

KANSAS

Wildlife & Parks

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2004

\$2.75





On Point

by Mike Hayden



Circle K Part II: Sustainability

In my last On Point column I wrote about the Circle K project in Edwards County. An important point of that column was that the Circle K represents a unique opportunity to move toward sustainable water use in the Middle Arkansas River Basin. On a larger scale, the project could be an example of how to achieve sustainable water usage in western Kansas and the entire Great Plains region, while diversifying rural economies by creating an outdoor recreation area. When reliable water levels are achieved, ground water and stream flows are as stable as possible, given normal fluctuations in precipitation. With such stability, sustainable irrigation could continue far into the future. In addition, community water supplies would also be stabilized, which obviously benefits the area residents and businesses. Sustainable water usage is absolutely critical to long-term economic stability.

Representatives from the Kansas Water Office and the Kansas Department of Agriculture's Division of Water Resources have stated that it is a priority to achieve sustainable levels of ground and surface water in the Middle Basin of the Arkansas River. The Division of Water Resources conservatively estimates that the Basin is over-appropriated, or in other words the annual use exceeds inflow, by 41,000 acre-feet. Average annual use at the Circle K is about 6,600 acre-feet, although about 8,000 acre-feet are appropriated. Taking Circle K wells out of production would put a significant dent in the total water usage that needs to be retired in the Middle Arkansas Basin, and it is water that other farmers would not have to give up. If water-use reductions are to occur in the Middle Arkansas Basin, it makes economic sense to stop irrigating the Circle K's less productive sandy soils than to stop in areas with more productive soils.

The underlying water supply for the region is the High Plains Aquifer. And although it's not as well known as the Ogallala Aquifer, which feeds much of western Kansas and the Great Plains, the High Plains Aquifer is also being depleted at a non-sustainable rate, as shown by the over-appropriation of the Middle Arkansas Basin.

About 4,500 acres of the 7,000-acre Circle K are irrigated with 41 center pivot irrigation units. Analysis of the wells on the ranch shows the groundwater declined 2-4 feet from 1988-2002. In addition to the change in quantity, the quality of the water has also declined with higher levels of nitrates and sulfates. These contaminants corrode the irrigation equipment.

The most apparent sign of groundwater depletion is the lack of surface flow in the Arkansas River. For the past 30 years, the number of no-flow days in the river at Dodge City has outnumbered the days the river has carried water above ground. The Circle K is situated about 30 miles east of Dodge City, and the river there is dry, as well. However, water levels are a few feet below the riverbed, and it is likely that managing water use would result in a rise in water levels, which in turn would provide surface flow in this section of the Arkansas River. Restoration of flow in the riverbed is part of achieving sustainable water levels, and flow provides habitat for countless types of plant and animal life. A healthy flowing river is an indicator of a sustainable water supply. A sustainable water supply should assure a more stable economy and improved quality of life for people in Edwards County and all of Kansas. I will discuss habitat restoration on the Circle K in the next column.

Water is key to the agriculture-based economy of much of the Great Plains. Some areas can be farmed without irrigation, but the Circle K would be difficult to cultivate without irrigation. The soil is composed almost entirely of sand, and without vegetation it blows and shifts with the wind and rain. For years it has been difficult for those who have farmed the property to turn a profit. Although using the water is a necessity to farm the area, the over-use of the water is creating the non-sustainable conditions that if left unchecked will ultimately lead to serious deterioration of agriculture in the region. Achieving sustainability, while diversifying the area economy by creating a public outdoor recreation area is a win-win project for everyone.



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KANSAS WILDLIFE & PARKS (ISSN 0898-6975) is published bimonthly (every other month) by the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, 1020 S Kansas Ave., Topeka, KS 66612. Address editorial correspondence to Kansas Wildlife & Parks Magazine, 512 SE 25th Ave., Pratt, KS 67124 (620) 672-5911. Send subscription requests to Kansas Wildlife & Parks Magazine, P.O. Box 8059, Red Oak, IA 51591. Subscription rate: one year \$10; two years \$18; and three years \$27. Articles in the magazine may be reprinted with permission. Periodical postage paid at Pratt, KS and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Kansas Wildlife & Parks Magazine, P.O. Box 8059, Red Oak, IA 51591. For subscription inquiries call toll-free 1 800 288-8387.



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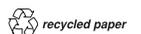
Front Cover: Mourning doves are among the trickiest targets for wingshooters, as well as photographers. Mike Blair filmed this closeup with a 600mm lens, f/9.5 @ 1/640th sec. **Back:** Rocky Ford, near Manhattan, offers fine flyfishing opportunities in late summer. Blair captured the mood with a 55mm lens, f/16 @ 1/500th sec.



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Prairie Alliances

by **Jim Minnerath and Greg Kramos** *private lands biologists, USFWS*, **Kent Jarnagin**, *President of the Comanche Pool Resource Foundation*, **Ted Alexander**, *CPPRF board member*, and **Jeff Davidson**, *Tallgrass Legacy Alliance Coordinator*

photos by Mike Blair

Preserving our grasslands and our ranching heritage are goals of several Kansas conservation groups. The photo of the Konza Prairie above shows the results of programs designed to control woody plant invasion on tallgrass prairie.



The nation's grasslands are a national treasure. Urbanites living far from the prairie seldom appreciate it. Oddly, even those within eyesight may not understand its importance. As a landscape element, the prairie is simply "there" in the way that mountains are "there." Most dismiss the prairie as something that always was and always will be.

Those who live within the prairie know differently. They depend upon the values provided by earth's great seas of grass. For them, abundant feed

for livestock, natural filtration for clean water, the song of wind through bluestem, and space to soothe the soul are compelling reasons to preserve this critical habitat. A world hungry for space greedily eyes the prairie for other uses. The danger of this is evident in the rapid consumption of America's once vast prairies.

New conservation efforts are springing up to battle this trend. The Sandhills Task Force in northwestern Nebraska and the Malpai Borderlands Group of southwestern New Mexico are

examples of grassroots efforts aimed at preserving America's prairies. These groups include ranchers, environmentalists, government agencies, and concerned citizens. They recognize the importance of rural life and the unique natural resources of the grasslands. They promote the values of water quality and quantity, wildlife habitat, ranching economics, invasive species control, and scenic vistas, all of which benefit ranchers as well as their respective regions.

Kansas, the greatest remaining prairie state, is joining these



The Tallgrass Legacy Alliance deals with eastern Kansas prairies (above.) The Comanche Pool Resource Foundation of southwestern Kansas is comprised of mid-grass prairie (pg. 8). Similar issues, particularly woody invasion, are concerns for both groups.

efforts through the recently formed Tallgrass Legacy Alliance (TLA) and the Comanche Pool Prairie Resource Foundation (CPPRF). These landowner-driven groups are truly “keepers of the prairie,” formed to strengthen the family ranch while preserving Kansas’ native grasslands. Both organizations stress partnerships. Instead of locking their gates to conservation groups, government agencies, and the public, they extend a friendly hand, seeking ideas and resources to better manage the prairie ecosystems which sustain us all.

Tallgrass Legacy Alliance

Opinions on prairie management are diverse, but everyone recognizes that issues threatening the future of grasslands are numerous, complicated, and

immediate. Economics, ecology, culture, and preservation of ranching communities are the focus of the TLA. Realizing that some issues are both sensitive and controversial, the organization proceeded on a principle stated simply as: “hang your hat, gun, and ego at the door.” All opinions are treated with respect. A significant early decision ensured that neutrality would be maintained even in the most hotly contested issues. Intent was to create a “clearing house” of ideas and information pertinent to the tallgrass prairie.

Focus area for the group was defined as the 4.5 million acres of the greater Flint Hills of Kansas and Oklahoma. Also included was the more fragmented tallgrass area east of the Flint Hills, which added an additional million acres of native

prairie pastures and hay meadows.

Tallgrass Legacy Alliance action was to be based on the following facts:

- Less than 4 percent of the original North American tallgrass prairie remains.
- Historically, Kansas ranked 5th nationally in tallgrass prairie acreage but now is first and roughly equals the acreage of all other prairie states combined.
- Nearly 83 percent of Kansas’ historic tallgrass prairie has been lost.

Of first order was to recognize needs and prioritize concerns from all parties involved. A dozen important issues emerged. Interestingly, prairie invasion by woody or invasive species was ultimately ranked first in importance as a prairie threat. Economic and ownership

considerations occupied the middle rankings, with lack of public understanding and disconnected conservation programs identified as lower priority problems.

From these issues, the TLA generated a series of goals:

- Serve as a national model of voluntary cooperation to manage the Kansas tallgrass prairie. Management must support the ranching culture, be ecologically sound, and preclude any further listing of tallgrass species under the endangered species act.

- Facilitate specific farm bill policies and generate better use of existing programs for Kansas tallgrass prairie.

- Assist with development of a tallgrass easement program in Kansas.

- Prevent further loss of tallgrass prairie.

- Increase public awareness of the benefits provided by the tallgrass prairie, including watershed, economic use, history, aesthetics, and recreational

opportunities.

Following the initial development of the TLA plan, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation awarded a monetary grant to hire a half-time coordinator in 2001. It was quickly decided that becoming a non-profit organization could help the TLA better achieve its mission and goals through public donations and grants. Legal assistance from the Kansas Farm Bureau helped accomplish this status in 2002.

So far, the TLA has made significant progress toward stated goals, while addressing new needs as they arise. Progress includes tangible efforts in education through media and public programs, public policy, endowment, wildlife concerns, invasive species control, and windfarm issues.

Among these efforts, the invasive species program has probably most directly affected the landscape. More than 70,000 acres of rangeland have been improved by tree removal or

Sericea lespedeza control. Such improvements increase all aspects of range, from production to wildlife diversity and function.

Now tied to TLA goals is managing ranchlands to benefit greater prairie chicken populations, and to prevent the listing of greater prairie chickens under the Endangered Species Act. When proper management for such a keystone species takes place, all prairie wildlife stands to benefit. Good nesting habitat for the greater prairie chickens means good nesting habitat for meadowlarks, Henslow's sparrows, grasshopper sparrows, and good thermal protection for winter roosting species such as short-eared owls and marsh hawks. Good habitat for these important prairie species means good range conditions are being generated, in turn offering increased ranch profitability.

Comanche Pool Prairie Resource Foundation

A 10-hour, two-day grazing workshop tour, along with several informal discussions about rangeland issues, proved instrumental in the formation of Comanche Pool Prairie Resource Foundation (CPPRF). Five local ranchers in the Red Hills region of south-central Kansas envisioned an organization that would help protect the native prairie and its ranching lifestyle. At the same time, they were willing to challenge conventional ranching methods while confronting sensitive natural resource issues.

These five ranchers embarked on a series of planning meetings that spanned seven months. They dedicated countless volun-



Prairie alliances consider diverse needs such as wildlife, watershed, grazing, and economics. Tours and on-site training provide ranchers with new ideas for profitable and conservation-friendly land practices. *Photo by Loren Graff*



Prairie alliances recognize the importance of Kansas' ranching heritage. A primary issue is helping ranchers succeed financially while improving the state's grasslands.

teen hours and resources to make their vision happen. In April 1999, it became reality and the CPPRF was officially recognized as a non-profit organization.

The CPPRF derives its name from two sources. The first is locale. In the late-1800s, several ranchers "pooled" their livestock together and allowed them to graze over a large area of land. This area was called the Comanche Pool. It is geographically similar to the focus area of the CPPRF. The second derivation springs from concern for the health of the prairie. The Foundation's primary reason for existence is to improve the native prairie resources.

At issue are approximately 5 million acres of native rangeland dominated by mixed-grass and sand-sage prairies overlapping Kansas and Oklahoma. This Red Hills region includes Kansas' second largest tract of intact native prairie (after the Flint Hills.) The Comanche Pool Board of Trustees (initially consisting of the founding ranchers) considers it necessary to manage the Pool on a regional scale,

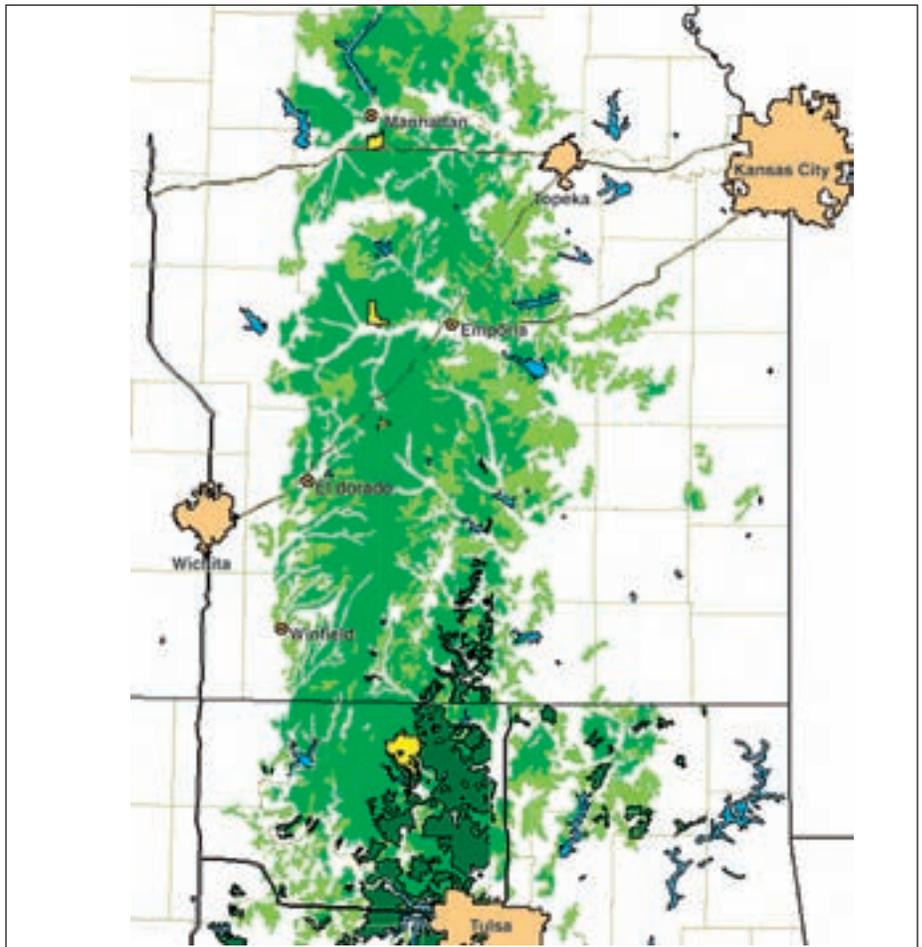
rather than political boundaries such as county or state lines.

The mission of the CPPRF is to provide demonstrations, educa-

tion, and consultation to regenerate the natural resources and to promote the economic growth of the rural community. Goals are as follows:

- Regenerate and protect natural resource ecology.
- Educate ranchers, citizens and youth about the proper management of the rangeland ecosystem.
- Enhance the socio-economic health of the rural community.

The CPPRF promotes an informal mentoring network among ranchers, who can call upon others to discuss issues, share ideas, and cooperate on projects. An important part of this process has been working with wildlife agencies and envi-



The green area on this map shows the area of Flint Hills prairie -- roughly 4.5 million acres, of which Kansas contains more than all other states combined.

ronmental groups. The CPPRF merges ranchers who have worked with these entities with ranchers who may be interested but hesitant. In turn, the Foundation expresses rancher concerns to wildlife agencies. This cooperation has led to an abundance of wildlife-friendly projects on private land.

For several years, the Foundation has concentrated on battling eastern redcedar trees that invade the native prairie. The Foundation partnered with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Kansas Department of Wildlife & Parks, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, National Fish & Wildlife Foundation and FMC Corporation to control this woody species. Battle lines have been drawn in the prairie and the partnership effort is making an impact. Conservation plans currently involve more than 72,000 acres.

This control work also improves wildlife habitat, especially for the lesser prairie chicken whose populations have decreased by 92 percent

since the 1800s. The lesser prairie chicken is now a candidate for federal listing as a threatened species.

Improvement work along 24 miles of prairie streams has benefited an important fish species, the Arkansas darter. Thus far, Foundation efforts have amounted to more than \$850,000 in improvements to the native range ecosystem and local ranching communities.

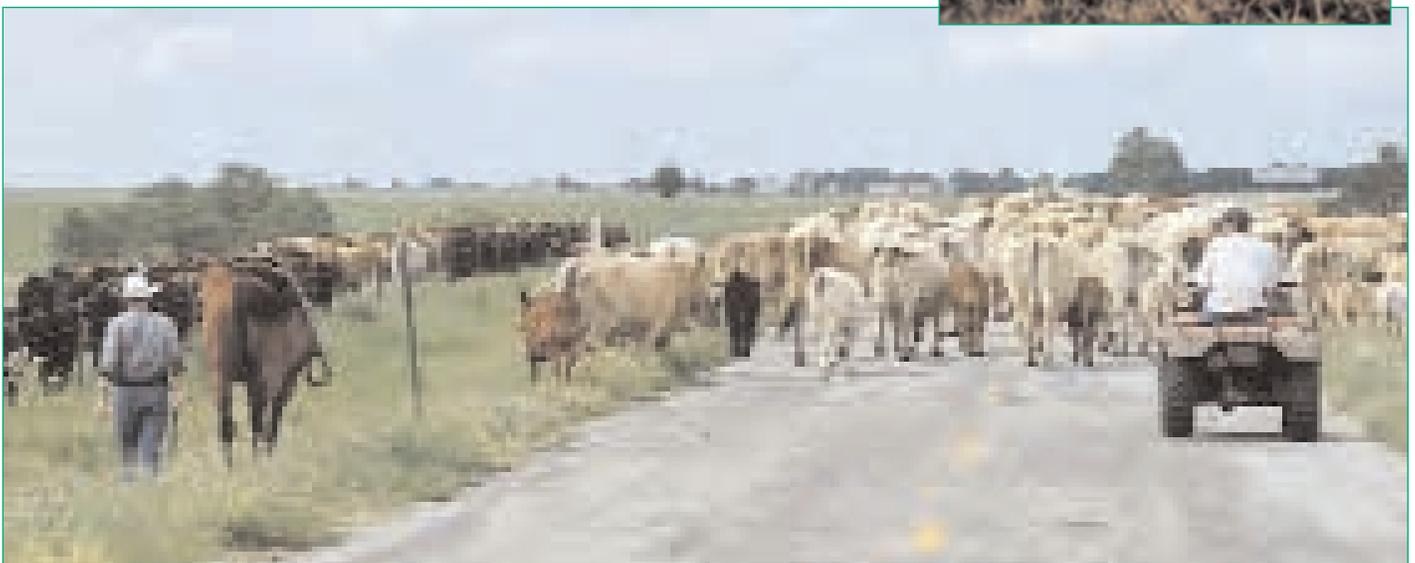
As this becomes known, additional ranchers seek to join in these efforts. Projects amounting to more than \$400,000 are on a waiting list for funding to control cedar trees, improve wildlife habitat, and increase range productivity.

Increased requests for conservation plans also increased the need for additional technical assistance. To meet this growing demand, the Foundation helped facilitate cooperation among federal, state, and local agencies in two states to fund a rangeland management specialist for two years. This position now assists Kansas and Oklahoma

ranchers within the Pool.

The Foundation also works to provide ranchers with continuing education opportunities. These focus on ideas and methodology to strengthen the family ranch and enhance the range ecosystem. Attendance proves rancher desire for this service. Meetings have an average attendance of more than 50 people, many of whom visit from other states. The Foundation sponsors internationally-known speakers such as Bud Williams, Temple Grandin, Jim Gerrish, Charlie Orchard, and Kirk Gadzia.

Demonstration of range management techniques and technology is another focal point of the Foundation. Ranchers are encouraged to implement “out of the box” ideas. The best of



Grazing and wildlife are two vital issues affecting ranchers. While cattle will always be a mainstay for rural Kansans, new concepts such as eco-tourism may improve economics while protecting grassland species such as prairie chickens.

these are then demonstrated in working ranch settings. Demonstrations allow ranchers to visualize the benefits of management changes. These include patch burning, solar-powered water systems, and various grazing systems.

Educational opportunities extend beyond the Pool, as well. The CPPRF has sponsored numerous range ecology research projects through the Fort Hays State University Biology Department. Graduate students have conducted research within the CPPRF's service area pertaining to plant diversity, insect diversity, and

prairie bird nesting success.

To strengthen the it's regional concept, the CPPRF has formed a partnership with High Plains Resource Conservation and Development in Oklahoma, and the Texas Prairie Rivers Region in the Texas panhandle. This alliance has grown into the Prairie States Coalition which now spans five states. Using a federal grant, the Coalition is developing a model for rural economic growth. Specific issues for this partnership include grassland recovery, wildlife habitat improvement, eco-tourism, and other rural economic development oppor-

tunities.

All Kansas, ranchers and city dwellers alike, will benefit from a better understanding of the prairie. This surpasses ranch management, extending to social appreciation of the beautiful prairie landscape. A healthy, scenic environment, maintained with a beef-based economy, provides economic and social stability for our state. It also preserves a land rich with prairie wildlife, and guarantees the continuation of Kansas' ranching heritage.

When prairies are appreciated, everyone wins. 🍷





Mike Blair photo

GETTING ON TARGET

by J. Mark Shoup
associate editor, Pratt

You're not born with good wingshooting skills, but you can learn to shoot a shotgun. And with just a little practice at the local skeet or clays range, you'll be much more successful during this fall's bird seasons.

Some 19 million Americans hunt each year, and more than 23 million enjoy target shooting with firearms, according to the National Shooting Sports Foundation. Many participate in this age-old pastime for fun and challenge —

to hit the bull's eye or see a clay target explode in a puff of grey powder. Target shooting is among the country's fastest growing recreational activities.

However, the shooting sports are, for some, a warm-up for the more serious challenge of

hunting. Wingshooters in this category enjoy shotgun sports such as skeet, trap, five-stand, and sporting clays. Some hunters argue that trap is too specialized and skeet too predictable to help the hunter when it comes to wingshooting.

However, sporting clays and five-stand enthusiasts know that these games will pay off in spades when upland bird and waterfowl seasons open, and with small modifications, skeet can offer a nearly equivalent challenge.

Sporting clays, in fact, was invented by the English in the early 1900s to simulate shots one might encounter afield and help prepare hunters for game bird seasons. The game didn't catch on in the United States until the 1980s, but it has grown quickly in recent years.

Sometimes referred to as "golf with a shotgun," sporting clays courses are laid out with a series of stations (rather than tee boxes) meandering through a pastoral country setting. Most courses offer 10 or 15 stations, each designed to recreate hunting shots. In fact, some stations are given such descriptive names as "Flushing Grouse," "Crossing Dove," or "Springing Teal," so the shooter can put himself in a hunting frame of mind.

I first encountered sporting clays a number of years ago at Claythorne Lodge, near Columbus and found it to be the most fun of any shooting game I've ever participated in. The sport offers a pleasant stroll through woods and fields combined with the broadest array of target presentations imaginable. From bouncing "rabbits" to springing teal — in singles, doubles, or report pairs (a second target thrown on the report of the first shot) — the



sporting clays range offers a challenging experience that can't help but improve one's wing-shooting.

I have also shot at Flint Oak, near Fall River; Michael Murphy and Sons, near Augusta; and LaSada, near Russell; but there are plenty of others to choose from. *Black's Wing & Clay Shotgunner's Handbook* contains a fairly complete list of trap and clay ranges and gun clubs (as

well as shooting instructors), or log on to the Kansas State Sporting Clays Association's website for a complete listing of Kansas sporting clays clubs: www.kssca.org.

Kansas Wildlife and Parks magazine editor Mike Miller took up sporting clays about three years ago, and although it has become a serious game for him, he views it as an invaluable wingshooting practice tool.



Doves are a challenge for even the most seasoned wingshooters, but those who spend time shooting skeet, five-stand or sporting clays will enjoy better hunting success.

Mike Blair photo, inset by Mark Shoup

“Sporting clays helps you with every aspect of shooting,” he says. “It simulates hunting shots and trains you to do things right. The most important thing in shooting is vision, and shooting clays teaches you to focus on the target and make mounting the gun second nature.”

Getting into the clays game has also taught Miller the importance of practice.

“Everyone who is good at something practices,” he explains. “Archers, golfers, rifle shooters all practice, but wingshooters have a tendency to wait until opening day of season to pull out their shotguns. It’s human nature, I guess.

Most of us grew up thinking you were a good shot or you weren’t, but it’s a learned skill. And when you shoot at a pheasant, it’s important to know you are proficient.”

Miller is also active in the Pratt Gun Club, where a group of men gather every Thursday evening to shoot five-stand. Five-stand is a good substitute for sporting clays because it can be set up in a much smaller area — in this case, a trap and skeet range — while still creating a variety of hunting-simulated shots. This group has been especially creative in obtaining equipment as

well as developing their game.

Using club funds and a grant from the Pratt Travel and Tourism Committee, they purchased four portable traps that hold about 250 targets each. One of these is a trap that can throw a rabbit target across the ground or arc birds through the air, presenting a unique and challenging target.

By placing these portable



Mark Shoup photos

The game of five-stand allows varied target presentations, similar to sporting clays, in a small area. Portable traps allow the layout to be changed and can provide incoming, quartering away, crossing, or overhead shots. A round consists of 25 targets, a single and two pair at each station, but singles can be shot at twice, so more than 25 shells may be needed.

traps at various positions around the range and combining them with high and low skeet houses, they have created a fast-paced, variable game that can recreate most shots a hunter might encounter. Crossing, incoming, going away, doubles, reports: all these shots can be offered, and target patterns and speeds can be quickly changed and varied from week to week or during a shoot.

Shooters at the Pratt Gun Club agree that this kind of shooting

improves success afield.

"This is wonderful preparation for upland bird hunting," says Frank O'Brien, who runs the Kinsley Gun Club and visits the Pratt club on occasion. "It gives you every angle imaginable, and you don't have to walk. It's really faster than sporting clays."

Brad Kidd, a Master Class sporting clays shooter from Wichita who frequents the course agrees, with one caveat: "This will definitely make you a

better, quicker shooter, but you'll have watch out; these targets fly faster than birds, so at the first of the season, you may find yourself shooting in front of live birds."

Steve Parsons, an officer in the club, has been shooting five-stand for about a year, specifically to improve his upland shooting. "It has worked, too," he explains. "There is no doubt this improves your wing-shooting. No doubt."

If you can't find sporting clays or five-stand near your home, skeet can be an excellent alternative for practice. Although skeet is predictable — every target flies the same speed, height and distance — there are some things you can do to make the shooting more like a real hunting situation. In the Nov./Dec. 2003 issue of *Gray's Sporting Journal*, Terry Wieland offers some tips to take the predictability out of skeet.

First, start with your gun in a carry position, safety on, just like you would when afield rather than shouldering it before the bird is thrown. Second, with the club's approval, alter your shots. Shooting from between established stations can present differing flight patterns that force even the seasoned skeet shooter to stop shooting mechanically and concentrate on target and technique.

Shooting only doubles or shooting the course in reverse can also force the shooter to concentrate harder on the flying target. Anything that breaks the predictability pattern of skeet will improve the game as a wingshooting practice tool. Shoot the doubles in reverse



Sporting clays is great practice for hunting, but it is also a competitive sport. Many who try it become hooked and participate in registered shoots such as the 2004 Kansas State Sporting Clays Championship, pictured above at Claythorne Lodge near Columbus.

order. Shoot at a longer (but still safe) distance. Add the element of surprise by having the puller push the button anywhere from one to 10 seconds after you shout "pull!" Ask him to surprise you with report doubles or random pulls, so you don't know which house the first bird is coming from.

Although some of your shooting partners might give you a hard time, don't keep score. Use your imagination to think up new variations on this game and only remember successful shots.

Whether you're shooting sporting clays, five-stand, skeet, or just throwing trap with a hand thrower, practice makes perfect. Here are a few rules of thumb to help perfect your practice with these games:

- before hunting season, practice with your hunting gun so you become familiar with it's weight, feel, and recoil;

- shooting ranges limit shot size to no larger than 7 1/2, so you may want to spend a little time in the country with a small portable thrower and larger loads used when hunting pheasants, ducks, or geese;

- if possible, spend a few sessions with an experienced, certified shooting instructor;

- keep both eyes open and concentrate on the flying target, not your barrel;

- always wear eye and ear protective gear; and

- practice lifting and mounting your gun smoothly at home, pointing

and moving across the line where wall meets ceiling. This develops both technique and muscle tone.

While most hunters enjoy just being afield, I've never met one who didn't have more fun when the birds offered plenty of shots, even if the shooters weren't

having much luck bagging game. If you're an avid bird hunter, tap into that natural love of shooting and bring more game home this fall. Find a local gun club and get in the game. Come November, you'll find yourself right on target. ♡



Mark Shoup photo

Sporting clays or five-stand allow shooters to practice a variety of targets while working on shooting fundamentals. These disciplines are also lots of fun and provide a competitive atmosphere that will make you a better wingshooter, guaranteed.

Finding A Place To Hunt



by Dustin Teasley
senior graphic designer, Pratt

photos by Mike Blair
associate editor/photographer, Pratt

Access to private land for hunting is definitely more difficult to obtain these days. However, the author has developed a system that works. And if you're willing to put in the effort and time getting to know landowners, it will work for you, too.



Lucky is a word often used by my hunting companions when they talk about areas I hunt, as in, “Man, you sure are lucky to have a spot like this.” I have to correct them by saying that luck had little to do with it. Hard work, time, and generous landowners are the reasons for my success, and anyone willing to invest the time and energy can have similar “luck.”

Finding a place to hunt in this day and age can be difficult. With lease hunting on the increase,

prime hunting spots are getting harder to come by. Local hunters may see access to traditional private land slip away. New hunters, or those new to an area, face even greater obstacles. High fuel prices, busy schedules, and unfamiliarity with the surrounding area make finding hunting ground more difficult. Public lands can provide surprisingly good hunting, but many prefer private land options. Fortunately, with determination and the right set of tools gaining access to private land can be accomplished.

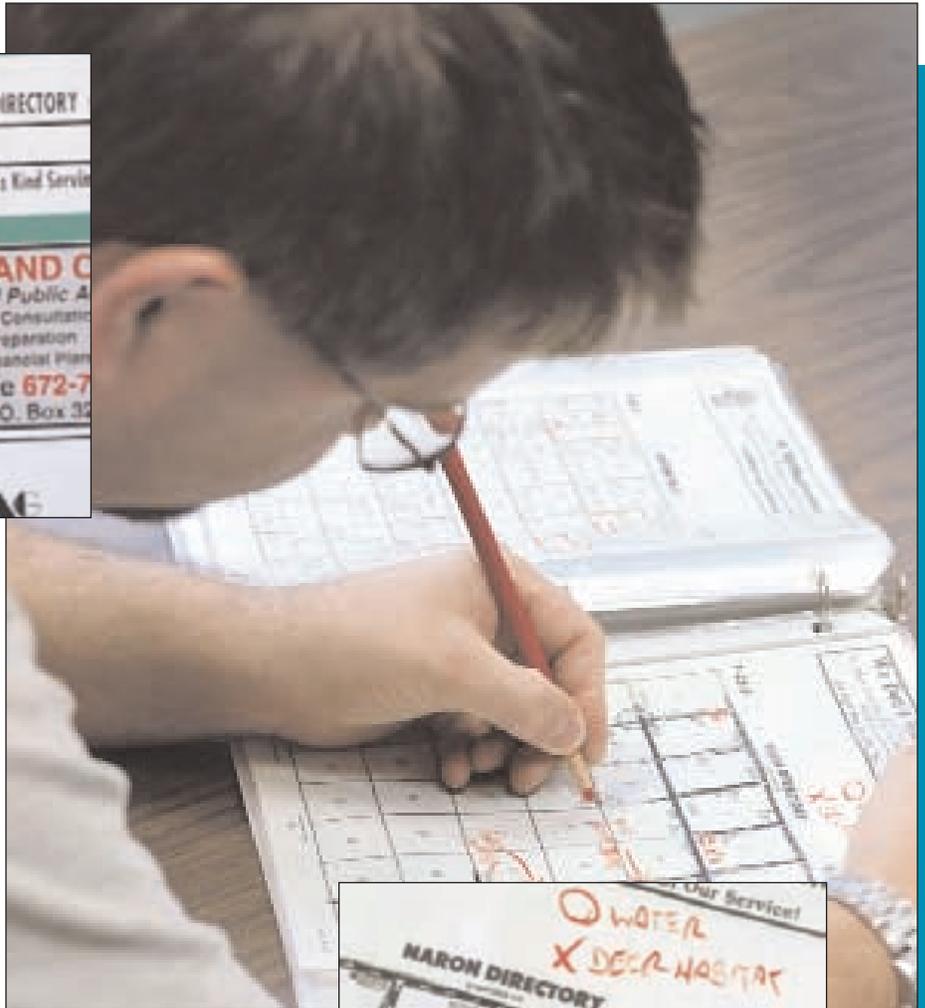
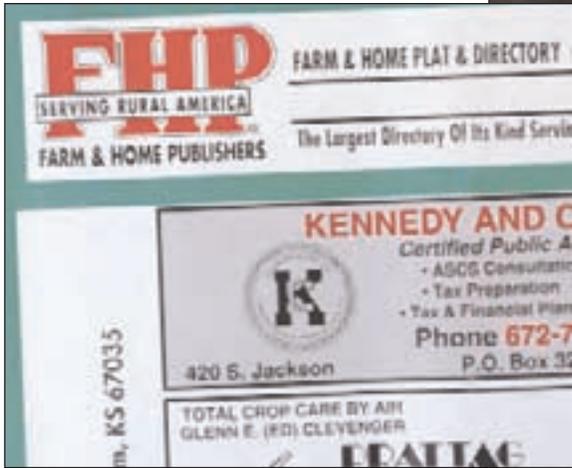
Small tracts of land, or areas with habitat that changes dramatically from year to year, can be easier to access than larger tracts and more consistent habitats. These small areas are usually very productive for many species of game such as ducks, geese, deer, pheasants, and even turkeys. Getting access to small areas can be easier than you think.

First, pick one species that you want to hunt. Then, address the

type of habitat it is most likely to use. Since habitat can vary from season to season, it makes sense to start the search process during the selected species’ season. The search process can then widen before landowner contacts are made.

Look for are small tracts of land that may be overlooked by other hunters. A 40-acre woodlot adjacent to crop fields and a creek, may hold deer traveling from feeding to bedding areas. Small waterways through harvested crop fields, or partially uncut crops, may produce pheasants. A heavy rain may produce 2- or 3-acre sheetwater ponds, perfect for ducks. Goose hunters know that any corn field may attract hungry geese at any time, so continuous scouting and having organized landowner contact information can pay big benefits.

A county plat book is an invaluable tool for locating potential hunting sites. Plat books are available from local Natural Resource Conservation Service



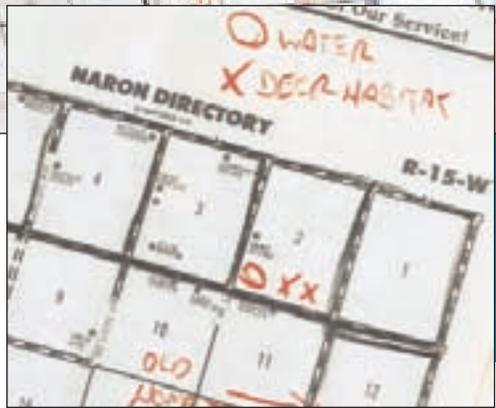
Plat directories, available for each Kansas county, are invaluable in helping determine land ownership. Individual township maps protected by plastic sleeves allow marks to be changed from year to year without damage to maps

(NRCS) offices, or they can be ordered online. You can also study these books at your local library. But you'll want your own maps, so it's best to purchase a book. A \$25 plat book contains maps that divide a county into townships and contain information about section and landowner boundaries, as well as a listing of current landowners.

I take the plat book, cut out all pages and place them in clear vinyl protectors in a 3-ring notebook. This allows me to use a grease pencil or erasable marker to write information on the maps. I will usually carry a few different colors to designate different habitat. Because the maps are expensive and plans may change from year to year, this system protects the original maps while allowing functional use.

I refined this technique when I first got into duck hunting. Early September rains had provided

more than usual sheetwater water in the area. To find potential teal hunting areas, one of my hunting buddies and I spent several evenings driving the backroads and marking the most promising looking spots on plat maps. We picked a township map we wanted to search and started driving the roads in a methodical order. This maximized our time and saved miles. We marked the roads we traveled with a black grease pencil to keep track. When we found an area that had hunt-able surface water, we marked it with a red circle. We continued driving townships and marking



maps and then spent a couple of evenings figuring out who owned what land and gathering contact information.

Later, on the weekends, I made personal visits to these landowners to ask permission. I tried to pick times that did not interfere with harvest or field work. Rainy weekends were ideal. I learned that nothing gets a rejection faster than interrupting a farmer during harvest. Out-of-state or long-distance

landowner contacts were made through phone calls.

I always sought written permission. This avoided problems with law enforcement, other hunters, and family members of the landowner. I made it a practice to tell the landowner how many people might be with me and what type of vehicle I would be driving. I always left my phone number and address in case the landowner wanted to contact me.

My success that first fall surprised me. In fact, one landowner I asked offered to show me other potential hunting areas on his land. We hopped into his pickup and he showed me around. Some of the areas turned out to be great hunting spots impossible to see from the road.

Understandably, some land-

owners said no because they had others hunting but suggested that I try back next year. Other landowners said no because of lease agreements. Even so, the first year I tried this technique, I obtained permission to duck and goose hunt on six or seven properties. Most turned out to be prime spots, and I had one of the most successful hunting seasons ever.

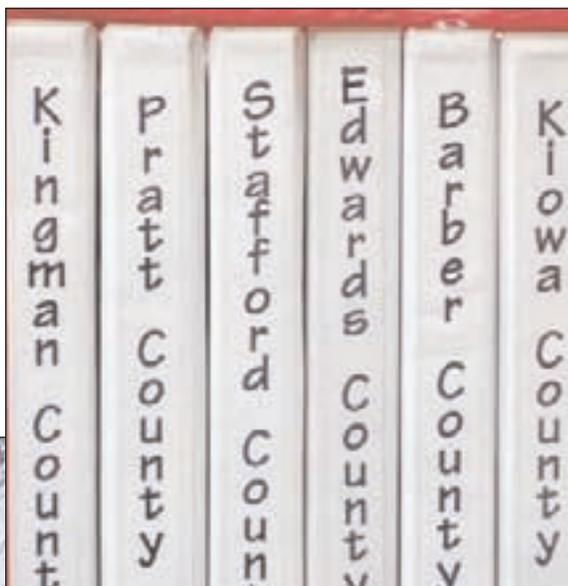
This process to find hunting

places has worked so well that I have used it year after year. Driving is usually adequate, but sometimes an aerial view is helpful. On occasion, I've hired a pilot and rented a plane to help locate water in hidden areas of crop fields. This is relatively inexpensive, especially if costs can be shared with a hunting partner. For \$100-\$150, several counties can be scouted in a short period of time. Aerial photos can also be taken for later reference.

Landowner contact shouldn't stop at the point of permission. An overlooked but critical part of the process occurs after the hunting seasons. Be sure to remove all blinds, treestands, and equipment, and fill all holes. Make a point to call and thank landowners for letting you hunt. I like to take the landowner something to show my appreciation. Canned jellies, apple pies, artwork, or

cleaned game meat can make great gifts. I've also learned that most landowners enjoy a good hunting story, and many have a few themselves. Such visits help develop trust between hunter and landowner and ideally, a friendship is built.

Growing competition for hunting access on private land makes getting permission more difficult. But with the right tools, hard work and persistence, you can find great places to hunt — and maybe a new friend along the way. ♡

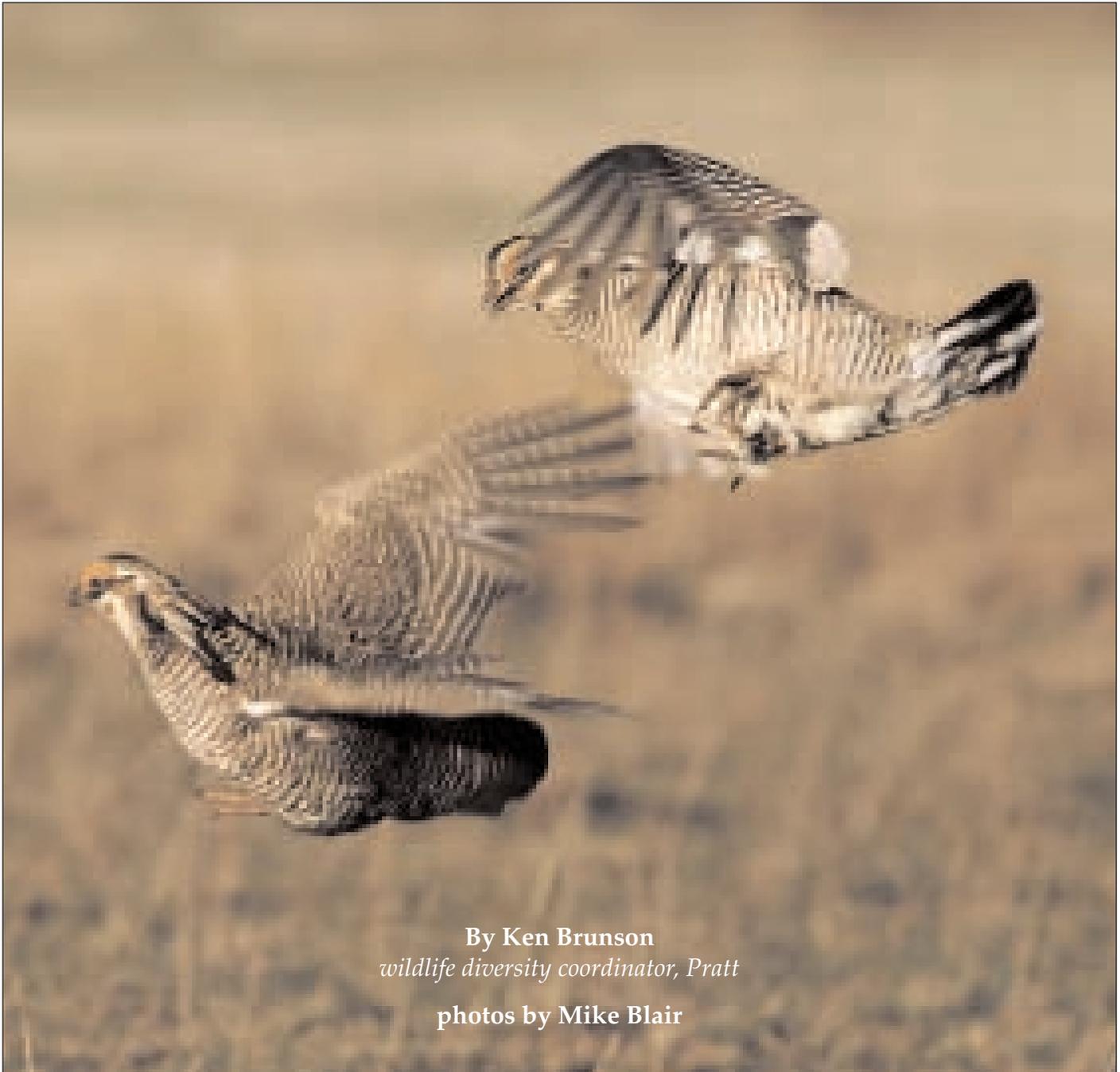


Most scouting is done driving backroads during the late summer and early fall. However, the author has rented a small plane to scout for hidden waterholes prior to the duck season. County plat maps are kept in separate notebooks for reference.

Nature-based Tourism:



Ticket To Conservation



By Ken Brunson
wildlife diversity coordinator, Pratt
photos by Mike Blair

Small rural communities aren't often thought of as tourist meccas, but that may be changing. Many are recognizing the value of their open spaces and wildlife and attracting urban dwellers hungry for both.

There was restrained celebration late that May night when three exceptional birders finished their “Big Day.” Their quest – to count as many species of birds as possible in a 24-hour period, midnight to midnight – was finished. Birders do these strange listing marathons with passion, though usually with little fanfare. And if Mike Rader, Mark Robbins and

Roger McNiel had counted 225 species of birds in 24 hours 10 years ago, few people outside of their close-knit birding group would have heard about it. However, the number of people who enjoy birding has grown at an unprecedented rate, and these passions have become more noticeable.

Early in this new century, Cris Collier of the Great Bend Convention and Visitors' Bureau, and Karl Grover, Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area manager, got their heads together. Great Bend needed to enhance economic growth, and Grover wanted more people to know about and appreciate the importance of Cheyenne Bottoms, one of North

America's most significant wetlands. Hunters have enjoyed the Bottoms for decades, but others were needed in the ranks to help build appreciation deserving of this national treasure. The result of the planning session was a "Wings-N-Wetlands Weekend" festival. For three consecutive years, Great Bend has conducted this major wildlife festival based around Kansas' central wetlands. About 150 people participated in the 2003 festival, birding at the Bottoms and nearby Quivira National Wildlife Refuge, another jewel of equal importance. Word-of-mouth praise for this marsh mecca spread throughout the country as visitors returned home.

Plenty of skeptics don't

appreciate what Kansas has to offer, not only for birding, but for wildlife and outdoor enjoyment in general. Unfortunately, many of these skeptics are Kansans. Either through simple ignorance or possibly from Wizard of Oz syndrome, Kansans have been the toughest sell for our own natural wonders. Fortunately, that's changing. Outsiders from as far away as New York and California are starting to flock to the center of the country, extolling its virtues to us. They are impressed, as evidenced by one Colorado visitor's remarks after attending the Wings-N-Wetlands event: "Can't say enough for the folks who host this event. I've never had a



Nature-based tourism can mean different things to different people. To some it may be birdwatching. To others it may be as simple as an open natural area to hike in. Many rural areas are learning that they have what "city folks" are looking for.



Birding is a popular activity at many wetlands and wildlife areas, especially the Quivira/Cheyenne Bottoms complex in central Kansas. However, other interests such as prairie wildflowers may attract visitors from other states. The benefits are more than just economic. Through these trours, people develop an appreciation for our natural resources and become supporters of conservation programs.

better time at a birding festival. I treasure the discovery of this area as a birding destination. A great value. Many thanks!"

Six months after the first Wings-N-Wetlands Weekend event at Great Bend, *Wildbird*, a respected national birding magazine, ranked central Kansas as one of the top 15 "best birding locations in North America." Then in February 2003, *Birding*, the American Birding Association's acclaimed magazine, ran an article by Mark Robbins, detailing the incredible "Big Day" that he, Rader, and McNeill experienced in May of

2002. Their 24-hour total tied for the all-time third highest species count in the nation — in Kansas! The following month, *Wildbird* ran another impressive story extolling the central Kansas wetlands as a birding location after the lead author, Sam Fried, attended the event.

Fried said: "Cheyenne Bottoms and Quivira are northeast and southeast, respectively, of Great Bend, Kansas, making this small city an excellent base of operations for what might be the shorebird capital of the world during spring migration." There are certainly other wild treasures

to discover in Kansas. But we shouldn't wait for an "outsider" to point them out to us.

The Kansas Nature-Based Tourism Alliance (KNBTA) is made up of an assortment of municipal, organization, and private enterprise representatives, as well as people who are just interested in watching wildlife. Initiated about four years ago by the Kansas Department of Commerce, the KNBTA is helping to elevate the recognition of Kansas wild offerings from within. Travel and tourism benefits are obvious, but there are other important posi-

tives. Nature-based tourism provides an opportunity for conservation. The premise of conservation is that people will not conserve that which they do not understand. The majority of people live in urban areas, even in Kansas, so exposing them to wildlife and natural wonders is the first step down the conservation road.

Not surprisingly, demand for these opportunities is increasing. According to the 2001 National Survey of Hunting, Fishing, and Wildlife Related Recreation by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the number of people in Kansas participating in wildlife viewing was double that of fishing, and triple that of hunting. In 2001, wildlife

watchers in Kansas spent \$129 million on gas, binoculars, bird guides, bird seed, motels, and other watching wildlife necessities. By contrast, hunters in Kansas spent \$236 million the same year while anglers spent \$193 million. An important distinction is that hunters and anglers must buy licenses to participate, unless exempt by age. Their license dollars purchased places like Cheyenne Bottoms, and they fund management programs for sport fish and wildlife, as well as threatened and endangered species. Hunter and angler license sales fund all important conservation programs of the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. If there was a way to

license Kansas wildlife watchers, perhaps through a general use license similar to a resident fishing or hunting license (\$19), more than \$15 million could be generated each year. Those funds would be an enormous boost to current programs and KDWP staffing and would adequately address the growing demand for wildlife viewing programs and facilities.

But what does nature tourism have to offer Mytown? It could be substantial, as Great Bend is learning since the community realized the value of its proximity to a Wetland of International Importance. That local "duckhole" provides a huge boost to the region's economy, and benefits grow as



East, west, north, south, Kansas' unique blend of wildlife makes it a great place to see the American outdoors. Big Basin Wildlife Area near Ashland affords a view of bison as they might have occurred two centuries ago.

its reputation spreads. The city of Great Bend has capitalized on the value of its incredible “back-yard” natural resource and its attraction to people across the country.

Mark Twain quipped, “Few things are harder to put up with than the annoyance of a good example.” I would add “. . . and especially if it is in Texas!” Canadian is a small town of 2,300 people in the Texas panhandle, but it has to be the shining pinnacle of nature tourism. Downtown, you’d notice that nearly all of the buildings are occupied and renovated. The city currently generates \$2 million per year, primarily marketing natural attractions. According to Chamber of Commerce director Ramelle Farrar, Canadian hosts 60,000 visitors a year, who come for nature’s feature shows and other normal, small town events

like parades and rodeos. But wildlife watching is the key ingredient. Partnerships with local ranchers have created unique opportunities to view lesser prairie chickens. Packaged tours, shows, and barbecues complete a weekend where visitors pay more than \$300 each to watch prairie chickens dance on their booming (mating) grounds. With this kind of economic attention, cooperating ranchers, who also receive part of the revenue, have renewed interest in land conservation practices that benefit prairie chickens, as well as other grassland wildlife. Federal grants for range improvement are being utilized to help both prairie chickens and the region’s economy.

Ted Eubanks runs Fermata, Inc., a nature tourism consulting firm from Austin, Tex. He’s helped both Canadian and Great

Bend explore their wild possibilities. In his presentations, he often reminds those of us who live on the Great Plains to look around and appreciate the incredible quality of life and natural resources we take for granted. There are millions of urbanites who yearn to see a prairie sunrise, the night sky filled with brilliant stars, for quiet solitude, or a thrilling and entertaining morning watching wild prairie chickens dance and display. What they seek is in our midst. We have only to unlock the opportunities and cooperation to enjoy not only the economics, but also the conservation possibilities. ♡

For more information about taking advantage of nature tourism in Kansas, visit the NaturalKansas website at:

www.naturalkansas.org





The Return

text and photo illustration by Mike Blair
associate editor/photographer, Pratt



They say

They say you can never go back to whatever or wherever “there” might be. Something is always different, taking the luster from memories that always seem perfect when colored by time. But I wonder. Places, especially the hidden haunts that make memories for a discoverer, often remain untouched and waiting. Catch the right weather, add another who shares the memories, and old times wait like stars in the deepening dusk.

That’s part of the reason why Bruce and I hunted the old Mitts farm again for squirrels. It was a glorious fall afternoon – bluebird skies and warm air, with golden light and just enough wind to stir the treetops. We carried .22s, and time stopped ticking for the half-day we searched through the tall oaks.

In the woods came a curious transformation. Gone were the boundaries of place and occasion that drew us together all too infrequently through five decades. In the oaks, again we were simply boyhood friends, living another chapter of a timeless fall ritual.

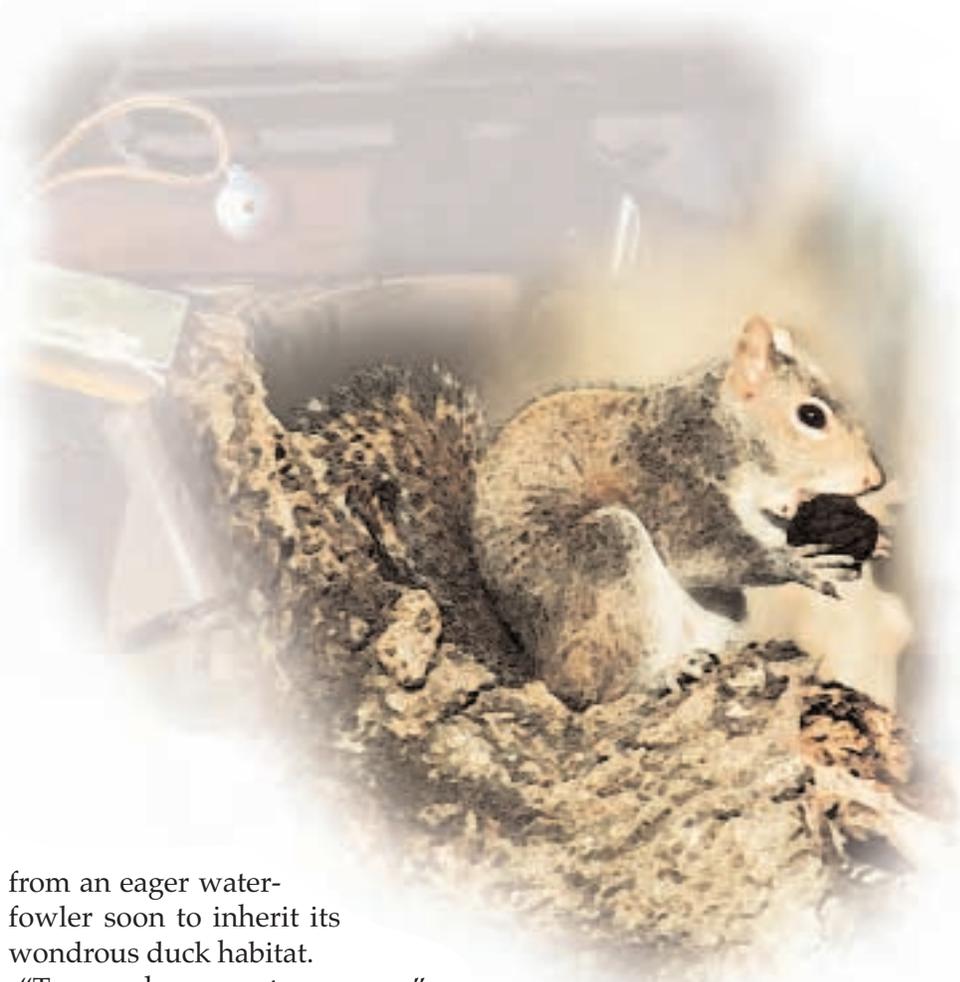
And it was an ending of sorts on the place we hunted. Bruce had owned the 200 acres for more than a decade and had used the land wisely. A mudhole pond had been drained and deepened, now the source of good fishing. A river oxbow full of tickweeds had begged to return from farm ground to wetland, and a series of new dikes secured its wish and formed a wildlife paradise between the pin oak flats along the river. Tall woodlands were left undis-

turbed, a mixture of pole and old-growth timber that harbored an abundance of game and birds. Through the years, the owner had enjoyed the wild bounty of his farm.

But this would be his last hunt in the familiar setting. The land would sell in a few days, bringing a handsome profit

the large acorns hanging overhead. But September days didn’t require it; squirrels were already there, busy in their efforts to cache a store of winter food.

We bent through the shadows of the forest edge, stepping carefully on dry leaves and hoping the dense foliage would muffle our entry. It worked. A gray, that



from an eager waterfowler soon to inherit its wondrous duck habitat.

“Too much money to pass up,” Bruce said, with a satisfaction that betrayed no hidden regret. “Let’s hit it one last time.”

We parked at the old cars, rusted relics from the 1960s whose headstones were giant bur oaks that now overgrew and hid the metal corpses. You could sit on the car hoods and wait for gray and fox squirrels to come for

small and wary creature sometimes called a “cat squirrel,” jumped up on a hackberry and froze just long enough for 3X crosshairs to find the mark. It was a classic moment, the kind always recalled when a deck of Septembers is fanned for memo-

Today proved

ries. The crack of the long rifle rang through the woods, alerting everything for a hundred yards. But the first squirrel was in the bag.

We split up. Bruce offered me the better route and rehearsed the places that yielded a limit just a week earlier. Then we set off, hunting solo, yet together in a way that never seemed to change as years went by. We would hunt a long circle and meet at the big red oaks half a mile away.

I quickly skinned and dressed the gray, placed the meat in a plastic bag, and stuck it in my daypack. Then I slipped down a dry meander and slowed to hunting speed.

"Drift like smoke," I remembered from an old *Field & Stream* article whose writer passed down the instruction of his American Indian mentor. It was good advice and kept the pace at a measure where eyes worked harder than legs. Unknown to those who don't hunt squirrels, wild tree dwellers aren't the same creatures that blithely sit at park feeders. Instead, they study the slightest clues for signs of an owl or bobcat. Add a tendency to cut nuts from a jungle 80 feet overhead, and they're hard to pin down as open targets. Wild squirrels are never easy, and hunting them is a challenge.

Today proved no different. Despite the perfect weather and urgency of season, empty woods contradicted what the first oaks

seemed to promise. Maybe the Solunars were off, or maybe it was something else. Whatever, the trees were barren of squirrels. Silence marked long stretches between gunshots. But that didn't ruin the afternoon and a host of images recalled.

I passed the place on a steep and muddy creekbank where Bruce and I once let



down a johnboat among dusking hordes of mosquitoes. Sure to catch big flatheads, we set and baited banklines with green sunfish caught earlier in the day. The night was an adventure – I'll give it that – for the reward of a single small channel catfish; but that didn't

matter now.

I stalked beside the final resting place of a doe I once arrowed, and thought of the 90-degree October evening when eight deer fed on oak mast near my bowstand. Bruce and I had hung the stand on a September day like this, and later travel from my home had allowed a quick hunt in the sweltering

conditions. Acorns fell like rain that evening as summer stubbornly persisted. The pin oak hunt will forever be a golden memory, though the place never again held the mast or the magic that it did on that special day. And years had gone by, hoping it would.

About now, a few hundred yards to the north, I knew that Bruce would be passing a tree along a field edge where a big buck once caught him in his treestand. The deer saw his motionless form point-blank as it chewed the twigs above a scrape. Unlike young bucks that often fail to notice such things, the old deer had the savvy to escape.

It whirled and disappeared before the bow could be drawn. The tree was thus marked for all time, for my friend by experience, for me by imagination, regardless of who owned the land. And I could bet that the story replayed itself as my hunting partner walked those woods a final time.

A fox squirrel on the ground

Then things slowed

caught my eye, and we began a game of cat-and-mouse that ended without a shot 30 minutes later. I reached the pecan grove where thin poles and dense crowns fought for space among the larger oaks and walnuts. There, in the fork of a familiar tree now empty, formed an image of a gray squirrel huddled against a winter day when skies matched the color of its pelage. It had been my only chance on that bone-chilling December walk, and a clean shot had been the reward. But today, among the leafy canopies warmed by golden sunlight, there were no live squirrels to break the spell of such winter ghosts, and I moved on.

A shot rang out to the north: count one squirrel down, head-shot. Seldom did my hunting partner miss.

I sat for a time on a stump and enjoyed the soft afternoon. As always, the outdoors offered refuge from phones, worries, and deadlines. Active or not, squirrels were here and everything was right. Place, time, and companionship defined the moment, and even more, contentment.

A fox squirrel sneaked in, digging quietly in the forest soil 10 feet away. I couldn't turn, but watched sideways as the animal finished its work and climbed a nearby tree. I stood and found the moving target in my scope, only to have it cross and recross the reticles as I tried to match its busy gait. Three trees later the animal paused, and my shot dropped it cleanly. Again, I took time to clean the squirrel, and as before, kept the bushy tail for tying flies on some future winter afternoon by the fire.

Bruce made contact with a soft

whistle and stepped into view. "Not much moving today," he said, perplexed, since his last outing here had produced dozens of sightings. He hefted a single fox squirrel without comment. "Got your fly rod?" he asked.

Just that simply, we quit hunting. On the way out, we stopped by the pond and cast to

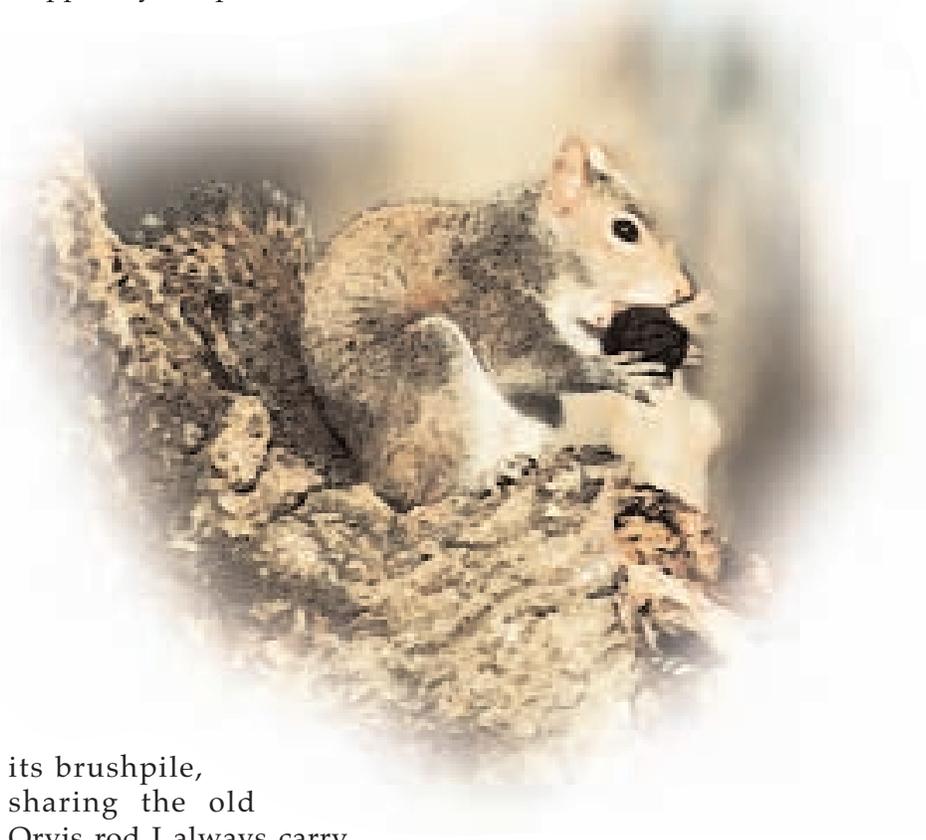
its brushpile, sharing the old Orvis rod I always carry for such chances. Bruce was on the end of it when a three-pound bass took the fly. I shot pictures, and he filleted the fish with a pocketknife while I took a turn and caught several nice crappies.

"Keep them coming," he said, continuing to clean fish and adding them to the plastic bag with the squirrels. "We might as well eat a few of these, since we'll never be back."

Then things slowed down, and the afternoon was over. We headed home, and Bruce handed me the bag of cleaned game. I

took it without argument. It would make a fine meal and cap a fine day, adding the experience of another hunt and building on a lasting friendship that always, always, included the outdoors.

There's no way to know if we'll



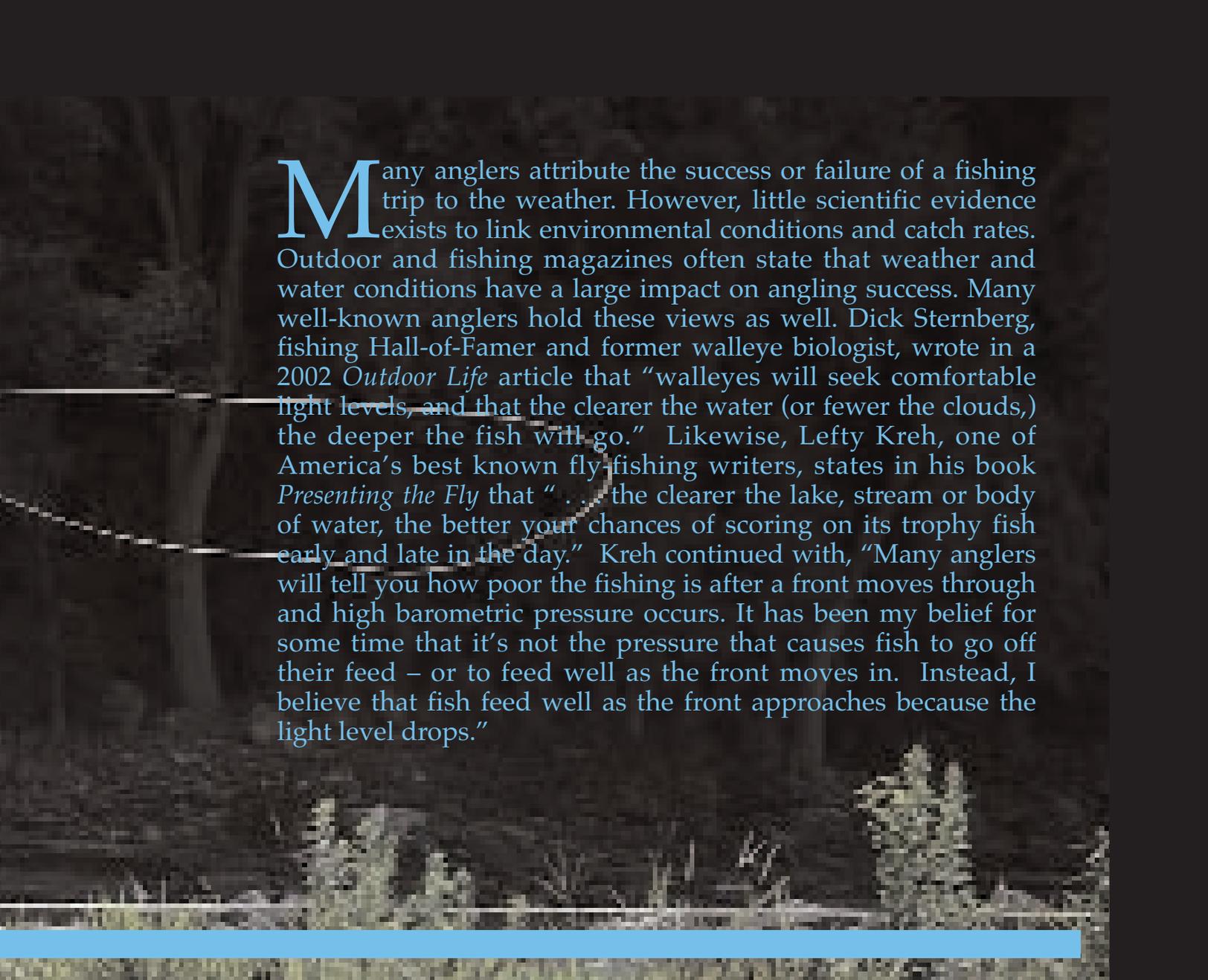
do it all again. But Lord willing, we'll hit the woods in another September. Three squirrel tails will make it to my home, hang in the garage, and given how things usually work out, never be touched until finally discarded in some spring cleaning. But once in awhile, they'll catch my gaze, recalling the best of a golden autumn afternoon.

And more, that you really can go back to the people and places that make up the best of it all. ♡

Can Weather



Affect Fishing?

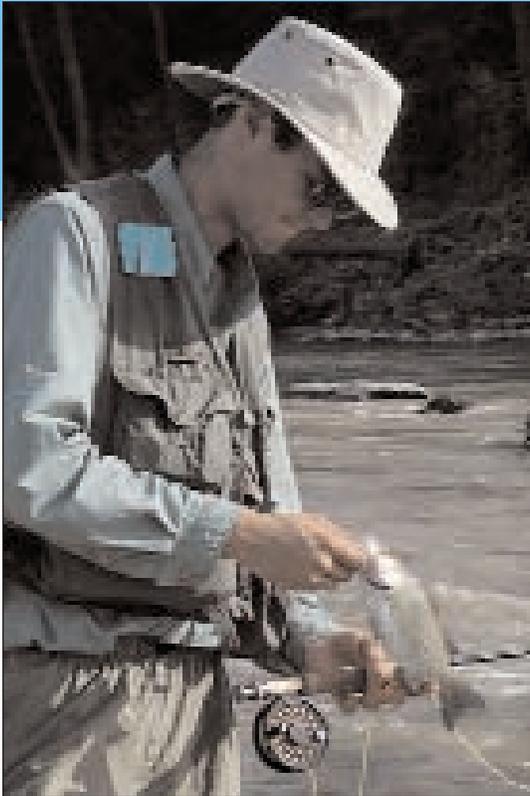


Many anglers attribute the success or failure of a fishing trip to the weather. However, little scientific evidence exists to link environmental conditions and catch rates. Outdoor and fishing magazines often state that weather and water conditions have a large impact on angling success. Many well-known anglers hold these views as well. Dick Sternberg, fishing Hall-of-Famer and former walleye biologist, wrote in a 2002 *Outdoor Life* article that “walleyes will seek comfortable light levels, and that the clearer the water (or fewer the clouds,) the deeper the fish will go.” Likewise, Lefty Kreh, one of America’s best known fly-fishing writers, states in his book *Presenting the Fly* that “... the clearer the lake, stream or body of water, the better your chances of scoring on its trophy fish early and late in the day.” Kreh continued with, “Many anglers will tell you how poor the fishing is after a front moves through and high barometric pressure occurs. It has been my belief for some time that it’s not the pressure that causes fish to go off their feed – or to feed well as the front moves in. Instead, I believe that fish feed well as the front approaches because the light level drops.”

by Daniel Shapaugh
Manhattan

photos by Mike Blair

All fishermen know that the fish bite better on some days, and we all have our theories; full moon, new moon, right before a storm, rising barometer, falling barometer, you name it. The author put some these theories to the test for a college research paper.



The author flyfished for 25 afternoons in September and October, keeping detailed records of fish caught, weather conditions, and barometric pressures.

mental conditions and angling catch rates. When given the opportunity to choose a research topic during my senior year as a biology student at Kansas State University, I designed an experiment to evaluate the effects of environmental conditions on angling success at the Rocky Ford tailwater, low-water-dam fishery near Manhattan. In particular, I wondered how barometric pressure, water temperature, cloud cover, and discharge from Tuttle Creek Reservoir, were associated with my angling success. The research I present here shows that anglers can benefit from an under-

Both of these authors offer sound advice. However, I was curious about the scientific evidence that might substantiate a relationship between environ-

standing of current weather conditions. A scientific approach allowed me to quantify the magnitude of my results.

To test if fishing success was related to weather patterns, I spent 25 afternoons between September 2, and October 18, 2003, fishing at the Rocky Ford Fishing Area located on the Blue River bordering Riley and Pottawattomie counties. The murky waters of this warmwater fishery support many game fish such as white bass, saugeye, and largemouth bass. Water flows coming out of Tuttle Creek Reservoir are variable at Rocky Ford, with discharge rates ranging from less than 100 cubic feet per second (cfs) to more than 10,000 cfs.

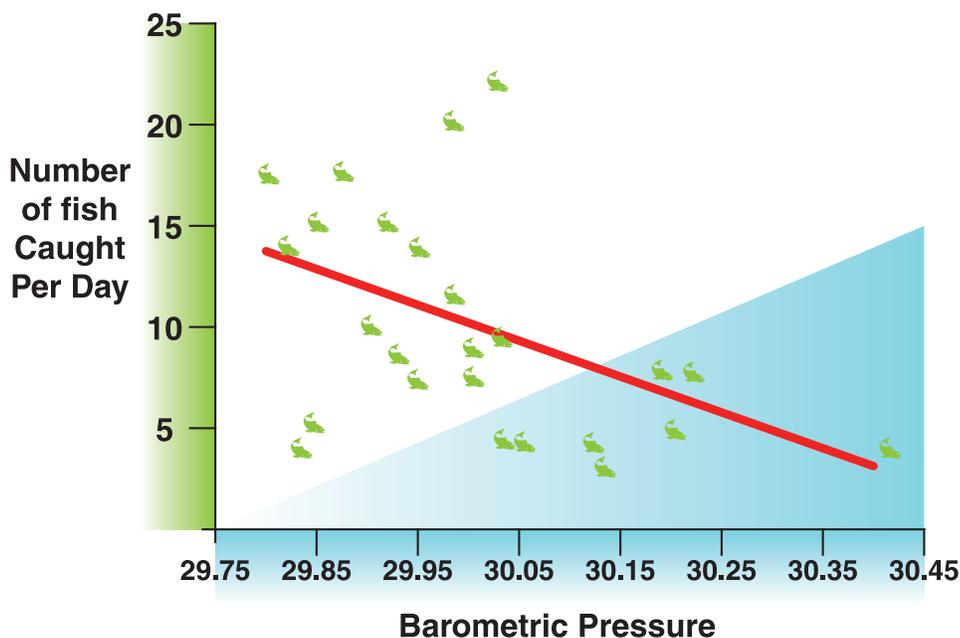
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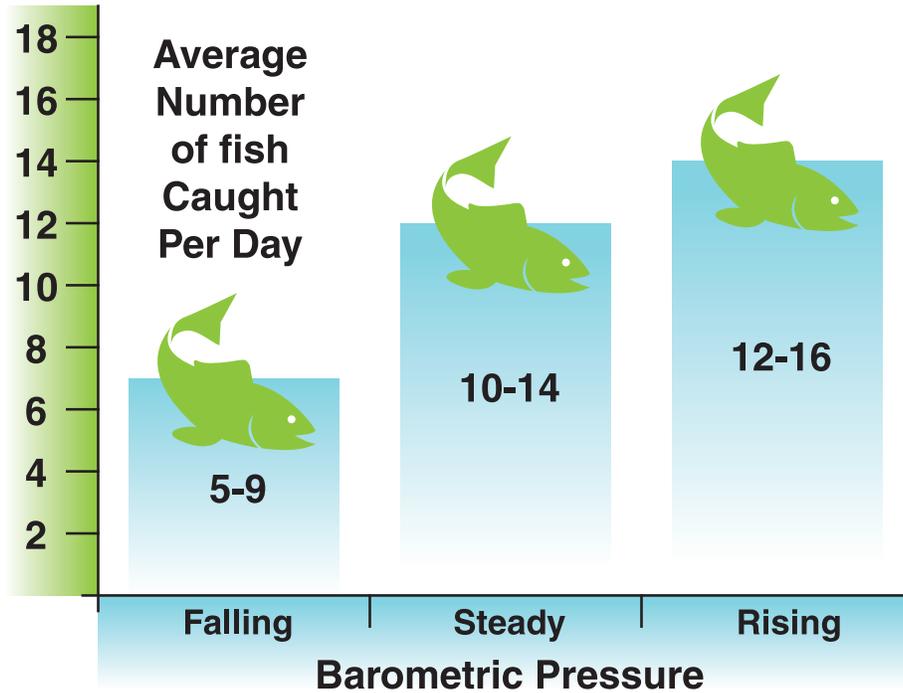
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Catch rates were three times higher when the barometer was below 30.05 than when it was higher. Also, more species of fish were caught during a lower barometric pressure.



Another interesting feature of this research was that more fish were caught during a rising barometer. The very best fishing was when a barometer below 30.05 began to rise. Catch rates more than doubled when a “low” barometer was rising compared to when it was falling.

gizzard shad, a common forage fish at Rocky Ford. Each fishing period lasted two hours, beginning at 5:00 pm. and ending at 7:00 pm. I fished at three locations each evening for equal amounts of time. Everything possible was standardized so that, theoretically, only the weather variable would influence catch rates.

Detailed records were kept for water temperatures and percent cloud cover during each fishing period. Discharge from Tuttle Creek Reservoir, as well as barometric pressure and the four-hour barometric trend prior to sampling, were recorded by accessing Corps of Engineers water management data (www.nwk.usace.army.mil/current), and archived climate sources for Manhattan (www.wunderground.com).

After fishing for 25 days and organizing my results, I graphed

the data and ran statistical tests to evaluate which factors influenced my fishing success. Statistics, a mathematical science, made it possible to assert with confidence the relationships between environmental variables and angling catch rates. Now, I had evidence showing that these variables were associated with my fishing results.

Two hundred and forty fish were caught and released during my study, including 12 different species. The most frequently caught species were white bass, freshwater

drum, largemouth bass, and saugeye, respectively.

What were the best conditions for fishing? In my study, barometric pressure showed the strongest relationship with fishing success, as my catch was greatest during periods when the barometric pressure was



This Clouser minnow was used throughout the study. Gizzard shad are the main prey species for game fish at Rocky Ford.

lower than 30.05. Fish were caught during periods of higher barometric pressure, but catches were not as frequent. Catch rates were three times greater when the barometric pressure was below 30.05 than when it was above that mark. More kinds of fish were also caught when the barometric pressure was low. However, an interesting trend emerged based on whether the barometer was rising or falling just prior to fishing periods. Total catch rates more than doubled when a “low” barometer was rising compared to when it was falling.

Cloud cover did not show a strong relationship with my fishing results. The poor water clarity of the Rocky Ford fishery may have reduced cloud cover’s effect on angling success. The visibility of my artificial fly below the surface was approximately 15 inches, and remained consistent through September and October. However, during early spring months, or in other fisheries with clearer waters, cloud cover may be more strongly related with angling success.

Water temperatures cooled from 80 degrees to 63 degrees during the study period. This appeared to have little effect on total catch rates, but the total number of species caught per day was positively affected by water temperature. The greatest numbers of species were caught when water temperatures were 76 degrees and 80 degrees.

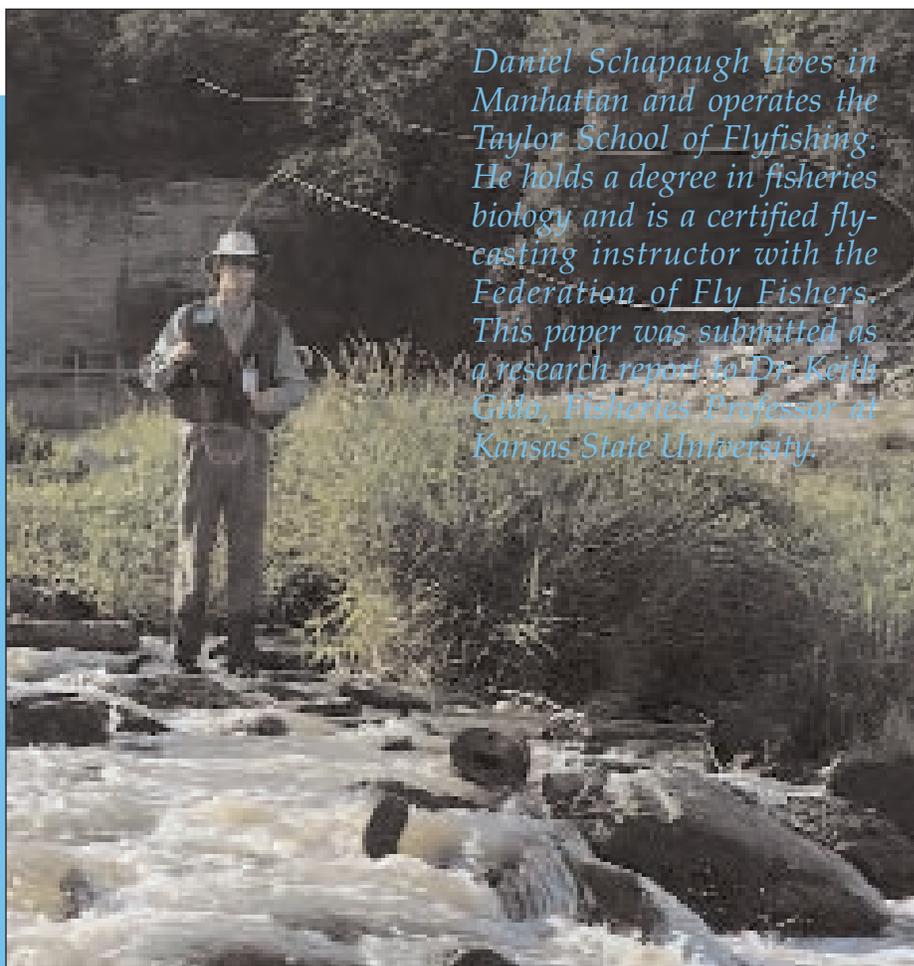
I found that discharge from Tuttle Creek Reservoir was not related to my angling success in this study. Water levels fluctuated during September and October, yet they were not extremely low or high during these months. Extreme water

levels may affect angling success, but the study was unable to determine this.

I concluded from the study that weather can affect fishing success. Barometric pressure had the most significant effect on catch rates during my 25-day study. Some of my findings vary from conventional wisdom regarding weather and angling success. Anglers who expect the best fishing on a relatively high barometer might be surprised to learn that low barometric pressure combined with a rising barometer yielded higher catch rates. Cloud cover had no effect on my angling success in the murky water of Rocky Ford.

Certain factors discussed in

this paper may affect a fishery near you differently than at the Rocky Ford study site. These weather factors may have a more or less pronounced effect during different times of the year, and on different species of fish. Also, many conditions were not explored in this study, such as the solar and lunar periods, and the severity of barometric pressure change. However, it is clear that weather can make a difference. If you keep records of your angling success, I would encourage you to examine the relationship of your success with weather data commonly available on the Internet. You may uncover similar interesting trends in your home waters. ♡



Daniel Schapaugh lives in Manhattan and operates the Taylor School of Flyfishing. He holds a degree in fisheries biology and is a certified fly-casting instructor with the Federation of Fly Fishers. This paper was submitted as a research report to Dr. Keith Gido, Fisheries Professor at Kansas State University.

In addition to barometric pressure, the author also kept track of percent cloud cover, release rates coming out of Tuttle Creek Reservoir, and water temperature.

Edited by Mark Shoup

ARCHERY DEER UNITS?

Editor:

The July/August 2004 edition of your magazine "2004 Legislative Wrap-Up" (Page 36) included a brief statement on deer archery management units. As a lifelong resident of and archery deer hunter in the great Sunflower State, that short news "tid-bit" certainly caught my attention and quite frankly with no small measure of alarm.

Your summary of this legislative action stated that the department has been directed to develop a minimum of nine archery deer management units by Jan. 1, 2005. I also learned from this article that the department intends to take public comments at statewide meetings throughout the summer and fall prior to issuing a regulation. In preparation for those public meetings, I would welcome some advance information on this ominous legislative mandate.

Specifically, I would appreciate your response to the following questions. What exactly does this legislative action require the department to do? What is the Legislature's stated intent for this legislative action? Realizing that public comments are still pending, what is the department's initial position on and intended reaction to this legislative directive? How does the department see this action ultimately impacting archery deer hunters in Kansas? What are the department's initial thoughts on the issue of resident bowhunters who archery deer hunt in one part of the state but own and archery deer hunt property in a different part of the state? When and where will the indicated statewide meetings on this issue be held?

The department has, in my opinion, done an excellent job of managing and maintaining a deer herd in Kansas. I do, however, get very nervous when our mostly untrained legislators start

micromanaging the duties and decisions of our trained biologists and KDWP managers. It is my sincere hope that the department is able to manage this knee-jerk legislative intervention in a manner that maintains the awesome deer hunting that is currently available to all bowhunters, resident and nonresident. Please advise if there is anything that we, the archery deer hunters of Kansas, can do to assist in your efforts.

Greg Markowitz
Onaga

Dear Mr. Markowitz:

I appreciate your concern for deer hunting opportunities in Kansas. I have numbered the responses to your questions accordingly.

1. The legislative action requires the department to implement a minimum of nine archery deer management units by Jan. 31, 2005, through regulation. The statute requires the use of current firearm boundaries to the extent practicable and also requires a report to the pertinent legislative committees by the Jan. 31, 2005, deadline. The exact text of the bill can be found on the Kansas Legislature website (www.kslegislature.org/cgi-bin/signed-enrolledbills/index.cgi) under the enrolled and signed bills section using SB 363 as the bill number.

2. The Legislature's stated intent for this bill is to allocate permits according to nine archery management units.

3. The department's initial position on this portion of the bill was one of opposition. However, when it became known that the provision would pass both houses, the department sought to soften the blow to the archery hunting community. Initially, the applicable provisions would have been effective this coming hunting season and further would have required 19 management units. Of course, now that the bill has become law, the department is

required to implement the changes.

4. The statute will ultimately impact archery deer hunters in Kansas by requiring archers to choose a unit prior to hunting, the same as a firearm hunter chooses a unit to hunt prior to hunting. I would note, however, that the availability of areas to hunt is not limited. It is only limited in the sense of archery hunting for bucks. Antlerless deer permits are still available for other units if a hunter wishes to hunt in more than one unit.

5. Once again, the department is required to implement the changes in archery permitting and although we understand the concerns of hunters who hunt in many different areas of the state, we are still required to develop nine archery management units, and thus, archery hunters will have to choose which unit they desire to hunt.

6. Public comments will be taken on the development of the regulation with the final public hearing conducted in January. The first meeting was held Aug. 26 at the Highland Hotel and Convention Center in Great Bend. The other meeting dates and locations are as follow:

- Oct. 28, 2004, Atchison – location still to be determined; and
- Jan. 20, 2005, Topeka – Memorial Hall.

Phone (620) 672-5911, ext. 102, for Wildlife and Parks Commission meeting times and agendas.

– Christopher Tymeson,
chief legal counsel, Topeka

THANKS FOR FISH ATLAS

Editor:

My neighbor Fred Pappas showed me his copy of your *Kansas Fishing Atlas* one night. To be very honest with you, I had a difficult time giving it back to him. We both poured over the pages, picking out some of the ponds we already actively fish, viewed counties we haven't visited yet, and basically

charted a potential lifetime of good angling. What a wonderful resource!

Hopefully, I don't sound like the fisherman who's lost his last wooly burger, but if you can find it in your heart, would you mind sending me a copy of your publication?

As you already know, your FISH program was recently featured in a well-written, tantalizing article by the *Wichita Eagle* outdoor writer. My best to the *Eagle* for working with you and sharing this great news. My congratulations to you and your colleagues at Wildlife and Parks on producing another fine effort to provide Kansas citizens with a portal into the great outdoors.

Thanks for your willingness to send me a *Kansas Fishing Atlas*. I've visited the Woodlawn office [Region 4, Wichita] on rare occasions although my neighbor and I did flip our fly rods across the park pond this summer while our ladies took a nature walk. Great facility.

My interest in your department goes back quite a few years. I've read your literature as a budding hunter and angler, hunter safety instructor, and former sports editor for the *Pratt Tribune*. Thanks for the fun you've given to my family, my friends, and me.

*Mike States
Wichita*

Dear Mr. States:

Thanks for the great letter and your support for the agency's efforts to provide high-quality outdoor experiences for all Kansans. Feedback like this helps all who work in this field to realize our efforts are worthwhile.

—Shoup

WHY TROUT STAMP?

Editor:

I have enjoyed and supported the trout stocking program for the last several years. I understand after reading a *Kansas Wildlife & Parks* magazine article (March/April 2004, Page 56) that it is a profitable program. I would like to expose my children (ages 4 and 6) to trout fishing; however, I am hesitant to

pay out the \$11 for each of us. Is there any chance there will be consideration of a youth trout stamp at a decreased fee, say half of an adult stamp?

*Dean V. Balocca
Wichita*

Dear Mr. Balocca:

Sorry, but no. The trout permit fees do not generate a profit. They only cover the cost of this program and help with other fisheries projects. Reducing prices would reduce the amount of trout we could stock. Each trout taken costs the same, whether taken by an adult or a child. This is truly a user-pay system and is maintaining this popular program.

When you think about it, \$11 isn't that much. The permit is valid for the entire six-month season. That's a lot of entertainment when compared to say, one evening at the movies, which easily exceeds \$11 in Wichita, if you add a drink and popcorn.

I am glad you enjoy this opportunity and hope you expose your kids it.

—Shoup

EARLIER TURKEY SEASON?

Editor:

Why don't we start our spring season two weeks earlier? It would keep down hunting in the bugs and heat. Would not this help with our exploding population also?

*Mark A. Bird
Salina*

Dear Mr. Bird,

We probably could start the season a little earlier. However, the premise behind spring hunting of turkeys is based on there being two peaks of breeding activity. The first peak, generally in March, corresponds with the time when most hens are bred. The second peak, in April, is when hens that have lost their nests will renest.

In order to avoid disturbing the first, and most important breeding period, we try to open the season prior to the second peak. This means that there should be fewer gobblers that are "henned up" during the hunt-

ing season. Since the timing of breeding peaks is variable throughout the state, we compromise by opening the second Wednesday in April.

This opening is appropriate most years and for the majority of the state although there are exceptions in certain areas. These exceptions provide some excitement to turkey hunting in that the hunter must work the birds to figure out the phase of the life cycle they are in.

*—Roger D. Applegate, small game
research biologist, Emporia*

COMMISSIONER CALLS BIRD

Editor:

I am a long-time subscriber to *Kansas Wildlife & Parks* magazine, and I would like to submit the attached photograph to be considered for inclusion in a future issue. The photo was taken on April 17 by my good friend [Kansas Wildlife and Parks commissioner] Tom Warner on his land in Elk County, near Longton. Tom called in this 18-pound turkey, which had a 9-inch beard, and I shared the exciting hunt with my eight-year-old son Cale Martin (in picture) and Tom's seven-year-old son Dylan Warner.

*Steve Martin
Wichita*



Early Bird Gets Ticket



On the evening of April 1, 2003, I had just walked in the door when my office phone rang. The caller informed me that he just heard gunshots in an area known as a good turkey roost. The concerned sportsman was positive that a pre-season gobbler had just been poached. He told me where he believed the incident occurred and that he could see a vehicle parked at the edge of a field by the Neosho River. I told him to get a tag number from the vehicle but not to make contact with any suspects.

I contacted Aaron Scheve, Anderson County natural resource officer, and asked him to lend a hand on the case. Scheve said he would be glad to help and was on his way.

At the location, I met the witness, and he showed me where the vehicle was parked, about one-half mile away by the edge of the river. I thanked the man for his concern and waited for the vehicle to come out to the road.

I didn't have to wait long. After about five minutes, the vehicle's headlights came on and started out of the field towards the road, which I had partially blocked with my patrol truck. As the suspect's truck neared the road entrance, I turned on my emergency lights and waited in the road.

Tense moments ensued as the vehicle picked up speed and

started for the ditch. I pulled my truck forward and parked at an angle to completely block the road. The driver slammed on the brakes at the last minute and came to a sliding halt, just inches from my truck.

I jumped from my patrol vehicle and yelled at two occupants of the truck to get their hands up and not move. I could see that both individuals were wearing camouflage, and as I approached the driver's side window, I could see both were young men. I also noticed a dead tom in the back of the truck. With the evidence not in their favor, both men took responsibility for their actions and admitted to the crime.

Scheve arrived on scene and assisted with processing the evidence. Both men were cited for hunting turkey during closed season and taking turkey without a valid permit. Total fines and court costs amounted to \$820.

The anonymous caller has subsequently been recommended to receive as much as \$500 in reward from a program sponsored by the National Wild Turkey Federation. The program offers a reward for anyone who provides information that leads to the apprehension and conviction of individuals involved in the illegal harvest of wild turkeys in Kansas.



—Jason Deal, natural resource officer,
Allen and Woodson counties

RICH IN HISTORY

Early explorers crossing Kansas were amazed at the diversity of wildlife on the plains, but by the early 1900s, unregulated hunting and habitat loss from agriculture had removed most of these species from Kansas.

The first Kansas Conservation Act was passed in 1877, and D.B. Long became the first "fish commissioner," under the direction of Gov. George T. Anthony. The first fish laws had been established, but there were few game laws at this time.

Between the years of 1895 to 1897 the Kansas State Legislature directed the fish commissioner to appoint unsalaried deputy wardens in all counties that contained lakes or streams. These deputies were empowered to make arrest without warrants, and they received \$5

for each conviction, along with a regular constable travel allowance. In later years, the collection fee would rise to \$10.

In 1901, the Legislature appropriated \$2,800 for fish propagation and protection. In 1903, they authorized the establishment of a fish hatchery and appropriated \$1,000 for its construction. In 1904, the county of Pratt donated 12 acres of land for construction of a hatchery under State Fish Warden D.W. Travis.

In 1905, the title of "state fish warden" changed to "state fish and game warden." This also marked the first year when hunting licenses were required. 1905 was also when the first year exotic game birds were stocked, with the introduction of Chinese and Mongolian pheasants.

1905 was the first year that bag limits on game birds were established, and protection

was extended to the red squirrel. Hatchery operations began for the first time in Kansas history, and user fees, not state general funds (taxes), would fund the State Fish and Game Commission. License collections that year totaled \$40,495.

The Conservation Act of 1905 established a state fish and game warden for a term of four years at a salary of \$1,500 per year. He appointed unsalaried deputy fish and game wardens. It would not be until 1921 that salaried deputy wardens would be hired. The first Forestry, Fish, and Game Commission would be established in 1925, consisting of a five-member panel.

Prior to the construction of watershed ponds and state fishing lakes, Kansas ranked second only to Arizona among states having the least amount of impounded water. In the late 1940s, the construction of

a dam on the Smokey Hill River began the creation of Kanopolis Reservoir. Several more reservoirs would soon be created by the Bureau of Reclamation and the Army Corps of engineers for flood control, irrigation, and recreation. In 1955, the state Legislature created the State Park and Resources Authority (which would be merged with the Kansas Fish and Game Commission in 1987 to create KDWP).

1905 marked the beginning of a self-sustaining conservation department with license fees, fisheries production, and wildlife law enforcement. The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks is working on informative displays to promote the history and heritage of wildlife conservation that it has promoted for 100 years.

—Dan Heskett, Law
Enforcement Division
training coordinator, Pratt

Endangered Species Changes

Every five years, KDWP conducts a review of wildlife species that are listed as endangered, threatened, or species-in-need-of-conservation (SINC). Individuals, organizations, agencies, and university personnel are notified of this review and asked to submit evidence that would warrant a change in the listings, if such evidence exists. The Threatened and Endangered Species Scientific Review Committee then screens the petitions to determine if sufficient evidence was presented to proceed.

The proposed changes are then published in the Kansas Register. After a 90-day public comment period, the KDWP secretary submits the proposed changes to the Kansas Wildlife and Parks Commission.

The following changes were discussed at meetings last summer; these changes will be presented to the commission in October:

- **delta hydrobe (*Probythinella emarginata*)** – The delta hydrobe is a gill-breathing aquatic snail. In Kansas, it had been found only in fossil specimens from the Pleistocene Era until the discovery of a relic population on Cedar Creek in Chase County. The presence of this animal indicates the high-quality of this spring-fed stream. The nearest known population is 250 miles to the east in Osage County, Missouri. There are only five species of gill-breathing snails in Kansas. All of them are sensitive to pollution.

The delta hydrobe is small and distinctly shaped. Its shell measures 0.1 inch long. The flattened apex at the shell spire gives this snail a unique appearance. This species has been petitioned for listing on the Kansas Endangered Species List. The proposed status is currently under review.

- **brindled madtom (*Noturus miurus*)** – The brindled madtom is a small member of the catfish family about 3 inches long. It has distinct black and yellow markings on body and fins. It avoids large rivers and riffles and can be found in leaf-littered pools in clear streams. In the last 25 years, it has been documented in Spring River (Cherokee

County) and Cedar Creek (Chase County). This fish has been petitioned for listing on the Kansas Endangered Species List. The proposed status is currently under review.

- **silver chub (*Macrhybopsis storeriana*)** – This member of the minnow family can reach 6 inches in length. It has a blunt, rounded snout; large eyes; silvery patches in front of the eyes; and narrow, bright, silvery streaks along the sides. It was once common in the Kansas and Missouri rivers but now is found infrequently. It has been petitioned for the Kansas Endangered Species List. The proposed status is currently under review.

- **night snake (*Hypsiglena torquata*)** – Because recent surveys reveal this snake to be one of the most common species where it occurs, it has been petitioned for removal from the Kansas Threatened Species List. Its range includes the Red Hills region of southcentral Kansas. This snake ranges throughout the southwest portion of the United States, where its status is regarded as common. The petition proposes this snake to be down-listed from threatened to SINC. The proposed status change is currently under review.

- **white-faced ibis (*Plegades chihi*)** – The white-faced ibis is known to nest at Quivira National Wildlife Refuge and Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area. Few breeding records are known in Kansas prior to 1962, but the trend in numbers has been increasing since that time. According to Kansas Breeding Bird Survey data, white-faced ibis numbers have increased by 18 percent annually from 1980 through 2002 throughout its range. The petition proposes to remove the white-faced ibis from the list altogether.

In addition to these species, the red-shouldered hawk (*Buteo lineatus*) and the eastern chipmunk (*Tamias striatus*) have been petitioned for removal from the SINC List. For more information on these species or the upcoming meetings, write KDWP, Fisheries and Wildlife Division, 512 SE 25th Ave., Pratt, KS 67124 or phone (620) 672-5911.

–Ken Brunson, wildlife diversity coordinator, Pratt

SEBELIUS RESERVOIR WATER

Last spring, the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) and the Almena Irrigation District signed an agreement intended to hold water in Keith Sebelius Reservoir at a level that will ensure adequate water for recreation and conservation. The lake, which is located just west of Norton, is currently more

than 16 feet below what is considered full, called “conservation pool,” and this agreement ensures that future use of the lake’s water for irrigation does not further lower the lake.

Under a two-year agreement, KDWP will pay a specified annual fee to retain water in the lake until the elevation reaches 2,290 feet mean sea level (msl). Currently, the lake is at 2,287.9 feet msl. Once the

elevation reaches or exceeds 2,290 msl, the district may release water to an elevation no lower than 2,288 feet msl. Any irrigation water releases in the next two years will stop once the reservoir water level drops to 2,288 feet msl.

The agreement will not affect the city of Norton’s ability to release water for their public water supply because those releases have little effect on reservoir water levels. Despite the agree-

ment, without inflows, evaporation alone could drop the lake level several feet over the next two years.

Bruce Taggart, KDWP regional Public Lands supervisor, believes the agreement proves irrigators and lake users can work together to maintain a healthy lake level.

“Under the agreement, irrigators will gain fiscal relief from operation and maintenance costs and will retain some assurance of having

enough water to meet the requirements of the Republican River Compact with Nebraska," says Taggart. "Likewise, boaters, anglers, and other lake users will have more water to enjoy. Fishing opportunities depend upon higher water levels.

"This improvement was made possible only through leadership shown by the president of the Almena Irrigation District, Norman Nelson; the members of the district; and [KDWP] Secretary Hayden. Hopefully this agreement will help spur similar agreements in the future, which will benefit irrigators, recreational users, and ultimately the economies of the communities surrounding other irrigation reservoirs in western Kansas."

KDWP, under license from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, operates and maintains both Prairie Dog State Park and Norton Wildlife Area on the shores of Keith Sebelius Reservoir. The lake offers boating, water-skiing, and fishing. The park and wildlife area provide numerous opportunities for hunting and wildlife watching. The state park offers camping facilities, hiking trails, and two historic structures that give visitors a glimpse of Kansas' past.

"All of these activities are dependent on the lake remaining at a viable level," says Taggart.

For more information on this agreement, write LeAnn M. Schmitt, special assistant to the secretary, KDWP, 1020 South Kansas Avenue, Suite 200, Topeka, KS 66612; phone (785) 296-3905; or fax a message to (785) 296-6375.

—LeAnn Schmitt, Topeka

CURB BIG CATS

The enactment of the Captive Wildlife Safety Act (see "Bush Signs Big Cat Ban" in the March/April issue of **Kansas Wildlife & Parks** magazine, Page 52), an amendment to the federal Lacey Act, has prompted review of the possession of large cats in Kansas. Members of the Governor's Sub-cabinet on Natural Resources, as well as select representatives of the Kansas Department of Health and

Environment and the Kansas Animal Health Department, have met to discuss possible regulation.

A small working group of KDWP employees has made an initial review of current KDWP regulations and has suggested a possible course of action, to include rewriting, and possible revocation, of several existing regulations. The result would broaden the list of animals from the six large cat species in the federal act to include bears, wolves, and primates.

The recommended action would also provide a date when the possession of these animals for personal pleasure would be prohibited. Provisions would be developed allowing the continued operation of zoos and accredited public displays serving the public good but would eliminate possession of these animals as pets.

After a brief meeting with Secretary of State Ron Thornburgh, KDWP Secretary Mike Hayden requested a meeting of affected parties to further discuss ways to clarify and deal with this issue. In July, a meeting was held among affected federal, state, and local governments; legislators; and private groups and individuals. Recommendations will be developed and presented at a future the Kansas Wildlife and Parks Commission meeting.

—Kevin Jones, Law Enforcement
Division director, Pratt



Conservation Fund Aids Parks

For the fifth year, Congress has approved funds for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) state grant program. Kansas will receive approximately \$1.17 million for LWCF state development grants, subject to matching funds and approval of projects by the National Park Service (NPS). Approximately half of the money will go to local community projects and half to state park projects.

The LWCF program provides matching grants to state and local governments for the acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities. The program is intended to create and maintain a nationwide legacy of high quality recreation areas and facilities and to stimulate non-federal investments in the protection and maintenance of recreation resources across the United States.

Funding for this program is derived primarily from outer continental shelf oil leasing revenues and is appropriated by Congress.

Seventeen LWCF applications were received this year from local communities. Each application was reviewed using priorities outlined in the state Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), as required by the NPS. The NPS criteria include points related to SCORP, including local park and recreation plans, public support, funding, and previous LWCF funding and administration.

While local projects are pending approval by the National Park Service, the following state park projects have been approved for this year:

- a new shower house and road improvements at Cedar Bluff State Park;
- a new shower house and road improvements at Kanopolis State Park;
- a new shower house and road improvements at Lovewell State Park; and
- new cabins and road improvements at Wilson State Park.

—Linda Lanterman, assistant director,
Parks Division, Pratt

EARLY MIGRATORY BIRD SEASONS, RABBITS

The Kansas Wildlife and Parks Commission approved early migratory bird seasons for 2004 at a public hearing in Overland Park June 24. Among seasons set were the following:

- **dove** – Sept. 1 through Oct. 14 and Nov. 1 through Nov. 16, with bag and possession limits of 15 and 30, respectively;
- **rail** – Sept. 1 through Nov. 9, bag and possession limit of 25;
- **snipe** – Sept. 1 through Dec. 16, bag and possession limits of eight and 16, respectively;
- **woodcock** – Oct. 16 through Nov. 29, bag and possession limits of three and six, respectively;
- **September Canada Goose** – Sept. 4 through Sept. 13 (around the cities of Wichita, Topeka, Lawrence, and Kansas City), bag and possession limits of three and six, respectively.

Because early teal seasons will be affected by U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service season frameworks issued later this year, alternative season dates to be set in August were proposed. The commission approved a KDWP recommendation to consolidate the two management units for the running of rabbits, to coincide with similar regulatory changes made last year regarding furbearers. An open season for rabbits and hares of Jan. 1 through Dec. 31 was set, with daily bag limit of 10, and possession limit of three daily bag limits.

As of this writing, the late migrant and teal seasons had not been set. Those were set at the August 26 meeting of the Kansas Wildlife and Parks Commission in Great Bend. To find these dates, pick up a copy of the *2004 Kansas Hunting and Furharvesting Regulations Summary*, available at most places that sell hunting equipment, at KDWP offices, or view them online at www.kdwp.state.ks.us. Just click “Hunting” and then “Sportsman’s Calendar.”

—Shoup

Sight That Rifle (and Practice)

A reminder for any hunter who thinks the deer season starts with an early morning breakfast on opening day: if you’re not sure exactly where your rifle shoots, you aren’t ready to step into the woods.

A rifle that’s not properly sighted in will likely place your shot outside the vital zone or cause you to miss the target altogether. Why take that chance? A shot at that special buck doesn’t come along every season, and a shot at any deer is a gift. You owe the quarry an accurate shot.

Before you start packing your duffle bag, head down to the range and sight in your rifle. Once you’ve finished on the bench, don’t pack up and go home. Spend time practicing from various shooting positions, and come back several times to practice. Good marksmanship is more than a matter of personal pride; it’s a very important part of ethical hunting.

To find a public shooting range near you, go to www.wheretoshoot.org.

—National Shooting Sports Foundation



LETTER TO INSTRUCTORS: JOIN UP

On behalf of the Kansas Hunter Education Instructor Association (KHEIA), I would like to thank all instructors for their hard work and dedication to the Hunter Education Program. You are definitely making a difference.

I would also like to invite each and every one of you to join KHEIA and help us to improve the communication and techniques we all use. Each of you have great ideas and are experts in different areas of instruction. The goal of KHEIA is to draw on that expertise to help round the rough edges of all instructors in the state.

The Hunter Education Program's statewide coordinator, Wayne Doyle, has done a great job of improving an already fine program, and we at KHEIA, with your help, would like to work with Wayne to make the program better yet. Information and applications to join KHEIA are available online at www.KHEIA.org. We also have a couple of positions open on the board of directors, and several positions available on various committees for anyone interested in helping shape the direction of our organization.

KHEIA has now added a new benefit, available to all instructors, a listserve to help enhance communication among instructors across the state. The listserve puts you on an email list that will automatically notify you when another instructor has made a comment or placed a question on the listserve. It is a quick and easy way to communicate to a large number of instructors. Subscription is free to all instructors.

Also, KHEIA is again sponsoring an essay contest for all students who successfully complete a hunter education class, and your help in making the flyer available to your students would be greatly appreciated. For more information, email rschumok@cox.net.

—Rick Schumock,
President, Kansas Hunter
Education Instructor Association

Where No Storms Come



by Mark Shoup

As the old saw goes, “Times change, and not always for the better.” But in rapidly changing times, we must often remind ourselves of what is good no matter what sea changes may beset us.

When I was 12, my dad let me hunt by myself. I couldn’t hunt with other kids, but I could pull my 20-gauge Savage pump from the gun cabinet, pack my vest with shells and a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, and walk six blocks through town, gun in hand, until I was out of the “city” and into the “wilderness.”

This was 1960 in Larned, Kansas. There were no electronic computer games, no drugs, no gangs, no profanity on television or in the movies, and sex on the screen was called pornography. People were polite to strangers, and kids feared, respected, and obeyed adults, whether they were their parents or not. It was a time when a 12-year-old boy could walk down the street with a shotgun in his hand, and no one would blink an eye, at least in the small rural towns of America. It was a time of fewer choices and greater freedom.

I took advantage of that freedom whenever I got the chance. Less than a mile from town, past Moffet’s Pond along the Pawnee Creek, I journeyed through that crack in time, untouched by the heroic turmoil of WW II a mere 15 years past and blind to the impending chaos of moral relativism that would fracture my generation, and eventually, the nation.

But in 1960, I gathered contentment in wildness at the edge of town – wildness that meant an occasional pheasant, squirrel, rabbit, quail, or dove in

*I have asked to be
where no storms come,
Where the green swell is in the havens dumb,
And out of the swing of the sea.
— Gerard Manley Hopkins*

the bag. After fresh rains not far from Ft. Larned, arrowheads pushed their points from plowed ground to remind me that I was not really living a timeless life. Still, such discoveries were gifts, signposts of a past to which I assigned only romance. Arrowheads were bonuses to the hunt, and I would clutch one in my hand as I slept on the sunny side of an abandoned barn, shotgun propped across my hip.

That old shotgun – and my father’s desire to pass his passion for the hunt to his son – has been responsible for some of the most tranquil moments of my life, such as those forays along the Pawnee Creek.

When I turned 16, I was allowed to hunt with friends, and we filled our autumn weekends with bags of game and hours of camaraderie, unaware in our small town bliss of the gathering storm in Southeast Asia and rocks flying in the streets of California. For now, we enjoyed rural tranquility and days afild.

The country would change, of course, and so would we. But a few years later, a high school friend, Gregory McDonald, and I had both returned to Larned from Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam. It was autumn, and ducks were migrating. A friend of my father allowed us to hunt his pond near the town of Ash Valley whenever we wished. We found the name of the place a bit odd because Ash Valley was but a lone silo resting on the southern ridge of the Smoky Hills.

Nonetheless, the hunting was great that fall. We dug a permanent blind, and flights of divers and puddle ducks alike regularly set their wings in our decoys. We killed a few, enough to fill our bags on rare occasions, but often we just sat in the blind talking, enjoying fresh air and the glorious Kansas sky.

It was all just like breathing; it was so natural I hardly noticed how much I enjoyed that fall until one day, Gregory (affectionately known as Gregory Peccary among friends) told another friend of mine, “Man, that Mark Shoup sure loves to hunt ducks.”

I actually had to think about it for a moment. The thought puzzled me, and I questioned the degree to which he assigned my love of the hunt. I had become jaded, preoccupied with world events. I had forgotten where I was and what I loved doing, what renewed my spirit, despite the fact that I had been rousting Gregory out of bed an hour before sunrise every morning for two weeks just to sit in a hole in the ground scanning the sky for a wing-beat that flapped in synchronicity to my pulse.

Then my mind drifted back to Moffet’s Pond and the Pawnee Creek, to the sun on my face, warming the hand that held that precious ancient point, glinting off the blue of my shotgun barrel. It was then I realized that although peace may merely be an interlude between wars, ingrained in my soul is a hunter’s gift, a gift I have passed to my sons so that they, too, may find that place where no storms come.

EL DORADO TO HOST DISABLED ANGLERS

On Sept. 24-26, disabled individuals from across Kansas will come together at El Dorado State Park for a weekend of fishing, fellowship, and fun. The event is sponsored by Fishing Has No Boundaries, Inc., a nonprofit organization with the goal of introducing disabled people to fishing.

Event registration and breakfast is from 7-9 a.m. on Sept. 24 at Bluestem Point Area Number 3 at El Dorado State Park. Participants will fish from 9 a.m. to noon, break for lunch, then fish until 5 p.m. Dinner will be served following fishing at 6 p.m. On Sept. 26, participants will fish from 9 a.m. to noon, followed by lunch.

There is a registration fee. Participants are encouraged to bring their own fishing pole; however, extra poles and adaptive fishing equipment will be available. All meals and fishing guides will be provided, but lodging arrangements are the responsibility of the participants.

Phone Cecil Walker at (800) 960-7853 or Casey Smithson at (316) 321-7180 for more information.

—Shoup

CATCH AND EAT

Most game fish do not like to chase their food very far or very fast. When fishing an artificial lure such as a crankbait, spinner, jig, or worm, remember to slow down the retrieve. Some newer baitcasting reels are designed with low gear ratios to help anglers slow their retrieve. Keep in mind that

live bait fishing is very successful. One reason is that the live bait is fished slowly. Apply the same deliberate style to your artificial lures.

Most anglers agree that fish are easier to catch when the water is slightly stained. Very clear water poses a challenge even to professional anglers. The secrets to clear-water fishing success are using very light line, fishing smaller lures a little faster than normal, making long casts to avoid spooking fish, and fishing at night.

If you can't eat fish fresh, there are a couple of freezing methods. Wrap small packages of fish tightly in plastic food wrapping, wrap again in white freezer paper, then mark and date them. Eat within 30 days.

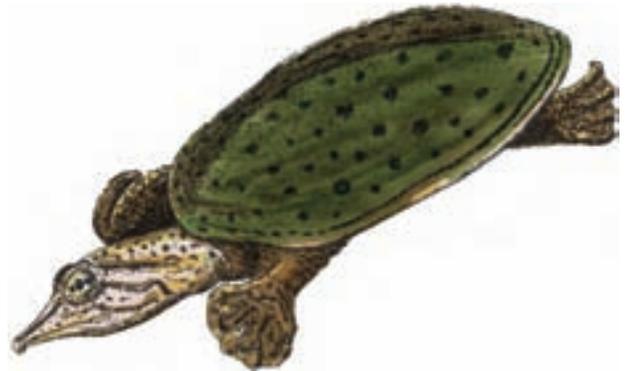
The best way to keep fish is to freeze them in water. Half-gallon milk cartons or similar containers work well. Place fish filets in the carton, cover them with water, and freeze solid. Be sure to allow an inch or so at the top of the container for expansion as the water freezes. The ice block prevents freezer burn and seals in the flavor.

—Humminbird Fishin Tips

TURTLE: REAL FOOD FOR REAL PEOPLE

Most anglers know that in addition to taking fish, a fishing license is required to take bullfrogs. And it is bullfrog season through Oct. 31. However, some may not know that a fishing license is required to take soft-shelled and snapping turtles.

“So who would want to take these critters anyway?” you may ask. Those who have tasted their meat could



answer that question easily. Yes, the meat of these turtles is quite tasty although getting to it can be difficult. A hunting knife with a heavy blade and a durable edge is essential, and with snapping turtles in particular, a small hatchet can come in handy. (Care should be taken when handling snappers.)

Just cut around the softer tissue where the top shell meets the lower shell, and then cut the meat away. There are many different cuts of meat in the turtle – from very light to slightly dark, about like a chicken thigh.

All of it is very tasty and may be fried like chicken or fish. (I won't say “It tastes just like chicken!”)

Common snapping turtles and soft-shelled turtles may be taken year-round. There is a daily creel limit of eight, single species or in combination, and possession limit of 24. Unless you are exempt by law, a valid fishing license is required to take these turtles. Legal equipment includes hand (not a recommended tactic with snappers), hook and line, setline, hand dip net, seine, gig, or turtle trap.

—Shoup

WAY outside

BY BRUCE COCHRAN



COCHRAN!
“DO YOU TAKE THIS MAN FOR BETTER OR WORSE,
THROUGH DUCK SEASON, DEER SEASON,
PHEASANT SEASON, TURKEY SEASON ...”

THREATENED IN FLIGHT

There are currently nine species of Kansas birds on the state Threatened and Endangered Species List. Of these, the white-faced ibis is being petitioned by KDWP for complete removal from the list.

WHITE-FACED IBIS (*PLEGADIS CHIHI*) – Threatened in Kansas but has no federal listing. The white-faced ibis is a large bird (22-25 inches long), chestnut-bronze in color glossed with green or purple and a 5- to 6-inch downcurved bill. In summer, it has a band of white around the base of the bill, under the chin, and behind the eye. This ibis prefers freshwater marshes where insects, salamanders, leeches, snails, crayfish, and frogs are abundant.

BALD EAGLE (*HALIAEETUS LEUCOCEPHALUS*) – Endangered in Kansas and threatened federally. Our national bird, the bald eagle has a 6- to 8-foot wingspan. The head and tail of adult birds are white, the bill and eyes yellow, and wings and body dark brown.

Winter eagles tend to concentrate around large impoundments, marshes, and rivers where fish, waterfowl, or other prey are abundant. Nearby stands of tall trees are important roost and nesting perches.

PEREGRINE FALCON (*FALCO PEREGRINUS*) – Threatened in Kansas but has no federal listing. The crow-sized peregrine has the pointed wings, narrow tail, and quick wingbeat typical of all falcons. Adults have slate-blue backs, bars, and spots below, and heavy black face pattern. They prefer marshes, lakes, and rivers where concentrations of waterfowl or other birds provide ample prey.

WHOOING CRANE (*GRUS AMERICANA*) Endangered on both state and federal lists. The whooping crane is the tallest (5 feet) North American bird and has a 7- to 8-foot wing spread. Adults are white with black wing tips and a red face.

During spring and fall migrations, cranes feed on grain, frogs, crayfish, grasshoppers, fish, crickets, spiders, and aquatic plants.

SNOWY PLOVER (*CHADRIUS ALEXANDRINUS*) – Threatened in Kansas but has no federal listing. Adult snowy plovers are about 6 inches long with a wingspread of 13-14 inches. It is very light in color with a thin black bill, black mark behind each eye and over the forehead, dark legs and feet, and a black slash mark on each side of the lower throat.

Nesting occurs in scattered locations in central and southwestern Kansas on open salt flats or sandy areas near water.

ESKIMO CURLEW



PIPING PLOVER (*CHARADRIUS MELODUS*) – Threatened in Kansas and endangered federally. The piping plover is a small (6-7 inches long) whitish plover the color of dry sand. It has a narrow black band above the forehead that reaches from eye to eye, a complete or incomplete dark ring around the neck, and yellow legs. In summer, the bill is yellow with a dark tip. In winter, bill and legs are dark. They require sparsely vegetated shallow wetlands and open beaches and sandbars.

ESKIMO CURLEW (*NUMENIUS BOREALIS*) – Endangered both in Kansas and federally. This shorebird is the smallest of the North American curlews. It is 12-14 inches long – including its 2-inch, slightly downcurved bill – and has a 26- to 30-inch wingspread. Its general color is buff to pale cinnamon-brown, darker on the back and lighter below. There is a very light stripe over the eye. The bill is black and legs are dark green.

The last suspected sighting in Kansas was at Cheyenne Bottoms in 1982.

LEAST TERN (*STERNA ANTILLARUM*) – Endangered both in Kansas and federally. This smallest of the North American terns is 8-10 inches long with a wingspread of about 20 inches. The adult is white below and grayish above with a black cap and white forehead. The leading edge of the wing primaries is also black.

Terns require barren areas near water, such as saline flats in salt marshes, sand bars in river beds, and shores of large impoundments. A dependable supply of small fish and aquatic crustaceans must be nearby.

BLACK-CAPPED VIREO (*VIREO ATRICAPILLUS*) – Endangered both in Kansas and federally. The black-capped vireo is about 5 inches long. Males have olive green backs, white undersides, and faint yellow-green flanks. The upper half of the head is black with white between the eye and bill and partial eye-ring, giving the appearance of white spectacles. The eye is brownish red and the bill black. Females are duller-colored with a more gray head and the underside washed with greenish yellow.

There have been no records of the bird in the state since 1953.

For more information on these birds and other threatened and endangered species in Kansas, click the "Environmental Services" icon on the KDWP website, www.kdwp.state.ks.us.
–Shoup



In June, Gov. Sebelius signs the Boat Safety and National Boating and Fishing proclamations, flanked by Keith Sexson (KDWP); Dan Norris (Kansas Walleye Association); Kent Craft (Kansas B.A.S.S. Chapter Federation); John Hamblin (U.S. Power Squadron); Mick Bresley (Cabela's); Mary Kearby (Ninnescah Sailing Association); Laura Calwell (Kansas Canoe Association); and Hank Booth (KS Wildscape). In July, the governor also signed a proclamation declaring July Recreation and Parks Month in Kansas.

GOV CELEBRATES JULY

Last July, Gov. Kathleen Sebelius proclaimed July as Recreation and Parks Month in Kansas. Typically, the month yields the highest state park visitation counts of the year. Last year, the 24 state parks hosted more than 1.3 million visits in July.

Recent research indicates that 69 percent of the Kansas population visits a state park at least once annually. Parks provide a variety of benefits to the public, according to John Thorner, executive director of the National Recreation and Parks Association.

"Parks provide a safe and positive place for kids to choose healthy activities, a place for people to relax and escape from the daily stresses of life, and a place for families, friends and colleagues to come together for fun and entertainment -- all in a setting that enhances nature and allows visitors to reconnect with the environment," Thorner says.

In addition to their quality of life benefits, state parks offer a substantial boost to the Sunflower State's economy. Among those benefits are the following:

- Kansas state park visitors spend \$190 million annually on purchases related to their park visits;
- about \$13.3 million is paid in state sales taxes related to park visit purchases; and
- at least 1,850 jobs are generated by park visitor purchases, with an estimated \$46 million in wages paid, generating an estimated \$7 million in income tax.

The purchases of goods, services, and equipment by park visitors has a hidden, but very real, multiplying factor that effectively triples what they spend as the initial expenditure ripples through the economy, according to economists. The overall economic impact of state park recreation on the state's economy is estimated to be in excess of \$625 million annually.

All of the 24 state parks offer ideal environments for

a variety of outdoor recreation, but each has its own flavor. For a colorful guide to all of the state parks, contact the nearest KDWP office.

—Mathews

KAW POINT PARK DEDICATED

More than 600 people attended the dedication of the new Lewis and Clark Historic Park at Kaw Point, in Kansas City, Kan. The kick-off to nine days of events at the park commemorating the bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark Expedition and the expedition's encampment at the site, the park dedication celebrated the efforts of hundreds of volunteers along with public and private sector partners over the past three years.

The park was reclaimed from an area that was formerly the site of a Darby Landing Craft facility during World War II, then a riverboat dinner cruise operation, but it had been allowed to become overgrown and strewn with junk. Through cooperative efforts, we now have a place for the community to enjoy river recreation

and historic interpretation."

The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks supported the project through a \$10,000 donation for boat ramps from its WildTrust funds. The donation made construction of the boat dock area and access for the physically challenged possible.

—Shari L. Wilson, Kansas Wildlife and Parks commissioner, Kansas City

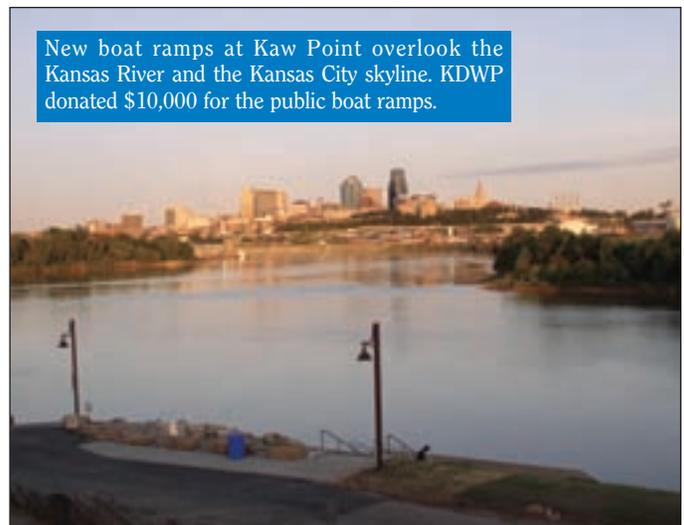
SPORTSMEN VOTERS

In the first law of its kind in the nation, Georgia will allow citizens to register to vote while they get their hunting and fishing licenses. The Sportsmen Voter Registration Bill (SB 541), signed into law by Gov. Sonny Perdue, was patterned after the popular "motor voter" law and requires businesses that sell hunting and fishing licenses to act as voter registration sites as well.

The Georgia General Assembly overwhelmingly approved the measure.

—from *American Hunter*,
July 2004, Page 20

New boat ramps at Kaw Point overlook the Kansas River and the Kansas City skyline. KDWP donated \$10,000 for the public boat ramps.



Short-lived Shrew

Many children are familiar with the character of Auntie Shrew from the animated movie, *The Secret of NIMH*, but did you know that shrews are actually common in Kansas? There are four species of shrews in the Sunflower State: Hayden's shrew, the northern and southern short-tailed shrews (which are very similar), and the least shrew. Of these, the southern short-tailed

shrew is perhaps the most common.

The southern short-tailed shrew is a remarkable animal that is frequently found in fields and woodlands of Kansas. Most casual observers who may see one of these small furry mammals would simply think it was a field mouse. Upon closer observation, however, some key characteristics reveal distinct differences.

In Shakespeare's time, a shrew was used to describe a woman with a scolding, nagging disposition, as described in his play, *The Taming of the Shrew*. (This famous play was also made into a movie starring Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor.)

The shrew has a long nose, five toes on each foot, and dark gray fur that will brush in any direction. The teeth have reddish brown tips.

Shrews emit a strong odor that repels many predators. Although house cats will often kill them and lay them on your doorstep, cats don't often eat this catch. However, birds of prey have a poor sense of smell, so they will seize any shrew they can get their talons on.

In general, shrews haven't been highly thought of throughout history. Aristotle once wrote, "The bite of the shrew-mouse is dangerous to horses and other draught animals as well. It is followed by boils."

The perception that shrews have a nasty attitude probably





quency sounds while navigating dark runways and burrows.

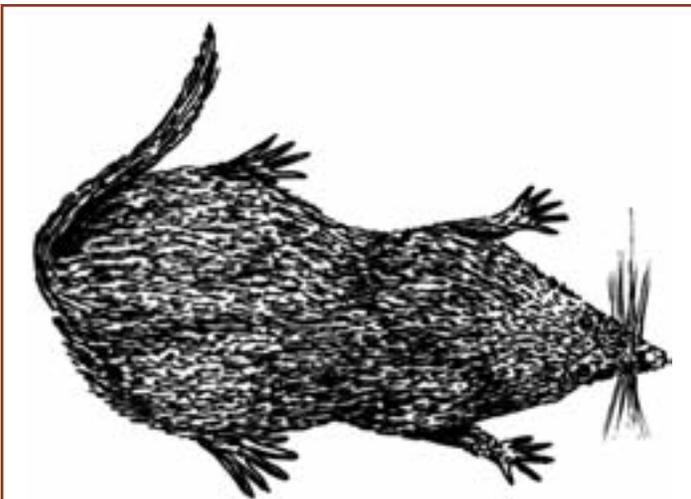
Shrews typically have two litters of five young, one in spring and one in fall. When the young get old enough to travel, they form a line that trails behind the

comes from the poison that shrews deliver through their saliva. This poison slows the heart and respiration rate of mice, one of the shrew's prey. The poison in the saliva gland of one short-tailed shrew reportedly is potent enough to kill 200 mice.

Shrews live fast and die young; few make it beyond two years old. They constantly search for

female. One of the offspring holds onto the hide at the base of the female's tail, and the following young grasp their siblings in the same manner, making a "shrew train."

Because shrews devour mice and insects, they play an important role in the balance of nature, benefitting farmers by keeping pests in check.



food, except for brief rests. Their hearts beat rapidly, and they need to keep their small bodies warm — tough for a non-hibernating species in winter. For this reason, shrews have an insatiable hunger and are known as mighty hunters for their size.

Shrews share common traits with moles and bats. In fact, shrews and moles are "related," both belonging to the mammal order Insectivora, which describes their preferred food. Like bats, shrews have poor eyesight and are capable of echo-location (or "radar"). They emit high fre-



Shrews have been found skewered to a thorn of a small locust tree. In this case, it would have been put there by the loggerhead shrike, also known as the butcher bird. The shrike will return later to its hanging food stash.



Backlash

by Mike Miller

Snipe Initiation

When I was in junior high, my friend Highwater (his real name was Melvin, but his pant legs were always 6 inches too short, so we called him Highwater) invited me to spend an evening at his family's farm to watch an initiation. His big sister's church youth group was initiating a new member with a "snipe hunt."

"You gotta come," Highwater said. "You and I will watch from the hayloft while they send the new guy out with a burlap sack to catch snipe. He'll think the club members are going to be beating the bushes, driving snipe toward him. He won't have a clue."

"What's a snipe?" I asked, though I may have been vaguely aware that it was some kind of bird.

"That's the beauty of it," Highwater chuckled. "There's no such thing. See, they'll convince the new guy to stand in the dark holding this sack while making some goofy humming sound that's supposed to attract snipe. The rest of the group will go inside and drink lemonade and eat cookies. You and I will watch from the barn and laugh."

I kind felt sorry for the new guy, but it was exciting to be in on the joke. And I'll have to admit, it was funny watching the poor guy walk tentatively into the dark, humming, while holding a burlap sack open. Highwater and I giggled and snickered at him from the dark loft.

Later in life, I confirmed that snipe were shorebirds and that you really could hunt them. But I've never let down my guard when snipe hunting is mentioned.

I was especially cautious when Bubba called. Bubba's excitable when it comes to hunting, and he'd been listening to stories about snipe hunting at Cheyenne Bottoms. Bubba loves any kind of hunting that involves shotguns, waders, decoys, marshes and Black Labs, and legitimate snipe hunting includes several of those criteria. But when Bubba learned that the limit on snipe was eight per day and that on a good day you might flush 20 or 30, he could hardly contain himself.

"You ever hunted snipe?" Bubba asked that October afternoon. "I know a guy who will show us how."

"Nope," I answered. "But before we go any further, I need to know two things: Are you talking about hunting during daylight hours and are burlap sacks involved?"

"Well, of course I'm talking about hunting during daylight hours, you moron," Bubba said with his usual charm. "You do know what a snipe is, don't you?"

"I do. I'm just making sure you and your snipe source

do," I answered. "And I really need to know if burlap sacks have been mentioned."

"What's the matter with you?" Bubba hissed. "Burlap sacks have not been mentioned. Do you want to go or not? I was thinking about hunting ducks early, then meeting this guy mid-morning to hunt snipe."

We had a great duck hunt that morning, after I confirmed there were no burlap sacks in Bubba's duck boat and relaxed. But the serenity of the morning changed as we trailered the boat. First, we identified the source of the eerie hum we'd been hearing: The marsh grass held mosquitoes in numbers that can't even be described. And second, the wind began to blow. And even though I usually hate the wind, on this day, I was happy to have it.

The wind built steadily to a sustained 30 mph as we met our snipe guide in a parking lot near one of the hunting pools. We pulled on hip boots and lathered on bug dope.

"The conditions are just right," our guide yelled over the gale. "The wind should keep the mosquitoes off. Let's go."

As we trudged into the wind, I was daydreaming about Highwater and the initiation when I heard Bubba shoot. We gathered around to examine the strange-looking bird and, for me at least, to validate that snipe hunting was real.

As we broke up to resume our walk, Bubba walked behind me and uttered an unrepeatable expletive. He was staring at my back like I had some hideous tumor.

"What?" I said, trying not to sound too worried.

"Take off your hat and look at the back of it," Bubba said grinning, while taking off his hat, too.

I've heard the term haired-over used to describe a worked farm field that's completely covered with new weeds. Well, the back of my hat, as well as my entire backside, which had been downwind, could only be described as "haired-over" with mosquitoes! The wind swept them away as we brushed them off, which sounds good, but with every step, new mosquitoes were dislodged from the grass to take their place.

Snipe hunting was fun and challenging. But each time I wiped a handful of mosquitoes from the back of my neck, I had this nagging feeling, aside from the itching. Somewhere in a little dark place in my mind, I could clearly see Highwater, covering his mouth and laughing hysterically at me. ♡

