

KANSAS

Wildlife & Parks

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2010

\$2.75





On Point

by Mike Hayden



Federal Funding For Access

Last July, The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced that it was releasing \$50 million in funding for a private land access program. Originally proposed by Sen. Pat Roberts (R-Kan.) and Sen. Kent Conrad (D-N.D.) as "Open Fields" in 2003, the program is designed to reward landowners who provide access for hunting and fishing.

The access program is now called the Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP), and it will provide grants to states and tribal governments to fund existing access programs, create new public access programs, or to provide incentives to improve habitat on enrolled lands. Grant funds can be used to provide rental payments and other incentives, such as technical or conservation services, to landowners who provide the public access to their land for wildlife-dependent recreation.

States were required to apply for the funds, and out of 28 applicants, Kansas was one of 17 to receive funding. Kansas will receive an initial payment of \$1.5 million the first year and the potential for an additional \$4 million over the next two years. That's good news for hunters, anglers, and Kansas communities.

Kansas has led the way in developing access to private land, beginning with a concept presented to me in 1988 while I was governor. At my request, KDWP secretary Bob Meinen and Kansas Board of Agriculture secretary Sam Brownback collaborated to develop a proposal called the Outdoor Recreational Access Program (ORAP). Under ORAP, landowners who voluntarily opened their land to public access would receive payment. While ORAP was never implemented, KDWP's Walk-In Hunting Access Program (WIHA) evolved from this idea and was unveiled as a trial program in 1996. WIHA expanded quickly and now provides more than 1 million acres of private land for hunting access.

Fishing Impoundments and Stream Habitat (F.I.S.H.), is a sister program to WIHA, providing Kansas anglers access to private ponds and streams. Kansas is 97 per-

cent privately owned, and as our population has become more urban, hunters and anglers have lost contact with rural areas, and getting access to private land has become increasingly difficult. WIHA has been one of KDWP's most popular and successful programs.

The new money will allow KDWP managers to enhance and improve the current programs. Plans include habitat development incentives for WIHA contract holders, canoeing and kayaking access to rivers in the FISH program, and more emphasis in providing opportunities where they are needed most.

Obviously, hunters and anglers will appreciate this significant funding boost. But this is also great news for rural communities that benefit from hunting and fishing tourism. Hunters and anglers spend nearly \$700 million dollars on trip-related expenses and equipment in Kansas each year. Nonresident pheasant hunters, for example, may spend as much as \$150 per day on lodging, food and fuel. If they stay an average of three days, you can imagine what kind of economic impact they have on a small western Kansas community. More than 60,000 nonresidents travel to Kansas each year to hunt upland birds, waterfowl, turkey, and deer.

The WIHA program has proven to be a great marketing tool. Nonresident hunters use the Kansas Hunting Atlas that is printed each summer to help them locate places to hunt. It's not uncommon for Kansas communities and businesses to use the atlas map of their region to draw hunters to their community. KDWP prints three atlases each year – the *Kansas Hunting Atlas*, the *Spring Turkey Atlas* and the *Kansas Fishing Atlas*. These have proven to be essential tools for hunters and anglers, guiding them to the access so vital to their success.

Increasing and enhancing access for outdoor recreation, whether through acquisition or programs such as WIHA and F.I.S.H., is a responsibility of this department that I take seriously. We have made significant improvements in recent years, and we will continue to work for our constituents in this area. ♡

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Wildlife & Parks

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Front Cover: The colors of a rooster pheasant are awe inspiring. Mike Blair snapped this photo as the rooster hunkered down after an early snow storm. **Back Cover:** The second Saturday in November is a big day for Kansas hunters. Mike Blair took this photo as former *Kansas Wildlife & Parks* editor Paul Koenig readied for the shot.



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KANSAS WILDLIFE & PARKS (ISSN 0898-6975) is published bimonthly (every other month) by the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, 1020 S Kansas Ave., Topeka, KS 66612. Address editorial correspondence to Kansas Wildlife & Parks Magazine, 512 SE 25th Ave., Pratt, KS 67124 (620) 672-5911. Send subscription requests to Kansas Wildlife & Parks Magazine, PO Box 37828, Boone, IA 50037-0828. Subscription rate: one year \$10; two years \$18; and three years \$27. Articles in the magazine may be reprinted with permission. Periodical postage paid at Pratt, KS and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Kansas Wildlife & Parks Magazine, PO Box 37828, Boone, IA 50037-0828. For subscription inquiries call toll-free 1 800 288-8387.

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 . . .

"MILLIONS" OF BISON?

Editor:

I much enjoyed Mark Shoup's fine article in the Sept./Oct. issue (Page 16), "Field Of Dreams," about the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve. It was well written and thoroughly researched. The photographs were impressive, and the text was informative and interesting. A job well done.

Allow me, however, to take issue with the photo caption on Page 19, "American bison once roamed the Flint Hills by the millions," and the text on Page 21, "For hundreds of years before European settlement, Kansa and Osage Indians and millions of bison roamed these hills." I think those statements give an incorrect and inaccurate implication.

It is my impression that bison, though certainly present in the Flint Hills, were never here in large numbers. Although Zebulon Pike reported seeing some bison in Chase County on his famous exploration west, there are no historical reports of large bison herds here that I know of. Santa Fe Trail travelers and early explorers didn't generally mention bison until they were near the short-grass country farther west. Large numbers of bison are usually mentioned no farther east than the Cow Creek area of present-day Rice County.

Indeed, the Kansa and Osage had well-travelled trails west from their Flint Hills homes to Cow Creek so that they could engage in yearly and semi-annual buffalo hunts, and they did so for generations. They occasionally killed buffalo in the Flint Hills, but never in large numbers.

In think the two statements send an improper and inaccurate message. I understand the current fascination with buffalo presence at the preserve, but as a tourist attraction and as a species-preservation method; however, I don't agree with presenting buffalo on the preserve as a historical accuracy, as is often done.

HUNTING HERITAGE

with Wayne Doyle

So Long

As I depart from the second best job I ever held, I want to acknowledge the efforts of two groups of people who have made it so – volunteer hunter education instructors and the dedicated folks in KDWP with whom I have worked the last dozen years.

Every job I have ever had has been about the people around me. I have been fortunate in that I have mostly worked with good folks who were dedicated to something bigger than themselves. Have there been some folks who were wasting oxygen? Certainly. But overall, the memories of the good folks far overshadow those of the oxygen wasters.

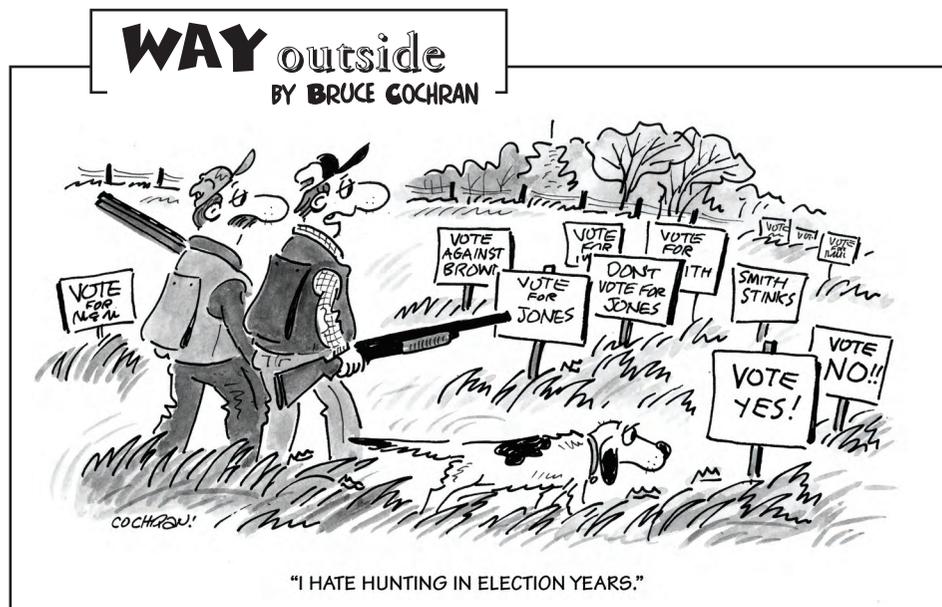
I have been blessed to have worked with the 1,500 or so Kansans who volunteer their time and resources to bring budding hunters to the hunter's fire. These volunteer hunter education instructors impart the traditions of the hunt to the young "cubs" and teach them to walk the hunter's path in a safe and responsible way. In doing so, they have reduced hunting accidents to statistical insignificance. They have helped to introduce a couple of generations of Kansas youth to nature and all its wonders. They have

shown the cubs how to be part of nature rather than just an observer and that we are "predators in a world where predation belongs." Hunter education instructors do not get the credit they deserve. We could not pay them what they are worth. They are, as a group, a priceless asset to hunting, to Kansas, and to the nation. I will miss my daily association with them.

I will also miss my daily association with the people who are the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. No words of mine can describe just what they do for Kansas. They are as dedicated a group of folks as I have been honored to work with in my half-century in the work force. What they do for the resource and the citizens of Kansas is all around us as we enjoy the beauty that the prairie and its wildlife give us. Whether biologist, conservation officer, land manager, park manager, administrative staff, they are there for you. They accomplish things, great and small, with limited resources. In their various ways, they put more logs on the hunter's fire. It has been an honor to have been counted in their number.

I won't be as close to the hunter's fire as I have been. But I'll be nearby as long as I can wander the prairie, following a good dog, gun in hand.

"When some of my friends have asked me anxiously about their boys, whether they should let them hunt, I have answered, yes – remembering that it was one of the best parts of my education – make them hunters."
Henry David Thoreau. Walden. (1854)



BIRD BRAIN with Mike Rader

Whooping Cranes In Kansas



Mike Blair photo

Whooping Cranes have to be one of my favorite bird species. It's always an adrenaline rush to see a whooping crane, not only because of its magnificent presence, but because it's one of the rarest birds in North America. Birders in Kansas are extremely lucky to be in the Central Flyway, where the majority of the last remaining, truly wild, whooping cranes can be observed. They conduct their annual migration from wintering grounds on the gulf coast of Texas (particularly the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge area) to the breeding grounds of Wood Buffalo National Park in Alberta and the Northwest Territories. This migration covers approximately 2,500 miles but is typically in a corridor only 300 miles wide. Birds with radio transmitters have shown researchers that they can cover as much as 500 miles in one flight and have gone as far as 1,140 miles in a two-day period.

The marshes of Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area, Quivira National Wildlife Refuge and other smaller areas in central Kansas are critical stops during their annual trek. In the fall of 2009, 28 whooping cranes were observed at Cheyenne Bottoms on Nov. 9, plus another seven at Quivira on that date. At the time, several of us birders thought we had experienced a once-in-a-lifetime event. Imagine the feelings I had on April 1, 2010, when three refuge staff members and I saw 76 whooping cranes at Quivira! That was most certainly unprecedented, and I can't hope to ever see that again.

These stately birds are 5 feet tall and have a 7-foot wingspan, making them one of the largest birds in North America. In migration, cranes eat a variety of prey, including crayfish, frogs, small fish, small rodents and birds and waste grain. Important foods on the Texas wintering grounds include clams, crayfish, shrimp, wolf berries, acorns and most significantly, blue crab. Summer food includes rodents, snakes, insects, fish, frogs and mollusks. Nests have one to three eggs, with usually only one chick surviving to fledge.

The historic population of whooping cranes was never large, estimated at approximately 1,300-1,500 in the 1850s. Uncontrolled hunting and habitat losses from the 1870s to 1920s contributed to the species' decline. In 1941, the population was at a low of 16 individuals. The establishment of Wood Buffalo National Park by the Canadian government in

1922 and the addition of Aransas National Wildlife Refuge by the United States government in 1937 initiated the recovery of this magnificent species.

There are attempts to spread out this species in different locations to help against a massive loss of individuals in case of a destructive weather event or man-made disaster. A

second migratory flock (currently at 119 birds) has been established in Wisconsin, trained to migrate to Florida by following an ultra light aircraft for the first few seasons. They now migrate without assistance, and a pair fledged two chicks this past season. A non-migratory flock (25 birds) has been established in Florida, and there will be an attempt at a second non-migratory flock in Louisiana in 2011. Approximately 170 birds are in captive breeding programs in the U.S. and Canada, providing eggs and chicks for reintroduction programs. With all these flocks combined, the approximate total population is about 600 individuals. A successful breeding season in 2010, with 46 chicks from a record 74 nests, should put the Aransas/Wood Buffalo population at approximately 290 individuals for the 2010 fall migration.

A disastrous year in 2008 claimed more than 20 percent of the Aransas/Wood Buffalo flock, with many birds perishing because of the drought in Texas. Threats to whooping crane populations include land and water development along the Texas gulf coast wintering areas, the spread of black mangrove trees in coastal estuaries, a long-term decline in blue crab populations, rising sea levels, and power line and wind turbine construction in the migration corridor. Collisions with power lines have killed or injured at least 19 whooping cranes since 1956. The potential risk of collision with turbines within wind farms and risk of a major oil spill from either a tanker or from a well platform could still spell disaster for this migratory flock. It's believed that the 2010 gulf coast spill was far enough away from the wintering grounds that it will not be a threat this winter.

I will anxiously await the first report this fall of whooping cranes here in Kansas and hope to see some again. The staff at the Kansas Wetlands Education Center at Cheyenne Bottoms will make a concerted effort to notify and guide members of the public out to locations cranes are using, provided they stop on the area. It is illegal to approach these birds too closely, so if the opportunity presents itself to view them with guided help, please take advantage of it. Crowding the birds can disturb them and adds stress. We are extremely lucky to have these magnificent birds share our landscape, and seeing them will be something you will never forget.

On a side note that might interest you, I'd like to see the distant parts of the preserve opened to public access. I propose that hike-in-only camping be allowed at primitive sites, near ponds or timbered draws, for example, on a permit-only basis. These sites could have a fire ring and a small vault toilet, perhaps. This would open up the ponds to catch-and-release fishing. This system works well in the Boundary Waters of Minnesota and many other primitive areas around the country.

Currently, only a relatively small portion of the preserve can be accessed, and visitors are nearly always in view of the ranch buildings and roads. It's pretty difficult to get the feeling of solitude, isolation, and prairie expanse that is the true character of the Flint Hills. And there is no way to accurately experience nighttime on the prairie.

I'm aware that there are lots of hiking trails and that fishing is allowed in ponds east of Fox Creek, but there are literally thousands of acres of the preserve that people never get to see or experience. That is unfortunate and inherently wrong, in my opinion. Your thoughts?

Again, thanks for a great article and a great magazine. I enjoy reading every issue.

*Joe Buchanan
Council Grove*

Dear Mr. Buchanan,

I consulted TNC project director Brian Obermeyer, who provided more detailed information about bison.

Historically, you are probably right although we have no records prior to the early to mid-19th century. Large bison herds likely preferred mixed- and shortgrass prairie farther west because the protein content of these grasses is much higher in winter. There were, however, bison throughout Kansas and even farther east, and prairie fires in the Flint Hills could have attracted large herds of bison periodically. My figure of "millions" of bison once roaming the Flint Hills may not be accurate.

Your comment that "only a rela-

IT'S THE LAW

with Kevin Jones

You are a Great Asset

Hunting season is here again, and this is arguably the best time of year. The days are pleasant, and colder temperatures invigorates the soul. Fall is also the busiest time for game wardens. While they really don't have a quiet time of year, the fall is particularly busy for officers. The reason is logical; more people are afield, resulting in more field contacts, and, unfortunately, more violations.

Trespassing remains the most common hunting-related violation. It is not surprising that trespass would be an issue in a state that is 97 percent private land. This is not a new phenomenon; trespass has always been the most common violation.

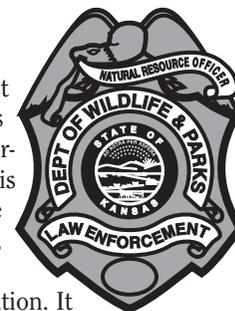
Hunting without a license and hunting deer without a permit are consistently among the four most commonly-cited hunting violations in the state. License requirements have been enforced for 100 years, so the "I forgot" excuse doesn't hold water.

Failing to tag and possessing untagged deer, when combined, round out the top four violations. It has been a requirement to tag a deer prior to moving the carcass since 1965 when the first permitted deer hunt occurred in the state. Again, this is not something new; it has been going on for years.

As should be expected, November is the month when the most deer poaching activity occurs. The poaching activity begins in October, reaches its peak in November and then tapers down through December. The poaching coincides with the deer rut, when poachers are able to easily see bucks moving throughout the day and night. Many of these poached bucks are shot only for their antlers. This harkens back to the days of commercial market hunting when birds were killed for a few select feathers or buffalo killed only for their tongues and hides. The results of market hunting were in part responsible for the modern-day conservation programs that enacted hunting seasons, bag limits and hunting licenses, and the fees that help pay for wildlife management. These programs brought several species back from the brink of extinction and are still the foundation of our current wildlife management programs. This is not to say that deer are in danger of extinction but to point out that conservation programs are important and that part of the root of poaching is deeply imbedded into certain segments of society for a variety of reasons, including personal greed.

It has been suggested that the reason these patterns of violations occur are simply based on the nature of mankind. But should we continue to accept that some people will always want to take something without either getting permission or paying for it? The vast majority of hunters are honest, law-abiding citizens who responsibly take on their role as conservationists. The remaining minority of violators are the ones who are creating the majority of the problems. Dealing with this minority is the job of law enforcement and the courts. But to be truly successful, this work cannot be done only by the game wardens.

KDWP officers need your assistance in helping to bring violators to justice. If you see a violation, report it. You can find the game warden's contact number, the Operation Game Thief phone number and website reporting information in the hunting regulations and on the KDWP website. Through our combined efforts, maybe we will eventually see a downturn in the number of violations.





PRIVATE LANDS with Jake George

ACCESS PROGRAMS GET FUNDING BOOST

Kansas land is 97 percent privately-owned, and KDWP is aware of the crucial need for public access to private property. The Kansas private land access programs, which began in 1995, are exemplary models of private individuals working with the state to provide public access to their property for both hunting and fishing. Currently, KDWP has more than 1 million acres of enrolled properties on agreements with more than 2,200 Kansas landowners, providing numerous public hunting and fishing opportunities across the state. Support for Kansas access programs has been overwhelming from hunters and anglers, landowners, and the many communities that directly benefit from the local revenue these programs generate.

Recently, KDWP took the opportunity to compete for additional access program funding through legislation included in the 2008 Farm Bill. The Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP) is a competitive grant program administered through the USDA Farm Service Agency. VPA-HIP provides funding to state and tribal government programs that

encourage owners and operators of privately-owned land to voluntarily make that land available to public access for wildlife-dependent recreation and to improve habitat on their land.

I am pleased to say that Kansas is one of 17 successful applicants from the first round of funding requests. This award secures an initial \$1.5 million in program funding, with the potential for an additional \$4 million over the next two years. This increase in access program funding is a tremendous opportunity for Kansas to further the objectives of current programs, provide additional access opportunities, and encourage appropriate habitat maintenance and creation on publicly accessible private lands.

The future looks bright for Kansas hunting and fishing access programs. Increased enrollment by landowners means more opportunities afield and the continued improvement of wildlife habitat throughout our great state. For many, residents and nonresidents alike, these state access programs play a large role in their decision to participate in wildlife-dependant recreation within Kansas.

If you have land and would like to find out more about Kansas public access programs, phone 620-672-0760 for more information. If you're a hunting and fishing enthusiast in Kansas, spread the word about the importance of public access to private lands within our state and be sure to thank those landowners who have already signed up.

Eastern Kansas Youth Trap Shoot

The 4th Annual Eastern Kansas Free Youth Trap Shoot was conducted on Saturday, Sept. 18, at the Lone Tree Gun Club in southeast Allen County. The club is owned and operated by Ron and Betty Wrestler. The weather was perfect for the three-hour event, which provided gun safety, shooting instruction, plenty of food and drinks for the young people who attended.

The event would not have happened without volunteers and donors, especially Safari Club International of Kansas City. With their financial support, about 70 boys and girls between the ages of 7 and 16 participated in a competition shoot with prizes for all shooters. Each shooter received 25 shotgun shells and 25 targets with instructions for practice.

After a practice shoot, shooters were provided 25 shotgun shells and 25 targets to compete for prizes, including Remington shotguns. Each young shooter also had the opportunity to have their name drawn for another Remington shotgun. After the shoot was over, every shooter was given the opportunity to pick a prize from the merchandise provided by sponsors. After the competition, there was open shooting for all ages.

The top shooter in the 13- to 16-year-old age group was Wyatt Redeker from Opie, breaking 25 of 25 targets from the 16 yard line; however, since he had won a shotgun in a previous year, he was not eligible to win a shotgun. Tapanga Turner, from LaHarpe, broke 24 of 25 targets and won the shotgun. The top



shooter in the 7- to 12-year-old age group was Hunter Kavanagh from Girard, breaking 20 of 25 targets. Miles Dice, from Buffalo, was the lucky shooter who had his name drawn for the third shotgun that was given away.

Event organizer Richard Diehl said that this event has been successful in teaching young children about gun safety and competition shooting. Each week, some of the young shooters return to the Lone Tree Gun Club on Wednesday evening and Sunday afternoon to practice. Over the past four years, three of the successful young shooters have competed at the Grand American Trap Shoot in Sparta, Ill.

— PNC Paul J. Haen, USN(RET) and Richard Diehl

tively small portion of the preserve can be accessed,” however, is not accurate. While this was true two or three years ago, today – as stated on Page 41 of the article – the public has access to 41 miles of trails 24/7.

Thanks again for your letter. It's good to know more about “where the buffalo roam,” and why, as well.
–Shoup

LIKED RANDY'S PROFILE

Editor,

I couldn't help but comment on your article of Randy Rogers in the Sept./Oct issue of Kansas Wildlife. It was a good summary of Randy's many years of commitment to the land and wildlife resources, especially upland game resources of Kansas. The Kansas outdoor fraternity and KDWP were fortunate to have someone of Randy's caliber working for them. I have known Randy for many years and been lucky to work with him and listen to his words of wisdom during our time together on the Midwest Pheasant Study Group. Randy knew pheasant management in Kansas and always kept Kansas sportsmen in the forefront during our discussions on Midwest pheasant management. He is a super guy, quick of wit, down to earth but always engaged when it came to land ethics, habitat management, and upland game bird management. With a little luck, I may even slip down to western Kansas with my shotgun to see what his conservation acres hold for pheasants.

Just wanted you to know that I enjoyed your article and appreciated your taking the time to summarize the career of a super wildlife biologist. I even know his wife quite well having worked with Helen on the Central Flyway Migratory Game Bird Tech Committee for many years. They are both quality people and professionals in their respective fields. It has been my pleasure to work with both of them.

Stan Kohn
Bismark ND

FISH SQUEEZER

with Tommie Berger

Fall Sampling

Fall is busy for fisheries biologists as this is when we collect our fall samples. We do much of our sampling in the fall because that is when fish are active and feeding up for the winter. Bass samples are taken in the spring with electrofishing gear, but all other species are sampled in fall, generally using gill and trap nets.

Most fall sampling is completed by the first or second week in November. We try to get our sampling done before the water temperature drops very far into the 40s. Fish movement really slows down when the water gets that cold. The weather is unpredictable then, too, and it's no fun working on the water when ice forms on the boat and on the nets as you pull them in.

With sampling completed, biologists have the data they need to analyze fish populations. Even though there is data entry and computer analysis to do, we already have a pretty good idea just what our fish populations look like. We can begin to predict which of our populations are strong and which ones may be weak. We begin to formulate next year's fishing forecasts to help anglers decide where to fish.

For many years, KDWP biologists have conducted fall sampling using a standardized method. (This old codger has been squeezing fish in the fall for about 37 years now.) We tried to set our nets in the same locations and during the same time frame year after year to provide accurate sample comparisons. Gear consisted of monofilament gill nets that were 100 feet long, 8 feet deep, and all one mesh size – either 1-inch, 1 ½-inch, 2 ½-inch, or 4-inch. The 4-inch mesh sizes were considered a complement of nets that were used to get an accurate samples of all sizes of fish. Trap nets in mesh sizes of ½-inch and 1-inch were also used and set at

standard locations.

This year, we changed to gill nets that are 80 feet long, 6 feet deep, with alternating panels of various mesh sizes from ¾-inch to 4-inch. The new nets are supposed to be more efficient at sampling various sizes of fish at one location. Another change is that the new gill nets won't be set in standard locations every year. Instead, they will be set in randomly selected locations that will change from year to year. The new sampling method also includes only ½-inch mesh trap nets that will also be set in randomly selected locations. These sampling changes have been adopted by most of our neighboring states and will allow us to compare samples from lakes and reservoirs in Kansas, as well as lakes in other states.

Some the biologists set both types of gill nets this year to compare catch rates between the two methods. The larger, old gill nets were set in random locations as well to determine if catch rates compared to standard locations. It will certainly be interesting to see how the data compares once it is analyzed. It has been an interesting fall getting used to the new sampling protocol.

By the end of the winter season and after the paper blizzard is over, all the fisheries biologists will have the data we need to accurately report on our fish populations. The *2011 Fishing Forecast* will come out in the spring, and many biologists will be conducting Fishing Information Nights again in 2011. All this work is designed to help Kansas anglers be successful and get the most out of every fishing trip.



Jessica Mounts photo

KUDOS FOR PITMAN

Editor:

I read with great interest the subject article ["Misconceptions about Upland Game," Jim Pitman, Sept./Oct. 2010]. It was well written, easy to read, and very informative.

I have long aspired to have KDWP help manage my land – when I get some!

Anyway, thanks for the education! Keep up the good work!

Dave Cox
Wichita

NOT CONVINCED

Editor:

I would take issue with Ken Brunson's most recent article, "The Problem With Science, That's Wild." He states that people have a poor understanding of science by claiming that 41 percent of Americans believe that humans and dinosaurs existed at the same time. I have a B.S. from K-State in biology and an M.D. from KU. I have taken organismic (evolutionary) biology, and I did not find the evidence compelling. I would suggest that reasonable minds can differ. While there is undoubtedly a difference between hypothesis and theory, there is also a difference between theory and law. While I don't debate that the majority of scientists believed in evolution, there is a significant minority who feel that there are many questions that have not or can not be answered using the current theory. All that I ask is that an intelligent and reasonable minority not be completely dismissed out of hand just because we are not in the mainstream. Science has been wrong on fundamental points in the past, and sharp debate is needed to continue to refine ideas as both sides seek truth. Forty-one percent of Americans may have a poor understanding of science due to poor teaching, but perhaps they do not find the evidence compelling, as well.

Travis Keller, MD
Lenexa

On The Web with Mark Shoup

Creepy Crawlers Outdoor Imagery

PESTS
That Affect Human Health
Spiders and Scorpions

Spiders and scorpions are probably some of the most feared arthropods and a cause of entomophobia (fear of insects), arachnophobia (fear of spiders) and delirious parasitosis (the feeling that insects or arthropods are crawling, biting or burrowing in the skin when no arthropod is involved). However, spiders and scorpions are important in nature and beneficial to humans because they feed on insect pests of crops, livestock, stored products and other commodities. While all spiders are equipped with biting jaws and venom for killing a prey, the majority cannot physically bite people or rarely come into contact with people. In Kansas, there are few species of spiders and scorpions that are of public health significance.

Spiders
Brown recluse spider

The brown recluse spider (*Loxosceles reclusa*) (Figure 1) is the most abundant poisonous spider of public health importance in Kansas. A bite of this spider in some cases can cause a necrotic lesion where the skin and flesh around the bite break down. This creates an open sore for several days and often leaves a scarred pit that is typically 1/4 inch in diameter. In a very small number of cases, poison from a brown recluse causes life-threatening systemic illness involving various internal organs.

The brown recluse spider's natural geographic distribution includes an area from the Gulf of Mexico north, covering the eastern two-thirds of Texas, Oklahoma and Kansas, and an area eastward to southern Indiana, western Kentucky, Tennessee and western Georgia (Figure 3). Probably most, if not all, homes and buildings in the area of natural distribution are infested with brown recluse spiders. Records show new homes with infestations – either the spiders were present on building materials, invaded the home during construction or were moved into the new home in boxes or furniture. Older buildings are often most heavily infested, especially where settling, swelling and shrinking of materials, or other influences of aging have created cracks and crevices, and where decades of living have resulted in accumulations of stored items and clutter.

Figure 3. Geographic distribution of the brown recluse spider (USDA Leaflet No. 508).

Figures 1 and 2. Brown recluse spider and closeup of violin-shaped marking.

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service

Outdoor Imagery

If you are a teacher or anyone else looking for a wide assortment of outdoor images, publications, and video and audio clips, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) National Image Gallery – www.fws.gov/digitalmedia – is the place for you. Within the topics of "Birds and Management," "Environmental Sciences," "Fisheries," "Habitats and Landscapes," "History," "Invertebrates," "Plants," "Law Enforcement," "Recreation," "Training and Education Outreach," "Wildlife," and "Wildlife Refuges," you'll find invaluable resources for personal information or use in projects of your own. All materials and photos are in the public domain, so all you have to do to use these resources is credit the author or photographer and USFWS.

Click on "Wildlife," for example, and you'll be shown a variety of publications on the first page. The left-hand margin contains a handy list of formats; click "Jpg" and you'll automatically view thousands of images that you can download to your computer or just view. In "Advanced Search" function, type "bald eagle" in the search box to find images and publications on the National Symbol. This is a great resource for students and teachers alike.

Creepy Crawlers

Cold weather in Kansas means more time inside, and sometimes the "guests" are unwanted. Pests such as mice and insects often seek refuge in the comfort of our homes, and perhaps the most unwelcome of these guests are venomous spiders and scorpions. While scorpions are less common in Kansas, yellow house, black widow, and brown recluse spiders, in particular, are common.

To address this problem, Kansas State University has an online publication entitled *Pests That Affect Human Health*, (kpbs.konza.ksu.edu/Spiderbites.pdf). This easy-to-access site contains detailed information on the habits of these arachnids, how to control them, and what to do if you are bitten. Color photographs make identification simple.

While bites are not commonly dangerous, they can be. With winter near, remember that these creatures can enter our homes unseen. Be prepared for them and take the precautions offered at this excellent website.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Digital Library

Welcome to the Fish and Wildlife Service's online digital media library. Here you will find a wide assortment of digital images, publications, video and audio that are in the public domain. You are free to use them as you wish - no permission is necessary. The files that you give credit to the photographer or creator and the US Fish and Wildlife Service in a format similar to the example below.

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Images of training and education.

Wildlife Refuges
Images of various wildlife refuges.



Field Dressing

Last fall, video producer Mike Blair and I decided to embark on a not so pretty but necessary assignment: to capture on video the process of field dressing a deer. The video is available on the department's website, www.kdwp.state.ks.us. Type "field dressing a deer" in the search box to find the link. The video shows the process from when a downed animal is found to when it's ready to be taken to a meat processor or home for butchering.

It is important to cool a carcass as soon as possible, but care must be taken to keep the meat clean – dirt, sand, hair, and excrement can spoil meat that it touches. Knowing how to use a knife in sensitive areas, carrying a few pieces of gear in your pack, and taking your time are vital components of good field care.

The video was designed with the novice in mind, but even a seasoned deer hunter might find it useful. The idea came to me while coming home after one of my hunts last year. A friend of mine, Jeremy, called

my cell phone ecstatic. He had just harvested his first deer with a bow but was unsure of how to properly field dress it. I went over the steps by phone but could tell by the time I hung up he was as confused as ever. Five minutes later he called me back asking if I could drive 40 miles to his location and help him out. I told him I would, and after getting a few items at the house, I headed his way. Afterward, he said it looked so simple but until he watched me do, it seemed overwhelming.

Jeremy had a friend with him who was

also new to bowhunting. He was amazed at how clean and fast the process could be, relating troubles he'd had the previous year. I wondered how many people in Kansas have thought about deer hunting but never have because they were unsure about what it takes to process a big game animal. Hopefully, this video helps get more people in the field to try their hand at processing venison.

The next step is DIY butchering, which is also not as complicated as you may think, but that's another video. Good field care of a harvested animal is probably the second most important step in processing good venison, next to good shot placement.



FISHIN' with Mike Miller

Too Nice To Fish?

How many times have you been on the lake in June when the weather was absolutely perfect – no wind, bright sunshine, comfortable temperature – and the fishing was lousy? It's happened to me more times than I like to admit. It seems that a little wind or bad weather usually makes the fishing better in spring and summer. However, that may not be the case in the winter. I've concluded – through purely unscientific research – that winter fishing is usually better when the weather is nice.

I know; it could be that I don't fish, at least out of a boat, when the winter weather is foul. It's not fun, and it's not safe. However, I have fished on the ice when the weather was awful, and the fish wouldn't bite. So my hypothesis may hold water.

Early fall is a great time to fish. The weather and water are cooling, and the fish are feeding heavily because baitfish are plentiful and winter is near. However, fall fishing can be boom or bust; you either load the boat or catch a zero. As winter

comes in, the fishing can actually get better and more consistent, at least for species such as crappie. And best of all, the better the winter weather, the better the fishing.

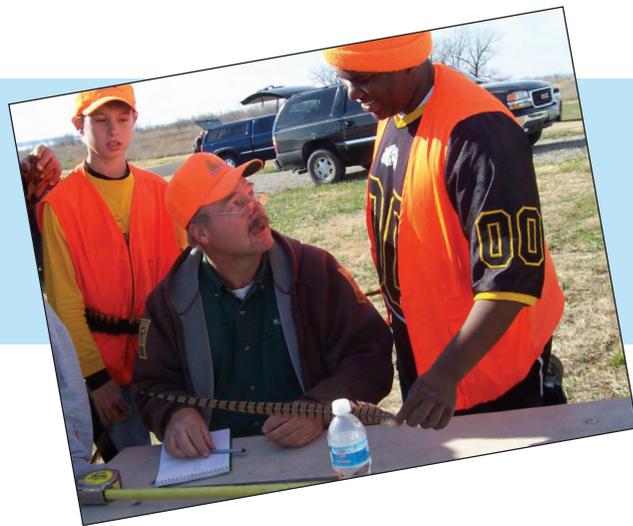
Calm weather is necessary for enjoyable winter fishing since the air temperature can be quite cold. A 20-mph wind on a cold day is miserable. But calm is necessary for success, too, because a little wind can make vertical fishing impossible. Vertical is the way to go for winter crappie. Fish are usually concentrated over structure such as brush piles or creek channel ledges, and the best presentation is to fish a jig or jigging spoon straight down. This works for three reasons: first, a vertically jigged lure imitates a stressed shad that is an easy mark; second, done correctly, the vertically fished lure is kept in the fish's zone, and these cold fish won't chase a lure; and third, fishing straight down is necessary if fish are in the brush. A little wind will cause lots of snag-ups and lost jigs.

So do a little research this winter and help me test my idea. Get on the water every nice day you can, then report back to me about your success. Whether you catch fish or not, spending more time fishing will improve your state of mind and make the winter more tolerable.

PROFILE:

with Mark Shoup

Mike Nyhoff



Mike Nyhoff grew up in Denver, where he played football and baseball at Denver Christian High School. So how does a big city kid end up working as a public lands manager in rural northcentral Kansas? The answer is family. His father grew up north of Downs, and both his parents' families still farm in that area. In addition to being close to his family, Nyhoff's father is an avid hunter and angler, so vacations were often spent at one of the family farms, where Nyhoff fished and tromped the countryside with his cousins. While in junior high and high school, he often spent time in Kansas, helping with harvest and stacking hay, and those experiences instilled an intense love for the Sunflower State.

The memories are vivid. "My grandfather loved to take the kids fishing when I was little," Nyhoff recalls. "He always carried an old cane pole and fished right near the bank. He never caught anything, but he didn't care. Except one time. My cousins and I had 'fancy' Zebco rods and reels, and were casting lures with no luck when Grandpa started jumping up and down, fighting something big on the end of his line. He landed a 6-pound channel cat, and he was really excited. After all the hubbub was settled down, and everyone was fishing again, he caught another one about the same size. I'll never forget that."

Nyhoff majored in wildlife biology at Colorado State University, where he received his degree in 1980. After graduation, he landed a seasonal job in Concordia, assisting fisheries biologists Ken McCloskey and Jim Stevens – not exactly his field of study, but he wanted to work for the agency. In 1982, he worked the same seasonal job. Permanent employment wasn't immediately forthcoming, but he kept his application active, and later that year he landed a job as "lake and grounds technician" at Washington State Fishing Lake – a fisheries position.

"When they called and told me it was a fisheries position, I thought they had the wrong number," Nyhoff jokes. "My time with Ken and Jim must have paid off."

This job would only last one year. When the job as Wilson Wildlife Area manager opened, he jumped on it. "Prettiest lake in the state," he declares. "I loved it there."

For many, however, there are stronger draws than scenery, and three years later, Nyhoff found himself managing Glen Elder Wildlife Area, 6 miles from his grandfather's farm. "I had come home," he says. He would spend 22 years in this position until in January 2010, he landed the job as Region 1 supervisor for KDWP's Public Lands Section. In this capacity, he oversees management of wildlife areas in 26 counties, including those surrounding seven large reservoirs, six state fishing lakes, nine other wildlife areas ranging in size from 160 to more than 3,000 acres, as well as numerous smaller areas.

"It was very difficult for me to leave Glen Elder," Nyhoff explains. "But now I have a chance to make a difference on a larger scale. Each property has different challenges, and I find that interesting."

Still, his experience at Glen Elder may be the most satisfying of his career. In 1993, the lake was 32 feet above conservation pool, and it was more than a year before the water was back to normal level. One-hundred-year-old oak trees and other habitat were destroyed, but the event was a blessing in disguise. When the wildlife area was dry, Nyhoff and his crew had the opportunity to redesign the place, abandoning the old square field designs and replanting trees, grass, and crops taking into account the topography of the land and the needs of wildlife. More edge – areas between habitat types essential to all wildlife – was created. Invasive trees were kept out while others were allowed to flourish, creating a harmonious mix of upland, woodland, and migratory bird habitat.

"Glen Elder is a productive area naturally," Nyhoff explains, "but we had the opportunity to enhance it. I don't know any manager who's had such an opportunity to redesign things like this, and it was very gratifying."

Next to his father, Nyhoff cites two men who strongly influenced his career – Ken McCloskey and his predecessor in his current job, retired regional supervisor Bruce Taggart. "Ken was a great advisor," he explains. "His motto was 'quality of life.' He was always asking what we could do to improve the quality of life for our constituents. And Bruce was a visionary. He looked to the future, and he saw this in young people. He understood that we need to recruit and retain hunters of all ages and backgrounds, and he loved working with people. That's become a passion for me, too. That and improving and expanding our public lands. As habitat is lost and more land is leased, our public lands become more important."

Nyhoff always saw himself finishing his career at Glen Elder, but the department is blessed that this talented and dedicated man – a true "people person" – is carrying his vision and experience to the rest of northwest Kansas.

"As society changes, we need to change with it," he explains. "I've got a great challenge ahead of me here, meeting the needs of our constituents and improving the land for all wildlife."

In the 1980s, Nyhoff worked with a crew rounding up geese in Denver city parks and transplanting them to Glen Elder. A Denver Post reporter asked him if the geese would be better off in the parks or in Kansas, and he replied that Glen Elder had much better goose habitat than Denver city parks. When the article came out, he was quoted as saying, "If I were a goose, I'd much rather live in Kansas." Nyhoff is certainly no goose, but this product of Denver proper knows a good place to live when he sees it.



It's a good time when hunters have a place to themselves and get to enjoy the peace and tranquility of Mother Nature. But all too often, weekends, holidays and season openers are crowded, especially on public land. Add the fact that access to prime private land, particularly for deer or turkeys, is becoming increasingly difficult to find, and hunt plans get discouraging quickly. So it just might be time to check out a "special" hunting opportunity provided courtesy of the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) and some of their partners.

Special hunts aren't anything new. However, in recent times, more have been added and opportunities expanded nearly statewide for several species. Normally off-limit areas such as refuges and state or federal parks are opened on a limited basis. Even season dates and restrictions, particularly for youth, have been altered and eased in an attempt to provide memorable outdoor experiences as part of KDWP's "Pass It On" Program.

I've been hunting the youth turkey season for several years now with my twin boys, Brandon and Cody. Now 11 years old, they started turkey hunting when they were seven, sitting on my lap with their 20-gauge shotguns propped on shooting sticks. Each has killed several turkeys. They wanted to try big game, so I threw their names in the hat for the 11th Annual KDWP Harper County David Berry, Morris Banks and Wayne Renollet Memorial Youth Deer Hunt.

"We've had terrific cooperation from area sportsmen, businesses, landowners and outfitters," said KDWP biologist Steve Adams who, along with fellow biologist Kyle McDonald, coordinates the hunt. "Those guys down there do a lot of work lining up guides, sponsors and land, and they deserve a lot of credit for such a great event."

Our plans were to hunt Saturday evening and Sunday morning. A 6th grade football game that started 90 minutes late caused me a bit of worry as it was at least an hour to our destination. Most participants left for their blinds at 5 p.m., so we were way behind when we crawled into ours at 7 p.m. I wasn't too upset because the thermometer in my truck still said 94 degrees, and we had the best hour of daylight left.

I first noticed the little three-point buck directly in front of us at about 7:45 p.m. However, he was off limits as we were in a "doe-only" area. Some local landowners and area outfitters provide access with that stipulation, and that's okay because any deer is a trophy to a young hunter. And the good news for us was that a big doe was in tow.

Brandon was first up with the Remington youth model .243 but struggled to find the doe in the scope because of the tall grass. I turned the scope's power down as the deer got closer. Finally, at about 60 yards he said, "I've got it." I bleated to get the doe to stop. We'd practiced with a laser pointer and deer videos on where to aim, and he must have paid attention. The deer traveled

less than 50 yards after the shot before piling up in a plum thicket.

A short night in a motel, and we were headed back out at 6 a.m. to a different location where we had the green light on any deer. The sun was barely peeking over the horizon when Cody spotted a doe. I hurriedly tried to get him into position and bleated to get it to stop. It did, but Cody still wasn't steady, and she started trotting. When he said he was settled, another bleat stopped it at 110 yards. Cody's shot was dead-on, and his first deer was on the ground.

I'll never forget those two hunts, and I doubt my boys will either. I'd encourage anyone with kids to take advantage of any youth season. If you don't have kids or they're grown, grab a neighbor kid who has showed an interest. You won't be disappointed in your efforts, and you'll know it's all worthwhile when you see that ear-to-ear smile.

Watch local papers each summer and fall for announcements about youth hunts and check out the *Special Hunts* brochure on the department's website.

Top photo shows 11-year-old Brandon Murrell with a doe he took during the 2010 youth deer season while participating in a special hunt. Below is the doe twin brother Cody took with his .243 at 110 yards. Youth seasons and special hunts provide excellent hunting opportunities for new hunters. Marc Murrell photos



PARK VIEW

with Kathy Pritchett

Retiring Director



assisting with disaster responses and resource management. Several program alumni now serve as KDWP staff.

In 2008, the National Recreation and Park Association presented Hover with the William Penn Mott Award for Excellence. In 2009, Kansas Recreation and Park Association President Betty Zeka presented him with an award

Very shortly, the Parks Division will undergo a change that many people in the department and most members of the public probably won't notice. It is major change for the division, though, because Dr. Jerold Hover, Ph.D., will be retiring. Hover has served as division director since 1993, nearly double the tenure of most state park directors. He has spent more than 45 years in resource management. Prior to coming to Kansas to head the division during some difficult years, Hover worked in the park systems of Utah, Idaho and Michigan.

Since Hover came on board with a holistic approach that takes all resources into consideration, the division has implemented the online permit sales system, initiated rental cabins, expanded partnerships to build cabins, support getting children outdoors, developed an extensive trail system and equestrian campgrounds, implemented long-term camping, inaugurated a reservation system, brought Hillsdale State Park from a plan to a functioning park, earned accolades and state park designation for Prairie Spirit Trail, and opened our first urban park.

Throughout Hovers reign, there have been ups and downs. The Parks 2000 initiative brought new facilities and improvements. The Recreational Trail Program and involvement with the Land and Water Conservation Fund program added facilities and opportunities. Hover brought extensive experience with both programs to Kansas. Under Hover's direction, a very successful AmeriCorps program has been in place for 12 years, bringing educational and service opportunities to many, while

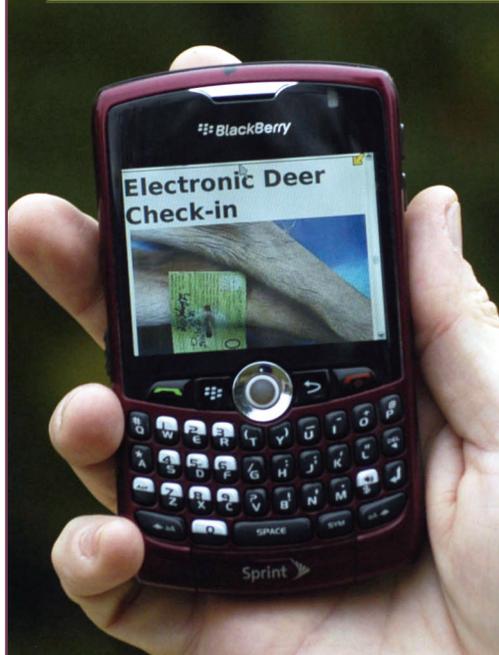
for his significant role in providing a positive influence on KRPA. He won the Kansas State Parks Award for Excellence in 2001. In 2002, he received the Distinguished Fellow Award from KRPA. Michigan State University gave him the Outstanding Alumni Award in 2004.

Hover kept the division up-to-date with technological advances and new techniques in resource management. He has served as president of the National Association of State Park Directors, bringing their conference to Kansas in 2006, and serves on the KRPA Board of Directors. He was president of the National Society for Park Resources branch of the National Recreation and Park Association.

He was instrumental in the development of and served on the faculty and Board of Regents of the National Association of State Park Directors State Park Leadership School, an intensive program designed to foster the next generation of park managers and supervisors. As Secretary Hayden's designee, he co-chairs the Kansas Coalition for Children in Nature.

Hover's plans for retirement are not yet concrete. Teaching and consulting suggestions have been made, but he wants to try something totally different for a while – doing nothing.

Electronic Deer Registration



This year, hunters can register their deer through the internet, using photos taken at the harvest site. Once registered, the hunter may then transport the carcass without the head attached to the carcass. To access the electronic deer check-in, go online to the KDWP website, www.kdwp.state.ks.us, and click "Hunting/Big Game/Deer/Deer Check-in."

This option was developed to address concern about the movement of any material from a deer that may contribute to the transmission of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD). Moving deer parts such as the head and skeleton from one location to another is considered a likely means for the disease to spread. The new registration system allows a hunter to leave these items at the kill site, minimizing the possibility of spreading the disease.

Several states have adopted strict regulations to prevent the spread of CWD, including not allowing the transportation of certain deer parts from states with

CWD. The new registration system allows hunters to properly dispose of the head and legally transport the boned meat, as well as the cleaned skull cap and antlers.

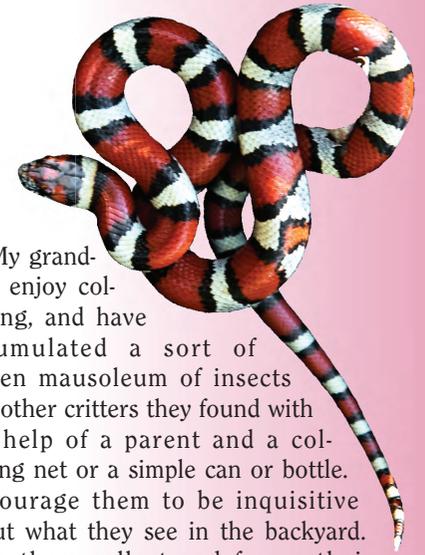
The registration process requires access to the KDWP website, where the hunter will submit two digital photographs – one legible close-up of the completed tag attached to the deer and a second showing the entire body of the deer with the head attached. A confirmation number, which should be retained during transport, will be issued by email.

This is the first electronic deer harvest registration in the nation using photo documentation. Instructions are provided online, and once these steps are completed, the deer head may be removed and the carcass and antlers prepared for transportation. More information on CWD and transportation laws may be found on the KDWP website under "Hunting/Big Game/Chronic Wasting Disease."

—KDWP News

MAGIC IN THEIR HANDS

THAT'S WILD
with Ken Brunson



Numerous reports trumpet the need to get kids more exercise, more outside activities, and more natural experiences. Most notable is *Last Child in the Woods*, a book in which Richard Louv coins the malady as “nature deficit disorder.” In response, new programs to get kids outside have been created. A recent summary of various available programs will be available soon from Emporia State University’s *Kansas School Naturalist* called “Last Child on the Prairie.” It will identify a wealth of information and programs available to parents and teachers for addressing nature deficit disorder.

Perhaps the simplest prescription is to let young kids explore wildlife in their backyards. A wildlife-friendly backyard, will have a wide diversity of grasses, flowers, shrubs, and trees that attract multitudes of insects, as well as some lizards, turtles, frogs, salamanders, and toads. Many homeowners wish to attract birds and plant bird-attracting plants. Birds are pretty, lively, and interesting. But they are quite unwilling to accommodate easy, in-hand observation. And small mammals aren’t safe to handle. However, cold-blooded creatures present great opportunities to satisfy curious young minds and hands. Virtually nothing is more intriguing to a child, and most adults, too, as being able to hold some small animal.

With common-sense referencing, the possibilities of safe-to-handle pets run a wide spectrum. From bull snakes to but-

terflies, the potential for natural teaching is great. And it’s so easy in this day and age to obtain identification help. There are field guides to help identify practically anything your child might find, including insects snakes and spiders. Using a good guide, you can avoid any that might bite, sting or be venomous. Windsofkansas.com and bugguide.net are sites I go to frequently to help with insect identification challenges. Search the internet for “Kansas Herpetofaunal Atlas” and “Kansas Mammals Atlas” to see if your collected specimen can be found in the pictures and descriptions. If you prefer printed copy, *Kansas Amphibians, Reptiles, and Turtles*, through Eagle Mountain Publishing, LC, has just been produced, and there is a great guide for common Kansas insects, *Insects of Kansas*, available through Kansas State University.

If you are lucky enough to have a little stream or pond as part of your backyard, your child can study numerous aquatic animals, including fish. Damselflies and dragonflies abound nearly everywhere and are fascinating to watch, chase, catch, and handle. There are great identification guides for these creatures. There are field guides and ample internet information to help your child know what they have encountered. Go to NaturalKansas.org and the website of the Great Plains Nature Center (gpnc.org) for great information and reference suggestions.

My grand-kids enjoy collecting, and have accumulated a sort of frozen mausoleum of insects and other critters they found with the help of a parent and a collecting net or a simple can or bottle. Encourage them to be inquisitive about what they see in the backyard. Help them collect and freeze their “prize.” If it’s a little larger prize, try to keep it alive in a temporary terrarium so that correct identification and study can be pursued. As your young child grows, they can be taught proper mounting techniques for insect collections and perhaps may wish for more permanent keeping of wild pets such as turtles, lizards, small snakes, or amphibians. All these natural pets are the most natural portal to a nature education.

Encourage wild hand pets to stimulate children’s interest in science. I do not know of a fellow biologist who did not have early encounters with some kind of fascinating hand pet. Virtual reality cannot replace the tickle of a doodle-bug between fingers, the grasp of claws of a small lizard, or the fascination of a butterfly’s wings. Help your child to know what’s out there and how to appreciate it by encouraging them to put the magic right in the palm of their hand.

STATE RECORD WIPER

On Aug. 8, James M. Moore, an Army sergeant major stationed at Fort Riley, landed a new state record wiper while fishing the Perry Reservoir Spillway. A 10-minute battle that ended when Moore jumped into the water to grab the fish yielded a monster that weighed 25 pounds and was 33 ½ inches in girth.

“It stripped off half my line before I could get it out of the current and turned around,” Moore, an avid angler who has dreamed of catching a state record for years, said of the battle.

Realizing he had a possible state record, Moore took the fish to the Perry State Park Office, where he contacted district fisheries biologist Kirk Tjelmeland. The two then met at The Bait Hut, a local bait and tackle store. Tjelmeland verified that the fish was indeed a wiper, and certified scales at the store weighed Moore’s new state record at an even 25 pounds. After making application to the KDWP Pratt Operations Office, Moore waited the required 30 days before the fish was officially certified a new state record.

Moore’s catch eclipses the old record of 22.29 pounds caught five years earlier in the same location by Eudora resident Chris Wilcox.

—KDWP News



Remembering Chris Rupp

“And in the end, it’s not the years in your life that count. It’s the life in your years.”

Abraham Lincoln



When our president stated this timeless truth, he could have been thinking of being afield, and he could have been thinking about someone like the late Chris Rupp. Growing up on the land, immersed in its resources, is something that fewer children are doing these days. But outdoor experiences build the character, forge the soul, and shape the perception of reality for those who are blessed with the opportunity to do so.

Chris was one of the fortunate ones who had a family who gave him the opportunity to experience the outdoors, and his much too short life was spent pursuing and enjoying those opportunities.

Sandy Rupp, his mother, writes, “Chris was a hunter, fisherman and outdoorsman from the age of three. He enjoyed going dove hunting with his dad. He was a natural when it came to handling and shooting a gun. He was involved in 4-H Shooting Sports for several years, which taught him safe gun handling, and he used those skills almost daily. He never sat in front of the television or played games when there was something to do outside. He hunted pheasants with many of his cousins, friends, and relatives. He would pick up his younger cousins and take them down to the creek to hike and plink around with BB guns. He enjoyed listening to hunting stories and adding in his own. At the age of eight, he started hunting with a bow and arrow, and he practiced that skill until he had it down. He bowhunted rabbits, wild hogs, deer and elk. Chris not only hunted these animals, but he learned to process them, cook them, and make them taste good. He often had friends out for a deer steak, hamburger or slow-cooked rabbit.”

Chris’ passion and aptitude for hunting and fishing were instilled in him by a long line of family members. His father, Kenny, mother, and Uncle Mike took him hunting and taught him about the outdoors. When Chris was very small, he loved to look

at his Grandpa Gene’s deer mounts on the wall and hear his tales. After Gene was paralyzed in a tractor accident, Chris enjoyed being able to help take his grandpa hunting. His other grandpa, Eugene, loved to hunt but was no longer physically able to. He gave Chris his .30-06, and shared hunts with him through Chris’ stories, which he loved to hear. Chris enriched the lives of his family and many others with his hunting stories. He was fortunate to have such avid outdoor mentors in his family. It was a rare gift for him to be able to call his parents, uncle and grandpas his hunting buddies.

Not only was Chris a successful hunter, he took multiple one-in-a-lifetime trophy-class animals. Because of his passion, persistence and practice to become proficient with his bow and firearms, Chris was able to take more inches of antler during his short 17-year hunting career than most hunters will take in a lifetime.

Chris’ mother summarized his dedication to the outdoors, right up to the moment of the tragic accident that killed him. “On August 1, 2009, Chris had traveled home after spending time fishing and four-wheeling at the family cabin in Daniel, Wyo. On the way, he stopped at Cabela’s in Sidney, Neb., to purchase a treestand and other hunting accessories for the coming hunting season. He went back to town that night to meet up with friends and visit. On his way home, he fell asleep and wrecked his pickup, killing him instantly. That night, we lost our son, friend, and great outdoorsman.”

As a fellow outdoorsman who never had the opportunity to step into the field with Chris, I sure hope to swap a story or two with him someday.

– Matt Bain, wildlife biologist, Colby



CABINS AT KINGMAN

Last August, KDWP opened two new cabins at Kingman State Fishing Lake, 7 miles west of Kingman on U.S. Highway 54. The two modern rental cabins overlook the lake, and the area charges no entry fees. The area around the lake provides hiking, wildlife viewing, primitive camping year-round, and a newly-refurbished group shelter for family gatherings. However, the lake’s main attraction is fishing, and hunting is available on the adjacent 4,622-acre Byron Walker Wildlife Area, through which the Ninnescah River flows.

The air conditioned and heated cabins sleep six comfortably on one queen, three twin, and one full futon beds. Users must provide their own bedding, pillows, towels, and toiletries. A hot shower, complete kitchen, refrigerator, stovetop, and microwave are included, along with an outdoor patio with gas grill and picnic table. A fire ring is available for evening campfires. Other amenities include an outside hydrant, kitchen utensils, dishes, pots, pans, and coffee pot.

KDWP offers these and more than 90 other cabins at 20 state parks and five wildlife areas throughout the state. For reservations or more information, click “Cabin Reservations” on the KDWP website, www.kdwp.state.ks.us. To ensure availability, reservations should be made seven days prior to arrival.

–KDWP News

2010 Sportsmen's

TURKEY

2010 FALL TURKEY:

- Season: Oct. 1-Nov. 30, 2010 and Dec. 13-31, 2010; and Jan. 10-31, 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 - Dec. 12, 2010
- Firearm Extended Whitetail Antlerless Season: Jan.1 - Jan 9, 2011
- Archery Extended Whitetail Antlerless Season (DMU 19 only): Jan. 10 - Jan. 31, 2011
- Special Extended Firearms Whitetail Antlerless Season: Jan.10- Jan.16, 2011 (Open for unit 7, 8 and 15 only.)

ELK (residents only)

Outside Fort Riley:

- Muzzleloader: Sept. 1-Oct. 3, 2010
- Archery: Sept. 20 - Dec. 31, 2010
- Firearm: Dec. 1-12, 2009 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 & Oct. 9-31, 2010
- Muzzleloader: Sept. 27 - Oct. 4, 2010

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

Calendar

MIGRATORY GAME BIRDS

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

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

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

UPLAND GAME BIRDS

PHEASANTS

- Season: Nov. 13, 2010 - January 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 - January 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 (Southwest Unit)
- Possession Limit: twice daily bag

SMALL GAME ANIMALS

SQUIRREL

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

RABBITS (Cottontail & Jack rabbit)

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

CROW

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

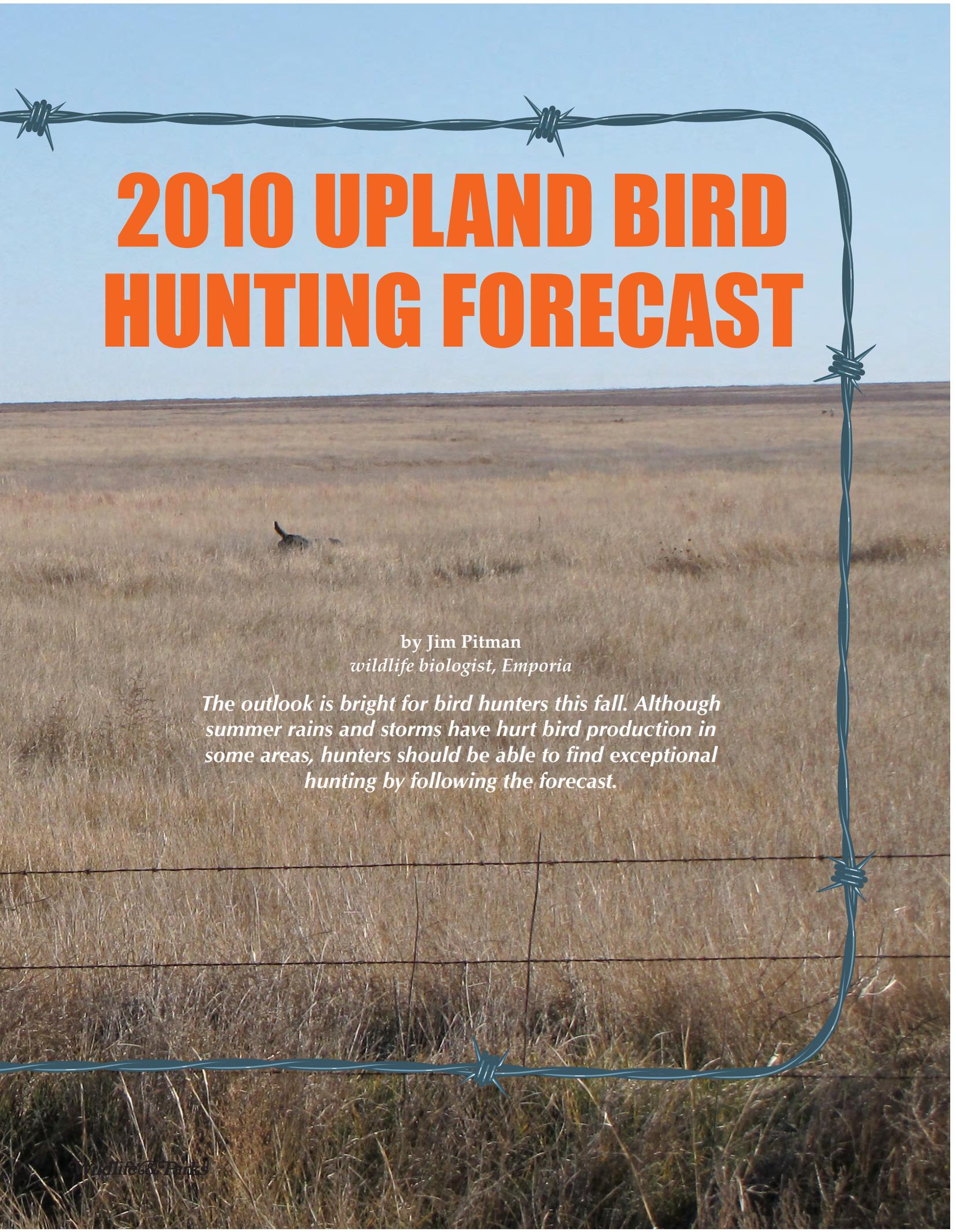
FISHING SEASONS

TROUT SEASON

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



Mike Miller photo



2010 UPLAND BIRD HUNTING FORECAST

by Jim Pitman
wildlife biologist, Emporia

The outlook is bright for bird hunters this fall. Although summer rains and storms have hurt bird production in some areas, hunters should be able to find exceptional hunting by following the forecast.



Each year, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks staff conduct a variety of surveys that are compiled in early fall to provide hunters with some idea of what kind of pheasant, bobwhite quail and prairie chicken numbers they can expect across the state. Staff conduct pheasant crow counts each spring, traveling a designated route and stopping at designated stops and counting the number of cock pheasants they hear crow. This information is compared to that of surveys taken for many years, and trends in breeding populations can be estimated. In July, rural mail carriers observe and record wildlife they see on their routes. With more than 40 years of mail carrier data, the information is another piece in the puzzle of estimating current populations. Also in the summer, KDWP staff conduct brood count surveys, recording the number and age of all upland birds they see. All of these survey data are then compiled, compared to previous years' data and used to estimate bird numbers, relative to past years, for hunters.

With more than 1 million acres of Walk-In Hunting Access land open, and a half-million acres of state-managed land open, hunters can use the forecast, along with the hunting atlas, to select the region and areas they will hunt. Due to summer storms, drought conditions and habitat changes, driving just 45 miles may mean the difference in below average hunting to excellent hunting. Use this forecast and the 2010 Hunting Atlas and have a great 2010

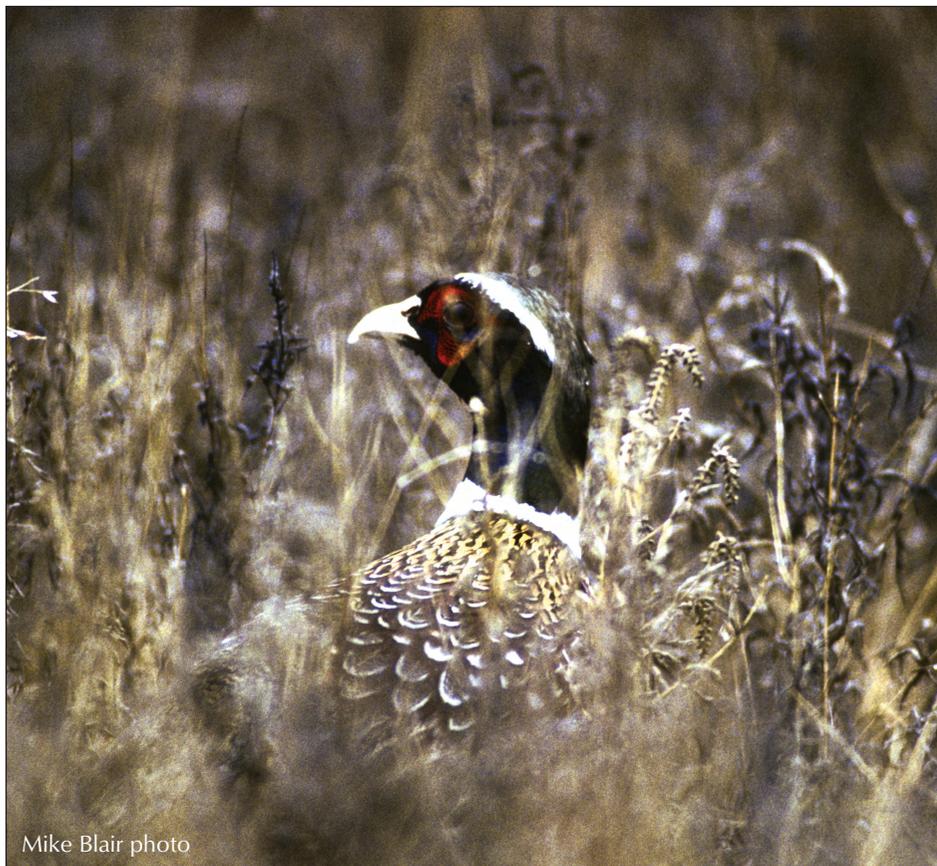
hunting season.

Over the last year, weather and habitat conditions across Kansas were very good for upland game birds, with a few exceptions. The winter of 2009-2010 saw near average snow and ice accumulation, which led to strong carryover of breeding populations in most regions. The exception was in the northeast, where more than a foot of snow covered the ground for at least three weeks immediately after Christmas. Most of the state also received average or above average precipitation last fall and early spring, resulting in good cover conditions for nesting and brood rearing. Additionally, weather during the critical nesting and brood rearing period of May

through July was favorable in all but a few areas of the state. The exceptions were due to severe thunderstorms in June and early July that dropped more than 4 inches of rain in a few local areas of the state. Many of those storms were also accompanied by large hail, especially in north-central Kansas.

PHEASANT

Due to good production in the summer of 2009 and a relatively mild following winter, the number of pheasants going into the nesting season was similar or slightly improved from 2009 in most regions of the state. Precipitation in June and early July prevented many farmers from harvesting their wheat crop until well after the peak time when pheasant nests hatch. The timing of wheat harvest plays a big role in the number of young produced



Mike Blair photo



Region 2 — Pheasant

Pheasants came through the winter in fair shape across Region 2 despite the deep snow that blanketed the region last winter. Heavy rain fell in June in the far northwestern, far northeastern, and westcentral portions of the region, disrupting pheasant production. Thus, numbers will be down in those portions of the region this fall. Pheasant numbers should be somewhat improved in the northcentral and southwestern portions of the region, offering fair hunting opportunities. The southeastern and southcentral portions of Region 2 are outside Kansas' primary pheasant range.

Region 3 — Pheasant

Spring crowing counts were similar to or slightly improved from last year across the region. Production was about average in most areas but above-average in the southcentral counties and the western one-third of the region. Good pheasant hunting should be available throughout most of the region this fall with the exception of the far southeastern counties. The best pheasant numbers in Region 3 will be in the central portion of the region, which will offer some excellent hunting opportunities.

Region 4 — Pheasant

The breeding population was generally improved from last year across the region. However, unfavorable June weather led to below-average production in the westcentral and northcentral portions of the region. Productivity was average or above-average across the remainder of the region. Pheasant numbers in the southcentral, southwestern, and northwestern portions of the region will be up somewhat from last fall, offering some fair to good hunting opportunities. Populations will be down in Reno, Harvey, Sedgwick and Marion counties and very sparse in the eastern reaches of the region, which is the eastern fringe of Kansas' pheasant range.

Region 5 — Pheasant

The vast majority of Region 5 is outside of the pheasant range. There are a few areas in the western and northwestern counties where pheasants persist at very low densities.

QUAIL

The bobwhite breeding population was similar to or improved from 2009 in every region of the state except the northeast. Much of northeast Kansas was blanketed with more than 12 inches of snow for at least three weeks last winter. Quail are less capable of locating food in deep snow than larger birds such as pheasants. As a result of the prolonged snow cover, the bobwhite breeding population was down more than 40 percent from last year in northeastern Kansas.

Habitat was good across the state for nesting and brood rearing due to plentiful mois-



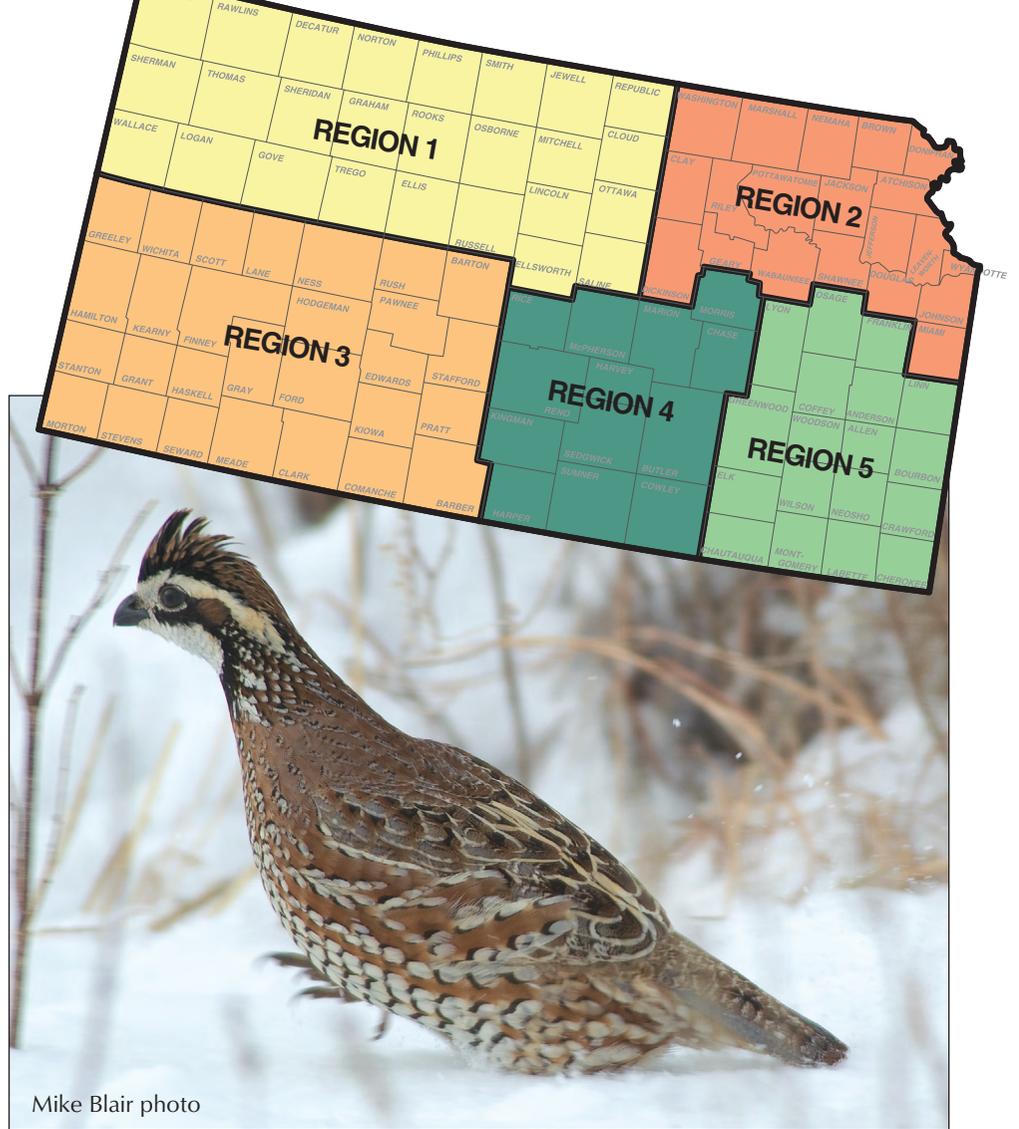
Mike Blair photo

ture last fall and early this spring. Heavy precipitation and flooding associated with summer storms hurt bobwhite productivity in a few areas.

The best quail hunting will be found throughout the central part of the state from the Oklahoma state line northward to about U.S. Highway 24 and eastward to about U.S. Highway 77. Quail numbers will also be improved in southwestern Kansas, offering some very good hunting opportunities in that region. Compared to last fall, quail numbers will be down in far northcentral Kansas and generally across the eastern one-third of the state. However, there are a few areas within the eastern one-third of the state that were unaffected by any major storms. Bird numbers in those areas will be improved from last fall but still far below the numbers observed 20-30 years ago. Bobwhite numbers in far northwestern Kansas will also be improved from last fall, but that portion of the state is at the fringe of the bobwhite's range, and densities will still be low compared to central Kansas.

Region 1 — Quail

The breeding population in Region 1 was similar to last year, and productivity was generally good across the region. As a result, quail numbers across the southcentral and southeastern portions of Region 1 will be much improved over last year. Populations in the far western and northwestern reaches of Region 1 are also generally improved. Due to summer storms, quail numbers will be down in portions of Jewell, Republic, Norton, Phillips, Rooks, Smith and Osborne counties.



Mike Blair photo

Region 2 — Quail

Breeding populations were down substantially this spring across the region due to deep snow cover last winter. Habitat conditions were generally good this summer for nesting, but most of the region experienced several heavy rainfall events during the nesting season. As a result, production across Region 2 was generally poor in 2010. Poor production coupled with a lower-than-average breeding population will mean fewer quail available to hunters this fall. Part of the central and northcentral portion of the region was spared from the most severe summer storms, and bobwhite production was good in that area, resulting in bird numbers similar or

improved from last fall. That portion of Region 2 should offer some very good hunting opportunities this fall.

Region 3 — Quail

Quail made it through last winter in good shape across all of Region 3, and production was average or above average. Overall, quail numbers should be improved from last fall, and some areas will offer outstanding hunting. Quail populations will be very strong in the southcentral counties and throughout the eastern one-third of the region. The best quail hunting in the state will be found in this portion of Region 3. Quail hunting should also be improved in the southwestern portion of the region where quail habitat exists.



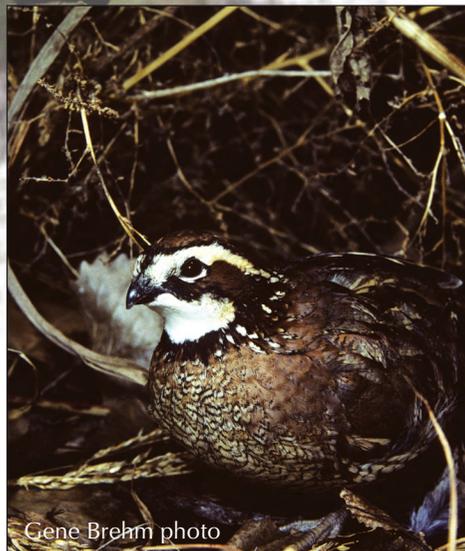
Region 5 — Quail

The breeding population was improved substantially this spring across most of Region 5 with the exception of the north-eastern and northcentral reaches, where numbers were down. Production was below average due to heavy rainfall in early to mid-July in portions of Greenwood, Lyon, Osage, Coffee, Woodson, Labette, Wilson, Montgomery, Neosho, Elk and Allen counties. More favorable weather did result in above average production in the southwestern and far southeastern portions of Region 5. Quail hunting in most of Region 5 will be similar to last year, but there will be noticeably more birds in those few areas that were spared from the heavy summer rainfall. Quail numbers throughout the region will still be well below the long-term average due to continued habitat degradation and poor production during many of the last five years.

Numbers will also be improved in the northwestern portion of Region 3, but populations will still be sparse because quail habitat is much more limited compared to the rest of the region.

Region 4 — Quail

The spring breeding population across Region 4 was improved from last year in all but the northcentral and northeastern reaches of the region, where numbers were down somewhat. Heavy rainfall that occurred during early July — the peak hatching time — hurt production in the westcentral, northcentral, and northeastern portions of the region. Production was very good across the remainder of the region. Expect quail hunting to be improved in the southern one-third of the region and the far



Gene Brehm photo

northwestern corner. Some of those areas should offer very good hunting this fall. Quail numbers will be down from last fall in Butler, Chase, Marion, Harvey, Reno, Harvey and Sedgwick counties.

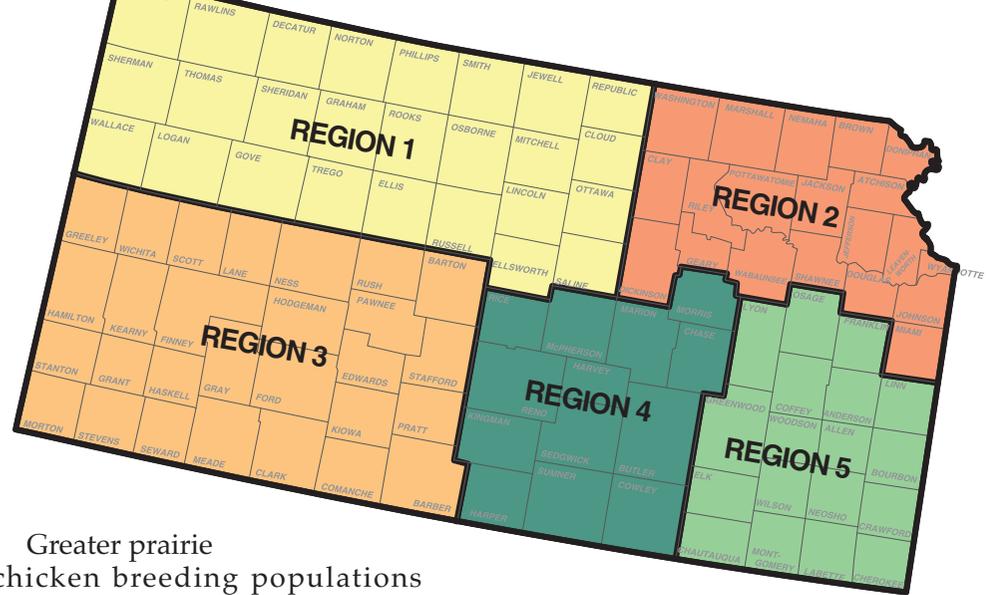


Mike Blair photo

PRAIRIE CHICKEN

Kansas is home to both greater and lesser prairie chickens. Both species require a landscape of predominately native grass. Lesser prairie chickens are found in westcentral and southwestern Kansas in native prairie and nearby stands of native grass within the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Greater prairie chickens are found primarily in the tallgrass and mixed grass prairies in the eastern one-third and northern half of the state.

The spring prairie chicken lek survey indicates that the lesser prairie chicken breeding population was similar to the previous year. Nesting and brood rearing conditions for lesser prairie chickens were generally good this summer throughout their range due to timely rainfall across southwest Kansas. It is likely that populations will be up from last year, and the best hunting will be in the central and northcentral portions of the bird's range.



Greater prairie chicken breeding populations were also similar to last year throughout their range. In the core of the Flint Hills, the majority of occupied habitat was burned again this spring, leaving little vegetative cover to conceal nests. Periodic burning is essential to prevent woody encroachment into the prairie, but burning the same acreage every year greatly reduces the potential for successful nesting even when weather is favorable. In addition to the lack of nesting cover, a good proportion of the central Flint Hills experienced heavy June rainfall that likely further

hurt production in that area. Conditions were comparatively better for production throughout the northern Flint Hills due to less prevalent spring burning and less severe rain storms. Conditions were good for production throughout most of the Smoky Hills region that spans northcentral and northwest Kansas. The best greater prairie chicken hunting should again be found in native grasslands from the northern Flint Hills westward throughout the Smoky Hills.



Mike Blair photo



Region 1 – Prairie Chicken

Prairie chicken populations have expanded in both numbers and range within this region over the past 20 years. The better hunting opportunities will be found in the southeastern and southcentral portions of the region in native prairies and nearby CRP grasslands. Spring lek counts in that portion of Region 1 were generally similar to last year or slightly improved, and nesting conditions were good.

Region 2 – Prairie Chicken

Greater prairie chickens occur only in the central and western portions of Region 2. Spring counts indicated that the number of birds heading into the nesting season was similar to last year in most areas. The heavy June rain that hurt pheasant production in the northwestern and westcentral portions of the region probably had a similar effect on chickens.

Thus, expect fewer chickens in those portions of Region 2. It is likely that chicken numbers across the southcentral and southwestern portions of the region will be up this fall due to more favorable nesting conditions.

Region 3 – Prairie Chicken

Most of the prairie chickens in Region 3 are lesser prairie chickens, with a few greater prairie chickens in the northcentral and northeastern counties. Counts this spring were generally improved from last year across the region. Conditions for nesting and brood-rearing were favorable for this summer, so numbers should be improved from last fall across the region. The best chicken hunting in Region 3 will be in native prairies and nearby stands of CRP in the central and southcentral portions of the region.

Region 4 – Prairie Chicken

Greater prairie chickens occur in the northern and easternmost portions of Region 4. Spring counts were similar to last year across the region. Most of the chicken habitat in the region is burned annually in early spring, leaving little cover for nesting. However, annual burning is much less prevalent in the northern and northeastern portions of the region, which provides better nesting and brood-rearing opportunities. Unfortunately, production in that area was still poor due to heavy rainfall in early June. Expect chicken numbers to be down from last fall throughout Region 4, but some fair opportunities will be found in northcentral and northeastern portions.

Region 5 – Prairie Chicken

Greater prairie chickens are most abundant in the western and northwestern parts of Region 5. Spring counts were similar to or improved across most of the region. Weather was suitable, with average rainfall during early to mid-June, when chicken clutches were hatching. However, production was probably average at best because most of the occupied habitat within this region was burned last spring. Expect prairie chicken populations across most of Region 5 to be similar to last fall. The exception will be in the far northwestern portion of the region, where numbers will be somewhat improved due to favorable weather and a less annual burning. ♡



Mike Miller photo

TREESTANDS AND WINDMILLS?

by Josh DeHoux
natural resource officer, Toronto

Feeling a little like he was going on the proverbial snipe hunt, the author embarked on an exciting bowhunting adventure in the open prairies of southwest Kansas. And yes, they really put treestands on windmills.



Mike Blair photo

Each year, I say a small prayer from my tree-stand opening morning. As the sun rises beyond the trees, I take those last moments of darkness to thank God for another year and another opportunity to experience His creation. This opening day, I found myself far from the hardwood forest of eastern Kansas. With a light breeze in my face and sun casting first light across the Cimarron National Grasslands, I became suddenly aware of the beauty hidden in what seems to be barren fields of grass and sage.

My perch was a familiar distance from the ground, and the sun the same warm glow I knew. However, my stand wasn't in a tree. I was suspended over a water hole, attached to a windmill. With its missing blades, bent supports, and broken cables, water trickled from the pipe only in short gusts. The horizon was nearly complete, broken only by the sage scattered across the prairie. I could see for miles in all directions. To my south were the only trees to be found. They marked the path the Cimarron River had taken for many years, not unlike the posts that marked the Santa Fe Trail less than a mile from where I sat.

This adventure began months earlier when I was talking with Bob Funke, a KDWP natural resource officer stationed in Fredonia. His stories of antelope, windmills, and



Mike Blair photo

an amazing land full of wildlife captured my imagination. Funke's stories of hunting for many years without success, crawling through prickly pear cactus, and battling sand burs didn't discourage me. He'd harvested several antelope over the past five years and was willing to share his secrets with another hunter. I was in.

While we talked one day

about spot-and-stalk hunting pronghorn, Funke let it slip that he had never arrowed one of these "goats" from the ground. My questions started instantly. "How is that possible? You do what? No way! That really works?"

Although I thought I was being fed a line of bull, I kept listening. He described how he was able to attach a tree-stand to a windmill base and said, "Goats just don't look up." He described the hunts with such detail, I figured they must be true.

As the summer passed, I kept asking questions about gear, shots, and if we were really going to put treestands in windmills. When the final list of needed gear included two hang-on tree stands and Vise Grips, I knew it was real. What I didn't expect was the land we were about to experience.



Mike Blair photo

The open, treeless landscape of southwest Kansas was a little intimidating at first. But after seeing how abundant and diverse the wildlife was in this unique habitat, the author fell in love with the Great Plains.



Mike Blair photo

Hunting pronghorns with archery equipment presents monumental challenges. The prairie speedsters use incredible eyesight to avoid predators, making stalking in this wide-open area almost impossible.

We left Wilson County early afternoon on a drive that would take us to the western limits of Kansas. As we passed through small towns in southwestern Kansas, the land became flatter, and the sage began to appear in pastures.

By the time we reached the Morton County line, I was sure western Kansas really was the flattest place on earth. The dry, almost desert lands were dotted with yucca and cactus and covered in sand — not what I expected. From the roads, the landscape seemed lifeless, except for the occasional hawk searching for a meal. We crossed a bridge that said Cimarron River, but it was dry. I thought to myself, *What can live out here?*

The next morning, we began scouting at dawn. Within minutes

I realized that my first impression from the highway was wrong. This land was rich with wildlife. From the moment our wheels hit sandy roads and two-tracks through the Grasslands, we were surrounded by wildlife. Creatures that I knew to be rare, that I had only seen in field guides, were just outside my window or visible through my binoculars.

Prairie dogs were common in many areas. Their towns were marked with burrows that looked like mini volcanoes scattered in the shortest grasses. One town seemed vacant, except for a burrowing owl perched on a mound. Fleeing shadows of ferruginous hawks and merlins streaked across the ground as they hunted. Midday was still alive with animals: white-tailed deer, coyotes, and countless birds

were everywhere we stopped to glass.

By lunch, we had seen several groups of pronghorn and had possible locations for our stands. Yep, we really were going to put our stands in windmills. Under one windmill where Funke had found success in past years, there was a scattering of pronghorn tracks. "Let's put one up here," he suggested. I grabbed a stand, he grabbed some Vise Grips, and we climbed about 15 feet up this "tree" made of steel and cable. I was surprised. After it was attached, the stand was quite secure. I still questioned whether or not this would really work.

Late in the afternoon, Funke and I received permission to hunt a private inholding property on the Grasslands. The

landowner warned that the windmill was kind of old, but we weren't worried. This spot was one of our first stops earlier that morning, and we had watched several antelope chasing and others just feeding on the grass near this particular windmill. However, when Funke climbed the windmill, he looked down and told me to stay on the ground. This windmill was shaking as he climbed up. I could see bars bending, cables stretching, and the entire thing moving with every move he made. After he attached the stand and tested the perch, he commented on it being in a good spot. After he climbed down, he asked me to get my range finder and start ranging 50 yards from the stand. He marked each spot with a stack of three gourds. I thought it was odd that we were marking 50 yards when Funke's



The author's expression says it all. Success rates for archery antelope hunters are very low, so taking a buck on his first hunt was truly thrilling. Exploring new country and spending time in camp and hunting with friends made the hunt truly memorable.

bow is only sighted to 40 yards.

When I asked why we marked out to 50 yards rather than 40 yards, he casually said because this is where I would be hunting in the morning. I looked back at the wobbling blades and rickety windmill and was excited and scared all in the same moment.

We ended our day watching the sunset and welcoming several other people into camp. It seemed that wildlife officers from across the state were gathering for this hunt. Everyone had high hopes and locations scattered across the area. I hardly slept that night thinking of the next day's adventure, and I admit some worries about that windmill collapsing under my weight.

Before sunrise, I anxiously walked across the prairie in the dark to my tree, I mean windmill.

As I climbed the ladder, I found it swinging loose. A rung was missing, and the entire windmill moved when I did. After attaching my harness, I settled in and waited for my day to begin. Just after sunrise, I noticed a group of pronghorn to the west, nearly a mile away — then another single north of them and another and another.

There was a buck in the first group I saw at sunrise that caught my attention. He was obviously the dominant buck in the area. I watched him keep every other buck far from his harem of does. As a rogue buck approached him, I watched as he chased the challenger clear out of sight and back again. Then, in what seemed to be the dominant buck toying with the challenger, he ran him off again, this time, within 100 yards

of my perch. When the race was over, the dominant buck returned to his harem still running. I was amazed that the dominant buck had just run nearly 4 miles and didn't seem winded.

I watched though the morning as other challengers approached the boss buck. Each was turned away. Many yearling bucks, does, and fawns came to water. It seemed that I was on the right water hole. By noon the action had slowed, but a group of antelope decided to bed down next to the gate where Funke was going to pick me up. I sent him a text message to leave me on the stand. He agreed and wished me luck. From sunrise to noon, I had antelope in sight the entire time.

Not only were the pronghorn plentiful, so were wildlife in general. This water hole was an

attractant for all of the life in the area. When the pronghorn were loafing well out of range, I had several other critters to keep my attention. I watched as two box turtles crossed the pasture and took a bath in the pond. I chuckled when one spotted the other about five feet away. Both of their heads stretched out, giving each other that don't-mess-with-me turtle stare.

About an hour later, I received a message from Funke that he had just shot a buck. After reading his message and sending my congratulations, I looked up to see my dominant buck pushing its harem straight toward the water. They

had covered almost a mile in minutes. In what seemed like just a few seconds more the first does were at the water. By the time I grabbed my bow, the buck was already within range. I released my arrow when he was at 30 yards.

My arrow was true, and the buck spun around in place once and fell over where it stood. The does ran about 50 yards and stood as if not sure what had happened. The final moments of my hunt happened so quickly that it didn't sink in immediately. As soon as my mind caught up with my body, I began to shake. It was amazing. I wasn't nervous; I was

overwhelmed. Months of preparation, practice, and eight hours on the stand, and in a matter of seconds my goal was realized.

After being picked up, my goat and gear was loaded and we headed for Funke, who had his own trophy just three miles south of where I was hunting. Two hours later, both animals were photographed, quartered, on ice, and I was enjoying a cool evening with friends.

The true trophy of this trip was the lifetime of memories and being introduced to a land that I already miss. ♡



Natural resource officers Bob Funke and Josh DeHoux traveled from eastern Kansas to the far southwest corner of the state to hunt pronghorns with bows. A long shot for sure, but success is evident in the photo above.



Bob Gress photo

Mountain Lion!

by Mike Miller
editor, Pratt
and Matt Peek
wildlife biologist, Emporia

After years of reports and futile investigations, mountain lions have been confirmed in Kansas. Evidence points to occasional transient individuals moving through and one such cat, fitted with a GPS collar, provided biologists with a fascinating travel history.

There aren't many wildlife topics that generate more interest in Kansas than mountain lions. Even though, until recently, the last documented wild Kansas mountain lion was killed in 1904, mountain lions are a popular topic with Kansans. You'll find mountain lion threads on many hunting forums and outdoor chat rooms, and there are even websites devoted to mountain lions. Unfortunately, an element of internet users delight in getting other users riled up with a mountain lion hoax. They find a legitimate photo of a mountain lion, dead or alive, then attach an illegitimate story to go with it – usually placing the lion in a region where few, if any, wild cats exist. Those who want to believe take the bait, hook, line and sinker.

It's likely that through the years at least a few transient individuals, probably young male lions leaving mountain lion populations in other states, have wandered through Kansas searching for new home ranges. Legitimate or not, those who report seeing mountain lions in Kansas do so with excitement or fear or both. They often ask what they can and should do if they see the cat again. By Kansas law and regulation, mountain lions are defined as nongame wildlife. They are native to Kansas, but there is no hunting season on them. This means that a mountain lion can't be hunted or killed for its mere presence. However, statutes allow owners or legal occupants of land to take wildlife found in or near buildings or destroying property (K.S.A. 32-1002).

Over the past 20 years, hundreds of mountain lion sightings have been reported, and KDWP officials have investigated many of them. Though field investigations aren't always conducted in cases where no physical evidence is present, staff have always tried to investigate cases where evidence was reported. In today's digital age of email and remote cameras, investigations are much more efficient. In many cases, emailed digital photos of tracks, scat, a potential prey item or even the animal itself can help determine if an investigation is warranted.

Mountain Lion GPS Tracking

Entered Kansas March 2, 2010

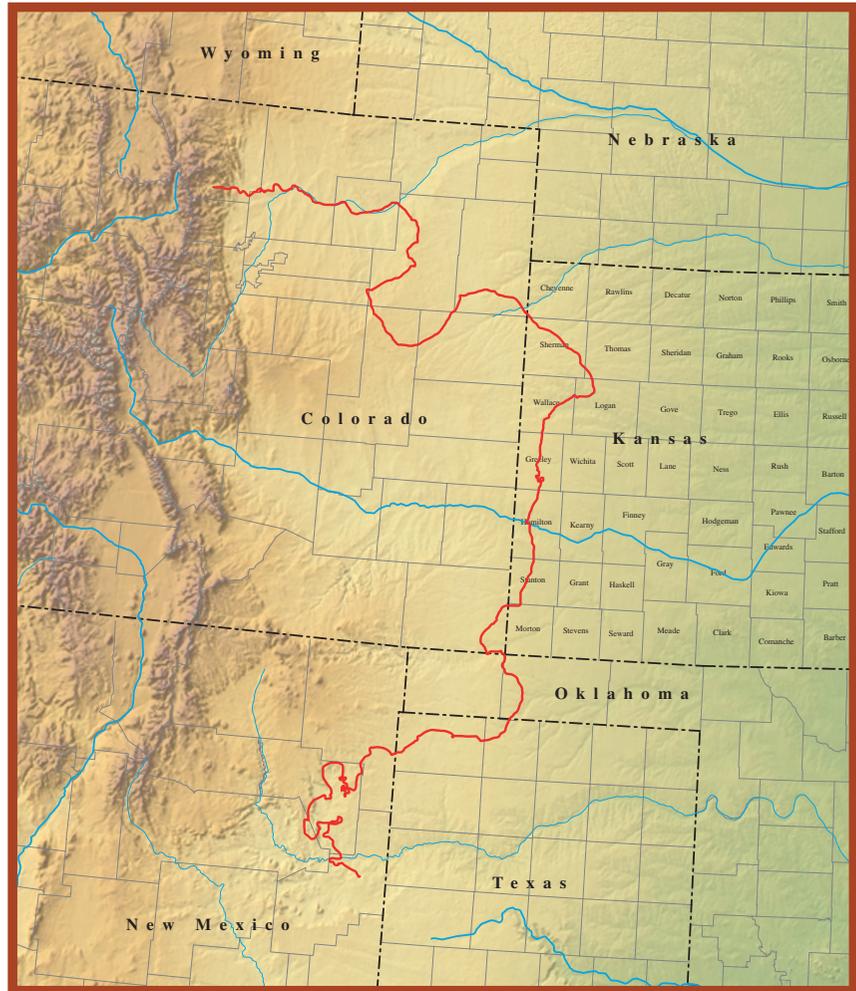
Left Kansas March 26, 2010

Rumors about KDWP and mountain lions have been popular coffee shop talk and internet forum fodder. There were reports of secret mountain lion stockings by KDWP to control deer populations. As one story goes, KDWP denied stocking mountain lions because of liability concerns. There was a rumor of tiny transmitters imbedded in mountain lion hides. According to the popular story, a person killed a lion, skinned it and hid the hide in his freezer. Several days later, a couple of KDWP officers knocked on his door, following the transmitter's signal. (I'll say unequivocally that KDWP neither stocked mountain lions nor placed any tiny transmitters in mountain lions.)

The first real evidence of a mountain in Kansas came in 2007, after a KDWP natural resource officer got a tip that a Barber County rancher had shot and killed a mountain lion. Several months after the alleged incident, the officer talked with the rancher, who said that while he was cutting wood, he saw a mountain lion, retrieved a rifle from his truck and killed it. The skull and skin were located at a taxidermist's shop in Texas and confiscated.

So was the rancher charged with a violation? Actually, he was. The rancher was charged with illegal possession of a mountain lion skin because regardless of the circumstances, possession of a lion killed in Kansas is illegal. A warning was issued for illegal take since the cat wasn't near any buildings or damaging property or livestock.

A year later, a bowhunter sitting in a treestand in northwest Kansas snapped several photos as a mountain lion walked past in the predawn light. KDWP biologists contacted the hunter and landowner and visited the site, confirming the photograph as legitimate. No more sightings were reported in that area.



The map above was assembled using the GPS points received from the cat's collar. The cat had traveled about 1,000 miles by mid-summer, ending up in New Mexico.

A little more than a year later, in 2009, a Colorado Division of Wildlife biologist contacted KDWP staff to tell them about a cat wearing a GPS transmitter collar that was heading into Kansas.

This was a cat that was taken from the wild to a wildlife rehabilitation facility at six months of age. It was released five months later near Estes Park, Colo., and it began traveling immediately, as wild animals held in captivity often do. The GPS

satellite downloadable collar was set to record a location every three hours. Receiving the cat's GPS locations after the fact, Kansas biologists were able to examine the cat's movements, as well as define areas it stayed for any length of time.

The 90-pound cat entered Kansas on March 2, 2010. Over the next 24 days, the cat wandered around the western counties of Kansas, moving in a southerly direction. On March 26, the cat left

Kansas and entered the panhandle of Oklahoma. As of this summer, the animal was in New Mexico.

After the cat left Kansas, several biologists decided to see what they could learn about where it spent its time and what it might have preyed on. With GPS coordinates and hand-held GPS units, the biologists set out to investigate “clusters” of GPS points, which would indicate the cat may have spent some time in one location. Clusters were designated as two or more GPS points within 200 meters of each other.

The biologists from Kansas and the Colorado Division of Wildlife found interesting evidence. The clusters were usually found near a group of trees such as a river corridor, an abandoned farmstead, or shelterbelt. But the lion also spent time in open areas – draws of native grass or weed patches – often not far from roads. One cluster was located in a railroad right-of-way between the tracks and the highway.

Biologists found evidence of prey the cat fed on, including raccoons, a porcupine, deer and a domestic cat. In Colorado, additional prey species were documented, including a coyote,



Matt Peek photo

With GPS coordinates, biologists were able to investigate the areas where the Colorado cat spent time. River corridors, tree rows and homesteads were common sites.

raptors, turkey and pheasant. No evidence of predation on domestic livestock was found or reported. In fact, one of the last cluster sightings investigated was near an occupied residence where cats, a farm dog, chickens and calves were kept. Though the animals were undisturbed, the residents of the house showed biologists photographs of lion tracks they’d taken the day the collared cat moved through. The occupants never saw the cat but sent the track photos to friends in Colorado, who indicated they were lion tracks.

On March 29, the cat crossed

back into southeastern Colorado from Morton County, then weaved its way into the Oklahoma panhandle. At last check, the cat was in New Mexico, and had traveled more than 1,000 miles.

While it was exciting for biologists to investigate where they knew for certain a cat had been, it isn’t certain whether the cat’s behavior is typical for a wild cat. Because it was kept in captivity for six months, the cat might not have avoided residences and buildings the way a truly wild cat might have. Learning what the animal preyed on was particularly fascinating for biologists.

Reports of wandering cats have increased over the last 20 years, probably due to expanding populations in South Dakota and other western states. To date, there has been no evidence of resident mountain lions in Kansas. KDWP field staff will continue to investigate reports where evidence exists, and you can bet the hoaxers will gear up for another fall season. 🐾

Editor’s note: In October, photos of a mountain lion taken by a deer hunter’s remote scouting camera in Republic County were sent to KDWP. Two biologists surveyed the site and confirmed that it was legitimate.



Large dog tracks (above left) are sometimes mistaken for mountain lion tracks. There are several differences, including claw marks on dog tracks and the size and shape of the pads.



MAGNUM'S MARK

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

***The pain of losing a dog is only outweighed by the joy it provided.
Good hunting dogs don't come along very often, but when they do, they leave a mark.***

It's often said every outdoorsman is rewarded with one good hunting dog in their lifetime. Many times the emotional ties we have with these four-legged friends seem to reach human proportions. Unfortunately, good dogs don't live long enough, and when it's time to say goodbye, it cuts to the core. Such was the case recently as I had to say so long to my best one ever.

His registered name was "M&M's Mighty Magnum." I picked Magnum from a litter of Labrador retriever puppies on April 1, 1998, when he was 49 days old. Experts say that's an ideal time to get a puppy, so they imprint as you become their caretaker. It worked like a charm, and Mag's dedication to me would be apparent for years to come. He bonded with my family, too, and pictures of him as a gangly pup with my then 5-year-old daughter, Ashley, are cherished. Ashley's now a high school senior.

Retriever training began right away, and Mag was an eager student. I worked with him at least four or five nights a week on obedience and retrieving. A 2-month stay with a professional trainer for some advanced work and ole' Mag was well on his way to becoming a "finished" dog who could make blind retrieves and obey whistle commands.

It was apparent Mag paid attention in class and loved his job. I started taking him on teal hunts when he was seven months old. It didn't take him long to realize retrieving something with feathers was more fun than training dummies, and it all clicked. Before he reached his first birthday, he'd retrieved nearly 40 Canada geese and more than 120 ducks for me and my friends.

Mag's ability grew as he gained experience during subsequent years, and in most he'd make hundreds of retrieves from September to February. It got to the

point where I was convinced if we put a duck on the water, it was getting an escort back to our boat or blind. I can't imagine how many miles Mag's retrieves saved us over the years through some of the nastiest marsh muck in Kansas. One buddy commented aloud after a particularly long retrieve that he should "kiss Mag right on the lips for bringing back that duck." He said the same thing in a text message after learning Mag was gone.

I was extremely proud of Magnum just like a parent would be of their own child. Sure, there were times when he'd break or not listen but they were few and far between. The thing I got most upset about was his constantly wagging tail. "Happy tail," as my friends called it, would drive me nuts in the blind. The constant "swish, swish, swish" of his tail was like a metronome. The cadence would increase when he saw ducks, often before we did, so I never had much time to get too upset.

But what made his final trip to the vet even more difficult wasn't Mag's ability or the number of miles he saved me over the years but rather his dedication and attachment to me. If I had to leave the blind and use the boat to retrieve a duck that sailed hundreds of yards out in frigid conditions, he had to ride with me. On camping trips, when I'd leave in the boat to take the kids tubing, he threw a fit. When I mowed the yard, he would lay in the mowed part and get up and lay back down repeatedly to move closer after each pass. He was like a kindergarten on a parent's leg the first day of school. We often laughed about Mag's "separation anxiety," but he was totally content as long as he was near me.

I have lots of memories. Some were comical, like the time Ashley

pointed out the camper window during one of Mag's first camping trips and said, "What's wrong with Mag, daddy?"

I looked out to see the goofy pup with his mouth stuck wide open. I bolted out the door and quickly discovered the little chewhound had a 4-inch stick stuck vertically in his mouth like a prop rod. It wouldn't be the last thing he'd chew as he conquered two garden hoses, the corners off my deck and even the wooden shelf off my gas grill. He did teach my kids to keep their toys picked up until he grew out of it.

And Mag must have been part cat over the years as he used several of nine lives. One of the most horrifying was his first season. A buddy and I had just shot a limit of ducks at Jamestown Wildlife Area, and Mag slicked up every

one in impressive fashion. I attached his check cord to my buddy's boat blind for the ride out in his Go-Devil boat. As we were on plane going down the canal in just inches of water, a coot fluttered out of the cattails in front of us. Mag launched right off the front in a swan dive taking part of the blind with him. There was no time to react, and after we ran over him, I looked back just in time to see the three-bladed, Ginsu-like prop miss Mag's head by mere inches. We turned around, and although covered in marsh mud and a little freaked out, he was okay. He wouldn't even look at a coot for several years after that incident.

The most recent brush was a couple years ago when the phone woke me one Friday night about midnight.



A good hunting dog will spoil a hunter. It's tough to hunt without a dog after hunting with a good one, and the hunter will compare all other dogs to the one.



Magnum was a part of the family for most of author's daughter Ashley's life, and it was hard on the entire family when he died.

"Do you have a black Lab?" the person asked.

"Yes," I said sleepily.

"Well, he's at Walmart!" they responded.

"What the hell is he doing at Walmart?" I said, wondering if I was dreaming.

I threw on some clothes and jumped in my truck. Walmart is about a mile from my house and across a busy section of highway. I pulled up to the front doors, and there were two 20-something girls and a guy with Mag in their laps loving the attention. I thanked the kids profusely and felt fortunate I had my name and phone number on his collar. My kids had left the back gate open that evening, and Mag had been roaming for hours.

All these memories, good and bad, made saying goodbye more difficult than I ever imagined. Mag had slowed way down over the last couple years and developed a breathing problem preventing him from hunting last fall. His condition worsened, and I knew in my heart he would struggle with the heat of this past

summer despite staying inside most of the time. We wanted to take him on one more camping trip in early June, but he only made it a couple days before his condition worsened to the point he was uncomfortable. I knew it was time.

The 45-minute ride back to the vet was brutal, and just when I thought I could control my emotions, I'd lose it again. It's not much different now as it's taken me 20 minutes just to type the last few sentences. I sat on the floor on a blanket and stroked Mag's head through a river of tears as the vet started the process. It was quick and painless, and as his happy tail fell forever silent I thought about all good times we'd had over the last dozen years. I thanked him for being such a loyal and dedicated friend and said goodbye.

Author's Note: If there's a silver lining to Mag's passing, it's that he left his mark one last time in the genes of six, bouncing Lab puppies. If Mag's son, Gator, is even remotely close to his old man in temperament, ability, heart and desire to please, I'll be thrilled. I'll keep you posted.



Cody, one of the author's twin sons, holds Magnum's legacy, Gator. The new pup is full of potential, but has the burden of following in Magnum's footsteps.

Memories (And Good Food) From a Piece Of Junk

text and photos by Dustin Teasley
Graphic designer

Good childhood memories and a promise made to an old man years ago provide motivation to build a backyard cold smoker.



When I was a kid, about 10 or so living on a farm, I was exposed to all sorts of unique things, especially food. From helping mom can brine pickles and picking fresh asparagus to eating homemade bacon and fresh eggs and drinking fresh milk from the neighbor's dairy farm, it was all good. But one of my most memorable treats came from an old man my father knew.

I only remember him as Mr. Stroda. I don't know how old he really was, but to a 10-year-old,

anyone out of school is old. I remember spending summer evenings listening to stories about the good old days. On hot summer days, he would pick a watermelon from his garden, take out his Old Timer pocket knife and touch the end of the blade to the rind; it would split in half so violently it scared me. He had large ceramic crocks filled with pickles 12-inches long and as big around as a pop can. But my favorite was his smoked jerky. It was the best. He always seemed to have some on

hand and was always willing to share. One day, I asked him for his recipe. He told me that if I wrote it down as he told it to me and gave him some jerky on occasion, he would give me the recipe.

I found I had put the cart before the horse. I had the recipe but no meat, no slicer, and no smoker. I don't remember exactly how it came about, but one day my brother showed up with a smoker built from an old latch-type refrigerator. I helped him bury it in the ground, dig a tunnel



A shelving system was built and racks constructed of half-inch angle iron, and expanded metal provided enough area for up to 10 pounds of finished jerky.

and pit out behind it, and place a stove pipe flue in the top. He had gutted the fridge and welded brackets on the inside to hold four expanded metal grates he had fashioned.

I fought tooth and nail with my mother to buy beef roasts for making jerky. Occasionally, I could talk her into buying a roast, as well as the other ingredients. It took many tries to get it right, but I did. To reduce costs, I wanted to use deer meat, but at 10, I was a few years away from being old enough to put in for a draw permit. A local hunter who happened to work for the police department said I could get on a deer-accident list with the county and retrieve deer involved in

vehicle accidents. I had him put my name on the list.

One late evening a few weeks later, the phone rang. My mom answered. I got the wide-eyed look of death from her when the person on the other end said he was from the sheriff's department. Unaware of my deal, the officer explained the program to her and that my name was next on the list. After calming down, she agreed and got directions to the accident site. We hopped in the car and

headed out while I explained myself. After getting the deer, my mother decided to teach me a lesson. She drove the carcass down to our barn, helped me hang it in the rafters, gave me a small pairing knife, and said she was going back to bed. (She didn't; she stayed up until I returned to the house.)

That first deer netted me probably 15 pounds of meat. Then for the next few weeks, I kept getting calls. The worst was at 2 a.m. during the middle of the school week. Mom was not happy about that. I found out that if you kept showing up for deer, they kept calling you. My mistake. I dressed about eight deer that year.

Now I had enough deer to make some serious jerky. Fortunately, my mother had a meat slicer that she let me use with her supervision. I remember mixing up batches on Fridays after school and starting the smoker the next morning and tending it the whole weekend. Tending the smoker was fun but tiring and counterproductive because my classmates would eat half of what I made during



A tunnel, 3 feet out the back of the smoker, is dug out about 18-inches deep. The tunnel is covered with metal and filled over with dirt for insulation. The pit at the end of the tunnel is about the same depth and about 2 feet in diameter. Two pieces of metal cover the pit and make it easy to control the heat.

Monday recess, and the other half was gobbled up by my brother and brother-in-law. For about five years, I was pretty popular during November.

Years later, my folks and I moved from the farm and into town. I took the smoker with me but never set it up. Then in 1994, I moved to Pratt to take a job with KDWP, and life started getting pretty busy. In the last few years, I thought of bringing that smoker down and firing it up again, but it wasn't until I began the "Let's Eat" column that I brought it back to Pratt. Unfortunately, time and the elements were hard on it, and I had to scrap it.

Determined to build another, I began searching for an old latch-type refrigerator. Mark Shoup, associate editor for the magazine, mentioned that he had one he would give me. I soon had it and began dismantling it. My neighbors were pessimistic about my creation that took several weeks to complete. I built it better than the old one but kept the basic principles in mind. The heat source,



Heather Teasley photo

After marinating overnight, strips of jerky are placed on the racks and peppered. Racks are checked every two hours and rotated if necessary. It takes about 8-10 hours at 140-degrees to dry-down a full smoker of 1/8" strips.

draft and vent system is the same. I was able to increase my capacity from four racks to eleven and installed a digital thermometer.

When I fired it up for the first time and laid those strips of seasoned deer on the racks, I remembered things long forgotten. I

parked myself in a chair beside the smoker watching the temp gauge and occasionally stoking the fire, my 6-year-old son parked right beside me asking questions that I asked at his age. I thought back to that 10-year-old and remembered I had forgotten to take Mr. Stroda any jerky. He has been gone nearly 20 years, but I have something of his that will carry on at least one more generation.

That is why I write this article, so I don't forget again. Building that smoker was fun, and my kids enjoyed watching it come together from nothing. They are amazed and ready to eat whatever comes out of it. I sliced nearly 30 pounds of deer roast into jerky for its first smoking; it lasted only two weeks. I gave it to friends, family, and pessimistic neighbors, and all enjoyed. I think I will travel to the woods — wife and kids in tow — to harvest a few deer this fall, and make a few more, hopefully permanent, memories around an old piece-of-junk refrigerator turned smoker. 🍖

Latch-type Refrigerator Smoker

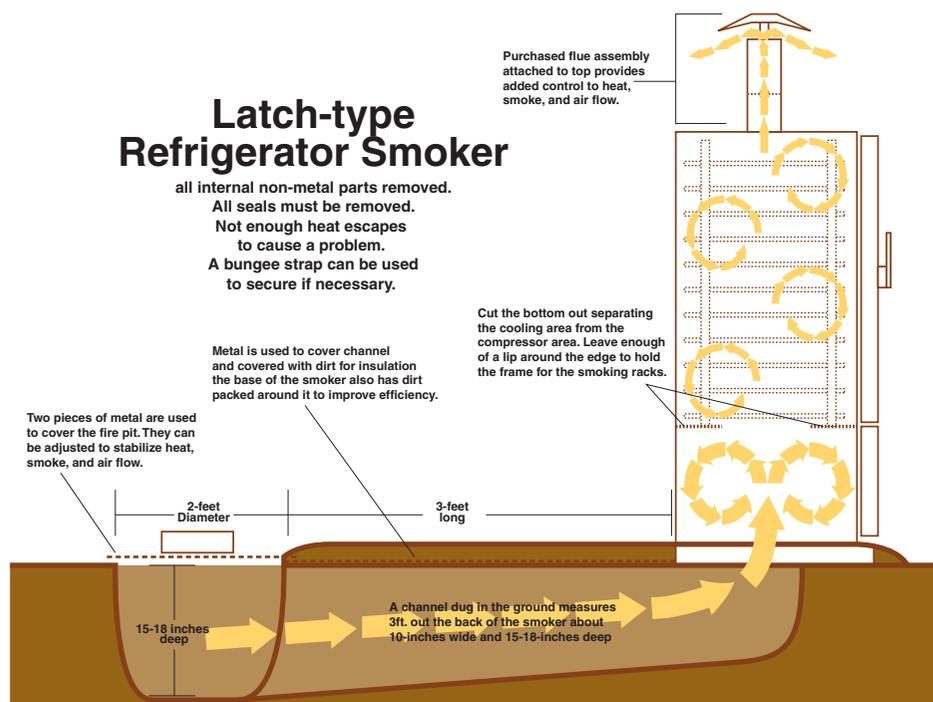
all internal non-metal parts removed.
All seals must be removed.
Not enough heat escapes to cause a problem.
A bungee strap can be used to secure if necessary.

Metal is used to cover channel and covered with dirt for insulation the base of the smoker also has dirt packed around it to improve efficiency.

Two pieces of metal are used to cover the fire pit. They can be adjusted to stabilize heat, smoke, and air flow.

Purchased flue assembly attached to top provides added control to heat, smoke, and air flow.

Cut the bottom out separating the cooling area from the compressor area. Leave enough of a lip around the edge to hold the frame for the smoking racks.



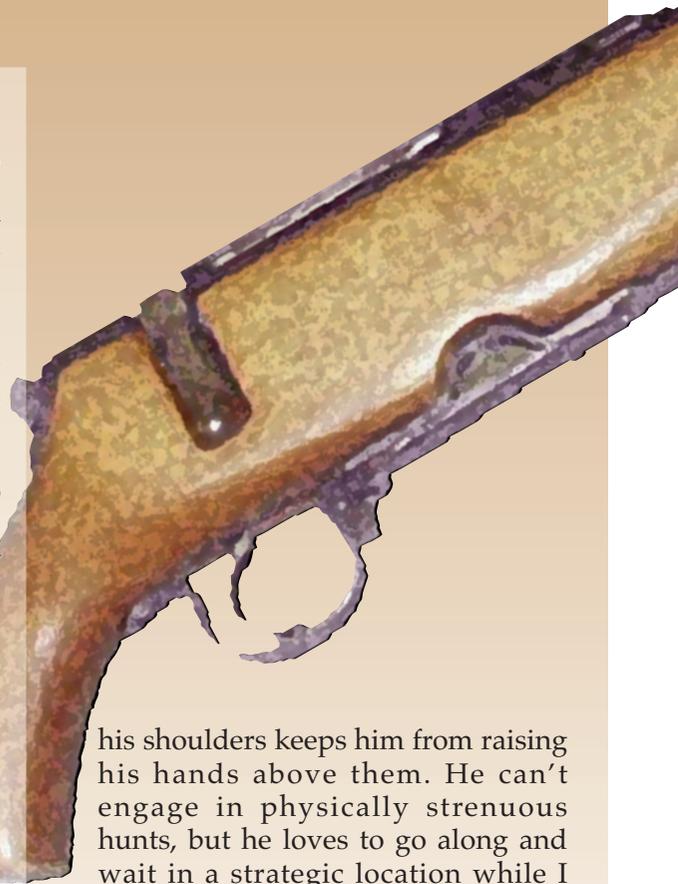
THE BEST RIFLE IN THE WORLD

Some guns are simply tools for the job, but there are others that take on a far greater value, and it has nothing to do with monetary worth.

by Randy D. Smith
freelance writer, Kinsley

Whenever a group of hunters or gun enthusiasts gather in one place for long, the debate of what is or ever has been the best rifle in the world will eventually come up. Historians, military enthusiasts, target shooters and hunters will have completely different picks, using various forms of criteria for their decisions. I've heard convincing arguments supporting such examples as the Kentucky Long Rifle, Sharps buffalo rifle, Winchester Model 94, Winchester Model 70, Mauser Model 98, and today's Remington Model 700 Sendero. I usually keep my mouth shut and just listen, figuring that I'll learn something that I haven't heard before if I wait long enough. Besides, I know what the best rifle in the world is; it's a bolt-action Model 340 Savage .30-30.

Every deer season, my favorite hunting partner is my 79-year-old father. He has worked hard all his life, and his physical appearance shows it. Years of operating heavy machinery, engaging in wild cow fights, and long hours of grueling farm labor have bent and shaped him, not unlike a steady plains wind molds a lonely hilltop cottonwood. Arthritis in



his shoulders keeps him from raising his hands above them. He can't engage in physically strenuous hunts, but he loves to go along and wait in a strategic location while I still-hunt favorite deer haunts. It has become an enjoyable ritual to take Dad deer hunting every year, and I look forward to it; he does, too.

It became increasingly difficult for him to shoulder his rifle as the arthritis advanced. He struggled to use the scope and stated several



times that he wished it had open sights like the ones he had grown up with. Finally, he simply said that it was too difficult to shoot anymore, and he guessed he would have to give it up. There was sadness in his voice when he made the concession. There was a heavy feeling in my heart when I heard it.

Then Dad had a bad summer. My mother struggled with ill health, as did two of Dad's life-long friends. I could see the depression growing in him as he coped with the potential loss of so many people who had been so dear to him for so many years. I wanted to do something for him that was unusual – something that only a son could do for his father.

While browsing a local pawn shop, I discovered a well-used and abused little .30-30 Savage bolt-action rifle. The stock was rough with a repaired crack near the safety switch; the bluing was almost gone; and the sling swivels

were missing. It needed a thorough cleaning and complete going over. But in spite of all its faults, it had a couple of major strengths that appealed to me. It was the size and weight of most modern .22s, and it had a nice set of marble open sights. It looked like an ideal rifle for an old man with arthritic shoulders.

I paid more than the rifle was worth and began my restoration project, then took it out and tried some test shots. It grouped as well as any modern rifle I've ever used. In spite of its appearance, it had the potential of being a very good gun. I planned to refinish the stock and add a new coat of bluing before deer season.

I was about half way through my restoration when the news arrived that my father faced a bout of cancer. Rather than wait, I put the gun together and took it to him that Saturday as a sort of "get your mind off the trouble" gift. He didn't say too much when I gave it to him, but Mom said he was down in the slough near the house the next day trying it out.

Dad began his chemotherapy. Deer season came around. The first morning was miserably cold. Dad waited on top of the hill while I hunted some cedars. He later told me that he had become dizzy and had to go to the truck.

Clearly he didn't feel good, and I hunted with my uncle the remainder of the day. The next day, Dad had to take my mother for treatments, so he didn't hunt. I gave up on the idea that he would do much, if any, hunting this season. Oh, well, we'd try again next year when he felt better.

The third morning dawned, and he followed us in his pickup while we tried some woods at the edge of our farm. We had no luck, but when we returned to the road, Dad was waiting with a broad smile. "I'm sorry to tell you boys this, but I just got one," he said.

He had a pretty fair doe. I made a big deal of it and even took his picture with the rifle and the doe. He acted embarrassed that I would make such a fuss over such a small deer, but he did pose for the picture. He refused to smile.

Sunday evening, after sharing a bite of supper, I rose from the table and said I needed to be on my way. I told my mother that I was glad she was feeling better and added that I was sure glad Dad was able to get himself a deer. He nodded, and I started for the door.

He followed me into the family room and said, "It was the rifle, you know. Thank you. It gave me hope. I didn't think I could shoot anymore."

Tears were forming in his eyes. He started to choke up, and I changed the subject so he wouldn't be embarrassed. He smiled and waved as I drove out of the farmyard. My heart at that moment was two sizes too big, and that little worn out Savage became the best damned rifle in the world. ♡



Getting Rid Of Feral Pigs

by Marc Murrell

manager, Great Plains Nature Center, Wichita

Feral pigs appeared in Kansas just 20 years ago, but they quickly adapted and expanded. Officials with KDWP and the U.S. Department of Agriculture have waged war on the populations, and it appears to be working.

Wild hog populations run rampant in states like Oklahoma and Texas. While they do provide opportunities for sport hunting with archery equipment, firearms and even with the use of dogs in some areas, their reputation isn't necessarily good. Many landowners and wildlife officials may tell you their destructiveness far outweighs any positive attributes of the domestic pigs gone wild. And in recent years, Kansas has been battling hogs in an effort to prevent them from becoming established.

"You can look at national agricultural statistics and see the kinds of damage that these states

and others in the southeast are having as a result of feral hogs," said Chad Richardson, wildlife biologist with the United States Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services Program, formerly stationed in Kansas. "It's kind of hard to figure out exactly, but it's pretty safe to assume we've documented at least \$200,000 to \$300,000 of damage each year over the last few years here in Kansas.

"The other big issue deals with diseases like brucellosis and pseudorabies that feral hogs can carry that could be detrimental to our swine industry," Richardson added. "Brucellosis can also be passed to cattle as well as

humans."

Wild hog populations started popping up back in the 1990s in various locations. Some near the Kansas/Oklahoma border may have wandered across naturally. However, officials believe some were purposefully released in other areas in an effort to increase sport hunting opportunities. As populations grew, so did concerns.

"The earliest that I worked on them was back in 1995," Richardson said of efforts to eradicate a population of hogs found on Ft. Riley, near Junction City. "We were kind of the first ones to get involved with the Army to solve that problem."

For the next five years,



KANSAS HOG LAW

In 1995, the Kansas Legislature passed a bill prohibiting importation and possession of feral swine. Hogs continued to thrive in some areas, and officials believed they were still being released to create hunting opportunities. As a result, the hunting of hogs for pleasure or profit was made illegal in 2007. The current Kansas law as it relates to hogs reads as follows: no person shall import, transport or possess feral swine in the state; no person shall intentionally or knowingly release any hog, boar, pig or swine to live in a wild or feral state upon private or public land; and no person shall engage in, sponsor,

instigate, assist or profit from the release, killing, wounding or attempted killing or wounding of feral swine for the purpose of sport, pleasure, amusement or production of a trophy.

The provisions of this section shall not be construed to prevent owners or legal occupants of land, the employees of such owners or legal occupants or persons designated by such owners or legal occupants from killing any feral swine when found on their premises or when destroying property. Such designees shall have a permit issued by the livestock commissioner in their possession at the time of the killing of the feral swine.

Richardson trapped hogs with cage traps and snares and shot them from a helicopter in an effort to eradicate the destructive hogs. By the year 2000, he had caught 378 hogs and virtually wiped the pig slate clean.

"We haven't had a report of a hog there since 2000," Richardson said.

It wasn't until four years ago that the livestock commissioner asked for a plan for statewide control of feral hogs.

"He was getting a number of calls and complaints from different parts of the state," Richardson said. "That's what got the ball rolling, and there was some state funding appropriated

through the Kansas Animal Health Department to initiate that program in 2006."

Richardson assumed the responsibility of heading up the project and spent the first year visiting with landowners and documenting hogs and their locations across the state. He provided traps and technical assistance to landowners, but many simply didn't have the time to run and work the traps effectively.

"We went back to the livestock commissioner with an idea of what we had and stressed that we really needed some more help," Richardson said. "We hired another technician the following year and put him in southeast Kansas where I thought I had some of the biggest problems."

Efforts to control wild hogs were ramped up, and a portion of Richardson's yearly budget was dedicated to controlling hogs via a helicopter.

"That amounts to about two weeks worth of flying," Richardson said. "It's very effective."

Both the pilots and crew members (gunners) performing this work have to go through special



It only takes a couple of generations for pigs to begin showing wild physical characteristics. Feral pigs are smart, prolific, adaptable and threaten native wildlife. Their feeding behavior is highly destructive, and they can potentially spread disease to livestock.



Aerial gunning has been an effective way to control feral hogs for officials with the United States Department of Agriculture. In prairie areas of southcentral Kansas, the helicopter can push the pigs into the open where they can be destroyed. Courtesy photo

training in Utah. The gunner uses a 12 gauge shotgun with an extended magazine and 00 buckshot. The pilot keeps the helicopter at tree top level until the hogs are spotted, and then an effort is made to herd them into a safe area to shoot where no cattle or houses are present.

“We don’t fly the helicopter anywhere where we haven’t got permission,” Richardson said. “We only fly it on areas where we’re working directly with landowners.”



Trapping is another method used to control feral pigs, and is used extensively in the more heavily vegetated areas. Courtesy photo

Richardson said that landowner cooperation with the project has been amazing.

“I’ve got close to 300 landowners who work closely with us,” Richardson admitted. “With the exception of Bourbon County and about three landowners, we’ve got nearly 100 percent cooperation from everyone.”

In recent years, Richardson has focused on Barber and Bourbon counties, where the largest populations of feral pigs were found. Other areas also have had hogs pop up in recent years.

“There’s also a small population in Cowley County, and we’ve had some hogs in Douglas County around Clinton Reservoir,” Richardson said. “And we’ve had a few hogs in Miami County and along the Smith/Phillips county line. We just took some hogs off the Cimarron National Grasslands in Morton County.”

FERAL PIG HISTORY AT CLINTON RESERVOIR

Approximately 6,000 acres of public land and 6,000 acres of surrounding private property.

2006 – public hunting permitted. Removed two pigs on public land and 22 on private land (aerial hunting).

2007 – public hunting prohibited. Removed 50 pigs on public land, 0 on private land (aerial hunting).

2008 – public hunting prohibited. Removed 60 trapping and 23 aerial hunting, all on public land.

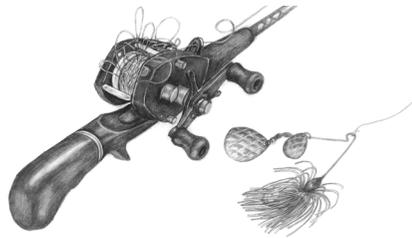
2009 – 0 pigs aerial hunting or trapping. Trapping efforts continued to ensure that the last few pigs were captured.

Once the hogs are killed, a global positioning system waypoint is recorded and relayed to ground personnel for collection of the hogs.

“We take blood samples from the adults and work with our vet services and the Kansas Animal Health Department and process those samples,” Richardson said. “And then the carcasses are disposed of. Most are rendered, but all that is handled by the Kansas Animal Health Department.”

The project is still on-going, but Richardson admits the efforts are paying off, and that’s good news.

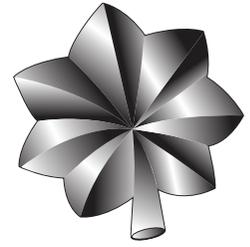
“We’ve been doing aerial control in those areas along with ground work, and we’ve got three to four years of work in some areas. We’re really starting to see results of our efforts.”



Backlash

by Mike Miller

Salute To The Colonel



There will be some mighty big shoes to fill around here after November 30. That's Hunter Education Program coordinator Wayne Doyle's last day with the department. Doyle is retiring – again. He spent 24 years in the United States Marine Corps, attaining the rank of lieutenant colonel before retiring from that outfit. He came to us 12 years ago when then Hunter Education Program coordinator Ross Robins accepted the job of Education Section chief.



An avid hunter with a long history as a hunter education instructor, Doyle brought the perfect balance to this position, and the man left some huge footprints on the program.

Doyle's work ethic, integrity, and Marine career provided him with the necessary skill sets to deal with 1,500 independent volunteer instructors, who by their very nature take a tremendous amount of ownership in this program. The Kansas program needed Wayne Doyle – every program needs a Wayne Doyle.

You could describe Doyle's style as tough love. With input from instructors, he clearly defined policies that would keep the program valid and credible, and then he expected instructors to abide by them. But he didn't ask anyone to do things he wasn't doing. I've never worked with a coordinator who stayed as involved in teaching. And he did it because he genuinely believes in hunter education, and he enjoys working with instructors and students.

If an instructor felt above the rules set in place and threatened to quit, Doyle thanked him or her for their services and moved on. Those who followed his lead, though, were rewarded. Never in the history of this program have instructors been rewarded as they have during Doyle's tenure. Recognition came in the form of award banquets, pins, certificates, valuable prizes, and more. Doyle invented a variety of ways to recognize the time and effort instructors put into the program and make them feel appreciated. He never missed a chance to give instructors credit, and he was reluctant to take

credit himself.

In my 25 years as an instructor, I've never seen instructors provided with better training and tools – or better communication. Doyle reached out to the instructors to help them do a better job teaching, to keep them operating within KDWP's guidelines and to help them feel a part of the Hunter Education Program family. He's criss-crossed the state providing training workshops to help instructors become better teachers, often bringing in nationally acclaimed authors and presenters. He provided instructors with laptops and projectors, trailers with shooting equipment, and trail-walk equipment. He listened to instructors and did his best to provide them with the tools they asked for. Doyle related well with the instructors because he was one of them.

Doyle has brought the Kansas Hunter Education Program to the present. The optional new delivery system that uses internet assistance and a field day has been very popular. Students are getting much more hands-on training, including firearm handling, live fire and simulated hunting trail walks. It's a better way to teach and goes a long way into building a program that is a student's introduction or initiation to hunting rather than a barrier. Although he's an "old-school" guy, Doyle wasn't afraid of change. And even though he avoided drawing attention to himself, the hunter education world noticed. Doyle was inducted into the International Hunter Education Association and Kansas Hunter Education Instructor Association halls of fame.

I have worked alongside Doyle in hunter education and hunter recruitment efforts, and I've learned that he's not about lip service. He says what he means and means what he says. His work with hunter education and hunter recruitment has been more a labor of love than a job. I'll miss working with such a respected colleague, but the instructors and future hunter education students will miss him the most. I've already started the recruiting effort to keep Doyle involved with hunter education and the Pass It On Program. If history is any indication, I don't think that will be a problem. ♡

