

# KANSAS

*Wildlife & Parks*

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# KANSAS *View*

by Robin Jennison



## TOO MANY PEOPLE?

Many years ago, a wildlife area manager told me that managing his areas would be a whole lot easier if he didn't have to deal with hunters. He may have said it tongue in cheek, but it was evident there was some truth to the way he felt. The irony is that without hunters, the manager wouldn't have had a job. Hunters are why we have the wildlife resources we have today and they fund virtually all wildlife and habitat management. We need more hunters because hunter numbers have been on a downward trend over the past 20 years. Increasing the percentage of our population who hunt and fish will ensure adequate funding for our wildlife management programs, as well as provide social and political support for scientific wildlife management. Hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation are also important to our state's economy.

However, some might say that increasing the number of hunters will create competition for limited opportunities and resources. Managing large numbers of hunters on limited public lands is a delicate balancing act between opportunity and resource impact. Increasing the number of hunters could create crowded public lands and restrictive regulations both for resource protection and hunter safety. Currently our public areas provide great hunting opportunities, and hunter behavior allows maximum opportunities under very safe conditions. The number of hunting-related hunting accidents, most of which don't occur on public land, have been so low in recent years they are almost statistically insignificant when compared to the number of hunter days spent. We're a long way from "too many" hunters.

Overall population growth and its impact on our outdoor resources and recreational opportunities is another story. As the human population has grown, wildlife management has become increasingly about managing people, rather than managing wildlife and habitats.

In the last 50 years, the U.S. population increased by more than 100,000,000. According to the 2010 census, the U.S. population topped 308,000,000. In the next 50 years, it's predicted to increase by almost another 100,000,000. In Kansas, the population grew from 2,278,611 in 1960 to 2,890,566 in 2010. More people means sprawling cities,

more roads, higher energy demands, more pollution, and more land necessary for food production. At some point, social and environmental issues caused by a burgeoning population will overshadow the needs of wildlife and our natural resources.

It's easy to be complacent about population growth living in Kansas where the human population density is less than 35 people per square mile. The average for U.S. states is 87 people per square mile. And there are many more Kansas counties with population densities of less than 20 people per square mile than there are counties with more than 40 people per square mile (40-149 is considered semi-urban and more than 150 per square mile is urban).

But just as it takes time for fashions and fads from the coasts to reach us here in the Midwest, population growth will eventually catch up. If the predictions become reality, the human population will be the biggest obstacle we'll face in managing our wildlife, wild areas and outdoor traditions.

Wildlife managers in the future will be fighting urban sprawl, intensive agriculture practices and increased energy production. It may seem like a long way in the future, but our U.S. population grows by one percent each year. One percent of 308,000,000 is 3,800,000! And while that is hard to comprehend, there is a website on world population growth with a counter that clicks over a new number about every second. That got my attention. While I watched, the world population was 7.1 billion and growing, and on that day at about 4 p.m. Central Time, the world population had grown by 149,430 people for the day.

While we deal with depopulation in many of our Western Kansas rural communities, the population growth will impact us. Kansas will likely be called upon to produce more food and energy for the growing world, and that will no doubt tax our resources, making conservation and good stewardship more challenging but also more important. To be sure, it is a global problem that our generation should deal with, there's no doubt our children and grandchildren will face human population issues. ♡



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

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# BIRD BRAIN

with Mike Rader

## ANTICIPATING FALL



I always look forward to fall birding in Kansas and hope to get to a few of my favorite areas before winter and Christmas bird count season hits. Most of the large reservoirs across the state should be great, as well as the old stalwarts of Morton County and the marshes of Cheyenne Bottoms, Quivira, and Marais des Cygnes. Be sure to visit your own local patch of woods, wetland and grassland, as well. You never know what will be the next “hot spot” for Kansas birding. Also, I encourage everyone to use the eBird data entry portal to help report bird sightings. It’s an easy and fun way to contribute to science and keep track of your own lists. To find out more, go to [www.ebird.org](http://www.ebird.org)

I have had over 50 sign up for the Kansas Birding Big Year, so it will be fun to see how participants have fared so far and what they finish the year with at the end of December. Plans are to renew the effort on Jan. 1, 2014, so be sure to check out how to sign up then. Instructions will be available later this year as to how to enter the fray.

September and October are great months to go birding in Kansas. With the rains in late July and early August replenishing (or in some cases, overflowing) the marshes in the central part of the state, the outlook for fall is great for migrating waterfowl and other water-loving bird species. I don’t know if the drought is broken or not, but the rains certainly did some good. I just wish it would have come with moderation. The two-year dry weather pattern seemed to be hard on much of the wildlife of Kansas, but too much rain can be a bad thing, as well. At least most nesting species should have gotten their young fledged and feeding on their own before the rains came. Warm-season grasses should still have some time to put on some growth and help provide some much-needed fall and winter cover, and with the almost certain growth of weeds, there should be definite improvement in food accessibility. Although the high water and flooding can and has caused major problems for humans and nature this summer, we hope the long-term effects will be positive.

Don’t forget to keep your hummingbird feeders up through September and October, as we get some of the most sightings of unusual species this time of year. With another season of dry, hot weather in the mountain west and arid southwest, many species such as calliope, rufous, and black-chinned visit our state in late summer to early fall. Other, more rare species can turn up as well, but there is always a good mix of western species, especially in the western half of Kansas. Of course there will be big numbers of rubythroats in various plumages to confuse all but the most-seasoned observers. Even if you cannot identify every bird that comes to the flowers or feeders, they sure are fun to have around.

September 20-22 is the weekend for the fall meeting of the Kansas Ornithology Society (KOS), held at the Washburn University campus in Topeka this year. It’s always a great way to mix with many folks interested in Kansas birding, learn about current bird research and sneak in a great field experience in the local area as well. More information and details about the weekend can be found on the website for KOS at: [www.ksbirds.org](http://www.ksbirds.org)

## KDWPT’S PITMAN RECOGNIZED BY PEERS

The Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (MAFWA) recently recognized Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT) Small Game Program coordinator Jim Pitman as the 2013 “Wildlife Biologist of the Year.” Pitman was presented the award by KDWPT Assistant Secretary Keith Sexson at the June 27 Kansas Wildlife, Parks and Tourism Commission meeting.

Each year, MAFWA recognizes an individual who has shown an unparalleled initiative toward the better understanding of wildlife and their conservation, and Pitman couldn’t have been a better choice.

“It is a huge honor to be recognized by my peers,” said Pitman. “Your peers are usually the toughest critics, so winning an award from that group is the most meaningful recognition anyone could receive. I’m very appreciative and humbled by it.”



Pitman’s most recent endeavor has been developing conservation strategies to address the potential listing of the lesser prairie chicken as a threatened or endangered species by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Pitman is the second KDWPT biologist in recent years to receive this award. In 2011, KDWPT Big Game Program coordinator Lloyd Fox was named Wildlife Biologist of the Year.

Comprised of 13 state and 3 provincial fish and wildlife agencies, MAFWA is an organization that strives to provide a common forum to share ideas, information, pool resources, and form action initiatives to better manage and conserve fish and wildlife resources.

For more information on MAFWA and Pitman’s award, visit [www.mafwa.org](http://www.mafwa.org).

*KDWPT News*

# IT'S THE LAW

with Kevin Jones

## STAY INFORMED



It has been said that information is power, and in many ways that is true. Having the right information allows us to answer questions and solve problems. In the law enforcement world, reliable information is one of the key building blocks we rely upon. This concept is two-fold. First, good information is needed in order for poachers to be brought to justice and frequently the information comes from people reporting violations. Second, people can avoid law enforcement problems by being informed about the laws and regulations.

The Operation Game Thief (OGT) program was created many years ago to enable citizens to report wildlife related violations. Originally the program consisted of a toll-free telephone number, which was answered during regular business hours. When the offices were closed, the caller could leave a message on a voice recorder. Obviously this limited the timeliness of the reports, particularly if there was a violation in progress. Over the years the system has changed, and the options for reporting violations have improved. The toll-free telephone number is still active, but it is now answered by a person 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Any witnessed violation can be reported by simply dialing 1-877-426-3843. Violations may also be reported through the department's website, [www.ksoutdoors.com](http://www.ksoutdoors.com), by clicking on the Operation Game Thief button on the homepage.

The link also provides you with contact information for all the game wardens in the state. Please remember that OGT is for reporting violations or reporting a need for law enforcement assistance. It is not set up to provide general information. So if you have a question, please call one of our offices or use the "Contact Us" link on our website.

The department provides a tremendous amount of information about our various programs, as well as all laws and regulations for hunting, fishing and boating. Hunters and anglers should

check the regulations frequently because they change from year to year. For instance, significant changes made this summer to regulations governing big game equipment requirements will apply during this fall's seasons. Other changes for 2013 will impact bag and possession limits for migratory game birds and fur harvesters. And, there are changes being proposed for next year's fishing regulations.

As always, the hunting, furharvesting and fishing regulations can be found in printed summary pamphlet available at license vendors and department offices. The summaries are also available on-line through the department's website. Just look for the link on the main webpage. If you are interested in reading the actual regulation or statute on a particular topic, that information may be found on the Law Enforcement page of the website under "Services."

Staying informed leads to better compliance with regulations, which makes management plans successful and leads to healthier resources and greater opportunities to enjoy out state's resources.



## "Wild About Kansas" Junior Photo Contest

If you're an avid *Kansas Wildlife & Parks* magazine reader, then you know our January/February issue is jam-packed each year with amazing images from some of the area's top outdoor photographers. One day we got to thinking, why stop there?

The Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism is proud to announce the 1st annual Wild About Kansas junior photo contest going on now. "Wild About Kansas" is a program designed to showcase Kansas outdoors through the lens of young photographers. Winning entries will be featured in the 2014 January/February issue of *Kansas Wildlife & Parks* magazine.

Participants must be age 18 or younger. Photos must be the participant's original work and be taken within the state of Kansas. There is no fee to participate.

For more information, including entry rules, submission instructions, and judging criteria, visit [www.ksoutdoors.com](http://www.ksoutdoors.com) and click "Services/Publications/Magazine/Wild About Kansas."



— Nadia Marji

## A DAM SHAME



On a bridge overlooking one of my secret fishing spots, my fishing buddy and I peered over the rail at the winding creek bed meandering through the woods. Here and there a pool of water remained, but it was as close to dry as a creek could get. Of course my buddy couldn't resist a snide remark.

"Wow, this is a great secret fishing hole – even the water doesn't know about it. Let's go down and look for fossils."

Normally, remarks aimed at slandering the credibility of my outdoor prowess are quickly shot down with sharp quips. I keep a good supply in the greased holster near my jawbone, but this time I was too shocked to respond. There was no reason for the water to be gone, and a full-scale investigation was in order.

We wandered upstream and sure enough, just around a bend was a beaver dam constructed of sticks and mud, turning the happy bubbly creek into a mini reservoir. Two beavers, probably the head engineers, were checking us out from the top of the structure as we approached. I thought I caught a glimpse of Corps of Engineers insignias on their furry little shoulders as they dove into the water.

"Wow. I have never seen a beaver dam that large," said my buddy with admiration. "No creature can make a dam like a beaver."

I couldn't quite agree with him. It was a nice dam – for rodents, and I said as much. "All dams have a heart. One stick gets pulled out, and the whole thing falls like a house of cards."

"What do you know about building dams?" he asked.

"Well", I said as I sat down to reminisce. (I might have heard a groan as I started my story, but it could have been the wind in the trees.) "Let me tell you a story."

In the summer of my tenth birthday, my friends and I constructed a bicycle track in the vacant lot across from my house. Our parents enjoyed it because they could keep track of us and evaluate our character. All parents evaluate kids. On a scale of one to 10 with one being an angel and 10 being prison-bound, other parents rated me between a 12 and 20, depending on how terrible their own child was that day. My mother always rated me at about a 2, although there was a time when I hid in a clothing rack and scared her as she scurried by looking for me. After she was defibrillated, I quickly shot from a two to a 20 for that day. Among the neighborhood kids, such an unsavory rating was a badge of honor, and I wore mine with pride.

Then one day, a bulldozer came through and converted the shallow ditch we rode through to our bicycle track into a deep, boulder-strewn bike trap. After a brief conference with my good pal Anthony, we made plans to build a bridge.

It was an arduous undertaking. Day after day in the hot summer sun, we piled up rocks. However, we couldn't engineer a bridge that was smooth enough or stable enough to support bike traffic and not kill anybody who crossed it. Then it rained.

The rain left a puddle in front of our failed bridge, giving me an epiphany – which turned into a day of infamy for others. I decided we'd build a dam and a bridge! Using mud from the pool of water that formed in front of our excavation site, some bags of cement and cinder blocks we liberated from an abandoned construction site, we poured a core of cement, reinforced with large rocks. Near the top, we cemented cinder blocks, three deep and eight long into a spillway. Anthony and I worked at a feverish pace, driven by the vastness of our project. When the bridge/dam was completed, we stood back to

admire our work. Then it was time for a test run.

Although the dam was impressive to look at, it had an ominous quality about it as we pedaled over. I experienced my first case of vertigo as I negotiated the precarious path and peered over the steep sides. A slight deviation either way would plunge a rider into the abyss. Nevertheless, the bridge was a monument of two ten-year-olds' ingenuity. Adults came from up the street to stare slack-jawed. We heard comments such as, "Where in the world did they come up with the blocks and concrete?" and "One of those little idiots is going to break their fool neck."

Amazingly, we had very few mishaps crossing the bridge, especially after we figured that the faster we went, the less likely we were to fall to our death.

It rained some more and half filled our reservoir. Anthony claimed one side of our lake-front property, and I claimed the other. We set up lawn chairs and sat on either side of our small lake pondering other great construction projects we could complete. Life was good. Then one night, a torrential rain filled the ditches. Anthony and I were overjoyed as we watched water rushing through our cinder block channels at a pace that would have turned a turbine. The dam was holding back a lot of water – too much water.

While we admired our handy work, we spied two angry looking neighbors marching toward us with picks and shovels in hand. We fled inside, and my dad went to the door. The enraged neighbors explained loudly that their basements were flooded and it was my fault. Turns out our dam had submerged the sump pump pipes of the two nearest houses and flooded their basements.

My dad listened, then with a deep sigh, he headed to my room to inform me that the neighborhood men were going to destroy our dam. He was sorry it didn't work out, and he promised to build us a wooden bridge after the water subsided.

We went outside and watched as the men wailed away at our rock-solid dam. We heard words we'd never heard before as they cursed and sweated, occasionally shooting us angry looks.

When we realized that they were going to break our dam, we were saddened. Then the dam groaned and split in two, sending a tidal wave downstream.

"Cool!" I shouted as the wall of water rolled like a huge beast through the ditch and blew out the neighbor's driveway spout. "Look at that baby go."

Anthony and I cheered as the wall of water caused further damage as it rolled down the road before finally petering out.

"We should have broken that a long time ago," Anthony said. "Then we could have rebuilt it and did it again."

The men were shouting too, but they didn't share our exuberance. After the water subsided, they went into a secret meeting.

I chuckled as I recalled that day long ago while explaining to my buddy what I knew about dam building. I never knew what was decided in the secret meeting, but Dad never let me go near a pick or shovel. I couldn't play around construction sites, and I was not allowed to play in any ditches again.

I looked over at my buddy, who was sound asleep. Such an affront of my story telling could not go unpunished. I headed for the beaver dam to find the heart stick and relive a childhood memory.

If you were seen on a boat this past summer, and everyone on board was wearing a life jacket, it might have been worth a free t-shirt or Frisbee! I spent quite a few weekends at lakes across the state of Kansas with the Wear It Kansas! boat, promoting life jacket wear and water safety. It wasn't always the perfect weather conditions to launch a 15-foot Boston Whaler, so a lot of times I would visit with people at boat ramps as they prepared for a day on the water.

During the course of the summer, I gave away over a dozen life jackets to families who had some "fit" issues with the jackets their children were wearing. A general rule of thumb for life jacket fit - if the jacket can be pulled up over ear level, it's too big. If the jacket slides above the ears when you are in the water, your mouth and nose will be under the water. If the jacket is too big, there's a chance you could slip out the bottom of the jacket.

We also handed out whistles to boaters who didn't have their sound producing device (which is required on all motorized vessels regardless of size), and skier-down flags. We noticed there still seems to be confusion about the proper use of the skier down flag. The best way to remember how to use it is to keep in mind that it's called a "skier-down" flag. When the skier or tuber is down (in the water and not being towed) the flag goes up. When the boat is actively pulling the skier or tuber, the flag should be stowed away. The flag is meant to alert other boaters that a person is in the water waiting to be retrieved or getting ready to be pulled by a boat. I saw flags being displayed the entire time a skier or tuber was being towed, and this serves no purpose.

The Wear It Kansas! boat has a Facebook page where pictures were posted of those who received t-shirts and Frisbees.

# Boat SAFE

with Erika Brooks

Get a FREE T-shirt!



Next summer, a photo contest will be held utilizing the Facebook page and allowing people to post pictures of their friends and family boating safely on Kansas waters. Go to <https://www.facebook.com/WearItKansas> and like the page to get updates on water safety in Kansas, contests, and see the planned schedule of where the boat will be next summer. Maybe you'll get a t-shirt and your photo on the page!

## 2013 HUNTING ATLAS AND HUNTING AND FURHARVESTING REGULATION SUMMARY

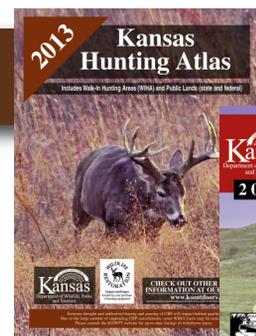
With maps showing the location of more than 1 million acres of land open to hunting, the 2013 Kansas Hunting Atlas, available online now, is a must-have for hunters. Whether you're looking for the perfect duck hunting marsh, scouting for land rich with upland birds, or scanning woodlots for the perfect place to set up your tree stand, Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism's hunting atlas is the perfect tool. Better than ever, the newly-redesigned hunting atlas features maps with shaded relief backdrops, county road names (where available), stream names, and much more. All state, federal and Walk-in Hunting Access areas are shown, color-coded for ease of use.

The atlas also features 2013 season dates and an outline of new regulations, making it quick and easy for hunters to get up-to-speed on important changes.

To view the atlas online, visit [ksoutdoors.com](http://ksoutdoors.com) and click "Hunting," then "Where to Hunt," then then "2013 Fall Hunting

Atlas." Hunters can also download an electronic version of the atlas from the KDWPT website, and file downloads that can be loaded onto Garmin GPS units. There are also file downloads for Android and iOS devices that can be used with Google Earth. The 2013 Hunting and Furharvesting Regulations Summary is also available on the KDWPT website. Printed versions of both pamphlets are available at all department offices and wherever licenses are sold.

— KDWPT News



## DEFINING HUNTING TROPHIES

„ The year 2014 will provide residents of the state of Nebraska a new hunting opportunity with a first-ever modern mountain lion season. Hunts of top tier predators generally cause some emotion in people as these hunts have typically been classified as trophy hunts. Trophy hunting is much maligned in the press as well as being misunderstood by the population, although it remains one of the stages that a hunter will typically go through during their hunting evolution. I wrote about another of these stages a few issues ago when I discussed the method stage that many hunters experience. I think it is safe to assume that the concept of trophy hunting is more misunderstood than any other aspect of hunting.

In the book “Hunting And Human Evolution,” anthropologist William Laughlin lists five components of hunting that have for centuries been seen as essential for man in his development. These include: (1) pre-hunt training and skill development, (2) pre-hunt scouting, (3) shooting skills development, (4) recovering the animal and (5) preparation of the animal. Hunting author and writer Dr. David E. Samuel goes on to conclude, “If an activity does not include all of the five components, then it is not a true hunt.”

While those considered trophy hunters will include all five components in their hunting, some still connect the concept of trophy hunting with unethical hunting behavior. People may also connect the concept of trophy hunting with an idea that the concepts of fair chase are vacated and that the trophy is guaranteed for the hunter. For most “trophy” hunters, nothing could be further from the truth.

It might help if people understood that a trophy is always defined by the hunter. What becomes a trophy is not always defined by the kill. Many of the finest trophies are recorded only in the memory of the hunter and may not include a kill at all. For many hunters the kill is not necessary although the possibility for a kill is essential. Without the possibility for a kill, there is no hunt, only a trip outside.

With this in mind, a friend shared his feelings about a trophy hunt he experienced last season, and I share it here with the author’s permission. Please accept it in the spirit it was given, and I hope that you can catch a glimpse of what resides inside the heart of a hunter.

*As you all know I haven’t been hunting my Brittany Lucky much this season. Arthritis, bad hearing, and general weakness from old age have greatly limited her duty. Yesterday was a 60-degree day with dry/windy conditions, so I decided to take her for a quick hunt, just the two of us. Recent guests and their dogs were headed home, and my younger hairy girls were gassed from three days of hunting, so the spotlight for this short hunt fell on ole Lucky.*

*After three days of hard hunting and limited success, I had no visions of Lucky finding any birds, but*

*we would spend some quality time together. I knew of a long narrow waterway with a parallel fence line for a return trip that usually held a nice covey, and it was easy walking for both of us.*

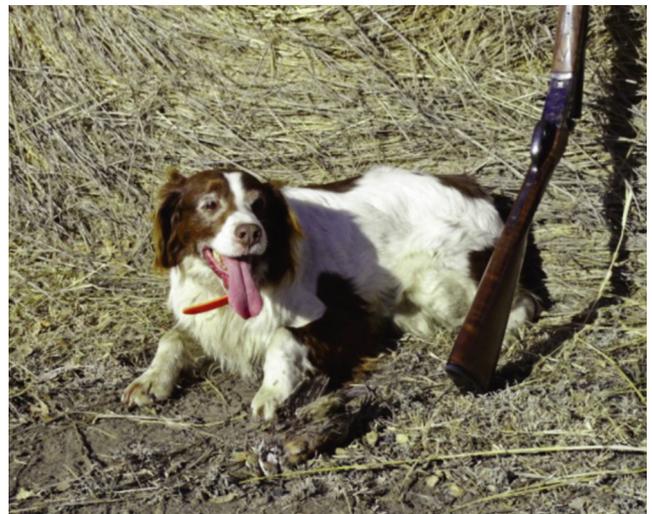
*As she limped along and I waddled behind, she would turn occasionally, smile, and let me know she was happy to be out. About halfway down the waterway a six-bird covey flushed ahead and to her side and landed in some stubble two terraces away. She stopped, turned with a question in her eye, and I waved her on down the waterway. She understood we wouldn’t bother a covey that small and seemed content to just keep hobbling along. Thirty yards later she jerked her head into the wind and froze into the prettiest point I’d seen in some time. I stepped in and flushed a nice fat bobwhite cock bird.*

*Since I’d just had a lesson from the Jim Dawson shooting academy, I instinctively swung up and dropped the bird. Lucky ran out for the retrieve and after she delivered the bird, she laid down panting, wanting a rest. We shared a bottle of water as we admired the bird. I had myself a good cry as I rubbed her ears and then we headed to the truck.*

*I lifted her into the front seat and she seemed to understand this was a special trip as she laid her head on the armrest, smiled, and went to sleep.*

*Later, I sipped a couple fingers of fine liquid as I cleaned the bird and reminisced. Over the years I’ve taken lots of birds, some remembered, most forgotten. The ones I remember are remembered not for the spectacular shot or the number in the covey, but for the dog work leading up to the shot or the retrieve after.*

*I vowed to never forget this bird.*





## PREPARE TO BE SUCCESSFUL

When I was younger, I would go fishing or hunting at the drop of a hat. A buddy would call, I'd grab my rod or gun and head out the door. I never worried about field dressing or meat contamination. I'm ashamed to admit it, but I remember when I was a kid fishing the farm pond behind our house. I strung a number of largemouth bass on a stringer in shallow water on a hot summer evening. When finished fishing, I carried my stringer of now stiff, dead bass back to the house to clean. When my mother tried to cook them they stunk up the house so bad we couldn't eat them. I learned my lesson.

I grew up eating wildlife game and my family today loves to eat it, but good-tasting fish and game meat requires planning and effort. With deer, dove and teal seasons opening in September when temperatures can be more like summer than fall, I take steps to ensure all meat we collect is edible. I am rewarded with peace of mind and good food.

For fish I always take a cooler of ice, especially when I travel any distance. The law requires boat livewells to be drained before leaving the lake to prevent moving dangerous aquatic nuisance species. And the meat will taste better if you remove the entrails

and pack your fish on ice. This also helps if you have to wait until the next day to finish the cleaning process. If fish are put on a stringer, stake it near moving or deeper water or in shade while fishing.

Big game taken when temperatures are warm should be field dressed right away and tenderloins removed, bagged and put on ice. Once the carcass is in the vehicle, I will place bags of ice from my cooler inside the body cavity for the trip home. I then process the animal into large chunks or quarters and put them in a cooler of icy salt water. Keep the clean meat in the cooler with ice and salt for a couple of days to draw out excess blood before finishing processing and freezing.

Upland bird seasons often open to warm weather, so I'll often field dress birds, leaving a leg attached on rooster pheasants during transport. Ducks and geese can be done the same way, leaving a wing attached for species and sex identification. Only on really cold days or short hunts do I not field dress waterfowl right in the field. But even then, feathers are so insulating that they are often still warm when cleaning them at home.

When traveling afield, take measures to ensure good quality meat. The people you feed will thank you. Always keep a clean cooler and a couple of bags of ice on hand for those spur-of-the-moment hunting and fishing trips.



### FISHIN' with Mike Miller

#### GO-TO FISHING SPOTS

Unless you have inside information, fishing a large reservoir for the first time can be daunting. Where do you start? Finding fish is about eliminating water where they aren't, but on a large water body, that can take time.

So you do your homework before the trip and you have a pretty good idea what the fish are doing as far as depth, lure choices and general parts of the lake. Now what?

I have three go-to spots that almost never let me down, and one is perhaps the most overlooked: Boat ramps. I always cast around boat ramps. A boat ramp is usually positioned on a shore sloping into deeper water so that large boats can be launched. The concrete and rip-rap around most ramps creates great structure. The concrete ramp itself will attract shad, crayfish and other baitfish. I like to cast jigs or crankbaits along the ramp edges and where I think the concrete stops in deeper water. Ramps can be great for white, largemouth and smallmouth bass, and crappie.

Another go-to spot is the dam. Kansas reservoir dams are usu-



ally rip-rapped or layered concrete. I like rip-rap best, but layered concrete also holds fish. Dams are similar to boat ramps since they slope into deep water and attract crayfish and baitfish. I fish them the same, casting jigs and crankbaits. Dams will often have added fish-holding potential around outlet structures. Outlet structures can be good options during hot or cold weather when fish are holding in deep water. I like to fish spoons and slabs vertically around these structures.

My third go-to spots are main-lake and secondary points. Look for a main-lake point with a long shallow ridge that extends a good distance into the lake. A secondary point is a point in a cove and will often extend out to a creek or river channel. Fish will often hold on the first water depth break, moving up periodically on the shallow point to feed. Trolling crankbaits along these points can be a great way to eliminate water and find fish. Once active fish are found, I prefer to cast jigs and crankbaits or fish spoons and slabs vertically.

Next time you visit a new lake, check out the ramps, dams and points.



## Bright-eyed and Bare-knuckled

*It's not often I blindly stick my hand into a dark crevice, hoping to feel something bite me, but a girl will do silly things for a catfish. I don't know if it's the whiskers or the shear girth of cats that get me, but whatever it is brought me to an undisclosed (but legal) location in Kansas to try my luck at noodling.*

Let me just preface this column with the fact that I have a newfound, unadulterated respect for noodlers. Noodling is an all-that-is-man (or woman), true-blue, no-bathroom-breaks, get-your-head-straight form of fishing. So why did I try it? The same reason any teenage boy did anything, ever – it sounded like a good idea at the time.

My preparations for the morning's festivities were just like any other day. I got some food in my belly, put on some comfy clothes, swiped on some mascara and threw on a ball cap. I should have been shaking in my boots, gloving up, saying prayers to Saints that probably don't even exist yet, because naïve little me was heading hand-first into the murky, mysterious world that is hand fishing.

Unfamiliar and inexperienced, I intelligently tagged along with a very patient and fearless guide, Toby. Now Toby, who has been noodling many, many times, was kind enough to give me some pointers on the way out to the location, which we will not name.

**Rule 1:** *If you feel an air pocket at any point in time, immediately remove your hand.* (Unbeknownst to me, apparently creatures that we don't want biting our hands, such as beavers, like to inhabit areas that give them some breathing room. Who knew?)

**Rule 2:** *Cover all your bases.* When these catfish perceive something as a threat, they will try and find the nearest possible exit as quickly as possible. For this very reason, a noodler must block all the available escape routes.

**Rule 3:** *When the fish takes a bite (and it will)- DON'T LET GO.* Your first instinct will be to pull your arm back, removing yourself from the uncomfortable situation. In this particular instance, a noodler must do the exact opposite of what his or her brain tells them to and maintain a firm grip.

Now I'm no expert, but I think there is one small thing that Toby left out of his "crash course" in noodling – I think to be a noodler, you have to be just a little bit "off your rocker." Some might say I'm crazy for trying it, but for those that know me, it would have been crazy for me not to. And although no behemoths were fished out that day, this won't be the last time I stick my hand in the den of the almighty catfish. The feeling of that silky spot on the ground that's been worn smooth from nesting, the echoing boom a fish sounds as it defensively slams up against a rock, and the hospitality of my guide Toby are just a few of the memories I'll take with me – along with all ten of my fish sticks.



This channel catfish was fished out from underneath a rock while guarding a nest of eggs. Since flathead catfish are the only legal species during the handfishing season, this fish was released back to its den shortly after the photo was taken.

For more Accidental Huntress fun, visit [accidentalthuntress.blogspot.com](http://accidentalthuntress.blogspot.com), or follow her on Twitter at: [@A\\_Huntress](https://twitter.com/A_Huntress)



Marc Murrell photos

The weather can play an integral part in people's moods. It's amazing how rain, sunshine, and the temperature affect our outlook and impact daily routines. I'll be the first to admit, I was grumpier-than-normal over the course of the last two summers when we had 50-plus days of 100-degree-plus temperatures. Yuck.

It's those kinds of summers that have me looking forward to fall even more. Granted, as I write this in early August, we've had a wonderful summer temperature-wise, and I've been less grumpy than usual. And recent rains have put water back in my favorite reservoirs and wetlands, giving me more reason to anticipate fall fishing and hunting seasons.

But those seasons won't seem like reality until I step outdoors one morning and it just feels like fall. It usually doesn't happen until the first week or so of September, but it's always welcome and instantly recognizable. I open the garage door to leave for work and am greeted with a blast of cool, crisp air. A jacket is often required, and I'll hurriedly dig it out of the closet where I tossed it last spring. My truck has plenty of dew on the windows and it's thick on the grass, too. Full-fledged fall is just around the corner.

I like spring, but fall is a time I cherish and might pick if I had to choose just one season for fishing and hunting. You can start with dove hunting and transition to

ducks, pheasants, quail and turkeys. The fall bite for crappie, wipers, channel catfish and walleye can be incredible. If you're into trapping like I am, that season kicks off a little later, too. The options are endless.



There's something magical about a misty morning on a marsh watching and listening to the wetlands wake up. Noises straight out of a science fiction movie resonate throughout, and the welcome sounds of whistling wings and waterfowl quacks, whistles and tweets flood the senses. As the sun peeks over the horizon, muscles of hunters and their four-legged hunting companions tense and quiver with excitement.

One of the most memorable experi-

ences I can remember outdoors in the fall occurred a few years ago. Several friends and I had convened duck camp at Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area near Great Bend. Our timing was perfect and we enjoyed picture-perfect days of fall weather complete with a giant harvest moon. Add to this the near-constant serenade and spectacle of white-fronted geese and sandhill cranes through dark and day and it was truly a therapeutic respite.

But the fall hunting and fishing seasons aren't complete without the other activities I enjoy. The perfect end to a delightful morning on the marsh or day on a distant reservoir is happenstance timing that finds a K-State or Kansas City Chiefs football game on the radio for the road trip home. Here's hoping the former continue their winning ways and the latter find theirs.

Football, fishing and hunting are synonymous with fall in my book, and it's a great time for all of it. While I don't want to wish away time, I always look forward to this time of year with great anticipation. So when that brisk breeze of that first cool snap in September hits me, you can bet my mind will start wandering. After all, it feels like fall, and that's a pretty good feeling to me.



Fall can be the best of times in Kansas state parks. Days and nights are cooler, fall color starts to show, and bird migrations begin. Those who prefer less crowded parks have more peace and quiet during the week as kids are back in school. Prime campsites and cabins are more available. Yet the pace isn't really as slow as it sounds.

Many parks hold special events in the fall. The 11th Annual Fall River Rendezvous will occur at Fall River State Park's Fredonia Bay Area on September 28. Representing the 1800-1840 time period when mountain men and Native Americans camped together to trade with the fur companies, the event will feature encampments, historical traders, blackpowder and archery demonstrations, a tomahawk throw, skillet throw for the ladies, and a kids' gold rush. This popular event brings many families back year after year.

On September 7, El Dorado State Park will host the Muddy Maniac Run, a 5-mile competition run with more than 20 obstacles. Simply the name of the event speaks a challenge. That same weekend, El Dorado is also holding a special youth deer hunt for Kansas kids age 12-16. September 27-30, El Dorado will host the Wheatland Fishing Has No Boundaries event to allow disabled children to experience camping and fishing. El Dorado's OK Kids and Free Park Entrance Day is October 5. Events include a fishing tournament, wingshooting, archery, moonwalk, boat and horse rides, geocaching, personal watercraft simulator and a free lunch.

On September 8, entrance is free at Lovewell State Park,

where visitors can enjoy a chili cook-off. The public is invited to sample and vote on the winners. Also, archers will compete in a 3-D archery shoot that same day. Competitors will shoot at 14 different stations on the range competing in three divisions.

Wilson State Park will host the Wild Within You 5k and 30K trail runs on September 22. If you would like a challenge, enter to run Wilson's scenic Switchgrass Trail. On October 13, the trail hosts two mountain bike races: the Wild Within You and Hellcreek on Wheels.

Halloween-flavored events on October 12 include Halloween in the Park at Meade State Park, Milford State Park's Monster Myths by Moonlight and El Dorado's Monster Run. Also on October 12, the Friends of Eisenhower State Park will stage the West Point Benefit Trail Ride in the park, which covers miles of scenic tallgrass prairie.

Fishing tournaments continue at many state parks throughout September and October. Coursing dog field trials begin at Clinton State Park, and hunter education courses are held in several parks.

Don't think the fun in Kansas state parks ends when the school doors open. We have more to offer throughout the year. And those who renew vehicle registrations in the fall should purchase a State Parks Passport at that time. For \$15.50, you can enjoy a full year's entrance into Kansas state parks. Motor vehicle permits purchased at park offices expire on December 31 of each year, making the passport an even greater value.

## BEAUTY AND A BOW

It's not often you associate the words "soldier" with "sash," or "beauty" with a "bow," but that's what Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism spokeswoman and Miss Kansas 2013, Theresa Vail, is all about – overcoming stereotypes and breaking barriers. She can strap on stilettos and shoot an arrow with the best of them, but these days she's aiming for more than just a spot on a target – she's got a bulls eye on the title of Miss America.

Bullied often as a child, Vail grew up not with a "can do" attitude, but with a "must-do" attitude, constantly challenging herself to prove her nay-sayers wrong.

"Growing up, I had so many people tell me I couldn't do certain things, that it almost had an opposite effect on me," said Vail. "It was like, if you say I can't, then I make a point to do." Today, that same tenacity is as fierce as ever as Vail



continues to push the limits of what is possible.

Apart from her recent duties as Miss Kansas, Vail is also a double major in Chemistry and Chinese, a soldier in the U.S. Army, Director of Public Relations for

"Suburban Woodsman," and an avid bowhunter. Vail, who began hunting at the age of 7, says she simply enjoys enjoy being outdoors.

"It doesn't matter if I see anything out on a hunt or not," said Vail. "I just like sitting out there."

Readers can find out more about Vail, including what her dream hunt would be, what being in the military has taught her, and her take on the difference between male and female hunters, in the November/December issue of Kansas Wildlife & Parks magazine.

To show your support for Vail in the upcoming Miss America pageant, visit [www.missamerica.org/videocontest](http://www.missamerica.org/videocontest) and vote her to the top! Voting closes at 11:59 p.m. EST on September 12, 2013.

Watch the Miss America pageant live, Sept. 15, 2013 at 9:00 p.m. on ABC.

– *Nadia Marji*

# SENATOR MARCI FRANCISCO

*This is the third article in a series featuring Kansas legislators and their views on wildlife resources and outdoor recreation.*

by Mike Miller  
editor, Pratt

Senator Marci Francisco, D-Lawrence, was elected to the Kansas Senate in 2004 where she represents District 2. Sen. Francisco is the ranking minority leader on the Senate Natural Resources Committee, and she took time to speak with Kansas Wildlife & Parks magazine for this third installment in a series profiling Kansas legislators and their views on the Kansas natural resources and outdoor recreation.

When asked about her interest in the outdoors, Sen. Francisco said her outdoor time these days is usually spent on a bicycle or hiking.

"I am bicycle rider," Francisco said. "I have ridden long distance, including a trips from Boulder, Colorado to Albuquerque, New Mexico and through the Sangre De Cristo mountains, and I used to always do the Lawrence Octoginta. Years ago, I took a six-week bicycle-train tour with stops in New Mexico, California, Oregon, and Glacier National Park."

Sen. Francisco said she was introduced to the outdoors through Girl Scout campouts and summer camp. "I did get my Marksman First Class in shooting," she said with pride.

"These days I enjoy hiking. My husband and I have been on several trips hiking and camping in the Grand Canyon. My grandmother climbed mountains in Switzerland and Colorado. Late in life she could no longer make it to the top of Pike's Peak with the Colorado Mountain Climbing Club, but she still went on the trips to help out with the cooking at base camp."

When asked about the economic impact of hunters and anglers in Kansas, she made some interesting observations.

"I recognize the important economic impact of hunters and anglers, but I particularly appreciate their interest in the environment. They're certainly the people who are working to preserve wildlife habitat and making sure that our rivers are clean. One of my favorite trips was to Cheyenne Bottoms. The first time you go there and you see all the shorebirds, it's an amazing sight.

"I recognize that hunters who are involved with wildlife conservation organizations like Ducks Unlimited have done a lot for preserving these natural areas in Kansas, and that's incredibly valuable to us all," she added.

She went on to talk about other ways hunters' contributions impact wildlife and conservation. "I have suggested to people that one of the best things they can do to help conserve wildlife is buy a hunting license. It's a great investment because far more money is generated for wildlife habitat conservation through the federal matching funds than just what you're paying for your license."



Deb Stavin photo

Sen. Marci Francisco and husband Joe Bickford

When asked about current and future issues, Sen. Francisco talked about water. It's important to her that riparian habitats are maintained to protect reservoirs from siltation and non-point source pollution. She is also concerned about the impact of aquatic nuisance species such as silver carp and zebra mussels.

Another issue on her radar is public land. "Kansas does not have a significant amount of public lands, and I know because of our fertile soils, it doesn't make sense to set aside the vast areas that we find in western states," she said. "But we need to make sure we have adequate public land available for recreation, and we need to fund recreation programs. People want to visit our state parks and I know they've really enjoyed the cabin program. So how do we maintain these programs? I really hope people will consider purchasing the Parks Passport when they renew their vehicle registrations," she added, speaking about the new park entry permit program designed to stabilize the Park Fee Fund.

Sen. Francisco also discussed the Kansas Department of Transportation's Roadside Management program, which allows wild flowers and native grasses to grow along our roadsides while curtailing mowing.

"I find it interesting when we can view these issues from a number of perspectives and set policies that work for many Kansans," she said.

Sen. Francisco concluded by saying she enjoyed learning about wildlife and outdoor resource issues when KDWPT staff provided testimony during legislative hearings.

"I support many of these programs because my constituents have let me know how important they are to them," she said. Kansans who value our hunting and fishing heritage should take note of Sen. Francisco's final statement. It's important that we communicate with our legislators so they understand our issues and know how much these resources and traditions mean to us.

Wow, what a difference a year makes. The last two years were so hot and dry, we were all praying for rain and cool weather. And early this summer we all anticipated more of the same. Although this spring was cooler than normal, when summer arrived, we braced ourselves for another miserable three months. Then came mid-July with rain and below average temperatures; RELIEF!

Some areas received too much rain, but most of our ponds, lakes, and reservoirs filled up, and the countryside greened up. I know some of you in western Kansas are still dry, but at least you can take a little pleasure in the cooler than normal temperatures. Fall farm crops look pretty good in most places, and we have weeds and decent grass in pastures and CRP for a change.

With the ponds filled up, a lot of landowners are thinking about restocking fish. If the ponds did not dry up completely, you may still have fish but you may need to evaluate what's left. Bass and bluegill will do a pretty good job of replenishing populations, although it will be next spring before they spawn. Catfish generally do not reproduce well in farm ponds, so you might have to add some catfish either now or in the spring.

If weeds grew up around the edges of your pond and are now flooded, there might have been an oxygen problem as the pond filled up. The decomposing vegetation causes oxygen depletion in the water and sometimes causes fish kills. By the time this article comes out, most pond oxygen problems should be cleared up, so stocking can begin in the fall.

To find fish to stock in your pond, contact a commercial fish

dealer in your area. You'll find a listing for Kansas dealers on the Kansas Aquaculture Association's website ([www.kansasaquaculture.org](http://www.kansasaquaculture.org)). The local KDWPT fisheries biologist can you provide you with technical advice.

In the fall, hunting can overshadow fishing. However, fall fishing can be good, and the recent rains should have the lakes in good shape. I plan to do some fall fishing as soon as I get back from trying to arrow a Colorado elk in early September. I also plan to start watching for that big buck I'd like to hunt this fall. Sounds like they are predicting a good teal season with an increased bag limit, so I might have to try that along with walking up some prairie chicken during the early season. Oh yea, dove season opens Sept. 1, and I have to get decoys ready for the waterfowl season later in the fall and get my trapping supplies rounded up for trapping season.

All of this fall fun will have to be worked in around teaching fishing classes at Becoming An Outdoors Woman; fall 4-H archery classes here in Lincoln County; taking my 4-H kids to state competition in archery, shotgun, and hunting skills; helping with local Eco-Meets; getting things ready for our local Pheasants Forever banquet; and following Fritz (my son) around at football games and other activities during his senior year in high school. Friends ask me if I'm really retired because they can't keep track of me these days. I tell them I'm still retired, but I'm not the least bit bored. I have no idea how I got this stuff done when I had a full-time job.

## COUNTRY STAMPEDE DRAWS 170,000 TO TUTTLE CREEK STATE PARK

The 2013 Country Stampede at Tuttle Creek State park drew 170,000 people over four days. Visitors came from all over to hear live country music in an outdoor, festive atmosphere. To keep concert goers safe, 22 park officers from 18 Kansas state parks descended upon Tuttle Creek State Park.

Law enforcement activities were coordinated in conjunction with Kansas Park Officers, Pottawatomie County Sheriff's Office, Riley County Police Department and Alcohol Beverage to prevent illegal activities. One of the biggest violations occurring at this event is underage drinking, which is not only illegal, but if not kept in check leads to cases of sexual assault, drunk driving, battery, alcohol poisoning, and even death. State park officers were extremely proactive and issued 105 minor in possession/consumption citations during the event.

The 2013 Stampede was mild from a law enforcement standpoint on violent and major crimes compared to recent years. A few other cases that were worked by park officers involved battery on a law enforcement officer, resisting arrest, transporting open container, criminal trespass and obstruction charges, which resulted in four arrests. In all, 139 violations were written by the state park officers.

Park law enforcement at the Stampede is not a lot different than when officers work at their own state parks. The big difference is the sheer number of people, as well as officers primarily



Marc Murrell photo

being on foot. When officers work their state parks, they focus on public relations; vehicle and camping permit enforcement, traffic enforcement; alcohol and drug violations; domestic violence; and of course boating and fishing violations.

I want to commend these officers for a job well done at this year's stampede. Their hard work has not gone unnoticed. In the past few years, KDWPT state park officers have been recognized as one of the premier law enforcement agencies working at the Country Stampede.

*Rob Gordon  
Natural Resource Officer I*

# NON-TOXIC SHOT REQUIRED AT DESIGNATED DOVE FIELDS



On many Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWP) public wildlife areas, managers have been working all summer to attract doves. Specific crops have been planted and managed, and if Mother Nature cooperates the dove hunting on these fields can be fantastic.

On many areas, these practices have been followed for several years; however, there are some changes for the 2013 season. The biggest change is that on designated dove fields, hunters will be restricted to non-toxic shot. Dove harvest has been high on many fields, and they draw large number of hunters for the first few days of the dove season. This kind of hunting pressure on small fields results in a large amount of lead shot being concentrated in a small area. Lead is toxic, espe-

cially to birds, so the non-toxic regulation has been implemented.

The fields requiring non-toxic shot will be designated with signs, and non-toxic shot is required for all shotgun hunting on these fields as long as the signs are in place. The following wildlife areas may have designated non-toxic shot fields: NORTHWEST - Jamestown WA, Glen Elder WA, Ottawa WA, Smoky Hill WA, and Wilson WA. NORTHEAST - Kansas River WA, Tuttle Creek WA, Clinton WA, Perry WA, Milford WA, Noe WA, and Hillsdale WA. SOUTHCENTRAL - Cheney WA, El Dorado WA, and Marion WA. SOUTHEAST - Dove Flats WA, Elk City WA, Fall River WA, La Cygne WA, Mined Land WA, Spring River WA, Toronto WA, and Woodson WA.

Hunters can see which wildlife areas have managed dove fields by going to [www.ksoutdoors.com](http://www.ksoutdoors.com), clicking on "Hunting," then "Migratory Birds" and "Doves." Narratives for each area under the "Managed Dove Hunting Areas On KDWP Public Lands" heading provide field locations, crop types and any special restrictions in place.

Dove hunting on these specially man-

aged fields can be so good they will attract many hunters. Common courtesy and strict safety procedures must be followed to ensure everyone has a safe and enjoyable hunt. Always keep plenty of space between hunting parties, be conscious of where you are shooting and where your shot will drop, and never take shots at low flying birds.

The 2013 season for mourning, white-winged, Eurasian collared and ringed turtle doves is open Sept. 1-Oct. 31 and Nov. 2-10. The daily bag limit for mourning and white-winged doves, single species or in combination is 15. The possession limit is 45. There is no limit on Eurasian collared and ringed turtle doves, but any taken in addition to a daily bag limit of mourning and white-winged doves must have a fully-feathered wing attached while being transported. A Kansas Harvest Information Program permit is required to hunt doves. An extended exotic dove season for Eurasian and ringed turtle doves will open Nov. 20-Feb. 28, 2014. There is no daily bag limit, but a fully-feathered wing must remain attached while the birds are transported.

*KDWP News*

## "ROUGH IT" AT A STATE PARK CABIN

Whether you're looking for a weekend getaway, a family reunion, or a basecamp for your hunting trip, Kansas state park cabins are great choices. With 121 cabins offered at 19 state parks, four state fishing lakes, and one wildlife area, there is sure to be a cabin that meets your needs.

Cabins are offered in either "deluxe" or "sleeper" styles. Deluxe cabins offer heating and air conditioning, a bathroom, shower, and often a furnished kitchen equipped with a refrigerator, stove, microwave, and coffee pot. Sleeper cabins are a little more rustic with fewer amenities, but are still equipped with heating and air conditioning, as well as electricity.

Cabins can sleep anywhere from four to ten adults. Beds are included, however guests are required to bring their own linens. Nightly fees vary from \$35 to \$110, depending upon the season and amenities offered. Cabins are popular, so it's a good idea to make reservations well ahead of time. For more information, including how to make a reservation, visit [ksoutdoors.com](http://ksoutdoors.com) and click "State Parks/Reservations." Reservations can also be made by visiting [www.reserveamerica.com](http://www.reserveamerica.com).

## WAY outside

BY BRUCE COCHRAN

### SPORTING GOODS

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# Go With The Flow

with Mark VanScoyoc

## COMMON CARP AND BUFFALO – KNOW THE DIFFERENCE

Because buffalo and carp are rather similar in appearance, these fish are often lumped together as if there is no difference.

Bigmouth, smallmouth, and black buffalo are native to Kansas. Buffalo are members of the sucker family. But the fight continues as fisheries managers struggle to deal with this destructive and competitive member of the minnow family.

Common carp are not native to Kansas. Carp were introduced to North America in the late 1800s by the U.S. Commission of Fish and Fisheries to provide a profitable food staple. There was growing public pressure on the Commission to mimic the European fisheries practices of stocking this species. The common carp proved prolific and adaptable, quickly infiltrating waterways across the U.S. The rest is history as they are prevalent in almost all bodies of water, streams and rivers in Kansas. Until recently, common carp were not highly prized as sport fish, but as any angler will tell you, get one on the end of your line and you're in for a fight.

The problem with carp is that they eat plants and animals necessary for other young game fish to grow and survive. They are considered bottom feeders and will uproot plants and stir sediments that will cloud



the water and block sunlight necessary for aquatic plants to grow. Game fish relying on sight to catch their prey struggle to survive in these muddy waters. Since carp are very productive, they will multiply to the extent where they take up the space needed by game fish. In smaller bodies of water they can all but eliminate a sport fishery. Even in larger waters they can significantly reduce populations of walleye and black bass species.

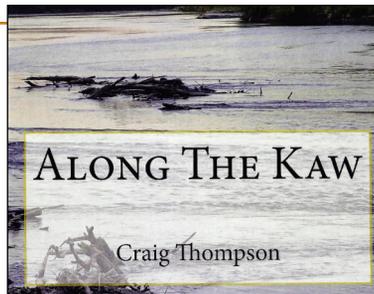
Buffalo are commonly mistaken for common carp and are therefore guilty by association. But upon closer examination, one can see noticeable differences between them. All of these fish can grow to relatively large sizes, with deep bodies, and similar coloration. Carp are easily distinguishable from buffalos because of the two fleshy barbels or “whiskers” on each side of their mouth. Additionally carp have spines while buffalo typically have larger scales.

Common carp are found in almost all waters within Kansas. Not the case with buffalo, which are found in larger river systems and reservoirs. These species are considered nonsport fish in the state and are often considered undesirable or unwanted by anglers. In the end, however, its only one of these species that produces undesirable and unwanted effects on our state's valuable aquatic resources.

### Along The Kaw

Last year, the U.S. Department of the Interior designated the Kansas River (also called the Kaw River) as a National Water Trail – and for good reason. The 173-mile river courses through some of the most scenic areas of Kansas – the Flint Hills and the eastern wooded hills. Along its way, it passes through a number of cities including Junction City (where it begins at the confluence of the Republican and Smoky Hill rivers), Manhattan, Topeka, Lawrence and Kansas City, where it meets the Missouri River. Floating the Kaw in a canoe or kayak makes for a relaxing, memorable experience, while anglers and hunters know the river can offer up some exciting sporting opportunities.

The river inspires and awes with a spell that has entranced many a river enthusiast. Craig Thompson is one of those spellbound travelers. A member of Friends of the Kaw, he uses his camera and talent for capturing compelling images to chronicle his trips



down the river. Thompson recently self-published a 158-page book of his photographs entitled, *Along the Kaw, A Journey Down the Kansas River*. The book features 75 color images exemplifying the beauty of the Kansas River and the fun of canoeing, kayaking, camping, and fishing along the river. The reader will find plenty of landscapes, birds, paddle-boaters, cityscapes and campers showcased in the book.

Thompson has organized his work into the Upper, Middle and Lower regions of the Kaw and further divides each region into numbered segments along the river. The images are captioned with the segment

number where they were taken. Each photo is also paired with a comment from a fellow river enthusiast (39 in all) who has fallen under the waterway's spell, and the poignant words underpin how much the river means to those who drift on its waters and play on its sandbars. Thompson's love of the river is evident in the variety of images he chose for the book. They represent the river in its natural state and in the context of the people who enjoy it and the cities that depend on it.

The Kansas River is one of three public rivers in the state (along with the Arkansas and Missouri rivers) and boasts the largest number of access points. Thompson concludes his book with a two-page map identifying 31 access points along the river where enthusiasts can launch a canoe or kayak or haul out for a break.

“Along the Kaw” is available from Amazon.com or from <https://www.create-space.com/4033692>.

*Ron Kaufman*





# **A Quarter Century of Bald Eagles Nesting in Kansas**

**text and photos by Michael A. Watkins  
wildlife biologist, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers**

***In 1960, just 413 bald eagle nests were  
found in the lower 48 states. In 2013,  
that number swelled to 10,000  
and a record 54 were  
documented in Kansas.***

Michael A. Watkins photo



Michael A. Watkins photo

**W**e struggled to walk away from the gnarly trunk of the eagle nest tree in the thigh-deep water. With each slow, deliberate step, the ankle-deep mud did its best to suck the boots off our feet and the energy out of our bodies as we pushed the small Jon boat slowly toward our main mode of transportation, an 18-foot SeaArk. It had been a challenging day of banding eaglets at Clinton Lake, but the mud, long hours and various obstacles we encountered couldn't dampen our spirits. To quote Mike Lockhart, "it was just another typical eagle banding day" (a phrase he often used when things weren't going according to plan).

Lockhart is the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Biologist (USFWS) who came to Clinton Lake 25 years ago to trap and band the first bald eagles hatched and fledged in the state since the turn of the century. We had just banded an offspring from that first pair of pioneering eagles who had established this nesting territory in 1989.

It seemed remarkable to our small banding party that this was the 25th anniversary of bald eagles nesting in Kansas, especially considering the tenuous beginning. In mid-April 1989 one of the adult eagles disappeared from this nesting territory, raising concerns that the nest might be abandoned. Then, on May 7, observers caught a glimpse of not one, but two young eaglets in the nest. The remaining adult, which turned out to be the male, successfully reared the young



This photo shows U.S. Army Corps of Engineers park ranger Teresa Rasmussen with a young eagle fledgling from a Kansas nest in 1991. Eaglets were captured and banded so biologists could track future nesting success.

birds and they fledged in mid-June.

Lockhart trapped and banded the two eaglets in July. By taking beak, talon and weight measurements, he determined that both juveniles were males. The sex of the birds was critical to establishing a new population of nesting eagles in Kansas because males generally return within 100 miles of where they fledge to establish nesting territories.

The two juvenile eagles were fitted with a standard U.S. Geological Survey aluminum leg band and a purple visual identification leg band with the silver letters A and B respectively. The color scheme is unique to the banding operation in Kansas. In 1991, Lockhart trapped and banded the adult male that was fitted with visual identification band E. Eagle E acquired a new mate after the 1989 nesting season and they have returned every year to nest at Clinton Lake.

This pioneering pair of eagles has produced 56 eaglets over the years and this is the most productive nesting territory in the state. A large portion of their offspring has been banded by the USFWS.

Initially the birds were trapped after they fledged from the nest, but in 1993 a new approach was implemented. The USFWS began recruiting tree climbers to climb the nest trees when the eaglets are about six weeks old. They lower the eaglets to biologists who measure and band the birds. The eaglets are immediately returned

to their nest, and the adults resume caring for their offspring.

According to Dan Mulhern, a biologist with the USFWS, "Climbing the nest tree is much more efficient than trapping the birds. It can take three to four days to



Dave Rhodes photos

The author, left, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist Mike Lockhart show an adult and young eagle trapped in 1989. The adult male raised the young birds on that first nest after the female disappeared.



trap the young from a single nest. By climbing the nest tree, we can band the eaglets from four different nests on a good day.”

Mulhern organized the first banding effort at Clinton Lake and has been in charge of the program since its inception. His decision to band the birds has paid huge dividends over the years. The purple visual identification leg bands were initially produced with alpha characters only. Once the original set of bands was used, bands were printed with alpha-numeric inscriptions. “The manufacturer prints only 18 letters of the alphabet on the bands to make it easier to identify the birds at a distance” Mulhern said. “For example, we use the letter E, but not the letter F as they could easily be confused when looking through a spotting scope.”

Only the juveniles from a portion of the active nests can be banded each year due to time and money constraints. Nest-banding priorities are established on a number of criteria, including, landowner permission, availability of an experienced tree climber, age of the eaglets, and location and structure of the nest tree.

“Once we start banding the hatchlings at one nest site, we like to continue every year to establish a history from that particular nest,” Mulhern said.

During the past 25 years, 220 bald eagles have been banded in Kansas. From this group, the status of 39 birds is known. Sixteen eagles have been observed in nesting territories at various lakes and reser-



Michael A. Watkins photo

Twenty-five years later, USACE natural resource manager Bunnie Watkins holds a young bird banded last spring from one of 54 eagle nests documented in Kansas.



voirs across the state and on the Kansas River. Four have been spotted nesting in Arkansas, Michigan and Missouri.

A significant event occurred in 1993 with the first return of a banded bird, Eagle B who established a nest at Hillsdale Lake about 28 miles southeast of Clinton Lake. Another milestone was reached in 1994 when Eagle A returned to establish a nesting territory at Perry Lake, about 15 miles northwest of Clinton. Both eagles continue to occupy these nesting territories and produce offspring.

Considering the mortality rate among first-year eagles is 70 to 80 percent, it was remarkable that both Eagle A and Eagle B survived, and that both had returned to nest in Kansas.

The most significant banded bird to return after A and B was 3S. This bird was banded as an eaglet in 1999 at Perry Lake Nest #1 and is the offspring of A. 3S is a male and the first banded second generation eagle to return to nest. 3S has been observed nesting on the Kansas River since 2004. According to Mulhern, "the return of 3S was further evidence of the growing stability and permanence of the bald eagle breeding population in Kansas."

Four banded eagles have been injured and taken to rehabilitation facilities in Kansas, Oklahoma and South Dakota. Three eagles have recovered from their injuries and been released. The fourth bird, Eagle CK could not be rehabili-

tated and is currently serving as an education bird at Pittsburg State University.

The remains of 16 banded eagles have been recovered. Many were collected close to where they were banded, but 5M was recovered in Prince Albert National Park, Saskatchewan, Canada approximately four months after he was banded at Clinton Lake. This young male had traveled over 1,200 miles from the nest where he



Bunnie Watkins photos

Watkins and USFWS biologist Dan Mulhern measure the beak of a young eagle at Clinton Lake last spring to determine the sex. In 25 years, biologists have banded 220 bald eagles in Kansas.



Michael A. Watkins photo

Initially, young eagles were trapped and tagged after they fledged from the nest. However, trapping was time-consuming and inefficient. In 1993 climbers were recruited to reach the nest then lower the eaglets to biologists waiting below. The technique has been used since.

fledged, which is not unusual for juveniles of either gender.

In most cases, it is difficult to determine the cause of death as the carcasses are generally found in an advanced stage of decomposition. Most juveniles probably perish from starvation, diseases, human interference or bad weather. There are many hazards in the environment that can adversely impact bald eagles; for example, one of our banded birds was hit by a train, one was hit by a motor vehicle, two were blown out of the nest by severe weather and two were struck by lightning while still in the nest. Two eagles have also been shot; 3A was killed near Claremore, Okla., and 5R near Paola. Unfortunately the poachers were not apprehended.

During the past 25 years, the nesting population of bald eagles in Kansas has increased dramatically. In fact, 2013 was a record year with more than 54 active bald eagle nesting territories scattered across the state.

“The Kansas bald eagle population is doing very well,” Mulhern

said. “Eagles are continuing to occupy open nesting territories, and I expect the population to continue to expand for the foreseeable future.”

Fish and waterfowl comprise a major portion of the bald eagle’s diet. Consequently, they prefer habitat around large bodies of water and along major rivers and streams where good fishing and hunting opportunities exist.

One of the fastest growing nesting populations in recent years has occurred on the Kansas River. The population has been monitored since 2002 thanks to Westar Energy’s Green Team, which annually funds an aerial survey of the river from Fort Riley to Kansas City. The population has ballooned from two nesting territories in 2001 to 18 productive nesting territories in 2013.

Several federal laws protect the bald eagle, including the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Lacey Act. Eagle nest sites are also protected. Anyone who disturbs or harms a nesting pair may be

assessed a maximum penalty of a \$250,000 fine and/or given a two-year jail sentence.

Partly because of these stringent laws, the number of bald eagles has increased significantly over the past four decades. When the bald eagle was designated our national symbol in 1782, biologists believe there were approximately 50,000 nesting pairs of bald eagles in the lower 48 states. By 1960, that number dwindled to a low of 413 nests. In 2013, the USFWS documented more than 10,000 productive nesting territories in the lower 48 states.

On August 8, 2007, the bald eagle was removed from the Endangered Species List. As part of federal law, the bald eagle population will be monitored and evaluated until 2027 to ensure that the species is continuing to flourish.

“We expect the bald eagle population in the Midwest to continue to expand,” Mulhern said. “The increase in bald eagle numbers nationwide has resulted in birds returning to regions of the country



they apparently abandoned more than 100 years ago.”

Over the years, more than 800 eagles have been hatched and fledged in Kansas. No one is certain of the exact number as there are certainly numerous nests that have yet to be discovered or reported.

Although the USFWS would band the juveniles out of eight nests during the 2013 nesting season, it was the original nesting pair at Clinton Lake that had led us to this banding site on that early evening in late April. We had started toward Clinton Lake Nest #1 first thing in the morning only to discover that this would definitely be “another typical eagle banding day.”

The lake water level was three feet low and approximately 100 yards from the nest tree the boat ran aground in the thick mud. The jet port in the outboard motor got plugged and the engine began to overheat. We aborted the banding attempt and headed to the other three nests on the lake. After overcoming some other significant obstacles and banding the six eaglets in those nests, we returned to nesting territory #1. We had a small Jon boat in tow to work from and to keep volunteer climber Jesse Morgan and his equipment dry.

It had been a challenge pushing the Jon boat to and from the nest tree in the deep, sticky mud. The five members of our eagle banding party were hungry and exhausted as we struggled to haul ourselves

over the side of the SeaArk and store our gear in the dwindling evening light. Nothing was said as the boat idled softly through the still night and navigated the submerged stumps toward deeper

water. The smiles on everyone’s face said it all. It had truly been “another typical, but successful eagle banding day.” 🦅

Michael A. Watkins photo



# HUNTER'S CHOICE

by Lloyd Fox

*Big Game Project coordinator, Emporia*





*Changes to the big game hunting equipment regulations will allow Kansas deer hunters to select the type of equipment that best fits each hunter's skill level and preferred hunting method.*

In 2013, a deer hunter will be able to select from the widest suite of equipment options ever allowed in Kansas. Many of the restrictions on equipment have been removed. For decades, regulations required a rifle hunter to use a caliber equal to or larger than a .243 Winchester. A handgun hunter had to select equipment with a shell case length that was at least 1.28 inches. Some shotguns and muzzleloaders were prohibited for certain species of big game. Years ago, there was a minimum draw

weight for bows. The purpose of those regulations was to set equipment standards intended to reduce wounding loss. With so many changes in the big game equipment requirements this year, deer hunters are encouraged to review the entire regulation.

These regulations are a work in progress as each year, hunters contact the department and point out various flaws in the regulations. Frequently they bring forth new ballistics supporting equipment not included under old regulations. Other changes have occurred when hunters revealed physical limitations that prevented them from hunting with required equipment, and they would suggest accommodating equipment allowed in other states. Equipment manufacturers are always improving old and creating new equipment not considered when the regulation was written. When we began reviewing regulations in 2012, we found that Kansas was in the minority among state wildlife agencies on deer hunting equipment regulations. For example, only seven of the 42 states where deer hunting with centerfire rifles

is allowed required a bullet of at least .243 caliber. After reviewing other states' regulations, as well as requests from hunters, department staff recommended changes for 2013.

Hunters have numerous objectives when selecting hunting equipment. They may wish to try something different or new to them, even though that "new" equipment may be a primitive or traditional form of equipment. Hunters frequently tell us that an important part of their hunting experience is to test themselves and develop skills. Other hunters want to use cutting edge equipment that is faster, more accurate or more powerful. However, the most basic function of the equipment they select is something that fits them, is adequate for the game they are hunting, and yet will result in a minimum of damage to the meat.

For some hunters, the amount of kick or recoil of a firearm is key. For some, the draw weight and let-off of a bow is critical to their accuracy. In addition to equipment specifications, most sportsmen consider the concept of fair chase. Fair chase has been thoroughly discussed and care-



Muzzleloader hunters have seen changes to equipment regulations over the years as technology changed equipment. Currently the only restriction on muzzleloaders is a .40 minimum caliber.

fully defined by many sportsmen. For many people, fair chase is the concept of matching personal skills to the evasive skills of the wildlife they pursue and the specifications of the equipment they select.

Conscientious hunters will spend time reviewing equipment ballistics and seek advice of experts before they purchase new equipment. Place a group of deer hunters in a room for a few minutes and start a conversation about the best hunting equipment, and in no time you'll have an argument brewing with as many different opinions as there are hunters in the room.

#### Public Acceptance

Equipment standards must pass the test of public acceptance. Regulations without public acceptance result in poor compliance. Before recommendations to the big game equipment regulations were formulated, staff did extensive surveys to find out what big game

hunters supported and desired. Questionnaires were sent to a sample of randomly selected hunters. Following those surveys, public meetings were conducted for more input. In the background was a committee of KDWPT professionals charged to review the current regulations. Finally, the recommended changes were reviewed by administrators and the KDWPT Commission. Make no mistake, not all people support the changes. Frequently people opposed to changes will point to possible scenarios that might occur and lead to problems. Those points often skew to a couple extremes. On one side, people argue that the new equipment will give some other hunter an unfair advantage over their quarry or other hunters. The other side of the argument claims that use of some equipment would be irresponsible as it might result in wounding loss, crippling and inability to retrieve animals, which would be a frivolous use of the

valuable shared resource. There are people who want the state to set the standard on equipment and there are others who believe those decisions should be left to hunters. Reviewing and changing the regulation followed the time-honored democratic process where everybody had an opportunity for input. It also followed a North American Model for Wildlife Conservation principle, which says hunting should be available to all people. It was not a process that favored one group over another based on the equipment they preferred.

For this article, I will consider three changes made in the big game equipment regulation: crossbows as archery equipment; any centerfire rifle being legal during the firearm season; and electronic equipment that may be added to an arrow.

#### Crossbows Allowed During Archery Season

Crossbows are an ancient device with a colorful history of conflict in opinions among people who used them and people who used long bows. In 1139, Pope Innocent II forbid certain uses of crossbows saying they were, "... deathly and hateful to God and unfit to be used among Christians." Other leaders of that time advocated for crossbows. There is much myth and misunderstanding about crossbows.

Crossbows are locked at full draw while long bows, recurve bows and compound bows require the hunter to draw and hold the draw weight of the bow when they wish to shoot. From a ballistics standpoint, they perform much like a modern compound bow. Numerous manufacturers are

producing high-quality hunting crossbows, and as they have become more available, their popularity among hunters has grown. Promotional advertisements for these devices have created public demand for their inclusion as legal equipment. In 1973, only two states allowed crossbows for deer hunting, but by 2012 crossbows were allowed as archery equipment in 22 states. Not since the invention of the compound bow by Holless Allen in 1966 has anything created such a stir in the archery world.

Archery has changed much during my lifetime. I built my first bow from a hickory branch and used it to take (or mostly just try to take) rabbits and fish. My first deer hunting bow was a used recurve with a quiver, four cedar-shaft arrows and some leather items for my fingers and wrist. I paid \$15 for the whole outfit. Modern archery equipment is high-quality and comes with a husky price tag. Interest in bowhunting grew as compound bows were perfected and became popular. Along with that new equipment came numerous advancements in the bowhunting techniques and the accessory equipment that improved hunter success.

In bowhunting's early years, the few hunters who pursued deer with archery equipment had little impact on big game populations. Archery seasons were liberal, and bowhunters became dedicated, enthusiastic participants. That history may be part of the controversy over allowing crossbows as archery equipment. It can no longer be argued that archery hunters are not having an impact on big game populations. In some areas of the nation, archery take exceeds that of firearm hunters. Some state wildlife agencies are concerned that long archery seasons may disrupt breeding behavior of some big game

species. The greatest concern has been raised over elk seasons. While none of those issues are a concern at this time in Kansas, the concerns from other states may be critical in the thinking of Kansas bowhunters, who have experienced, in their recent memory, large changes in the number of bowhunters. They fear that more hunters with newer equipment may make it even more difficult for them to find a place to hunt.

As KDWPT joins the ranks of states where crossbows will be legal equipment to anybody during the archery season, an expanded monitoring program will determine how many hunters select this equipment and how successful they are. Each person who plans to use a crossbow to hunt big game and turkey in Kansas is required to obtain a free Crossbow Survey ID number. Data collected will allow KDWPT to survey all crossbow users without contacting all deer hunters.

Have we heard the last of the controversy over crossbows?

Probably not. However, we have established some procedures that will allow the department to evaluate hunters' use and success with this equipment. That information will allow us to make decisions in the future based on facts determined by the best standards of data collection. Science-based decisions are another key principle of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation.

### **Any Centerfire Rifle Allowed During Firearms Season**

When the regulation was changed to allow any centerfire rifle for big game hunting, some people wondered if the department was promoting a switch to small caliber rifles. The answer to that is NO, and staff don't expect much change in the firearms deer hunters use. The experience from other states with similar regulations suggests that the majority of firearm deer hunters will continue to use the same calibers they have always used. Officials in those states did not indicate any prob-



Some hunters believe our hunting heritage is under siege with technology insulating young hunters from the challenge of traditional contact with game and the environment.



This year, Kansas deer hunters will be able to select the centerfire caliber and cartridge that fits their shooting ability and hunting method.

lems as a result of hunters using smaller caliber centerfire rifles, and no published scientific reports were found pointing to increased wounding loss or adverse effect on big game populations.

A survey of 10,590 firearm deer hunters last year revealed that the most popular caliber in Kansas is the .270 (22.8 percent of firearm hunters), followed by the .30-06 (18.4 percent) and the .243 (11.6 percent). Surveys of Kansas hunters in 2002 and 2012 revealed no significant change in hunter preference for calibers of firearms. So, who wants to use a small caliber rifle to hunt deer in Kansas? Probably very few people. Some young hunters want to use a rifle with little recoil. Because of their accuracy, the .223 and the .22-250 have been used effectively by wildlife professionals and damage control specialists in deer culling operations. However, who and how many people will use the equipment may be less important than who should make that decision on equipment.

#### **Transmitters on Arrows and Other Gadgets**

Some people feel that their hunting heritage is under siege and the next generation will not experience hunting as they did. It is not for lack of opportunity or scarcity of wildlife that they fear their heritage will be lost. It is because commercial products and modern technology allow such comforts and aids as to insulate today's hunters from the challenge of traditional and natural contact with game and the environment. This is not a new problem. Aldo Leopold warned in the 1940s that sporting-goods dealers with their mechanized gadgetry were a hindrance and had, ". . . draped the American outdoorsman with an infinity of contraptions, all offered as aids to self-reliance, hardihood, woodcraft, or marksmanship, but too often functioning as substitutes for them."

Some gadgetry restrictions in Kansas regulations were removed this year. This is not the first time this portion of that regulation has changed. It started simply as pro-

hibiting electronic devices that could be attached to the bow or arrow. As years passed, exceptions were added for lighted pins on the sights, then holographic sights and more recently illuminated nocks. Today that section of the regulation allows rangefinders, video cameras and radio-frequency location devices to be attached. A radio-frequency device is a tiny transmitter that attaches to an arrow but remains attached to the hide when the arrow passes through the deer. Theoretically, the device will begin to transmit a radio signal that could be detected by a receiver. The hunter would then have a short period of time to use their receiver to find the carcass of the deer before the battery would run out of energy. The device is designed to prevent the loss of a deer when a hunter is unable to follow the sign left after a deer is hit and runs off if, for example, rain washes away the trail or the deer dies in tall grass.

KDWPT is not alone when it comes to wrestling with the dilemma of gadgets, fair chase and the tradition of our hunting heritage. Frequently we have looked to sportsmen's organizations for input. The Pope and Young Club is one of the foremost organizations in the bowhunting field, and they too have struggled with this constantly changing equipment. Formerly, they excluded from their record book any animal taken with a compound bow with a let-off greater than 65 percent of its draw weight. However, as manufacturers developed new compound bows with let-off ratings of 70 percent to 90 percent and few companies continued to produce bows with less than 65 percent let off, club officials changed their standard.

#### **Accuracy and Shot Placement**

A friend was asked which style of deer hunting equipment caused the most wounding. His response,

“Any equipment purchased the night before season opens!” Having equipment with ideal specifications is not enough. It makes little sense to select equipment with excessive power, but which you cannot use accurately. Whatever equipment selected, if you cannot draw the bow, if you fear the recoil of a heavy rifle, if you flinch when you pull the trigger, if you do not know the vital areas and aim points on a deer, or if you simply have not developed shooting skills, then you are not ready for deer hunting. This is where a good mentor and an honest self-appraisal of your abilities become critical. The ethical deer hunter selects equipment carefully, practices adequately with it, knows his or her abilities and has decided in advance about responsible decisions.

Shot placement is a consideration based on the type of equipment used. There are many locations on a deer that could be considered lethal aim points. However, some locations may be inappropriate for certain hunters and equipment.

An arrow kills when a razor-sharp broadhead cuts major blood vessels as it passes through the body. Bullets kill by delivering large amounts of energy, which breaks bones and damages internal organs.

The heart and lung area of a deer is an excellent aiming location for any type of equipment especially if the hunter has knowledge of the location of these organs relative to the deer’s position. Because of the size of these vital organs, there is also a large target area, about the size of a volleyball. The brain and spinal cord of a deer are also lethal aim points; however, they present a small target area (about the size of golf ball) and they are protected by heavy bones. Hunters need to

know the distance at which they can consistently group their shots if they pick those target areas.

Hunters using archery equipment should avoid a shot at the deer’s heart if for example the large bones of the front leg or shoulder might be hit and prevent the arrow from reaching the heart and lungs. In general, the best body position for an archer is broadside or quartering away.

Firearm hunters may not be as limited by the deer’s body position, but they must consider bullet weight and velocity and select an aim point that does not destroy edible meat. Light, high velocity frangible bullets, while extremely accurate may not be suitable for heart/lung shots.

### Trophies and Equipment

Equipment choice may also determine if a harvested animal qualifies for trophy status through a record keeping organization. Hunters should be familiar with equipment restrictions of various organizations if a trophy listing is important to them.

### Summary

These new regulations will not encourage or force people to use new or different equipment. The industry will continue to improve equipment and add choices, and the current regulation will allow hunters to review the technical specifications and read the product reviews of new items. They’ll ask their friends and seek advice from experts. They will determine their skill levels with various equipment and they will determine when the field performance of various items is satisfactory. The Kansas sportsmen are also creatures of habit and tradition. Many of their decisions will be based on experience, peer group pressure and that long list of items we lump under ethics. Neither a free market environment nor a strong central government approach in design of regulations dealing with hunting equipment will cause the sky to fall in part because North American sportsmen are involved and they have been involved for decades. Thank you North American Model of Natural Resource Conservation. 🦌



All hunters should understand the anatomy of a deer well enough to know where lethal aim points are. Then they must know the limitations of their equipment and abilities.

# SOUTHEAST KANSAS NATURE CENTER

By Andra Bryan Stefanoni  
*Pittsburg*

*A unique park and natural area in Cherokee County is home to a nature education facility that is now operated by the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism.*



What began as a first grade teacher's solution for nearby field trips has become a destination full of natural wonders suitable for people of all ages.

"I wanted to take my students someplace they could explore," said Linda Phipps. "It needed to be close, and it needed to be free."

She found it where she spent much of her childhood: The 55-acre Schermerhorn Park south of Galena. The park's crumbling scout cabin, built atop a wooded hill, terraced by the WPA in the 1930s, overlooked the banks of nearby Shoal Creek.

"We came to day camps here. I grew up wading here. We'd ride our bikes down and spend the day," Phipps said.

Ten years ago, she spearheaded an effort to restore the cabin and open it as the Southeast Kansas Nature Center. The project was paid for through grassroots

fundraising. Through the work of some 30 volunteers, the transformed cabin now boasts native animal and plant exhibits and discoveries around every corner.

There's a working beehive, a Native American arrowhead collection built over 40 years, and a display of native bird nests and eggs. Computers with nature-based programs allow for individual learning, while occasional public programs allow groups to take a wildflower hike or see live raptors. Outside, hiking trails take visitors through the "Kansas Ozarks," where hillsides are shaded by oaks and shagbark hickories, and a few tallgrass prairie glades can be seen.

Wildlife that call the park home include ornate box turtles, five-lined skinks, slider and painted turtles, white-tailed deer, eastern chipmunks, and gray and fox squirrels. On late summer evenings, visitors can hear chuck-will's-widows, whip-poor-wills, great horned owls, barred owls, eastern screech-owls and

the high-pitched chirp of flying squirrels.

The recent addition of an afterschool program has brought about 10 to 20 youth to the center from a nearby elementary school, and summer programs keep youth learning and engaged. But the center has also attracted the attention of adult groups like the Sperry-Galligar Audubon Society, wildflower enthusiasts, and the Kansas Herpetological Society, which conducted its annual species count there in April.

An estimated 30 percent of the state's threatened and endangered species are evident at the park, which was a finalist for the 8 Wonders of Kansas contest in 2010.

My husband and I began taking our oldest son there when he was just tall enough to open discovery drawers filled with the wonderments of nature: Mammal skins, turtle shells and shed antlers. A few years later, his brother joined us. They took delight in trying out the child-sized binoculars set out on the ledge of a bird-viewing window, and saying hello to the taxidermy mounted great blue heron and racoon.

On rainy days, we sat on the floor of the classroom area and put together a giant floor puzzle that featured insects, or marveled at the rock collection. On spring or fall days, we enjoyed a winding hike through the Ozarkian hilltops in search of wildflowers just beginning to show themselves, or leaves beginning to turn autumn colors. If we were lucky, we'd see a skink or hear the "tap-tap-tapping" of a woodpecker.

As our sons got older, we worried that return trips to the nature center might not hold their interest. We were wrong. As their understanding of the natural world has gained more depth, return trips have found them asking more complex questions. They want to know about the anatomy and physiology of living species on display and they can hike further distances on the trails.



Ron Kaufman photo

The Southeast Kansas Nature Center sits on the 55-acre Schermerhorn Park, south of Galena and overlooks Shoal Creek.



Andra Stefanoni photo

Phipps, meanwhile, worried about the future of the center itself. She was seeking retirement and many of the volunteers and board of directors who helped build and fund the center were aging.

This spring, the center's future became secure when the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT) assumed operations and hired a full-time director: Jennifer Rader, who holds a degree in biodiversity and conservation and has experience teaching nature education. She is the daughter of Mike Rader, KDWPT's wildlife education coordinator.

On our most recent visit, she was a hit with our boys. She invited them to help her feed a three-toed box turtle and took a milk snake out of its terrarium so they could touch it. She brings a renewed energy and enthusiasm to the center, and it's clear her expertise is an asset.

We look forward to many more visits for years to come. ♡

#### To go:

The center is open Tuesdays through Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and on Sundays from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., or by appointment. It is located at 3501 S. Main St., two miles south of the intersection of Highway 66 and Main Street in Galena. Phone 620-783-5207 or 417-439-3234. Groups are encouraged to schedule visits. The park is open dawn to dusk and has picnic tables, a playground and restrooms.

Andra Bryan Stefanoni is an award-winning journalist who lives in southeast Kansas on two acres that she and her biologist husband developed to attract wildlife. In 2003, they installed a trail of five nesting boxes. Since then, they have counted 73 bluebirds that fledged. Andra can be reached at [andra.stefanoni@gmail.com](mailto:andra.stefanoni@gmail.com)



# WIPER ON!

by Craig Johnson  
*district fisheries biologist, El Dorado*

***The hybrid created by crossing a striped bass with a white bass has caused quite a stir in the angling community. You won't soon forget the fight of your first wiper.***

**F**ew fish are capable of pulling harder than the striped bass hybrid, commonly called wiper in Kansas. The wiper is a cross between the white bass and striped bass, and the resulting hybrid grows quickly and can make drags scream with long, powerful runs when hooked. Wipers are usually found in schools, so when you catch one, you can usually catch several. The trick is finding these open-water fish in large reservoirs.

The wiper is a pelagic, or open water, species. They can be nomadic and may appear to be aimlessly swimming the wide-open water spaces. However, once they are found, it is usually quite evident why they are there. Factors influencing wiper location can vary from structure preference, wind direction, water temperature, water clarity, food availability, or a combination of these factors. To find fish, anglers should begin looking in high-per-

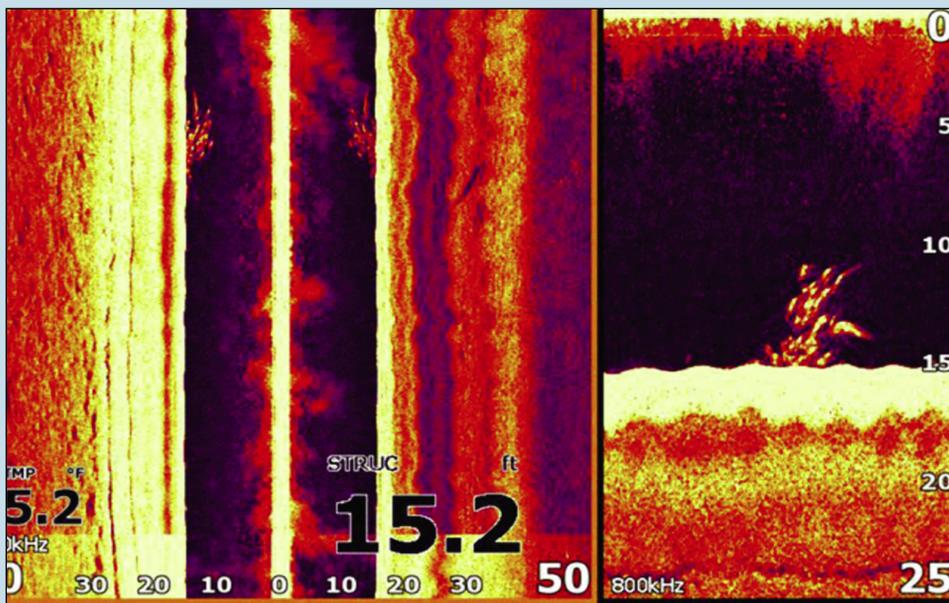
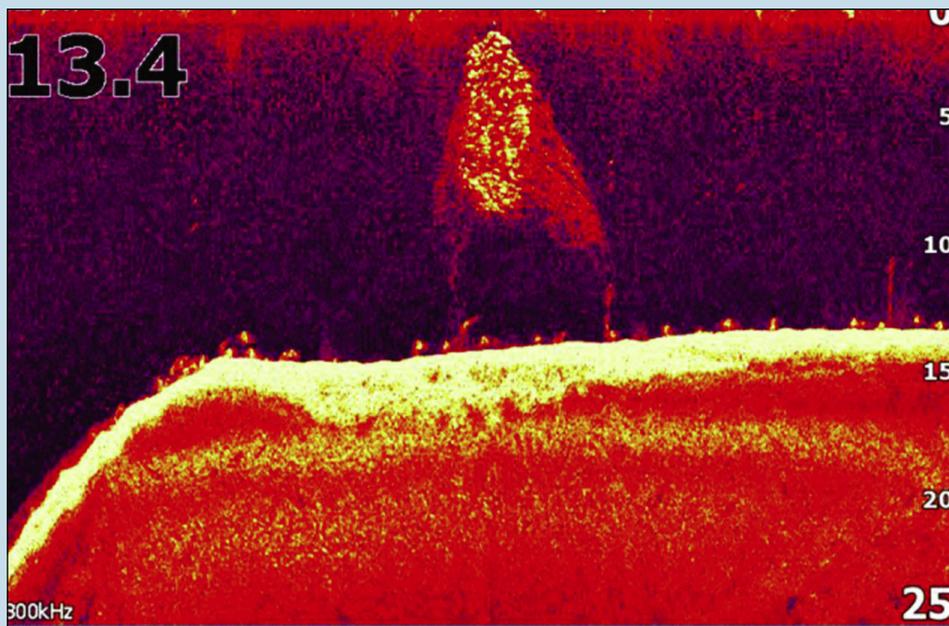
centage areas while considering seasonal influences.

Seasonal movements begin in the spring when wipers may move up streams and rivers during the white bass spawning run. In mid-summer, wipers will be found wherever schools of young-of-year shad are located, and they will stay on shad through October. Later in the fall, wipers can be found along rip-rapped dams and causeways. Other potential wiper-holding spots include downwind

shorelines and shallow points where baitfish are concentrated, steep bluffs, channel ledges, or humps where shad can be cornered by a school of feeding fish, and submerged roadbeds. Having a seasonal “milk run” of these high-percentage areas during your fishing trip will keep you in the wiper zone longer than blindly searching thousands of acres for the roaming wiper.

When active fish are found on one of these spots, good fishing will last until a change occurs such as the wind changing directions, or a cold front passing through. However, when several favorable factors occur simultaneously and stay consistent, fish may be found and caught in the spot, same depth and with the same techniques day after day. Consistent pattern fishing requires stable weather with little change in wind direction, water temperature, or water clarity. Any change will likely send the fish packing to find another favorable area. A spot that held fish for days or even weeks will suddenly be devoid of fish, and anglers will have to go back to search mode. Long-term patterns don't happen often, but when they do the rewards can be great.

Advances in electronics make locating fish much easier. High-resolution displays with side-imaging sonar features allow anglers to look at wide swaths of water to not only find likely fish-holding structure but also to find the fish themselves and where they are located in the water column. Sonar units with GPS capabilities allow the angler to mark either fish or structure with a waypoint so it can easily be relocated. GPS can also prove invaluable in staying in productive water during trolling runs. Older sonar units required more interpretation to decipher what was being displayed on the screen. Today's advanced units can actually show near-picture quality



views of the underwater world.

Balls of baitfish look like, well, balls of baitfish. Larger fish can easily be differentiated from smaller individuals. Relation to available cover is easily seen and depth of the target fish is obviously displayed. Above are two screenshots from a Lowrance HDS unit taken on El Dorado Reservoir during 2011.

Being able to see the fish and orientation of the school, the angler can make decisions regarding the best possible presentation under the current conditions. The top picture shows nearly all of the preda-

tory fish lying very close to the bottom but not in a tight school. In this instance, medium depth diving crank baits were used to tick the bottom pulling the baits right through the fish. Wiper and walleye were caught out of this grouping of fish.

The bottom picture shows a tightly-bunched school of fish that extends up 5 feet from the bottom. Since the school of wipers were such a small target and didn't appear to be chasing shad, we dropped spoons down and fished vertically. Side-scan imaging can be seen to the left.

Selecting the right lure can be a piece of cake or impossible depending on the mood of the fish. Structure and depth will give your first clues in selecting a bait that will get bit, but the bait should resemble a gizzard shad and you have to be able to get it in front of the fish. When wipers are feeding aggressively, it's hard to pick a bait they won't hit, and if they're chasing gizzard shad on the surface, just about any bait thrown into the boiling water will get bit. During these frenzies, some anglers prefer casting equipment and lipless crank baits. Other anglers prefer spinning gear and jigs tipped with plastic bodies. Keep in mind that it's quicker to unhook a fish caught on a single jig hook than it is to wrestle a thrashing fish with a crankbait with three treble hooks flying around! It's safer for the angler, too. Being able to quickly unhook the fish allows the angler to get back to the action. When fishing during the frenzy season, it is a good idea to always have a rod ready to throw to surfacing fish. This rod should be rigged with a lure that can be cast a long distance and of a size that closely matches the size of the shad the wiper are feeding on.

Slab spoons are a great choice when fish are holding off of a drop or relating to other structure and not moving very much. With a spoon, the presentation can be slowed down and the angler can hang a bait in front of the wiper and tempt them in to biting when they are in a less aggressive mood. Slab spoons are worked by dropping the bait to a level just above the fish and then the rod tip is snapped quickly upward a couple of feet. After a slight pause at the top of the lift, the spoon



Craig Johnson photos



For casting to schooling fish or jigging deep fish, try lipless crankbaits, jigs and slab spoons (above left and left). The crankbaits above are good choices for trolling and casting once fish are located.



is allowed to drop and flutter on a controlled fall. The angler should keep slight tension on the spoon as it falls so strikes can be detected. Strikes most often occur on the drop and also on the pause after the lift. Spoons are heavy and while fished on a tight line the strikes are very easy to feel. Set the hook immediately if you feel a bump, thump, or just feel weight. Tying a small hair jig eighteen inches above the slab spoon will enhance your presentation. This gives the appearance that the spoon is "chasing" the jig and really grabs the attention of predator fish. It is not uncommon to catch doubles of wiper or white bass on this rig.

Trolling is a great search tool for locating active wiper and also white bass. After deciding on a high-percentage area considering conditions, set out rods rigged up with crankbaits and work through the area. Keep a close eye on the sonar and GPS while driving the area. Since you will be looking for fish in the area anyway, it increases your chances to have some baits in the water as you scout.

Having baits that run at



Mike Miller photo



Craig Johnson photo

Wipers commonly grow to more than 8 pounds, and a fish that size will test the heaviest of tackle. The state record weighed 25 pounds and was caught below Perry Reservoir.

varying depths will help you cover more water and find the active fish more quickly. Taking note of the depth of fish returns on the sonar will allow you to adjust the depth of your baits to get them in the zone. Need more depth? Let out more line. Is your lure running under most of the fish? Reel in some line to make the bait run shallower. Line counter reels make it easy to put the bait back in to the same depth where active fish are found. If fish are scattered, then trolling may be the best method to catch fish. If you see that the wiper are concentrated in a small area and you catch fish only while pulling through them, you can stop and work the area thoroughly with slab spoons or jigs. If the fish can't be enticed to bite while fishing vertically, go back to trolling through them. Sometimes the speed of the lure and the illusion of escaping prey trigger the fish into biting. Experiment often with colors, lure size, depth, and speed. At times a slight change in a presentation can result in either increased or decreased success. Being able to duplicate a successful trolling pass is key.

Hot wiper bites can turn stone cold in a matter of minutes. Sometimes it is because they have moved off, and other times they are just done feeding. Nothing

beats time on the water for putting together a successful milk run route. Being flexible and not falling into a rut will keep anglers productive. What was the hot spot today may be dead tomorrow. Having other high-percentages areas identified and knowing how to search new water in an efficient manner is important to staying on top of these striped freight trains.

Restrictive length and creel

limits exist for wipers in El Dorado. The 2/day creel limit and 21-inch minimum length limit provides very good angling opportunity at the lake. There are currently good numbers of 21-inch and larger wiper in the lake, creating good chances of hanging in to larger fish. Wiper in the 15- to 17-inch range were caught in high numbers during October by anglers fishing from both shore and boat. Anglers should be able to properly identify wiper. See the fish ID poster at [ksoutdoors.com](http://ksoutdoors.com) for information on how to identify wipers.

Wiper can provide fast action with high numbers of fish that fight like none other. El Dorado has a great population and other reservoirs worth checking out including Milford, Kirwin, Cheney and Marion. Check out the 2013 Kansas Fishing Forecast for more detailed information, spool up with new line, get your friends and family and hit the water! You'll likely make memories that will last a lifetime! ♡



Mike Miller photo

Catching a wiper is about as much fun as an angler can have, and when you hook into a really nice fish like this one, it is sure to put a smile on your face.

# Bling WITH A BANG

**TEXT AND PHOTOS BY  
NADIA MARJI  
ASSOCIATE EDITOR, PRATT**

*Weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism employee Jennifer Haugh is a communications manager and editor of KANSAS! magazine, but come 5:01 p.m., she's a gun-toting, magazine-reloading, target-shooting "diva."*

It all started just one year ago when Haugh was shooting pistols with her stepfather just prior to taking a conceal carry class. Impressed by her accuracy, Haugh's father began calling her "dead eye." "I didn't know what that meant at the time," said Haugh, "but once I found out, it was such a confidence booster!"

The more her abilities were recognized, the more she realized she wanted to share her passion with other women. It wasn't long until Haugh made the decision to become a Certified Kansas Conceal Carry



Dead Eye Diva co-founder, Jennifer Haugh, shoots a few rounds with her prized FNS 9mm pistol dubbed none other than "Bling Betty."

Instructor and a NRA Certified Pistol Instructor. Holding classes all throughout Kansas, Haugh teaches a variety of subjects including Pistol 101, Conceal Carry, and Women On Target. She estimates that nearly 100 women have taken her courses in just the past year alone, a handful of which have taken more than one. Haugh stressed the importance of providing women a supportive, non-judgmental, and fun environment to learn in when introducing them to shooting.

"So many women tell me about how they have tried to learn how to shoot with their husbands or brothers and they just end up leaving frustrated. They feel like the men teaching them sort of have this mentality of 'you should already know this stuff,'" Haugh said. "I want women to shoot with me and see that guns aren't that scary and that they can learn this stuff."

Apart from teaching, Haugh also has been making preparations to start her very own women's shooting league. Although if you were to look in her shooting bag, you might find that she has quite a league of her own.

"I have four pistols that I shoot regularly, all of which I have names for," Haugh chuckled. Opening her shooting bag, she pulled out pistol after pistol, referring to each of them as if they were an old friend. Her buffet of bling consisted of a FNX 9mm dubbed "Black Betty," a FNS 9mm called "Bling Betty," a Ruger SR22 known as "Itty Bitty," and a Ruger 357 Revolver dubbed none other than "Roseanne" for it's rosewood grip.

"All joking aside," said Haugh, "it's important we understand the right we've been bestowed, the respect it deserves and the reward it can provide if you have an interest and it's done safely."

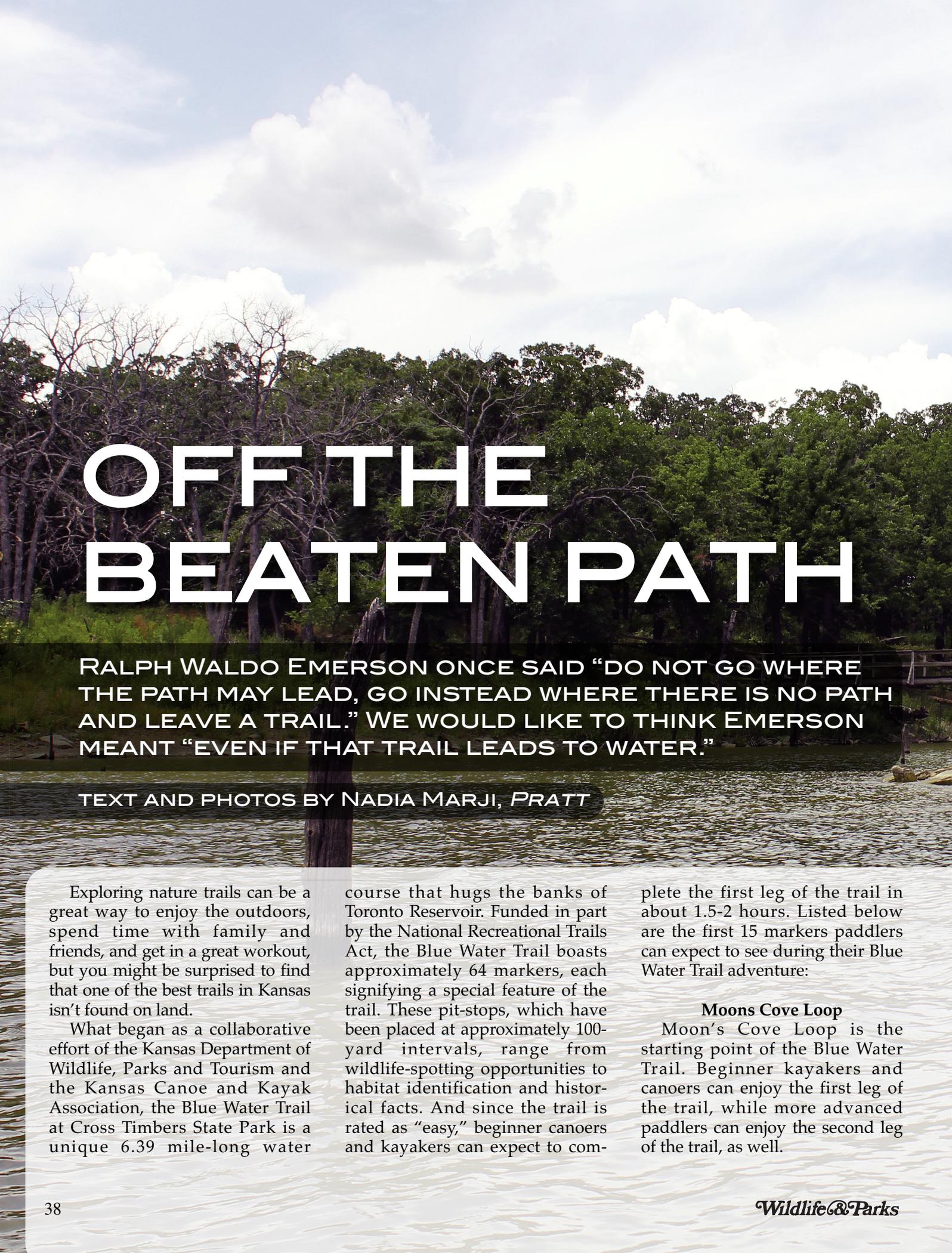
For more information on Dead Eye Divas, including a list of classes currently being offered, visit [deadeyedivas.com](http://deadeyedivas.com), or contact Haugh at [DeadEyeDivas@gmail.com](mailto:DeadEyeDivas@gmail.com).



Jennifer Haugh displays her collection of pistols: a FNX 9mm, and FNS 9mm, and Ruger SR22, and Ruger 357 Revolver with rosewood grips.

## Dead Eye Diva





# OFF THE BEATEN PATH

RALPH WALDO EMERSON ONCE SAID “DO NOT GO WHERE THE PATH MAY LEAD, GO INSTEAD WHERE THERE IS NO PATH AND LEAVE A TRAIL.” WE WOULD LIKE TO THINK EMERSON MEANT “EVEN IF THAT TRAIL LEADS TO WATER.”

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY NADIA MARJI, *PRATT*

Exploring nature trails can be a great way to enjoy the outdoors, spend time with family and friends, and get in a great workout, but you might be surprised to find that one of the best trails in Kansas isn't found on land.

What began as a collaborative effort of the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism and the Kansas Canoe and Kayak Association, the Blue Water Trail at Cross Timbers State Park is a unique 6.39 mile-long water

course that hugs the banks of Toronto Reservoir. Funded in part by the National Recreational Trails Act, the Blue Water Trail boasts approximately 64 markers, each signifying a special feature of the trail. These pit-stops, which have been placed at approximately 100-yard intervals, range from wildlife-spotting opportunities to habitat identification and historical facts. And since the trail is rated as “easy,” beginner canoers and kayakers can expect to com-

plete the first leg of the trail in about 1.5-2 hours. Listed below are the first 15 markers paddlers can expect to see during their Blue Water Trail adventure:

### **Moons Cove Loop**

Moon's Cove Loop is the starting point of the Blue Water Trail. Beginner kayakers and canoers can enjoy the first leg of the trail, while more advanced paddlers can enjoy the second leg of the trail, as well.



### **Sandstone Outcroppings**

The second marker on the trail is the Sandstone Outcropping stop. Sandstone, a sedimentary rock formed by the cementation of sand, appears throughout Toronto Lake in the form of outcroppings. This unique feature gives lake-goers a feel of the Ozarks of Missouri.

### **Buttonbush**

Next, paddlers will come across the Buttonbush marker. The bush's round, white flowers are sweet-

smelling, and thus attract bees and other nectar-loving insects.

### **Migratory Birds**

If the timing is right, paddlers may encounter American white pelicans at marker number four. These birds travel across Toronto Lake during the spring and fall. They can be identified by their flat bill, white feathers, black-tipped wings, and wingspan reaching upwards of 8 feet.

### **American Elm**

The favorite shade tree of many towns and cities, American elms in Kansas are naturally found along water courses, often by ash and cottonwoods. A native of eastern Kansas, the American elm now faces a lethal enemy – Dutch elm disease.

### **Fish Habitats**

For marker number six, paddlers get an up-close view of dead snags protruding from the water, left as a result of when Toronto was first



Adam Murray, Cross Timbers State Park ranger and avid outdoorsman, guides first-time canoer, Nadia Marji, down the Blue Water Trail. Visitors can rent a canoe like the one seen above from park staff at no charge.

constructed. The snags actually provide excellent habitat for most of the fish in Toronto Lake, including catfish, crappie, and white bass.

#### **Post Oak**

In the Cross Timbers region, Post Oak is often the dominant tree found on upland sites. Valuable for its acorn food supply, whitetail deer, wild turkeys, squirrels, and raccoons are just a few of the animals who enjoy the fruit of this tree.

#### **Waterfowl**

A little over half-way through the trail, canoers and kayakers just might get a glimpse of several waterfowl species. Conveniently located in the central flyway, Toronto Lake hosts thousands of waterfowl traveling through the area during the spring and fall months each year.

#### **Fish on a Line**

Indian Wood Oats, also known as Fish on a line, is a perennial grass bearing large, drooping, oat-like flowers from its slender bamboo-like leaves. A rarely-seen plant in Kansas, Fish on a Line can be found in the Cross Timbers region of the state.

#### **Black Willow**

The black willow is another common tree found on the banks of Toronto Reservoir. In pioneer times, black willow wood was a source of charcoal for gunpowder. Today, it is used commercially to construct furniture, barrels, toys, and pulpwood.

#### **Green Ash**

Marker number 11 signifies a site for the native hardwood, green ash. This tree has been deliberately planted where it is to prevent land erosion.

#### **Bald Eagles**

Our national bird, the bald eagle, can often be sighted near marker number 12 from November through February on Toronto lake. Both the bald and golden eagles can often be seen in Moon's Cove.

#### **Sandstone Blocks**

The chunks of sandstone found near marker number 13 are naturally-fractured blocks. Today, sandstone such as this has become a popular landscaping tool in and around homes and businesses.

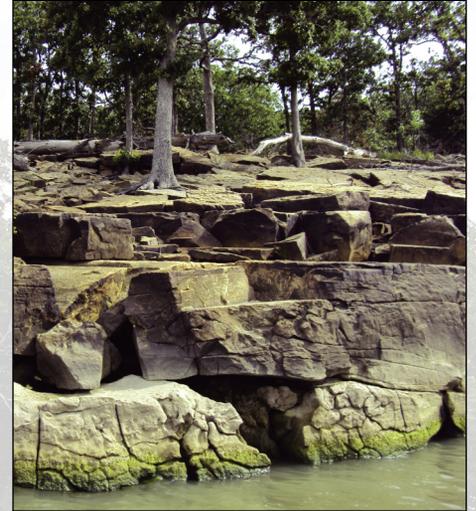
#### **Hiking Trails**

Cross Timbers State Park offers nearly 15 miles of trails for hiking and biking enthusiasts, including

the Chautauqua Hills trail, which can be enjoyed in a 1.5-mile, 4-mile, 8-mile or 11-mile loop.

#### **Fishing Pier**

Moon's Cove is a favorite spot for late winter and spring crappie fishing. Toronto Lake has been rated one of the top lakes in Kansas for crappie, and this fishing pier is usually a hot spot to catch this game fish.



These naturally-occurring sandstone blocks are just one of many stops along the Blue Water Trail.

The rich history, scenic views, and one-of-a-kind design of Cross Timber State Park's Blue Water Trail is a must-see for anyone who enjoys exploring beyond the beaten path. Equipment, including life jackets, are available for day use at no charge to visitors. For those who wish to stay on land, Cross Timbers State Park also boasts a handful of other great nature trails, including the Ancient Oaks, Chautauqua Hills, Overlook, Blackjack, and Oak Ridge Trails. After an afternoon of trailblazing, visitors can relax at one of four newly-built cabins or at one of the park's some 170 campsites, all with their own unique features.

Whether hitting the trails by foot, bike, or boat, Cross Timbers State Park has just the trail to get you on the right path. To plan your next trip at Cross Timbers, contact park staff at (620) 637-2213, or visit [ksoutdoors.com](http://ksoutdoors.com). 

by Dustin Teasley  
graphics designer senior, Pratt

# First Dove Season

**D**ove season means different things to different people. Some get frustrated by the challenge of hitting the little gray birds on the wing, others use it to sharpen hunting skills rusted by the months between hunting seasons, and many are happy just to be in the woods again. I love to hunt and dove season kicks off the fall, marking the promise of cooler temperatures and more seasons to come. I don't go nuts over dove hunting like I do deer, ducks and spring turkey, but it is fun none-the-less.

Last spring my son Hunter bagged his first turkey. And as expected, he fell in love with the shotgun we borrowed. It was perfect; a 20-gauge semi-automatic TriStar. The youth model is perfect for young, beginning shooters because it is light, gas-operated for low recoil and dependable. It's an important tool for KDWPT's Pass It On and Hunter Education programs.

My mother passed away later that spring and she left her kids a small amount of money. It wasn't a great amount, split between my brothers and sisters, and I struggled with how to best use it. I thought about the kids' savings accounts or maybe investing in some silver in case of hard times, but I finally decided that the best way to share it was to buy a youth shotgun like the one Hunter borrowed for his turkey hunt. My mother loved to hunt, and rabbits were her favorite. I thought it would be a great way to remember her every time we went afield, especially while the kids were learning to hunt.

In June, I ordered a new Tristar in the camouflage pattern, as requested by Hunter. When the gun arrived, Hunter and I grabbed a couple of boxes of shells and visited the local gun club. A friend and board member of the



club told me to bring Hunter out early so we could set a trap to throw some easier incoming targets. Hunter found success that first night, but he only shot four or five rounds. I didn't push him, and we repeated that scenario for three or four subsequent weekly visits. Gradually, Hunter's confidence, proficiency and strength built up enough that he was ready to shoot a full round of trap. On his first full round, he broke 6 out of 25 targets. He wanted to shoot another round and hit 9 out of 25. Over the course of the next few weeks, he busted his share of targets and averaged 10-12 targets per round. Then, evening baseball and football practices made it harder to make it to the range. However, I made it a point to get in a couple of rounds the Thursday before dove season opened. Hunter was looking forward to his first dove hunt.

September 1 opened hot and dry, but our enthusiasm was high. I was excited to see how Hunter would shoot in the field, and I decided to leave my shotgun at home so I could help him. At eight, Hunter is just learning the skills to be a safe hunter and I wanted to be sure to reinforce those habits. I also knew I would get just as much enjoyment from his shooting as I would my own.

Hunter, a friend of mine and I went out mid-morning to try and catch doves flying from feed fields to water-holes. We saw three doves in two hours. Frustrated, we headed back to the house to cool down and figure out a Plan B. Then I remembered that one of the gun club members had offered to let us hunt on his pasture pond. The landowner wasn't planning to hunt opening day and said we were welcome. I figured it had to be better than what we experienced that morning.

That afternoon, we arrived at the pond to see about two dozen doves staring at us from an electrical line that supplied power to the pond's well pump. Energized, we parked the truck, grabbed our gear and headed toward the pond.

Positioned near a cedar tree on the pond bank, I loaded a single shell into Hunter's gun. Then we waited. But it wasn't long before that first bird streaked by overhead. Hunter never even had a chance to mount his gun.

"I don't know if I can hit one of those, Dad." He said with a puzzled look.

I smiled and assured him this was going to be tough. The next bird he picked up at a distance and had plenty of time to get ready, but he punched a

hole in the sky as the bird seemed to work its way around the shot string. Another bird was coming, I loaded him up again and "bang," he missed again. Although frustrated, Hunter was on alert and enjoying the challenge. The next bird came from across the pond, and I could tell it was setting up to land. Hunter fired, and the bird crumpled, falling within 10 yards of his feet. Success! Hunter turned to me beaming. That smile is still burned into my memory, and I was proud, knowing all our practice paid off. At the end of the night, he had shot six doves, burning through 43 shells, but I put it down in the books as one of the great hunts; his first wing shooting outing. We were both proud.



A collared dove was a prize in a bag full of mourning doves. This exotic species has no limit and does not count against a daily bag.

The next night the doves were flying just as well. Hunter dropped 13 using only 41 rounds. His first bird of the night was a collared dove. We lost one in the grass and one to a turtle or hungry fish in the pond. Hunter didn't know what to think about that.

We haven't been out for doves since. Football practice three nights a week until dark and games on weekends made it tough to do any hunting after that opening weekend. But I noticed at football practice, Hunter was often distracted when a dove lighted in trees near the practice field. I could tell he would have rather been hunting, and I doubt he will ever look up at a fall sky the same again. ♡

# 2013 Sportsmen's Calendar

## TURKEY

### 2013 SPRING TURKEY:

- Youth/ Archery/Persons with disabilities:  
April 1-9, 2013
- Firearm: April 10-May 31, 2013

### 2013 FALL TURKEY:

- Oct. 1-Dec. 3 AND Dec. 16-Jan. 31, 2014

## BIG GAME

### DEER:

- Youth/Persons with Disabilities: Sept. 7-15, 2013
- Archery: Sept. 16-Dec. 31, 2013
- Muzzleloader: Sept. 16-Sept. 29, 2013
- Pre-Rut Whitetail Antlerless Oct. 12-13, 2013
- Regular Firearm: Dec. 4-Dec. 15, 2013
- Firearm Extended Whitetail Antlerless  
Season: Jan.1-Jan. 12, 2014
- Archery Extended Whitetail Antlerless  
Season (DMU 19 only): Jan. 20-Jan. 31, 2014
- Special Extended Firearms Whitetail  
Antlerless Season: Jan. 13-Jan. 19, 2014  
(Open for unit 7, 8 and 15 only.)

### ELK (residents only)

#### Outside Fort Riley:

- Muzzleloader: Sept. 1-30, 2013
- Archery: Sept. 16-Dec. 31, 2013
- Firearm: Dec. 4-15, 2013 and  
Jan.1-March 15, 2014

#### On Fort Riley:

- Muzzleloader and archery: Sept. 1-30, 2013
- Firearm Season for Holders of Any-Elk  
Permits: Oct. 1-Dec. 31, 2013

#### Antlerless Only

- Firearm First Segment: Oct. 1-31, 2013
- Firearm Second Segment: Nov. 1-30, 2013
- Firearm Third Segment: Dec. 1-31, 2013

## ANTELOPE

- Firearm: Oct. 4-7, 2013
- Archery: Sept. 21-29 & Oct. 12-31, 2013
- Muzzleloader: Sept. 30-Oct. 7, 2013

## MIGRATORY GAME BIRDS

### EARLY TEAL

- Season: High Plains: Sept. 14-22  
Low Plains: Sept. 7-22
- Daily bag limit: 6
- Possession limit: 18

### DUCK

- Season: High Plains  
Oct. 5-Dec. 2 & Dec. 21-Jan. 26, 2014
- Season: Low Plains Early Zone  
Oct. 5-Dec. 1 & Dec. 21-Jan. 5, 2014
- Season: Low Plains Late Zone  
Oct. 26-Dec. 29 & Jan. 18-26, 2014
- Season: Low Plains Southeast Zone  
Nov. 2-3 & Nov. 16-Jan. 26, 2014
- Daily bag limit: 6 (see regulations)
- Possession limit: 18

### CANADA GEESE (including brant)

- Season: Oct. 26-Nov. 3 & Nov. 6-Feb. 9, 2014
- Daily bag limit: 6
- Possession limit: 18

### WHITE-FRONTED GEESE

- Oct. 26-Dec. 29 & Feb. 1-9, 2014
- Daily bag limit: 2
- Possession limit: 6

### LIGHT GEESE

- Season: Oct. 26-Nov. 3 & Nov. 6-Feb. 9, 2014
- Daily bag limit: 50  
Conservation order: Feb. 10-April 30, 2014

### YOUTH WATERFOWL

- High Plains and Low Plains Early: Sept. 28-29
- Low Plains Late: Oct. 19-20
- Low Plains Southeast: Oct. 26-27

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

- Season: Sept.1-Oct. 31 and Nov. 2-10, 2013
- Daily bag limit: 15
- Possession limit: 45 (Daily bag and possession limits apply to mourning and white-winged doves, single speices or in combination. No limit on Eurasian collared or ringed turtle doves)

# 2013 Sportsmen's Calendar

## EXOTIC DOVE

(Eurasian collared and ringed turtle doves only)

- Season: Nov. 20, 2013-Feb. 28, 2014
- Daily bag limit: No limit
- Possession limit: No limit

## RAIL (Sora and Virginia)

- Season: Sept. 1-Nov. 9, 2013
- Daily bag limit: 25
- Possession limit: 75

## SNIPE

- Season: Sept. 1-Dec. 16, 2013
- Daily bag limit: 8
- Possession limit: 24

## WOODCOCK

- Season: Oct. 12-Nov. 25, 2013
- Daily bag limit: 3
- Possession limit: 9

## SANDHILL CRANE

- Season: Nov. 6, 2013-Jan. 2, 2014
- Daily bag limit: 3
- Possession limit: 9

## UPLAND GAME BIRDS

### PRAIRIE CHICKEN

- Early Season (East and Northwest units):  
Sept. 15-Oct. 15
- Regular Season (East and Northwest units):  
Nov. 16, 2013-Jan. 31, 2014
- Regular Season (Southwest Unit):  
Nov. 16-Dec. 31, 2013
- Daily Bag Limit: 2 (East and Northwest  
Units) single species or in combination  
1 (Southwest Unit)
- Possession Limit: four times daily bag

### PHEASANTS

- Season: Nov. 9, 2013-Jan. 31, 2014
- Youth Season: Nov. 2-3, 2013
- Daily bag limit: 4 cocks in regular  
season, 2 cocks in youth season

## QUAIL

- Season: Nov. 9, 2013-Jan. 31, 2014
- Youth Season: Nov. 2-3, 2013
- Daily Bag Limit Quail: 8 in regular season,  
4 in youth season

## SMALL GAME ANIMALS

### SQUIRREL

- Season: June 1, 2013-Feb. 28, 2014
- Daily bag limit: 5
- Possession limit: 20

### RABBITS (cottontail & jackrabbit)

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

### CROW

- Season: Nov. 10, 2013-March 10, 2014
- Daily bag/Possession Limit: no limit

## FURBEARERS

### TRAPPING

- Season: Nov. 13, 2013-Feb. 15, 2014  
Badger, bobcat, mink, muskrat, opossum,  
raccoon, swift fox, red fox, gray fox,  
striped skunk, weasel.

### RUNNING

- Season: March 1-Nov. 8, 2013

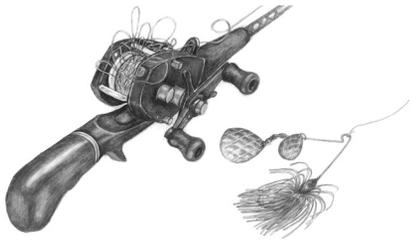
### BEAVER AND OTTER TRAPPING

- Season Dates:  
Nov. 13, 2013-March 31, 2014
- Otter season Bag Limit: 2

## FISHING SEASONS

### BULLFROG

- July 1-Oct. 31, 2013
- Daily creel limit: 8
- Possession limit: 24



# Backlash

by Mike Miller

## Kids and Doves

**A**t first glance, a September dove hunt might not seem like the ideal way to introduce a youngster to hunting. Hitting fast-flying, dipsy-dooing, doves on the wing is a challenge even for skilled wingshooters. It's estimated that, on average, hunters shoot seven shells for each dove harvested. A dove hunt could be frustrating for a beginning shooter.

However, there are other aspects of dove hunting that make it an ideal hunting experience for youngsters. There are factors in preparation and set-up that can help ensure a quality experience that mentors should consider.

First, let's talk about what makes a September dove hunt a good choice. The weather will be mild, maybe even hot. But most dove hunts occur early in the morning or in the evening, when temperatures are more comfortable. Warm temperatures are much easier for youth to endure than cold temperatures, and young hunters won't be inhibited by heavy clothing. Dove hunting can be exciting when conditions are right; lots of birds and lots of shooting; perfect for a young hunter. And finally, dove hunting is safer for new shooters because it doesn't require a lot of walking and maneuvering through heavy cover with a loaded shotgun. Hunters usually sit on stools along a feed field edge or water hole, and this allows a mentor to stay near the young hunter and help him or her make good shot selections. A mentored dove hunt is perfect for teaching safe gun handling skills.

So how do you ensure a young hunter has a good experience rather than a frustrating one? First I recommend several pre-season shooting practice sessions. Ideally, a portable trap is set up so that incoming shots and quartering-in shots can be simulated. These are shots common when doves are coming into feed or water, and they are not difficult to master. New shooters may have a tendency to take very long shots, so some practice judging distance on targets can be helpful. Focus the practice sessions on basics: looking at the front edge of the target, mounting the gun correctly, and moving the gun smoothly. Keep it simple and spend time on easy shots to build confidence. Insist upon safe gun handling and discuss safety issues that could arise when hunting on a public land dove field.

Preseason scouting is a must. Check out the managed dove field list on KDWP's website, [www.ksoutdoors.com](http://www.ksoutdoors.com). Some fields may be reserved for youth/mentor hunting for the first few days, and these may offer outstanding opportunities. Managed dove fields may require non-toxic shot, so check out specific regulations. Most shot-shell companies offer a hunting load with No. 7 steel shot that is priced similarly to lead field loads, but you may have to shop around to find it.

If you don't have a managed dove field in your area or you have permission on private land, scouting is critical. Evening hunts around water holes can be fantastic, but not just any pasture pond will attract droves of doves. Look for ponds with shallow sloping banks with little or no vegetation growing along the shore. A pond with a flat mud bank is perfect. During dry years, a good pond is one with water. During wet years, you'll need to find one the birds are using.

Doves will also feed on wheat and corn stubble fields that have been worked, preferring to land on open ground rather than in weedy areas. When scouting look for birds on high lines or tops of dead trees. Locating these staging areas can increase your shooting opportunities. A few morning and evening drives before the season will often turn up some potential dove hunting locations. Getting permission to hunt a worked field or sheetwater pond is usually not difficult.

When opening day arrives, be sure to have plenty of shotgun shells, water, and some bug spray. A bucket or stool to sit on is a good idea, too. When mentoring a new dove hunter, sit behind them and help spot incoming birds. Identifying a dove in the distance takes some practice, but with some advanced notice, the young shooter will be able to make a conscious gun mount and make a good shot. Talk to the hunter about why low birds may not be safe in certain situations. When a bird is downed, mark the spot and always find it before another shot is taken. Even in light cover, small, gray doves can be difficult to find if you take your eyes off the spot.

End the hunt with a lesson in cleaning the birds and plan a grilled-dove dinner. Dove breasts wrapped in bacon are delicious to even the most selective pallets. ♡

