

KANSAS

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SENIOR LICENSE EXEMPTION UPDATE

One year ago in this column, I was pointing out the expected benefits of changing the age exemption for resident fishing and hunting licenses. During the 2012 session of the Kansas Legislature, a bill supported by the department passed, changing the exemption age for resident licenses from 65 to 75. With just more than 10 months of sales under our belts, we can provide an update on the impact that change has had.

First, though, I want to emphasize why the change is so important. It was really about maintaining our current wildlife and fisheries programs while keeping hunting and fishing affordable for everyone. The Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism has not raised fees for hunting and fishing licenses since 2002. However, trends in license sales and inflation made it clear that we would have to either increase fees or re-distribute revenue support among our users. We must continue to recruit youth, so charging them wasn't an option. And we want young adults with families to continue hunting and fishing, so we avoided an across-the-board fee increase.

When we learned that hunters and anglers 65 and older were our fastest growing segment of participants and that we were losing thousands in Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration (WSFR) funds as a result of the exemption, it was clear the exemption age needed to be amended. WSFR funding is derived from excise taxes on hunting and fishing equipment, and states are reimbursed based, in part, on the number of hunting and fishing licenses sold. Hunters and anglers 65 and older who were exempt from needing a hunting or fishing license were contributing to WSFR, but that money was going to other states. Changing the exemption age wasn't a popular move with some who believed they deserved the exemption, but now that we can see the impact that change has had, I think you'll agree, it makes sense.

As a result of the bill, the department established senior licenses for resident hunters and anglers age 65-74 at reduced fees. Annual hunting and fishing license

fees were set at approximately half of the regular price – \$11.50 for annual fishing or hunting and \$20.50 for an annual hunt/fish combination. Or residents age 65-74 can purchase a lifetime hunt/fish combination license for \$42.50. I believe these prices are bargains for the hunting and fishing opportunities available, especially when you compare them to the cost of other hunting and fishing expenses or other types of recreational activities.

A look at license sales records for the past 10 months shows the impact on revenue. As this was written, 5,651 annual senior fishing licenses, 983 annual senior hunt/fish combination licenses, 666 annual senior hunting licenses and 10,612 hunt/fish senior combination lifetime licenses had been sold. Senior license sales generated almost \$500,000 by mid-October. WSFR reimbursements this year are calculated to be \$8.31 for each licensed angler and \$16.15 for each licensed hunter in Kansas. So, the senior licenses resulted in an additional \$339,788.43 in revenue from the excise taxes.

More than three-quarters of a million dollars were added to the Wildlife Fee Fund so far this year, and the upland bird and deer season sales periods are still ahead. The additional revenue will allow the department to continue delivering popular programs such as Walk-In Hunting Access, Community Fisheries Assistance, fish stocking, wildlife area management, law enforcement, education programs, and more. Today's Kansas hunters and anglers have opportunities that couldn't have even been imagined just 30 years ago, making every license and permit dollar worth the investment.

Only those who choose to hunt and fish pay for our wildlife and fishery programs – programs that benefit all wildlife in Kansas. Because of that, our wildlife resources and outdoor traditions depend more than ever on adequate funding from license revenues and WSFR reimbursements. Changing the exemption age was a step toward ensuring future generations enjoy these same outdoor opportunities. ♡



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Front Cover: Bobwhite quail populations improved in certain areas of Kansas this year. Consult the *2013 Upland Bird Forecast* on Page 16 for more details. KDWPT file photo. **Back Cover:** Labrador retrievers are versatile hunting dogs, and perfect for the pheasant fields. They also make great companions. Mike Miller photo.



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Letters . . .



EAGLE WATCHERS

Editor:

We just received the latest magazine with the article on eagles in it. For 3 years we have watched a pair of eagles build, enlarge and nest within a mile of our house in a cottonwood tree, on a bend in the Arkansas River. (We live just north west of Arkansas City, Kansas.) My husband sets up a spotting scope out our kitchen window, pointed at the nest. We are able to "eagle" watch up close and personal. I am not sure if this nest is one of the counted area nests in Kansas, but we have had a wonderful time eagle watching.

Thanks for the article.

Kenneth and Carolea Hower

DEFINE ASSAULT RIFLE

Editor:

Per your March/April issue; In his Hunting Heritage column, Kent Barrett writes about different

weapons to use. I wish that people like you would please put the following on your next issue. I am getting tired of people saying what an assault rifle is. Most people/hunters don't even know the definition of assault rifle.

Definition: The term assault rifle is a translation of the German word *Sturmgewehr* (literally "storm rifle", "storm" as in "military attack"). The name was coined by Adolf Hitler^[3] as a new name for the *Maschinenpistole* 43, subsequently known as the *Sturmgewehr* 44, the firearm generally considered the first assault rifle that served to popularize the concept and form the basis for today's modern assault rifles.

The translation assault rifle gradually became the common term for similar firearms sharing the same technical definition as the StG 44. In a strict definition, a firearm must have at least the following characteristics to be considered an assault rifle:

- It must be an individual weapon with provision to fire from the shoulder (i.e. a butt-stock);
- It must be capable of selective fire;
- It must have an intermediate power cartridge: more power than a pistol but less than a standard rifle or battle rifle;
- Its ammunition must be supplied from a detachable magazine rather than a feed-belt.
- And it should at least have a firing range of 300 meters (1,000 feet)

Rifles that meet most of these criteria, but not all, are technically not assault rifles despite frequently being considered as such. For example, semi-automatic-only rifles like the AR-15 (on which the M16 rifle is based) that share parts or design characteristics with assault rifles are not assault rifles, as they are not capable of switching to automatic fire and thus are not selective-fire capable. Belt-fed weapons or rifles with fixed magazines are likewise not assault rifles because they do not have detachable box magazines.

The term "assault rifle" is often more loosely used for commercial or political reasons to include other types of arms, particularly arms that fall under a strict definition of the battle rifle, or semi-automatic variant of military rifles such as AR-15s.

The U.S. Army defines assault rifles as "short, compact, selective-fire weapons that fire a cartridge intermediate in power between sub-machinegun and rifle cartridges."

Thank you.

David Morris

BIRD BRAIN

with Mike Rader

ANTICIPATING FALL

abundant, and we also get good numbers of white-crowned, white-throated, savannah, song and Lincoln's sparrows, too. Others such as the swamp, LeConte's and Nelson's sparrows are challenging to find.

Winter finches also appear during these months but can be irruptive, meaning they may arrive in large numbers one year and virtually none the next. This phenomenon is driven by food availability north of us, including cone crops of various pines, spruces and other trees. Red cross-bills put on a show last winter, so I'm interested to see if we have something similar this winter. Now is a great time to check out the website for the Kansas Ornithological Society (www.ksbirds.org) for information concerning Christmas Bird Counts. Usually around 50 are conducted in Kansas, and most are open to having new folks participate. Contact information for count compilers, locations of count circles and other data can be found there.

I look forward to this time of year and hope to see you out and about, enjoying what Kansas has to offer.



November and December are great months for doing some serious birding. Neotropical migrants are through, but we anticipate the large influx of waterfowl, cranes, sparrows and winter finches that always occurs this time of year. Nothing says fall in Kansas to me like the calls of migrating sandhill cranes and waterfowl that echo through the marshes of the central part of the state. A large flock's calls create a tumult that is primal and wild. With the late-summer rains helping replenish water levels at Cheyenne Bottoms and Quivira, there should be great opportunity to see and hear the annual spectacle that is late-fall migration.

There are plenty of other species of birds that make their appearance during these months, and birders relish the chance to see them, as well. Water birds such as loons, grebes and gulls reach high numbers in late fall and some may winter here or just a little further south in Oklahoma and Texas. Birding trips to area lakes and reservoirs will usually be well worth the time. Large numbers of gulls, diving and dabbling ducks and geese rest and feed on these larger water bodies. We have tremendous numbers of common goldeneye and common mergansers. The challenge is spotting the rare find in these massive flocks - a Barrow's goldeneye, a long-tailed duck, or any of the three species of scoters. Even small municipal lakes, ponds and sewer lagoons will hold water birds this time of year. Many can be viewed from public roadways, as long as it can be done safely and without impeding traffic. If not, be sure to get landowner permission.

I love native sparrows, and this is a great time to look for them. Many species migrate through, so it's a pleasant change from the few that actually nest in Kansas. Spotted towhees, Harris's sparrows and fox sparrows are among my favorites and are commonly seen. Tree sparrows and dark-eyed juncos from the Arctic and other high elevation areas of the country become

HUNTERS CAN PROCESS DEER IN FIELD WITH ELECTRONIC REGISTRATION

All deer must be tagged before being moved from the site of the kill. Unless a hunter has an either-sex permit, the head must also remain attached to the carcass for identification purposes while in transit to a residence or place of commercial processing or preservation. However, there is an option for hunters who want to bone deer out prior to transport. The voluntary electronic deer check-in system is not required but allows hunters to register their deer with KDWPT through the Internet using photos taken at the harvest site.

Once registered, hunters will be emailed a confirmation number that allows them to transport the carcass without the head attached. If Internet access is unavailable at the kill site, the hunter can retain the photographs while in transit and a registration number can be obtained later.

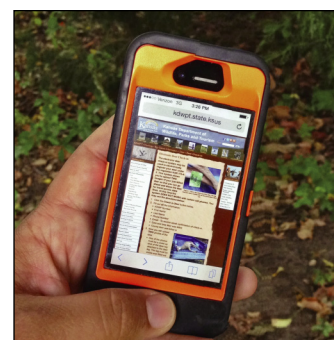
This registration process requires a hunter to submit two digital photographs - one close-up clearly showing the completed tag attached to the deer and a second showing the entire body of the deer with the head still attached. Once logged on to the KDWPT website, a hunter must submit the photos and enter the KDWPT number from their permit, time and date of the kill and the county where the deer was taken. The confirmation number must be retained during transportation.

This option was developed because of concern about moving any material from a deer that may contribute to the transmission of chronic wasting disease (CWD). Because CWD affects the brain and central nervous system, the transportation of a deer head and skeleton from one location to another is considered a likely means for the disease to spread. The new registration system allows a hunter to leave these items at the kill site, minimizing the possibility of spreading CWD.

Also, many states prohibit the transportation of a deer head with brain tissue from a state with confirmed CWD cases. Electronic registration allows a hunter to legally transport boned meat, as well as the cleaned skull cap and antlers.

More information on CWD and transportation laws may be found on the KDWPT website, www.ksoutdoors.com, under "Hunting/Big Game/Chronic Wasting Disease."

—KDWPT News



IT'S THE LAW

with Kevin Jones



SHARING THE HARVEST

Hunting seasons are now in full swing, and frequently hunters want to share game meat with family and friends. This is a great opportunity to connect people who haven't had the opportunity to hunt or can't hunt with our outdoor traditions. And many people feature game meat at holiday meals or special celebrations. However, for those who want to share the harvest, there are a few simple rules that need to be followed when giving game meat away.

To give away deer, upland bird, rabbit or squirrel meat, the hunter must provide a written note describing what kind of game is being given away and how much. The note must also include the hunter's name, license and permit numbers, the date the game was harvested and the date when the game was given to the other person. The hunter must provide an address and sign the note. While this may sound complicated, a preprinted form that may be used can be found in the hunting regulation summary, or on the Department's website at www.ksoutdoors.com by clicking on "Hunting," "Hunting Regulations, and "General Information."

When giving away migratory game birds such as ducks, geese, sandhill cranes or migratory doves, the rule is a bit different because of federal regulations. Federal law requires that any migratory birds given to another person have a tag attached, signed by the hunter who took the birds, the hunter's address, the total number and species of birds taken, and the date the birds were harvested. So, while upland game birds regulated by state law, such as pheasants, may be given away with one donation note or form, federally protected birds, like ducks, must be individually tagged.

It is important that these rules are followed since this is how the person receiving the game would prove they did not take it illegally. As always, it is simpler to follow the rules than having to explain why the rules weren't followed later.

TRANSFERRING FISH OR GAME TO ANOTHER PERSON?

Stay legal. Make sure you provide the following information with each transfer.

- Hunting/fishing license, transaction, or big game permit number
- Person Giving Fish/Game
- Person Receiving Fish/Game
- Date Taken
- Date Transferred
- Fish/Game Type and Quantity
- Signature of Giver
- Address of Giver

A hunter education card number or date of birth may be substituted for a hunting license number for hunters under 16 years of age. Hunters over 16 years of age may provide hunting license number. All big game transfers must include permit numbers.

Hunting/fishing license, transaction, or big game permit number _____

I, _____

give permission to _____

to receive _____

taken date _____ transfer date _____

Signature of Giver: _____

Address of Giver: _____

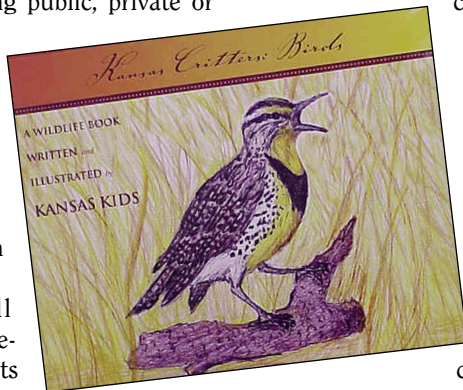
GPNC INVITES YOUTH SUBMISSIONS FOR BOOK

Kansas Critters gives youth a chance to become published artists or writers

The Great Plains Nature Center, Wichita, is seeking submissions for an educational book entitled *Kansas Critters: Wet 'N Wild: A Wildlife Book Written and Illustrated by Kansas Kids*. The book, which is modeled after several other popular "Kansas Critters" books, will be available next summer and will focus on 27 species of wetland animals found in Kansas.

Kansas youth K-8 attending public, private or home schools are eligible to participate and may submit poems, drawings, facts, paintings, stories, sketches, and more. All entries must be submitted no later than Feb. 15, 2014 to the Great Plains Nature Center, 6232 E. 29th St. N, Wichita, Kansas 67220.

Submissions must fall under one of the three categories listed below. Participants may submit one entry in each category. All submissions must be the entrant's original work. Participants whose entries are selected will be invited to a special awards ceremony and reception at the Great Plains Nature Center.



Group 1

People enjoying wetlands activities such as fishing, hunting, boating, photography, or nature observation. Species: green-winged teal, plains minnow, channel catfish, diamondback water snake, common snapping turtle, bullfrog, mapleleaf mussel, or Graham's crayfish snake.

Group 2

Species: beaver, white-fronted goose, bluegill, Topeka shiner, great blue heron, painted turtle, plains leopard frog, floater mussel, halloween pennant dragonfly.

Group 3

Species: mink, mallard, orangethroat darter, largemouth bass, American avocet, red-eared slider, kingfisher, northern crayfish, or black-crowned night heron.

For more information, visit gpnc.org, or contact program coordinator Lorrie Beck at (316) 683-5499, ext. 108.

This project is made possible by generous grants from The Lattner Family Foundation, Cargill Cares, the Kansas Health Foundation, and the Wichita Cultural Funding Committee.

— KDWPT News

TAKING ONE FOR THE TEAM



I stress teamwork both at work and home. Getting the most out of the team depends on identifying individual skills and getting the right person into the right job. Most importantly, team members must recognize that the team is more important than the individual. Sometimes a person has to “take one” for the team.

I learned this lesson one November day years ago before I was even aware I was a part of a team. I was with my dad, my older brother, and a small army of well-armed friends who had descended on a pocket of jungle-thick vegetation in western Kansas on a windy, cold afternoon. We had observed a rooster pheasant land in the thick mess but couldn’t flush it out.

“Son,” my dad barked, “be a team player and go down there and kick that bird out of that brush so we can shoot it.”

I was proud Dad thought I was part of their team, but my fervor dampened when I got to the tangle of weeds and found it to be impenetrable without the aid of an armored vehicle.

“Dad,” I shouted over the wind, “I’d need a Sherman tank to get in there. Why can’t the dogs go?”

“Don’t let us down, dang it, son,” Dad yelled back. “The dogs are too smart... er, scared to go in there. It’s up to you. Unload and lay your gun down outside and get in that brush and root around.”

I was reconsidering the honor of being a part of this team as I busted into the brush unarmed and defenseless. As I forged deeper into the thick mat of pigweed and kochia, only dusk-like light filtered through to the ravine floor. I crawled on my hands and knees, brawling with weed stalks as thick as my thigh and working my way toward the center – the fighting was hand-to-hand. Suddenly, I broke into a clearing. I don’t know who was more surprised, me at finding the opening or the hundred or so roosters kicking back, downing some cold ones, taking dust baths, and cackling about the dimwit hunters who thought they were going to flush them from their private dust spa. There was a moment when time stood still and we stupidly stared at each other, my mouth wide open, their beaks agape.

Then the sky erupted with roosters. I could only watch helplessly as gun fire erupted and pheasants plummeted to the earth. I lay on my back sweaty and out of breath as the shouts of victory echoed throughout the ravine. I realized I had been the sacrificial lamb and had taken one for the team. I vowed to never take two for this team.

Some folks don’t accept sacrifice as gracefully. I recall the “Springfield Incident” about 25 years ago where team play was misinterpreted. My buddy and I took our girlfriends down to a big promotional event at Bass Pro Shops. The line to get in the store was four wide and four blocks long. I was not only a team player but a chivalrous young man, so I graciously dropped the girls off at the front of Bass Pro Shops. They could sit on a bench at the entrance while we waited in line.

Two hours later as my buddy and I were approaching the store’s entrance, the girls were not on the bench. We assumed

they tired of waiting and had somehow gone on in. We entered the store intent on finding the girls, but packed together like cattle, we were driven down aisles one after the other. No sign of our dates.

However, we were passing merchandise on our shopping lists, so we picked those items up. After being herded through each section twice and had completed our shopping, we still had not seen the girls. Tired and hungry from shopping and searching, we fought our way to the McDonald’s upstairs. After a delicious meal, we checked out, then went outside to walk our packages to the car, before starting a more thorough search for the missing team members.

As we left we heard a loud “HEY!” and turned to see our long lost girlfriends shoot off of the outside bench as if spring loaded. They descended on us, heads cocked sideways, mouths open in disbelief.

“What do you think you’re doing? Where have you been? Have you been shopping? Have you EATEN?” These questions came rapid fire, and obviously they knew the answers.

I immediately saw the humor in this, which I should have kept to myself. Laughing, I said we would all look back and laugh about it someday. I also pointed out a team member miscue, telling them that if one of them would have stayed on the bench, this incident would not have happened. I learned some important things about taking one for the team that day: Even if you are right, say you are wrong; never laugh in the face of death; and if a woman comes at you with her head cocked sideways, run!

I have tried to teach my daughter the benefits of teamwork, but I don’t think she has fully grasped the concept. The other day, as I reached the top of the driveway after an early morning jog, I noticed my house was shut up tight and my daughter’s vehicle was gone. I had no keys and no way to access the different rooms and facilities on the inside of the house, with special emphasis on the bathroom. I did have my cell phone, so in a panic I called my daughter but got no answer. I texted her that I was locked out and why it so important I gain entrance.

She texted me back that she was in math lab and would be unable to rescue me. She then ended it with, “One day we will look back on this and laugh. Lol.” I did not see the humor in it. Luckily, we have a big back yard that backs up to the woods.

A few nights later she brought up the incident.

“Oh yes,” I said. “I will not soon forget it.”

“Well dad,” she said, “the teacher caught me texting you and laughing. I told her it was an emergency and that it was you. She said, “Yea right,” and took my phone. Then she read it and started laughing real hard. Then she shared it with the class.”

I was dumbfounded. “Savannah, sometimes you have to take one for the team. You should have sacrificed your phone to save my reputation. That’s what being a team player is about.”

“Yeah right.”

She is a fast learner.

Whether you're hunting, fishing, or just enjoying time on the water, your boat is an important piece of sports equipment. It can put you in the best waterfowl hunting or fishing spot around, or it can put you in serious danger if used unsafely. Many hunters don't consider themselves boaters, but if you're using a boat for any part of your hunting trip, then you need to follow the boating laws, as well as the hunting regulations. Familiarizing yourself with some basic boat safety could save your life.

Of all boating accidents, capsizing or swamping claim the most lives every year because many people overload or unbalance their boats with equipment. Stay within load limits shown on the boat capacity plate. Make extra trips for gear rather than risk capsizing. Distribute the load evenly and keep it low.

Falls overboard occur almost as often and are deadly in cold water. Standing to shoot, relieving yourself over the side of the boat or pulling up the anchor put boaters at risk of accidentally leaving the boat head first over the side. Sitting on the sides or bow can swamp or capsize the boat very quickly.

Not wearing a life jacket adds serious risk. Inhaled water, panic, heavy clothing, and hypothermia are killers to the person who falls overboard in cold water. Even if you're a strong swimmer, you may involuntarily gasp and drown if you fall without a life jacket into water cooler than your body, and struggling to stay afloat wastes energy that your body could be using to stay warm.

Anchoring from the stern (rear) of your boat can pull the boat lower in the water with each wave, and can allow water to come in over the transom, swamping the boat. Always anchor from the bow of the boat.

Weather and water conditions that are ideal for hunting can be the most dangerous. Leave a float plan with a family member, listing where you are going and when you plan to return home.

Most hunters have been checked by the game warden from time to time regarding their licenses, stamps, plugs, shot, species and possession limit, but if you're using a boat to get to your hunting spot or to hunt from, be prepared to take part in a boat inspection. The equipment requirements are the same for all boaters, regardless of whether they are hunting, fishing, or cruising the lake.

No one ever expects to fall into the water, so wearing your life jacket is an important safety step you can take each time you are in a boat. Children 12 years of age and younger must ALWAYS have their life jacket on when they are in a boat, even when it is anchored. Adults are encouraged to wear a life jacket at all times, you might even want to try out a U.S. Coast Guard approved float coat! Wear It Kansas!

Boat SAFE

with Erika Brooks

HUNT SAFE



Required equipment for a motorized boat less than 16 feet long:

- Readily accessible life jacket each person on board, all those age 12 and under must wear PDF at all times
- Certificate of number on board
- Registration decals displayed
- Fire extinguisher if gas tank is enclosed
- Horn or a whistle
- Navigation lights, from sunset until sunrise

Required equipment for a motorized boat 16 feet long or longer:

- Readily accessible life jacket each person on board, all those age 12 and under must wear PDF at all times
- Type IV throwable PFD (cushion or ring)
- Certificate of number on board
- Registration decals displayed
- Fire extinguisher if gas tank is enclosed
- Horn or a whistle
- Navigation lights, from sunset until sunrise

HUNTING HERITAGE *with Kent Barrett*

DANGER IN THE WOODS

Fear can be a motivator at times, even when the fear is not founded in reason. My wife doesn't like having bears in the area when we are camping or hunting. My oldest daughter told me she was not comfortable with the idea that I was going to go wolf hunting with the intention of calling an apex predator in to a decoy. I need to recognize their anxiety although I don't happen to feel the same motivator. I saw a newspaper report entitled "What Is The Most Dangerous Thing In The Woods?" I imagine that the hope was for people to read this article and change their behavior out in the field in order to be safer. In that situation perhaps a good dose of fear is not a bad thing. This time of the year we need to be concerned with safety in the field. That is a major part of the hunter education curriculum as we try to prepare safe and ethical hunters for the field. We have an obligation to ease people's fears through education.

According to the article the most dangerous thing in the woods was not an animal or another hunter, but was a treestand. There have been various studies showing that approximately one-half of all hunting incidents involve treestands. This should be cause for reflection for any hunter planning on using a treestand for the hunt, not only because of the quantity of incidents but also because of the severity of the injuries suffered in these incidents. The list of injuries attributed to treestand incidents is quite sobering. Here is a summary: 30 percent suffer back/neck injuries, 25 percent suffer extremity fractures, 18 percent multiple rib injuries, 12 percent pelvic fractures and 15 percent suffer head injuries. Just looking at this list could cause anyone to decide to not use an effective hunting tool. Yet there is a simple solution to these concerns: attach yourself to the tree using an approved full-body harness/fall arrest system. Remember to take your time and never get in a hurry when entering or exiting the tree stand; simple but effective strategies.

It is always appropriate for us to be reminded of the four firearm safety rules. 1) Treat every firearm as if is loaded; 2)

Always keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction; 3) Keep the finger out of the trigger guard and off the trigger until the sights are on the target and the decision has been made to fire; and 4) Be sure of the target and what is beyond, in front of and beside it. Never shoot at objects you "think" may be a game animal. Do not shoot at flashes of color, movement in the brush, or in a direction that may have structures or roadways behind it. Once a trigger is pulled, the projectile can never be called back.

While falls and errant gunshots are obvious risks to hunters, heart attacks can also be a danger. Many activities associated with hunting, such as walking large distances over rough terrain, can send heart rates up significantly. Add to that environmental factors such as altitude, cold weather, wet or snowy ground conditions and increased wind and you have the making of a situation.

Hunters need to be diligent with their safety precautions, wear suitable clothing for hunting as well as the weather conditions and be sure to take frequent rests. Darkness, cold air and fatigue are contributing factors to many hunting incidents.

Hunters should never use alcohol while hunting. Alcohol affects judgment and makes hunters more susceptible to injuries, as well as frostbite and hypothermia.

These are just a few reminders for this hunting season. Not reasons to fear but reasons to become better educated. Now I am off to Idaho for my predator hunt. That reminds me of my favorite t-shirt saying: "Anything that doesn't kill you makes you stronger. Except for bears. Bears will kill you." Perhaps fear can be a motivator.



Crime Clean-up

Region 1 Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism law enforcement officers recently cleaned out District 1B evidence freezers containing confiscated game from the 2012-2013 hunting and fishing seasons. District 1B is just one of 11 law enforcement districts across the state. Pictured at right are a few of the items.

Once seized, evidence is kept secure until the officer gets the court disposition to destroy it, use the item for educational purposes, or to sell it by auction. If the item is sold at auction, the money received from the sale comes back to the state. In some counties, officers are able to use perishable evidence abandonment forms,

where evidence such as a deer, antelope, or elk, meat can be given to someone in need, ensuring it doesn't go to waste.

The majority of the evidence collected results from three common violations: trespassing, failure to tag or possessing an untagged carcass, and illegal methods of take. This particular freezer contained 21 crappie, 14 walleye, 11 white-tailed deer, two raccoons, one Rio Grande turkey, one bobcat, and one hawk.

It is estimated that poachers may take as much game and fish as legal hunters. There are never enough game wardens to cover the entire state of Kansas all day every day, so officers need your eyes and ears to report known or suspected violations. If you suspect an illegal activity may be occurring, contact Operation Game

Thief at 1-877-426-3843. Reports can be made anonymously.

- NRO Landen Cleveland





VENISON TIPS FROM A BBQ JUDGE

(KCBS). Our endeavor began in 2009 and entailed a course certification, judging 30 contests and cooking with a team at a KCBS sanctioned event. Thirty contests have taken us all over Kansas and into Oklahoma to judge.

The knowledge we have gained over the past five years, especially cooking with a team, has broadened our cooking techniques in the kitchen as well as on the grill. A few of the important things we learned was don't be afraid to screw up and be liberal with spices.

A TV show popular among BBQ cooks, professional and backyard, is titled BBQ Pitmasters on Destination America. Season 4, Episode 12, in Lee's Summit, Mo. featured venison tenderloin as a challenge. By the looks on the cook's faces, venison was nobody's favorite.

Now when judging BBQ, three criteria are scored, appearance, tenderness and taste. Getting it to look pretty is one thing, getting it to be tender and taste good might be another. Results were mixed as one contestant's entry suffered from gaminess and another toughness. These were professional cooks, and they were having a hard time cooking deer.

I found that when working with game, including deer, it's best to follow K.I.S.S. – or Keep It Simple Stupid. Although for show, the

This year my wife and I earned our certification as Master Barbecue Judges with the Kansas City Barbecue Society

venison challenge appeared harder than it needed to be. A good soak in salt water, buttermilk, or Italian dressing will draw most blood from deer meat, the primary culprit of gaminess. Prepping into smaller sizes will help expose areas to pull excess blood. And I also like go heavy on a few spices instead of light on a lot. That way, if something doesn't work, you will know what to change.



When cooking most game, medium rare is preferred. Deer is no different. It doesn't matter how much bacon you wrap around it, overdone is still overdone and will result in tough, dry and or gamey tasting meat.

Try cutting two pounds of venison backstrap into one-inch steaks and soaking them in a solution of one-quarter cup of salt to a quart of water for three to four hours. This removes blood from the meat and also sea-

sons it with salt. Place steaks in a small bowl and pour in five to seven tablespoons of olive oil or Italian dressing and coat steaks thoroughly. Next, use a "SALT-FREE" seasoning shaker like a McCormick "Garlic and Herb" or a homemade version from the spice rack and coat fillets liberally. With the grill on high heat, place the fillets on for around four minutes, turn and cook for another three minutes. Remove meat and place on a triple layer of aluminum foil. Wrap tightly and set aside to rest for at least 15 minutes. Slowly cooling down will keep meat from drying out. Take this time to make your sides.

Although nothing fancy, a simple pre-mix seasoning or a few spices from the spice rack and attention to grill time can produce a tasty meal from venison. But you didn't need a Master BBQ judge to tell you that. Let's Eat!



FISHIN' with Mike Miller

DO THE LITTLE THINGS

As I get older, I've learned that details, no matter how seemingly insignificant, are important to any successful fishing trip. Fortunately, I've also noticed that preparation for an upcoming trip is much more enjoyable to me than it used to be. In my younger years, I was known to put off preparation until the last minute, and I almost always forgot something. Now, I look forward to getting ready for an upcoming trip, and find the preparation process an integral part of the event.

I don't know if this new-found joy in preparation is a natural part of my evolution as an angler or if it is just a factor of growing older. Whatever, it has made my trips more successful.

There are little things that I used to easily procrastinate, that I've learned don't take much time and can make or break a trip. One of the best habits I've formed is making a list of things I know I'll need. It may take 10 minutes. I usually make a list well ahead of time, add to it as the departure date nears, then go

back just before I start preparations and re-read it.

Other things I do that are quick and easy include either putting new line on my reels or removing the first 6 or 7 feet of line on each of my reels. Then I'll tie on lures I know I'll use. This takes less than 30 minutes, but it can save fishing time because you'll be ready to start fishing as soon as you hit the water. And it could save a big fish that might have broken off because of a bad spot in the old line or a worn knot. I also like to do a quick inventory of tackle in my large tackle box and boat. I make sure I have the lures and equipment I'll be needing while I still have time to find stuff I may have moved to another tackle box.

Another habit I've formed that helps me remember important things is keeping a journal while on trips. I've found that while I may remember many of the high points of a past trip, little things like dates, water temperatures, best lures, hot spots, and things I needed and didn't bring are often lost. Re-reading my journal from last year's trip is not only fun, but it reminds me of things I need to bring this year.

The trip I look forward to most each year is going to Canada with Dad. We'll drive more than 1,000 miles to a remote lodge on Lake of the Woods. Forgetting something means doing without it for a week. I've sort of made a game of thinking of anything we might need during the week and bringing it along. We've brought plenty of stuff we didn't need, but in 20 years, we haven't forgotten anything crucial.



Tick, Tock, Teal Season: It's a "Wading" Game

There's nothing graceful about me when I hunt teal.

In fact, my last teal hunt was a comedy of errors; between tripping and filling my waders with marsh water and getting my shotgun caught in weeds mid-mount, I'm sure I kept my fellow hunters entertained. I've even become such a professional at thrusting my gun in the air in anticipation of a dunking, that I could probably get a second job as a stunt woman. My only redeeming quality as a duck hunter is that when I play my cards right and focus, I can usually hit my target, and with one shot at that. I might have a sore shoulder from an improper gun mount, but you can bet there will be a dead bird in the marsh.

Like with most types of hunting, duck hunting has a learning curve, and there are definitely some areas I still struggle with. My Achilles heel has been learning to wade in sticky marsh mud. Teal are fast, fast ducks and the last thing you want coming between you and that quacker when it's shooting time is immobility. If your feet are planted, nay, cemented, in mud and you can't easily swing your shotgun along the bird's flight path, the probability of you hitting your target goes down exponentially. Teal don't stick around for you to free your trunks and catch up.

Although I won't disclose how many boxes of shells I went through as I rounded the learning

curve, I got my first-ever limit of teal, and with the daily possession limit now six birds, it couldn't have happened during a better season.

Once I got over the excitement of being able to fill every loop on



My limit of blue-winged and green-winged teal. During the 2013 season, the daily bag limit for teal was six.

my duck tote for the first time, I sat back and reflected on all of the events that led up to that amazing moment and what I would remember most. This is what came to mind:

- Waders filled with water, but a gun held in the air staying bone-dry
- A sore shoulder from a hurried gun mount, but a dead bird on the water

- An onset of A.D.D. as "wads" and "jags" of teal appear every where you look, but it's the most relaxed you've been in months

- A mouthful of mosquitoes and midges for breakfast, but the prettiest sunrise you've ever seen

- Cursing missed opportunities and praying for another group of ducks to come in

- The passing on of old traditions and appreciating new technology

- Friendly competition, but teamwork first

- One dream fulfilled, and a new standard set

- Teal hunting at its best, and a huntress who's getting better

By hunt's end I was tired, wet, muddy and bloody, but I couldn't have been more proud. And although limiting on teal won't make me more graceful, I would like to think there is a lot to be said for someone who "falls down seven times, and stands up eight," especially in mud.

For more on the adventures of an Accidental Huntress, visit accidentalthuntress.blogspot.com, or follow her on Twitter at: @A_Huntress

ADVENTURES FROM THE LIFE OF AN AMERICAN HUNTER

by Steven Rinella

I did not know Steven Rinella was the host of the “Meat Eater” television show on the Sportsman Channel, nor had I heard of him. Frankly, I’m not a fan of many “outdoor” television shows. I had seen “Meat Eater” advertised as I channel surfed but never stopped.

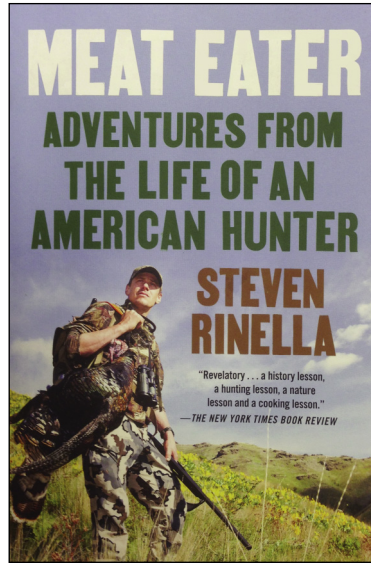
But I saw a reference to Rinella on a trapping website forum with a link to a YouTube video showing a discussion between Rinella and an anti-hunter/vegan during a bookstore appearance. The anti-hunter/vegan politely asked Rinella how he rationalized killing animals with beating hearts who simply wanted to live and why he murdered innocent creatures. Rinella’s thoughtful and articulate three-plus minute response blew me away.

While Rinella admitted he felt the man’s question was more of a statement, he was as cool as the other side of the pillow. He answered with such grace, tact and sincerity, I felt honored to have him on my side. Rinella’s rationalization for obtaining his own food was accurate, both historically and biologically. And in a surprising show of respect, the anti-hunter/vegan actually let Rinella make his case without interruption, listening intently. By the end of the conversation the anti-hunter/vegan agreed to read Rinella’s book if Rinella would read his pamphlet on veganism.

“Deal!” Rinella replied. “I’ll read it tonight.”

I was impressed. The response and manner in which Rinella handled himself made me want to read his new book, *Meat Eater Adventures from the Life of an American Hunter*, which was released in September.

In the book, Rinella chronicles his hunting past growing up in Michigan with a father who was an avid hunter and two older brothers, Danny and Matt. Like many kids with a true outdoor heritage, his big backyard and the woodlots beyond were his initial hunting grounds. His first memory of hunting was at age 10 carrying a .22 rifle given to him by his father and chasing squirrels in Camp Woods with his older brothers. During the fur boom of the 1980s, he attempted to eke out a living as a



trapper of muskrats and other furbearers.

It becomes apparent throughout the book that Rinella’s sense of adventure and connection to hunting and fishing is beyond average. Rinella chose his colleges based on the location to hunting prospects and planned accordingly. Daniel Boone was his hero and Rinella’s own exploits are nearly akin to a modern day version of the same. Many of his adult hunting ventures are in remote locations far from civilization with the most basic of necessities, and relying somewhat to living off the land.

His hunting adventures take you from the squirrel woods of Michigan to chasing mule deer in the Missouri Breaks of Montana to hunts for elusive Dall sheep in the mountains of Alaska. A fishing trip finds him hitchhiking in Mexico’s Yucatan Peninsula in search of bonefish and grappling with a moral dilemma of the notion of catch-and-release.

Each chapter focuses on a different storyline, hunt or part of his life that has shaped who he is as an outdoorsman. Interestingly he admits, on several occasions, to disregarding some hunting and trapping regulations as a youngster. He killed his first deer a year before the legal age in Michigan and used illegal snares for trapping. He took a symbolic otter in a closed area and realized the error of his

ways by saying, “I’d become an asshole.”

But as an adult, he agonizes for quite some time, along with his brother, about whether or not a Dall sheep ram is of legal age by trying to count the annuli of its horns through a spotting scope.

At the end of each chapter is a page or two of “Tasting Notes.” In each he describes the palatability of an array of wild game from beaver tail to mountain lion to deer heart. He discusses the nuances of various game meat and body parts and the best way to prepare them over an open flame or later at home.

The book is riddled with Rinella’s sense of humor and rapid-fire storytelling, frequently meandering off-track. While describing an adventure or hunt, he’ll mention the Bible, a particular war or battle, or a reference to Pink Floyd and Pete Townshend, (lead guitarist for The Who). But even these circuitous deviations are entertaining and add insight into Rinella’s sense of hunting.

Here are a few references or quotes from the book I particularly enjoyed:

On the sounds of hounds chasing a mountain lion: “It sounded like someone torturing a gang of opera singers.”

On cleaning a squirrel proper: “Cut through the squirrel’s hide all the way around its belly, right where a belt would be if squirrels wore belts.”

Describing Michigan’s Upper Peninsula as the Mecca of the outdoors: “It’s kind of a miniature Canada, but without the self-righteousness, progressive politics, or Draconian gun laws.”

Rinella’s matter-of-fact claim to be his own provider of protein is a welcome relief in the big-eyed, bright lights, fist-pumping, screaming, high-fiving world of outdoor shows that bypass the most basic reasons our ancestors hunted. His book, *Meat Eater Adventures from the Life of an American Hunter* is a great read, which should remind hunters where we all started and where we’re headed. Rinella lives to hunt and hunts to live.

Looking for that perfect stocking stuffer? How about a Kansas state park motor vehicle permit for 2014? They go on sale December 16 and are good from that date until December 31, 2014. What else can you buy for \$25 that will give you a year's worth of entertainment while also helping to ensure that future generations have parks to enjoy. Annual camping permits also make a great gift, a bargain at \$152.50 if purchased between December 16, 2013 and March 31, 2014. Books, hats, mugs, t-shirts, hoodies and other Kansas Outdoor Store items are also available at the parks.

If you bought your State Park Passport when you renewed your vehicle registration, you won't need another permit to enter a Kansas state park until your vehicle registration expires. If your vehicle renewal is coming up, save yourself time, money and hassle by purchasing your passport at renewal. It's only \$15 and can only be purchased with your vehicle registration.

You can make your campsite reservations for 2014 starting December 18 for camping through September 30, 2014. Some parks, such as Tuttle Creek, even take reservations for later in the year. Cabins for next year can be rented now, up to one year in advance. And speaking of cabins, do you have enough beds for your holiday crowds? If not, rent a cabin for your guests. Or move the holiday celebration away from city hustle and bustle to a state park cabin.

Tuttle Creek and Cross Timbers state parks and the Green Recreational Trail have already signed up to host First Day Hikes

this year on January 1. Others will be listed as they are scheduled. Start the new year and your resolutions off right by getting outdoors and logging some miles. First day hikes are a new tradition begun nationwide last year by America's State Parks, with all 50 states challenged to host these hikes. Kansas will host several.

Your Kansas state parks are open year-round with many events scheduled for winter, though you may find some campground loops and shower buildings shut down so the water pipes don't freeze. With kids back in school and most family vacations over, the parks are quiet and uncrowded. If you are hunting in the state this season, a state park cabin makes a cozy place to rest up after a long day afield. Fishing can be excellent. Equestrian trail events also take advantage of cooler temps to make it easier on horses and riders. Or you can get out and enjoy the crisp weather and changing colors as summer turns to fall and fall to winter. As trees drop their leaves, birds



and wildlife can be easier to spot.

There is always something to see and do in a Kansas state park. And sometimes the best thing you can do is to not DO anything but just BE. Stop for a moment and just be present where you are. Notice the trees. Listen to the birds. Feel the sun and the wind (it IS Kansas, after all). Smell the crisp air. If it's snowing, taste a snowflake on your tongue. One of the privileges of living in Kansas is the proximity of natural public spaces to almost everyone. Take the time to visit one of your Kansas state parks often.

ILLEGAL MARIJUANA PLOT FOUND ON PERRY WILDLIFE AREA

In October, two men were arrested in connection with a cultivated marijuana grow found on the Lower Ferguson Marsh on the Perry Wildlife Area. Hunters reported what they thought that was a "weed grow" - wild marijuana. However, after a Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWP) game warden met with the hunters and viewed the field, he determined it was a cultivated plot.

The KDWP game warden requested assistance from the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office, and on October 4, the warden and a sheriff's officer watched the field. At sundown, the officers observed two men cut and bag marijuana stalks. The two men, one from Pomona and one from

Savannah, Mo., were arrested and charged with unlawful cultivation of a controlled substance, unlawful possession of controlled substances, unlawful possession of certain drug precursors and paraphernalia, distribute or possession with intent to distribute drug paraphernalia, and no drug stamp.

Illegal marijuana plots on public and private lands are not uncommon across the country. They are usually located in remote areas with low human traffic, but as fall hunting seasons open, chances of illegal fields being discovered increase.

KDWP law enforcement staff reminds hunters and anyone else spending time in remote areas of private or public lands this fall to be vigilant and cautious.

"If you come across what you think could be cultivated marijuana plants, note the location, back out of the area and contact either a KDWP game warden or the local sheriff's office," KDWP Law Enforcement Division Director Kevin Jones recommended. "You have to assume that whoever is cultivating the plants doesn't want them found, and if they are in the area, you could be in danger."

In addition to the marijuana plants, other signs of illegal grows include PVC pipe, black drip line tubing, trash piles and evidence of human activity and traffic that looks out of place.

—KDWP News

REP. WILL CARPENTER

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

by Mike Miller
editor, Pratt

Rep. Will Carpenter, R-El Dorado, is serving his first term with the Kansas House of Representatives, representing the 75th District. Rep. Carpenter is a small business owner who has been active in state and local politics, serving on the school board, the Kansas Wildlife and Parks Commission, and Butler County Commission before being elected to the House.

When asked about his involvement in politics, Rep. Carpenter says, "I just wanted to make a difference. It's easy to sit out here and criticize people for what they've done, but it's a lot different to get in there and try to make a difference."

Rep. Carpenter grew up in Greenwood County where he learned to hunt and fish as a boy.

"My grandfather was a huge mentor to me," Carpenter said. "In those days, we didn't hunt as much for sport. We hunted for food."

He laughs as he reminisces, "We didn't have any geese in those days, of course, or deer. We hunted ducks, jumping ponds, and we hunted quail. We had tons of quail in those days. You could go out and get up 10 or 12 coveys a day. Prairie chickens were plentiful, too. I never hunted deer until 1980."

Rep. Carpenter has two daughters and a son, all of whom were raised in the outdoors. His son, who is an avid hunter, is a Marine stationed at Camp Pendleton and is getting out next April. He has three grandchildren who he is looking forward to spending time with outdoors.

Carpenter participated in the Kansas Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus events during his first year in the legislature and looks forward to continued involvement.

"There are many legislators in the caucus who have the same passion about the outdoors I have and an understanding of its history in our lives. I don't know of any immediate issues that jeopardize the future of hunting in Kansas, but I'm confident that Caucus members will support Kansas sportsmen when issues arise."

When asked about the economic impact hunting, angling and outdoor recreation has in Kansas, Carpenter was supportive but careful.

"I think there needs to be a balance between nonresident and resident hunting opportunities," Carpenter cautioned. "I'm concerned about hunting becoming something that only the rich can do."

"I'm all about opportunity, but we have to keep our eyes on the resource. And I've felt this way since I was on the Wildlife and Parks Commission. If we don't have a healthy resource – be it deer, turkey, pheasants, whatever – we won't have the economic or quality of life benefits it provides."



Rep. Will Carpenter

"I could own a small business and live anywhere. I choose to live in Kansas because of the hunting and fishing opportunities we have available," Carpenter added. "We have some of the finest deer hunting in the nation, great turkey and upland bird hunting, and who would think we'd have the fantastic waterfowl hunting we have. We're lucky to have these opportunities in one state."

One of Carpenter's real passions has been passing on his love of hunting to anyone who has an interest. He has been an instructor in the Becoming an Outdoors Woman workshop since its beginning and says he gets a thrill out of seeing someone take their first deer or quail. He is anxiously waiting for his grandchildren to reach the age at which they can begin hunting with him.

His reflections after serving the first year of his first term in the legislature were positive.

"I enjoyed it, but I didn't realize how hard legislators worked," he said. "During the session, we work from early in the morning until late in the evening, then get up the next day and do it again. And out of the session, I still have lots of meetings and event commitments I attend."

"But I think I can make a difference and improve the quality of life in Kansas," he added. "That's really my only goal."

Fish Squeezer

with Tommie Berger

Wow, time really flies when you're busy and having fun! It seems like 2013 just started, and here we are into the last quarter of the year. I can tell you I did not get enough fishing in. It has been windy this summer and fall, and that limited my ability to get my boat out on the reservoir.

Now hunting and trapping seasons are on my radar screen. I always told my boss if he'd let me have November, December, and January off I would work twice as hard the other nine months. Now that I am retired, I have those three months off, but I still can't get everything done. For example, for the next six weeks, Sunday afternoons will be spent attending 4-H Archery and Shooting Sports project meetings. Our local Pheasants Forever banquet is coming up, and guess who is president of our local chapter? I have several farmers calling for help with fall harvest, and I've been called several days to substitute teach at school. Friday evenings are out due to high school football, and then wrestling season starts, which means Saturdays will be out, too. Our son Fritz is a senior this year, so Mom and Dad will be following him closely – hard to believe that he will be off to college next fall – where did the last 17 years go?

As I reflect on a lifetime in the outdoors, I encourage hunters and anglers to make a list of things they want to do before they get too old. I feel fortunate that I've been able to travel and do lots of fishing and hunting. However, I still have a bucket list of things that I would like to do before I "kick the bucket."

Most of you probably think a bucket list is something old farts make up when they see the light at the end of the tunnel. However, I think that even youngsters (people in their 30s, 40s, or 50s) need to make a bucket list. Unfortunately, I have to admit that I am one of those old farts now; darn it!

TIME FLIES

I scratched off one of the things on my bucket list this fall – I harvested another elk with my bow in the Rocky Mountains. Every year I go, I wonder how much longer I will be able to climb that big rock pile to the west, but I got it done one more time. I have to figure out how to continue to put that tasty elk meat in the freezer once in a while – I'd almost forgotten how good it is.

While I was hunting with one of my best friends, Steve Price, also a retired KDWPT fisheries biologist, we talked about things we'd like to accomplish down the road. While hunting deer and turkeys in his new home state of New Mexico, Steve found a remote canyon with lots of mountain lion sign. Calling in and killing a mountain lion has been on my bucket list for years, so we are investigating that possibility.

Another critter on that bucket list is a wolf. For some reason, calling in and harvesting critters has been high on my priority list for a long time. Now that wolves have been delisted and are being hunted in several northern states, I'm working on how to make that happen.

A buddy in Oklahoma and I are getting closer to a Merriam's turkey hunt somewhere in Nebraska, New Mexico, or Colorado. We've both killed Easterns and Rios, but we just can't seem to put together that Merriam hunt yet – it's on both our bucket lists.

At one time, moose were on my bucket list, but that hunt has fallen to the bottom. And of course, a Booner whitetail buck has always been on my list and I hope that I have quite a few more years to pursue one of those.

Whether you call it a list of goals or a bucket list, make a list and get started planning. Then as life passes you by at warp speed like it has for me, you can continually mark those things off. The problem is, the list never really seems to get shorter.

ZEBRA MUSSELS FOUND IN THREE MORE KANSAS LAKES

This past summer and fall, zebra mussels were confirmed in Glen Elder Reservoir (Waconda Lake) in Mitchell County, Lake Wabaunsee in Wabaunsee County and Clinton Reservoir in Douglas County. Zebra mussels are bean-sized mollusks with striped, sharp-edged, two-part shells. Twenty-two Kansas lakes have now been confirmed to have zebra mussels.

"These latest discoveries show how important it is for the public to be aware of the dangers of aquatic nuisance species (ANS) and to take precautions to prevent their spread," said Jessica Howell, KDWPT Aquatic Nuisance Species Coordinator.

There is no known method to rid a lake of zebra mussels. According to Howell, prevention is the best way to avoid spreading ANS. "By always cleaning, draining, and drying boats and other equipment and by not moving water around, we can stop the spread of not just zebra mussels, but most aquatic nuisance species that may be present," she said.

The lakes will be added to the list of ANS-designated waters in

Kansas, and notices will be posted at various locations around the lakes. The sharp-shelled zebra mussels attach to solid objects, and lake visitors should protect their feet when walking on underwater or shoreline rocks.

To prevent further spread of zebra mussels and other non-native aquatic species that threaten our waters and native wildlife, boaters and anglers must remember to follow regulations and precautions:

- Clean, drain and dry boats and equipment between uses
- Use wild-caught bait only in the lake or pool where it's caught
- Do not move live fish from waters infested with zebra mussels or other aquatic nuisance species
- Drain livewells and bilges and remove drain plugs from vessels prior to transport on a public highway

For more information about aquatic nuisance species in Kansas, report a possible ANS, or see a list of ANS-designated waters, visit ProtectKSWaters.org

– KDWPT News

7th TJ's Memorial Youth and Disabled Deer Hunt



Kent Hensley, Parker May and Karl May

The Hunting Heritage Group and the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks, and Tourism hosted the 7th annual TJ Memorial Youth and Disabled Deer Hunt on September 7 and 8. The annual event is conducted in memory of TJ Hellerud, an avid hunter who was killed in a car accident at the age of 16. Hunting was more than just a pastime or hobby for Hellerud. Cynthia Maier, Hellerud's mother, said hunting taught him "the struggle for survival, the reality of death and the appreciation of life."

Nine hunters attended the 2013 event, including special guests Joshua Glavin who has cerebral palsy and Parker May who has Down syndrome. Each hunter had the opportunity to harvest a deer while hunting on fantastic properties, including

the Cedar Bluff Wildlife Area.

The hunters harvested three bucks and six does. Glavin harvested a 10-point white-tailed buck, and May took a white-tailed buck in full velvet and a doe. While most of the hunters were from the Trego County area, some traveled across Kansas to participate.

The young hunters were mentored on a variety of other subjects, including deer habitat and management, hunting strategies, gun handling, marksmanship, and shot placement. Each hunter spent time on the gun range zeroing in their rifle before their guides took them to ground blinds. Each participant was also accompanied by a guardian during the hunt.

The event would not be successful without the knowledgeable local volunteers, gracious landowners, and the parents/guardians who brought their kids out for the weekend. Special hunts like this are part of the Kansas hunter recruitment and retention program called "PASS IT ON." This program addresses the need to recruit new hunters and retain existing hunters in order to ensure the future of hunting in Kansas.

— NRO Jason Hawman

Sponsors

Hunting Heritage Group
Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks & Tourism
Trego County Commissioners
Trego County Attorney
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Vanderbilt's
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Phil Mann
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Garand Leighton
Sam Leighton
Jason Hawman
Kaylin Hawman
Jerome "Doc" Oborny, DC

CATFISH POACHERS NABBED

Last summer, Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism law enforcement officers caught several anglers illegally handfishing on the Republican River. Officers Landen Cleveland, Brian Hanzlick, Jason Hawman, Hal Kaina, Dan Melson, AJ Meyer, Mike Peterson, Todd Robinson, and Greg Salsbury staked out stretches of the river, watching for potential violations. None were surprised when they found multiple groups of anglers illegally handfishing that day. From 2 p.m. until dark, officers issued a total of eight citations.

Handfishing for flathead catfish is legal from sunrise to sunset June 15 through Aug. 31 at three locations: the entire length of the Arkansas River in Kansas; all federal reservoirs from beyond 150 yards of the dam to the upper end of the federal property; and on the Kansas River from its origin downstream to its confluence with the Missouri River. In addition to a fishing license, hand-fishermen must also have a special handfishing permit. The penalty for illegally handfishing varies by county, however violators can expect to be fined as much as \$250, including court costs.

— NRO Landen Cleveland

WAY outside

BY BRUCE COCHRAN



SEPTEMBER 2013: U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE LISTS NEOSHO MUCKET MUSSEL AS ENDANGERED AND RABBITSFOOT MUSSEL AS THREATENED

If you're unfamiliar with what a mussel is, they are freshwater animals in the mollusk family, which includes clams, oysters, scallops, slugs and squid. Mussels generally live buried in the bottom of rivers, streams, and other bodies of water. They siphon water into their shells and across four gills that are specialized for respiration and food collection. Their primary food is disintegrated organic debris, algae, and bacteria. As filter feeders, they position themselves on the bottom in a way that allows them to take in food and oxygen from the water above them. It should be fairly apparent why good water quality is important to these animals and why biologists regard them as very important indicator species to the overall health of watersheds. Rapidly declining and disappearing populations of mussels are red flags, indicating potential problems within an ecosystem.

Neosho mucketts and rabbitsfoot mussels are found in portions of the Cottonwood, Elk, Fall, Neosho, Spring, and Verdigris Rivers in Kansas. Nationwide, the Neosho mucket no longer exists across 62 percent of its historic range with only nine of the 16 historic populations remaining. Eight of the nine remaining populations are declining with only one large viable population (Spring River, Mo.) remaining. The rabbitsfoot has been eliminated from approximately 64 percent of its historic range. While 51 of 140 historic populations remain, only 11 populations are viable. These remaining populations are at risk of becoming totally eliminated or show very limited reproduction necessary to sustain the species.

Identified threats that have caused nationwide declines in populations include impoundments, channelization of streams and rivers; mining; oil and gas exploration; sedimentation; chemical contaminants; temperature alterations; population fragmentation and isolation; loss of fish hosts necessary for reproduction; and invasive, non-native species.

Protection for these mussel species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) becomes effective 30 days after the ruling was published in the September 17, 2013 Federal Register. Under the ESA, it is illegal to kill, harm or otherwise "take" a listed species, or to possess, import, export or conduct interstate or international commerce without authorization from the Service. The ESA also requires all federal agencies to ensure actions they authorize, fund, or undertake do not jeopardize the existence of listed species.

Once protection becomes effective, the next step is developing a recovery plan that will guide the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and its conservation partners to address



Neosho mucket mussel on the left and rabbitsfoot mussel, right.

threats to the species survival and recovery. When completed, the recovery plan will be available at www.fws.gov/endangered.

Both of these species are listed as endangered under the Kansas Nongame Act of 1975. Out of the other 46 species of freshwater mussels found in Kansas, four are listed as threatened, five endangered, and 12 are considered Species In Need of Conservation (SINC).

Federal listing of these species adds a federal oversight component to management of these newly-listed species. Conservation practices and plans undertaken by state agencies managing these species will now be partnered with federal counterparts to ensure that all is being done for the benefit of these mussels. Greater care will be taken in reviewing any projects or actions that will potentially impact habitat necessary for the ultimate recovery.

Such listings on the part of the USFWS should highlight the importance of our state's role in conserving, managing, and when possible, restoring a species in need of conservation. In the past, coal miners used canaries to alert them of dangerous gas leaks while working underground. Sensitive species, such as mussels, alert biologists, much in the same way of threats to our incredibly diverse natural resource in Kansas. From an aesthetic point of view, we risk endangering and even potentially losing some amazing species of animals that are often overlooked. On a more practical note, losing such valuable tools in assessing our state's irreplaceable natural heritage would also be a terrible loss.

For more information regarding the listing of these two freshwater mussels, please visit <http://www.fws.gov/arkansas-es/> or Docket #FWS-R4-ES-2012-0031 on <http://www.regulations.gov/>



2013 Upland Bird Forecast

After two years of severe drought, the pheasant harvest in 2012 was one of the lowest on record. While habitat conditions are much better this year, rains came too late to significantly impact nesting and brood-rearing success this summer. However, there are birds available for hunters willing to travel and put in walking miles. Along with this detailed forecast, hunters can use the 2013 Kansas Hunting Atlas, which includes maps of 1 million acres of Walk-In Hunting areas, as well as all state and federal public hunting areas, to locate potential hunting spots.



Mike Miller photo

When predicting upland game population levels for the fall hunting season, two important factors are considered. First is the number of adult birds that survived the previous fall and winter to become viable breeders in the spring. The second is the reproductive success of this breeding population. Reproductive success consists of nest success (the number of nests that successfully hatched) and chick survival (the number of chicks recruited into the fall population). For pheasant and quail, annual population turnover is relatively high; therefore the fall population is more dependent on reproductive success than breeding population levels. Annual population turnover for prairie chickens, which are a species of grouse, is not as rapid,

although reproductive success is still the major population regulator and important for good hunting opportunities. In the following forecast, breeding population and reproductive success of pheasants, quail, and prairie chickens will be discussed. Breeding population data were gathered during spring breeding surveys for pheasants (crow counts), quail (whistle counts), and prairie chickens (lek counts). Data for reproductive success were collected during late-summer roadside surveys for pheasants and quail. Reproductive success of prairie chickens cannot be easily assessed using the same methods because they generally do not associate with roads like the other game birds.

Extreme drought conditions per-

sisted in most of Kansas again this year. While several late winter and early spring storms brought much needed precipitation across the state, it was not enough to recover vegetation conditions going into the breeding season. Nesting conditions were somewhat better for pheasants than our other game birds due to a later-than-average wheat harvest. Pheasants utilize green wheat for nesting more than other game birds, and a later harvest provides more opportunity for nests to hatch and young to fledge. However, the lack of precipitation in June and most of July did not improve vegetative conditions enough to provide for good brood-rearing cover or sufficient insect abundance. The combination of these two deficiencies led to lower than average



Mike Miller photo

chick survival for all upland game birds across most regions of the state. As precipitation fell across much of the state in late summer, vegetation conditions improved, signaling improved conditions and a potential for better production in the near future.

Because of drought conditions occurring during mid-summer, 66 counties in Kansas were opened to emergency haying and grazing of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) grasslands. CRP emergency haying requires fields that are hayed to leave at least 50 percent of the field in standing grass cover. CRP emergency grazing requires 25 percent of the field (or contiguous fields) to be left ungrazed or grazing can occur at 75 percent normal stocking rates across the entire field. For many of these counties, this is the third consecutive year where CRP has been released for emergency haying or grazing. In the previous two years, approximately 43 percent of CRP acres in Kansas had been utilized for emergency haying or grazing. The emergency use over the last three years has created a cumulative negative effect within areas where the drought prevented regrowth. Thus, a portion of the CRP will only provide fair to poor cover this fall, including on many Walk-In Hunting Access (WIHA) areas. WIHA property is privately owned land open to the public for hunting access. Kansas has over a million acres of WIHA (atlases are available at www.ksoutdoors.com or at any license vendor). Often older stands of CRP grass are in need of disturbance, and haying and grazing can improve habitat conditions for the upcoming breeding season. With the late summer precipitation across many regions of the state, we have already had a great improvement in the vegetative composition within those disturbed CRP fields. If climate conditions continue to improve, these disturbed CRP fields should provide excellent habitat for production next summer.

Due to continued drought during

the reproductive season, Kansas will experience a below average upland game season this fall. However, for those willing to hunt, there will still be birds available, especially in the northern Flint Hills, and northcentral and northwestern parts of Kansas. Kansas has 1.5 million acres open to public hunting (Wildlife Areas and WIHA combined). For regulations, season dates and bag limits, go to www.ksoutdoors.com and click on "When To Hunt" under the "Hunting" menu. Don't forget that

Nov. 2-3 is designated for the youth pheasant and quail season, open to youth 16 or younger and accompanied by a nonhunting adult who is 18 or older. All public wildlife areas and WIHA tracts will be open for public access during the special youth season. Please consider taking a young person hunting this fall, so they might have the opportunity to develop a passion for the outdoors that we all enjoy.



REGIONAL SUMMARIES

Northern High Plains (northwest)

This region has 11,809 acres of public land, and 330,994 acres of WIHA open to hunters this fall.

Pheasant – This region maintained the highest spring densities in the state but still showed a decline of almost 40 percent from 2012 to 2013. Wheat harvest was delayed in the region to late June, which allowed for more successful nesting in wheat fields in the region. However, drought conditions through the summer and emergency use of CRP acreage reduced cover and insects needed to support broods. As a result, the summer brood survey showed densities decreased nearly 75 percent in the region compared to 2012. Hunting opportunities will be limited, but counties in the central portion of the region maintained the highest densities of pheasants as identified by summer brood surveys.

Quail – Populations in this region had been increasing prior to the drought, which has resulted in significant declines in production. This area is at the extreme northwestern edge of bobwhite range in Kansas, and densities are relatively low compared to central Kansas. Hunting opportunities in this region will be extremely limited this year, but the best areas will be in the eastern and southeastern counties where adequate cover is present.

Prairie Chicken – Prairie chicken populations have expanded in both numbers and range within the region over the past 20 years. The better hunting opportunities will be found in the central and southeastern portions of the region in native prairies and nearby CRP grasslands. Spring lek counts in that portion of the region were slightly depressed from last year and nesting conditions were only fair this year. Extreme drought likely negatively impacted chick survival again. Thus, hunting will be fairly tough, but the region still contains some areas of

relatively high densities compared to other areas of the state. The best hunting will be in the eastern most portion of the region.

Smoky Hills (northcentral)

This region has 75,576 acres of public land, and 288,654 acres of WIHA open to hunters this fall.

Pheasant – The Smoky Hills breeding population dropped about 50 percent from 2012 to 2013, reducing overall fall population potential. While nesting conditions were good due to good winter wheat growth and delayed harvest, the drought continued to limit vegetative cover following wheat harvest and thus limited the number of young recruited into the fall population. This region shows the highest density of birds from the summer brood survey despite a 40 percent annual decline. The best areas will likely be in northeastern portion of the region; however relatively good brood production was reported across several



Mike Miller photo

other counties scattered within the region. Overall, bird numbers will be below average across the region.

Quail – Breeding populations increased over 60 percent from 2012 to 2013, increasing fall population potential. However, drought conditions persisted and impacted nesting and brood success. There are reports of fair to good quail numbers in certain areas throughout the region, which is likely attributed to late re-nesting attempts benefiting from late summer rains. Quail populations in northcentral Kansas are always spotty due to a corresponding distribution of habitat. Areas within the northern and northeastern portion of this region appear to hold the best hunting prospects for this fall.

Prairie Chicken – Greater prairie chickens occur throughout the Smoky Hills where large areas of native rangeland are intermixed with CRP. This region includes some of the highest densities and greatest hunting opportunities in the state for greater prairie chickens. Lesser prairie chickens occur in a few counties in the southwestern portion of the region. Spring counts indicated that numbers were slightly reduced over most of the region from last year. Much of the rangeland cover is significantly reduced due to drought, which had negative impacts on production. The best hunting in the region will likely be found in the northeastern portions of the region with several other scattered counties holding relatively high densities of birds.

Glaciated Plains (northeast)

This region has 60,559 acres of public land, and 53,604 of WIHA open to hunters this fall.

Pheasant – Spring crow counts this year indicated breeding populations of pheasants remained similar to last year. Pheasant densities across the region are low, especially compared to other areas in western Kansas. Good hunting opportunities will exist in only a few pockets of good habitat

primarily in the northwestern portion of the region.

Quail – Breeding populations stayed relatively the same as last year and some quail were detected during the summer brood survey. The long-term trend for this region has been declining due to unfavorable weather conditions and degrading habitat. Hunting opportunities will be similar to last year with the best areas likely in the western portion of this region near the Smoky Hills and Flint Hills.

Prairie Chickens – Very little prairie chicken range occurs in this

region, and opportunities are limited. The best areas are in the western edges of the region, where large areas of native rangeland still exist.

Osage Cuestas (southeast)

This region has 80,759 acres of public land, and 29,088 acres of WIHA open to hunters this fall.

Pheasant – This region is outside the primary pheasant range, and very limited hunting opportunity is available. A few birds can be found in the northwestern portion of the region.





Quail – Though long-term trends have been declining, breeding populations have been steadily increasing over the last five years. The southern half of this region held some of the highest densities in the state this past spring and again during the late summer brood survey. Heavy rainfall in late summer could have negatively impacted production in some portions of this region. Population levels are above the 15-year average but remain far below historic levels across the bulk of the region due to extreme habitat degradation.

Prairie Chicken – Greater prairie chickens occur in the central and northwest parts of this region in large areas of native rangeland. After a sharp increase last year, breeding population densities declined this past spring. Populations have been in consistent decline over the long-term. Infrequent fire has resulted in woody encroachment of native grasslands in the region, gradually reducing the amount of suitable habitat. The best hunting opportunities will be in large blocks of native rangeland, primarily located along the Flint Hills.

Flint Hills

This region has 128,371 acres of public land, and 60,625 acres of WIHA open to hunters this fall.

Pheasant – This region is on the eastern edge of pheasant range in Kansas, and well outside the primary range. Pheasant densities have always been relatively low throughout the Flint Hills. Spring breeding populations were down over 25 percent, and reproduction was limited this summer. The best pheasant hunting will be in the northwestern edge of this region.

Quail – This region as a whole contained the highest breeding densities of bobwhite in Kansas in 2013. The breeding population in this region remained relatively stable compared to 2012, and the long term (since 1998) trend has been stable with little annual variation over the last several years. The number of birds detected during the fall brood survey declined by 50 percent compared to 2012. This is likely due to heavy rainfall that fell across the region in late summer.

Some areas in this region should still offer quality hunting opportunities, particularly in the northern and southern counties in the region.

Prairie Chickens – The Flint Hills is the largest intact tallgrass prairie left in North America. It has served as a core habitat for greater prairie chickens for many years. Since the early 1980s, inadequate range burning frequencies have gradually degraded habitat, and prairie chicken numbers have been declining as a result. The continued drought has again left many areas that are normally burned annually, unburned this year. While the drought still impacted the vegetative conditions in the area, the reduced burning meant more residual grass cover for nesting compared to most years. There are some reports of prairie chicken broods, and hunting opportunities will likely be improved over last year throughout the region.

Southcentral Prairies

This region has 19,534 acres of public land, and 67,688 acres of WIHA open to hunters this fall.

Pheasant – The breeding population declined over 25 percent from 2012 to 2013. Prolonged drought over the last three years and very poor vegetation conditions resulted in poor reproductive success this year. CRP was opened to emergency haying or grazing in all counties in the region for the third consecutive year. Summer indices showed a depressed pheasant population in all counties within this region. There will be limited hunting opportunities in this region this fall, but the best areas will likely be in the northern portion of the region.

Quail – The breeding population dropped over 35 percent from 2012 and the summer brood survey indicated over a 50 percent decline for this region. This region generally has some of the highest quail densities in Kansas; however prolonged drought and resulting vegetation conditions

have caused significant declines in recent years. Extended periods of heavy rainfall that occurred throughout this region in late summer may have further depressed brood survival this year. However, the precipitation did improve vegetative conditions that will likely lead to improved survival over the winter and improved productivity next summer. With significant declines in this region, hunting opportunities will likely be limited. Areas in the northcentral portion of this region will likely have the best opportunities.

Prairie Chicken – This region is almost entirely occupied by lesser prairie chickens. After a sharp decline last year, the breeding population remained stable in the region this year. Nesting cover has been limited due to the drought over the last three years. Densities from spring lek counts in some counties were improved and the counties in the sand prairies south of the Arkansas River will offer the best hunting opportunities this year.

Southern High Plains (southwest)

This region has 2,904 acres of public land, and 172,020 acres of WIHA open to hunters this fall.

Pheasant – After record lows last year, the breeding population fell another 40 percent in this region from 2012 to 2013. While late summer precipitation improved vegetation cover, extensive drought conditions during the bulk of the nesting and brood rearing season combined with extremely low breeding populations, significantly reduced bird numbers again. The summer survey indicated that densities in the region declined over 40 percent from last year. Additionally, CRP was opened to emergency haying or grazing in all counties in the region for the third consecutive year. Hunting opportunities will be limited, but counties in the southeastern portion of this region should provide the best chances for success.

Quail – The breeding population in this region tends to be highly variable depending on available moisture and resulting vegetative conditions.

Quail densities from the spring whistle survey were stable compared to last year but well below the 10-year-average. The drought continued to limit the available nesting and brood rearing cover, but late summer rains improved conditions across the area which provided higher potential for success for reneating attempts. Hunting opportunities in the region will be limited this season but the best hunting will likely be found in the southwest portion of the region where some limited production occurred.

Prairie Chicken – This region experienced a 35 percent decline in the breeding index from last year. While late-summer precipitation slightly improved vegetation, drought conditions remained extreme in this region during most of the nesting and brooding season, and reproductive success was very low. Hunting opportunities in this region will be extremely limited this fall but the best hunting will likely be found in far southeastern portion of this region. ♡



Mike Miller photo

FIND YOUR INNER MOUNTAIN MAN

by Marc Murrell
manager, Great Plains Nature Center, Wichita

photos by Jim Reid
Wichita

What started as a history lesson about American mountain men for his two young boys turned into a passion for the author. Trapping is a way to connect with the heritage left by our early American pioneers.



This country was founded by explorers and frontiersmen who braved a myriad of challenges as they explored a new land. I can only imagine what these individuals saw as they encountered pristine lands and endless outdoor opportunities. Fur trading was at the heart of settlement and a way of life or death for many.

I've often wondered what it would be like to have the experiences of early trappers. Although I'm fairly content in a 4-wheel drive truck and a motorized boat, I think it would be a treat to see the outdoor world as it was centuries ago. Making do with what you had or could find, catch or kill would be intriguing. The balance of life and living was often determined

by how resourceful individuals were at the time and that would make for an interesting challenge.

The historical aspects of trapping and the fur trade are exactly what got me interested in it a few years ago. Or, more accurately, my twin boys came home from grade school and started asking questions about early settlers and the fur trade as they were studying it in school.

"You want to go trapping?" I asked.

"Sure!" was their answer.

Since that time, I've enjoyed trapping adventures with my boys. Although I'm in tune and experienced with many other outdoor activities, trapping was a new endeavor. The boys would run the line with me between sports and school activities and their sense of exploration was as heightened as my own. We learned along the way and quickly discovered that trapping, at least successful trapping, depended totally upon being immersed in animal sign and interpretation.

While the skills involved in successful trapping haven't changed much, the gear and gadgets available to trappers today have changed dramatically. There are more options and types of traps than ever before and the materials they're made from are likely better now. Outer gear like boots, gloves and warm clothing have evolved and improved, too.

Several of my friends tease me about being a "modern day" Jeremiah Johnson as that movie is their only exposure to trapping. I'll take the comparison and I bet he would, too, if he could use the same equipment I have available. Johnson went west as a greenhorn and received a crash course in survival. He fared well with even the most basic of supplies and equipment.

My trap lines have never been extensive. Usually, I set for three or four days on a long weekend or holiday when the weather cooperates. If I have 15 traps out that's plenty to check with work, kids and other family



commitments. Despite the limited number of traps and time, I've always enjoyed what I consider good success. My primary quarry has been raccoons, with incidental skunks and opossums regularly encountered, too. The last couple years I've expanded my knowledge and efforts and caught coyotes, beavers and bobcats.

Last year I decided to run a river line. The Kansas, Arkansas and Missouri Rivers are public within the normal water marks and open to trapping. The Kansas

Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism leases land around the upper ends of most Kansas' reservoirs and manages it for public hunting and trapping. The rivers flowing through these wildlife areas feeding the reservoirs are ideal places to trap.

But rather than paddle my way along in a canoe, I loaded my 16-foot Jon boat and 24-horse marsh motor with all my gear. I made plans to "hit it hard" when the season opened last year in mid-November. Going old school may have worked, but I'm all about working smarter, not harder these days.

As soon as the 2012 season opened at noon, I was busy making sets, mostly for raccoon but a few for beaver. One of the first things I learned when I started trapping was how labor-intensive preparing and setting traps correctly is. It took me four to five hours to scout, find enough sign and set traps in areas where I thought I stood a good chance for success. I was disappointed in the amount of raccoon sign I saw and it got to the point if I found tracks,



Scouting is a necessary skill if you are to be a successful trapper. The author used his duck boat to travel a river into a public wildlife area and reach areas not readily accessible from roads.



A hand-held GPS unit is handy for finding new sets, especially in early-morning light.

rich history, Kansas' largest rodent has always fascinated me. Quite common now, beavers pose numerous problems for landowners destroying trees and flooding areas with their dams.

With a good friend along to keep me company and take photos, I was on the water just after first light the next morning to see what was waiting in my traps. The anticipation of running a trapline is one of the things I find enjoyable with this activity. It's akin to checking a trotline as you never really know if you're going to catch something or what the next trap holds. It didn't take long for my efforts to pay off and the first animal of the day, a nice, big boar coon was sleeping when I beached my boat and woke him.

Despite not finding much promising sign the previous day

when setting traps, the results of my efforts were pleasing. Of the traps set for raccoons I caught nine nice-sized coons. Add a couple opossums and a skunk, and several tripped traps and 15 of the 20 traps saw action, which is a great first night's effort in my book.

I eased up to the first beaver lodge to check my 330s and could tell immediately I had at least one giant rodent. The stabilizing sticks I used for the 330 were dislodged and I could see a chunk of fur floating right there within the run. Upon closer inspection, I found a 45-pounder with beautiful chocolate fur. I caught a similar-sized beaver in another run, and my long-line was off to a great start. A 35-pounder came from the next lodge and a sprung 330 indicated I'd come close on another.

My tally for the first check was nine raccoons, three beavers, two opossums and a skunk. I was pleased and wondered aloud if Jeremiah Johnson would have been equally as happy with this haul and my buddy just laughed.

or even a single track or two, I'd place a trap.

My first attempt at what I considered a "long-line" might be laughed at by seasoned trappers. I put out 20 Lil' Grizz dog-proof-type traps that revolutionized coon trapping for many individuals. They're primarily raccoon-specific, but opossums and skunks can be caught in them, too. This dog-proof trap is perfect for public lands where non-target catches are a concern. They're more expensive than traditional foot-hold traps, but the peace of mind is worth it in my book. Most of them were placed along the shoreline and baited with a homemade concoction of ground carp and drum and store-bought jack mackerel.

In addition, I set six, 330 body-gripping traps in several underwater runs of two different beaver lodges I located. Historically, early trappers sought beaver because the fur was in demand for use in making beaver-felt hats. In the first half of the 19th century, it is estimated that between 100,000 and 500,000 beavers were trapped annually. By 1850, silk had replaced beaver-felt and many beaver populations were nearly wiped out anyway. Because of this



The author looks for just the right place in the beaver run to set his 330 body-gripping trap. Demand for beaver-felt hats lured the early American trappers west.



Raccoons were the primary target, and the author employed special, dog-proof traps for piece of mind since he was trapping on public land open to other types of hunting.

“He’d probably rather have your Go-Devil, neoprene waders and Gore-Tex gloves,” he said.

Day two’s check went equally well, a pleasant surprise as the second day’s catch rate often falls off. I tallied 10 raccoons, one possum, and two more beavers in the 20-pound range. I considered it another fine day on the trapline. Results fell off dramatically on day three with just one small raccoon, opossum and one more beaver to show. I wondered if I’d worn out my welcome. It didn’t really matter because a work commitment required me to pull my traps. The law requires all traps be checked every 24 hours. Trappers often move traps to new territory after a few days anyway, so I chalked it up to experience and loaded everything into my boat.

Even with a slow day three, I was more than satisfied with my efforts. Each day after running traps, I’d skin the animals I caught and lay the pelts flat in the freezer. This, too, was hard work and my admiration for early American trappers grew as I imagined the dangers, elements and hardships they overcame.

I wouldn’t be trading my

furs for flour, sugar or powder, but selling them locally to a licensed fur buyer. My green-skinned (not finished fur) raccoons brought anywhere from \$5-\$20 (I probably averaged \$12) and the beavers

were each in the neighborhood of \$12-\$15. Considering the expense of traps, gas and gear, I likely wasn’t money ahead for this short-term outing. But the system of reward versus effort reminded me of what it was like to live off the land and I realized you better trap smart and tough if you were going to survive back in the day.

I enjoyed my time, albeit brief on the river. I imagined trappers of old running their lines and doing things much like I’d learned to do from their guidance and information inherited from past generations. I wondered if Jeremiah Johnson would have liked to trade places with me and see how modern day trapping had changed compared to mountain man days. I’m sure he would, but that would mean I would have to learn how to skin a grizz and I don’t know if I’m ready for that yet. 🐾



Trapping has taught the author about reading sign, predicting animal movements and the use of scent and lures. While he sells his fur, it’s not a money-making endeavor.



David Butel photo

AMERICAN ROBIN

THE BACKYARD BIRD WE THINK WE KNOW

by Bob Gress
Wichita

As children, we are taught that seeing a robin is a sure sign spring is just around the corner. We always assumed they were returning from a warmer winter location. However, there are many flocks that winter in Kansas.

This tame, backyard songster with the loud voice is one of the most recognizable songbirds in America. We know this bird - or do we?

The American robin is the largest, most abundant and widespread of all North American thrushes. This tame, backyard songster with the loud voice is one of the most recognizable songbirds in America. We know this bird - or do we?

This harbinger of spring shows up annually in our yards as soil temperatures rise and earthworms once again become active.

Although appearing to listen, the robin cocks its head to view the ground. After a few moments the robin will often switch to view the other side. When movement is spotted, the bill is quickly thrust into the ground to grab the unsuspecting prey. Steady pressure stretches the earthworm to the breaking point before fatigue releases the robin's meal.

Like other species of wildlife in

North America, the robin has experienced changes since our country was settled. But, unlike many animals whose populations declined, robins benefited. Robins were not always plentiful on the Great Plains and in Kansas. They migrated through Kansas and were present in small numbers during the breeding season. Conditions began to change in the late 1800s as agriculture provided



Bob Gress photo

Flocks of hundreds of birds often forage in neighborhoods and overgrown pastures. Wintering flocks are nomadic and as food supplies decrease the restless birds squabble for the remaining berries before moving into new areas.



Bob Gress' photo

ideal conditions for introduced earthworms. Earthworms thrived in the recently broken prairie soils. This new food source increased even more with the expanding population of people and the popularity of parks, lawns and especially our desire for green, constantly growing, irrigated grass. Moist soils with mowed grass were perfect for earthworms and sight-foraging robins. Homesteads and small towns also introduced trees to the vast prairies. Robins now had plenty of food in earthworms, short grass for foraging, trees to build their obvious mud and grass nests, and people happy to share their backyards. Life is good for American robins!

The scientific name for the American robin is *Turdus migratorius*, meaning wandering thrush, or migratory

thrush. Massive migrations to wintering areas occur to and from their breeding ranges in Canada, the United States and Mexico. As with all migratory birds, migration is a response to food availability, not cold conditions.

As fall approaches, earthworms seek deeper soils and robins require a new food supply. Robins switch to berries and their fall migration takes them to areas with abundant berry crops. Most of the wintering flocks are concentrated in Mexico and southern and central United States, including Kansas. Historically, migrating robins spent little time in Kansas. But today's urban forests, expanding riparian woodlands, and red cedar laden pastures provide excellent berry production for hungry, migrating and wintering

In Kansas, robins are no longer restricted to spring and summer. Many flocks of wintering robins are found across the state. But because the birds are not on our lawns they often go unnoticed.



Bob Gress photo

robins. In Kansas, wintering robins forage on rough-leaved dogwoods, sumac, poison ivy, green briar, and especially the plentiful fruits of hackberry trees and red cedars. Flocks of hundreds of birds often forage in neighborhoods and overgrown pastures. Wintering flocks are nomadic and as food supplies decrease the restless birds squabble for the remaining berries before moving into new areas.

At night, roosting flocks descend into dense wooded areas by the thousands, sometimes the hundreds of thousands. Loose flocks begin to gather late in the afternoon and pause in the tallest trees. As numbers increase, the early arrivals join the ever growing flying flocks until numbers peak shortly after sunset. With noisy, erratic flights the flocks descend into dense groves of trees. Some individual trees hold hundreds of noisy birds. Groves can contain hundreds of thousands of birds and roosting flocks in Kansas have been known to approach a half million birds. Roosting areas

located near steady supplies of berries may support roosts annually, but when berry production fails, robins may not show up at all.

In Kansas, robins are no longer restricted to spring and summer. Many flocks of wintering robins are found across the state. But because the birds are not on our lawns they often go unnoticed. The availability of earthworms, usually in March, triggers the spring migration. Southern birds stream north and join wintering flocks to disperse across lawns statewide. Although robins have been here all winter, the first appearance of robins tugging on flexible earthworms reminds us that spring is just around the corner. ♡

Bob Gress is the former director of the Great Plains Nature Center and co-founder of www.BirdsInFocus.com.

IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE

by Marc Murrell
manager, Great Plains Nature Center, Wichita

A positive attitude and outlook on life would never be more important to Kurt Umbarger than it was after a fateful day in 2008.

Bowhunters are a unique breed of outdoorsmen. Many enjoy all aspects of the activity and connecting on game with stick and string is the ultimate challenge. Bowhunting is an addiction to some, and they love every minute of it. It's that passion that drives a bowhunter to sit for hours on end in a treestand each fall, waiting on the buck of a lifetime. That's exactly what Kurt Umbarger, 36, headed out to do early one morning in 2009, when his life changed dramatically in the blink of an eye.

Umbarger grew up in Chanute in southeast Kansas. He came from a family of avid bowhunters.

"I grew up seeing my brothers and my dad kill deer since I was five years old," Umbarger said. "I killed my first buck with a bow when I was 13 years old."

In addition to his bowhunting interests, Umbarger also liked to chase waterfowl. Once he got his driver's license, he and his friends would visit the Neosho Wildlife Area on a regular basis.

"At that time, waterfowl hunting was probably my first love," Umbarger said.

Umbarger admits he didn't fish a lot as a young man and that was likely due to his interest in sports, particularly baseball as that occupied many of his summers growing up.

"We'd play about 60 or so games a summer," he said. "I really didn't have a lot of time to do much other than baseball."

Umbarger also wrestled and was a standout high school running back and linebacker. He received numerous regional and state awards

during high school for wrestling, football and baseball and played in the Kansas Shrine Bowl his senior year. While he could have played football in college, he chose to play baseball and signed with Neosho County Community College and then went to Murray State University in Kentucky on a full scholarship. After graduating from Murray State with a degree in Occupational Safety and Health Administration, he played two years of professional baseball in the Independent League.

Umbarger married and had a daughter and was working for a chemical plant in western Kentucky. Life was good and he began to enjoy the outdoors more and more. However, he realized the waterfowl hunting was much different in Kentucky.

"They do a lot of waterfowl hunting on the Ohio and Tennessee rivers," he said. "That's a lot different than going to Neosho."

As a result of fewer waterfowl hunting opportunities, Umbarger's interest in bowhunting grew. In addition to deer, he started chasing turkeys with a bow, and became an accomplished bowhunter.

"I really got ate up with bowhunting," Umbarger said. "It basically consumed me because I love the challenge."

He had a deer hunting lease in Illinois and also bowhunted Kentucky. And every chance he got, he'd slip back home to hunt family ground in southeast Kansas.

"I basically bowhunted every chance I got from October 20 through mid-December," Umbarger said. "I was always going somewhere."

It was on one of these outings on December 3, 2009, that Umbarger's life changed forever.

"I had a block of woods behind my house where I could bowhunt. I had some trail cameras out with some pretty good bucks on them, but it was a good doe spot, too," Umbarger said.

At about 6 a.m., Umbarger ascended his sections of ladder that were strapped to the tree leading up to his hang-on, portable treestand. Although he admits he hadn't always worn a safety vest or fall restraint device in the past, Umbarger said he had worn one for the last few years. He had one on the morning of his accident and was within seconds of being able to hook it up.

"I had one foot on the ladder and one foot on the stand and I reached around the treestand to pull myself up a little more with a limb and the limb snapped and I went straight back," Umbarger said. "To this day I can see my stand getting smaller as I was falling to the ground."

The fall severed Umbarger's spinal column between the C5 and C6 vertebrae. Unable to move, Umbarger laid on the ground for 12 hours until help arrived that evening around 6 p.m.

Umbarger doesn't remember how he hit when he landed an estimated 25 feet below his treestand. He remained conscious and surprisingly didn't feel any pain.

"The way I explain the feeling to everyone was that if you blew up a balloon and held it in your hand and let the air out while you were still holding it, that's how my body felt," Umbarger said. "I knew instantly what had happened, that I was paralyzed."

The fall severed Umbarger's spinal column between the C5 and C6 vertebrae. Unable to move, Umbarger laid

on the ground for 12 hours until help arrived that evening around 6 p.m. He never lost consciousness, despite temperatures being in the 20s and his severe injury.

"There are a lot of things that run through your mind in that time," Umbarger said.

Umbarger was Life-Watched to an Evansville, Ind., hospital where he was evaluated. But due to his extended time on the ground after his fall, he developed pneumonia in both lungs and surgery had to be delayed for six days. His injury was severe and a titanium plate and screws were placed at the location of the break in his spinal column to stabilize it on December 9. The damage was irreparable. Umbarger would be confined to a wheel chair, unable to move much of his body for the rest of his life.



Kurt Umbarger (left) grew up in Chanute where he learned to love bowhunting. He enjoyed hunting with family and friends and took most of his turkeys in the years leading up to his accident with archery equipment.

He was then flown to Craig Hospital near Denver on December 22 where he would spend the next three months in rehab, learning to deal with life in a wheelchair paralyzed from the neck down. As if his physical challenges weren't enough, Umbarger and his wife would separate and divorce shortly after his accident.

But despite the huge physical and emotional obstacles, Umbarger remained positive throughout his recovery process. Although he admits he initially didn't think he could ever get back out into the woods again one experience at Craig Hospital gave him hope.

"They were real big on activities," Umbarger said. "They knew how I got hurt and one of the guys that worked there had a device that helps you shoot a gun or crossbow and that was the first time I thought I might be able to get back out.

"After I saw that, my will started to turn a little bit thinking I would have a chance to get out and hunt again," he added.

Umbarger left the Craig Hospital on March 22 and returned to Chanute where he lived with his parents for a couple years. It was during this time that friends and family constructed a blind on a portable trailer that he could use to hunt from in his wheelchair with some friendly help. One of those friends is Chip VanHouden who lives in Spring Hill.

"Chip was a year younger than me in school," Umbarger said. "Both of us hunted together all the time when we were in high school and he's been my biggest hunting buddy over the years. And since my accident, he's just continued and carried it on, getting me out to hunt.

"Kurt was always an athlete, always a winner as far as his attitude and he's a positive guy," VanHouden said. "He's always been a beast of a man."

"He's been a big factor in my life both before and after my accident," he said.

VanHouden went to see Umbarger in the hospital just days after the accident. He admits their conversations then and since have centered on past hunting trips.

"Kurt and I had kept in touch over the years, and we always talked about bowhunting deer," VanHouden said. "We really got into it about 10 years ago and shot some really good deer. We would video each other, and then we really got into bowhunting turkeys."

VanHouden wasn't surprised by Umbarger's desire to get back into the woods.

"Kurt was always an athlete, always a winner as far as his attitude and he's a positive guy," VanHouden said. "He's always been a beast of a man."

Umbarger and VanHouden got together and hunted deer again in 2010 just like other hunts in the past. One difference now is Umbarger uses an assisted shooting device similar to what he used at the Craig Hospital). It allows a gun or bow to be positioned in front of his wheelchair and he can move and fire it with his mouth using a sip/puff device. He's been successful with it and on a trip to Kansas last spring used it to take two turkeys.

"I started out with my crossbow and had some bad luck with a tom on Friday and I got frustrated and told Chip I'd use the shotgun as I only had a couple days before I had to leave," Umbarger said. "I ended up getting a jake and a tom the next day."

While Umbarger's physical limitations have obviously changed, VanHouden said their time together is no different than in the past.

"It's just like anyone else and we call up and say hey we're going to meet and go kill a big gobbler," VanHouden said. "It just requires that I help him get to where he needs to go. But after that, it's just hunting and we deal with all of it just like anyone else does and we get after it.

"We have no more obstacles than the average hunter trying to kill a deer or turkey, they're just a little more challenging," he added. "We don't let it get to us, and we still hunt if it's soaking wet out and if we can get out, we'll do it."

Umbarger has a van he uses to get his wheelchair in and out and the duo can drive it to the blind. A ramp goes up into the blind where Umbarger and VanHouden both sit. The blind can be moved to likely interception points for both deer and turkeys.



Kurt Umbarger's friends and family helped construct this portable hunting trailer so he could hunt deer and turkeys. His van can be pulled alongside and he rolls his wheelchair up a ramp and into the blind.

Although Umbarger's outdoor experience is obviously different now, his passion for it remains strong.

"I'm in one spot more now, but I still love it and it's cool," Umbarger said. "I still love seeing a 140-class whitetail up close and all the other things in nature and that feeling hasn't changed at all."

Umbarger moved to Littleton, Colo., a year ago last August, and he's engaged to be married.

"I've been blessed to be able to move on and find someone else in my life," he said of his fiancée.

Umbarger looks forward to spring and fall in Kansas and will continue to try to get back here on a regular basis.

His philosophy on life remains largely unchanged from his days growing up in Kansas to where he is today.


"Kurt's part of the story is the amazing part," VanHouden said. "Here's a guy who's a prisoner in his own body, but yet finds ways, and not just hunting, to make the most out of his life.

"He's in the worst crisis of his life, lying in a rehab hospital down and out and his wife has told him she cannot take care of him anymore," VanHouden explained of troubled times shortly after Umbarger's accident. "That's where he was at and he starts talking to a rehab nurse and wins her over with his positive outlook and that right there tells you what type of person you're dealing with that words can't even describe.

"That's the same reason I want to spend time with him," VanHouden added. "It is kind of a feel-good story but it is what it is and at the end of the day it's more about overcoming adversity and Kurt's done that in a big way."

Umbarger now knows he has to rely on others for help and sometimes has trouble asking as he doesn't want to be a bother. Despite the adversity, he still feels fortunate.

"I've said it many times but I've been truly blessed with really good friends and family," Umbarger said. "There have been so many people who have done so many things for me since my accident that's got me where I'm at today.

"I've never looked for pity," Umbarger concluded. "I've made the best out of my situation and tried to handle it the best way I could and think I've got a pretty good outlook." 



Chip VanHouden (left) and Kurt Umbarger grew up together in Chanute. They've remained lifelong friends and still get together each fall to hunt deer and turkeys.

Q&A CALVIO WITH A QUEEN

by Nadia Marji *associate editor, Pratt*

An expert marksman in the United States Army, a double-major in Chemistry and Chinese at Kansas State University, and an avid bowhunter, Theresa Vail, Miss Kansas 2013, has never been one to back down from a challenge. The perfect mix of tough and tender, Vail is the quintessential “girl next door” meets The Hunger Games’ fearless, arrow-slinging heroine “Katniss Everdeen.”

Being an outdoorswoman, Vail’s newest endeavor has been serving as spokeswoman for the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism. Whether she is making guest appearances, mentoring youth on archery, or simply blogging about her passion for the outdoors, Vail’s all-but-cookie-cutter lifestyle has been a welcomed addition to the agency.

I sat down for an exclusive interview with Vail in August. Here’s an excerpt from our conversation.

What is it about hunting that appeals to you?

Hunting was always a family experience for me. My dad and I started doing it when I was 7, and it was my bonding time with my dad. Being with him was what interested me then, but now I just enjoy being outdoors. It doesn’t matter if I see anything or not, I just like sitting out there.

What is your favorite hunting season?

Uh, the rut.

If you could hunt any animal, what would it be?

A moose. They are just so huge!

How do you think female hunters differ from male hunters?

I think we as female hunters don’t go “oh I want that monster buck, or I want that big buck.” We enjoy hunting for the environment. We

don’t care about what we shoot like men do. They have that big ego they have to fill.



Vail harvested her first buck with a bow last year during an evening hunt. The buck was at 25 yards.

Why do you think more men hunt than women?

Our culture. Society says “women have to do this, and men have to do that,” and unless a girl was raised around it, she probably isn’t going to hunt on her own.

Where does your drive to overcome challenges come from?

From children and everyone saying “I can’t.” I grew up with almost a complex, like “okay, you say I can’t? Then I definitely have to!” It was like “if you say I can’t, then I make it a point to do it.”

How has life changed for you since being crowned Miss Kansas?

I always have to be put together. I don’t get any down time. My life is no longer my own, and I can’t even think about hunting because I just don’t have the time; it’s sad. Although, I will say, since I’m in the spotlight, a lot of hunters with a lot of land are wanting me to come hunt with them and do celebrity hunts with them, so that’s a plus. If that’s the sacrifice I have to make, then okay.



Here Vail poses in a sapphire gown during the Evening Wear portion of the Miss America competition.

If there is one thing you want people to take away from your time spent as Miss Kansas, what would that be?

Be fearless. You honestly can do anything you set your mind to as long as you are fearless about it and have the courage to get up and do it.

What has been the most rewarding part of being Miss Kansas?

The emails I get from parents saying "thank you so much. My little girl is looking up to you, thinking that she can do things now." And little girls and teenagers saying "Oh my gosh, thank you for being you. I used to feel like I had to change myself, and now I don't."



Vail has a passion for mentoring youth in archery. Here she is seen coaching a young girl at El Dorado State Park's archery range.

How has being in the military helped you with the Miss America competition?

Being in the military has taught me how to just tough it out, especially when dealing with our schedule.

Wearing six-inch heels everyday would be considered "tough" by a lot of women's standards. Do you enjoy wearing heels?

You know, my feet were really hurting at first, but wearing heels everyday has actually cured my plantar fasciitis. It's made my feet

better! I used to be able to run maybe a mile before they really started hurting, and now after wearing heels everyday for the past two months, I'm up to running like nine miles, and it's no big deal.

What have you enjoyed most about partnering with KDWPT?

All the people I have met that I wouldn't normally have before I was Miss Kansas. That's been the best part, by far. ♡

MISS KANSAS TRIVIA

1. What talent did Vail originally plan on presenting at Miss America, and why did she change it?
2. What is Miss Kansas' fantasy job?
3. What did Vail want as her first meal following the Miss America Pageant?
4. What is Miss Kansas' weird habit at restaurants?
5. What is Vail's lucky charm?

ANSWERS

1. Archery. There were restrictions against "projectile objects."
2. Vail likes to pretend she is a sniper with the military.
3. Pizza Hut's stuffed-crust supreme pizza.
4. Vail always orders a hot water.
5. Her Cabela's Outfitter camo pants.



Got a question of your own for Miss Kansas?

**Follow her on Twitter at:
@MissKansas2013**



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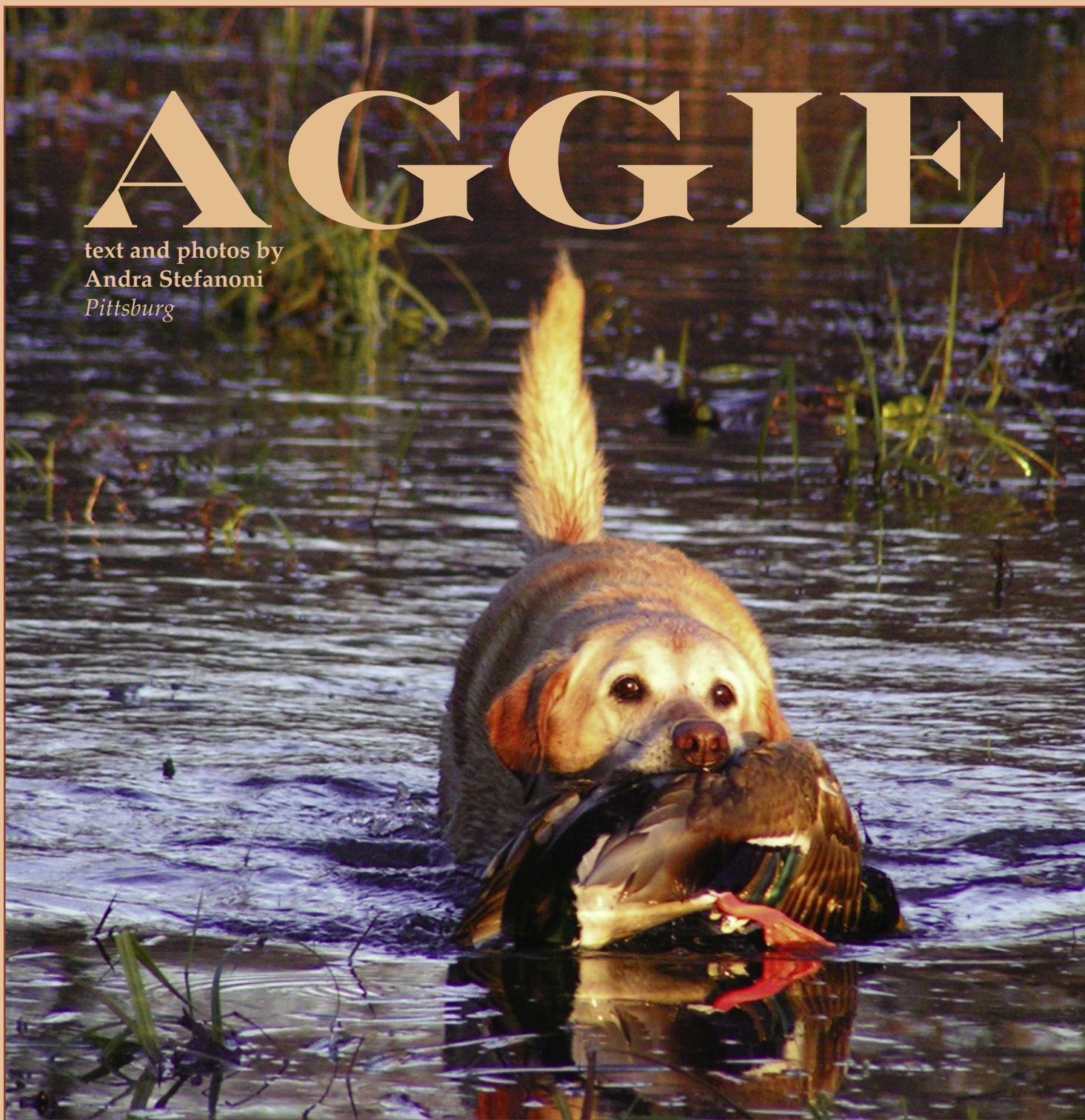
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AGGIE

text and photos by
Andra Stefanoni
Pittsburg



I always knew I'd have to write this story. But it's not really my story to write. By rights, this story belongs to my husband, who in May 1998 fell in love with a six-week-old yellow Labrador retriever.

He brought her home to Frontenac on the front seat of his pickup. I barely knew him at the time.

That fall, we began dating, and he told me the story of how she melted his heart. He knew right then, he said, that she would be his companion in

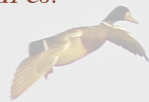
the duck blind and on other outdoor adventures.

He was patient, yet firm, in his discipline with her. He was caring, he was dedicated, and he put her needs first. He got up at night to let her out of her little kennel by the bedside so she could go outside for a bathroom break.

I didn't fully realize it then, but my observations of his attitude toward that dog planted the seed in my mind that this man I was falling in love with



He knew right then, he said, that she would be his companion in the duck blind and on other outdoor adventures.



would make a wonderful husband and a wonderful father. And I was right; he did.

During our courtship and marriage, Aggie played a central role in our lives. She was our walking buddy, his hunting retriever, the one we babied after work before our own human babies came along.

She thrived. So did we. We could hardly wait to introduce her to her first frolic in piles of leaves under the massive oaks. When the first snow of her life fell, I'm not sure who had more fun: her, or us watching her.

We hung a stocking at Christmas for her and put a bone in it. We took her swimming at the in-laws' pond and on rides in the truck to get ice cream cones.

Our first son learned to feed Aggie at a young age, carefully scooping up the right amount and with his toddler hands pouring it into her bowl. He was so proud the moment he was old enough to take her on a leash walk.

Our second son was born almost five years later, so by the time he was old enough to wear his own Carhartts and carry his own BB gun, Aggie had slowed significantly. Her job transitioned from leaping out of the duck blind for mallard retrieval, to keeping an eye on our house and yard from her vantage point on the front porch.

A few falls ago when my husband began preparing duck decoys for opening day of hunting season, she showed only a cursory interest. She came down from the porch slowly, stiffly, to say hello and nose a few while he scratched her behind her ears. Our sons finally were old enough to join him in the blind, but he knew Aggie wouldn't that year.

She maintained dignity in her retirement — wagged her tail a bit when they returned with a few greenheads as a show of solidarity, and went as far as the mailbox with us on our evening walk.

She turned 15 in March, and still she hung on to life. The quality of it, however, was no longer there.

And that, as I considered it through a flood of tears on a blue sky, sunshine day in September, is the great rub of deciding to bring home a puppy with which you've fallen in love: It means one day

*As I held her, it wasn't her life
that flashed before my eyes, but
ours — his, hers and mine.
They were so intertwined it was
almost inconceivable that one
now was missing.*

making a difficult decision. I had to make it at the worst (or perhaps the best?) of times. No one else was home. Just me and Aggie, and she couldn't stand up.

I've long known our veterinarians to be among the kindest, most compassionate animal owners and animal doctors. That was underscored when, after gently explaining our options over the phone, they arrived at my home, knelt on the patio next to Aggie and did what they are trained to do.

As I held her, it wasn't her life that flashed before my eyes, but ours — his, hers and mine. They were so intertwined it was almost inconceivable that one now was missing.

For a few weeks, we mourned. We saw her in the vapors every time we'd come driving up the lane, every time we'd step out onto the porch. We were grateful to receive letters and cards from other pet owners who knew exactly how we felt.

We couldn't imagine bringing home another puppy and falling in love all over again. Training one all over again. Going on swims and hunts and hikes all over again and then saying goodbye.

But in our sadness, we realized that the awful trade at the end is part of the deal in order to get 15 years worth of wonderful memories. Was it worth it?



We knew down deep it was.

So the four of us began talking. Just idly at first, around the supper table.

"How was your day?" "Good, and yours?" "I saw a cute puppy." "What color?" "Yellow, like Aggie."

And then more seriously.

"If we ever got a puppy again, what color would you prefer?" "Black, I think. Something different. Something new."

And finally, my husband sealed the deal.

"We're getting a new dog." "When?" "Next summer, I think. That will give us time to repaint the dog house. A different color, maybe. Make some repairs to the fence. Decide on a name. You know."

Yes, I know. And it will be worth it.

R.I.P., Aggie. 🐾

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 species 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

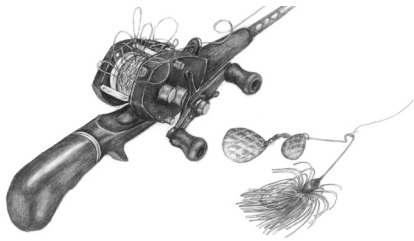
FURBEARERS

TRAPPING

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

BEAVER AND OTTER TRAPPING

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



Backlash

by Mike Miller

MIRACLE ON NE 60TH ROAD

What happened in northern Barton County last August was nothing short of miraculous. Thirty square miles of dusty, cracked mudflats dotted with thick stands of kochia were transformed back into the largest inland wetland in North America within the span of a month.

The Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism's wildlife area known fondly as "The Bottoms," had been dry for almost two years. And by dry, I mean bone dry. There wasn't even a muddy spot in the bottom of a canal. Winds blew up great clouds of white dust, and migratory waterbirds passed over in search of wetter accommodations. And while history tells us that this wetland was commonly dry one or two years out of every five, it has rarely been completely dry for two consecutive years. But much of Kansas was suffering through one of the worst droughts to hit the region since the 1950s, and Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area felt the brunt.

KDWPT public lands staff kept busy during the drought, getting rid of invasive vegetation such as cattail and phragmites. Both plants can take over large expanses of a shallow wetland, reducing its value to wildlife. When water is present, control of these plants is difficult. In addition to vegetation control and working on water control structures, staff cleared boat canals, disced kochia, and planted millet, preparing as if the rains were guaranteed.

July rains saturated the soil. With each passing storm, anxious waterfowl hunters inquired about the Bottoms' status. Finally a big rain fell on the drainages of the Wet Walnut and Deception creeks. Staff were able to divert water and begin storing it in the deep-water storage pool. If no more rains came, at least some water could be pumped into the hunting pools. Then in early August, several big rains hit, essentially filling all pools.

And while the filling of this treasured wetland is incredible to see, what happened next was amazing. Like the giant monster Frankenstein, Cheyenne Bottoms came alive. Within days, waterbirds began showing up. First the ibis came, then some early shorebirds, and by late August teal were buzzing over the flooded pools.

When the early teal season opened on Sept. 7, the wetland was back to its former glory. All main pools



contained 12 inches or more of water. Rather than cattail, the prominent vegetation was kochia, along with acres of millet, barnyard grass and smartweed – just the kind of food-producing plants waterfowl are looking for. Within a few days, green aquatic vegetation began to emerge, including cattail. If you stopped wading and let the mud settle, a multitude of aquatic insects could be seen swirling in the water.

Teal hunting and the Early Zone opening weekend were excellent for hunters, who averaged more than four ducks per man, per day. And waterfowl hunters hope that early successes are precursors to what's to come this fall. The adage "you don't know what you got 'till it's gone," was never more true. While I don't think hunters take Cheyenne Bottoms for granted, there's nothing like absence to make the heart grow fonder. This duck hunter is glad to have it back. There's nothing quite like hunting the big marsh. Not only can the duck hunting be fantastic, but there is so much more to see at Cheyenne Bottoms. I also believe that water in the Bottoms impacts the number of waterfowl that stay in the entire region. Hunting at smaller, private wetlands will be better this season because Cheyenne Bottoms, Quivira National Wildlife Refuge and several other mid-state wetlands have water. Better stock up on steel shot. 🦆

