

KANSAS

Wildlife & Parks

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2010

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On Point

by Mike Hayden



Tallgrass Prairie Legacy

"It was a land belonging to grass, flowers, and sun, a new sort of land that was open to the sky, and trees and shadows shrank from it. For a long time, so did people."

-Writer, naturalist, and wildlife biologist
John Madson's description of the
tallgrass prairie before settlement.

On Page 16 of this issue, you'll read an outstanding, in-depth treatise about an extraordinary effort that led to the creation of our Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve. Associate editor Mark Shoup immerses the reader in this fascinating history that can actually be traced back to an idea expressed more than 100 years ago.

This history of individuals and organizations that worked to establish the preserve is as intriguing and fantastic as the tallgrass prairie itself, and it's time we recognized the value of both. I suppose it's human nature to take for granted things that are close to us. And I think many Kansans take the tallgrass prairie for granted. I will borrow a few facts from Shoup's article to make a point. Before settlement, there were 160 million acres of tallgrass prairie in North America. As early as 1930, much of this amazing ecosystem had been farmed under, developed or severely altered. Today, less than 4 percent of North America's tallgrass prairie is left and more than two-thirds of that is in Kansas. The tallgrass prairie in our Flint Hills region is truly a treasure we Kansans can be proud of. The Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve lets us share our prairie jewel with the world.

I know some will still wonder why it's such a big deal. We've all driven along the Kansas Turnpike and absently admired the expansive view of rolling, grass-covered hills dotted with grazing cattle. This complacent reaction comes naturally. As our ancestors pioneered west, many passed right through the first tallgrass prairie they encountered, assuming the soil was infertile because no trees grew. The prairie was a formidable environment; hot and humid in the summer, cold and windy in the winter, and prone to wildfires in the spring. The swaying tall grasses reminded them of an ocean, and the tallgrass prairie was sometimes referred to as the sea of grass; their cov-

ered wagons were called prairie schooners.

Early settlers eventually learned that the tallgrass prairie soils are among the most productive in the world, and that would be the beginning of the end for much of the prairie. But fertile soils aside, at first impression, the tallgrass prairie doesn't impress the viewer the way towering trees or immense snow-capped mountains might. Tallgrass prairie aesthetics are more subtle, but there are plenty of us Kansans who love the open prairie, even prefer it. And we see beauty in the vast, unaltered Flint Hills. A closer look reveals the diversity of life the tallgrass prairie supports and impresses even skeptics.

The heart of the prairie is its grasses and forbs. There are more than 500 species of plants documented on the tallgrass preserve. Dominant grasses include big bluestem, switchgrass, Indian grass, little bluestem, and prairie cord grass. Abundant forbs, or broadleaf, herbaceous plants so important to wildlife, include spectacular wild flowers such as butterfly milkweed, purple prairie clover and purple coneflower.

And the diversity of plant species is nearly matched by a wealth of wildlife, including 150 species of birds, 31 species of mammals, and many reptiles, amphibians and insects. Grassland-nesting birds depend on the tallgrass prairie, and some of the more noted species include Kansas' flagship species, the greater prairie chicken, as well as Henslow's sparrow, upland sandpiper, eastern meadowlark and many more.

Most of North America's remaining tallgrass prairie is in Kansas primarily because limestone protects it from the plow. But it remains pristine because landowners conserved the tallgrass prairie as more than merely a means to make a living. It is considered a part of our culture, as well as a natural treasure. We are indebted to those who've taken care of our prairie as well as the visionaries who long ago realized its value and the need to preserve it. Enjoy Shoup's article about the extraordinary process that resulted in the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve. Then make plans to visit the preserve soon. Within the year, completion of a new visitors' center will be an exciting addition, enhancing the experience. I'm confident that once you visit and learn about the tallgrass prairie, you'll understand its significance, not only to Kansas, but to North America, as well. ♡

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Preserving a piece of the vanishing tallgrass prairie has made sense to some for more than 100 years, but establishing a preserve and national park required a fantastic combination of private and public entities and personalities. *by J. Mark Shoup*

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Kansas hunters are lucky to have a number of outstanding public wetlands that lie in the middle of the Central Flyway. Waterfowl will come and they will stop, but to be successful on public marshes requires special strategies. *by Bill Graham*

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A ceremony last fall recognized the completion of the long-awaited renovation of Jamestown Wildlife Area in Cloud County. Managers are confident that duck hunters will notice in 2010. *by Rob Unruh*

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Bird hunting traditions run deep in Kansas, but as the landscape has changed, so have the factors that affect our bird populations. However, there are as many myths about those changes as there are hunters. *by Jim Pitman*

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Front Cover: The historic Lower Fox Creek school house sits like a beacon on the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve. Mark Shoup photo. **Back Cover:** Marc Murrell walks back to the blind on Jamestown Wildlife Area after assisting his loyal retriever, Magnum, in locating a downed duck. Mike Miller photo.



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 . . .

OLYMPIC ARCHERY?

Editor,

Great to see younger people interested in propelling sharp sticks with some accuracy. However, there is no connection with the compound bow and Olympic archery. Has the compound bow perverted American archery?

*Eldon Hellman
Eureka*

Mr. Hellman,

You are correct - Olympic competition archery requires recurve bows. However, the techniques taught in Archery in the Schools program are modeled after International Target Archery training methods. There may be purists who feel that only recurve bows should be used in this style of archery, but one could argue about where that line is drawn. Is a recurve bow less pure than a long bow? What about a recurve bow with sights and stabilizers, which are allowed in Olympic competition? The goal of NASP is get any youngster who has an interest involved in archery, and the compound bow is a great equalizer. Youngsters of all sizes, ages, and strength levels can learn to shoot with the compound bows used in NASP, and that is what the program is all about.

Editor

LOVE BARRED OWLS

Editor:

Thank you for your very excellent magazine. Here at Black Swan Lake, we enjoy the night-time sounds of these barred owls. My friend, Charles Hammer took these pictures. They are so beautiful. I hope you can share them with everyone. Charles caught a chipmunk in his catch-em-alive squirrel trap. The owl



HUNTING *with Wayne Doyle* HERITAGE

The Replacements

I was suffering a severe case of writer's block as the evil editor's deadline for this article roared down on me. (Or is it the editor's evil deadline? Whatever.) I could not even decide what to write about let alone put words on paper. But then:

My visiting 11-year-old grandson, Cooper, asked, "Grandpa, could you take me pheasant hunting this year?" Could I? Do coyotes live in Kansas? Do Tollers like water? Are Labs goofy? Of course I can take him!

His Dad, an ardent waterfowler as I was in days gone by, has already introduced Cooper and his brothers to the fine art of duck hunting. The hunter's fire has been lit. I get the opportunity to fan that flame higher by putting Cooper behind a pack of good dogs. And when that first rooster flushes right in front of him, I will get to see the eyes of the predator shine brighter. And it won't matter whether he shoots or just stands there drinking in the whole scene. He will have taken another step into the natural world. And if he kills one, I'll be there to share those conflicting emotions of joy and sadness that will come.

As Cooper and I planned this, over a couple of bowls of ice cream with extra chocolate sauce, I was reminded that all hunters have a duty to replace ourselves as well as a few extras. My sons are my replacements, my grandsons my extras. Others that I have mentored are at the hunter's fire. It's a good feeling.

Go get your replacement and a few extras. You will be ensuring the future of hunting. Now there's a legacy.





Mike Blair photo

BIRD BRAIN

with Mike Rader

Western King Bird

the western kingbird, but has a brownish back and tail, a bright yellow breast and belly and no white on the tail. The calls of all these birds are very different, which helps if you don't see them right away. The call of a scissor-tailed flycatcher is similar to the western kingbird, so a good look at a bird heard calling is required to distinguish these species.

Western kingbirds occur in a variety of habitats, including open, rural areas with scattered trees, hedgerows, backyards and alleys in towns and even power poles with electric transformers in larger cities. I've had several friends in the suburban Kansas City area comment about seeing them along major highways in the city. Many folks have seen kingbirds catching insects well after dark in Kaufman Stadium while attending Royals baseball games. The artificial lights attract a smorgasbord of flying insects, and they don't seem to mind staying up late. I have heard western kingbirds calling at all hours of the night and early predawn.

Western kingbirds are most common in Kansas from late April through the first couple of weeks in September. Males perform elaborate courtship flights, often flying as high as 60 feet before tumbling back to where the female is perched. Nesting occurs in June, with a clutch of three to six eggs incubated for 18-19 days. The nest is an open cup, made from grass, small twigs and bark. It is lined with soft material, such as wool, cotton, hair or feathers. Most nests are located in trees, but they are often found in man-made structures such as power poles, electrical transformers and fence posts. Young birds are born fuzzy and helpless and typically fledge in mid-July. Kingbirds aggressively defend their territory against larger birds and have been observed dive-bombing vultures, hawks and even mammal intruders wandering into their space. They eat a variety of insects, with grasshoppers, bees, wasps, and moths making up most of their diet. They will also eat berries, especially mulberries, during the summer.

Most western kingbirds winter from central Mexico to Central America. Within the past few decades, a small population has been using south Florida as a winter destination. They are regular transients in fall on the east coast. They can gather in small flocks during migration, usually no more than 40 or so. Many are family groups, setting off on migration together.

I have a pair of western kingbirds that have taken up residence in my neighborhood in Wilson this year. It always makes me smile when I watch them do their aerial acrobatics. It reminds me of my childhood. I still hear them calling when it's time to take the dog for a late-night stroll. We are lucky to have them in Kansas. Even with their bug-catching prowess, they aren't making a big dent in the number of insects around – but they sure are entertaining and a joy to watch.

Western kingbirds are one of my favorite species common in Kansas. I have fond memories of watching them catch moths and other large insects from the power lines behind my folks' restaurant in Kensington. I could get them to chase or at least give a closer look at small rocks tossed into the air, but I think they were always smart enough to never actually grab one. It was really fun to see them take an interest. They were active well into the evening, so I spent a lot of time watching them while waiting for the industrial-sized dishwasher to finish its cycle! I thought it was great to have them nesting in town, while their cousins, eastern kingbirds, I only observed out in the country.

Western kingbirds are members of a group of birds collectively called tyrant flycatchers. This group includes both eastern and western kingbirds, which are in Kansas; Cassin's kingbird, an uncommon migrant through the extreme western part of the state; and scissor-tailed flycatchers, which are abundant in summer and fall in the southern two-thirds of Kansas. Western kingbirds are common throughout the western United States and southern Canada. They used to be referred to as Arkansas kingbirds, which is funny since they don't really occur in Arkansas, except for passing through in migration. Their breeding range has expanded to the east in the last century, mainly because of trees planted in the Great Plains, so they might make it to Arkansas as a breeding species someday.

Western kingbirds are approximately 7-9 inches long (approaching the size of an American robin) with a large, pale gray head and a dark line through the eye. They have a gray throat and upper breast, with a yellow lower breast and belly. The back is olive-green or grayish, wings are brown, and they have a black square-tipped tail with white outer feathers. The similar Cassin's kingbird has a darker gray head, back and breast and has a contrasting white chin. The eastern kingbird is substantially different, with a dark, almost blue-black back, white under parts, from throat through the belly and a white-tipped tail. The great-crested flycatcher superficially resembles

flew down and the chipmunk hit the panic button and squeezed out of the trap. But in a few seconds the owl caught him and had him for lunch.

Ken Michaels

P.S. Do an article on how soon heart bypass surgery people can shoot shotguns and rifles again.

Mr. Michaels

I assume that rehabilitation after heart surgery is patient specific. I recommend getting advice from your cardiologist.

Editor

OUR SCREECH OWLS LEFT?

Editor,

For many years, we've been blessed with eastern screech owls inhabiting in our backyard. As Mike Rader's article declares, these eerie little "ghosts" of Kansas nights are thrilling to hear and observe. Sadly, the last two years, all the surrounding neighbors have opted to turn on bright lights all night long, driving away the owls. How we miss their cool presence. Any help?

*Lucy Jarmer
Larned*

Mrs. Jarmer,

You might try visiting with your neighbors, and I recommend placing a nest box somewhere in the yard. Maybe they can be coerced into coming back. They don't seem to be bothered by activity, unless it directly affects them. There is a brood of four or five in Wilson that a couple of friends of mine have been photographing in the daylight.

Mike Rader, wildlife education coordinator

IT'S THE LAW

with Kevin Jones

Electronic Registration

This fall, the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks will unveil an electronic deer registration program. The new option will allow hunters to register their harvested deer through the internet. Once registered, the hunter may then transport the carcass without the head or evidence of sex attached as is required with most permits now.

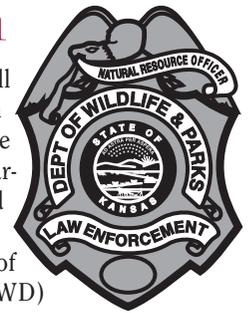
This new system will address concerns about movement of any deer from an area where chronic wasting disease (CWD) occurs. It is believed that CWD may be spread from one region to another by transporting the head, including brain material, of an infected deer. The new registration system will allow a hunter to leave the head at the kill site.

The second concern is directly related to the first. Numerous states have adopted strict regulations dealing with the transportation of a deer head with brain tissue from a state where CWD has been found. Hunters transporting Kansas deer have been cited in other states and had their deer confiscated for illegal transportation. (More information on CWD and transportation laws may be found on the department's website, <http://www.kdwp.state.ks.us/news/Hunting/Big-Game/Chronic-Wasting-Disease>.) The new registration system will allow hunters to properly dispose of the head and legally transport the remainder of the carcass, including the cleaned skull cap and antlers.

The registration process will require access to the KDWP website. Once logged on to the website, the hunter will need to submit two digital photographs; one legible close-up of the completed tag attached to the deer and a second showing the entire body of the deer with the head still attached. The hunter will need to enter their KDWP number from their permit, time and date, and the county where the kill was made. A confirmation number will be issued when the photos and data are successfully received. This confirmation number will need to be retained during transportation. Once these steps are completed, the deer head may be removed and the carcass and antlers prepared for transportation. This is the first photo documentation harvest registration in the nation.

The new system allows the hunter to register their deer without the inconvenience of driving to a check station. It also allows department personnel to see the deer and the hunter's completed tag without the time and expense of maintaining a check station.

Hunters, particularly those transporting their deer out of the state, are encouraged to use this system in order to assist in the control of CWD and maintain compliance with the laws in other states. However, hunters may transport their deer in-state in the traditional manner with the head attached. All hunters regardless of the method they use to transport the carcass should dispose of the waste in an appropriate way such as burial or taking it to an approved landfill.



KAW RIVER STATE PARK OPENED

On Saturday, Sept. 4, KDWP opened the state's newest park, Kaw River State Park in Topeka. The opening celebration began with a "Race for the Kaw," a 4-mile walk/run sponsored by the Topeka Sunflower Striders. Later that morning, Gov. Mark Parkinson and his wife Stacy addressed visitors and dedicated the Kaw River Access Road and the Kaw River boat ramp and a canoe flotilla on the Kansas River.

Many visitors celebrated the opening with canoe and kayak floats up and down the river. For more information on this new park, phone the KDWP Region 2 Office, (785) 273-6740, or Friends of the Kaw at (913) 963-3460.



—KDWP News



HABITAT HELP with Jake George

WIHA Atlas Options

For many, the release of the *Kansas Hunting Atlas* in late August is a greatly anticipated event. Whether you're anxious to see if a favorite WIHA tract was re-enrolled or excited by the prospect of exploring new acreages, the atlas is a beginning for plans of a fall filled with opportunities afield. And with approximately 1 million acres enrolled in the WIHA program each year, public hunting opportunities on private land in Kansas abound. In fact, when reviewing the atlas for the first time, the biggest question is often "Where do I start?" This is certainly not a bad problem to have, but a good question, nonetheless. Once you've identified certain areas of interest, the next most commonly asked question is probably "How do I get there?"

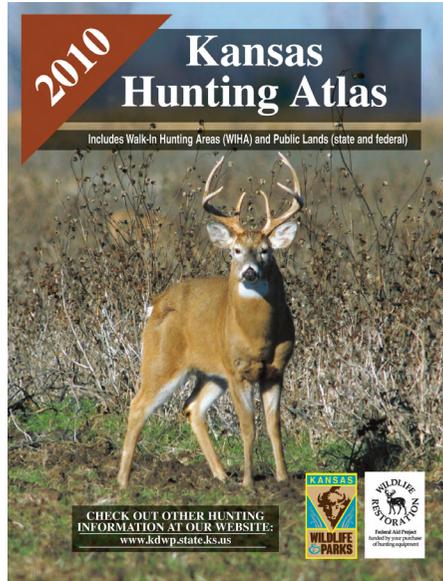
There have been many changes to the atlas since the inception of the Walk-In Hunting Access program in 1995. What began as a black and white pamphlet showcasing 10,000 acres of accessible properties

in southcentral Kansas has evolved into a statewide color atlas with the locations of more than 1 million acres of WIHA properties.

Given the incredible amount of information presented and the current scale of the maps, one of the biggest challenges has been to increase the ease with which hunters can answer the "Where?" and "How?" when accessing WIHA properties. Attempting to meet these challenges, two alternatives to the printed atlas were made available this fall.

Handheld and in-dash GPS units are common tools for outdoorsmen and women today. With that in mind, a file has been made available for download from the KDWP website that allows the WIHA tracts to be loaded on Garmin GPS. units. (Future plans include files for other brands.) Additionally, tracts can now be added to the digital globe in Google Earth by downloading a file from the KDWP website. Although imagery on the digital globe is not real-time, overlaying WIHA tract boundaries can be very useful for gaining a general idea of the landscape.

With the wealth of information now made easily accessible regarding where hunting access is available and how to get there, the only question remaining is "When?" So get out early, get out often, and enjoy all that Kansas Walk-In Hunting has to offer.



Built Environment Summit Oct. 19-20

On Oct. 19-20, the Kansas Recreation and Park Association (KRPA) will conduct a two-day event entitled the 2010 Built Environment and Outdoor Summit. The event will take place at the Wichita Marriott, 9100 Corporate Hills Dr. in Wichita.

According to event organizers, "The design of a community – where people live, work, learn and play – heavily influences their well-being. The built environment – its biking and walking spaces, access to fresh fruits and vegetables, and safety – all affect an individual's ability to be active and eat healthy." Participants will learn to identify resources that promote these ideals and how to affect environmental policy within a community.

Keynote speakers will be Fran Mainella and Dan Burden. Mainella is currently a visiting scholar at Clemson University and was the 16th director of the National Park

Service. She is a member of the board of directors for the Children and Nature Network and is co-chair of the U.S. Play Coalition. Mainella's session, "The Value of Play and Reconnecting to the Outdoors," will address the crisis and consequences – obesity and emotional and mental disorders – of play deprivation. Mainella will focus on author Richard Louv's "nature deficit disorder" and the important role parks and recreation play in solving this growing problem.

Burden is co-founder and executive director of the Walkable and Livable Communities Institute in Port Townsend, Wash. Burden will discuss building healthy, sustainable, livable and walkable communities – with a focus on active transportation, smart growth, and green streets – to create thriving communities, with a focus on how transportation policy and land-use initiatives create healthy and safe environments that



promote physical activity.

The public is invited, but event organizers encourage the attendance of architects, city administrators, construction and project managers, developers, engineers, environmental professionals, health and nutrition professionals, landscape architects, park and recreation professionals, planners, public works and utilities directors, surveyors, and trail advocates and planners.

For more information, visit www.krpa.org or phone Doug Vance at (785) 235-6533, ext. 21, or Bonnie Simon at (785) 235-6533, ext. 20.

—KDWP News

LATE MAGAZINE

Editor

I enjoy the *Kansas Wildlife & Parks* magazine. Being a lifetime resident of Kansas, I was raised fishing and hunting. What I can't understand is the reason you can not get the magazine out to the subscribers on time. For example, my May/June issue didn't get here until May 24. All my issues are late. What's the point of receiving a magazine that is already outdated by the time you received it? I try to support the Kansas wildlife as much as possible. Being handicapped, I always buy hunting and fishing and lake permits for over 40 years. I don't think it's too much to ask for my subscription on time!

*Russ Odle
Goddard*

Mr. Odle,

I apologize. We have always strived to deliver magazines by the first week of the month. And you should have received your May/June magazine by May 4. However, we are a very small staff and the magazine is only a small part of our publication and information responsibilities. If we lose a day or two during production due to other priorities, illness or missed deadlines, that often translates into three or four days to final distribution.

We appreciate your loyalty, so know that we're working hard to get back on schedule. As always, we'll try to produce the best magazine we can.

Editor

FISH SQUEEZER with Tommie Berger

Fall Fishing

As we head into the fall season, I wonder what Kansas would be like if we did not have the changing of the seasons and cool fall days to look forward to. I predict that if you polled the anglers in this state, many would rate the spring as their favorite fishing season. However, there are lots of anglers who might vote for fall as the best season for catching a wide variety of fish. If hunting seasons did not interfere, fall waters would be more crowded than they are!

Winter is probably the hardest season on our warmwater fish species. When the water gets cold, fish tend to slow down and eat less. Many of our fish are in their poorest body condition of the year in the late winter and early spring. To counteract this, fish feed heavily in the fall.

Fall is often a time of abundance; a time when the forage fish are the most numerous and game fish are fattening up. In most reservoirs, gizzard shad are the primary forage, and in smaller lakes, bluegill and other panfish might be added to the grocery list. Game fish are not too discriminatory – they will eat whatever they can catch even if it means small fish of their own kind.

For anglers, fall is a great time to put filets in the freezer. As the water cools down, the game fish become more active, and their metabolism increases. Crappie, striped bass, and walleye come out of the deep water and roam the channel edges and shallows looking for the schools of bait fish that use these underwater highways. Largemouth and smallmouth bass frequent the shallows to fill up on any critter that moves – crayfish, bait fish, or just about any lure the angler casts. Catfish are also active in the fall, but few anglers fish for them. I have noticed that fall anglers seem to concentrate more on species like white bass, wipers, crappie, walleye, and saugeye.



If I had to pick the most successful and versatile lure for fall fishing, it would probably be the slab spoon. Slab spoons are a great imitation of a wounded or dying shad. They can be fished vertically and are heavy enough to quickly drop to the bottom at any depth. They can also be cast a long way from the boat or from the shore, then hopped back on the retrieve. Fish may strike a spoon as it is raised up, but they seem to prefer to hit it on the fall. It takes a little practice to learn to fish a spoon correctly, but once you get onto it, you can quickly catch a lot of fish if you get into an feeding school.

Slab spoons work all through the fall and winter and are popular with icefishermen. Best colors are white and chartreuse, often with a little orange, red, or blue blended in.

Fall is a great time to catch a variety of fish. I'll probably see you out there, but I'll be fishing with nets instead of spoons. Fall is an important time for fisheries biologists to sample our lakes and see how the populations fared through the spring and summer. Much of the information we gather will help us provide a forecast of next year's fishing prospects.

On The Web with Mark Shoup

Wildflowers Duck ID

September Wildflowers

Summer may be about over, but wildflower lovers know some of the best wildflower outings are to be had in September. Whether you're a seasoned wildflower expert or someone who would like to get outside in mild weather and learn more about these beautiful natural plants, the place to start is www.naturalkansas.org/wildflow.htm#SEP. This Natural Kansas website lists a number of wildlife tours and other related events in September and even into October. Seed harvesting at the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve, tram tours of Maxwell Wildlife Refuge, wetland outings near Cheyenne Bottoms, wildflower hikes on the Konza Prairie, and much more are listed here, complete with links to group websites and phone numbers for more information.

This September, get outside and enjoy the painted glory of Kansas prairies. The place to start is naturalkansas.org.



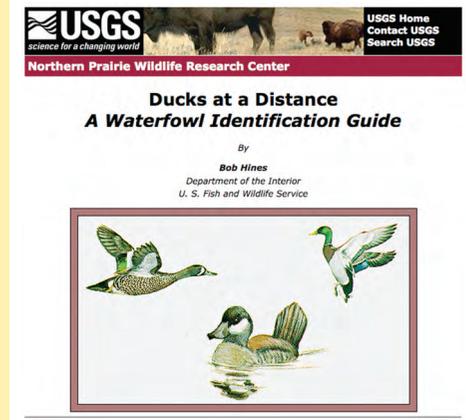
Duck ID

Duck season is fast approaching; in fact, many readers may be in the middle of teal season as they read this. No one wants to mistake a wood duck for a teal, a canvasback for redhead, or a hen mallard for a gadwall.

Sometimes this can be tricky, especially when the bird is in flight or, as is often the case in fall, lack full plumage.

While nothing can replace a good ID book carried in the field, the U.S. Geological Service has an excellent resource for duck identification. At www.npwrc.usgs.gov/resource/birds/duckdist/index.htm, you'll find a great place to explore the look of ducks commonly found in the Central Flyway. Illustrations of each bird in flight – when the hunter most needs to know his ducks – are presented in detail, including drakes, hens, and eclipse drakes of each species. Wings of both hen and drake are individually presented, as are common flock patterns the hunter might encounter. Written descriptions – which are of limited value – are kept to a minimum.

Visit this site before you hunt this year. It may inspire you to acquire a copy of *Waterfowl Identification In the Central Flyway*, an excellent pocket ID book available from the KDWP Outdoor Store. Order online at www.kdwp.state.ks.us or phone (620) 672-5911, ext. 220.



SECOND SPECIAL HUNTS APPLICATION DEADLINE SEPT. 30

The Special Hunts Program offers a variety of limited hunts, many designed to introduce youth and novices to hunting in an uncrowded setting with good opportunity for success. The first application deadline – for special hunts in September and October – was July 31. The application period for November, December, and January hunts is Sept. 1-30, with drawings held the first week in October. Applicants may submit only one application, which allows three selections in each hunt type: upland, dove, waterfowl, and deer.

Not all special hunts are for youth or novices. Some are open to all hunters, and each special hunt targets specific game species, including doves, upland game, waterfowl, and deer. Some take place during the special youth/disabled deer season Sept. 11-19, some during the youth pheasant and quail season Nov. 6-7, and others during special youth waterfowl seasons, Oct 2-3 in High Plains and Early zones, and Oct. 23-24 in the Late Zone. Still others occur during regular hunting seasons. Special hunts will be conducted in all regions of the state on both public and private land.

Specifically, there are three categories of hunts: open, youth, and mentor. Open hunts are available to all hunters. Youth hunts require parties to contain at least one youth 15 or younger who must be accompanied by an adult 18 or older. Some youth hunts may have more specific age requirements, and adults may not hunt. Mentor hunts are open to both youth and/or inexperienced hunters who are supervised by a licensed adult 18 or older (mentor). A mentor is a licensed hunter 18 years or older who supervises and/or participates in a hunt restricted to youth or novice hunters. Some hunts require the supervising adult to be 21 years or older.

For more detailed information or to apply, go online to www.kdwp.state.ks.us. Click "Hunting/Special Hunts." Those who do not have computer access may apply by telephone at (620) 672-0791.



—KDWP News



Counting Calories

the most energy-efficient form of food. A gram of fat provides the body with more than twice the calories of other macronutrients.

Proteins on the other hand carry fewer calories per gram, but energy from protein is consumed very slowly. The body works harder to digest protein, and it lasts longer in the body. Slow digestion also may curb afternoon hunger pains, and that helps prevent afternoon snack craving.

Wild game meat is high in protein and lower in fat and carbs than similar store-bought items. The following information compares a few game meats with that of domesticated store-bought counterpart. I used the internet-resource www.nutritiondata.com to identify protein, fat, and carb make-up.

A few years ago, I wanted to lose weight and eat healthier, so I researched different diets. I ended up following a high-protein, low-carbohydrate diet with good results. I lost weight, but that wasn't the most valuable aspect of that diet. Through my research, I became aware of what I was eating and how my body dealt with it.

I eat a lot of game meat, and I know that it is good for me. There are no nutritional fact sheets posted on the backside of a rooster pheasant or white-tailed deer, but like homegrown vegetables and fruits, game often tastes better and is better for you. There are no injected water or dyes, no added preservatives, and no fancy marketing gimmicks.

Three categories of macronutrients make our food: proteins, fats, and carbohydrates (carbs). There are good and bad carbs, good and bad fats, but almost all proteins are good.

We all know that food fuels the body, and we measure the potential of that fuel by calories per gram. A gram of protein contains four calories, a gram of carbs four, and a gram of fat nine calories. Your body converts these calories to glycogen that is then used by our muscles for energy.

Carbs are the easiest and fastest to convert to energy. The problem is that when you run out of fuel, you feel hungry and then consume more carbs. This is a vicious cycle.

Fats are the slowest source of energy but

MACRONUTRIENT VALUE COMPARISON OF COMMON GAME MEATS AND COMMON CUTS OF DOMESTIC MEATS

Deer roast	31g protein,	2g fat,	0g carbs,	142 cal. per 3-ounce serving
Beef roast	23g protein,	18g fat,	0g carbs,	254 cal. per 3-ounce serving
Pork roast	21g protein,	15g fat,	0g carbs,	219 cal. per 3-ounce serving
Pheasant breast . .	21g protein,	3 g fat,	0g carbs,	113 cal. per 3-ounce serving
Quail	18g protein,	3g fat,	0g carbs,	99 cal. per 3-ounce serving
Duck breast	18g protein,	3g fat,	0g carbs,	99 cal. per 3-ounce serving
Chicken breast . . .	18g protein,	9g fat,	0g carbs,	153 cal. per 3-ounce serving



FISHIN' with Mike Miller

Fall Back Crankbaits

Years ago, when I was just beginning to write for a living, I was fishing with a local bass tournament angler. He was kind enough to take me out on a reservoir that had recently opened to fishing, and it was full of largemouth bass. I could barely afford a pair of waders, so fishing out of his bass boat was a thrill. I was also excited to catch reservoir bass – nearly all of my bass fishing up to that point had been in small farm ponds where my go-to lures were a purple plastic worm and a black Jitterbug.

At the time, I read everything about fishing I could get my hands on, including *BASS*. I had read about Paul Elias winning the *BASS* classic with his “kneeling and reeling” crankbait technique. Since a diving crankbait with two treble hooks doesn't work well in a farm pond full of vegetation, I hadn't used one, but this was a perfect opportunity. I chose a Bomber A in the baby bass color.

I wanted to impress the guy by catching fish, and the crankbait turned out to be the perfect choice. I caught bass after bass while he stubbornly stayed with his jig-n-pig, telling

me many times that his lure would always catch bigger fish. I was having a ball, and after I set the hook on another fish, I heard him grumble under his breath, “Anyone can catch fish on a crankbait.”

He was right. All you have to do to catch fish with a crankbait is cast and reel. You'll catch more fish if you reel fast enough to drag the crankbait into and across structure – sticks, logs or rocks. The erratic action of a crankbait darting as it caroms off of a rock or limb often triggers a strike. Fish a crankbait around any rocky structure such as rock piles, points and especially rip-rap. A fast, erratic retrieve will often get “reaction” strikes from bass when they won't hit other lures.

Easy to fish or not, there are times when the crankbait is the best lure for the job. And in the fall, it can be the best lure. Most reservoir game fish are feasting on shad in the fall because young-of-the-year shad are so plentiful. It's a great time to be on the water, and it's a great time to “crank” 'em with a crankbait. Select a crankbait that matches the shad, both in size and color. I'll use natural colors such as white and silver in clear water and brighter, contrasting colors in turbid water. Select a bait that will dive the appropriate depth. The size and width of the plug's lip, the type and weight of line you use, as well as the speed of retrieve will determine the depth it will run.

PROFILE:

with Mark Shoup

Randy Rodgers



Randy Rodgers grew up in Medicine Lodge, the heart of the Red Hills. With this landscape as his playground, it's no wonder he became a wildlife biologist.

"I spent half my childhood in Elm Creek and the Medicine River, wading and fishing," he explains. "There's no question that experience influenced my career choice. But my brother Jerry, who was 11 years older, had a lot to do with it. He took me fishing when he could, and he let me tag along with my BB gun when he hunted."

Rodgers' discovery of wildlife biology, however, came from a most unusual source: English class. "I always knew I wanted to be involved in science. I didn't know exactly what, but thanks to an English teacher who made us research and write about what we wanted to do after high school, I discovered there was such a thing as wildlife biology. That's when I knew what I wanted to do."

The die was set, and Rodgers entered K-State, graduating in 1975 with a bachelor's degree in wildlife biology. He went straight to graduate school at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, where his major professor was an Aldo Leopold protégé.

"I read *A Sand County Almanac* my second year at K-State, and I was just awed by Leopold's ability to put conservation concepts into words," Rodgers explains. "The Department of Wildlife Ecology at UW-Madison was founded by Leopold, so it was steeped in the Leopold tradition." Perhaps the great conservationist's wordsmith skills rubbed off because Rodgers would develop and put them to good use during his career.

After graduate school, Rodgers "landed right where [he] wanted to be," as an upland bird biologist for the Kansas Fish and Game Commission, a position he would hold until retirement June 14.

During his tenure, Rodgers' many accomplishments would encompass a wide variety of conservation projects. He worked extensively with the federal Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), which pays farmers to restore erodible cropland to grassland. He worked with the Farm Service Agency and the Natural Resource Conservation Service, creating "Conservation Priority Areas" that would most benefit from wildlife-friendly practices. He also helped fine-tune CRP grass-forb mixes that would be of most benefit to wildlife. Rodgers teamed with former KDWP biologist Troy Schroeder and former Pheasants Forever biologist Barth Crouch to develop and "punch through the Washington bureaucracy" an official CRP practice known as CP15B, which helps farmers develop grassed terraces.

Rodgers also helped design another CRP practice, CP38E, or State Acres For Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE). In Kansas, this program involves flexible buffers designed so that habitat seedings can be configured almost any way that works well in a farmer's field, depending on soils, field configuration, and other factors.

"Probably one of the most important things I've done with continuous [CRP] signup is just promoting it," he explains. "A lot of people don't understand how beneficial these practices can be and how well they can fit into a farm operation. They're starting to take off pretty well now."

Over the years, Rodgers frequently used his writing skills. He has written many publications on agricultural practices that benefit wildlife, reduce erosion, and increase grain yields. One primary topic involved years of research on the benefits of added wheat stubble height to pheasant survival. He has published a number of articles in *The Wildlife Society Bulletin* as well as *Kansas Wildlife & Parks* magazine. Many of Rodgers' feature articles were reprinted and are still being distributed today, including his article "Tree Invasion," which calls attention to the threat invasive trees pose to prairies.

"I'm proud of helping call attention to the lesser prairie chicken situation in Kansas," Rodgers says, "particularly through the video that Gene [Brehm, former KDWP videographer] and I did. [*The Lesser Prairie Chicken: Echoes of the Prairie?*] About 6,000 of those have been distributed in five states and to key people in Washington, DC. I think that may have helped influence how the USDA implements some of their wildlife-friendly programs."

Rodgers had many mentors over the years, but when pressed, he mentions former KDWP employees Bill Hlavachick, Marvin Schwilling, and Bob Wood. "I hope the agency continues to focus on the resources," he explains. "We gotta have people like these men, who understand the land." But Rodgers isn't looking back.

"I loved my job," he says. "I only retired from the agency because I didn't have time to pursue my newest conservation projects." These include developing more than 400 acres in Rush County and 600 acres in Gove County for wildlife and crop production, more writing, helping wildlife-oriented landowners, and maintaining a 3-acre Outdoor Wildlife Learning (OWLS) site near O'Loughlin Elementary School in Hays. And for the first time in 31 years, he plans to hunt opening day of pheasant season, which he has had to work in the past.

One chilly pre-dawn spring morning in the late 1990s, he put Hays Daily News photographer Steve Hausler and me in a blind in western Gove County, on a lek where he had discovered both lesser and greater prairie chickens booming together. It was one of my more memorable days in the field, but Rodgers did not stay with us. He was off to explore the countryside and listen for more leks. "What can be better than spending the morning in Gove County?" he asked, smiling but perfectly serious.

Even in the austere beauty of the High Plains, this truly is a man who understands, and loves, the land.

HUNTING SPOTS

with Marc Murrell

Could You Survive?

Surviving a wilderness emergency isn't something most Kansans worry about. After all, Kansas' terrain, while fairly remote in some places, isn't necessarily imposing. However, a reservoir duck hunt could turn dangerous due to a blizzard or equipment failure. And many Kansans venture to parts of the country or even abroad where an outdoor outing could go horribly wrong as a result of an accident or getting lost. The fact of the matter is outdoorsmen and women who are prepared "just in case" usually survive.

"People venturing outdoors should have at least a basic survival kit and take it with them," said Peter Kummerfeldt, a survivalist training instructor.

Kummerfeldt grew up in Kenya, East Africa, and was an Air Force survival training instructor for 30 years before retiring in 1995. He now operates Outdoor Safe, Inc., (www.outdoorsafe.com), and conducts outdoor safety and survival skill training seminars.

"Don't think it can't happen to you," Kummerfeldt said of outdoor emergencies. Many people in outdoor emergency situations die from exposure or hypothermia.

"Ninety-eight-point-six is the most important number for your survival," Kummerfeldt said.

Shelter is critical and doesn't have to be anything elaborate. An oversized, heavy

duty trash bag can be used to keep dry and contain body heat. Simply slide it over the shoulders with a hole cut in the side near the sealed bottom of the bag.

Water is critical, too. People can survive weeks without food but only a short time if they become dehydrated. Water can come from many sources. It can be boiled or treated to kill any harmful bacteria, if possible.

"Doctors can fix giardia and other problems but they can't fix dead," Kummerfeldt said.

Fire is an important element of survival should an overnight stay become necessary. Matches and lighters can be used to make a fire but aren't as dependable as other options. A metal match that consists of a small metal rod made of various alloys and a striker to create sparks works in wet, dry or windy conditions. Vaseline-soaked cotton balls make ideal fire starters when pulled apart and showered with sparks from a metal match. Four or five pre-prepared cotton balls can be placed in a small, waterproof container although they still work when wet.

Some sort of audible device is also a good idea to alert others of your where-



Marc Murrell photos

abouts should rescue become necessary. A signaling mirror can be used. A whistle can be used to signal, too, but typically has a range of less than a mile under ideal conditions. The universal distress signal for help is three blasts of anything, including gun shots. However, during hunting seasons in daylight hours, gun shots are typically disregarded.

Preparation and mental toughness are often the difference between survival and death. It's not a bad idea to take some first aid and CPR courses, too. If you are equipped, clothed and trained, an unexpected night out in the wild should not be a life-threatening experience.

Toronto, Fall River Reservoirs Lowered for Dam Repairs

Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) staff at Cross Timbers and Fall River state parks have alerted the public that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE) has lowered both Fall River and Toronto reservoirs for repair of the lakes' dams. Both lakes are currently 2 feet below conservation pool, making most boating facilities inaccessible.

The drawdown will allow work to repair damage to the dams. Work on the Fall River dam is expected to be complete by November, after which the lake will be allowed to fill back to conservation pool. Work on the Toronto Reservoir dam will continue through March, according to the COE website, www.swt.usace.army.mil/recreat/LakeNotice.cfm?LakeName=Toronto%20Lake.

At Toronto, only the Toronto Point East boat ramp is not barricaded, but those who choose to boat must use extreme caution. Toronto is a relatively shallow lake, so a drawdown of this nature brings submerged structure such as trees, old farm silos, a railroad trestle, and other hazards dangerously close to the surface for boaters. Other lake access is limited, as well. One boat dock is completely on the ground, and others may not be usable. The swimming beach is 80 percent unusable. And because there is so much debris in the lake – rock and flooded timber – putting in temporary boat ramps and docks is not feasible.

For information on the lake levels' impact on park facilities, go to the KDWP website, www.kdwp.state.ks.us. Click on "State Parks," then "Locations," and select Cross Timbers or Fall River. You can get current conditions for each park by clicking on the "News" icon in the upper menu. Click on the Fish icon, and you'll find a link to the COE website for current lake levels.

For more information, phone Cross Timbers State Park at 620-637-2213 or the Corps of Engineers office at 620-658-4445.

– KDWP News

PARK VIEW

with Kathy Pritchett

This And That

The summer recreation season is about over, kids are back in school, and you may think, "There's nothing to do in the state parks." WRONG! Even though days are shorter and nights cooler, there are still many glorious days to spend outdoors until the end of the year. From October 1 through March 31, prices are lower, offering an even better bargain.

Check out the list of special events on the KDWP website to see what is happening at nearby parks. Labor Day Weekend this year marks the grand opening of our newest park, Kaw River State Park in Topeka. The fishing tournaments and sailing regattas scheduled indicate you can still have fun on the water. Trail rides and cooking contests celebrate the cooler weather.

Dove season marks the opening of fall hunting seasons, and many hunters choose to camp in the state parks or stay in one of our cabins to be able to stay closer to their favorite hunting spots.

Wildlife is on the move in the fall, offering entertaining glimpses of activity. Fall color in the trees makes for spectacular photo opportunities. Fewer people around means more solitude and time to reflect. Kids cooped up in classrooms all week may relish the chance to run and play, renewing them for another week of learning. Disc golf and trail hiking give adults a chance

to move after a week behind a desk. In short, there is still plenty to do in Kansas state parks after summer has become just a memory.

In July, both Lovewell Reservoir and Meade State Fishing Lake were closed to water contact due to blue-green algae blooms. This action was based upon recommendations from public health agencies. While incidental contact may not be harmful to healthy adults, the algae can be extremely dangerous to infants, children, pets and those with less than optimal immune systems. The department chose to take no chances with the public health.

Blue-green algae, or cyanobacteria, are naturally present in small quantities in most bodies of fresh water. However, when nutrient-rich shallow surface water gets very warm and goes undisturbed for a period of time, a "bloom" or rapid growth of algae can occur. The bloom may simply be noticeable as a paint-like discoloration of the water or may form large floating "rafts" of the algae. The dying algae may also smell foul. Toxins produced by the bloom present the danger.

Camping, hiking, picnicking and other activities continued, but because some recreationists base their activity around water recreation, rain checks valid at a later date or at other parks were offered.

From time to time, other conditions (unsafe ice, dangerous roadways, floodwaters, high winds, accidents, breakdowns) may cause the department to close parts of parks. Be assured that we do not take these actions lightly. Either public safety or protection of the resource is our primary considerations.

Kansas River Asian Carp Infestation Critical

Five years ago, adult silver carp were first noticed in the Kansas River, leaping high in the air and endangering boaters. These non-native fish have a peculiar habit of leaping completely out of the water as a motorboat passes over, but their presence threatens more than boaters. Silver carp, along with the bighead carp, are extremely prolific breeders and threaten channel catfish, bass, walleye, crappie – all native game fish – as well as bait fish anywhere they are spread.

High water this spring created a reproductive explosion of these fish, which, in addition to endangering native species, are illegal to possess alive. In August, young-of-the-year (2 to 3 inches long) Asian carp were "stacked up by the hundreds of thousands" below Johnson County WaterOne Coffey Dam, according to KDWP aquatic nuisance specialist Jason Goeckler.



- learn to identify Asian carp because it's illegal to possess them alive;

- you can seine your own bait, but legal bait fish can only be used in the waters where they were caught – it's illegal to move bait fish from one water to another;

- Asian carp have the potential to take over a fishery and destroy populations of desirable native fish.

"I've never seen anything like this," the seasoned biologist said. "The water is just loaded with them. You can stick a dip net in and pull up 100 or more at a time, and our real concern is that – because they could easily be mistaken for shad or other minnows – anglers will put them in their bait buckets and take them to other waters."

Just putting these fish in a bait bucket is illegal. Silver carp and bighead carp are on the state list of species that are illegal to import, possess, or release alive in Kansas. That means they cannot be kept if taken in a seine, put in a bait bucket, or used for bait unless they are killed first. Violation is a Class C misdemeanor punishable by up to 30 days in jail and a \$500 fine.

It is illegal for anglers to move bait from any body of water to another, and if anglers don't comply with this regulation, it will be more than a "nuisance" for them and their sport. Anglers could be destroying the thing they love most. Asian carp are not sport fish and are rarely caught on hook and line.

—KDWP News

Do you realize that one survey shows that 41 percent of adults believe that humans and dinosaurs existed at the same time? Do you need further proof that way too many people have a very poor understanding of science? It is unfortunate that at a time when we need science the most, we experience repeated attempts to weaken it in our educational, religious and political institutions. A report from the Christian Science Monitor cited a survey on science literacy ranked the U.S. aptitude of 15-year-olds as 29th among 57 countries. Finland emerged at the top, according to the 2006 survey results from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA).

Only 53 percent of adults know how long it takes for the earth to revolve around the sun.

Only 59 percent of adults know that the earliest humans and dinosaurs did not live at the same time.

Only 47 percent of adults can roughly approximate the percent of the earth's surface that is covered with water.

Only 21 percent of adults answered all three questions correctly.

Only a few understood that in science, as one subject put it, "the word theory is used differently than in the general population. It does not mean someone's idea that cannot be proven. It is a concept that has considerable evidence behind it and has endured the attempts to disprove it."

This is one of the most commonly misunderstood aspects of science. We commonly hear a scientific claim being dismissed because it is "just a theory," expressing a belief that theories are unproven concepts. But for an accepted concept to be given the status of "theory" it must be far from unproven. To the contrary, it must be extensively tested or confirmed, and it must continue to survive attempts to refute its predictions. Otherwise, it is more properly called a hypothesis. Therefore, every currently-accepted theory is well-supported and not "just a theory." Evolution theory is perhaps the best example of how this concept can be misconstrued. A common misunderstanding is the very normal self-examination common to science. Science is constantly testing theories, gaining new information. This tests the status quo and leads to further enlightenment. However, when any aspect of evolution is challenged by the very normal process of self-examination, a naive public views this as weakening this theory. If anything, this points to a need for better understanding of the scientific method.

Evolution, being the foundation of biological science, is fundamental to human understanding of biological systems, nature, cellular metabolism and the myriad of relationships of different organisms. The overwhelming majority of scientists believe in the theory of evolution based on the repetitive and countless evidence from bio-

chemistry, comparative anatomy and the monumental paleontological record. To understand biology is to understand evolution. Anything short is simply contributing to the 41 percent above who think dinosaurs and humans existed at the same time. How in the world will we solve complex biological problems in science and medicine if we are doing such a pathetic job of science education?

Good science means basing decisions on reliable observations and methods. A good example is the constant quibble over whether KDWP recognizes the existence of cougars in Kansas. Good science should demand that good evidence be used to support theories and wildlife management. Too many expect KDWP to rely on hearsay evidence. Our biologists insist on relying on confirmable reports. You should expect no less from your professionals in your state wildlife agency. The same case should be made for every biological decision we make. While there are occasional failures in this effort, I've generally witnessed good science being applied throughout our KDWP history. However, there are constantly those who would rather see programs managed through hearsay and superstition. To resort to mythology in wildlife management would relegate much wasted effort into trying to rationalize such ridiculous notions as ancient men riding on backs of dinosaurs.

2010 HUNTING REGS AVAILABLE

Printed copies of the *2010 Kansas Hunting & Furharvesting Regulations Summary* are available at Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) offices, license vendors, and the KDWP website. The more significant new regulations involve big game and waterfowl and include the following:

- * new deer map – new boundaries for units 10 and 11 makes these units, as well as units 10 and 14, adjacent units, but Unit 19 boundaries did not change;
- * limited quota Antlerless



Either Species permits are available in units 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 17, and 18 on a first come, first-served basis (valid in the

unit specified on the permit);

* January extended white-tailed antlerless-only season is open in all units;

* Any-Elk and Antlerless-Only Elk Hunt-Own-Land permits are available through March 14, 2011 (not valid in Morton county);

* Any-Elk and Antlerless-only Elk general resident and landowner/tenant Elk permits are available through March 14, 2011 but are not valid on Fort Riley or in Clay, Geary, Riley, or Morton counties;

* a system is being developed that will allow hunters to voluntarily register their deer elec-

tronically so that they may transport the carcass/meat without the head attached. For more information, go online to www.kdwp.state.ks.us.

* the daily bag limit for ducks has increased from five to six ducks, which may include no more than one canvasback, two redheads, two pintails, two scaup, three wood ducks, and five mallards (only two of which may be hens). The daily bag may comprise six of any other duck, such as six teal, six gadwall, or six wigeon; and

* brant have been added to the species that may be taken in the Canada goose season.

Timmy Voge Memorial Shelter House

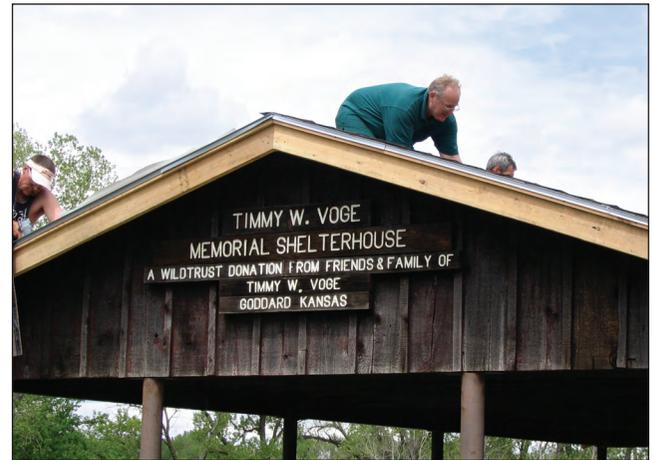
On April 24, 2010, the family of Timmy Voge met at Kingman State Fishing Lake to renew a memorial of almost 30 years. Timmy Voge was tragically killed in a car accident as a teen. His family, wishing to make a memorial to his life, chose to do so at a place he loved to spend time, Kingman State Fishing Lake. The Voge family built a picnic shelter at the lake as the first Wildtrust project in Kansas. The shelter provides four double-length tables capable of seating several dozen visitors.

The shelter house roof has needed to be re-shingled for several years. Plans by the Kansas Muzzleloaders Association to re-shingle the shelter were unfortunately cancelled and a substitute labor source had not been found. In 2009 Timmy's brother, Sid Voge, contacted area manager Troy Smith wanting to provide labor for the project. Plans were made and materials purchased in preparation for the work project. Despite several tentative dates and subsequent cancellations, the day finally arrived on April 24, 2010.

On that morning, Sid Voge, Goddard; Roger Voge, Wichita; Gary Stephenson, Wichita; Paul Stephenson, Wichita; Bob Seidl, Wichita; Mike Helton, Derby; and Dan Neises, Derby, met at the lake with tools, materials, and the ambition to complete the project.

The old shingles were removed and some sheathing was replaced. New roof edging, underlayment, fascia, and soffit were installed and the shingling began. About 8 hours later, the new roof was absorbing the sun and ready to shed the rain. This shelter on the east side of Kingman State Fishing Lake is available to families like the Voges, who enjoy spending time in the Kansas outdoors.

– Troy Smith, Byron Walker WA manager



STATE RECORD STRIPED BASS



photo courtesy Paul Bahr

In July, KDWP certified a new Kansas state record striped bass that was caught in Wilson Reservoir on May 14, breaking a record that had stood for 22 years. Paul Bahr, Ellsworth, hauled the monster 44-inch, 44-pounder from the lake about 7 p.m. using live shad for bait. After Bahr's fish was weighed on a certified scale, witnessed, and the species confirmed by fisheries biologist Tommie Berger, Bahr waited the required 30 days before the fish was officially certified a new state record.

Wilson is one of the few reservoirs in the state that harbors a viable striped bass population, and the previous record was taken at this lake, as well. That fish weighed 43.5 pounds and was taken by Sylvan Grove resident Chester Nily in May of 1988.

Striped bass are native to the Atlantic coastline of North America from the St. Lawrence River into the Gulf of Mexico to approximately Louisiana. They are anadromous, meaning that they migrate between saltwater and freshwater, where they spawn. Although they can survive in some Kansas reservoirs, the water must be somewhat clear, and peak summer temperatures must remain relatively cool. Natural reproduction has not been documented in Kansas waters. Stripers were first introduced in Kansas in early 1970s, but fishable populations may only be found in Wilson, Cheney, and La Cygne reservoirs.

A potential state record fish must remain intact until it is weighed and officially identified. Anyone who believes they have caught a state record fish must bring the fish to a grocery store or other business with certified scales as soon as possible. The weighing must be witnessed. The fish must be species-confirmed by a KDWP fisheries biologist. (A tissue sample may be required.) A color photograph of the fish must accompany the application. The fish must be weighed before it is frozen.

All applications for state records require a 30-day waiting period before certification. For a list of Kansas state record fish, visit the KDWP website, www.kdpw.state.ks.us, or pick up a copy of the Kansas Fishing Regulations Summary wherever licenses are sold.

–KDWP News

2010 Sportsmen's

MIGRATORY GAME BIRDS

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

- Season: Sept. 1 - Oct. 31 and Nov. 6-14, 2010
- Daily bag limit: 15
- Possession limit: 30

EARLY TEAL

- High Plains Season: Sept. 18-26, 2010
- Low Plains Season: Sept. 11-26, 2010
- Daily bag limit: 4
- Possession limit: 8

EXOTIC DOVE

(Eurasian collared and ringed turtle doves only)

- Season: Nov. 20, 2010 - Feb. 28, 2011
- Daily bag limit: No limit
- Possession limit: No limit

RAIL (Sora and Virginia)

- Season: Sept. 1 - Nov. 9, 2010
- Daily bag limit: 25
- Possession limit: 25

SNIPE

- Season: Sept. 1 - Dec. 16, 2010
- Daily bag limit: 8
- Possession limit: 16

WOODCOCK

- Season: Oct. 16 - Nov. 29, 2010
- Daily bag limit: 3
- Possession limit: 6

SANDHILL CRANE

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

DUCK

High Plains Zone

- Oct. 9 - Jan. 3, 2011, and Jan. 22-30, 2011

Early Zone

- Oct. 9 - Dec. 5, 2010 and Dec. 18 - Jan. 2, 2011

MIGRATORY GAME BIRDS (continued)

Late Zone

- Oct. 30 - Jan. 2, 2011 and Jan. 22-30, 2011
- Bag limit: 6 ducks, including 5 mallards (2 hens), 3 wood ducks, 2 scaup, 2 pintails, 2 redhead, and 1 canvasback.

CANADA GEESE

- Season: Oct. 30 - Nov. 7, 2010 and Nov. 10 - Feb. 13, 2011.
- Area open: Statewide
- Daily bag limit: 3 (including Brant)

WHITE-FRONTED GEESE

- Season: Oct. 30 - Nov. 7, 2010, and Nov. 10 - Jan. 2, 2011 and Feb. 5-13, 2011.
- Area open: Statewide
- Daily bag limit: 2

LIGHT GEESE

- Season: Oct. 30 - Nov. 7, 2010 and Nov. 10 - Feb. 13, 2011.
- Area open: Statewide
- Daily bag limit: 20
- Conservation Order: Feb. 14-April 31, 2011

BIG GAME

DEER:

- Youth/Persons with Disabilities: Sept. 11-19
- Archery: Sept. 20 - Dec. 31, 2010
- Muzzleloader: Sept. 20 - Oct. 3, 2010
- Early Firearm (Subunit 19 only) Oct. 9-17, 2010
- Regular Firearm: Dec. 1-12, 2010
- Firearm Extended Whitetail Antlerless Season: Jan. 1-9, 2011
- Archery Extended Whitetail Antlerless Season (DMU 19 only): Jan. 10-31, 2011
- Special Extended Firearms Whitetail Antlerless Season: Jan. 10-16, 2011 (Open for unit 7, 8 and 15 only.)

Calendar

BIG GAME (continued)

ELK (residents only)

Outside Fort Riley:

- Muzzleloader: Sept. 1 - Oct. 3, 2010
- Archery: Sept. 20 - Dec. 31, 2010
- Firearm: Dec. 1-12, 2010 and Jan. 1 - March 15, 2011

On Fort Riley:

- Muzzleloader and archery: Sept. 1 - Oct. 3, 2010
- Firearm Season for Holders of Any-Elk Permits: Oct. 1 - Dec. 31, 2010
- Firearm First Segment: Oct. 1-31, 2010
- Firearm Second Segment: Nov. 1-30, 2010
- Firearm Third Segment: Dec. 1-31, 2010

ANTELOPE:

- Firearm: Oct. 1-4, 2010
- Archery: Sept. 18-26 and Oct. 9-31, 2010
- Muzzleloader: Sept. 27 - Oct. 4, 2010

UPLAND GAME BIRDS

PHEASANTS

- Season: Nov. 13, 2010 - Jan. 31, 2011
- Youth Season: Nov. 6-7, 2010
- Daily bag limit: 4 cocks in regular season, 2 cocks in youth season

QUAIL

- Season: Nov. 13, 2010 - Jan. 31, 2011
- Youth Season: Nov. 6-7, 2010
- Daily Bag Limit Quail: 8 in regular season, 4 in youth season

PRAIRIE CHICKEN

- Early Season (East Unit): Sept. 15 - Oct. 15, 2010
- Regular Season (East and Northwest Units): Nov. 20, 2010 - Jan. 31, 2011
- Regular Season (Southwest Unit): Nov. 20, 2010 - Dec. 31, 2010
- Daily Bag Limit: 2 (East and Northwest Units) 1 (Southwest Unit)
- Possession Limit: twice daily bag

TURKEY

2010 FALL TURKEY:

- Season: Oct. 1 - Nov. 30, 2010 and Dec. 13-31, 2010; and Jan. 10-31, 2011.

SMALL GAME ANIMALS

SQUIRREL

- Season: June 1, 2010 - 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, 2010 - March 10, 2011
- Daily bag/Possession Limit: No Limit

FURBEARER HUNTING & TRAPPING

- Season: Nov. 17, 2010 - 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, 2010 - March 31, 2011

FISHING SEASONS

TROUT SEASON

- Oct. 15, 2010 - April 15, 2011
- Daily creel limit: 5
- Designated trout waters listed at kdwp.state.ks.us

BULLFROG

- July 1 - Oct. 31, 2010
- Daily Creel Limit: 8

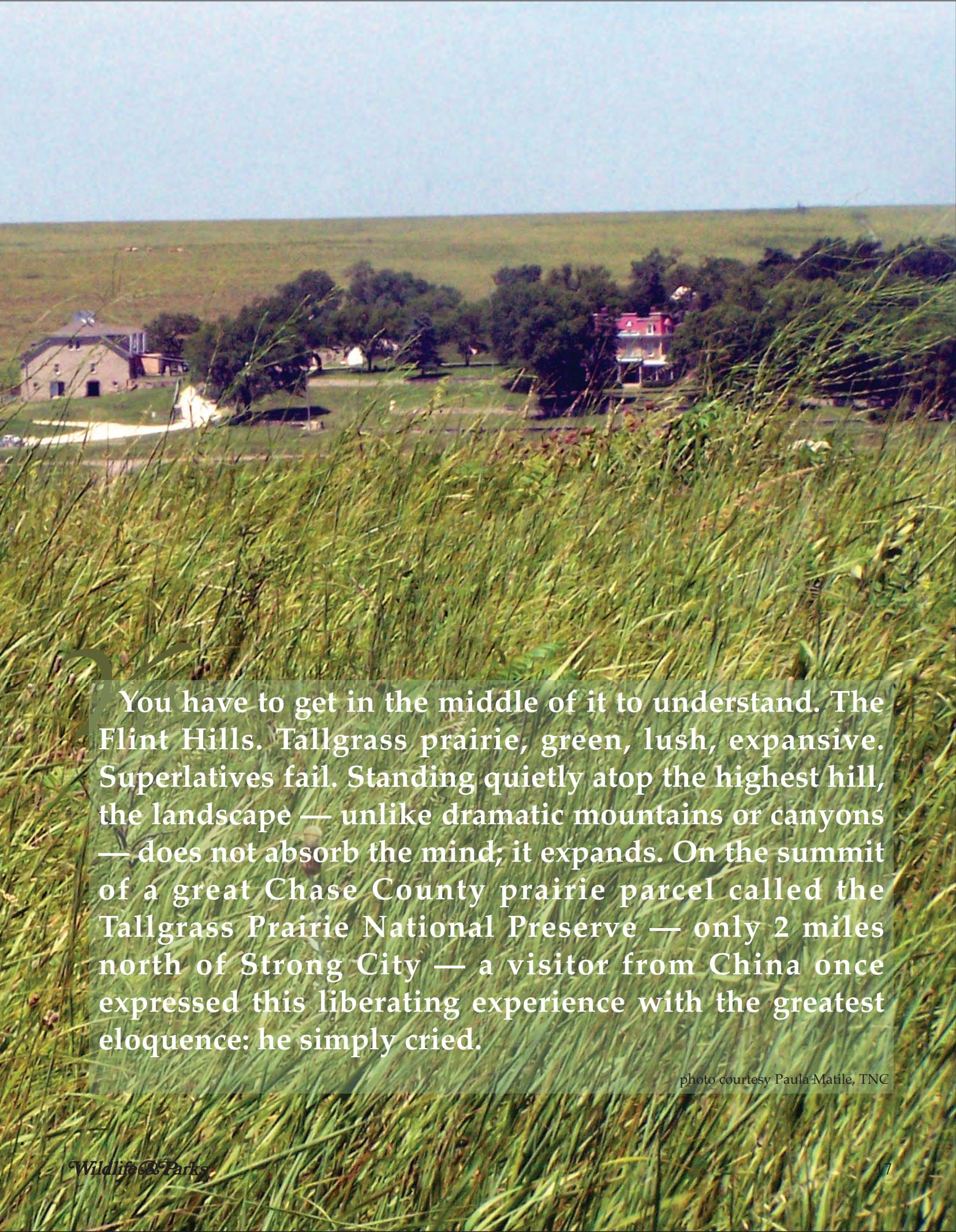
FLOATLINE FISHING

- July 15 - Sept. 15, 2010
- Daylight hours only – Hillsdale, Council Grove, Tuttle Creek, Kanopolis, John Redmond, Toronto, Wilson and Pomona reservoirs only.

FIELD OF DREAMS:

Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve

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



You have to get in the middle of it to understand. The Flint Hills. Tallgrass prairie, green, lush, expansive. Superlatives fail. Standing quietly atop the highest hill, the landscape — unlike dramatic mountains or canyons — does not absorb the mind; it expands. On the summit of a great Chase County prairie parcel called the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve — only 2 miles north of Strong City — a visitor from China once expressed this liberating experience with the greatest eloquence: he simply cried.

photo courtesy Paula Matile, TNC

Originally encompassing an estimated 140-167 million acres, today's tallgrass prairie is estimated at nearly 6.7 million acres, more than 70 percent of which is found in Kansas.

Millions of people have driven through the tallgrass prairie in the unique Kansas landscape known as the Flint Hills. Relatively few have experienced the beauty and sense of freedom flowing from river bottoms and verdant, rolling natural grasslands 50 miles in every direction. It's as if the very air itself could lift a person and carry them above the Earth as it was in the beginning. It is said, in fact, that from the highest point on the preserve, one may see more natural tallgrass prairie than remains in all of Indiana, Iowa, Illinois, and Missouri combined.

As word gets out about this national treasure, visitation is bound to grow. One of the most beautiful places on the face of the Earth can't go unnoticed forever. This is the real "Field of Dreams," and the imperative has been "open it, and they will come." It's already built, and it is very much open.

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In the 1990s, I followed the news of efforts to create the preserve with passing interest. As the National Park Service (NPS) had noted, the tallgrass prairie was the only ecosystem in North America not represented by an NPS preserve. Originally spanning portions of 14 states from Texas to Minnesota and encompassing an estimated 140-167 million acres, today's tallgrass prairie is estimated at nearly 6.7 million acres, more than 70 percent of which is found in Kansas.*

Considering the historical, economic, and environmental importance of the region, this seemed a curious deficit. In July 2010, I leaped at the opportunity to sate my curiosity about this prairie wonder and the story behind the "park." More than a story, I found, it was a long and arduous journey. As KDWP Secretary Mike Hayden, a major player in this drama, told me, "It took 112 years get this done."

Hayden was referring to an 1884 Fourth of July speech by D.W. Wilder, editor of the *Hiawatha World*, advocating a tallgrass "park . . . ten thousand acres broad." The editor, apparently observing the loss of tallgrass prairie habitat, was ahead of his time. Serious interest in a prairie preserve didn't begin until

the 1920s, when researchers from the universities of Iowa, Illinois, and Nebraska began studying the plants and animals of this ecosystem. In 1930, a professor from the University of Illinois introduced the first proposal to incorporate a large portion of tallgrass prairie into the national park system. This proposal died when the Great Depression hit.

The struggle to establish a tallgrass preserve in Kansas or a nearby state began in earnest during the 1950s. An overview of that journey provides an even greater appreciation for the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve that now graces Chase County, Kansas.

Although some 70 years premature, Wilder's speech was prescient because the first specific



This three-story stone mansion was built by Stephen F. Jones in 1881 for \$25,000. Built for entertainment, the house featured two parlors on the main floor, a landscaped front lawn with flowing fountain, and three circular stone walls separating buggy parking spaces.



photo courtesy Paula Matile, TNC

American bison once roamed the Flint Hills by the millions. Today, a portion of the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve is grazed by a small bison herd that serves as a “satellite herd” (maintained for pure bison genetics) for a herd at South Dakota’s Wind Cave National Park.

proposal for a tallgrass prairie preserve was in Pottawatomie County, not far from Hiawatha. G.W. Tomanek and F.W. Albertson, professors at Fort Hays State University, investigated 24 sites in nine states and issued recommendations that, in 1958, were adopted by NPS in a report entitled *Proposal For a True Prairie National Park*. The proposal called for a 34,000-acre park in Pottawatomie County. Local support was lukewarm, and the idea floundered although NPS continued to pursue creation of a park of at least 30,000 acres. By 1960, NPS had narrowed the concept to four sites: Chase, Elk, and Pottawatomie counties in Kansas and Osage County, Oklahoma.

In 1960, following NPS recommendations, members of the Kansas Congressional delegation introduced federal legislation establishing a 57,000-acre park abutting the east side of Tuttle Creek Reservoir. At this point, things became dicey. The Pottawatomie County Commission wanted a 1-mile buffer for development around the newly-developed lake, an important economic issue for the

city of Manhattan and surrounding communities. In addition, local landowners, already stung by the federal government’s use of the power of eminent domain to take agricultural land for the reservoir, began to form opposition to the park, which they feared would take more land from private hands. In 1961, a bill was introduced to Congress that did not include a buffer zone, alienating many previous supporters from the business community and inflaming the fears of local

farmers and ranchers. Passions came to a head when the Secretary of the Interior and the Director of NPS landed two helicopters on private land within the proposed park’s boundaries. Met by a local rancher who leased the land, they were driven off the property at gunpoint.

Combined with the lack of a buffer in the proposal and Congressional opposition from western states, the incident helped further galvanize opposition. This and subsequent bills were



Like the mansion, this 100-foot-by-60-foot, three-story barn was built from locally-quarried cottonwood limestone. The 20,000-square-foot barn was built to house 40 horses with room in the loft for hay.

defeated. Pottawatomie County would no longer figure in the mix for a tallgrass preserve. Except for a failed proposal in 1969 by the Nixon Administration, no further legislative effort to establish a preserve would emerge until the 1970s.

Lines had been drawn, with agricultural and ranching interests on one side, environmental groups and park proponents on the other, and local government and economic interests straddling the fence. One particularly impor-

tant concern for local governments was the loss of property tax revenue.

In the following years, NPS would continue to study possible sites, and opposition groups would become more organized. NPS also began to explore alternative land-acquisition strategies, from traditional acquisition by eminent domain to use of easements and even a “regional management concept” whereby NPS would work with landowners to manage private land using park

management practices. This final concept also promoted the “archaeology, history, sociology, and economics of the Flint Hills region,” according to a 1998 NPS report entitled *Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve Legislative History, 1920-1996*, by Rebecca Conrad and Susan Hess.

In 1976, Congress passed a bill authorizing the Secretary of the Interior to provide local governments “in-lieu” payments to offset loss of tax revenue from public lands within those governments’ jurisdictions. Still, both sides hardened their stances, expanded their support bases, and conducted public programs designed to shore up support for their positions. Bills were introduced in 1977 and 1979 that would have significantly expanded the size of any park, but they were easily defeated. More bills and proposals were put forth, one in 1975 (H.R. 5592) that would have acquired as much as 3.5 million acres in the Flint Hills of Kansas and Oklahoma.

If environmental groups had become intransigent in demands for a huge tract of land obtained by eminent domain, opposition groups were equally strident. Prominent opponents were taken to statements such as “Preserve, reserve, whatever you call it, it’s a park. We’re opposed to a national park in Kansas.” For them, a preserve meant one of two things: the area would become an “uninhabited no-man’s land” or a “tourist trap compete with curio shops and hot dog stands.”

For a time, the battleground switched to Oklahoma when that state’s U.S. Congressional delega-



TNC Flint Hills project director Brian Obermeyer explains the benefits of rotational grazing on the Preserve. Big Pasture, which is grazed by cattle, is separated into three segments, one burnt each year. The practice is cost-efficient for grazing and enhances the grassland’s value to wildlife, especially greater prairie chicken.

The home was a three-story mansion overlooking Fox Creek. It was finished in 1881 at a cost of \$25,000, and Jones shortly added the barn for an additional \$15,000.

tion introduced legislation that would establish a preserve at the Osage site. But in 1988, when some environmental groups began to lobby nationwide for a much larger preserve, key members of the Oklahoma delegation withdrew their support.

By this time, however, the Midwest Regional Office (MWR) of NPS had decided on a more modest approach. While some in the environmental coalition wanted to preserve most remaining tallgrass prairie, MWR considered previous approaches — use of eminent domain, for example — unrealistic. From this point on, only willing sellers would be considered, perhaps a turning point in the struggle for a tallgrass preserve.

Attention once again returned to Kansas. In Chase County, a historic ranch near Strong City — the Z-Bar, more historically known as Spring Hill Ranch — was being held in trust by Boatman's National Bank of Kansas City.

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At this point, however, we must rest our narrative drama. But don't go away during intermission; we're going to travel back in time 132 years, narrowing our focus to the treasure at hand. Then we'll return to our narrative knowing all that was at stake, then finally, what came to be.

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For hundreds of years before European settlement, Kansa and Osage Indians and millions of bison roamed these hills. After the Civil War, however, the state was



Park ranger Ron Clark shows off the stone root cellar, adjacent to the kitchen. Garden vegetables could be stored year-round, and a skylight provided ample light for cooks to find what they needed for the day's meals.

quickly settled by pioneering families. In 1878, successful Colorado rancher Stephen F. Jones decided to reverse the 19th century mandate for success and "Go East, young man." Not exactly a young man, the 52-year-old Jones thought this good advice nonetheless and bought 7,000 acres of Flint Hills tallgrass prairie north of Strong City. Finding abundant hills and springs on the property, he aptly named it Spring Hill Farm and Stock Ranch. He reportedly enclosed the entire ranch with 30 miles of 5-foot-high stone fence although little of this remains. In 1881, he hired local contractor David Rettiger to build a home, outbuildings, and a 110-foot by 60-foot, three-story barn from locally-quarried cottonwood limestone.

The home was a three-story mansion overlooking Fox Creek. It was finished in 1881 at a cost of \$25,000, and Jones shortly added the barn for an additional \$15,000. A Strong City Independent issue dated Oct. 15, 1881, described the homestead: "...we arrived at the palatial residence of the wealthiest man in the country [sic], S.F. Jones. It stands on a very prominent hill and can be seen for miles, either way. At a distance, it could be readily taken for an old Scotch castle. It is a magnificent structure."

The barn encompassed 20,000 square feet and would house at least 40 horses with ample room for winter hay storage in the loft. The 4,000-square-foot house, on the other hand, was built for entertainment, with two parlors

on the main floor, a cistern that ran fresh water into the kitchen and through a spring room for keeping perishables fresh in summer, and a landscaped front lawn with fountain and three stone walls circling the front of the home, each wall separating a tier of parking space for visitors. After water left the house, it ran to the fountain and underneath the road to an orchard nestled close to Fox Creek. The view from the front veranda was (and is) breathtaking.

But Jones must have been a restless man because only nine years later, in 1888, he sold his paradise to neighbor Barney Lantry for \$95,000. Combined with his adjacent holdings, Lantry

now had an estate spanning 13,000 acres, but he and his family lived in town while ranch hands occupied the house Jones built. Lantry owned stone quarries throughout Chase County and supplied building stone and crushed rock throughout the U.S. His firm helped build the railroad line to the top of Pike's Peak. Lantry died in 1895, and when one of his sons followed in 1904, the property was split. Charles and Nannie Patten bought 9,682 acres of the ranch in 1907 for more than \$180,000, and Otto and Flora Benninghoven purchased the house, barn, outbuildings, and 1,080 acres of pasture in 1909. The Benninghovens, ironically, were

the first to live in the house for a long time. Otto died in 1917, but Flora hung on until she was forced to sell during the Great Depression.

In 1921, the Pattens sold their holdings to Lester and Beulah Urschel for \$400,000, but the Depression was hard on everyone: along with Flora Benninghoven, the Urschels sold their property, as well. Both properties were eventually purchased by wealthy Kansas City businessman George Davis. The Jones and Lantry ranches were reunited. In fact, Davis eventually bought 70,000 acres in the area. Davis was once president of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and his ranch operation was known as the Davis-Noland-Merrill Grain Company, a name which it carried for many years after his death in 1955. Like most previous owners, he never lived in the ranch house. It would seem that through all the years, the only owners to embrace the ranch house as home were the Benninghovens.

In 1971, the ranch house complex was entered on the National Registry of Historical Places, and in 1975, Davis-Noland-Merrill Grain Company merged with the Z Bar Cattle Company, which became its official name. By 1986, the Z Bar had disbanded, and 10,894 acres of the ranch were placed into a trust managed by Boatman's National Bank of Kansas City.

Which ends the intermission and brings us back our tallgrass saga.



The tallgrass prairie is more than grass. Wildflowers abound, including purple and prairie coneflowers, partridge pea, gayfeathers, wild blue indigo and more.

If any new bill to establish a park was to be presented to Congress, prohibition of eminent domain and protection of the land's tax base would have to be written into the legislation.



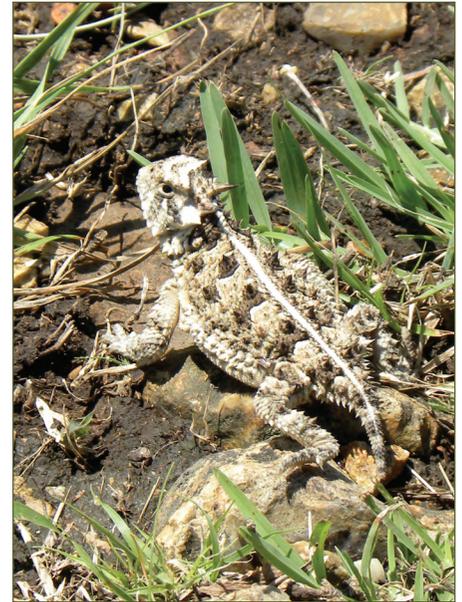
Mike Blair photo

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In June, 1988, the Kansas Chapter of National Audubon Society secured an option to purchase the Z Bar. Executive director Ron Klataske had long held an interest in this issue and was himself a proponent of the willing-seller concept of public land acquisition. Klataske met with U.S. Rep. Dan Glickman, and they

arranged a series of meetings that brought together local leaders, landowners, and conservation groups to work out a plan for the ranch. While most ranchers had no objection to Audubon buying the land, they still feared federal involvement. If any new bill to establish a park was to be presented to Congress, prohibition of eminent domain and protection of the land's tax base would have to be written into the legislation. A draft bill not only included these provisions but added a 20-member advisory board to help oversee the project; the largest block of membership in the committee represented local interests.

Every previous objection to a tallgrass preserve had apparently been addressed, but the Kansas Grassroots Association wrote Glickman saying they would "actively and consistently" oppose the bill or any like it. Newspapers throughout the state



focused on this friction, one prominent paper featuring a picture of five ranchers posed on the Z Bar lawn with arms crossed in defiance. For the next two years, meetings to discuss the proposal were picketed or otherwise disrupted, all of which made headlines. By 1991, Glickman was ready to introduce a bill proposing a Z Bar preserve, but opposition was strong and emotions in Chase County running high. In addition, the Kansas Congressional delegation was split on the issue.

This was not just an issue of agriculture versus the environment. Flint Hills ranchers felt that they were good stewards of the land and saw irony in the fact that this stewardship is what made the area so attractive to environmental groups. As Conard and Hess point out in their report, ranchers "could not accept the proposition that hundreds of thousands of visitors annually, no matter how much money they pumped into



Mike Blair photo

The tallgrass prairie's diversity of plants is nearly matched with wildlife species. Of course, the greater prairie chicken is the star, but upland sandpipers and horned lizards also call the grassland home. The area is particularly important to grassland-nesting birds.

the local economy, would be more in harmony with the prairie ecology than the cattle that grazed the hills.”

By late 1991, however, momentum began to shift in favor of a park or preserve at the Z Bar. Glickman introduced a bill in the House in October, and it passed. In December, Sen. Nancy Kassebaum, herself a local landowner, threw her support behind “creation of a private foundation to purchase the Z Bar.” This would be a major turning point.

From 1991 to 1994, Kassebaum managed to bring the various parties to the table, believing that people could eventually agree if they listened to each other. Although her efforts during this time did not result in a private nonprofit purchase of the Z Bar or legislation creating a preserve, it brought all parties into agreement that a nonprofit purchase was acceptable.

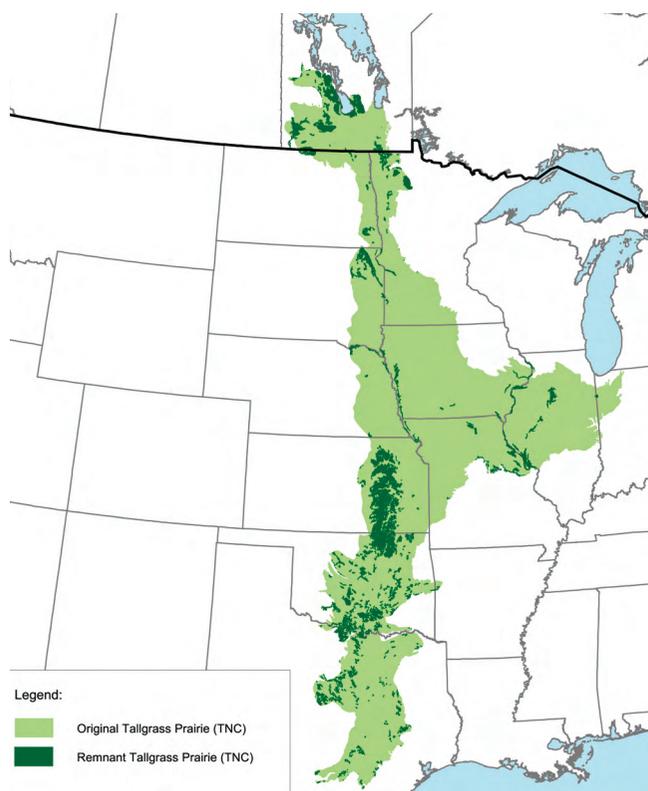
By 1994, Audubon’s option to buy was running out, and they did not have the resources to make the purchase. But they had kept the option alive for years at considerable expense. Enter the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) and its nonprofit land trust affiliate, the National Park Trust (NPT). With the support of Glickman and Kassebaum, NPT purchased the property in June 1994. A preserve or park seemed inevitable at this point, but the question of federal involvement

was still to be worked out. It was decided that NPS would be allowed to purchase the Z Bar homestead and out buildings, and would be allowed to accrue no more than 180 surrounding acres “by donation,” and bills were introduced in both the House and Senate to create a public-private prairie park on the Z Bar site. In the House, Glickman introduced

guished. Glickman and Slattery were replaced by newly-elected representatives Todd Tiahrt and Sam Brownback, respectively.

To complicate matters further, NPT was struggling to pay the mortgage on the Z Bar, but this problem was temporarily resolved in 1995 when a large Flint Hills landowner, prominent Texas rancher Ed Bass, contributed \$1 million to the preserve and paid another \$2 million in advance for a 35-year grazing lease on the property. NPT helped by hiring an on-site employee to open the ranch house and buildings to the local community and create lines of communication locally. In April 1995, Kassebaum and Dole reintroduced a bill in the Senate, and Roberts and Meyers followed suit in the House. Although the 180-acre NPS acquisition limit remained a key provision of the legislation, the bill got buried in mountains of other park legislation being considered. Finally, in March 1996, Kassebaum managed to attach a Z Bar bill to a package of bills that included 60 other parks. This legislation failed, however, when Democrats filibustered the comprehensive bill.

Undeterred, Kassebaum reintroduced the Z Bar legislation as a stand-alone bill. Despite nearly a year of wrangling in both houses and initial opposition from the Clinton Administration over other issues, the House passed a comprehensive parks bill that included the Z Bar, and the Senate



Tallgrass prairie once covered portions of 14 states and encompassed 140-167 million acres. Today, approximately 6.7 million acres remain, more than 70 percent in Kansas.

the bill with co-sponsorship from representatives Jan Meyers, Jim Slattery, and Pat Roberts. In the Senate, Kassebaum introduced the bill with co-sponsorship from Sen. Bob Dole.

It was an election year, however, and the legislation lan-

From 1991 to 1994, Kassebaum managed to bring the various parties to the table, believing that people could eventually agree if they listened to each other.

unanimously complied — only one month before the 1996 elections and in the last week of Kassebaum's final Senate term. On Nov. 12, 1996, President Clinton signed the bill into law.

Although the law had created a public-private venture to establish the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve, it did not provide funding now much needed by NPT to pay off the mortgage on the property, and its finances were tight. For almost 10 years, NPT held onto the property through fundraising and money from Bass' grazing rights. By 2004, however, they let it be known that they could not hold on any longer, and they would have to sell the property. Because of her passion for the tallgrass prairie, Kansas Gov. Kathleen Sebelius was concerned that the whole project may yet fail. In response, she founded a new nonprofit, the Kansas Park Trust (KPT), to explore the possibility of taking over the mortgage. In February 2005, KPT secured enough donations to assume the loan, but this was only a stop-gap measure. Among those on the KPT board was former governor and now KDWP Secretary Mike Hayden. Hayden had worked with the Kansas Chapter of The Nature Conservancy (TNC) before, and he suggested that they were in the best position to take possession of the property. KPT was rapidly running out of resources, and the note on the property would come due soon.

Sebelius' office contacted TNC, which had actually considered involvement years earlier, and TNC Kansas State Director Alan

Pollom became actively involved. After much negotiation, Pollom secured a \$5 million loan from the organization's national office, and in March 2005, TNC became the new owner, having made it possible to avoid the threatened loss of the preserve by less than a day.

A law establishing the preserve had been passed, and after 70 years (or 112, depending on one's reckoning) of struggle, the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve's land, as Hayden notes, was "secure for all time."

Hayden was right in suggesting that TNC had the ability to handle the load. (And the experience, as well: TNC owns and operates 39,000 of tallgrass preserve in Osage County, Oklahoma.) Within two years, TNC had not only paid off the loan, they had repurchased the grazing rights, reacquired previ-

ously-severed mineral rights, then plugged and reclaimed 27 abandoned gas locations on the property. *TNC has that kind of money?* you might ask. Not exactly, but its fundraising track record is excellent. They sought large donations — \$250,000 to \$1 million — and, perhaps because of the importance of the project combined with its long history, donations were quickly secured. Major donors include the Fred C. and Mary R. Koch Foundation, the Capitol Federal Foundation, Burlington Northern Santa Fe, David and Vicki Cox, Kenneth and Ann Baum, the Kresge Foundation, AT&T, Westar Energy, Inc., Mr. and Mrs. Fred L. Merrill, and the Lattner Family Foundation.

When asked who is most responsible for making this project happen, the consensus is "Nancy Kassebaum." Hayden says, "To be

photo courtesy Paula Matile, TNC



If the prairie chicken is the flagship wildlife species of the tallgrass prairie, big bluestem the flagship grass. The soil is some of the richest found anywhere, and big bluestem can grow to heights of eight feet or more in places.

honest, Senator Kassebaum.” Former preserve superintendent Steve Miller says, “It was her. To make it happen when it did, it was her.” Pollom and TNC Flint Hills project director Brian Obermeyer both add that Hayden was “a huge advocate for the preserve.” Truth be told, everyone mentioned in this article, and many overlooked, played critical parts. As Kassebaum herself said before a joint session of Congress Oct. 3, 1996, in her last such address, “The passage of the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve Act would not have been possible without the countless individuals who have worked over the years to see this idea become a reality.”

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In retrospect, the preserve is a modest project, especially considering the monumental task it was to complete. The federal government owns only 34 acres, and it would take an act of Congress to allow them to have more than 180 acres. Even the 180 acres would have to be donated. TNC remains the private landowner of the remaining 10,842 acres of the preserve, all of which remain fully on the tax rolls. This is a tiny fraction of the estimated 4.9 million acres of tallgrass prairie left in Kansas. But the area is surrounded by ranchers who will never farm because of the rocky composition of Flint Hills

soil. Those neighbors, combined with special management practices on the preserve, make the place very special, indeed.

“All of our neighbors seem to be really good land managers,” says Kristen Hase, natural resource program manager for NPS at Tallgrass, reflecting a dramatically tempered relationship between NPS and local landowners since the battle for a preserve started. She’s not the only one at NPS with warm feelings toward their neighbors.

“A property like the Tallgrass Preserve gives the public an appreciation for what private landowners are doing here,” adds preserve superintendent Wendy Lauritzen, who has a degree in range management.

Hase aids TNC (and vice versa) whenever possible with projects on the preserve. The pulse of this help is the Heartland Network, a core of NPS biologists who travel the country helping with projects such as bird sampling and special projects specific to a given area. In addition to species monitoring, Heartland staff may maintain data bases on the effects of prescribed fire, stream water quality, prairie restoration, and invasive species encroachment. They, as well as Hase and her three seasonal staff, are on hand to help TNC with whatever projects they may need on the entire property.

Rotational burning and cattle grazing are at the heart of TNC’s and NPS’s joint management practices on the preserve. Approximately 7,700 acres of the preserve is set aside for cattle grazing, a historically sound



Mike Blair photo

From atop the Preserve’s highest point, it is said that you can see more natural tallgrass prairie than remains in all of Indiana, Iowa, Illinois, and Missouri combined.

When asked who is most responsible for making this project happen, the consensus is “Nancy Kassebaum.”

practice and one which has taken the place of bison, elk, and pronghorn that once roamed the prairie. Approximately 1,800 cattle are grazed annually, but not on the entire preserve. The largest grazing area — a 4,000-acre pasture aptly named Big Pasture — is separated into three segments, each of which is burned once every three years. This burning-grazing regime, called “patch-burn grazing,” imitates historical estimates of wild-fire frequency on the prairie and rejuvenates the vegetation. The one-third segment burnt in the spring will attract almost all the cattle grazing that summer — increasing their weight gain by roughly 2 pounds per day — allowing other portions of the pasture to rest. This, in turn, pro-

vides the vegetative structure necessary to attract species once abundant in the Flint Hills, such as the prairie chicken. In fact, in the five years since implementation of rotational burning, prairie chicken numbers on the preserve have tripled. Henslow’s sparrows, once hard to find, are now common, and more than 44 species of butterflies were counted last spring. In addition, a number of bottomland acres are being restored from smooth brome to native grasses and forbs.

The beauty of this management practice is that cattle graze where the grass has recently been burned, largely eliminating the need for fencing except around the property’s perimeter and 1,100 acres of the preserve reserved for bison grazing.



Mike Blair photo

Purple coneflower splashes color across the rich green pasture. Wildflowers abound in spring and early fall.

SOME CORE PRINCIPLES OF MANAGEMENT ON THE TALLGRASS PRESERVE CAN BE FOUND IN THE NPS GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN, DEVELOPED IN SEPTEMBER 2000:

- the preserve would be managed to maintain and enhance the tallgrass prairie within its boundaries;
- prescribed fire applications would make use of roads, fences, stream courses, topography, and burn frequencies to create a varied landscape, or vegetative mosaic;
- riparian areas would be protected to prevent erosion;
- state and federal threatened and endangered species would be considered in all management actions; and
- with the exception of agricultural crops that may be reintroduced to areas to recreate a historic scene, no alien, non-indigenous [plant] species would be introduced.

The bison serve as a satellite herd for a herd in Wind Cave National Park, in South Dakota’s Black Hills. The Wind Cave herd is one of the few in North America that is known to be genetically pure (having no cattle genes). The Tallgrass Preserve herd will help maintain that genetic purity and provide Wind Cave with more bison in the future. Currently, 14 bison graze the Tallgrass Preserve, a number bound to grow with natural reproduction. The bison herd not only helps maintain genetic integrity of the species, it serves as a living historic reminder of the area’s natural fauna.

NPS conducts bus tours on the area daily from Memorial Day through Oct. 30, weather and burn plans permitting. These tours



Tallgrass Preserve features 41 miles of hiking trails open 24/7 free of charge. These follow old pasture roads and are periodically mowed. Camping is not allowed.

follow the many old ranch roads that crisscross the pastures. The roads are a great place to observe the differences between pastures that have been burned recently and those where it's been a year or two. The newly-burned pasture on one side of a road has shorter, more patchy vegetation, harboring upland sandpipers, horned larks, nighthawks, and prairie chicken broods searching for insects. These burned patches also serve as important forage areas for spring migrants such as the American golden plover and buff-breasted sandpiper. The side burned the previous year is taller and has more residual vegetation, a good place for prairie chickens to nest and one that attracts a greater variety of grassland birds, such as the Henslow's sparrow, grasshopper sparrow, and dickcissel. Unique species such as the huge Lubber grasshopper, as well as more common ones such as the Texas horned lizard, may be found in both areas.

A fact largely unknown to most Kansans is that this magnificent area has 41 miles of trails open to public hiking 24 hours a day, seven days a week, free of charge. The Park Service also conducts interpretive tours of the homestead, which is worth the trip in itself. Three stocked ponds and Fox Creek are open to public fishing (catch-and-release only and managed under the KDWP's Fishing Impoundments and Stream Habitats program). NPS also maintains a historic stone schoolhouse on its acreage, and works with both Strong City and Cottonwood Falls whenever possible. Eventually, a bike path already connecting the two towns will extend all the way to the homestead. Annually, visitation is about 20,000.

As Steve Miller says, it is the combination of pristine natural and human history that makes this place so special: "A lot of park units are natural, but the Tallgrass Preserve has a rich human history,

a strong cultural overlay that enriches its possibilities. And because it's in the middle of the largest unplowed tallgrass prairie in the U.S., the place is unique."



The Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve is now a reality. The land is secured, paid for, and well-managed. End of story? Not quite. The Kansas Park Trust, originally established to capture an option to buy the place and find a stable owner, is now charged with one final mission: creation of an interpretive visitor's center, a place where people can gather inside to learn more about the region's natural and cultural history before experiencing the adventure before them. KPT has been working on this for several years, and plans are now in place.

Even this has not been a simple process. Plans have been submitted and a site selected, both of which will complement the historic look of the place. Funds have been raised. With Hayden at the helm as chairman, things have fallen into place. All parties have been brought together to develop a concept plan. Funds have been secured from the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT), the Department of Commerce, and TNC. An architectural firm has been hired and plans approved. Construction funding has been secured from KDOT (under the Scenic Byways Act), and the U.S. Department of Interior, each contributing \$3 million. Groundbreaking is scheduled for Nov. 12 of this year, and a number of dignitaries have been invited — including Kassebaum,

In fact, in the five years since implementation of rotational burning, prairie chicken numbers on the preserve have tripled.

Sebelius, Gov. Parkinson, Glickman, Roberts, U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar, and many others involved in this undertaking.

If all goes as planned, the center will be complete by the fall of 2011. The center will be comprised of two buildings joined by an entry portal with skylight, a place where groups can gather and visit before tours or entering the center. The interpretive building will include a bookstore, lobby, restrooms, exhibit space, and film room. The connected building will house administrative offices for TNC and NPS staff, as well as a conference room. The entire center will comprise approximately 5,000 square feet and will occupy space south of the barn, with a sloping stone facade designed to blend into the out-buildings around the homestead.

This final touch will offer visitors a complete educational experience when they visit Tallgrass. Like everything else in this saga, the center has been a joint effort, but Pollom gives Hayden more than a little credit. "If it hadn't been for Mike, the visitor's center would not have happened."

There are many famous quotes about the prairie, some not so complementary. But for the true prairie lover, whether cowboy or conservationist (or both), the favorite comes from Walt Whitman: "As to scenery . . . while I know the standard claim is that Yosemite, Niagara Falls, the Upper Yellowstone, and the like afford the greatest natural shows, I am not so sure but the prairies and plains, while less stunning at first sight, last longer, fill the esthetic

Fishing in the Day Use Area

Welcome to the preserve Day Use Area. Recreational fishing continues to be a long standing tradition deeply rooted in the Flint Hills culture. Enjoy the solitude and rich cultural heritage found at the preserve as you fish these ponds.

Fishing hours are from sunrise to sunset, March 1 through October 31. Three ponds are available for catch-and-release fishing as shown on the map below. Access to the ponds is by foot only. Please use the ranch road and then branch off using a different path to prevent trampling and erosion. Please observe all rules and safety regulations. Enjoy your stay.

REGULATIONS

- No trot lines or live bait.
- No bullfrogs.
- No smoking or open flames.
- No camping.
- No pets allowed.
- No hunting or firearms.
- No horseback riding.
- No biking or motorized vehicles.
- No boating or floating devices.
- No swimming or scuba diving.
- No alcoholic beverages.
- No collecting anything.

Rules enforced by Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks.

DAY USE AREA FISHING PONDS

FISHING HOURS
SUNRISE TO SUNSET
MARCH 1 - OCTOBER 31

CATCH AND RELEASE ONLY

PRESERVE FISHING PERMIT REQUIRED

A current Kansas fishing license is required for anglers between the ages of 16 and 65. A preserve fishing permit is also required. Please follow the four steps below to complete the preserve fishing permit:

- Step 1 - Pick up fishing permit from Permit Box below and complete left portion of card.
- Step 2 - Separate permit halves and drop left portion in Box 1 below.
- Step 3 - Keep right half of permit card with you while fishing.
- Step 4 - As you leave, fill out right half of permit card and drop in Box 2.

LEAVE NO TRACE OUTDOOR ETHICS

Please practice the following Leave No Trace outdoor ethics when visiting the preserve.

1. Plan ahead and prepare.
2. Pack it in, pack it out.
3. Leave what you find. No collecting.
4. Respect wildlife.
5. Be considerate of other visitors.

OUR PARTNERS

The Nature Conservancy
Protecting nature. Inspiring life.

Kansas Park Fund

Thank you for visiting the preserve.

Three stocked ponds and Fox Creek are open to catch-and-release fishing March 1-Oct. 31. The fisheries are managed through KDWP's F.I.S.H. program.

sense fuller, precede all the rest, and make North America's characteristic landscape."

Perhaps it takes a poet to make the greatest case for a preserve that honors a national landscape. Perhaps all descriptive efforts fail. Artist, photographer, writer: none can capture a landscape's overwhelming beauty; we can only

cling to a personal vision and offer inadequate representations that, hopefully, pay homage to all creation. But for those who made this project happen — and those who have since made the Tallgrass pilgrimage — the experience has created a sweet field of dreams, however restless the journey may have been. ♡

*Historical tallgrass prairie range data based on Kansas Biological Survey Report #98, May 2001, prepared by Stephen L. Egbert, Dana L. Peterson, Aimee M. Stewart, Chris L. Lauver, Clayton F. Blodgett, Kevin P. Price, and Edward A. Martinko.

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Public Land



Bill Graham photo

Duck Strategies

by Bill Graham
Platte City, MO

Cheyenne Bottoms is a magnet to migrating waterfowl and also to waterfowl hunters. Finding consistent success on a large public hunting area that receives considerable hunting pressure requires a little extra work and attention to detail.

Each autumn, the cattails turn reddish brown, and ducks and geese by the thousands flock to Kansas wetlands on public wildlife areas open to hunters. But marshes and skies filled with waterfowl won't guarantee a hunter that any birds will respond to decoys or calls and fly within shotgun range. That's why Rick Tomlinson, Great Bend, is a waterfowl strategist. He tweaks his hunting plans each day and applies extra care to blending into

the marsh, and usually his hunting parties are carrying bagged birds home from one of the state's most important and heavily hunted public wildlife areas.

On a morning in late November last year, shortly after a chilly sunrise, Tomlinson whispered to hunters lying prone on a low marsh island near the water's edge, their bodies covered with hand-pulled weeds.

"Canadas coming in from the

northwest, flying low," Tomlinson said. About 30 seconds passed, which seemed like 10 minutes to anxious hunters. Suddenly a flock of Canada geese in V-formation appeared low overhead, intent on landing in a decoy spread floating offshore from the island.

"Take 'em," Tomlinson shouted.

Shotguns roared and three geese fell into a marsh at the Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area. A retriever swam after them in a prime hunting spot open to all.

Kansas waterfowl hunters are blessed with wetlands and reservoirs throughout the state that serve as fall and winter stopovers for ducks and geese. The Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area is one of the finest and most important wetlands for migratory birds in North America. At almost 20,000 acres, the public wildlife area is part of a larger 41,000-acre "sink" in the prairie landscape northeast of Great Bend.

What's prime for waterfowl also lures hunters to the Cheyenne Bottoms pools open to shooting.

But honed waterfowl hunting skills are needed to consistently lure wise ducks and wary geese into gun range on a public area, birds that have learned how to avoid obvious blinds, unnatural decoys and humans during their migration south.

"By the time they get down here," Tomlinson said. "They've seen it all."

That calls for a plan, so the unabashed waterfowl enthusiast and professional guide uses strategies that help bag ducks and geese throughout the season. His hunting party that killed the Canada geese that morning also killed ducks and a white-fronted goose while shooting from the same island, an island visible from the Kansas 156 highway which passes near the marsh. His ideas are applicable to public wildlife areas throughout Kansas.

"One of the main things that I do is start my scouting the afternoon and early evening before the morning that I'm going to hunt," said Tomlinson, who hunts the marsh almost daily in season. "One of the main things with duck hunting is being where the ducks want to go." He drives the marsh roads and uses field glasses to look for waterfowl patterns.

"If I see water where birds are piling in or consistently using a

spot at night, I may hunt there the next day," Tomlinson said.

Factors such as food, hunting pressure, wind direction and weather influence what areas of the marsh ducks and geese prefer on different days. The best locations can also vary according to what species are most numerous in the marsh in a given week.

"It changes from day to day, and a lot of that is the hunting pressure," Tomlinson said. "If I've set up with five guys and we've done a lot of shooting, I won't use that place the next day."

Weather is the first thing he studies when planning the next day's hunt.

"The wind makes a difference," he said. "I try to get back in out of the wind, where there's low wave action."

That means picking a sheltered, downwind spot near the main

shore or on an island, a place where it's easier for waterfowl to rest and feed.

Bad winter weather with northerly winds sometimes makes the south end of the expansive marsh complex a good place to shoot geese. They're fighting the winds as they return to the marsh from feeding in the fields. An island or cove setup that also offers some wind protection is attractive.

Tomlinson uses a large, flat-bottom boat to reach shooting spots at Cheyenne Bottoms, and he's not shy about using decoys.

"I use a lot of decoys, more than most guys do," he said. "I like 100 to 150 duck decoys, and sometimes I'll go to 200 or more."

He uses a similar number of goose decoys. An assistant guide helps set the spread for hunting parties.



Bill Graham photo

Local Cheyenne Bottoms guide Rick Tomlinson scouts the public area the day before he plans to hunt. He'll set up in an area ducks are using, which often means hiding in a make-shift blind. Here Kansas City hunter Dave Zumbaugh settles in some fireweed.



Mike Miller photo

Cattails and bullrushes make great make-shift hides with the proper camouflage patterns. Ducks arriving in Kansas in November have likely seen a variety of hunter blinds and decoy spreads. Blending in with the shoreline vegetation is a better option. On a large public marsh like Cheyenne Bottoms, a duck boat and a retriever can be invaluable to hunters' success.

"When I hunt by myself, I might put out close to 100 decoys," Tomlinson said.

Those decoys are in the water plenty early. Tomlinson likes to have the spread set and hunters in position at least an hour before daylight. He hides his boat down the shore or on the back side of an island and walks back to the hunting spot. Since the birds are wise to blinds, he prefers to hunker down in cattails and weeds. Sometimes the hunters cover themselves in weeds and grasses to completely blend in with cover.

A full face mask helps. Dogs must lie quietly. When shooting time arrives, Tomlinson uses duck and goose calls sparingly.

"I use very little calling," Tomlinson said. "A lot of guys think more calling is always better."

Instead, he's found a lot of calling on a public area usually just alerts waterfowl that hunters are near.

"I use a whistle a lot," he said. "A duck quack doesn't echo. But a duck call often does echo. A whistle doesn't echo. All you want to do is get their attention."

More tips:

A listing of public hunting areas is available at the KDWP website www.kdwp.state.ks.us/news/Hunting/Where-to-Hunt-in-Kansas. You can also link to the weekly waterfowl reports from this page.

••

Special rules apply at some public wetlands; study an area's guidelines before leaving for the hunt.

••

Be courteous to other hunters in the marsh by keeping a safe and respectable distance from them, and be safe with boats and guns in the pre-dawn darkness.

••

Know your ducks, bag limits and effective shooting ranges. Season dates and daily bag limits are posted at kdwp.state.ks.us/news/Hunting/When-to-Hunt/Migratory-Birds.



Mike Miller photo

In the early hours, Tomlinson likes to listen closely to how the ducks are talking to one another, and he adjusts his calling style accordingly to match their mood.”

“Listening to the birds is part of the skill,” he said. “On some days, they are a lot more vocal.” But on many days, quiet is best.

“Normally, you can hear two or three or four guys calling, and they sound like hunters,” Tomlinson said. “I try to stay

away from sounding like that.”

Advance scouting, being in place well before sunrise, plentiful decoys, extra concealment and restrained calling can all help a waterfowl hunter find success on public areas. But Tomlinson is also a firm believer in dog power so downed game isn’t wasted.

“One of the most important things is the use of a good retrieving dog,” he said.

A dog that can bring dead birds

into shore and nab wounded birds before they dive or swim away, also reduces the movement by hunters on shore or the necessity to use the boat to fetch birds.

On heavily hunted public areas, making a marsh spot look duck friendly and hunter free is the key factor. When birds are flying in, Tomlinson said, “keep your head down and don’t move.”



Marc Murrell photo

There’s nothing quite like being on the big marsh at sunrise in November, but there is generally going to be some competition from other hunters on a public area. However, with some scouting and a little extra effort, the hunting can be fantastic.

NEW LIFE

A wooden signpost stands in a grassy field. The top horizontal beam of the signpost has the words "JAMESTOWN WILDLIFE AREA" painted in white, uppercase letters. Below this, a smaller horizontal beam features a white arrow pointing to the right. The background shows a vast, flat landscape with patches of water and distant hills under a clear sky.

JAMESTOWN WILDLIFE AREA

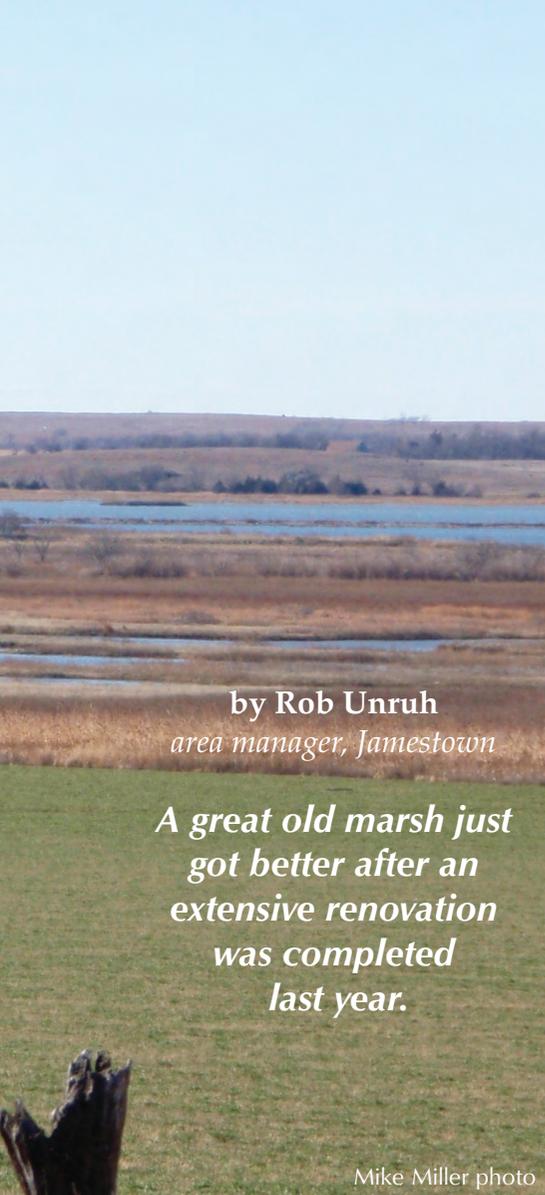
FOR AN OLD SCHOOL MARSH

September 19, 2009, was a spectacular fall day, and a crowd anxiously gathered in northeast Cloud County. Hunters young and old, neighboring landowners, state legislators, local mayors and county commissioners, KDWP staff, conservation organization leaders, engineers and local businessmen were there to dedicate the long-awaited renovation of Jamestown Wildlife Area. The land we now call Jamestown Wildlife Area was deeded to the state by Congress in the mid-1860s. Jamestown is one of the original 12 Kansas “school marshes” sold by the state to provide funds for Emporia State Teachers College, now Emporia State University. As with many wetlands across North America, the Jamestown wetlands were deeded to settlers to be drained for other land uses. The dedication ceremony in September 2009, recognized the efforts of conservation organizations and agencies working together to restore and protect these crucial wildlife habitats.

Historically, Jamestown was a waterfowl migration cornerstone made of fresh and saltwater marshes, riparian areas, and native grasslands. The core area

stretches from the upper reaches of the 138-square-mile Marsh Creek watershed in Jewell County southeasterly through southwest Republic County and the northwest corner of Cloud County where it drains into Buffalo Creek 8 miles west of the Buffalo’s confluence with the Republican River. This natural salt marsh wetland is made up of two larger basins, a north and south basin in the shape of an hourglass. The marshes were usually wet in spring and dry in the summer, leaving salt, especially from the salty, artesian spring water on the west side of the south marsh, lying on top of the cracked soil. Sometimes the wet-dry cycle was reversed, but it always attracted wildlife, which attracted people.

Native Americans used the marshes as the natural weather cycles allowed, but early settlers, hunters and anglers dammed the marshes, trying to make the wet season last longer than the dry. Evidence of these old lake-building attempts can still be seen below the present dams. Over decades, the lakes silted in and large expanses of cattails grew — a hint that Mother Nature was still aware of her marsh.



by Rob Unruh
area manager, Jamestown

***A great old marsh just
got better after an
extensive renovation
was completed
last year.***

Mike Miller photo

In the late 1920s, the then Kansas Forestry Fish and Game Commission purchased several, northern marsh tracts from private landowners. The first concrete low-head dam was constructed during the winter of 1931-1932, replacing the former wood-post and bridge-plank structures. This dam created the Republic County State Fishing Lake, which now is the Gamekeeper Marsh. In the 1950s and 1960s, more tracts were purchased to the south in an area known as the Jamestown Gun Club. In the 1920s, a local group of 25 stockholders leased this marsh from private landowners for hunting, fishing, boating, swimming and picnicking. The club's first wooden dam was built in 1928 in an area just south of the present

Gun Club Marsh Dam. Just above the present-day dam, the club built boat docks, two boat houses holding six boats each, a suspended walking bridge, concession stand and rental cabins.

The lake was more than just a hunting club, and on July 28, 1935, Martin Blosser, a local barnstormer turned boat enthusiast sponsored a powerboat regatta. Eight races were scheduled for the day and a professional "surf rider" from Salina put on an exciting show. Racers traveled from four states and as far away as Kansas City and Tulsa. Twenty-eight powerboats with 100hp motors recorded some of the fastest times of the year that day. More than 2,000 spectators watched from tents on the eastern shore. In those days, the club's Sportsman Lake was estimated to have a depth of 6 feet.

In the early days, the Commission also managed the marshes for fishing, boating and other recreation. The second concrete low-head dam was constructed in 1957, but management and recreation were controlled by the flows of Marsh Creek. By the 1970s, sediment from natural erosion and accelerated runoff due to increased agricultural activity in the watershed had accumulated in the lake and marshes.

Waterfowl hunting was at times spectacular, but it became increasingly difficult for hunters to wade or boat as the marshes slowly filled and rank stands of cattails grew. Area managers submitted requests for help in the early 1970s, and in 1977 the first engineering study was completed by Wilson and Company of Salina. However, the project's price tag of \$479,000 was too costly.

The marsh complex is just north of the city of Jamestown, and the wildlife area is a 4,729-acre public hunting area situated in the Central Flyway, making it an important migration stop-over for waterfowl, shore birds and other water birds,

including the endangered whooping crane, which is a frequent fall and spring visitor. I was hired as manager of Jamestown in 1990. I had hunted the area for several years and was all-too familiar with the mud. My prior experience working for the Soil Conservation Service helped me better understand the landscape and processes responsible for sediment filling the marshes.

Just like me, all former Jamestown managers had dreamed of how much better it could be. I read all the old correspondence and visited with many of them, including Elden Bergstrom, Don Dick, Darrell Monte, Lee Queal, Steve Sorensen, Ron Ruthstrom, as well as other wetland professionals. They showed me copies of grand projects designed to offset the sediment and control the water; projects that never got funded. Area hunters told me tales of the good old days, but they didn't quite remember the bad days. Now it became my charge to explore options to keep this marsh functioning, both for wildlife and for hunters.

There was strong public support for saving the marshes. Public input included renovation ideas, as well as pledges of monetary support. When told that the renovation would dry up the marshes for a time, area hunters were willing to make the sacrifice.

Important land acquisition that would be crucial to the renovation actually started in 1985, when the department partnered with Ducks Unlimited to purchase land and build several small wetlands under Matching Aid to Restore States Habitat (MARSH) - the first project of this type in Kansas. The Florrell and Hedstrom tracts were purchased through MARSH, and more lands were purchased by KDWP in the 1990s, including the Shelley Wetland, the Jamestown Oxbow Marshes, and the Young, Andersen, Nelson and Standley tracts.



Before the renovation, sedimentation was filling in the Jamestown Marsh, making it difficult for hunters and perfect for cattails. Dense stands of cattails left little open water.



Mike Blair photos

In 2001, a public meeting was held in Concordia, and with support from local hunters, conservation groups, and then-KDWP commissioners Tom Warner and Lori Hall, the consensus was to move forward with a renovation project. DU stepped forward as a major partner. Scott Manley, director of Conservation Services in DU's Southern Region, and DU engineer Eric Held were assigned to the project.

In 2002, KDWP and DU enlisted the professional services of Schwab-Eaton Engineers to put ideas and plans on paper. Engineer Chris Cox, a lifelong Jamestown hunter, took on the project with a keen interest that ensured success.

When plans were presented to the public in 2003, people began to believe the renovation would happen. To provide funding for Phase 1, KDWP applied for a North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA), grant. However, the first application was rejected because the project's local support "score" was too low. In just 60 days, 13 new partners, many of them local, were on board, and an additional \$152,000 in funding was secured. The application was resubmitted, and a \$3.2 million grant was approved. Partners include KDWP, NAWCA, DU, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Kansas Alliance for

Wetlands and Streams (KAWS), Pheasants Forever (PF), Westar Energy, Kansas Wildlife Federation (KWF), CloudCorp, Cloud County Board of Commissioners, City of Jamestown, Cloud County Convention and Tourism, Jewell County Board of Commissioners, Republic County Board of Commissioners, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and more than 30 private individuals.

Prior to renovation, water level management at Jamestown was a challenge. Water was moved in and out of the marsh through two weir gates and several old stop-log water control structures. The gates functioned well enough to drain the entire marsh, but sediment had blocked drainage channels making it impossible to completely drain the marsh quickly. Most of the water could be drained, but to dry out the ground enough so that Phase 1 construction could begin required the sun. In 2004, contractors from Louisiana brought their amphibious backhoe to dig drainage channels in Gun Club Marsh. The new drainage canals helped dry the marsh and will be part of the seasonal water management for years to come. In 2006, the old Gun Club Dam was raised 1 foot to gain back some water depth lost to years of sedimentation.

In 2007, Phase I on the 550-acre Gun Club Marsh began with con-

Marshes were drained and dried so that heavy equipment could be brought in to begin dredging and building berms.

struction of a berm that splits the marsh into two cells. A bypass canal was constructed at the Gamekeeper Dam to move creek flows from the upper lake to the west pool of Gun Club Marsh. This allows managers to drain the east and west pools independently. To replace marsh acres lost to berm construction, a 14-acre marsh was built adjacent to Greenwing Marsh directly below Gun Club.

Eleven new water control structures were installed, including one each in Gun Club and Gamekeeper Marshes, and seven habitat islands were built. Drainage canals were dug in the Gamekeeper Marsh to allow total drainage and prepare for future projects.

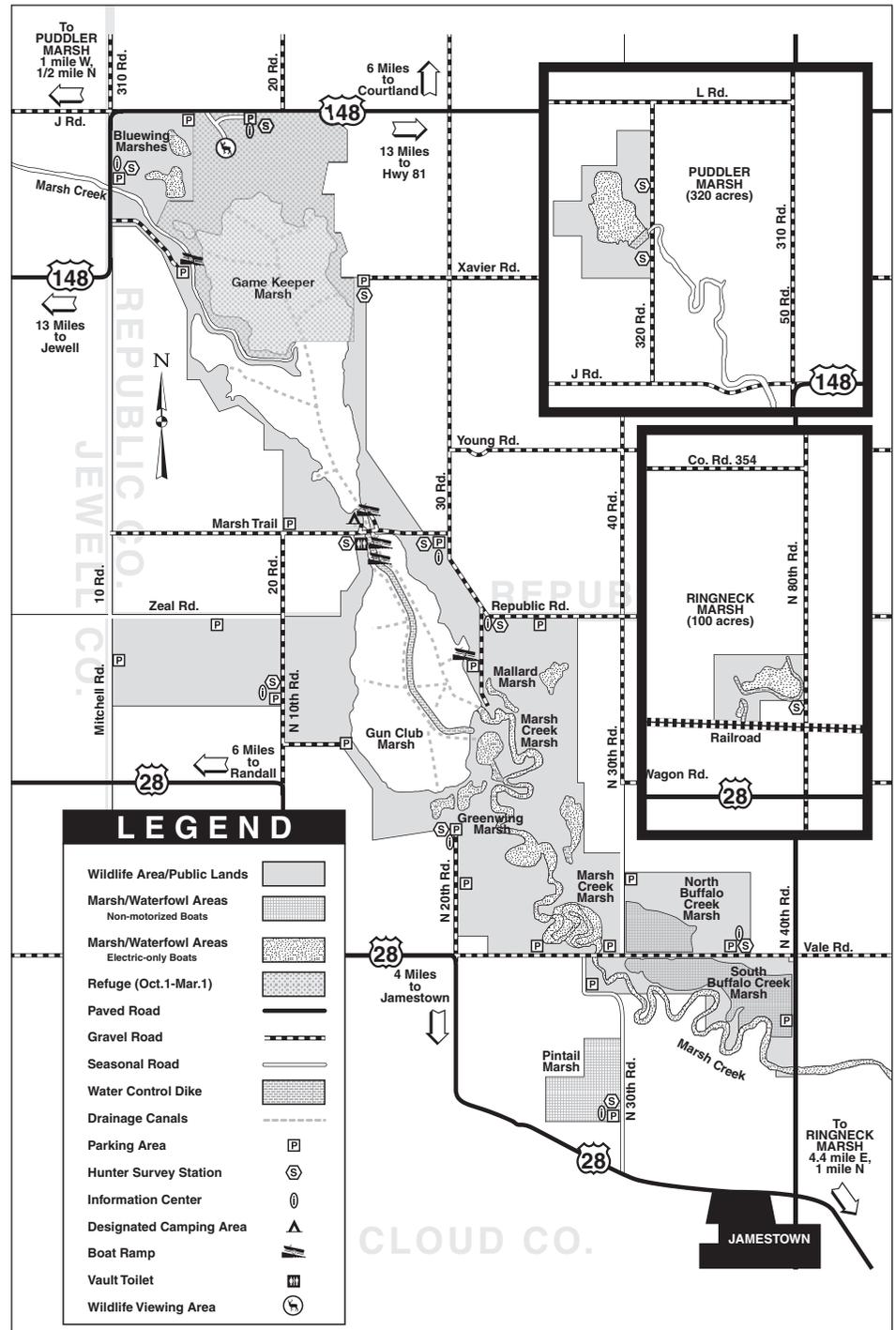
Land acquisition and protection of nearby and adjoining wetlands and upland areas have been inte-

gral to Jamestown Wildlife Area management since 1932. The goal has been to protect and conserve wetlands and to provide hunting and other outdoor recreation opportunities. Various tracts were acquired from 1939 through 1990, and between 1990 and 2008, nearly 2,000 acres in six tracts were added.

A second NAWCA grant of \$1.4 million - Jamestown Wildlife Area Phase II - was approved in December 2007, primarily for land acquisition. On February 8, 2008 the DU National Executive Board gave approval for Wetlands America Trust to purchase additional property in the Jamestown vicinity. Two DU land acquisition specialists have been making contacts and negotiating land purchases with willing sellers. To date, there have been three acquisitions, adding 185 acres. All of these acres remain on the local county tax roles. Most of these areas have either been returned to seasonal marshes or planted to native vegetation similar to what was there prior to cultivation.

Land tracts acquired from Darlyne Standley, who has a true love for wildlife, and Madeline Nelson and Eric Andersen, who have family remembrances with their properties, made Marsh Creek Marsh project possible. It was completed in 2006 and impounds 300 surface acres. Stored water can be released to fulfill KDWP's commitments to minimum desirable streamflow (MDS) on the Republican River and used in a future project on Buffalo Creek Marsh. A close working relationship with the Kansas Division of Water Resources allowed this project to be completed.

In December 2008, a grant application was submitted to the Playa Lakes Joint Venture and ConocoPhillips Corporation for the Buffalo Creek Wetlands project. The \$85,000 project was approved in January, and work was completed in July 2010. One-hundred-



and-ninety-seven acres of emergent marsh wetlands were restored in two marshes along Buffalo Creek on the 520-acre tract purchased during NAWCA I. A combination of low-profile levees and two water-control structure sites built along natural contours helped restore this wetland basin. The Buffalo Creek Marsh was made possible with land acquisitions from Darlyne Standley and Carter Ham.

The first tract south of Buffalo Creek was purchased from Dr. James and Janice Carrico, Beloit, in January 2009. The Pintail Creek Marsh is a 120-acre tract has hydric soils and seasonal wetlands with uplands and a shelterbelt. It is directly south of the Marsh Creek Marsh dam. The uplands and food plots have been planted, and the native wetlands plants are regenerating from the former cropped areas.



Mike Miller photo

In 2008, flood events left plenty of water, but very little food for waterfowl. Hunting was good at times, but birds didn't stay long. There should be good food and water for 2010.

In July 2010, DU's Wetlands America Trust purchased 400 acres at Talmo Marsh, 16 miles east of Jamestown Marsh. The land was purchased from the Ernestine Nutter Trust to preserve the area for wildlife and continue limited agricultural production on the remaining best tillable acres. Talmo is another of the original Kansas "School Marshes" and also part of the Lower Republican Basin. The land will be deeded to the state of Kansas and managed as part of the Jamestown complex, open for hunting with non-toxic shot this upcoming season.

Planning is underway to draft and submit a NAWCA III application to enhance Marsh Creek Marsh and the Buffalo Creek Marsh, by constructing levees and habitat islands, as well as installation of a water delivery system and water control structures. This grant also will include planting more upland habitat and enable additional land acquisition. The Gamekeeper Marsh renovation will soon follow, and additional land acquisition efforts and planning are already underway. Plans are to raise this dam 18 inches, subdivide marsh areas, and move and store water more efficiently.

Additional projects not part of the NAWCA grants include four new boat ramps and a new restroom facility constructed with a

Motor Boat Access grant. A new primitive campground just west of the Gamekeeper Marsh Dam greeted hunters in the fall of 2009. Other improvements include a new road on the west side of Gun Club Marsh, several new and improved parking lots, and a cooperative project with the road departments of Cloud and Republic counties to upgrade area roads.

In addition to the wetland renovations, KDWP used contractors to mechanically remove invasive brush and trees from 200 acres of grassland. KDWP crews conducted controlled burns on more than 900 acres and planted 400 acres of native warm and cool season grass and forb mixes on marginal crop-

land fields bordering the newly renovated and restored wetland areas.

With the help and support of local Concordia Representative Elaine Bowers, a new assistant manager position was approved. Matt Farmer, who grew up hunting Jamestown, joined the management team in December 2008.

The primary goal of the renovation was to allow managers to mimic a "natural wetland" that has water part of the year, or maybe even multiple years and then is dry for a time. Dry periods are critical for the growth of plants that thrive in a moist environment. These plants also play an important role in the function of the marsh. The dry soil produces annual plants that provide nutritious seeds that migrating birds need for energy during migration. Decaying moist soil plants attract aquatic invertebrates or insects that are highly nutritious and an important food source for females as they prepare to lay eggs and raise broods. As plants begin to grow, some flooding won't hurt them; in fact, some flooding increases their growth and seed production. The plants also filter the water as it moves through the system, holding back sediment and gathering nutrients carried in the water.

The water management program begins in late fall. While hunters are



Mike Blair photo

In addition to dividing pools with berms, deepening canals and building concrete low-head dams, renovations also included improving parking lots, creating a campground, building boat ramps, and enhancing grasslands on the upland areas.

still enjoying the fruits of the previous year's efforts. Current results are evaluated, and a detailed water-level management plan is developed. After the water is off the marshes, the growth of moist soil vegetation is promoted. Plants such as nodding smartweed, barnyard grass, sprangletop, yellow nutsedge and upland plants such as kochia and lambsquarters produce seeds that are a preferred food of waterfowl and wading birds.

Managers also work during the growing season to control unwanted plants. Cocklebur, salt marsh aster, and several moist-soil-loving trees such as cottonwood, willow and salt cedar grow well in the fertile soils and must be controlled. Some cattails are desirable for cover, but they can easily get out of hand. Most undesirable plants are controlled by mowing, disking and with chemical. During wet growing seasons, ATVs and a wide track skid steer are required to get around. Backpack sprayers and airplanes are sometimes required to spray unwanted vegetation. If flooding occurs in spring and summer, the water often inhibits the growth of moist soil plants, and KDWP will hire a pilot to seed strategic areas with Japanese millet.

As part of the management plan, water levels are staged, or raised, beginning in mid- to late summer. Jamestown is at the mercy of Mother Nature since we do not have the ability to pump ground water or pull water from an adjacent river or stream. By looking at long-range forecasts and paying close attention to the water stored during the growing season, managers make important decisions before most hunters even think of repairing decoy lines or polishing up retrievers.

Target dates for holding and moving water are set based on the length of the growing season and how the moist soil plants have matured. These target dates are then modified within a few weeks or days depending on summer storms



Mike Miller photo

Hunters have attempted to control water levels at the Jamestown Marsh for decades. Many of the new concrete low-head dams replaced old stop-log structures.

or occasional rain showers. The goal is to have sufficient water for ducks and hunters to use by the opening day of September teal season. The water levels are then increased (if possible) so that by the first of October there is new food for the "big ducks." Managers try to slowly increase water levels throughout the fall, flooding food plants for new arrivals. As the ice starts to form in early December, work on next year's management plans begin.

Hunter input is also necessary for sound management decisions. Hunter Report cards are required of all hunters on the area. One recent year's data showed that hunters came from 28 states and 57 of Kansas' 105 counties. However, 80 percent of the hunters were from counties bordering Cloud, Jewell and Republic counties.

In 2008, the first year after construction, the marshes were completely drained as soon as the ice was gone. Moist soil plant response was incredible before eight flood events occurred from May 15 through October 25. The area had plenty of water but not much food. Hunting was fairly good at times but only during the peak migration days. We could not hold the birds without food. In 2009, the marshes were again drained soon after ice-out, which showed damage to the newly constructed infrastructure from those floods. After necessary repairs, marshes were left low through late

June, and the moist soil response was terrific. Nodding smartweed grew taller than 6 feet in places. Then staff raced to deliver water and mow and spray herbicide for openings or "shooting holes" in strategic wade-in and boat-to areas. It was a good year!

In 2010, a long hard winter kept the entire area ice covered until the first week of March, and dewatering did not occur until late March and early April. The conditions at the time were perfect for a spectacular spring migration, and an estimated 30,000 ducks utilized the Jamestown marshes throughout the spring. Mother Marsh Creek has graced us with her flooding presence from Father's Day through July 4. The area has responded well, and the new drainage canals and water control structures have allowed us to get right back on schedule with some supplemental aerial seeding of Japanese millet and a second crop of barnyard grass and sprangletop, a vegetation smorgasbord different from 2009 but also attractive. With some hard work and a little luck, 2010 should be a great year. ♡

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Mike Blair photo

Upland Bird Mythbusters

by Jim Pitman
wildlife biologist, Emporia

There are lots of theories about the factors that impact our pheasant, quail, turkey and prairie chicken populations, but the real truths are based in science.

Turkeys have become abundant while at the same time quail have declined. Turkeys must be eating quail or competing with them for resources.

It is true that turkey populations have exploded while quail populations have declined. Some

people assume turkeys are having a negative impact on quail. In reality, both populations have been influenced by a large-scale landscape conversion that has occurred over several decades.

Wildlife biologists have been studying both quail and turkeys intensely for more than 75 years and have never documented a

single occurrence of a turkey eating a quail. It is a common rumor that turkeys have been shot with quail in their crops, but no biologist has ever seen a specimen or a photograph. Another problem with this claim is that most quail hatch in late June or early July, well after the turkey season has closed. It would be highly unlikely that a legally-harvested turkey would have a quail chick in its crop even if the phenomenon was known to occur.

The main factor contributing to declining quail populations and increasing turkey populations is a landscape conversion from grasslands and shrubs to woodlands. Satellite images show that woodland habitat increased 23 percent in eastern Kansas from 1984 to 2000. If the 1950s landscape were compared to the present landscape, the woodland increase would have been much greater. This landscape transformation occurred throughout Kansas but has been most severe in the Flint Hills and eastward. The additional trees have improved habitat for many woodland species (turkeys, deer, and squirrels) but degraded habitat for grassland species like quail.

Large trees are required by turkeys for roosting, and as woodlands have matured and expanded into the prairie, more areas have become suitable for turkeys. These trees have shaded out low-growing bunch-grasses and shrubs required by quail for nesting and protective cover. Additional woodland has also benefited quail predators such as hawks, owls, raccoons, and opossums. Avian predators are a major source of mortality for adult quail, and trees provide ideal perches from which raptors can hunt. Other factors have contributed to quail decline, but more trees in the landscape has had the greatest negative impact.

Turkeys are causing extensive crop damage and need to be thinned.

At least five scientific studies have found turkeys to be an insignificant source of crop damage. The most recent study used infrared cameras to closely observe wildlife activity in various crop fields. Observations were collected day and night throughout two different growing seasons. While turkeys were regularly seen in all surveyed fields, researchers did not once observe them digging up seeds, pulling plants, or directly eating from standing plants. They did observe crop damage caused by white-tailed deer, raccoons, crows, squirrels, beavers, and rodents. The majority of damage observed during their study was from raccoons at night. Turkeys do spend time in agricultural fields displaying and foraging, but diet studies have shown they are eating insects, grubs, and waste grain from previous years' crops.

Why isn't predator control recommended as a management strategy to increase quail numbers?

It is true that predators are the primary source of mortality for adult quail, nests, and young. It is also true that populations of many different quail predators have increased over the last 25 years. It is easy to see why many land managers now use predator control as a method to increase quail populations. But does predator removal really work?

A recent Florida study tested the effects of predator removal on quail survival and productivity. Trappers removed opossums, armadillos, raccoons, bobcats, coyotes, and foxes from March through October on two 3,000-acre study sites. One of the sites was managed extensively for quail and

offered high-quality habitat while habitat at the other site was of much lower quality. For three years, 300-500 predators were removed annually from each site. Little or no improvement in quail numbers was observed on the site with high-quality habitat. On the site with poorer habitat, there was a sharp increase in nest success and fall bird densities. These results indicate that predator removal provided little benefit if the habitat was already suitable for quail.

All of the predators that prey upon quail are opportunistic feeders, and when it is difficult for them to locate quail nests and young they begin targeting animals that are easier to find. Predation on quail can be minimized by simply increasing habitat quantity and quality even if predators are fairly abundant. This phenomenon has occurred in central and western Kansas over the last 20 years where more than two million acres of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) grasslands was added to the landscape.

Quail populations in this part of the state have been stable or even increasing despite increasing predator populations.

In poor habitat, it is possible to increase quail numbers by removing predators during the summer reproductive season. However, the practice is extremely costly, and the benefits are only short-term. Predators will quickly re-colonize an area when trapping stops, so for lasting results the removal must be done annually during the reproductive season. In Kansas, many quail predators are classified as furbearers and cannot be legally removed outside of the fall hunting and trapping seasons. Because predator removal can only be done during the fall in Kansas, it makes the practice even less effective. It is much more cost-efficient and socially acceptable to focus agency dollars toward the creation of suitable habitat. Additionally, the benefits provided to quail through habitat improvements are long-term compared to those gained from the removal of predators.



In Kansas, habitat availability and weather are the primary factors affecting turkey populations. Here, two gobblers strut for the attention of a hen.



Mike Blair photo

Stocking pen-reared birds won't help pheasant or quail populations. Research shows that more than 90 percent of stocked birds perish within a few weeks. Pen-reared birds miss out on important lessons wild chicks learn from wild hens.

How does fall turkey harvest effect spring hunt success and future populations?

Two major factors are considered when setting fall turkey regulations: the impact on future population growth and the effect on spring hunting success. In terms of population growth, males are much more expendable than females because one male can mate with numerous females. Taking hens in the fall can cause a population decline if more than 10 percent of the hens are harvested. In Kansas, it is estimated that less than 2 percent of the hens are harvested. Thus, a reduction in fall harvest alone would not be enough to increase overall turkey numbers in Kansas. In our state, habitat availability and weather conditions are the major factors affecting turkey populations. However, if populations become critically low, it might be beneficial to reduce fall hen harvest to help speed recovery.

While harvest of male turkeys during the fall doesn't signifi-

cantly impact overall population growth it can impact spring hunting success. Most male turkeys taken during a fall turkey season would have survived until spring. If spring hunter success were to decline substantially, a reduction in fall harvest might be justified.

Why doesn't the state stock game birds to supplement or establish populations?

It was once common for state fish and game agencies to propagate and distribute pheasants and quail for stocking, but this practice largely ceased after research clearly revealed it was ineffective. Pen-raised birds simply do not have the skills necessary to survive in the wild.

Since the 1970s, numerous studies have documented survival of pen-reared pheasants and quail using all sorts of propagation and release techniques. This was true even when the birds were released into ideal habitat. Nest success and chick survival were extremely poor for the few stocked birds that did

survive long enough to reproduce.

The most recent stocking technique is a device known as a "surrogate," which is essentially a portable brooder house that can be placed at the intended release site. This method is relatively new, but the two scientific studies that have evaluated this approach found no improvement over previously-tested stocking techniques. In 2005, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources released 1,641 wing-tagged quail chicks using surrogators on a plantation considered to have ideal quail habitat. During the fall following release, less than 1 percent of the quail harvested on the plantation were produced in surrogators. The researchers estimated the cost for each surrogated bird harvested to be \$74.53, not including the cost of the surrogators. A separate study conducted by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission has recently found similar poor results with surrogated pheasant chicks.

The only proven method of increasing populations is to create and maintain suitable habitat. Spending money on habitat improvements is much more cost effective, and wild birds will recolonize the area naturally. Upland game populations are sufficiently distributed across Kansas for this to occur when suitable habitat is provided.

KDWP should reduce the pheasant bag so that we will have more birds in future years.

Pheasants are minimally affected by hunting because only males can be legally harvested. A single male pheasant can mate with many hens each season. A spring sex ratio of one rooster per 10 hens is sufficient for all hens to be bred and initiate nests. In Kansas, at least three or four roosters are typically available per

10 hens each spring. Changes in pheasant numbers from one year to the next are mostly dependent on the weather. Long-term population changes are driven by land use and its effect on the quantity and quality of habitat available for nesting and brood rearing. Pheasants are short-lived birds and cannot be stockpiled by limiting hunting or imposing more restrictive seasons or bag limits.

Hunting has decimated prairie chicken populations in eastern Kansas.

Researchers have found that hunter harvest in Kansas accounts for less than 2 percent of prairie chicken mortality. So what is to blame for population declines? Prairie chicken populations in the eastern part of the state have declined over the last 25 years for two primary reasons: too much

prairie burning or too little. Periodic burning on a two- to four-year rotation provides good habitat for grassland wildlife. Unfortunately, much of the rangeland in eastern Kansas is either burned annually or seldom burned at all.

Prescribed fires in some parts of the Flint Hills and grasslands farther east have been rare over the last couple of decades, and as a result, these landscapes have been invaded by trees. Prairie chickens require large expanses of open grassland to survive and reproduce. When trees become scattered across the landscape, the habitat becomes less suitable for prairie chickens. Prairie chickens tend to avoid areas with tall structures (natural or man-made) probably to avoid predation.

Prairie chickens require 18 to 20 inches of the previous year's growth (residual cover) for nest

concealment. Annual burning in April across most of the Flint Hills removes that residual cover. It is true that annual burning has been common in parts of the Flint Hills for more than half a century, even during times when prairie chickens were abundant. But prior to the 1980s, those fires were patchy, leaving some nesting cover for chickens. Today, the burns are much more thorough, leaving vast landscapes completely blackened. Additionally, most producers have switched from traditional season-long stocking to intensive early stocking. Intensive early stocking uses double the season-long stocking rate for a short duration, immediately following a spring burn. This approach keeps new growth short, only allowing regrowth after livestock are removed in July. This minimizes cover availability in May and June, when prairie chickens are attempting to nest and rear young. Prairie chicken nesting success in a landscape dominated by annual burning and intensive early stocking is generally less than 10 percent. Before this system was widely adopted, nesting success often exceeded 40 percent in the Flint Hills.

Fragmentation of the prairie is another factor that has led to declining prairie chicken populations. Large expanses of unbroken grasslands are required to sustain a core population of prairie chickens. Whenever a tract of prairie becomes heavily fragmented by agriculture, roads, power lines, buildings, oil and gas infrastructure, or other man-made features, it becomes less suitable for prairie chickens. If too much fragmentation occurs, the area will become unusable by prairie chickens. Fragmentation of prairie chicken habitat has occurred throughout Kansas, but it has been most prevalent in the eastern part of the state.



Mike Blair photo

Hunting is not a factor in the lesser or greater prairie chicken populations. Limiting factors are associated with habitat and land-use practices.



We don't know all the factors that prevent pheasants from surviving in southeast Kansas, but a lack of minerals in the soil and high spring temperatures and humidity may factor in.

Why doesn't KDWP provide winter food for game birds during harsh winters?

When ice or deep snow remains on the ground for an extended period of time, some game bird populations suffer significant mortality. Quail are by far the most susceptible to severe winter weather. Pheasants and prairie-chickens are much heartier, but occasionally severe winters harm these species too. Turkeys are least susceptible because their strong legs allow them to scratch through deep snow and ice to locate food. In Kansas, severe winter weather seldom lasts long enough to have a negative impact on turkeys.

To have a noticeable effect on spring breeding populations, KDWP would have to provide food to a large proportion of the affected population. The agency doesn't have the funding or manpower to accomplish a task of that scale. Winter feeding is not an effective use of sportsmen's dollars or staff time, which can be better spent on habitat projects that have more lasting benefits. Fortunately, game birds are prolific and can recover from winter losses relatively quickly. It is not uncommon for some game bird populations to increase over 200 percent from spring to fall when

habitat and weather conditions are favorable.

Why are there no pheasants in southeast Kansas?

The most obvious factor is inadequate habitat caused by too many trees, too little high-quality nesting habitat or brood-rearing habitat, intensive agriculture, and urbanization. These problems have worsened over the last 30 years in southeast Kansas and have also been detrimental to pheasants in other parts of the country. However, even before these problems intensified in southeast Kansas, pheasants were mostly absent. Some areas in southeast Kansas and other places outside the pheasant range seem to have suitable habitat, so habitat inadequacy probably isn't the sole explanation.

Soil-mineral deficiency is another factor that may influence pheasant distribution. Calcium, which is important for eggshell development and adult survival, may be deficient in non-range areas. Soils in the central, northeast, and western portions of the state are naturally high in calcium. Southeast Kansas soils are naturally low in calcium. While the exact mechanism by which this may limit pheasant distribution is complicated and not entirely clear, mineral deficiencies

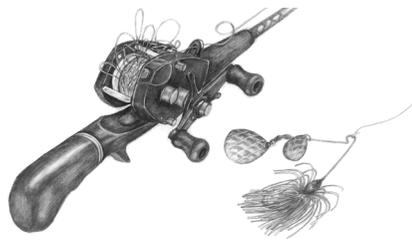
may play a role in explaining why pheasants are absent.

Another possibility is higher spring temperatures and humidity. Research has shown that egg hatchability declines with increasing temperature and humidity. When the temperature is held at 85 degrees and humidity at 80 percent, hatchability drops to around 40 percent. Southeast Kansas certainly has much higher springtime temperatures and humidity than in parts of the state where pheasants are common.

I've seen a lot of different-sized pheasant chicks this year, so the hens must have produced multiple broods.

It is normal for pheasant hatching to extend from May through July. Most pheasant hens in Kansas start laying eggs in late April or early May. But many of these initial nests are destroyed by predators or farming operations. Fortunately, pheasants are persistent re-nesters, and most hens will try again if their initial clutch is lost. Many will continue trying if a second or even a third nesting attempt fails, but re-nesting mostly ends by the beginning of July because hens are physically exhausted. This pattern of re-nesting after failed attempts is what produces different-aged chicks by late summer.

Unlike bobwhites, which occasionally incubate and hatch more than one nest when conditions are favorable, pheasant hens seldom re-nest after they have produced a brood. Rare exceptions to this occur if a hen's chicks are killed within a day or two of hatching. Either way, a pheasant hen never produces more than one brood per summer, and many don't succeed at all. It's common to see young of different ages with one or more hens, but this is a result of different broods mixing together or lost chicks joining up with another brood. ♡



Backlash

by Mike Miller

Duckdreams In July?

I'm hoping for a good waterfowl season this fall. I know that's overstating the obvious if you're a duck hunter, but I'm not nearly as avid as some of my duck-hunting buddies, who live duck hunting year-round. I never start thinking about duck hunting in July, but this year is different.

On a recent warm summer evening, I was throwing a dummy for my Lab, Creede, and I started thinking how nice it would be to have a few good duck hunts this fall. My ambitions are modest compared to those of the duck nuts I know. I don't need thousands of ducks and daily bag limits. This year, I'm looking for a few good days with the Big Black Dog because he's had a rough year. First, his world turned upside down when I brought a Brittany puppy home in July, 2009. Creede had been an only dog for five years, and he'd grown accustomed to undivided attention from Lisa and me. The puppy is high maintenance and demands lots of attention. Creede has accepted the pup, but he resents every minute I spend working with it.

Two months later, Creede ruptured the ACL on his right knee. He has a Lab's pain threshold, so it was difficult to figure out how serious the injury was. I wasn't sure I wanted to put a nine-year-old dog through major surgery, but it was agonizing for me to watch him limp. After x-rays and consultation with a couple of trusted vets, I opted for reconstruction. Recovery was long and difficult. For several weeks after surgery, Creede spent most of each day in a pet kennel, only allowed out on a leash to eat and take short walks in the backyard. I built a ramp over the steps on the backyard deck, and even carried him up and down our staircase in the house a time or two. There were setbacks and times when I thought the knee would never heal. This summer, though, he's nearly back to normal.

We've been working every evening in the backyard and taking long walks. When I finally thought he was ready to start retrieving again, I made short tosses up a slight incline. The slope slowed him down and kept him under control. I only threw the dummy

a couple of times the first session, but it was amazing how much he seemed to enjoy it after the long layoff. Even now, he bounces around like puppy after each session.

Creede's not a hard-driving, field-trial-type Lab – he likes to duck hunt, but he's about as happy fetching the morning paper or hanging out with me around the house. To be honest, while I tell myself that Creede needs a good duck hunt this fall, it'll be more for my benefit. There's a special bond built with dogs you hunt with, and I want to renew that with the Big Black Dog.

You can't attach human emotion to dogs, but you can and should enjoy the companionship of a good dog. It can be therapeutic. Hunters will say that a good dog makes them more efficient in the field and reduces lost game, which is true, but the real reason to hunt with a dog is because it makes hunting more enjoyable. In fact, once you've hunted with your own dog, hunting without it can seem almost joyless by comparison.

Last fall, I hunted birds with a group that included good friend and Hunter Education coordinator Wayne Doyle. We had six or seven dogs working in front of us, but Wayne was obviously preoccupied and not enjoying the hunt as he usually does. When I asked him what was on his mind, he said, "Awww, I keep looking around for Thor. Then I remember I had to leave him at home. It's not the same without him." Thor, his spoiled-rotten Nova Scotia duck tolling retriever, was on injured reserve for the week. I felt the same way the entire season last fall without Creede.

Creede and I will have a good fall, especially if we can find a few ducks and maybe a pheasant or two. The new Brit has tons of potential, and I'll have to spend lots of time with him. But the Big Black Dog will be 10 next February, the twilight years for a Lab. Anyone who has owned a good dog will understand when I say that I will savor every minute in the field this year. 🍷

