

# KANSAS

*Wildlife & Parks*

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2005

\$2.75





# On Point

by Mike Hayden



**“... and change has its enemies.”**

Robert Kennedy

Change, especially in long-standing traditions, is difficult. But change to one tradition may be necessary to sustain another. For a quarter of a century, the second Saturday in November has been the traditional opening day of pheasant and quail seasons for Kansas hunters. However, starting in 2006, a new tradition will begin.

Amidst controversy, the Kansas Wildlife and Parks Commission made changes to upland bird seasons at its June 2005 meeting in Hays. Commissioners considered testimony from KDWP biologists, K-State researchers, and the public before voting on changes, which will create separate opening days for hunters.

One change the Commission made was to establish a statewide opening day for quail on the second Saturday in November. Quail season has traditionally had two opening days – the second Saturday in November for most of the state and the third Saturday in November for a portion of western Kansas. There is no biological reason to delay the opening day in this area, so the Commission opted to create a statewide opening day to simplify the regulations and to provide more opportunity. They did, however, approve an amendment that will close the quail season on the third Sunday in January in response to research indicating late-January harvest could be detrimental to quail breeding populations for the coming nesting season.

There was, and still is, controversy over the change in the pheasant season opening day. Beginning in 2006, pheasant season will open on the first Saturday in November rather than the second. This recommendation was made for several reasons. First and foremost, it adds a week of hunting during the best time of the fall for our most popular game bird. The department is always looking for ways to increase quality hunting opportunities without hurting the resource. But staff are also cognizant that as the percentage of people who hunt has declined, there is competition to attract those hunters. From 1990 to 2004, resident hunting license sales have decreased by 24 percent, while the population of Kansas has increased by more than 10 percent. Providing additional hunting days during a particu-

larly pleasant time of the fall is one way to both encourage more resident hunters and attract more non-resident hunters to Kansas.

Nearby and neighboring states have similarly adjusted their pheasant season openers to attract more hunters and increase opportunity. Opening dates in some of these other states are even earlier than what Kansas' will be. Nebraska's and Iowa's pheasant season opens on October 29 this year, South Dakota on October 15, and North Dakota on October 8. Colorado currently has the same opener that Kansas has but they had moved that opening date to the second weekend in November several years ago to try to keep more resident hunters at home, rather than have them travel to Kansas.

These changes should be viewed as positive for all. They give hunters an extra week of hunting opportunity and allow KDWP to promote each of our upland bird species separately. Hunting is an important part of rural economic development in Kansas, and businesses in small towns will benefit from an additional week of hunter traffic. A U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service survey showed that Kansas upland bird hunters spend more than \$121 million on retail purchases, with a total economic impact of \$245 million each year. This annual economic boost is especially critical to many rural communities that are struggling to survive.

Through special hunts, special youth seasons, and outdoor skills programs KDWP is working to ensure that youngsters have a quality introduction to hunting. However, along with the youth recruitment effort, KDWP has been concerned with retaining our current hunting constituents. As the old saying goes, “It takes a hunter to make a hunter.” We need hunters to pass on the tradition of hunting to the next generation. Creating more hunting opportunities and simplifying our regulations are efforts to ensure current hunters keep hunting. The changes to upland bird seasons are indeed breaking with tradition, but I believe these changes will play a role in saving the most important tradition – the tradition of hunting.

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Wildlife & Parks

November/December 2005

Vol. 62, No. 6

- 1 On Point**  
“... and Change Has Its Enemies” by Mike Hayden
- 2 A Century Of Ringnecks**  
The ring-necked pheasant is an Asian transplant that has adapted quite well to Kansas’ landscape. by Randy Rodgers
- 8 The Value Of Public Land**  
All Kansans benefit from wildlife areas and state parks. by Mike Miller
- 11 Film Your Hunt**  
The author taps into his 30 years of photo experience to help readers better record their hunting experiences. by Mike Blair
- 16 Welcome To Cyberspace**  
Everything you wanted to know and every license and permit you desire is at your keyboard-tapping fingertips. by J. Mark Shoup
- 19 2004 KDWP Annual Report**
- 21 Forty Years Of Deer**  
Today’s deer hunting is a far cry from the opportunities enjoyed during the first modern deer season in 1965. by Mike Miller
- 23 Rabbit Fever**  
A Missourian travels to Kansas each winter to enjoy rabbit hunting and beagle music. by Marc Murrell
- 26 A Tale Of Three Prairies**  
Photo essay by Mike Blair and Jim Minnerath
- 33 Wild Currents**  
(Including a new feature, “Profiles” on Page 41) edited by J. Mark Shoup
- 45 Backlash**  
Lennie’s Deeropolooza by Mike Miller



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Illustrator Dustin Teasley  
Staff Writer Marc Murrell  
Circulation Teri Simpson

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.



**Front Cover:** Kansas pheasant hunting ranks among the best in the nation. Mike Blair filmed this scene in Pratt County, 55mm lens, f/11 @ 1/500 sec.  
**Back:** Photos after a successful hunt ensure a lifetime of special memories. Blair photographed his son-in-law with a 24mm lens, f/11 @ 1/125 sec



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





# A CENTURY OF RINGNECKS

by Randy Rodgers  
*wildlife biologist, Hays*

photos by Mike Blair  
*photographer/associate editor*

*Not long after their Kansas introduction in 1906, pheasants captured the imagination and passion of hunters. Today, Kansas ranks among the top three states in the country in pheasant harvest, making this Asian transplant an important piece of KDWP's centennial story.*



KDWP file photo

**L**ong before Kansas became a state, its vast and unbroken prairies were home to countless numbers of bison, elk, pronghorn, and even large predators like wolves and grizzlies. But over a relatively short span of time, European settlers brought dramatic changes to this land and its wildlife. By the late 1800s, John Deere's moldboard plow had turned much of the prairie sod upside down and with that, the wildlife would inevitably and permanently change.

The sweeping changes that converted the prairie landscape to one dominated by cropland left many voids in the array of wildlife species. Early accounts indicate Kansas' prairie chickens and sharp-tailed grouse initially became more abundant in response to the scattered grain fields created during early stages of agricultural establishment. But as crop fields eventually overwhelmed the landscape and the remaining prairie was fenced, and often overgrazed, prairie grouse populations became remnants of their former numbers. It's not hard to imagine this loss becoming the impetus for the rise of a new game bird on the plains, one with a very different taste in habitat and from an altogether different land.

Over the course of several millennia, the ring-necked pheasant had adapted to not only coexist with human agriculture, but to thrive around it. So it must have seemed logical in 1881 when Judge Denny arranged to have a shipment of ringnecks, trapped near Shanghai, China, released

into the burgeoning agricultural region of Oregon's Willamette Valley. While Denny's effort was not the first attempt at establishing pheasants in North America, it was the first to be successful. This and the successful establishment of pheasants elsewhere in Oregon, Washington, British Columbia, and California eventually caught the attention of hunters across the continent. The meteoric rise in popularity of this spectacular



game bird meant it would only be a matter of time before it was tried in Kansas.

Under the direction of State Fish and Game Warden D. W. Travis, that time came in April of 1906 when 3,000 pheasants were released in 84 of Kansas' 105 counties. This was followed by additional releases of 2,366 birds in subsequent years. It's interesting that the initial 1906 release was of "1,500 pairs" of pheasants, possibly suggesting they hadn't considered the polygamous nature of the species. Kansas' first pheasants

didn't come directly from China, but were imported from England. We don't know the exact Chinese point of origin of our "English" birds.

Little is known about the early response of these first Kansas pheasants. They were probably released into nearly perfect conditions. Relatively primitive, unmechanized agriculture created a patchwork of small fields with lots of edge. Weeds were abundant in the crops providing ideal brood habitat and high quality winter cover. Hay harvesting was a slow, time-consuming process that allowed plenty of time for good nest success. Harvest of grain crops was inefficient, leaving abundant waste grains to supplement available weed seeds for winter food. Even predator populations were suppressed. Under such conditions, it's likely that many of the original releases took hold and those birds initially thrived.

One thing we do know is the first Kansas pheasant hunting season opened on December 1, 1917 and ran to December 15. An identical season occurred in 1918, but the season length was cut to 11 days (December 1–10) for the 1919 and 1920 seasons. From 1921 through 1931, no pheasant season occurred in Kansas, possibly reflecting a belief that the birds needed more time to establish.

When pheasant season was reopened in 1932, a more conservative approach was apparent. Only 12 counties were opened for a two-day season on October 21 and 22. Seven of those counties were in the northwest

quarter of the state and the remaining five were clustered in southcentral Kansas. The daily bag limit was two cocks through 1936, and a single hen was allowed in the three-bird bag from 1937 through 1941.

When the Dirty Thirties arrived in Kansas, the hard times were not limited to the people. The droughts, dust storms, and horrible condition of the land at the time also made survival difficult for pheasants and other wildlife, particularly in western Kansas. This setback likely accounts for the number of pheasant-hunting counties being cut to nine in 1937.

A slow, halting trend toward expansion of the hunting season began in 1939 when 21 counties were opened for the three-day season. This increased to 38 counties in 1944 and 47 just two years later. It wasn't until 1962 that essentially the full Kansas pheasant range, as we know it today, was opened for hunting. By that time, the season was 40 days long and included a five-bird daily bag limit. In 1961 and 1962, one hen was permitted in the five-bird bag, but that experiment was discontinued in 1963 and cocks-only seasons have been the rule ever since.

Further lengthening of the pheasant season, with occasional setbacks, occurred through the early 1970s when our first modern-length seasons were initiated. As biological information accumulated, it became clear that hunting-season length was not a significant factor in subsequent pheasant production. Cocks-only hunting, coupled with the fact that these birds are polyga-

mous, meant that, theoretically, as much as 80 percent to 90 percent of the roosters present in the fall could be harvested without harming spring reproduction. Kansas' actual cock harvest rate has never approached that level, so season length made little or no difference.

Timing of the pheasant season came to be recognized as more of a social issue, balancing landowner tolerance with recreational opportunity. In 1981, after three years of excellent pheasant harvests, members of the Kansas Fish and Game Commission unexpectedly extended the pheasant season through February 15. The sociological side of the equation reasserted itself in 1982 after landowner protest resulted in the Commission's adoption of a stabilized season that started the second Saturday in November, ended

January 31, and included a four-rooster daily limit. That structure lasted 24 years through 2005.

In 1940, work was begun on a state-run pheasant farm at the site of what is now the Meade Fish Rearing Station. The pheasant farm went into operation in 1942, but this facility did not last long. Overwhelming evidence from research across the country was showing that pen-reared pheasants lacked critical survival skills and were easy prey for predators. The Meade pheasant farm was eventually closed because it was ineffective at improving Kansas' pheasant populations. That didn't matter; wild pheasants were doing the job themselves.

No scientific data exists to document exactly when pheasant populations reached their zenith in Kansas. Accounts from retired wardens and biologists suggest the peak came in the 1950s when



The Kansas landscape was likely ideal for the 3,000 ring-necked pheasants released in 1906. Primitive farming practices with a patchwork of small fields and lots of weeds probably provided perfect habitat for the pheasant to prosper in.

it was not uncommon for hunters to flush hundreds of longtails from a single western Kansas field. Those populations were a by-product of a cropping system that meshed with the pheasant's annual needs — the wheat-fallow rotation. This system was a response to the repeated crop failures of the 1930s which had shown that the dry croplands of the High Plains could not consistently produce an annual wheat crop. The wheat-fallow system inserted a 14-month fallow period between the harvest of one wheat crop and the seeding of another. Fallowing provided time for moisture to accumulate in the soil, substantially reducing the risk of crop failure. And it created something else — quality pheasant habitat.

The abundant green wheat offered ample, secure nesting cover. But it was the wheat stubble available during fallow, particularly the weeds that grew in the stubble, that produced quality brood habitat and winter cover. With these three critical phases the pheasant's life cycle all satisfied by the wheat-fallow rotation, pheasant populations exploded in western Kansas. In 1956, the Soil Bank Act began to add millions of acres of perennial habitat to the landscape as well, further extending the pheasant boom into the middle 1960s, when the Act was repealed.

It wasn't until the late 1950s and early 1960s that biologists initiated scientific monitoring of Kansas' small game populations. The Small Game Harvest Survey, a means of estimating hunter participation and success, was first conducted in 1957. The same surveys, still used today to track pheasant populations, saw their



KDWP file photo

The first pheasant hunting season was held in 1917, Dec. 1-15. Several more short seasons were held until pheasant hunting was closed from 1921-1931.

origins in 1962 and 1963. These include the Rural Mail Carriers Survey, the spring Pheasant Crowing Survey, and the Summer Brood Survey. Biologists also tested at least five other types of pheasant monitoring in the early 1960s that were ultimately dropped for various reasons. The surveys retained have revealed the ups and downs of Kansas' pheasant populations ever since.

Perhaps the most interesting pheasant decline and recovery occurred in the 1970s in that it revealed the powerful influence of national policies and geopolitical events on our pheasant populations. A period of all-out crop production occurred after the U.S. sealed a huge grain deal with the Soviet Union in 1973. Then U. S. Secretary of Agriculture, Earl Butz, exhorted farmers to plant "fencerow to

fencerow" to take advantage of the booming export market and strong grain prices. And plant they did, often removing fencerows, breaking new ground, and increasing the frequency of tillage in the process. The predictable result was that pheasant populations plummeted, hitting a low point in 1976. This sharp decline in pheasants was evident not just here in Kansas, but throughout the Great Plains.

But this was not to last. The Arab oil embargo in 1974 caused crude oil prices to spike. When the higher prices of diesel combined with the sharp decline in wheat prices that began in August of 1976, the result was fewer acres seeded and less weed control. This set the stage for an amazing pheasant comeback. In 1978, the combination of excellent pheasant populations and a modern-length season resulted in



Pheasant populations first boomed in the 1950s in response to a wheat farming method called wheat-fallow rotation. Fallow, or idle fields of weedy wheat stubble make perfect brood-rearing and winter habitat.

a record 916,000 roosters being taken in Kansas. That was eclipsed by harvests estimated at 1.25 million in 1979, 1.26 million in 1981, and the all-time record of 1.57 million in 1982. The pheasant good times were rolling, but the seeds of the next decline had already been sowed.

New agronomic practices were taking hold by the early 1980s. “No-Till” became the catch-all term that defined a series of crop rotations where tillage was mostly or completely replaced by herbicides and seeding was done directly into crop residues. The traditional wheat-fallow rotation of the High Plains was being replaced by systems that offered two crops in three years or even three crops in four years. Fundamental to the new rotations was thorough post-harvest weed control in the wheat stubble. This loss of critical weedy wheat stubble resulted in drastic declines in the quality of habitat available for both brood rearing and winter

cover. Even the quality of the stubble itself declined, becoming shorter with the introduction of new semi-dwarf wheat varieties and more powerful combines. With habitat quality steadily diminishing, a hard drought followed by a severe winter in 1983–1984 triggered another pheasant population crash. But this time, the losses were never recovered.

Thanks to a key provision of the Federal Food Security Act of 1985, Kansans can still boast of



Weedy fields provide young pheasants with the insect diet and overhead cover necessary for survival.

quality pheasant hunting and ours remains one of the top three or four pheasant-hunting states today. The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), basically a reconstitution of the old Soil Bank program, added about 36 million acres of permanent cover to the nation’s agricultural landscapes. Almost 3 million of that is in Kansas, mostly in the form of native grass mixtures. Although research has shown that, acre-for-acre, these CRP stands do not match up in habitat quality to the weedy stubble once furnished by the wheat-fallow rotation, there is no question that the CRP represents a critical buffer against further pheasant declines. Efforts to improve pheasant populations in Kansas and other states significantly hinge on increasing the proportion of broad-leaved plants in these stands and on improved CRP management. Real progress in this regard is being made.

The CRP isn’t the only angle being explored in the on-going effort to rebuild pheasant populations. Recent studies have highlighted the substantial agronomic and wildlife values of maximizing wheat-stubble height in dry regions. Research has also produced a new form of the wheat-fallow rotation that substantially improves profitability and offers even greater pheasant benefits than older forms of the system. These developments hold potential for at least partially restoring some of the lost pheasant potential on the High Plains.

No doubt, there are those who dismiss the ring-necked pheasant as just another exotic species. To be sure, problems have often far



Pheasant hunting is an important heritage in Kansas, and it provides many rural communities with an important economic boost each fall. More than 40,000 non-resident hunters will travel to Kansas this winter in pursuit of pheasants.

outweighed the benefits of many other exotic introductions, whether deliberate or accidental. But this isn't the case with ring-necks, and it's unfair to lump them with the likes of house sparrows and starlings. Pheasants in Kansas, and North America in general, have become a key engine for conservation. The powerful desire to see and pursue this beautiful game bird has motivated generations of hunters and landowners to conserve and create wildlife habitat on the agricultural landscape. Pheasants are truly a "flagship species" in our agro-ecosystems, since the habitats created on their behalf benefit less charismatic species like grasshopper sparrows and meadowlarks. Were it not for the work of the many advocates who mainly know the CRP through pheasant hunting, it's not unrealistic to ask whether its erosion-control, water-quality, and native-wildlife benefits would remain undiminished today.

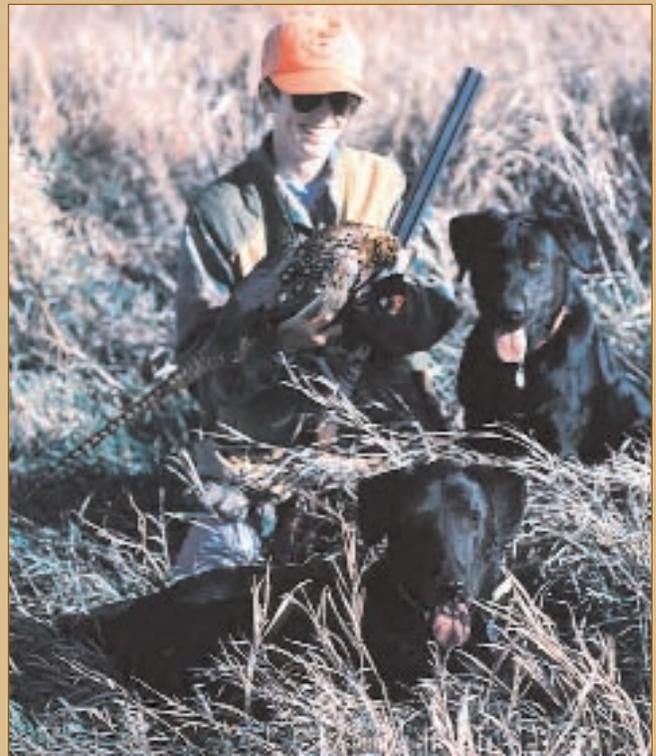
But there's more to the ring-neck than that. My wife Helen and I recently buried an old dog. He wasn't exactly a hunting

purebred, but you'd never have convinced him of that. We have many fond memories of Ryne, but none are so clear and unfading as those formed on pheasant hunts. Helen's first rooster taken in Ellis County with no witnesses but the dog, that perfect point of a cock I'd walked over in Barton County, or the unbelievable chase of a bird winged by a too-long shot in Rooks County — those are memories for a lifetime.

Without ring-necks, how many such memories might never have been? How many opening-day family gatherings might never have occurred? How many urbanites might have less understanding of rural America, and vice-versa. And how many young-

sters would never have experienced the camaraderie of hunting companions, young and old, in the crisp air of fall?

Would I have loved to experience the wildness of the vast prairie before it was turned and tamed? Absolutely! But that can never be. Of course, the contexts have inexorably changed from prairie to cropland, and from subsistence to sport. But I suspect the heart-pounding thrill of taking a first pheasant isn't really so different from that experienced by young Indians on their first bison hunts 150 years ago. This keeps us connected to the land. And that's why the first 100 years of ring-necks in Kansas has been a good thing. May the next 100 be even better. ♡



Randy Rodgers photo

The author's wife, Helen, holds a pheasant taken in Ellis County. The pheasant hunting tradition brings families and friends together all across the state each fall.



KDWP file photo

by Mike Miller  
editor, Pratt

***Even though only a small percentage of Kansas is open to the public, those areas managed for outdoor recreation are very popular. And whether you use them or not, they are valuable to you and your community.***

More than 20 years ago, I was an enthusiastic novice bowhunter. I had just moved to a small, rural community with lots of hunting opportunities, but I didn't know many people. Just a year out of college, starting a new job and purchasing a home, I didn't have a lot of opportunity that first year to seek permission to hunt private land. Fortunately, there was an amazing public hunting area not too far from town. Deer numbers weren't high in those days, but I learned so much. And I had the time of my life, sitting in a makeshift tree-stand evenings after work and on weekends. I managed to take a young white-tailed buck – a thrill I'll never forget. And that public area still has a special place in my heart.

But I learned more than just what mistakes I would make bowhunting whitetails. I learned that my wildlife area would be busy when the pheasant and quail seasons opened. Hunters from across the U.S. would

travel to my little piece of paradise. Another nearby public area was managed for waterfowl, and I always looked at license plates on cars parked there when I drove by. Most were from outside the county.

While there aren't as many Kansas hunters today as there were 35 years ago, there seems to be more competition for access to the land. Access has become a commodity – in some cases an important part of a landowner's annual income. People are willing to pay large sums for access. Things are very different today.

Even though Kansas ranks 49th among states in its percentage of land that is open to the public, the public wildlife areas we have are popular with hunters. They provide an important piece of the opportunity puzzle, for both residents and nonresidents. And just as important, they provide an economic shot-in-the-arm to local communities. The hunters from around the country

who hunted pheasants and quail on "my" public area usually stayed two or three nights in a local motel. They ate at our restaurants and bought gas. The out-of-county duck hunters probably stopped for gas and a bite to eat on their way home. My community benefited by having those public wildlife areas nearby.

Great Bend is another good example. Like most western Kansas communities, Great Bend's economy suffered when the oil industry and agriculture hit hard times in the 1980s and 1990s. Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area, one of the most important inland marshes in the country, is just four miles north of town. And just 10 miles to the south is Quivira National Wildlife Refuge. Local businesses soon learned that Cheyenne Bottoms and Quivira were valuable to more than just migrating birds and a few hunters. The wildlife area draws tens of thousands of hunters and birdwatchers each year.

Today, the Great Bend Convention and Visitors Bureau actively promotes the wildlife areas to attract visitors from all over the world. In addition to attracting hunters, the CVB promotes “Wings N’ Wetlands,” a spring birding festival that is very popular. Tourism as a result of these two areas pumps several million dollars in to the local economy annually -- dollars critical to a struggling economy.

It’s the same throughout western Kansas. Hunters flock to small communities for the hunting. And a community near a public wildlife area is a more attractive destination.

The city of El Dorado has benefited enormously since El Dorado Reservoir was built in the early 1980s. The lake is popular with anglers and boaters and includes our largest state park and a 4,000-acre public wildlife area. On any given summer weekend, the state park will host 10,000-15,000 campers. On Memorial Day, July 4, and Labor Day weekends, the park will swell with 30,000 visitors, more than twice El Dorado’s population. These park visitors travel through El Dorado, and they purchase gas, food and supplies.

El Dorado has embraced the park’s impact and it actively promotes visitation. A bike/hiking trail from town connects to the state park’s trail system. An active friends group works with the park staff and helps fund projects that would otherwise be impossible. Obviously, retailers benefit from the increased traffic, but all local residents benefit by having the opportunity to fish, boat, camp, hike, and enjoy many special events hosted at the park. It definitely improves the quality of life, making El Dorado an attractive place to live.

While these direct benefits are easy to realize, indirect benefits are just as important, though often overlooked, especially by people who may not visit public land. However, they still benefit. Indirect benefits include businesses and service providers that may only be in place

because of the business provided as a result of the park or wildlife area. A community near a lake, park or wildlife area is more attractive to potential new residents and business owners. Land values may be higher because of the proximity of a recreation area. And I know of a community college coach who touts the local wildlife area and hunting opportunities to potential recruits. To those students with a hunting background, having a place to hunt is a drawing card.

Kansans are fortunate to have quality public lands across the state. And the visitation at these areas testifies to the popularity. Even obscure, out-of-the-way wildlife areas will host many hundreds of man-days each year.

Kansas’ population has gradually shifted from rural to urban. Today, more than half of our residents live in urban areas. When a family moves from a rural community to an urban one, they lose contact with family farms and private landowners. One of the biggest reasons former hunters give for not hunting is that they don’t have a place to go. But these Kansans are still hungry for outdoor experiences.

When KDWP purchases land for recreation, it is a win-win situation. For example, landowners within the McPherson Valley struggled to farm land that was wet three out of five years. KDWP has purchased more than 4,000 acres from willing sellers, paying appraised value for the land. The management program has developed the area’s natural wetlands, and each fall and spring, tens of thousands of waterfowl visit, attracting hunters and birders. Everyone wins. Farmers received payment for land that would have been difficult to sell and wasn’t turning a profit. The public has a wonderful area to enjoy, and the local communities benefit from increased travel to the area.

Another example of a potential win-win situation is the Circle K Ranch in Edwards County. The 7,000-acre farm is owned by the cities of Hays and Russell. It was purchased in 1994 when the communities were exploring water supply options. The original plan of piping municipal water supplies from the Circle K’s irrigation wells has since been abandoned, and the communities would like to sell the property. The Kansas Water Office is con-



Mike Blair photo

Public lands provide us with a variety of outdoor recreation opportunities. Hiking, biking and horseback riding are popular at many state parks.

cerned about the over-appropriation of water rights in the Middle Arkansas River Basin and would like to see many of the ranch's 42 irrigation wells taken out of production. KDWP would like to provide public hunting and outdoor recreation opportunities in the area, and the travel and tourism provided by the recreation would be a boost to the nearby town of Kinsley's economy. Money to make the purchase would have come from the Water Office and federal money the department receives from excise taxes on hunting equipment. It appeared to be a slam dunk.

But it wasn't. Legislation necessary for the purchase was blocked in last year's session. There is a powerful force in Kansas that opposes government ownership of land. There is fear of taking land off tax rolls and there is fear of reduced economic benefits. The fears are unfounded. KDWP would provide payment in lieu of taxes on this property, and recreation is a powerful and yet underutilized economic force.

In addition to the money spent on equipment, lodging and trips, by



Mike Blair photo

Hunters paid for our wildlife areas and continue to pay for management through license and permit sales. However, waterfowl areas provide critical habitat to many more nongame species and attract thousands of birdwatchers annually.

hunters, hikers, anglers, campers and wildlife watchers in Kansas, which by the way totals more than \$600 million annually, many Kansas-based companies contribute. Well-known companies such as Cobalt Boats, Carlson Chokes, Garmin Electronics, and a host of other outdoor-related businesses provide jobs and money to the Kansas economy. Look for more on these businesses in coming issues.

The Kansas Department of

Wildlife and Parks is committed to providing opportunities for outdoor recreation and will continue to pursue increasing our banks of public land through purchase from willing sellers. As Secretary Mike Hayden said in his column in the September/October 2005 issue, ". . . it's clear that the lack of public land in Kansas is a downward drag on our economy. That's something we'd like to change." ♡

Communities near wildlife areas benefit economically as hunters pay for lodging, food and services. In addition, public lands can also increase property values, make a community more attractive to new businesses and potential residents, and increase the quality of life.



# Film Your Hunt

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

*Quality photos can make memorable experiences in the field last a lifetime. A few simple tips can help you take great pictures of your hunts.*

**Y**ou never forget a hunt like that one. It was November 13, and a cloudy daybreak left a pall in the deer woods. Jason, my son-in-law home from college, sat in one of my best deer stands, hoping to take his first big buck with a bow. Several yearlings passed, and a two-year-old drifted by at the edge of shooting range. The damp woods were quiet, promising good things as the rut peaked. But the morning wore on, and nothing else was seen.

My stand was no better. The big buck I hoped for never materialized, so I got down and met Jason at the truck. Before heading home, I wanted to try something else. The clouds were starting to break, it was calm, and the timing was perfect to rattle in a buck at a nearby woodlot I had in mind.

Walking in, I'd never seen better rattling conditions. I told Jason that we might leave with a big deer, and I meant it. In 30 years of hunting and taking photographs, I'd rattled numerous bucks, and this place had the magic. We set up where a large, leafy brushpile afforded good cover. Jason simply stood by a big cottonwood tree to break up his silhouette. Any buck that appeared would be focused on the sounds of the horns.

I began smashing the antlers together while thrashing on the broken limbs to create the racket two bucks might make while fighting. Half a minute later, I saw Jason tense up and look to the south. I quit rattling and peered through the leaves to see a mature buck charging in. It stopped just 15 yards away, looking for





Take some time to position subjects in a natural area. Clean up the animal and remove any limbs, grass, or trash that could distract from the composition.

the fight. Jason drew his arrow.

I clicked the antlers twice, and the buck began to circle. Still at full draw, Jason waited for a broadside shot at 10 yards. Seconds later, he had his first Pope & Young-sized deer in one of the most exciting hunts I'd ever experienced. Though the buck was a three-by-three, I judged it to be at least 4 1/2 years old. A mature buck like that doesn't come easy with a bow.

And that's the reason we spent the next few hours taking pictures. Details of the hunt will always remain in your mind, but there will never be another chance to record the moment as it really was. Fifty years from now, Jason may look at those photos and recall the sights, the sounds, and the wonder experienced with his first archery trophy. Even the taxidermist can't do that. A beautiful photo at the end of a hunt is a natural and lasting conclusion.

These days, getting good pictures is easier than ever. Fine

hunting photos are not hard to get, but they do require attention to detail. Good pictures are a combination of gear, site, time, and subject preparation. It helps to have a partner handy, and often, it's worth the trouble to find one. After all, you've worked hard to have a successful hunt, and another hour or so to make good pictures will be worth it the rest of your life. Among my hunting friends, we expect calls during season to help each other with photo chores. In fact, it's just part of the fun. But there are times when help is unavailable. In those instances, you can still film yourself with your trophy.

First, let's talk about cameras. Everything is different than it was a just a few years back. Special features once exclusive to single-lens-reflex (SLR) cameras now are common on point-and-shoot (PS) models. Automatic focus and exposure compensation are nearly flawless, ensuring usable pictures by anyone who can look through a viewfinder

and push the shutter. Every camera out there is capable of delivering good photos – even the cheap, disposable cameras you can buy at a convenience store. Camera prices vary from just a few dollars to more than \$5,000, depending on features. Fortunately for most situations, inexpensive cameras do just fine.

When film was the only game in town, camera considerations were more limited. Now, the main question is whether to shoot film or digital. Digital cameras basically work like their earlier counterparts, but instead of using film, they capture images on a fixed CCD (charge-coupled device) and record them on a memory card. Images are downloaded from the card for storage or printing. The card is erased and reused.

Digital camera quality is determined by the size of the CCD as measured in Megapixels (MPS). Early on, digital cameras of 1-2 MPS could not compete with film cameras' image quality. Now, though, even the smallest digital cameras are rated at 4 MPS or bigger – adequate for photo prints up to 8-by-10 or even larger. Because of this, picture quality is not an issue.

Digital cameras provide a great advantage in film savings. For the cost of a few rolls of 35mm film and processing, a memory card can last for years. Without film costs, photographers are free to shoot more pictures, leading to greater skills and justifying the purchase of more expensive camera gear. Photos can also be judged instantly on the camera's screen and kept or deleted.

What's the downside to this new technology? Digital photog-

raphy can rely on modern computers, special software, and computer skills. And while home digital printing can now equal or outperform commercial photo labs in quality and print life, this also requires expensive equipment and knowledge. However, photo processors can now accept your digital camera's memory card and produce only the prints you select. And many can also burn your photos to a CD for storage, so you don't have to be a computer whiz to enjoy digital photography.

On the flip side, film is always good. In fact, it's your best choice if you already own a film camera, don't want to bother learning digital skills, and want prints of everything you shoot. It's also convenient and available. You can buy film in a convenience store (and, for that matter, cheap disposable cameras ready to shoot), the printing is done by professionals, and pictures can be mailed to your home or picked up in an hour, depending on the lab.

That said, digital and film cameras are somewhat the same. SLR cameras in either format are

by far most versatile. They accept a variety of lenses and powerful flash attachments and have motor drive options or sequential shooting modes. They can be paired with mid-range zoom lenses that cover all kinds of shooting situations with optical clarity. The biggest drawback of SLRs is size and bulk. They're heavy, don't fit well even in large backpacks, and they're expensive. Even so, they are the choice of most serious photographers.

Excellent hunting photos are also possible with less expensive PS cameras. Dramatic advances in the past few years have added zoom lenses, close-up focus modes, and built-in flashes. The real advantage of PS cameras is compact size: most are lightweight and fit easily in a pocket. Digital cameras may have digital zoom capabilities in addition to their optical zoom. The digital zoom is tempting to use, since it mimics a long telephoto lens, but quality is seldom acceptable. Use the camera only in its optical zoom range for best results.

Set up makes a good hunting photo, and the best photos are

taken at the hunting scene in quality light. Heavy shadows or patchy light can reduce important details in the picture, so move to sunlit openings when possible. Likewise, avoid tall vegetation, vines, or saplings that create distracting backgrounds. When upland bird hunting, move away from chest-high grass. Film in the native habitat whenever possible. If a deer falls in a muddy soybean field, move it to nearby grass or woodlands to create more natural and pleasing pictures.

Always clean an animal before taking photos. Whether filming pheasants on a tailgate or a pronghorn in sandsage, make sure that mud and blood are not visible. Carry wet wipes to help clean fur or feathers, and make sure the animal looks its best. Check the hunter for needed adjustments, too. Study the setup carefully before snapping photos. Make sure that distracting foregrounds or backgrounds are not a problem. Watch out for tree branches that seem to "grow" out of a hunter's head, or that interfere with important details like deer



This is the digital age, and there are as many choices for digital cameras as there are for film equipment. Single-lens-reflex digital cameras provide the most flexibility. However, just as in film cameras, they are bigger and heavier. Digital point-and-shoot models take excellent photos in just about any conditions, and each shot can be previewed instantly.

If you don't have assistance, a scene with game and dog can be interesting. But keep your point-and-shoot handy to capture field action, such as the retrieve scene below.

antlers. Likewise, watch for clumps of foreground grass that might obscure part of the scene. I often spend 10 minutes or more policing the photo site before taking a picture.

Most hunters wear caps that cause distracting facial shadows. Tilt headgear back so that the hunter's face is lit. Changing the angle of light can also help to illuminate subject faces. Use fill flash (usually discussed in your camera manual) to improve shadow details. Where possible, adding the gun, bow, or hunting dog improves a photo by revealing more of the situation. Position these unobtrusively to add important information to the scene.

Whether a deer or a bobwhite, the animal should be portrayed in front of the hunter with its best features highlighted. Small game birds can be held in an open hand or positioned on the ground in front of the hunter and dog. Pheasants should be displayed to show maximum color and detail. Turn a buck's head to reveal the rack's most impressive side. Be sure to study the best perspective. In the case of deer, filming from a low angle may highlight the antlers against the sky.

Hunters without a photo assistant have several options. They can photograph the quarry alone or perhaps with their dog, adding gear to enhance the memory. Or in many cases, they



can photograph themselves with the animal, using the camera's self-timer function. This requires a tripod or other steady, level rest for the camera.

Composing self-timed pictures is tricky. First, set up the animal in a desired background and decide where you will fit for best composition. Place the camera on the tripod and move it as necessary to frame the shot. Set the focus and exposure (most

cameras do this automatically.) Make sure the frame contains enough room to fit everything — too close, and important features may be cut off. Set the camera timer for 30 seconds, push the shutter, and get into position. It's a good idea to try this with several framings to ensure best results. And this is where a digital camera provides a distinct advantage, since immediately after the shot is taken, you can



review and make adjustments to the composition. Remember, it's better to include too much scene than not enough.

When good shots count, consider the time of day. Flash photography can be accomplished at night, but results are usually disappointing. It's better to photograph in daylight. Should you take the animal at dusk, in a major snowstorm, or other undesirable light, wait until the next day to set up the photographs. I've never been sorry for waiting, especially with rare trophies. Be sure proper steps are taken to ensure the carcass cools quickly and is kept cool until the photo session and final processing.

Hunting photos are more than scenes with a kill. Be sure to capture the best of each hunt. Sometimes, a beautiful sunrise makes an important part of your hunting experience. Beautiful dog work makes great photos. A candid picture of your hunting partner or scenes around hunting camp may provide indelible memories of the hunt. Action pictures are always dramatic. Anticipate the shot and film from a sitting position as your retriever arrives with a duck. Film your buddies as they engage a dramatic covey rise over a pointer. But never take chances with dangerous gun angles in actual hunting situations. Likewise, never portray a static hunting scene where even an empty gun is pointed in an unsafe direction.

For me, filming the hunt has become a natural and necessary part of saving great memories. I've always got my cameras. I carry a full complement of digital SLR gear in my truck so that it's available if needed. But on an

actual hunt, I rely on a tiny, five MP5 PS digital camera that's no bigger than a deck of cards. With it, I can shoot magazine-quality photos of virtually any Kansas hunting situation without the hassle of larger gear. Best, I've always got it when needed. I still regret the day, years ago, when I missed a spectacular, sun-through-fog turkey hunting scene with my dad. I decided not to carry my heavy film gear that

day, and his big gobbler was taken in a mystical scene that will never be repeated.

Great hunting photos are far easier than they used to be. Hunt hard, keep the faith, and good things are bound to happen. Make sure to capture these great moments for lasting memories with your camera. 



The day, the company, the deer – a variety of factors come together at any given time to make one moment a memory of a lifetime. When it happens, take the time to photograph the event so that photos will help you cherish those times.

# WELCOME TO CYBERSPACE



by J. Mark Shoup  
*associate editor, Pratt*

***By the end of 2005, an automated license system will be in place across the state, and you will be able to purchase just about any license or permit from your home computer.***

According to the Pew Internet & American Life Project, “22 percent of Americans 65 and older use the internet. By contrast, “58 percent of Americans age 50-64, 75 percent of 30-49 year-olds, and 77 percent of 18-29 year-olds currently go online.”

An even more startling figure the Pew study revealed is that almost nine of 10 teenagers use the internet. That was in 2004. As the old saying goes, “the future is now.”

Whether you’re a computer user or not, you’ve probably heard of email. This is by far the most common use of online services. For millions of people, it has replaced the hand-written letter as the most common form of personal correspondence.

But online services go far beyond personal correspondence. Researchers often dig up online in minutes information that might take hours to find in a library. News junkies are rapidly finding alternatives to the mainstream media through online news websites and weblogs, called “blogs,” which are the passion of many who want to dig behind the scenes of TV or

daily newspapers. For better or worse, almost anything known can be found on the internet.

Another feature of the internet has had a huge impact on the nation’s economy: online shopping. This handy form of shopping saves consumers time and gasoline and allows them to comparison shop from the convenience of their homes. They can even make hotel and airline reservations online.

So what has all this got to do with the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks? Actually, computers have transformed what we do. For example, production of *Kansas Wildlife and Parks* magazine and the hunting and fishing regulations brochures are all produced on computers in the Pratt Operations Office. When the electronic versions produced in Pratt are complete, they are sent to the printer over the internet through a process called file transfer protocol, or “ftp” for short.

Perhaps the biggest change is how department constituents get information. We still print and distribute “hard copy,” but more and more, customers are going to our website: [www.kdwp.state.ks.us](http://www.kdwp.state.ks.us) for information.

Point-of-sale machines, pictured at right, or PCs are installed at license vendors across the state. When the new system is completed, sales and record keeping will be faster, more efficient, and easier.



What can be found on the department's website? Want to know where to hunt, fish, boat? It's there. Want to know where the fishing's best or the waterfowl are gathering? What about the upland bird forecast? Field biologists have the ability to update these portions of the website, letting KDWP constituents know what conditions are like at their favorite reservoir or wetland as soon as it happens. (With laptop computers, biologists are also able to collect and process data on-site and send it directly to central databases.)

But this is a fraction of the information available on the website, which contains some 5,000 pages of information, complete with quick links to other locations on the site or elsewhere online. A handy search box allows the user to type in a keyword or words, such as "zebra mussels," and be taken directly to information on this exotic species that threatens Kansas reservoirs.

Or click on the "site map" at the bottom of the home page. There you'll find links to the latest news, information about the Kansas Wildlife and Parks Commission, pending regulations, and a plethora of links to information about hunting, fishing, state parks, boating, law enforcement, threatened and endangered species, environmental education, and much more. You can also email KDWP with questions, comments, or complaints.

However, the area that has really

taken off in recent years is online sales. Today, you can renew a boat registration online or purchase anything the department issues: hunting and fishing licenses, big game and turkey permits, stamps, game tags, you name it. You can subscribe to *Kansas Wildlife & Parks* magazine. Need free publications such as the *Kansas Hunting Atlas* or the *Summary of Boating Laws*? Print or download them and approximately 200 other publications from the convenience of your home.

Beginning this fall, computer technology has enhanced the KDWP consumer's ability to make purchases from traditional vendors, as well. The much-anticipated automated licensing system is now in operation statewide. With the new system, vendors have a computerized licensing machine or PC installed in their business. (State parks have them, as well.) Like the online system, hunters and fishermen will be able to buy all department issues. However, instead of a separate permit or license for each purchase, the customer will receive a printed document that lists all the things the person has purchased, eliminating the need to carry multiple pieces of paper for various

types of hunting, fishing, or park use.

The system has many other advantages. With point-of-sale automated licensing, KDWP constituents or clerks no longer have to fill out hand-written forms. After the first purchase has been made, customers are given a KDWP number for future purchases. The next time they want to buy a license or permit, they just provide this number and what they want to purchase, and the computer will print the purchase in the blink of an eye.

Additional benefits to customers, vendors, and KDWP include the following: eliminates the need to print licenses, ship them to license agents, and warehouse past years' license books for audit purpose; eliminates waste of unsold preprinted licenses; provides a true accounting system for all vendors; allows law enforcement officers to verify license and permit information in the field any time of the day or night; allows cross-checking of licenses and permits to prevent issuance of duplicate permits; allows a customer to replace a lost or stolen license or permit at any vendor, not just the vendor where the original purchase

was made; allows vendors to sell all licenses and permits, and eliminates the problem of running out of preprinted license books; and enables more efficient surveys of users due to real-time collection and availability of names and addresses.

With time, hunters, fishermen, naturalists, and park users will come to appreciate the speed and

efficiency of purchases made online or through the automated licensing system, not to mention the information quickly available on the KDWP website. Some may consider outdoor enthusiasts — a minority in today's culture — rustics, but like everyone else, we have entered a brave new world. Welcome to cyberspace. 🦋



It's important to read all instructions as you proceed through the screens to purchase a license or permit. Also, be sure to download the "plug-in" when purchasing a turkey or deer permit, so that you can print it out when you are finished.



## BUY A LICENSE ONLINE

Click "Online Sales" on the top right-hand side of the home page. Then click "Begin License/ Permit Purchase." Read ALL instructions and download software and plug-ins you need. Then click the "Begin License Purchase" button. Identify whether you are a resident or non-resident, whether you are a lifetime license holder or not, and enter your driver's license and Social Security numbers before clicking "Continue License Purchase." If you have already purchased any permit or license this fall — online or through the Automated Licensing System at a vendor — you will have a KDWP number to enter and will not have to fill out any other fields. If not, you will be taken to a page where you fill out personal information such as name and address, then continue to step two, where you choose your purchases.

You may add purchases or proceed to checkout at any time after that. After entering credit card information, you print your license, permit, or whatever other issue you have purchased on your home printer. If you are purchasing a big game permit, a PDF file will be downloaded that you can only print one time. The permit includes a carcass tag. The permits you print must be carried with you while afield.

Adobe Acrobat Reader software and a printer attached to your computer are required. If you do not have Acrobat Reader, a link is provided where you can download and install it on your computer free.

# 2004 KDWP ANNUAL REPORT

The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks is a century old this year. Reviewing the accomplishments of 2004 provides a sense for the similarities — and the differences — between our first year and our 100th year.

In many respects, our challenges today are much the same as those that faced our forebears in 1905. We still must accommodate the divergent opinions and preferences of Kansans to ensure fair distribution of outdoor recreation opportunities. We still must work to minimize the effects of environmental degradation and conversion of wildlife habitats to other uses. And we still are challenged by changes in our society. Through it all, we are committed to the same vision that guided our predecessors: To conserve and enhance our state's diverse natural resources, and to provide opportunities for public enjoyment of those resources.

Listed below are a few highlights of 2004.

- KDWP's Environmental Services Section completed the tenth year of its stream survey program. More than 1,000 surveys have been completed, documenting aquatic life and habitat quality in river basins around the state.

- The Kansas Hunter Education Program surpassed an impressive milestone, with more than 400,000 students having completed the course since its inception in 1973. Volunteer instructors provide the training for about 12,000 hunters annually.

- The number of certified Outdoor Wildlife Learning Sites (OWLS) surpassed 200, enhancing environmental education at schools across Kansas.

- Using 75 percent federal funding, the department completed 30 boating access projects (boat ramps, courtesy docks, toilets, and parking lots) in 2004. The department maintains more than 230 boat ramps, and associated facilities on public land.

- Tuttle Creek and Milford state parks added rental cabins in 2004, joining Cheney, Lovewell, Cedar Bluff, Eisenhower, Webster, and El Dorado state parks already providing cabins. Cabins are scheduled for construction at Perry, Cross Timbers and Prairie Dog state parks in 2005.

- The popular Walk-In Hunting Areas (WIHA)

program opened more than 1 million acres of the state to hunting access in 2004. In addition, the department leases private land for spring turkey WIHA areas (about 115,000 acres annually).

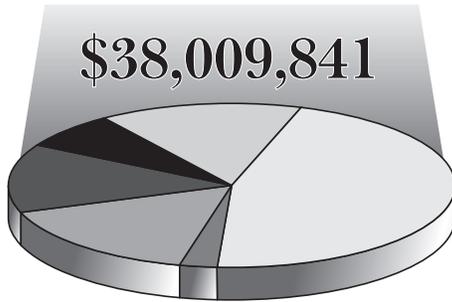
- The Fishing Impoundments and Stream Habitats Program — the angling counterpart to WIHA — opens more than 1,200 acres of private ponds and 87 miles of privately-held streams to public fishing access from April through October.

- In 2004 and 2005, the department negotiated agreements with local communities to eliminate access fees at 206 community lakes in Kansas. The cost of the Community Fisheries Assistance Program (CFAP) is paid by Federal Sportfish Restoration funds. Anglers benefit by removal of fees, and participating community lakes receive enhanced department fisheries management.

- Each year, the department's four fish hatcheries (Pratt, Milford, Meade, and Farlington) have cultured and distributed 100 million fry, one-half million fingerlings and 250,000 intermediate sportfish to public fishing waters around the state.

- In 2004, the department contracted with a private company to develop an automated licensing system (Kansas Outdoor Automated Licensing System). Licenses, permits and registrations issued by the department are now processed through a centralized, secure database. The system substantially enhances sales, accounting, and law enforcement capabilities of the department. Once a customer record is entered into the system, vendors will no longer need to hand-write customer information for each issuance they sell; the database will contain that information, which can be easily recalled for any subsequent purchase by that customer. Real time monitoring of license and permit sales will enhance management of resources and facilities by allowing department staff to adjust immediately to fluctuations in demand, as reflected in sales figures. Law enforcement effectiveness will be enhanced, since an officer will be able to cross check information contained in the database to confirm license and permit information any time of the day, any day of the year.

# Revenue



Hunt/Fish License Sales	\$17,444,252	46 %
Hunt/Fish Federal Aid	\$7,552,590	20 %
Park Permits	\$4,990,512	13 %
Boat Registrations	\$801,195	2 %
Other Federal Aid	\$4,222,973	11 %
State General Fund	\$2,998,319	8 %
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$38,009,841</b>	<b>100 %</b>

## FISHING, HUNTING, FURHARVESTING

License/permit	Number sold	Revenue
Resident Fish (\$18.00)	161,661	\$2,909,898
Combination Fish/Hunt (\$36)	37,280	\$1,342,080
]Nonresident Fish (\$40)	8,565	\$342,600
Five-Day Trip Fish (\$20)	4,603	\$92,060
24-Hour Fish (\$5)	60,252	\$301,260
Trout Stamp (\$10)	7,173	\$71,730
Lifetime Fish (\$300)	232	\$69,600
Lifetime Comb. Fish/Hunt (\$600)	571	\$342,600
Lifetime Hunt (\$300)	1,077	\$304,800
Resident Hunt (\$18)	83,880	\$1,509,840
Nonresident Hunt (\$70)	53,890	\$3,772,300
Nonresident Junior Hunt (\$35)	2,062	\$72,170
Controlled Shooting Area (\$15)	9,354	\$140,310
48-Hour Waterfowl (\$25)	671	\$16,775
Deer Permit (variable)	156,722	\$4,794,195
Turkey Permit (variable)	70,121	\$1,263,340
Adult Furharvester (\$18)	5,383	\$96,894
Junior Furharvester (\$10)	180	\$1,800
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>663,677</b>	<b>\$17,444,252</b>

## THREE- YEAR BOAT REGISTRATIONS

Registration Type	Number Sold	Revenue
Boats under 16 feet (\$20)	16,641	\$332,820
Boats over 16 feet (\$25)	18,735	\$468,375
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>35,376</b>	<b>\$801,195</b>

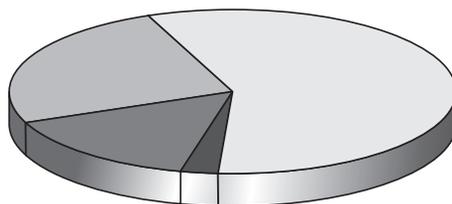
## STATE PARKS

Permit Type	Number Sold	Revenue
Annual Vehicle (variable)	35,889	\$1,264,564
Annual Camp (\$150)	3,066	\$459,900
Second Vehicle (variable)	3,797	\$257,943
Duplicate Vehicle (\$10)	1,005	\$10,050
Daily Vehicle (variable)	212,381	\$1,134,809
Daily Camp (variable)	86,615	\$599,342
14-Day Camp (variable)	2,174	\$154,100
Utility (1-\$5.50)	14,122	\$77,671
Utility (2-\$7.50)	114,580	\$859,350
Utility (3-\$8.50)	20,244	\$172,074
Group Camping (variable)	292	\$709
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>494,165</b>	<b>\$4,990,512</b>

## FEDERAL AID

Coast Guard (boating safety)	\$ 6 2 1 , 7 8 3
Dingell-Johnson (fish)	\$3,657,056
Pittman-Robertson (wildlife)	\$3,895,534
Other	\$3,601,010
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$11,775,383</b>

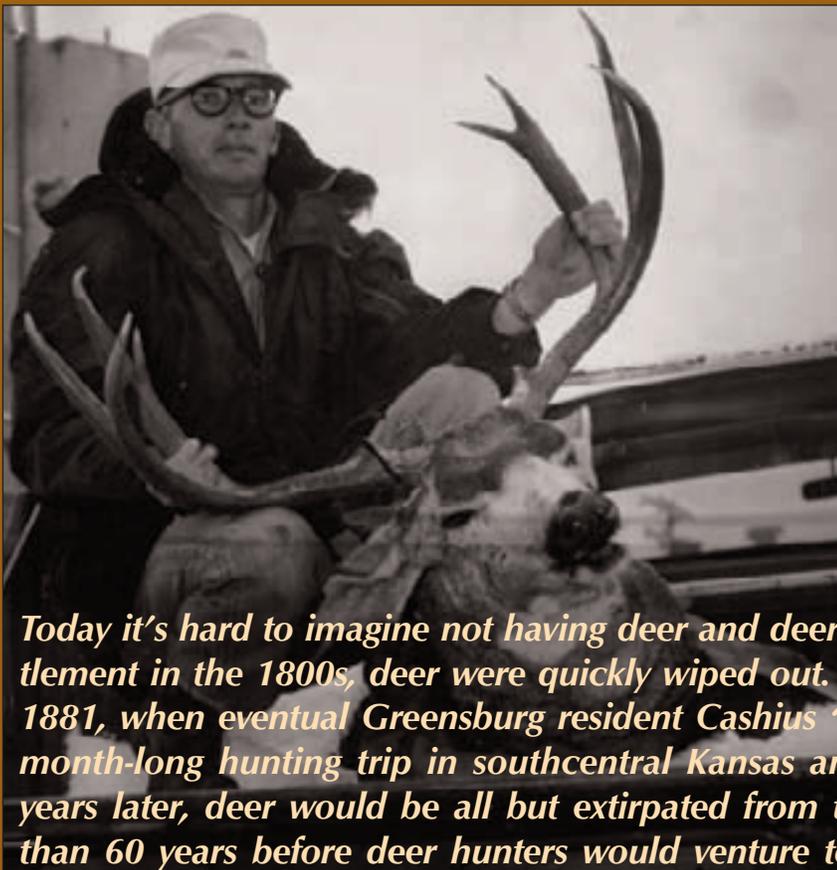
# Expenditures



Fish & Wildlife	62 %
Parks	25 %
Administration	10 %
Boating	3 %
<b>Totals</b>	<b>100 %</b>

# Forty Years of Deer

by Mike Miller  
editor, Pratt



*Today it's hard to imagine not having deer and deer hunting in Kansas, but after settlement in the 1800s, deer were quickly wiped out. There were still a few around in 1881, when eventual Greensburg resident Cashius "Cash" Hopkins wrote about his month-long hunting trip in southcentral Kansas and northern Oklahoma. Just 20 years later, deer would be all but extirpated from the state, and it would be more than 60 years before deer hunters would venture to the Kansas fields. Below is an excerpt from Hopkins' journal as transcribed by his granddaughter Ruth Mead.*

"Monday, November 28, 1881, 10 o'clock on the bank of the Arkansas shooting geese and brant. The river is about 600 yards wide, very shallow, full of sand bass, poor country along the river but very fine back one mile down the river [Cash and his three partners traveled from Hutchinson to Kingman by train, then on to Harper and then to Medicine Lodge by wagon. From there they camped and hunted westward] ... killed one wild turkey and one coon - turkey for breakfast. Sunday noon - take dinner at Salt Plains. The Salt Plains on the east side of the road. The plains are about 5 miles square, white as snow. Past through cattle ranch 30 miles square - 60,00 head of cattle ... Sunday Dec. 3, 1881, camped for night on the bank of Indian Crick 150 miles

from Hutchinson ... deer scarce here, turkeys scarce also. Dec. 5, tore up camp - moving up Indian Crick. McCoy killed one deer 10 o'clock a.m. Weather cloudy and warm. Deer sign plenty. Country sand ridge and brush. 4 o'clock p.m. taking dinner for the last time on Indian Crick. Saw five deer today. Wednesday, Dec. 5, 1881. Took dinner on Eagle Cliff 20 miles from Indian Crick. Saw eight deer, killed none. Hitching up to move to a ranch six miles. Thursday, Dec. 7, 1881. Camped on Eagle Cliff at the mouth. The sun bright and warm, game very scarce. Fixing to move 25 miles farther. The Indians have made a raid thru this country and killed all the game. Find great piles of deer horns piled up where they have tanned their hides."

The notes from Hopkins' hunting journal clearly show that there were still some deer left in southern Kansas and northern Oklahoma in the late 1800s, but it was also evident that they were becoming less common. By 1900, deer were as good as extinct in Kansas. Along with most other game animals, unregulated hunting, market killing, and subsistence hunting and changes in the landscape from farming and grazing had wiped out white-tailed and mule deer across Kansas. It would be 65 long years before deer would again be the topic of a hunter's journal.

In the Winter 1962 issue of *Kansas Fish and Game* magazine, an article titled "Kansas Nears Big Game Status" highlighted a growing deer population. Even though no deer were trapped or

transplanted into the state, they were coming back on their own. According to the article, the total Kansas deer population in 1955 was estimated at 725. But in 1960, surveys estimated 9,095 deer and by 1961 estimates had our deer herd numbering 10,686.

An article in the Summer 1964 issue of *Kansas Fish and Game* magazine announced that the Commission had paved the way for the first modern deer season in Kansas. The herd was estimated at between 20,000 and 30,000 and was growing at 30 percent per year. In 1958, 118 deer were killed on Kansas highways; by 1964, that number had increased to 431. The coming season provided a liberal archery season of Oct. 1-Nov. 15 with unlimited permits, since low success rates would have little impact on the herd. The rifle season was Dec.11-15, offering a total of 4,474 firearms permits authorized in 12 management units. That first season saw 1,220 archers harvest 160 deer and 3,935 firearms hunters take 1,340 deer. A tradition was born.

Today Kansas residents buy Whitetail Either-Sex deer permits over the counter, both archery and firearms. Nonresidents can apply for a limited number of permits and Kansas has become one of the top destinations for trophy-class white-tailed bucks. In some regions, deer hunting opportunities are in high demand and deer hunting has become big business.

In 2004, 134,097 firearms deer permits were issued, including resident and nonresident, Any Deer (which allow the harvest of either species, buck or doe), Whitetail Either-Sex, and Whitetail Antlerless Game Tags. Just more than 21,000 archery permits were issued, including 3,250 to nonresidents. The total harvest was estimated at 76,935. Hunter success rates vary from 61.7 percent for resident Any Deer permit holders, to about 50 percent for firearms Whitetail



During that first deer season in 1965, 1,200 bowhunters took 160 deer. Last year, 21,000 bowhunters took 9,400 deer for a success rate of 45 percent

Either-Sex permit holders, and about 45 percent for bowhunters. That's a far cry from the 13 percent success rate archers had in 1965 and the 34 percent success rifle hunters experienced.

While the Kansas management program has always included some harvest of female deer, recent policies have encouraged doe harvest. In the mid-1990s, the Kansas public and legislature made it clear that, in some regions, deer numbers had outgrown public tolerance levels. More than 10,000 were being reported hit by vehicles on Kansas roads, and many farmers reported some crop damage due to deer. More antlerless deer permits were made available, and special January seasons for antlerless deer were opened. Inexpensive game tags, which allowed the harvest of an antlerless whitetail were established. In some units, hunters could purchase up to four game tags, in

addition to their Whitetail Either-Sex and Antlerless permits. Under the permitting process in 2001, a hunter could have legally killed seven deer.

In just 40 years, deer have gone from front-page news of rare sightings to sports-page trophies and back-page accident reports. Management has evolved from conservative limited draw permits to over-the-counter sales, using harvest to find a balance among hunters, landowners, and the general public.

Deer hunting has become a treasured tradition in Kansas, and deer have become a key economic factor for the department and the state. It's been a wild ride. Hang on for the next 40 years. ♡



# Rabbit Fever

text and photos by Marc Murrell  
manager, Great Plains Nature Center, Wichita

*The excitement of the chase and lure of abundant cottontails and generous bag limits, brings a retired shop teacher and his world famous beagles all the way from Missouri to Kansas every year.*

Although most of the hunting seasons here in Kansas are over by mid-February, there remains one that is often overlooked, especially by Kansans. It is for this reason that a retired basketball coach and shop teacher from Missouri makes an annual trek to Kansas each February. What's his secret? Nothing but rabbits, and that's just the way Fred

Baum likes it.

"I hunt primarily in Kansas and Missouri," Baum said. "You don't have to go any place else when those are two of the best states around."

Baum doesn't go it alone, nor would he want to. He enlists the help of four-legged friends, many of which are world-class at what they do. Beagles are likely what keep Baum inter-

ested in rabbit hunting. Baum speaks of his first hound with nearly the same affection he might have for a first girlfriend.

"I had this friend who had a beagle and I had a pistol he wanted," Baum said of the first transaction in 1960. "We just decided to swap, and it all started right there. I've been training them and selling them all over the United States ever

since.”

When asked what lured Baum to beagling, he didn't blink and said he could give about ten reasons, and mentioned a few.

“One is you never go out and draw a blank,” he said. “You can't say that about other types of hunting. You're always going to have action. I've never gone out when I didn't have a race.”

Other factors also add to the life-long love.

“You've got two parts of the sport to look at,” said Baum. “You've got the shooting part of it and the sportsmanship of your accuracy and then you've got the hound work, and both make it really exciting.”

The number of beagles Baum



runs together depends upon how well they pack, or run together. Ideally, the dogs work as a team to sniff, track, and unravel the trail left by the fleeing cottontail.

“If they don't run too close together, I like to hunt about

three,” Baum admitted. “I like to think I could lay an imaginary blanket over all of them. If I can do that, I'll run five or six. More than that and they get in each other's way.”

Larger packs make much more noise, or “music” if you're a hound lover. To the layman, it sounds like garbled howling, but to the trained ear, the sound of each dog is unique and recognizable.

“They're all distinct,” Baum said. “They're just like people and each one has a different voice. You can run them at night or with your eyes closed and you can tell which dog is doing what.”

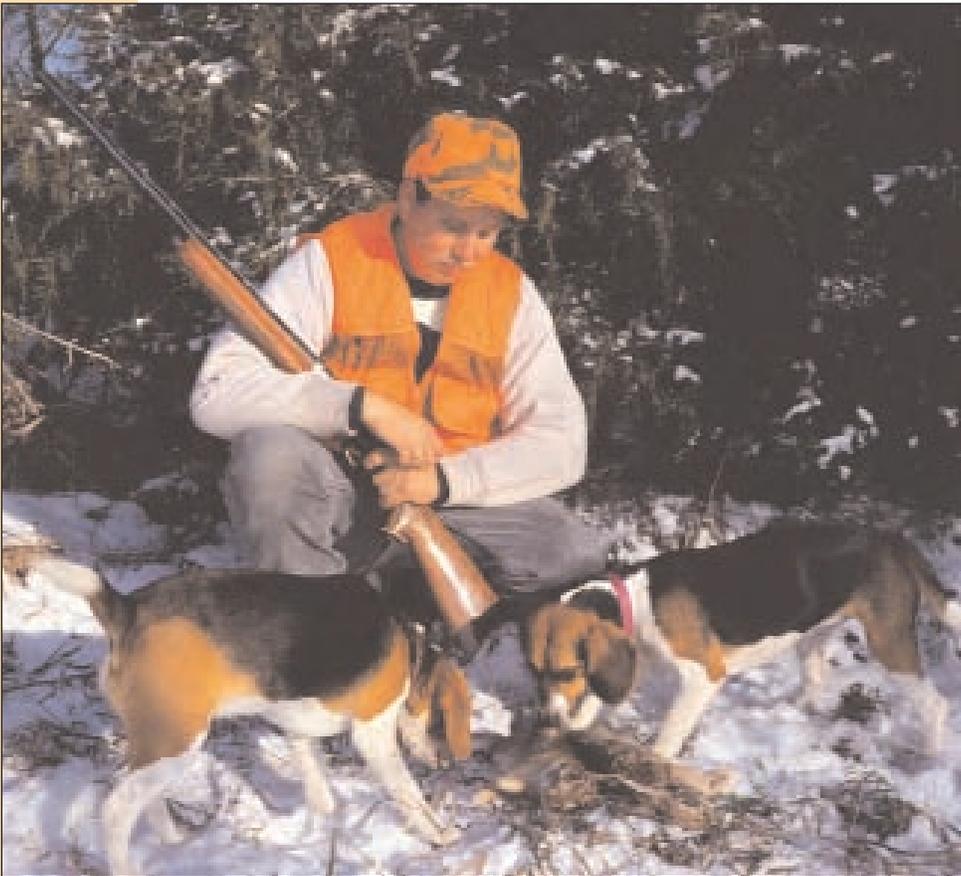
Baum raises and trains his dogs in Missouri, but he travels to the northern part of the state for reliable action since rabbits aren't as numerous around his home town of Aurora.

“You just see one rabbit every once-in-a-while. And the land is so poor here, he has to carry a sack lunch across the field,” Baum joked.

Which is exactly why Baum doesn't mind the five-hour drive to southcentral Kansas where rabbits are plentiful.

“You've got to have briars (or thickets),” Baum said. “That keeps the coyotes and the hawks from getting them first. The edges of grain fields with brush are the best.”

Baum's hunt tactics are simple. He does not shoot the rabbit when it first leaps from cover, but rather he will rely on the noses of his hunting partners. Ideally, the hunters jump the rabbit because if pressured too quickly, they have a tendency to hole-up



Those who hunt rabbits with beagles end up being more enthused with the chase than the actual harvest. Most Kansans overlook rabbit hunting in favor of upland birds.

and end the chase. If the dogs don't see the rabbit, Baum gets their attention.

"I holler, 'tally-ho, tally-ho, tally-ho,' and they'll come running," Baum said, smiling. "I put my finger down along the rabbit's trail and they'll come right to my finger, and the race is on."

Cottontails have a natural tendency to run a circle and return to their home territory. Some circles may cover only 100 yards with the rabbit returning quickly, while others may cover nearly a mile and take a long time to complete. The length of time also depends on how fast the rabbit is running, which depends on how fast it is being chased. Dogs are rated as slow, medium and fast, and Baum prefers medium runners due to their versatility.

"When the rabbit starts coming close, say within 100 yards, you better not move your feet, cough, or adjust your hat because they'll see that and spook," Baum said.

While many rabbit hunters prefer a 12-gauge shotgun, Baum prefers a Browning semi-automatic .22 pistol he received as a gift from one of his senior classes during his teaching days.

"I've got several others, but that's my favorite," Baum said. "I always go back to that one when I start missing with the other ones."

But if Baum goes out and has good races all day long, he doesn't care if he brings home the main ingredient to rabbit stew.

"I don't even shoot any around home," Baum said. "I just run my dogs. There's only

one rabbit and he seems like he just waits on me. I call him, George, and he seems to enjoy the chase, too. He gets trickier every day."

Baum is glad to share his rabbit hunting experience and knowledge with others. His pleasant demeanor and likeable personality are immediately evident when he's talking about

beagles and rabbit hunting with anyone who shows an interest. He is dedicated to the thrill of the chase and enjoys each moment to the fullest.

"I've made a lot of friends rabbit hunting and selling dogs," Baum smiled. "I've never made an enemy in 40 years." 🐾



Missourian Fred Baum poses with a brace of cottontails and his beloved beagles. Baum says he loves to hunt with beagles because he never draws a blank. Success is measured by listening to the sounds of his hounds.

# A Tale of

*The tallgrass prairie is at once dramatic and expansive. Before, it covered more than 170 million acres from Canada to Mexico. Six million acres remain. Kansas and Oklahoma are the principal guardians of this precious and shrinking ecotype. Most of the remaining tallgrass prairie resides in the Flint Hills region of these two states.*



# Three Prairies

text by Jim Minnerath

*private lands biologists, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*

photos by Mike Blair

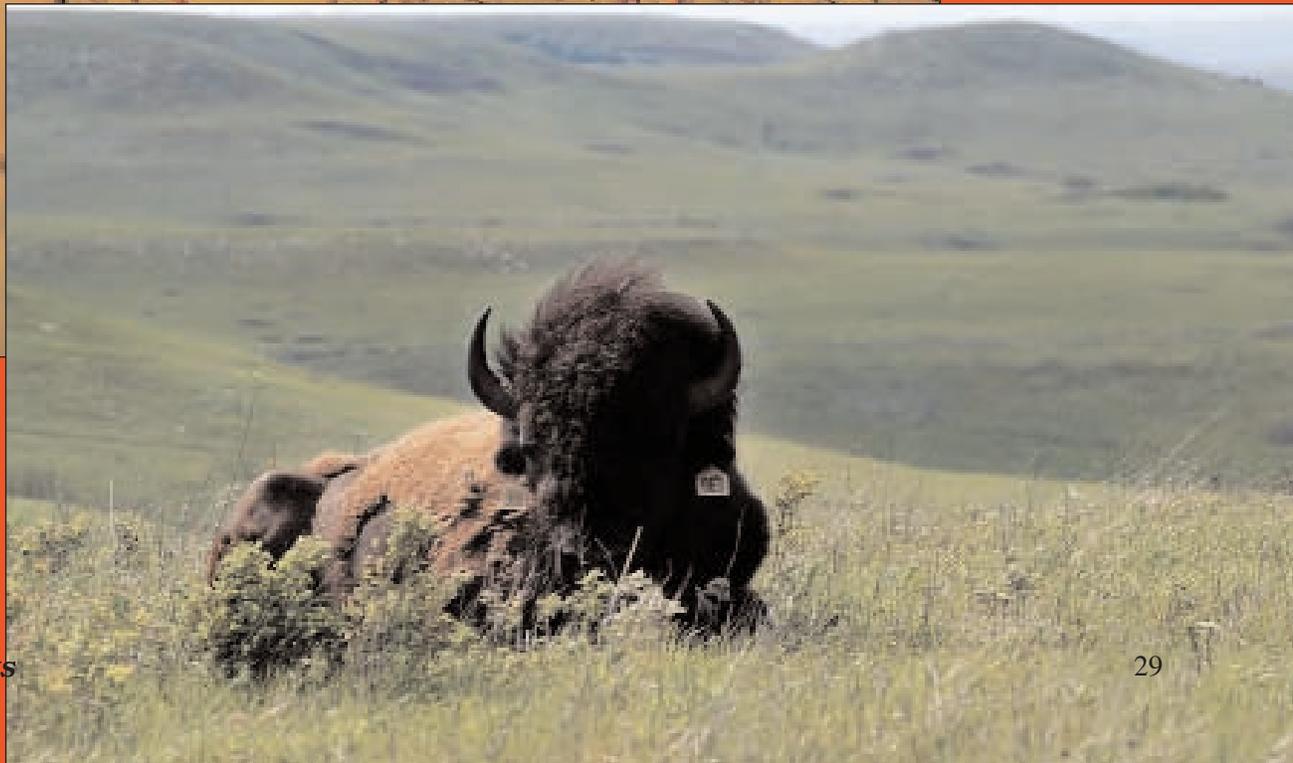
*We Kansans are fortunate to experience the remaining tallgrass prairie of the Flint Hills, but we also enjoy midgrass and shortgrass prairies. Time spent in any of these treasures indeed makes us prairie people.*



*The good stewardship of local ranching communities has preserved the Flint Hills much as they were thousands of years ago. To wander this tallgrass region evokes feelings of belonging to something greater than self. Here, one can sense the importance of grass, of open vistas, of continuation. Sure, the prairie offers economic opportunities, clean watersheds, and pure air. But more, it offers a sense of place, not only for those living and working there, but also for those who visit. The tallgrass prairie exists nowhere else on Earth.*



*Poets sing of the wind  
through pines, yet that  
soft pleasure is multiplied  
where the wind strums  
miles and miles of tall  
grass. Wind is the lan-  
guage of this region, its  
very essence, its Spirit.*





*Both man and beast know the prairie as home. Wild inhabitants abound. Some are common and visible — the coyote, the meadowlark, the prairie chicken. Horses run free, flowing across the land. Cattle graze, painting the distant green with peace. Hidden is the Henslow's sparrow, the mole cricket. Life teems in the rich prairie sod. Common or not, all the prairie's creatures are rare in a longer view. Less than three percent of the grasslands remain. Any who live there, be it rancher or cottontail, need understanding and sound conservation.*



*A walk through head-high bluestem in September is unforgettable. A snowy gown on treeless winter hills is unforgettable. Spring color of a million prairie flowers is unforgettable. The dawn songs of a prairie summer are unforgettable.*



*Somehow, the grassland hues of each season complement majestic sunsets and enrich the lives of those who see. Twilight offers the voice of the poor-will and the chorus of song-dogs, both praising the close of another prairie day. When I consider*

*what it means to be a Kansan, the prairie resounds clearly in my mind. I am a rare and lucky prairie person.*



Edited by Mark Shoup

## HELP: LOST CAMERA!

Editor:

If anyone hunted Quivira National Wildlife Refuge on opening day of teal season and happened onto a digital camera in a camera bag, I would like to hear from you. My husband and I were hunting near unit 40 and parked in the first lot south of it. We think the camera fell out of our truck that morning when we pulled our guns out. Of course, it was dark and we did not see it.

When we left, we walked straight to the road, and he came to pick me up, so he did not go on the side of the truck it may have fallen out of. The camera has several pictures on it that I do not have copies of. Most of them are of our grandson doing "firsts" in his life. The camera can be replaced, but those pictures cannot. I feel that any fellow hunter will want to do the right thing and get the camera back to us, so I am hoping you will read this letter and contact me. If you know someone who may have hunted that area, please check with them also. Thank you for your time, and as a distressed grandma and fellow hunter, I hope to hear from someone. Phone (913) 963-7808 or email [bacs@kcnet.com](mailto:bacs@kcnet.com).

*Becky Hallagin  
Paola*

## MOVE MUZZLELOADER

Editor:

I have read with interest the letters concerning the deer season for hunters using muzzleloaders. I am just getting started with this form of hunting and have been drawn for a Kansas permit. My goal is not to shoot a trophy but to try a different form of hunting. However, I did not hunt in the September season but will try my luck in the regular firearms season.

Why? Mostly because the forecast for opening day was for 90-degree weather. At that time of year, the deer still have dependent fawns and may even be cov-

ered with ticks. Combine this with the prospect of hunting in sunflowers and ragweed taller than I, the heat, and mosquitoes, would you want to go deer hunting at this time of year?

Still, I think muzzleloader hunting would be more of a challenge than rifle hunting.

The archery season lasts three months; firearms season lasts 12 days; and muzzleloader season lasts 14 days. In last month's issue of **Kansas Wildlife & Parks** magazine (Sept./Oct. 2005, Page 33), your response to Mr. Marsh regarding this subject was based on the advantage of hunting with a muzzleloader or rifle and that hunting during the rut may have a negative impact on trophy deer. If you are worried about the number of trophy deer taken during the rut, put this season where it does not correspond to the rut. You have already accomplished this with

the rifle season because the heaviest part of the rut is completed by Dec. 1.

The idea of a muzzleloader season sometime in late September to the middle of October, when the weather cools off, seems to be an option because the rut is really not in full swing by then. You might even consider decreasing the number of days allowed for the muzzleloader season but schedule it later in the fall.

I would only ask that if you are going to offer a special muzzleloader season, to please set the season when temperatures at least have a chance of getting down to 50 degrees, so that deer meat does not spoil within an hour of hitting the ground. If nothing else can work out, a late hunt for muzzleloaders in January is more appealing than the early September season.

*Kent Schaub  
Ness City*

## 2005 YOUTH DEER HUNTS

(RIGHT) Abilene 4th-grader Morgan Potter's first deer was bigger than any her dad has taken. Morgan took the trophy-class buck on Sept. 25 with a 30-30 rifle.

(LOWER RIGHT) Nine-year-old John Allen, of Great Bend, is all smiles as he poses with his first deer taken during the special youth season, Sept. 24, 2005. John's deer fell to a perfectly placed shot from his .243.

(BELOW) Tierra West is a 1st-grader at Greensburg and has been tagging along on hunting trips with her mom and dad since she was four. On her first deer hunt, Tierra took this monster mule deer buck with her .243.



photo courtesy Laura Stroda



Dear Mr. Schaub:

As with Mr. Marsh's comments, I understand and appreciate your concerns, and your points are well taken. This would be a matter for the Kansas Wildlife and Parks Commission to consider, and all parties affected would be allowed a voice. If you wish to contact the commission, commissioner contact information may be found on the KDWP website, [www.kdwp.state.ks.us](http://www.kdwp.state.ks.us), or in the 2005 *Kansas Hunting and Furharvesting Regulations Summary* booklet, available wherever licenses are sold.

—Shoup

## ALLOW SCOPES

Editor:

I have to agree with Toby Bridges' article on the use of scopes on muzzleloaders. See [hpmuzzleloading.com/legislation.html](http://hpmuzzleloading.com/legislation.html). From a historical perspective, scopes have been on muzzleloaders since the mid-1800s. From an ethical perspective, a scope allows a hunter to have a more precise aiming point at a distance, increasing the possibility of a clean, quick kill. All hunters should strive for that goal.

Please consider changing that regulation for next year because the majority of states have already come to the conclusion that allowing hunters to use scopes during the muzzleloader season is the right thing to do.

Rod Werhan  
Wichita

Dear Mr. Werhan:

The topic of what kind of equipment should be allowed is one of considerable debate. If it were simply a matter of using only the most effective, accurate, and lethal equipment available, then only high-powered centerfire rifles would be allowed.

However, there are cultural issues involved. This season was originally set up for primitive muzzleloader hunters at their bequest. Many of these hunters do not believe that modern in-line muzzleloaders should be used during the muzzleloader season, much less scopes, but they are. Similar disagreements have evolved among bowhunters, some

of whom don't think compound bows are fair and others who think crossbows should be legal. Some centerfire hunters believe a .223 should be legal for deer, and others think that a .45 ACP pistol should be allowed.

Lines have to be drawn somewhere and both social and ethical issues considered. What your argument really boils down to, however, is knowledge of and practice with one's equipment, and proper shot selection. If these basic hunter ethics are respected, the question of getting a clean, quick kill becomes moot.

Your proposition is worthy of discussion, however, so feel free to bring it before the Kansas Wildlife and Parks Commission.

—Shoup

## PENALTY TOO WEAK

Editor:

I knew Mr. Pittman (see "To Catch a Thief," *Kansas Wildlife & Parks* magazine, Sept./Oct. 2005, Page 30) because I worked in the shop next to his at Boeing for several years. I listened to his exploits and attributed them to an overactive imagination and

an overzealous ego. I really didn't think anyone could be that illegal (in his case lucky) and get away with it. That was until he was arrested.

This was refreshing to see, but I cannot fathom what the judge was thinking. He gave him a weekend prison sentence, which is a joke in my book. The county prosecutor did not charge him the first time he was caught, and now we slap his hands. Boy he is learning his lesson.

As long as he is out, he can have the opportunity to keep poaching. Then we can fine him again; he can pay his lawyers fees and keep the economy functioning. It is no longer about right and wrong but what can you pay when you are caught. He should have been hit where he really could have been hurt — his job. Sixty days away from it in jail with the fines would have been much more appropriate. As far as revoking his hunting privileges, in his case I don't think that will have an effect.

Guess I should have taken him more seriously.

Robert Hendrix  
Mulvane



## MORE ON TRESPASSING

It is illegal to hunt, fish, shoot, or trap on private land without the owner's permission. Hunting from public roads and railroads requires permission of landowners on both sides of the road or railway. Railroad rights-of-way also require permission from the railroad.

Written permission is required to enter land posted with hunting and/or trapping "by Written Permission Only" signs or having trees or fence posts painted purple.

Landowner permission should be obtained before pursuing wounded game onto private property. If you cannot find the landowner or get permission, contact your local natural resource officer.

It is both trespassing and dangerous to mount blinds or treestands on power poles, whether they appear abandoned or not.

Trespassing to hunt, fish, or trap or hunting from roads or railways without legal permission is a crime. Upon first conviction of this offense, a person may lose their hunting and/or fishing license and all related privileges for up to one year, in addition to other fees and penalties the court may assess. Upon any subsequent convictions, forfeiture of both license and hunting privileges is required, in addition to fines.

Furthermore, conviction of trespass or criminal hunting, trapping, or fishing may prevent the convicted person from enjoying these privileges in other states. The

Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks is a member of the Wildlife Violator Compact, to which 20 other states currently belong. Under this compact, anyone who has had hunting privileges revoked or suspended cannot hunt, trap, or fish in other member states.

—Shoup

## OFFICERS ASSIST KATRINA VICTIMS

The Kansas Wildlife Officers Association (KWOA) has made \$500 donations to each of two funds established to assist wildlife officers in Mississippi and Louisiana. The KWOA is a non-profit organization of Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks natural resource officers.

The Louisiana Wildlife

Agent Association Disaster Relief Fund and the Mississippi Wildlife Foundation Officer Relief Fund have been established to provide financial assistance to wildlife officers in their states, some of whom lost their homes in hurricane Katrina.

"KWOA members have worked for years at sport shows selling hats, coffee mugs, and raffle tickets to collect money that has been used to fund things like the youth hunter education challenge program and to help with the establishment of the International Game Warden Museum," says KWOA president Dan Melson. "Now we are going to send some of our funds to help our fellow officers affected by this disaster."

—Shoup

## CRIME OF A DIFFERENT COLOR

KDWP natural resource officers do more than just work with hunters, anglers, and boaters. They sometimes investigate crimes that occur on lands controlled by KDWP even if the crime may not be directly related to fish, wildlife, or boating. Such an incident occurred at the new wetlands located on the Milford Wildlife Area early this year.

On Feb. 14, NRO Jeff Goeckler, was contacted by the Wakefield Police Department about a vehicle that was stuck at the Quimby Creek wetland. Goeckler responded to the call and found a Ford Explorer stuck in the wetland's mud. Goeckler noticed that the lift boom, used to set the electric pump in the creek, had been damaged.

Goeckler returned to Wakefield and met with Police Chief Glen Mallen. Mallen said that he had overheard a conversation about another vehicle that had tried to get the Ford Explorer out of the mud and also got stuck. The individuals said that they used the lift boom located at Quimby Creek wetland to get their vehicle out.

Goeckler contacted the individuals that Mallen had overheard talking about the wetland lift boom. They said that they were trying to help a friend get their vehicle out, but they also got stuck. One of them had walked to town to try and get help, but by the time they got help, the other people in the group were able to get the vehicle out with the help of the lift boom. They were unable to get the Ford Explorer out because the vehicle was out of the lift boom's reach.

Goeckler attempted to contact the owner of the Ford Explorer but couldn't, so the vehicle was impounded.

On Feb. 18, Goeckler finally met with the owner of the Ford Explorer. The owner said that he had used the pump lift to get the friend's vehicle out of the mud but was unable to get his vehicle out because the cable was not long enough. Goeckler explained that the pump lift was not intended for pulling vehicles out of the mud, and the pump lift was damaged because of the wrongful use. The owner of the Explorer agreed that his actions caused the damage and was issued two citations. The case was turned over to the Clay County Attorney.

The owner of the Ford Explorer was found guilty and was ordered by the court to pay \$3,000 in restitution to KDWP for the damage. Twenty days in jail was waved in lieu of 18 months of probation.

—Jeff Goeckler,  
natural resource officer, Wakefield



### KDWP CREDIT CARD

The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) has developed an "affinity" credit card. This is a personal credit card that allows the holder to support a particular group or cause. In addition to supporting their cause, the card holder can receive additional benefits.

When a new applicant is approved, KDWP receives a signup fee from UMB Bank of Kansas City, Mo. This fee is donated to the program the applicant designates to support. Applicants may choose to support parks, hunting, fishing, boating, or watchable wildlife at the time they apply. The program will generate long-term support from every card issued because a percentage of what each card holder spends is returned to that selected department program monthly.

In addition, the applicant receives a two-year free subscription to *Kansas Wildlife & Parks* magazine and earns redemption points on qualified purchases. Earned points can be redeemed for KDWP's Outdoor Store merchandise, park and game permits,

stamps, and licenses.

Beginning Sept. 1, KDWP offices began displaying an easel and applications for the Kansas Wildlife and Parks Visa® Platinum credit card. Applications may also be made online at [www.kdwp.state.ks.us](http://www.kdwp.state.ks.us).

—Shoup

### NEW TAG ANSWERS

In the process of switching to online license and permit sales and an automated point-of-sale licensing system, the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) has received questions about how the system handles big game and turkey permits, game tags, and carcass tags.

Regarding permits and licenses issued at vendors with automated licensing machines, the answer is simple. Instead of a separate permit or license for each purchase, the customer receives a printed document that lists all the privileges he or she has purchased, eliminating the need to carry multiple pieces of paper for various types of hunting, fishing, or even park use. This document is signed at the time of purchase and kept throughout the season.

If a deer or turkey permit or game tag is part of the purchase, a tear-off carcass tag is attached to the document. If multiple permits or tags are issued, multiple tear-off carcass tags are also attached to the document. When a deer or turkey is taken, the carcass tag must be torn off, signed and dated, and tied to the animal's leg through two pre-punched holes in the tag.

Permits and tags purchased through the internet on home computers are printed on personal printers and also include carcass tags. These tags are torn off when an animal is taken, signed and dated, placed in a plastic food bag, and tied to the animal's leg.

In addition, for this year only, deer permits acquired through drawings include a carcass tag that must be signed, dated, and attached in the same manner as previous years. Next year, however, draw permits will be the same as permits issued under this year's automated licensing system, even though they will still be issued through a drawing.

Photocopying of permits is illegal. If a permit is lost, a duplicate may be purchased for \$12.15 from KDWP offices, any license vendor, or online.

—Shoup

### WHOOPEE SHOOTERS CONVICTED

On Sept. 30, seven men were convicted of shooting two endangered whooping cranes, ending nearly a year of investigation and prosecution that began when the incident took place Nov. 6, 2004, on private ground near Quivira National Wildlife Refuge in Stafford County. Each poacher pled guilty to misdemeanor charges under a plea bargain agreement and received sentences of two years probation, loss of hunting privileges for two years, and \$3,000 fines. In addition to the fines, the court ordered the group to pay \$2,586 restitution.

Presiding over the U.S. District Court in Wichita, Magistrate Judge Donald W. Bostwick also required the men to perform 50 hours of



community service and to complete a certified hunter education course. Under federal law, each man could have served a year in jail and been fined \$100,000.

The shooters were Michael L. Burke, 33, Great Bend; Chad M. Churchill, 34, Ellinwood; Kim Churchill, 53, Ellinwood; Scott L. Hjetland, 33, Chase; Ronald Laudick, 50, Hudson; Mark S. Ricker, 33, Raymond; and Lonnie J. Winkleman, 33, Lyons.

—Shoup

## SPORTFISH WIN

After nearly two years of Congressional action and three years of strategic planning and consensus building by leading angling and boating organizations, the most significant legislation for sportfishing and boating since 1984 was signed into law by President Bush on August 10.

The centerpiece of the legislation is the successful capture of the federal fuel tax on motorboats and small engines, which will now be dedicated to sportfish restoration, angler and boating access, and boating safety. The Act will consolidate the receipts of the new Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund and distribute them according to a simpler and more equitable formula supported by a coalition of fishing and boating organizations.

This reauthorization will recover approximately \$110 million per year of federal fuel taxes currently being paid by anglers and boaters that was being diverted to the general treasury. The capture of the fuel tax will significantly boost funding

# Lynx Goes A W O L



In late September, Tanya Shenk, a mammal research biologist with the Colorado Division of Wildlife (DOW), received a call from a farmer planting wheat in Kansas that he had found one of their "bobcats" in a ditch near Grainfield, about halfway between Wakeeney and Colby in northwest Kansas. The farmer had found her phone number on the cat's radio collar. Shenk contacted the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, and natural resource officers Jason Hawman, Benny Young, and Mike Hopper "Pony Expressed" the animal back to Colorado.

Information from the radio collar revealed the cat's identity. It was lynx #YK00M3, originally from the Yukon, trapped near Whitehorse. DOW brought the lynx to Colorado on March 2, 2000, and released it at the Rio Grande Reservoir near Creede, on April 1 of that year. From fall 2001 through summer 2004, the male cat stayed in the Conejos River Valley and was thought to have been one of the breeding males in 2004. In fall of 2004, the cat moved out of the Conejos River Valley and up towards Emerald Lake, where it stayed through most of the spring of 2005. DOW's last location for it was near Cinnamon Pass on April 12, 2005. This is the first lynx documented in Kansas.

"Many thanks to the conservation officers in Kansas who retrieved the carcass and then transported it to the state line," Shenk said. "This saved me many hours of driving, and I really appreciate that. Needless to say, they have been a great help."

Planning for the Colorado DOW lynx re-introduction program began in 1997, and the first lynx was released in February 1999. Before that, the last confirmed lynx in the state was trapped illegally in 1973. There have been a few unconfirmed sightings and tracks found since then. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service believes that there were probably a few surviving lynx in Colorado since 1973 but not enough for a breeding population.

For more information on the lynx, go to [wildlife.state.co.us/species\\_cons/lynx.asp](http://wildlife.state.co.us/species_cons/lynx.asp) on the internet.

—Shoup

revenues to approximately \$570 million per year for important angling and boating programs such as fisheries monitoring; habitat conservation and restoration; fishing and boating access facilities such as docks, piers, and boat ramps; and education and safety programs for anglers and boaters. State wildlife and natural

resources agencies, which receive the funds, will see an annual increase anywhere from \$1.1 to \$5.5 million dollars for conservation management. Fifty-seven percent of the money will go to sportfish restoration programs.

Funds are appropriated to the states for sportfish restoration and boating programs based on license sales

and water area. Authorization of this act is estimated to raise the Kansas fiscal year 2005 apportionment from the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Fund in Kansas \$1,590,970, to a total of \$5,853,200.

—American Sportfishing Association

## UPLAND BIRD FORECAST



### REGION 1 (northwest and northcentral)

Good numbers of birds should be available this fall. Late summer rains improved cover. Hunters should concentrate on areas that provide good cover and grain fields. Overall, pheasant densities for 2005 appear to be similar or improved over 2004 throughout most of Region 1, with the highest densities occurring in the eastern half of the region. However, look for noticeable improvements in the west, especially in the northern counties.

Although not the best area of the state for quail, quail numbers continue to increase in Region 1. Quail densities appear moderately higher than last year, especially in the east. Also, hunters should find pockets of good quail hunt-

ing the central portion of Region 1.

Prairie chicken populations appear to be expanding in both numbers and range within the region. The better hunting opportunities will be found in the eastern and central portions.

### REGION 2 (northeast)

Pheasant numbers will be fair to poor in most of the region with numbers up slightly in the northwestern counties, where the best hunting opportunities will be found. However, the outlook will only be fair, even in this area.

Quail numbers appear to be below average in Region 2. Early reports from landowners indicated a slight increase in quail numbers, but few broods were seen this fall. Quail hunting in the region will be poor to fair overall, with some better but spotty areas.

### REGION 3 (southwest)

Region 3 will provide good to excellent upland bird hunting this year. Best reports for pheasant and quail came from Garden City east. Much of the southwest has heavy cover.

Reports for the Cimarron National Grassland predict fair to good hunting opportunities for pheasant and quail. Lesser prairie chicken hunters should be able to find good numbers of birds on this area.

### REGION 4 (southcentral)

Pheasant carry-over in the Region 4 pheasant range was excellent. Good reports have come from areas in Marion, McPherson, Rice, and Reno counties.

In the Flint Hills counties, quail numbers appear to be somewhat improved over several years ago. In the northern part of the Flint Hills, populations are still somewhat low. In the southern Flint Hills, ranchers are reporting more quail than in several years. Quail in the southern and western portions of Region 4 range from fair to good.

Prairie chicken hunting should be fair.

### REGION 5 (southeast)

Overall, quail numbers in Region 5 continue to be below the long-term average. However, the eastern portion of the region should be improved.

Prairie chicken production was poor this spring and summer. A combination of extensive spring burning and severe weather are the primary reasons for the poor production in a population that is struggling. Most landowners are reporting a few small broods.

—condensed from the 2005 Kansas Upland Bird Forecast, by Randy Rodgers, research biologist, Hays

## SHOOTING RANGE ACTIVE

The Horton Sports Shooting Complex opened in the fall of 2004 and attracts serious shooters. In addition to law enforcement officers, the \$350,000 outdoor range attracts hunters, youth groups, and target shooting enthusiasts. Last summer, the American Rimfire Association held two matches at the range, and it's getting more popular all the time.

Horton was looking for a safer range for their police officers to practice when the city applied for a KDWP grant, paid for through excise taxes on guns and ammunition. Range staff did the dirt work. The Kansas National Guard worked on the project as a way to train their soldiers.

The range was designed by a Florida company to meet National Rifle Association standards. The range has 10 rifle

positions at 100 yards and 14 pistol positions at 50 yards.

The range was designed to be extra safe, with a 20-foot backstop and baffles that are 8 inches thick. One of the requirements of the state grant was for the range to be open to NRA instructors and the public. The range is presently open 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on the first and third Sundays of each month. The cost is \$3 a day. Targets, if needed, cost four for \$1. Ear and eye protection are also available. Rules are posted at both the rifle and pistol ranges.

Around hunting season, shooters sight in rifles in this safe environment. Others come to shoot just for the fun of it. Range officials hope more youth groups will use the range, so kids can learn how to use firearms safely. Women are also encouraged to use the range, but everyone is welcome.

— Rebecca Shelton, *Hiawatha World*

# Hooked!

by Mark Shoup



The following story was related to me by a friend affectionately known as Mitsy, a sharp-as-a-tack, no-nonsense Alabama country girl who can keep the most stoic personality in stitches. I thought it was too funny not to relate, and it illustrates that while the KDWP "Pass It On" philosophy may not always be easy, the rewards are priceless.

About six years ago, Mitsy's grandsons arrived from Lafayette, Louisiana, excited because "Grandpa John" was taking them fishing. She got up early Saturday morning, rolled the crew out of bed, and dressed them as lightly as possible because they were going to be spending the day in the hot Alabama sun.

They loaded the fishing gear into their little Nissan Sentra with the poles already tied with broken back Rapalas, treble hooks and all, slanted into in the back seats. Grandpa John told them to sit down, put their seat belts on, and "don't be jumping around in the car."

They were out of cash, so they had to go to the bank. Sure enough, while Grandpa was in the bank, four-year-old Devin unbuckled himself and started jumping around. Suddenly, what Mitsy described as a "siren" went off in her ear. She turned around to find that Devin had a treble hook imbedded in his little arm and was grabbing wildly at it with his other hand, screaming his head off.

Mitsy spun around, still belted in because she, too, panicked and forgot to unbuckle, and grabbed Devin's hands to keep him from hooking himself with the other. He was so freaked

that she could hardly handle him, so she just held on, the siren still on high, and waited for Grandpa. Devin's big brother, Christopher, just sat there, afraid to move.

Finally, Grandpa shuffled out of the bank. Deaf as a doorknob, he was almost to the car before he heard Devin. But calm as you please, he just reached back and undid the hook, which was not in past the barb. Devin sniffled for a few minutes and then calmed down. Mitsy was still shaking like a leaf in a thunderstorm when Grandpa used the occasion to remind the boys why he wanted them sitting still.

In keeping with the tenor of the day's start, they had forgotten the nightcrawlers, so they had to stop back by the house. Mitsy ran in and got them, and as Grandpa was driving down the road, she checked to see if the creepy crawlers were still alive. She pulled one out and held it up for Grandpa to check out, and it was squirming and acting like, well, a worm, and the boys started screaming.

Apparently, these boys' mom didn't so much as let them get dirty, so "they were afraid of their own shadows," according to Mitsy. She saw it as her mission to help the children over this obstacle in life. She looked at Grandpa and said, "I'm not having any little wimps for grandsons," and chucked the worm over her shoulder into the back seat. Out of the seatbelts the boys came, clinging to the back windows like little Velcro monkeys. Grandpa almost wrecked because he was laughing so hard, and Mitsy had to crawl in the back and get

the worm to settle the boys down.

Object lesson number two complete, they grabbed some junk food because they didn't want to waste time cooking while the fish were biting. They arrived at the "Fishin' Hole" – four catfish rearing ponds open to the public with the promise, "If you come to the Fishin' hole, I guan-an-tee you will catch a fish!"

It would be no empty promise, but before they could fish, they sat at picnic tables to eat. Both boys just stared at the ponds, not eating, like their minds were somewhere else, so Grandpa trashed all the food, and off they went.

Christopher had a new little Mickey Mouse rod and reel, which turned him into a casting fool. He was so wild, they had put him at a distance. Christopher cast again and again for what seemed like an hour. The worm would hit the water, and before it hit bottom, he was dragging it back in.

All this time, Devin stuck close to Grandma and Grandpa. Finally, however, he edged closer and closer to Christopher. The hapless grandparents didn't notice this until that siren went off again.

They sprinted to the boys and found a hook stuck in the top of Devin's ear. This time, it had a big nightcrawler on it, and it was wiggling all over the boy's head and face and trying to crawl in his ear. He was too panicked to run, so he just stood and screamed. Mitsy was laughing so hard she couldn't pull the hook out, so Grandpa once again unhooked Devin, whose eyes were wide as half-dollars.

Finally unhooked, however, Devin was no worse for the wear, and he finally started fishing – and catching. Christopher toned down his casting enough to actually land a few fish, too. At the end of the day, they had 13 pounds of catfish fillets, four sunburned people, two minor hook wounds, and no worms.

"And no more wimps, either!" Mitsy proclaimed.

## Take on Trout

Trout season began Oct. 15 and runs through April 15. During this cool period of the year, KDWP stocks rainbow trout in designated waters throughout the state. *Anyone* fishing for trout in these waters must purchase a \$12.15 trout permit, whether they need a fishing license or not. Trout permits are valid for the calendar year, so permits purchased last January are valid through Dec. 31. All residents 16-64 years old and non-residents 16 and older must also have a valid fishing license.

Trout fishing at Mined Land Wildlife Area #30 (Cherokee County) and Tuttle Creek Reservoir Seep Stream, where trout survive through the summer, requires a trout permit year-round.

The daily creel limit is 5 trout. The possession limit is 15.

Trout permits are available online, at KDWP offices, some county clerk offices, and license vendors. For information on stockings or to purchase a permit, visit the KDWP website, [www.kdwp.state.ks.us](http://www.kdwp.state.ks.us).

—Shoup

## Antelope Lake

KDWP fisheries biologist Lynn Davignon can't say enough good things about Antelope Lake [near Morland, in Graham County]. He lumps it in the same category as Sheridan State Fishing Lake, located about 8 miles west.

"Those two lakes are little jewels out here in the prairie," said Davignon. "Both lakes support good populations of fish, even though they are small. I'll guarantee you one thing: to the locals, Antelope's not a sleeper."

Davignon also said Antelope Lake has an excellent catfish population. He has sampled catfish up to 19 pounds there, and it has a tremendous population of saugeye, a cross between wall-eye and sauger.

"Antelope is a very productive lake, and it is able to produce fish that maintain good growth," he added. Antelope Creek, which feeds the lake, starts about

7 miles upstream, where the Ogallala Aquifer releases water. "It's a consistent source of water. Even in a drought, I've never seen it dry."

In addition to catfish, Davignon says the lake has outstanding populations of bluegill, some weighing up to a pound. And a few years ago, it was the best small lake in the state for black crappie. Fishermen were catching black crappie as long as 14 inches and weighing up to a pound.

"It offers a lot of opportunities," Davignon said. "The only downfall the lake has is its depth. With an average depth of only 5 feet, heavy rains or strong winds can disturb the clarity of the water. Despite that, the lake is able to hold its own and support fishable populations of several species."

Both lakes get a lot of use in this generally arid part of the state.

—Mike Corn,  
Hays Daily News

## Paddlefish at John Redmond

Last July, the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks made the first major paddlefish stocking at John Redmond Reservoir, releasing 6,000 8- to 12-inch spoonbills into the Neosho River above the lake. The fish were raised at the Tishomingo Federal Fish Hatchery in Oklahoma.

Young paddlefish were stocked in the Neosho River and John Redmond Reservoir to compete with and replace buffalo fish, an undesirable rough fish rarely caught by anglers. To help control buffalo, more than 1.5 million pounds of the fish have been removed from John Redmond since 1980.

The paddlefish are expected to grow rapidly and should be 6 to 10 pounds by the end of their second year. They mature at five to seven years, when they migrate upstream to spawn in shallow riffles.

Many of these fish also drift downstream and live in the Neosho River, concentrating at low water dams during upstream spawning migration in early spring. Among other places, they are expected to concentrate at the Burlington City Dam, where a spring paddlefish snagging season is open during high water. (Any other sportfish snagged must be released.)

The first paddlefish stocking experiment at John Redmond Reservoir was in 1983, when 3,000 small fish were released in the river above the lake. Large fish were noticed in the John Redmond Spillway and at the Burlington Dam in the early 1990s. After several years of concentrations, a snagging season was opened, but only seven fish were caught the third year, so the season was closed.

"This is the first large stocking since the 1983," noted KDWP fisheries biologist Leonard Jirak. "These fish are difficult to spawn and raise, but the techniques are improving every year. In four to five years, anglers can look forward to catching some of these large, prehistoric-looking fish at the Burlington City Dam."

Paddlefish, also known as spoonbills, are large plankton-eating fish. They strain food from the water, have no real bones, and have a "nose," called a rostrum, that extends into a long paddle-shaped bill, which gives them their name.

Paddlefish can grow to more than 100 pounds. The world record paddlefish, weighing 144 pounds, was caught in an Atchison County farm pond last year. No one knows how the fish got in the pond, but it was likely released by someone who had caught it elsewhere.

—Coffey Co. Republican



## JILL OF ALL TRADES

### Bev Aldrich, Pratt

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** To celebrate the 100th anniversary of KDWP, the 2005 editions of this page, ordinarily called "Nature," have been devoted to profiles of retired, long-time employees of the agency, folks who dedicated their lives to the nature this page usually features. This is the last installment in this series.

**Age:** 66

**Education:** Cullison High School, numerous college business courses

**Years of Service:** 45, including 1 1/2 with SRS, April 6, 1958, to June 3, 2005

**Original Hometown:** Cullison, Kansas

**Positions Held:** Started as "Jack of all trades" – everything from accounting to boat registration; gravitated toward Information and Education, where she was office manager.

**Most Admired Employee:** "I was very fond of George Moore, the old director; I thought Steve Williams was a wonderful director; and Mike Miller has always been so wise, and I always sort of looked up to him even though he was a lot younger."

**Toughest assignment:** "The most frustrating thing was when we had to manually type the entire magazine and send it to the state printer. We had one particular editor who was an absolute perfectionist. I would type it, and he would edit it and give it back to me to type again. He wouldn't send it to the state printer with any marked corrections. This would go on and on, but one time I had gotten it back the eighth time to redo, and that's when I went to the section chief and told him it was either the editor or me or a memory typewriter or something. Another thing that was always a challenge was budget because we had to type that, too, and we had to have 16 copies of each budget. But I'm here to tell you that made us perfect typists. When I got that memory typewriter, I thought I'd died and got to heaven."

**Most Important Issue Facing KDWP in the 21st Century:** "As the state becomes more urbanized, people just aren't as interested in hunting and fishing. They don't have a problem with it, but they're so busy, and with fewer people growing up on farms, I think keeping the interest, especially for hunting, is going to be a big challenge. I've noticed at Becoming an Outdoors Woman events that more women are gravitating toward non-consumptive activities.

"Finding a way to keep our parks going is also a big problem. I think the interest is there if we can keep it where they can afford to go."



Endurance and a great attitude typify Aldrich's years with the agency. She went to work for the Kansas Forestry, Fish, and Game Commission in the days when there was no maternity leave. She didn't realize that she was pregnant, but when she found out, she worked through November. Her daughter was born in December. By the time she was ready to go back to work in late 1959, there were no openings at the agency, so she went to work at the Social Rehabilitation Service.

"I was there for a year and one-half. Bob Ward (another long-time "Fish and Game" employee) would always come in the court house for business, and one day he motioned me into the hall and said, 'Why don't you come back to work for me?' He said he could pay me \$220 a month, and since I was only making \$175, it seemed like the answer to all my financial problems. So I went back to [Wildlife and

Parks] in January of 1961."

Forty-five years with one employer might be a sign of stubbornness, complacency, or inertia, but none of these apply to Aldrich. As mentioned above, she certainly had endurance, but Aldrich's most endearing quality, and perhaps the secret of her endurance, was her positive, cheerful attitude.

"Working at Wildlife and Parks always gave me the satisfaction of feeling like I had done a job well," she says. "I never felt unappreciated out there. It made me feel good to know that other people appreciated what I did. And I never got bored with my job. It afforded me a chance to visit with so many people, and my supervisors allowed me to make the job more than just a clerical job. I had a lot of freedom to make the job what I wanted it to be. It was just a good place to work, and I'm really glad I had that opportunity.

When it came time to retire, I was made to feel like part of a family."

Unlike many other retired employees, Aldrich, who still lives in Pratt, stays in close contact with those still working. It still makes her feel good when she sees them. She always tells them that the secret to working for this agency is to keep a positive attitude. "It's so easy for people for people to get in a rut. When you hear people grumbling, pretty soon people around them are the same way. I just want to tell folks to keep a positive attitude because it's just that much better for you and everyone around you. You give and you receive."

Having worked closely with Aldrich for 16 years, I witnessed this attitude almost daily. If you were having a bad morning, all you had to do was talk to Bev and, without realizing it, you went back to your work feeling better.

–Shoup

## ON THIS DAY

Throughout 2005 – KDWP's centennial year – this page of *Kansas Wildlife & Parks* magazine has featured stories from past issues of the magazine, primarily from the 1940s. This installment of our 100th anniversary magazine will focus on stories from the late 1950s through 1970. We hope you've enjoyed this journey through the past.

—Shoup

## FIRST PLACE FOR KANSAS

Kansas topped the states in amount of federal aid money spent on waterfowl projects for the 20-year period ending June 30, 1958. The federal share of the Kansas waterfowl program over the past two decades was \$2,676,000.

California was second, followed by Iowa, Illinois, Michigan, New York, and Oregon.

The states qualified for the federal aid funds by supplying \$1 for every \$3 of federal money. Kansas put up \$892,000.

—*Kansas Fish and Game*,  
October 1959

## NEW NEOSHO WA

Final inspection prior to official acceptance has been made of the Neosho County Waterfowl Refuge by employees of the Kansas Forestry, Fish, and Game Commission; Wilson and Company Engineers; and the Frito Construction Company. The inspection, made Tuesday, April 18, revealed that the new refuge is in good condition following construction.

The refuge is an area of approximately 3,000 acres located near St. Paul. Water areas will consist of three pools with a total area of 1,390 acres when full.

—*Kansas Fish and Game*,  
Spring 1961

## CHRISTMAS GUN

Merry Christmas, young man. And how could it be otherwise with the thrill of finding the dreamed-of ".22" or shiny shotgun under the tree?

You should be especially proud of



such a present, for it's evidence that your parents have gained respect for your ability to use good judgment and take good advice. Those are the qualities of maturity, of manhood, and you must not disappoint them.

For you should know, young friend, that a gun is a gift that requires giving in return. It means surrendering the foolishness that sometimes goes with boyishness, and that is not always easy – especially when in company of other lads your own age.

Today, and for all your tomorrows, you must realize that ownership of a gun is a treasured right and a weighty responsibility. You must realize the reasons for the regulations that restrict your use of firearms for yet awhile. This is to give you time to show that you've "gotten your growth" in judgment and skill, as well as in size and age, before you can go it alone.

Safety requires that the parent or guardian accompany a young shooter, in the hope that those adults will help and advise as well as supervise. For the gift of a gun should only begin with your giving.

In your young hands lies the future of shooting in this country of yours. You will find as you grow older that there are many who would take your gun from you. Some of these are well-meaning people who fail to understand how certainly the right to keep and bear arms is

this nation's heritage and strength. Others, it is certain, are persons who do realize it and are enemies of freedom.

When you commit some careless or reckless act with your gun, you give these people another weapon to use against you and all gunners. Pledge to us that you will never shame the name "sportsman" or "hunter," and we welcome you with pride and understanding.

For I, too, remember a cold Christmas morning and a tinsel tree – and the wonder of my first real gun.

—Don L. Johnson,  
*Kansas Fish and Game*,  
Winter 1962

## FIRST MASTER ANGLERS

A program to honor anglers who catch "bragging size" and record fish in Kansas waters has been announced by the Kansas Forestry, Fish, and Game Commission.

George Moore, director of the commission, said colorful "Master Angler Award" certificates and "Record Fish Award" certificates honoring large catches among 10 popular game fish species will be awarded to all who qualify.

—*Kansas Fish and Game*,  
Summer 1969

## FIRST LETTERS

*The Winter 1970 issue of Kansas Fish and Game was the first issue in which readers' comments were solicited and printed. The following is a good-natured comment pointing out an error in the previous issue, which erroneously reversed identification of birds on the back and front covers.*

## Chinaman, No?

"I have been told that the Chinese read from back to front, so the backs of our books would actually be their fronts. Therefore, I have to assume you are a Chinaman. Perhaps Mr. Heskett doesn't know an owl from an eagle, or more probable your printer didn't read your article before printing the cover.

"I want you to know that I enjoy your magazine very much."

—Edward E. Burns,  
Kansas City

# Keep Them Wild



It's best to leave all wild animals in the wild, both for them and you. People who do not have special training or the proper permits should never try to take care of orphaned or injured wildlife. Bringing a wild animal into your home can be a dangerous thing, and it will usually die. Wild animals may carry diseases, such as distemper and rabies, or para-

sites, such as fleas, ticks, roundworms, and mites. They are not pets, and it is illegal in Kansas to possess most species of wild animals without state permits. But well-meaning individuals sometimes pick up injured or abandoned wildlife. What should they do with them?

In some cases, injured or orphaned wild animals may be

taken to wildlife rehabilitators, who must have special training and special permits to operate in Kansas. A rehabilitator does many different things to care for injured animals. When an animal first arrives, the rehabilitator's job is to look for symptoms and signs of injuries, treat the animal for shock, provide fluids, clean and bandage wounds, and immobilize broken bones until they can take the animal to a veterinarian. A veterinarian may take x-rays, perform any necessary surgery, and prescribe medicines, but it is the rehabilitator's job to do everything else for that animal's recovery and hopeful release back into the wild. This might mean giving shots, taking blood, treating for parasites, giving physical therapy to get wings and legs working again, and, of course, feeding and cleaning up after each animal.

Caring for an injured or orphaned animal requires lots of training. You must know





## WHEN DO ANIMALS NEED HELP?

It's best to leave all wild animals alone, and it's helpful to know what normal behavior is for an animal. Most wild animals will not let you get very close to them. Sometimes young animals don't run away because they haven't yet learned that humans are dangerous. This does not mean that they are abandoned. Bird and mammal mothers will often leave their young while they search for food but are almost always nearby and waiting for you to leave, so they can return to care for their young.

what each animal eats, how much food the animal should get, how each animal is cared for by its wild parents, and what size cage the animal will need. It also requires lots of time, both day and night. Specific foods — such as mice for an owl, fish for a pelican, or mealworms for a bat — can't be purchased at the grocery store, so rehabilitators must raise these prey species or find someone who does. And the most important goal of all rehabilitators is to release an animal back to the wild. That takes special skill, training, knowledge and commitment. Rehabilitators do not make pets of wild animals.

## WAYS TO AVOID INJURING WILDLIFE

Hang streamers or a falcon silhouette on a window that birds commonly fly into. Glass can act like a mirror and reflect trees and sky, so birds might think they are flying toward trees instead of away from them. Hanging streamers or a silhouette can change this reflection.

If there is a bird feeder outside the window, move it farther away, so birds are less likely to fly into the window. If your room has windows on both sides so that you can see through the room, keep the curtains closed on one window.

Tying strips of cloth to the top strand of wire fences will help make them visible and let birds know the wire is there.

Place caps on chimneys to prevent wildlife from getting in your chimney.

Never leave fishing line or string lying wrapped around bushes or on the ground. If you find some that other people have left, pick it up and dispose of it.

Keep your cats inside! The safest place for cats is inside the house. Cats catch millions of birds each year.



# Backlash

by Mike Miller

## Lennie's Deeropalooza

Lennie doesn't bowhunt for deer as avidly as he used to, and this town is noticeably quieter each November. Years ago, when we were younger, Lennie made each of the deer he killed with a bow major events that included friends and family for an evening out. It usually started with a phone call just after sunset.

"Gotta *yeeeu*ge monster," he'd say matter-of-factly, as my ear hit the receiver.

He said this no matter how big the buck was, which always puzzled me. Rarely did Lennie actually have a "*yeeeu*ge monster," but that's what he'd say when he called everyone, including the landowner. We'd all meet at the landowner's house to prepare for the trail. We always had too many people, but Lennie could never turn anyone down, and I think the more the better in his mind.

Lennie would mingle among the group, grinning widely and visiting with everyone about his hunt. Once the lanterns were lit and the crew briefed, we'd tromp into the woods. We'd gather beneath the tree-stand and Lennie would command everyone's attention as he described the evening's hunt in a low voice. He'd painstakingly demonstrate how the buck came in, where it stopped and licked a branch, crossed a fence, or rubbed a tree. He'd walk over the deer's path, stopping dramatically where he loosed the arrow, then describe how and in which direction the deer ran after the shot. Then we'd spread out.

"I've got running tracks here," someone would say in a low voice. "Here's blood!" another would whisper. "Mark this spot."

Except for a few occasions, the actual search was anticlimactic. We'd find the deer right where Lennie had last seen it. The good thing was that he always had plenty of help to drag the buck back to the truck. I always wondered if that was his plan, but now I don't think so. Lennie enjoyed the sharing. Bowhunting is a little too solitary for Lennie's taste. After sitting quietly in his stand for several hours, he

was ready for some company.

Back at the farmhouse, we'd all gather around Lennie and his buck for photos. The group photos included everyone, even the landowner's children. Lennie would make excuses about why his deer wasn't as big as he described, saying that it looked bigger through the brush or that it was hard to judge from his high angle in the treestand. Nobody cared. We'd had a good time and enjoyed sharing Lennie's triumph.

After photos and congratulations, the deer was hauled to town and hung for skinning in Lennie's garage. Again, this was a group effort – usually four or five of us critiquing Lennie's skinning technique.

"I don't think that knife you're using would cut warm butter."

"Are you gonna mount that '*yeeeu*ge monster'?"

"I can't find where the arrow hit. You sure you didn't just scare it to death?"

Lennie would grunt and leer at us over his shoulder while he wrestled with the hide. We'd laugh and watch, and it was usually after midnight before we went home. Those were good times, and I remember each of Lennie's deer like they were yesterday.

Maybe that's why Lennie described them all as *yeeeu*ge monsters. I'm almost ashamed to admit that most of us were caught up in the trophy-buck syndrome. If a buck didn't have a certain sized rack, it was just a "dink" — somehow less important than a deer with a bigger set of antlers. In Lennie's mind, any deer was a prize, regardless of the antler score, and he made each of them memorable. Come to think of it, Lennie may be a lot smarter than we think. Heck, I remember some of his deer better than my own. It's the experience that really matters — hunting and spending time with good friends. And that's one thing Lennie's really good at – providing memorable experiences. ♡

