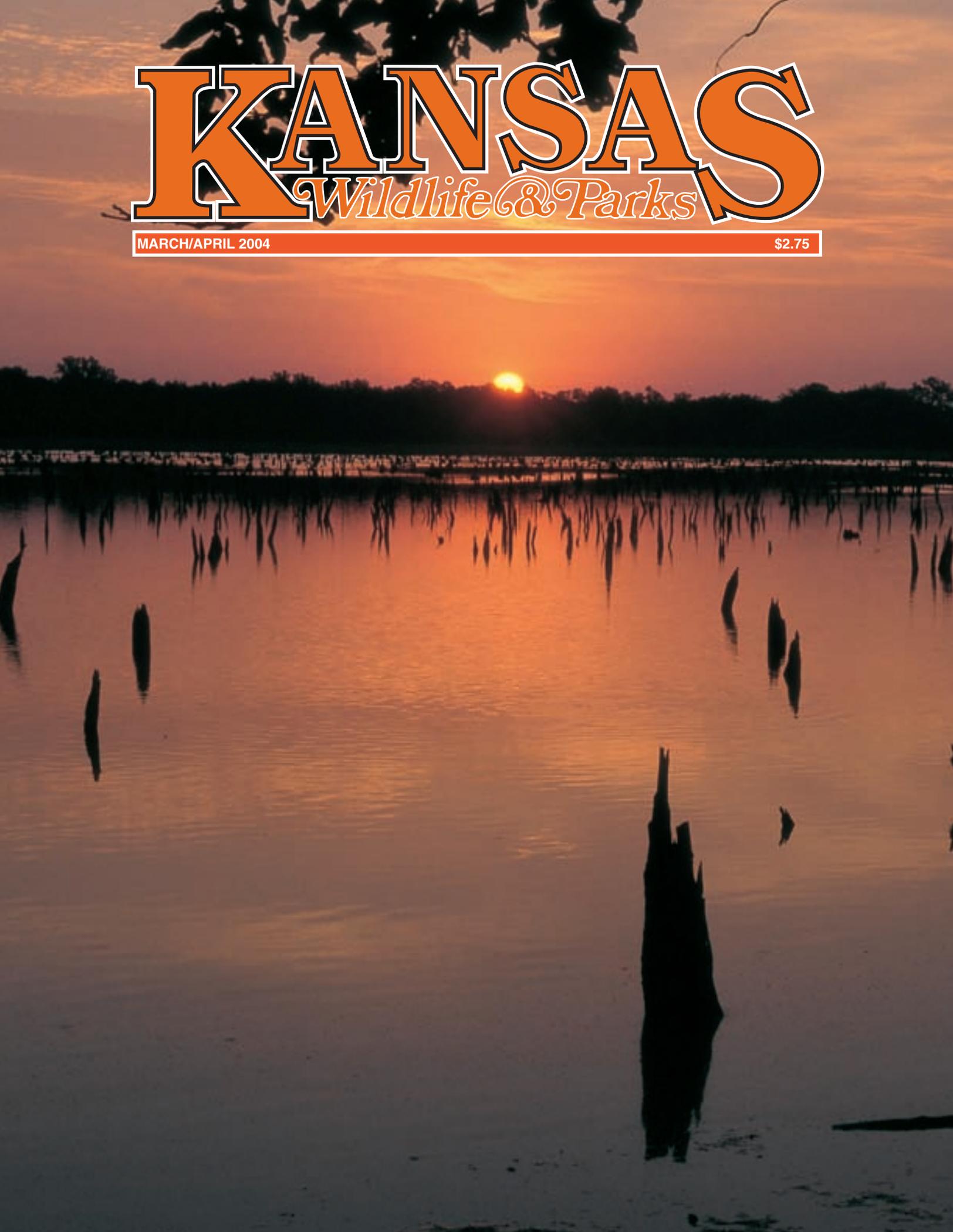


KANSAS

Wildlife & Parks

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On Point

by Mike Hayden



State Park Funding Challenge

Mushroom Rock, Prairie Dog, Fall River, Cedar Bluff — the names of our state parks reflect the diversity of the Kansas landscape and the flora and fauna it supports. In previous columns I've written about the importance of public lands for all Kansans. All who enjoy the outdoors, many of whom live in urban areas, need open spaces to enjoy hiking, hunting, biking, birdwatching, or any of the other many outdoor activities.

The state's park system began in 1958 with the establishment of Kanopolis State Park in Ellsworth County. There are currently 24 state parks all across the state. Visitation has steadily increased during the past decade, and in 2002, more than 7 million people visited Kansas state parks. As attendance has increased, so has the challenge to meet the ever-changing outdoor recreation needs of visitors.

State parks are among the most popular attractions in the state. According to 2002 attendance figures, Hillsdale State Park was second only to Cabela's as the most visited place in Kansas. Many other state parks had more than 200,000 visitors, placing them in the top tier of Kansas tourist destinations.

Besides being a critical source for outdoor recreation, state parks are also key in efforts to conserve and preserve the Kansas land and the plants and animals that live there. Enhancing wildlife habitat and restoring native prairie are included in many parks' management plans. Special projects, such as shoreline stabilization at Cheney, Eagle Days at Milford and Kanopolis, maintenance of habitat for threatened and endangered species, and preservation of an 18th century pueblo at Scott State Park, are just examples of how parks contribute to natural resource and historic conservation.

Despite their tremendous value to Kansans, state parks' long-term funding is uncertain. For the past decade, the amount of State General Fund support for parks has decreased from 60 percent of the total parks budget in 1995 to a proposed level of 15.5 percent in fiscal year 2005. The department has been advised that in the future, all State General Fund money could be removed from the Parks Division

budget. The department is currently wrestling with how to make the parks self-sustaining, while meeting the increasing demand and diversity of park visitors.

Limited budgets make volunteer groups essential to the parks. Many state parks have their own "friends" organizations, and other groups such as the Flint Hills Trail Riders, the Navy Seabees, the Kansas Trail Council, and the Boy Scouts, all contribute time, raise money, and supply the labor for many park projects. Corporate efforts such as Westar Energy's Green Team have also provide critical support.

Currently, the department is seeking legislative designation of a 25th state park—Menninger Memorial State Park in Topeka. It is hoped that a private developer, who will be developing a portion of what was the Menninger Hospital campus, will donate 80 acres of land to the state. A day-use state park, with access to the Kansas River, picnic areas, walking and biking trails, and a children's fishing pond, would be developed. Additional land may eventually be acquired that would link the Kansas State Historical Society, Menninger Memorial State Park, and the Governor's Mansion at Cedar Crest in a system of trails. This project would help meet the needs identified in the 2003 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, which noted heavy demand for additional open space, children's fishing areas, river access, and hiking/biking trails near urban areas, particularly in our state's capital city.

Probably during next year's legislative session, the department will seek the designation of Prairie Spirit Rail Trail State Park, as well. This trail currently runs from Ottawa to Welda, a distance of about 33 miles. The trail is open to biking, hiking, runners, and those who want to enjoy the outdoors. The third, and final phase of the trail, for which the department will seek approval during next year's legislative session, will extend the trail to Iola, for a total of about 50 miles.

For more information about the parks please go to the department's website, www.kdwp.state.ks.us, or contact the department's office at (620) 672-5911. With spring just around the corner, please plan to visit our parks and enjoy the Kansas outdoors.



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Front Cover: A peaceful summer morning dawns over Area G at Marais des Cygnes Wildlife Area. Mike Blair filmed the scene with a 55mm lens, f/11 @ 1/1000 sec. **Back:** A proud young hunter holds his first turkey, taken during a youth hunt near Hutchinson. His guide Marc Murrell took the photo with a 35-80mm zoom lens, f/8 @ 1/125.



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Marsh of The Swans

step back in time

by Lee Queal

wildlife biologist/retired Ducks Unlimited regional director, Pratt

and Karl Karrow

area manager, Marais des Cygnes Wildlife Area, Pleasanton

photos by Mike Blair

associate editor/photographer, Pratt

Along a wild river by the same name, the Marais des Cygnes Wildlife Area provides us with a snapshot of why people have been drawn to this land throughout history.

Marais des Cygnes. Locally pronounced “mare des zene”. Once pronunciation is mastered, the obviously French words roll gently off the tongue. Similarly, other names in eastern Linn County — Boicourt, La Cygne, Coppage Bayou, Paris Township — all reflect an early influence of

French trappers in the settlement of the area. The riverbank community of Trading Post, an apt name in an area steeped in wildlife history, is one of the oldest settlements in Kansas, dating back to the early 1800s.

The dominant ecological force in the area is the Marais des Cygnes River. This river origi-

nates in southeastern Wabaunsee County and drains some 3,230 square miles above Trading Post. The river was subject to frequent and intense flooding prior to settlement. Through the lower section of its eastward flow, the riverbanks (terraces) are 3 to 6 feet higher than the bottomlands of the adjacent floodplain. These



terraces trapped floodwater on the floodplain, inundating forests and natural wetlands. In lower reaches of the river there are many U-shaped oxbow lakes, remnants of former river channels cut off by frequent flooding.

Prior to settlement, the watershed provided clear, clean runoff to oxbow lakes, bottomland hardwood forests, and marshes, which attracted waterfowl and other wetland wildlife. Presumably, early French trappers and traders pursued beaver in the area and provided the name, Marais des Cygnes, which translates to Marsh of the Swans. Marshes with abundant waterfowl attracted hunters — first for sustenance and then for market and sport hunting. Market hunters shipped birds to Kansas

City and New Orleans markets. Numerous hunting clubs developed along the river, mostly for sportsmen from the Kansas City area. Currently, there are over 40 waterfowl hunting clubs in the lower Marais des Cygne Valley.

In the early 1950s, the Kansas Forestry Fish and Game Commission embarked on an effort to create a waterfowl management area in the lower Marais des Cygnes Valley. The natural wetlands and bottomland hardwood forests made the area near Trading Post and Boicourt an obvious site. Original documents indicate that waterfowl management was the primary objective.

Early efforts in acquiring land were successful but marked with controversy. The Commission elected to take the fast approach and used condemnation to

acquire much of the land. The agricultural bottomland along the river was acquired first but not without bitterness, some of which lingers today. The effort to acquire hunting clubs resulted in numerous court cases, some even going before the Kansas Supreme Court. The State eventually won, but in a startling reversal of its earlier position, the Commission elected not to go forward with acquisition of some key club properties.

Acquisition began with 3,679 acres in 1953. Additional purchases from 1954-1973 brought the total number of acres included in what is now the Marais des Cygnes Wildlife Area (MDCWA) to 7,350. Later purchases involved only willing sellers, an approach that takes more time but has more public

support.

Adjacent to the wildlife area is the 7,500-acre Marais des Cygnes National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), established in 1992, and managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). This NWR is proposed to be 9,300 acres, if fully acquired, and focuses on restoring and protecting bottomland hardwoods along the Marais des Cygnes River. Combined, the two areas total almost 15,000 acres, which far exceeds the original total envisioned by the Fish and Game Commission in the early 1950s.

Wetland Development

Wetland development at MDCWA began in 1955 and continues today. Units A (originally called Burr Oak Lake), B (Wood Duck Lake) and G (Flathead Lake) were completed by 1957. Additional wetlands were developed in Units C, E, and F in the 1960s and 1970s, and wetlands are still being created or enhanced throughout MDCWA.

In the early years, wetland recharge was mostly by natural sources. Units A, C, and G had small watersheds and relied almost entirely on floods for water. Other marshes such as Units B, E, and F captured precipitation runoff and flood water. Most large units had considerable variation in topography, resulting in portions of the wetland being too deep for most wetland wildlife when the units were full.

Although the primary purpose of the project was to manage waterfowl, fishing became a major recreational use of MDCWA in early years. Without an artificial water supply, early managers usually opted to leave units full and, combined with abundant structure from dead trees, the pools

provided excellent fishing at times. Unfortunately, fisheries and wetland management often conflict. Wetlands are most productive when water levels fluctuate to produce vegetation for food and cover. Further, wetlands are much shallower than is ideal for fish.

Management plans were also affected by dramatic changes in the Marais des Cygnes River watershed. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers constructed three major watershed projects over an 18-year period. Pomona (1963), Melvern (1972), and Hillsdale (1981) reservoirs have a combined drainage of approximately 25 percent of the Marais des Cygnes River watershed and store almost 520,000 acre-feet of water. Conversion of prairie to agriculture fields speeds runoff into the river and tributary streams. Withdrawal of water for municipal, industrial, and agricultural use further impacts the hydrology of the river system. Modern floods undoubtedly have greater velocity and higher peaks, but are of shorter duration than before modifications.

Changes in river hydrology and demand for high-quality wetland habitat to attract waterfowl for hunting led MDCWA managers to develop reliable water sources. In 1982, a major pumping station was constructed. This 200-horsepower, electric pump delivers more than 15,000 gallons per minute and supplies water to units A, C and F. Managers began to intensify wetland management and dewatered selected marshes in the spring and reflooded wetlands in the fall. Fishermen vigorously opposed wetland drawdowns, particu-



This aerial view of the Marais des Cygnes Wildlife Area shows the diversity of the environment, as well as oxbow pools left by the Marais des Cygnes River.

larly right after the pump station was established.

Development of the river pump station ushered in the era of modern wetland management, but many problems still remained. Individual wetland units had been developed without regard for an overall water delivery system and movement of water between marsh units was slow and cum-

bersome. In some instances, water could only be delivered to downstream marshes after upstream marshes were filled. Large topographic variation within units required large volumes of water and during droughts, flow in the Marais des Cygnes River was insufficient to flood marsh units. Other marshes still relied on natural water sources.



Waterfowl hunting is the most popular activity for wildlife area users, but birdwatching activity has increased in recent years.

A major renovation project constructed from 1994 through 1996 solved many problems. Water delivery was isolated from marsh units to allow timely movement to selected marshes. Marshes were divided along topographic contours to allow shallow inundation of large areas without deep flooding of other areas. Shallow water habitat favored by ducks and other wetland species increased. Subdivided marshes provide more management flexibility by allowing

managers to dewater or flood subunits individually. Overall water demand from the river was reduced, allowing better use of water in drought years. In addition, a subsequent project in 2002 subdivided one of the F units, further reducing water demand and increasing shallow water habitat.

Still problems and opportunities remain. One particularly acute need is for effective management of water in Unit B, the primary refuge pool at MDCWA. A project is being designed to divide this unit along contours and to provide a pump for reliable water recharge. River flow during severe drought is still inadequate to meet needs in spite of reconfigured marshes that require less water. This problem is certain to become more acute as population growth in the Marais des Cygnes Valley puts additional demand on the Marais des Cygnes River. Techniques to address this problem are being investigated.

In addition to management of open marshes, recent management has focused on forested wetlands, or bottomland hardwood forest. This habitat has been dramatically reduced nationally and is important to a wide array of species. Fortunately, MDCWA has many acres of bottomland hardwoods in good condition. This resource will require excellent stewardship to be protected, enhanced, and restored for the future.

Wildlife Resources

Furbearers and waterfowl obviously attracted early visitors to the area that became



A wildlife area for all seasons, this series shows how the land changes through the year. Ideally, wetland managers prefer to drain some wetland cells in the spring so that vegetation can grow, providing food and cover for waterfowl when the cells are reflooded in late summer or early fall. Modern improvements have allowed managers to move water and use it more efficiently.

MDCWA. Although harvest of furbearers is now relatively insignificant, wetland management is the primary focus and waterfowl hunting constitutes the greatest recreational use of the wildlife area. In addition to waterfowl, other game species such as white-tailed deer, turkey, and tree squirrels, attract significant numbers of hunters.

Birdwatching has recently grown in popularity, and significant numbers of birders visit the area during migration peaks. Perhaps most significant is the large numbers of wading birds and in some years, shorebirds, that can be observed in wetlands that are being dewatered in spring. In addition to serious birding, many visitors simply enjoy the scenic views and chance encounters with wildlife.

Although a diverse number of waterfowl species use the wildlife area, mallards are most popular with hunters. In recent years, mallards have generally constituted 60 percent to 75 percent of all ducks taken at MDCWA. Hunters prize this species because it responds to calls and decoys, yet is wary enough to be a challenge. Further, mallards remain in the Marais des Cygnes valley after most "marsh ducks" have migrated, providing hunting opportunity until marshes are completely frozen.

Significant harvest of Canada geese, another highly prized species, is relatively new at MDCWA. From the wildlife area's early development in the 1950s until 1980, Canada



Bottomland hardwood forest is another critical habitat type managers are focusing on. MDCWA has many acres of quality bottomland forest.

geese were never abundant. Fall sightings of 100 to 150 geese were unusual. Typically a few migrants would pass through prior to the waterfowl season, and a few larger geese would be present in late fall. Bagging a Canada goose was a rare prize.

In the late 1970s, the department initiated a project to create a population of local nesting geese at MDCWA. The wildlife area was chosen because it was being managed for waterfowl, had habitat capable of supporting large numbers of geese, and the area manager at the time, Rick Warhurst, was knowledgeable about geese and a proponent of the project. Another factor was La Cygne Lake, about 6 miles to the north, which provides open water year-round due to warm-water discharges from an electrical generating plant.

In 1980, a predator-proof goose pen was erected and pinioned geese from North Dakota, Illinois, Wisconsin, Nebraska, and the Wichita Zoo were introduced to the pen. Although pinioned geese are rendered perma-

nently flightless, their off-spring were allowed to fly free. With no established migration pattern, these geese developed nesting populations in the Marais des Cygnes Valley. A refuge was established surrounding the management area to protect local geese. This extensive refuge area, which remained in effect until 1987, allowed the population to become well established. Habitat management, combined with the local population, attracted migrant Canada geese in high numbers, particularly in the late 1980s and early 1990s.



This photo shows a sign from the early years of development, probably the late 1950s.

Local populations are now self-sustaining and hunting seasons are reasonably generous.

MDCWA is primarily a migration stop for waterfowl but in mild years, significant numbers of hardy species, such as mallards and Canada geese, winter on the area. Canada geese and wood ducks are the only significant nesting waterfowl at MDCWA.

Partnerships

Effectively managing wildlife and its habitat can only be accomplished through working partnerships. The most obvious partnership is between hunters and KDWP. License fees paid by hunters have been the primary funding source for MDCWA since inception. This has been supplemented by federal aid, which comes from the 11 percent excise tax on all sporting firearms and ammunition.

In the Marais des Cygnes Valley there is another unique partnership: KDWP, the USFWS, and private landowners all manage many acres for wildlife habitat. The department and the USFWS have many common objectives, such as the protection of bottomland hardwood forests and wetland management.

Private duck clubs manage many acres of wetlands and contribute significant habitat in the Valley. Further, habitat management assistance for private landowners is provided by both the state and federal agencies.

In recent years, budgets for expensive wetland development have tightened and additional funding sources were needed. Fortunately, Ducks Unlimited, Inc. (DU) developed the Matching Aid to Restore States' Habitat



While waterfowl are the primary attraction, deer, turkey, and squirrels also thrive on MDCWA.

(MARSH) program in 1985, whereby 7 percent of all monies raised by volunteer efforts in the state were allocated back to approved projects. And the state waterfowl habitat stamp program, passed by the Kansas Legislature in 1987, provided additional money to help Kansas match MARSH funds. Since that time, DU has provided more than \$930,000 to KDWP through the MARSH program. More than \$250,000 has found its way to the Marais des Cygnes Valley. Without this partnership between the department and DU, wetland management at MDCWA would be severely hampered at the expense of waterfowl and those individuals who treasure this resource.

A Bright Future

Tremendous improvements have been made at MDCWA, but opportunities and challenges remain. Wildlife management is an evolving science and as we learn more about how wetlands function and the needs of wet-

land wildlife, management practices are refined. Certainly, the duck hunter who visited MDCWA in the late 1950s would scarcely recognize the area today. Further, negative impacts to wetlands and wildlife resources in North America continue, and it is imperative that public lands provide the best habitat possible.

It's been some 50 years since the concept of a Marais des Cygnes Wildlife Area was initiated. A lot of water has washed under the proverbial bridge since then. Wetland and waterfowl management has been highly successful. The future can be even better with the development of more efficient management of limited water resources. This success is a tribute to the dedication of the Kansas sportsmen and the management staff of the Marais des Cygnes Wildlife Area that has been created in the Marsh of the Swans. ♡

50th Anniversary

April 3, 2004 has been designated to honor the 50th Anniversary of the Marais des Cygnes Wildlife Area. Wildlife enthusiasts from across the state are invited to join in this special celebration. Activities will begin at 10 a.m. At 11 a.m. speakers including KDWP Secretary Mike Hayden, Ken Babcock (Director of Operations for DU Southern Regional Office), Scott Manley (DU Director of Conservation Programs for Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Kentucky), and others will address participants.

Lunch will be served (free-will donation) followed by tours of the wildlife area highlighting completed and planned projects.

It will be a great celebration of 50 years of work dedicated to improving wetland and waterfowl habitat. For more information contact Karl Karrow, MDCWA manager, at 913-352-8941.



BARGING IN ON WALLEYE

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

Millions of walleye eggs were taken from Kansas waters last year, and a special tool called the walleye barge helped biologists work more efficiently.

Walleye are popular with Kansas anglers, even though they aren't native to most waters. Not long after walleye were first stocked in the 1960s, it became apparent that dependable walleye fishing would require annual stocking. From that necessity, the walleye culture program evolved.

The saga of Kansas walleye begins in early spring. Even in ideal conditions, fewer than 5 percent of walleye eggs normally survive in the wild. Artificial spawning and hatching can increase egg survival rates to 50 percent.

Walleye move into spawning areas when the water temperature reaches the middle 40s. By the end of March, crews of biologists are set up on several Kansas reservoirs. They will work grueling hours for several weeks to capture walleye. Eggs are stripped from females, fertilized and shipped to state hatcheries for incubation. Hatchery culturists incubate eggs in

closely monitored systems of flowing water. At a water temperature of 60 degrees, hatching occurs on the eighth or ninth day.

Some fry are stocked in lakes just days after hatching while others are kept in hatchery ponds, raised to fingerling size, and stocked later in the summer. But first, the hard work of egg collecting must be completed, a process that is constantly being refined, as demonstrated last year at Glen Elder Reservoir.

Last fall, Kyle Austin took a desk job in the KDWP Pratt Operations Office, but prior to that, he had spent 14 years as a district fisheries biologist managing Glen Elder and Lovewell reservoirs and Jewell State Fishing Lake. It was in this latter capacity that he helped introduce Kansas to an innovative fisheries management tool — the fish culture barge.

Because Glen Elder Reservoir is one of the state's more productive walleye lakes (others include Cheney, Hillsdale,

Kirwin, and Webster), a substantial portion of Austin's early-spring days were spent working on the walleye culture program. Prior to the late-March/early-April walleye spawning period, Austin prepared equipment and corralled "volunteers" — other biologists from across the state — for the intensive process of collecting eggs. He would spend three weeks preparing nets, boats, motors, livewells, coolers, waders, and other gear in late winter.

With equipment ready, Austin and his team of four or five biologists braved unpredictable Kansas springs — which can bring sun, wind, cold, and rain — to collect 30-100 million eggs a year. It is work not for the faint of heart. Thirty-mile-per-hour winds whipping across a Kansas lake create more than a chill during cool weather; they can capsize or flood a boat in a heartbeat.

To collect and fertilize walleye eggs, large numbers of female walleye must be caught,

“milked,” and released with the least amount of disturbance to those fish. Two methods of capture are used for this: fish traps on or near the shallow spawning areas (along the dam at Glen Elder) and gill nets farther out in the lake. While fish traps have been standard equipment, windy conditions at Glen Elder convinced Austin to switch to gill nets. Wind would often roll trap nets up, making them ineffective and dangerous to retrieve, and modern multi-filament gill nets are much easier on fish than the older monofilament nets.

“I used traps for 10 years,” he explains, “but on this lake, it just got to the point where I felt it was too dangerous. The waves next to the dam not only make it hard on us, but it’s possible to lose some fish in the process. On Glen, gill nets are a lot safer and more effective, and we’ve been supplying a steady egg source with them since 1999.”

Choice of equipment has not been the only challenge in collecting enough eggs to meet demand. The process itself has made collecting viable eggs and saving brood fish difficult. Fish had to be hauled to the bank, where the females were squeezed for eggs. (Because preserved sperm is now used, males no longer have to be collected at this time.) Here, milt and eggs had to be mixed in whatever elements Mother Nature presented. The sun can be hard on eggs, and it was difficult to protect them from exposure to the light. And the wind could whip dirt into the mix, tainting the fertilization process.

“We had to turn this way to protect the eggs from the sun and that way to avoid the

wind,” Austin says. “There was just no way to protect the eggs at all times, and severe conditions made the process harder on the fish.”

Looking to improve the process, Austin traveled to Colorado to study their methods of propagating walleye. While there, he was introduced to the concept of a floating fish culture dock. Austin immediately recognized the dock’s potential to make walleye egg collecting more efficient in Kansas.

“I went to Colorado two or three years, essentially to investigate gill nets versus traps,” Austin explains. “I found that the gill nets were working well in their walleye operation, but their floating fish dock really caught my eye. They did everything on it, and they were inside where it was warm, clean, and out of the sun and wind. A year or so later, they went to the same operation on a barge, and I went out in 2002 to see how it worked. I immediately knew I wanted one.”



Inside the canvas cover, the barge includes all the equipment necessary to take eggs cleanly and efficiently. It’s also more comfortable for biologists.

The seed for this new technique was planted. Austin pitched the barge idea to his supervisor, Steve Price, who received the okay from Fisheries Chief Doug Nygren.

Austin modified the design of Colorado’s boat to fit Glen Elder’s needs and sought bids from boat builders. The first rig would cost \$19,000, including boat and trailer, and it arrived at Glen Elder Reservoir in March of 2003.

With the new barge in place, Austin and his team of biologists were ready when the walleye began to spawn last spring. To meet biologists’ requests, 240 million walleye eggs would be needed, and this crew would be out to prove the value of their new tool.

Here’s how the process works: Twelve 400-foot gill nets are set and checked every two hours throughout the night, beginning at 5 p.m., for 20 days. Approximately 800 female walleye will be collected during this time. Because the wind usually kicks up by mid-morning, the



A cooler with fertilized eggs is marked and dated and ready for delivery to one of the state’s hatcheries.



Female walleye are sorted and those that are green, or not ready to spawn, are kept in holding cages under the barge.

last net is checked and pulled at 6 a.m. Brood females are taken from nets and put in the boat's livewell. (Males are released. To ensure that genetically pure walleye are produced, populations were tested. Marion Reservoir walleye tested pure, so sperm from these fish is sent to Milford, where it is preserved for fertilization of all walleye eggs propagated in the state.)

The females are then brought to the fish barge, where they are sorted. "Green" females — those not yet ready to spawn — are placed in a holding cage under the barge where they will be kept overnight, so their eggs can ripen. "Spent" females, which have already spawned, are released. "Ripe" females are kept in a holding tank on the barge before processing.

The 30-foot-by-8-foot fish barge most resembles a floating

laboratory. The floor contains four trap doors with holding cages beneath. One side contains a bubbling holding tank and shelves lined with vials, scales, measuring boards, coolers, and other equipment. The entire barge is covered with a white nylon tarp that lets in light but keeps wind and dirt out.

After the females are sorted, the fertilization process begins. A ripe female is taken from the holding tank and eggs (approximately 80,000 per fish) are gently squeezed from its vent into a fertilization pan, where they are mixed with clean water, about a tablespoon of preserved sperm, and Fuller's earth — a powdery clay used to keep the eggs from sticking to one another. This solution is then slowly stirred with a large feather until eggs, sperm, and clay are thoroughly mixed.

After the eggs are stripped, the female is measured and released back into the lake. Her eggs are placed in a nylon basket and submersed in clean water. The eggs are bathed in this water for about two hours to wash away the clay. During this time, the eggs harden

and actually get bigger. They are then placed in coolers full of clean water, sealed, and labeled for immediate shipping to hatcheries at Milford, Pratt, and Meade.

This is the same process used at the other lakes where some 240 million walleye eggs were collected last year; with the barge it's just cleaner, more efficient, and — from the biologist's point of view — more pleasant.

Currently, KDWP has only one walleye spawning barge, but others may be in the offing, depending on demand and budget. Fisheries biologists at other lakes are vying for the opportunity to use the barge this year, and as of this writing, it wasn't certain which lake would house this new technology.

But wherever it goes, the walleye barge will help ensure that 50-150 million walleye will be stocked in Kansas lakes each year. And that's good news for anglers who will have the chance to catch one of the tastiest fish that swim North American waters. ♡



The walleye culture process is continually being refined by fisheries biologists and hatchery fish culturists. Last year, the program produced more than 240 million walleye eggs, which resulted in millions of walleye stocked back into state reservoirs.



Mussel Treasure

text by Bryan Simmons
aquatic ecologist, Pratt
photos by Mike Blair

Commonly called “clams,” freshwater mussels were once economically important to eastern Kansas river communities. Today, their numbers and economic value have dropped, but their environmental importance has never been higher.

When you think of underwater exploration, Jacques Cousteau swimming among fish and colorful coral reefs off the Bahamas islands comes to mind. You don't think about a dive in the muddy Neosho River of eastern Kansas. The turbid stream, filled with jagged trash, fishing debris, and log piles, is hardly aesthetic. However, one does strange things for treasure.

I dive the Neosho and other Kansas rivers – not for recreation, but for science. Each time I go into the water, there is a sense of expectancy. In the gloomy depths of Kansas rivers are creatures that may hold answers to the future of Kansas' water. With each dive, knowledge of our state's water quality and fauna

increases. At the same time, there is a sense of adventure.

Upon reaching the river channel bottom 8 feet deep, I struggle to orient myself on the gravel. An air line tied to my back provides oxygen from a floating compressor. Around my waist is a 30-pound lead belt to hold me underwater. Looped over my shoulder is a large net bag for my invaluable finds. I try to create a low profile, as the river fights to push me downstream toward the log jam on the next bend. Once stabilized, I start my search by sweeping my hands across the river bed. Little can be seen, though the sun is directly overhead on a clear day. Light is choked out by the agricultural sediment the river. Suddenly, a familiar smooth object the size of

a baseball is felt among the stones. My quarry has been located and is tucked safely away in my bag. I go on to find another and another during this murky dive.

This treasure is not gold, silver, or jewelry, but freshwater mussels — also known as Unionids, clams, or naiads. Mussels are classified as invertebrates, without internal bones, much like insects or crayfish. Their hard outer shell is the only structure that protects them from a ravenous river environment. Furthermore, their treasure lies not only in the beautiful abalone-like shell, but also in their rarity and environmental importance. Mussels help foretell the health of our rivers and streams.

That fact is made clear in this dive. The bounty of mussels within this stretch of river, as well as a majority of rivers of the Midwest, was once so abundant that the gravel of the river's bottom was outnumbered by these hard-shelled animals. Now, though it is still easy to find them, populations are far short of historical levels.



Biologists survey populations of mussels by diving and bringing samples to shore for study. Trends in mussel populations are valuable indicators of water quality.

Through history, mussels were economically important. They were used by American Indians, not only as a source of food, but also as utensils, tools, ornaments, jewelry, and as temper for pottery. As settlers moved westward and towns sprang up along major Midwestern rivers, mussels became important in the garment and jewelry industry. Shells were harvested and shipped to factories. The pearly mussel shells were processed into fancy buttons. This became a multi-million-dollar industry along eastern Kansas rivers such as the Verdigris, Spring, and Neosho. Shells can still be uncovered during renovation projects in some old river towns which have the telltale markings from the button process. Waste button shells were also used in building foundations and bases for sidewalks and roads.

At first, like much of American wildlife, mussels seemed in endless supply. During the mid- to late 19th century, harvests were tremendous. It was reported that 85 million mussels were removed from the Neosho River during 1912 alone, which represented

about 17 percent of the nation's total pearly products. However, within a few decades, it became apparent that mussel catches were dramatically dwindling. This decline continued until they were scarcely obtainable for the cost involved. About this same time, in the 1940s, plastic was invented and replaced mussel shells as the primary button material. This took the majority of the pressure off of the natural resource. Since then, mussel harvest has been low to moderate.

Even so, mussel shells still have

a market today, primarily as pearl blanks shipped to Japan and inserted into pearl oysters. Mussel shells are drilled to produce a nucleus upon which pearl oysters can secrete a thin layer of nacre. This helps to produce cultured pearls in a fraction of the time needed for natural processes utilizing a grain of sand. Blanks also help standardize the size of pearls to be harvested.

Before looking at conservation needs, it is useful to understand some things about Kansas freshwater mussels. Mussels feed upon



Photo Chris Barnhart

During the first stage of life, mussel larvae must attach themselves to the gills of a host fish. Some species have an appendage resembling a small fish. When a larger fish attempt to eat the decoy, mussel larvae are deposited.

suspended microscopic particles, including algae, using a part of their anatomy called a gill. A portion of this gill also functions as a brood site for baby mussels. Since mussels aren't very mobile, reproduction and gene exchange is performed using the surrounding water as a medium. Males simply emit sperm into the water, and the current transports it downstream where any number of females siphon it in as a by-product of feeding. The eggs that are in the brood chamber of the gill are then fertilized and baby mussels called glochidia develop.

Now, an intriguing life stage is required. The glochidia must attach itself to the gills of a fish in order to develop as a juvenile mussel. This process, which ordinarily requires only several weeks to complete, allows the immature mussel to be nurtured from the bloodstream of the host fish as it develops its own digestive system. The process is sometimes so specific that only one species of fish can complete a mussel's development. Obviously, any habitat problem that affects the fish also affects the mussel.

It was learned only recently, that mussels employ differing and often astounding reproductive strategies to transfer their parasitic glochidia to host fish. For example, female mussels of several species have a soft mantle flap that closely resembles a small baitfish. Glochidia, which are attached to the flap, are transferred when a fish bites at the mussel's "bait." In other species, the glochidia develop in a packet or envelope which resembles a food source. These packets are simply released into the water in hopes that the proper host fish will eat it and thus

provide transfer.

For this to work, several million glochidia are produced by every female each year to ensure that one or two mussels survive to the next generation. For those that reach adulthood, life span is about 10 to 20 years. However, a few species are known to live nearly 100 years. Sexual maturity often requires 10 years or more, so adverse river factors can have a rapid impact on mussel populations.

Mussels exhibit great diversity in habitat preference. Some species prefer riffles, some pool areas, and some lake- or pond-like areas. Their shells also vary in shape to match their environment. Shells with a lot of sculpturing (knobs, bumps, or ridges) are also very heavy. These mussels generally live in fast moving riffle environments, where their anatomical features allow them to hold on in a flood.

Mussel harvest currently continues in a limited number of

states, but Kansas is not among them. Beginning in 2002, Kansas declared a 10-year moratorium on mussel harvest.

The moratorium was based on several factors, including declining harvest trends, existing low-market values for shells, lack of current population status, low numbers of recruitment (babies coming into the population to replace those being harvested,) and significant population differences noted between harvest and non-harvest areas. It is currently illegal to harvest freshwater mussels from any Kansas waters, as it is throughout much of the U.S.

Why are mussels declining nationwide? Several factors come into play, many the result of human neglect, impropriety, and ignorance through activities associated with urbanization and development. Rivers are affected by such things as dam construction and stream channelization, dredging for navigation and road mater-



Photo Chris Barnhart

Mussel shells were popular for jewelry and buttons in the late 1800s, and a multi-million-dollar industry developed along several eastern Kansas rivers. Plastic replaced mussel shell as the preferred button material in the 1940s, and harvests declined.



Mussel species have adaptations according to the type of water they prefer. Some have heavy shells which allow them to thrive in riffles and stay put during high flows.

ial, pollution and sedimentation from agricultural run-off, and woodland removal along stream banks. Changes to a river ecosystem ultimately affect its wildlife, particularly mussels.

That is why freshwater mussels are now recognized as the most imperiled group of animals in North America. More than 70 percent of all animals listed on the Federal Threatened and Endangered List are freshwater mussels. Of 300 species nationally, 36 are now presumed extinct, and 61 are listed as federally endangered. Kansas mussels are experiencing alarming declines as well. Of the

46 mussel species native to Kansas waters, five have been extirpated, seven are listed as endangered, four as threatened, and 12 as SINC (Species in Need of Conservation).

Reasons for protecting Kansas' mussel population are numerous. While they provide a general index of water quality and toxicity, they also directly improve water quality. One individual mussel can filter more than 8 gallons of water a day. Through recent surveys of mussel densities, it is estimated that one mussel bed in one riffle can naturally filter 1 million gallons a day during optimal temperature. How can we put a price tag on these benefits?

Mussels are also an important food source for a variety of other aquatic and terrestrial animals. However, if mussel populations continue to decline, we may never completely grasp the importance of their existence and free bio-fil-

tering capability upon our fragile ecosystem until they are gone. Fortunately, current mussel populations in Kansas and surrounding states are not worse for all they have endured.

Questions remain. There is concern that baby mussels aren't making it into the future population. We can only hope that we can prevent the continual decline and initiate a comeback. To do so, watersheds need to be examined to better understand the trends both positive and negative on our mussel populations. Populations may need to be relocated or reintroduced.

We should consider our important responsibility for stewardship of Kansas' resources, remembering the past and looking toward betterment of the environment for our children. One would like to think that the mussel populations could eventually rebound to support a sustainable harvest for use. But until their biology and life history, as well as human impacts, are better understood, we should continue to monitor and protect freshwater mussels. Only by doing so, will learn what these treasures are really worth. 🦎

Zebra Mussels

This article deals with mussels native to Kansas, but there is another mussel in the news recently: the zebra mussel. Zebra mussels are non-native, brought to North America in the ballasts of cargo ships and first discovered in the Great Lakes.

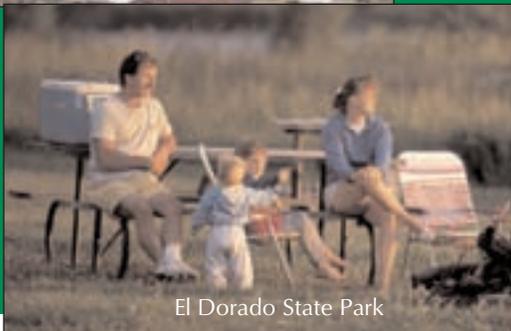
The zebra mussel is a small barnacle-sized mussel that could threaten aquatic ecosystems and damage industry. Zebra mussels look like small clams with yellow-brown shells, usually with dark- and light-colored stripes. Most are smaller than 1 inch long. The microscopic larvae can live in a teaspoon of water.

In August of 2003, zebra mussels were discovered in El Dorado Reservoir. Because of the potential threat zebra mussels pose to other aquatic species, as well as industry and recreation, it's important that the following precautions be taken to prevent them from being spread to other Kansas lakes:

- 1) Drain bilge water, livewells and bait buckets
- 2) Remove any vegetation attached to boat and trailer
- 3) inspect the boat and trailer for attached mussels and scrape them off
- 4) dry boat and trailer for one week before entering new water, OR wash boat and trailer with 140-degree water, a 10 percent chlorine and water solution, or hot salt water solution (DO NOT WASH AT BOAT RAMPS) finish with clean rinse.

Kansas State Parks: *More Than Meets The Eye*

The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks manages 24 state parks across the state. Most provide utility and primitive camping, and access to reservoirs, trails and wildlife areas. A few are preserved natural areas, allowing visitors to enjoy unspoiled wild Kansas. Many parks host annual events such as concerts, festivals, and competitions. Whatever your outdoor interest — hiking, camping, wildlife observation, fishing, bike riding, horseback riding, hunting, or just plain relaxing, a Kansas state park has what you're looking for. If you've never been to a Kansas state park, use this guide to find the nearest one. If you haven't visited a state park recently, look again — *there's more than meets the eye.*



Kansas State Park Fees

Prices in parentheses are for purchases during
Prime Season: April 1 – September 30
All other prices are for purchases from
October 1 – March 31.

Motor Vehicle Fees

One-Day Motor Vehicle Permit	(\$6.50)	\$5.50
Annual Motor Vehicle Permit (for calendar year)	(\$45.50)	\$35.50
Second Vehicle Permit (with annual vehicle permit)	(\$25.50)	\$20.50
Senior/Disabled – Kansas Residents Only (Daily Motor Vehicle Permit)	(\$3.75)	\$3.25
Senior/Disabled – Kansas Residents Only (Annual Motor Vehicle Permit)	(\$23.25)	\$18.25
Senior/Disabled – Kansas Residents Only (Second Annual Motor Vehicle Permit)	(\$13.25)	\$10.75
Duplicate (replacement) Permit		\$11.00

Trail Use Fees

Daily Trail Permit* (per person)	\$3.00
Annual Trail Permit* (per person)	\$11.00

Camping Fees

Daily Camping Permit (per night/unit)	(\$8.00)	\$7.00
Fourteen Day Camping Permit	(\$76.00)	\$66.00
Annual Camping Permit		\$151.00
Prime Site Fee**	(\$2.00)	
Utilities	1 Hookup	\$5.50
	2 Hookups	\$7.50
	3 Hookups	\$8.50
Rent-A-Camp Equipment - per night		\$15.00
Designated Overflow Camping		\$6.00
Reservation Fee		\$10.00
Duplicate (replacement) Permit		\$11.00
Group Camping	\$1.50 per person, plus \$0.50 per site	
Youth Camping (per unit)		\$3.00
Cabin Camping Permit		PRICES VARY

(Check with participating parks for pricing and availability of cabins)

A daily or annual motor vehicle permit is required for all vehicles entering a Kansas State Park.

A camping permit is required in addition to the motor vehicle permit for overnight stays.

Prime site fees and utility fees are in addition to all camping permits.

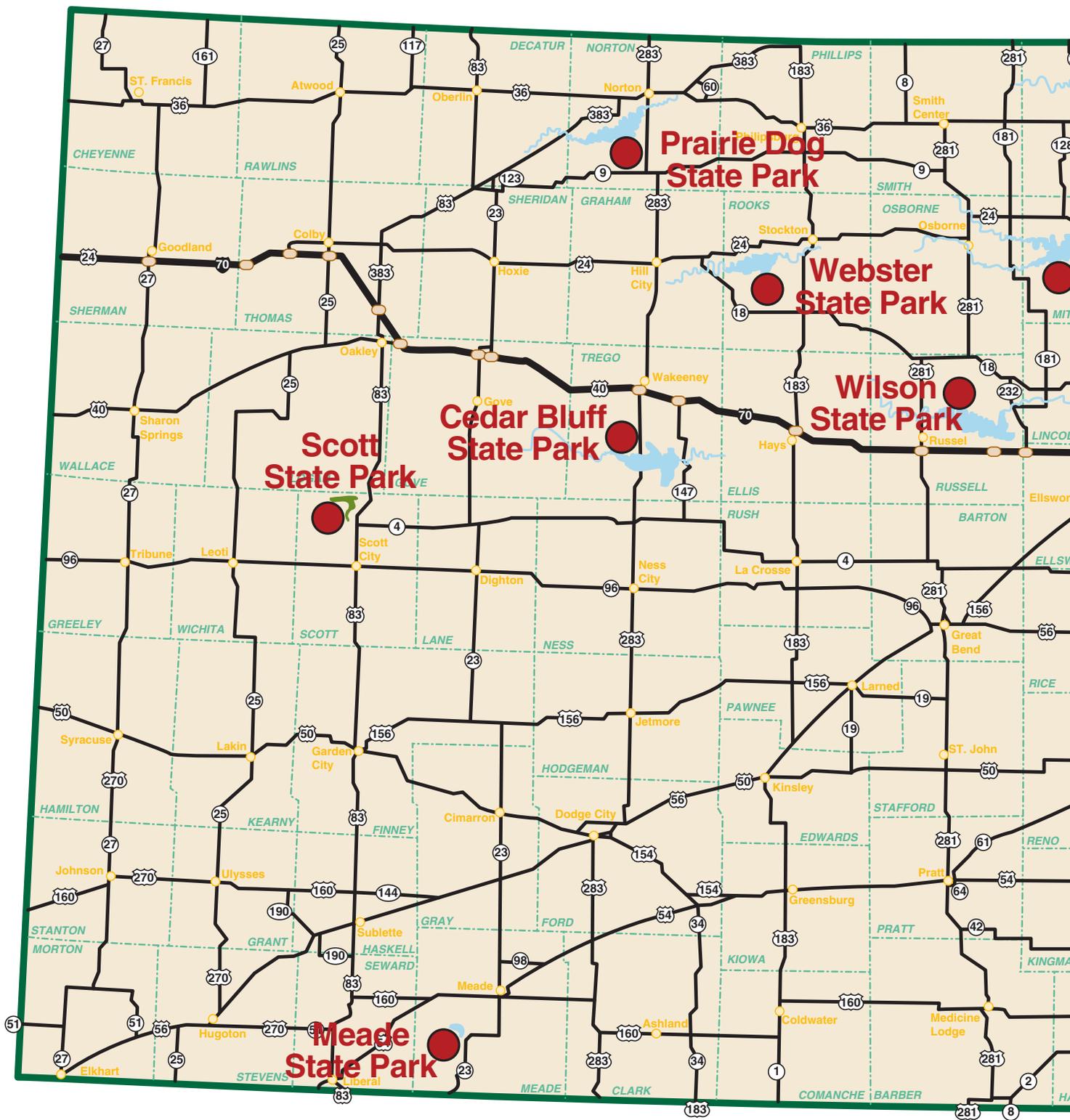
***A "per-person" trail permit is required to utilize Sand Hills State Park and Prairie Spirit Trail (except the portion of Prairie Spirit Trail within the city limits of Garnett and Ottawa).**

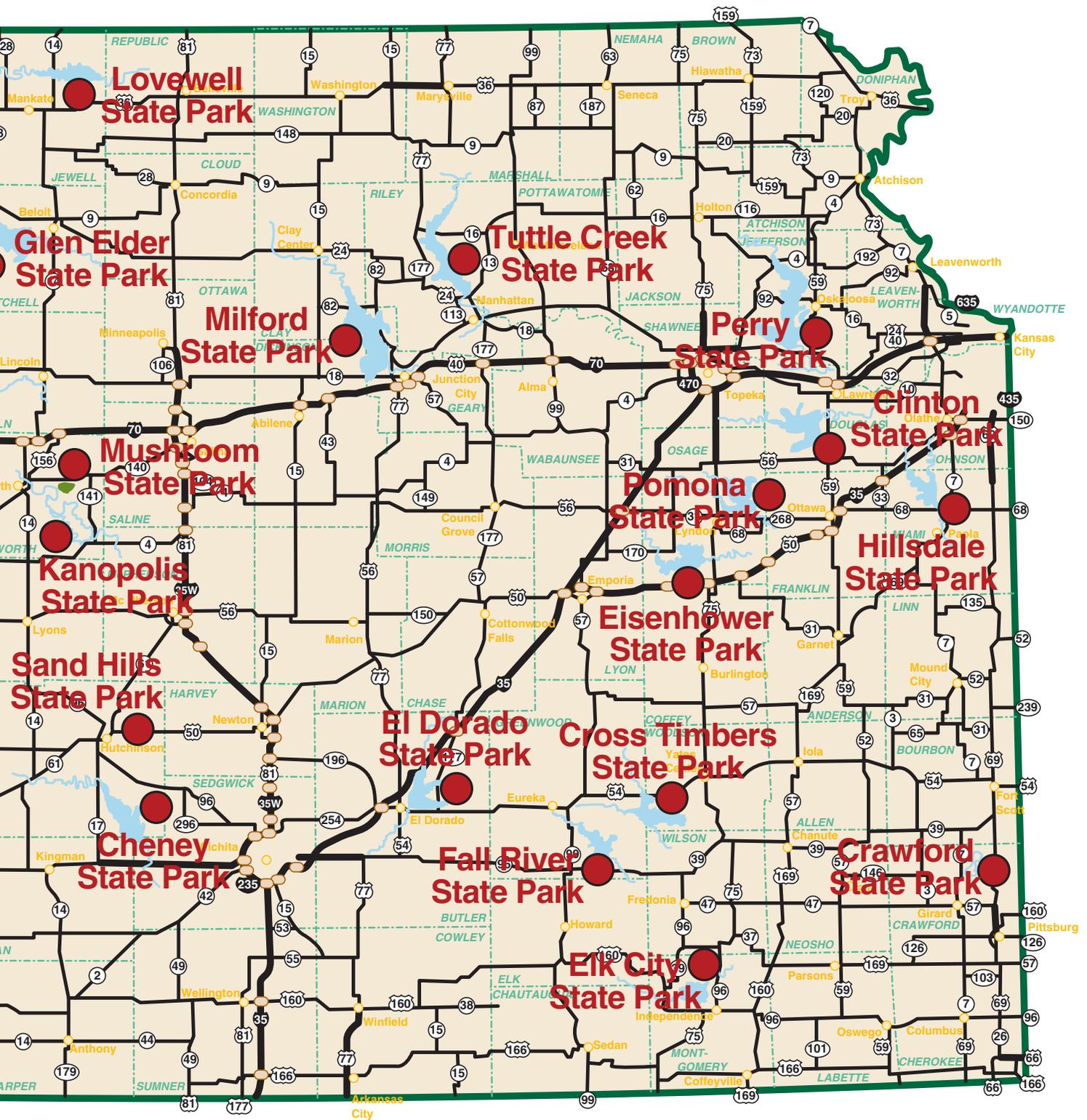
****Prime site fee applies to designated sites from April 1-September 30. All fees include \$1 issuance fee. Some vendors may charge an additional fee.**

PARK	SERVICES																							
	LAND ACRES	NUMBER OF AREAS	WATER	SEWER & ELEC. HOOKUPS (B)	ELECTRICAL ONLY (B)	NON-UTILITY SITES	RESERVABLE SITES (B)	RENT-A-CAMP (B)	SHOWERHOUSE	BOAT RAMP HOUSE	COURTESY LANES	BOATING DOCKS	MARINA	DUMP STATION (B)	TRAILS	HISTORICAL LANDMARK	MOTEL NEARBY	SHELTERHOUSES	FISH CLEANING STATIONS	RENTAL CABINS (B)	50 AMP ELECTRICAL (B)	SWIMMING BEACH		
Cedar Bluff	900	2	10	91	20	300	A	5	11	5	A	A	3	A	A		4	2	2	A	1			
Cheney	1913	2		185		245	A	9	22	3	A	A	4	A			3	2	7	A	4			
Clinton	1425	1		240		220	A	4	16	8	A	A	4	A	A	A	6	1	0		1	Archery Range, Trout Pond, Childrens Fishing Pond		
Crawford	589	1		48	27	A		2	2	2	C		A	1	A	A	2	0	0		1			
Cross Timbers	1075	5	15	37	10	180	A	5	6	2	A			1	A		A	0	2	0	A	1		
Eisenhower	1785	1	25	38	127	A	A	4	18	2	A	F	F	4	A		A	0	2	1	A	1	Equestrian, Hiking, and Interpretive Trails	
El Dorado	3800	4	128	352		566	A	A	13	17	5	A	A	A	4	A		A	10	6	5	A	2	
Elk City	857	1	11	84		70		2	3	1	A			2	A	F	A	3	0	0	A	1	Accessible Fish Dock	
Fall River	983	3		45		100		3	4	3	A			1	A			14	1	0	A	1		
Glen Elder	1391	1		112	8	240	A	3	6	2	A	A	A	2	A	A	A	1	1	0	A	1	Trails Under Development	
Hillsdale	2830	4		160		40	0	3	10	4	A			1	A			9	0	0	A	1	Equestrian Campground, Windsurfer Beach	
Kanopolis	1585	2	16	31	200	A	A	3	6	2	A		A	3	A	A	A	4	2	0	A	1	Equestrian Campground, Horse Rentals	
Lovewell	1126	1	23	13	82	306		3	4	3	A	A	A	2	A	A	A	3	2	2	A	1	Archery Range	
Meade	443	1		42	0	150		2	1	1	E			1			A	4	0	0	A	1		
Milford	1084	1	31	92		100		3	10	4	A	F	A	2	A	A	A	33	1	0	A	1	Viewing Tower Horse & Hiking Trails	
Mushroom Rock	5	1	DAY USE AREA ONLY																					
Perry	1597	2		124		200		5	10	2	A		F	2	A		A	8	1	0	A	1	Horse, Biking and Hiking Trails	
Pomona	490	1	47	97		200	A	A	3	5	2	A	A	A	2	A		A	1	0	0	A	1	
Prairie Dog	1150	2		40	18	125	A	2	2	1	A			2	A	A	A	0	1	0	A	1	Adobe House Museum	
Prairie Spirit Trail	33 mi.		DAY USE AREA ONLY- per person permit required																					
Sand Hills	1123	1	DAY USE AREA ONLY- per person permit required																					
Scott	1120	1		25	35	170		3	2	2	E		A	1	A	A	A	3	0	0	A	1	Historical Site	
Tuttle Creek	1156	5		104	12	500	A	A	4	11	3	A	A	A	3	A		A	25	2	0	A	1	Disc Golf Course Canoe Rentals
Webster	880	2		66	8	100	A		3	5	3	A		1	A		A	18	1	0	A	2	2 Walk-out Fishing Docks	
Wilson	927	2		99	36	100	A	A	3	5	2	A	A	A	3	A		A	3	1	0	A	2	Biking & Walking Trail

KANSAS STATE PARK LEGEND

Park Area		Information Center		Dumpster	
Camping Area		Pay Stations		Concessions	
Other Public Lands		Potable Water		Playground	
Water		Shower/Toilet		Shelter	
Dam or levee		Modern Toilet		Shelter Group	
Private Lands		Vault Toilet		Cabin Modern	
Paved Roads		Trailer Dump Station		Cabin Primitive	
Gravel Roads		Boat Ramps		Camping Improved	
Unimproved Roads		Dock/Pier		Camping Primitive	
Park Entrance		Fish Cleaning Station		Trail/Trailhead Hike	
Park Office		Swimming Area		Trail/Trailhead Bike	
Parking Area		Marina		Trail/Trailhead Equestrian	



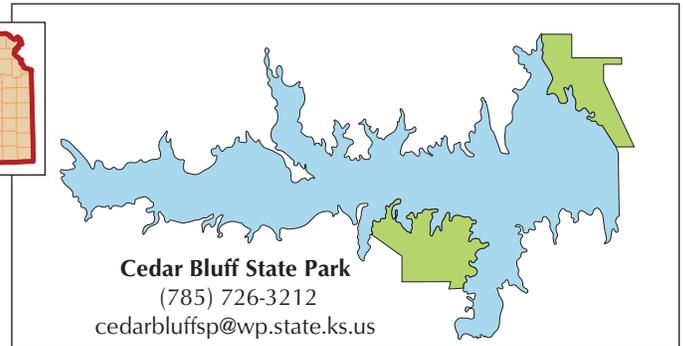


Cedar Bluff State Park

Located south of I-70 in Trego County, this western Kansas park consists of two areas comprising 1,100 acres on the 6,000-acre Cedar Bluff Reservoir.

The Bluffton Area, located on the lake's north shore, is the most developed and receives extensive use. The Page Creek Area, on the south shore, offers beautiful primitive camping as well as a generous helping of utility sites.

Park campgrounds offer 121 utility sites, and a

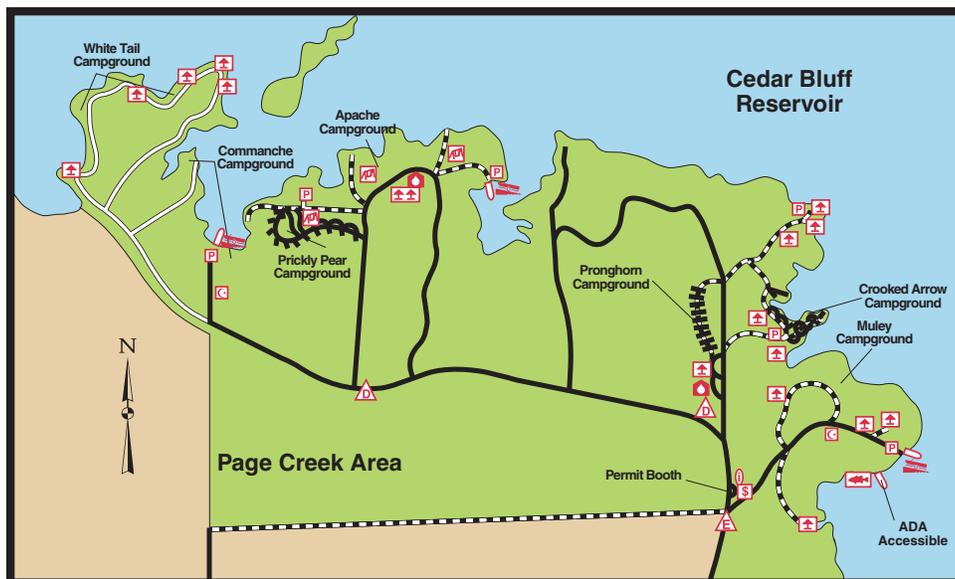
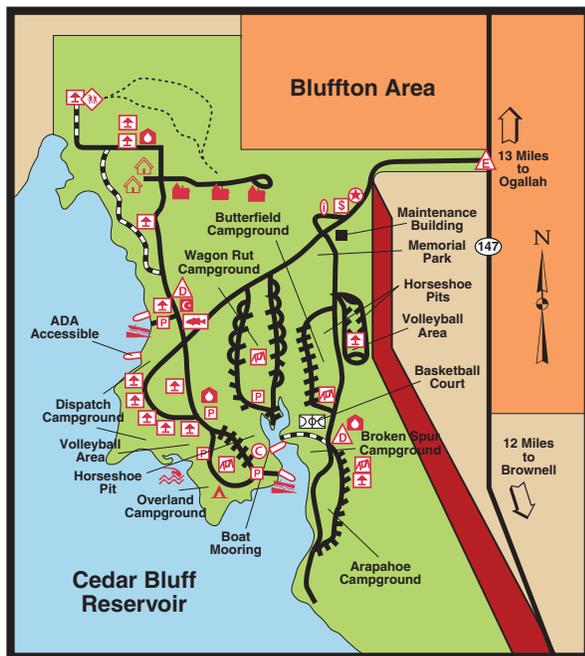


group campground contains 12 utility sites. Expansive areas are set aside for primitive camping, the park is equipped to suit nearly anyone's preference. Rental cabins are available in the Bluffton Area. These reservable cabins come with bunk beds, camping gear as needed (stove, water jug, lantern), and a woodstove.

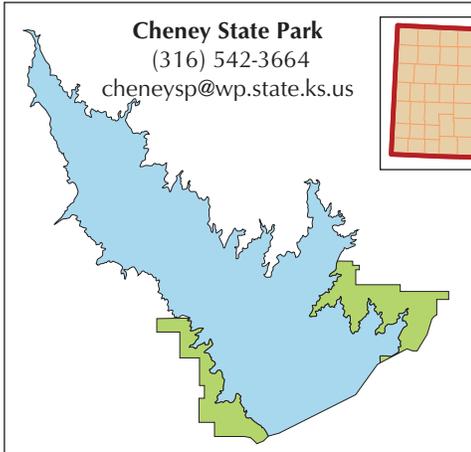
On the lake, fishing, boating, windsurfing, and skiing are popular. In the stilling basin just below the Cedar Bluff Dam, anglers may fish for the rainbow trout stocked in the spring and fall. There are five boat ramps that allow access to the water, two in the Bluffton Area and three in the Page Creek Area.

The area around the park offers excellent wildlife watching opportunities, enhanced by food plots and a waterfowl refuge. Deer, turkey, pheasant, Canada geese, pelicans, eagles in the winter, and more can be seen in and near the park. A portion of the Page Creek Area is designated as a handicap hunting access area.

Threshing Machine Canyon, the site of a 1850s Native American attack on a wagon train bearing a threshing machine, is accessed by a road west of the park. In the historic canyon you will find carvings dating back to the mid-1800s. For a stunning view of the area, take a drive to the top of the 150-foot tall, cedar covered limestone bluffs.



Cheney State Park



This 1,900-acre park comprises two areas located at the south end of Cheney Reservoir, located 20 miles west of Wichita. Since its completion in 1964, the park has grown to include more than 200 utility camping sites. In addition to the variety of camping amenities available here, the

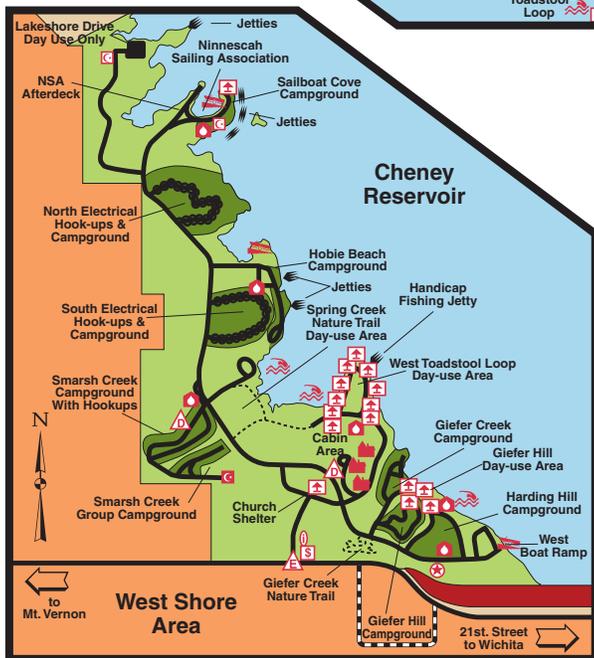
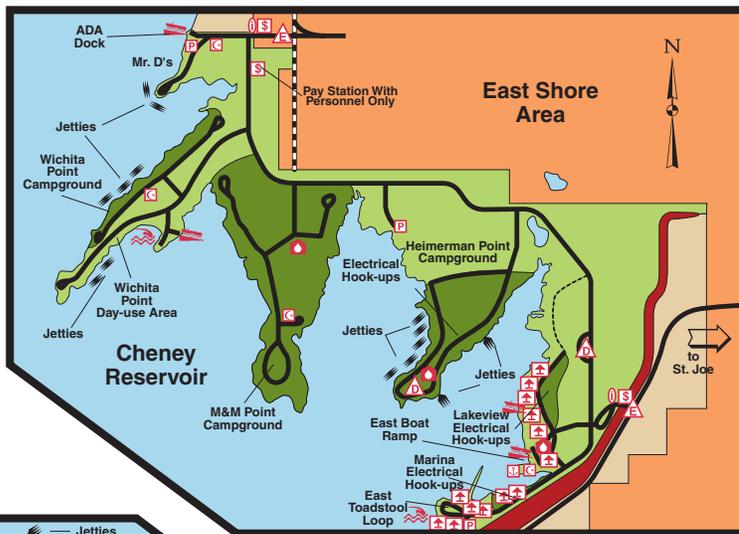
West Shore Area offers seven reservable modern cabins.

Cheney State Park occupies the shores of one of the top sailing lakes in the U. S. The Ninnescah Sailing Center on the West Shore Area is the “head-quarters” for sailing at Cheney. A marina in the East Shore Area offers supplies and services for boaters and anglers.

The park is equipped with modern pit toilets, nine restrooms with showers, a shelter house, four trailer dump stations, and four designated swimming areas, as well as several picnic/day use areas. The Giefer Creek and Spring Creek nature trails offer hikers an aesthetic sampling of the area’s lush natural beauty.

Fishermen are attracted to productive fishing for channel catfish, white bass, crappie, striped bass, wiper, and walleye. The park’s 22 boat launching lanes provide convenient access to the 9,500-acre lake. A handicapped-accessible fishing complex is available at the Toadstool Loop Jetty.

The 5,200-acre Cheney Wildlife Area adjacent to the park provides a rich variety of wildlife watching, nature photography, and public hunting opportunity. A refuge has been set aside on the wildlife area for migratory waterfowl. The area is closed to all activities from Sept. 15 through March 15, when it is reopened for fishing and non-hunting day-use activities.



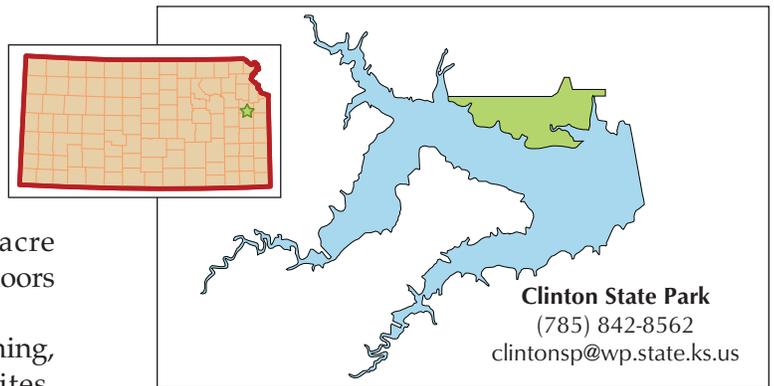
Clinton State Park

Clinton State Park is located four miles west of Lawrence in the scenic Osage Questas region. The 1,500-acre park lies on the north shore of Clinton Reservoir, known for its clear water and good fishing. Modern facilities and an extensive hiking/biking trail system make this park and adjacent 9,200-acre wildlife area an attractive destination for a outdoors enthusiasts.

Popular activities include picnicking, swimming, or camping on one of the nearly 500 campsites, including 240 water/electric utility sites and 220 primitive sites. Nearby restrooms and showers add a touch of comfort and convenience for park visitors.

Visitors to the park can enjoy viewing white-tailed deer, wild turkey, waterfowl, bald eagles in spring and fall, and numerous species of songbirds in the carefully managed habitats that make Clinton a distinctive outdoor destination.

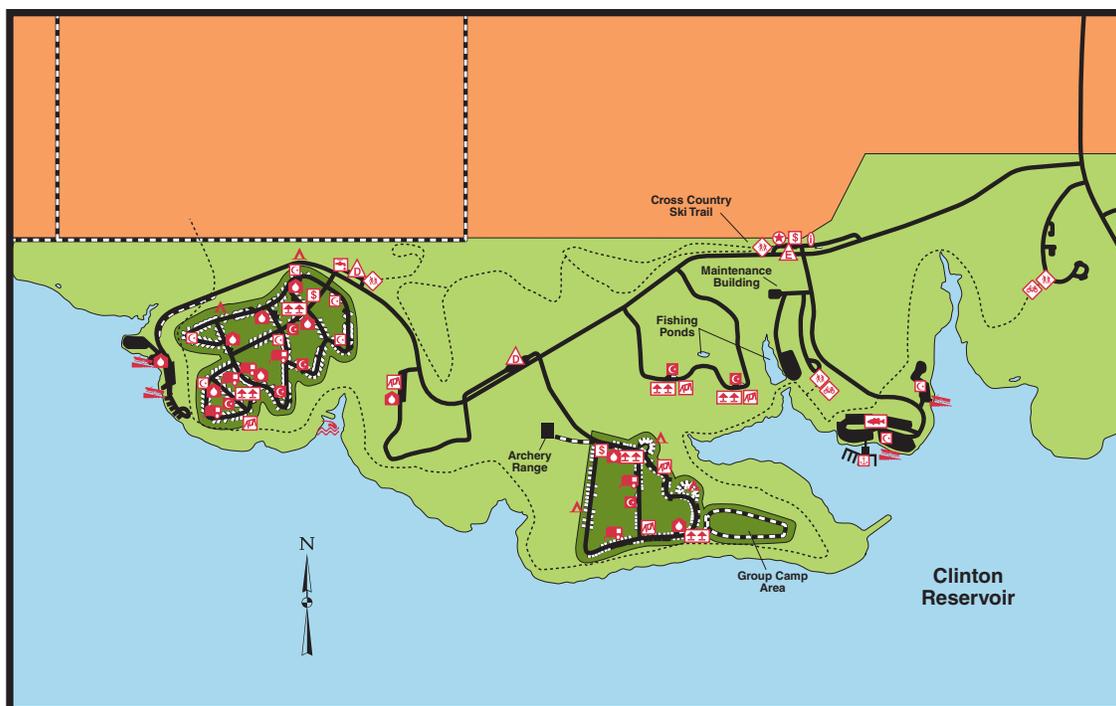
Clinton offers 16 boat ramps, eight courtesy docks, separate launching areas for windsurfers and personal watercraft, a beach with shower house, six picnic shelter areas, a separate day-use picnic area, four playgrounds, a sand volleyball area, an archery range, six shower buildings, two



dump stations, and more.

The Clinton Lake Marina offers boat slips, fishing and boating supplies, equipment rental, and a floating restaurant. Anglers are attracted to Clinton Reservoir for its good channel catfish, walleye, and crappie fishing.

Well-known for its extensive trails system, Clinton State Park is an outdoor mecca for hikers, nature photographers, mountain bicyclists, wildflower enthusiasts, wildlife observers, even cross-country snow skiers. Park staff work closely with Lawrence and University of Kansas individuals and organizations to present several concerts and other special events each year.



Crawford State Park

Rich in history and spectacular scenery, Crawford State Park has a flavor all its



own. This southeast Kansas treasure, located 9 miles north of Girard in Crawford County, resides on a 150-acre lake built by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in the 1930's.

There are two recorded archaeological sites within the park's boundaries, including remnants of a 19th-century U. S. military outpost. An interpretive trail connects the park with the Kansas Department of Wildlife & Parks' Farlington Fish Hatchery, which was built shortly after the CCC completed construction of the lake.

The 500-acre park features seven campgrounds with 74 water/electric utility campsites and 425 primitive campsites, two boat ramps, two bathhouses, and a swimming beach. Sand volleyball courts, horse shoe pits, and a playground offer more recreational opportunities. Food, fuel and convenience items are available at the full-service marina and restaurant located within the park.

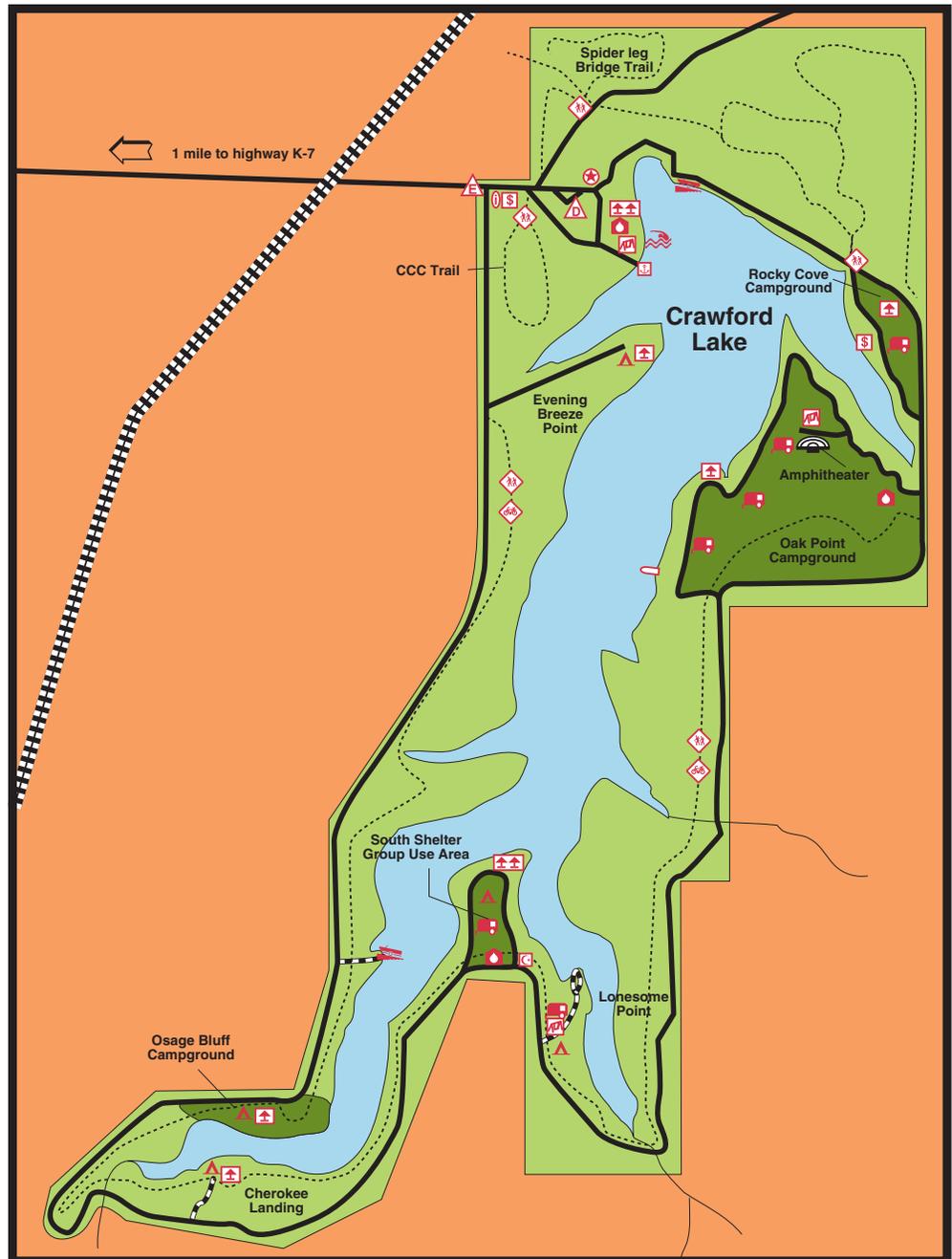
Anglers enjoy excellent fishing for channel catfish, crappie, and

striped bass. Pleasure boating and scuba diving are among favorite recreational pursuits.

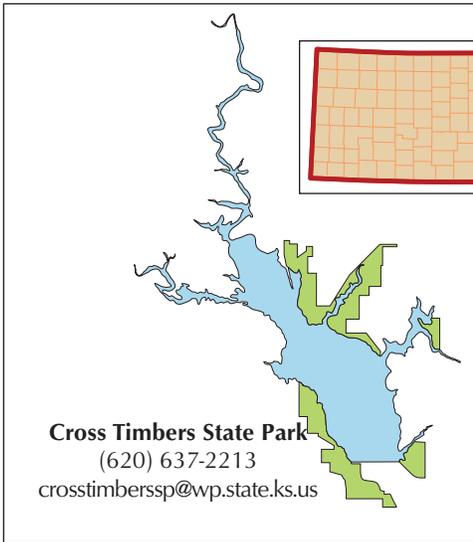
Located on the edge of the Ozarks, Crawford State Park illustrates the variety of land-

scapes available in Kansas state parks. Redbud trees offer spectacular beauty in spring, and the lush foliage of the surrounding forest is a naturalist's delight.

Crawford State Park
(620) 362-3671
crawfordsp@wp.state.ks.us



Cross Timbers State Park



Cross Timbers State Park is located in the gently rolling hills of the Verdigris River Valley in southeast Kansas.

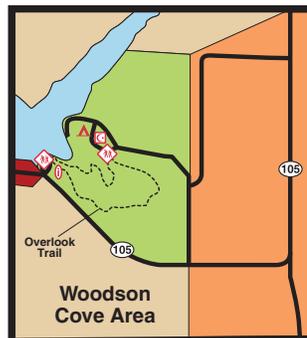
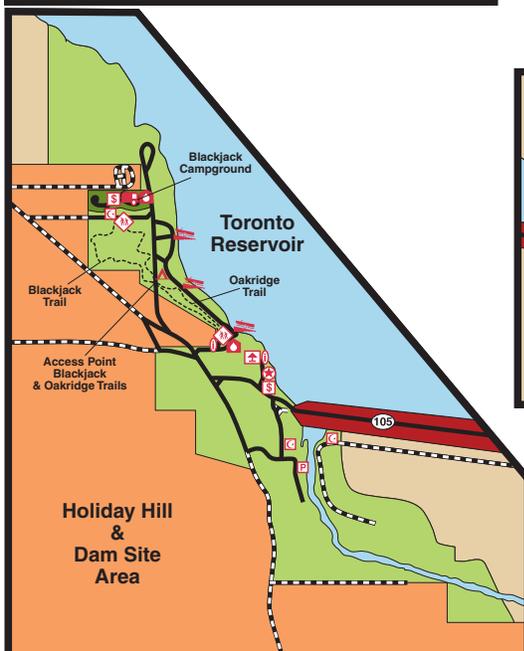
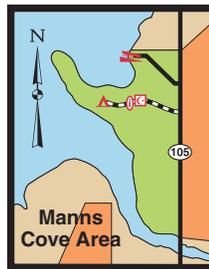
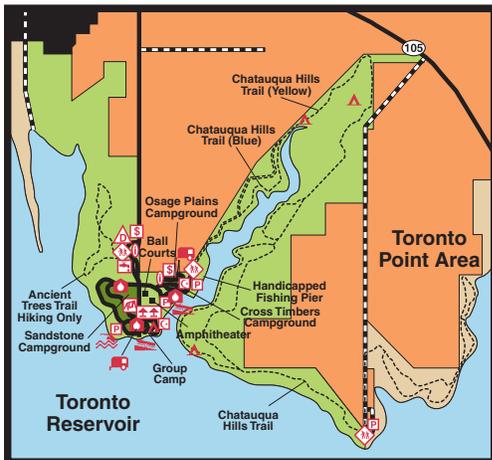
Comprising 1,075 acres in the northern reaches of the physiographic region known to early pioneers as the Cross Timbers, this park provides numerous access points to the 2,800-acre Toronto Reservoir.

The park is located 12 miles

west of Yates Center in Woodson County. This region was a favored hunting and camping ground of Native Americans of the Osage Nation. The forested flood plains, surrounded by terraces of prairie and hills of oak savannah, provide visitors an opportunity to immerse themselves in some of the most diverse flora and fauna in Kansas.

Shaded campsites within easy access of the lake are available for both full RV hookup and primitive camping. All park campgrounds are served by modern bathroom and shower facilities. All park trails are open to hiking and backpacking. All but the Ancient Trees Trail are open to other non-motorized uses such as jogging and mountain biking. Backcountry camping is allowed by special permit on segments of the Chautauqua Hills Trail.

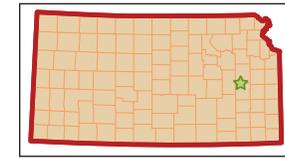
Fishing in the river and on the reservoir can be excellent. Both are noted for excellent white crappie, white bass, channel catfish, and flathead catfish angling. Black bass, bluegill, and sunfish round out the diverse fishing opportunities available here. The adjacent 4,600-acre Toronto Wildlife Area is a diverse collection of habitats, including forests, grasslands, farmlands, and marshes. Species common to the area included white-tailed deer, wild turkey, quail, squirrel, rabbit, dove, and raccoon. A rich variety of songbirds appeals to wildlife observers and photographers.



Eisenhower State Park

Named after native son President Dwight Eisenhower, this 1,785-acre park features 1,000 acres of tallgrass prairie, 440 acres of woodland, and a complete range of recreational facilities. The park lies on the north shore of the 6,900-acre Melvern Reservoir, in southern Osage County.

The park provides 195 utility campsites and four shower houses. Non-utility sites are available for primitive camping in the Five Star, Blackjack, Sailboat Beach, and Omaha Swim Beach areas. Westpoint Campground is open to camping, and group camping is available in Abilene Campground. Mamie's Cabin, an ADA accessible rental, offers



park visitors another camping option. Other recreation facilities include a swimming beach, horse shoe pits, playgrounds, volleyball courts, and picnic shelters.

Eisenhower is also home to a burgeoning trails system. Camping with horses is available in Cowboy Camp and the North Loop of Westpoint Campground. Crooked Knee Horse Trail offers equestrians a 20-mile excursion through the undeveloped west side of the park, which also offers excellent shotgun and archery hunting.

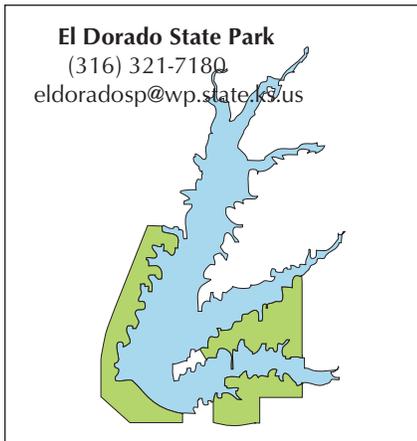


Melvern Reservoir's excellent fishing potential attracts anglers looking for walleye, crappie, sauger, white bass, and channel catfish. Two nine-lane boat ramps with ample parking offer excellent access to the expansive lake.

The 10,400-acre Melvern Wildlife Area adjacent to the park is home to a variety of wildlife, including white-tailed deer, eastern wild turkey, bobwhite quail, squirrels, furbearers, and waterfowl.



El Dorado State Park



miles of shoreline. About 6,000 acres of land are available for public hunting, including 2,000 acres within the state park. All hunting within the park requires a state park vehicle permit for entry.

A large amphitheater with

dual stages accommodates a variety of concerts and festivals conducted at the park each year. Trail users will find a variety of attractions, including a designated horse campground. Seven trails offer outdoor adventure for hikers, bikers and horse riders.

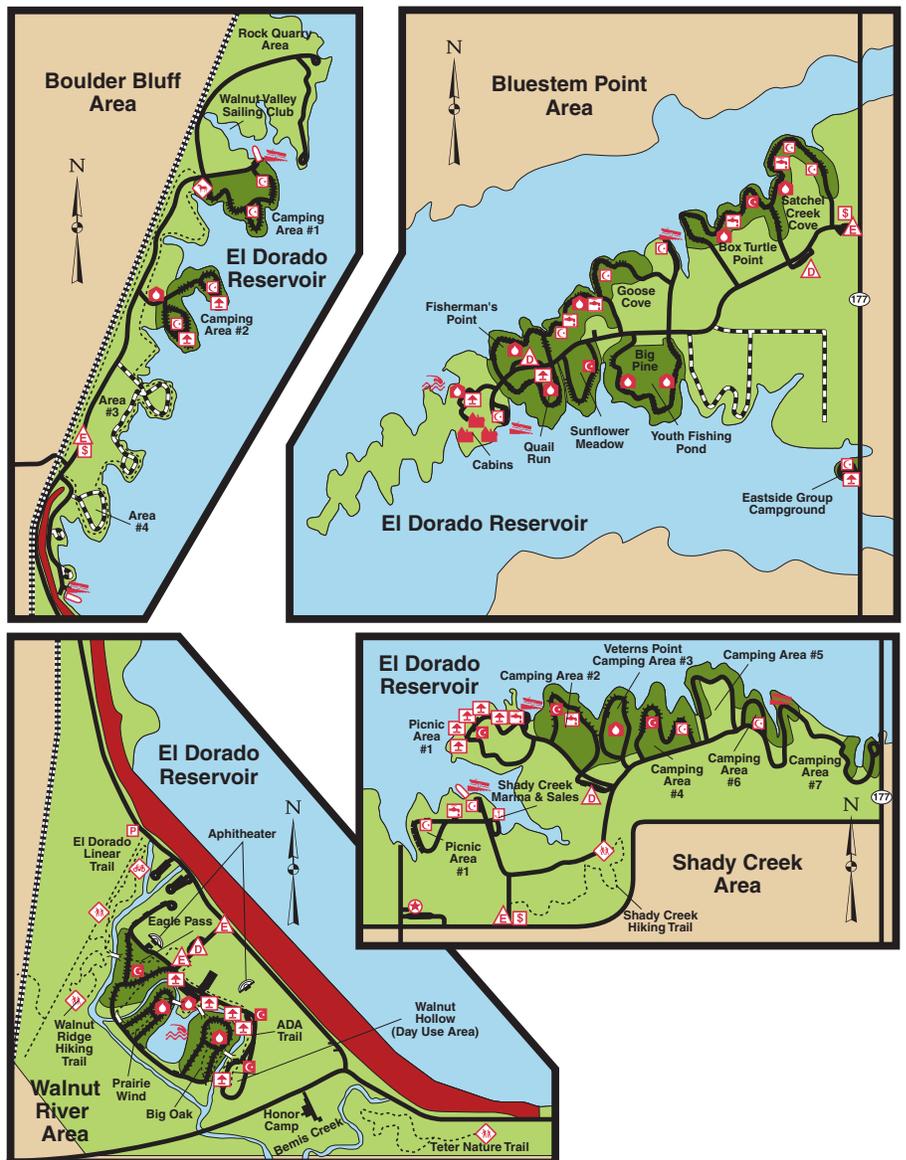
Seven cabins are available for reservation year-round, offering a variety of comfortable accommodations to suit any preference.

El Dorado State Park is located just north and east of the city of El Dorado on the edge of the scenic Flint Hills. The largest state park, El Dorado's four units sprawl across 4,000 acres along the eastern and western shores of El Dorado Reservoir.

Regarded as one of the state's most handicapped accessible parks, El Dorado contains 1,100 campsites which offer visitors a range of choices. Other facilities include two swimming beaches, 10 group shelters, and a 24-site group campground.

The Shady Creek Marina, Walnut Valley Sailing Club, and six boat ramps offer amenities and facilities for boaters of every stripe. Crappie and largemouth bass fishing are good in standing timber and around fish attractors. Walleye fishing is good along the face of the dam and on the old railroad bed. Channel cat fishing is good lakewide, as well as in the river below the outlet. Flathead fishing is good in a variety of areas, especially Old Bluestem Lake.

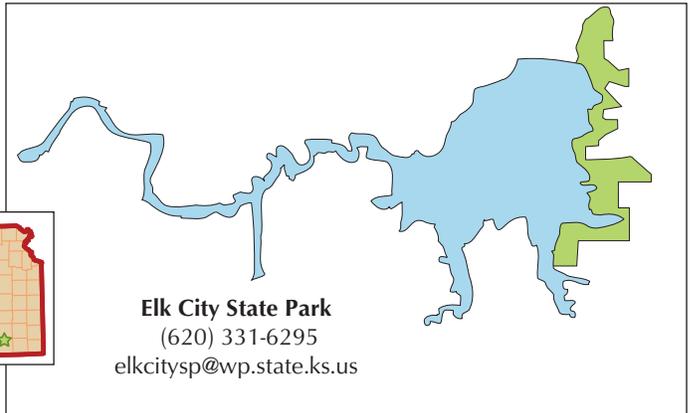
The 8,000-acre El Dorado Reservoir has approximately 98



Elk City State Park

Dense oak-hickory woodlands meet rolling meadows of big bluestem and Indiangrass at this striking 857-acre park located west of Independence in Montgomery County. The 4,500-acre Elk City Reservoir and 12,000-acre Elk City Wildlife Area adjacent to the park offer outdoors lovers ample room to pursue their pastimes.

A nationally recognized trails system invites visitors to take a closer look at the rich variety of flora and fauna in and around Elk City State Park. The Green Thumb Nature Trail is a one-mile loop that begins in the state park campground, and rewards hikers with a panoramic vista of the lake, framed by ash and oak trees. Table Mound Hiking Trail and Post Oak Nature Trail are also park attractions. The Elk River Hiking Trail is a scenic 15-mile route that begins at the west edge of the dam and

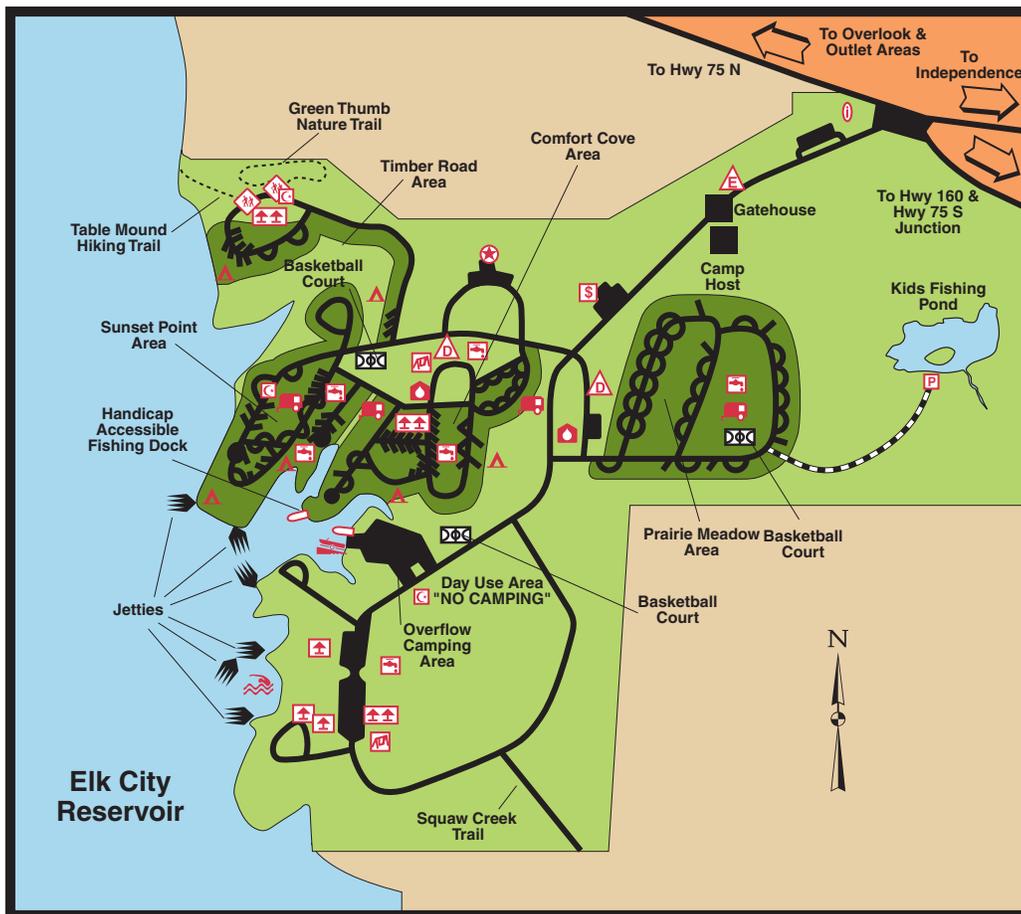


ends near the U. S. Highway 160 bridge on the Elk River. Parking is available at the Memorial Overlook or state park trailheads.

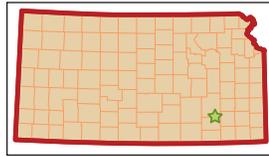
Campgrounds at Elk City offer an array of well-shaded sites appealing to recreational vehicle or primitive campers. Conveniently located restrooms and showers, swimming beach, group shelter, fishing piers, and three-lane boat ramp offer popular amenities for park visitors.

The expansive Elk City Wildlife Area adjacent to the park offers a rich array of wild inhabitants. White-tailed deer, wild turkey, bobwhite quail, cottontail, fox and gray squirrels, and prairie chickens can be found here. Common furbearers include beaver, raccoon, bobcat, coyote, gray fox, opossum, mink and muskrat.

Elk City Reservoir offers good to excellent fishing opportunities for channel catfish, white bass, crappie, flathead catfish, largemouth bass and saugeye. A handicapped access fishing dock is located in the state park.



Fall River State Park



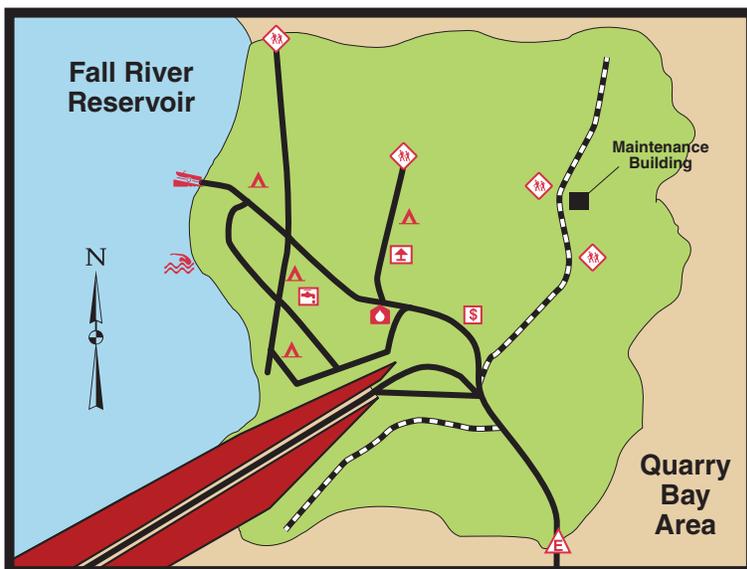
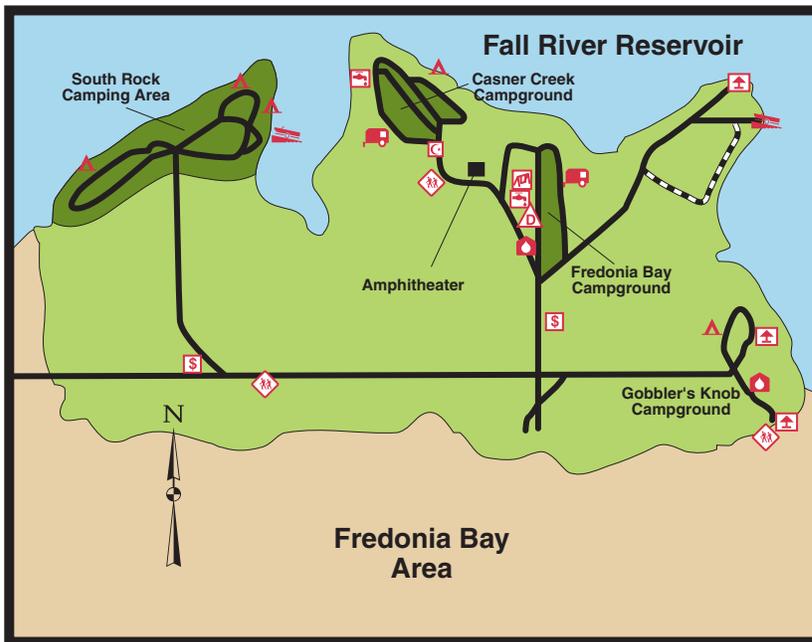
Positioned between the Cross Timbers region and the grasslands of the Flint Hills, Fall River State Park is home to a remarkable diversity of plant and

animal life. The 980-acre park is a unique blend of forested flood plains, blackjack savannahs, and tallgrass prairie. Outdoors enthusiasts looking to get off the beaten track will find much to their liking at this park, located in southeastern Greenwood County.

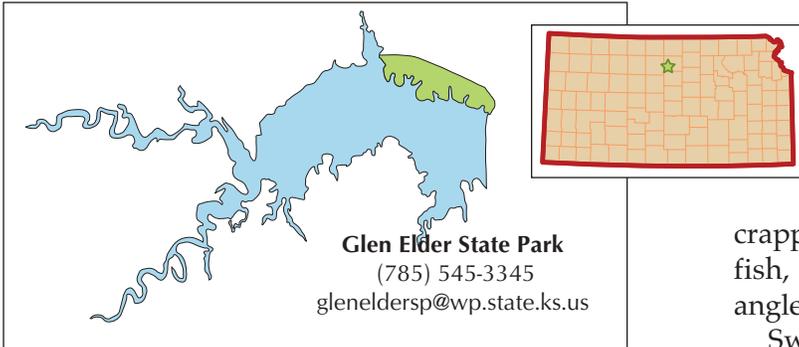
Camping, swimming, boating, water skiing, hiking, and picnicking are popular pursuits at Fall River. Developed campsites include modern restroom and shower facilities. Forty-five electric/water hookups are available, plus more than 100 primitive campsites. A hiking trail and orienteering course offer visitors an up-close and personal perspective on this unique area.

A favorite pastime here is canoeing Fall River, which feeds into the 2,450-acre reservoir of the same name. Bird watchers, photographers, and naturalists will enjoy a variety of native plants and animals here. More than 8,000 acres of public wildlife area next to the park are managed for a variety of game and nongame species. Dove, quail, deer, turkey, rabbit, squirrel, waterfowl, and prairie chicken are common.

Fall River offers good fishing opportunities for channel catfish, white bass, crappie, flathead catfish, largemouth bass and walleye. White bass fishing can be excellent in early spring, particularly in Otter Creek and Fall River above the reservoir.



Glen Elder State Park



300 primitive sites, there's plenty of room for campers of any preference. Boat ramps in Kanza and Osage offer excellent lake access and ADA courtesy docks.

Glen Elder State Park offers convenient access to the 12,500-acre reservoir where crappie, walleye, white bass, saugeye, channel catfish, largemouth bass, and flathead catfish attract anglers.

Swimming, boating, hiking, volleyball, softball, and bicycling accommodations are all available at the park. The Osage area has sand volleyball courts, a reservable group shelter, and a swimming beach. The Pawnee Overlook provides shoreline fishing, primitive camping, picnicking — and an excellent view. The Chautauqua Fishing Pond offers easy access for individuals with disabilities and children. The pond is stocked with trout in the winter.

Waconda Heritage Village, featuring the historic Hopewell Church, offers visitors a glimpse into the area's past. The facility provides historical displays and a room reservable for group events. Proposed future development includes a Waconda Springs replica and a restored limestone schoolhouse.

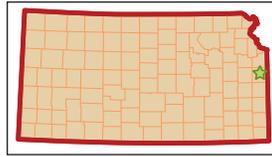
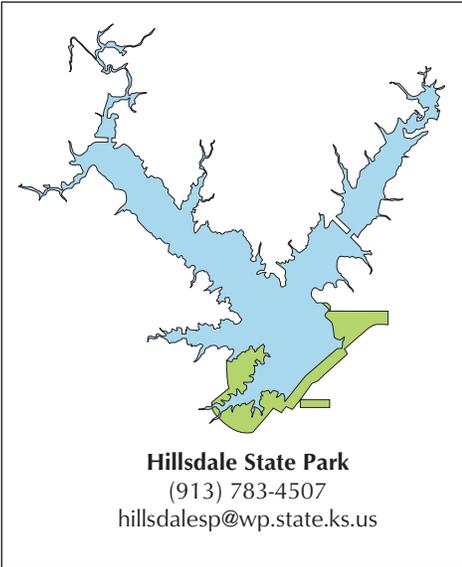
Situated on the shores of one of Kansas' largest lakes, Glen Elder State Park offers nearly unlimited recreational opportunities. Located 12 miles west of Beloit in Mitchell County, Glen Elder offers something for virtually any outdoor pursuit.

Modern restroom/shower buildings are open in the Sioux, Kanza, and Cheyenne areas from mid-April to October. The Kanza shower may be open during the winter and early spring, as well, depending on the weather. A full-service marina provides fuel, slip rental, and supplies from April through October.

With three campgrounds offering 121 electrical hookups (most with water), as well as more than



Hillsdale State Park



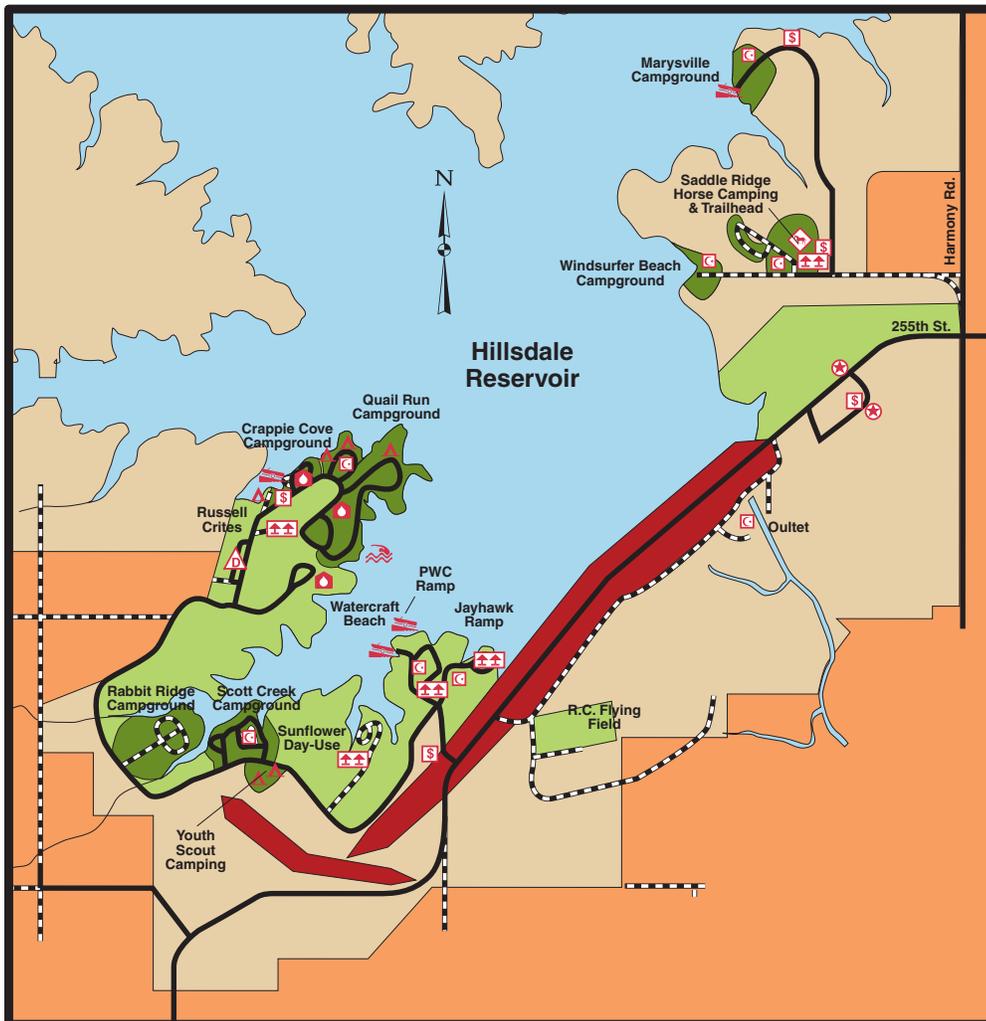
Located in the rolling hills of Miami County, Hillsdale State Park offers a broad array of outdoor recreation opportunities. Campers, anglers, boaters, hunters, swimmers, horseback riders, model airplane flyers, hikers, naturalists, picnickers, photographers and sightseers all enjoy unique opportunities at Hillsdale.

As the newest of Kansas' state parks, Hillsdale is well-equipped with modern facilities. Located in the fastest-growing area of the state, the park is heavily used by residents of nearby Kansas City.

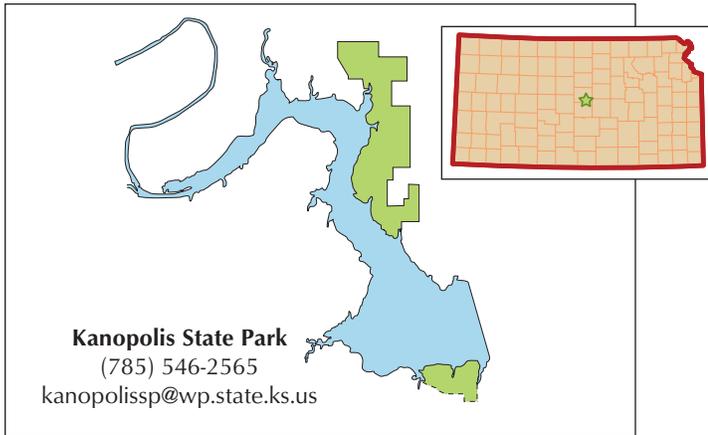
Camping is allowed in the 200 designated camp sites in the Russell Crites Area. About half of those sites have electric/water hookups available. Two restroom/shower houses are conveniently located for campground users. The park features two beach areas which are open from sunrise to sunset.

The Saddle Ridge Equestrian Area on the east side of the reservoir has 32 miles of marked trails. Model airplane flying is a popular activity in a specially designated area just south of the dam.

Anglers find ample sport in the 4,500-acre Hillsdale Reservoir. Fishing is allowed on all 51 miles of shoreline, and seven boat ramps in the state park and adjacent wildlife area provide convenient access to the water. When the lake was filled, in the early 1980s, more than 70 percent of the standing timber in the lake basin was left to provide fish habitat. As a result, walleye, catfish, largemouth bass, crappie, and bluegill are abundant. The adjacent 7,700-acre public wildlife area offers hunters and wildlife observers a variety of enjoyable outdoor opportunities.



Kanopolis State Park

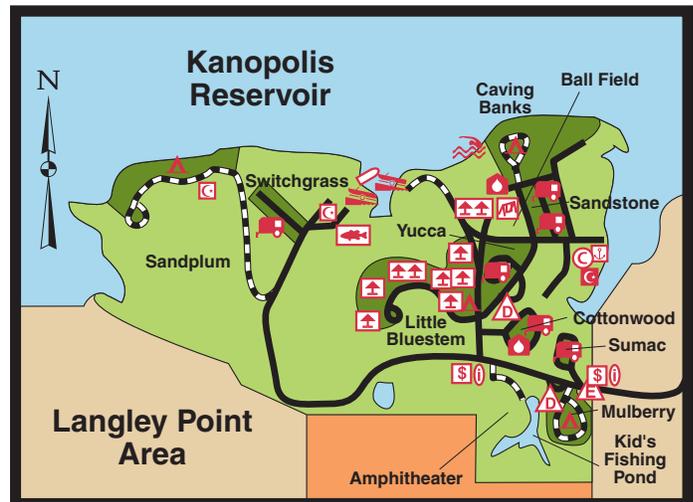
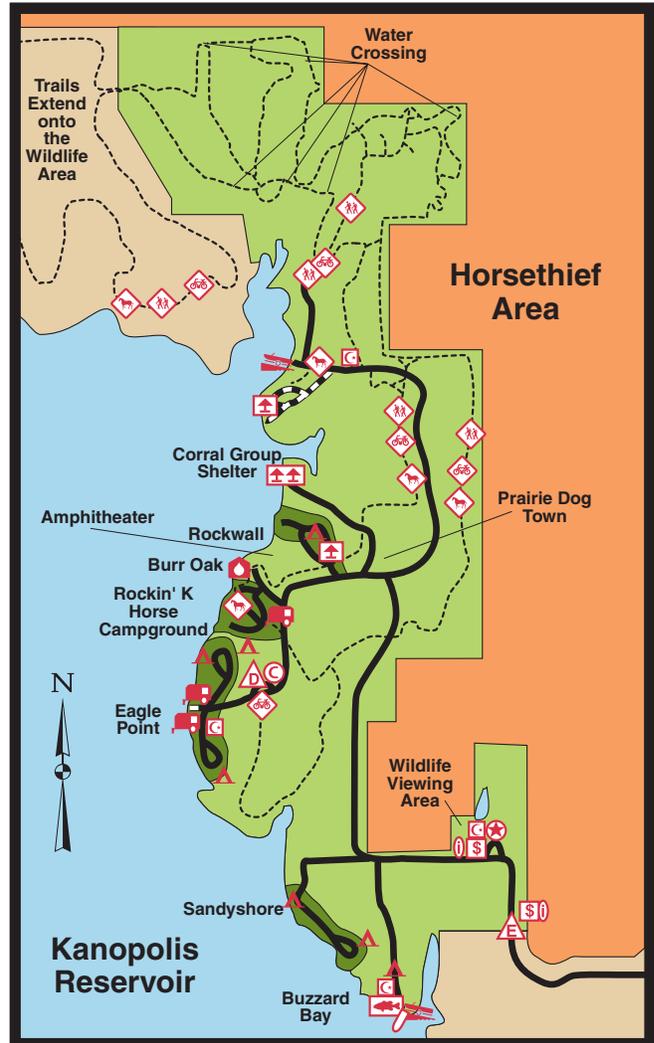


Kanopolis State Park started it all. The first Kansas state park has drawn visitors to eastern Ellsworth County since 1955. Situated in the rolling hills, bluffs and woods of the scenic Smoky Hills region of Kansas, Kanopolis is located 33 miles southwest of Salina.

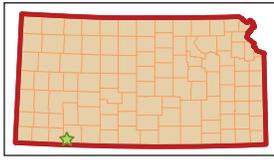
The park features a full-service marina, beaches, picnic areas, and trails for horseback riding, mountain biking, and hiking. More than 200 primitive campsites and 119 utility sites are located through the 14 campgrounds in the Langley Point and Horsethief areas. Buffalo Track Nature Trail is an enthralling 1.5-mile route rich in native plants and wildlife, as well as Native American history.

Kanopolis offers 25 miles of trails, all of which start in the state park. The Rockin' K trails take visitors to and from the Rockin' K campgrounds. The Horsethief trails loop through canyons and trees. Farther north and west, the Prairie Trails traverse high prairie and Red Rock Canyon. The Alum Creek trails take visitors across vast prairie and through many water crossings. Be aware that it can take more than a day to complete some trails on foot.

The 3,500-acre Kanopolis Reservoir offers excellent fishing opportunities. White bass fishing can be good soon after ice-out and in April during the spawning run. The best crappie fishing occurs from March through May. In addition, anglers will find walleye, saugeye, wiper, largemouth bass, and channel catfish. More than 12,500 acres of public wildlife area add to Kanopolis' appeal.



Lake Meade State Park



The only state park in southwest Kansas, Meade State Park is an oasis in the shortgrass prairie region of the state. The park comprises 440

acres of land and recreational facilities situated around the 80-acre Meade State Fishing Lake.

Nature trails offer visitors an up close look at the shortgrass prairie ecosystem. Utility and primitive camping, day use areas, swimming beach, and boating and fishing access make this a popular destination. Campgrounds provide 42 water/electric

utility sites and 150 primitive campsites.

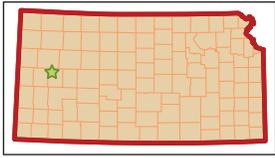
The lake invites anglers to sample excellent fishing for bluegill, channel cat, and largemouth bass. No skiing or pleasure boating is allowed; boats must be used for fishing purposes only.

The adjacent 360-acre wildlife area, although modestly sized, offers good opportunities for dove and quail hunters. Deer, turkey, rabbit and some waterfowl also inhabit the area and offer hunters an occasional mixed bag. Deer may be hunted only with bow or muzzleloader firearms. Naturalists will enjoy a nature trail at the northwest corner of the lake.



Lake Meade State Park
(620) 873-2572
meadesp@wp.state.ks.us

Lake Scott State Park



Hidden in the western Kansas prairie, Scott State Park is a startling oasis of natural springs, deep wooded canyons, and craggy bluffs. The 1,020-acre park surrounds the 100-acre, spring-fed Scott State Fishing Lake.

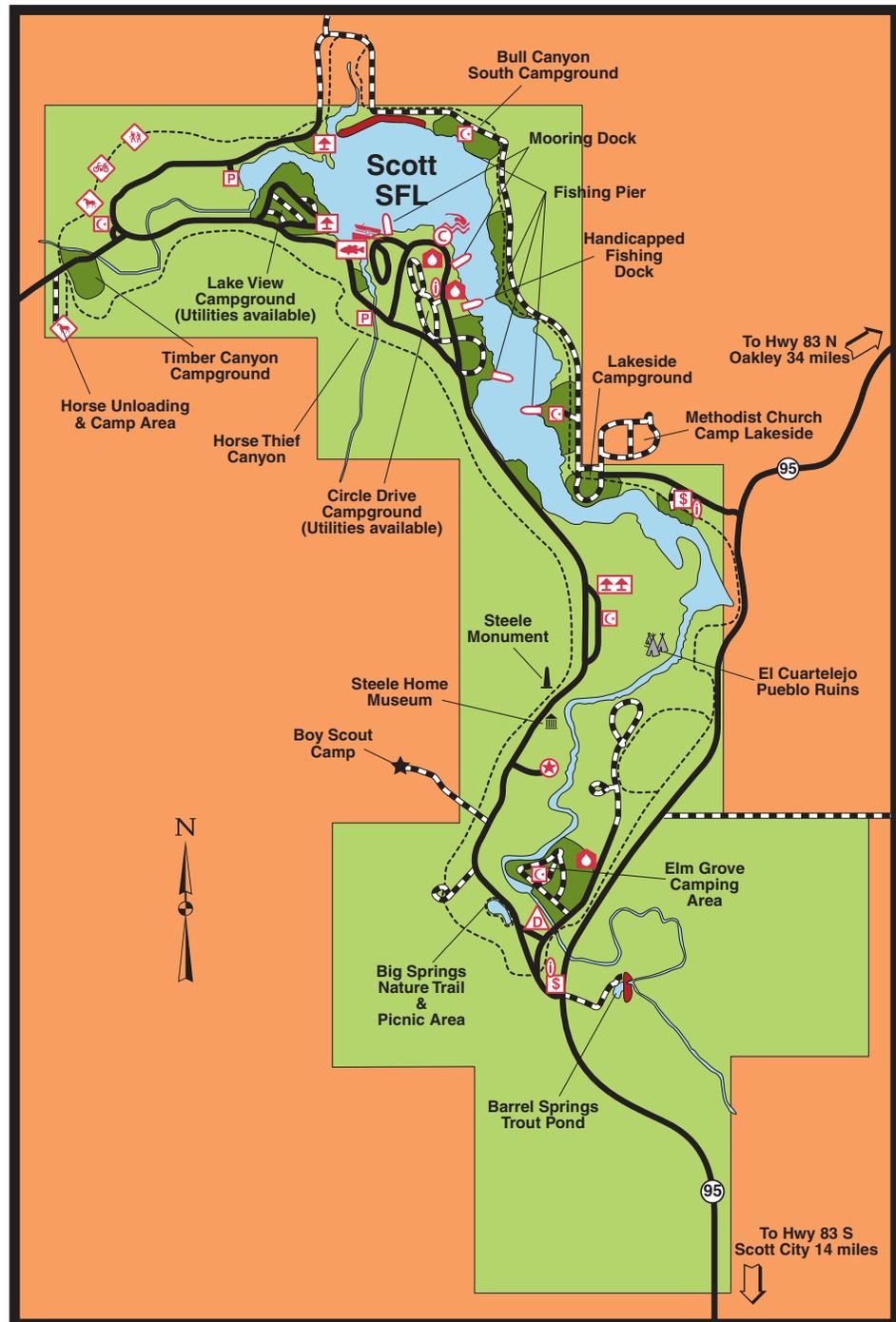
Rich in history, this park provides an ideal setting for camping, boating, swimming, hiking, hunting, fishing, and wildlife observation. The Steele home, the dwelling of the original settlers on the area, has been preserved much as it was 100 years ago. The park also boasts the northernmost pueblo in the U. S. – El Cuartelejo.

The park has 55 utility campsites, including some with 50-amp service and water hookups. Three modern shower buildings, 175 primitive campsites and several vault toilets are also available. Visitors enjoy a swimming beach and playground, and a concessions building stocks camping and fishing supplies. Canoe

and paddleboat rentals are available seasonally.

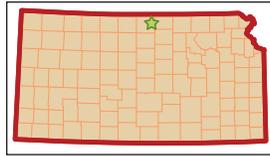
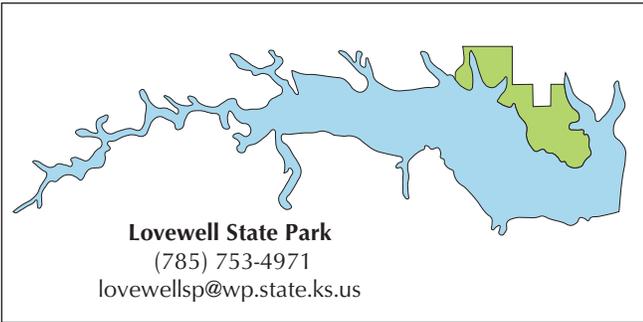
Nature trails accommodate hikers, horseback riders, and naturalists and provide excellent opportunities to observe wildlife

in natural habitats. Wild turkey, deer, bobcat and beaver are common in the area. A horse camp area provides amenities for equestrian visitors.



Lake Scott State Park
 (620) 872-2061
 scottsp@wp.state.ks.us

Lovewell State Park



Lovewell offers an enticing blend of camping, fishing, wildlife watching, and special events.

Lovewell State Park is a haven for outdoors lovers who are looking for variety. Located off the beaten track in northern Jewell County,

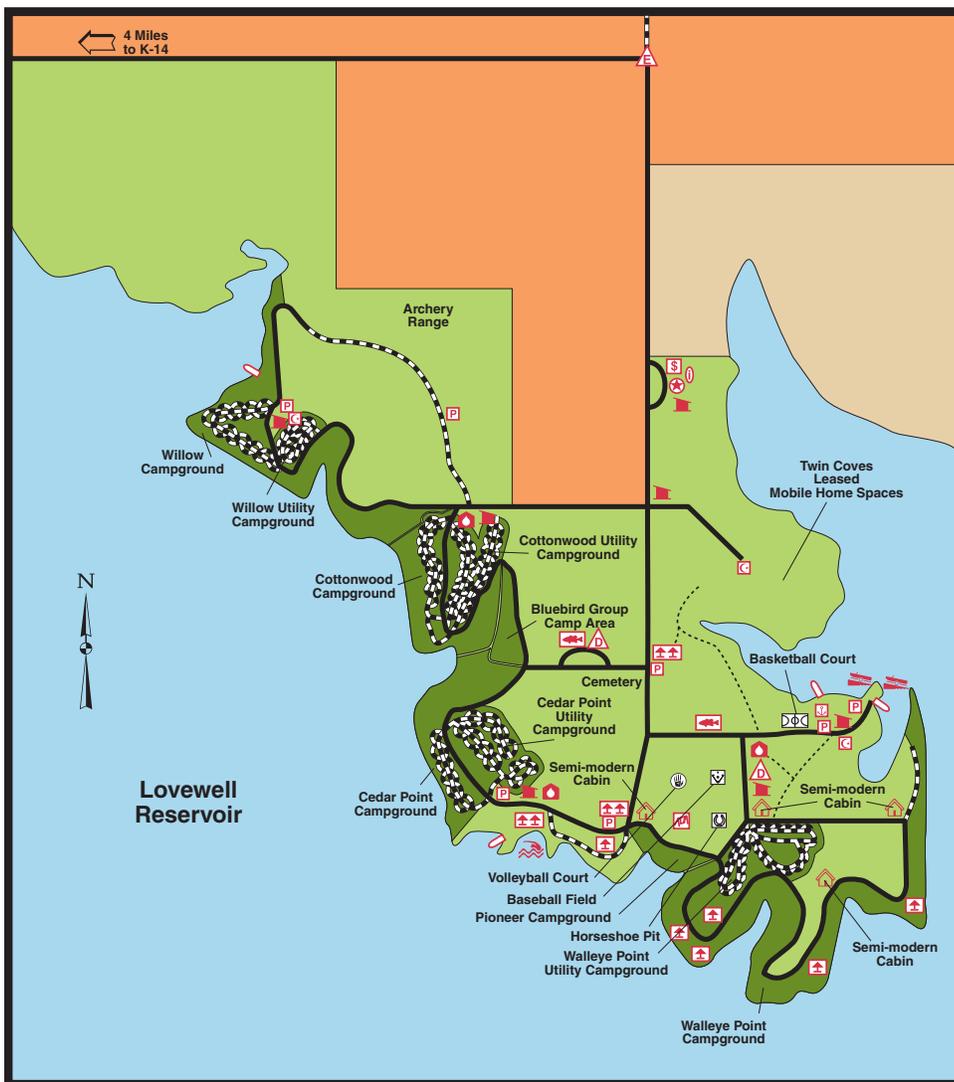
The park features excellent shade and 23 full utility, 13 water/electric, 82 electric only, and 306 primitive campsites, as well as two cabins. Designated

electrical sites may be reserved, and Bluebird Primitive Campground is reservable for camping groups. Three shower/toilet buildings, three vault toilets, year-round freeze-proof water hydrants and two trailer dump stations are centrally located in the park.

A historic limestone school hosts summer church services, and an archery range is located north of the Cottonwood shower building. The Pioneer day-use area features a playground, sand volleyball, softball diamond, and horse shoe pits. Two basketball courts are located west of the marina. The Southwinds Swimming Beach offers plenty of sun and shade. Picnic facilities are available throughout the day-use areas, as well as a large log group shelter that can be reserved.

Lovewell hosts several annual special events, including a Kids Fishing Derby in early June, fireworks and sand castle contest in July, Lovewell Fun Day in August, and various other special events and fishing tournaments throughout the year.

The 2,900-acre Lovewell Reservoir is popular with anglers. The south shore features high bluffs that block summer winds. The 2,200-acre Lovewell Wildlife Area invites hunters, wildlife watchers, and other wildlife enthusiasts to experience a variety of well-managed habitats.



Milford State Park

Located near Junction City on the shores of the state's largest lake – 16,000-acre Milford Reservoir – Milford State Park is a favorite getaway for outdoors loving visitors. Park facilities include modern campgrounds, shower buildings, toilets, swimming beaches, boat ramps, picnic shelters, a full-service marina, and a multi-purpose trails system. The park also houses a large yacht club.

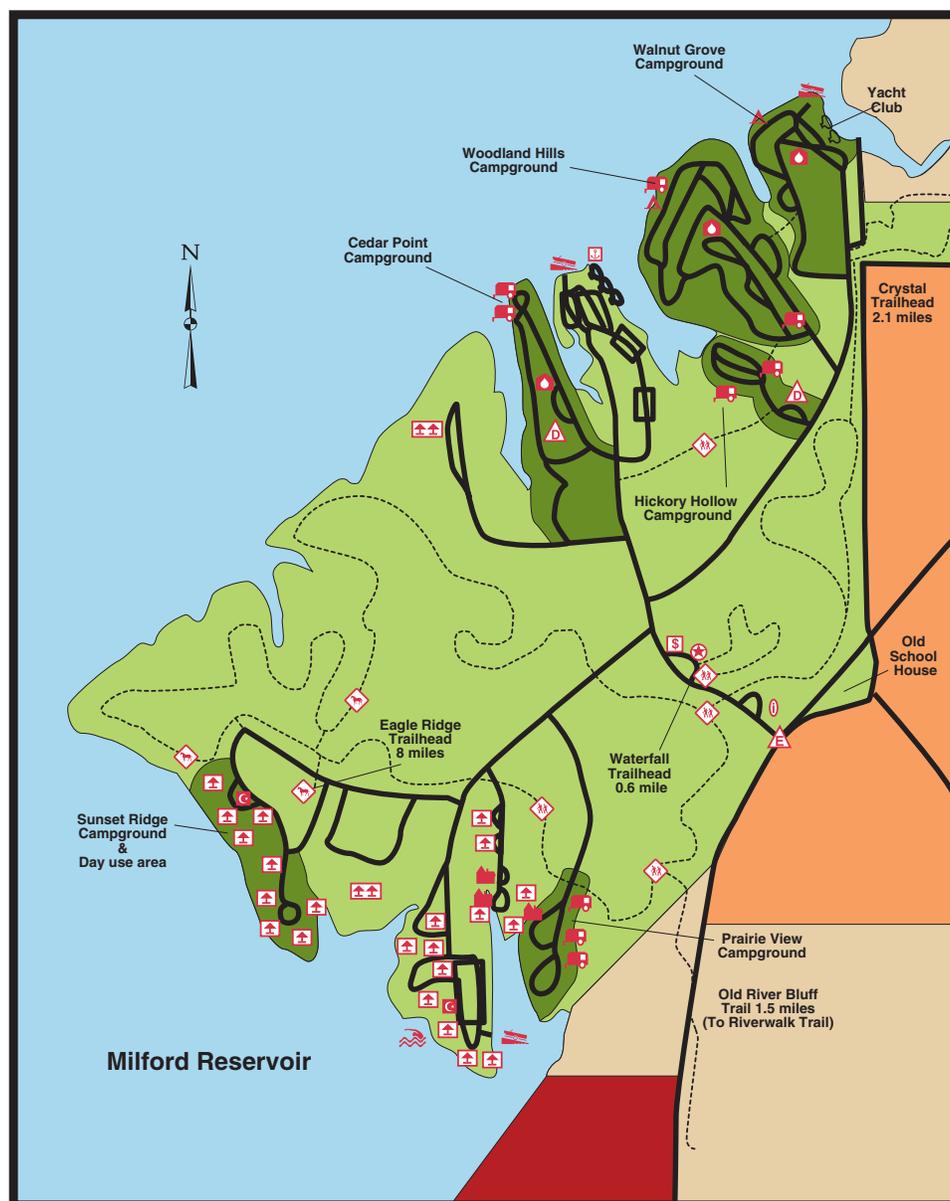
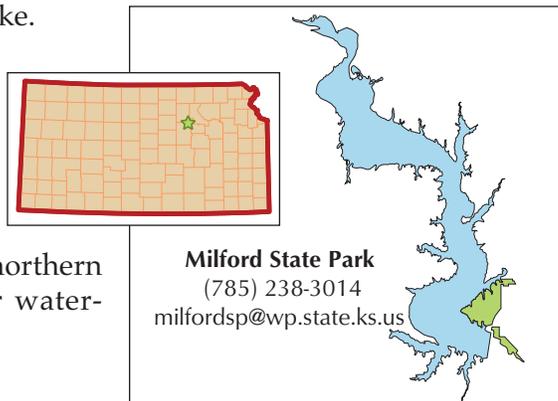
Nearby Milford Nature Center and Milford Fish Hatchery offer a variety of interpretive exhibits and displays.

The park comprises five campgrounds with 120 electric/water utility sites. Thirty of these sites also include sewer hookups. More than 100 improved primitive campsites are also available throughout the park.

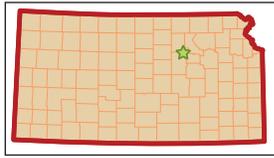
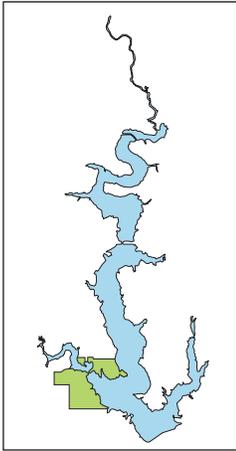
The state park is a popular destination for anglers eager to experience the excellent fishing available in Milford Reservoir. Walleye concentrate along the face of the dam in early April to spawn, then move to the flats at Farnum Creek and mud points near School Creek. Nearly all of the brushy and rocky coves contain crappie and largemouth bass, but coves in the Rolling Hills and Curtis Creek areas are traditional hot spots for crappie. White bass and catfish are plentiful in a variety of locations, and smallmouth bass frequent the face of the dam, as well as rocky points

in the lower half of the lake.

Many game species are present on the 18,800-acre Milford Wildlife Area, and a permanent 1,100-acre wildlife refuge has been established on the northern end of the reservoir for waterfowl management.



Perry State Park



Perry State Park comprises two areas totaling 1,250 acres on the shores of Perry Reservoir in Jefferson County. With the 12,500-acre reservoir and an 11,000-acre wildlife area nearby, this state park is well-situated to accommodate any outdoor preference.

The park's four campgrounds provide 124 electric/water campsites and 350 primitive campsites. Showers and toilets are conveniently located for all

campers. A swimming beach and beach house serve summertime fun-seekers. Day-use areas of the park offer seven picnic shelters, three of which are available by reservation.

The marshes at Perry Wildlife Area provide early migrant bird hunting, and deep water areas supply late season mallard and diving duck hunting. In dry years, water is pumped to some of the area's 10 marshes to ensure adequate water levels. White-tailed deer, cottontails, wild turkeys, coyotes, raccoons, and dove are common on the area.

Perry Reservoir is best known for its crappie and channel cat fishing. Best angling opportunities for crappie are in the Slough Creek, Rock Creek, and Old Town areas. The best areas for channel catfish are on mud flats in the upper end of the reservoir and in the Delaware River.

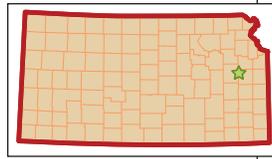


Perry State Park
 (785) 246-3449
 perrysp@wp.state.ks.us

Pomona State Park

Well-known by northeast Kansas residents for shady campsites and a great family atmosphere, the 490-acre Pomona State Park is located in Osage County, 30 miles south of Topeka. Recreation opportunities at the park include camping, picnicking, fishing, boating, hiking, and wildlife viewing.

The park has 140 water/electric campsites and more than 200 primitive campsites. Lighthouse Bay Marina provides full services to boaters, anglers, skiers and campers. Four boat ramps are available in the park, and the lake's generally calm waters are popular with skiers.

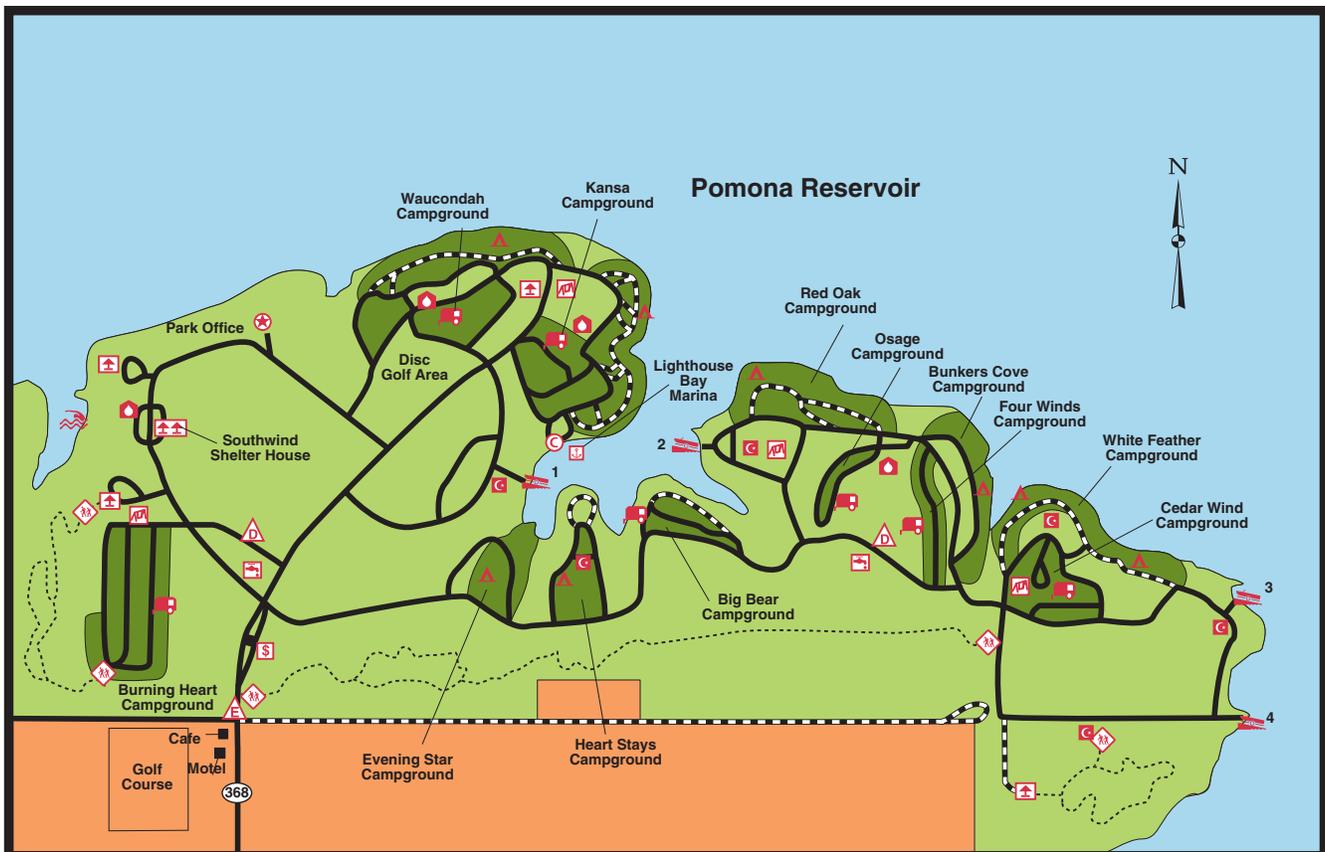


Southwind Shelter House is a group facility equipped with restrooms, a kitchenette, a large multi-purpose room, and restful porch areas. Call the park office for availability and reservations. A swim beach and bath house are located in the park, as well as picnic shelters, playgrounds, volleyball courts, horse shoe pits, and a nine-hole disc golf course.

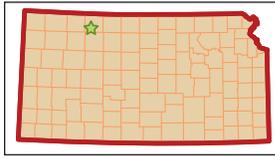
Nearby wildlife areas offer upland bird and waterfowl



hunting. Bald eagles visit the lake in the winter and are often seen perching in shoreline trees or soaring above the lake. A popular destination for fishermen, the 4,000-acre Pomona Reservoir offers some of the best crappie and catfish angling in Kansas, as well as good populations of walleye, white bass, and largemouth bass.



Prairie Dog State Park



A prime place to experience the shortgrass prairies of western Kansas, Prairie Dog State Park occupies 1,150 acres on the shores of Keith Sebelius Reservoir in Norton County. The park is home to a thriving prairie dog colony and is the site of the last remaining adobe house in Kansas.

Campsites at Prairie Dog include 40 electric/water sites, 16 electric-only sites, and more

than 130 primitive sites. Reservable sites are available. A group campground is available in the Branded Cedar area. Shower and restroom facilities are conveniently located, as are two RV dump stations. A 1.4-mile nature trail complete with interpretive signage is a great way to explore the park and observe wildlife.

Historical interpretation is a

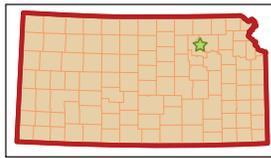
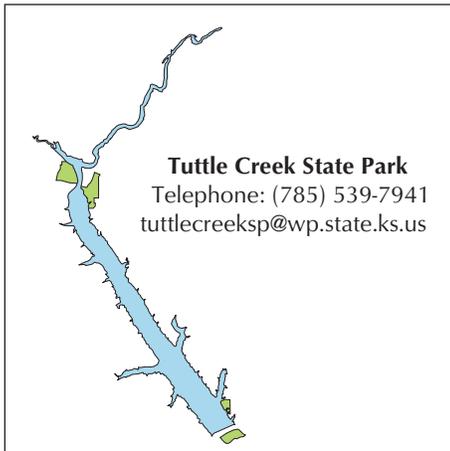
hallmark of this park. Two vintage 19th century buildings are preserved here, including a one-room school and renovated adobe house.

Sebelius Reservoir is well known for its excellent fishing opportunities. In recent years, anglers have found productive fishing for black bass, walleye, wiper, crappie, catfish and saugeye.

The 6,400-acre Norton Wildlife Area offers good prospects for pheasant, waterfowl and rabbits. Both white-tailed and mule deer can be found here, as well as a variety of furbearers.



Tuttle Creek State Park



Located near Manhattan in northeast Kansas, Tuttle Creek State Park offers visitors a broad variety of outdoor recreation possibilities and plenty of room to roam.

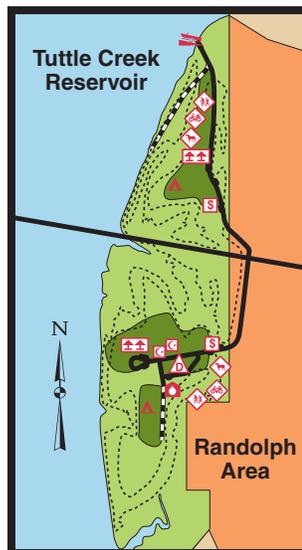
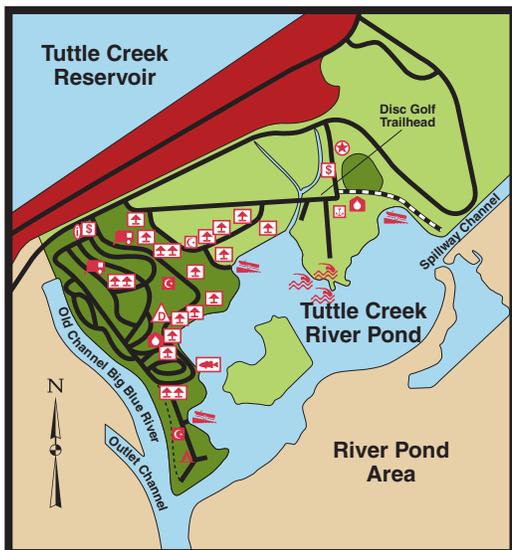
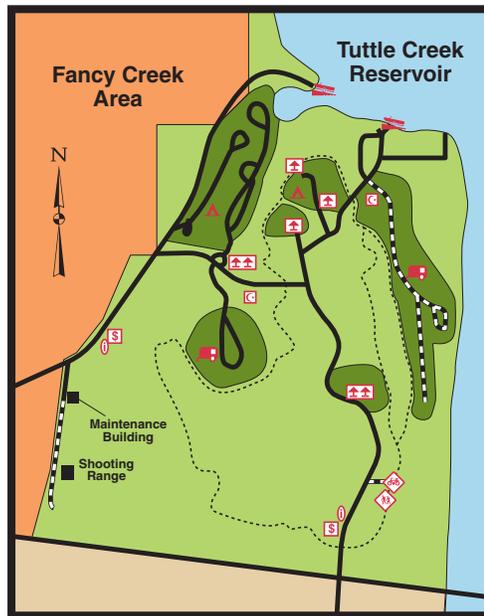
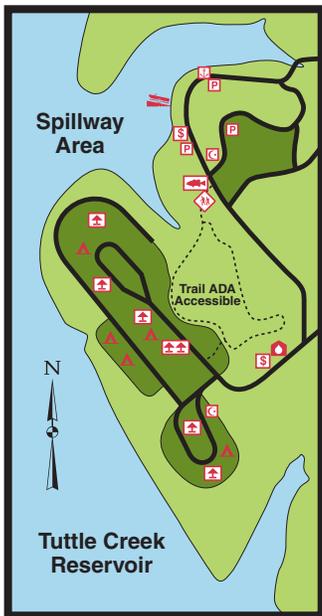
Tuttle Creek Reservoir, the

state's second largest impoundment, offers 12,500 acres of water and about 100 miles of rugged, wooded shoreline to explore.

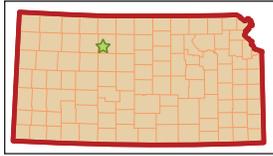
Four units – River Pond, Spillway, Fancy Creek and Randolph – make up the 1,156-acre park. Electric and water hookups, a swimming beach, boat ramps, courtesy docks, and dump stations are available. Campgrounds contain 104 water/electric campsites, 12 electric-only campsites, and 500 primitive campsites.

Numerous nature trails, a mountain biking trail, and a scenic equestrian trail offer explorers a variety of routes to experience the aesthetic Flint Hills environment. Scenic picnic areas, an 18-hole disc golf course, volleyball courts, horse shoe pits, and conveniently placed restroom and shower facilities accommodate park visitors. The state-of-the-art Fancy Creek Shooting Range is open the first and third weekends of each month.

Excellent channel cat and flat-head fishing is available in the lake and in the river above and below the lake. Fair numbers of bass are caught near standing timber and brush piles, and walleye can be taken off the face of the dam as well as in the river below. The 12,000-acre wildlife area adjacent to the park offers excellent hunting and wildlife watching opportunities.



Webster State Park

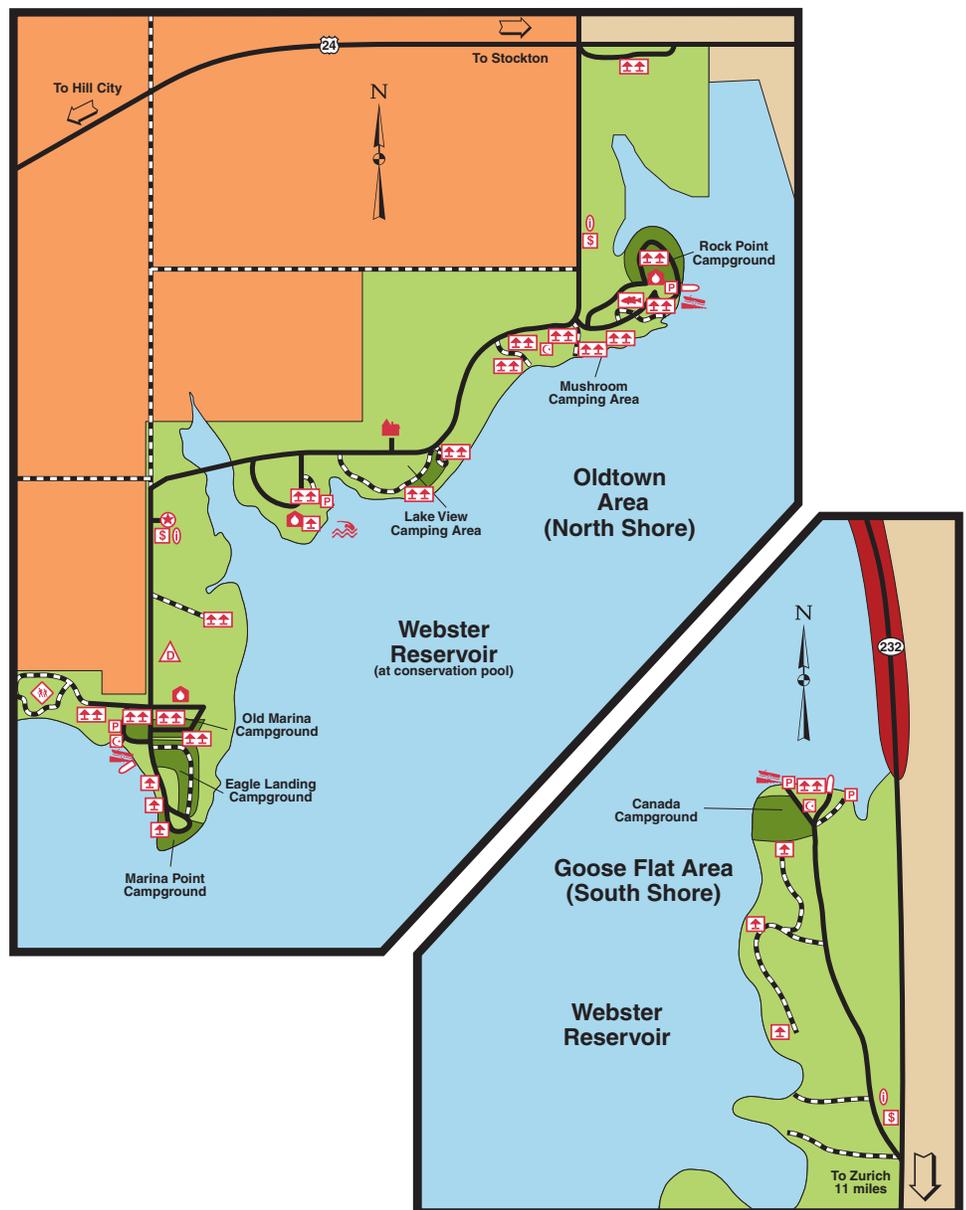
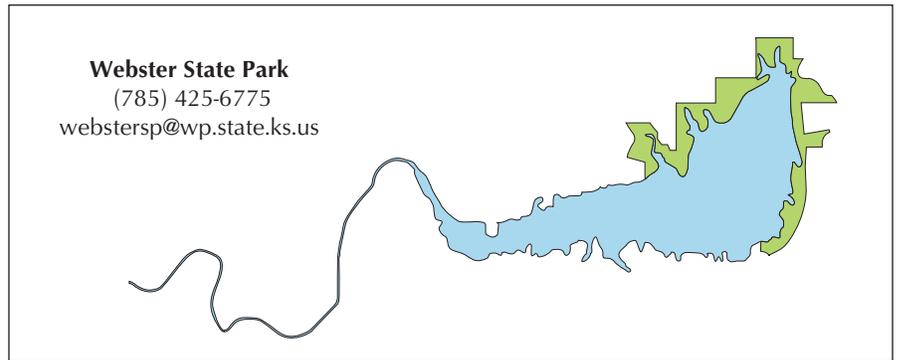


Webster State Park offers a prairie setting of rolling hills and spacious skies. The park occupies 880 acres contained in two tracts on the shores of Webster Reservoir.

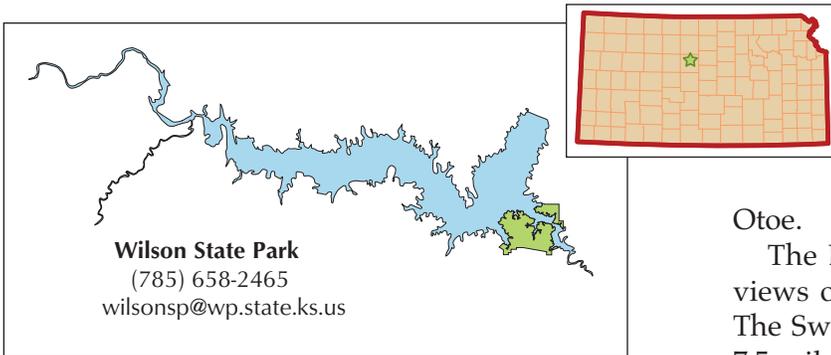
Campers can choose from 72 utility campsites and more than 100 primitive campsites. Besides boating and fishing, campers at Webster choose from recreational opportunities provided by swimming beaches, a sand volleyball court, horse shoe pits, playgrounds, and a hiking trail. The newest addition to Webster's attractions is a two-bedroom cabin that accommodates six people.

Five boat ramp lanes and three courtesy docks offer boaters ample launching facilities. Pleasure boating, fishing water skiing, and windsurfing are popular activities at Webster. Primary sportfish include walleye, wipers, largemouth bass, crappie, channel catfish and flathead catfish. The park offers floating fishing docks, and there is an easily-accessible fishing pier at the nearby stilling basin.

The 5,750-acre Webster Wildlife Area is home to white-tailed and mule deer, pheasants, quail, waterfowl, wild turkey, squirrels and numerous songbirds.



Wilson State Park



shower buildings are available April through September. Frost-free water hydrants and several vault toilets are open through the winter. For RV campers, the park has three dump stations – two in Hell Creek and one in

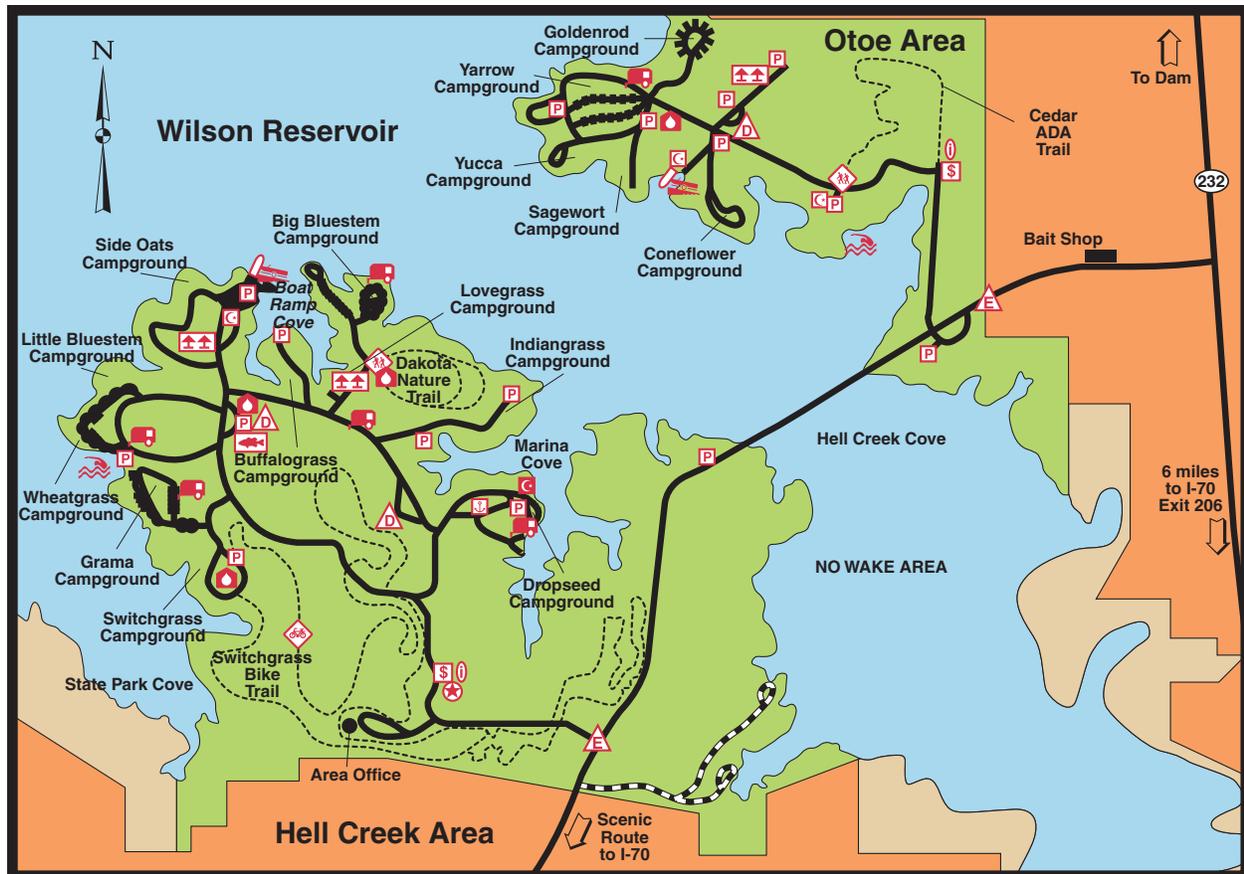
Otoe.

The Dakota Trail gives visitors one of the best views of the Kansas prairie and Wilson Reservoir. The Switchgrass Bike Trail offers bicyclists a scenic 7.5-mile route. The Cedar Trail in the Otoe area is a handicapped-accessible, one-mile loop with an asphalt surface.

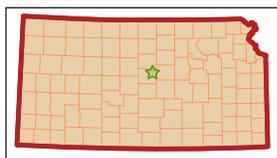
Wilson State Park offers excellent opportunities to view and photograph wildlife, including deer, bobwhite quail, waterfowl, numerous songbirds and migratory birds. The adjacent, 8,000-acre Wilson Wildlife Area offers an array of hunting opportunities. Famous for its striped bass and walleye fishing, Wilson attracts thousands of anglers each year.

Set in the scenic Smoky Hills region of Kansas, Wilson State Park provides convenient access to one of the state's prime water recreation areas.

The park's 945 acres consist of two areas – Hell Creek and Otoe – both situated on the south side of the 9,000-acre Wilson Reservoir. Utility and primitive campsites, day-use areas, swimming beach, boating access, a marina, and trails provide enjoyable alternatives for visitors. Water hookups and



Mushroom Rock State Park

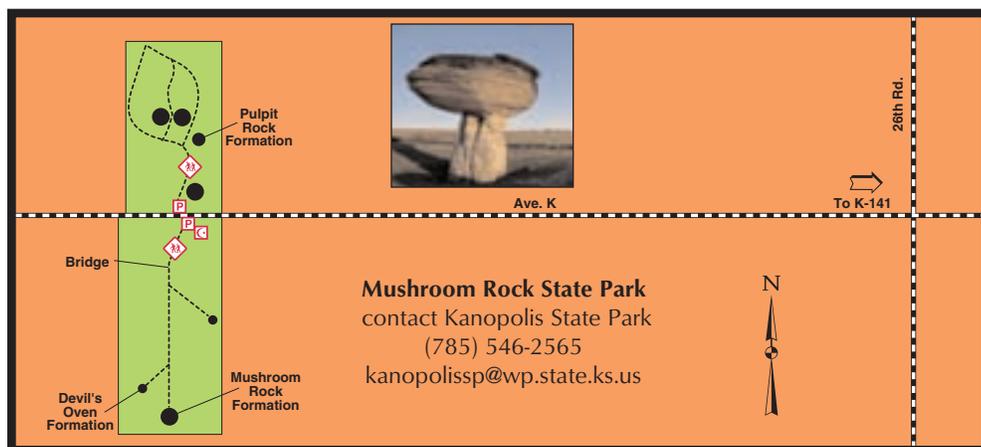


Mushroom Rock State Park is a geological phenomenon of sandstone spheres balanced on softer pedestals of sandstone. The power of erosion weathered

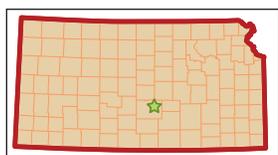
away the softer portions of sandy rock. The spheres of the naturally cemented portions of the sandstone are what we see today.

The Smoky Hill wagon trail crossed in this vicinity. These unusual formations, which resemble giant mushrooms reaching for the sky, served as landmarks and meeting places for Native Americans and pioneers.

Managed by staff from nearby Kanopolis State Park, Mushroom Rock is a unique site in a history-rich region.



Sandhills State Park

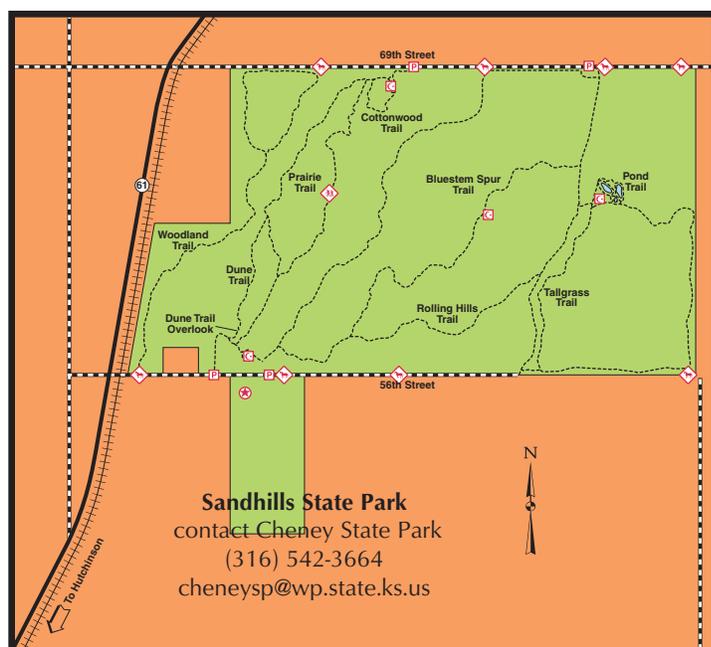


A unique natural area, Sandhills State Park is a wildlife watcher's delight. Located north-

east of Hutchinson in Reno County, the park features an excellent system of trails that winds through 1,123 acres of sand dunes, native prairie, wetlands, and woodlands. Visitors are limited to walk-in access to help protect the area's natural features. A trail access permit is required for persons 16 years of age or older.

Two wildlife observation blinds allow visitors a close up view of ducks, geese, songbirds, deer, muskrats and more. The most popular activities at Sand Hills are hiking and horseback riding. Eight different trails provide hikers and horseback riders a variety of natural environments. The trails range from one mile to almost four miles in length, and are open throughout the year. Most trails start from four parking lots located on 56th Street or 69th Street.

Archery deer and turkey, and upland game hunting are available only by special permit. Contact the Cheney State Park office (316/542-3664) for information.



State Park Regulations

1. A current motor vehicle permit is required for every motorized vehicle entering the park.
2. Vehicles are permitted on improved roads and parking areas only.
3. A camper may stay at one campground up to 14 consecutive days, and may extend an additional 14 days only with written permission from the manager.
4. Fires are allowed in fireplaces, firerings and cooking grills only.
5. Swimming is at your own risk and recommended only at swimming beach areas.
6. Beverages containing more than 3.2% alcohol are not permitted. Kegs are prohibited in some state parks.
7. Pets must be restrained on a leash not longer than 10 feet or otherwise confined.
8. A special event permit is required for any

event involving entrance fees, sales, organized competition, amplified sound, use of temporary structures (does not include common camping gear or blinds) or reservation of specific site or facility.

9. Quiet hours are 11 p.m. to 6 a.m. Actions which alarm, anger, or disturb others are prohibited. Failure to comply may result in expulsion from the park and a notice to appear in court.

This summary highlights only a portion of the current regulations. For a complete listing of the state park rules and regulations, contact a state park office or the KDWP, 512 SE 25th Ave., Pratt, KS 67124-8174; (620) 672-5911.

Complete regulations are also available at the KDWP website: www.kdwp.state.ks.us



Elk City State Park



Lake Scott State Park



El Dorado State Parks



Cedar Bluff State Park



Hillsdale State Park



Elk City State Park

State Park Contacts

Cedar Bluff (785) 726-3212
Box 76A
Ellis, KS 67637
E-mail: cedarbluffsp@wp.state.ks.us

El Dorado (316) 321-7180
618 NE Bluestem Rd.
El Dorado, KS 67042-8643
E-mail: eldoradosp@wp.state.ks.us

Cheney (316) 542-3664
16000 NE 50th St.
Cheney, KS 67025-8487
E-mail: cheneysp@wp.state.ks.us

Elk City (620) 331-6295
4825 Squaw Creek Rd.
Independence, KS 67301
E-mail: elkcitysp@wp.state.ks.us

Clinton (785) 842-8562
798 N. 1415th Rd.
Lawrence, KS 66049
E-mail: ClintonSP@wp.state.ks.us

Fall River (620) 637-2213
144 Highway 105
Toronto, KS 66777
E-mail: crosstimberssp@wp.state.ks.us

Crawford (620) 362-3671
1 Lake Rd.
Farlington, KS 66734-4045
E-mail: crawfordsp@wp.state.ks.us

Glen Elder (785)545-3345
RR 1, Box 162A
Glen Elder, KS 67446
E-mail: glenEldersp@wp.state.ks.us

Cross Timbers (620) 637-2213
144 Highway 105
Toronto, KS 66777
E-mail: crosstimberssp@wp.state.ks.us

Hillsdale (913) 783-4507
26001 W. 255th St.
Paola, KS 66071
E-mail: hillsdalesp@wp.state.ks.us

Eisenhower (785) 528-4102
29810 S. Fairlawn Rd.
Osage City, KS 66523-9046
E-mail: eisenhowersp@wp.state.ks.us

Kanopolis (785) 546-2565
200 Horsethief Rd.
Marquette, KS 67464
E-mail: kanopolissp@wp.state.ks.us

Lovewell (785) 753-4971
RR 1, Box 66A
Webber, KS 66970
E-mail: lovewellsp@wp.state.ks.us

Meade (620) 873-2572
Box K, 13051 V Rd.
Meade, KS 67864
E-mail: meadesp@wp.state.ks.us

Milford (785) 238-3014
8811 State Park Rd.
Milford, KS 66514
E-mail: milfordsp@wp.state.ks.us

**Mushroom Rock
Kanopolis** (785) 546-2565
200 Horsethief Rd.
Marquette, KS 67464
E-mail: kanopolissp@wp.state.ks.us

Perry (785) 246-3449
5441 W. Lake Rd.
Ozawkie, KS 66070-9802
E-mail: perrysp@wp.state.ks.us

Pomona (785) 828-4933
22900 S. Hwy 368
Vassar, KS 66543-9162
E-mail: pomonasp@wp.state.ks.us

Prairie Dog (785) 877-2953
Box 431
Norton, KS 67654
E-mail: prairiedogsp@wp.state.ks.us

**Sand Hills
Cheney** (316) 542-3664
16000 NE 50th St.
Cheney, KS 67025-8487
E-mail: cheneysp@wp.state.ks.us

Scott (620) 872-2061
520 W. Scott Lake Dr.
Scott City, KS 67871-1075
E-mail: scottsp@wp.state.ks.us

Tuttle Creek (785) 539-7941
5800 - A River Pond Rd.
Manhattan, KS 66502
E-mail: tuttlecreeksp@wp.state.ks.us

Webster (785) 425-6775
1210 Nine Rd.
Stockton, KS 67669-8834
E-mail: webstersp@wp.state.ks.us

Wilson (785) 658-2465
RR1, Box 181
Sylvan Grove, KS 67481
E-mail: wilsonsp@wp.state.ks.us



Crawford State Park



Cheney State Park



Fall River State Park



Other KDWP Offices

Office of the Secretary

1020 S. Kansas, Rm. 200
Topeka, KS 66612-1327(785) 296-2281

Pratt Operations Office

512 SE 25th Ave.
Pratt, KS 67124-8174 (620) 672-5911

Region 1 Office

1426 Hwy. 183 Alt., P.O. Box 338
Hays, KS 67601-0338(785) 628-8614

Region 2 Office

3300 SW 29th
Topeka, KS 66614-2053(785) 273-6740

Region 3 Office

1001 W. McArtor Road
Dodge City, KS 67801-6024(620) 227-8609

Region 4 Office

6232 E. 29th St. North
Wichita, KS 67220 .(316) 683-8069

Region 5 Office

1500 W. 7th St., Box 777
Chanute, KS 66720-0777(620) 431-0380

Emporia Research & Survey Office

1830 Merchant, P.O. Box 1525
Emporia, KS 66801-1525(620) 342-0658

Kansas City District Office

14639 W. 95th St.
Lenexa, KS 66215 ...(913) 894-9113

Equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from programs described herein is available to all individuals without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age or handicap. Complaints of discrimination should be sent to Office of the Secretary, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, 1020 S Kansas Ave. Suite 200, Topeka, KS 66612-1327 03/04

TURKEY FEVER

text and photos by Marc Murrell

Great Plains Nature Center manager, Wichita

The youth turkey season, April 9, 10, 11, 2004, is a great time to introduce a young hunter to the sheer excitement of spring turkey hunting. However, being the mentor can often be as exiting as being the hunter.

Turkey hunting is exciting. Predawn gobbling and a big gobbler drumming and strutting at close range makes even veteran turkey hunters shake. Although “turkey fever” is often confined to the shooter, the sights and sounds of the hunt can make even an observer’s heart race. I learned that lesson in 2002 during Kansas’ first youth-only turkey season.

I was guiding a 14-year-old Hutchinson teenager who had submitted his name and was lucky enough to be drawn for the KDWP’s Third Annual Youth Turkey Hunt. The youngster, like the nine other participants, had never killed a turkey. Young hunters met guides, learned about safety and hunting techniques and checked shotgun patterns the evening before the hunt. As the sun set, guides and hunters scouted hunting ares to “roost” birds for the morning’s hunt.

“We should be able to hear the birds from here,” I said to the youngster and his dad after I stopped the truck.

Mosquitoes big enough to



need their own license plates buzzed around our heads as we listened for gobbles. One distant bird gobbled before we moved to the other side of the section. Nothing was heard there, and we ended up back where we started.

“It looks like you’ve got your work cut out for you tomorrow,” his dad said after a series of my owl hoots yielded no gobbling response.

“I assume there are birds

roosted in there,” I said based on previous years’ experience. “I’d bet this truck on it. They’re just not talking tonight.”

Hunters and guides met at 4:30 the next morning, then traveled to private hunting spots provided by generous landowners. We arrived at our spot at about 5 a.m. We walked in with the aid of a small flashlight, getting as close as I dared to a known roosting spot.

I sat my young hunter at the base of a cedar tree and positioned the jake and hen decoys about 20 yards to our left. Shooting time was about a half-hour away, so I told him to get comfortable and we’d listen for gobbles.

At 5:20 I heard the faintest, distant gobble. Several more turkeys gobbled, but none close to our location.

“Did you hear that?” I asked him after each gobble.

But he was having trouble hearing because of a cold. Then a tom cut loose less than 100 yards away.

“I HEARD THAT!” he said in a loud whisper “That one was close!”

Several more joined in and

from nearby trees. As the sky brightened, we could see the silhouette of one tom as he fanned and gobbled from his two-story perch. Hens joined the serenade as the wild world awakened.

I called softly, hoping the gobblers would think there was new a hen nearby. Then we watched a couple birds fly down. Unfortunately, they went the opposite direction.

The gobblers were much less vocal on the ground and only answered my calls occasionally. However, at least two hens seemed irritated by my calling and were matching my yelps note for note. This went on for several minutes when a single gobbler thundered from the bottom.

"That's a good sign," I said, hoping we could peel a gobbler out of the flock stacked with female companions.

A short time later the gobbler sounded again, closer.

"I think we're in business," I said, certain the gobbler was on its way.

I could see the tom through a thicket, 100 yards out and in full strut.

"There he is!" I whispered. "Get your gun up and be still."

I didn't call again since the gobbler could see both decoys. We had a ringside seat as the big bird strutted the whole closer and closer.

"He's going to the left," the youngster said, worried the bird was leaving his shooting lane.

"He'll turn and come back to the decoys," I said confidently as the bird closed the gap to within

25 yards. "Just don't move."

Like I predicted, the mature tom turned back to our right and headed straight to the hen decoy, only 20 yards away. My heart was racing and I wasn't even holding the gun.

The gobbler inched forward in full strut when the hen decoy twitched in the breeze. The tom did a side step and raised its head with a sideways glance.

"Shoot him!" I advised knowing it was now all up to the young hunter.



His little 20-gauge jumped, and the gobbler went down with a well-placed load of No.4s.

"Go get your first turkey," I shouted as the gobbler flopped. "Good shot!"

I checked my watch and it was 6:04.

"It doesn't always work like this," I told the young man as we admired his bird. "Everything worked perfectly this time."

The young hunter's first turkey was a 2-year-old with about an 8-inch beard, 3/4-inch spurs and weighed about 20 pounds. I shot photos as the sun was just peeking over the horizon.

Before driving back to check

in, we drove some backroads to see how many turkeys we could spot. I just wanted the morning to last a little longer for the youngster.

After watching several flocks of turkeys, we turned in to headquarters and found three other hunters had also scored. Two of them connected right off the roost, 10 minutes into legal shooting time, while the other connected a short time later. All three had killed mature toms with nice beards and spurs.

It turned out those four were the only birds killed during that hunt which concluded at noon. A couple youngsters missed birds and all hunters saw and heard plenty of turkeys.

The youngsters came away with a new understanding of turkeys and turkey hunting, and hopefully will want to try it again. The guides came away with the satisfaction of knowing they may have just played a part in keeping our hunting heritage alive. Pass It On! 🦃

For more information on special youth hunts, contact KDWP, (620) 672-5911. The 2004 youth turkey season will be April 9, 10, and 11. Youngsters 16 and younger can hunt on those days while under the supervision of an adult 21 years old or older. Adults may not hunt. All youth must have a turkey permit, and 16 year old resident youth and all nonresident youth must also have hunting licenses.

Edited by Mark Shoup

DON'T ABANDON FILM

Editor:

I've just looked over your beautiful pictures in the Jan./Feb. 2004 issue of *Kansas Wildlife & Parks* magazine and send highest compliments for your fine work. You've not only given us lovely photos that display the beauty of Kansas, but you've also supplied rich examples of counties where rank amateur photographers (like me) can day-trip for impromptu photo shoots.

As much as the digital age has afforded you with speedy shoot-to-press-time capabilities, I would sincerely hope you won't completely hang up your old film camera and abandon the purest form of the photographer's art. No, it won't be fast, and you certainly won't be able to tweak the color if you've arrived and shot on the downside of nature's beauty.

You might be forced into using your own hand at burning and dodging, but in the long run, I believe you'll be more satisfied with the end results because they will be entirely yours – no outside help from a program, no predetermined calculations, just you and your skills in the final rendering of very superb pictures that you've already captured.

Thanks for sharing your art with us. I'll look forward to the next edition.

*Judith McGuire
Leavenworth*

DOCTOR GIVES OKAY

Editor:

I just received the Jan./Feb. 2004 issue of *Kansas Wildlife & Parks*. The photographic issue of your pictures of Kansas is extraordinary. Indeed it represents our state in a beautiful fashion.

When I moved my family here some 37 years ago, I had little expectations. I have since retired from the faculty at the Kansas University Medical Center. During these years, I have come to

appreciate Kansas as the gem that it is. This issue helps to document this. I will keep it for a long time to convince others of our gift.

I have found Kansas to be the best there is. From the KUMC circuit courses for physicians in the state to my own treks throughout the state, we have come to appreciate it. Indeed, we have recently purchased a farm in Marion County.

While I enjoy photography using slides, and I can see the value of digital photography, I believe for several reasons I will stay with the slides rather than spend money for a new technology I would have to learn over.

As a conservationist, I thank you and Wildlife and Parks for keeping Kansas a wonderful state.

*Francis E. (Pete) Cuppage, M.D.
Shawnee, Kansas*

HOWLING WITH 4-H

Editor:

I just wanted to let you know that one of our AmeriCorps team members and I were absolutely howling with laughter after reading Mark Shoup's article, "Legends of the Fair" (*Kansas Wildlife & Parks* magazine, Nov./Dec. 2003, Page 39). We are both 4-H parents and club leaders and have lived your nightmare! It's great that we can laugh about it later although we are sure we are going to suffer a coronary at the time.

It was very well written and very funny. Thanks for brightening our day.

*Lisa Boyles
Webber*

LOVE THE DIGITAL

Editor:

I really appreciated the Jan./Feb. issue. To Mike Miller, thanks for dedicating an entire issue to photographs.

To Mike Blair, thanks not only for your wonderful photography but thanks especially for your comments supporting

the legitimacy of digital photography. I shoot with a Canon D60 and, like you observe, I appreciate the flexibility, latitude, freedom from noise, instant feedback, and high resolution this medium affords, especially coupled with the extreme flexibility of Photoshop.

Most of my own photos are panoramics composed from six or more overlapping, side by-side exposures. The technique works great for everything but action.

Again, thanks to you both for an excellent issue.

*John Morrison
Wichita*

DENVER LIKES DIGITAL

Editor:

I've really got to compliment you on your January/February issue of *Kansas Wildlife & Parks* magazine. The digital pictures were beautiful and stunning. Keep up the good work. I look forward to each issue.

After reading every magazine, I drop it off at the Denver Regional Veterans Hospital so it can continue to bring joy.

*Gary Gulick
Denver, Colorado*

GET OVER "TROPHIES"

Editor:

I always enjoy *Kansas Wildlife & Parks* magazine. I started shooting a rifle at about eight or nine years old and basically hunted rabbits until I received my first shotgun at 12. I always remember older men in my life congratulating me for the occasional rabbit I actually managed to take. It was a source of pride and accomplishment, and I looked forward to eating the game. I appreciated the hard-earned prize.

I enjoy watching some of the many outdoor programs on TV. However, I notice the obsessive attention to trophy deer hunting they emphasize. I heard a host on a program the other day talking

about a deer he shot and the length of its G7 and G whatever. I thought he was talking G2 intelligence until I realized he was talking antlers.

So if you go out and shoot a doe, your hunt was a failure to these clowns. If you don't shoot a 6 x 6 bull elk, you don't measure up. These people and many outfitters do a great disservice to hunting and the tradition of hunting. Basically, they aren't true hunters.

Growing up in Kansas, I had a passion for bird hunting of all types. I have since graduated to deer, antelope, elk, bear, and wild hogs. I have taken my share of what would be considered trophy animals. However, I have shot more doe deer than bucks and was equally pleased to take "non-trophy" animals. The satisfaction of hunting is the outdoor experience and the appreciation of whatever game you take. If it's not a trophy, has your hunt been a failure? It shouldn't be. All game taken should be respected and admired for the life it lived. Out of respect, we enjoy the consumption of the game after the hunt.

I find the constant promotion of trophy hunting by outdoor programs becoming more and more offensive. I don't have much respect for the attitude it promotes, and of course, it helps enflame a lot of poaching of trophy animals.

*Ron Sisk
Lenexa, Kansas*

Dear Mr. Sisk:

I couldn't agree with you more, and I hope that the current "trophy" obsession doesn't influence our young hunters to believe that they must take large antlers to have a successful hunt.

-Miller

THANKS FOR THE SURVEY

Editor:

I would like to thank you for letting me participate in the Kansas Small Game Hunter Activity Survey. I live in Texas and have been going to Kansas for several years deer hunting with bow. I have a nephew in Arlington, Kan., who I spend Thanksgiving with. Last year, I had the chance to go pheasant hunting there with a friend of mine who lives in

Santa Fe, Texas.

I have seen pheasant many times going to hunt for deer but just didn't get the chance to hunt the birds. Now pheasant and quail hunting is all I think about when I come to Kansas.

I used to pheasant hunt with my dad and brother when I was young in Ohio. I went back to Ohio and wanted to go pheasant hunting and was told there aren't any. Being hard-headed, I went anyway, and it was very sad because there weren't any pheasant at all, and I walked all day.

That was about 20 years ago and I haven't tried since, but I went last year in Kansas and had the time of my life. I will go many more times in Kansas.

I just want to thank you for making every possible effort to keep hunting in Kansas a memorable experience for my family and me. My daughter got her hunter education certificate this year, and she is just as excited to go hunting with me in Kansas. You are doing an excellent job.

*Michael Pletcher
Santa Fe, Texas*

FIRST PRAIRIE CHICKEN SEASON

Editor:

Could you tell me the first year that Kansas had a prairie chicken season? I think it was open for only one weekend a year.

*Toby Ross
Iola*

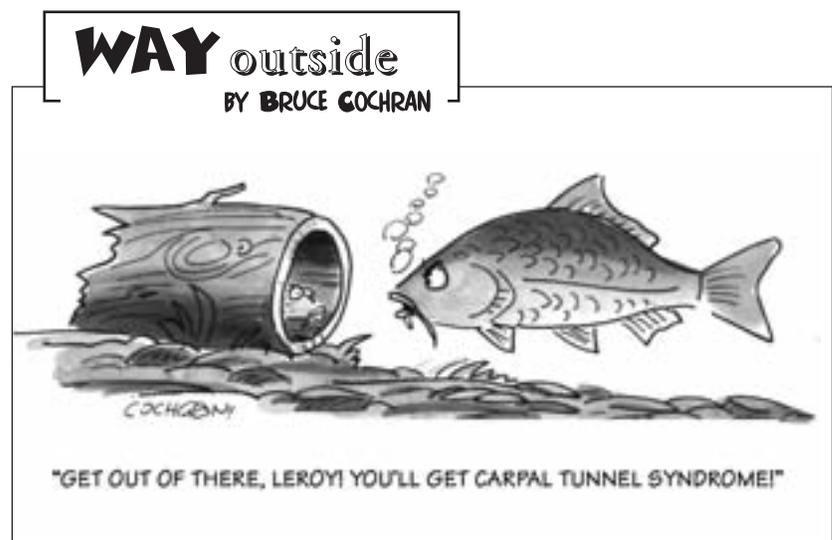
Dear Mr. Ross:

According to *Kansas Hunting and Fishing*, by Neal E. Danielson, the first prairie chicken season was established in 1861, and it lasted September through March. In 1901, it was Aug. 15-Oct. 1. In 1905, it was Sept. 15-Oct. 15 with a bag limit of 15. In 1919, it was moved to Dec. 1-10.

The first two-day season appears to be Oct. 22-23, 1929. The season was closed in 1936 until 1941, when it was opened for one day, Oct. 21, in six counties.

It remained limited to a day or two only in certain southeast Kansas counties until 1944, when it was again closed until 1950-51, when it was opened Oct. 25 in certain counties. The season was open for a limited number of days or closed altogether year to year after that until 1980, when a statewide season of Nov. 1-Dec. 31 was established, with a bag limit of two.

-Shoup



CO NABS BANK ROBBER

It was just before noon on December 12, and I was leaving the KDWP Region 4 office in Wichita. Just minutes before, I had been talking to my supervisors about how quiet the firearm deer season had been. However, that all changed when I heard a broadcast on my police-band radio of a bank robbery in progress at Sunflower Bank, near 21st Street North and Woodlawn, only a short distance from where I was now driving. Dispatch notified me that a black male suspect wearing black pants and a gray hooded sweatshirt was last seen running north from the bank with a gun.

Knowing that the bank was less than a mile away, I went to the area to assist. Seconds after arriving a block north of where the robbery occurred, a suspect matching the description given by dispatch ran in front of my truck. I jumped out of my truck and pursued the suspect on foot through an apartment complex parking lot. Then I lost sight of him when he ran around the corner of a building.

A Wichita police officer arrived to assist in the area where I lost sight of the suspect, but it was not hard to find out where he was hiding. The suspect had knocked a charcoal grill over when he entered one of the apartment complexes. The other officer and I covered the building. As I was standing next to the door the suspect had entered, he ran out of the building. The chase was on again.

The suspect ran and climbed over a 6-foot chain-link fence. I went over the fence and continued to chase him into a backyard surrounded by another fence. I had the suspect at gunpoint, but he failed to comply

with verbal commands. I reached for my radio to give my location to dispatch, but it was gone. It had fallen out when I crossed the fence.

Finally, I was able to hold the suspect at gunpoint until a Wichita police officer arrived. As it turned out, the original report from the bank had been wrong: the suspect did not have a gun. He was still uncooperative and combative, but we finally took him into custody. He still had the money from the robbery.

To say the least, it was a change of pace from catching poachers. It goes to show that you never know what you may encounter while on the job as a conservation officer.

—Jason Barker, conservation officer, Wichita

GOLFER KILLS HEN MALLARD

In April of 2003, a man was golfing with three other people at the Riverbend Golf Course south of Salina. While playing the sixth hole, the man and his companion lost their golf balls near the edge of a pond.

While there, a hen mallard duck sitting on her nest was hit repeatedly with a golf club. The golfer's companion said that his friend was startled by something in the water and swung at it. He said that they saw that it was a duck afterward and that it was still alive but ruffed up a bit.

After the golfing foursome left the golf course, a witness saw that the duck was lying dead in the water. Other golfers and witnesses were interviewed, and charges were filed with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The man was convicted of illegally killing a migratory game bird and paid a \$500 fine.

—Greg Salisbury, conservation officer, Salina

DOG DOC PLEADS NO-CONTEST

A veterinarian accused of shooting three deer at his Leavenworth residence last year pleaded no contest to three wildlife violations, a prosecution spokesman said. The man was fined a total of \$810 after entering his plea [last winter]. He indicated he planned to pay the fine the same day.

The vet pleaded no contest to taking deer without a valid big game control permit, taking deer during a closed season, and taking deer using illegal equipment. One charge of failing to tag deer was dismissed as part of a plea agreement, said Assistant County Attorney David Melton.

The vet was arrested Aug. 6 after he reportedly admitted to shooting three deer at his residence at 1830 S. 18th St. According to police, he said he shot the deer with a shotgun because they were pests and eating his flowers.

He was fined \$250 for each of the three charges. He also was charged \$60 for court costs. In court, he read a lengthy statement in which he apologized. He also made note of a deer population problem that he said he has personally witnessed.

The killing of the deer received local media attention, but District Court Judge Gunnar Sundby assured the doctor that the case was being treated as any other. His attorneys had previously mentioned a possible diversion, which could have led to the charges being dismissed if terms were met. Melton said a diversion had been offered, but the veterinarian decided to make a plea instead.

"I'm not sure why he didn't take (the diversion)," Melton said.

The assistant county attorney said the terms of the diversion would have required the vet to pay fines for the charges he faced, court costs, and another fine of at least \$100. The diversion also would have called for him to donate veterinarian services to a local animal shelter.

Melton said the man's first court appearance was Sept. 17, but the diversion negotiations took some time.

"There was just a bunch of wrangling," he said.

Melton said the vet's attorney, Carl Cornwell, talked to him before court. The defense attorney indicated he wanted to take care of the case that day.

Dismissing the charge of failing to tag a deer as part of a plea agreement is "pretty typical" in such cases, Melton said.

Melton said the standard fine for each of three remaining charges is \$500. He said the judge probably gave the veterinarian a break because there were multiple charges involved.

—John Richmeier,
courtesy of The Leavenworth Times

NO LEON LION

Last winter, the department received dozens of emails from people all reporting the same story, with slight variations, about a giant mountain lion being shot near Leon, Kansas, during our 2003 firearms deer season. Unfortunately, these folks were victims of one of many email hoaxes that circulate the web.

The circulated photograph was actually featured in the fall issue of the Boone and Crockett Club's magazine, "Fair Chase." The lion had been taken earlier in the year within an hour's drive of Seattle, Washington. This email hoax first began when it was said to have been taken near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Since then, the department's website feedback email has received messages claiming it was taken in Alabama, Montana, Texas, and Wyoming, as well as the hoax claiming Leon.

Perhaps there is a lesson to be learned here. Check out dubious email stories before passing them around. Two good places on the internet are truthorfiction.com and snopes.com. The following is an example of the email hoax and the lion photo it circulated. It's big, but it wasn't taken in Kansas:



Photo courtesy of the Boone & Crockett Club

"Got this from one of my friends at [name a workplace]. This mountain lion was shot near Leon, Kansas. This guy is a friend of one of the guys who works with my friend. He was going deer hunting when he heard his neighbor's cows making noise. He discovered this cat attacking some calves.

"He shot and reportedly the cat jumped 8 feet into the air, ran about 100 yards, and died. The man in the picture is over 6 feet tall and the cat weighed over 200 pounds."

To track the validity of supposed "trophy" game animal emails, click the "Trophy Watch" link on Boone and Crockett's website, www.booneandcrockettclub.com.

—Shoup

BUSH SIGNS BIG CAT BAN

On Dec. 19, President Bush signed into law the Captive Wildlife Safety Act, which bars the interstate and foreign commerce of dangerous exotic animals – including lions, tigers, leopards, cheetahs, jaguars and cougars – for the pet trade. An estimated 10,000 to 15,000 exotic cats, such as lions and tigers, are kept as pets in the United States.

The ban specifically

includes any "lion, tiger, leopard, cheetah, jaguar, or cougar species, or any hybrid of such a species." The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks currently issues permits for possession of mountain lions, but the state has no prohibitions regarding possession of the other species cited in the law. However, it is against the law to release exotic animals into the wild.

The legislation passed both chambers of Congress without dissent.

The Captive Wildlife Safety Act provides exemptions for legitimate wildlife sanctuaries and for those people licensed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to exhibit these animals. Nineteen states currently have laws that ban keeping big cats as pets.

KDWP is currently reviewing state regulations to see if the new law will affect how the department deals with this issue.

—Shoup

NEW HUNTER ED RULES PROPOSED

For several years, wildlife agencies throughout the U.S. have noted that the average age of hunters is rising and that fewer younger people are taking hunter education classes and joining the ranks of hunters. Although Kansas is more rural than many states, KDWP has noted this trend here, as well. A number of factors drive this trend – some speculative and some based on studies by various organizations and agencies.

Today's young people have more things to occupy their time than in the past: organized sports at ever younger ages, virtual sports on computers, and various other activities that offer instant gratification and almost instant entrance into the activity. These all compete for the young person's attention. As a result, a hunter education course has come to be viewed as a barrier to young people who might otherwise give hunting a try.

The problem is that kids are required to invest 10-14 hours in a hunter education class before they can even try hunting to see if they like it. Many youngsters and their parents are not willing or able to do that.

In an effort to remove this barrier, KDWP has introduced Senate Bill 363, which asks the Kansas Legislature for a change to the hunter education law. This change would remove a potential barrier to young people who want to try hunting. All changes would be effective Jan. 1, 2005.

If passed, the new law would allow anyone under age 12 to hunt without taking a

hunter education course, as long as they were under the direct supervision of a licensed adult 18 or older, effectively removing the barrier that keeps many youngsters from going afield. Currently, anyone who has passed a hunter education course can hunt most game species by themselves, regardless of their age.

In addition, this proposal would require anyone 12 years old or older to have a certified hunter education course to hunt. The law would further state that the minimum age to be certified in hunter education will be 11 years old.

For hunters 12 years or older, the requirement that anyone born on or after July 1, 1957, must have a certified

hunter education course in order to hunt would not change. All certificates issued prior to the effective date of the law would be valid regardless of the age of the holder, but those younger than 12 would be required to hunt under the direct supervision of a licensed adult, even if they have already taken a certified course.

The second change in hunter education requirements that KDWP is pursuing would allow “crash courses,” primarily for adult nonresidents who are not required to have hunter education in their own state. Currently, the law

requires a 10-hour course for anyone born on or after July 1, 1957, regardless of their home state’s requirement. In this case, KDWP will be asking the Legislature for authority to offer a shorter course and to charge a fee for that course, as well.

What is envisioned is a course where the hunter takes the International Hunter Education Association (IHEA) internet course at home. They would then bring the section tests to a three hour class. The class would first test students on the IHEA course to make sure they took it. There would then be instruction in ethics,

safety, and Kansas laws and regulations, as well as a gun-handling test.

If successful, the hunter would be issued a “crash-course certificate” valid only in Kansas and only until the end of the current upland bird season. A limited number of crash courses would be offered, and their dates and locations would be listed on the KDWP website by the middle of August. Those would be the only dates and locations.

For those interested in this effort, check “Legislative Updates” on the KDWP website, www.kdwp.state.ks.us

—Wayne Doyle,
statewide Hunter
Education coordinator, Pratt



Drawdown Kills Z-mussels

Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) biologists have obtained results of a water drawdown that began Dec. 12 at El Dorado Reservoir to kill newly-discovered zebra mussels and to allow further study of the exotic species’ infestation. While massive numbers of the invasive zebra mussels were exposed and killed in this experiment, there is still reason for concern.

Millions of mussels were killed. In the lower part of the lake, especially the southeast corner, biologists found an average of 135 mussels per square meter within the dry area. This is an increase over what were found in August and likely the result of late summer and fall reproduction.

The mussels found were also bigger than those found in August and reflect growth during the fall. Many of the mussels found in the lower lake were one-half to 1-inch long, compared to generally less than one-half inch earlier.

Some of the larger mussels appeared

to have two “annuli” – ring-like structures on the shell that indicate age – indicating that zebra mussels may have been in El Dorado Reservoir at least three years, possibly longer.

And the mussel kill resulting from the drawdown does not indicate an end to the problem. There are more on the rocks just below the surface of the lake. Zebra mussels have already been found colonizing native mussels and were found on tree stumps, logs, bottles, even a golf ball.

Many larger rocks have caches of opened mussel shells beneath them that include zebra mussels and Asian clams.

Zebra mussels have been found through out the lake, but those found in the very upper end were smaller and less numerous, less than one per meter. KDWP has received reports of zebra mussels in the Walnut River below the dam, but an investigation of the site

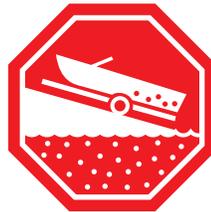
revealed many Asian clams but no zebra mussels.

Zebra mussels look like small clams with yellowish-brown, D-shaped shells that usually have alternating dark and light stripes. Usually, they are less than 1 inch long and grow in clusters.

As detailed in the Nov./Dec. issue of *Kansas Wildlife and Parks* magazine (Page 37), Kansas boaters who move their boats from ANY body of water to another can help prevent their spread.

Anyone who discovers zebra mussels in Kansas waters should note the location and date and notify the nearest Wildlife and Parks office or contact the Emporia Research and Survey Office, 1830 Merchant, P.O. Box 1525, Emporia, KS 66801, (620) 342-0658. Save a sample in rubbing alcohol. Do not put them back in the water.

—Shoup



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Youth Essay Contest, Gobbler Seminar

WRITING CONTEST

Young hunters can write a story and win a guided youth spring turkey hunt with Jared McJunkin this spring. McJunkin guides annually for the Kansas Governor's Annual One-Shot Turkey Hunt held each spring in El Dorado and is known locally for his passion to introduce fellow hunters, especially youth, to the sport he so dearly loves.

In 500 words or less, youngsters will explain why hunting is important and why we should strive to preserve the hunting tradition. The lucky winner will receive a two-day guided spring turkey hunt during the KDWP youth turkey hunting weekend April 9-11. Participants must have completed a hunter education course, be available to hunt during the youth weekend, and, if chosen, purchase a Kansas spring turkey hunting permit. The winner also will receive a special turkey hunting vest donated by Bluestem Farm and Ranch Supply, Emporia.

Essays, including name, age, address, and phone number must be submitted to Jared McJunkin, 91 Cherokee Lane, Emporia, KS 66801 by March 27. Those



The clinic will last from 9 a.m.–2 p.m. Calling tips and other expert turkey hunting advice will be provided by Hunter Specialties pro-staffer Martin Eichelberger. Eichelberger also will be at Bluestem Farm and Ranch Supply later in the afternoon giving turkey hunting advice. Free T-shirts and lunch will be provided. In addition, the clinic will include several educational sections dealing with all aspects of becoming a successful turkey hunter, including the following:

- turkey calling and locator calling;
 - scouting and roosting;
- wild turkey biology and management;
 - shotgun hunting for wild turkeys;
 - bowhunting for wild turkeys;
- turkey hunting equipment; and
 - turkey hunting safety.

attending the Spring Turkey Hunting Clinic at Camp Alexander (see the box above and "HUNTING CLINIC") may submit their essay to McJunkin at the seminar.

The winner of the contest will be notified by March 31. Lodging will be provided if the winner is not from Emporia or the surrounding area. A parent or guardian is welcome and encouraged to accompany the youth on this hunt.

This contest is co-sponsored by the Flint Hills Gobblers Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation and Bluestem Farm and Ranch Supply. Only youth 16 years and younger from Chase, Coffey, Greenwood, Lyon, Osage, and Woodson counties are eligible to win.

For more information, contact McJunkin at (620) 340-3219.

HUNTING CLINIC

In conjunction with the essay contest, the Flint Hills Gobblers Chapter and KDWP's Hunter Education Program will present the Third Annual Spring Turkey Hunting Clinic on March 27 at Camp Alexander, near Emporia. Anyone interested in learning how to become a better turkey hunter is

invited, especially youth.

For more information and to reserve a spot, contact McJunkin at (620) 340-3219.

—Phil Taunton, hunter education area coordinator, Emporia

PASS IT ON OPPORTUNITIES

Increasing youth involvement in hunting is one of the key goals of the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) "Pass It On" program, designed to increase hunting participation in Kansas. The program includes events such as statewide youth seasons and special hunts. For several years now, KDWP has provided early special youth seasons for deer, waterfowl, upland birds, and turkeys.

Under current law, youth deer season is open during the last weekend of September and allows youth 12 to 16 years old to hunt deer under the supervision of an adult 21 or older. Youth waterfowl seasons typically open the weekend prior to the regular opening day of duck season in each of the three duck zones. Youth 15 and younger may hunt under the supervision of an adult 18 or older. Youth upland bird season is open the weekend prior to the regular pheasant season opening.

Youth 16 and younger may hunt pheasants and quail under the supervision of an adult 21 or older.

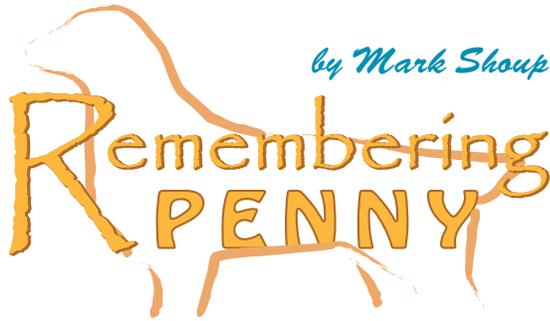
This spring, youth turkey season is open the Friday, Saturday, and Sunday (April 9, 10, and 11) prior to the regular spring turkey opener. Youth 16 and younger may hunt under adult supervision.

The supervising adult may not hunt in any of these seasons.

Another component of the "Pass It On" program is the statewide Special Hunts

Program. Some special hunts are designed for youth and offer uncrowded, high-quality hunting opportunities and enhanced harvest odds. Hunts include opportunities for waterfowl, upland birds, and deer. The applications are typically available in mid-June and need to be submitted to the Pratt office by mid-July. There are no additional fees; all that is needed are the appropriate licenses, stamps, or permits.

—Greg Nichols, public lands manager, Sylvan Grove



by Mark Shoup

Remembering PENNY



The first time I met Penny, she was six months old. The previous spring, I had researched an article on Kanopolis State Park, hoping to land a job with this wildlife outfit. Friendships were forged with Kurt Reed, the state park manager, and Mike Butler, the Corps of Engineers biologist, and I found myself at Kurt's Uncle Harold's farm near Larned on the opening of pheasant season, 1987.

Mike had two golden retrievers with him that day. Penny was still a pup but well behaved, intelligent, and beautiful. With a coat reflective of her name, she pranced like a thoroughbred between fields. It was love at first sight.

Over the next six months, I made several trips to Kanopolis, shooting my first prairie chicken, catching the white bass run, shooting my first wild turkey, playing with Penny, and begging Mike to sell her to me. After all, he had two goldens and a Lab. Think of the money he'd save on dog food.

Finally, in late April of 1988 – a month after my first son, Logan, was born – Mike relented, and I drove to pick her up. Mike ran her through a few training drills, then turned her loose. I rolled on the ground and called. Instantly, Penny was all over me, and we spent several minutes wrestling like two puppies.

"She'll need plenty of that," Mike noted with a smile. And she would get it. Although a year old, she was my dog. I felt she knew this when I told her to "kennel up," and she hopped into the dog box in the back of my pickup.

We lived in Wichita at that time. Although Penny had never been in a house before, she house-broke in a week. Her new bed was beside ours from that time on.

Okay, not all was perfect. Penny made her first impression on my wife, Rose, by chewing up her *Joy of Cooking* cookbook. But Rose soon came to appreciate having a

dog in the house when I was gone and, as Logan grew and Will arrived, how Penny reacted to the boys.

"I felt secure with her because she would bark when someone came to the door," Rose explains, "and she would patiently let the boys wrestle with her, pull her ears and tail. And if the boys were tired, she would let them lie against her and sleep." I, too, loved to watch her play with the boys. Whether they were trying to ride her or make her pull a wagon, she was always patient and gentle.

My father, not prone to hyperbolic praise, once said of Penny, "Why, she's just the best dog that *ever was!*"

My mother recalls how Penny would sit beside her with her head on Mom's lap. "She was the sweetest human dog I ever knew," she says.

Once when Rose was gone for the evening, I had to run to the corner store, only two blocks away. Logan was asleep in his crib, so I locked the doors and left Penny inside. When I returned not five minutes later, Penny did not respond to my call. I finally found her upstairs guarding the crib, as if to say, "You shouldn't leave this baby alone." In that moment, she was both my child's guardian and her master's teacher.

In training, Penny was tireless, retrieving a dummy far out in the lake until my arm ached, and begging for more. Afield, she was the indispensable flushing retriever. She stayed close, got birdy on quail, and could find a dead bird in the thickest brush. She'd stand for hours in cold water, scanning the air for ducks.

But she was my dog alone, and therefore, all game was mine. I once was hunting doves with my father when he killed a bird he couldn't find. He was some 300 yards away in a weedy fencerow, so I sent Penny on a line to him while he called her.

She went straight to Dad, probed the area a few minutes until she found the dove, then sprinted back to me, bird in mouth.

Most of all, though, Penny was my friend. In the truck, she stayed on the floor, but her head was always on the drive-train hump, brown eyes gazing up at me. Often, she would cheat and plop her chin on the seat, so I could scratch her ears.

In the fall of 1998, more than a year after we had moved to the country, Penny was 11 years old, but she still liked to hunt and had a tendency to roam when left alone. I let her out one Saturday morning, and when I returned to whistle her in, she did not come. By afternoon, I began to fret. I called all the neighbors I knew and asked them to spread the word. One mentioned that he had seen her late Saturday morning, a mile west of our house heading south.

The entire family worried through the weekend, praying that someone would find her and call. I drove every dirt road within 10 miles, scanning fields for any sign of her. Nothing. Then Sunday evening, we received a call from the folks who had purchased our house in town. "Do you have a golden retriever?" they asked. Apparently lost, Penny had gone "home," travelling the back roads and fields at least 15 miles over terrain she had never seen before to find our old house, where she arrived late Saturday afternoon and refused to leave.

That was Penny's last adventure. The following spring, she contracted sinus cancer, and six months later, I could no longer bear seeing her in pain. I called the vet. We all gathered round Penny in the family room on her favorite blanket. I fed her a sausage as her eyes surrendered the last light of life.

Wrapped in the blanket, we laid her in a grave near the pond, and I stumbled through a tearful farewell prayer. As I was about to cover her, William said "Wait," ran to the house, and returned with his special "sparkling rock." Logan followed suit with a coin from a foreign land, and both threw their charms to Penny.

As she had charmed our lives, so they sought to return the gift. And through these spontaneous gestures, I realized that Penny had touched and taught those I love most – in lasting ways that make me forever grateful for the best dog that ever was.

LARGEMOUTH BASS RESTORATION PROJECT



Why Trout Permit?

The trout program, in its current format using commercially purchased fish, was directed by the Kansas Wildlife and Parks Commission to be a user-pay venture. The commission wanted anglers to pay for the program. A trout permit costs \$11, and the department sells approximately 9,000-10,000 per year.

The program is also covered under federal aid, allowing a 75-percent reimbursement for the cost of the program. So, the total revenue derived from the trout program is approximately \$90,000 in permits and \$142,000 in federal funds. This more than covers the cost of the program (\$190,000).

The money is deposited into the Wildlife Fee Fund and must be appropriated by the governor and legislature each year to maintain the program.

—Doug Nygren, Fisheries Section chief, Pratt

From 1997 to the present, the Flint Hills Bass Association (FHBA) has actively assisted KDWP biologists at Perry Reservoir with a progressive largemouth bass restoration project. In early 1997, Perry Reservoir was adopted by the Flint Hills Bass Association and the local Black Bass Foundation (BBF) chapter with the goal of increasing the largemouth bass population in the lake.

A five-year plan was developed with several components that would hopefully achieve the ultimate goal — more largemouth bass in the reservoir. The plan included increasing the length limit from 15 inches to 21 inches, commercial harvest of rough fish, establishment of shoreline vegetation, habitat placement in prime largemouth locations, annual stocking of 5,000 intermediate sized largemouth bass, continued submission of the Water Level Management Plan (WLMP) for fisheries benefits, and the most important

component — involvement of anglers.

KDWP provided approximately \$10,000 to purchase 167 Berkeley Fish Habs — artificial fish habitat structures made of recycled fishing line and other recycled plastics. The American Sportfishing Association,

FishAmerica Foundation, and Wildlife Forever provided another \$10,000 to purchase an additional 167 Berkeley Fish Habs.

Members of the FHBA cut and placed trees, built habitat structures, and placed Berkeley Fish Habs into Perry in July and August, 1997. FHBA members contributed nearly 400 hours to this initial effort.

Concrete blocks to weight trees were donated to KDWP by Capitol Concrete Products Co., Inc., of Topeka. Seventy boatloads of trees were placed along the shoreline in 175 locations. Using the KDWP habitat barge, individual tree placements, ranging from 30 feet wide to 20 feet long, were placed in the lake. All habitat placements were made in 7 to 15 feet of water. On Jan. 1, 1998, a temporary 21-inch length limit on Perry largemouth bass was approved.

FHBA sponsored the 13th annual Atchison Youth Center Kid's Day at Perry, and the American Sportfishing Association (ASA), the FishAmerica Foundation, Wildlife Forever, and the Coleman Company presented FHBA \$10,000 to match KDWP's \$10,000

investment the previous year.

The group also helped with fin-clipping, stocking bass in rearing ponds, and collecting bass from private ponds in the area. Over the course of the project, members donated more than 800 man hours, helped stock approximately 40,000 bass over the past 6 years, placed 122 boatloads of trees and nearly 400 Berkeley Fish Habs in the lake, and raised more than \$20,000. In addition, FHBA has spent \$600 for a pellet fish feeder for use in rearing ponds.

As part of the project, commercial fishermen harvested approximately 94,000 pounds of rough fish from the lake. Also, FHBA members helped transplant American lotus, water primrose, American pond weed, arrowhead, and other aquatic plants from Perry waterfowl marshes to three sites in Rock Creek and three sites in Evans Creek. Once established, the transplants will help provide vital fish nesting habitat.

While the five-year plan ended Dec. 31, 2002, the Flint Hills Bass association's work is not done. Over the last few years, drought has lowered Perry Reservoir, among others. Seeing this as an opportunity, FHBA members placed shoreline habitat along areas that will hopefully fill over in the future.

With the commitment they have shown thus far, the FHBA will likely continue work for some time, making them a model for what organized anglers can do on other Kansas lakes.

—Shoup

Home to 465 bird species, Kansas offers fascinating possibilities for both the amateur and the serious bird watcher. The Sunflower State has diverse habitats, joining the eastern hardwood forest to tallgrass prairie. The mixed-grass prairie region harbors the pleasant Smoky Hills and Red Hills and encompasses two prime central wetlands – Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area and Quivira National Wildlife Refuge.

One of the main birding attractions is in the extreme southwest corner of Kansas – the Cimarron National Grasslands and areas around Elkhart. Known for “zooties,” rare birds that occasionally extend ranges from areas south and west, this corner of the state gains attention of all serious birders both in-state and nationally.

How does the Kansas bird list stack up regionally? Compared to nearby states, Kansas ranks very well in numbers of species. According to the American Birding Association, the number of bird species in surrounding states number as follow: Oklahoma – 450; Colorado – 470; Nebraska – 445; Missouri – 405; and Iowa – 405.

Situated in the Central Flyway, Kansas enjoys flocks of thousands of waterfowl and shorebirds in the central part of the state. The casual nature-lover will enjoy the spectacle of these giant flocks around the major wetlands and reservoirs. Shorebird migrations are very dependent on these major wetlands, and the majority of some species make stops at these locations annually.

While some shorebirds and humming-

birds begin their fall migrations in July, most birds start later. Shorebird numbers peak through September as many of the passerines (songbirds/perching birds) are beginning their migrations. Typically, the first week in October is peak for warblers and many of the raptors, along with sparrows and many others. Classic warbler migrations are anticipated each fall along the eastern edge of the state and in other key spots offering a short-term, safe harbor from unfavorable south winds.

In spring, mid-April is peak for shorebird numbers, and over the following 30 days or so, most other passerines, raptors, and waterfowl flock through the state.

In recent years, Kansas birding has achieved some significant notoriety. In September of 2001, *Wildbird* magazine ranked the Kansas central wetlands as 8th out of 15 of the “best birding locations in North America.” In February of 2003, *Birding*, the highly respected magazine of the American Birding Association, ran an article by Mark Robbins detailing the incredible 225 “Big Day” that he and two others had the previous year. This big day tied for the all-time third highest one-day count of individual bird species in the nation.

In the March/April issue of *Wildbird*

the same year, Sam Fried extolled the birding virtues of the central Kansas wetlands after visiting the Wings N’ Wetland Festival at Great Bend the previous year. Such notoriety has helped make Kansas a coveted destination for serious birders.

Kansas also has a number of resources for birding information, including the Kansas Ornithological Society (www.ksbirds.org/kos/index.html) and Audubon (audubonofkansas.org) chapters. Additionally, there is an active Kansas bird listserve where both novice and expert can obtain up-to-the hour information on birds being seen around the state. The listserve also discusses bird and birding issues and is a great place to learn quickly about these topics. This listserve may be found at listserv.ksu.edu/archives/ksbird1.html. Join in and see for yourself the tremendous birding opportunities Kansas has to offer.

For information on birding events, as well as a gallery of beautiful photographs by Kyle Gerstner, go to the Kansas Birders’ Calendar at staff.jccc.net/dseibel/ksbirdcal.htm

–Ken Brunson, wildlife diversity coordinator, Pratt

Kansas Birding: As Good As It Gets



LITTLE HOUSE
ON THE LAKE

Webster State Park now has a log cabin available to rent to the public. The cabin will appeal to families or groups who want to experience the great outdoors but also want to enjoy modern conveniences.

The Webster cabin has heat and air conditioning, a modern kitchen and dining area, a bathroom with shower, and two bedrooms. The cabin will sleep six and is handicap accessible.

Some additional amenities include a large front porch with an excellent view of Webster Reservoir, a picnic table, and fire ring.

Webster State Park staff was able to build this addition to the park thanks to funding from the Bureau of Reclamation. For more information, to check availability, or to make reservations, contact the Webster State Park Office at (785) 425-6775.

—Cliff Ehrlich, park manager,
Webster State Park

PLANNING FOR
HUNGRY

Kansas Farmers and Hunters Feeding the Hungry (FHFH), a nationally-affiliated program initiated by a Maryland hunter in 1997, has announced the results of its most recent efforts. During the 2003 deer season, the non-profit group processed 217 deer that were donated by Kansas hunters to feed those in need.

“This was down a lot from last year when we processed 418 deer,” says Tony DeRossett, Kansas FHFH

chairman, “but going into the fall, I didn’t know if we were going to have a program because we were in the red. Then we had some folks step up, and we got rolling. And because we didn’t process as many deer as last year, we’ll start next fall about \$2,000 in the black.”

DeRossett’s comment on next fall’s start reflects the optimism he has for this program. Already, the group has scheduled 3-D archery fundraisers for March 7 and April 17, and other events – such as sporting clay competitions – are in the planning stages. “With the events we have planned and are working on, combined with private and corporate donations, we hope to be in a position to process 500 deer next year,” he adds.

If Kansas hunters continue donating venison to the organization, the money raised will pay for processing, packaging, and freezing of donated deer. Donations from churches, clubs, businesses, and individuals all

help in the effort. Some hunters also donate to processing costs. Some meat processors across Kansas agree to accept donated deer. An average of \$70 is required to process each deer.

The food is distributed to needy families through existing food banks and community service organizations. However, the program also needs volunteers to transport the processed venison from the meat processors to local food distribution services.

In the 2003 season, the Kansas FHFH Chapter received donations or pledges from the following corporate contributors, as well as other sources:

- Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Company – \$10,000;
- American Family Mutual Insurance Company – \$2,500;
- Kansas Farm Bureau – \$1,000; and
- Shelter Mutual Insurance Company – \$1,000.

FHFH is co-sponsored by the Flint Hills Resource Conservation and Development Council, Strong City; the Glacial

Hills Resource Conservation and Development Council, Valley Falls; the Resource Conservation and Development Councils of Kansas; and the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. The national organization has affiliates in more than 30 states, and tons of donated venison has been distributed through existing food banks to needy families through the organization.

Anyone interested in donating to or helping with the program may email tonyderossett@home.com or phone DeRossett at (913) 768-6479. Donations may be sent directly to Farmers and Hunters Feeding the Hungry, PO Box 260, Strong City, KS 66869. Information on the program is also available at the organization’s internet website, www.ksfhfh.org.

—Shoup



by Ed Miller,
nongame biologist,
Independence

A Finch of a Different COLOR

There are many kinds of finches (members of the family *Emberizidae*) in Kansas, from the small but colorful goldfinch to the striking favorite of many a birdwatcher, the cardinal. Two members of this family are quite similar and, these days, familiar to anyone who has a bird feeder. One is native to America but new to the Midwest over the past 10 or 15 years, while the other seems to have been around forever but is actually an alien.

Those who have kept bird feeders for years may have noticed that there are fewer house sparrows these days. House sparrows — once called English sparrows — have been here a long time but are not native to North America. In a rare reversal of natural history, however, the house sparrow is slowly being

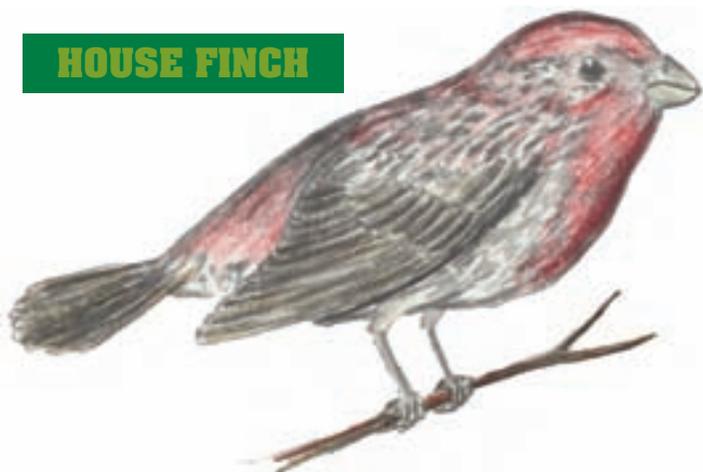


HOUSE SPARROW

out-competed by the house finch, the “new-comer” with a reddish-orange head and rump. (The female house finch is actually quite plain, a drab brown bird looking very much like a house sparrow.)

According to bird feeder reports conducted by KDWP, the Kansas Ornithological Society, and Audubon of Kansas, house finches historically have not made the top-10 list of birds on the annual surveys. By 1995, however, they were the third most common bird in the Kansas Winter Bird Survey, which is taken every January.

The house finch is native to western states, but it was introduced to the east coast in about 1940. Pet dealers there sold house



HOUSE FINCH

PURPLE FINCH



even feed the young dandelion seeds. Adults will come to any feeder to eat sunflower or thistle seed.

Another reddish finch that can be confused with the house finch is the purple finch. "Purple" is not very descriptive of this bird because the male looks more like he was dipped in

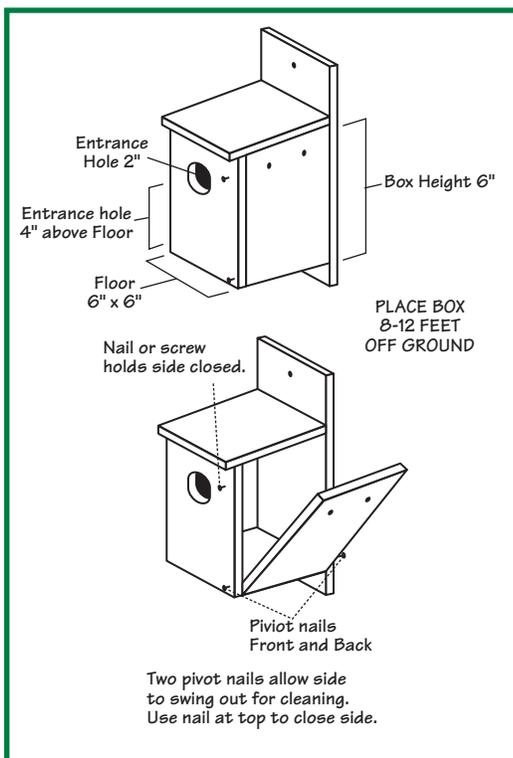
tail. Male purple finches differ from male house finches in that they have a darker red color and no streaks on their breast feathers.

Purple finches will only be seen at a feeder during the winter months because they nest in the pine country of the northern U.S. Usually, a small number journey far south in winter, but greater numbers migrate when the weather is severe and food supply is low.

finches as caged birds and dubbed them "Hollywood finches." Because taking birds from the wild and selling them was a violation of the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act, many of the caged birds were released and established wild populations that spread throughout the East.

The coastal populations of house finches adapted well to human habitat and expanded their ranges toward the Midwest. In the last few years, the two expanding fronts have merged, so now the bird's range stretches from coast to coast. Eastern Kansas probably was some of the last real estate that the house finch inhabited.

House finches eat weed seeds, especially those from dandelion and thistle. Adults



raspberry juice. The female looks like a large sparrow with a light white line behind the eye and a dark jaw stripe.

Purple finches are slightly larger than house finches and have a more deeply-notched

House finches are now permanent residents of Kansas. They nest in cities, towns, and homesteads and often raise two broods a year. Because the house sparrow and house finch use the same nesting sites, they are in direct competition. The aggressive house finch — the true native species — appears to be winning this battle. The population of house sparrows will probably decline until a balance is reached where the two species can co-exist.

Meanwhile, the house finch is an easily-accepted "invader" in Kansas. It has some features that most people find appealing: its status as a native species, its colorful feathering, and its musical song.



Backlash

by Mike Miller

Danger Calls

I was fiddling with my turkey calls the other day. (Technically, fiddling is one of the early stages of hunt preparation. There are five stages, beginning with “finding your stuff.” The second is “fiddling with your stuff.” And fiddling leads directly to: “making sure all your stuff works.” The fourth stage is “fixing stuff or buying new stuff,” and the last stage is “organizing stuff for tomorrow.” Each stage can take several hours or several days, depending on what season it is and how much stuff you have.) Anyway, I was trying to get up the nerve to put one of my diaphragm turkey calls in my mouth and try it. Yelping on a mouth call is great fun, and besides, I was fiddling. But I couldn’t tell if I had rinsed it off after last season. Stuff can grow between the latex reeds on a used turkey call.

Finally, I popped it in and pushed it up against the roof of my mouth and let out a few yelps. The reeds were stuck together and the call sounded awful. As I spit it out, I was reminded of Lennie’s introduction to the mouth diaphragm years ago.

Lennie was fascinated when I demonstrated a diaphragm call. He was just learning to turkey hunt and figured a hands-free call would be his ticket to success. Fumbling with a box call had already cost him a big tom.

I showed him which calls to order, and I remember him phoning excitedly when they arrived. “Whatter you doin’?” he asked. “Come over and show me again how these calls work,” he ordered before I said a word.

When I arrived, Lennie was carefully examining a triple-reed diaphragm, holding it up to the light and squinting at the latex layers.

“It’s not working. Which way does it go?” he asked.

“The longest reed goes on top. Put it in and let her rip,” I said with a knowing grin.

“Pfffft, pfffft, pfffft,” Lennie huffed.

“Sounds more like an out-of-breath cricket than a turkey,” I joked.

Embarrassed, he repositioned the call.

“Pfffft, pfffft, pitouie!” the call came flying out.

As I laughed, Lennie snatched the call from the table and held it in my face.

“Here, Mr. Turkey Calling Expert, show me.”

I wasn’t about to put Lennie’s turkey call in my mouth, but I put one of my own in and yelped and cut and even gobbled just to rub it in.

“Okay, Okay,” Lennie said as he held up his hand.

“So you’re better at something than I am. What am I doing wrong?”

I explained how the call had to be pushed against the roof of his mouth, and how he had to regulate air passing over the reeds with his tongue. I made some long, drawn out yelps, while he looked at me skeptically. He picked up his call and tried again.

“That’s what I was doing. Pfffft pfffft, pfffft, yeelp!” Lennie made a screechy sounding yelp. He grinned and kept yelping.

“Yeeeeelp, yeeeeelp, yeeelp. I got it. I got it,” he declared.

“Now, make the yelp break a little quicker and work on your cadence,” I said.

But Lennie wasn’t listening. He was strutting around the house proudly screeching on his new call. He yelped at his wife. She rolled her eyes and gave me a “What have you done now?” look.

“Practice,” I said, then left before I got in more trouble.

A month later, Lennie and I were going scouting. Turkey season was a week away, and we were going to listen for gobblers along the river that evening. As he drove, Lennie pulled his call from his shirt pocket.

“I’m getting better,” he said. “But sometimes it just doesn’t sound right.”

He put the call in and made some weird hissing sounds before a yelp finally broke out. We both laughed. But as he inhaled after laughing, he sucked the call into the back of his windpipe. Lennie’s eyes grew big and he froze in panic. My first thoughts were how the Heimlich Maneuver might be performed in the front seat of a tiny Nissan truck cab, but my second thought was bailing out since Lennie was driving. Finally, he coughed. The call fired out of his mouth like a bullet, smacking the windshield.

We both stared in stunned silence at the call stuck to the windshield. Then I exploded with uncontrolled laughter. Lennie was hurt by my insensitivity.

“It ain’t funny,” he wheezed. “I could have suffocated.”

In between gasps and guffaws, I said “You could put an eye out with that thing. I guess if you ever run out of shotgun shells, you could kill a turkey with your call.”

As relief swept over him, Lennie ended up laughing until tears ran down his face. He finally got the nerve to try a mouth diaphragm again several years later, but he still prefers a box call. He claims it’s because box calls sound better, but now you know the rest of the story. ♡

