

KANSAS

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On Point

by Mike Hayden



Disaster In The Gulf

As this magazine goes to print, one of the most extensive and expensive environmental disasters in American history is unfolding in the Gulf of Mexico and along America's gulf coast. It's now a familiar story – a series of terrible mistakes occurred at the Deepwater Horizon oil drilling rig located about 40 miles off the Louisiana coast. The resulting cataclysm on April 20, 2010 killed 11 workers, injured 17 others and ruptured the wellhead 5,000 feet beneath the ocean surface. Tens of millions of gallons of oil continue to leak into the Gulf.

The wind and currents have spread the expanding area of oil pollution toward the central and eastern Louisiana coast and eastward to the coast of the Florida panhandle. The pollution is also spreading southward into the Gulf and toward the Florida peninsula. As of this writing, maps show scattered sections of coastline affected by oil in varying degrees, with other sections showing no signs of oil. So far, the Texas and western Louisiana coastlines do not show signs of oil. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has closed nearly 81,000 square miles of the northwestern Gulf of Mexico to fishing activities — about 33 percent of the exclusive economic zone in the Gulf.

The plight of oil-soaked wildlife fuels our frustration. News reports bring us heart-wrenching stories of real and potential damages to the fragile, ecologically vital coastal areas. It's the coastal areas where I want to focus my remarks, and on the creatures that call the areas home. Many of our readers know that Kansas is one of the principal stopping points for migratory birds on their semianual travels along the Central Flyway, which extends from the Canadian arctic southward to Mexico and Central America. Generally, the Central Flyway includes Texas but not Louisiana. Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama are at the southern point of the Mississippi Flyway and Florida is the southern terminus of the Atlantic Flyway. Of course, wildlife knows nothing of state lines and flyway boundaries, so there is some crossover between adjacent flyways. Many of the birds using all three flyways are currently living and rearing their young in the northern U.S. and Canada, but that will end soon when the southbound fall migration begins.

Migration is an ancient instinct triggered by seasonal climate changes and their effects on food, water, and cover. Mere humans cannot change the seasons, nor can we change the migratory patterns that birds faithfully follow time and time again. Most of the migratory game

birds traveling south through Kansas will end their travels in Texas, along the Texas coast, and in Mexico, locations where, at this writing, the oil has not spread. However, the fall migration for many species of waterfowl and shorebirds in the Mississippi and Eastern flyways will end along the Louisiana coast or in the Gulf itself. Unfortunately, in some areas, oil will pollute the coastal marshes and the sea floor where the food chain begins. There are many unanswered questions about the oil's impact. Will there be fewer birds during next spring's migration? How will the spill affect hunting next year?

Sadly, the answers can only come over time. Two things are certain – the seasons will change and birds will migrate. Dr. Tom Moorman, Director of Conservation Planning for the Southern Region of Ducks Unlimited, noted in a letter to members, "At this time it is not possible to say what impacts the oil spill may have on waterfowl or all of the other wetland-dependent birds, but we certainly can say that the spill adds a new dimension of risk to an already highly threatened but critically important wintering area."

Research is ongoing, but we can't predict what could happen in a few months or a few years. According to Faye McNew, migratory gamebird coordinator for KDWP, conservationists must wait and see if the oil reaches the Texas coastal marshes and if the cleanup efforts work.

It appears for now that migratory birds passing through Kansas may not encounter significant impacts from oil. As they always do, Kansas wildlife area managers will work to keep our wetlands and wildlife areas in good condition so migrating birds have quality habitat for their stopovers. That not only helps the Central Flyway populations, it also provides quality hunting opportunities.

Government officials, wildlife managers, non-governmental organizations, volunteers and others responding in the Gulf coast states can try to keep oil out of critical wintering areas and clean or rehabilitate any oil-fouled habitat. They may also try to provide alternative wetland areas farther inland.

Only time will tell the long-term impacts of the oil spill on wildlife. This ecological disaster is a reminder of the risks associated with our increasing appetite for energy. I'm hopeful that, as we've seen with other such disasters, wildlife and their habitats will again prove remarkably resilient, making spectacular comebacks with time and the necessary assistance. ♡

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Front Cover: Few wildlife groups display the variety of colors we see in birds. Bob Gress snapped this vivid shot of an indigo bunting. **Back Cover:** Mike Blair photographed this Mississippi kite as it drank. Kites are common summer Kansas residents, nesting and raising young here before heading south in the fall.



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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Letters . . .

THANKS, PARK STAFF

Editor,

For the last 36 years, I have been hunting and fishing in Kansas. I am a Colorado native and live in the Denver area. I have gladly purchased numerous licenses and will continue to do so as long as my health allows me to enjoy your beautiful state. I am incredibly pleased with condition of the numerous state parks I have visited and stayed in. I love the cabins and look forward to each chance to spend valuable time fishing and hunting with my best friends, and we regularly stay in the cabins at several parks. Hats off to doing things the right way. I only wish Colorado had your lakes, parks and the people who run them! Keep up the great work, it is appreciated!

Sincerely,

*David Seitenbach
Arvada, Colo.*

HARD TO READ

Editor

The older folks like me who have to wear glasses do have a lot of trouble reading information in ***Kansas Wildlife & Parks*** that is written on a background other than white. I am not complaining but just bringing it to your attention. Thank you for the good magazine.

*William Scott
Parsons*

**Mr. Scott,
We'll do better in the future.**

-Miller

TEACH THEM TO FISH

Editor:

I loved the article Backlash: Teach Your Children to Fish, in the May/June issue of Kansas W & P! The quotes were excellent as well - I live by that of Patrick F. McManus, "The two best times to fish is when it's rainin and when it ain't." The topic of fishing and being with your kids couldn't have come at a better time. Too bad your readership is likely of an aged population rather than young parents. As the article mentions, many kids don't have an adult in their lives that will spend the time and money on such an activity.

I've often thought of fishing as a time



HUNTING *with Wayne Doyle* HERITAGE

Volunteers do more than teach in the classroom

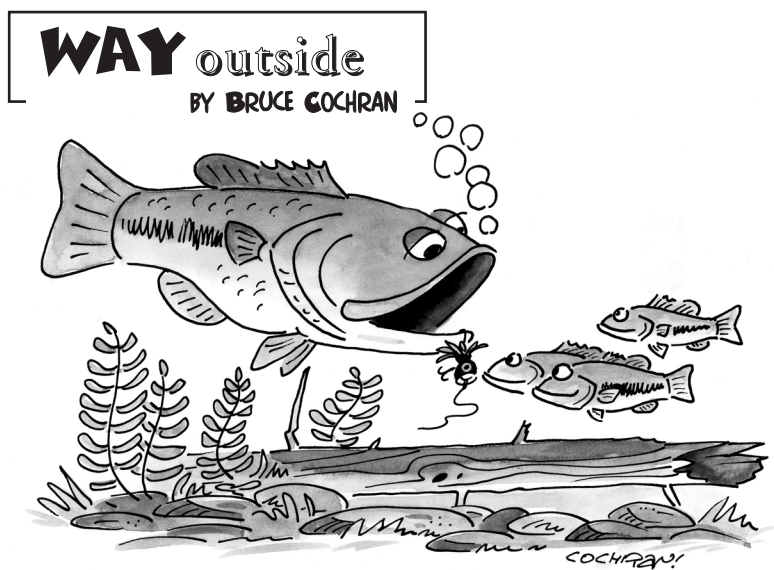
In the last issue of this magazine, Hunting Heritage reported on the Hunter Education Instructor Academy held at Rock Springs in March. This was partly to show that volunteer hunter education instructors give much more than a few hours of their time teaching a class to ensure our hunting heritage is passed on. The teaching of the class is, in some respects, the easy part.

The preparation for a class takes up a good deal of time. Instructors average three hours of prep time for every hour they teach. To remain certified, instructors attend training courses that take more time, as well as some personal expense. Many instructors take part in work days to ready outside training sites and events.

The number of classes using the internet-assisted option is growing, and that growth has required extra time and effort from instructors to support these classes. The internet-assisted courses require a field day, and one of the key activities of the field day is the trail walk, where instructors teach youngsters how to safely handle firearms in field conditions. To provide this, several instructors have outfitted cargo trailers with equipment necessary to conduct the trail walk – dummy guns, cut outs, and other training aids. The demand for the few fully-equipped trailers has reached the saturation point.

In early April, members of the Kansas Hunter Education Instructor Association volunteered even more time and effort to make a batch of dummy guns. Tim Boxberger, Dennis Vincent, Ray Fischer, Charlie Fischer, Larry McAdow, Shannon Clarkson, Gary Clarkson, and Mike Corby gave up a Saturday in this effort. Additionally, McAdow is heading up an effort to build pop-ups and other training aids to be stocked in trailers around the state.

This is just more evidence, not that any is needed, of the superb efforts of volunteer hunter education instructors to further the hunting heritage in Kansas by producing more effective ways to produce safe and responsible new hunters.



I ERUPTED FROM THE LILY PADS AND SMASHED HIS LURE. THEN, SHAKING MY MASSIVE HEAD, I TAIL-WALKED ACROSS THE SURFACE, DOVE INTO THE MURKY DEPTHS, AND WRAPPED HIS LINE AROUND A LOG."



Eastern screech owl, Mike Blair photo

Have you ever heard what you thought was the “whinny” of a horse in the trees? Well, you’re not crazy, and it’s not a horse! You are most likely hearing the territorial call of an Eastern screech owl.

These diminutive owls are a common bird in our state, documented in all but three Kansas counties. They range from the prairie provinces of southern Canada, south through the Great Plains (east of the Rocky Mountains) to the east coast of the U.S., and as far south as northeastern Mexico. In Kansas, Eastern screech owls are usually found in timber along creeks and rivers, woodlots, and in towns and cities with mature trees. They are small – only 6-8 inches tall, with 14- to 16-inch wingspan and weigh less than 10 ounces. They can pack a punch, though, taking prey as large as starlings and pigeons if necessary. Their diet more typically consists of small rodents, song birds and large insects. They are opportunistic and have been known to take snakes and lizards, amphibians, crayfish and even small fish. They are a sit-and-wait predator, remaining motionless, pouncing at the right moment to grab their prey. Some people mistakenly think they are baby great horned owls because of the “ear tufts” on the head, but screech owls are substantially smaller and show very cryptic and camouflaged coloration. Young great horned owls are the same size as a screech owl when they are still fuzzy and white.

Eastern screech owls exhibit one of two color phases: gray or red. The gray phase is most common, with approximately two-thirds of all birds this color. Red or rufous-colored birds make up the other one-third. The red phase is more likely in the eastern part of their range, with very few reds (less than 15 percent) seen in the west. These pairs are mostly monogamous and mate for life, but will mate with a different bird if one of the existing pair dies. Eastern screech owls nest in tree cavities or can be attracted to man-made nest boxes. The nest does not contain any added nesting material, with the female laying from 2-8 eggs and incubating them for 26 days on the bare bottom of the cavity or box. Young screech owls fledge in approximately 24-28 days and are tended by the parents for another 5-6 weeks outside the nest. If you are lucky enough to have them in your neighborhood, they can be lots of fun to watch in late summer, while they are learning how to catch

BIRD BRAIN

with Mike Rader

Eastern Screech Owl A Haunting Call

insects and try out their vocal chords.

Eastern screech owls really don’t “screech”, but have two types of primary calls or songs. The “trill” or “bouncing” call is used by members of a family group or both sexes of a pair to keep in contact with each other. The male will use the “trill” call to advertise a nest location to a female in courtship and also when delivering food items back to the nest site. The “whinny” call is usually done by the male in defense of its territory. They can be very protective of nest locations, even diving on humans they perceive to be a threat. Eastern screech owls are prey for many other animals, including other larger owl species (mostly great horned and barred), raccoons, opossums, large snakes and hawks.

These owls are very reactive to the calls of other screech-owls, so they will respond to a whistled imitation or to recorded screech-owl calls. It’s a fun way to get to hear them and have them fly in to check out what’s making the sound. Many times, if you’re quiet and follow the sound of the bird responding, you can find them peering out of a hole in a tree. It’s okay to call them a little, but don’t overdo it, especially during their nesting season (April-June). A recorded screech owl call also attracts lots of other song birds that show up to defend their territory against the unseen owl.

Eastern screech owls are non-migratory and usually set up a several-acre home range they use all year. As long as there is abundant food and adequate habitat available, they will continue to frequent the same areas from year-to-year. These owls can live up to 14 years in the wild, but more likely not past half that age. It’s estimated that 30 percent to 50 percent of young birds do not make it to their first year of age and sexual maturity.

Screech owls are usually secretive and seldom seen – unless one makes an effort to try to find them. It can be very rewarding! I assisted with field trips for the spring Kansas Ornithological Society meeting in May and had great luck showing a number of beginning birders a couple of Eastern screech owls. The participants were very excited to see them in broad daylight, responding to an artificial owl call. It was a first for many of them. Moments like that can really help hook people into the hobby of bird watching. These eerie little “ghosts” of the Kansas night are lots of fun to observe, so listen for them in mid-late summer, when the young birds are learning what it means to be an owl. It’s one of the coolest sounds in the woods!

Letter . . .

for regrouping. One year ago I found myself unemployed, after 19 years of teaching special needs kids. I've priced myself out of the local job market, having earned my Doctorate in Special Education. Without fishing and time on the water, to ponder where I've come from and where I may be headed in my professional career, I simply would have gone nuts.

None-the-less, your article was timely and gave me something to think about. I am a teacher of youth with emotional/behavioral disorders and have often wondered the impact that adult attention has on the child's self-concept and ability to direct their time wisely.

Skills taught first-hand to youth, such as fishing, would likely have impacted their quality of life and the behaviors they chose to exhibit. As you know, teaching youth to fish (i.e. spending time with them) isn't exclusively about fishing, but about gifting someone time to get in touch with themselves and sitting silent enough to listen to one's heart. Yes, I said that as I meant, "gifting someone time to . . ."

As a young child, my Dad used to go fishing to relax. I recall spending more time and money getting ready for the trip than we actually spent once we were at the sacred fishing spot. As I grew older, high school aged I suppose, he quit going. Granted, we were busy and he was trying to accomplish all he could to provide funding for our college educations.

As many readers may find, they were truly offered a gift when they were being taught to fish. They were allowed to do a little parallel "work" beside someone they cared about and had not only the reward and challenge that landing a fish brought, but also the parallel silence that brings many people to clearer, more focused thinking.

Just wanted to say thanks for stating the value that fishing has had for you. Hope my comments allow you to see the impact that being by the water and fishing has had on my life as well.

*Amy L. Mueting
Axtell*

IT'S THE LAW

with Kevin Jones

The Lacey Act

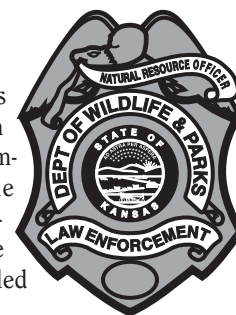
This past May, a federal grand jury indicted two Texas men for violating the Lacey Act. The charges stem from an extensive, long-term investigation concerning illegal commerce and poaching deer in Kansas. The results of the investigation allege these men illegally conspired and participated in violating numerous Kansas laws that regulate deer hunting. You may ask, "If the deer were illegally killed in Kansas, why is the federal court involved?"

The answer lies in the Lacey Act. While many people have heard of this federal law, it is sometimes misunderstood. The Lacey Act was passed by Congress in 1900 and is the first law to address wildlife protection on a national level. Representative John Lacey of Iowa introduced the bill into Congress over the concern of illegally-taken wildlife being transported across state lines. In those days, a person poaching game in one state could find refuge from prosecution by crossing a state line.

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, commercializing wildlife was big business – very lucrative and hard to control. Numerous wildlife populations were over-harvested, some to the point of extinction. While individual states enacted laws to regulate and protect wildlife within the state, they were limited to their jurisdictional boundaries and could not compel a person to return to the state to answer charges. The Lacey Act was created to address this problem. In its design, the act regulates interstate commerce and prohibits the transportation or trafficking of illegally-taken wildlife. Violating the Lacey Act is treated seriously, with a felony conviction having a maximum penalty of up to \$250,000 and five years in federal prison.

Over the course of the past 110 years, there have been several amendments made to this law. In its original version, the Lacey Act addressed only terrestrial wildlife. Another law, called the Black Bass Act of 1926, was later enacted by Congress to address illegally-taken fish. These two acts were combined into one law in 1981. Provisions were added to prohibit the interstate commerce of wildlife captured or killed in violation of any federal or foreign law; to prohibit the importation of injurious wildlife that would harm crops and horticulture; to prohibit the importation of wildlife under inhumane or unhealthful conditions; and to authorize the federal government to implement needed measures to preserve and restore game bird populations. The current Lacey Act covers not only fish and wildlife, but it also includes plants.

The Lacey Act is primarily enforced by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). It is through the combined efforts of the USFWS and state agencies, such as KDWP, that the Lacey Act is most successfully enforced. Even though this landmark federal law has been in existence for more than 100 years and has been amended several times, it is important to note that the reason the act was originally created still affects our wildlife today. All species of wildlife are valuable for ecological, esthetic and economic reasons. While there are legitimate ways to profit from wildlife, the results of illegally killing wildlife for profit have been shown to jeopardize fish and wildlife. Unfortunately for some individuals, the lessons learned more than 100 years ago have not been taken to heart. Illegal commercialization of wildlife is still a problem and remains at the top of the enforcement priority list.





HABITAT HELP with Jake George

Kansas Hunting Access

Like many states in the Midwest, Kansas land is mostly privately owned. In fact, more than 97 percent of land within the state is privately owned. This makes landowners in Kansas not only essential in their role as wildlife stewards, but necessary to the continuation of our outdoor traditions via recreational access to their properties. When landowners allow hunting access, they provide opportunity. Without these opportunities, Kansas hunting as we know it today would not be possible.

As the figurative separation between rural and urban populations in Kansas has grown, it has become seemingly more difficult for hunters and landowners to connect. Couple this with the exorbitant prices being paid for private hunting leases and the growing market and sale of “recreational” properties, and finding a place to hunt has become a challenge. This is not to say that access to private land is no longer available for those who have the time to seek it, just that it has become more difficult to obtain.

In an effort to increase public hunting opportunities within the state, KDWP began the Walk-In Hunting Access (WIHA) program in 1995. The WIHA program initially focused on seven southcentral counties, and in the first year more than 10,000 acres were leased for hunting access from 46 different cooperators. Based on the overwhelmingly positive feedback from landowners and sportsmen, the program was expanded statewide the following year. In 1996, a Federal Aid For Wildlife Restoration grant was obtained from the US Fish and Wildlife Service, providing funding for 75 percent of the program operating costs. In the same year, the WIHA program grew to more than 181,000 acres.

Today, after more than 15 years of working with Kansas landowners to provide hunting access, the WIHA program has grown to more than 1 million acres statewide. Approximately 2,200 access agreements are signed by willing Kansas landowners each year, providing a wealth of hunting opportunity for Kansans and nonresidents alike. Access periods for WIHA properties generally start in September or November and run through the end of January. Atlases showcasing WIHA property locations are available electronically online and in printed format available wherever hunting licenses are sold, making it easier than ever to find a place to hunt.

Creating hunting opportunities that are numerous and easily accessible is perhaps the most effective tool we have with regard to hunter recruitment and retention. Because of this, the WIHA program is not only one of the most successful programs in KDWP history; it's also one of the most important programs for our future.

For further information regarding access to WIHA properties, or if you wish to enroll your property in the program, call (620) 672-0760.



Part of the group that assisted with brushpile construction at Glen Elder Reservoir. Pictured are (back row) Bob Foos, Wayne Jay, Patrick Jay, Roger Hardaway, (front row) Darin Zimmer, Cecil Miller, and Angie Lickteig.

Waconda Habitat Work

Members of the Waconda Lake Association and other local anglers volunteered their time last spring to assist KDWP fisheries biologists Scott Waters and Angie Lickteig with brushpile construction at Glen Elder Reservoir (Waconda Lake). Thanks to the help of all these volunteers, nearly 400 cedar trees were cut, wired with concrete blocks, and sunk in the reservoir. About 260 trees were placed near the Harrison Point fish attractor. A buoy has been placed on this brushpile to inform anglers of its location. An additional 120 cedar trees

were used to create a new brushpile off the bluffs area. This attractor does not have a marker buoy, but the coordinates are posted on the Glen Elder fishing reports website.

Special thanks to all the volunteers who took time out of their busy schedules to help improve fishing in Waconda Lake. They include Cecil Miller, Darin Zimmer, Patrick Jay, Wayne Jay, Jim Huiting, Lee Rebel, Bob Foos, Chuck Barr, Roger Hardaway, and Norman Newell.

—Scott Waters,
fisheries biologist, Beloit

FISH SQUEEZER

with Tommie Berger

Summer Kill

There are times during the hot summer months when you will find dead fish along the shorelines of small lakes and ponds. One might ask, "Who is the culprit?" How can fish be fine one day, dead the next?

Many pond owners first think of chemical poisoning. And that's possible because fish kills occur soon after a rain, and herbicides or pesticides might be the culprit. However, usually the situation is simply summer kill – a situation where dissolved oxygen in the water is depleted by a number of factors, and the fish simply suffocate. It's hard to imagine, but a few nice cloudy days and a 2- or 3-inch soaking rain that we all enjoy so much this time of year can have a drastic effect on fish in a pond. A couple of very hot, 100-degree-plus days with little wind can do the same thing.

To understand summer kill, we must look at the critters in the water. All ponds contain bacteria, algae and aquatic plants, either in the water or along the shoreline. All algae and plants use sunlight for energy. While they are alive and growing, they use carbon dioxide and produce oxygen, which is transferred into the water. When sunlight is blocked by the clouds for a few days, or after an influx of muddy water, or the water gets extremely hot, plants lose their energy and die.

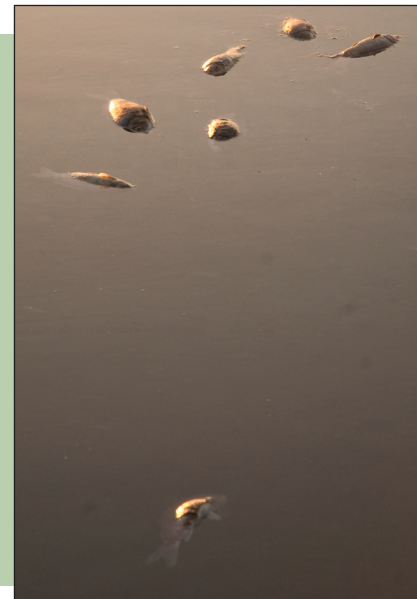
As dead plants decompose, bacteria uses valuable oxygen. Water temperature is a factor because warmer water holds less dissolved oxygen. Another factor in small ponds may be too many fish. If all these factors use too much oxygen, fish begin to suffocate.

Generally, oxygen levels are lowest just before sunup, so a lot

of fish mortality occurs at night when no one is around to realize what is happening. Large fish need and use more oxygen than small fish, so they die first. Depending on the severity of oxygen depletion, some or all fish may die. After fish die, they first sink to the bottom and begin to decompose. Eventually they bloat and float to the surface 18 to 36 hours after death. That's why it's usually too late to correct the problem by the time the pond owner realizes fish have died.

Weeds around the pond can also be a problem. Pond levels recede, and weeds grow quickly in the damp soils. Often they grow to 6 or 8 feet tall. As the water level rises and floods the vegetation after a rain, weeds die, and as they decompose, oxygen levels in the water drop. Most pond owners don't really think about that, but keeping the weeds out or mowed is often the only solution.

If summer kill occurs in your pond, you'll need to evaluate the extent of the kill and restock the pond after the problem is over. Again, some or all the fish may die, but usually a few survive. For pond assistance, contact your nearest KDWP office. A district fisheries biologist can provide you with technical advice.



State Park Treasure Hunt

For the third year in a row, KDWP is sponsoring a geocaching contest in Kansas state parks. From May 1 to Nov. 1, each state park and some other KDWP locations have two hidden caches. The coordinates of the first cache at each site are posted on the KDWP website, www.kdwp.state.ks.us. (Type "geocaching contest" in the search box.) Participants use hand-held global positioning systems (GPS) to find and open the first cache, where they will find the coordinates of the second. Upon finding the second cache, the participants sign a log sheet and take a certificate to that park office. Then they receive a park-specific ink pen and the official statewide KDWP Geocaching Entry Form. Entry forms can be validated at all KDWP park and regional offices, as well as the Pratt Operations Office, for each second cache found.

Prizes will be awarded based first on

how many points are earned. Every second geocache found at each participating location will be worth one point. Prizes will be awarded on a point and time system after the contest ends Nov. 1. First place prizes (maximum of 50 winners) will be a choice between two nights in a KDWP camping cabin or one annual camping permit for 2011. The first 50 participants to earn all of the 31 points and submit their forms win a first-place prize.

Those who earn 31 points but mail their forms in after the first 50 will receive second-place prizes, a choice between one night in a camping cabin or a 14-day camping permit for 2011. Two nights camping and utilities will be awarded for third place winners.

—KDWP News

KANSAS DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE & PARKS 2010 STATEWIDE GEOCACHING ENTRY FORM <small>One winner per prize category per household</small>				
NAME:	AGE:	FULL ADDRESS:		
E-MAIL:	PHONE:	GPS TYPE:		
May we contact you with further information about Kansas Wildlife and Parks programs and events? Please circle Yes or No				
Location	CACHE LOCATION CODE:	DATE FOUND:	STAMP	Initial of validator
1 Cedar Bluff State Park				
2 Cheney State Park				
3 Clinton State Park				
4 Crawford State Park				
5 Cross Timbers State Park				
6 Eisenhower State Park				
7 El Dorado State Park				
8 Elk City State Park				
9 Fall River State Park				
10 Glen Elder State Park				
11 Hilldale State Park				
12 Kanopolis State Park				
13 Kaw River State Park				
14 Lovewell State Park				
15 Lovewell Wildlife Area				
16 Maxwell Wildlife Area				
17 Meade State Park				
18 Milford State Park				
19 Mushroom Rock State Park				
20 Perry State Park				
21 Pomona State Park				
22 Prairie Dog State Park				
23 Prairie Spelt Trail				
24 Pratt Operations Office				
25 Rocky Ford Fishing Area				
26 Sand Hills State Park				
27 Scott State Park				
28 Smoky Hill Wildlife Area				
29 Tuttle Creek State Park				
30 Webster State Park				
31 Wilson State Park				
DATE ENTRY FORM RECEIVED IN PRATT:				Entrant's Signature:
Submit Forms to: Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, 512 SE 25th Ave., Pratt, KS 67124, Attn: Parks				

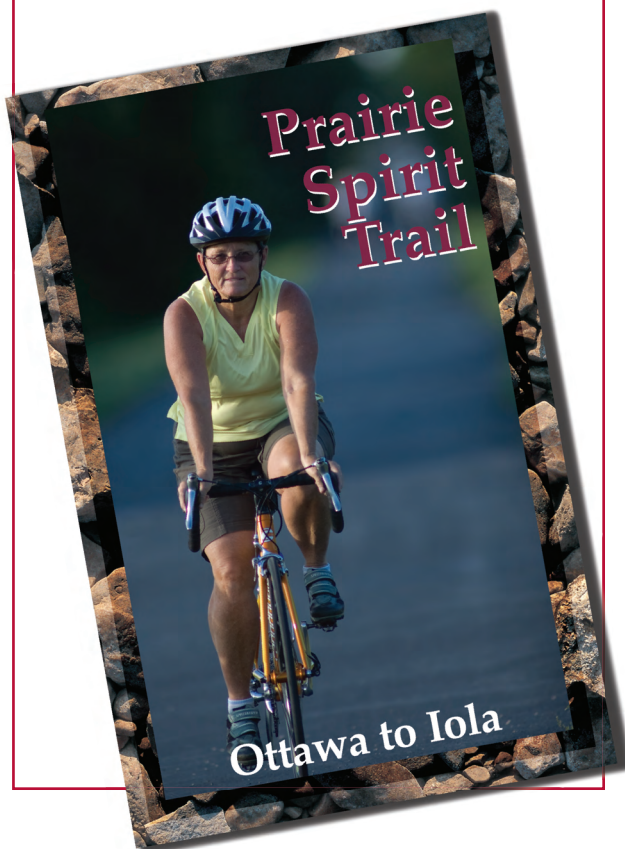
PRAIRIE SPIRIT TRAIL ADDED TO OFFICIAL STATE PARK LIST

Eastern Kansas rail trail will see
benefits because of designation

When Gov. Parkinson signed HB 2434, the 51-mile Prairie Spirit Trail was added to the list of Kansas state parks. The hiking and biking trail starts in Iola and extends north to Ottawa. The popular trail is a shining example of the importance of the railbanking provision that was added to the National Trails System Act in 1983, which allows for interim trail use on railroad corridors and preserves the corridor for possible rail use in the future.

The abandoned railroad corridor was railbanked in 1992, and work on the trail was completed in stages. The final stage, which connected the trail to the city of Iola, was completed in the fall of 2008. KDWP has managed the trail through its Parks Division, but the trail wasn't officially designated as a state park until this legislation was signed. The designation should make the trail eligible for additional signage and certain grants.

Trent McCown, Prairie Spirit Trail State Park manager, was glad the park's status was elevated. "People have always thought of it as a state park," McCown said. "It's nice to have the official designation."



On The Web with Mark Shoup

Crappie Crazy Ultimate Pheasant

Crappie Crazy

Some people just love to fish for — and eat — crappie more than any other fish. They're always watching the crappie radar, looking for reports from other anglers about where the crappie are biting, especially during the spring spawn. But what to do when the spawn is over, and crappie have moved out of shallow spawning beds?

Crappie.com has the answers — the where and the when and how. This site encourages crappie enthusiasts not to abandon their pursuit post-spawn. Yes, there are plenty of tips for fishing the spawn, but there's much more. There are links to a list of general crappie forums (as well as other fish), articles, magazines, businesses, general "crappie stuff," and a "State Forums" link that will take you more thoughts on crappie fishing in the Sunflower State than you thought possible. A "Fishing Guide" link takes you to a Google site and a list of tips and services nationwide, and other links allow you to explore trout fishing. Whether you want to fish for crappie in Kansas, take a trip somewhere else, or just explore fishing in general, crappie.com is a useful tool for the avid angler.



Ultimate Pheasant

Some avid outdoorsmen and women fish, some hunt, and many love both. Those in the latter two categories are thinking of hunting even in late summer. For them, ultimatepheasanthunting.com may be worth checking out. In addition to headlines from the top pheasant hunting states, the site features articles on preparation for the upcoming season, featured hunts, a forum, news, dog training tips, and recipes. Many articles include a forum board to share thoughts on article contents. Links to information on everything from booking a guided hunt to self-guided hunts, buying licenses, and transporting firearms and game are included, as well.

Featured hunts, member forums, and a pheasant trail cam are among the many features upland bird hunters will find fascinating. Begin preparing for pheasants early this year with a visit to ultimatepheasanthunting.com.



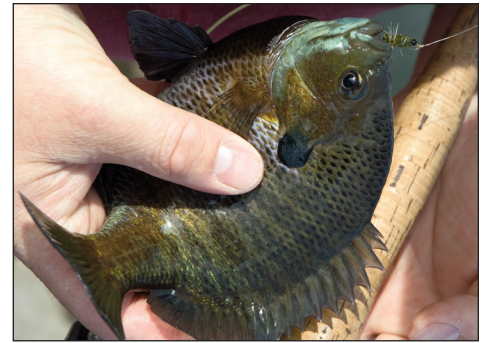


BLUEGILL BAKE

I make it a point every year to cook up a mess of bluegills for the family. The local lake offers decent action for summer bluegills, and the falling of cottonwood cotton signals the time to get them. A bonanza on large bluegills is hard to find, but with the kids, all bluegills are fair game. They are one of the easier fish to fillet, but after removing the rib cage, only a little meat is left. You can hopefully make up in numbers what you lose in size. Since bluegill fillets are thin, they require only a short cook time using traditional methods. The meat on a bluegill is very light in taste and carries a sweet flavor. Bluegills are one of the few fish I eat baked. When preparing to cook bluegills in an oven, allow for ample prep and cook

time. A glass casserole dish with lid is great for baking bluegills. Spray the bottom with a nonstick cooking spray, then layer the fish evenly to add thickness to the dish. Between each layer add your favorite spices. One or two spices often work the best to complement the light-flavored meat. I use chili powder and garlic salt. Then top the dish with a couple of pats of butter. Cover and bake at 350 degrees until a fork can be inserted and pulled back out clean. Cook time will vary by the thickness of the layered fish. Then remove the lid and return to the broiler until the top begins to turn color. If the dish is too tall for a broiler, use the top oven rack as close to the top element as possible. Serve with fresh peas and scalloped potatoes. Tastes Great.

Another method is grilling. Bluegills destined for the grill are handled a little differently than normal. When cleaning, a



cut is made behind the pectoral fin as with filleting but is carried through the fish on both sides, essentially removing the head and pectoral fins. Cut the belly open and remove the entrails and the pelvic fins. The dorsal, anal, and tail fins should remain on. Scale the fish. Then lay the fish out and spray with a butter-flavored cooking spray. Next, sprinkle a blackened seasoning liberally over both sides of the fish. Place on a high-heat grill until the meat is easily flaked off. The skin helps keep valuable moisture in the meat. The dorsal and anal fins can then be removed with little effort. The tail doubles as a convenient handle and tasty chip.



FISHIN' with Mike Miller

Whackin' Weeds

Anglers have a love/hate relationship with aquatic vegetation, or "moss," as most anglers will call it. It can be especially prevalent in farm ponds because they tend to be shallow and the water is clear, allowing vegetation to flourish. Anglers often cuss "weeds" because they tangle our lures, make reeling in a fish difficult, and can even cover a pond completely. However, and this is where the "love" part comes; weeds are necessary to grow fish. Aquatic vegetation is fish habitat, providing a nursery for young fish, aquatic insects for fish food, and photosynthesis oxygenates the water.

So weeds are good, right? Well, there can be too much of a good thing, and when floating vegetation covers a pond's surface, fishing can be almost impossible. But all is not lost. Some of the most exciting fishing I've ever had was on a pond completely covered with vegetation. We knew there were good bass in the small pond, but couldn't get a lure through the weeds. Quite by accident, I still caught fish - well almost. While reeling my twister-tail worm quickly over the top of the weeds, there was an incredible explosion. I set the hook, and naturally the worm and hook sailed over my head. I quickly



cast again. And this time as I reeled, I tried to make as much surface action as possible - whoosh! The weeds blew up around my worm, but I missed again. I finally did catch a couple of fish. I learned to reel and stop and not set the hook until I felt the weight of a fish. And even though my catch rate wasn't good, I had a blast.

I've since found floating plastic frogs designed for just this kind of fishing. As you reel, the dangling legs of the lure make little ripples in the water. Strikes are explosive and the fish miss more than they hit, but the anticipation keeps you wired.

The best times to fish when the weather is hot will be early and late, and topwater is a perfect choice for summer bass. Get some floating curly-tail worms or frogs, rig them weedless and don't avoid the thick mats of weeds. Pull your hat down tight and hang on!

PROFILE:

with Mark Shoup

KEN BRUNSON



Old Man River

Ken Brunson is a wildlife advocate. As passionate as they come, he has loved wild animals since he was a little boy, and no one I know pushes harder for policies that benefit them. His knowledge of Kansas wildlife and the interaction of this portion of Earth and its critters is just as profound. It is a warm relationship.

Brunson grew up on a farm along the South Fork Solomon River near Stockton, a wildlife habitat-rich environment that nourished this born naturalist. Much of his youth was spent with his father, flathead fishing both North and South forks of the Solomon – waiting on mud banks at night in anticipation of a pounding bank line when thunderstorms boiled in the west.

“I grew up around northcentral Kansas limestone rock, and it’s still in my blood,” he explains. “I was always near the river, and the South Fork Solomon shaped my interest. I fished there, caught all kinds of toads, frogs, snakes, lizards. Darn near drowned there. It was a full adventure. I had a pretty classic biologist start, trying to make ‘hand pets’ out of everything. I caught lots of horny toads – horned lizards. If a kid’s not fascinated by a horned lizard, the kid is just not awake.”

Like most of his ilk, he was exposed to hunting early, which “really got my blood up and elevated my interest in the outdoors even more.” He spent more time with a .22 rifle than anything, he says. He hunted squirrels and rabbits and just plinked. “We had an NRA .22 Rifle Club in Stockton. It was the Pass It On of its time, .22 caliber shorts in an upstairs shooting room every Tuesday night.”

With this background, there was no way he could have been anything but a wildlife biologist with an interest in all species, and by 8th grade, he knew what he wanted to be.

“I just loved wildlife and knew I wanted to work in this field. I got to know [former regional Law Enforcement Division supervisor] Jerry Bump, and I credit some of my early interest in the field to him.”

In 1973, Brunson graduated from Ft. Hays State University with a degree in zoology and moved on to graduate school. At this time, a new state program called SASNAK was implemented by the state legislature, infusing enough money into the Kansas Forestry, Fish and Game Commission to hire about 50 new biologists. With an offer in hand, he dropped out of graduate school to accept a job as fisheries biologist at Norton Reservoir. He held this position for three years before moving to a new area of natural resource work – water quality specialist for non-point source pollution, working out of the Pratt Operations Office. He worked in this capacity for about two years before becoming a stream research biologist. For 10 years, he enjoyed studying the streams and rivers of Kansas, compiling essential data for ensuring the health of this seminal element of his

youth. After a short stint in the Environmental Services Section, the rest of the critters came calling.

In 1989, Brunson became KDWP’s wildlife diversity coordinator, charged with research, management, and funding for nongame wildlife species. Twenty-one years later, he still works with passion in this capacity. It’s been a great career, but not without changes.

“This job has gotten so technically sophisticated. We’re able to collect and analyze data so much more efficiently, but I despair that we may lose more field biology. I’m a generalist, and I respect a broad knowledge of nature. We’ve become so specialized that I fear we may become slaves to the machines.”

Brunson doesn’t complain about much, though. He’s enjoyed the people he’s worked with and their inspiration, citing retirees Bill Hlavachik, Bob Hartman, and Bob Wood, to name a few. He’s also enjoyed working on the cutting edge of long-term wildlife management funding, working primarily through the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies to help generate ideas and secure funding. Helping implement State Wildlife Grants as a new way of doing business has been a step in the right direction, but he wants to see more.

“I hope we’ll see the light when it comes to expanding constituents for a future funding base. Wildlife funding is continually jeopardized because there are fewer hunters and anglers. We need to initiate a process that helps broaden the funding burden. I don’t buy that there’s never a time when we couldn’t possibly get a long-term program from a number of options, as evidenced by other states. If we are doing little to work for it, we will surely achieve little.”

Everyone who works in this field will leave something undone when they retire, but they almost always leave with more done than before they started, and this is invariably a sense of satisfaction for those I’ve talked to over the years. Ken Brunson was one of the first people to befriend me when I signed on with KDWP 21 years ago, and when he goes – hopefully not soon – this agency will be a little poorer. He, however, will be richer.

“I’ve been able to work my dream job in various capacities,” Brunson muses. “Like most people in this agency, I would do nothing differently. I’ve had other opportunities, but I’d hate to have lost the ones I’ve had because I chose a different road.”

Brunson has devoted his life to the animals that we don’t hunt or fish, from songbirds and butterflies to box turtles and plants, but he’s an avid hunter. He sees no contradiction.

“It’s my philosophy that we need as many wildlife advocates as we can get,” he says. “It’s a good thing to cultivate that. We need everyone we can get in the wildlife conservation arena.”

HUNTING SPOTS

with Marc Murrell

MAP IT

The dog days of summer are here and as the ol' country song says, it's "... too hot to fish, too hot for golf..." But if you're already looking forward to crisp, clear mornings in a tree stand, now is the perfect time to do a little homework in your climate controlled office or home. Today's technology has made maps, both aerial and "bird's eye," a key component to scouting and increasing your chances of crossing paths with a monster buck this fall.

With the advent of the Internet, hunters have a wealth of information at their fingertips. Using various mapping websites, hunters can narrow their search for ideal stand locations. Being able to see the lay-of-the-land can shave hours off of scouting time and wandering simply hoping to find perfect stand site locations.

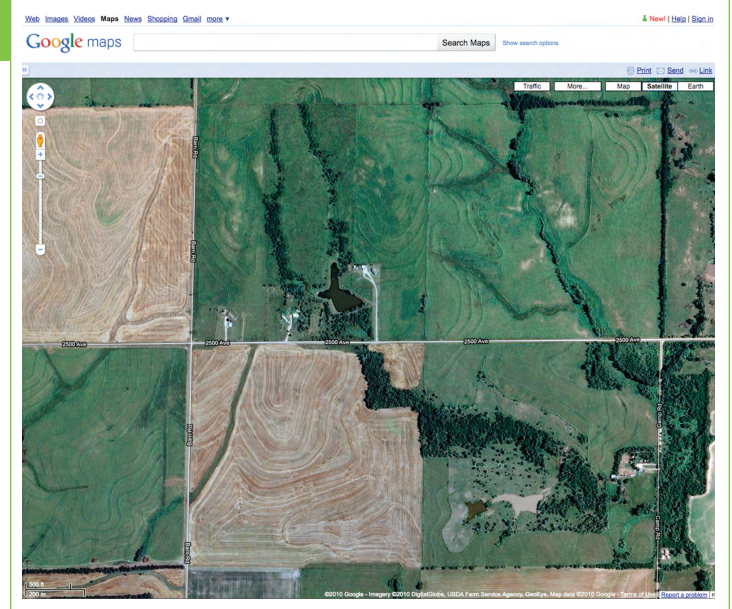
Map searching is simple and effective. You can do a "search" on mapping websites, but there are a few that have proven popular with outdoorsman. They include maps.google.com, mapquest.com, and bing.com/maps/. There are other web sites available, but these are convenient and free and all are similar in scope. Some are easier to navigate than others, and being able to search, zoom, drag and print from the same screen saves time and hassle.

When looking at an aerial map, it's best to start with a wide view. Make a note of areas that look promising, and then zoom in on each of them to get a closer look. It's easy enough to print the wide view and mark areas with a highlighter or

print individual areas after zooming. It's a good idea to record any notes on the print-out and include landowner names and contact information.

Looking at aerial photography for a piece of property can pinpoint travel corridors between agricultural fields and bedding areas. Granted, the crops in most instances aren't discernable, but chances are the images are years old so it doesn't matter, anyway. But it does show you where feed fields are located in relation to heavy stands of timber or Conservation Reserve Grassland tracts with any draws or drainages connecting them. Since much of Kansas' prime deer habitat is associated with stream or river corridors, these aerial views show areas of constriction known as "pinch points" or "funnels." A properly-placed stand, keeping predominate wind directions in mind, provides an ideal ambush site in these areas.

Map searches using the web can be made more valuable coupled with a Rural Directory for the county you're searching.



These identify tracts of land and ownership and in many cases contact information, as well. However, smaller tracts are more difficult to track in populated areas, and good old fashioned door-to-door research is often better.

Aerial maps aren't just for deer hunters. I've used them many times to look at areas of reservoirs or rivers for waterfowl hunting. Large stands of timber on public wildlife areas around reservoirs are ideal locations to squirrel hunt and easily pin-pointed with aerial photography. Regardless of your preferred species, getting a bird's eye view of your favorite hunting spot in a climate-controlled setting is the perfect way to scout and beat the summer heat.

COMMISSIONERS REAPPOINTED

Gov. Mark Parkinson has reappointed two members of the Kansas Wildlife and Parks Commission. Gerald Lauber, Topeka, and Robert Wilson, Pittsburg, have been reappointed with their terms expiring on June 30, 2014. Other commission members include Kelly Johnston, chairman, Wichita; Shari Wilson, vice-chairman, Kansas City; Frank Meyer, Herington; Doug Sebelius, Norton; and Debra Bolton, Garden City.

The seven-member commission works with the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) to conserve and enhance Kansas' outdoor recreation resources, primarily reviewing regulations recommended by KDWP staff. All positions are appointed by the governor with the commissioners serving staggered four-year terms.

—KDWP News

Play It Safe This Summer

Someone drowned in one of our reservoirs recently, a tragedy that devastated a family and their circle. Yet this incident also affected all of the users at that park, as well as the taxpayers in that county.

The emotional trauma to the family is the factor most consider when thinking about a drowning victim. However, those who came to that lake looking for a carefree weekend instead witnessed the discovery and aftermath of a tragedy. This might cause them to pack up and go home to brood about the incident, maybe never to return. Children en route to the fishing pier for a carefree childhood memory may instead be haunted by the sight of rescue divers bringing in a body bag. Memories of a body found or a family's agony stay with the searchers forever.

When a person on the water in a state park is reported missing, we scramble all available staff to the search effort. Not only Parks Division staff, but Fisheries and Wildlife and Law Enforcement divisions respond to search water and shoreline. County officers, Kansas Highway Patrol, emergency medical personnel, search and rescue teams and volunteers rush to the

scene. If enough time goes by without a living person or a body found, divers or helicopters may be called in.

So next time you are preparing for recreation upon the water, stop to think for a moment. Measure the cost of an approved personal flotation device or proper maintenance measures for your boat against the potential cost to your family, as well as the other recreational users on the lake, if you or a family member is lost. Is saving a few bucks or seconds really worth the risk?

First Geocachers Complete All Sites

Again this year, Ken and Rosie DeWitt of Salina located all 31 sites in KDWP's geocache contest before anyone else. This year, they shaved two days off last year's time, appearing in our Pratt Operations Office on May 10 with all caches found. The DeWitts began on May 1, opening day of the contest, finding caches at five parks and a wildlife area (Lovewell, Glen Elder, Webster, Wilson and Prairie Dog). Then they travelled on to the central region, finding six caches on May 2. They found only five caches on May 4, and slowed down to four caches on May 5. May 6 yielded only three caches, as did May 7. They found three more on May 9 and had to wait until May 10 to bring in the validation form to the Pratt Operations Office, completing the contest. They were the first to turn in their form the first year, taking a month to find all the caches. Before last year's contest, they retired and found all the caches in 13 days. This year, they had to beat their own record.

REHABILITATORS: No More Fawns

Last September, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks staff learned that a white-tailed fawn had been transported from Decatur County in northwest Kansas to the Hutchinson Zoo. Because deer from Decatur County have tested positive for chronic wasting disease (CWD), KDWP biologists had to work with zoo officials to euthanize and test the animal for the disease. This is another case of well-meaning people trying to "rescue" apparently abandoned animals, only leading to the animal's demise.

Fortunately, the sample in this case came back negative for CWD, but it could have been a disaster if it had not. The greatest danger in transporting these animals is that it will likely accelerate the spread of this always-fatal disease to their new environment for a very long time. For example, 20 years after captive mule deer were removed from the facility in Colorado, deer were returned to pens in the same spot and soon contracted CWD. Attempts to decontaminate infected facilities have failed.

To prevent spreading CWD to wild deer in other parts of Kansas and to avoid contaminating facilities, KDWP has asked licensed wildlife rehabilitators to discontinue rehabilitating any orphaned or injured fawns. While some states have or will be making fawn rehabilitation illegal, KDWP is currently asking rehabilitators to cooperate voluntarily.

"We encourage the public to leave fawns in the wild," said Shane Hesting, wildlife disease coordinator for KDWP. "As we all know, in many cases, lone fawns are not 'orphaned' but hidden by the doe to avoid detection by predators. The risk of spreading such a dangerous disease should override the emotion of wanting to 'save' a fawn."

Besides leaving young deer (and other animals) alone, anyone who sees a deer acting sick should immediately contact the nearest KDWP office or their local sheriff.



—KDWP News

FUNGUS FEARS

THAT'S WILD
with Ken Brunson

As if bats don't have enough challenges to survival, along comes a huge threat in the form of a fungus. Bats are dying en masse in winter hibernacula (bat caves) in the East due to a new and major threat, white-nose syndrome (WNS). According to Bat Conservation International, WNS has killed more than a million bats of eight different species since it was discovered in a New York cave four years ago. Mortality rates approach 100 percent at some sites. The fungus associated with WNS, *Geomyces destructans*, has an unknown origin and is a newly identified species. WNS so far has killed only species that hibernate, which include 25 of the 46 U.S. bat species. Since the first recorded incident of WNS near Albany, New York, in February of 2006, WNS has burned through bat populations from New Hampshire to Tennessee. Missouri was the twelfth state to document the existence of the fungus in a population of gray myotis, a federally endangered species.

This May, Oklahoma became the thirteenth state to identify WNS when an infected cave myotis was found. However, there is a distinction between a confirmation of the *Geomyces destructans* fungus and WNS. The fungus is implicated in the bat mortalities associated with WNS, but it is not known what actually kills the bats. There could be other factors such as the environment or microbial pathogens, which may be implicated as well. Researchers are investigating all angles in order to try to find a way to fight this disease. The fungus shows up as white fluff on the muzzle and wings of bats. Bats seem hyperactive at a time when they should be reserving their fat reserves to make it through the winter. Instead, it is believed they succumb to starvation trying to fight the fungus and perhaps other pathogens associated with it.

The normal mode of transmission of the disease is believed to be bat-to-bat contact. However, additional precautions have been taken in other states to restrict human access to caves inhabited by bats to minimize additional means of spreading the fungus from clothing, footwear and



equipment. Anyone visiting caves is advised to wear clean clothes and boots and use clean gear to avoid the possibility of spreading the fungus from one cave to another.

Approximately 800 caves are known in Kansas, although most are relatively small and on private land. A few caves in the Red Hills harbor maternity colonies of cave myotis, the same species of bat identified in Oklahoma as having WNS. These colonies are relatively small as cave bat colonies go, numbering typically in the thousands. However, of more significance are the few pallid and Townsend's big-eared bats, which may be in the same caves. In Kansas, these two species are known only from the Red Hills, and are on the Kansas Species in Need of Conservation List. Because of this, there is added concern about their survival in the state. The infection of cave myotis represents a new species associated with this fungus, and is outside the range of previously known infections. A possible out-

break of WNS in cave myotis poses a serious threat to this species and possibly others in Kansas, as well as other western states. There have been no threats identified to humans from the fungus or the WNS disease.

While presently little exists to help fight WNS, people should be aware of the positive values these flying mammals contribute to our environment. Bats eat enormous quantities of insects during their nightly feeding flights. Bats are often unnecessarily maligned. They are not the huge rabies threat as some portray, harboring a much smaller threat than canine rabies infections. They don't fly into your hair on purpose. No bat species in the U.S. sucks blood and they don't turn into vampires. They fill an important niche in our world's diverse ecology and deserve continued protection and positive attention. For excellent information about bats and updates on the WNS issue, go to Bat Conservation International on the web.

One-Shot Hall of Fame

Rob Keck of Edgefield, S.C., was inducted into the Kansas Governor's One Shot Hall of Fame in El Dorado on April 17. Kansas Governor Mark Parkinson and former Kansas governor, hunt founder and KDWP Secretary Mike Hayden presented Keck the award at the One Shot Banquet.

Keck has been a supporter of the Kansas Governor's One Shot Turkey Hunt since 1987, the first year. During his 30-year tenure at the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf), Keck worked closely with former Kansas hunt president Marv McCown. He facilitated a National Jake Essay Contest for the Kansas event and introduced the hunt to many people from all walks of life. Keck currently serves as director of conservation for Bass Pro Shops.

—KDWP News



NEW SMALLMOUTH RECORD

A new Kansas state record smallmouth bass was caught in Milford Reservoir on April 4 and has been certified by KDWP. Frank Evans Jr., of Salina, caught the 6.88-pound smallmouth on a jerk bait about 1 p.m. KDWP fisheries biologist John Reinke confirmed the species of the fish, which was 21.5 inches long and 16.5 inches in girth. Evans' catch continues a Salina-Milford connection for smallmouth bass. The previous state record of 6.68 pounds was also taken from Milford by Salina resident Jason Heis in August of 2004.

—KDWP News

Poachers Guns on Auction

On Aug. 21, KDWP will auction guns forfeited by those convicted of wildlife crimes. The auction will be held at the Blomquist Auction Gallery, 684 E. Kansas Highway 4 in Assaria, beginning at 10 a.m. United Country Auctions of Salina is conducting the auction, and items are currently available for view and bid online at proxibid.com/asp/Catalog.asp?aid=29039.

"Proceeds from this auction will come back to KDWP to help protect the natural resources of Kansas," says Kevin Jones, director of KDWP's Law Enforcement Division. "We hope that this process will give law-abiding citizens a chance to make use of this equipment while the agency recoups some of the cost of apprehending and prosecuting poachers."

For more details, phone (785) 667-7653 or visit the above website.

—KDWP News

Memorial Day Records

KDWP reported record-breaking attendance during the Memorial Day weekend with more than 430,000 people visiting 25 state parks. El Dorado State Park reported the highest attendance with a visitor total topping 65,000. Several parks reported the largest Memorial Day crowds in a decade.

"We are pleased to see so many people spending time enjoying Kansas' great outdoors," said KDWP Secretary Mike Hayden. "I am especially proud of the KDWP employees. Despite being short-staffed, we pulled together, preparing large areas of property and responding to weekend emergencies."

According to Parks Division Director Jerry Hover, the spike in attendance is attributed to people staying closer to home, the Children in Nature program that encourages outdoor activities, and excellent reservoir water levels in central and western Kansas. The superior quality of Kansas State Parks is a factor as well. "People like our state parks better than other parks," Hover said.

The 2010 state park season appears to be following the trend documented in 2009 when visitation was 30 percent higher than that of 2008. That's good news for state parks, which depend largely on entrance and camping permit fees to maintain operating budgets. It's also good news for the communities located near state parks because state park visitors provide an important economic boost by buying food, fuel, and supplies when they travel.

—KDWP News

2010 Sportsmen's

FISHING SEASONS

TROUT STOCKING

- Oct. 15 - April 15, 2011
- Daily creel limit: 5
- Area open: Designated trout waters listed at www.kdwp.state.ks.us

HANDFISHING

- June 15 - Aug. 31 (flathead catfish only)
- Two locations: Arkansas River from John Mack Bridge in Wichita downstream to Oklahoma border and Kansas River from origin to confluence with Missouri River. Special per required.
- Daily Creel Limit: 5

BULLFROG

- July 1 - Oct. 31
- Daily Creel Limit: 8

FLOATLINE FISHING

- July 15 - Sept. 15
- Daylight hours only – Hillsdale, Council Grove, Tuttle Creek, Kanopolis, John Redmond, Toronto, Wilson and Pomona reservoirs only.

TURKEY

2010 FALL TURKEY:

- Season: Oct. 1 - Nov. 30 and Dec. 13-31; and Jan. 10-31, 2011.

BIG GAME

DEER:

- Youth/Persons with Disabilities: Sept. 11-19
- Archery: Sept. 20 - Dec. 31
- Muzzleloader: Sept. 20 - Oct. 3
- Early Firearm (Subunit 19 only) Oct. 9-17
- Regular Firearm: Dec. 1 - Dec. 12
- Firearm Extended Whitetail Antlerless Season: Jan. 1-9, 2011
- Special Extended Firearms Whitetail Antlerless Season: Jan. 10-16, 2011 (Open for unit 7, 8 and 15 only.)

- Archery Extended Whitetail Antlerless Season (DMU 19 only): Jan. 10-31, 2011

ELK (residents only)

Outside Fort Riley:

- Muzzleloader: Sept. 1 - Oct. 3
- Archery: Sept. 20 - Dec. 31
- Firearm: Dec. 1-12 and Jan. 1 - March 15, 2011

On Fort Riley:

- Muzzleloader and archery: Sept. 1 - Oct. 3
- Firearm Season for Holders of Any-Elk Permits: Oct. 1 - Dec. 31
- Firearm First Segment: Oct. 1-31
- Firearm Second Segment: Nov. 1-30
- Firearm Third Segment: Dec. 1-31

MIGRATORY GAME BIRDS

DOVE (Mourning, white-winged, Eurasian collared, and ringed turtle doves)

- Season: Sept. 1 - Oct. 31 and Nov. 6-14
- Daily bag limit: 15
- Possession limit: 30

EXOTIC DOVE

(Eurasian collared and ringed turtle doves only)

- Season: Nov. 20 - Feb. 28, 2011
- Daily bag limit: No limit
- Possession limit: No limit

RAIL (Sora and Virginia)

- Season: Sept. 1 - Nov. 9
- Daily bag limit: 25
- Possession limit: 25

SNIPES

- Season: Sept. 1 - Dec. 16
- Daily bag limit: 8
- Possession limit: 16

Calendar

WOODCOCK

- Season: Oct. 16 - Nov. 29
- Daily bag limit: 3
- Possession limit: 6

SANDHILL CRANE

- Season: Nov. 10 - Jan. 6, 2011
- Daily bag limit: 3
- Possession limit: 6

DUCK

- to be set

CANADA GEESE

to be set

WHITE-FRONTED GEESE

- to be set

LIGHT GEESE

- Conservation Order: Feb. 15 - April 31, 2011

UPLAND GAME BIRDS

PHEASANTS

- Season: Nov. 13 - Jan. 31, 2011
- Youth Season: Nov. 6-7
- Daily bag limit: 4 cocks in regular season, 2 cocks in youth season

QUAIL

- Season: Nov. 13 - Jan. 31, 2011
- Youth Season: November 6-7
- Daily Bag Limit Quail: 8 in regular season, 4 in youth season

PRAIRIE CHICKEN

- Early Season (East Unit): Sept. 15 - Oct. 15
- Regular Season (East and Northwest Units):
Nov. 20 - Jan. 31, 2011
- Regular Season (Southwest Unit):
Nov. 20 - Dec. 31
- Daily Bag Limit: 2 (Southwest Unit)
- Possession Limit: twice daily bag

SMALL GAME ANIMALS

SQUIRREL

- Season: June 1 - Feb. 28, 2011
- Daily bag limit: 5
- Possession limit: 20

RABBITS (Cottontail & Jack rabbit)

- Season: All year
- Daily bag limit: 10
- Possession limit: 30

CROW

- Season: Nov. 10 - March 10, 2011
- Daily bag / Possession Limit: No Limit

FURBEARER HUNTING & TRAPPING

NOTE: All furbearer hunting, trapping, and running seasons begin at 12 noon on opening day and close at midnight of closing day.

- Season: Nov. 17 - Feb. 15, 2011
Badger, bobcat, mink, muskrat, opossum, raccoon, swift fox, red fox, gray fox, striped skunk, weasel:

BEAVER TRAPPING

- Season Dates (statewide):
Nov. 17 - March 31, 2011

The

Colorful
World

of Birds

text and photos by Bob Gress
manager, Great Plains Nature Center
Wichita

goldfinch

The world is more colorful to birds

Because birds and humans see the world in color, we may think that birds see the world as we do. But most birds not only see the spectrum of light we see, but they also see ultraviolet light. Because of this, birds see a more colorful world, and birds are more colorful to each other than they are to us. For example, the black spots on the wings of a mourning dove are strongly reflective in ultraviolet light. To birds, these spots may have a deep purplish-violet cast. The iridescence on the necks of mourning doves may also be quite spectacular in ultraviolet light.



mourning dove

Coloring birds with pigments

Melanin is a pigment that colors our skin as well as our hair. In birds and humans, melanin is manufactured in our bodies from amino acids. The colors produced by melanin range from black to pale gray. One type of melanin, eumelanin, produces many of the colors we see on bird's legs, bills and patches of bare skin. It's also responsible for the velvety black feathers seen on red-winged blackbirds and gray feathers seen on least terns. Phaeomelanin is another type of melanin used to produce the rusty red feathers of wood thrushes and the rich plumage of cinnamon teal.

red-winged blackbird





Baltimore oriole

Colors produced by food

Many of our favorite birds are colored by the foods they eat. Carotenoid pigments are responsible for vivid displays of red, yellow and orange. More than a dozen types of carotenoids are known to color birds. They cannot be synthesized in the body but must be eaten, and they are common in many kinds of bird foods and human foods, including carrots. Carotenoids create the brilliant plumages of Baltimore orioles, American goldfinches, northern cardinals and rose-breasted grosbeaks.



great egret

White

White is often overlooked as a color, but most white feathers are also the result of structural coloration. White, like the plumage of a great egret, appears when all wavelengths of light are reflected equally. Albino birds, however, are different. When individuals that normally have melanin, lack this pigment, albinism can occur. Partial albinism, in a single feather, or a few feathers, is much more common than a totally albino bird.

Eastern screech owl (albino)





common grackle

Iridescent colors

Some birds appear to change colors depending on our angle of view and the bird's orientation. The sheen on the head of a common grackle is an example of iridescent coloration. The flashes of color from the throat feathers of male hummingbirds are also created by iridescence. The colors are produced by very thin films, similar to oil on water, in conjunction with layers of melanin pigment. Reflective light from these films create iridescent colors.

Structural colors

The microscopic structure of feathers also affects the colors of birds. Blues are created by reflective light. Feathers, and human fingernails, are constructed mostly of keratin. This protein is strong and somewhat transparent. Light passing through the complicated feather structure is reflected back in the blues we see in cerulean warblers, Eastern bluebirds and indigo buntings. Put a light behind a blue jay feather, and the feather no longer appears blue.

Most color blindness in humans results in the inability to differentiate between greens, reds, and yellows. As a color-blind birder, Bob Gress is fascinated with colors and appreciates help in spotting colorful birds.



Northern cardinal



The Cabin Experience

by Kathleen Dultmeier
marketing/public information officer, Topeka

If the thought of maintaining an RV or camper is overwhelming, and the idea of sleeping in a tent brings immediate protest from your sore back, consider renting a clean, convenient cabin.

Many of us have good intentions of spending time outdoors this summer, but other activities quickly fill up our schedules. The state park cabin program fulfills the desire to spend time outdoors hassle-free by offering modern cabins at reasonable prices. The cabin program is designed to enhance outdoor recreation opportunities in Kansas parks and wildlife areas by providing an alternative to tent or RV camping.

Keith Sexson, KDWP's assistant Secretary for Operations, frequently uses the cabins as a way to "camp" in comfort. Sexson rents the cabins for family vacations and simple weekend getaways.

"Our most memorable cabin experiences come when spending time with our grandchildren, enjoying the outdoors and being close to the water, hiking trails and state park events," Sexson explains. "As a KDWP employee I'm fortunate to work daily with

programs dedicated to managing our natural resources and providing outdoor recreational opportunities. But when I stay in a cabin and experience those opportunities first-hand, I'm reminded why I have the best job in the world." Sexson continued, "While

Perhaps you need a unique place to host an event. The cabins can be used for family reunions or "girls-only" weekend trips.

I have enjoyed tent and RV camping, the relaxing experience from staying in one of our well-equipped KDWP cabins is one that I highly recommend for everyone. You owe it to yourself and family to try the cabin experience. If you do it once, I'm betting you'll be hooked."

Sometimes a girls-night-out needs to be more than dinner at a local restaurant. Julie Cirlicuina of Mission, organizes a woman's

group called Women's Outdoor Recreation. Her members are outdoor enthusiasts who gather for camaraderie and nature. Cirlicuina rented multiple cabins at Tuttle Creek State Park, and 14 women ages 30 to 60 stayed a weekend. "We picked Tuttle Creek because it was only two hours away from Kansas City, and it was a nice change of scenery," Cirlicuina said.

By combining the luxury of the cabins with the benefits of outdoor fun, the women were better able to appreciate the Kansas outdoors. According to Cirlicuina, some women took advantage of the "fantastic hiking trails" while other women stayed closer to the cabins, admiring the beautiful view of Tuttle River Pond while relaxing by an outdoor fire. Last fall, Cirlicuina stayed in the cabins located at Crawford State Park and was equally impressed by those cabins.

KDWP cabins also provide a perfect venue for family reunions.



While many cabins are in state parks, others are located in secluded areas of wildlife areas, often near state fishing lakes. The spectacular view from this cabin's front porch is of the Mined Land Wildlife Area in Cherokee County. Excellent fishing, as well as deer and turkey hunting opportunities wait just outside the cabin door.

When Mike Beck, of Manhattan, was asked to plan his family's reunion, he wanted to take advantage of Kansas' beautiful weather. Beck reserved multiple cabins at Tuttle Creek State Park to house the guests

"We booked four to five cabins, and we really liked the new, big ones. Really nice," he said.

His family traveled from Kansas, Nebraska, Arizona and California.

"The ones from California and Arizona loved it and want to do it again," Beck said. "The state park is well-kept. Good people. They keep it clean and keep it mowed."

Beck added that the state park staff was helpful and accommodating. "They were real nice," he said.

According to Mark Stock, cabin program director, "The response has been incredible." Stock has been overseeing the cabin program since July 2008 and noted as the program has expanded and cabin accommodations have improved, usage has steadily increased.

"People love being outside, and

After years of fielding inquiries about state cabin rentals, KDWP began the cabin program in 1993. The cabins make it easier to enjoy Kansas parks without the inconveniences of camping or investing in an RV.

combining the beauty of Kansas with the convenience of a cabin just makes good sense."

Stock explained that KDWP manages 80 cabins at 18 state parks and four state fishing lakes



From refrigerator and stove to heating/AC and indoor plumbing, many cabins have all the comforts of home. You can't call cabin stays "roughing it," but you will call them fun.

and wildlife areas. Every year, more cabins are added. The draft 10-year cabin plan calls for KDWP to operate approximately 200 cabins at 23 state parks and 20 state fishing lakes and wildlife areas.

KDWP cabins provide lodging in a natural setting with modern facilities but patrons need to plan ahead by bringing their own bedding, towels, amenities and food. Most cabin kitchens have a table, stove, refrigerator,



Cabins provide an excellent place for special get-togethers, from family reunions to quiet get-aways. Many cabins in state parks are situated in clusters, making them perfect for large groups.

cooking and eating utensils, microwave, and toaster. Some cabins have outdoor grills. Many of the cabins are handicapped accessible.

Stock explained that the cabin program has benefits that cannot be measured.

“Cabins offer an outdoor experience to many who would be unable to enjoy the Kansas outdoors. Not everyone wants to purchase all the equipment needed for


camping. Experiences such as s’mores, chatting around the campfire or gazing at a starlit sky are life moments some may never experience without the cabins.”

Stock added that unlike tent camping, you can stay in a cabin, rain or shine and still have a good time.

The price of cabins depends on location and season but range from \$45 to \$110 per night. Standard processing fees may apply. Many

cabins are available year-round, providing hunters a great base camp close to wildlife areas.

Enjoy the summer sights and sounds of the boundless Kansas outdoors, or change the venue for your next event by reserving a cabin. Visit <https://reserve.ksoutdoors.com> for details regarding specific cabin accommodations or to make a reservation.

You can contact each park for reservation information as well. 



Many cabins include picnic tables and barbecue grills, and these at Tuttle Creek State Park feature covered shelters. Check the KDWP website for cabin information, including which cabins are handicapped accessible. You can call the numbers below for information on cabins located at the specific state park or wildlife area. Reservations can be made by phone or online.

Atchison State Fishing Lake
(785) 273-6740

Cedar Bluff State Park
(785) 726-3212

Cheney State Park
(316) 542-3664

Clinton State Park
(785) 842-8562

Crawford State Park
(620) 362-3671

Cross Timbers State Park
(620) 637-2213

Eisenhower State Park
(785) 528-4102

El Dorado State Park
(316) 321-7180

Fall River State Park
(620) 637-2213

Glen Elder State Park
(785) 545-3345

Kanopolis State Park
(785) 546-2565

Lovewell State Park
(785) 753-4971

McPherson State Fishing Lake
(316) 683-8069

Milford State Park
(785) 238-3014

Mined Land Wildlife Area
(620) 231-3173

Ottawa State Fishing Lake
(785) 628-8614

Perry State Park
(785) 246-3449

Pomona State Park
(785) 828-4933

Prairie Dog State Park
(785) 877-2953

Scott State Park
(620) 872-2061

Tuttle Creek State Park
(785) 539-7941

Webster State Park
(785) 425-6775

Wilson State Park
(785) 658-2465

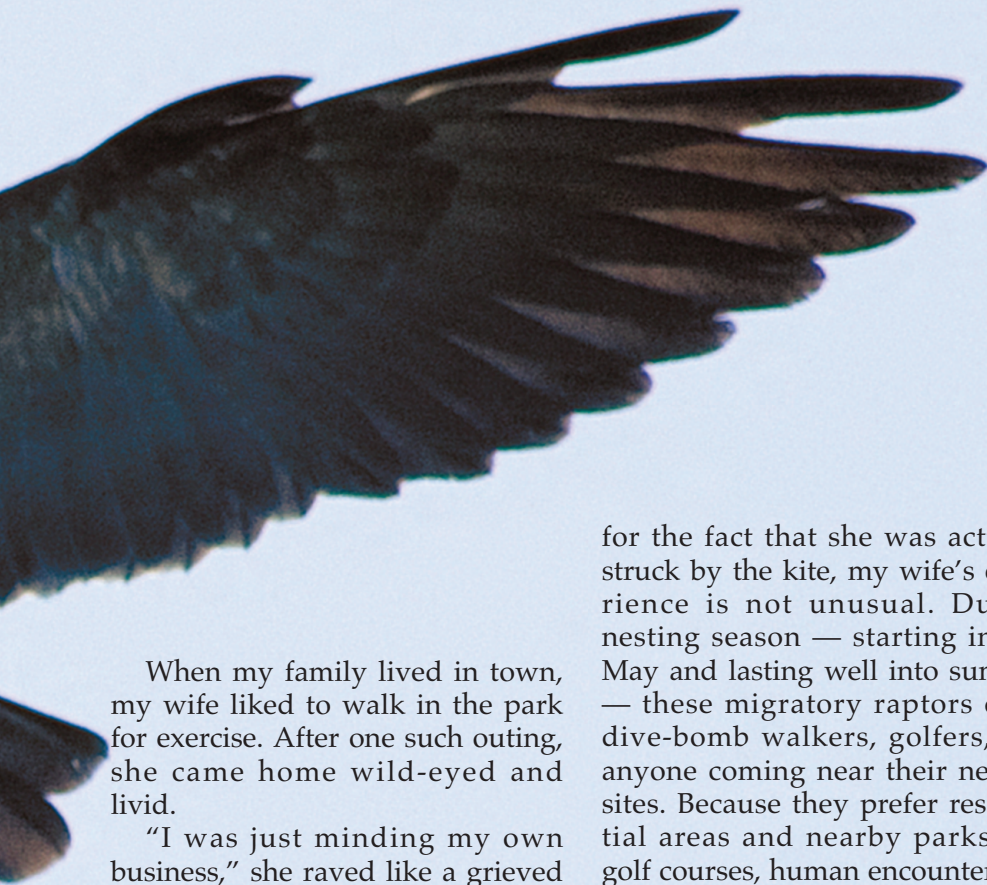


Mississippi Missile

by J. Mark Shoup
associate editor, Pratt

photos by Mike Blair
videographer, Pratt

The Mississippi kite is a common summer resident in Kansas. While its protective nesting behavior can be disconcerting, its aerial displays are fascinating and its voracious appetite for insects a boon to man.



When my family lived in town, my wife liked to walk in the park for exercise. After one such outing, she came home wild-eyed and livid.

"I was just minding my own business," she raved like a grieved party in a civil court dispute, "and this BIRD comes swooping down from behind me and knocked my bandanna off! I never saw it coming, but I can tell you right now, those darn things are a menace! Somebody needs to do something! What was that thing, anyway?"

I listened to her story with contained amusement. My wife can get her dander up, but I'd never seen her riled about wildlife before, and she was riled.

"It was just a Mississippi kite," I replied calmly, trying not to laugh. "It's nesting season, and it was just protecting its nest. It's just a bluff. They rarely actually hit someone."

"Well I wasn't bothering its nest, and it hit me!" She retorted. "I'm carrying a tennis racket next time I go walking. Somebody needs to do something about those darn birds."

No, she never really carried out the tennis-racket threat. And except

for the fact that she was actually struck by the kite, my wife's experience is not unusual. During nesting season — starting in late May and lasting well into summer — these migratory raptors often dive-bomb walkers, golfers, and anyone coming near their nesting sites. Because they prefer residential areas and nearby parks and golf courses, human encounters are common, usually displayed in the form of a near miss of several feet. Even the most minor contact with humans is rare. But kite numbers in Kansas have grown over the last 20 years, and with them, these interesting encounters.

Despite its disconcerting nesting habits, the Mississippi kite is a friend to man. Drifting above the Earth, the kite will suddenly sweep down, passing just above the ground to snatch a meal of grasshoppers, crickets, cicadas, beetles, and other insects. An opportunist like most predators, it will also take small snakes, lizards, and frogs. Toward evening, kites can often be seen circling high over town — 500 feet or more — then diving headlong almost to the ground to catch an insect. World-renowned ornithologist John James Audubon described the kite's hunting habits most eloquently:

"He glances toward the earth

with his fiery eye, sweeps along, now with the gentle breeze, now against it; seizes here and there the high-flying giddy bug, and allays his hunger without fatigue to wing or talon. Suddenly, he spies some creeping thing that changes like the chameleon from vivid green to dull brown to escape his notice. It is the red-throated panting lizard that has made its way to the highest branch of a tree in quest of food. Casting upwards a sidelong look of fear, it remains motionless, so well does it know the prowess of the bird of prey; but its caution is in vain; it has been perceived, its fate sealed, and the next moment it is swept away."

The kite often telegraphs its presence. While scouting from on high, the usually silent kite occasionally lets out a song much like the high-pitched "wolf whistle" common to the red-tailed hawk — in two notes, *WHE-when*.

Found throughout most of the southern half of Kansas and some sites in the north, kites usually arrive in early April and spend the summer here before migrating south as far as Argentina in September. During their stay, they mate and raise young. Both male and female kites work to build nests, which are usually flimsy clusters of coarse twigs lined with green leaves and assembled in trees 10 to more than 100 feet up. Nesting occurs in June and July, when two bluish-white eggs are laid and the young hatched. (Incubation period is 31 to 32 days.) It is during this time that kites are aggressive.

One of the most curious facts about kites is that although their numbers are growing, the bird is not a prolific breeder. Of its common clutch of two eggs a season, one of the eggs or hatchlings will commonly fall victim to storms or predators such as great horned owls or raccoons. The



While kites are common sights in the skies above communities and golf courses, your best chance for a close encounter will be if you venture too close to a tree where a pair is nesting. Like it or not, you have to admire the kite's ferocious defense of the nest territory.

secret of the kite's success appears to be its longevity; an adult bird will live, on average, seven years in the wild. A pair will often reuse a nest from the previous mating season.

The great ornithologist Arthur Cleveland Bent (1866-1954), in his book *Life Histories of North American Birds of Prey*, presents a fascinating description of kite nest building, written by fellow birder Albert F. Ganier:

"On looking up, I was surprised to find them soaring high in the air, apparently with nothing more upon their mind than to satisfy their appetites. Suddenly, one of them remained stationary for a second, then with half-closed

wings came swift as an arrow down through the trees and reappeared above my head with an oak twig in his talons; wheeling, he sailed swiftly upward to a crotch in a gum tree, which showed a bunch of sticks, the beginning of a nest. Only for a moment did he remain; then, dropping over one side of the nest, he sailed upward and rejoined his mate.

"For over an hour and a half I lay there and watched them slowly constructing their nest; both birds worked, darting in among the trees as on the first occasion, and reappearing with either a twig or spray of green leaves. At last, as the midday hour

began to cast short shadows, one of the birds perched on the edge of the nest, while its mate lit on the topmost branch of a cottonwood tree some 200 yards away."

Regarding care for the young, Ganier continues: "I soon made out the form of a young bird on the edge of [the nest], looking out among trees and spreading its wings as though impatient to be free. While still looking, a shadow glided through the trees, and an old bird lit on the edge of the nest with something in her beak; slowly, the young bird turned to receive its food and then assumed its old position. The parent bird lingered but a minute, then glided away as silently as she had come."

Kites are named for their ability to hang or circle in the air as if tied to a string. This behavior is most dramatic in September, when the birds stage before their migratory journey south. During this time, dozens of kites may be seen resting on power lines and in trees during part of the day, then circling high above Earth on warm air currents called thermals. This behavior may continue for several days before conditions are right for the thermal swirl to morph into a southward migration. Weather and group numbers may both be triggers, but when the time is right, these birds that seemed so plentiful during summer are suddenly nowhere to be found.

With smooth, slate-gray back and wing feathering, pale ash breast and head, and piercing red eyes, adult kites are striking when seen up close. Black tail and yellow legs add to the dramatic apparition of this relatively small raptor, which weighs only 7 to 12 ounces (females larger than males) but has a wingspan of 34-37 inches. Juvenile birds display the same basic colors but are streaked and mottled brown. They may retain this coloration as long as a year, sometimes mating in juvenile colors the year after hatching.

Once rare in Kansas, kites are now common. According to *Birds In Kansas*, by Max C. Thompson and Charles Ely, the "Mississippi kite is a common summer resident in southwestern and south-central Kansas. It occurs casually and occasionally breeds north and east to Phillips and Wyandotte counties."

Considering its name, you'd think this bird would be common in the south, as well, but such is not the case. At least in Tennessee. Since the early 1980s, KDWP has had an ongoing agreement with the Tennessee Wildlife Resources



Kites float high above earth hunting insects, then fold their wings and dive like a rocket. Flying insects are often caught in mid-air, while other prey are caught on the ground.

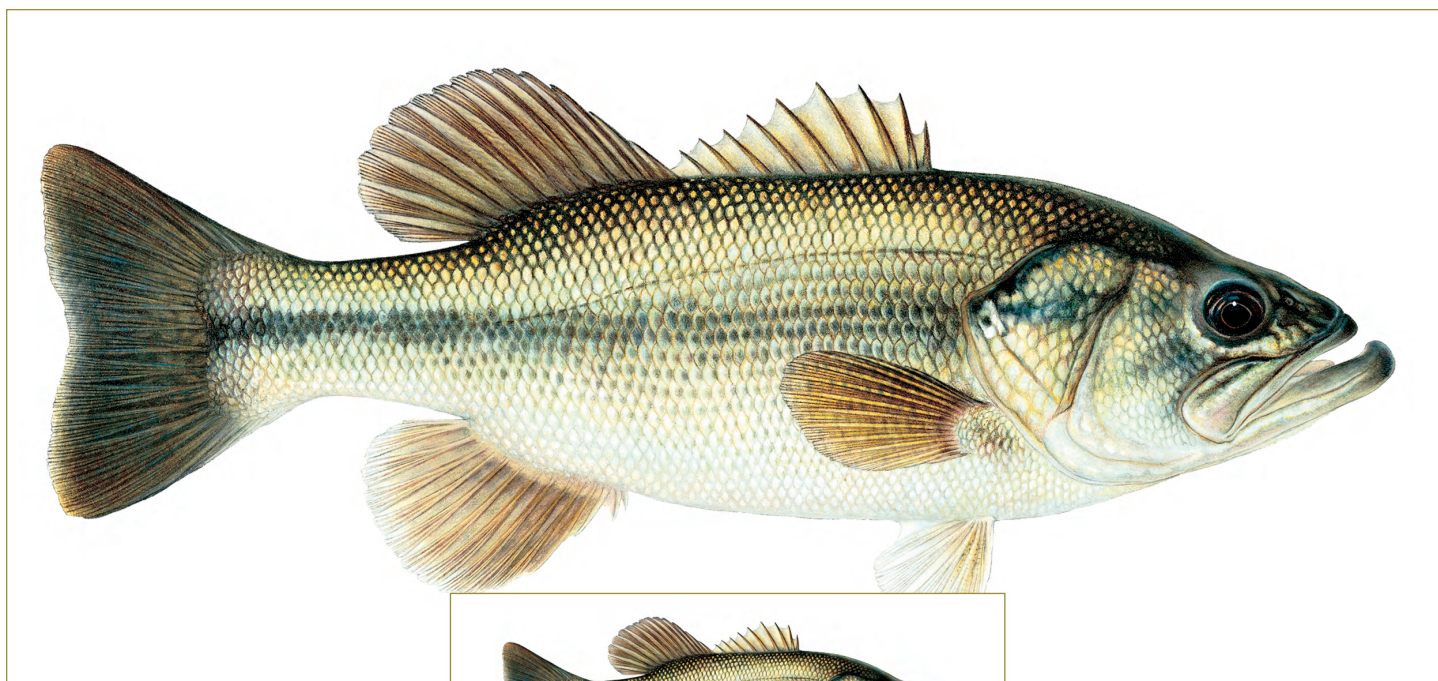
Agency (TWRA) to help restore the kite to a region of the country where it was once plentiful.

"In 1983, we began capturing a few kites that folks considered a problem and transplanted them to Tennessee," says KDWP wildlife diversity coordinator Ken Brunson. "While helping us deal with complaints about a few birds in Kansas, the program has helped bring the kite back to some of its former range. Nearly 300 birds were transplanted to Tennessee from 1983 through 2001. The program has slowed some now, but most years, we send 20 or so birds down there."

As much as my wife would like to play tennis with them, Mississippi kites are protected by federal and state laws, so it is illegal to harm or harass the birds. If you really want to avoid this bird, steer clear of nest sites in June and July. If this is not possible, a few precautions can usually prevent trouble. Wear a hat to prevent scratches, and watch for

birds when crossing their territories. Keep eye contact with a diving kite, and it will pass harmlessly. Pay particular attention from behind because the birds will attempt to dive from that direction. In the off chance that a bird actually makes contact, it will be little more than a bop on the back of your head, like Agent Gibbs' attention-getting technique in the TV series NCIS. Aggravating but not dangerous.

After young have left the nest, peace will return to your favorite neighborhood park. In the meantime, enjoy the show that kites provide while gliding on the wind, hunting, and yes, protecting their young. But next time you take a stroll in kite nesting territory, leave the tennis racket behind and take a camera. You'll bring home something more exciting to talk about than a surprise tap on the back of your head. ♡



by Mike Miller
editor, Pratt



illustration by Joseph Tomelleri

Fooling Mother Nature

“It’s not nice to fool Mother Nature.” If you are old enough to have watched TV in the sixties, you probably remember that Chiffon Margarine commercial. This is a story about just that – fooling Mother Nature — only as far as largemouth bass are concerned, though. So far, Mother Nature doesn’t appear to be offended. Meade Hatchery biologists Jason Vajnar and Josh Jagels have yet to be struck by lightning, and the ruse appears to be working. If the project succeeds as hoped, Kansas bass anglers will be the beneficiaries.

The largemouth bass is arguably the most popular sport fish in the U.S. Just watch television fishing shows on ESPN some morning if you don’t believe me. Bass fishing is as American as apple pie. Even though Kansas

waters feature world-class catfish and crappie populations, anglers still select largemouth bass as their favorite.

We’re fortunate to have 24 large reservoirs around the state, but few of them provide consistent largemouth bass fishing opportunities. Fishery managers have struggled for years to maintain bass populations in reservoirs, but in most cases, it’s been a futile battle.

Kansas anglers catch plenty of largemouth bass, but most come from the tens-of-thousands of farm ponds and small lakes that dot the state. We’ve had glimpses of what big reservoir bass fishing can be, nearly always when the reservoirs were new.

When the reservoirs, built for flood control and water supply, first filled, wooded draws, weedy

farm fields and grasslands were inundated. Fish populations exploded in this rich habitat, and largemouth bass flourished and grew quickly. Bass fishing was exceptional for five or six years. But as the reservoirs aged and flood control management practices were adhered to, bass populations dwindled – in almost every case. Periodically, bass populations make comebacks when lakes refill after suffering low levels during drought. The new-lake conditions are perfect for largemouth bass spawning, survival and growth. But within a few years of normal levels, the largemouths fade away.

Why? Fisheries managers have struggled for years to identify the primary limiting factor for bass in aging reservoirs. The first solution was to stock more largemouth

bass, and biologists did that. However, in most cases, stocking more fish didn't have the desired effect.

Biologists continued to look for solutions and determined that aquatic vegetation is a key missing ingredient in most reservoirs. Aquatic vegetation, so prevalent in farm ponds and small lakes, is usually absent from large reservoirs. Widely fluctuating lake levels, turbidity due to runoff and rough fish, and heavy wave action in most reservoirs often prevents aquatic vegetation from surviving. Aquatic vegetation is important for largemouth bass as a nursery – a place where recently spawned bass can avoid predators and feed. Vegetation harbors insect larvae, minnows and panfish species that are important food sources for largemouth bass. Biologists have transplanted vegetation and even fenced off coves in attempts to re-establish vegetation, but results



Fisheries staff from across the state traveled to the Meade Hatchery to assist in the construction of the raceways and fish house equipment prior to the first early spawn effort.

were limited.

Through sampling efforts, biologists learned that even when there are good natural spawns, few young-of-the-year largemouths survive their first winter. The problem: insufficient forage. Gizzard shad are the main food

supply for predatory reservoir fish, including largemouth bass. But gizzard shad spawn earlier in the spring than largemouth bass, so young-of-year gizzard shad are often too big by the time largemouth young need to be feeding on them. Forage isn't a problem in ponds and small lakes because bluegill are the main forage fish, and they spawn later than largemouths, providing ideally-sized food throughout the summer.

So that's where fooling Mother Nature comes in. Hatchery biologists Vajnar and Jagels set out to trick largemouth bass into spawning in early April rather than May. It's new ground. Only hatchery staff in Florida had successfully induced largemouths to spawn early. The Meade staff learned what they could from the Florida program.

During the winter of 2009, hatchery staff from the other three state hatcheries converged on the small Meade facility to assist in constructing and plumbing tanks in the Meade fish house. The idea was to create an indoor environment where water temperature and photoperiod could be controlled, tricking the bass into thinking it was May and time to



Using staff to build and plumb tanks held costs down and allowed equipment to be customized to the hatchery. Here fish management specialist Kyle Austin assists Pratt Hatchery staff member Duane Panek building one of the tanks.



Josh Jagels photo

Holding tanks were covered so that light periods could be modified, convincing the fish that it was May rather than April. Water temperature was also carefully adjusted.

spawn. Spring 2009 was a learning experience. It turns out that there's a lot more to fooling Mother Nature than warming the water and leaving the lights on.

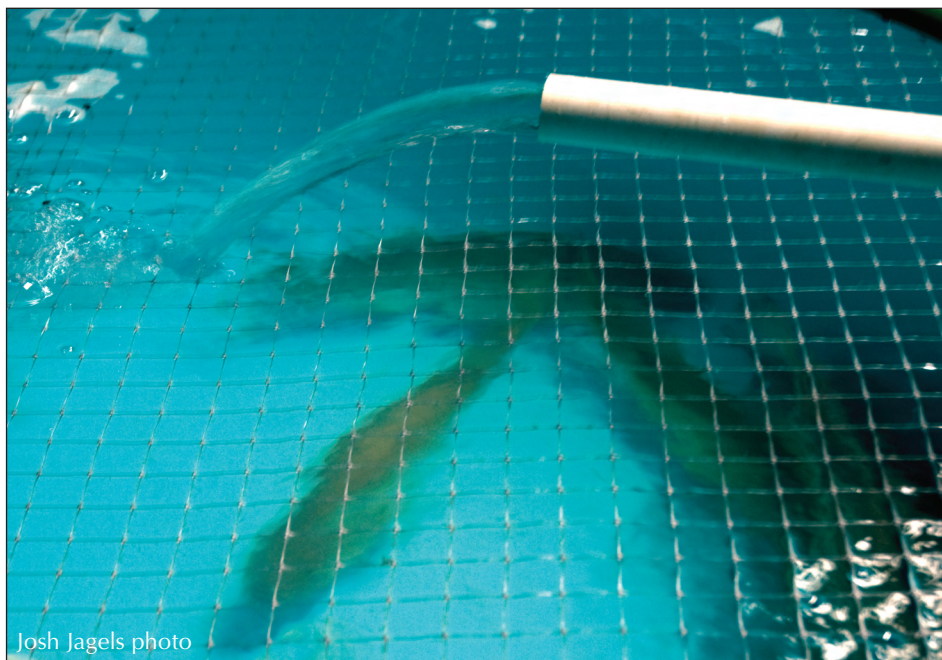
Vajnar and Jagels were frustrated in their first attempt, but they learned that tank shape and substrate color were critical. They also learned that they needed to back up the winter cycle of the bass. For the second attempt, bass were taken out of the hatchery ponds outdoors and brought into the indoor tanks in November 2009. Water temperature and lighting was adjusted to mimic winter – 40-degree water and 10 hours of light followed by 14 hours of dark. On March 11, the lighting was changed to 14 hours of light and 10 hours of dark to replicate the diurnal cycle of May. The water was warmed to 68-70 degrees, then on March 25, it was warmed to between 70-72 degrees. Until this point, the male and female bass had been kept in separate raceways. On March 25, the sexes were put into the same race-

ways but kept separated by a screen. Bass could then react to the pheromones given off, allowing gonads to develop. On April 2, the screens were pulled and the sexes were allowed to mingle. Spawning mats (artificial nests) were placed

on April 9, and on April 14, the first spawns were collected.

When it was all said and done, the brood largemouths at Meade Hatchery produced nearly three-quarters of a million fry. To monitor initial stocking success, only two reservoirs were chosen for the first stockings. About half of the fry were stocked in Hillsdale Reservoir and half in Cedar Bluff Reservoir. A few were stocked into ponds at the Pratt Fish Hatchery, to monitor early growth rates. While we won't know if this is going to have the desired impact on reservoir largemouth bass fishing some time, the early spawn effort has been declared a success. It's a remarkable improvement over the first effort in 2009.

What did the biologists learn? The devil is in the details for one thing. Largemouth bass didn't like being in round tanks, and they often attempted to jump out. Even after covering the small round tanks with netting, bass would attempt to jump out, often becoming injured or abraded by the net cover. Long raceway-like



Josh Jagels photo

The first tanks were painted pool blue, copying tanks used in a Texas bass spawning effort. After further research, staff learned that the a dark gray color was necessary.

tanks were the answer, and round tanks are no longer used to acclimate bass prior to spawning.

The spawning mats are made from a commercially produced product called Spawn-tex. It's constructed of natural coconut fibers with a latex binder on a polyester net backing. The spawning mat holds the eggs for incubation, but this year, 1 ½-inch suction cups were attached to the bottom to keep them in place.

And substrate color? It seemed to make a difference. Vajnar had experience working with Texas' Share A Lunker program, and while he was there, the Texas hatchery tanks were gel-coated pool blue.

"Before we got started, I had made several phone calls to people I worked with while I was in Texas asking them what I needed for our facility. The color of the tanks was never brought up



This photograph of one of the early spawned bass stocked into a Pratt Hatchery pond was taken in early May, when bass spawned in the wild would have only been tiny fry. The headstart is impressive.

until we were already in production phase here," Vajnar remembered.

Frustrated by a lack of results in the first early-spawn attempt, Vajnar called Juan Martinez, who is the biologist in charge of the Texas largemouth bass spawning program.

"He asked me about the color of our tanks, and I told him they were the same as theirs, pool blue. Then he told me that they had changed their tank color to dark gray. This color wasn't so reflec-

tive of light and calmed the fish down much more than the blue did. They also started getting spawns from their fish after painting the tanks."

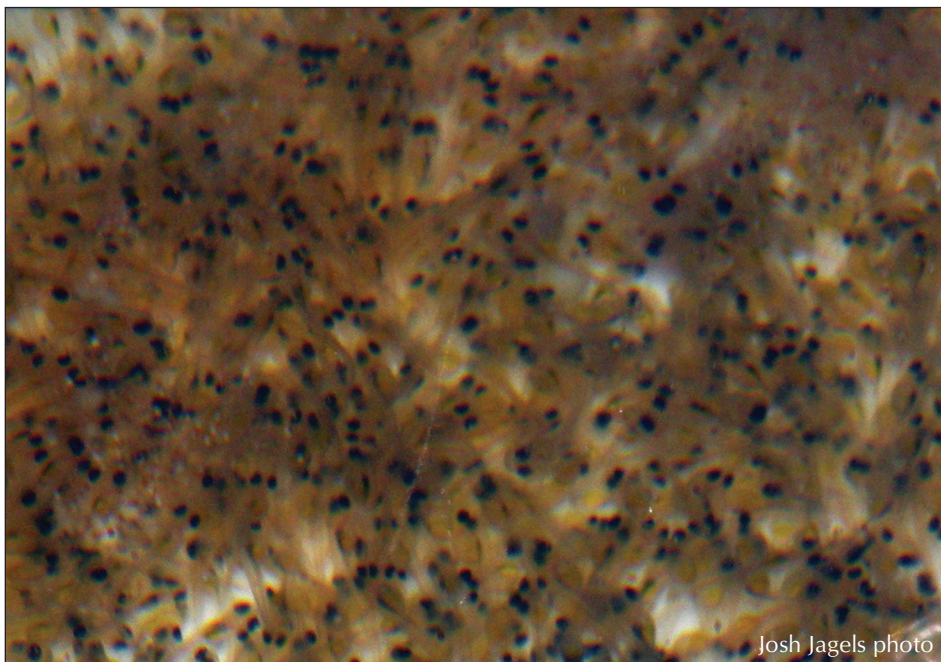
While it was too late for the 2009 spawn, staff lined the tanks with a black plastic and noticed an immediate change in the bass' behavior.

"When the raceways were blue, bass would swim as fast as they could away from you if you would go look in the raceway," Vajnar said. "Once the black plastic was put in, you could walk up to the tank, and the fish would just stay where they were. Before this year's attempt, we painted both of our raceways with a non-toxic epoxy dark gray paint."

Water quality was also monitored carefully this spring. Staff watched levels of ammonia and un-ionized ammonia carefully, and whenever set parameters were exceeded, they made adjustments. The water heating system was also improved so that the temperature didn't fall during the night.

"Our correspondence with Michael Mathews at the Florida Bass Conservation Center in Florida probably helped us as much as anything," Vajnar said. "He helped us tweak our methods and taught us a great deal about early spawning of largemouth bass."

So Vajnar and Jagels successfully fooled Mother Nature by producing more than 700,000 largemouth bass well ahead of schedule. Now we must depend on Mother Nature. Sampling this fall will tell biologists if the Meade bass are large and robust enough to survive this winter. The success of this effort won't be fully realized for several years. Stay tuned. ♡



Newly-hatched fry writhe through a cluster of eggs. The first spawn were collected April 14.



Andale High School Outdoor Club

text and photo by Les Grauberger,
Andale

Have you ever known that you should be doing something and procrastinated? Have you ever known that if you didn't do that something, that some day you and your children might not have the opportunity do that something. The "Pass It On" slogan kept tugging at me.

That's what has been poking at my mind for several years, and finally last spring I called a handful of students into my office and presented my idea about an Outdoor Club. I asked them if they thought that there would be support for that at Andale High School and the Renwick School District. They all thought it was a great idea and said, "Let's get 'er done."

Having never traveled this trail before, and since I wasn't familiar with other schools that had something like this, I went to the

internet. I found some school clubs, but most were usually affiliated with groups such as 4-H. I found some good club rules and bylaws from clubs with web pages, picked out the parts I felt were relative to our needs, typed them up, and presented my idea to the principal. He was receptive but approved the club with some trepidation.

I asked a fellow colleague to help with the program along with a couple of my trap shooting buddies. They all accepted readily. The first meeting to determine interest was called in the latter part of last August to determine the extent of interest. As one teacher later told me, it looked like the whole school was headed to my room; there was standing room only. After the dust cleared, we had 75 members in a school of

450 students. We elected officers and created a calendar of events for the year. Events included trap shooting, hunting, fishing, reloading and a cookout to enjoy our rewards of the field.

As the word spread about the club, many of my friends and the parents of the kids were very generous in helping support our efforts. Several donated shells, targets, hunting/fishing grounds, and yes, even money. We sponsored a turkey shoot in the spring for our fund raising activity. One of the parents donated an entire beef for the grand prize. The local locker processed it at a greatly reduced price; the local VFW donated the clay targets; another parent donated all the food we sold at the shoot; and the patrons were excited about the program and donated generously.

There are always kids who have the opportunity to hunt and fish, but there are many more who don't and would like to. Those were the ones who we really wanted to draft into the club. We also wanted those who are avid outdoors people to help teach the "newbies" and get the feel for "passing it on." Sponsoring a fall and spring trap league was the easiest way to get all involved in the shooting sports, help them improve their shooting skills and generate immediate interest. For the finale in the fall trap league, we had more than 30 kids at the shoot.

I have been in the teaching profession for more than 30 years and have had many rewarding memories, but without a doubt, this has been the most rewarding thing that I have ever been involved in. I hope this spurs some others to take the initiative to get involved and help pass along this lifelong hobby so that we may preserve our heritage and the joy of outdoor sporting. ♡

Family Fishing

by Tina McFerrin

Fisheries and Wildlife Division, Pratt

There is no better bass bait than natural-colored plastic worms. At least that's what Grandpa always said. I don't remember him fishing with anything else.

Grandpa passed away, but the memories will last. When I was young, I spent several weeks with my grandparents each summer. Almost every evening after they closed up shop, we fished private watershed ponds.

The last time I was privileged to fish with him, he was a little unsteady getting in to the small aluminum boat. It was a cool, calm June morning, but we started early, knowing it would be warm soon.

The water was crystal clear, and I loved seeing the bluegill and small bass scatter as we launched the boat. It seemed like every cast resulted in a strike, and most resulted in a catch. I remember watching bass follow my worm all the way to the boat, sometimes gabbing it only inches away, which always startled me.

Grandpa and I caught a nice mess of fish that day. We enjoyed a beautiful day even though we had to fend off a snake that swam across the pond right to the boat. I'm not sure if it was trying to get into the boat, but it was definitely an uninvited guest! Grandpa and I kept it at bay with an oar until it finally gave up and slowly disappeared in to the cattails.

Last summer, I had the chance to spend a similar day with my dad. We hit a favorite pond, used an aluminum boat and fortunately didn't have to fend off any snakes! What a day we had!

It was July and promised to be hot by afternoon, so we hit the water early. The water was so still, it perfectly reflected the landscape like a mirror. That day I experimented with different colored plastic worms, but when Dad started catching big bass with a certain color (purple with a curly black tail), I quickly copied and soon found success. Dad ran the trolling motor, and it seemed like every time he stopped reeling to adjust our direction or speed, he would catch a fish. And true to my tradition of copying, I would stop reeling, let the worm settle a little and then begin retrieving again. It worked.

We caught huge bass, one after the other, and our laughter broke the stillness as bass jumped to toss the hook. We lost a few, but that's okay because the ones that got away can be as big as you want when you tell the story later.



We joked about who had landed the most and the largest fish, and I did not want the day to end. It was simply another wonderful experience with my favorite outdoor partner, my Dad.

Dad patiently passed on his love for fishing to my kids with the help of my husband (my other favorite outdoor partner). Like teaching a kid to hunt, teaching a youngster to fish doesn't allow much quality fishing time for the teacher. There's no telling how many hooks we've baited with worms, especially for our daughter because little girls don't touch "icky" things.

Today, my family takes every opportunity to fish at Dad's ponds. Sometimes we use a boat, but usually we simply work our way around the shoreline. Once you find that honey hole, it's amazing how quickly you become a magnet to the other fishermen. It warms my heart to see my kids having a wonderful time together, bonding over the simple act of fishing, and playfully fussing with each other over who has caught the largest fish. The smiles and "look at what I caught" moments are forever embedded in my mind and heart. I could never thank Grandpa and Dad enough for passing the fishing heritage on to us.

I can't imagine not spending time outdoors as a family. While my husband was the one who introduced me to deer hunting, I introduced him to bass fishing. I know he still remembers the look on my face when I shot my first deer, and I certainly remember the look on his face the first time he hooked a big largemouth bass.

Brad Paisley has a country hit titled "I'm Gonna Miss Her," about a husband who chooses fishing over his wife. My response? Wives, don't get mad as your husband heads out the door to go fishing again — grab a pole and tag along. You'll probably out fish him! ♡



Get 'em Outside

text and photos by Bill Graham
Platte City, MO

Research is showing that spending time outdoors — fishing, hunting, or just exploring a patch of woods — may be important to a child's healthy development.

Kirk Fisher, age 8, confidently tied a leadhead jig onto his line, threaded an earthworm onto the hook, and cast the bait into shallow water just beyond some weeds. Skills learned from a father and grandfather he now used on his own to plumb underwater mysteries at Johnson County's Kill Creek Park Lake, unaware that he's increasingly an exception regarding children being familiar with the outdoors.

"Fishing is my favorite sport," said Fisher, of Buhler. "The cool part is, when you're reeling one in, you don't know what it is until you see it."

Suddenly his rod bent, and he cranked a pan-sized channel catfish to the bank. He smiled and grappled it onto shore as Jocile

Fisher, his grandmother from Linwood, came from the shade of a picnic shelter house to help him put the fish on a stringer. She had kept a watchful eye on her grandson but let him fish off a point alone in the midday sun, fishing however he wished.

"We'll have quite a tale to tell your grandpa," she said.

But many families don't have outdoor traditions from which a child can learn self-reliance and experience nature. In fact, many kids today miss simple pleasures such as being close to trees, wildflowers or birds. This change is not healthy for children or nature's future, say many experts, including those who run outdoor skills programs that aim to reverse the trend.

"We're in such a climate-control

world," says Molly Postlewait, a naturalist at the Ernie Miller Nature Center in Olathe. "We have kids who don't know how to get hot and sweaty or wet from the rain, or that it's ok to get muddy."

For generations, only a screen door separated children from exploring nature outdoors in summer, whether romping along a creek, crawling into underbrush, lounging in a tree house, picking berries, or playing hide and seek in a grassy meadow. Fishing and hunting skills were often learned and polished in youth. Catching bluegill on a summer afternoon for many led to fishing as a life-time hobby and strong support for conservation. But today, cultural barriers exist between kids and nature. Plus, electronic entertain-

ment such as video games and the internet are powerful indoor allures for the young.

In the past two decades, children have become separated from nature like never before in mankind's history, says Richard Louv, a Kansas native and award-winning author of the book, "Last Child in the Woods, Saving Our Children From Nature-Deficit Disorder." Studies show that physical contact with nature boosts creativity, and improves decision making skills and psychological well being, according to Louv. A child's senses are fully stimulated in the adventuresome outdoors, and yet nature is calming for a child, too. The San Diego-based journalist and outdoor advocate grew up exploring wild places in the Kansas City area, including teenage years living in Johnson County near the Kansas River.

Today, many subdivisions are governed by neighborhood association rules that prohibit children from building homemade tree houses or stick forts in the woods. Brushy patches of trees, shrubs and native grasses are taboo and replaced by carefully mowed grass. Also, parents are afraid to let children ride bicycles to parks or roam a neighborhood's natural areas because they're concerned about threats ranging from insects to stranger danger. When both parents hold jobs, children often spend summer days in a crowded day care environment with the same regimented existence they experience at school.

For children at home, electronics are a common babysitter, rather than children using their imagination and inventiveness to play outdoors.

"As the young spend less and less of their lives in natural surroundings," Louv writes, "their senses narrow, physiologically



A child's senses are fully stimulated in the outdoors, but it has a calming effect, as well. Odds are this young girl will remember this day for the rest of her life.

and psychologically, and this reduces the richness of human experience."

While some studies show that just as children need adequate nutrition and sleep for good health, Louv says, they may also need adequate contact with nature. And nature needs them.

"How the young respond to nature, and how they raise their own children, will shape the configurations and conditions of our cities, homes – our daily lives," he writes.

The issue is complex. But what's generally needed, he says, is for parents, relatives, trusted friends and community organizations to create more outdoor experiences for children. Seemingly simple play to an adult can be profound to a child.

The Ernie Miller Nature Center is among several programs in Kansas that teach day-campers skills such as swimming, archery, BB gun shooting, fishing and how to paddle a kayak or canoe. But a favorite for the children at the center is the "fort woods free play area," a patch of red cedar, Osage

orange and hardwood trees near the center's parking. At day's end, the children have time to play however they wish in the fort woods. Some sit quietly at their favorite hideaway spots, while others scurry about building, tearing down and rebuilding forts and lean-to shelters with sticks, logs and rocks dragged from adjoining woods.

"It's fun, and it's teamwork," says one lad dragging a timber. "I like playing out in the wild."

Camp counselors watch quietly, making sure there is no conflict or unsafe construction. But otherwise, they let the kids choose their roles and pace in the shady greenery.

"It's unstructured play time with safety and supervision close at hand, but we're not hovering over them," Postlewait says.

The fort play area evolved from an earlier setting at the center called Turtle Island. Parents would come to center counselors and ask to see the Turtle Island they'd heard so much about from their kids. The island was simply sand piled under a shade tree, but


KANSAS CHILDREN'S

Outdoor

Bill of Rights

Every child should have the opportunity to:

- ✔ Walk in the footsteps of Kansas History
- ✔ Access a natural environment
- ✔ Camp under the stars
- ✔ Explore nature
- ✔ Learn to swim
- ✔ Play on a team
- ✔ Follow a trail
- ✔ Participate in the shooting sports
- ✔ Catch fish and harvest game
- ✔ Play in a safe environment



Former Gov. Sebelius created the Kansas Coalition for Children in Nature in 2009. The Coalition, along with the Kansas Recreation and Parks association and KDWP adopted the Kansas Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights.

magical to the children. There's no reason parents, day-care providers and neighborhoods can't create their own fort woods or Turtle Islands, Postlewait said.

Kids enjoy outdoor challenges and discoveries, especially older children. The center also has woodland and streamside trails to hike on, and the outdoor skills activities are held at nearby Johnson County parks, such as the Timber Ridge Adventure Center.

"One thing I love about canoeing," Postlewait says, "is that kids learn a lot about cause and effect with a paddle in their hands. You can't watch a video and learn canoeing. You have to be the person in the canoe."

Counselors point out trees, wildflowers, bugs, and critters. There are "ah-ha" moments when a child sees something for the first time or understands something

new about nature's life cycles.

"They may not remember all the names of the plants," Postlewait says, "but they'll remember how they felt when they saw it, or how they felt when they caught their first fish, or how the mud felt between their toes."

Lysa Holladay as a child went fishing only one time, on a Girl Scout outing. But she loved it. In college, she saw another student carrying a fishing rod and talked him into taking her, too. Now she's the adventure program coordinator for the Johnson County Park and Recreation District. On this day, she was teaching youth how to fish at a Lenexa city park lake.

"If I can do it, anybody can," Holladay joked.

Adults and children can learn to fish together, especially in late

spring, summer and early fall when fish such as bluegill and small bass cruise water close to shore. Holladay recommends avoiding cheap kiddie rods with cartoon characters. Instead, spend a few more bucks, say \$15 to \$30, for spincasting reels on rods five to six feet long. Better equipment avoids tangles and poor casting that can discourage young fishermen.

Tie a small hook on the line, crimp a sinker a foot or so above, place a bobber above the rig because children enjoy watching them, and it makes it easier for them to detect strikes and hook fish. Take longnose pliers to help unhook fish. "They can use sweet corn kernels or pieces of hot dogs for bait if they don't want to use the squirmy earthworms," Holladay said. "That's what we use all the time, and we catch fish."

Sometimes the youth in her classes "stick fish," tying the same hook, sinker, bobber and bait combo onto a stick and dropping the bait into the water.

"They always enjoy that," she said, "and we catch fish."

State parks in Kansas offer public access to fishable lakes and streams. Many have ponds open



Getting wet and dirty, looking for frogs and fishing were natural activities just a generation ago. However, fewer of today's children are getting these outdoor opportunities.

only to youth anglers. The KDWP website gives information on fishing in the state in general, including updates on what fish are biting where.

The KDWP Urban Fishing Program regularly stocks catchable-sized fish in urban lakes, a plus for young angler success. Click on a link on the right of the "Fishing" page to get a list of the lakes stocked.

Also, fishing clinics are sometimes offered in spring or early summer for youngsters at state parks or other public waters by KDWP and conservation groups. Check the fishing website or individual park calendars. County and city parks throughout Kansas also offer fishing programs and nature programs.

Throughout this summer and especially this fall, KDWP's Pass It On program will sponsor a variety of youth outdoor skills programs and special hunts. The outdoor skills programs often feature basic wingshooting instruction, and some will offer archery and pellet gun shooting. Special youth hunts will range from youth-only dove fields on public lands to deer, duck and upland bird hunts during the special youth seasons. Special events and hunts are often organized by KDWP area managers, biologists and law enforcement officers. Many events are limited to how many youth can participate, and organizers will advertise locally for applicants. Watch the KDWP website news and local newspapers for announcements.

Many Hunter Education Program classes conducted this summer and fall will be internet-assisted, meaning students complete several hours of internet instruction prior to a field day. The field day keeps kids outside and includes trail walk instruction, gun handling and live-fire wingshooting. Youth must be 11 to

Some key tips, Holladay says:

- Be extra safe with fish hooks, putting them in rod eyelets and tightening the line when not in use.
- Take children fishing at a time and place so they will be successful. Don't be afraid to ask for advice from friends or other anglers at the lake or river.
- Make each fishing trip fun. Let kids explore and play if the fish are not biting. Point out things in nature such as frogs or the sound of a woodpecker chipping away on a tree.
- Set aside an hour or two at least, don't rush things. Enjoy time spent with a child.
- Bring plenty of patience. A parent may not have much time for their own fishing while helping a child. But with time, the child will learn to handle bait, tangles and fish.


be certified, and the course is a great way to introduce them to basic hunting information.

Just getting outdoors with children and teenagers is the key step. After that, a child's curiosity and interests can lead the way. For example, a family or supervising adult could pick a state park to visit in spring. Find a pretty spot near a lake, stream or trail to hold a picnic, perhaps do some fishing or morel mushroom hunting, or simply let the children explore their surroundings. Then go back to the exact same spot in summer, autumn and winter to see the changes, before finally returning again in the spring.

"In the fall and winter, nature reveals some of those secrets that you don't see at other times of the year," says Bill McGowan, outdoor recreation supervisor at Ernie Miller.

Children gain confidence, self-reliance and peace of mind when they learn to be comfortable seeking out those

surprises and secrets in nature.

"When kids are outdoors, it resets their brains," Postlewait says. "Studies show it's such a healthy thing for kids to be outside, not just physically, but mentally as well." 



Just getting kids outdoors is the key. After that, nature takes over.

10,000 Miles For Free Fishing

text and photos by
Jeff Vordermark
Leavenworth



Colonel (retired) Jeff Vordermark is an Assistant Professor at the United States Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth. A Kansas native, he returned upon retirement to take advantage of the outdoors opportunities in the Sunflower State. His retirement goal is to never miss another opening day.

I have discovered that fishing has global appeal — it does not seem to matter what country or culture you are from. Having spent more than a decade overseas serving in the Army, I can confirm a notable convergence of interests from folks the world over when it comes to angling. Now that I'm retired, one of the joys of teaching at the United States Army Command and General Staff College at Fort

Leavenworth is having the opportunity to introduce foreign students and their families to American lifestyle and culture, including hunting and fishing mid-America style. In June of 2009, I encouraged two international students to bring their boys along on a little fishing excursion and take advantage of Kansas's annual Free Fishing Days. My son Seth and his high school friend Jordan also accompanied us.

One of my U.S. students was renting a house in town, which was near a small lake. She was able to obtain access for us to fish, and we planned to assault the objective bright and early on 6 June. Yudi, my Indonesian student, brought along his oldest boy Edvan, 10, while Valerio, from Brazil, was interested in ensuring that both his sons, Carlos, age 6, and Jonatas, age 9, had an opportunity to participate.

Everyone (eight, including my son and his friend) showed up on time that morning and trekked through the tall grass to the lake. An added bonus was the opportunity to commune with some friendly horses en route. After the provision of a few carrots, the horses left us alone to enjoy the fishing.

Despite breezy conditions and some light showers, the boys were all business. The lake was clear and well-stocked with fish the anglers could see, so they were anxious to fish. I found all my young charges to be apt students that morning, as eager and excited about fishing as any boys I've ever seen. The first order of business, however, was getting everyone chigger-proofed. I figured a bad case of chiggers would be a little more of an introduction to the local fishing experience than was really necessary. (Twenty-seven years of Army life taught me that misery was something to be avoided if and when you can.) Once they were rigged up and familiar with the basic operation of a spin-casting rod, the remainder of my morning was spent baiting hooks, releasing fish, explaining what exactly they had just caught, and where to cast next. My son Seth proved to be an able assistant in this regard, lending a hand to help the younger kids out until they got the hang of it.

Carlos, the youngest angler, was just happy to admire the fish in hand as he caught them, while the older boys approached the entire affair with an earnest air. There was not much whooping and hollering when fish were caught, but they made sure you saw their fish once they landed them.

Although there were good numbers of bass in the lake, they were not very accommodating that day, and none of any size

was caught. All the boys ended up catching an admirable number of panfish, however. The green sunfish proved active and easy to catch and as a bonus, put up a nice fight. They outnumbered the bluegill, but there were plenty of those to be had, as well. The biggest went into the bucket for the obligatory fish fry later.

Not knowing what else might be in the lake, I had one rod baited with liver in the event some eating-sized catfish were in there. With all the other activity, I had managed to forget about that particular rod. Around mid-morning, Edvan very politely informed me that the line on it was moving. He was not sure what to do about that, especially since he already

had a rod in hand and was under strict instructions to watch his own bobber. I was able to tighten the line and successfully set the hook on whatever was playing around with the bait, sincerely hoping it was not a turtle. Because I was not expecting anything of size in this small lake, I handed the pulsing rod to one of the boys, who gave me a marvelous "really, you will let me do this" look before an epic struggle ensued. Epic, that is, if you have never fished before in your life and the fish on the other end winds up being bigger than your little brother.

Edvan and Jonatas were not shy about grabbing the rod when offered and took turns fighting



The author's son Seth assists Jonatas, from Brazil, with a largemouth bass. Fishing was a common connecting thread between people from different corners of the world.

the fish while the adults cheered them on. Although they had a hard time understanding the necessity of keeping the rod tip up and using the leverage the rod provides, eventually they got it and were pumping steadily, attempting to make headway on the monster while the drag sang a happy tune.

I had no idea what was actually on the other end of the line until Edvan had it fairly close to shore, and a large head broke the surface. What happened next was fit for a cartoon. The fish did not like the sight of us and made an immediate, strong surge for deep water. Edvan, caught staring in disbelief instead of keeping the pressure on, unwittingly lowered the rod and was jerked off balance in the same direction the fish was now headed. He almost followed the fish into the lake! Belt loops are a wonderfully useful and, at times, multi-functional thing. I was fortunate to be able to snatch hold of one and kept him from a muddy and cer-



Yudi, from Indonesia, poses with the flathead catfish caught with a team effort.

tainly embarrassing experience.

When they finally showed the fish who was boss and managed to crank it into shallow water, we hoisted a 48-inch flathead catfish — surely top predator in this small body of water. Just goes to show that you never know what

may be on the other end of that line. The boys were thrilled, and their dads were in awe at the size of the fish and role their boys played in landing it. Were they proud papas? You bet. “I came 10,000 miles for this!” Yudi exclaimed. “Awesome!”

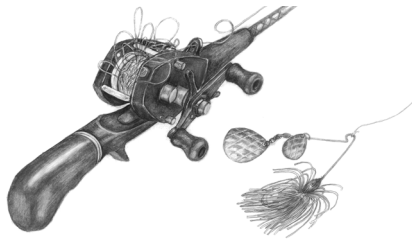
Following photos and the opportunity to touch and appreciate this fish, we released it. I did notice after all this excitement that the boys stood a little farther away from the water and closer to Dad.

Later in the morning, my wife came by with a fresh batch of Rice Crispy treats, a truly American delight that none of them had experienced before. She was impressed by the big fish story, secretly relieved that the flathead was not available to greet her personally and disappointed that all her offerings were not consumed before she left. To their credit, the boys were still busy doing some serious catching and were not to be distracted.

We finished the day off with a fish fry. I had plenty of help from three sets of fascinated eyes while I filleted the fish. If I had any concerns about the boys being squeamish, they were resolved quickly; I had their full attention until the last fish was finished. Carlos, the “small fry” at the event, surprised us all by making very short work of four large helpings of fish and proclaimed it was the best fish ever. It was certainly a fitting way to end a great day. Not only did everyone have fun and enjoy a good meal to boot, but international bonds were strengthened, memories about a big one that didn’t get away were made, and maybe, just maybe, I helped to recruit some new anglers to the sport. I’m looking forward to the next time I can have a day like this one. ♡



The day of fishing was capped off with a fish fry — a perfect ending for a perfect day. The author wanted his friends to enjoy the full experience of American fishing.



Backlash

by Mike Miller

When Are We Going Fishing?

When he was 5 years old, the boy couldn't get a better surprise than to be told he was spending the night with Granddad and Grandma. It was surely a nice break for Mom and Dad, since he was an active 5-year-old who spent every waking minute outside if possible. And with a two-year-old sister, Mom kept on the run during the day.

Granddad and Grandma always planned a full schedule, and going fishing was usually on it. Just the thought of an impending fishing trip kept the boy occupied and in good spirits. Granddad and Grandma had always lived close to the land, and they passed on that love to the boy. Both grew up in rural southcentral Kansas during the depression and the Dirty Thirties. They'd weathered the tough times of World War II, moving around to find work. Naturally, they were frugal, and they stayed connected to the land, even though they lived in Denver, Colo. at this stage of their lives. Fortunately, it was a short drive to the mountains – back to the land.

Recently, the man was reminiscing about fishing with Granddad, but he was having a tough time bringing up images of catching fish. Time spent with Granddad and Grandma always included much more than fishing. Granddad had a shop in the basement and usually three or four projects to work on. The boy followed him around like a puppy. There was a connection between them, and nothing was more fun for the boy than hanging out with Granddad. Even so, fishing was on the boy's mind, and there's no doubt Granddad got more than a little tired of the question, "When are we going fishing?"

Digging for worms was a prerequisite to going fishing — a ritual as important as the fishing trip itself. And it also kept the boy's undivided attention for the hour or so it took. An added attraction of digging for worms was that their beloved dachshund, Katie, participated. The boy had to be fast, grabbing any worms that turned up in Granddad's spade before Katie could grab them. "You have to be quick," Granddad warned. "She'll see 'em before I do most of the time."

She didn't eat them, but the worms were worse for wear after she nipped them between her front teeth. It was all part of the fun, and the boy was duly

impressed with a dog that enjoyed digging for worms as much as he did.

Now, 45 years later, those are really good memories; they just don't include much fish catching. He can remember the places — sometimes a city lake just across town or a full day-trip to the mountains. The really special memories are those of spending the whole weekend in the camper near a remote mountain lake.

There are other vivid memories of helping Granddad repaint the light blue stripe on the little camp trailer. Like most of his grandparents' nonessentials, the camp trailer was purchased used and "fixed up." Small and unequipped by today's standard, the little camp trailer was sure better than a tent. He remembers helping Granddad paint "Numb Butt" on the transom of the little aluminum boat hanging in the garage. He didn't understand what that meant or why a boat needed a name, but he does remember Granddad's embarrassment when he realized he'd painted the words upside down – when the boat was lowered from the garage hangers and turned right-side-up.

The man remembers the smell of gas and oil from the little two-stroke "Wizard" 9.9 hp outboard motor. Even today, the smell of two-stroke exhaust gives the man flashbacks of fishing with Granddad and Grandma. It's a good smell.

Even though the boy was, and still is, obsessed with fishing, the fishing is only a small part of the memories. The man is beginning to understand that fishing was just the vehicle for the relationships forged with the people most special in his life. Fishing with Dad or Granddad, and family camping trips to the mountains, set the stage for a wholesome and healthy childhood.

The moral of the story is that worrying about whether or not you'll catch fish is a waste of time. I've heard the excuse too many times, and I've used it myself. But the real truth, especially if youngsters are involved, is that it doesn't matter. Catching fish will make the trip more enjoyable, but ultimately the fish will fade away quickly. The memory of going fishing, though, will be etched in a youngster's mind forever. ♡

