

KANSAS

Wildlife & Parks

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2009

\$2.75





On Point

by Mike Hayden



Finding A Balance

By now, I'm sure you've read about the budget cuts all Kansas agencies will need to make in the coming months. State revenues are below projections, and Gov. Sebelius has asked for a 3 percent cut in the current fiscal year's budget. We may be looking at a 5 percent cut for Fiscal Year (FY) 2010. Budgets are something KDWP managers work with throughout the year – operating within the current budget and working on the budget for a fiscal year almost two years away. Even though we are largely a fee-funded agency, KDWP will still make the required cuts. As a matter of fact, budget cuts were on the table even before the governor's request.

In recent years, KDWP's revenues haven't kept pace with spending. The agency is always looking to improve services for our constituents and programs such as the Walk-In Hunting Access, F.I.S.H. access, Upland Bird initiative, Community Lakes Assistance Program, public land acquisitions, cabins, and a host of others have proven popular. In addition, operating costs that include fuel, utilities, salaries, benefits, and materials have gone up.

As the state predicts future revenues, so do KDWP budget analysts. Without an increase in revenue, we'll need to reduce current programs or reserves will be dangerously depleted. While it's always good to examine current programs and improve efficiency, our constituents demand a certain level of services. To maintain those services, a compromise of some budget cuts and increased revenue is a better solution.

Staff are currently working on recommendations for increasing our revenue. KDWP hasn't increased general hunting and fishing license fees

since 2002, the resident turkey permit fee hasn't increased since 1980, and resident deer permit fees have been at \$30 since 1985. Discussion on fee increases will be initiated with the Kansas Wildlife and Parks Commission at its January 2009 meeting. After Commission and public input is received, recommendations will be considered by the Commission this spring and voted on next summer to take effect Jan. 1, 2010.

A committee has been assembled to will look at a variety of ways to increase revenues. One aspect of license and permit sales that is intriguing is the amount of "churn." Churn is the number of customers who don't buy a permit or license every year. Our data shows that 50 percent of our hunters buy a license only one out of every three years. This committee will look at incentives that may entice people to buy licenses more often. Other ideas that will be examined may include value-added packages, differential pricing, and marketing campaigns.

There is no doubt that we're in for some difficult times. However, an exercise in improving efficiencies and examining programs will be beneficial in the long run. Hunters and anglers have always paid for, not only the programs they enjoy, but for all wildlife and fisheries management. It's a plain fact that a wide variety of activities compete for our time today, and KDWP must find ways to attract people to hunting, fishing, and state parks. I am confident that the department will adapt and continue to provide some of the best outdoor recreation opportunities and programs found anywhere.

KANSAS

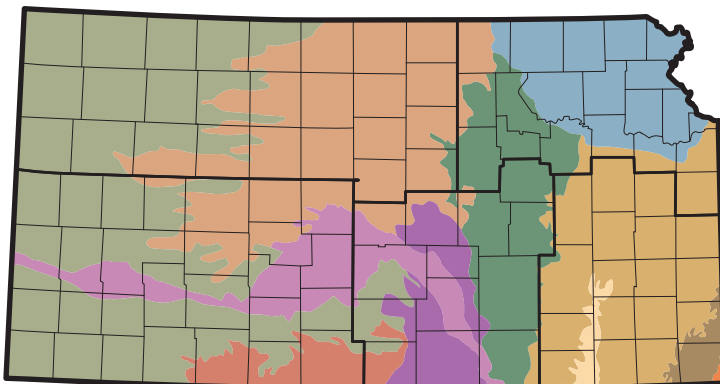
Wildlife & Parks

January/February 2009

Vol. 66, No. 1

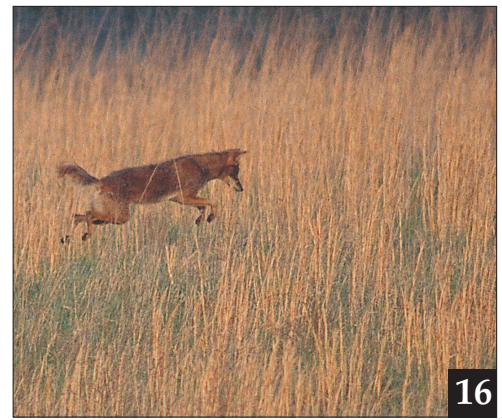
Everyone knows that Kansas is flat and has tornadoes, endless wheat fields, wind, no trees, Jayhawks, Wildcats, and friendly people. However, a closer look reveals an amazing and diverse landscape, as well as trees, native prairie, water and plenty of wildlife. In geological terms, Kansas is made up of 11 physiographic regions. From west to east, they include the High Plains, the Arkansas River Lowlands, the Smoky Hills, the Red Hills, the Wellington-McPherson Lowlands, the Flint Hills, the Glaciated Region, the Osage Questas, the Chautauqua Hills, Cherokee Lowlands, and the Ozark Plateau (see map below). Our landscapes and habitats are as diverse as the names suggest. Annual rainfall in the west can be under 12 inches. In the east, as many as 40 inches of precipitation will fall. All photos, except for the Public Gallery, were taken by Mike Blair. A little more than a year ago, KDWP's website began posting interesting photos submitted by our viewers. Blair, who administers the website's Public Photo Gallery, has chosen the best images submitted for inclusion in this photo issue. Check out our website and the gallery and, by all means, submit a photo or two. Who knows, we could be enjoying some of your images in the next photo issue.

Mike Miller



LEGEND

High Plains	Chautauqua Hills	Arkansas River Lowlands	Smoky Hills
Flint Hills	Osage Questas	Cherokee Lowlands	Glaciated Region
Red Hills	Ozark Plateau	Wellington / McPherson Lowlands	



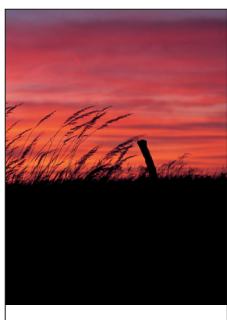
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KANSAS WILDLIFE & PARKS (ISSN 0898-6975) is published bimonthly (every other month) by the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, 1020 S Kansas Ave., Topeka, KS 66612. Address editorial correspondence to Kansas Wildlife & Parks Magazine, 512 SE 25th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



Front Cover: Indiangrass sways at sunrise in a Flint Hills pasture. Mike Blair photographed the scene with a 50mm lens, f4 @ 1/125 sec. **Back Cover:** A pair of majestic bald eagles watches Miami State Fishing Lake in early fall. Blair photographed the pair with a 600mm lens, f/11 @ 1/500 sec.



Editorial Creed: To promote the conservation and wise use of our natural resources, to instill an understanding of our responsibilities to the land.

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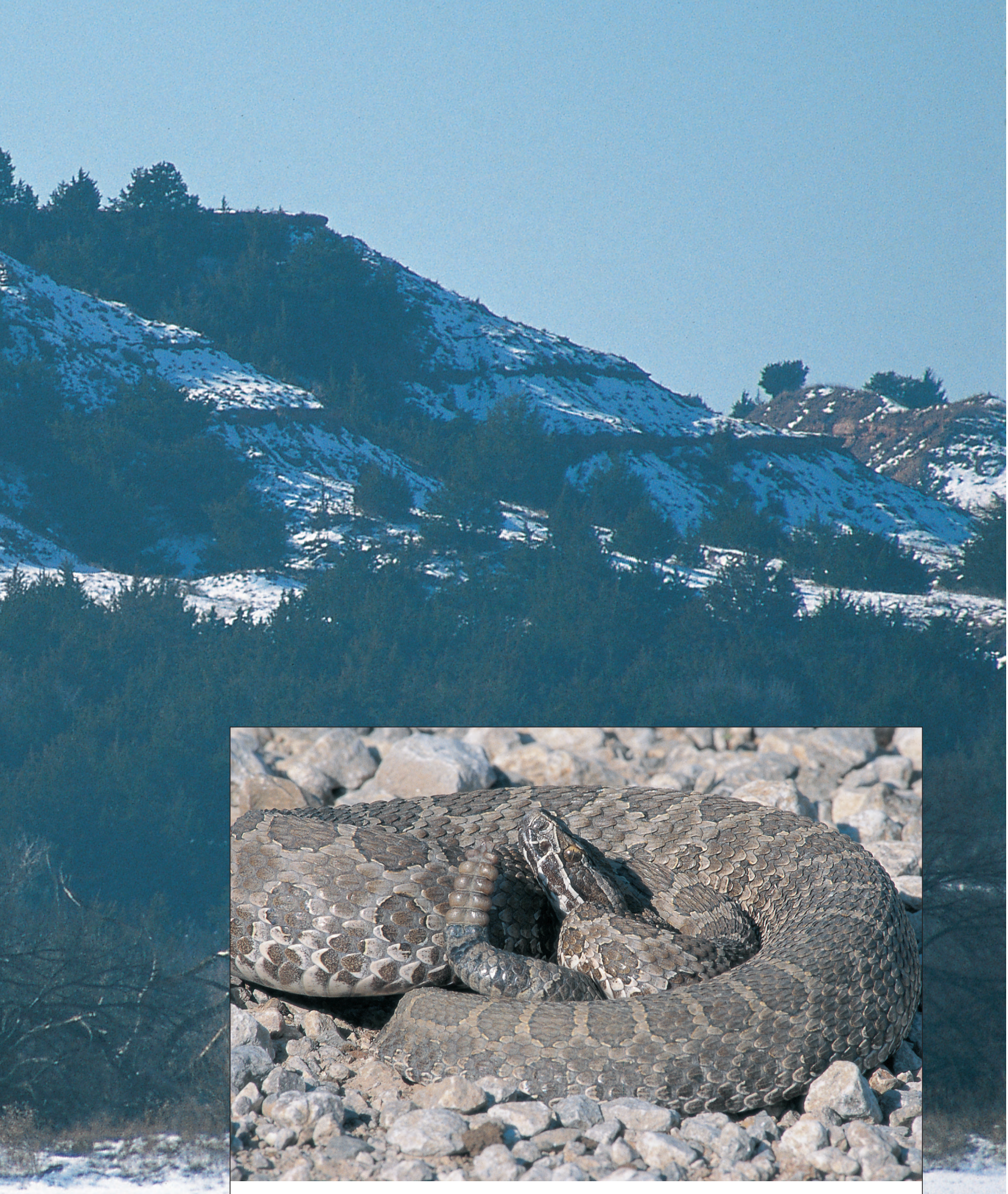


















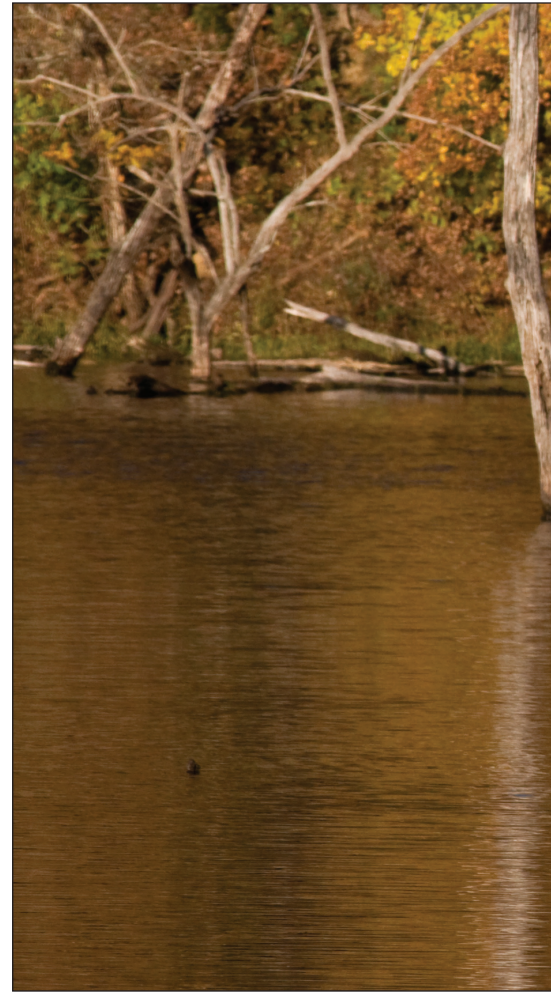








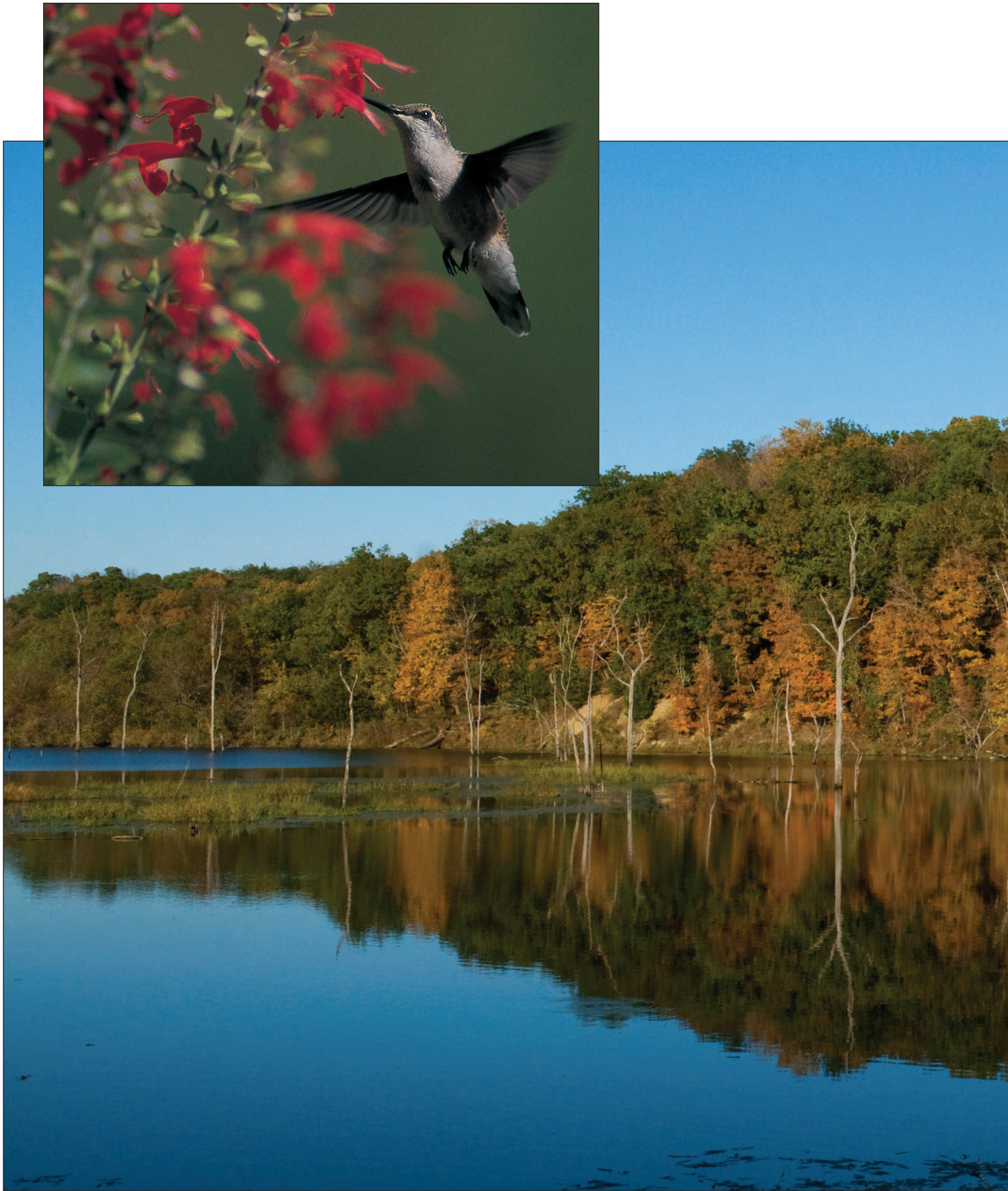


































Public Photo Gallery:



POSED JUST RIGHT: Five white-tailed does form a unique scene of repeating form as they study the photographer. photo by Jim Glynn of Great Bend

Best of the Best

PROUD SHORTHAIR – The photographer's hunting partner "The Duck" poses with a nice bag of pheasant and quail taken in January on a Barton County Walk-In Hunting Area. photo by Sean Miller of Lawrence





SNAKE DEN: A warm day in April stimulates common garter snakes to emerge from their winter den. photo by Bill Falk of Overland Park

FRESH FISH: A northern water snake drags its bullhead catfish lunch to shore for a leisurely meal at a pond near Liberal. photo by Bob Maier of Liberal



MOTHER'S WORRY: A white-tailed doe and fawn paused before disappearing along School Creek at Milford Reservoir. photo by David Rubin of Junction City



JACK'S FIRST FISH – The photographers son Jack pulls in his first fish, a bluegill, from a private pond. photo by Roy Rhodes of Paola

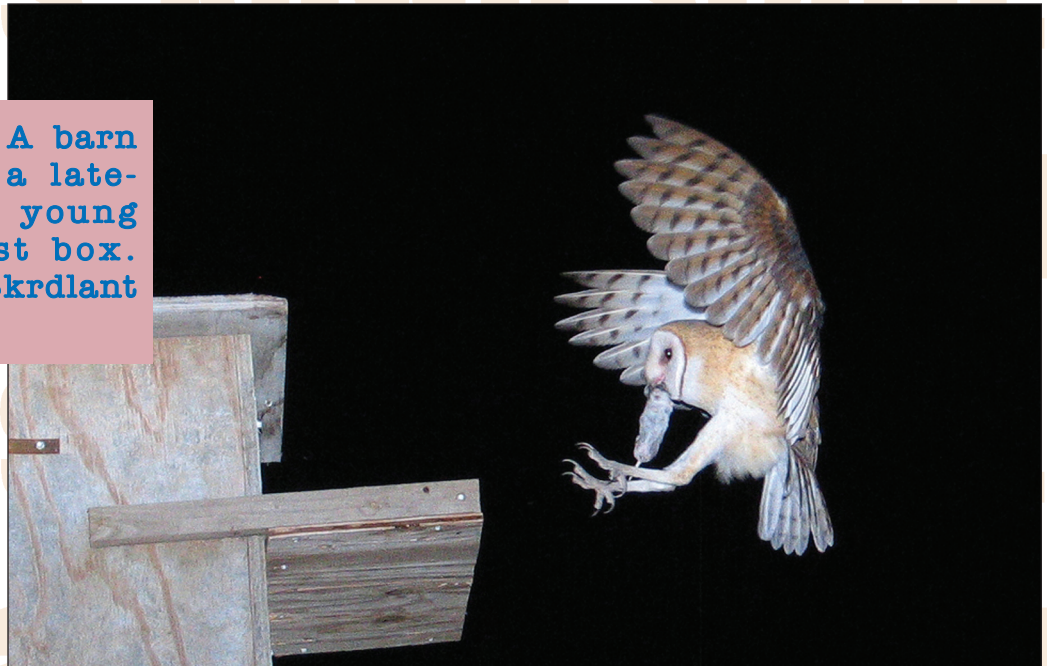
LOOKING FOR A PRINCE: Tate Fanshier can't believe his big sister, Tanna, is actually going to kiss a frog. photo by Brad Fanshier of Great Bend





GETTIN' SKINKY: A pair of Great Plains skinks basks in the sun in Riley County. photo by David Leith of Manhattan

DINNER'S READY: A barn owl brings home a late-night meal to its young residing in a nest box. photo by Darrell Skrdlant of Norton



SNACK TIME: Water flies as a belted kingfisher shakes a recently caught fish. photo by Jim Glynn of Great Bend



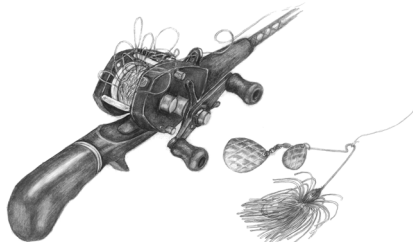
"WHO?:" A barred owl hoots in the familiar rhythm of "who cooks for you," in Tonganoxie. photo by Laurie Folsom of Tonganoxie



PELICAN PARTY IN 1976: Pelicans gather at the Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area. Taken 32 years ago, the photo looks north toward the town of Redwing. photo by Jim Glynn of Great Bend



KNOT HEAD: A unique white-tailed buck in velvet paused for a portrait on a hot summer evening. photo by Bill Fales of Derby



Backlash

by Mike Miller

Rumors.com

Lennie stopped by my office the other day and plopped down in one of the chairs in front of my desk. I was glad to see him – we don't have as much time to hunt and fish together like we use to. It doesn't seem like there are as many minutes in a day. I know some smart guy is going to tell me that there is exactly the same number of minutes in a day as there was 10 or 20 years ago, but I'm not so sure. Since I turned 40 (it seems like just last year, but I'm 50 now), each day, each week, and each year has gone by just a little faster than the last. I read an article someone emailed me that attributed this to the holes in the atmospheres made by the space shuttle. The holes altered the earth's rotation, which in turn altered the number of minutes in a day. It seemed legit.

Anyway, I cheerfully greeted Lennie but was met with a sigh and a scowl.

"What's the matter, aren't you glad to see me," I kidded.

"Don't take it personal, it's just that I'm getting fed up," he answered. "I keep getting all these emails about stuff that's not true. And I keep getting sucked in to them. First someone sent me that aerial photo of an alligator swimming in a swamp with a deer in its jaws. The email said the photo was taken over the southeast Oklahoma lake where my family was vacationing last summer. I wouldn't let the kids swim that weekend, and it was 100 in the shade," he sighed.

"After we got home, I learned it was a hoax. The photo was taken in Georgia, not Oklahoma. The kids weren't too happy with me. Then someone emails me this picture of a guy posing with a big buck. It's supposed to be a new world record and it was killed in Kansas. It looked authentic since the photo showed a Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks office sign in the background. Crap. I forwarded it on to everyone I knew, bragging about Kansas' monster deer. Then I find out the deer was killed two years before. It was in Kansas, but it was no where near a world record."

Lennie looked down, ashamed. I tried to console him, telling him that everyone has been fooled by

bogus emails, but he cut me off.

"You'd think I'd learn," he said with a smirk. "But last month one of my cousins sent me a picture of this dead mountain lion. The photo showed a guy sitting behind a huge lion, holding up its enormous paws. My cousin claimed the cat was hit on a highway near Ottawa and that it charged a game warden who showed up to put it out of its misery. I bought it. He's one my smarter cousins, and he's usually on the up-and-up. Anyway, I did it again. I forwarded it on to everyone I knew, saying that we finally had proof of lions in Kansas. Then, of course, I found out it was a fake. The cat was actually hit by a truck in Arizona."

"You have to take everything you see on the internet with a grain of salt," I advised. "I did the same thing last month. Someone emailed me that K-State had hired a new football coach. I rushed to tell everyone I knew. I guess it's human nature – you want to be the first one to bear exciting news. Anyway, about 30 minutes later, I find out it's only a rumor – no truth to it whatsoever."

"I'm not sure how these myths get started, but too many of us are just itching to spread the news. Think about some to the rumors we've dealt with over the years. There was the one that the department stocked mountain lions from black helicopters. Then there was a persistent one that biologists had implanted tiny transmitters in the cats' hides, so that if someone killed one and kept the skin, we could track them down. People love those kinds of rumors and with the internet, they can spread lightning-quick. We should have a rule that we won't forward an email without verifying it with at least two sources."

"Maybe — I don't know," Lennie said somewhat dejectedly. "But I gotta go. My wife wants me stop by the store on the way home and pick up some hamburger. I guess the company that packaged the burger she bought this weekend was buying cow eyeballs and grinding them with the meat to save money."

"Lennie — where did your wife hear that?"

"Uhhhh — I don't know — I gotta go."

