

KANSAS

Wildlife & Parks

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"C" Is For Courtesy

When my son and daughter were children, they watched Sesame Street. One character, Cookie Monster sang a song, "C is for Cookie." I suggest updating the song to "C is for Courtesy."

Several weeks ago, a friend and I were carp fishing at one of our state fishing lakes. We were fishing from the bank at the upper end about 15 feet from the end of the lake. At that point the lake was essentially the creek that fed the lake, and it was only about 20 feet wide. While we were fishing, three teenagers had paddled their canoe up the lake to where we were. Given the width of the creek and our proximity to the end of the lake, there was no reason for them to continue to the end of the lake. As they paddled by our lines you could see the carp scatter. Our little fishing expedition over.

I'm glad they were enjoying themselves, but their raucous good time ruined our relaxing good time. These kids either were ignoring or were never taught proper outdoor etiquette.

Kansas has some fantastic public lands. We truly have some unique and outstanding outdoor opportunities but like our natural resources, our public lands are limited. Most of Kansas is privately owned, so it is imperative that we use discretion and behave responsibly when sharing our public lands. In our Hunter Education Program, students are taught the importance of responsibility — to respect not only the wildlife, but landowners, other hunters and nonhunters, as well. That lesson is necessary for all outdoor users.


Hunters, anglers and other outdoor enthusiasts need to follow an honorable conduct code that includes respecting landowners' property and assuming liability for their actions whether on public or private land, not littering, obeying wildlife laws, and observing safety precautions. It is our duty to have the utmost respect for nature and other people. Our duty also requires us to teach others to show courtesy and respect for the outdoor tradition, as well. With just a little respect and courtesy, those boys and my friend and I could have enjoyed our day in close proximity, and everyone would have been happy.

Welcome

July 1, 2011, marked another historical event for the agency. The Kansas Division of Travel and Tourism officially merged with Wildlife and Parks. The agency's new name is the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism. In addition to the new name, the agency has a new logo with a design that is consistent with the logos of other state agencies.

Becky Blake, Director of Travel and Tourism noted,

"Kansas has a wealth of unique and authentic experiences to share with the rest of the world. This new alignment of the Tourism Division will further enhance our ability to develop and promote all the tourism opportunities in Kansas and expand the economic impact of this important segment of the state's economy."

I would like to welcome our new team members to the Department. I look forward to helping make Kansas the showpiece of the Midwest. 





26

1 **Kansas View**
"C" Is For Courtesy *by Robin Jennison*

18 **Lovewell State Park: Jewell County Gem**
You don't drive by Lovewell State Park — you have to go there on purpose because of its location — but you'll find a pristine and comfortable park that will make you glad you made the drive. *by J. Mark Shoup*

26 **Growing Up Outdoors**
As a teenage daughter readies to leave for college, her father reminisces about the times spent outdoors as a family — treasured memories of camping, fishing and hunting together. *by Marc Murrell*

32 **Awake At The Wheel**
It took years, a lot of effort and a grant to see the Kansas Rocks Recreation Park come to life. Now the 210-acre park in Bourbon County is open to off-road trail users. *by J. Mark Shoup*

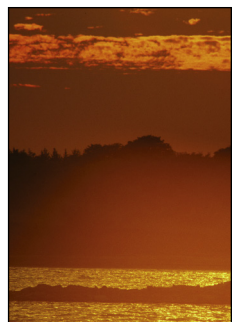
37 **Plant It And "They" Will Come**
KDWPT wildlife area managers are planting food plots that are attracting mourning doves and hunters alike. Intensively-managed fields are providing outstanding wingshooting. *by Mike Miller*

41 **Angling Art**
B.D. Ehler, of Topeka, is a artist when it comes to building custom fishing rods, and he also uses his works of art to help wounded veterans heal and feel appreciated. *by Marc Murrell*

45 **Backlash**
Sumer Magic *by Mike Miller*



18



Front Cover: A sunset over Lovewell Reservoir is a stunning view from Lovewell State Park. Mike Blair shot this scene **Back Cover:** Sunflowers attract mourning doves, and more wildlife area managers are using sunflower fields to provide great dove hunting. Many also provide fields for youth hunts. Marc Murrell photo



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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 . . .

FELLOW ILLINOISAN

Editor:

I always enjoy the magazine, but I especially appreciated the profile on Steve Price in the May/June issue of *Kansas Wildlife & Parks* (Page 9).

While I do not know Mr. Price, I too grew up in Cissna Park, Ill. I would guess that I'm three to four years younger. The article brought back good memories from my days in Cissna Park. I remember the elevator his dad ran. Instead of going to Pigeon Creek on the south edge of town, I went just north of town to Mud Creek and also lived on and fished Kellart Lake. I too recall fishing the Iroquois and Vermillion rivers and their tributaries.

Today, I enjoy Kansas lakes and parks but never get enough time at them. Thanks again for the article and the memories.

Jeff Creighton
Olathe

JAMESON FISHING DERBY

Editor:

Wanted to tell you about our family tradition or reunion we have every year, usually the first weekend of June, the Jameson Fishing Derby. What started out as a "girls can fish better than boys" challenge has turned into a tradition that has continued for 31 years. We have had hats and shirts made on a few occasions for the whole family commemorating the derby.

For the first 20 years, the event was hosted by one or two of the ten kids; now the grandkids are hosting the derby. Each year, a multi-page packet is handed out by the host stating the location of the derby, the rules, and what specific side dish or desert to bring for supper. Everyone has their specialty.

We are a family that loves the outdoors, and what better way for all of us to get together to show off our skills. My whole family is from the southeast Kansas area. My grandparents raised 10 kids in a three-bed-

HUNTING with Kent Barrett HERITAGE

Why Hunt

One thing that I have noticed as I have gotten older is that when a bunch of us "old guys" get together, we immediately start talking about hunting. But not every one of us talks about hunting in the same way. Hunting has been and continues to be a very personal activity, which is somewhat unusual because it is typically something we do as a group. Each individual hunts for his or her own reasons, and memories of the hunt are recalled from very different stimuli.

Some people talk about the hunt with hushed, almost reverent tones. They find a quality in the experience that calms them and brings about a change in them that deepens their respect for the natural world and every creature that lives in it. Some people find that to be a confusing scenario. How can someone find peace participating in an activity that involves the hunting of an animal that they have come to appreciate so much. I can't explain it even though I do understand it completely. Many of these most powerful emotions come from sights and smells that take us back to those very moments in our minds when we once again are a part of the world we have come to love and respect so much.

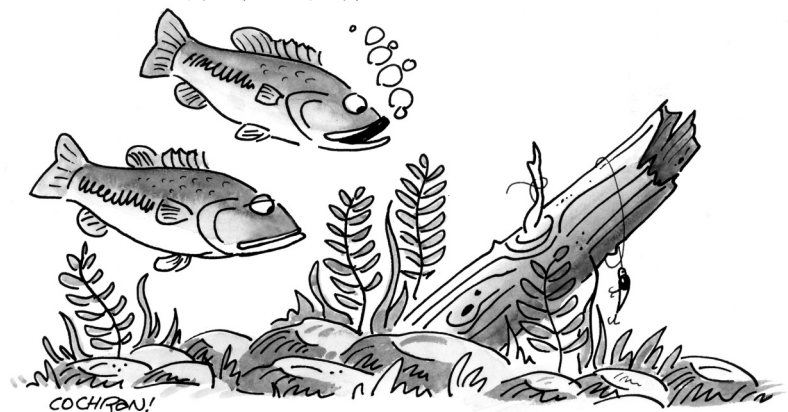
Some of us find that our memories are

tied to the hardware used on the hunt. I have to admit to being one of those "gear guys." We can remember the equipment we used, when we bought it, where we acquired it, even how much we paid for it. I remember well my first shotgun, a sweet little Mossberg three shot bolt-action model in .410 bore. I purchased that shotgun used from a "Five and Dime" store for \$20 when I was in the fourth grade. I still have that little gun in my gun safe at home. Is that really important? My wife would say that it would only be important to me or someone like me. But I connect that little shotgun with my first pheasant ever taken as well the first teal I ever took. It is still my gun of choice when I get out to hunt squirrels.

Some talk about their hunting companions, two legged and four legged. Their memories are directly tied to those they share the hunt with. Father, mother, sisters, brothers, uncles, grandparents, friends, dogs – each face, when seen in one's memories, never fails to bring a smile to a hunter reflecting on times spent in the hunt. These memories are vital parts of initiating young boys and girls into the fraternity of hunters so that they become a part of this tradition of hunting.

I am a hunter. But I am not defined only by what I do because it is my experiences that make me who I really am. These experiences shape me as a person, guide me in how to interact with others, and provide me with memories of what makes life so great. Because I am a hunter, I realize what a privilege it is to be alive, to go into the field and truly be a part of nature.

WAY outside BY BRUCE COCHRAN



"ISN'T THAT THE LOG YOU WRAPPED THAT GUY'S LINE AROUND LAST SUMMER?"

Late summer in Kansas usually has a consistent theme – hot and windy. Even though you might consider putting away the binoculars until cooler weather arrives, keep them handy and get out to look for the wealth of avian life that spend summer in Kansas. Most species of birds that nest here will be busy raising young, making for a unique identification challenge. Even familiar birds such as the American robin can be a mystery for the novice birder while in immature plumage. Young robins have lots of spots on the breast, are still a bit smaller than the adults, and make loud, un-robin-like sounds. Take some time and watch them for awhile, and usually an adult will show up with some food, making the immature bird's identity obvious. It's common in most species for the adults to feed and protect young for a while after they've left the nest.

Common late summer young birds in Kansas towns include Mississippi kites, mourning doves, blue jays, purple martins, barn swallows, house wrens, European starlings, brown thrashers, northern mockingbirds, Baltimore orioles, northern cardinals, common grackles, house finches, and house sparrows.

People need to resist the temptation to pick up baby birds. In most cases, unless a storm has blown through, many youngsters are out of the nest and trying to learn to fly and fend for themselves. They are usually under the watchful eye of at least one of the parents, so many well-meaning people are actually kidnapping these young birds from a situation they are able to cope with. Feral cats and house cats that are allowed to roam outside are typically the worst offenders when it comes to killing of wildlife, especially young birds. It's usually best to try to place a young bird back into a tree or shrub in the area you found it. Getting them off the ground can be important. The parents will find them.



dickcissel by Mike Blair

BIRD BRAIN

with Mike Rader

Summer Birding



eastern kingbird by Mike Blair

Other locations for mid-summer birding opportunities include the marshes of Cheyenne Bottoms, Quivira, Jamestown, McPherson, and various other local wetlands. If the summer weather hasn't evaporated all the water from these areas, they are great places to observe birds. There are usually abundant water birds, such as herons, egrets and waterfowl that have stayed to nest. Migration starts in July and August for many species of shorebirds, so the wetland areas are a magnet for them this time of year. If you want a real challenge, take some time to practice your identification skills on migrating shorebirds in late summer and fall. Most adult shorebird species tend to migrate first, with the young of the year coming through later.

Summer can be a decent time to go to the woods and prairies to look for birds, as well. Common species such as great crested flycatchers, eastern and western kingbirds, dickcissels, indigo buntings, blue grosbeaks, Baltimore and orchard orioles, summer tanagers, lark sparrows, and many other species will still be singing and easy to locate. If you prepare for stifling heat, biting insects, ticks and chiggers, summer birding can be a treat.

Letters . . .

room house across from the main boat ramp at the Mined Land Wildlife Area west of town. They grew up fishing those pits and even ran a small bait and lunch stand for a few years out in the front yard. My grandpa has not been in those pits or timber for years but can still tell you where to hang a stand or where some brushpiles remain in the deep water.

Some years, you are allowed to fish anywhere you choose, which is usually all over southeast Kansas, and other years, we meet and fish a specific lake because there are more than 100 of us. After a day of fishing, usually from 6 a.m. to 3 p.m., we have the weigh-in; don't be late or you will be penalized.

After all the fish are weighed in, prizes are given for biggest bass, a traveling trophy for the adult heaviest stringer, and an even bigger trophy for the kids. Side bets are allowed. We then clean fish (with Grandpa supervising), cook (with Grandma helping with the breading), and enjoy eating our catch while bragging and telling fish stories. Grandma and Grandpa still fish and even won heaviest stringer and big bass in the last few years while in their 80s. At last year's derby, we weighed in more than 200 pounds of bass, crappie, and bluegill.

We enjoy getting everyone together doing what we love to do, spending time with family and fish. This year, we had the derby June 4 at Elm Creek Lake north of Hiattville.

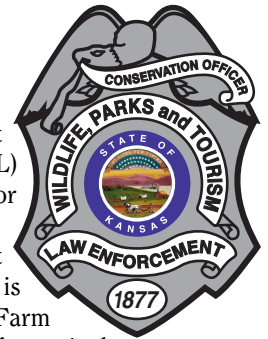
*Jason Jameson
Pittsburg*



IT'S THE LAW

with Kevin Jones

HUNT-OWN-LAND DEER PERMITS



Each fall, we receive a new round of questions about what qualifies a person to receive a Hunt-On-Your-Own-Land (HOL) deer permit. The HOL permit is valid only on the land owned or managed by the person for agricultural purposes.

Eligibility comes down to some very basic factors. The first is whether the land is farm or ranch land, and the second is whether there are at least 80 acres of land for each permit. Farm or ranch land means that the primary purpose of the land is for agricultural production of crops or livestock. There are various government programs that allow land to be classified as farmland without an actual crop being produced, such as lands enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program; however, the requirement is that the land is owned for agricultural purposes. The law also requires that there must be a minimum of 80 acres of land for each eligible permit. Therefore, if three eligible people are applying for permits, they must collectively own or manage at least 240 acres.

Whether a person qualifies as a landowner or tenant is the next question. A landowner is the person whose name actually appears on the deed to the land. Simple as it sounds, this is a little complex. If the name on the deed is that of an individual person or persons, then they are eligible. However if the name on the deed is that of a corporation, trust, estate, or other business entity, then the tenant or manager of the agricultural operation becomes the eligible individual.

The tenant, or manager, is defined in Kansas statute 32-937 as the individual who is actively engaged in agricultural production of crops or livestock, and has a substantial investment and potential to realize substantial financial benefit from the agricultural production, or has the overall responsibility to direct, supervise, and conduct the operation with the potential to realize substantial benefit from the production in the form of salary, shares of production, or other economic incentive based upon the production of crops or livestock. The individual making the claim to be the tenant or manager may be required to provide documents to show they are fulfilling the requirements of the statute.

HOL permits are available to certain family members of landowners or individuals who qualify as tenants or managers. Eligible family members include direct lineal family members, such as children or parents and their spouses and siblings and their spouses. Cousins, aunts and uncles are not eligible family members. If the family member is domiciled with the resident landowner or the tenant, they are eligible for the same type of permit as the landowner or tenant. Lineal family members or siblings not domiciled with the landowner or tenant are eligible for the Special HOL permit. Here again, there must be 80 acres of land for each permit issued. As the name implies, these permits are only valid on the land that is owned or managed.

Nonresidents who own agricultural lands in Kansas — that is, their individual name is on the deed — do not have the same privileges as residents or tenants. In this case only the person whose name is on the deed may apply for the HOL permit. The privilege does not extend to family members as in the case of resident landowners or tenants. However, the 80-acre requirement for each permit issued does apply.

Regardless of whether the person is a resident of Kansas, a tenant, or a nonresident, they may receive only one permit that allows the taking of an antlered deer. HOL permits are valid during any deer season, subject to the limitations of that season with equipment that may legally be used during that season.



PRIVATE LANDS with Jake George

PRIVATE LAND ACCESS

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

KDWPT has been aware of the crucial need for public access to private property for many years now. The Kansas private land access programs, which began in 1995, are exemplary models of private individuals working with the state to provide public access. Currently, KDWPT 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 sportsmen and women, landowners, and the many communities that directly benefit from the additional local revenue these programs help generate.

As successful as the initial Walk-In program was, there's always room for improvement. One of the major roadblocks since the beginning has been obtaining public access in the eastern, more populated areas of the state. Whether due to landowner perceptions, less expansive land ownership patterns, or demand for private hunting leases, it was clear that the original Walk-In Hunting Access (WIHA) program was less successful in the east than it was in the west. In 2008, KDWP initiated the Special Hunts on Private Lands program in the east, giving landowners a limited access alternative to the general access WIHA program. Now, landowners are able to work with KDWPT biologists to determine appropriate access dates, species, methods of take, and number of hunters allowed specific to their property. This program has continued to grow and has been an excellent tool for introducing landowners in the east to public hunting access programs.

Recently, KDWPT was afforded 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), a competitive grant program administered through the USDA Farm Service Agency, is intended to provide funding for state programs that encourage owners and operators of privately-owned land to voluntarily make that land available for access and improve habitat on their land. Kansas was one of 17 successful applicants from the first round of funding requests, securing an initial \$3 million with the potential for another \$1.5 million in 2012.

The primary focus of VPA-HIP funds will be to offer long-term access leases on properties that have enrolled in Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CCRP) practices, specifically CP33 - Habitat Buffers for Upland Birds and CP38 - State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement. CCRP enrollment is similar to CRP in that tracts are retired for a period of 10-15 years; however, only small portions of the field, such as filter strips or field buffers, are included, allowing the majority of the field to be farmed. Although CCRP tracts are generally smaller in total acreage than those enrolled through the CRP general sign-up, these areas provide quality habitat for wildlife by creating increased edge, diversity, and small patches of permanent cover in and around fields. Participating landowners will be eligible for CCRP enrollment incentive

payments, above and beyond those paid by USDA, and access payments on leases that will span the length of the CCRP contract. This approach will maximize the utility of VPA-HIP funds, encourage additional enrollment by offering landowners yet another alternative to general WIHA, and help to ensure appropriate wildlife habitat for the duration of the hunting access agreement. Opportunities for enrollment will be statewide and should be available this summer.

The future looks bright for Kansas hunting and fishing access programs. Increased options and incentives for landowners to enroll

means more opportunities afield and continued improvement of wildlife habitat throughout our great state. Creating hunting opportunities that are as numerous and easily accessible as possible is perhaps the most effective tool we have with regard to hunter recruitment and retention. For many residents and non-residents these state access programs play a large role in decisions to participate in wildlife-dependant recreation within Kansas.

If you have land and would like to find out more about the many options available for Kansas public access programs, phone 620-672-0760 for more information. If you are 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.



FISH SQUEEZER

with Tommie Berger

Live Bait Gets Results

I talk often about taking kids fishing, and though summer is waning, there is still plenty of time left to take a kid fishing. While some youngsters may have enough skills to have success with artificial lures, most beginners will have better luck if they use bait such as worms or minnows. And let's face it, fishing is more fun when you catch fish, especially for youngsters.

Let's talk about how to correctly fish worms and minnows under various fishing situations – the Tommie Berger methods, anyway. Worms can be put on a hook in a variety of different ways, but most often you simply see a glob of worms all bunched up on a hook. That's okay if you are fishing for catfish, carp, or other big fish. However, bluegill or smaller fish will simply pick a glob of worms to pieces and seldom get the hook in their mouth. So if you are getting a lot of bites but not catching anything or wanting to catch a mess of smaller fish, try this: tie on a smaller hook (directly to the line – don't use a swivel). Most anglers use hooks that are too large. A No. 6 hook is okay for most fish, but a No. 8 will catch bluegill more consistently. And don't use a whole worm. Just pinch off about a half-inch, then thread it on the hook just like a sock on a foot. Bring the point of the hook just slightly out of the end of the worm. You can run the worm on up the line above the hook if you've pinched off a bit too much.

This technique puts the hook inside the worm, and the fish has to get the hook in its mouth to bite the worm. This bait/hook combination will not only catch bluegill and smaller fish, it will also catch bigger fish. Kids in my fishing clinics have caught nice bass, big sunfish, crappie, and catfish on No. 8 hooks baited with one-half inch of worm under a small bobber.

A glob of worms on a hook will catch bigger fish. Just stick the hook through the end of the worm, go down a half-inch and stick the hook through again. Continue on down the worm until the entire worm is on the hook. This type of bait seems to work best fished on the bottom instead of under a bobber. When fishing a jig-n-worm for walleye, most often the jig or hook is

simply run into the end of the worm for about one-quarter- or one-half-inch, then out. The worm is then pushed up the shank of the hook, but most of the worm dangles off the back end.

There are several problems with fishing with a jig-n-worm. First off, you can't cast your line out too hard or you'll throw the worm right off. An easy cast or simply dropping this rig over the side of the boat and feeding line out from the reel will ensure your worm gets to where the fish are in one piece. Another problem is that lots of fish, including walleye, like to grab the end of the worm and bite or pull it off short of the hook. If this happens, pinching the worm in half will often work – just shorten up the bait. If you continue to get bites but no hookups, you are probably dealing with small fish like bluegill, white perch, drum, or catfish.



Minnows are fairly easy to rig. To fish minnows under a bobber, on bank lines or trot lines, or even fishing for stripers or catfish in deep water, the most common method is to hook the minnow under the dorsal or top fin, on top of the backbone about half-way back. This method ensures that the minnow will stay alive and swim somewhat naturally.

If you are trolling or drifting with minnows, some hook them through the lips – especially if you want them to stay alive. This is a somewhat a delicate proposition, and hard casts or bait stealers will pull them off easily. Other options are through the head from under the chin and out through the top of the head or through the eyes. These last two methods will kill the minnow, but since you are moving by trolling or drifting, it will look like it is still swimming along. This hooking method will work with dead minnows, too.

Sometimes a glob of dead minnows on a hook will work, but most often one minnow at a time is used. Some catfish anglers will use larger hooks and run the hook through the minnow or baitfish several times – usually from tail to head, so the point of the hook is closest to the head. This works well with dead bait that is then squashed, making all the good, smelly juices slowly seep out as you fish it.

The idea is to present bait as naturally as possible. That is why I recommend no swivel, the least amount of weight needed to cast, small bobbers, and small hooks. The more natural the bait looks, the more likely a fish is to bite.



Letters . . .

GREAT WEBSITE

Editor:

I am a student at Baker University, and I am conducting web-site research. I evaluated the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism website, and here's what I wrote for my project:

The primary intention of the web-site is to provide information regarding locations of state parks, calendar of events, regulations, license purchases, and fees for use of the parks. The website is designed for the whole state of Kansas, providing options to view particular park information. When researching for a particular park, I chose Tuttle Creek State Park near Manhattan because my son is a federal game warden, and this park is located in his jurisdiction.

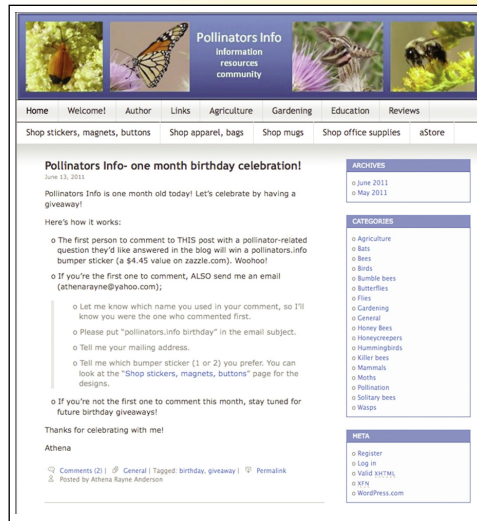
For Tuttle Creek State Park, there were links for news updates, calendar of events, brochures and maps for hiking trails, camping and bird watching, information for the 12,200 acre wildlife area, and even public photos downloaded by recent visitors.

The website is awesome, including a search engine with advanced features available. I used the search engine to find fishing license information, and it was simple. It took me right where I needed to be, with options including the purchase of a Kansas fishing license online, a pdf downloadable 2011 Kansas Fishing Atlas, a link to How to Fish, provided by takemefishing.org, and even a link to information on varying subjects, including Are My Fish Safe to Eat?

The ease of use and the attractiveness to users definitely deserves an A+. However, the website was only provided in English. I was surprised that there was not a Spanish language option and think this would be an improvement. Also, even though the site was very easy to navigate, some of the information overlapped. But had I not been researching the site and instead just been looking for particular information, I might not have even noticed.

*Maria Hastert
Baldwin City*

On The Web with Mark Shoup



NATURE'S FLORISTS

Most people think of insects as simple pests, but without many of them, life on Earth would be very different, if existent at all. Not only do insects provide food for many other animals, they help decorate the world by pollination.

For those interested in pollinators, www.pollinators.info is an excellent online blog. The site is designed for a general audience, to provide information, resources, and a forum for pollinator-related discussion. This site not only provides copious information on these busy creatures, it offers pollinator enthusiasts a community of like-minded people a place to discuss pollinator issues.

But it's about much more than bees and butterflies. Hummingbirds, bats, and other mammals that pollinate are discussed in detail. And this site is much more than a forum. Whether you're a gardener, a farmer, a teacher, or just interested in this topic, it's a great educational tool. Complete with great pictures and detailed information on each species, www.pollinators.info is a place anyone interested in nature should visit.

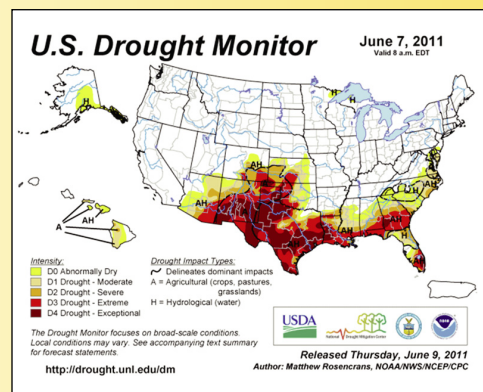
Pollinators Drought Monitor

DROUGHT MONITOR

Mark Twain is often quoted as having said, "Everybody talks about the weather, but nobody does anything about it." This humorous statement holds a fundamental truth – weather, particularly precipitation, is the lifeblood of the Earth. Whether it's too little precipitation or too much, everyone is affected by how much moisture has fallen from the sky. You think we might be in a severe drought? Find out for sure at the U.S. Drought Monitor, www.drought.unl.edu/dm/monitor.html.

Here you'll find a map of the U.S. colored to show areas from abnormally dry to exceptional droughty. To put things in perspective, six- and 12-week animations are offered, as well as short-term and long-term indicator blends. You can even compare this week's drought with those of the past. A National Drought Summary covers in detail drought conditions in every region of the U.S., noting the most recent dramatic weather events. Links to historical data, contacts with experts in the field throughout the nation (including state climatologists), a link to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and much more are provided.

So do more than talk about the weather this summer; get educated. The U.S. Drought Monitor can tell you how bad – or good – we really have it.





Labor of Love

Have you ever tasted someone's secret recipe and wished you could replicate it? Everyone has, but not all cooks are generous with recipes they've developed or had passed down to them by family members. I have often wondered, when writing these articles about cooking wild game, if I was violating an unwritten code of ethics governing cherished recipes. But my sister, Veronica, summed it up for me last fall.

Every year, Veronica gets into the holiday spirit by making dessert pumpkin rolls. She makes five or six at a time, sometimes twice each fall. Everyone loves them, and she even sells some. She's asked for the recipe so often, she carries printouts to give away. I asked her why she lets such a

fine recipe out. She told me that if someone is willing to put the amount of work it takes to make the rolls, she's willing to give them the recipe. They'll have earned it. If not, she figures they'll be back next year for another pumpkin roll.

Then I got to thinking. It takes many hours, sometimes days and weeks, to make some of the recipes I have. I've had many requests for recipes, especially for my Jim Hlauss' Hot Mammass. They are truly a special food item that intrigues most people. More often than not, I'll let someone help me make a batch in return for a jar of the pickled sausages. After spending two hours grinding meat, mixing ingredients, cleaning equipment, then another two hours stuffing casing and twisting links, followed by another three to five hours standing over a boiling pot of water, then finally two hours to cool, pack, and finish, friends are often

content with sharing mine now and again, rather than making their own.

Of everyone I have shared this recipe with, no one has ever made more than one batch. A batch is 25 pounds, or nearly five one-gallon jars, and takes two days to do right. I make anywhere from two to four batches a year. Its tough work, but its fun, and my friends and family enjoy it. I figure my older sister might have taught me something about sharing. If someone is willing to earn your recipe, they deserve it.

Making sausages, jerky, pickled fish, dried fish, and many other types of wild food on a regular basis is a labor of love. The more you do it, the better you get, and if you are willing to put in the time to do it and do it right, then you have earned my recipe.



FISHIN' with Mike Miller

Old Reliable

Either I'm gaining wisdom with age or becoming lazy – being more efficient with my time sounds better. Whatever, I change lures less often than I used to, and when I do, I always reach for the same two or three lures. However, that doesn't mean that I buy fewer lures or that I've downsized my tackle box. Nope, I still keep more lures than I can carry. It's just that when trying to decide what lure to cast, more often than not I reach for a jig, more specifically, a spinner jig.

Roadrunner is a popular brand of the horse-head jig with a small spinner. My favorite has a chenille body and marabou tail, and I keep a good supply of them. I seem to tie one on whenever I'm not catching fish on whatever I'm using.

It happened recently while fishing a state fishing lake. I first cast a spinnerbait for bass without success, then switched to a 3-inch tube. When that failed to get a strike, I sat down with my tackle boxes and pondered my next move. There were lots of choices, believe me. However, like I've done countless times before, I reached for old reliable spinner jig. The

water was pretty clear and less than 15 feet deep, so I grabbed an eighth-ounce in chartreuse. And sure enough, a couple of casts later I was reeling in a crappie. After catching a second crappie, the third fish was a white bass. I tossed Dad a Roadrunner to tie on. Like I said, I have plenty.

After a couple of casts, he was fighting a fish, which was obviously bigger than a white bass or crappie. It turned out to be the first of several channel cats we caught that evening, all while casting chartreuse Roadrunner jigs. In all, we caught five species in a one-hour stretch: crappie, white bass, largemouth bass, channel catfish and flathead catfish. I don't know what other lure could have done that.

While I've used plastic bodies, I always go back to chenille and marabou and prefer all white or chartreuse for clear water and bright skies. However, one of the best all-round colors, especially in turbid water, is the red head with a white body. I've probably caught more white bass on that jig and color combination than all other lures combined, especially during the spawn, when whites are in the rivers.

So, I'll admit that I'm getting set in my ways, and that I tend to use the same types of lures over and over. However, one advantage is that I keep the lure I'm using in the water more and spend less time tying on different lures, and that alone probably helps me catch more fish.



PROFILE:

with Mark Shoup

Lynn Thompson



Lynn Thompson retired from this agency on June 11 after 25 years of service to KDWPT and 35 years working as a wildlife officer. Growing up on a Wisconsin dairy farm, he learned about hard work and setting goals at an early age. But despite keeping up with school and milking cows early in the morning and every evening, the Thompsons found time to enjoy the great Wisconsin outdoors.

"I had three older brothers, and they got me into hunting and fishing at an early age; some might say they led me astray," Thompson jokes. "When I was a kid, there were plenty of pheasants and quail up there, and we had a trout stream flowing through our property."

So a career in the wildlife field was inevitable, right? Not necessarily.

"My older brothers are all very successful but not always happy in their careers, so when I let them know I wanted to do something in the outdoor profession, they were very encouraging," he explains. "They wanted me to be happy in my work."

After graduating from Elmwood Area High School in 1965, Thompson went to the University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point, which has one of the premiere wildlife management programs in the country. Thompson found the expense too great, however, and after two years, he volunteered for the draft. One of his brothers, a West Point grad, said, "I'm going to ship to Vietnam about the same time you'll get out of training. They won't send two brothers over there at the same time, so you volunteer, and you'll probably get another duty station with your two-year hitch."

His was right. Thompson spent two years in the Army, most of it in Germany, and that example helped solidify an already strong sense of duty to family, one that would last a career and carry him into retirement.

After his stint in the service, he used the GI Bill to help finish college, and in 1974, he graduated from the University of Wisconsin-River Falls with a degree in wildlife biology. Then he entered graduate school, but fate came calling.

In 1975, Thompson was offered a job as game warden with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. He took the job on Jan. 3, 1976, and worked there for 10 years. Life was good, and he and his wife had a son. For part of those years, his neighbor and fellow wildlife officer was Omar Stavlo, who moved to Kansas to become the KDWPT Law Enforcement Division director during Thompson's tenure in Wisconsin.

Then Thompson faced one of life's blessings in disguise: he had a daughter who was born deaf. The closest school for the deaf in Wisconsin was 400 miles away, and there were no job opportunities in that area. But then Stavlo called with an offer to work as a conservation officer in Kansas. The carrot on the stick was that the Kansas School For the Deaf in Olathe is one of the best such schools in the country. Although Olathe would be 250 miles away

from Thompson's duty station in Bellville, the pay was about the same, and he took the job in May 1986, when his daughter was only four years old.

"My wife sacrificed a lot," Thompson stresses. "She took our daughter to Olathe every week and brought her home on the weekends and still managed to get a nursing degree from Mid-America Nazarene College in Olathe. And our daughter graduated from high school on time, got a degree from Johnson County Community College, and now works for the IRS. She's a very bright girl, just happens to be deaf."

Raising a deaf girl forced Thompson to learn sign language, a skill he has sometimes employed on the job. On one occasion, staff at Wilson State Park were having trouble communicating with a group of deaf campers, and Thompson was called to interpret.

It's been a rewarding career move for Thompson. He recalls a case in the late 1980s where he investigated the poisoning of eagles. The culprits were caught and paid \$15,000 in restitution, by far the largest wildlife case in Kansas at that time. In 2000, he was promoted to district supervisor and worked in that capacity until his retirement.

Thompson's law enforcement philosophy was shaped by his mentor in Wisconsin, Milt Dieckman. "Milt showed me the ropes and was very laid back," Thompson explains. "He'd tell me things like, 'You're never going to catch them all,' and 'You have to live in this area,' meaning that you treat people with respect. He had a good way of working with people. He was always polite and made people feel comfortable. He would never accuse someone of doing something he hadn't seen them do and made checking licenses more like a pleasant conversation."

Still, Thompson was destined for Kansas, and he doesn't regret it. "We plan to stay," he says. "Our families are all up there, and I miss them, but I really got tired of the long, cold winters. I have a granddaughter up there now, but we can travel."

Thompson's most satisfying achievement in his career was being promoted to district supervisor.

"I enjoy working with young officers and showing them how to make things easier," he says. "I would go into this field if I had everything to do all over again. Kansas is a great place to work because the people are very friendly, especially those who work for this agency. In many regards, it's much better here than in Wisconsin."

But at the heart of things, Thompson's life centers on his family.

"To tell you the truth, my biggest satisfaction in life was getting my kids through school," he says proudly.

HUNTING SPOTS

with Marc Murrell

Deer Jerky Simple and Easy

Deer season is long over, and memories of the hunt, along with a good bit of venison, are all that are left. Fortunately, as with many types of wild game, the culinary enjoyment of last fall can be had throughout the year. And one of the easiest, as well as tastiest, ways is to make jerky out of last year's bounty. It's a perfect snack for fishing trips, ball games, or simply whenever you need a little something between meals.

Venison jerky comes in two forms. The first is whole muscle, which is made from sections of meat taken from the deer and usually sliced with the grain for a chewier texture. Any part of the deer can be used for this but the loins (back straps) or rear quarters yield plenty of jerky meat after a few steaks and chops are removed.

The other option is made out of ground deer meat. While some prefer the chewier texture of whole muscle jerky, many enjoy the palatability and easier chewing of ground jerky. In recent years, many new tricks and gadgets have been introduced on the market to make this option easier to produce from start to finish.

Hunters who take deer to local locker plants often have burger made from some of the meat. While fat is recommended for burger used in hamburgers and other recipes, added beef fat often makes a mess when making ground jerky and isn't necessary. Simply ask the locker to grind



some of the meat without added fat.

For those hunters processing their own deer, many have invested in various hand and electric grinders. While hand grinders work okay, several electric versions make the process of grinding even a hundred pounds of deer meat a snap. They're worth the extra money when the entire process takes only a matter of minutes.

Veteran jerky makers have their own secret recipes of various spices and ingredients they like after pounds and pounds of experimenting. With the "do-it-yourself" option becoming more popular, companies have introduced pre-mixed jerky cures and spices. Hi Mountain Jerky Cure and Seasonings has many different flavors, and each pack will season 15 pounds of deer meat for about \$7.

The latest gadget for ground meat, the Jerky Shooter, is available for about \$30. It operates on the same principle as a caulking gun and makes the process simpler. Load

the ground meat into the cylinder, place the desired nozzle on the end and insert the cylinder into the trigger assembly and start squeezing out perfectly-shaped jerky strips.

Curing or cooking jerky can be accomplished in several ways. Many jerky aficionados prefer to finish in a dehydrator. Walmart sells one that costs about \$40. This is my personal favorite because it dries the jerky uniformly, but doing large quantities can take 4-6 hours or longer. Others prefer to smoke the strips, which adds a nice flavor.

Another alternative to cure jerky is to put it in the oven. Two hundred degrees works well for 1 ½ to 2 ½ hours, depending on the thickness of the strips and desired results. The process and clean-up is made easier by purchasing commercially-made jerky trays.

Making batches of tasty venison jerky doesn't take much effort, and it's a great way to use deer meat. A Sunday spent around the house doing chores or playing with the kids can be incorporated into a day of jerky making. Venison jerky is a healthy snack alternative, it's easy to make, and it tastes good, too.



AmeriCorps

By the time this magazine hits your hands, the Parks Division should know whether or not we received our fifteenth AmeriCorps program grant. This grant program, which will begin September 1, provides for members to receive a living stipend for serving either 900 or 1700 hours in a year. In addition to the living stipend, members are trained in basic first aid and CPR, as well as skills needed to assist with running the parks such as use of power tools, trail building, concrete and construction work, public speaking and campground design. Upon completion of the service hours, members receive an education award, more than \$5,000 for a full-time 1700 hour term, which they can then use for educational expenses at qualified schools or to pay back certain student loans.

Recruitment for the program is beginning now. Members will serve at various state park locations throughout the state. We train members in disaster response skills and when a disaster, such as a tornado, or flood strikes, our members may be called upon to assist. Our members responded to the Greensburg tornado. While

there, members stayed in "Yurt City" at the Greensburg city park and assisted residents with sorting through debris, tree chipping, and even running a day-care program at the city park for a few weeks, so parents could deal with paperwork and sorting while their children enjoyed a safe, trauma-free environment. This May, several members responded to Tushka, Okla. to assess the damage from the

April tornado that struck the town. While there, they constructed and installed street signs, a great help in a town where all street signs and landmarks were gone.

The program not only brings change to the parks and communities where members serve, it often brings change to the members themselves.

Through disaster service and serving with other programs, members develop a life-long desire to serve others. It can also provide a "foot-in-the-door" to students desiring a career with KDWP. Nearly 20 former AmeriCorps members now work full-time for KDWP.

If you or someone you know is interested in learning more about the program, contact the state park office where you would like to serve.



GLEN ELDER STATE PARK

by **Ron Kaufman**

The Waconda Springs Replica at Glen Elder State Park pays tribute to an ill-fated site of Kansas geology and Native American history. The park is located on the northern shore of Glen Elder Reservoir, which is also called Waconda Lake. As part of a flood control effort, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation began building the lake's dam across the Solomon River in 1964, and it was completed in 1968.

The resulting lake covered what once was an active mineral spring called Waconda Springs. The spring's pool was said to be 50 feet in diameter, 15 feet deep and rich in a variety of minerals. Waconda Springs was a sacred, ceremonial gathering place for many of the Native American tribes that lived in the central plains, including Pawnee, Wichita, Kaw, Kiowa, Sioux, Arapaho, Comanche, the Miami, Crow, Cheyenne, Arapaho and others. Kanza tribe members reportedly called the springs "Wakonda," meaning "Great Spirit."

In 1767, the first non-native person is said to have visited the springs. However, the first recorded visit by a non-native occurred in 1806, when General Zebulon Pike (for whom Pike's Peak is named) altered his route to Colorado to visit the springs. Gradually, more and more non-native people began to migrate to the area and beginning in 1884, the Waconda Springs Sanitarium was built over a ten-year period. Although it saw a variety of uses in its lifetime, the sanitarium stood until it was razed in the early

1960s to make way for the lake. Rubble from the demolition was piled into Waconda Springs before the lake filled.

Also at Glen Elder, travelers can visit the historic Hopewell Church. The church was originally located south of Beloit and was completed in 1878 at the cost of \$1,200. It was built by a dedicated congregation that was established in March 1876 and met in private homes. By July 1876, the group had grown too large to meet in homes, so in August 1876 they decided to build a 24-foot by 40-foot frame structure with a 6-foot vestibule at one end.

Building the church was quite a challenge. Lumber had to be shipped in, but the nearest railroad terminal was 80 miles away in Greenleaf. It took as much as two weeks to receive a load of lumber. It took two years to build the church, and the first congregation met in the new building on February 22, 1876. A number of changes occurred over the subsequent century. The church congregation eventually dwindled, and it was forced to close its doors in 1989 after 113 years of service.

In 1994, the church was moved 15 miles to its present location as the first step toward the Waconda Heritage Village Association's goal of creating a "living" museum dedicated to pioneer heritage and Native American lore.

Engaging stories about Waconda Springs and Hopewell Church can be found on the city of Glen Elder official website at glenelder.com and on the Kansas State Historical Society website at kshs.org.

Glen Elder State Park is located about 11 miles west of Beloit on US-24 Highway, or about 13 miles west of Downs on US-24 Highway.

ROADSIDE BEAUTY

THAT'S WILD
with Ken Brunson

"Don't it always seem to go, that you don't know what you got 'till it's gone. . ." And so go the lyrics of Joni Mitchell's "Big Yellow Taxi." I'm changing the lyrics a bit for this piece: "Don't it sometimes seem to go, that you don't know what you got 'till it's here." Thusly, I herald the announcement of new wildlife habitat for the state. It's been right under our noses, or in a less metaphorical sense, right outside the car window. For years, Kansans have cruised by our roadside ditches never imagining what potentials they held for beautiful wildflowers, swaying native grasses and cool songbirds. We only imagined when we went to other states such as Texas, Iowa, and even Nebraska to see what potentials there were.

Finally, Kansans will be able to enjoy native wildflowers and wildlife and be able to feel our own sense of pride – and save money. Thanks mainly to the dedicated efforts of Deb Miller, Secretary of the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT), and other key staff of KDOT, as well as a number of other citizens from conservation organizations, the Aesthetics Task Force (set up by Miller) made this a reality. Still an option for the various KDOT districts, we hope it continues to

catch on, ultimately translating to county efforts as well.

Near my home every summer, the plains sunflowers announce themselves in glorious profusion and brighten the county roads depicting a beautiful roadside companionship for a few precious weeks. Then complaints of "weeds" to county governments force a section by section battle for a "clean" landscape. It will take a concerted public education effort to save money by reducing mowing and only spot spraying noxious weeds instead of carpet bombing every living plant trying to reveal its beauty. And it's not just the plants. American goldfinches and mourning doves flock to this habitat along with many butterflies, reptiles, other birds and small mammals.

Along our highways, the natural vegetation that is left offers significant nesting habitat for birds. And in some places, the narrow refuge of forbs and grasses along the road may be the only place for a goldfinch or pheasant to seek food and cover. Even this day as I write, there is a proliferation of very attractive plains sunflowers just down the road and a bastion of Maximilian sunflowers ready to erupt in



later beauty. There are so many good reasons not to regularly mow road ditches – beauty, habitat, water quality protection and conservation, and saving taxpayer dollars. A significantly smaller outlay could be devoted to spot spraying just noxious weeds in the few places they actually occur and reduce mowing to corners for safety reasons.

At least in Kansas now, we've become enlightened enough to realize the potential for beauty along the state's highways, which has always been there just waiting to bloom. The possibilities for additional beauty and habitat along all the state's county roads could far surpass that of the highway system. "Don't it always seem to go. . .?"

The Kansas Fisherman

Call it inspiration or crazy, but Clay Dixon is fishing all the waters in KDWPT's Region Four. Dixon's hope? To help you catch more fish in Kansas waters.

On his blog hosted by KDWPT, Dixon reveals tips and tricks that will improve your technique, which could result in more fish on your stringer. Each of Dixon's blogs also feature a video clip of the lake he fished and tips that helped him catch fish. From pattern fishing to wind direction to matching your equipment, lures and bait to the size of the fish you want to catch, Dixon covers topics that will help even experienced anglers.

Dixon spent seven years fishing 35 weekends a year in professional bass fishing tournaments throughout the Midwest, including Kansas, Missouri, Arkansas and Oklahoma. Twice, he represented Kansas as a member of the Kansas B.A.S.S. Federation State Team that included a top 10 finish. Dixon and his fishing partner also qualified for the year-end Tournament of Champions in the first Florida Freshwater Fishing Championship.

Dixon spent almost 30 years as a corporate executive. He was the director of human resources where he helped manage a manufacturing plant for a billion-dollar, international corporation. While managing a successful corporate career, Dixon owned and operated the third largest hunting club in America. However, fishing has always been his first love.

"This is going to be an exciting project. While it requires a great deal of work and effort from many people, teaching others to catch fish has always been a high priority of mine, and that will be the number one goal of this cooperative effort with the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism," Dixon said.

Dixon and his wife, Jackie, have lived in Kansas for more than 35 years and currently reside in Wichita.

Check out the "Kansas Fisherman" at ks-fisherman.blogspot.com.

**From night crawlers
to spinner baits and
everything in between ...**



Clay Dixon, a former semi-professional angler, is fishing the waters of Kansas and posting his experiences online. Dixon's fishing program is designed to teach beginner anglers the "hows and whys" of fishing.

Learn more at www.kdwp.state.ks.us.



— Kathleen Dultmeier

Rainbow Trout Record Falls Twice In April

On April 2, Bob Lorson, Topeka, caught an 11.02-pound rainbow trout from Lake Shawnee that was confirmed as a new state record. On April 20, Ed Ames of Tecumseh was fishing the same lake with a Kastmaster lure when he landed a monster 13.65-pound rainbow, more than 2.5 pounds larger than Lorson's catch. Realizing he had something special in his creel, Ames took the fish to The Bait Hut in Topeka where it was officially weighed and witnessed. KDWP has now entered Ames' rainbow as the new state record.

State record fish are listed in the *Kansas Fishing Regulations Summary*, available wherever licenses are sold, and on the KDWP website, www.kdwp.state.ks.us. If you think you have caught a state record, take the fish to a grocery store or other business with certified scales as soon as possible. Do not freeze the fish before it is weighed. The weighing must be witnessed, and the species must be confirmed by a KDWP fisheries biologist or a Fisheries Division regional supervisor. (A tissue sample may be required.) A color photograph of the fish must accompany the application. All applications for state records require a 30-day waiting period before certification.

For more information on Kansas state record fish and KDWP's Master Angler Program, pick up a copy of the regulations summary, available wherever licenses are sold, or visit the KDWP website, www.kdwp.state.ks.us.

— KDWP News



photo courtesy Ed Ames

Off the beaten path – Shoal Creek Wildlife Area

Lush, dense vegetation. Black jack Oak trees. Clear running streams. Chipmunks. This describes a typical Ozark trail, but it also applies to a small wildlife area in southeast Kansas: Shoal Creek Wildlife Area.

In 2004, KDWP purchased the area to protect a small portion of the Kansas Ozarks and a clear-running Ozarkian stream called Shoal Creek. The 32-acre wildlife area is located in the far corner of southeast Kansas in Cherokee County, within the Ozark Plateau physiographic region. Shoal Creek Wildlife Area typifies the characteristic wooded hills, Ozarkian streams, wet limestone crevices and caves found in the region. Many species of wildlife found on the state endangered and threatened species list are found in this area.

Region Five Public Lands manager Rob Riggins is responsible for maintaining the wildlife area. "This area is a great place to walk. You get to see the Ozarks without leaving the state."

Riggins continued, "My favorite part of the wildlife area is the bluff overlooking Shoal Creek. It's a beautiful area."

White-tailed deer, gray squirrel, fox squirrel and furbearers are commonly found on the Shoal Creek Wildlife Area. The unique flora and physiography of the area also provide habitat for numerous species of birds, insects, reptiles, amphibians, and fish not found west of the Ozark Plateau. Because of the area's size and proximity to Schermerhorn Park, hunting is limited to archery and shotgun only.

A quarter-mile stretch of Shoal Creek is available to anglers. Common species include smallmouth bass, spotted bass, longear sunfish, warmouth, flathead catfish, channel catfish, and the occasional walleye.

Adjacent to Shoal Creek is the Schermerhorn Park, which is maintained by the city of Galena. The park features Schermerhorn Cave, which slices deep into the Ozark Hills some 2,566 feet. This cave is home to many cave-dwelling species that are rare in Kansas, including the dark-sided, cave and graybelly salamanders.

Visit kdwp.state.ks.us for more information on Shoal Creek Wildlife Area.

— Kathleen Dultmeier



Kathleen Dultmeier photo

WSU OFFERS HUNTER EDUCATION INSTRUCTOR COURSE

For the 2011 fall semester, Wichita State University will offer a course to train students in the knowledge and skills necessary to become certified as a volunteer Kansas hunter education instructor through KDWPT. Students will learn about wildlife conservation, safe gun handling, and the role of hunting in conservation. Wildlife management, firearm safety, and other topics will also be covered.

The two-credit-hour course is currently scheduled for 2:30 p.m. each Wednesday of the semester. In addition, a four-hour session on Saturday, Oct. 15, at 9 a.m. is mandatory. This session will take place at Michael Murphy and Sons, 6400 SW Hunter Road just north of Augusta and will involve field



.....
**WICHITA STATE
UNIVERSITY**

work in live fire training and use of trail walks and other training aids in simulated hunting situations.

The course will focus heavily on developing instructor presentation skills using lecture, training aids, electronic media, and internet instruction.

No previous courses or experience is required for this course although some experience with hunting is recommended. To find a course description, go online to www.wichita.edu and type hunter education instructor course in the search box. Write down the course numbers, then phone 316-978-3055 for enrollment information.

— KDWPT News

Kansas Retailer Develops Rooster Wear

With a last name of Fields, hunting is a natural fit. Kenneth Fields, creator of the Rooster Wear brand, started the company with a sketch. He continued to work on the sketch until one day he looked at the picture and thought, "That's pretty cool." The Rooster Wear logo was created, and a new business was born.

Fields was introduced to hunting at a young age when his grandfather would take him and his brother hunting. He instantly fell in love with hunting upland birds such as quail, pheasant and prairie chickens.

As Fields matured, he wanted to wear clothing that expressed his love for the sport.

"As an avid hunter, I am constantly searching for hunting clothes that express my love for upland bird hunting," Fields said. "I couldn't find apparel with wild roosters flushing and bird dogs on point or a classy sport shirt that I could wear out to a causal event or dinner. So I designed a unique logo and combined it with top notch quality clothing," Fields added, describing the apparel as something you would wear after the hunt.

Kenneth and his brother, Brent



Fields, operate Rooster Wear, Inc., a clothing line based on action themes such as upland bird hunting and dogs on point. Rooster Wear creates artwork for specific breeds of dogs such as an English setter with flushing quail or a specific upland bird such as quail or pheasant. Rooster Wear is located in Wichita.

The Fields brothers launched the Rooster Wear brand in South Dakota during a National Pheasant Fest trade show. Fields reflected, "I was so nervous because this was my baby!" But Rooster Wear proved popular with the trade show attendees because nearly all his inventory was sold. While selling out inventory was impressive, making important contacts within the industry was the boost the fledgling business needed.

After the National Pheasant Fest show, the Rooster Wear brand was picked up by several retail outlets in South Dakota. Now the brand has added Nebraska and Minnesota retail outlets.

The company has not solely focused on one bird species. Rooster Wear includes Quail Wear and Dog Down. The Dog Down brand features popular breeds such as English setter, English

pointer, German shorthair, Labrador retriever and German wirehair pointer. Future plans include adding a Turkey Wear line in 2012 and Hen Wear, a clothing line designed for outdoor women. According to Fields, expanding women's apparel shows a great deal of opportunity since one of Rooster Wear's top selling items is a pink and gray camouflage hat.

Fields said finding Kansas outlets is one of the company's top priorities. "We live in Kansas. We love hunting in Kansas, and we want to work with Kansans to support our home state."

In addition to adding Kansas outlets, Fields is involved with hunting events such as attending fundraising banquets and participating in "Pass It On," a KDWPT program that provides hunting opportunities to youths.



The best times of your life just got less expensive



photo Mike Blair

He'll be 16 before you know it and off to college in the blink of an eye. Don't miss a single chance to be in the field with your son by purchasing a multi-year youth hunting license.

The Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism offers resident multi-year hunting and fishing licenses for youth 16-21. For a one-time investment of \$42.50, you can give your teenager a hunting or fishing license that will last until they turn 21. A combination multi-year hunting/fishing license is \$72.50. (Regular one-year licenses are \$20.50, so if you buy your daughter the multi-year fishing license for her sixteenth birthday, you'll save more than a hundred bucks!)

And you'll be investing in more than time with your teenager. Your license dollars help fund Kansas' wildlife and fisheries management and conservation programs.

You can purchase a multi-year youth license wherever licenses are sold, through the web-site

www.kdwp.state.ks.us

or by calling 620-672-5911.

Resident multi-year licenses are perfect for:

- ✓ Birthdays
- ✓ Graduations
- ✓ Holidays
- ✓ Special celebrations



2011 Sportsmen's

TURKEY

2011 FALL TURKEY:

- Season: Oct. 1 - Nov. 29, 2011 and Dec. 12-31, 2011; and Jan. 9-31, 2012.

BIG GAME

DEER:

- Youth/Persons with Disabilities: Sept. 10-18
- Archery: Sept. 19 - Dec. 31, 2011
- Muzzleloader: Sept. 19 - Oct. 2, 2011
- Early Firearm (Subunit 19 only) Oct. 8-16, 2011
- Regular Firearm: Nov. 30 - Dec. 11, 2011
- Firearm Extended Whitetail Antlerless Season: Jan.1 - Jan. 8, 2012
- Archery Extended Whitetail Antlerless Season (DMU 19 only): Jan. 9 - Jan. 31, 2012
- Special Extended Firearms Whitetail Antlerless Season: Jan. 9 - Jan.15, 2012 (Open for unit 7, 8 and 15 only.)

ELK (residents only)

Outside Fort Riley:

- Muzzleloader: Sept. 1 - Oct. 2, 2011
- Archery: Sept. 19 - Dec. 31, 2011
- Firearm: Nov. 30 - Dec. 11, 2011 and Jan.1 - March 15, 2012

On Fort Riley:

- Muzzleloader and archery: Sept. 1 - Oct. 2, 2011
 - Firearm Season for Holders of Any-Elk Permits: Oct. 1 - Dec. 31, 2011
- Antlerless Only
- Firearm First Segment: Oct. 1-31, 2011
 - Firearm Second Segment: Nov. 1-30, 2011
 - Firearm Third Segment: Dec. 1-31, 2011

Antelope

- Firearm: Oct. 7-10, 2011
- Archery: Sept. 24 - Oct. 2 & Oct. 15-31, 2011
- Muzzleloader: Oct. 3 - Oct. 10, 2011

MIGRATORY GAME BIRDS

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

- Season: Sept.1 - Oct. 31 and Nov. 5-13, 2011
- Daily bag limit: 15
- Possession limit: 30

EARLY TEAL

- High Plains Season: to be set
- Low Plains Season: to be set
- Daily bag limit: 4
- Possession limit: 8

EXOTIC DOVE

(Eurasian collared and ringed turtle doves only)

- Season: Nov. 20, 2011 - Feb. 28, 2012
- Daily bag limit: No limit
- Possession limit: No limit

RAIL (Sora and Virginia)

- Season: Sept. 1 - Nov 9, 2011
- Daily bag limit: 25
- Possession limit: 25

SNIPE

- Season: Sept. 1 - Dec. 16, 2011
- Daily bag limit: 8
- Possession limit: 16

WOODCOCK

- Season: Oct. 15 - Nov. 28, 2011
- Daily bag limit: 3
- Possession limit: 6

SANDHILL CRANE

- Season: Nov. 9 - Jan. 5, 2012
- Daily bag limit: 3
- Possession limit: 6

Calendar

MIGRATORY GAME BIRDS

DUCK

- Season: to be set

CANADA GEESE

- Season: to be set

WHITE-FRONTED GEESE

- Season: to be set

LIGHT GEESE

- Season: to be set

FURBEARERS

TRAPPING

- Season: Nov. 16, 2011 - Feb. 15, 2012
Badger, bobcat, mink, muskrat, opossum,
raccoon, swift fox, red fox, gray fox,
striped skunk, weasel.

RUNNING

- Season: March 1 - Nov. 1, 2011

BEAVER TRAPPING

- Season Dates (statewide):
Nov. 16, 2011 - March 31, 2012

UPLAND GAME BIRDS

PRAIRIE CHICKEN

- Early Season (East Unit): Sept. 15 - Oct. 15, 2011
- Regular Season (East and Northwest Units):
Nov. 19, 2011 - Jan. 31, 2012
- Regular Season (Southwest Unit):
Nov. 19 - Dec. 31, 2011
- Daily Bag Limit: 2 (East and Northwest Units)
1 (Southwest Unit)
- Possession Limit: twice daily bag

PHEASANTS

- Season: Nov. 12, 2011 - Jan. 31, 2012
- Youth Season: Nov. 5-6 2011
- Daily bag limit: 4 cocks in regular
season, 2 cocks in youth season

QUAIL

- Season: Nov. 12, 2011 - Jan. 31, 2012
- Youth Season: Nov. 5 - 6, 2011
- Daily Bag Limit Quail: 8 in regular season,
4 in youth season

SMALL GAME ANIMALS

SQUIRREL

- Season: June 1, 2011 - Feb. 28, 2012
- 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, 2011 - March 10, 2012
- Daily bag/Possession Limit: No Limit

FISHING SEASONS

TROUT

- Oct. 15 - April 15, 2012
- Daily creel limit: 5
- Area open: Designated trout waters listed at
www.kdwpt.state.ks.us

BULLFROG

- July 1 - Oct. 31, 2011
- Daily creel limit: 8
- Possession limit: 24

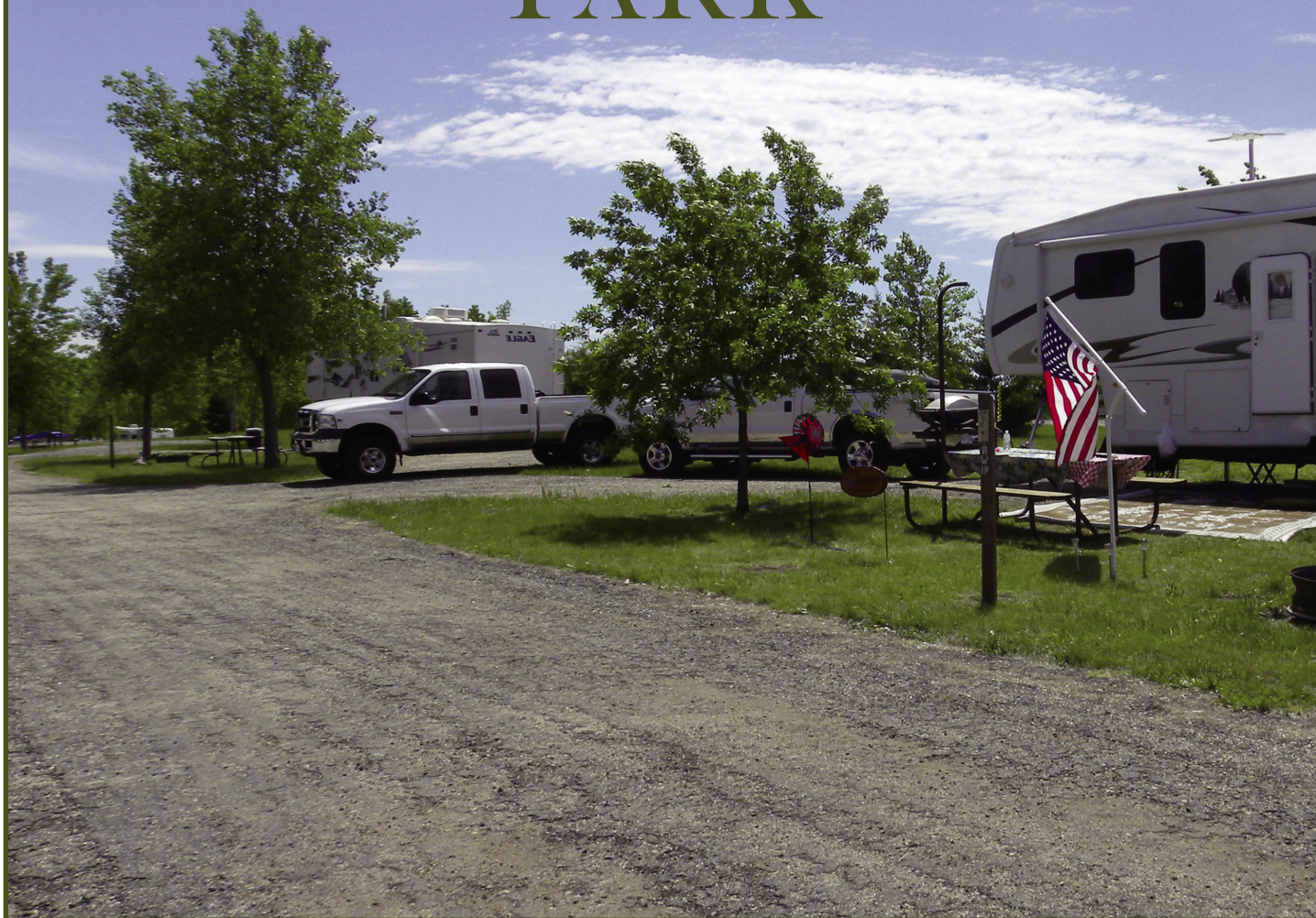
HANDFISHING (flathead catfish only)

- June 15 - Aug. 31, 2011
- Area open: Arkansas River, Kansas River and
federal reservoirs beyond 150 yards from the
dam upstream to the end of the federal
property.
- Daily creel limit: 5
(special handfishing permit required)

FLOATLINE FISHING

- July 15 - Sept. 15, 2011
- Area open: Hillsdale, Council Grove, Tuttle
Creek, Kanopolis, John Redmond, Toronto,
Wilson and Pomona reservoirs.

LOVEWELL STATE PARK



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

Just miles from the Nebraska border, Lovewell State Park sits on the shores of Lovewell Reservoir. A great get-away, the park is in a remote region of Kansas, and the staff have adopted a self-sufficient attitude out of necessity. Many of the park's unique features and amenities have grown from this can-do spirit, making Lovewell State Park truly one of a kind.

JEWELL COUNTY GEM



Mike Blair photo

If you're a Kansan, chances are you'll travel north to reach Lovewell State Park, only 6 miles south of the Nebraska border. Just the drive alone is worth it; in post-rock country north of I-70, the highway ribbons through the Smoky Hills, where speed limits are 55 mph, whether to caution drivers of the winding, steep roadway or to accommodate the landscape's view. The Smoky Hill, the Saline, the Solomon: slow down as you cross these three lush rivers. Enjoy one of the prettiest parts of the nation, a harmonic blend of western High Plains and eastern wooded hill country. Then prepare for a state park masterpiece in a county aptly named Jewell.

But I get ahead of myself. Although Lovewell Reservoir was finished in 1958 and the park opened in 1967, it could be said that the story of the park as it is today begins on the night of Tuesday, March 13, 1990. That dark and brooding evening brought heavy tornado damage to the central portion of Kansas, far south of Lovewell. But a rogue twister made its way north and slammed down on Lovewell's Cedar Point, scattering trees like dandelion seeds in a breeze and devastating picnic areas. After the initial touchdown, the funnel jumped back into the sky only to spear down in front of the park office, where it ripped through the

office and workshop, destroying both buildings, office equipment, and mowing machinery. Trees 50 feet tall and 3 feet in diameter were plucked from the ground.

"There was nothing left of those trees but roots and stumps," said park manager Rick Cleveland. "Signs and picnic tables were scattered everywhere, and flying debris damaged vehicles throughout the park." Once richly-shaded picnic areas were left barren.

"I knew we were going to have to start over," Cleveland added.

But resourcefulness, determination, and nature would raise Lovewell from the destruction, like the phoenix reborn. With the help of co-worker Rob Unruh,

Campers like trees so Lovewell staff have been planting them. A tornado in 1990 erased much of that effort, but staff started over with a goal of planting 100-200 trees each year.



Cleveland was the fire under the rise.

I met Cleveland at the park office on a beautiful spring day last May. A warm, out-going, friendly man with seemingly boundless energy and ideas, he was eager to hop in the truck and show me the park. Cleveland had become park manager in 1987, so it wasn't long before the tornado gave him the challenge of his life. One goal when he took the job was to plant 100-200 new trees every year, and that goal suddenly took on new urgency.

"It takes 15 years to make a tree and 15 minutes to get rid of it," he mused.

Campers want shade, so using a tree spade kept at the park's maintenance facility, park staff took young trees from unused wooded areas and began restoration of the campgrounds immediately. In 1992, Cleveland's plan to dredge Marina Cove to allow greater access for boaters and a dock became a reality. Earth from the lake was laid out in a long

dyke around the cove, and trees quickly grew in the rich soil. As they grew, Cleveland mowed paths through them just wide enough to allow access for the tree spade, and a ready source of native trees was soon available. They would be needed. In 1993, floods destroyed more trees, but the Lovewell crew didn't miss a beat and kept on planting.

"I try to target five trees per campsite," Cleveland explained, "and I use only native trees — cottonwood, ash, hackberry, locust. I figure what grows here naturally will last the longest and provide the best shade and wind-breaks."

After the tornado and flood, there were plenty of fallen trees to clear, and Cleveland used them to provide an extra benefit for park users. All cleared trees are now piled in one spot where park visitors are allowed to cut their own

firewood. And tree planting became a continuous activity at Lovewell.

But rebuilding the park would require more than clearing and planting trees. The tornado — combined with aging facilities and increased visitation — required that shower houses, utility hookups, toilets, dump stations, docks and boat ramps, shelters, and signage would have to be replaced or repaired over the years.

"We did most of the work ourselves," Cleveland explained. "Because we didn't contract out things like plumbing, wiring, and other things, we saved enough money to do even more work."

One example is the Willow CXT shower house with bathrooms on one end and unisex showers on the other. Park users particularly enjoy the unisex showers because they provide the

Lovewell State Park manager Rick Cleveland talks about one of the shower houses built recently. Cleveland has lived most of his life in the area, moving there in 1957 when his father became the reservoir's first superintendent. Thirty years later, Cleveland would become the state park's manager.



privacy of locked shower rooms during use. Cleveland and his crew saved enough money by doing all the plumbing and wiring themselves to develop 32 more water and electric utility sites in North Willow Campground.

Cleveland's creative touch can be seen throughout the park. While visiting Cheney State Park, he noticed that lantern holders and work benches were being used to designate campsites, and this inspired him to design picnic tables with raised work benches and lantern holders built onto the ends. He and his crew made more than 50 of these, then contracted the Department of Corrections to make several hundred more. This popular feature can be seen in most state parks and public campgrounds in western Kansas.

In his tenure, Cleveland has added numerous campgrounds. He laid out sites with a mower then flew over the areas in an airplane, taking pictures, so the areas

could be scaled to an existing map for the best layout. Then he measured electrical and plumbing runs and took the plans to KDWP's Engineering Section for approval. Both the park and Engineering saved money in the process.

"I'll have 160 utility campsites before I'm gone, and we'll sell 'em," he said proudly. [Cleveland retired June 12; look for him in the Sept./Oct. issue's "Profile."] "We've ranked fifth or sixth in the state in annual visitation and sales over the years even though we're in a remote location. You have to want to come here because Lovewell's not on the way to anywhere. The majority of our visitors — Kansans and Nebraskans —

drive 60 miles or more to get here even though they have parks closer to home. That makes us feel like we're doing something right. People want to spend their money here. I pay attention to what they want, and I try to provide it. I operate the park like a business. We're always doing something to improve the area."

Visitation at Lovewell averages more than 200,000 each year — a record 284,000 in 2009 — with about 60 percent of them being nonresidents.

"That percentage used to be higher," says office manager Lisa Boyles. "We used to get about 80 percent of our visitors from Nebraska, but we think the word has gotten out to Kansans about

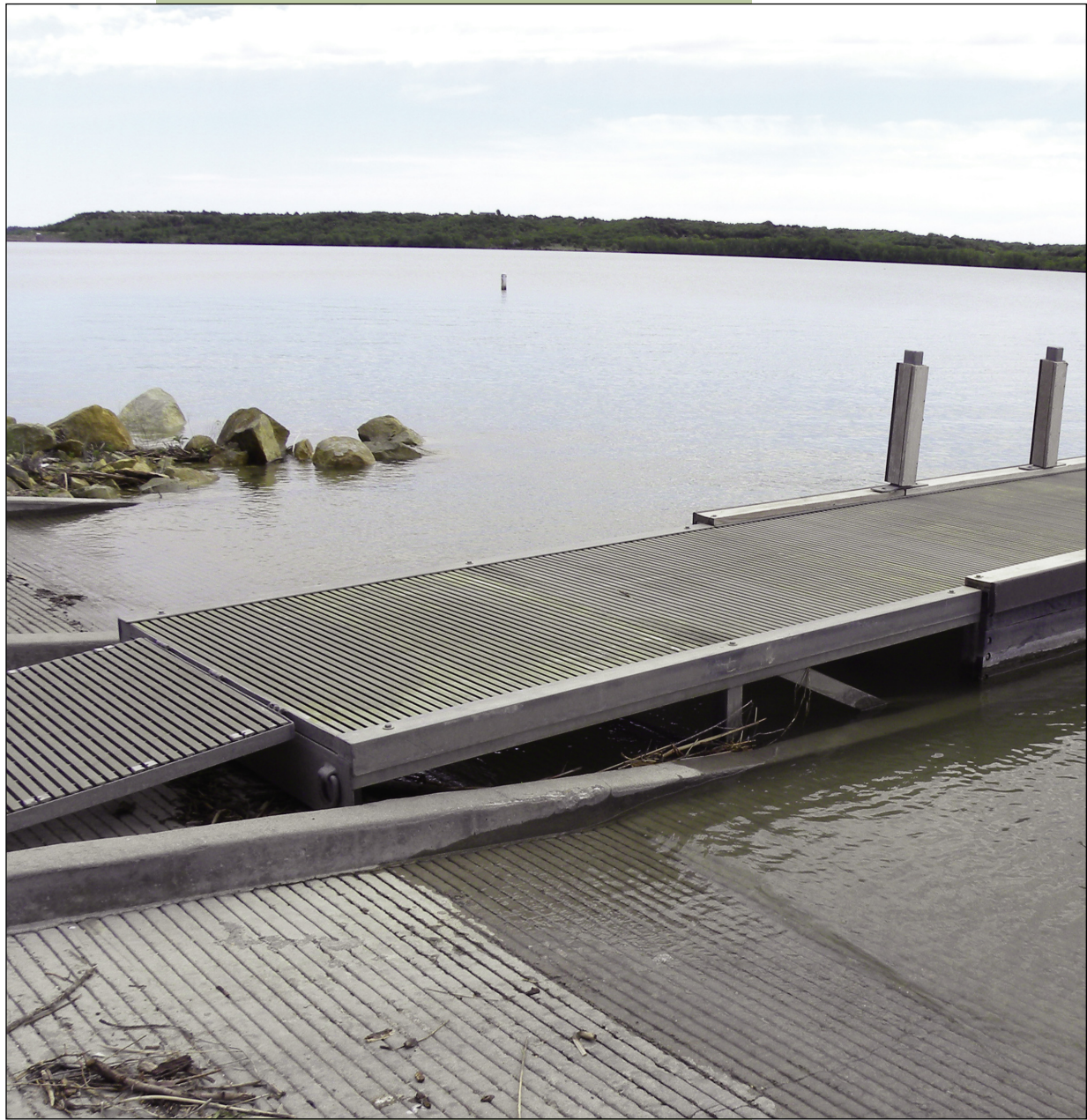
This sliding dock is a good example of independent ingenuity that identifies Lovewell. The reservoir was built for irrigation, so staff know that water level fluctuations are a fact of life. The dock slides on a rail in or out, according to the water level.

Lovewell State Park.”

Another innovation in the park is grassy camping pads. Cleveland reasoned that many people would rather camp on grass than concrete or rock, so most pull-through utility sites are left to grow over with grass. This leaves RV campers with foot-friendly lawns in their “front yards.”

Cleveland loves new park amenities. He and his two-man crew are bowhunters, so they built a handicapped-accessible archery range in Cottonwood Campground. For visitors who want a large grill, park staff designed and built kettle grills that can be rented for \$10 a day. An isolated prime-site area surrounded by trees provides sites for those who are willing to spend a little more, and it's almost always full.

One of the most interesting



innovations at Lovewell is the sliding boat dock. Cleveland was watching a boating program on TV one day and noticed that the boat dock did not go up and down as people got on and off boats. Wondering about this, he looked closer and reasoned that it must be a sliding boat dock without flotation. Because Lovewell is an irrigation and recreation reservoir, Cleveland's pragmatism immedi-

ately recognized the benefit of such a dock at his lake, where a fixed floating boat dock is often impossible to move within reach of boaters.

“I realize that this lake is for irrigators, as well as water recreationists, and I want everyone to be happy,” he explained. “We wouldn't have Lovewell if it weren't for irrigation, so we manage for both. I worked for 15

The first cabins constructed at Lovewell are unique to the park. They are considered sleeper cabins because they don't include bathrooms or kitchens. They are actually enclosed "toadstool" shelters, similar to those built first at Cedar Bluff State Park. The native cottonwood used in construction, cut and milled locally, make the Lovewell cabins truly unique.



years for a low-water boat ramp to the White Rock Creek river channel, just off Cedar Point, and we finally got it with this sliding dock/ramp."

As with work on much of the park's other facilities, Cleveland — with the help of maintenance technician Dennis Swanson and park ranger Thane Loring — drew up a design and sent it to the Engineering Section, which stamped it with their approval. Once the water got low enough, the Lovewell crew put in a new

concrete ramp with a curbed channel for the sliding dock. As the water level rises or falls, staff can use a front-end

loader to pull the dock up or slide it down, providing dock access when the lake is as low as 15 feet below normal. The Engineering Section has since improved on the design and placed sliding docks at other lakes around the state.

Cabins have been built at state parks all across the state in recent years, but Cleveland was one of the first park managers to put one in. (Cleveland got the idea of converting toadstool shelters to cabins from Cedar Bluff State Park, where staff built the first park cabin.)

Lovewell's first was a primitive cabin built under a former shower and toilet toadstool shelter in 1999 for approximately \$4,000. Cleveland knew a local man who had a sawmill and provided milled cottonwood that Cleveland used to side the outside and line the inside walls of the cabin, creating a warm, rustic feel.

The park now has six of these cabins for rent, as well as four full-service cabins converted from unused FEMA trailers. These trailers are set on full-service utility pads, so if natural disaster were to hit again, the cabin locations could easily be converted to full-service pull-through utility sites.

Group shelters are popular at most state parks, and Lovewell is no exception. Lovewell has three,



Sometime in 2011, several new cabins, with full amenities will go online at Lovewell. The full-service cabins are actually new trailers purchased from FEMA and modified to become permanent cabins in the park.

including a large one in Southwinds Campground built on a pole-shed design for \$11,000, half what most shelters cost. Two fish cleaning stations, ADA-compliant sewer and dump stations, swimming beach, playground, a fireworks area in Pioneer Day-Use Area, and other facilities common to most parks are among the various amenities available at Lovewell.

While facilities are essential, state parks mean more than just a place to camp. With an involved staff such as Lovewell boasts, events are integral to the park experience. Years before geocaching became a popular park activity, Cleveland had scavenger hunts for visitors, especially youngsters. This activity has now evolved into a geocaching event.

"I put geocache prizes in exciting places where new things are being put in," Cleveland said. "It gets people out into the parks.

Kids are always playing with hand-held electronic devices, so GPS is a natural hook for them. We use them on OK Kids Days, too, and I think we really need to expand on this, provide locations that connect kids and adults with nature. We place geocache sites near things like shed antlers, beaver falls, turtle shells, things like that. And we give them coordinates for all kinds of things in the park other than the geocache locations."

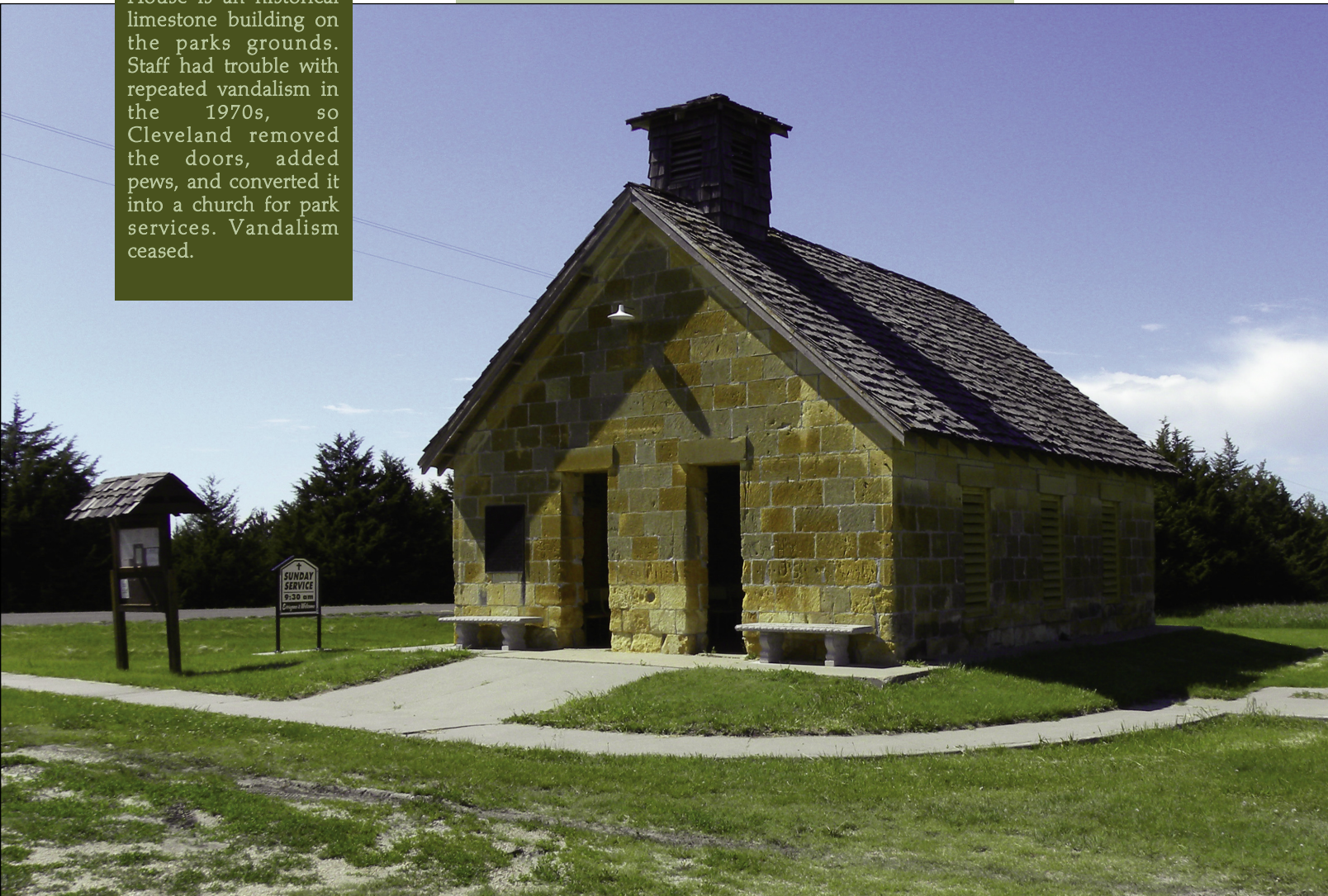
Other special events include a kids fishing derby, a sand castle contest, Lovewell Fun Day with many events, a campfire cookoff, Campground Christmas in August for campers who want to decorate their campsites in a Christmas motif, fishing tournaments, and other events throughout the year. And Cleveland is blessed to have in Boyles one of the most proactive office managers when it comes to organizing and getting

the word out about Lovewell events. "I couldn't do these events without her," Cleveland said.

Many state parks have historical attractions, and Lovewell has Rose Hill School House, a sturdy limestone building erected in 1873. In the late-1970s, park staff were having trouble with vandals tearing things up inside, so Cleveland took off the doors and built pews in the building, converting it into an open-air church. He's had very few problems since. Services are held every Sunday, Memorial Day through Labor Day, and the church can be reserved for weddings and other gatherings.

Right next to the church is a well-kept graveyard with the prodigious name of White Rock Scandinavian Evangelical Lutheran Cemetery. A Cleveland headstone is prominent in the middle of the cemetery, where the park manager's father, Randall, is laid to rest. In 1959, Randall was hired as the first manager of the lake under the Bureau of Land

The Rose Hill School House is an historical limestone building on the parks grounds. Staff had trouble with repeated vandalism in the 1970s, so Cleveland removed the doors, added pews, and converted it into a church for park services. Vandalism ceased.



Management, and Cleveland grew up on the lake. Rick's brother, Conley, is also buried here.


The Lovewell State Park Office was rebuilt in 1991, and that was just the beginning of this beautiful park's rebirth. When Cleveland retired in June, the brainstorming park manager left behind a treasure chest of ideas to improve the park. He'd envisioned an ice-skating rink behind Sunrise Cabin in Walleye Point Campground and a disc golf course, catering to youth interested in this rapidly growing sport.

Cleveland's vision was always cutting-edge, but he's the first to

admit that he had a lot to work with in this area where he has spent his entire life. There's no mediocre view on the 3,000-acre lake, which is surrounded by tree-lined bluffs. A 2,000-acre wildlife area surrounds the park and lake, providing hunters ample opportunity to take deer, turkey, quail, pheasant, rabbits, squirrels and, on portions of the lake, waterfowl. During the peak park season, the wildlife area offers visitors a "wilderness" to explore and view wildlife.

As I mentioned previously, this is one of the prettiest regions of the country, and the lake and park

have only enhanced that natural beauty. Cleveland's successor will likely continue to provide one of the most satisfying state park experiences in the state.

There's a lot of summer left, so this season, go north. You'll find a welcome mat and plenty of shade at Lovewell State Park. You may even find Cleveland and his family enjoying a sunset and a campfire. 



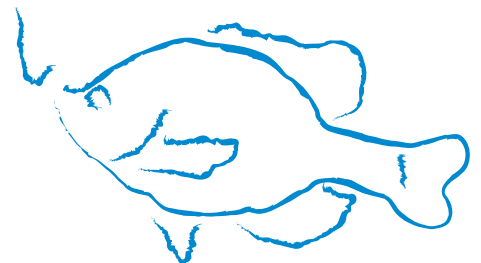
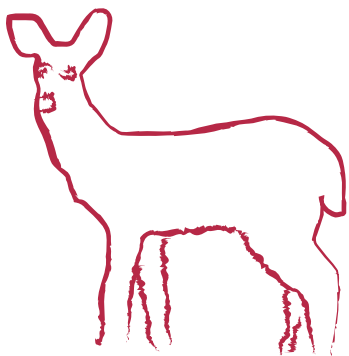
text and photos by Marc Murrell
Great Plains Nature Center manager, Wichita

Growing

A father chronicals camping and spending time outdoors with his family, looking back as his 18-year-old daughter prepares to move away to college. She and her twin brothers have enjoyed a wealth of outdoor fun as a family, and Dad hopes they will cherish those experiences and memories as much as he does.

UP

OUTDOORS





The author's wife, Candace, and daughter Ashley in the early years. While tent camping was an intimate experience, several middle-of-the-night thunderstorms convinced them to purchase a fifth-wheel trailer.

It seems like just yesterday, but it was more than 18 years ago when my wife and I anxiously awaited our first child. We chose not to find out the sex of our first baby, wanting it to be a surprise. Many assumed I hoped for a boy due to my outdoor interests, but in reality I just wanted a healthy, happy baby. When Ashley was born, it was a blessing and one I am thankful for each and every day.

While it may have been easy to let preconceived notions and stereotypes keep Ashley away from the outdoors, I knew that wouldn't be the case. I believe camping, hunting, fishing and trapping know no gender, and the only limitations to getting involved

are those placed by individuals. I promised to allow her equal opportunities, and if she enjoyed our outdoor experiences, I'd value her company. If not, I'd support whatever activities she was interested in pursuing.

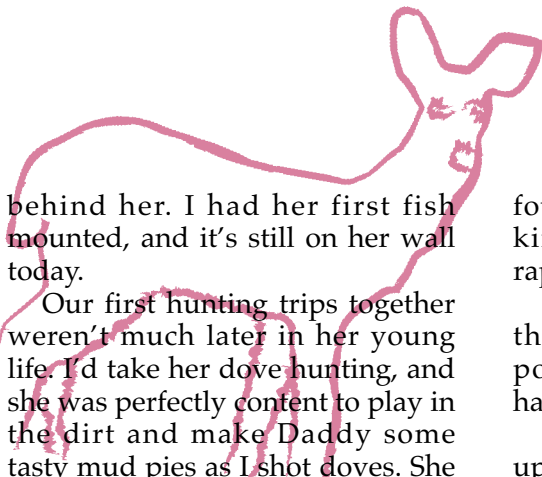
Like any toddler, Ashley had a

fascination with all things new. When I'd arrive home from a spring white bass fishing trip at Fall River, she'd peer into my cooler and squeal and jabber about, and to, the fish on ice. I'd take the practice sinker I had tied to her little pink, personalized Zebco rod and put it through the gill of a big white bass. She'd start cranking and tugging until it finally cleared the cooler and landed with a "splat" on the concrete. She'd take her sidewalk chalk and draw around the fish with toddler-like artistic abilities. My friends were all amazed at the 3-foot-long white bass I'd caught, but I had the chalk outline to "prove" it.

Ashley's first fishing trip was at a pond when she was 2 ½ years old. Her grandmother had made her a fishing vest and hat, and she had a T-shirt that said "Daddy's Fishing Buddy," so she was styling for the occasion. I cast out her little pink pole and told her to watch her bobber. It went under almost immediately, and with a little help, she was reeling in her first fish. However, once the 8-inch bluegill started flopping on the shore, she wanted no part of it and started backpeddling, nearly knocking me over in my crouched position



Twin brothers Cody and Brandon came along when Ashley was six, the more the merrier.



behind her. I had her first fish mounted, and it's still on her wall today.

Our first hunting trips together weren't much later in her young life. I'd take her dove hunting, and she was perfectly content to play in the dirt and make Daddy some tasty mud pies as I shot doves. She looked adorable and kind of funny as she'd stare up at me and smile wearing her hearing protection ear muffs that were way too big but served their purpose.

An early season teal hunt at age

As a doting big sister should, Ashley helped her brother Cody get really muddy on this trip five years ago.

four had her asking all kinds of questions in rapid-fire succession.

"Why can't you shoot those?" she said, pointing to a northern harrier.

"What happens if this place fills up?" she said to me after I failed to pick up an empty hull bobbing in the marsh.

"When do we eat?" she said, knowing we had sandwiches in the cooler.

It was also about then we



started camping as a family. I'd grown up camping with my parents and grandparents at many Kansas state parks, and I wanted to create those same memories for Ashley.

Our maiden voyage was just up the road to Marion Reservoir. With a truck-full of Coleman camping



Ashley, Brandon and Cody have tagged along with Dad fishing and hunting since they were old enough to walk. Dad spent hours pulling them on tubes behind the jet ski when they were younger, but today, to Dad's delight, they prefer fishing. And with fish like this, who wouldn't?

gear, we headed out with little Ashley buckled into her car seat. Upon arrival, she was all abuzz and curiously inquisitive about our first adventure.

"When do we get to make s'mores, Daddy?"

"How dark will it be in the tent?"

"Are there any bears around here?"

I tried to answer all her questions as we raised the tent and furnished our camp with as many comforts as possible. It was getting dark, so we started a fire. I told Ashley to go into the tent to retrieve the flashlight.

"Daddy," she said as I heard

some rustling inside. "I need a flashlight to find the flashlight."

Early tent camping trips were memorable although my wife wasn't real keen on "roughing it." After about the third trip, when huge thunderstorms kept us awake through the night and soaked our tent and belongings, I was beginning to agree. It must have been an omen because we returned from one weekend trip sopping wet only to see a used fifth-wheel camper sitting in a neighbor's driveway with a "For Sale" sign in it. I bought it.

Not long after, we gained more camping companions. My twin boys were born in late March, and

we took them camping in May with formula and diapers added to the camp check-list. Ashley was a doting big sister at age 6, promising to show her little brothers all there was to discover about camping in the great outdoors. And she did just that, while keeping a watchful eye out for each of them.

Our camping adventures eventually included friends and relatives, such as my sister and her family. We met at various parks between my home in Newton and theirs in Topeka. My sister always brought my grandmother along, who's 91 now and still comes along. Although we can't get her



Camping is truly a family affair. The Murrells often meet Marc's sister and her family at the park, and Grandma always come along. While the fun of camping, fishing, cooking s'mores and sitting by the campfire may stand out in their memories now, these youngsters will grow to cherish the time they spent with their family when they get older.

on the water tube, she still gets around well enough to enjoy all the soothing aspects of camp life. She often positions her lawn chair near the water and watches the sunset, cherishing every one.

While we have plenty of camping plans for this summer, it will be a difficult one. Ashley recently graduated from high school, and in August she'll leave for college. I've known parents with teenage daughters who couldn't wait for their daughters to move out and breathed a sigh of relief when they headed off to college. I don't want Ashley to go. It will be a sad day indeed, and I often tease her about our "last"



summer together. She assures me that she'll return every summer as long as we get to go camping or fishing.

I've watched Ashley grow from a little tow-headed toddler to a beautiful young lady in the blink of an eye. Ashley has been a wonderful child, rarely giving us any problems at all. She's sweet, caring, responsible, loving and mature beyond her years. I have

no doubt she'll be successful doing whatever she chooses and is truly a wonderful person.

During the last 18 years, Ashley and I, as well as our family, have spent countless hours together camping, hunting, fishing, trapping, and enjoying the outdoor lifestyle. Although I don't know for sure, the time we spent together over the years outdoors may have influenced the type of person Ashley has become. I'd like to think it did and wouldn't trade a minute of any of it. ♡



It may not get any better than this: family, good friends, a big fire and a relaxing evening at the state park. It's times like these that keep everyday-life in perspective, reminding people to slow down and enjoy the natural world around them.



Awake At The Wheel

Del Ruff photo



Del Ruff photo

by J. Mark Shoup
associate editor, Pratt

Thanks to the efforts of a determined group of enthusiasts and a grant from KDWPT, folks in eastern Kansas have a park where they can drive their slow-crawling, rugged vehicles in a family-friendly atmosphere.

Whether it's camping, fishing, hunting, hiking, boating, off-road bicycling, bird watching, or just plain enjoying a stroll in the woods, most Kansans have ample opportunity to enjoy their favorite outdoor pastime in the Sunflower State. But what about those hard-core off-road motorized vehicle enthusiasts, the ones who seek to go where no man has gone before? Slowly. Over the roughest terrain imaginable in "trucks" that look like futuristic moon rovers crossed with deep-combat engineering vehicles. Or just the family four-wheel-drive vehicle. Now there's a place for them, too.

In 1997, a year after David Killion, Lenexa, formed the Kansas City 4WD Association, he realized the growing need for motorized recreation land in the Kansas City area. Among many options in his search to fill this need was development of relationships with landowners for use of their land. This would include both leasing and buying land. But Killion met with opposition at almost every turn.

However, Killion's research had led him to a federal grant available through the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT) for developing recreational trails. Technically called the TEA 21 program, it is more commonly known as the Recreational Trails Program (RTP). Funds for the

program are collected from a portion of gasoline taxes to provide opportunities to enhance existing or develop new parks and trail systems. So Killion and 21 other outdoor enthusiasts, formed KANROCKS Recreation Association, Inc. Initially, KANROCKS raised funds and found sponsors by sending letters targeted to truck, off-road vehicle, and mountain bike dealerships, and members talked to them individually. The goal was securing sponsorship for the 20-percent match of the grant funds and finding land for off-road riding, but after 1 ½ years, support dried up. Undeterred, the 22-member organization decided to proceed on their own.

KDWPT had a pool of federal grant money for trails, some tar-

geted for hiking and biking and some targeted for multi-use, to include motorized off-road vehicles. A large amount of off-road vehicle funding was available simply because there had been few applications of this kind. Generally, RTP funds go to state and local parks, but the KANROCKS Recreation Association, a 501c3 nonprofit organization, became the first non-governmental Kansas entity to apply for one of these 80-percent reimbursable grants. The proposal looked like a winner.

KANROCKS filed for and received the RTP Grant in December 2001, and its Board of Directors would guide the effort to find property. Perhaps the diverse membership of the board helped; members comprise a mix of people from all walks of life. Killion has a business in mobile bumper repair. Other members include a banker, a policeman, businessmen, and "lots of hard-working people who love the sport," Killion says.

At this point, the land search began. After two years of intense planning, developing strategy, and looking for the perfect piece of land, the group obtained the property to develop Kansas Rocks Recreation Park (KRRP) in April 2003 — 210 acres of land in Bourbon County. The park opened to the public on August 2, 2003, and the Grand Opening was held on August 30, that Labor Day Weekend. With 10 inches of rain just before dawn, more than 400 people still attended the ceremony.

Numerous clubs, including the Kansas City 4WD Association, the Kansas City Jeep Club, Brushbeaters Jeep Club, Flatlanders Jeep Club, Earth Riders, and Wichita 4X4 committed many hours developing the area, which would account for the new park's 20 percent match.



photo courtesy David Killion

The park is not just for motorized vehicles. Hikers and bicyclists have areas specifically geared for fun pedaling or walking. The park is open to the public through daily or annual passes. User fees go toward park maintenance and improvements.

These and other groups and individuals also help with the area's Adopt a Trail Program, which maintains trails, keeps them clean, and keeps them safe by providing members a sense of ownership and ensuring that users obey the rules, including a 5-mph speed limit on all trails, day-time only wheeling, an 18-year-old driver rule, seat belts, and working mufflers.

"We have a great trail system developed to include trails for beginning and experienced outdoor enthusiasts," says Killion. "And the future of the park includes developing new trails and offering more camping facilities. We have a good mix of participants, with a lot of families. We attract young people just getting interested in the sport, older people who've been doing it for 30 years, and a good mix of women drivers, as well."

Drivers negotiate rough trails and obstacles with a combination of strategy, skill, and machine. The challenge is to get over these obstacles with a sense of accomplishment, and some without



photo courtesy David Killion

Shelters provide comfort for park users to gather between rides. When the day is done, many stick around talking until after dark.

breaking anything.

"One of my favorite trails goes down into a big gully, then follows a steep uphill climb over rocks that some might call boulders and huge tree roots to the

top of the area," says Killion. "But it's not all brute force. Another one of my favorites is very serene and takes me to the top of a hill where I can see through the trees clear across the valley and usually spot deer and turkey. Except on very busy days, it's really quiet there, too."

The appeal is social, as well. "People love getting out into the woods together," Killion explains, "and when they're done riding, they gather for food and drink, many staying until well after dark, or even setting up tents and camping. It's really a friends and family affair."

And for those interested in more than motoring, hiking is open throughout the area. A trail dedicated for mountain bikers is also a popular draw, and mountain bikers have a blast on a "free-ride" area with jumps and ramps.

KRRP property is open to the public for a daily or annual usage fee. All four-wheel-drive and utility (UTV) vehicle drivers,



Del Ruff photo

Motorized vehicles range from stock vehicles to modified stock vehicles to special suspension vehicles. Modified stock vehicles are driven by about 80 percent of users.

bicyclers, and hikers using KRRP property are required to sign in and out at the office, fill out the appropriate waiver, and pay the daily or annual usage fee. The fees are \$5 per individual hiker or mountain biker and \$10 per four-wheel-drive vehicle and UTV. (ATVs, quads, and motorcycles are not allowed due to property constraints.) Annual access passes are available for \$50. Annual passes are valid through the calendar year. One permit is allowed per vehicle or bicycle or hiker. Usage fees for the park go toward maintenance, future development, improvements, and expansion.

KRRP has proven that what may seem an obscure sport to some has a very active following. Killion says the park has 4,000 to 5,000 visitors per year. This is not really surprising considering that the property has 18 to 20 miles of trails, primitive camping, well-maintained pit toilets, a playground, and articulation moguls and a rock pile for the more aggressive vehicles.

When it comes to trails, imagination is the name of the game. The more than 60 trails and/or obstacles even have names that sound challenging, such as Bad Axe Hill, Buckin' Chute, Carnage Canyon, The Labyrinth, Mike's Malice, Robin's Rollover, and Skull Hill. While some are large and some are small, all are designed to command respect.

"Basically, we have three different levels of motorized vehicle trails," Killion explains. "Novice trails are for stock vehicles, which accounts for about 10 percent of our users. Intermediate trails are for modified stock vehicles, and this group accounts for about 80 percent of our users. The other 10 percent are those with special suspension vehicles that are ready to take on the greatest challenges we offer. We offer a couple of 'Off-

Roading 101' courses each year, as well as novice competitions and other events."

Pre-registration for some of these events is required and may be completed on the park's website, ksrockspark.com.

Summer hours (April 1 through Sept. 30) at the park are Saturday 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Sunday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Winter hours (Oct. 1 through March 31) are Saturday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

If you're interested in slow-moving, hard-grinding motor sports — or just want to bike, hike, or take a family drive through the woods — a visit to Kansas Rocks Recreation Park is a must. Although no water and

electrical hookups are yet available, plan to camp. As Killion says, "What could be better than wheeling, going to sleep, waking up, and wheeling again without leaving the park?"

For more information, write KANROCKS Recreation Association, Inc., PO Box 15812, Lenexa, KS 66285-0812, email Killion at info@ksrockspark.com, or visit the park website, ksrockspark.com. To find a map to the area, type "2051 130th Street, Mapleton, KS" in your favorite map search engine. 📍



Del Ruff photo

The 20 miles of trails on the park range from the rugged to the serene, and everything in between. The park hosts about 5,000 visitors per year.

PLANT IT AND “THEY” WILL COME

text by Mike Miller
editor, Pratt

photos by Marc Murrell
Great Plains Nature Center manager,
Wichita

Food plots on wildlife areas are nothing new, but in recent years, some managers have planted fields to specifically attract mourning doves. This intensive management is working, attracting not only doves in droves but hunters, as well.



The Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism manages habitat and provides public hunting opportunities on approximately 700,000 acres of state- or federally-owned land. On each of these areas, wildlife area managers strive to provide optimum wildlife habitat. Any area manager will tell you that the top three factors in healthy, sustainable wildlife populations are habitat, habitat and habitat. Most enhancement efforts are planned

with long-term benefits in mind, such as annual burning, shrub planting, and strip disking. However, seasonal food plots have often been planted as a way to supplement natural food sources, attract wildlife and keep wildlife on the land. On many areas, food plots are planted just for wildlife. On others, local farmers plant and harvest crops through a tenant or cash/rent agreement, leaving a portion of certain crops uncut for wildlife use.

In recent years, some managers have developed an intensive food plot program aimed at a single game bird, creating fields to attract mourning doves. Overall, results of these efforts have been very good, and hunters have been happy. However, another important benefit to this practice may be realized through hunter recruitment and retention. Managers have been experimenting with reserving the first few days of the dove season for youth hunting or setting certain

fields aside for youth or youth/mentor hunting only.

Manipulating crops to attract wildlife can be hit or miss, depending on the weather. Managers are working with sunflowers, millet, and wheat, and when rains come at the right times, and weeds can be effectively managed, the results have been spectacular.

Doves are the most numerous game bird in North America, and each summer Kansas harbors one of the top breeding populations in the Midwest. Doves are typically hunted near feeding, roosting or watering sites. During dry years, farm ponds and stock tank runovers can be excellent places to hunt doves. Worked wheat and cornfields also provide good hunting. However, anyone who has ever hunted a sunflower field knows doves love sunflowers.

Dove hunting is popular with Kansas hunters because doves are abundant, and it's the first hunting season of the year, opening on September 1. Hunting is usually best early, before a cool snap or hunting pressure pushes local birds out. About 50,000 hunters pursue doves each year, taking about a million birds. Shotgun shell manufacturers like dove season, too, as the small, speedy fliers are challenging targets. It's estimated that the average hunter will shoot seven shells to harvest one dove, and the daily bag limit is 15!

It's a good idea to work on basic wingshooting skills with young hunters before hitting the dove fields. Doves are never easy, and if the wind blows, they're difficult even for experienced shooters. However, the positives of taking a youngster on an early September dove hunt outweigh negatives. Most hunts are short, usually a couple of hours in the morning or evening. There will be lots of action and opportunity



Sunflowers attract doves like no other crop, but the keys are planting them early enough to mature in August and keeping the field clean. These fields are great for youth hunting.

when the weather is warm. Sitting on a stool pass-shooting doves may be safer for a young beginning hunter than negotiating thick cover CRP grass hunting pheasants. It can be a good idea for a mentor to sit behind a beginning hunter to help spot potential shots and ensure safety. Action can be fast, and it can be easy for a youngster to get caught up in the confusion and forget safety. A spotter can also help mark downed birds because even on fairly open ground, a small gray bird can be difficult to find.

Last year, there were managed dove fields in all five KDWPT administrative regions. In Region 1 (northwest), there were managed dove fields at nine areas. In Region 2 (northeast), there were managed dove fields on 10 wildlife areas. Region 3 (southwest) had fields on three areas. Region 4 (southcentral) managers planted dove fields on seven

areas, and in Region 5 (southeast), 10 wildlife areas featured managed dove fields.

To find out where fields have been planted for 2011, go to the KDWPT website (www.kdwpt.state.ks.us) and click on "Hunting" then "Migratory Birds" and then "Doves." Each wildlife area that has dove fields will be listed, along with information about the fields, as well as any restrictions. For example, one area in Region 1 was open to youth/mentor/novice hunters for the first four days of last season. Youth or novice hunters required supervision from a licensed adult hunter, who could also hunt. Small areas, such as Kaw River Wildlife Area near Topeka, may be open by limited special permits for the first part of the season. Limiting hunters ensures high-quality hunting experiences, and prevents the birds from being pushed off quickly by heavy hunting pressure.

Darrin Porter, Elk City Wildlife Area manager, manages intensively for doves on several of his areas. The Dove Flats Wildlife Area is small and known historically in the region for dove hunting, so it seemed logical to manage the area for doves. Porter has divided the area into 15-acre fields with grass strips in between. The crop strips are planted to wheat, corn and sunflowers in rotation. Crops are manipulated to make them more attractive to doves; wheat stubble is burned or disced, and sunflowers are kept clean and mowed, beginning a month before the season opener.

"We have tried to provide youth hunting opportunities at Dove Flats, usually reserving opening day for young hunters," Porter said. "But there isn't a great deal of demand in this area, I think because getting access to private land for dove hunting is still relatively easy.

"In the past couple of years, we have reserved opening day for youth/mentor hunting, allowing the mentor to hunt, and that has been more attractive," he added.

Porter said that in addition to crop manipulation on Dove Flats, he and his staff have girdled cottonwood trees along the grass strips, leaving the dead snags, which attract doves. They also have a couple of pit ponds that they mow around to provide open shorelines attractive to doves.

There is no doubt that the fields provide outstanding opportunities.

"On one 20-acre field on Elk City Wildlife Area, we had approximately 100 hunters out there on opening morning last year, and I think they harvested 1,200 doves," Porter attested.

Brent Theede, McPherson Valley Wetlands manager, has one field he manages specifically for doves.

"We have a lease agreement with a local farmer who plants sunflowers. He harvests 75 percent of the field and leaves 25 percent. We require the field be planted by May 15 to ensure that the sunflowers are ripe by the first or second week of August."

Theede has tried burned wheat stubble with mixed results, but with sunflowers, the results have been phenomenal.

"We may bushhog some of the department's share of the crop, trying for a clean field. Last year, I drove by three days before the season and saw maybe 200 doves. On opening morning, there were

thousands. Seventy-one hunters reported killing 622 doves on opening day," Theede added.

On the McPherson field, hunting has usually lasted about a week, before hunting pressure burned the birds off or the weather changed and birds left.

"We haven't set aside any days or areas for youth hunting yet," Theede said. "It's a big field and for the most part, hunters have been happy with their opportunities. However, some who thought it would be too crazy first thing opening morning waited until 10 and brought their kids. Only a few other hunters remained, and the



On many areas, fields are set aside for youth and youth/mentor hunting. On other areas, the first few days of the season may be reserved for youth hunting. It's a good idea to work with young hunters, helping them spot birds and ensuring safe gun handling.

kids still shot limits.”

Region 2 (northeast) Public Lands supervisor John Silovsky said they have 10 wildlife areas with dove fields on them in the region. Depending on the size of the area, some have multiple fields managed for dove hunting.

“Our emphasis has been on sunflowers and wheat,” Silovsky explained. “And we’ve also experimented with some millets. On some of the larger areas, we’re rewriting our agricultural leases to a cash/rent agreement and requiring the renter to plant a certain amount of sunflowers. They’re not really a cash crop in this area.”

As in other areas, the secret to good dove fields is getting them planted early enough, so they are ripe sometime in August.

“The other factor in creating a good dove field is keeping it clean from weeds,” Silovsky said. “It’s not easy or cheap, but we get more positive comments from hunters on our dove fields than anything else we do.”

Silovsky said that within the region, hunters can choose from a variety of hunt types. “We have some fields that are open only by limited drawing through our Special Hunts Program, and we have fields that are open only to youth or youth-mentor pairs. The demand is high for these types of hunts. We also have fields open to anyone hunting.”

On a small wildlife area near Topeka, a dove field is reserved for the first two days of dove season for the local Hunter Education Instructors Association. Hunter education instructors use the opportunity to mentor students who have recently completed their course, and this has proven popular.

“At Clinton Wildlife Area, we have a field we save for a local conservation organization, so its members can conduct a mentored

youth hunt,” Silovsky added. “After a couple of days, the field is opened to public hunting.

“In our region, we’re trying to spread out hunting pressure so that good hunting lasts longer than two or three days. If we hunt a field too hard, the birds move out,” he said. “This year, we’re considering adding some refuge fields that will be closed to hunting during the first part of the season. Then, we’ll open them up later. So far, this year looks pretty good. There are a lot of things out of our managers’ control when developing dove fields, but this spring and summer have provided good conditions. I know there are hunters already checking out the fields. It’s been a very popular program.”

Less than two percent of Kansas is open to public hunting, but KDWPT managers do a remarkable job of providing good wildlife habitat, as well as great hunting opportunities. Innovative programs such as managed dove fields are a prime example. Providing high-quality wing-shooting opportunities may play an important role in recruiting young hunters, as well as retaining current hunters. Check out a nearby wildlife area this September . . . and bring plenty of shotgun shells. ♡



There are many factors outside of managers’ control when producing good dove fields, but with a few years of experience under their belts, staff are building on past successes.



by Marc Murrell
Great Plains Nature Center manager, Wichita
 photos courtesy B.D. Ehler
Topeka

B.D. Ehler handcrafts custom fishing rods that are as beautiful as they are effective at catching fish. With intricate wraps and personal touches, these rods are works of art.

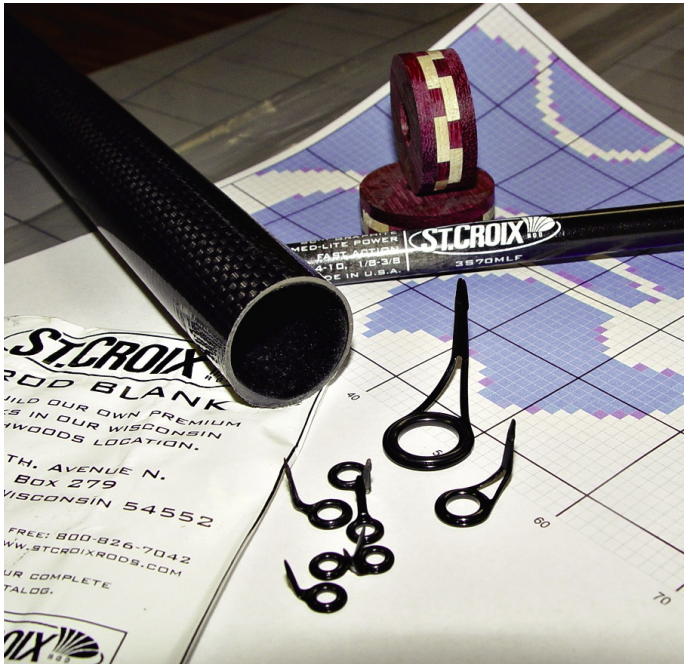
Outdoor enthusiasts have hobbies of all kinds related to what they enjoy doing outdoors. Some tie flies, carve decoys, or fashion gadgets or various pieces of equipment that make their outdoor experiences easier, more satisfying, or convenient. For one Kansan, the satisfaction of making a piece of equipment and watching it perform on the water has been putting a smile on his and the faces of many other anglers for decades.

"I started fishing seriously in high school with a fly rod," said B.D. Ehler of his start in rod building during his days at Highland Park High School (Topeka), where he graduated in 1952. "I had a fly that came loose, and I tied it back, and then I had a guide that came loose, and I fixed that. I figured if I could tie a fly or guide, I could build an entire rod."

Ehler contacted Herter's, an outdoor catalog company, and got his first kit to build a fly rod. He was

hooked, so to speak, and decades later, the rest is literally rod building history.

Ehler's reputation as a rod craftsman stretches far and wide, and he's recognized nationally as one of the finest in the country. His accomplishments have earned him the nickname, "Rod Doc," for his ability to bring any rod back to life no matter its ailment. But even more impressive might be his rod works of art made from raw materials, many of which are suitable



It starts with blanks, guides, wood for the handle and a variety of threads, depending on the complexity of the design.

for a museum but right at home catching species such as bass, crappie, walleye, or even catfish.

It was shortly after buying a drug store in 1971 that Ehler realized there might be a demand for his custom-built rods.

"I ordered components for 14 spinning rods, and in my spare time between kids and a career, I built them and took them into my store and put them on display for sale," he said. "Within a week they were gone."

Over the next four decades, Ehler estimates he's built well over 1,000 rods for anglers from all walks of life. The price of his rods start at about \$125 and go up from there, depending on the blank, components used, and the time and detail required to build a rod to an angler's personal specifications. The most expensive rod he ever sold went for \$1,200.

"I once built about 300 rods in three years, which was the most I ever built," Ehler said. "But these days, I build about 50 a year, and that's really about all I want to do now. Every angler has different ideas about rods and lengths, and I

get different requests from every angler. I try to give them what they want."

He also tries to educate them on the various aspects that make a good rod for the species they pursue. He describes in detail the three parts of the rod and makes recommendations to anglers based on the type of fishing they prefer. He's as interested in matching a rod to an angler as he is crafting a perfect rod. His customers

are usually repeat clients.

The detail, craftsmanship, and artistic touches on some of Ehler's rods are nothing short of amazing. He collects all of his own wood for the handles from various trees and water cures it for six months before allowing it to dry for as

long as 18 months. His shop is meticulously organized with more than 15,000 guides and hundreds of blanks at his disposal. He's got 30 drawers of current and discontinued threads of all styles and colors to use in adding that special touch to any rod.

"The guy who dies with the most thread wins," he laughed.

He built a rod for his son with a Kansas Jayhawk logo near the handle, which required 123 threads totaling more than 200 feet. It took him two weeks just to do the Jayhawk, which is about the size of a dime.

Ehler is to custom rods what Leonardo da Vinci was to the Mona Lisa, except the Mona Lisa never caught a fish. He'll build an average rod without the fancy details in a couple weeks. Many of



Even the handle caps are intricate on Ehler's rods. He collects the wood himself, water curing it for six months and drying it for as long as 18 months.



Details in the wraps of this Ehler custom rod is amazing. Some of his more intricate designs required 123 threads totaling more than 200 feet. Some of his most impressive masterpieces have taken him as long as four months.

than the masterpiece might be the memories created during its first outing.

"We went fishing and saw some fish surfacing, and she cast over there with her new rod and her first fish was a 6-pound channel cat, and the next one was a 9-pound channel cat," Ehler laughed. "And then she caught a 3 ½-pound large-mouth bass!"

She still uses the rod today.

The Ehlers' children all grew up using their dad's rods, and now some of the grandchildren have their own rods, as well. Ehler and Mary still spend many hours fishing for wipers and other species in

Pomona Reservoir, which is just a stone's throw from their back deck where they've lived since 1976.

But despite the accolades and dedication to his hobby, Ehler's even more passionate about passing on the tricks of his trade than he is in personal recognition. A truly humble man, Ehler is more concerned with keeping the tradition of rod building alive than he is with monetary gain, awards or notoriety. He's taken several local anglers under his tutelage and is more than willing to share his expertise. His goal is to see to it the hobby that has given him so much pleasure over the years can do the same for others for many years to come.

"I look at it as more of a hobby, not necessarily a business," Ehler concluded. "If I can pass on my knowledge, this kind of information doesn't die." 🦈

his most impressive masterpieces take three to four months to build, working nearly a full-time schedule on them each week. While he's made money doing it over the years, he admits his hourly wage likely wasn't too high considering the time he put into each rod. But the pride from creating a true work of art and the positive feedback received from anglers who appreciated his efforts was worth a lot.

Most of his business now is word-of-mouth, mostly in Kansas. He builds rods for the average angler after most any species, but many he builds are for walleye or crappie tournament anglers. He's as busy as he wants to be and has plenty to keep him occupied. He realizes the more time he spends building rods is less time spent on the water with his favorite fishing partner, Mary, his wife of 54 years.

"She's my fishing buddy," Ehler said of his bride he met in high school art class. "Some anglers are lucky, some are good; she's lucky AND good!"

Many of Ehler's rods have personal meaning, such as the one he built for Mary in 1980. It had her name in fine thread as well as the words, "I Love You," near the handle. But even more important



Proof is in the crappie. Ehler shows off a very nice crappie he caught at Pomona Reservoir on one of his rods.

RODBUILDERS THANK U.S. VETERANS

The men and women who have served or are serving in our armed forces have the gratitude of a nation. Unfortunately, some make the ultimate sacrifice for their country and are killed, and many more are wounded. The road to recovery is difficult, but there are some outdoors enthusiasts helping them heal and thanking them for their service.

"The Rods for Soldiers Program started about three years ago," said Pat Helton, 63, who has been building custom fishing rods for three decades and is the director of the program as a member of the Texas Rod Builders. "The first year we gave away about 35 rods."

Helton is a Vietnam veteran. He says when he got back after serving his country, he and other soldiers were met by protesters.

"I never felt really proud of my Vietnam service until 30 years later," Helton admits. "I swore I would do everything I could so our heroes get a 'thank you' when they get home."

Since the first year, the program has grown. Interest from rodbuilders from around the country has skyrocketed.

"I've had some rods built by some of the best in the world," Helton said. "I've got 12 rods sitting here from B.D. Ehler, and he's a legend in rod building."

Ehler is more than happy to share his skills for this wonderful cause.

"Pat Helton is the front man for Rods for Soldiers," Ehler said. "Along with co-founders Terry Jones, Doug Moore, and Jim Leuck and wonderful contributors like Silvia Davis, Randy Search, and countless others, they have managed to turn the program into something that's

nothing less than truly phenomenal. The support has been overwhelming as rod builders from all over America have stepped up to honor our country's servicemen and women."

This year, the Rods for Soldiers program will distribute about 150 fly rods, spinning rods, and other custom-built rods to soldiers wounded in action. Helton and others work to raise money for the supplies and components of the custom rods.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON RODS FOR SOLDIERS

If you're interested in donating to the Rods for Soldiers program, a 501c3 organization, or would like more information, phone Pat Helton at 979-418-9093 or email patfatdaddy@gmail.com. Information on the program is also available online at www.texasrodbuilders.com or www.rodguild.com.

"If a rod builder needs the components to build these rods, they just contact me, and I send them all the components and they build it and send it back," Helton said. "And there are some rod builders that pay for everything themselves and send me the rods."

If it's possible, Helton or one of the other club members will present the rods to soldiers personally.

"I went to Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio last Christmas, and I took 21 rods," Helton said. "They went to heroic young men recovering from wounds and who had made some pretty big sacrifices."

The soldiers are extremely appreciative. Helton says some of them can't believe someone cares

enough to give them anything, much less a custom fishing rod.

"To a man, they're very excited and ready to go out and try their new rods," Helton said.

And Helton is working on another request he recently received.

"I got a call from a lady whose son was killed in Afghanistan in December, and she said her husband were devastated," Helton said. "I'm going to build a rod for him and put the Marine logo on it and 'In Loving Memory' and her son's name and present it to his dad."

Helton had an experience recently that symbolized the true character of the Rods for Soldiers Program.

"I was at the Houston fishing show trying to raise some money, so we can buy more supplies," Helton said. "A gentleman about my age came through and was wearing a hat that said, 'Purple Heart Veteran' on it."

The man was using a cane and had his family with him.

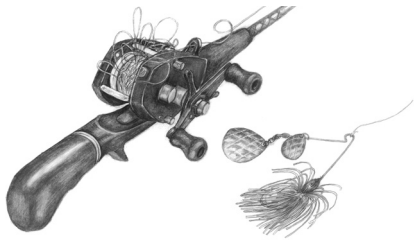
"I said, 'You must have been wounded in Vietnam,' and he said, 'Yes, I was,'" Helton explained.

Helton had a rod rack of custom rods they typically distribute to wounded soldiers. He led the Vietnam Veteran over to the rack and told him to pick one out. The man said he couldn't afford a rod like that.

"I told him he'd already paid for it," Helton said.

"Paid for it?" the man questioned. "I haven't paid for it."

"I told him, 'When you won that Purple Heart in Vietnam you paid for it,'" Helton said. "We were just 35 years too late getting it to you."



Backlash

by Mike Miller

Summer Magic

Each year I get a little more cynical about summer, and I'm thinking this could be some sort of built-in defense mechanism; a way to deal with the heat. "Hot enough for ya?" is a common sarcastic greeting around the office when it's really hot. The common response includes rolling the eyes and a guttural, unpleasant-sounding groan. Perhaps it's human nature to grow cynical about certain things as we age, and mid-summer heat seems to be high on everyone's list. However, when I was a boy, summer, at whatever temperature, was magic.

The big event was "summer vacation." The last day of school was one of the most anticipated dates of my life when I was nine or 10, rivaled only by Christmas morning. Summer marked the last day of school and the beginning of summer vacation. That first Monday morning when I didn't have to get up and go to school was pure bliss. When you're a kid, three months is forever, and the first of September when school re-started seemed half a lifetime away. But the other thing that marked summer vacation was being outdoors. I don't remember spending much time in the house during the summer, unless I was sleeping. Summer was synonymous with "outside."

For me growing up in a small Kansas town meant a summer daily schedule of something like this: Sleep in. Ride my bike over to my cousin's house and convince him that we should go fishing. After digging for worms, we'd ride our bikes to the lake. We'd fish, throw rocks, catch frogs, get wet and dirty, and once in a while we'd catch a fish. By noon it was getting hot, so we'd ride home to eat lunch, then change into our swimming suits, get back on our bikes and head for the city pool. We'd swim all afternoon. After supper, we were either on our bikes riding with friends around town, playing basketball in the driveway, or playing "capture the flag" or other yard games until after dark. The only reason to be in the house was to eat, change clothes and sleep. The next day, we'd get up and do it again.

A special treat was getting a ride to the farm pond south of town where we could swim, fish, catch frogs, get dirty -- I guess pretty much the same itinerary as at the state fishing lake but in a "wild" setting. When we were a little older, we'd sometimes get dropped off at the pond in afternoon with a cooler of food and drinks, cots, sleeping bags and fishing tackle. We'd sleep under the stars, tell stories, and ending up scaring ourselves. I

remember one night when a meteor shower kept us entertained well into the night. Those are fond memories.

I'm afraid many of today's youngsters aren't finding that summer magic outdoors. I know there are some parents who make sure their kids experience the Kansas outdoors, but for some, getting kids outdoors has become an intimidating proposition. We were lucky to live in a small rural town where we had access to a state lake and a private pond. But what about kids growing up in an urban setting?

Actually, there are some great opportunities wherever you live; they're not far away, and they don't cost much. KDWPT manages more than 50 state fishing lakes that are rarely crowded and are managed specifically for anglers. On most, boating is allowed for fishing only, so anglers don't compete with pleasure boaters. There are more than 200 community-owned lakes enrolled the department's Community Lake Assistance Program (CFAP). CFAP leases fishing rights to these waters so that no angling fees are charged. All you need to fish a CFAP lake is a fishing license, unless you're a kid; then all you need is a fishing pole and a bike. KDWPT manages the fisheries and because of low fishing pressure, many community lakes provide outstanding fishing.

KDWPT offers a "Family Friendly Facility" (FFF) rating for those CFAP lakes that are alcohol free, offer flush toilets, are regularly patrolled by security, provide lighting and have easy shoreline access for anglers. A complete listing of state and community lakes, including those rated FFF, can be found in the *2011 Kansas Fishing Regulations Summary*, and locations are included in the *Kansas Fishing Guide* and *Kansas Fishing Atlas*. Printed versions of all publications are available at KDWPT offices and license vendors across the state. Digital versions, as well as other lake fishing information, including area maps, fishing forecasts and fishing reports, can be found on KDWPT's website.

On the Children & Nature Network website, www.childrenandnature.org, you'll find research and studies showing kids who experience nature outside are healthier and happier. My unscientific finding is that my childhood experiences outside, especially those magical summers, are nearly all happy memories. My time outdoors played a role in who I've become and what I do for a living. So, yes, it's more than hot enough for me, but it's just right for a 10-year-old who loves to fish, catch frogs and get muddy. Get them outside and find the magic. ♡

