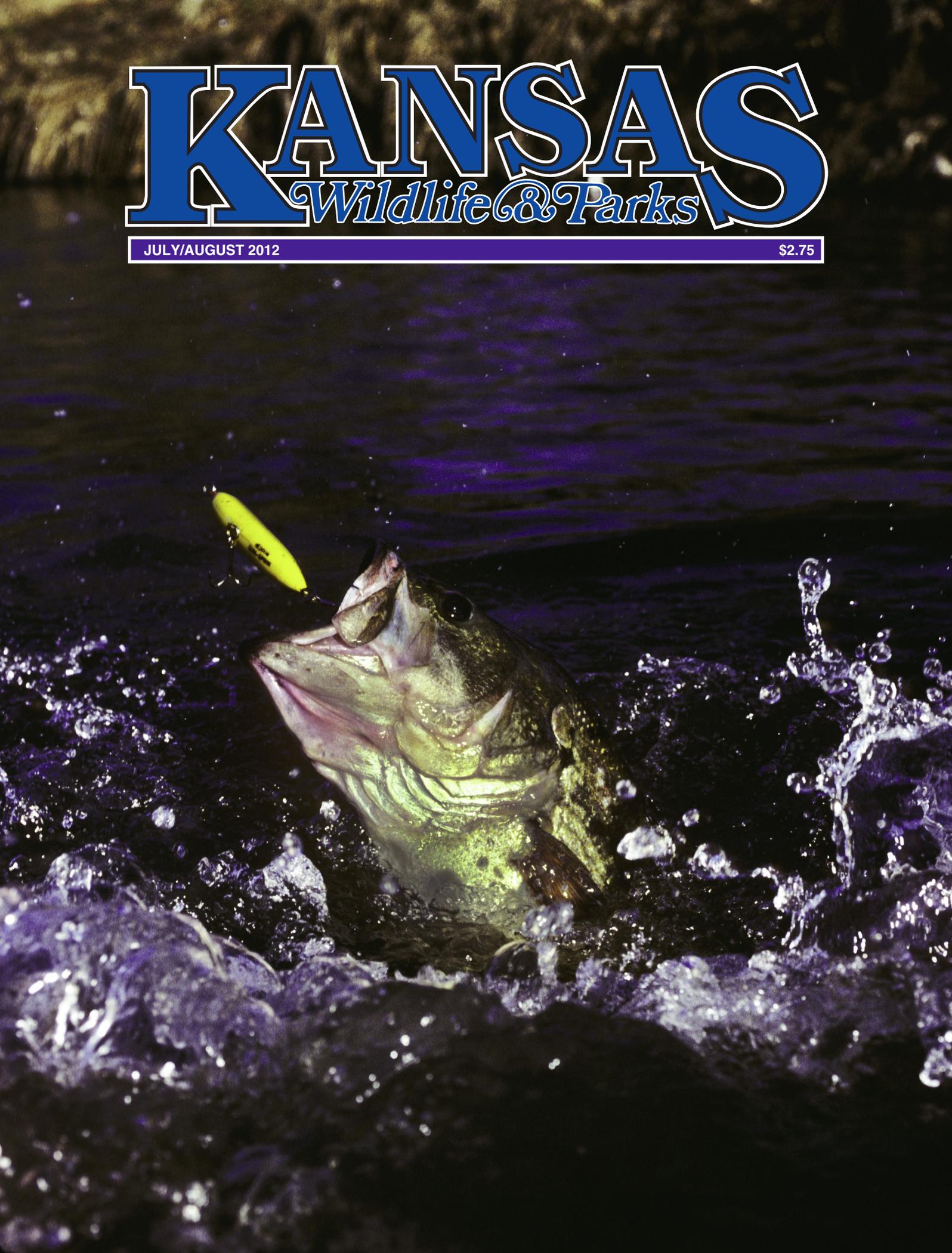


KANSAS

Wildlife & Parks

JULY/AUGUST 2012

\$2.75



KANSAS *View*

by Robin Jennison



2012 Landmark Legislation

You've probably read reports about what the Kansas Legislature did not do this year. However, when it comes to the Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism and our constituents, much was accomplished this session.

The most talked about and controversial issue was ending the hunting and fishing license exemption for hunters and anglers 65 and older. As noted in my January column, the decision to introduce the legislation was based on two issues: First, our hunters and anglers 65 and older are a growing percentage of the total number of hunters and anglers. Second, Kansas is losing out on federal funding those hunters and anglers are paying through excise taxes on the sporting equipment they buy. That excise tax goes back to the states based, in part, on the number of hunting and fishing licenses we sell. Kansas is one of 14 states that did not charge 65 and older hunters and anglers in some way. And though they hunted, fished and bought equipment, Kansas was not getting its appropriate share of the excise tax. This legislation will put Kansas on a level playing field with the rest of the states.

The legislation created two options. Someone 65 and older can buy a half-price (\$9) annual fishing or hunting license. Or anyone 65 and older can purchase a Senior Pass combination hunting/fishing license, valid for the rest of their life. The price of the Senior Pass has to be set by the commission, but the department committed to the legislature that it would be \$40. This does not go into effect until January 1, 2013, and it will not impact anyone 75 or older, who will still be exempt from hunting and fishing license requirements.

Also starting in January 2013, park users will be able to buy their annual vehicle park entrance permit at the county treasurer's office when they register their vehicle. The price of the annual park pass will be \$15 dollars. That is a savings of almost \$10 over an annual park permit purchased during the peak season and almost \$5 compared to purchasing an annual permit in the off season. Michigan created a program like this, and convenience and savings increased visitation and revenue to their park system. It will also reduce the Kansas parks system's reliance on daily permits, sales of which are a determining factor on whether the parks have a good year or not. If the parks do not have favorable weather on the four holiday weekends throughout the summer, revenue falls significantly, creating challenges for funding the necessary operations and maintenance.

The last piece of legislation that will affect the department and our constituents is a constitutional amendment to take boats out of the personal property classification. Kansas boat owners pay the highest property taxes of any in the Midwest. That is not only a problem for boat owners, but it is a competitive disadvantage for our marinas and boat dealers. Even though it is illegal to have your principle use in Kansas and have your boat registered in another state, many people do. Because of that, they also buy their boats in other states. The legislature has approved this measure to be on the ballot this November. I would encourage all sportsmen and women to support this measure. It will be good for our Kansas boaters, marinas and boat dealers, and our state parks.

All of these measures are necessary and part of a strategy to put the department in position to protect and conserve our natural resources and maintain our recreational facilities so we can pass them on to our children and grandchildren.

We can look back just 65 years to see the amazing impact hunters and anglers have had on our outdoor opportunities through the purchase of hunting and fishing licenses. In 1947, Kansas had three public wildlife areas; today we have 107. Sixty-five years ago, we had 12 state fishing lakes, and today we have 57. We had three state parks, and now we have 26. There were no federal reservoirs and no walleye, smallmouth bass, wipers or white bass. Today we have 25 reservoirs that hold outstanding populations of those sport fish. Only 25 community lakes existed in 1947, and today we have 258. KDWPT has four fish hatcheries where millions of fish are raised each year for stocking into our lakes, and KDWPT biologists manage the fisheries in all of the lakes mentioned above. In addition to the public hunting areas, more than 1 million acres of private land are enrolled in the Walk-In Hunting Access program.

We have created a sportsmen's paradise in Kansas with more diversity in opportunity than any state. It has been the combined efforts of the sportsmen and the dedication and hard work of KDWPT employees that made these opportunities available.

With your help, our children and grandchildren will be able to enjoy the same outdoor opportunities that we have. ♡



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Front Cover: Gene Brehm froze the action as this whopper largemouth jumped to shake the Zara Spook from its jaw. **Back Cover:** Mike Blair snapped this peaceful scene of a float tube angler stalking fish on a F.I.S.H. pond in northcentral Kansas. Check out the 2012 Fishing Atlas for a pond like this near you.



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

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

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BASS VISION

Editor:

I am writing to let you know that I really enjoyed the article in the March/April 2012 Kansas Wildlife and Parks magazine (Page 41) titled "How Does A Bass See?" As I finished reading the article, I had several thoughts run through my head.

I love to continue to learn as much as I can. I have been an avid outdoorsman all my life. As most are aware, you are never finished learning when it comes to most anything in life, especially when it comes to trying to outsmart mother nature. So when I find articles like this that have actual real-life tested examples of what the author is trying to explain, I take notice. It was great to see Brent Chapman explain his reasoning behind what lures he feels are the best and why. I could imagine some professional fisherman steering away from some of their secrets but as we all know, there is more to fishing than just choosing the right color of lure.

I have a friend who did not grow up fishing but has learned to enjoy it. The only problem is that he doesn't know much about it, so I have tried to help steer him in the right direction. After reading this article, I talked to him and said I have a great article for him to read and would get him a copy of it once I was through. As stated before, this is the kind of information someone can take away and use to hopefully become more successful at fishing.

As a kid, I really enjoyed reading *Kansas Wildlife and Parks* magazine. I absorbed most everything I read and applied it whenever I had a chance. It gave me great direction, so that now as a adult and father, I have a fighting chance to actually do some good out in the field and hopefully teach a few others along the way. My wife and I currently have a five-month-old daughter, so my outdoor adventures are somewhat limited at this time, but I can't wait to drag her along and show her the wonders of what God has waiting for her. Thanks again for the great article and keep them coming.

*Eric Rector
Moundridge*

HUNTING *with Kent Barrett* HERITAGE

Learning Limitations

I just got back from Kansas City where I attended the annual conference of the International Hunter Education Association. I participated in a range day where I had the opportunity to "shoot" a number of different hunting tools. Most of these looked back to the past with the help of modern technology. I can say that it was a hoot, and of course I came back with a desire to add a number of new tools to the old collection. This could be problematic.

One of the tools new to me was an atlatl. For those of you not familiar with it, the atlatl is an old school tool that uses leverage to achieve greater velocity when throwing a spear or dart. A traditional atlatl is a long-range device that can throw projectiles at speeds of over 90 miles per hour. You may already be familiar with common devices that people use to throw tennis balls for their dogs to retrieve. The principle is the same. The atlatl acts as a lever that trades force for speed (the opposite of the commonly used term leverage). All I know is that it was a lot of fun to try it although the deer in Kansas, as well as all surrounding states are safe from this atlatlist. I was able to generate sufficient speed to acquire some distance, but my accuracy left a lot to be desired. The only way I would hit a deer right now would be if they were unlucky enough to wander in front of a dart by accident or one with a death wish jumped in front of a dart. Neither option is good enough for me. I would need a lot of practice in order to feel confident enough to use this tool in a hunting situation. It made me understand why man designed a bow to replace the atlatl. The bow is much more forgiving and has a much flatter

learning curve. This is good to know information. And besides, the atlatl is not included in our regulation listing legal deer hunting equipment.

My experience, though, can serve as a good reminder that practice is a necessary part of our preparation for the coming fall hunts. Now would be an excellent opportunity to use our summer practice time to discover the limits of our abilities, as well as that of our equipment. We purchase our equipment with the idea that it will function properly within a window of certain precise conditions dictated by weather, terrain and distance to the target. But after we make the purchase, do we take care to ensure that we are capable of using this equipment correctly within that same window of conditions? If realistically we can't, then it is time to practice so that we can. We need to shoot our bows and firearms at the distances that we intend to hunt. We need to shoot from an elevated position if we intend to hunt from a treestand. We need to shoot from a ground blind if that will be how we hunt. If we hunt in cold weather, we need to wear some bulky clothing to practice in conditions as they will be during the hunt. When was the last time you shot from the prone position? When was the last time that you could get in the prone position? I was reminded of this during my last coyote hunt. These are all things to consider while we practice.

I know my limitations with an atlatl. They were quite obvious. I may overestimate my abilities with my familiar rifle or shotgun. Now is the time to find out these limitations and fix the situation. It only takes practice, and we all know that practice is fun!

BIRD BRAIN

with Mike Rader

Summertime Kites



Mississippi kites are one of my favorite summertime birds. They are beautiful little hawks, with the adults having a light gray hood, darker gray on the body, black wing and tail feathers and bright red eyes. Young birds are streaked, with lots of brown. The young can be seen in abundance in late summer, before migration begins. These kites are approximately 13-17 inches long and have a wingspan of approximately 3 feet. They are similar in size to a peregrine falcon, but they weigh about a third as much - only 8-12 ounces. Being that lightweight helps them with their buoyant style of flight. They need to be agile because of what they eat - mostly large, flying insects such as cicadas, dragonflies and grasshoppers. Often they snag one of these insects out of the air with their feet, and then reach down, pull the wings off and eat it while still on the fly. Other prey include small birds, lizards, snakes, bats and rodents, but they are primarily insect eaters.

Mississippi kites spend the winter in sub-tropical (central) South America, often ranging as far south as Argentina. They usually arrive in Kansas in late April to early May and can range over most of the state, but highest concentrations are in the southwest and southcentral regions. Fall migration starts in August and continues through early September.

Kites will nest in both urban and rural settings but tend to concentrate in towns, with Garden City, Ulysses, Meade, Pratt, Great Bend, Larned, Hays and communities around Wichita having highest numbers. For nesting, they prefer medium to tall trees found in city parks, golf courses, residential areas and in rural shelterbelts and woodlots with mature trees. Mississippi kites lay clutches of 1-3 eggs, and incubation lasts about a month. About a month after hatching, the young birds leave the nest.

The two-month period when the adults are incubating eggs and tending to young are when my agency and nature centers get a lot calls about kites. A small percentage of adult birds turn aggressive toward intruders. They will swoop down at people and pets who get too close to the nest tree, sometimes making contact and even drawing blood. They rarely do serious damage, but kids and the elderly can fall and potentially hurt themselves trying to avoid the little dive-bombers. The best thing to do is avoid getting too close to the nest tree, but if you need to be in

the general vicinity, wear a cap or be ready to duck. Luckily, only a few birds get aggressive enough to be an issue. It is illegal to harass or harm the birds or remove the nests while the birds are using them, so patience and awareness are the best practices. Many well-meaning people will pick up young kites when they are fledging and take them to rehabilitators. In most cases, the birds are just learning to fly and are best left alone or placed in an adjacent tree. The parents are usually still in the area and caring for them. Only about half of the young produced reach fledging age, often falling victim to summer thunderstorms, raccoons and larger birds of prey, such as great horned owls or red-tailed hawks.

The town of Wilson has had a small influx of nesters in the past several years, with maybe a dozen or so around town. We have had a nest across the street the last couple of years, so it's been fun to see them (ours don't dive-bomb yet). I have noticed an increase in numbers in several other towns along and near I-70, including Salina, Hays, Russell and Ellsworth. They are expanding northward, so watch for them this summer - you'll be glad you did.

POCKET RANGER APP FOR STATE PARKS

KDWPT has launched the Kansas State Parks Pocket Ranger® app - a free, interactive mobile guide to Kansas state parks. The app is designed to provide information and technology to guide and enhance the state park experience for nature lovers and outdoor enthusiasts at all of Kansas' 26 state parks.

The Pocket Ranger® app offers interactive GPS and mapping technology for tracking trails, marking waypoints, and locating landmarks in state parks. Users are also able to locate friends within parks using the Friend Finder feature. The Alert feature supplies GPS coordinates to designated contacts in case of an emergency. Guests can also cache (store) park maps in advance, so they can still navigate if they lose mobile reception. The GeoChallenge feature offers the novice explorer or more adventurous geocacher various geoquest activities and games

throughout the year to guide them on their quests.

In addition to its state-of-the-art GPS technology, the Kansas app has other tools that can help visitors decide which park to visit using a comprehensive list of activities and events or search for a park within a particular region. Park rules and regulations are a click away. Users can even reserve a campsite or cabin using the Pocket Ranger® to navigate to KDWPT's new online reservation site.

The free Kansas State Parks Pocket Ranger® app is available on the KDWPT homepage at ksoutdoors.com, on iTunes, in the iPhone Apps Store, and online at PocketRanger.com and will soon be available for Android phones. Blackberry and feature phone users can use the mobile website version of the Kansas State Parks Pocket Ranger®.

- KDWPT News

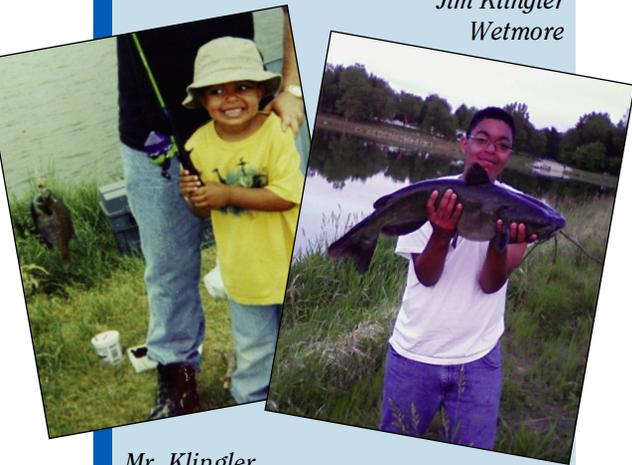
GROWTH OF AN ANGLER

Editor:

You can see in these photos my son has done a lot of growing, and so has his fish! The first photo was about 10 years ago at Centralia Lake. He caught a bluegill, and you can see by his eyes, he's not so sure about him! The second photo was about a week ago at a state fishing lake (shhh...it's our secret fishing hole). Noah Klingler, age 14, Wetmore, KS.

Enjoy your magazine. Thanks !

*Jim Klingler
Wetmore*



Mr. Klingler,

Nice job passing it on. I know from my own experience that your son will never forget the time you two spend fishing together. Your fishing excursions will likely play a positive role in his development into an adult. I hope you have many more fishing trips together. Never underestimate the power of passing it on.

- Miller

WISCONSIN FAN

Editor:

I wanted to take a moment to tell you all what a great job the KDWP has done with managing your state's resources. From the easy-to-use website to the availability of Walk-In areas to the size and numbers of animals, I have found hunting in your state very enjoyable.

I'm from Wisconsin, and the Kansas plains are quite a change from the kind of hunting I'm used to, but I honestly enjoy every minute I get to spend in your state. As a whitetail hunter, I have used the Walk In Hunting areas when coming out and have seen some true trophy deer. While I haven't always been successful in

IT'S THE LAW

with Kevin Jones

Crossbow Opportunities



Changes have been made to this fall's archery big game regulations in regard to the legal equipment that may be used. For several years, there has been an ongoing discussion over whether crossbows should be included as legal equipment during the archery seasons. Parties on both sides of the debate have strong opinions.

Historically, only disabled hunters were allowed to use a crossbow during archery seasons. Any person meeting the disability requirement, as certified by a person licensed to practice the healing arts in any state, could acquire a permit allowing them to use a crossbow to hunt big game or wild turkey. In 2008, the big game and wild turkey regulations were changed to allow the use of crossbows during the big game regular firearm season, and for spring wild turkey.

Since the change in 2008, requests for allowing more use of crossbows have continued to be received by the department. A number of reasons and rationales have been provided, including the assertion that the use of crossbows would better accommodate aging hunters, who may be finding contemporary bows difficult or impossible to use. As a result, a change in the regulations has occurred which establishes the crossbow as legal archery equipment for hunting big game or wild turkey for any person holding a youth big game or wild turkey permit, or any person 55 years of age or older. This regulation applies statewide to any season where archery equipment is allowed.

While the Commission approves regulations, the Legislature establishes statutes. During the 2012 legislative session, Senate Bill 314 was passed and signed into law. Part of this bill affects the use of crossbows for the upcoming deer seasons. The pertinent language in the bill states in part, "the secretary shall develop and implement a deer crossbow hunting pilot project. Such pilot project shall be implemented in no more than four deer management units." The language continues by requiring a report on the success of the project to be provided to the House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources and the Senate Committee on Natural Resources before January 31, 2014. At the time of writing this article, the specific units have not been selected for this project; however, there will be four deer management units that will allow the general use of crossbows during the 2012 and 2013 archery deer seasons. Check with the department for further information as the hunting season approaches.

Any crossbow used in these seasons must have a minimum draw weight of 125 pounds, using an arrow or bolt 16 inches or longer that are fitted with a broadhead point incapable of passing through a ring with a diameter of $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch when fully expanded. It is legal for a hunter using a crossbow to possess an arrow or bolt not equipped with a broadhead while hunting; however, it may not be used to take or attempt to take any big game animal or wild turkey.

So, in wrap up, crossbows will be considered legal archery equipment for big game and wild turkey hunting across the entire state for youth permit holders and permittees who are 55 years of age or older. Additionally, there will be four deer management units selected where hunters of any age will be able to use a crossbow during the deer archery hunting seasons.

The Way I See It

Todd Workman

A 12-YEAR-OLD'S DESTINY

Everyone remembers their firsts. First fish, first pheasant, first dove, first kiss, first time you accidentally set fire to the water because your parents bought you that chemical set, not knowing that you would combine all of the chemicals and light a match to the concoction in the culvert underneath the highway.

However, the first that really stands out in my mind is that first campout. Like Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn, all boys want to travel far from home and live off of the land. Catching and eating fish, starting a fire without disrupting traffic on a major highway, and drinking as much soda pop and eating as many Ho Hos as your body can stand without convulsing – man, that is paradise for a 12-year-old boy.

My friends bought into the idea enthusiastically, but selling the plan to our mothers was another story. They were convinced we would starve, catch cold, or set the farmer's field on fire (and they looked right at me). This list of potential atrocities actually tempered the enthusiasm of the weakest in our group, and we lost three quarters of our expeditionary force; better to weed them out early than to have them leave when the chips were down.

We didn't let up, though, and the mothers finally relented. After securing permission from a local farmer who didn't know any better, we had a location and time for our overnight campout. Our bikes were assembled like horses trailing a wagon train heading for a wilderness of fish ponds, cupcakes, and Orange Crush. With a grandiose waving of my arm forward, we picked up our provisions and headed west toward the land of fish and honey.

Almost immediately, we hit our first snag. I was riding in the front of the column, and my best friend Tony was riding beside me. We held between us my dad's stainless steel Coleman cooler full of pop, snacks and weenies. Dad wasn't thrilled about loaning us his cooler, and the threats were less than thinly-veiled should damage occur to this coveted item. The snag came in the form of two large boy-eating dogs named Precious and Sweetie, who lived to chase boys riding bikes. In the past, our basic strategy was to

silently drift by the house until the dogs barked, then go to full throttle. But because of the large amount of tackle and provisions we were packing on this trip, we were unable to execute this plan.

I figured the mere size and strength of our column would win the day, but Precious and Sweetie were unimpressed and hit the head of our column with full force. Tony was larger than me, so my thought was that Precious and Sweetie would see Tony as the best meal and head for him, allowing me to escape with our provisions. It would be a noble sacrifice on his part, and we would sing songs around the campfire about him. However, Tony wasn't ready to embrace that team sacrifice strategy and sped up, leaving me very disappointed in my best friend's character. Neither he nor I wanted to release the cooler. I would have rather faced the teeth of Precious than face Big Daddy when I got home with a scratched cooler.

However, the mutinous Tony was getting a good lead on me. I suddenly remembered that in Wild Kingdom episodes, the lions always pulled down the slowest and weakest animals. Although Tony's cowardly act was treacherous, he was the stronger and faster animal – but not the smarter animal. I dropped that cooler like it was hot, and Tony suddenly found himself listing heavily to starboard. A chain reaction of events occurred. Tony found himself pulled down hard off of his seat by a 50-pound load of snack cakes, pop, and ice. He capsized in an explosion of spraying Orange Crush and ice slivers. I avoided the catastrophe and went through without further incident.

I looked back from an observation post a safe distance away. The dogs were satisfying themselves on snack cakes and processed meat. Although they showed little desire to eat the remaining members of the train, even the prone and defenseless Tony, they were very defensive of their pirate booty, which was spread in a wide arc of destruction along the road. So while the evil dogs gorged themselves on the spoils of their victory, we limped westward toward our wilderness paradise. We had less food, one less bike, and exposed character flaws, but with true pioneer spirit, we marched on to our rendezvous with destiny.

Second Annual Luke Nihart Memorial Hunt

Tuttle Creek State Park hosted the Second Annual Luke Nihart Memorial Hunt on April 6-8, 2012. Four youth and two disabled hunters participated this year. Six volunteers assisted as guides, and staff from Milford and Tuttle Creek state parks, as well as numerous other volunteers stepped up to make the event a success.

The hunt started off with a bang – a bang of thunderstorms. Guides watched the weather to make sure it was safe for the hunt, and some impressive toms were harvested. The heaviest tom weighed 27 pounds, and one tom had three beards that totaled 22 inches in length. Both toms were taken by first-time turkey hunters.

Guides included Larry Larson, Brent Harper, Dale Grunewald, Kaleb Campbell, Doug Nihart, and KDWPPT personnel, Scott Skucius, Tony Reitz, Matt Colvin and Rob Gordon. The hunt would not be successful without the landowners who opened their land to hunters and the support from the 3 River Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation, the Riley County Game and Fish Association, and Godfrey's Indoor Shooting and Archery Range.



– Justin R. Wren, NRO I, Milford State Park

Letters . . .

tagging one, I can only blame myself.

The job that your department has done in giving me those opportunities is awesome, and I want to say “thank you.” I can assure you, my father, brother, and I are all very appreciative of your hard work and dedication and look forward to finding our successful draw announcement in the mail each year.

*With Gratitude, James Machtan
Marshfield, Wisconsin*

BACKYARD DUCK

Editor:

At my home in Overland Park last May, I had a hen sitting on a nest with 14 eggs for at least three weeks. She left from time to time, then came back. I tried to avoid any disturbance. Does it normally take this long to hatch? What should I do to get my yard back?

*John Bednarczyk
Kansas City, Missouri*

Mr. Bednarczyk:

A mallard hen will lay one egg a day, laying a clutch averaging eight to 13 eggs. After the last egg laid, it will take 24-28 days to hatch. Closer to time to hatch, the hen will take fewer and shorter recesses from the nest. A day or so from hatch, a small star-like crack appears near one of the ends of the eggs. This “star pip” is the duckling breaking through the shell. The eggs will hatch nearly synchronously, and the hen will take the ducklings to water once their downy feathers dry a few hours after hatching. In another 50-60 days, they will be able to take flight. Find more online at www.allabout-birds.org/guide/Mallard/lifehistory.

Waterfowl have a strong propensity to return to same nest sites year after year, particularly if they are successful. To ensure that a duck or goose does not set in an unsuitable place, one needs to discourage them prior to nest building. This means causing a disturbance that will make the bird find a friendlier place to nest. Once the nest becomes active (she is sitting on it or contains a viable egg), there is not much one can do without a federal permit.

– Tom Bidrowski, migratory game bird program manager, Great Bend

Boat SAFE

with Erika Brooks

BUJ



Each summer, I spend some time on the water with water patrol officers. It helps me to see what the most common misinterpretations of the laws are and where we need to work harder in educating the public. Many of the violations we encounter are easy to explain, such as inaccessible life jackets, no sound producing device, and lack of boating education certification. Boating under the influence would seem like a no brainer to avoid, but there are some variables that most boaters are unaware of. During boating education classes and safety programs, we always tell people that while on the water, it takes just one-third the amount of alcohol to cause impairment than it does while on land, but we never really go into detail about why.

Boating stressors are always given as the reason alcohol affects the body differently on water, but what are boating stressors? They are the naturally occurring environmental stressors that make you tire more rapidly when on the water, such as the sun, glare, wind, motion, engine noise, and vibration.

When you're boating, you're getting a double dose of the sun, from above and from the reflection off the water. As your body fights off the sun's damaging rays, this takes a toll on your energy level. The reflection from the water also makes it more difficult to see detail, contrast, and color. You're forced to make more of an effort to see through the glare, which also tires you out.

A boat on the water is in constant motion, and you have to exercise your muscles continuously to maintain balance. Even something as simple as the vibration from the motor can cause your body to tire more easily.

Add the heat from a nice sunny day, and now dehydration becomes an issue. Sweating cools our bodies, but it also carries away fluids. It's possible to lose

several quarts of water on a hot day. If you lose more fluids than you are taking in, dehydration becomes another cause of fatigue. While you can't do anything about the sun, wind, and motion of the boat, you can help control dehydration by drinking plenty of water. It is recommended that you drink some amount of water every 15-20 minutes.

If you choose to drink alcohol while boating, you should be aware that if you're tired and dehydrated, just a couple of beers on a boat can have the same effect as several drinks on land. Your liver is the organ that cleanses the body of alcohol, and it needs energy and water to work properly. Fatigue robs you of the energy needed and dehydration reduces the available water in your body to efficiently process the alcohol in your system. To make matters worse, alcohol is a diuretic, so you retain less of the fluids you do drink.

Alcohol affects balance and vision, and it causes you to lose some of your peripheral vision and depth perception. With alcohol in your system, you have difficulty focusing and following multiple objects, trouble distinguishing low contrast objects, and a reduced ability to tell the difference between red and green. It also reduces your reaction time, and your overall judgment is impaired. Alcohol impairment can also cause an inner ear disturbance, and if you fall overboard, you may have trouble distinguishing up from down.

Have a designated operator who doesn't drink while on the water, but if you do choose to drink and operate a boat, drink responsibly. The legal limit on the water is the same as it is for operating a motor vehicle on the road, .08 percent, and anyone who operates or attempts to operate a vessel is deemed to have given consent to an alcohol and/or drug test. Always wear your life jacket and boat safe!

Fish Finders and Saving Water

Findin' Fish

So you've just bought a boat, and you're ready to catch some fish. What's next? Just rev up the engine, motor out on your favorite lake, and throw a line, right? Not quite. This is the 21st century, and there's more to catching fish than that. The good news is that new technology has made the avid angler much more effective. It's called a fish finder.

If you're in the market for a new (or your first) fish finder, check out www.fishfinders.com. This handy site features an overview – in layman's language – of what a fish finder is, how it works, mounting tips, and what to know before you make a purchase. Descriptions of different kinds of fish finders are covered, including color, monochrome, GPS combo, portable, and ice fishing units.

The pros and cons of the most popular brand names and models are discussed, so you can make an informed decision before you walk into a dealership. Review models by brand or price range. If you are up to speed, you can even make a purchase online.

This is one handy site for researching the advantages of fish finders. For more sites and detailed information, a web search for "fish finders" is recommended.

Calculate That Leaky Faucet

Did you know that you could fill buckets every day with water from one leaky faucet? According to the U.S. Geological Society, a faucet that drips just one drip per second – and that's not a fast leak – will fill five gallons of water per day. Two drips per second would fill 11 gallons, and a four-drip-per-second leak is not uncommon. So what if you have several leaky faucets you've been ignoring for awhile?

If you want to find out just how much water those leaks are wasting, go to the USGS Water Science for Schools page – ga.water.usgs.gov/edu/sc4.html – and find out. This site hosts a leak calculator that lets you figure water waste from leakage by number of homes (one to one million), number of faucets per home (one to five), and drips per minute (one to 120). If every home in a town of 10,000 people has one faucet that leaks two drips per second, that amounts to 114,134 gallons per year – enough to fill a large municipal swimming pool.

It costs money to pump water into your home. If it's a hot water faucet, the cost is even greater because the water heater is running all the time. Run the numbers, and you'll probably fix those leaks soon.



South Of The Border Deer Fajitas

Over the years, this has been a cherished, anticipated part of deer hunting. In the field, I will field dress a harvested deer and remove the tenderloins from the inside of the ribcage along the backbone and place them in a Ziplock bag to keep them from getting contaminated with dirt on the way home. Once home, while I finish up with the deer carcass, my wife does her magic on the tenderloins.

This year, however, I didn't take my first deer until the January season. I anticipated those fajitas from that first deer but was informed, and it was a shock to everyone, that we were out of fajita seasoning. Bummer! My wife will only use one type of seasoning for her fajitas, and without it, she just doesn't make them. The problem is the only store that sells the seasoning is 60 miles away and is only open weekdays. So I started packaging and freezing my tenderloins for a later date.

A couple of weeks ago, a friend of mine asked if he needed to pick me up anything while he was purchasing sausage seasonings. Sure. I had him pick me up a couple of containers of my wife's favorite fajita seasoning. She sat out two packs of tenderloins that night.

Now there is nothing special about the fixin's that accompany

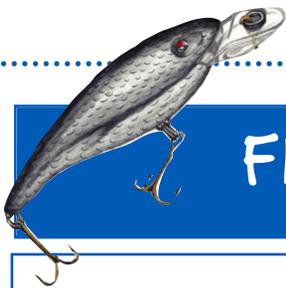
A long-standing tradition in my family is to prepare the tenderloins from a freshly harvested deer into fajitas.

the fajitas, just the preparation of the meat through cooking and marinade. At our house, the kids turn their noses up at the veggies, so it's the basics: meat, cheese, meat, and maybe some salsa.

Here is what she does. In the morning, place 2 pounds of tenderloin in a Ziplock bag along with Excalibur Fiesta Fajita Seasoning Mix to season all sides of the tenderloin. Let them sit in fridge all day. The seasonings will help tenderize the meat. Preheat the grill on high. Place meat on grill and quickly sear all sides. Once seared, let it cook for about 3 minutes then turn over for another 3 minutes. Then remove the meat and place it into a boat of double-layered aluminum foil that she quickly closes to rest for 5 minutes. Once opened, slice the medium-rare meat into thin strips that quickly get processed by little hands onto tortillas. She has even started squeezing a slice of lime over each fajita before eating it to make the flavors pop. Always a hit.



I felt that if the wife feels so strongly about the way she makes our fajitas that maybe it warranted an article showcasing it. Some say keep your recipes close. I say keep your friends full. Hope you enjoy.



FISHIN' with Mike Miller

Wintertime Tactics For Summer

The best way to catch crappie in the winter is to fish vertically. Fish usually relate to structure such as brush piles, standing trees, or creek channel ledges. Once fish are located, the trick is to get over them and drop jigs or spoons straight down in their faces. The water is cold, making cold-blooded fish lethargic and reluctant to chase a bait, but they can't resist a lure mimicking a dying shad right in front of them.

So why am I talking about winter fishing in a July/August column? Although it is nice to think about cooler temperatures when it's this hot, winter fishing is mentioned because you can catch fish the same way in the middle of summer. Crappie act much the same in mid-summer as they do in winter. When it's hot, they'll often be found in water 15-25 feet deep and almost always associated with structure - brush, standing trees, rock piles, river channels or underwater humps. In warm water, cold-blooded fish will hang in a comfort zone where the water temperature, oxygen content and prey fish are present. They won't

be as active as they were just a month earlier, but they'll still eat.

Crappie may be found in much shallower water during the heat of summer, but they'll still be near structure, usually standing trees and brush, and you still have to fish vertically. Deep or shallow, use a long, flexible rod with sensitive line. Many anglers will use a filament or braided line for the sensitivity and extra strength. Match the hatch by using jigs or minnows 2-3 inches long, which would be about the same length as young-of-the-year gizzard shad.

Get on top of them and fish vertically.



Mike Miller photo

PROFILE:

with Mark Shoup

Chuck Bever



If anyone was predestined to be a fisheries biologist, it is Chuck Bever. He was raised on a Crawford County dairy farm near Farlington Fish Hatchery (then a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service facility) and Crawford State Fishing Lake, a blue-ribbon bluegill lake that any boy would envy. It was, as he deadpans, “an avenue that turns you in that direction.”

In addition, hatchery manager Bob Hiland was a member of Bever’s local church and an early inspiration. A 3½-acre farm pond less than ¼ mile from his house served as an early aquatic classroom where he spent evenings chasing bass, bluegill, and channel catfish. But it wasn’t just fishing that drew Bever into the outdoors. Excellent quail hunting could be found in that part of Kansas in those days, and the family kept busy with bird dogs, specifically Brittany spaniels, during hunting season.

“It was all rather natural,” he says of the segue from youth to career in fisheries biology. In 1969, he graduated from Girard High School and from there became a Pitt State Gorilla, where in 1973, he earned a B.S. in field biology, the general degree offer at the time because there was no fisheries degree offered. But he knew what he wanted to do. During his college days, he spent two summers working at Farlington, one summer working for the Corps of Engineers at Fall River Reservoir, and one summer as a fisheries aide for Leonard Jirak at Webster Reservoir, a “Fish and Game” position.

“Then after pounding nails and other temporary jobs, I got my first full-time job at the Farlington Hatchery in 1975,” he adds. He was back home, but he only stayed rooted for two years. In 1977, he landed the KDWP district fisheries biologist job in Manhattan, and although he became the Region 2 Fisheries Section supervisor in 2007 – a Topeka job – he still lives in near Manhattan in Wamego. He loves it there.

“If you look at the map, the Manhattan area is robust with a lot of opportunities to fish, and hunt as well,” he notes. “Through the years, I’ve bowhunted, bird hunted, duck hunted – I’ve enjoyed my fair share here.”

Bever has been inspired by many people during his career, but one in particular stands out.

“I always looked up to Don Gabelhouse,” he says, referring to a former Fish and Game fisheries biologist who now works in Nebraska. “He was in the same regional staff with me when I came to Manhattan, and he was very active in the American Fisheries Society. I gained a lot of knowledge from that organization and people like Don Gabelhouse. Don is a noted fisheries biologist. He’s a member of the Fisheries Management Hall of Fame, and he wrote and illustrated *Producing Fish and Wildlife From Kansas Ponds*. And our research staff – Dave Willis [now professor at South Dakota State University] and Tom Mosher [retired] – I looked up to, as well.”

In his 37 years of service, Bever notes the creation of the Rocky Ford Fishing Area as one particular accomplishment. “It’s

gone from a low-head dam and some concrete slabs left over after the hydro-electric energy period to a unique river fishing access area, thanks to an infusion of Sport Fish Restoration Act funds. Now we have great access and another pool on the east side.”

Other accomplishments stand out for Bever, as well. He was the first in the agency to bring trout into the state during the modern era. Through a trade of channel catfish with Colorado, he stocked trout in Tuttle Creek Seep Stream in 1981, years before the current trout-stocking program began. But for Bever, working with people is his proudest achievement.

“Living in a college town with a fisheries biology program, I have got to touch many, many students who were interns, whatever. There is a long list of people who have worked with me and now have jobs with this agency. It’s quite a list of current employees. Yes,” he reflects, “it’s as big an accomplishment as anything.”

There’s more to Bever than work, however. He and his wife, Kristy, have two grown kids, daughter Andrea and son Clint. In his spare time, he gardens and plays some golf but still returns to his childhood love – fishing for bluegill. And he doesn’t ignore crappie and largemouth bass.

“I love small water, especially ponds,” he explains. “I spend a lot of time at Pottawatomie State Fishing Lake and Alma City Lake. Also, the F.I.S.H. program has been wonderful for people like me who love small ponds, and there are many of us.”

Bever is not ready to retire just yet. “I’ve enjoyed it. Although I’m mostly in the office now, I’m still connected to the resource,” he says. “I still feel like I’m involved. Now there’s only two fisheries supervisors, and I’ve got the northern half of the state. I answer emails, make plans, attend meetings, but I still feel connected.”

So would he do something different if he could start over?

“Oh, no, no, no, no, no,” comes the unqualified reply. “Oh, I might have bought an 80 somewhere that everyone wants now, but no, I wouldn’t. I have enjoyed it all. But it will be interesting to see what the future brings. We’ve got a lot of water up in our part of the state, but as the years go by, the common problem is that we want to recruit new users. Maintain the number of anglers, so we can maintain opportunities. For that, we need constituents because we are fee-funded. We need to maintain and conserve what we have. The lake expansion period is over, but fisheries research and management isn’t.”

Fortunately, the agency will benefit from Bever’s experience for awhile longer. But if he ever decides to retire, the state’s fisheries resources will be much the better for having had Bever to care for them. And there will be plenty of bluegill waiting.

HUNTING SPOTS

with Marc Murrell

WHEN RUST IS GOOD

Cool temperatures and the fall trapping season are many months away, but for avid trappers, there's always equipment to ready and gear to tune-up to ensure good working order when mid-November arrives. Even in the middle of the summer, trappers are busy getting traps ready.

Purchased traps come right of the box shiny and new. However, that's not generally the way trappers utilize them. It seems contrary, but one of the first things a trapper wants on a new trap is a light coating of rust. The easiest way to accomplish this is to leave them out in the grass. The dew from wet mornings will accomplish that in a matter of days. The theory is whatever trap dip is employed to prevent the trap from getting too rusty will adhere better to a slightly rough surface versus smooth metal.

Old traps can often be refurbished and brought back to life, too. Even traps with considerable rust can be made to work well with a little effort. The process is quickened with the use of a 5-gallon bucket and a 50-50 mixture of vinegar and water. Simply place the traps in the solution and let soak overnight or for a couple days, paying close attention to their progress. Vinegar is acidic and actively removes excess rust, and traps come out looking nearly new. A high-pressure washer is handy to knock off any remaining debris or rust.

Once prepped, many trappers prefer the tried-and-true dye and wax to coat their foothold traps. Body-gripping traps aren't typically waxed as they could become too slick to handle or fire unexpectedly. Other trap coat products have been introduced over the years, and some of them are mixed with Coleman fuel or water and come in several colors, usually brown or black. Personal preference and target species sometimes dictate which particular covering is used.

Several dips of trap coat are often

necessary to get the desired results. Hot days work well to sufficiently dry the coating, and traps can be hung from a line stretched between two trees. It's a messy process, so care should be used to avoid getting the dip on other items. Several brands of trap dips can be reused so it's best to dip in a container that can catch the excess. Trap dip should be kept in a sealed container and not allowed to freeze.

Trap care and preparation is much more critical for furbearers like coyotes as they are incredibly crafty, and their noses are tough to fool. Many hardcore trappers prefer to dye and wax their canine traps, or use a trap coating not requiring a mixture of gasoline-type ingredients like Formula One. Trap covering selection is not as critical for beaver, raccoons or bobcats.



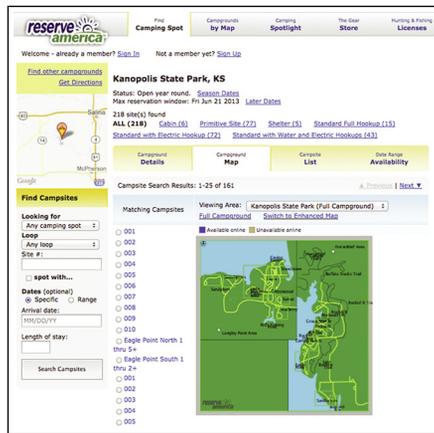
Finally, traps should all be tested for operation and adjusted accordingly. Pan tension settings will vary by trapper and target species. All traps must be tagged with the trapper's name and address or KDWPT number. It's also a good time to read through the trapping regulations to be sure all trap size limits and restrictions are followed to avoid conflicts and problems with other outdoor recreation users.



“PARK PASS” IS WIN/WIN

On June 1, 2012, Governor Sam Brownback signed the historic “Park Pass” bill. This legislation will enable any Kansan to purchase a Kansas State Park motor vehicle permit at a discounted price (\$15.50, a potential savings of nearly \$10) when registering a vehicle. This also changes the motor vehicle permit to being valid one year from the date of purchase instead of just for the calendar year. Permits will still be available for purchase at KDWPT offices. If patrons desire to purchase senior or exempt (handicapped) permits, they will have to do so at KDWPT offices, as the Department of Motor Vehicles will not be able to issue such passes.

Kansas State Parks Outdoor Recreation Management System (ORMS) launched in April with an overwhelmingly successful number of reservations. The much-anticipated system allows patrons to reserve cabins or campsites from home or their smart phones at their leisure. They may also view campsite or cabin availability and pricing. The system offers photos of each site and cabin. It also gives staff the ability to see at a glance what campsites are full and lets them shut down in the system sites that may have issues, such as non-functioning electrical boxes. Some campsite check-in procedures have changed due to the system, so pay attention to our new signage and campsite post markers. To make a reservation or check out the site, go to www.ksoutdoors.com/State-Parks/Reservations



or www.reserveamerica.com.

All reservable campsites and cabins were full as well as nearly all utility sites and many primitive sites for the 2012 Memorial Day weekend, making it one of our most successful Memorial Days ever. Record numbers of recreationists filled campsites, cabins and boat ramps, along with folks who came to the parks for just the day to picnic and play on the beaches. Many reserved their campsites well in advance, while others came to the parks on the spur of the moment and found their campsites on arrival. By the time this magazine hits your hands, July 4 will also be behind us, hopefully as successful. But you can “make your own holiday” any time in a Kansas state park, with the variety of events and options for pursuing your favorite activities.

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment will continue testing lakes for blue-green algae this summer. If it is discovered in a lake, we will not close the campgrounds and shelters, though beaches and water contact should be avoided. However, there are still many land activities to pursue. Hiking and biking trails, archery ranges, evening movies, naturalist programs, rendezvous, antique car shows, cook-offs, music festivals and other special events are just some of the land-based pursuits available at our parks. Check our event calendar at www.ksoutdoors.com/news/State-Parks/Event-Calendar.

Kansas Anglers Are Classic-Bound

The Bassmaster Elite Series is arguably the most prestigious level of professional bass fishing. There are 99 pros fishing the 2012 schedule of eight events. The first tournament was fished in Florida in March, and the series will conclude in August in New York. Two Kansas anglers are among the field: 17-year veteran Brent Chapman of Lake Quivira and rookie Casey Scanlon of Lenexa. At the halfway point in May, Chapman was ranked 3rd in the 2012 Angler of the Year points standings, having topped the list after the third event but slipping two notches after Douglas Lake in Tennessee. Scanlon was struggling a bit in his first year in the top echelon of angling, holding down 78th place after four events

The Top 28 in the points, along with the winners of each of the eight Elite derbies, qualify for the 2013 Bassmaster Classic, to be held on Oklahoma's Grand Lake. Both Kansas fishermen, however, are already qualified. In addition to the Elite Series, both are fishing the Bassmaster Central Opens, a level down from the Elite Series. The winner of each of the nine Opens (three each in the Northern, Central, and Southern Divisions) also qualifies for the Classic.

Chapman won the Lewisville Lake, Texas Central Open in February, and Scanlon won the next at Table Rock, Missouri in April.

B.A.S.S. also has a weekend fisherman's tournament structure called the Federation Nation and qualifies its six regional champions for the Classic. Kansas is in the Central Division, and information on the Kansas B.A.S.S. Federation Nation and member bass clubs can be found on their website at <http://www.kbcfn.com/>. —Jonathan Manteuffel



Chapman



Scanlon

photos courtesy of B.A.S.S./James Overstreet

Go With The Flow

with Mark VanScoyoc

Re-Opening a River

As I'm writing this article the Wichita Riverfest is taking place, and thousands of people are flocking to the city's event to enjoy the festivities. This year, festival attendees will notice something new if they venture south along the Arkansas River to the Lincoln Street area.

Dams have been built for various purposes in the past, one of the more prominent reasons being flood control. It was

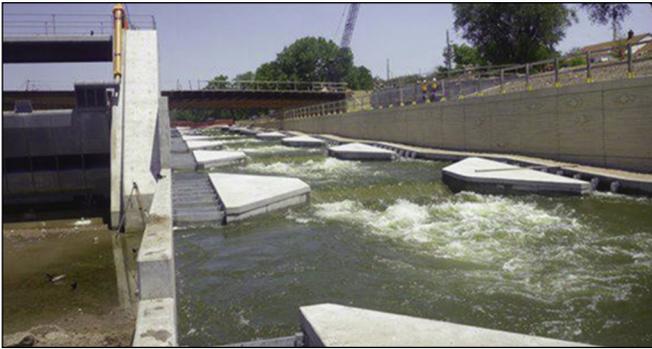
thought that by pooling up flood waters in various locations during the rainy season, it would be possible to alleviate some of the hazards and inconveniences associated with these high-water events. Years later, observation and research has shown that attempting to control these floods is much more difficult and even detrimental to natural systems. Placing a big pile of anything in a flowing stream or river to dam it up will cause problems. From a biologist's point of view, one of the major problems is aquatic organism passage. A dam prevents fish and other aquatic animals from moving upstream. Most people are familiar with the idea of salmon in the Pacific Northwest making their way upstream to spawn, which is necessary for the survival of that species. The same is true of native

aquatic organisms here in Kansas.

However, the Lincoln Street dam and bridge project includes construction of a fish "ladder," or passage structure. The ladder will open up miles of the Arkansas River that have been blocked for many years. Even though the structure is not fully complete, KDWPT biologists have already observed fish using the ladder while collecting data that will be used to determine usage once the structure is in full operation. The project is due to be completed late summer or early fall of 2012.

This is truly a unique and promising project here in the Midwest, representing cooperation and open communication among those involved in city, federal, and state governments tied to the project.

If you're curious as to how it will work, feel free to witness it firsthand once the project is complete since the fish passage doubles as passage for kayaks and canoes.



Deer Permits Left

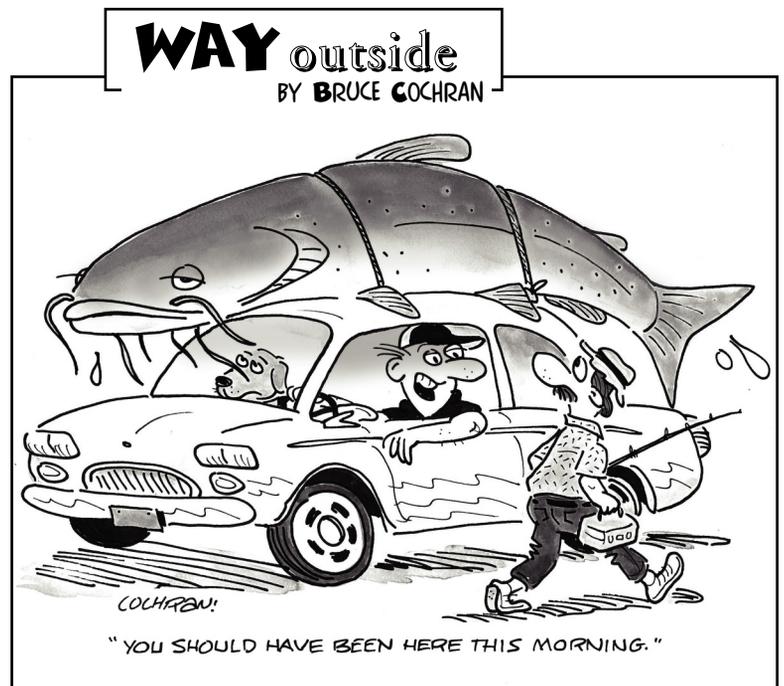
The drawing for 2012 nonresident deer permits was held in May, and when the dust cleared, more than 4,000 permits were left over. Those permits were available online beginning June 18. At the time this magazine went to press, there were still permits left in several deer management units.

Those hunters whose favorite units are fully subscribed may purchase a permit for an adjacent unit, if it has leftover permits, then select their favorite unit as the adjacent unit where they may also hunt.

Nonresident hunters who were successful in the drawing should have received their permits in the mail about the second week in June. Those who were unsuccessful – more than 600 applicants – were notified about the same time. Applicants can check the number of deer permits by unit that are still available online at the KDWPT website, ksoutdoors.com, under "Hunting/Applications-and-Fees/Deer/Quotas-and-Draw-Stats." Department staff will update this site frequently.

Applicants can check the status of individual applications at https://www1.ks.wildlifelicense.com/results_lookup.php.

– KDWPT news



Summer has arrived, the kids are out of school, and summer activities are in full swing. For me that means it's time to take the kids camping, fishing, swimming, and frogging. Anyone who enjoys the outdoors has learned how valuable these types of experiences are to our peace of mind and quality of life. Many of us learned these outdoor lessons at an early age and continue to enjoy them well into our senior years. Unfortunately, there are youngsters who don't get these outdoor opportunities. But I've learned that most are more than eager if given a chance.

In May I spent a weekend teaching fishing classes for the Becoming an Outdoors-Woman program. The Friday class was limblining, and we had five eager participants who wanted to experience something new. Jessica Mounts, district fisheries biologist in Wichita, was my assistant instructor. We spent about an hour in the classroom discussing the art of setting banklines, limblines, and trotlines for catfish in our streams, rivers, and reservoirs. Each student made up two lines, attaching large catfish hooks, swivels, and weights on heavy braided line. As required by regulation, the name and address of each angler was attached.

Then we headed to the creek to catch our bait. I sent one lady to a pool with a pole rigged for green sunfish. The others donned chest waders and helped me seine some sunfish, crawdads, and minnows. Some of the ladies enjoyed collecting the bait almost as much as setting the lines and catching the catfish. We then cut some bankline poles in case there were no limbs hanging over the water. Since most of the ladies had never trekked through a stream with chest waders on, we proceeded slowly and tried to stay out of water deeper than the tops of our waders. The ladies set their own lines, baited their own hooks with their choice of live bait, and promised to remember where the lines were set as we were not scheduled back to check the lines until well after dark. We had sev-

eral stumbles, but no one took a bath.

It was after 10 p.m. when we arrived back at the creek for a check of the lines. The ladies realized that walking around in a fast moving stream is quite different in the dark. Flashlights and headlamps were on, and of course, they attracted swarms of bugs – perhaps the least favorite part of the experience. A small water snake also elicited a few comments. But bouncing bank and limb lines made everyone forget about the bugs and snakes – especially when the very first line held the mysterious flathead. (A measly 4-pound pup to me, but it weighed 20 pounds by the time the stories were told the next morning)

By the time we checked all the lines, we had three channel cats and the one flathead. Most of the baits were gone, and several lines had obviously had fish on them because they were wrapped well around the poles. And we only had one lady take a bath – a unique experience in the dark cool stream waters. On the way back down stream, the lights illuminated a gar floating in the shallows, and we enjoyed the chorus of the frogs, crickets, and barred owls. The stars were bright, and all was peaceful thanks to the wonderful companionship of Chuckie, Patt, Kristi, Justine, and Bernadette.

This class brought back memories of BOWs past, especially the one when a 71-year-old lady caught her very first fish in my Intro to Fishing class – actually catching 13 fish before class was over. It is never too late to learn. My memories extend back to my grade school days when Dad took me seining minnows, swatting leopard frogs with old tennis rackets, sleeping near the campfire, and catching legitimate 20-pound flatheads.

There is plenty of summer left, so give it a try. As I said earlier, go camping, fishing, swimming, or frogging – just get outside and either build on your own outdoor experiences, share them with others, or better yet, learn something new and exciting.



Jessica Mounts photo

Lesser Chickens Aerial Surveyed

The Lesser Prairie Chicken Interstate Working Group collaborated with federal agencies and West Ecosystems, Inc., of Laramie, Wyo., to conduct a large-scale, helicopter-based survey to locate lesser prairie chicken leks across the High Plains in all five states.

Leks, which are also referred to as gobbling grounds, are sites that the birds come to every spring for breeding. These surveys encompassed more than 300,000 square miles, and survey results will be used to produce the first statistically valid, five-state estimate of the number of leks by sometime later this summer.

The lesser prairie chicken has been considered a candidate under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) since 1998, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will release a proposed rule on the status of the bird under the ESA in September. Information from these surveys will be used as a baseline by these five state fish and wildlife agencies to monitor trends in prairie chicken populations and to target conservation programs in partnership with private landowners, oil and gas industries, and wind-energy and electric utilities.

The surveys this spring detected several previously unknown leks, despite the severe

drought that occurred across the region last year. They also detected leks in Kansas that are beyond what was thought to be the northern extent of the historic range of the species. Lesser prairie chicken numbers have been largely increasing in Kansas for the last 15 years, while populations have declined in parts of the southern portion of the range. Biologists believe this northward expansion may represent a shift in the population of the species caused by improved habitat from native grasses planted through the federal Conservation Reserve Program.

– *KDWPT News*

JIM KELLENBERGER INDUCTED INTO INTERNATIONAL HUNTER EDUCATION HALL OF FAME

KDWPT youth shooting instructor Jim Kellenberger has been named to the International Hunter Education Association (IHEA) Professional Hall of Fame. The award was presented at the IHEA National Convention on May 30 in Kansas City.

With 39 years as a regional Law Enforcement Division supervisor and natural resource officer for KDWPT, Kellenberger has been involved with the agency's Hunter Education Program since its inception – as a class instructor, class coordinator, shooting instructor, and coach. His contributions have been numerous.

“Jim has been influential in the promotion and incorporation of live-fire activities into Kansas Hunter Education classes for almost 40 years,” noted KDWPT statewide Hunter Education Program coordinator Kent Barrett in his nomination of Kellenberger. “Although not a required class component, live fire is now included in 63 percent of Kansas classes. Much of the credit must go to Jim and those pioneering instructors who saw the value in that specific training. Jim's involvement with Pass It On Recruitment & Retention events, along with promotion of hunter education class live fire activities, displays long-term support for Kansas hunter education.”

Kellenberger also helped develop hunter education curricula consistent with IHEA standards. As a game warden, he helped develop standards that made Kansas hunter education certification reciprocal with other states while maintaining the most relevant and instructive coursework possible.

Kellenberger also influenced the direction of the Hunter Education Program through the recruitment and training of many instructors still active today, and he stays involved by promoting live fire through the Hunter Education in the Schools program in Kansas. He also works with Becoming an Outdoors Woman and Women On Target programs to get women more involved with the shooting sports.

“Jim chose a career that would allow him to be intimately involved in an activity that he thoroughly enjoyed,” Barrett added. “When hunter education was mandated, and the Kansas Safe Hunter program began in 1973, Jim was immediately pressed into service. His instructor number is 66; there are now more than 18,000 Kansas hunter education instructors.”

As one of the original “go to” guys in the program, Kellenberger looked for recruits. He was the coordinator for his assigned area. He organized and taught classes, found and recruited new instructors, and trained them to teach. He saw the students come to class, pass the course, become hunters, and come full circle as instructors themselves, so they could pass the hunting tradition on to a new generation. He hasn't stopped yet.

“After 39 years of teaching hunter education, Jim remains an active and very positive teacher of core IHEA standards



Jim Kellenberger (right) receives his award from Kansas Hunter Education Program coordinator Kent Barrett

that remain the framework on which Kansas Hunter Education is built,” Barrett said. “For 20 years as a regional law enforcement supervisor, Jim was the training officer and guiding force moving his officers to increased involvement in hunter education. Following his example, Jim's officers were required to recruit and train new instructors while organizing and conducting hunter education classes within their assigned areas. This kept them active and provided opportunities to get to know local hunters, and for the hunters to get to know them.”

Kellenberger began working with Pass It On before retiring. Pass It On funds have purchased and equipped shooting trailers in the different Kansas regions to provide opportunities for more individuals to experience safe, positive live-fire events. Kellenberger went through the first required training and became completely involved as a custodian of one of the first trailers. Already an excellent wingshot, he became a superb teacher and coach, and after retirement, he still has his calendar full of hunter education classes and shooting events.

“He is always in demand. Event coordinators repeatedly request Jim for events,” Barrett noted. “And before retirement, Jim was invited to be a member of the Kansas Hunter Education Advisory Committee. His service in that capacity has been exceptional. He is quiet and thoughtful when considering questions posed to the committee. When he speaks, everyone listens because his experience and wisdom are immediately apparent.”

The International Hunter Education Association (IHEA) is the professional association for 67 state and Canadian provincial wildlife conservation agencies and the 70,000 volunteer instructors who teach hunter education in North America.

—KDWPT News

The best times of your life just got less expensive



photo courtesy of Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation

She'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 on the water with your daughter by purchasing a multi-year youth fishing 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 website www.kdwpt.state.ks.us or by calling 620-672-5911.

Resident multi-year licenses are perfect for:

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



2012 Sportsmen's

TURKEY

2012 FALL TURKEY:

- Season: Oct. 1 - Nov. 27, 2012 and Dec. 10-31, 2012; and Jan. 14-31, 2013.

BIG GAME

DEER:

- Youth/Persons with Disabilities: Sept. 8-16
- Archery: Sept. 17 - Dec. 31, 2012
- Muzzleloader: Sept. 17 - Sept. 30, 2012
- Early Firearm (Subunit 19) Oct. 13-21, 2012
- Regular Firearm: Nov. 28 - Dec. 9, 2012
- Firearm Extended Whitetail Antlerless Season: Jan.1 - Jan. 13, 2013
- Archery Extended Whitetail Antlerless Season (DMU 19 only): Jan. 14 - Jan. 31, 2013
- Special Extended Firearms Whitetail Antlerless Season: Jan. 14 - Jan. 20, 2013 (Open for unit 7, 8 and 15 only.)

ELK (residents only)

Outside Fort Riley:

- Muzzleloader: Sept. 1 - 30, 2012
- Archery: Sept. 17 - Dec. 31, 2012
- Firearm: Nov. 28 - Dec. 9, 2012 and Jan.1 - March 15, 2013

On Fort Riley:

- Muzzleloader and archery: Sept. 1-30, 2012
- Firearm Season for Holders of Any-Elk Permits: Oct. 1 - Dec. 31, 2012
Antlerless Only
- Firearm First Segment: Oct. 1-31, 2012
- Firearm Second Segment: Nov. 1-30, 2012
- Firearm Third Segment: Dec. 1-31, 2012

Antelope

- Firearm: Oct. 5-8, 2012
- Archery: Sept. 22-30 & Oct. 15-31, 2012
- Muzzleloader: Oct. 1-8, 2012

MIGRATORY GAME BIRDS

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

- Season: Sept.1 - Oct. 31 and Nov. 3-11, 2012
- 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, 2012 - Feb. 28, 2013
- Daily bag limit: No limit
- Possession limit: No limit

RAIL (Sora and Virginia)

- Season: Sept. 1 - Nov. 9, 2012
- Daily bag limit: 25
- Possession limit: 25

SNIPE

- Season: Sept. 1 - Dec. 16, 2012
- Daily bag limit: 8
- Possession limit: 16

WOODCOCK

- Season: Oct. 13 - Nov. 26, 2012
- Daily bag limit: 3
- Possession limit: 6

SANDHILL CRANE

- Season: Nov. 7, 2012 - Jan. 3, 2013
- Daily bag limit: 3
- Possession limit: 6

Calendar

MIGRATORY GAME BIRDS

To be set

FURBEARERS

TRAPPING

- Season: Nov. 14, 2012 - Feb. 15, 2013
Badger, bobcat, mink, muskrat, opossum, raccoon, swift fox, red fox, gray fox, striped skunk, weasel.

RUNNING

- Season: March 1 - Nov. 1, 2012

BEAVER TRAPPING

- Season Dates (statewide):
Nov. 14, 2012 - March 31, 2013

UPLAND GAME BIRDS

PRAIRIE CHICKEN

- Early Season (East Unit): Sept. 15 - Oct. 15, 2012
- Regular Season (East and Northwest Units):
Nov. 17, 2012 - Jan. 31, 2013
- Regular Season (Southwest Unit):
Nov. 17 - Dec. 31, 2012
- Daily Bag Limit: 2 (East and Northwest Units)
1 (Southwest Unit)
- Possession Limit: twice daily bag

PHEASANTS

- Season: Nov. 10, 2012 - Jan. 31, 2013
- Youth Season: Nov. 3-4, 2012
- Daily bag limit: 4 cocks in regular season, 2 cocks in youth season

QUAIL

- Season: Nov. 10, 2012 - Jan. 31, 2013
- Youth Season: Nov. 3 - 4, 2012
- Daily Bag Limit Quail: 8 in regular season, 4 in youth season

SMALL GAME ANIMALS

SQUIRREL

- Season: June 1, 2012 - Feb. 28, 2013
- Daily bag limit: 5
- Possession limit: 20

RABBITS (cottontail & jackrabbit)

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

CROW

- Season: Nov. 10, 2012 - March 10, 2013
- Daily bag/Possession Limit: No Limit

FISHING SEASONS

BULLFROG

- July 1 - Oct. 31, 2012
- Daily creel limit: 8
- Possession limit: 24

FLOATLINE FISHING

- July 15 - Sept. 15, 2012
- Area open: Hillsdale, Council Grove, Tuttle Creek, Kanopolis, John Redmond, Toronto, Wilson and Pomona reservoirs.

HANDFISHING (flathead catfish only)

- June 15-August 31, 2012
- Area open: Arkansas River, Kansas River and federal reservoirs 150 yards from beyond the dam upstream to the end of the federal property.
- Daily creel limit: 5
- Special permit required



MAKE 'EM HIT!

by Jonathan Manteuffel
Huntsville, Alabama

What makes a bass strike a lure? You might be surprised to learn that fish can be caught even when they aren't hungry or actively feeding.

It's mid-summer and you've been fishing hard all morning, but the bass aren't cooperating. Although your buddies caught a boatload just yesterday on crankbaits in the same area of the lake, you just can't seem to get things going. As the day begins to heat up, you pause to wipe sweat from your eye and quickly resume your retrieve. Suddenly, a big fish loads on! Despite your surprise and excitement, you remember not to rush and play it carefully to the boat. As you guide it gently into your waiting net, you feel the celebration rising up inside you. *Yes! This is what I came out here for!*

After admiring your catch for a few moments, you release the big bass back into the lake and watch it swim lazily down into the depths. Hopefully, you'll be lucky enough to catch it again on another trip. As you resume casting, you begin to wonder, *What made that fish bite? Did I finally find productive water? Did they just turn on? Is there some piece of cover or structure down there? Or have the fish been fish there all along, and I finally just found a hungry one? What was different?*

Bass fishing may slow down in summertime, but that doesn't mean you can't catch fish. By studying the different types of strikes and what makes a bass strike a lure, anglers can make warm-weather fishing exciting and productive.



Jonathan Manteuffel photos

In bright conditions and in clear water, try brightly-colored or more natural-colored lures. Each lure above may elicit strikes for different reasons. Some lures resemble prey while others get bit through reaction or impulse strikes because of movement or vibration.

Jonathan Manteuffel works in the missile defense industry as a systems engineer in Huntsville, Alabama, where he lives with his wife and two sons. His love of fishing led him to begin freelance writing as a creative way to share his passion for the outdoors.

A Strike Is a Strike Is a Strike – Or Is It?

Most anglers who like to analyze fish behavior tend to agree that there are two general types of strikes — feeding strikes and reaction strikes. "Those are the main two types of strikes," says Kansas native and Bassmaster Elite Series professional bass fisherman Brent Chapman, of Lake Quivira. "Feeding strikes are kind of obvious. If you present a lure that looks like prey and just swim it around hungry bass, they'll eat it.

"But a reaction strike is another thing. I tell people it's like we would swat at a fly or move to push something away that gets in our space. It's an irritation or a territorial thing. And it's sort of instinct, too. A good analogy is a cat lying relaxed, and then you drag a toy by it and, hungry or not, it will swat at it. It's the same with bass."

Dr. Keith Jones — of the Berkley Fish Research Center in Spirit Lake, Iowa — agrees with Chapman. "I define reaction strikes as those intended for a non-feeding purpose — for example, curiosity, pure aggression, territorialism, or reflex," he says. "With that definition, [there are lures that] likely evoke both feeding and reaction strikes. However, I really doubt that bass draw as much distinction between those two categories as we do."

What really matters is how we as fishermen can make the most of how fish respond to lures under different conditions and use that information to stack the odds in our favor.

It sounds odd, but sometimes you can catch more bass on so-called reaction baits than you can with real food. Chapman explains it this way: "I have a friend who goes shiner fishing in Florida every year with those big live shiners.

One year, I went with him. It just so happened that a strong cold front hit while we were there, and Florida bass are notoriously sensitive to cold fronts. But I learned a valuable lesson on that trip. The biggest bass he caught on a shiner was a 6-pounder. I caught more on a lipless crankbait and a jerkbait than on shiners — and some were big ones. The fish weren't in a mood to feed, and the shiners were not working. But by working the lures in a fast and erratic manner, I got reaction strikes" despite the negative posture of the fish.

It's fairly easy to catch fish when they're in a feeding mood. They get aggressive, competitive, and most lures and retrieves will get their attention. The challenge comes when they are in a neutral or negative mood. Fish that are satiated, cold, stressed, or live in heavily-fished waters are tough to catch. But there are ways to get them to bite if you understand how they perceive things in their environment and how they react to them.



Jonathan Manteuffel photo

In dingy water and during low-light conditions, try darker baits. When fish are hungry, they bite lures to eat. When they aren't actively feeding, the angler can use an erratic retrieve to get fish to hit "reactively" when they may not even bite live bait.

Taste, Touch and Smell

Fish have the same senses we do, though they are specially adapted to their aquatic environment. They can see, hear, smell, touch, and taste. The latter two senses are not, according to Dr. Jones, very much involved in eliciting a strike response. Until a bass picks up a lure in its mouth (a strike, if you will), it hasn't touched the lure yet, or tasted it. Taste and touch are used more to decide whether to swallow the object or reject it once the fish has already grabbed it. However, sudden changes in scents in the water can alert the bass to the presence of food.

A bass has a nose, but it has four nostrils, or nares. Water is taken in through the front set and expelled through the back pair. As it passes through, chemo receptors pick up

on the presence of substances in the water, and the bass' brain tries to decode what they mean. But there are so many smells in the water that detecting a particular smell can be difficult. Hence, bass key on detecting changes in the odor pattern. Thus, a sharp rise in a food-related smell will ring the dinner bell. However, keep in mind that the scent must disperse in water for the fish to be able to smell or taste it. Oil-based scents do not dissolve in water and are virtually imperceptible to a bass. (They can, however, aid in moving lures through aquatic vegetation, as in the flipping technique, because they lubricate the lure.) Attractants such as Berkley Gulp! and Power Bait are water-soluble and can potentially enhance a feeding response once a bass is close enough to smell and taste the lure.

Note also that a bass (or walleye or pretty much any sportfish) is a predator. They eat meat, mostly other fish. They don't eat vegetation. It may even be, speculates Dr. Jones, that they cannot even smell anise, or licorice, or garlic or any other vegetable-based scents that commonly appear in commercial fish attractants. Dr. Jones notes that "bass are not the salt lovers we are. Bass find it mildly appealing at best." Salt added to a plastic worm may enhance flavor just a tad, but as the only flavor, the bass doesn't care.

Scents dispersed in the water may help draw a bass to a lure and conceivably make it more inclined to strike the lure once located. For this reason one should not rule out use of certain fish attractants as potential aids in getting fish to bite. A fast-dispersing scent increases attraction, but a slow-dispersing scent increases holding time. So which kind of scent you should use depends on what your objectives are. Do you want more strike opportunities, or do you want



Mike Blair photo

A spinnerbait with yellow skirt is a good lure for a bright day in clear water. The spinnerbait draws strikes because of its color, flash, vibration and motion.

longer time to detect the strike and set the hook? In the first case, you're committing to an area for a longer period of time to let the fast-dispersing scent draw bass to you. In the second, you are looking more for a reaction strike and hoping for a better hook set.

Sight

Far and away the most important senses bass use to locate and strike prey are vision and hearing. We learned in the March/April 2012 issue of this magazine (Page 41, "How Does a Bass See?") that lure color, contrast, water color, light conditions, and other factors

— influencing how light reaches a bass' eye — all play a part in the likelihood that it will strike a lure. We discovered that a lure having a dark back and lighter contrasting belly, resembling most prey objects, is more important than the actual colors. We also found that lighter and more natural-looking color schemes worked better in clear-water situations, while darker color patterns worked better in dingy water or in low-light conditions.

We also learned that a bass probably can see the same colors we can, but due to its environment, those colors may appear different to the fish.

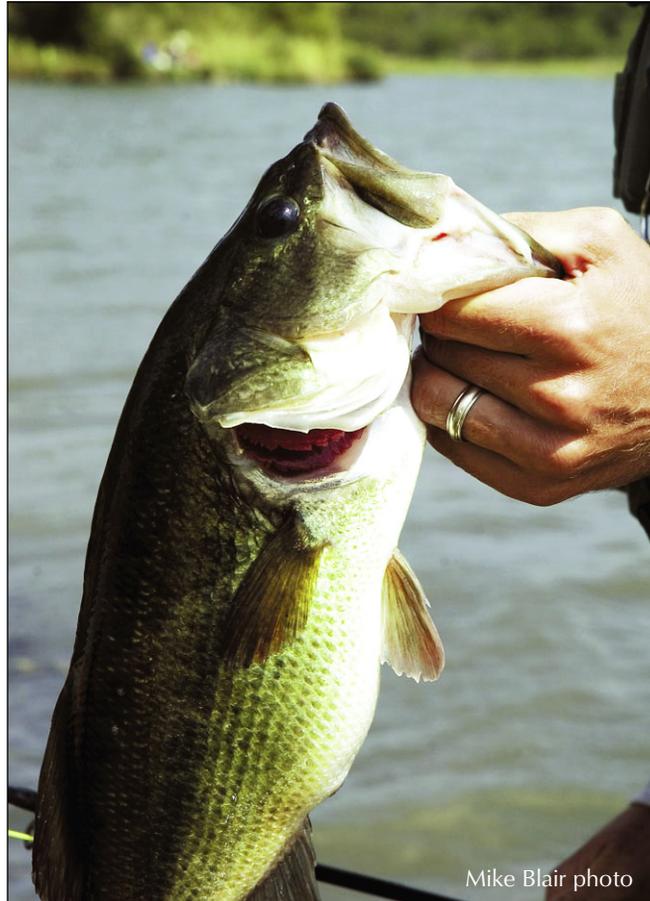
Chapman thinks so too, and has started using baits from Tightlines Lure Company that are UV-enhanced, reflecting light in the UV spectrum that other lures absorb. "I think fish see differently than we do, so the UV baits give them a different look in the water. I think I get more bites in certain situations by using that to my advantage."

Dr. Jones notes that "bass use a variety of visual factors to locate and assess lures, including size, shape, color, flash, and action. They can assess all of these factors simultaneously from a considerable distance." A key point he makes is that the way the bass' brain "pieces together all the visual factors, and not their individuality, may well create the feeding stimulus." In other words, it's probably not just one thing that provokes a strike.

The most important thing to Dr. Jones is that to a bass, food moves. "Its whole visual system is designed to pick up the slightest movements of small prey," he says. "Bass motion detection may be the

strongest predatory driver of all." Changes in motion, such as the stop-and-go retrieve, also trigger strikes, with take-offs having a seeming advantage over stops. But too much of either can discourage the bass.

Remember Chapman's discovery that fast, erratic retrieves drew strikes even from bass in a negative mood? Those were mostly horizontal motions, but he also draws strikes with vertical motion.



While sight may be the most important sense a bass uses to find and catch prey, the lateral line, an organ running the length of its body, enables the fish to sense the presence of a moving object, the direction to that object and its distance away.

"I often use a heavy drop bait with a fast fall, like a 3/4-ounce jig. I'll punch it through matted vegetation or hop it so that it falls several times on a retrieve. The bass doesn't have much time to think about it or examine it." He knows that a bass is opportunistic, and if it allows a lure to zip past it unmo-

lested, it may miss a meal. It isn't smart enough to know whether it might be food or not and has to grab the object to find out.

Feeling the Pressure

A bass is foremost a visual feeder, but as any night fisherman will tell you, they have little problem locating and striking lures in the dark. That is predominantly a credit to their fascinating lateral line, which senses pressure waves and vibration in the water. The lateral line sense has been described as a "distant touch" and does far more than just allow the bass to detect sound. That organ, more than the small internal ear, enables the fish to sense the presence of a moving object, the direction to that object, and possibly even some measure of its distance away and direction of motion.

The lateral line runs down the middle of each side of the fish and is a series of pressure-sensitive pores that connect via nerves to its brain. There is even extensive branching of the lateral lines on the bass's head. As pressure waves pass over the fish, they cause a flow between adjacent pores, which the sensory organs detect. Objects such as crankbaits moving in the water produce localized currents and pressure waves. A shad or spinnerbait going by, for example, leaves vortices swirling in its wake and pushes out a compression wave that the fish can detect.

The lateral line system is sensitive to changes in pressure, not a constant flow. It senses disturbances, not static conditions. The "bass can detect changes in water flow by analyzing the stimulation

pattern down the length of one side or across the head and by comparing signals between its two sides," Dr. Jones notes. So it is able to tell the direction the sound comes from by noting automatically which pores feel it first. The trunk region is good at detecting the direction and distance to the source of disturbance, while the head region is better at sorting out vibrational stimuli at close range.

Chapman believes that "bass feed mostly by sight, but it depends on the body of water. In clear water, they use sight more. In dingier water, their sense of vibration is huge. In dirtier water and low light conditions, a lure with a strong thump may help the bass to find the lure and get them to strike. But they get more spooky and shy in clear water, so that might drive them off. Quiet, more natural-looking lures get more strikes in clear water. Another thing about noisy lures is that rattles in crankbaits, jigs, or worms can irritate the fish into biting, but bass are also curious, and sometimes they just bite out of curiosity."

Putting it All Together

So next time we go fishing, how do we put ourselves in a better position to get a strike rather than strike out?

We choose lures that have a built-in action or that we can cause to move. We use smaller, more natural-looking lures in clear water – usually ones that are quiet and don't have strong vibrations. We move those lures quickly, so the bass doesn't get a good look at it because it is easier for the bass to detect flaws and recognize unnatural aspects in appearance and motion. We downsize our fishing line to reduce the possibility of the fish detecting it. And remember that sudden starts and stops and changes of direction may provoke a



Mike Blair photo

A topwater bait is a good choice in low-light conditions, attracting strikes because of the noise, surface disturbance and visual silhouette seen from below.

reaction strike from visually-oriented bass, but don't overdo it.

In dingy water and low light conditions, we go the opposite direction in order to appeal to the fish's lateral line, using larger lures with thump and rattle. A slower, steady retrieve allows the fish more time to home in on the object and not lose track of it as readily. A water-soluble scent that contains what smells like food to a bass may be helpful because the lure is moving slowly, and the bass can smell and taste the scent trail once it gets very close to the lure. Since the bass can't see as well, the smell may play a larger role in its final commitment to strike.

These are good guidelines, but Dr. Jones has studied bass enough to know that, while we can make endless observations and draw some solid (and some not-so-solid) conclusions, we can never get inside that tiny piscatorial

processor that passes for a bass's brain. When all is said and done, "it is unlikely we will ever be able to functionally distinguish between a reaction versus feeding strike based on such a generic measure of bass behavior," he says. "All an angler will ever know is that he got a strike. We will never know exactly why the bass struck."

Note: Dr. Jones leads a team studying how a bass relates to its environment, and particularly how it responds to fishing lures. He wrote a book called *Knowing Bass: The Scientific Approach to Catching More Fish*, published in 2002. Much of the information in this article describing how a bass uses its senses to detect, track, and strike its prey is drawn from this book.

Outside



Class

by Mark Shoup
associate editor, Pratt

photos courtesy Sherri Newlin

When Wichita Collegiate science teacher Sherri Newlin made the internet-based WildLifer Challenge part of her curriculum, she found contagious enthusiasm from students and parents alike.

Famed botanist Luther Burbank once made the tongue-in-cheek comment, "A flower is an educated weed." Another old saw is that kids grow like weeds. If you can immerse those kids in nature, they will flower physically, mentally, and spiritually.

The idea is simple: get kids outdoors and teach them about activities that make it so much fun, they'd rather be outdoors than in. A couple generations ago, this was second nature for kids, and they didn't have to be taught; there was simply more to do outdoors, especially when the weather was good. Not so today, with electronic gizmos galore from video games and 24/7 streaming media to hand-held devices that keep kids' heads-down, connected to the "cloud" non-stop.



What to do? Kansas Wildscape has the answer in its WildLifer Challenge Program. Laid out in a cleanly-formatted, easy-to-use program manual for parents, scout or other group leaders, or teachers, the challenge provides all the tools you need to lure kids into the outdoors with exciting and educational activities that will keep them charged about nature for the rest of their lives.

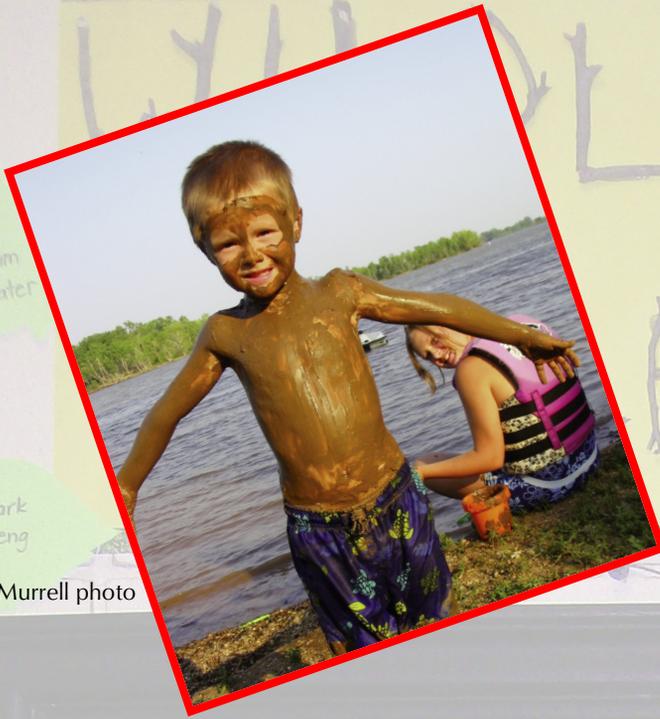
Activities include pitching a tent, covering up in leaves, stargazing, catching a frog, building a fort, lighting a campfire, hiking, birdwatching, fishing, playing in mud, photography, tree-planting, lake swimming, minor first aid, catching fireflies, packing a picnic, rowing a boat, and even hunting. All things kids instinctively love.

Although the program is designed to get kids outdoors, the WildLifer Challenge doesn't ask that they abandon computers and the internet entirely. In fact, the program encourages parents and children of all ages to become more involved in the outdoors through the use of an interactive, web-based program that challenges children to accom-

plish these outdoor challenges and prove that they're not kids who lounge around the house all day. Participants log onto the site using their own username and password to unlock 20 challenges (15 must be completed) on a "Challenge Tree." To earn credit for each task, participants must have a digital picture taken of themselves during their challenge experience and upload that photo on the WildLifer user page, www.kansaswildlifer.com. Once a participant has completed 15 challenges, they receive official "Kansas WildLifer" status and a WildLifer pack of outdoor items, WildLifer identification materials, and a glow-in-the dark WildLifer T-shirt.

Most of the activities are easy to do and easy to teach, and the program manual makes a great classroom tool. Just ask Sherri Newlin, lower school science teacher at Wichita Collegiate. Newlin used the program to challenge her elementary school students "to roll off their comfy couch, get away from the television, let go of that game controller, and have some outdoor fun." When Newlin and Collegiate joined forces with Kansas Wildscape to go outdoors, beyond the pavement, and into the mystery of the unknown, the program was so well-received that 176 students enrolled in the program as part of her course curriculum.

"More than 50 kids signed up in just 24 hours," Newlin said. "One mom even wrote me a note telling me how excited her son was and that they had already started the same



Marc Murrell photo

night I began the program. Parent response has been tremendous. They stopped by the science room to tell me how excited they were, and I gave out every manual I had. Some older siblings wanted them as well. A few teachers even stopped by and took some for their kids who don't attend Collegiate."

Newlin's program started with a seed planted, so to speak, in Colorado.

"Last summer, I attended a science workshop in Denver, and throughout the workshop, I realized that I wanted my students to reconnect with nature," she explains. "I started working on ideas to get them outside. When I shared this idea with a colleague, she introduced me to the WildLifer Challenge. I was very impressed with the program, so I started making phone calls. When I spoke to Charlie Black (Wildscape director) and Lynn Gentine (Wildscape director of development), they were not sure it would work at a school, but they were willing to try.

"They jumped right in and provided the booklets and lots of advice," she continues. "I introduced it to my 233 students, and then I said a little prayer. I was hoping to get 100 students involved; Lynn said to be happy with 50. But I wanted to provide kids with activities after school that were free and exciting, and I knew I could get 100 kids to join me. Be careful what you pray for — 176 kids enrolled, and I was a little overwhelmed. But we started right away, and kids were pouring into the science room to meet for challenges."

Newlin feels fortunate to have found a teaching tool that can benefit students outside the classroom. "I am so lucky to have found this program," she explains. "It has drawn students off the couch and connecting with nature.

"Many of the students ran with it," she adds. "I started getting phone calls and emails from parents telling me how their kids were coming home from school and going right outside to work on challenges. They were having kids over on a Saturday and spending all day outside, and they explained how happy they are when their kids are not in front of a screen. I loved the opportunity to connect with kids outside the classroom and get to know them better. Even though I have only provided 10 challenges at school, 15 students have completed 15 challenges to receive their prize packages. My science room was been abuzz last term because of the WildLifer Challenge, and I am so thankful for the opportunity to be a part of this amazing program."

And her version of the program didn't end when school let out. The class has completed challenges entitled Medic, Climb a Tree, Cover Yourself in Leaves, Build a Fort, Wet a Line, Plant a Tree, Pack a Picnic, Play Dirty, Set Your Sites, and Take a Picture. And KDWPT will help her with a condensed hunter education challenge in the near future. This summer, she has continued the challenges with the kids, meeting at various parks and at school to keep working on the challenges.

"Sherri has done a tremendous job of incorporating our WildLifer Challenge in her classroom and school overall," said Black.

Whether you're a teacher, a parent, a mentor, or a kid, the Kansas WildLifer Challenges offers a special opportunity to teach and learn about the outdoors while simply enjoying the playful activities previous generations took for granted. So this summer, carry on outdoors and carry on the tradition. Let your kids blossom. 🌱

Kids can take the WildLifer Challenge by going to www.kansaswildlifer.com. There they can register and begin their journey to complete the challenges and prove they're WILDLIFERS!

Make sure I
have your
"Enrollment Form"
before you sign up!



PRAIRIE GHOST GALLERY

text and photos by Ron Kaufman
Director of Information Services Division, Topeka

In an unlikely location on a sleepy main street in Paxico, Jamie and Dick McCabe opened an art gallery featuring wildlife and Native American art, books, bronzes and pottery.

In the northeastern Flint Hills, just north of I-70, across meandering Mill Creek, over the still-used railroad tracks, around a curve, in the shadow of a thickly-wooded hill shielding it from modern high-speed transportation, is Paxico. A stroll in Paxico is a stroll back in time, past many weary decades, into the cobweb-draped heart of the 19th century. Visitors may sense they're ambling through a peaceful, somnolent village drowning in yesterdays. Paxico is that quiet and – established in 1886 – that old.

It might not seem far-fetched to encounter ghosts in a rural hamlet like Paxico where the antique trade is passionately plied in an eclectic array of stores hugging the two main cross streets. Much of what the town offers save, perhaps, for the food, drink, special events and hospitality, is salvaged from days long past, once loved or used by everyday folk, and with stories as varied as the lives of their former owners. Ghosts surely come to Paxico to play and remember – unseen and unheard – alongside antique aficionados searching for treasures unearthed from the fertile soils of history.

East-west Main Street runs smack into the south end of Newbury Avenue, a north-south street on Paxico's west side, which, if followed to the north, leads to tiny Newbury township about a mile distant. Newbury is home to the historic "Cathedral of the Flint Hills." This Catholic church is visible for miles,

and it's a rewarding side trip just to see the imposing church architecture.

On Newbury Avenue, where it meets Main Street, stands what amounts to an early American version of a strip mall. The glass-laden, wooden storefronts and the ambiance seem to have emerged untarnished from the late 1800s. The enormous store windows reveal a glimpse of the goods inside, while carefully arranged collections of flowers, antiques, benches and old chairs artfully frame each entryway. It's easy to imagine that a bank, general store, hotel, barber shop and perhaps a saloon or café once welcomed residents and travelers to this early center of railroad commerce. In fact, the old train depot still stands on the Mill Creek Campgrounds site on the south side of the tracks.

At the north end of the shoulder-to-shoulder storefronts, the visitor will find an art gallery eerily named the Prairie Ghost Gallery. The name is quite apt in Paxico, which, besides being a purveyor of appealing old stuff, also rests near thriving expanses of tallgrass prairie in Wabaunsee County. There is, however, a deeper meaning to the name, which the gallery visitor soon learns. A hand-painted wooden sign adorned with the outline of a running pronghorn antelope hangs outside the door, coaxing one to enter, and upon so doing, a small bell jingles to announce one's entry. It's all very quaint, very welcoming, very Paxico.

Art includes original oils, watercolors, scratchboard, serigraphs, pen and ink, bronze sculptures, pottery, decoys and more.



Summoned by the bell, Jami McCabe greets visitors with a hearty, "Welcome to the Prairie Ghost Gallery – Native American and wildlife art, books, bronzes, pottery, and more!" It's not good grammar to include more than one exclamation point at the end of a sentence, but clearly, more are needed to convey the energy of Jami's greeting. Housed in what once served as the Stockgrower's State Bank (the handsome old vault still stands in a back corner of the largest of the gallery's two rooms), the business is a dream coaxed into reality by Dick and Jami McCabe following Dick's retirement from a 35-year career with the Wildlife Management Institute (WMI). During his time with WMI, Dick carefully assembled a significant collection of Native American and North American wildlife art in a variety of mediums. The works for sale are just a portion of Dick's 40-some years of collecting activities that include original oils, watercolors, scratchboard, serigraphs, pen and ink, bronze sculptures, pottery, decoys and more. Prairie

Ghost Gallery also sells an impressive number of natural history books, including many collectable titles.

The Prairie Ghost Gallery acquired its intriguing name not by reference to the nearby prairie, nor from the ghosts one might imagine hovering silently among the antique shops, but instead from a book for which Dick served as senior author, *Prairie Ghost: Pronghorn and Human Interaction in Early America* (University Press of Colorado, 2004, 2010). The book reverently describes the roles the pronghorn antelope played in the cultures of Native Americans and early settlers, and conversely, their influence on the pronghorn.

Superficially, the Prairie Ghost Gallery might appear to be a charming, unique exposition of one man's passion for collecting really pretty art. It is charming and unique, and the art is quite stunning, but much deeper, it's a view into how Dick McCabe experiences the natural world around him. An ethnozoologist (a scientist who studies the relationships between human cultures and animals in their envi-



The McCabe's in their gallery, which literally fills the old Stockbroker's State Bank building in Paxico.

ronment), Dick is a soft-spoken mashup of naturalist and humanist. An alumnus of the University of Wisconsin where his father once served as the only teaching assistant for well-known conservationist Aldo Leopold, Dick's undergraduate degree is in English (American literature) and his master's degree is a curious mix of wildlife ecology, mass communications and agriculture journalism.

As an avid hunter and angler since childhood, one might expect Dick's love of art to reflect his love of such outdoor sports, but the Prairie Ghost Gallery is not a tribute to hunting and fishing. Instead, the gallery represents what Dick not only sees, but feels when he is immersed in the outdoors. "Hunting and fishing are my passions, but for me," he humbly remarks, "it's not about the harvesting. Wildlife and nature is the ultimate work of art, as grand and beautiful as anything I can imagine. Collecting this type of art is very fulfilling. I can be surrounded with nature's beauty even if I can't be outdoors." He particularly enjoys the visual splendor of waterfowl, "Watching waterfowl is such a sensory experience; they're so graceful and fluid when they fly," he remarks with a glint in his eye.

Dick sounds almost apologetic when he claims he's not an artist, although many who have read his books would contend that he's quite wrong – he is a talented, creative writer. While he may not be proficient in the visual arts, he has a profound respect for the artists who can represent nature in their work. "Being able to represent nature in art is remarkable," he says

as his gaze sweeps across the walls and displays. "I enjoy working with artists who can successfully make that happen." He must really, really enjoy those relationships; the gallery carries pieces by more than 100 artists (with multiple works by more than 40 artists), and it's quite a feat of quantum mechanics to squeeze that many pieces in the space available. One of Dick's favorite artists is Dan Metz, who Dick had commissioned to illustrate Prairie Ghost. Metz created the running pronghorn illustration that symbolizes the gallery. Dick's words dance when admiring many of the pieces, but he admits he's especially drawn to watercolors, scratchboard, and the works of several artists. Jami beams when she describes her favorite piece in the gallery, a bronze river otter titled *Over the Hump*.

The McCabes delight in sharing their passion for outdoor experiences. Jami serves as the coordinator for KDWPT's *Becoming an Outdoors-Woman* program, a popular learning experience for women wanting to learn more about hunting, fishing, camping, and the outdoors. "The cool part is just being out there," she says with characteristic enthusiasm. She enjoys learning about the art and, in Dick's library, has found a "slew of books" she wants to read. She particularly loves meeting people, which is evident when she guides visitors around the gallery. According to Dick, "Jami could be selling pudding pops to people as long as she could enjoy the encounter." They've fallen head over heels for the Flint Hills – one of the reasons they located the gallery



in Paxico. "I'd rather be in the Flint Hills looking at art than in San Francisco," Jami comments. The value they place on visitors experiencing their art accounts for the McCabe's decision to not sell their works online. "Viewing art online just doesn't give you the same sensations as when you see it in a gallery," Jami explains.

Jami and Dick view the gallery not only as an opportunity to have fun and share their appreciation of art and literature, but also as an opportunity for visitors to experience nature in ways that heretofore might have been out of reach. It's all about having fun and sharing the experience of art. In fact, their first criteria when considering the gallery business was

that it had to be fun. They delight in watching people interact with the art. Jami's enthusiasm wells up again when she reports that a customer recently exclaimed, "It's frigging awesome!"

Awesome, indeed. Visitors to the Prairie Ghost Gallery and the town of Paxico will be rewarded with an enriching experience that artfully blends superb wildlife and Native American art, enchanting antiques, and the delightfully relaxed character of a small rural Kansas town. With any luck, visitors will have a close encounter with Dick and Jami McCabe, because, above all else one can experience in Paxico, its people are the perfect frame for this picturesque adventure. ♡



The Prairie Ghost Gallery enables Dick and Jami McCabe to contribute to organizations that are particularly meaningful to them. A portion of the proceeds from the sale of certain designated works of art are donated to one of the following:

- KSDS (formerly Kansas Specialty Dog Service)
- Becoming an Outdoors-Woman, Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism
- KU Breast Cancer Prevention Center
- The Nature Conservancy-Kansas
- Wildlife Management Institute

The items designated for contribution to these causes have colored dots on their identification tags.

LEARN MORE

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 Paxico Merchant's Association,
paxicomerchants.com
 Wildlife Management Institute,
wildlifemanagementinstitute.org
 Becoming an Outdoors-Woman,
ksoutdoors.com/news/Services/Education/Becoming-an-Outdoors-Woman

GETTING THERE

Paxico is located about 20 miles west of Topeka, just north of I-70. From the east, take the Snokomo Road exit (Exit 335) or from the west, use the K-138 exit (Exit 333).



SNIFFING OUT THE TRUTH

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

When it comes to solving wildlife-related crimes, it helps to have a good nose for evidence. None are better than KDWPT's K-9 "officers."

Now in its ninth year, the KDWPT Law Enforcement Division's K-9 Program has been so successful that as soon as dogs are about to "retire," new ones are brought in for training and replacement. The division budget allots five natural resource officers (NRO, commonly known as game wardens) for K-9 positions, and there are always officers ready for the challenge. It's not easy.

"If there is an open position, you have to have been an NRO I for at least two years and be dedicated, energetic, and in fairly decent shape because it gets pretty physical when you have to run miles behind a dog," explains program supervisor Jason Sawyers. "And you have to love and understand dogs. I like people who have hunted with dogs and trained them because this is kind of the same thing except that we're training them to find guns, spotlights — anything with some scent. It's kind of the same principle."

The current crop of K-9 teams includes Jason Barker, Wichita, and Moose; Jeff Goeckler, Washington, and Lucy; Lance Hockett, Abilene, and Meg; Jake Brooke, Stockton, and Kooper; Ben Womelsdorf, Iola, and Libby; and Sawyers, Topeka, and Rex. Rex is 11 and about to retire. Last year, two dogs were retired: Brian Hanzlick's K9 Alley and Dan Melson's and K9 Chase, after great careers and many cases.

Training is the backbone of the program, and it's ongoing. New dogs and their handlers must undergo an eight-week certification training program. Current handlers and dogs must recertify their dogs annually, usually during a one-week period in April or May. Certification training is conducted from January through April, so all the dogs aren't out of action for eight weeks in a row. In addition, four hours a week of training is required year-round, depending on the dog

and handler's experience. And all teams meet for three or four days in early fall to refresh skills before hunting seasons. Training exercises and topics for handlers include breed choice, scent, tracking, grooming and health, first aid, wildlife detection, types of alerts, and area searches.

Spring is time for the eight-week certification training, which usually takes place in Indiana. However, Indiana didn't have a course this year,

so the Kansas K-9 Corps developed and conducted its own course near Milford Reservoir from Jan. 23 through April 27. Womelsdorf has a young dog that needed certification, and all the dogs needed annual training. Dogs are commonly about a year old when training begins, and, depending on the dog, may be field-ready by 16 months old. Handlers hope for 10 years of productivity from their dogs.



Above, Jake Brooke, Stockton, and K-9 Kooper pose before tracking exercises near Milford Reservoir last April. Brooke says of his partner, "I really don't go anywhere without him." Opposite page: KDWPT's K-9 corps pose after spring training. From left to right: Jake Brooke and Kooper, Jeff Goeckler and Lucy, Jason Sawyers and Rex, Lance Hockett and Meg, Jason Barker and Moose, and Ben Womelsdorf and Libby.



Officer Jeff Goeckler, Washington, uses hand signals to guide Lucy to an area where the author had previously walked to hide an object. Once on the track, it didn't take the dog but a few minutes to locate the object. In a real investigation, this skill could help an officer located evidence such as hidden firearms, ammunition or shell casings.

"Training for tracking takes four to six of the eight weeks," Sawyers explains. "It's the hardest part. It's not only the training of the dogs but the training of the handlers to read their dogs, too. Each dog gives different messages with its tail. Some of them show different body posture — like head or tail low to the ground — when they are tracking. My dog is hard to read, but I've been with him so long, I can tell when he's on track."

Dogs are trained to find an object and scratch the ground next to it. Then the handlers have the dog fetch a toy — usually a bouncing rubber pet toy — to avoid accidents and damage to evidence and to reward the dogs. It's a game for them. In the dog's mind, this is the goal.

The dogs are trained for more than tracking, however.

"On vehicle or building searches, we use choke collars," Sawyers explains. "But the dogs often have snap collars on the job. They're going off-leash on these searches. When they see that collar and hear that snap, that means it's time to go find whatever

they're trained to find. You've also got to be able to give your dog hand signals to control where they search. You've got to work the dog fairly loosely but not miss any ground you have reason to believe might hide what you're looking for."

These aren't bloodhounds, however, which are primarily trailing dogs that are given a scent that they follow. A tracking dog finds a specific scent on the scene and follows that.

"When tracking, our dogs follow a combination of the human scent and the smell of disturbed vegetation where the person they are following has walked," Sawyers explains. "They're both tracking and trailing dogs. They go on the first scent at the scene that we tell them to track.

"The advantage is that if you have an area that is highly disturbed by the person you are tracking — a playground, for example — the person's scent is going to be everywhere, and the dog will get confused. We start at the edge of the playground and work out from there, the dog picking up both the scent of the person and the

scent of the tracks where the person most recently disturbed the ground. We have to have a starting point, however. You can't just give us a shirt and say, 'Go find this person.' We have to know where you think the person was last seen. They can only run a track in a place where a lot of people have run if they have acquired the scent of the person they are tracking first."

When an officer gets a call, they also have to factor in weather. Someone running down black asphalt in July leaves little chance of finding any scent. High humidity and mild temperatures are ideal. Under these conditions, officers can carry an item ½ mile away during training and leave it overnight. The dog usually goes right down the track the next day. It doesn't matter whether something's hidden in tall grass or plain sight. They will find it.

"One time, a guy was shot, and the shooter ran off," says Sawyers. "My dog found the shooter's wallet, so we found out who did it. They're trained to find anything with human scent on it. If you touch it, they will find it. And

it's not just crime. Jeff's dog found a department commissioner's hearing aide. My dog found a Kansas City man's cell phone. Lance's dog found a hunter's wallet containing \$400 last year. So we use it to help people in many ways."

Once on a track, the dog will go wherever the person they're tracking goes, and the handler has to keep up.

How are these dogs able to do this? "It's all from human scent, and every human scent is different," says Barker, who has been with the program since its inception. "Everyone sloughs off skin rafts (flakes) at about 40,000 per minute. Also, their footprints crush vegetation, which leaves scent on the ground. And when people run and are scared, say running from the law, they will pump out even more scent. A dog's nose is 44 times more sensitive than a human's — they can identify individual scents of different people — so this is a big advantage over officers just going out and hunting for people."

Kansas K-9 "officers" have proven to be some of the best in the nation. Brooke and Hockett took four dogs to national certification in Indiana last year, two as backup. Ten days into training, two Virginia dogs had washed out, so Brooke and Hockett gave their two backup dogs to the Virginia department. Both are game warden dogs in Virginia now. Another year, they donated a dog to Indiana that became instrumental in finding a school shooting suspect when other dogs couldn't find the evidence.

"Our dogs excel at what they do," Sawyers adds. "I think it's because we spend a lot more time doing area searches and tracking. Other agencies in the state spend a lot of time on drugs and biting. We like our dogs to have a good temperament."

Which brings us to dog breeds. Labrador retrievers are used exclusively. Hockett and Sawyers explain.



Brooke has a conversation with Kooper during a break in training. New handlers and dogs must undergo an eight-week certification program, and there is annual training, as well.

Sawyers: "When the program started, it was funded entirely through donations, even the dogs. Several sportsmen's groups were involved, and they predominately love Labs. They're intelligent, highly trainable, and generally don't like fighting with other dogs. They have a good temperament, and they already hunt."

Hockett: "We don't go out and buy specially-bred dogs. We usually get them from families who can't care for them."

Sawyers: "We don't look at bloodlines at all. We like dogs from families who don't want them anymore because they're usually hyperactive, and we want that drive. A dog that wants to go, go, go all the time doesn't make a really good house pet. My dog came from the pound. Half our current dogs came from animal shelters. Barker put an article in the Wichita

paper last year, and we received hundreds of calls. We not only want a dog that will do the job, but it has to match the handler's personality, as well. All the dogs we've chosen in the nine years of the program have worked out."

Donations still play a big part in the K-9 program because the agency just doesn't have the budget to cover it all. All of the food is donated by Science Diet throughout each dog's lifetime. A lot of vets provide discounted rates or free service. A lot of medications such as Frontline and Heartgard are donated by the companies.

No natural resource officer's day is routine, but K-9 officers live a different life altogether.

"On a normal day, the dog's always with us when we're working," says Brooke. "That's an adjustment from being a regular field officer. We try to



Lance Hockett follows Meg on a hot tracking trail. Officers must be in good shape to run after eager dogs for sometimes miles at a time. Training a dog to track can take four to six weeks of the eight-week certification program.

train a little each week, especially Lance and I because we've only had our dogs a little over a year. We train and repeat everything more often. When I go home, my dog's always around my family. She stays in the house. I just enjoy getting the calls to take her out and let her work. It's 24/7, like having a kid. I don't really go anywhere without her anymore."

Goeckler jokes that "I spend more time with my dog than I do with my wife. My dog will sit by the door and howl if I leave without her." Barker adds that his dog knows when he's having a bad day.

"They see you put on your uniform, and they're ready to go," says Sawyers. "If you left them at home, they would drive your family crazy."

An afternoon spent watching these men train their dogs convinced me of their dedication, as well as the effectiveness and tractability of the dogs. Much like an elite combat or rescue unit, they are tight-knit and supportive of one another and the mission with which they are charged. Each officer proudly touts their dogs in action. Here's a few stories.

**JASON SAWYERS
AND
K-9 REX**

Rex has been doing this for nine years. He has recovered items including guns, spotlights, shell casings, knives, wallets, cell phones, and various game. One of his best was early in his career. We were working at one of the local wetlands, and hunters began to come up to the parking lot. I had Rex start checking hunters' decoy bags to see if anyone was hiding anything. Rex indicated on a decoy bag. When I had them empty the bag, Rex indicated a single decoy. I picked up the decoy, and there were duck breasts hidden inside the decoy. There were many other hunters around, and the word spread everywhere about how the game wardens now have dogs. This simple find served as a deterrent to many. Just the dogs' presence helps us protect the resource.

**JAKE BROKE
AND
K-9 KOOPER**

I was called by regional supervisor Brad Odle, who had lost his smart phone on his way to his tree stand a week earlier. It snowed the day he lost it, but he remembered the path he had walked, so we had a rough idea where to search. He had searched four or five times trying to retrace his steps over the course of the week. Kooper searched for about a half hour and found it in CRP grass, still working.

**JEFF GOECKLER
AND
K-9 LUCY**

Lucy helped with the apprehension of individuals who were involved in a high-speed pursuit and then ran from their vehicle into a heavily-wooded area. They had been shooting from their vehicles with the

aid of a spotlight. Lucy was able to track them, which led to their arrest and conviction.

In another case, she found an empty shell casing that led to the arrest and conviction of a man for hunting on private property without permission.

**LANCE HOCKETT
AND
K-9 MEG**

Meg and I helped the Geary County Sheriff's Department with a 69-year-old suicidal female who had fled her residence into the timber with a .357 pistol. Meg tracked the lady to Milford State Park, where she was hiding underneath cedar trees with the pistol. Friends and family members could not give Meg enough hugs. Even the lady we tracked apologized. Meg and I received the Award of Valor.

During the 2011 firearms deer season, Meg and I were called about a landowner who reported hearing several shots on his property and seeing someone walking along the tree line and believed to be carrying a gun. When the individual came to the road, he was not carrying a gun and claimed that he was only out for a walk. Meg and I started an area search in the last known place that the suspect had walked. After a short time, Meg found a .25-06 caliber rifle hidden in the weeds. Confronted with this, the suspect confessed to trespassing and shooting a deer on property where he did not have permission.

**JASON BARKER
AND
K-9 MOOSE**

While patrolling in northern Sumner County during pheasant season, I watched 10 hunters walking

a pasture toward the road. I approached and asked if I could see their hunting licenses. Eight produced valid licenses, but two who were non-residents had no licenses or guns. I found it odd that they would travel from another state just to walk around with eight other hunters, but I told them all that they could walk to their vehicles parked about a mile away. Then I had Moose conduct an area search of the field. Within five minutes, Moose located two shotguns and three shotgun shells. Presented with this evidence, both subjects confessed to hunting with no license.

Another case involved a landowner report that he thought someone was hunting on his land without permission. Upon arrival, I located a truck parked about a ¼ mile from the land in question. I had Moose run a track from the driver's side of the truck. We ended up near the reporting landowner's property and were unable to continue tracking due to high fence. When I arrived back at the suspect's truck, he was there. I asked him where he had been hunting, and he told me on land where his truck was parked, but when

I told him the details of how my canine had tracked him from his truck onto the land where he did not have permission, he confessed.

**BEN WOMELSDORF
AND
K-9 LIBBY**

My dog and I have just been certified (in April), so I have not had the opportunity to make any cases yet. This has been one of the more difficult times of my career but by far the most rewarding. We rescued Libby from the Pottawatomie County Animal Shelter, and I took her home and bonded for two weeks. Four days into training, I realized that I would be the one being trained because she was absorbing the new duties at an amazing pace. My stress level was on sheer overload multiple times, wondering if I had what it took to work with the best. However, when I finally relaxed, it was like a switch had flipped. Libby became a superstar, and I was along for the ride. 🐾



In an area search training exercise, Jason Barker, Wichita, tests Moose's ability to find hidden evidence – in this case fish – under one of several containers arranged in a row. The exercise is designed to immitate what a dog may encounter when walking passed parked cars.



FARM POND JEWELS

by Jeff Vordermark
Leavenworth

More than 150,000 farm ponds dot the Kansas countryside, and each holds an almost indescribable attraction for the author; indescribable, that is, if you're not an angler. Kansas farm ponds produce some of the best fishing to be found anywhere in the Midwest.



Mike Blair photo

I cannot take a leisurely drive down a country road and see a farm pond without accomplishing an impromptu analysis of its fishability. Water clarity? Weed-choked or not? Does it have good cover, and if I were a bass this time of year, where would I be lurking? Ponds hold fish, often largemouth bass, so whenever I see a farm pond, I have to wonder what fish it harbors and how big they are. My lovely bride, who often accompanies me on these drives and has the benefit of my expert though unsolicited analysis, would attest to the fact that there is certainly something

ascertainable from all this. I'm nuts.

I admit it; I'm a farm pond junkie. I've pulled some mighty nice bass out of some pretty small puddles, and over a lifetime of pursuing bass in places actually famous for them (Florida, California, and Texas), I must note that my biggest fish ever did not come from any of those legendary waters known for holding monster fish. I even successfully entered the popular draw for a coveted strip pit during the Florida pre-spawn but only managed a measly (if you are to believe the Florida hype) 5-pounder. I fished for Florida bass for

three years, but I still think Kansas anglers have it good.

My three largest bass were caught somewhere I would not have expected, especially after growing up reading every outdoor magazine I could get my hands on and dreaming about catching lunkers. Farm ponds in Kansas, which did not figure prominently in any of those early magazines, have proven to be a very pleasant surprise. After having fished here the past few years and seen firsthand just what can come out of a small body of water, put me down as a firm believer in Kansas farm ponds.

There are many reasons that I personally frequent farm ponds. First off, I'm cheap. As in the "I refuse to throw down the big bucks for a real bass boat" kind of cheap. I have no primal urge to spin around on the bigger reservoirs in the region and pursue whatever pops up on the fish finder. Some of my fishing buddies term this as evidence of diminished testosterone, and I think they may actually be questioning my man-credits because I don't have all the cool man-toys they do. I, however, prefer to think of it as being frugal, and when it comes to just who has actually caught the bragging-sized bass on a consistent basis, let's just say that I've developed a hypothesis that big bass may actually be scared of those bigger boats.

I do have a boat of sorts. One that is a real head-turner whenever I'm out at a public lake. That usually happens the moment I drive up to the launch ramp without a boat trailer and pop that thing out of the trunk, inflate it, and secure all the gear before heading off in my instant two-seat bass boat. An electric trolling motor gets me where I need to go; I can stow all the necessary gear to include four rods; and I can run it all day long. Oh, and I catch fish. Lots of fish.

The second reason I like farm ponds is that since I consider myself an old-fashioned sort of angler. I eschew any sort of electronics to read structure and find fish. My fish finder

consists of a rod, line, and lure of choice. No electronics for me, no Sir! Takes the fun out of it, or so I tell myself. But then, when the lake you are fishing is only 4 acres, just how much in the way of electronics do you really need? My wife mentioned this in the way of feedback during one of my more involved impromptu farm pond analysis sessions. When I mentioned that getting a Hummingbird might be good, and that hard-to-read pond we just passed was the perfect example of why I really needed one just like all the other guys, she suggested that sugar water in a feeder on the back porch would be the surest way to get one. When I pointed out that she had no clue what a Hummingbird was and that what I needed was to spend more money at the local Cabela's, my points card came up missing.

Another reason to fish farm ponds is that they are just plain fun. They don't get the fishing pressure of public bodies and can hold a number of surprises, like the time I started catching 15 ½-inch crappie on top water lures a couple of years back. Or bluegill big enough to attack a good-sized spinner bait. But I'm not partial to just any old farm pond. I look for



Mike Blair photo

An angler can simplify his fishing tackle and have a blast fishing farm ponds. Many small ponds can be fished from the bank, but a float tube is a great way to reach big fish.

those with a certain unique, almost indescribable appeal. At any rate, I've come to appreciate that the scummier they are, the better they might be. Now this could be due to the fact that most sane folks would drive right on by, convinced that the only thing in

there was muck. But that is fine with me because the bass there end up only possessing a grade-school education when tested on artificial lures. They just don't seem real smart.

When my youngest was not yet keen on fishing, I decided he might be more enthused about spending a day on the water with Dad if, instead of fishing, we were actually catching. I found a pond that got no pressure at all and spent an evening trying to see if the bass might be accommodating. My plan was to bring the boy out the next day if this pond measured up. This was no ordinary pond. Only about 5 surface acres, it boasted a broad and dense matt of filamentous algae that covered much of the pond. Most folks would drive right on by, but I thought the thing looked pretty fishy.

I was having fair success but nothing remotely spectacular until I tied on a soft plastic frog and slung it up on the bank before retrieving it across the scum. I learned two things immediately. One, real live frogs are carnivorous and will eat smaller frogs, real or plastic. I had to act fast



Mike Miller photo

A two-person scamp-type boat equipped with a trolling motor is easily transported and gets around well on larger ponds. This rig is perfect for sneaking up on shallow fish.

in order to get my bait away from a particularly large and active bullfrog before he could chomp my offering. Two, forget the frogs! There are hungry bass under those weeds just waiting to perform their little fresh-water imitation of Jaws. Once I got away from the frog-infested bank, the water erupted under my lure as a large bass came right through the weed mat. I set the hook too slowly and missed that bass, but not the next one. There were quite a few after that as well. None were under 16 inches, and the largest was a healthy 22-incher that I knew was coming because she pushed a wake that was visible through the weed mat. A bass that size is good in anyone's book — even Florida's.

I returned the next morning with a skeptical and grumpy adolescent who was quite certain that this would be another boring day with Dad. Perhaps he harbored some secret hope that I would fall out of my little fishing boat, and it would be worthwhile to have a front row seat for the event. For whatever reason, he came along. We had fun catching a few bass in the open water before the sun got high, and then I unleashed a surprise on him and handed him a rod with a frog on the end. He was quite happy to throw surface lures even though the topwater bite had tapered off. I explained what had happened the night before, and from the look on his face, he believed me.

Okay, what really happened was that he rolled his eyes and took some time to process the information. My simple instructions to "throw this onto the weeds near the bank and hop it across" must have seemed beyond humorous because he did not laugh. Nor did he cast until I added "When a fish hits, rip his lips off!" This comment brought an instant grin and seemed to provide the missing incentive.

He lobbed the frog on the weeds and drug it back without a strike. Again, then a third time. I was beginning to suffer doubt when I was saved by a nice bass launching itself

through the weeds and all the way out of the water in an effort to hammer that frog. The bass missed, but my young man was suddenly intrigued by what had just happened. We spent the rest of that morning enticing bass through the weeds, and probably hooked one in five. It was a good day indeed, and Seth was happy when we left. Driving out, we looked back on the pond and saw dozens of visible holes in the weed mat around the lake created by bass going after our frogs. That was the day I learned that if you want to gain a kid's interest in fishing, it's the catching that can be darned important. He was a willing participant on future trips.

There is something else about those farm ponds that appeals to my frugal nature: they do not require a small fortune's worth of lures in order to be successful. Those topwater frogs are not the only tempting offering that will work. Because these ponds are essentially microsystems, it is

somewhat easier to pattern the fish. Face it; there aren't that many places for them to go, and locations that have worked before likely hold fish now as well. Your job is to ferret out what they are in the mood for. My top lures are simple choices for just that reason.

Because my "fish-finder" is attached to the end of my line and is not electronic, I like to throw lures that cover lots of area. On points or off structure, my favorites include a soft swim bait, such as a 4-inch fluke or a willow-leaf spinner bait. My favorite way to fish the fluke is with a 1/16- or 1/32-ounce bullet weight pegged forward of the eye and retrieved in random short jerks. Steady retrieves just seem to yield smaller fish. Also, because the ponds often have a supreme abundance of "moss," having a streamlined lure that does not make it seem like you are harvesting kelp instead of fishing makes good sense.

At times, the bass hang out under



Jeff Vordermark photo

The author can't drive by a Kansas farm pond without wondering what kind of fish lay beneath the surface. Fortunately, there's only one way to find out.

that heavy cover, especially during the dog days of summer. Although it may be counterintuitive to throw a bait there, a weedless frog thrown onto the bank and fished out to the boat can yield explosives hits, as previously detailed. Sometimes, it just seems that bass want to smash something on the surface. Lures with noise, splash, and stop-and-go retrieves, like the Pop-R or Jitterbug, are hard to beat, and that action starts in May and can last through September. The classic edges of vegetation are also worth checking out, especially early and late in the day, or during conditions when the fish may be cruising. I always have a good supply of plastic

worms on hand too, but these rarely get used. These are more of a security blanket if all else fails, which on farm ponds is usually not the case.

Finally, farm ponds are usually quiet, peaceful, serene, and can be fairly close by. You just need to gain the necessary permissions. After a long hard work week, or when you want to maximize your time on the water, a local pond can beat driving for hours to get to a big name lake when you could be fishing instead. There is no competition on these waters, either. You don't have to worry about other anglers, pleasure-seeking speedboats, or shore groups that are more interested in partying

than fishing. And like I mentioned, you catch fish — lots of them.

So in these days of high fuel prices and frenetic work schedules, consider taking the time to expand your fishing venues by including farm ponds in your plan. You don't even need an eye-catching boat like mine because many of these ponds can be effectively fished from the shore. You might just surprise yourself with the bass of a lifetime. If you do happen to drive by a scummy pond and happen to see a guy in a funny inflatable boat, give a wave. It will probably be me, when I'm not at home looking for that Cabela's points card. 🍷



Jeff Vordermark photo

The author affectionately calls his pond-fishing rig the “Scumskipper.” It may not be pretty, but it fits his budget and it gets him into ponds where steep banks or heavy vegetation make them difficult to fish from the bank.



A Day With Grandpa

by Kirk Miller
Greensburg

The following story is one of many I could tell about the days spent on the 160 acre farm in rural Miami County with my loving Grandparents, Reuben and Hulda Miller, of Paola, Kansas.

We'd still be nearly two miles from the old farmhouse, but I could see the huge eastern red cedar tree that loomed above Grandma and Grandpa's old two-story white farmhouse. Once, I was so excited that I forgot about the bump in the driveway. I was jolted off the spare tire that was my seat in the bed of our 1974 Ford pickup truck. "Ole Green" is what we called that truck. I landed spread-eagle in the rusty bed, caught myself on the closed tailgate and waited for Ole Green to roll up to the carport. I swung a leg over the side of the truck and was on a mad dash for the back porch where I knew Spot, Grandpa's overweight rat terrier, would be waiting.

Poor little thing was round, not like a rat terrier should be. She waddled when she tried to run, and her toenails clicked on the old linoleum floor. I pushed through the screen door and knelt down to pat Spot, then off to the kitchen to see Grandma. I knew there would be a

platter of fresh cookies waiting to be devoured. It's not like I should have been surprised, they were always there in the round Tupperware container on the second shelf of the cupboard in the pantry off the kitchen. I grabbed a cookie and met Grandma by the kitchen sink. She bent down, hugged me and gave me a peck on the cheek. Grandma was always happy to see us. She wore a kind smile that seemed to say, "I would do anything for you!" All of us grandkids felt special at Grandma's. Grandma stood straight up and went through the traditional greeting. It was always the same. She'd pinch my ribs and grab me by the chin, tilt my head back and look down my throat, then scruff my hair a little and pat me on the head. I guess I passed inspection. She turned to cabinet and grabbed a glass, then reached in the fridge and pulled out a pitcher of fresh cow's milk from the old jersey cow we called "Penny." I downed the milk, and wiped the mustache from my lip. "Where's Gramps?"

"Chair," she answered simply. Grandpa's favorite napping spot was the beat up recliner in the living room. I'd ease into the living room and tap him on the sock-covered foot. "Gramps, wake up, I'd like to go fishing."

He'd snort a bit, open one eye and reply, "fish are not biting today. It's too hot." Grandpa had a special way of always making me appreciate things, but deep down, I knew he would take me. He always did, rain or shine. After some coaxing and a few more taps on the leg, Gramps would holler into the kitchen. "Fix us some lunch Grandma; we're going fishing!"

Gramps leaned the old rocker up and dropped the footrest. That was my cue. I grabbed the fold out T.V. tray and the checkerboard from the hall. We sat them up and played a game while Grandma fixed lunch. When I was 10 years old, I would have argued with someone if they said they were better at checkers than my grandpa. We played thousands of games, and I never beat the old fart!

Lunch was nearly always the same: grilled cheese and shoe string potato chips. We'd wash it down with another glass of fresh milk. I was eager to get down to the pond, so I always ate fast; hardly chewed my food. Grandpa seemed to eat very slowly. I sometimes wondered if he didn't do it just to torment me. Grandpa always saved some of his milk, and when he cleaned his plate, he'd have a slice of homemade bread and dump milk over it to

clean up his plate. I never realized it when I was young, but Gramps had seen some lean years in his life. He never wasted a drop of food. When we had cleaned our plates, Grandma would set out two saucers. She'd swing around to the oven and pull out dessert. Today it was her specialty, chocolate cream pie.

We walked out to the barn and loaded all of our gear in Grandpa's beat up white Ford half-ton pickup. I opened the gate, and we drove through the first pasture, which was really just a barn lot. We called it the sheep lot. Then we'd go through the east gate into the brome field. The hay had already been bailed and stored in the loft of the big barn, so we were able to drive to the pond. We parked and crossed the five-strand barbed-wire fence. Before we could fish, we had to dig some worms. If it was wet enough, we could dig worms right there by the fence, but when the summer heat took its toll, we would have to go behind the pond dam to dig for worms. We called them "soddies." They were huge earthworms that lived deep in the ground. It wasn't uncommon to pull one up that was over a foot long. The sod worms were great bait. They were juicy and tough and stayed on the hook. The big catfish that lived in Grandpa's pond loved them too. We gathered a handful of worms and put them in a beat up Folger's coffee can and headed down to the water.

Grandpa's pond was a great place to fish. He had bluegill, largemouth bass, and huge channel catfish in his pond. Grandpa grabbed a rod and reel for me. His favorite setup was a Zebco 33 with a flimsy fiberglass pole. He baited the hook with a glob of soddies and whipped the rod, sending the bait out just past the weed line. He checked the drag to make sure it wasn't too tight and handed me the pole.

I always got the bucket seat. The bucket seat wasn't anything special.

It was the white 5-gallon bucket that we used to haul our catch back if we got lucky enough to catch anything and if grandpa felt like fish for dinner. Often, we would just fish for sport. When I first started fishing with him, I'd get mad when he threw the fish back. "Grandpa, why do you throw them back when you worked so hard to catch them?"

He'd always say, "They aren't-a-going nowhere." Sometimes when you are 10 and on the farm with your grandpa, he is teaching you things and you do not even realize it until you get a little older.

As I sat on that bucket, my mind began to wander. I looked the pond over. It seemed like a decent-sized pond to me, but it was probably only about a half-acre. The dam was on the south end and there was a little point on the west side about halfway up to the shallow end. I scanned the water and wondered where "Ole Pete" would be lurking today. Ole Pete was the biggest catfish in the pond.

Just as I was about to doze off, I felt a tap on the rod tip. I took the rod off the forked stick I had shoved in the pond bank. I held the pole in anticipation. Then it happened! *Zing* – the line went out. I pushed the release button on the Zebco and gave some slack. I knew if it was Ole Pete, he'd drop the bait if he felt a tight line. I slowly began to count to 10, giving Pete time to inhale the worms. Four, Five, Six — I couldn't take it anymore and whipped back on the flimsy rod so hard I nearly fell off my bucket. When the line tightened I could feel the dead weight of a huge fish. I hollered to Grandpa, "Got one on!" Grandpa moved swiftly around the pond to help coach me through the fight. Slowly Pete began to run for deeper water. I could feel the massive head shaking as Pete tried to loose the hook from his whiskery mouth.

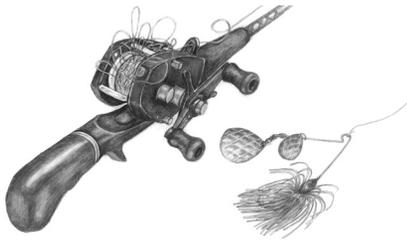
Grandpa was a great coach. "Keep the tip up and put steady

pressure on the line," he exclaimed. The drag zinged as Pete ran south to the dam then back up to the point for shallow water. Each time I would gain some line, he would make yet another run. Gramps slapped his cap on his thigh and yelled, "Pete, we've got ya now old boy!" I could feel the fish tiring. I was winning the battle. Gramps eased out into the shallow water to land old Pete. I made one last haul, and the massive fish came sliding through the weed line. Just as gramps reached down to grab the worn beast, he shook his head one last time and turned.

I tried to stop him and reared back with all my might. *Snap* — it sounded like a .22 rifle going off. I fell backwards, and my feet were in the air. I was on my back in the grass. I thought to myself, "What just happened?"

With a whirl of his powerful tail, Ole Pete turned and darted back into deep water. He was gone. My line had snapped. I had lost Ole Pete again. I was distraught. I slumped down on the bucket seat and put my head down. I didn't know what to say or do. Suddenly, I felt a tap on my back. "Don't worry boy; he ain't goin nowhere." It was gramps. I looked up from under the red ball cap I was wearing, and there was gramps looking down at me and just laughing. We sat there and laughed a bit and then just stared out over the pond and the pasture. Then gramps broke the silence. "Well, best we get back to the house. Grandma will have dinner shortly."

Grandma was only around for four more years. Grandpa lived to be 93. He loved to fish and discuss the outdoors right up to the time he passed. The old cedar tree in the front yard is gone now, and you cannot see the farm from quite as far down the road anymore, but the smell of fresh cookies, the bump in the drive, and the days spent down by the pond will always be a part of me. ♡



Backlash

by Mike Miller

Take Two Dogs And Call Me In The Morning

It was Labor Day, and I wasn't leaving for work on a Monday, but my two dogs were aware that something else was different about his day. The fact that I was lacing up hunting boots and had a camouflage shirt on probably clued them in. Trip, the Brittany, has a keen nose, and he carefully checks out the pants and shoes I put on each morning, so he was wired. As I put on a camo hat and walked out of the bedroom, Trip was looking at me expectantly. My old Lab, Creede, was waiting at the top of the stairs that lead to the front door.

This was Creede's day, though. I had taken Trip hunting on Saturday and left Creede home, so today it would be just Creede and me on a morning dove hunt. I put Trip in the backyard, hoping he wouldn't notice me drive away without him — fat chance. As I loaded the truck, I could see his liver-freckled nose poking between the cedar fence boards, snorting displeasure. Creede sat contented in the back seat, very happy we were leaving Trip home.

We stopped at a convenience store, and I bought a cup of coffee and a package of small donuts. As I opened the package, the big black dog immediately sat up and placed his large paw on the console, letting me know he expected to share. And share we did — one donut for me and one for him until the package was empty, and he plopped back down.

The morning was perfect. The doves flew, and Creede found and retrieved every one I knocked down. At his age, he's slow, but he's good company. When we got home, I bragged to Lisa about our morning and how I was sure Creede enjoyed it. In truth, he probably enjoyed the donuts as much as the dove hunting, but I was pleased to have had such a fine morning with a dog that has been such a loyal companion. Some hunters own dogs to make them more efficient in the field and some own them based on pedigree and the status that comes with having a dog with field champion ancestry. I have bird dogs for a very simple reason: They enrich my life.

I really can't think of hunting birds without a dog along. It would be like fishing in a swimming pool —

what's the point? But the hunting seasons are only a few months long and at best, I'll get to the field only a couple of dozen times each fall. So while hunting with my dogs is important and my excuse to have them, it's only a small part of the reason I love having them around.

I've always wondered if part of the attraction of having a hunting dog was knowing there is a being as excited about going hunting as I am. The intensity shown in my Brittany's eyes when he realizes we are going hunting is contagious. When I put on my hunting pants and boots, case the shotgun and put the whistle around my neck, he becomes full of hope and optimism (my interpretation, or course), and that rubs off on me.

And while hunting with a dog is enjoyable and gratifying for me, I find similar enjoyment in my dogs every day. The sheer enthusiasm they show when I get their leashes off the hook for a simple walk in the neighborhood affects my mood. And when one of them leans on my leg and rests his head on my knee, I guess I feel appreciated.

My dogs can make me feel happy when I'm not. They can make me laugh when things haven't been going well, and they can convince me to be hopeful when my mood is sour. It's my nature to be upbeat and optimistic, so I'm happiest when I feel that way. But I still get down and feel sorry for myself. A dog that is beside itself with excitement to see me when I get home from work can right a listing ship. When we step out the backdoor to play a game of fetch, talking to the dogs between throws can often blow away a dark mood. I tell them about what has made me angry, and while they don't understand or care as long as I make the next throw, they don't disagree, either.

Dogs are a key ingredient in my recipe for a happy life; a recipe that also includes fishing, hunting, family and friends. I've always appreciated John Gierach's quote about fishing, "The solution to any problem — work, love, money, whatever — is to go fishing, and the worse the problem, the longer the trip should be." Throw in a couple of dogs, and you're set for life's challenges. ♡

