

KANSAS

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REASONS FOR OPTIMISM

It has been three long years, as far as the drought in Western Kansas goes. And it seems like even longer than three years since we've had a good pheasant season. However, it was just 2010 when Kansas hunters took home more rooster pheasants than they had in more than 20 years. The following spring, pheasant crow counts were the highest on record. And then it hit – a drought that we hadn't seen the likes of since the 1950s. Mother Nature smacked Kansas with a one-two punch – extreme drought and unbearably hot summers. According to the National Weather Service, we average 12 days a year over 100 degrees. In 2011, we recorded 53 and in 2012, we recorded 36. The drought and heat prevented just about any beneficial pheasant habitat from growing, and last year was one of our poorest pheasant harvests on record.


The good news is that as of August, the drought appears to be letting up (I hate to say it's over because I don't want to jinx us). Increased rainfall this summer throughout Western Kansas improved habitat conditions dramatically. Unfortunately, the rain probably didn't come soon enough to help pheasants as much as we would have liked. Even so, we are in much better shape habitat-wise right now than we've been for quite some time.

As I write this, I don't have the benefit of seeing the results of our summer small game surveys, but from what I've been told, we'll probably see an uptick in pheasant numbers. Of course there are always those pockets where there may be pretty good hunting, but overall, it will take another strong nesting season to make significant increases. However, I have been hearing good reports about quail in many areas.

This news makes me optimistic for this fall, and just seeing the green countryside this summer makes me feel better. And the increased precipitation has also improved the outlook for waterfowl hunters. We should have a banner duck season with most of our common duck species at numbers way above long-term averages. The May Breeding Duck Population and Habitat Survey provided an estimate of 49.2 million ducks, which is higher than the last two years and 48 percent higher than the long-term average. May pond counts from the breeding range were higher than the last two springs and 40 percent higher than the long-term average. That combined with the fact that our major Kansas marshes are full, should add up to great duck and goose seasons this

year. Last season, 16,847 Kansas duck hunters harvested 235,335 ducks, which is 56 percent better than 2012 and 28 percent higher than the long-term average. Goose season statistics were similar with 13,990 goose hunters harvesting 106,850 geese, both well above the long-term averages. The way the stars are lining up, 2014 should be even better.

In addition, deer and turkey populations are stable and should provide excellent hunting opportunities across the state. Check out the *2014 Kansas Hunting and Furharvesting Regulations Summary* for season dates and bag limits, as well as some new regulations. The Kansas Wildlife, Parks and Tourism voted last year to dramatically reduce the price of youth big game and turkey permits. For example, resident hunters 16 or younger will pay only \$12.50 for an over-the-counter either-sex deer permit and just \$7.50 for a turkey permit (adult resident price - \$32.50 and \$22.50). Nonresident youth pay just \$112.50 for a whitetail combo permit, a third of the adult price (youth still must go through drawing). These price breaks should make it more affordable for families to enjoy hunting, and we hope it helps recruit young hunters. Another change made by the commission will make big game and turkey permits valid immediately after purchase. Previously, hunters had to wait until the next calendar day. And the 2014 Legislature approved an amendment allowing hunters to purchase up to two apprentice licenses. The apprentice license allows a hunter 16 and older to hunt without first completing Hunter Education. The apprentice license holder must hunt under the direct supervision of a licensed adult 18 or older. Prior to the amendment, hunters were allowed to purchase only one apprentice license, which is valid for the calendar year in which it is purchased.

Another change bird hunters will notice is that there will be no prairie chicken hunting in the southwest portion of the state. This change was necessary after the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed the lesser prairie chicken as a threatened species. The drought conditions had a significant impact on lesser prairie chicken numbers, and though KDWP staff worked with agencies from four other states to produce a range-wide lesser prairie chicken management plan in order to dissuade the listing, in the end it wasn't enough. 

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

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Letters . . .

PUPPY LOVE

Dear Ms. Marji:

The picture of your Kota is as cute as they come (who's the photographer?). I'm trying to resist the urge to find a black Lab puppy as a result.

Enjoyed your article on hunt tests. If you'd like to do an article on field trials, I've got some experience in that area. The next licensed field trial I know of anywhere near Pratt is that put on by the Topeka Retriever Club at Melvern Lake October 3-5. I'm one of the judges at this trial for the Derby and Qualifying stakes. You also might be able to find some trials this fall in northern Oklahoma. Go to entryexpress.net for a listing.

Philip R. Carson
Kansas City

Mr. Carson,

I'm glad you enjoyed the photo. It was one of mine. And thanks for the information on field trials; might be a good idea for a future article.

Nadia Marji

it, but it probably had babies down there. Daddy said he caught one 23 inches and 7 pounds when he was seven years old. I caught mine when I was six!

Susanna Knight
Waverly



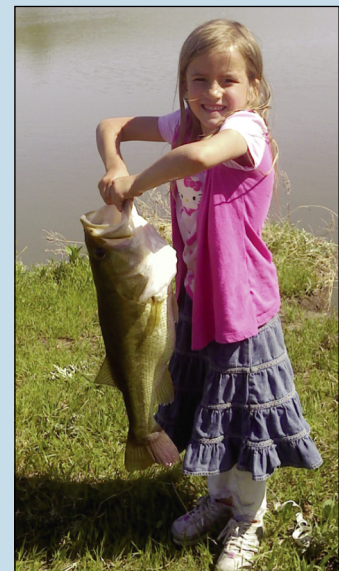
SPHINX MOTH

We live just a few miles north of Oskaloosa and McLouth in Jefferson County. I was setting up to take some pictures of the sunflowers we planted in our front yard and this little sphinx moth was buzzing around. I snapped about 20 pictures of it before it moved off and this was the best one.

Jeff Kilgo
Oskaloosa

LITTLE LASS – BIG BASS!

My name is Susanna. I was fishing at a KDWP FISH access pond. We went around the pond and we caught little fish. We went a little farther and stopped to cast a little. I said "Maybe we are too fast". Then, Daddy said "Look, Susanna!" and I looked. I saw the fish jump. I thought it would just be a small one because I had fought a small one this hard, but when I looked, I could not believe it. It was bigger than I thought. I finally got it out and I went to show Momma, Garrison, and Nellie. I caught a largemouth bass. It was 23 inches long and at least 6 pounds! We went over to the bank and let it go. It was a Momma bass. We could have kept



BIRD BRAIN

with Mike Rader

Swainson's Hawk

September and October are great months to birdwatch in Kansas. Our breeding species are on the move, getting ready for their annual exit from the state. Early fall also brings a huge influx of migrant birds from the north. Hummingbirds, flycatchers, warblers and many other smaller species can be found in abundance. Waterfowl migration starts with teal showing up in good numbers and some sparrows will be coming to Kansas later in this season. One species I always look forward to seeing is the Swainson's hawk. We happen to be within a huge migration corridor, and early fall is the best time to see them in big numbers.

Swainson's hawks are a fairly common nesting species in the western half of Kansas, the western U.S. and into central Canada. Some nesting occurs in the Flint Hills, but they are really birds of the High Plains and are much easier to see in the summer west of U.S. Highway 81. To a casual observer, they might be confused with our common year-round resident red-tailed hawks, but they are slightly smaller, usually exhibit a dark "bib" on the upper chest and have a distinct wing pattern of dark grayish primary and secondary flight feathers when seen in flight. They can be a little confusing for another reason, as around ten percent of the population is a dark color morph. Other hawks such as red-tailed, rough-legged and ferruginous have dark morphs too, so you have to look at other features and consider time of year and location to help identify them. Another Swainson's feature is that their feet and talons are quite a bit smaller than those of other large hawks we see in Kansas, which is indicative of smaller preferred prey.

Swainson's feed their young with the main staples of larger raptors that nest here: rodents, reptiles and rabbits, but switch almost exclusively to a diet of insects - mainly grasshoppers and dragonflies. In migration, they often frequent crop fields, especially cut soy beans and alfalfa, to feast on the insects they find. They are opportunistic feeders and are known to eat bats and birds taken on the wing, as well. Swainson's readily use the technique of walking/running after prey, so if you see a field of hawks on the ground, they are almost certainly this species. Irrigation units and trees close to crop fields are also favorite hunting perches. They will roost communally at night during migration, so shelter-

belts or tree lots can have substantial numbers of them, as well. This species is highly gregarious with flocks reaching the thousands in number. More commonly, they can be seen in groups of 10 to 100. Population estimates are hard to get, but it's probably somewhere over 500,000.

Swainson's are aggressive defenders of their nests, which are usually placed in single trees out in the open. Other hawk species, great horned owls and other birds trying to use old Swainson's nests may get chased off by the returning pair of Swainson's. Migration takes the vast majority of Swainson's hawks to the pampas of Argentina and a few of the adjacent South American countries. A few birds winter farther north, with some found in Florida, the Texas coast and limited numbers in California. They are not in Kansas in the winter. Hawk counting areas in south Texas and Mexico report hundreds of thousands of these hawks flying over in huge "kettles," mixed in with other species, such as Mississippi kites, broad-winged hawks, turkey vultures and a few others. There was a substantial drop in the Swainson's hawk populations in the mid-1990s due to poisoning from agricultural chemicals on their

wintering grounds in South America. Grasshopper outbreaks prompted farmers to enlist aerial spraying of organophosphate insecticides, with thousands of birds killed directly by being sprayed while they were foraging in fields during the application process. But thanks to education and controlled use or banning of certain chemicals, this loss has been curtailed.

I always look forward to seeing large flocks following tractors as farmers work fields in fall. They are primarily catching grasshoppers and small rodents disturbed

by disking of the soil. Other hawks will do this in winter, especially rough-legged and ferruginous. They are catching rodents and rabbits for the most part as they try to escape the cultivation equipment. Large prey, such as jackrabbits, are probably too large for Swainson's, but ferruginous hawks will tackle them without hesitation. Keep an eye out, especially in mid-September and October for large flocks of migrating raptors. You might be lucky enough to witness a massive "grounding" of Swainson's in a field. I was able to see over 300 in a field between Pratt and Stafford and a couple of hundred in two fields east of Wilson Lake in Lincoln County last fall. They are really fun to watch as they scurry around, trying to catch insects.

The fall meeting of the Kansas Ornithological Society (KOS) will be held in Salina the first weekend of October, and I'll bet we see some around there this year. Local folks up that way will help us scout out some likely areas in the rural countryside, and hopefully we can take some participants out to see them. More details on the meeting can be found on Page 13 of this issue or the KOS website: www.ksbirds.org.



Swainson's hawk

BOAT SAFE

with Erika Brooks



GET READY TO PADDLEBOARD



Stand up paddling (SUP) is an activity that started in the 1940s in Hawaii, but recently has exploded in popularity across the country as an outdoor recreation activity. It's a great way to connect with nature and an excellent form of exercise. A paddleboard is a long board, similar to a surfboard 9-14 feet long, with an extended paddle that allows the rider to paddle while standing. However, due to the newness of SUP, education is necessary to enjoy this activity safely.

In Kansas, paddleboards are considered a vessel and therefore are subject to the same laws and regulations as other paddle craft. So, paddleboarders need to carry a USCG-approved, properly fitting life jacket and boarders 12 and younger must wear their life jacket at all times. Inflatable life jackets are only approved for persons 16 years of age and older. Paddleboards may not be operated inside a designated swim area or in any area restricted to boats marked by buoys. If you plan to be out on your SUP between sunset and sunrise, you must also carry a flashlight or lantern with you.

When getting started in SUP, wide, slow moving rivers, lakes, and ponds are the perfect places to learn. Always proceed with caution in any body of water as submerged obstacles, shallow depths, and other boat traffic can cause potential injury and/or board damage. Paddling alone

is not advised, especially during the learning process, and it's more fun to go with friends anyway!

Paddleboarding start-up costs range from \$500 to \$3,500, depending on board choice, paddle composition, and accessories selected. Boards can be solid or inflatable and made from foam, fiberglass layered over foam, bamboo, or plastic. Carrying weight and ease of transport should also be taken into consideration when purchasing a paddleboard. As a rule of thumb, paddles should be 10-12 inches taller than the person using it, and many paddles are adjustable. Paddles can be made of plastic, wood, fiberglass, and carbon fiber. Throw on a life jacket and you're ready to start paddleboarding.

Other optional accessories include a leash that attaches the board to the rider and prevents separation in current or windy conditions. During early spring or late fall, wearing a wetsuit is recommended in case of a fall into cooler water. Helmets can be worn for safety, especially if planning to SUP in flowing river current or in areas with a lot of debris. Carrying a sound-producing device (whistle), while not required in Kansas, can help to signal others in case of an emergency.

Many boards have a mount on the deck for a camera and tie down hooks for other items. The family dog can even ride along after a little practice. Larger boards can hold more than one person comfortably and allow smaller children to get involved. Kansas has more than 150 lakes, 10,000 stream miles, and 55,000 ponds, providing ample paddleboarding opportunities.

KDWPT boating education will be offering paddling clinics during 2015 at multiple locations across the state. There will be opportunity to try kayaking, canoeing, and paddleboarding for free during these clinics. Classes will also be offered for those who want to learn in more detail about the paddling environment, equipment selection, launching, transport, paddling strokes, and maneuvers. Watch the KDWPT website at www.ksoutdoors.com or the Wear It Kansas! Facebook page at www.facebook.com/wearitkansas for dates and details.

IT'S THE LAW

with Kevin Jones

GAME WARDEN



One of the most recognized titles in the world of hunting, fishing and trapping is "game warden." This title is literally centuries old and originally referred to the person charged with keeping and protecting the King's wildlife. While the roots of the title go back to Europe, it has been used since the early days of wildlife conservation in North America. Game wardens were often the first positions established and filled by the states when they adopted laws protecting wildlife.

In Kansas, the history follows a similar path. O.E. Sadler served as the sixth Fish Commissioner from 1895 to 1897. Deputy wardens, the predecessor title for game wardens, were first appointed during Sadler's term in office. From these early days to the present, Game wardens are the oldest established state law enforcement officers in Kansas. Only sheriffs, constables and marshalls have earlier origins. During the course of history, different titles have been used, such as game protector, conservation officer and natural resource officer, but the root mission has

remained the same; to protect the wildlife through the enforcement of the statutes and regulations that control our wildlife management programs.

To be hired as a Kansas game warden, a person has to have a college degree in a natural resource course work, or equivalent, relevant job experience.

While enforcing wildlife laws is a significant part of the job, game wardens also spend a lot of time doing other duties. The enforcement of the boating safety laws is another large component of their responsibilities. Being certified full-time law enforcement officers, they are statutorily empowered to enforce all criminal and traffic laws, as well. But law enforcement is not all they do. Their jobs also focus on informing, educating and promoting outdoor recreation opportuni-

ties in the state. Game wardens are often the main point of contact for the public and the local source for assistance and information. They also assist in wildlife surveys and conservation projects. When disasters strike, game wardens provide emergency response for search and rescue, recovery and security efforts.

To be hired as a Kansas game warden, a person has to have a college degree in a natural resource course work, or equivalent, relevant job experience. This is one of the few law enforcement jobs that require this level of formal education. Additionally, an applicant must pass a physical endurance test, a battery of four written tests and an oral interview. After successfully completing these phases of the process, a thorough background investigation is conducted along with a psychological assessment, physical examination, drug screen and a final interview. Successful applicants must be citizens of the United States, be at least 21 years of age at the time of appointment and have no convictions of felony, domestic violence-related crimes or history of misdemeanor convictions. The hiring standards are meant to be high. Game wardens have a serious and substantial responsibility. Their mission is to serve and protect the public and our natural resources.

To see employment opportunities with KDWPT, go to this webpage: <http://kdwpt.state.ks.us/KDWPT-Info/Jobs>

LAW ENFORCEMENT ADDS NEW TEAM TO K9 UNIT



The Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism Law Enforcement Division would like to introduce the newest members of the K9 team, game warden Chris Stout and his partner, Ruby.

Warden Stout and Ruby graduated from the Indiana Department of Natural Resource's K9 Academy this spring and are off to a great start. Among other successes, they have tracked and arrested tres-

passers and responded to requests for K9 assistance from sheriff's departments and the Kansas Bureau of Investigations.

Warden Stout covers the south half of Sumner County and all of Harper county. He has been with KDWPT since 2007. If you see Warden Stout and Ruby out this season, be sure to welcome them to the team!

WAY outside

BY BRUCE COCHRAN



"...OF COURSE I CAN NEVER READ 'PETER RABBIT' TO THE KIDS AGAIN..."

PF OUTREACH COORDINATOR COMPLETES FIRST YEAR

With my first year as the Kansas Outreach Coordinator wrapping up, I would like to thank everyone who helped make this a record year for Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever's No Child Left Indoors® initiative in Kansas.

No Child Left Indoors® is Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever's national initiative to work with members, chapters and conservation partners to provide outdoor opportunities for youth and their families. Last year, Kansas Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever chapters conducted 73 youth events, connecting 2,795 youth to the outdoors. They reached out in their communities to sponsor mentored hunts, field days, shooting sports events, conservation camps, family fishing events, hunter education classes, community based habitat projects and more.

To become better teachers and mentors, dedicated volunteers took addi-

tional time out of their schedules to attend a three-day National Sporting Clays Association Level 1 instructor course. Objectives of this course were to learn the most effective techniques to help youth become successful wingshooters. In addition, more than 50 volunteers attended "Focus on Forever" at Ringneck Ranch in Tipton. Volunteers were taught the best practices to introduce young people to the shooting sports, how to get involved in community pollinator habitat projects, and how to put on the best youth/mentor hunt or outdoor field day possible.

This fall, chapters across the state are busy planning youth events. Working closely with the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT) staff and the department's Pass It On program, chapters will conduct youth wingshooting clinics, as well as mentored upland bird, dove,

waterfowl and deer hunts. See KDWPT's weekly news releases, website, Twitter account and Facebook page for event details.

If you have questions about The No Child Left Indoors® initiative or Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever, contact me by email at bschaffer@pheasantsforever.org or by telephone at (570) 994-7197.

Pheasants Forever/Quail Forever is the nation's largest nonprofit organization dedicated to upland habitat conservation. Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever have more than 140,000 members and 745 local chapters across the United States and Canada. Chapters are empowered to determine how 100 percent of their locally raised conservation funds are spent, the only national conservation organization that operates through this truly grassroots structure.

— Brian Schaffer

HUNTER EDUCATION CORE STANDARDS RECOGNIZED

The International Hunter Education Association (IHEA) has developed a broadly-vetted, relevant and applicable set of contemporary curriculum standards that will be recognized by state agencies across the nation. The core standards were developed to create consistency among states' hunter education programs and include the following topics:



- Safe firearm mechanical handling
- Safe firearm field practices
- Wildlife identification
- Hunting regulations
- Personal responsibility and behavior
- Hunter best practices
- Responsibility to wildlife
- Hunters' role in conservation
- Key wildlife and management principles

Luckily for students of Kansas hunter education courses – past, present, and future – the newly-adopted standards closely mirror information already being taught in the sunflower state, attesting to the quality of the Kansas Hunter Education Program and its instructors. For information on the Kansas Hunter Education Program, visit ksoutdoors.com and click "Services/Education/Hunter."

2013 SAFEST HUNTING YEAR

According to the 2013 Kansas Hunter Education Hunting Incident Report, just six hunting incidents were reported last year, the lowest number reported since the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism began keeping records 50 years ago. None of the six resulted in fatalities, but all incidents can be prevented if basic gun safety rules are followed.

Hunting is one of the safest outdoor activities when you consider the low number of incidents compared to the millions of hunter days recorded by Kansas hunters each fall. Regardless, even veteran hunters must keep safety in mind.

RULES OF GUN SAFETY

- **Treat every firearm as if it's loaded.**
- **Never point your firearm at any thing you don't want to shoot.**
- **Keep the safety on until right before you shoot.**
- **Know your target and what lies beyond it.**
- **Never put your finger on the trigger until you are ready to shoot.**

HUNTING HERITAGE with Kent Barrett

Guns: Safety And Responsibility

I was recently saddened by a report of a four-year-old who shot and killed his 18-month-old brother with a handgun that had been stored in a bedroom night stand. I was called and interviewed for a follow-up story on gun storage and safety by the newspaper. These unfortunate incidents are sometimes the only opportunity for us to openly discuss the responsibility that comes with gun ownership.

First, we need to accept the reality that in the world today, people don't always live in the nicest housing arrangements and are not surrounded by the best of neighbors. This reality means that people have need for immediate access to firearms for personal and family protection. For this reason, we must recognize that there is a difference between long-term storage of a firearm and securing one's firearm safely while still allowing immediate access for use. Kansas Hunter Education has always been proactive in advocating the safe long-term storage of all sporting firearms.

When safely storing firearms in the home for an extended period of time, we first must make sure that the firearm is unloaded. The Kansas Hunter Education curriculum teaches that firearms must be unloaded and cased before safely bringing them into the home. Next the ammunition is removed from the vicinity of the firearm and stored separately. If possible the ammunition should be locked away in a separate drawer or ammunition locker. The firearm should be stored in a secure location inaccessible to children and not readily visible to anyone visiting the home. I prefer to store my firearms in a locked gun safe or secure gun storage locker. Additional security devices such as trigger locks or cable locks can make the firearm inoperable and thus safe for long-term storage. These devices are provided by the manufacturer to the original purchaser of a gun or can be purchased at any gun shop at a reasonable price. Gun cable locks are available free of charge through Project ChildSafe, a project developed and sponsored by the National Shooting Sports Foundation. Many county sheriff departments participate in this project and provide these locks free of charge to anyone who asks.

Securing one's firearm while still allowing for personal

The firearm should be stored in a secure location inaccessible to children and not readily visible to anyone visiting the home.

protection access is a different project all together and is not a part of the Hunter Education curriculum. The degree of gun security will always be modified by the degree of access that the gun user feels is necessary for their own particular security needs. This is a very personal decision that each gun user must make and would be best made after consulting with a knowledgeable professional; your local law enforcement training instructor, NRA certified instructor or state recognized concealed carry instructor. This does not mean that gun safety is ever compromised in

making a decision that a firearm must be accessible to the user. The user must take personal responsibility for the security of the firearm. This means that if the firearm must be immediately accessible it should be secured on or in the direct vicinity of the user. If accessibility becomes less of an issue then security concerns make us add more secure

storage features into our storage plans. Remember: cable locks are not designed for use with a loaded firearm and trigger locks should never be used with a loaded gun. Gun safety must be the primary responsibility for a gun user.

This would be a good time to reiterate the four basic gun safety rules that we adhere to in hunter education.

- 1. Treat every gun as if it were real and as if it were loaded.**
- 2. Never point any gun at anything that you do not intend to shoot.**
- 3. Keep your finger out of the trigger guard and off the trigger until the gun is on target and you make the decision to shoot.**
- 4. Be sure of your target and what is beyond, in front of and to the sides of your target.**

Training is a vital part of what we do in hunter education. Gun safety is critical in our effort to train people how to properly handle and use guns. Our longest serving hunter education coordinator, Wayne Doyle, always reminded us to "Load your brain before you load your gun." So, a huge part of our effort must continue to be to make all gun users understand the tremendous responsibility that comes with the ownership and use of firearms. This not only includes when we have them in our hands but especially when we don't. As Larry Potterfield of MidwayUSA would say: "Gun safety is all our responsibility."

Fish Squeezer

with Tommie Berger

Retired but not yet tired

FARM POND MANAGEMENT

Fall is a good time to restock farm ponds because the water cools down and fish survive handling and transport better. Kansas farm ponds should be stocked with largemouth bass, bluegill, and channel catfish. Crappie, white bass, walleye, and other game fish do not do well in small water bodies.

Crappie tend to overpopulate because bass populations aren't managed correctly, and inadequate predation allows too many small crappie to survive. Black crappie will do better than white crappie, but bass harvest needs to be restricted if you want crappie big enough to eat. I fish a 28-acre watershed pond, and we restrict most bass harvest. The black crappie, which were there when I first got access, average about 9 to 10 inches and despite the removal of 750-1,000 crappie per year, the crappie won't grow any bigger. I've seen only one crappie longer than 12 inches in 15 years.

White bass and walleye are big-water fish and need a prey base of gizzard shad and water deeper than 10 or 15 feet. I can count on one finger the times I have seen white bass or walleye in significant numbers in a pond. I have seen a few larger ponds where wipers (white bass/striped bass hybrids) have done fairly well, especially if there are lots of small crappie. But, in every situation, the wipers are fed a pelleted fish diet. Wipers can be trained to take floating fish food but they will not reproduce and will have to be stocked periodically if any are harvested. I still don't recommend wipers for a farm pond because they are expensive.

Some pond owners do not like bluegill because they fear they will overpopulate. However, if the bass population is managed correctly, some of the bluegill should grow to 7 to 9 inches, which is a nice bluegill in Kansas and makes them big enough to fillet. Some anglers may feel the size of a



bluegill fillet is not worth the effort, but I challenge anyone to fillet a couple dozen big bluegill and fry them up. The flavor is much better than largemouth bass and as good or better than crappie or walleye. Stocking hybrid bluegill (a cross between bluegill and green sunfish) is another option, but they do not reproduce and won't provide adequate forage to maintain a good bass population. They work well if you want just sunfish and channel catfish and are fed a diet of fathead minnows. They, too, are pricey.

A typical 1-acre farm pond can support up to 100 pounds of channel catfish, around 300 pounds of bluegill, and about 35 pounds of bass. If you want a quality bluegill population, you will need to severely limit the harvest of bass. The common rule of thumb is to harvest 10 pounds of bluegill for every pound of bass taken. Think about that! While fishing in early spring, you decide to be conservative and throw most of the bass back. On your last cast you catch a 5-pounder and decide to take it home. Now, you need to remove 50 pounds of bluegill but the bluegill won't be biting good until around Memorial Day and by then you have forgotten all about the need to harvest them. You may have already thrown the pond out of balance,

and the bluegill may begin to overpopulate. This same situation applies to crappie so if you have both bluegill and crappie, you have double the trouble.

Bass are a VERY important management tool, are a LOT of fun to catch, are NOT the best eating fish, and ALL should be thrown back. I have been known to tell my fishing classes that bass are poisonous and that the Good Lord will strike you down if you kill a bass - they are that important.

If you want channel catfish only and stock fathead minnows as a food source or feed pelleted fish food, you can double or triple the poundage of catfish in the pond. Catfish do not compete with bass or bluegill, so that is why they are recommended when stocking all three. If you have catfish only in the pond, you may get some catfish reproduction since there are no predators to eat up the baby catfish. If there are bass or other predators in the pond, you will get no catfish reproduction and will have to stock catfish periodically as you harvest them out. Catfish will do just fine in muddy ponds whereas bass and bluegill need clear water to be able to see what they are eating.

Farm ponds and watershed lakes need to be managed just like any piece of cropland or pasture but few get any attention at all. A few fish are thrown in with the hopes that something will bite when you decide to take a little time to go fishing. After all, the pond is mainly out there to water the cattle, right? However, with just a little effort and some education of your fishing friends, you can have a recreation area that will provide some delicious/nutritious food, as well as hours of fishing fun for the entire family! Remember, throw those bass back, fillet those tasty bluegill, and keep every crappie you catch. **And most important, take a kid fishing to help you manage that farm pond.**

EVERYTHING OUTDOORS

with Marc Murrell

Whacky Whitewings and Crazy Collareds

Anomalies in the outdoor world generate plenty of interest, especially when they are animals considered rare. Two examples may be seen in September as hunters pursue mourning doves. On rare occasions they may encounter white-winged doves and Eurasian collared doves.

White-winged doves are native to North America, but seldom encountered in Kansas. Their normal range includes much of the south and southwest arid portions of the United States and Mexico. They look similar in size and overall appearance to a mourning dove but have large, white wing patches, which show only as a thin, white line when sitting.

I've hunted doves in Kansas for several decades and until a few years ago had never shot or seen a white-winged doves. But for some reason, my boys and nephew shot several through the first few days of the season that year, adding an interesting twist to some memorable hunts.

A couple of years ago I took one of my twin boys (the other skipped the dove opener to attend a KU football game with a friend. Can you believe that?), Cody, and my nephew, Dylan, to a managed dove field at the McPherson Valley Wetlands. Cody had a couple of years experience shooting winged game, but it would be Dylan's first time. For that reason, I decided not to take a gun and just sit behind both boys and make sure they were safe in crowded conditions.

The boys did well, both on



Marc Murrell photo

doves and being safe. Cody shot his first 15-bird limit and Dylan managed a baker's dozen after a slow start. But the unique part was early on when Dylan shot a dove and said, "This one doesn't look like the others" after he retrieved it.

Sure enough, it was a white-winged dove. Once we knew what to look for, we noticed more whitewings flying by. Their flight pattern was more pigeon-like than mourning doves, and the white wing patches were easily seen. Both boys ended their morning with several white-winged doves in their bag.

Eurasian collared doves are not native to North America. This Old World Eurasian species was introduced to the Bahamas in the 1970s and subsequently spread to Florida by the 1980s. It is now a common, year-round resident throughout much of the United States, although rare

in the northeast. Collards are usually found within cities and suburbs and rarely frequent remote habitat like other dove species. They may be found around farms, livestock yards and other dwellings. Eurasian collared doves are noticeably larger and lighter colored than mourning doves, and adults have a thin, black "collar" along the nape of the neck.

If you're fortunate to hunt a farmstead on the edge of town, or any with big shelterbelts or feedlots, you might get a shot at a Eurasian collared dove. I've killed a handful and they're fairly rare by most accounts. However, the first one, actually two, were memorable.

I had just shot a mourning dove and was returning to my stool which was nestled into the weedy edge of a cut sunflower field. Two monstrous-looking doves flushed behind my stool and I shot just as both birds crossed a few feet off the ground. They both fell.

I was amazed at their overall size and threw them in my dove pile knowing they'd look about the same, just bigger, wrapped in bacon on the grill.

Whitewings are included in the daily bag limit of 15 doves, either in single species or combination with mourning doves. However, Eurasian collared doves (and ringed turtle doves) are not included in the daily bag limit and there is no limit on them. Either of these two species being transported from the field must have a wing attached. There is an extended exotic dove season (Eurasian and Ringed) that opens November 20, 2014 and ends February 28, 2015. There is no daily bag or possession limit.

Dove hunters this fall should check all doves for leg bands. Report all banded doves harvested by calling 1-800-327-BAND, or online at www.reportband.gov.



Accidental HUNTRESS

with Nadia Marji

ACCIDENTALHUNTRESS.BLOGSPOT.COM/

MOVE LIKE *molasses*

Practice won't always make for perfect, but it can certainly make for progress and this summer I have been striving for progress with my shooting skills. Frequent visits to the local gun range, a trip to Claythorne Lodge, and some time spent shooting hand-thrown clay targets have taught me some invaluable lessons about shooting, and none more important than this: move like molasses. I'll explain.

The first time I shot trap, I walked away with seven out of 25 targets hit. I was glad I at least hit one target at each station, but I knew if I wanted to be a successful wingshooter, seven out of 25 wasn't going to cut it during hunting season. Since then, I have devoted quite a bit of time working on my shooting skills, especially this summer, and I now can proudly say I can shoot up to 21 out of 25 targets – three times the amount I was able to hit before. It has required a lot of pointers, tons of practice, and good 'ol perseverance, but it will be all worth it when I trade in discs for ducks. Now although my progress is definitely worthy of merit, I have also learned that success can't always be measured in numbers. Sometimes, success should be measured by the improvement made in your technique, as well.

One technique that has been hard for me to learn is how to move with fluidity. Swinging your gun with a jerking motion is about as effective as trying to eat pudding with a toothpick. Those seemingly-small jerks made on your end can mean big problems on your quarry's end, and not in your favor.

In the past when given a hard left or a hard right target, I'd swing as hard as I could to try and speed my gun barrel up to the pace of the target. Now, I don't consider myself an aggressive shooter, and I'm sure others who have shot with



Sporting clays can be a great way to warm up for hunting season and practice tough shots in a low-pressure atmosphere.

me might agree, and it's because of this that I try to compensate by swinging hard – only to my detriment, a little too much. It took one phrase from my boss, and shooting mentor, to make things click. He said “just move like molasses.”

As silly as it sounds, I began to picture myself in a vat of molasses, trying to swing my gun. All of the sudden, my swing had fluidity and steadiness. I feared I wouldn't be swinging fast enough to catch up with my target, but I wasn't going to argue with his years of experience. Sure enough, I smashed the next target that came by. Nowadays, “move like molasses” has become one of the last things I chant in my head just before I conclude my pre-shot routine.

To some readers, it might seem counterproductive to move your gun “slowly” when a target is moving fast, but just like passing cars on the highway, they only seem to move fast when you're sitting still. Speed up to meet a passing vehicle, and suddenly they don't seem to be going so fast. Stay in park and they

this routinely, and you just might find that crossing teal won't be so hard to hit, after all. In other words, don't rush the shot. A controlled barrel, steadily-increasing in speed, will get you at the right place, at the right time if you just have patience and faith.

Now I'm no Annie Oakley, and I don't aspire to be, but I will say the time I've put into practicing has made me a more educated shooter. A funny fitness-related quote I read recently states “I run. I'm slower than a herd of turtles stampeding through peanut butter, but I run.” This is a great perspective to have when you begin any new venture, especially shooting. Experience will come with time. As long as you continue to learn and grow, that's all that matters, not what you find at the bottom of a score sheet. And remember new shooters: never be ashamed of how long it may take you to pick something up, because progress made slowly is still progress made.

Until next time, shoot straight and move like molasses.

seem impossible to catch up with. This works the same way with birds. Focus on a bird as you smoothly mount your gun and build up your gun speed to match the bird's. You'll find that not only is your movement more fluid, you're more focused on the bird's flight path, but also that the bird will appear to “slow down.” Practice

Perry State Park Awarded

Perry State Park was awarded AmeriCorps NCCC (National Civilian Community Corps) Southwest Region Sponsor of the Year! In March, the park hosted a team which performed a variety of much-needed tasks at Perry, detailed in last month's magazine. Team members nominated the sponsoring agency for this award. Out of the 112 projects that NCCC teams performed in the 2013-14 service year, only 23 projects were nominated. Perry State Park won. NCCC flew Perry State Park ranger Michelle Campbell, who coordinated the group's projects at Perry, to Colorado to receive the award at the NCCC graduation on July 29 at Denver's famous Red Rocks Amphitheater.

Though surprised by the award, Campbell was delighted for the opportunity to reconnect with the team (Fire 2) that accomplished so much at Perry. While in Colorado, Campbell met with Colorado State Parks staff and toured some of their facilities to share insights and information.

In their nomination, Team Leader Vanessa Schultz, said, "I know as a fact that most of my team, myself included, thought Kansas was going to be the most boring round, but just after two weeks of being there, the team was trying to come up with some sort of plan to protest so we could stay the rest of the year."

Schultz lauded their service at Perry. "The variety of work given at Perry State Park helped members of Fire 2 find a passion for what they do." She said that no amount of college



courses could compare with the skills and experience of serving at Perry.

"At Perry State Park they just don't give you the solution to things. They walk you through it so you can figure out the answer."

Team member Andrew Poitras summed up his experience, "I was always motivated and inspired to go at our service to the park and still find that consequential energy in the work I have done and will, in the future, accomplish."

Enjoy Kansas State Parks This Fall

Just because kids are back in school doesn't mean the parks close down. September, October and sometimes even November and December bring some beautiful days and crisp nights. Fish are still biting and hunting seasons are underway. Campgrounds are generally uncrowded, which makes fall the perfect time to get away to a Kansas state park.

If fall nights are too chilly for the tent or camper, consider renting a cabin for your getaway or as home base for your hunting expeditions. Our cabins are cozy and comfortable.

Trail rides and bike races are scheduled as many special events take advantage of fall weather. Special youth hunts will also take place this fall, in addition to the regular hunting seasons. Fishing tournaments continue, the 12th Annual Fall River Rendezvous reenactment will take place September 27, and El Dorado schools hold their cross country meets in El Dorado State Park.

Take advantage of your state parks this fall to enjoy Kansas outdoors.



Go With The Flow

with Mark VanScoyoc

Close Encounters Of The Wildlife Kind

Spending more time outside during summer and fall months means greater opportunity of interacting with wildlife. While some of these interactions may be of the cute and fuzzy kind, some can be more dramatic. As wildlife professionals, we field many calls ranging from baby ducks crossing a busy street, fawns wandering around an outfield during a little league game, snakes in the garden, or Mississippi kites swooping down on unaware pedestrians. While some of these encounters are more pleasant than others, we have to remember one thing: these are all wild animals. They are not like our pets and will not respond in the same way as our domestic animals.

Most people enjoy wildlife viewing opportunities, but it's when these encounters become inconvenient or uncomfortable that things become complicated. It's important to also remember that these wild animals do not exhibit the same types of emotions as humans. A bird swooping down on pedestrians is not exhibiting this behavior because they're mad at you or like tormenting you. Most likely they are protecting a nest of fledgling young or you are in an area where they have been feeding and are protecting that source of food. When animals react, they are either protecting themselves or their young, have been startled from their habitat, or are looking for a source of food. In the case of Mississippi kites, I've often told people to tolerate the behavior for just a few more weeks as the birds will soon be gone. In the meantime, an umbrella will help shield you from potential attacks and the extra shade will probably feel good during the summer months.



Mississippi kite

Young wildlife present a different challenge. We've all been told not to touch them, otherwise the mother will not take them back. This is not always the case. Special care should be taken if young wild animals are handled. There is not only the risk of the spread of bacteria or other viral pathogens and parasites from them, but we as humans can infect them, as well. In most cases, when you come across a group of ducklings or a fawn, the mother is usually close by, probably much closer than you realize. Relocating the young from the area found will most

likely result in the parent animal not being able to locate their young and they will most likely die from lack of care. Therefore, the old advice of "leave them be" is still the best action. There may be cases where relocation of young animals will be necessary, but it should be left to experienced professionals.

As we continue to develop and build in wild areas, human/wildlife encounters will only increase. If we want to continue seeing wild animals, we'll need to do more than just take care of the wild animals we find in our neighborhoods and parks. To do the most good, I would encourage anyone interested in wildlife to participate in one of the many very good wildlife conservation organizations. Additionally, organizing small community groups or just getting your family out for a walk and doing a trash pick-up along a stream or river or road can go a long way toward helping not only that group of baby ducks you see crossing a busy street, but help improve conditions for all wildlife in your area.

KANSAS ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY FALL MEETING

The Kansas Ornithological Society (KOS) will hold their fall meeting October 3-5 in Salina. This entertaining gathering is open to everyone and includes an informal, come-and-go reception at Lakewood Discovery Center on Friday from 6 p.m.-9 p.m.; a paper session and business meeting on Saturday from 9 a.m.-4:40 p.m.; the annual banquet Saturday evening from 6 p.m.-9 p.m.; and all-day field trips on Sunday beginning at 7 a.m.

The paper session and business meeting will take place at the Sams Hall of Fine Arts, Kansas Wesleyan University, where students involved in bird research will have the opportunity to present their results. Time will also be allotted for non-professional birders wishing to share information on less-formal bird observations and research. Following lunch, participants can enjoy a

Birdwatchers' Hour where photographers of all skill levels can showcase their work of birds from Kansas and around the world.

The annual banquet is scheduled at the Salina Country Club and will feature an awards ceremony and keynote speaker, Al Batt, a contributing columnist for Birdwatcher's Digest.

All-day field trips led by local experts, conclude the event on Sunday. Participants will depart from Lakewood Middle School (across from Lakewood Discovery Center) at 7 a.m. Destinations include: Salina, Ottawa State Fishing Lake, Kanopolis Reservoir, McPherson State Fishing Lake and Abilene.

For more information, or to register, visit www.ksbirds.org, or contact Mike Rader at mike.rader@ksoutdoors.com or (620) 672-0708.



Breaded Backstrap!

Each year, I find myself scouring the freezer this time of year for goodies from last year's hunting seasons. Depression set in when my wife informed me in early July we had used the last of our venison backstrap. However, imagine my delight when I came across a package of backstrap buried among bags of frozen chicken breasts my wife had sent me to the freezer for.

To my surprise, she opted for deer that evening instead of chicken. One of my vices in summer has to be breaded fried zucchini from the garden at least a couple of times during the season. My wife decided to double up on the effort and have breaded backstrap and zucchini. Here is the recipe.

Mix hot sauce and butter-milk in large bowl. Place cut venison in mixture and let marinate for at least one hour. In separate, smaller bowl mix the flour, salt and pepper.

When ready to cook, create an egg wash by pouring ½ cup of the marinade into another smaller bowl and whisking in the two eggs.

Heat oil in frying pan to 325 degrees. Create a dough ball, using flour mixture and egg wash, about the size of a pea and drop in oil. If it vigorously begins cooking, you are ready.

Next, place three pieces of venison in egg wash. Then individually place each piece into the flour mixture, making sure to coat well before going directly to the skillet. This one at a time method allows the oil temperature to recoup slightly between each entry and staggers the cook time. You tend to the stove more often but control your cooking better. Cook each piece until lightly browned on

BREADED VENISON BACKSTRAP

1-2 pounds venison backstrap (cut into ¼-inch slices)
2 cups buttermilk (Milk)
2 tablespoons hot sauce
2 eggs
3 cups all-purpose flour
2 tablespoons salt
1 tablespoon ground black pepper
3 cups vegetable oil

each side, about three minutes. Remove to a metal rack to drain when done.

Avoid using paper towels to soak up oil. Once cooled, the breading will soak the oil back from the paper towel and get soggy. It's best to pat off excess oils with a paper towel and move the meat to another dish.

The only thing bad about this meal was that we only had one backstrap. I will have to wait until this fall to have more deer backstrap – I hope. And fried potatoes will replace the garden fresh zucchini. Dang!



FISHING FOR THE BIRDS

I'm fascinated by birds and like many of my hunting and angling peers, I'm a closet bird watcher. Birds have kept me entertained for many hours while sitting in my treestand, and when the ducks don't fly, other water birds will hold my attention while sitting in a duck blind. However, other than occasional glances, I rarely spend much time watching birds while I'm fishing. That is, unless I'm fishing for whites and wipers in the fall. Then I'm all about birdwatching.

Late summer and early fall is the best time to catch white bass and wipers (white bass/striped bass hybrids) near the surface of our Kansas reservoirs. Shad from this year's spawn are usually 2 or 3 inches long this time of year, and it's not uncommon for large schools to be near the water's surface. Schools of white bass and wipers will often "pin" these shad schools on the surface, and an all-out feeding frenzy will break out. If you're close enough and the water is calm, you'll see shad jumping out of the water to escape, and often you'll see whites and wipers clear the water in attack. If there's some wind, the surface action can be hard to see from a distance. That's where the birds come in.

Large numbers of gulls and terns will stage on Kansas

reservoirs during their fall migration, and you'll usually see them flying lazily over the water or rafted in big flocks on the water. But when you see birds flying frantically and diving to the water, they're pointing out a great fishing spot for you. The feeding frenzy just below the water's surface creates a feeding frenzy on the surface as birds swoop to pick up and eat shad injured or killed in the melee.

Get there quick because frenzies may not last long, but approach with caution. Ease up the last 50 or so yards with the trolling motor and cast slab spoons, jigs or topwater plugs in the froth. Strikes are usually immediate and violent. But don't despair if the surface action stops before you get in range. The fish are still there and can often be caught casting or fishing vertically. Use your sonar to locate fish, depth and any structure. This information may help you locate fish later in the day.



Todd Workman

The Way I See It

GO FIGHT A KITE



My neighbor, a self-proclaimed antique expert, came over this weekend to look at my split bamboo spincast rods. He is excitable by nature and became very animated when he saw the old rods hanging in my garage.

"These are magnificent," he exclaimed, as he rushed by me to get to the rods. "Why in the world do you have them in a garage hanging by a hook?"

As he handled the rods like fine china, he noticed notches I had carved into them long ago. "I wonder who the idiot was who carved notches in these fine rods."

"Ah, that idiot would be me," I said matter-of-factly.

"Why am I not surprised?"

"Well, you may be an expert in old stuff because you are old, but you don't know squat about kite fighting," I retorted.

"Wha...? Oh never mind. I don't want to hear about it." He stormed out of the garage, but I knew he'd be back. He can't go a day without insulting me. But our conversation reminded me of the three weeks in '71 when I was allowed to fly a kite.

Kite flying by itself is boring. Once the kite is up, the only thing worth watching is it crashing to the ground. However, I reminisced of a March day in 1971 when my brother was flying his old, traditional long-tailed "Man in the Moon" kite in our backyard. He was flying it a long way up and it looked kind of fun, so I wanted some air time.

"Get away from me you little pest. I ain't gonna let you touch my kite – ever!" he said.

I tried to reason with him, but I could only eat so much grass. When he quit rubbing my face in the dirt, I did what any reasonable little brother in my position would do, I tattled on him to mom. She knew that the word "sharing" was not in our vocabulary, and she also knew it would be well worth it to stop by Western Auto and buy me a \$1.49 kite rather than listening to me whine all day.

Two hours later my "Black Bat" kite was climbing to the same altitude as my brother's rickety Man in the Moon kite. The only problem with the Black Bat was that it didn't want to hover and bask in the wind currents. It wanted to swoop and dive like an angry wasp. It appeared to own the sky and any flying object was an enemy to be eliminated. Five minutes after taking to the air, the Black Bat recorded his first kill, totally on its own. It blew right into the Man in the Moon and ripped the paper kite from stem to stern. The damaged kite screamed to earth in a heap of torn paper and broken wood and landed on Highway 75 where it was turned into moon dust by a couple of semi trucks carrying cattle.

My brother's mouth was agape, then he yelled, "You did that on purpose."

I knew the tone. He was passing judgment and sentencing me to death by pummeling. I was getting ready to run when mom saved me. "C'mon," she said. "I saw what happened. We can get you a new kite, too."

A short time later, my brother had his "Orange Bat" kite in

the sky, and soon after kite flying became kite fighting. Our sole mission was to knock the other's kite from the sky. We started using Dad's old bamboo fishing rods to make our swoops and dips more dramatic. I had read that Jesse James notched his guns after a kill, so I notched the rod after each victory.

Kite fighting turned out to be a loud sport as we ran yelling and screaming to create action in our kites. Commotion attracts other kids and three weeks later, on any given day, there were never fewer than 12 kites in aerial battles above the neighborhood.

In any war, the one who innovates the fastest wins. I started with "the stinger," a sharpened pencil I attached to the tip of the Black Bat. Before the stinger, a kite could crash to the ground and immediately fly again. Post stinger, plastic kites were being ripped to shreds. Soon others were arming their kites with weaponry. My brother used three small Phillips-head screw drivers to arm his kite. Some used paper clips or sticks. However, on the day of our last battle, I had a super secret weapon, and I got my kite airborne without any of the other pilots noticing. By coincidence this day, several of the neighborhood men had gathered for an ice tea break, and they got a kick out of the kite fights.

"At least they can't get into any mischief if they are flying kites," said Mr. Spaulding.

"I don't know," Dad countered. "Hey, did you borrow my small screwdriver set? I can't find it anywhere."

"I'm missing mine, too," chimed in another father.

"That's odd" my mom said, "I'm missing two of our good steak knives."

Then they all looked skyward.

I was having a great fight, cutting my way through the competition. Just when victory was in my grasp, the group of grownups, better known as The Fun Erasers, seized our kites.

"What have you done?" my dad accused. "Are there sharp things attached to those kites?"

"Yep." I said proudly. "Lots of 'em."

The Fun Erasers started yanking our kites from the sky, but they didn't know squat about kite flying and their unskilled yanking brought kites down at high speeds. Two kites kamikazied into Mr. Spaulding's deck, sticking firmly into the wood. Another damaged his favorite lounge. My kite zoomed into his apple tree, shearing off a small branch and neatly slicing apples in two. The crowd gathered around my kite and observed my innovative use of steak knives.

Kites were immediately added to the long list of things we could never play with again, and we were marched off to respective gallows. The commotion heard up and down the neighborhood that night wasn't one that attracted kids.

Still, I fondly admired my notched split bamboo rod and placed it back in its place of honor.

SEXSON RECOGNIZED BY PEERS

Keith Sexson, Assistant Secretary of Operations at the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT), is the 2014 recipient of the Phillip W. Schneider Lifetime Achievement Award in recognition of his contributions to wildlife management. Sexson was presented with the award at the Association for Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) meeting this summer.

Over his 47-year career with KDWPT, Sexson has held the title of field researcher, game species coordinator, Chief of Wildlife Section, and Assistant Secretary for Operations. Apart from his agency duties, Sexson has been an invaluable asset to organizations such as Ducks Unlimited, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, The National Wild Turkey Federation and many more. Sexson has also been an active member in the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (MAFWA), the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA), and AFWA.

In MAFWA, Sexson has been involved with the Midwest Deer and Wild Turkey Study Group, and served as a member of the Awards Committee, Program Committee, and has held the position of Director/Liaison to the Midwest Private Lands Committee and Midwest Legal Committee, Second Vice President, First Vice President,



President, and Past President.

In WAFWA, Sexson has made contributions to the Habitat Committee, Director's ESA/SARA Working Group, Private Lands and Access Committee, State-Federal-Tribal Communication Committee, Audit and Finance Committee, and has served as the Director Sponsor of WAFWA's Western Grassland Initiative.

But his accolades don't stop there. In 2007, Keith was appointed by the Secretary of the Interior to be one of only 22 members on the Wind Turbine Guidelines Advisory Committee.

Most recently, Sexson worked on the WAFWA lesser prairie-chicken initiative council. He currently resides in Pratt with his wife Elaine, where he continues to work at the KDWPT Pratt Operations headquarters.

— Nadia Marji

E-PERMITS NOW AVAILABLE FOR SELECT WILDLIFE AREAS

Beginning Sept. 1, 2014, hunters using select Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism-managed wildlife areas will be able to get their free daily hunt permits electronically. The iSportsman system will be more convenient for hunters and provide harvest information in a more efficient manner.

The new electronic daily hunt permit system will be in use at Jamestown, Lovewell, Clinton, Elwood, Kansas River, Milford, Cheyenne Bottoms, Texas Lake, Isabel, McPherson Wetlands, Slate Creek Wetlands, Neosho, Melvern and Lyon wildlife areas. A similar system is already in use at Fort Riley.

The Kansas iSportsman system is open now, and hunters planning to hunt any of these areas can register for an account at any time by logging on to <https://kdwpt.isportsman.net>. Upon completing the registration, hunters will obtain their General Access Permit. Once a hunter has registered and obtained a General Access Permit, he or she can log on before they plan to "check in." After they've finished hunting, the hunter logs on to report harvest and "check out." Hunters can check in and out from any computer, smart phone, cell phone or landline. Eventually, hunters will be able to check in and check out using a cell phone or landline.

For more information call (620) 672-5911 or visit <https://kdwpt.isportsman.net>.



Attention Young Photographers

Whether it's a snapshot of a peaceful moment fishing on the lake, the fiery colors of a Kansas sunset, or the image of a white-tailed fawn at rest, *Kansas Wildlife & Parks* magazine staff want to see Kansas outdoors through the lens of your camera. Photo submissions for the 2nd annual "Wild About Kansas" junior photo contest are being accepted now through **Oct. 24, 2014**. Participants can submit photos in three categories: wildlife, outdoor recreation or landscapes. There is no fee to enter, and the contest is open to both residents and nonresidents, age 18 or younger.

"Kansas is a state filled with a plethora of diverse and awe-inspiring natural resources, and this contest is just one more way we can enjoy and share those resources with others," said *Kansas Wildlife & Parks* magazine associate editor, Nadia Marji.

Budding photographers can submit up to three photos and multiple entries may be submitted in the same category.

Photos must be taken within the state of Kansas and must be the entrant's original work. Each photo will be judged on creativity, composition, subject matter, lighting, and the overall sharpness. First, 2nd, and 3rd place prizes will be awarded in each category, as well as one honorable mention per category. Winners will be featured in the *Kansas Wildlife & Parks* January/February 2015 photo issue.

Entries must be received no later than 5 p.m. on Oct. 24, 2014. An entry form must be submitted for each participant. Photo format should be JPEG and a file size should be not less than 1mb and not more than 5mb.

For more information and entry forms, visit ksoutdoors.com/services, or contact Nadia Marji at nadia.marji@ksoutdoors.com.

The best times of your life just got less expensive



photo courtesy of Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation

She'll be 16 before you know it and off to college in the blink of an eye. Don't miss a single chance to be on the water with your daughter by purchasing a multi-year youth fishing license.

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

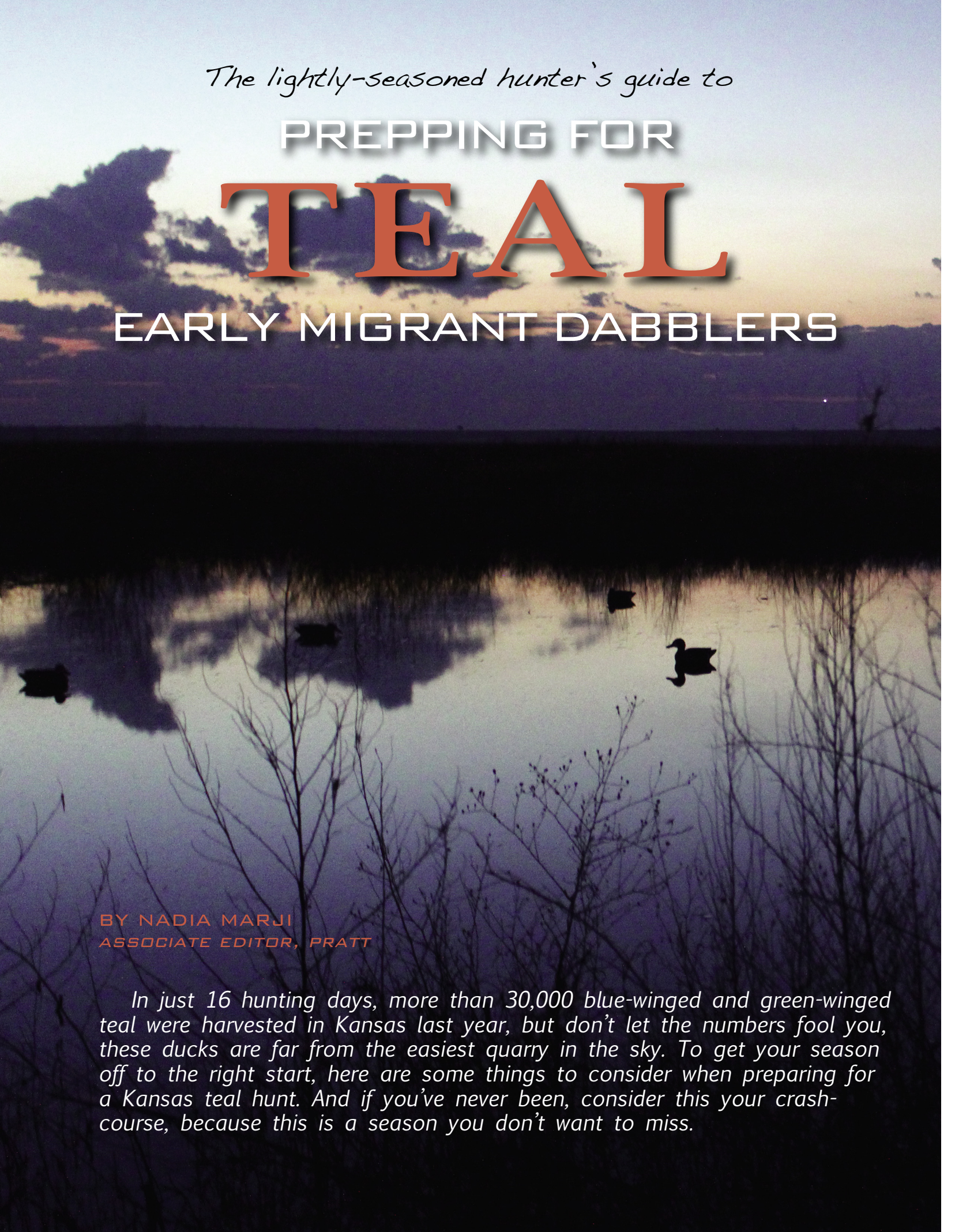
And you'll be investing in more than time with your teenager. Your license dollars help fund Kansas' wildlife and fisheries management and conservation programs.

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The lightly-seasoned hunter's guide to

PREPPING FOR

TEAL

EARLY MIGRANT DABBLERS

BY NADIA MARJI
ASSOCIATE EDITOR, PRATT

In just 16 hunting days, more than 30,000 blue-winged and green-winged teal were harvested in Kansas last year, but don't let the numbers fool you, these ducks are far from the easiest quarry in the sky. To get your season off to the right start, here are some things to consider when preparing for a Kansas teal hunt. And if you've never been, consider this your crash-course, because this is a season you don't want to miss.

Whether their coverts come in blue or speculums in green, there's nothing quite like the rush of teal whizzing through the air opening day of season. The arrival of early migrant dabblers such as teal marks the beginnings of a mid-September hunting season that is unlike any other.

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Trends in Duck Breeding Populations 2014 report, teal are currently at a combined estimated population of 11.9 million, with 8.5 million of those being bluewings and 3.4 million being greenwings.

IDENTIFYING BLUEWINGS & GREENWINGS

Weighing in at just a pound or less, bluewings and greenwings are the smallest of the dabbling ducks. Their small stature may require more precise shot placement, but it helps hunters discern between teal and larger duck species, which aren't legal during the early season.

When the season opens in September, teal are still in their fall plumage, which tends to be a drab, washed-out, mottled version of their more impressive winter colorings. Identification isn't completely impossible early on, but the difference between drakes and hens of either species is usually indiscernible at this time. Even the most seasoned hunter could have trouble identifying a bluewing from a greenwing during early hunts. It isn't until drakes of both species reach their winter plumage that major differences in appearance occur, (hens maintain a similar look all year long). As the season progresses, identification can be a breeze with the right "know how."

Early Season

Though it isn't necessary since both species are legal to take during the early season, the best way to distinguish bluewings from greenwings is to watch them in flight and to listen. Bluewings tend to have a more elongated silhouette, while greenwings appear more compact. You can also listen for their calls. Bluewings have a high-pitched quack and greenwings usually whistle. A great resource for learning the difference calls is Ducks.org. Simply click "Hunting" and "Waterfowl ID" and you'll have numerous duck calls at the click of a button.

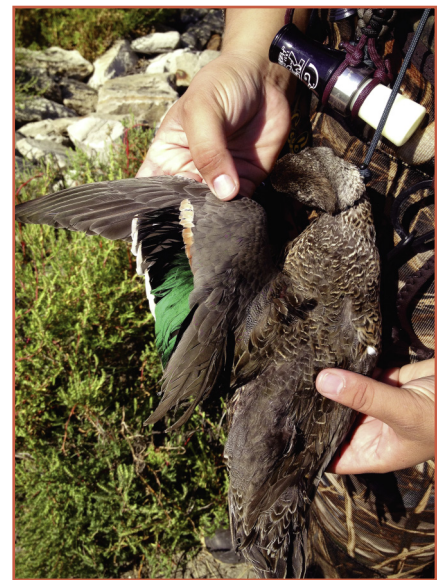
Late Season

When colored, drake blue-winged teal are easily identified by a white crescent shape marking at the base of their bill and a somewhat large white patch near their rump. Hens are a little harder to identify, but a dark thin stripe through the eye and a white-washed color near the base of the bill can serve as good indicators. When in flight, both drakes and hens can be identified by light blue secondary coverts, or feathers at the top of each wing, where the breast meets the wing.



Pictured is a bluewing's powder-blue coverts and dark green speculum.

Greenwing drakes can easily be identified by the rufous head and an emerald green marking that runs from their eye through the back of their neck. This, paired with a tan chest spotted in black, gives them an unmistakable look. Hens are less flashy with a thin, very light version, of the green eye mask. Both sexes have a black bill, and when in flight, can both be identified by an eye-catching patch of green on their speculum. Greenwings also have a bright white belly, unlike bluewings.



Seen here is the emerald green speculum of a green-winged teal.

WHERE TO HUNT TEAL IN KANSAS

Now comes the next step in planning your hunt — figuring out a location. Teal love shallow, weedy wetlands, and during years with ample rainfall, flooded fields can be ideal teal hunting spots. For hunters who are fortunate enough to have access to private land, figuring out where to hunt may not be at the top of the "to-do" list, but for public land hunters, finding a location is everything. The travel time and distance, area hunting pressure, and accessibility by foot and/or

boat are all things to consider when choosing where to hunt on public lands. You may have neighbors nearby on public lands that you wouldn't encounter on a private land hunt, but don't let that deter you from hitting any of the following watering holes this season. Teal are magnets for the following areas, and at the end of the day, it's important to be where the ducks are.

CHEYENNE BOTTOMS WILDLIFE AREA, GREAT BEND

Cheyenne Bottoms is a natural land sink spanning nearly 41,000 acres, 19,857 of which are owned and managed for public hunting by the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT). The area is divided into nine pools, six of which may be open during the early teal season (check with the area office for details). This incredible wetland can easily host tens of thousands of teal.

[Above]: A blue-winged teal pair settle in for the evening on a placid public pond.

[Right]: The views that come with an early morning hunt at Cheyenne Bottoms near Great Bend are as awe-inspiring as the birds that flock there.

Weekend hunting pressure can be heavy, so weekday hunts are ideal, but don't worry – successful hunts can be had any day of the week on this large marsh. Because the area is so impressive, consider viewing a Google Earth map of the Bottoms to get a feel for the area's layout prior to hunting. For more information, call the Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area office at (620) 793-7730.

JAMESTOWN WILDLIFE AREA, JAMESTOWN

Jamestown Wildlife Area is a KDWPT public land in southwest Republic County along Marsh Creek, and it usually attracts its share of teal. Of the 4,729 acres that make up Jamestown's hunt-able land, more than 1,900 of them are wetlands. The wildlife



area was recently renovated, removing silt and enhancing water-control structures. The area is divided into a dozen separate marshes, including an 800-acres refuge that helps keep waterfowl in the area. For more information, contact the Jamestown Wildlife Area office at (785) 439-6243.

MCPHERSON VALLEY WETLANDS, MCPHERSON

Situated within 50 miles of Cheyenne Bottoms and Quivira National Wildlife Refuge, McPherson Valley Wetlands is an ideal teal hunting spot. Divided into three main units, the wetlands make up the Big Basin Marshes, Chain of Lakes, and Little Sinkhole Marshes. According to area staff, McPherson holds 51 independently-managed wetland pools, two refuges, and provides approximately 1,750 surface acres of water when full. McPherson's shallow, weedy wetlands are particularly attractive to teal. The area is open to the public year round and, with the exception of posted refuges, may be entered by foot from nearly any location. To plan your visit to McPherson Valley Wetlands, contact staff at (620) 241-7669.

MARAIS DES CYGNES WILDLIFE AREA, PLEASANTON

Located just 60 miles south of Kansas City, Marais des Cygnes Wildlife Area is a hop, skip, and jump away for quality teal hunting. The 7,653-acre area lies in the floodplain of the Marais des Cygnes River, providing unique habitat, and quality food and shelter for its migratory visitors. Adding to the already impressive location, Ducks Unlimited has cost-shared a multitude of the area's waterfowl



FAST FOOD:

TEAL HAVE A TYPICAL FLIGHT SPEED OF **30 MPH**. THE FASTEST DUCK EVER RECORDED (AS OF 2013) WAS A RED-BREASTED MERGANSER FLYING AT **100 MPH**.

[SOURCE: DUCKS.ORG]

I had the pleasure of bagging a limit of six teal at Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area in 2013, taking home five bluewings and one greenwing. If you've never hunted the Bottoms, this season is the perfect time to change that.

habitat enhancement projects, benefiting both wildlife and hunters. For more information, including rules regarding the use of boats and blinds, call (913) 352-8941.

NEOSHO WILDLIFE AREA, ST. PAUL

The Neosho Wildlife Area is a unique, man-made marsh on the broad flood plain below the junction of Flat Rock Creek and the Neosho River in Neosho County. The 3,246-acre KDWPT wildlife area contains 1,748 acres of prime hunting waters spread between fifteen man-made pools. In preparation of waterfowl season, staff

flood hunting areas (Pool 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and the South Unit) with approximately two feet of water, making the area ideal for teal. A refuge area (Pool 3) also aids in attracting and holding waterfowl. If you aren't already sold, perhaps the 250 acres of corn, milo, and millet planted in the pools each year will persuade you to visit this area, too. Contact the area office at (620)-449-2539 for rules and restrictions.

[CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE]

WHAT TO PACK

Temperature-wise, early teal season can be pretty miserable in comparison to hunts later in the fall. Humidity, high temperatures, and determined mosquitoes lurking about can mean some tough times outdoors. Here are a few tips that will hopefully make your time outdoors a little more comfortable and care-free.

1. Moisture-wicking clothing. You may not associate thin or breathable fabric with duck hunting, but mind you – it's September in

Kansas. A moisture-wicking long-sleeve shirt not only provides camouflage, but it also provides protection from the sun, and another barrier between your skin and those pesky mosquitoes.

2. Layer up. Kansas weather is about as predictable as the number of birds you'll come home with — there's no telling until it's already said and done. Layering up your light-weight clothing means you'll be prepared for anything Mother Nature throws at you, and that

can mean more time in the field. Consider wearing light, breathable shorts and a t-shirt under your hunting clothing. If the heat and humidity get to be too much, you've got a plan B. If the weather takes a turn for the cooler side, you can shoot away while your friends stay in the truck.

3. Mesh camo face mask. If you've ever had sweat beads coated in oily camouflage paint make their way into your eyes, for you this is a no-brainer. Camo face paint is a great alternative to having fabric over your face, but mesh camo face masks are handy during early Teal. No camo face paint to end up all over your hands, no stinging eyes from dripping paint, and it's easy clean up with no makeup remover wipes necessary.

4. Ice-filled cooler. The drive home can be long for some hunters, and with warm temperatures, it's important to keep your harvested ducks cool. Pack a large cooler with ice, keeping drinks cool during the hunt and ducks cold for the drive home. All game meat is better table fare when it's kept clean and cooled soon after harvest.

5. Long-lasting bug spray. Don't just bring it, use it, and generously. There are plenty of choices when it comes to bug repellants, so don't just grab the first bottle you see. Unless you plan on making multiple trips to your vehicle to re-spray, make sure your bug-spray can last as long in the field as you can. Today companies make bug sprays that can last up to 10 hours. A few extra minutes spraying down ahead of time might save you a few sleepless nights and a lot of itching. And swatting mosquitoes is sure to spook approaching teal. ♡



Decoys can be very beneficial, but don't think you need to spend big money on decoys for early season birds. Although curious, Teal won't always land in a spread the way larger ducks do. Your best bet? Stay concealed and vigilant.



Teal are dabbling ducks, meaning they feed on the surface. Consider hunting shallow areas with plenty of food such as algae, weeds, seeds, and grasses.

COOKING TEAL

When the shots have all been fired and the retrieves have been made, it's time to enjoy the result of hours on the marsh. Teal are an excellent duck for eating and most hunters have their own special tradition of how they prepare their meat. However, for lightly-seasoned hunters, how to cook them can be a little bit of a guessing game. Consider preparing your teal in one of the manners listed below, courtesy of Ducks Unlimited. They'll have you eagerly setting your alarm for the next day's hunt, guaranteed. For detailed instructions on each recipe, visit ducks.org and click "Hunting," then "Recipes."

- Grilled Duck Bites
- Deep-fried Duck
- Roast duck
- Duck sandwiches



Nadia's Pick: Duck Poppers

What you'll need:

- 8 teal breasts*
- *(4 breasts if larger species)
- 1 block Cream Cheese, sliced
- 1 jar jalapeno slices
- 1 pkg. uncooked bacon
- Italian dressing

Marinate the teal breasts in Italian dressing for 3 or more hours. When ready to cook, score the breasts in half and stuff with a slice of jalapeno and a slice of cream cheese. Wrap in bacon and pin together with a toothpick. Cook the breast on the grill for a few minutes on each side, or until meat is medium rare. Enjoy!

2014 USFWS WATERFOWL BREEDING POPULATION REPORT

MALLARD
10.9 (UP 5%)

BLUE-WINGED TEAL
8.542 (UP 10%)

NORTHERN SHOVELER
5.279 (UP 11%)

SCAUP
4.611 (UP 11%)

GADWALL
3.811 (UP 14%)

GREEN-WINGED TEAL
3.44 (UP 13%)

NORTHERN PINTAIL
3.22 (DOWN 3%)

AMERICAN WIGEON
3.117 (UP 18%)

REDHEAD
1.279 (UP 6%)

CANVASBACK
0.685 (DOWN 13%)

*(POPULATIONS IN MILLIONS)

**(PERCENTS COMPARED TO
2013 POPULATIONS)

FOR THE FULL REPORT,
VISIT WWW.FWS.GOV.

BUCK FEVER



AND HOW I'VE LEARNED TO ENJOY IT

by Aaron Austin

assistant coordinator, Hunter Education Program, Pratt

Every bowhunter experiences physiological responses during close encounters with big game animals, or what we often refer to as buck fever. The feelings are what make bowhunting so exciting and frustrating, depending on how a hunter learns to handle the it.

When I was younger, learning how to bowhunt and making mistakes every single time afield, I used to describe my bowhunting stories as chapters of disappointment. When a big buck passed by just out of range, or was in range and I couldn't get a shot in time, I sat hopelessly shaking. Watching a buck swagger away, I was sick with disappointment because I didn't harvest that animal. This also caused me to become over-

whelmed with mixed emotions of anger and sadness, both at the time of the encounter and after the animal had left unharmed. I would get so worked up with nerves, my heart would race, I'd have watering eyes and shakes that would rattle my stand. When a big buck came into view, the thoughts were "Gasp! There he is!" It was almost a sense of fear on some levels. I was afraid I would spook the deer or that I wouldn't get a shot. There was also fear I might

The sight of a big buck can have a dramatic physical effect on a bowhunter, and the intensity of the experience can be influenced by the hunter's motivation.

wound the deer if I got a chance to shoot. Heck, I may have even been scared of the deer! I can't recall how many times I'd bang something into the stand or bump my arrow off my rest only to see that "deer in the headlights look" from a shooter buck right before he bolted.

Before I could learn how to handle my nerves in the field, I had to understand that hunting, especially bowhunting, demands the acceptance of patience before I could truly become successful. I also had to examine "success." Success is simply defined as accomplishing one's goals. I know that my goals have changed significantly over the years. What are your goals as a hunter? What motivates you to achieve your goals? Knowing and understanding your goals can greatly improve your chances of success in any of your endeavors. Looking at the different motivations can also help you understand the type of hunter you currently are.

Recognize that there are three types of hunting motivations: achievement, affiliation and appreciation. Almost all beginning hunters are motivated by achievement. Filling the limit, bagging the biggest trophy and recognition of their hunting skills motivates these hunters and determines how they measure success. Some hunters will remain motivated by achievement the rest of their lives. The achievement extremists are commonly those who feel that



they have failed if they did not fill a tag or a daily bag limit. Often, they are more disappointed about a hunt than happy they were able to be out hunting that day.

Hunters motivated by affiliation measure their success by the time shared with friends, family, or perhaps their dog while out hunting. These hunters find satisfaction in watching the dog work, taking new people, and witnessing the success of other hunters. Few, if any, hunters start out their hunting careers with this motivation. I would suppose that one exception might be a parent who started hunting only to spend more time with their kids who found an interest in hunting. Affiliation hunters go hand-in-hand with achievement hunters because they both get what they want out of hunting.

Hunters driven by an appreciation motive are



With a buck considered trophy-class by any standard, the author shows the results of learning to manage emotion and using a pre-shot routine to make a good bowshot.

“in-tune with their surroundings” and enjoy the wilderness aspect of being alone and enjoying the outdoor experience. These hunters are successful every outing. There will always be some experience during a particular hunt where they say, “that made my hunt;” something they can remember, learn from or take home and talk about. They could have witnessed amazing or strange animal behavior, a beautiful sunrise, or getting to see a big buck just out of range.

I believe a well-balanced hunter will be driven, at times, by all three motives. For example, an appreciation-motivated hunter could perhaps be a trophy whitetail deer hunter who wants to spend as much time as he can in the stand. If a mature buck provides a perfect shot, he will take it. If the big one doesn't present itself - no big deal; the hunter gets to spend a great amount of time in the woods. This hunter would not shoot a young deer with potential to become a trophy because that isn't why this hunter is out there. If this hunter wants meat, harvesting a doe would likely be a “plan B” option. Another example could be duck hunters who love the camaraderie of good company and have just as much interest in bird watching while in the blind. This would be an example of an affiliation / appreciation motive.

Back to my troubled time as a novice bowhunter;

was 100 percent motivated by achievement, and while there is nothing wrong with that motivation, I wasn't finding it in bowhunting. However, after a brief rifle hunting hiatus, I realized I missed something I got from bowhunting that I wasn't getting from the short rifle season and increased range of rifle hunting. I have since returned to bowhunting and have learned to appreciate the entire hunt, become more patient, and ultimately more successful.

So, it has taken years of learning from mistakes to figure out how to overcome the emotions known as buck fever, although I must admit, they can still get me rattled. I'm not saying you shouldn't get excited when hunting or that getting butterflies when a big tom turkey is gobbling and strutting within range are bad. Enjoy that part of hunting and embrace it. You will learn how to harness the excitement and turn it into focus. Those feelings are what get hunters out of bed three hours before daylight. However, lose the sense of fear or the “victim” feeling while afield. Forget the excuses and be more prepared for your hunt. Be the most proficient shooter and practice all situations you may encounter while on your hunt. If you practice a scenario before it becomes a real situation, you can perform any task like a pro.

“Stop being the victim and start being a

predator." A friend of mine said once, when he is in the close presence of game, his predator instincts take over as he gets all squint-eyed. I laughed at first, thinking about my friend ready to pounce on a bunny like a coyote. But I discovered he is absolutely right, you need to picture yourself as a focused predator. When a rabbit is ten feet away, do you think the coyote is thinking "OH NO, there he is!" "Ohhh, I sure hope I don't screw this up!" Nope. Or, is the coyote thinking about every move he is making, the moves he needs to make and the moves the rabbit is likely to take. Nope. Through instinct, trial and error and the memory of successful hunts (practice), the coyote automatically does all of those things but is only focusing on catching the rabbit. In the heat of the moment, no animal can cloud their mind with thoughts. This is why Olympic athletes look so calm — it's because they actually are. Through muscle memory and a strict training process, they've broken down every aspect of their performance into a sequence of events enabling their body to take over when it matters, only focusing on the bull's-eye they are about to hit or the precise landing they need to stick. As an archer you must do this in order to become the most proficient shooter and ethical hunter that you can be. It can be as simple as a handful of steps to write down and follow. Whatever it is, commit your shot sequence to memory and practice this mantra while you practice your shooting. What is a shot sequence? It is the foundation to a shooter's form and can be compared to a basketball player shooting free throws: from the time he /she walks up to the line to the time they shoot again. The basketball player does the same thing every time, seamlessly. However, the sequence of events are actually a list of steps. When you shoot your bow, you take a stance, grip the bow, nock an arrow, grip the string, point at the target, draw

the bow, anchor the string to your face, aim, set up the shot and release the arrow. Following the release of the arrow you can reflect on the shot, how it felt and what you did right or wrong. It is simple steps like these that are used by Olympic archers to ensure that they will perform the same way they practice when the pressure is on. Pre-shot routines put focus on the process, not on the result, and they make good shooters great and emotional or nervous hunters calm. They ultimately make hunters more successful.

In conclusion, you don't need to trouble yourself with multiple thoughts while on a hunt. When a high-stress situation arises, your subconscious will take over and you will know what to do because you've trained to the point of proficiency. That is up to you. Be ethical, be patient, be proficient, be the predator, and recognize your goals to be successful. If you can hunt without the harvest and be patient enough to wait for the right time to make an ethical shot, your hunts will always be successful and you will enjoy your time in the field more. Being in the presence of wildlife is the fun part; go enjoy it and always note the moments afield that "made the hunt" for you that day. 🦌





WHO PAYS FOR CONSERVATION?

BY MIKE MILLER
EDITOR, PRATT

There is a common and persistent misconception that wildlife management and our conservation programs in Kansas are paid for with general tax revenues. It's understandable because the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism is a state government agency, and most government programs are paid for with tax revenues. However, our agency is fee-funded, and our wildlife management program is fashioned after the North American Model for Wildlife Conservation.

Although it wasn't fully articulated until this century, the North American Model actually originated in the late 1800s when many wildlife species were in trouble and some were on the brink of extinction. In the 1860s, hunters began to organize and advocate for the conservation of wilderness areas and wildlife. Their cause was anchored by the Supreme Court decision in 1842 that established the Public Trust Doctrine. The ruling denied a landowner's claim to exclude all others from taking oysters from a particular mudflat in New Jersey. It boiled down to an opinion about the "law of nature and things common to all mankind," and it has been further interpreted to mean that certain things,

such as wildlife, should be held in the public trust and that trust property is owned by the public and held in trust for the benefit of the public.

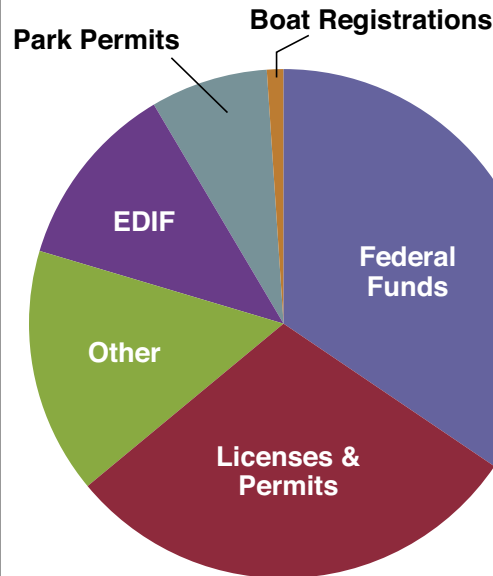
When hunters began organizing and advocating for conservation of our wildlife resources, the public trust doctrine was crucial to their cause. Hunting groups held that wildlife belonged to no one, but was to be held in trust by state and federal governments. However, funding for wildlife conservation and wildlife law enforcement wasn't available until the early 1900s. In fact, significant funding only arrived after hunters lobbied for the passage of the Pittman-Robertson (P-R) Act, which passed in 1937. P-R established an excise tax on firearms and ammunition. This money was then redistributed back to the states with strict requirements on how it could be spent. State fish and game departments received funding, but were required to provide a 25 percent match. The states' match came from hunting license and permit sales. In 1950, the Dingell-Johnson Act established a similar excise tax on fishing equipment and motorboat fuel. Today the two acts are collectively referred to as the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program (WSFR),

and have allocated more than \$2 billion back to states for wildlife and fishery restoration and management.

State wildlife agencies began to develop programs to restore wild places and wildlife populations, and we enjoy the fruits of those beginnings today. Through these efforts, the North American Model for Wildlife Conservation has evolved and is based on seven tenants: wildlife is a public trust resource; prohibition on commerce of dead wildlife; democratic rule of law; hunting opportunity for all; non-frivolous use; wildlife is considered an international resource; and science is the proper tool for discharge of wildlife policy.

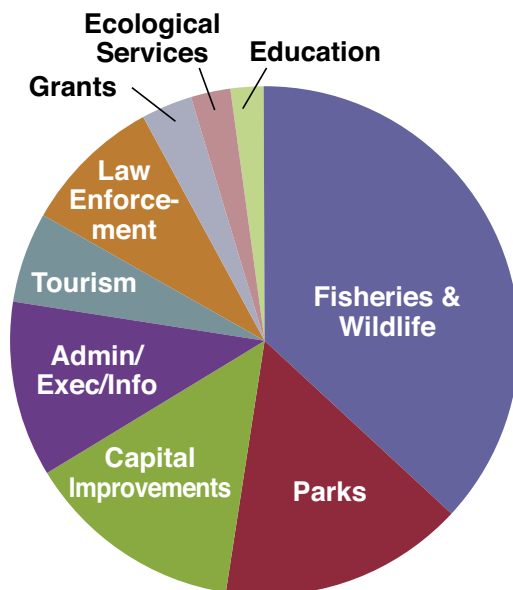
So where does the money for Kansas wildlife conservation, hunting and fishing programs and public land management come from? To be sure, we have a users-pay system in Kansas. Only those who choose to hunt and fish pay to participate and those revenues fund our programs. Hunters and anglers are required to purchase hunting and fishing licenses, as well as permits for big game, turkey, and special privileges. Revenue from the sale of licenses and permits goes directly into the Wildlife Fee Fund, which is used to fund our programs and match WSFR funds. The pie charts show where our wildlife and fisheries revenue comes from and how it is spent. ♡

FY2013 Revenue



Hunt/Fish Licenses	\$23,478,365
Federal Funds	\$27,112,312
Park Permits	\$5,745,471
Boat Registrations	\$842,742
State General Fund	\$0
EDIF (Economic Development Funds)	\$9,414,802
Other	\$12,365,225
TOTAL	\$78,958,917

FY2013 Expenditures



Fisheries & Wildlife	\$27,273,212
Parks	\$11,742,651
Capital Improvements	\$10,369,325
Admin/Exec/Info Svcs.	\$8,426,717
Law Enforcement	\$6,697,746
Tourism	\$4,170,308
Grants	\$2,259,279
Ecological Services	\$1,852,898
Education	\$1,513,535
Debt Service	\$41,273
TOTAL	\$74,346,944



HUNTING FOR PERSPECTIVE

Kansas has a reputation for producing trophy-class whitetails, but that doesn't mean big bucks hide behind every tree or that hunting mature bucks is easy in the Sunflower State.

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY MARC MURRELL
manager, Great Plains Nature Center, Wichita

If you believe what you see on television or read about in magazines, the only thing keeping you from taking a trophy-sized whitetail buck in Kansas is getting a tag. The common misconception is that monster bucks roam the Kansas countryside with such regularity that the most difficult decision a bowhunter makes is which monster to shoot.

To be sure, the Kansas deer management program and limited hunting pressure on largely private land allows bucks to reach trophy size more frequently than in some other states. But Kansas was one of the last states to allow nonresidents to hunt deer (the first nonresident permits were issued in 1994) and hunting here was viewed as the "forbidden fruit." The state's reputation has grown quickly, reaching almost legendary status as a whitetail hunting destination. Avid whitetail hunters from other states think we Kansas residents have it made, killing huge bucks year after year.

"I wish it was that easy," said veteran resident archer Bruce Snelling. "I've endured plenty of archery seasons where I hunted hard and ended up eating my tag."

"Despite what you see on television or read about, big bucks aren't hiding behind every tree in Kansas," he said, chuckling.

And Snelling is not alone. Archers with decades of experience and prime places to hunt don't kill big bucks all the time. The reality is that no matter where you hunt, killing a mature whitetailed buck is never easy.

"I've been bowhunting for sev-

eral decades and the opportunities to shoot monster whitetails just don't come along that often," Snelling said. "And when they do, there are tons of things that can and do go wrong."

But persistence has occasionally paid off over the years for Snelling, and he's managed to tag several impressive Kansas whitetails.

"But just when I think I've got things figured out and I'm on a roll, the next year or two leaves me scratching my head, wondering what in the world happened," Snelling added.

Such was the case for Snelling a few seasons ago.

"That season was a good one as far as the number of nice bucks I

saw, but I never had any decent shot opportunities at mature whitetails," Snelling remembers. "I hunt some timbered areas surrounded by pastures and the deer move through the area during the rut. I usually get a chance to at least see some good ones."

But even that would prove difficult for Snelling. Increased hunting pressure on surrounding areas had reduced the local deer population and even seeing does was something of a rarity.

"I think I may have seen one buck that was barely Pope and Young that year, but I just didn't see many deer, period," Snelling recalls. "And in the area where I hunt, if you don't have does hanging around, you're not going



Big buck? In many states, this would be a monster buck. Some Kansas hunters would consider this to be an average buck, but should we judge a deer by inches of antlers?

to have any bucks hanging around."

The next season would start off similarly for Snelling with few deer sightings from his usual stands. He hunted with a friend on other property a few times and saw several nice bucks, including a couple that were Pope and Young candidates.

"The biggest one came into my

decoy at 28 yards, but the wind was blowing so darn hard I just didn't feel good about shooting," Snelling remembers. "On another hunt, I had one right under my tree at 3 yards, and I got a good look at him as he milled around below me for several minutes. He was a nice buck, but it was still early in the season and I wanted a chance at something bigger. I

passed on taking a shot.

"But I had a great time hunting as I'd seen more nice bucks on just one hunt with my buddy than I'd seen the entire season before," Snelling laughed. "And it was still early, and deer movement was really just getting started."

Snelling's choice of not shooting would prove to be the right one as the Kansas rut was fast approaching. One evening, he decided to slip out of work early and sit in one of his favorite tree-stands bordering a big pasture.

"It was just a beautiful fall day," Snelling said. "I figured at that time of the year, bucks could be cruising at any time of the day, so I headed out of town a little earlier than normal."

He walked into his stand site carrying his bow, backpack and doe decoy. After placing his decoy just out from the base of his tree, Snelling climbed into his stand and got his quiver hung up and his bowholder installed.

"But when I looked at my doe decoy, I didn't like where it was at, so I got down and moved it a little closer to the base of my tree," he said. "It's two dimensional, and the angle where I expected the deer to come from wasn't going to be good as far as them getting a broadside look at the decoy."

His move would soon pay off. He settled into his stand and glanced at his watch. It was 2:22 p.m.

"I had barely got relaxed when I heard footfalls and looked to the west. Here came a doe," Snelling said. "And sure enough, right behind her was a nice buck."

Snelling admits he makes up his mind to shoot as soon as he sees a deer and he knew, without binoculars, this was a definite shooter.



After going a couple years without wrapping his archery whitetail either-sex tag on a deer with antlers, the author finally connected on this nice buck from a treestand in central Kansas on Veteran's Day.

"Both of them were panting like crazy. The doe jumped the fence heading toward the timber but stopped and looked at my decoy," Snelling recalls. "The buck was following her and when she looked, he turned to see what she was looking at and he saw the decoy and came on a rope."

Snelling knew the buck was a good one but tried not to look at the antlers as the deer circled downwind of his decoy.

"He was at 20 yards and stopped as I drew," Snelling said. "I shot and he bolted back the way he came, but he didn't go 15 yards."

Snelling looked at his watch and it said 2:28 p.m.

"It was one of the shortest hunts I've ever been on," Snelling laughed.

As he walked up to his buck, Snelling was impressed by the size of the antlers the 140-class 10-pointer carried. He was more impressed with the size of the body.

"He had a huge neck on him. We put a tape on it, and it was about 34 inches around," Snelling said. "He was a huge bodied deer, too, but his neck was probably the most impressive thing about him other than his rack."

Bowhunters all over the state experience seasons of varied success. Occasionally, they unravel the mystery, or the bowhunting stars line up just right and everything comes. My entire bowhunting career in Kansas has followed exactly that scenario.

But over my three decades of bowhunting, I've managed to put



Bruce Snelling had only been in his stand six minutes when this bruiser came by chasing a doe. Both deer stopped and checked out Snelling's decoy, and the big buck just had to investigate his new 2-dimensional girlfriend. Snelling arrowed the brute at 20 yards.

tags on a few nice bucks. For the first few years I spent bowhunting, I was self-taught and tried to put my tag on any deer. I wasn't picky and finally tagged my first buck after three years of trying. As if I knew what I was doing, I killed a nice buck the next year and I thought I was on my way to the Monster Buck Hall of Fame. Wrong.

Despite having opportunities at plenty of does and small bucks each year, I was now holding out for deer that would at least come close to the Pope and Young minimum of 125 inches. As a result, I only intermittently placed my tag on a deer with antlers.

After killing a decent buck one season, I was anxious as the next fall approached. I had placed all of my stands early and stayed out of most of them until the rut started to heat up at the end of October. It was the day before Halloween, and I chose to sit in a 15-foot

ladder stand overlooking several fields I hadn't hunted in several years.

I couldn't believe my eyes when I looked up an hour later and saw a big set of horns coming down a tree row. The buck eased toward me, apparently looking for does, and finally got within the outer limits of bow range. After the buck took a few more steps, I decided to take the shot. My arrow sailed high and the beautiful, 140-class 10-pointer bounded away. My heart sank as I watched it disappear a half-mile away. I hunted the stand a few more times, killing a doe, but never saw that buck again.

The next season found me hunting a new stand. I hunted it several times early and had small bucks and a few does in bow range. On the sixth trip, I shot a doe at 22 yards and watched her fall less than 40 yards after the shot. Then, I stayed out of the

stand as the rut was fast approaching.

On a crisp November afternoon, I decided it was time to sit in that stand again, so I climbed in at 4 p.m. Just 20 minutes later, I caught movement out of the corner of my eye as a 130-class eight-pointer was following a drag scent trail I'd put down. The buck never had a clue as I drew, mouth grunted to stop it broadside at 20 yards and released the arrow. Unfortunately, my bowstring hit my coat sleeve and I watched my arrow miss low. I saw the buck the next day but never wrapped my hands around antlers that season.

I didn't think my luck could get any worse and was hoping the following season would bring better results. However, my early-season hunts didn't.

I was off work on Veteran's Day in mid-November and decided to slip out for a morning hunt. I eased into my stand and waited for it to get light. Soon after getting settled in, I caught movement down a ravine ahead of my stand and watched a nice 8-pointer cruising for does. When he stopped to watch something, I turned to see two does and a fawn about 100 yards through the timber to my left. The young buck

immediately jogged toward them, dogging them my way. The big lead doe offered a 17-yard quartering away shot too good to pass up. She went less than 75 yards after the shot. It was only 8 a.m. so I nocked another arrow hoping my morning wasn't over.

Less than five minutes later, I heard footsteps in the same direction where the small 8-pointer appeared. My eyes finally met the sound and I immediately saw antlers. The deer was huge bodied and his rack was unusual. I lost hope after repeated attempts to grunt him into bow range failed, and he walked straight away.



An eventful morning in a treestand one Veteran's Day started with this doe coming by the author's treestand at 17 yards. After the shot, she traveled only 75 yards before piling up. Less than five minutes later, this old, gnarly whitetail buck came by and his fate was the same.

Trophy perspective

I assumed he was ignoring me, but I soon discovered otherwise. Another buck was approaching, and my buck was going to meet him head on. The incoming buck wouldn't even make eye contact and skirted the big bruiser as he came down the trail straight toward my stand. I readied the bow as this buck, too, looked like a shooter.

Turns out, he was only half a shooter. I could see his right main beam had been broken completely off just beyond the G2. Had his broken side matched his remaining side he would have sported an impressive set of antlers.

The half-rack crossed in front of me at 10 yards. The other buck followed nearly the same path and at 18 yards I shot him quartering away. He sprinted less than 100 yards before falling just out of sight.

As I walked up to him, his sheer body size amazed me. His rack only grossed roughly 130 inches but he had one broken tine when I shot him and he broke at least half of another off as he ran away. My dry run was over and everything finally came back together after several years of missed opportunities.

But like most bowhunters, Snelling and I both realize every year is different.

"Most guys aren't going to kill big bucks every year," Snelling said. "There are just so many things that change from year to year such as landowners, crop locations and even weather can play a factor in your success.

"The good thing is there's always a chance you'll see a really nice buck, and if everything works out, you'll have a shot at putting your tag on him," he concluded. 🦌

The true definition of a trophy deer should lie in the eye of the hunter. Too many times hunters, particularly bowhunters, get wrapped up in what others feel is a deer worthy of shooting. Most of the time, it relates to inches of antlers and the bigger the better and small bucks or does are frowned upon in some circles.

Over the last few decades of bowhunting, my opinion on what constitutes a "shooter" has changed. While I've eaten tag soup several years in a row waiting on a bruiser of a buck, I'm more content now just enjoying my time in the field and the overall experience of bowhunting. And rather than setting a goal with a particular number, or record-book requirement, I look at harvesting most any mature whitetail with a well-placed shot as a trophy in itself.

I admire the bowhunter who spends countless hours holding out for a monster and hunting in all kinds of weather conditions. If he or she kills a huge buck, I'm happy for them. But I also admire the bowhunter who is proud of a doe or 1 ½-year-old buck they shot because that's what they chose to shoot. I'm happy for them, too.

Bowhunting goals are a matter of personal choice, as is the kind of deer a bowhunter chooses to kill, antlers or not. It's not a one-size-fits-all activity, nor should it be and the thrill of the chase shouldn't be lost in the size of the animal or inches of antler.



The definition of a "shooter" buck has changed for the author over the course of his three decades of bowhunting. He spent several years holding out for the biggest of bucks and killed a few nice ones along the way. However, he finds more enjoyment now from the simple experience of most mornings or evenings in a tree and if he arrows a mature buck like this one he's ecstatic.



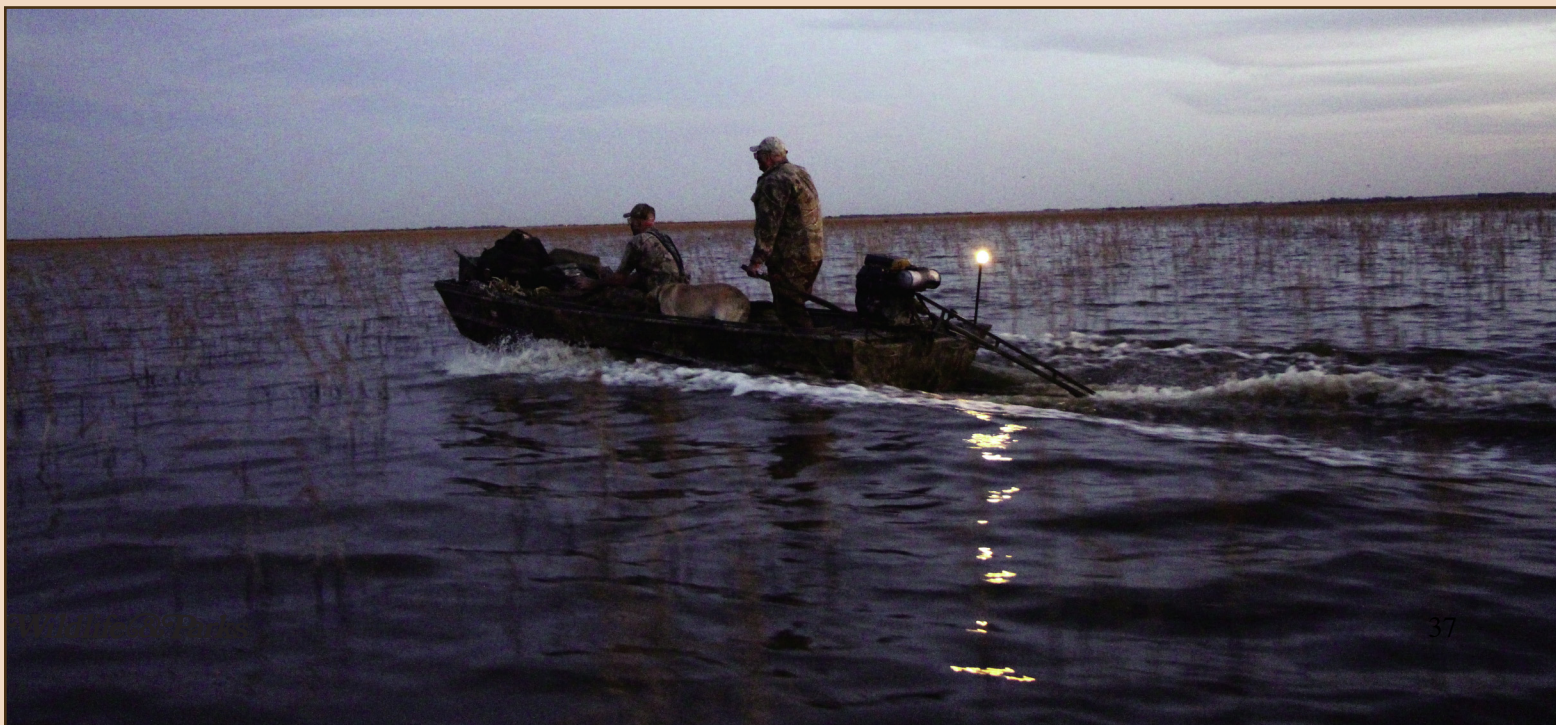
Fetch Me October

photos by Mike Miller



I love the September teal season because it's the first chance to get in the marsh after a long layoff. I wear waders, even though the water is bathtub warm and I put out decoys and blow my duck call, even though the teal may ignore both. Teal season is fun, but it's kind of like practice for real duck hunting. Give me October when the first segment in our early duck zone opens.

That's real duck hunting with cool mornings, big ducks that might respond to my calls and set wings over decoys and no mosquitoes. There's nothing quite like the smell of marsh mud on a crisp fall morning or the gravelly quacking of gadwalls waking up before sunrise. Yes, I'm ready for October; fetch it up!



HUNTER'S EVOLUTION



text and photos by
Dustin Teasley, *graphic designer, Pratt*

Since he was old enough to tag along, my son Hunter has been accompanying me on hunting trips. At four years old, he was with me in the blind when I arrowed a whitetail. Since then he has been eager to learn about all types of hunting, but especially deer hunting. After that first hunt, it just didn't seem right to go without him, so whenever he could, he tagged along. When he was eight years old, he was strong enough to shoot a shotgun accurately, and he killed his first spring turkey. After that hunt, he made a wish list of first experiences; his first duck, his first goose, his first pheasant, and of course, his first deer.

"When he was eight years old, he was strong enough to shoot a shotgun accurately and he killed his first spring turkey. After that hunt, he made a wish list of first experiences; his first duck, his first goose, his first pheasant, and of course, his first deer."

As his interest in deer hunting grew, we wanted to encourage him, so a couple of years ago his mom and I bought him a youth compound bow for Christmas. However, even when it was set for a 10-pound draw-weight, it was too much for him to shoot. He put it away and forgot about it. But when the 2010 deer season approached and I began shooting my bow in the backyard, his interest renewed. This time he was able to draw the bow and hit paper-plate-sized targets at 10 yards.

Not realizing the draw-weight was still too low for deer hunting, Hunter assumed he was going to bowhunt with me that fall. He was disappointed when I explained that he couldn't.

To keep him involved, I planned a rifle deer hunt for him, instead. We borrowed a youth model .243 rifle and started practicing. He ran through a box of shells and felt pretty confident in his abilities. He was proficient to about 75 yards. He was thrilled when I took him out of school for a couple of hunts during the regular season, but we saw no deer. Undeterred, we planned a doe hunt during the extended whitetail antlerless only season, and found a setup that put deer right at 50 yards. Perfect.

On our first hunt, a yearling doe walked by in range. He spied her through the scope but decided not to shoot because, he said, he was waiting for a big one. About that time a large doe appeared and began to feed our way.

"There she is Hunter, get ready!" I whispered.

He steadied the rifle and I waited, and waited, and waited.

"What's wrong? Are you going to shoot?" I asked.

"No, dad. I can't," he replied.

I could see he was beginning to cry. I realized the gravity of the moment was too much for him emotionally, so I slowly removed the gun from the tripod, unloaded it and told him it was okay.

"Let's just sit here and watch deer the rest of the evening; okay?"

"Okay," he said, sounding relieved.

We watched a parade of deer the rest of the evening, and he enjoyed every minute of it.

Fast forward to early fall 2012. Regulations changed



Sometimes it just isn't meant to happen, but it's always fun to be in the woods. We are faced with choices every day and making the tough ones shape us into who we are and who we will

to allow hunters 16 and younger to use crossbows during the archery season. (Crossbows are legal archery equipment for all hunters now.) Although Hunter was unable to use his youth compound bow and decided not to shoot a deer with a rifle the season before, he was still excited about being in the woods and the idea of hunting with a crossbow fueled his fire.



A pop-up blind is perfect for beginning deer hunters, rifle and archery alike.

We borrowed a crossbow, and he practiced shooting in the backyard until my arms were sore from cocking the thing. He was proficient to about 30 yards, so we knew his affective range. In November, reports from another hunter on the property we were hunting sounded promising. So one Saturday afternoon around 2:30, we decided to try our luck.

When we arrived at the small woodlot, we easily located the two deer stands the other hunter had been seeing deer from. We set up our pop-up blind in an area shadowed by a small pocket of cedars and old cottonwoods. The blind we have is too small for both of us, and a crossbow, so I elected to sit outside and instruct Hunter through an open taco-shaped window. We were facing southeast. After an hour, we spotted a doe working around the east side of another small woodlot 50-60 yards south of us. Hunter readied himself and things were looking promising. The doe was about 30 yards out, but facing us not presenting a good shot. Suddenly she snapped her head to look behind her and bolted across in front of us. We followed the doe's gaze to see a farm dog loping across the pasture. The doe stood 60 yards away watching the dog for a few seconds before walking out of sight. Hunter teared up, but this time because of an opportunity lost.

I assured him we still had time and about 30 minutes later, as the sun cast a long evening shadow across the pasture, we saw another deer. A nice 8-point buck appeared from behind some brush and slowly made his way toward us. I told Hunter to steady the crossbow on the tripod and take his safety off. As if on cue, the deer turned to the left and crossed in front of us at 27 yards. I made a grunt to stop the buck and softly whispered "anytime." Hunter instantly released the arrow. I saw a

wound open up low on the front leg and was afraid it was too low. When the deer whirled and took off running south, I could see fletching on its side. I told Hunter to keep an eye on the deer, and we both watched as the deer ran about 50 yards and stopped as if it was looking around to see what stung it. Within seconds, the buck teetered and fell over dead.

"I knew that the decision on whether or not to shoot was his and his alone. I felt proud of my son for telling me he wasn't ready to kill a deer the year before, and I was equally proud of the way he hunted this year."

I looked down at Hunter and could see he was shaking, wide-eyed and ready to see his deer. We gathered our gear and took our time breaking down the blind to give the buck some time before we started the blood trail. We found half of his bolt about 20 yards from the shot site and began marking spots of blood. It was hard for Hunter to follow the blood trail since he knew where the deer was, but I told him it was good practice for when he didn't know where the deer was. We were to his buck soon enough, a nice eight-point anyone would be happy with.

We field dressed and hung the deer that night. The



When everything comes together, the reward comes from the experience not the kill.

next morning, I took pictures until Hunter was sick of taking pictures. As I watched him happily hold his buck, I thought back to our hunt the winter before, and I understood that all he needed was a little maturing before he was ready to harvest his first deer. I also knew that the decision on whether or not to shoot was his and his alone. I felt proud of my son for telling me he wasn't ready to kill a deer the year before, and I was equally proud of the way he hunted this year. I'm confident my son is on his way to becoming the kind of hunter we should all strive to be. ♡

2014 Sportsmen's Calendar

SPRING TURKEY:

- Youth /Persons with disabilities: April 1-14, 2015
- Archery: April 6-14, 2015
- Firearm: April 15-May 31, 2015

FALL TURKEY:

- Oct. 1-Dec. 3 AND Dec. 15-Jan. 31, 2015

DEER:

- Youth /Persons with Disabilities: Sept. 6-14
- Archery: Sept. 15-Dec. 31
- Muzzleloader: Sept. 15-Sept. 28,
- Pre-Rut Whitetail Antlerless Oct. 11-12
- Regular Firearm: Dec. 3-Dec. 14
- Firearm Extended Whitetail Antlerless Season: Jan.1-Jan. 4, 2015
(Units 6, 9, 10, 17)
- Firearm Extended Whitetail Antlerless Season: Jan.1-Jan. 11, 2015
(Units 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16)
- Special Extended Firearms Whitetail Antlerless Season:
Jan. 12-Jan. 18, 2015 (Units 10A, 15, 19)
- Archery Extended Whitetail Antlerless Season (DMU 19 only):
Jan. 19-Jan. 31, 2015

ELK (residents only)

Outside Fort Riley:

- Muzzleloader: Sept. 1-30
- Archery: Sept. 15-Dec. 31
- Firearm: Dec. 3-14 AND Jan.1-March 15, 2015

On Fort Riley:

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

Antlerless Only:

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

ANTELOPE

- Firearm: Oct. 3-6
- Archery: Sept. 20-28 AND Oct. 11-31
- Muzzleloader: Sept. 29-Oct. 6

EARLY TEAL

- Season: Sept. 13-28, 2014, Low Plains Zone
Sept. 20-28, 2014, High Plains Zone

DOVE

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

- Season: Sept.1-Oct. 31 AND Nov. 1-9, 2014

EXOTIC DOVE

(Eurasian collared and ringed turtle doves only)

- Season: Nov. 20-Feb. 28, 2015

RAIL (Sora and Virginia)

- Season: Sept. 1-Nov. 9

SNIPE

- Season: Sept. 1-Dec. 16, 2014
- Daily bag limit: 8
- Possession limit: 24

WOODCOCK

- Season: Oct. 11-Nov. 24, 2014

SANDHILL CRANE

- Season: Nov. 5, 2013-Jan. 1, 2015

DUCKS

High Plains Zone

- Oct. 11-Dec. 8, 2014 AND Dec. 20, 2014-Jan. 25, 2015

Low Plains Early Zone

- Oct. 11-Dec. 7, 2014 AND Dec. 20, 2014-Jan. 4, 2015

Low Plains Late Zone

- Nov. 1, 2014-Jan. 4, 2015 AND Jan. 17-25, 2015

Low Plains Southeast Zone

- Nov. 8-9, 2014 AND Nov. 15, 2014-Jan. 25, 2015

GEESE

Canada Geese

- Nov. 1-9, 2014 AND Nov. 12, 2014-Feb. 15, 2015

White-fronted Geese

- Nov. 1-Dec. 14, 2014 AND Jan. 17-Feb. 15, 2015

Light Geese

- Nov. 1-9, 2014 AND Nov. 12, 2014-Feb. 15, 2015

Light Geese Conservation Order

- Feb. 16-April 30, 2015

PRAIRIE CHICKEN

- Early Season (Greater Prairie Chicken Unit):
Sept. 15-Oct. 15
- Regular Season (Greater Prairie Chicken Unit):
Nov. 15, 2014-Jan. 31, 2015
- (No open season for taking prairie chickens in Southwest Unit)

PHEASANTS

- Season: Nov. 8, 2014-Jan. 31, 2015
- Youth Season: Nov. 1-2, 2014

QUAIL

- Season: Nov. 8, 2014-Jan. 31, 2015
- Youth Season: Nov. 1-2, 2014

SQUIRREL

- Season: June 1, 2014-Feb. 28, 2015

RABBITS (cottontail & jackrabbit)

- Season: All year

CROW

- Season: Nov. 10, 2014-March 10, 2015

TRAPPING/HUNTING

- Season: Nov. 12, 2014-Feb. 15, 2015
Badger, bobcat, mink, muskrat, opossum, raccoon,
swift fox, red fox, gray fox, striped skunk, weasel.

BEAVER AND OTTER TRAPPING

- Season Dates:
Nov. 12, 2014-March 31, 2015

BULLFROG

- July 1-Oct. 31, 2014

FLOATLINE FISHING

- July 15-Sept. 15, 2014
- Area open: Hillsdale, Council Grove, Tuttle Creek, Kanopolis,
John Redmond, Toronto, Wilson, Elk City, Fall River, Glen Elder,
Lovewell and Pomona reservoirs.

See the 2014 Kansas Hunting and Furharvesting Regulations Summary, available online and wherever licenses are sold, for more information on hunting in Kansas.

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Coyote by Bob Gress

The largest native canid present in Kansas, adult coyotes typically weigh 27 to 35 pounds. Their hearty physiques are supplemented by diets consisting primarily of mice, rats, rabbits, squirrels, and various carrion; however, being an omnivorous animal, coyotes will also feed on a mix of plant foods, including fruits, berries, seeds and grasses.

The predator species will stalk their animal meals through the use of sight, sound, and scent, and occasionally hunt larger prey with the help of another coyote.

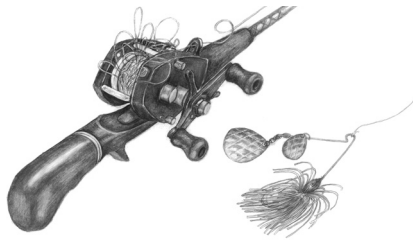
The most vocal of all North American animals, a coyote's high-pitched howl can be heard from as far as three miles away.

A coyotes home range can cover anywhere from 5 to 25 miles.

Females will typically inhabit smaller ranges, while males will cover a larger area, often times overlapping with the range of another male.

Although some coyotes live longer in captivity, the average wild coyote lives only six to eight years.





Backlash

by Mike Miller

CREEDE

The term “heavy heart” is an overused expression, and I never gave much thought to what it felt like. However, cliché or not, I don’t know how else to describe the weight I felt in my chest this past July. After having him by our side for 13 ½ years, our black lab, Creede, is gone. We held on as long as we could, and so did Creede, coping valiantly with what I can only imagine near the end. He didn’t appear to be in pain, but we knew he was struggling. Lisa and I did everything we could to make him comfortable and keep him around as long as possible, as much for us as him. Then came that dreaded July morning when I knew it was time.

When I returned home after burying Creede, every reminder added to the weight. As I got out of the truck, I missed hearing his hoarse “woof” that always greeted me, letting me know he’d seen me from his perch by the sliding glass door. In the house, his “happy toy” lay conspicuously near the top of the stairs. It was an old rubber squeak toy that he carried around whenever he was excited. When we came home, he would rush around the house looking for that toy, then he carried it, head thrown back, tail wagging, welcoming us as if he hadn’t seen us for a week.

His absence leaves a hole in our lives, but he’ll always be a part of us. He was an average hunter and retriever, but his unconditional loyalty to Lisa and me was anything but average, and our bond was instantaneous. I had pick of the litter and acted like I knew how to select the perfect puppy. In reality, Creede chose me. While the rest of the puppies quickly became bored with my attention and ran off to other adventures in the backyard, Creede stayed with me. From that moment, until his death, he stayed with me.

He spent his first night at home in a large cardboard box next to our bed. I reached down with my hand to comfort him, and he went to sleep quickly. However, he woke me four times that night, and we went out to the backyard each time. The next night, he slept through, and so did I, both content, I suppose, with this arrangement. And he slept in that spot, sans the box, for the rest of his life. When I would get up in the night, I would slide my feet along the floor to avoid stepping on him. Usually, before I found him, I would hear his tail wag, *thump, thump, thump*, on the floor, helping me locate him. It was common for me to wake, listen for his rhythmic breathing or snoring and once I heard it, go right back to sleep. In the waning weeks of his life, he became restless around 4 a.m. He was having problems eating and keeping food down, so when I realized he



wasn’t beside the bed, I got up with him. I continued to wake up at 4 a.m. after he was gone. In a half-awake daze, I listened for his breathing, then I would remember and feel the weight.

Losing Creede was tough because of our connection. He was a dog that wanted to be near us no matter what we were doing. Whether we were hunting, fishing or just working in the yard, he stayed close, just in case he was needed. He seemed to especially enjoy our September vacations to the mountains, taking long hikes with Lisa and standing belly-deep in the Rio Grande, waiting for me to catch a trout. We’ll feel that weight without him this fall, and I know I’ll smile through teary eyes when I look down and he’s not standing beside me watching my cast.

Some might say, “he was just a dog,” but our lives were happier with him along, that’s for sure. I’ll never know the extent of his physical ailments in the final weeks, but I’ll forever admire the way he coped and kept his dignity to the end. We can learn a lot from old dogs. We’ll have another black lab one day, but I know we’ll never have another Creede – and I’m okay with that.

