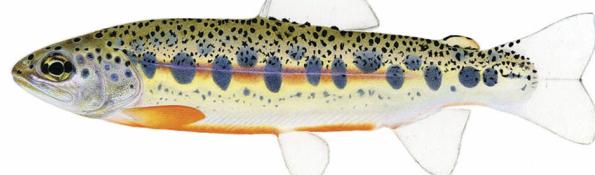
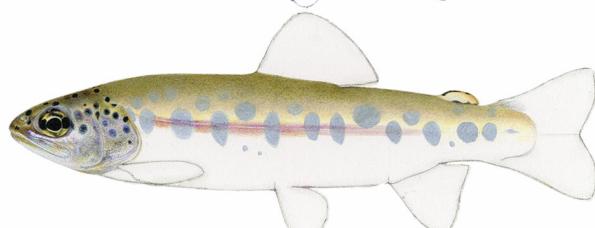
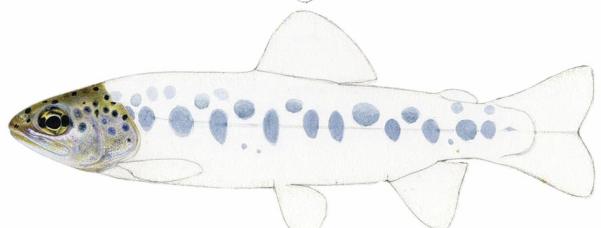
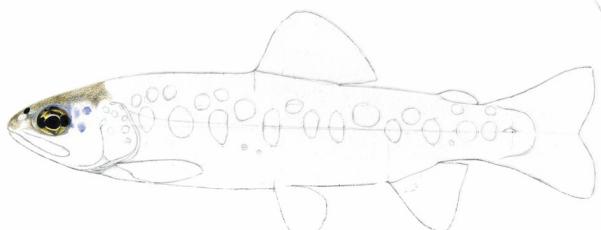




September/October 2016

\$2.75

pg. 18 *America's Fish Artist*
Joseph R. Tomelleri



Joseph Tomelleri
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KANSAS

Wildlife & Parks

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2016 – VOL. 73, NO. 5

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Front Cover: This series shows the progression of Joseph R. Tomelleri’s illustration of a Mexican golden trout. **Inside Front Cover:** Ducks Unlimited volunteers enjoy the fruits of their labor during a teal hunt at Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area. Nadia Reimer photo.

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Let Fall Energize You

Growing up in Lane County, hunting was our main outdoor recreation, and I have fond memories of hunting with friends and family.

I still keep a bird dog and make it back to the family farm several times each fall to hunt. Those hunts keep me close to our land and keep the hunting heritage ember burning in me. Walking those fields also reminds me why I'm proud to be a Kansan. We have remarkable hunting opportunities, opportunities I took for granted even while growing up in the heart of Kansas' best pheasant country. I've since learned just how much hunting means not only to our quality of life, but also to our economy. Hunters pour more than \$400,000,000 into the Kansas economy each fall. And I've talked to many of those hunters from other states who speak reverently of rural Kansas – the landscape, the people and the wildlife – and can't wait to get back here every year.

That special season is here and like me, you're probably enjoying the cool September mornings. Unfortunately, I seem to find less time for hunting each fall. Job and family commitments take priority and before you know it, the weekend is over. However, I think I know a way we can reorder our priorities, at least as far as hunting goes, in order to make it afield and that's to mentor someone new to hunting this fall. It's amazing what seeing the outdoors through "new" eyes can do for your enjoyment of outdoors.

We've all said this, "I didn't think I was going to make it out for this hunt, but I'm glad I did." I'm not in the habit of making guarantees, but if you make time to be outdoors this fall, I will guarantee you'll be glad you did. And teaching someone to hunt will be a gratifying bonus.

So, aside from the added enjoyment of mentoring a new

hunter, why is getting outdoors so important? There are the regular talking points: Our population is becoming more urban and the percentage of our Kansas population who hunt is decreasing; fewer hunters means less support for hunting – socially, politically and financially; fewer hunters means less funding for all wildlife management; but perhaps most important is fewer hunters means fewer youngsters are being introduced to our hunting heritage.

There is the saying, "It takes a hunter to make a hunter," and it's absolutely true. We've all had mentors who nurtured us, taught us and gave us the confidence we needed to hunt on our own. They are people who helped us at the shooting range, gave us advice on what kind of decoys to buy, taught us how to blow a duck call or taught our hunter education classes. Mentors are critical elements in preserving our hunting heritage.

But teaching someone to hunt has a more profound value, especially if youth are involved. There is a special bond built when you teach youngsters about the outdoors, and you're providing them a path they may follow for the rest of their lives. A young person who discovers the outdoors may find more than just lifelong recreation. It could impact their career path, where they choose to live, and the people they choose to associate with. You can't underestimate the power of passing it on and the impact spending time outdoors can have on a person's life. And you can't ignore the positive impact teaching someone about the outdoors will have on you. You will feel better and be better for it.

Get out this fall, you'll be glad you did. And if when you do, take someone new with you. 

KANSAS WILDLIFE & PARKS
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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 to The Editor

BIG RIVER BLUE

Here's a 91-pound blue catfish that I caught on rod and reel on the Kansas River, if you're interested. This was caught very early in the morning Saturday, 7/16/16.
Jake Miller, Kansas City



KUDOS AND KANSAS' CALL
Dear Mike,

Here's a nice catfish my wife Myki caught on July 26 at Milford lake (30.5 pounds). I would like to thank your magazine for always promoting women and kids in the great outdoors. Kansas has so much to offer anybody that will just take the time to look around. If you do, the call of Kansas will be calling your name. Thanks again for such a great magazine!

Rocky Both, Wichita



Poison Ivy Comment

One reason I became a botany major at KU was because of *Rhus radicans*. Your dog cannot get poison ivy, but he can give it to you very easily. It happened to my mother in law. One way to identify poison ivy is by looking at the petioles connecting the leaflets. They are always pink or reddish. Also, poison ivy plants can be completely free standing. They are not always climbing or trailing. Thank you.

Loren Scott, Lenexa

THE CABIN EXPERIENCE

Mike,

Here's a picture of my wife Tammy fishing near Kingman State Fishing Lake and the cabin we stayed in. We enjoy staying at the cabin at Kingman. We've also enjoy staying at McPherson State Fishing Lake; we just love the cabin experience!

Randy Heidel, Hutchinson



Have something to share? Write the editors at:

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BIRD BRAIN

WITH MIKE RADER

Everyone's Migration

Shorebirds, hummingbirds, waterfowl, songbirds, raptors, gulls - you name it - they're migrating through Kansas this fall, making it one of the best and busiest birding times of the year. All the activity makes for crowded skies and habitats, but it also makes for crowds of people, too; it really is everyone's migration. Mid-August to mid-October is a really great time to be outdoors in Kansas. However, there are some things we all can do to make sure everyone has the best experience possible.

Be patient. Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area, Quivira National Wildlife Refuge, and other wetlands, have an abundance of birds and it's easy to get caught up in wanting "more, more, more." I believe you'll enjoy your time more if you slow down and really observe what the birds are doing. Study their behavior as they rest and fuel up for the next leg of migration. Watch more and move less and you'll be less likely to scare birds. If you're out walking, they may perceive you as a threat and fly. I've always had better luck seeing birds up close if I stay inside my car. I know many folks have spotting scopes with tripods and need to get out to get better views, so if that is how you bird watch, try to get out and view with the least amount of movement possible. A window-mount for your scope is a good option.

Be respectful of other birders. Public wetlands often have multiple vehicles on roadways. When you stop, pull over as far as possible. Remember also that we share these areas with hunters and anglers. Many lands birders enjoy are managed with revenue from the sale of hunting and fishing licenses. Fall is when hunting seasons are open, and conflict can be avoided if you visit when hunting pressure is lower, avoiding opening days and weekends. It's our responsibility as birders to know when hunting seasons are, especially when visiting public hunting areas. Check season dates ahead of time at ksoutdoors.com.

Look out for all wildlife. Apart from giving our feathered friends the space they need to comfortably go about their business, we also need to watch the roads for other creatures. Many snakes, turtles, lizards, small mammals and insects are killed by inattentive drivers. Fall is a great time to see snakes and turtles on the sand roads around Quivira. They're out getting warm or moving from one location to another in preparation for hibernation. By watching the roads closely, we can avoid the unnecessary killing of other fantastic wildlife.

If you find yourself wanting to get your birding fix toward the end of September, and your favorite spot is a little too busy for comfort, consider attending the fall meeting of the Kansas Ornithological Society, Sept. 30- Oct. 2 in Garden City. The event will include a Friday evening social, Saturday paper session with informative presentations on bird-related research, Saturday evening banquet, and culminate with Sunday morning field trips to local birding hotspots. More information on this event can be found on the KOS website, www.ksbirds.org. Join us for an exciting event where birds and birders are celebrated!



Jay Miller photo



IT'S THE LAW

WITH LT. RICK CAMPBELL

Since 1980, the state title and uniform for state wildlife law enforcement officers have changed four times and the state agency we work under has experienced three structural changes. The common thread of our state game protectors and today's natural resource officers is the dedication of service. While our numbers haven't increased, our basic mission still holds strong: to serve the people and protect the state's natural resources.

It was 1979 when the Kansas Fish and Game Commission (presently the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism, KDWPT) announced state game protector vacancies within the Law Enforcement Division. Minimum qualifications included being at least 21 years old and a high school graduate. More than 600 applications were processed and written tests were issued. Those with high test scores were interviewed and ranked, and the highest ranking candidates received interviews with law enforcement staff whose task was to develop a hiring roster. If a candidate was offered a position and had no history of conviction of any crime punishable by imprisonment in a federal penitentiary or state prison, they were admitted to the Kansas Law Enforcement Training Academy.

Today things are a little different. There is a greater emphasis on domestic violence and anyone who has been convicted of or is receiving a diversion from a felony or misdemeanor domestic violence crime is ineligible. A four-year degree in a natural resource field or equivalent is now required. And the 1979 basic training class of four weeks is now 14 weeks at the Kansas Law Enforcement Training Center.

In addition to the standard application process and written test, candidates today receive an extensive background investigation, must pass an electronically-monitored interview measuring

truth and honesty, and must pass a physical performance test. Final interviews are then conducted by KDWPT Law Enforcement Division rank and file and appointments are offered to Natural Resource Officer (NRO) candidates, as the position title has changed.

In the early 1980s, beyond riding with veteran game protectors, on-the-job training was informal, and self-teaching was standard practice. Today, candidates graduate from the basic law enforcement academy and begin an on-the-job field training program that covers all duties and aspects of fish, wildlife and boating enforcement.

Our equipment has advanced, too. A fleet of two-wheel drive, standard cab, standard transmission mini-pickups provided transportation for game protectors in 1980. Today's NROs drive full size club-cab, 4X4 trucks with automatic transmissions. With expanded state law enforcement authority, patrol trucks now display the agency badge on doors and are equipped with emergency response light systems, too. Long gone is a single red spotlight magnetically mounted on the dashboard that served to make vehicle stops.

Many game protectors working in 1980 were not issued, nor did they carry, a firearm when they began their career. The 1980 game protector was issued a .38 caliber revolver but no other secondary defensive weapon.

NROs today carry a .45 caliber duty pistol and have a 5.56mm M-4 rifle in their patrol trucks. Secondary defensive tools are also carried on duty belts, including pepper spray and expandable batons. Ballistic vests are

Natural Progression

issued to all NROs for daily wear, but that was not the case in 1980.

Today, many NROs have at least three communication radios in their patrol trucks. They can exit their truck and maintain communication on portable radios that 1980 game protectors didn't have.

The 911 phone system now posts almost every Kansas roadway with mapping, allowing today's NRO to respond quicker to calls and communicate their location to dispatchers – a big safety factor in today's policing.

And then there's the cell phone. Mobile phones allow everyone to be an NRO. Game protectors knew how important the public was in reporting wildlife violations and other crimes, but communication wasn't always easy. Today, the watchful eye of knowledgeable sportsmen and the general public's timely reporting of violations make a huge difference in wildlife crime fighting. Fur, fish and game isn't stamped with serial numbers and once tucked behind closed doors, it is very difficult to determine all the facts to get cases prosecuted.

A lot has changed, but much remains the same. I suppose it's just a natural progression.

WAY outside

BY BRUCE COCHRAN



"IT'S SOME GUY NAMED HOOD FROM SHERWOOD FOREST. HE WANTS TO KNOW IF WE HAVE AN ARCHERY DOVE SEASON."

AT WOODS EDGE

WITH ANDRA BRYAN STEFANOJI

Journal
Yourself Out



I credit a nature journal with getting me through the first three long months of learning to be a mother, which also happened to coincide with the first three months I hadn't worked in a decade and the most snowfall we'd had in years.

Translation: I felt a little housebound.

But each day as I rocked my son and gave him his bottle, I had the perfect window view of a tree on which my husband had thoughtfully hung several bird feeders. Eager to do something creative, I put my birding field guide next to the rocking chair, dug out a blank sketchbook and colored pencils, and my newest nature journal was born. I would put my son down for a nap, and steal 15 minutes for myself, noting which birds came to visit, what seeds they liked and what the weather was doing.

As the season transitioned into spring, I looked beyond that tree to the rest of our backyard, which cried out for some tender loving care. I noted in my journal which plants I could envision there, drew sketches of possible garden beds and, when the weather finally allowed, I parked the stroller under the trees and got busy.

Having taught nature journaling workshops earlier in my career, I appreciated them for what they allow you to hold in your hand: A way to record and make sense of the present, and a way to dream about the future. Today, nearly 16 years later, I appreciate them for helping me remember the past. Perhaps most importantly, nature journals have helped me understand much more about the world around me – a benefit underscored by Frederick Franck, who authored *The Zen of Seeing*.

"In this 20th Century, to stop rushing around, to sit quietly on the grass, to switch off the world and come back to the earth, to allow the eye to see a willow, a bush, a cloud, a leaf – I have learned that what I have not drawn I have never really seen," he wrote.

And by one of my favorite nature journalists, Clare Walker Leslie, "Like a string of beads, or pearls, these little – or grand

– episodes help us link to the larger strand. This stringing of images, thoughts, connections, helps us to have more understanding, reason, compassion, gratefulness," she wrote.

For inspiration, consider reading Leslie's *Discovering a Whole New Way of Seeing the World Around You*, a how-to guide filled with illustrations, samples and tips. I used her advice, and it served me well. Now, as the seasons begin to change once again, I encourage you to take a journal in hand.

Choose a purpose for your journal, whether it's to record just what you see in your own backyard, what you experience each time you head to your favorite fishing hole or hunting spot, or what you observe on your hikes through the woods.

When choosing a journal, consider durability and size (where will it be taken?). Think about whether you'd prefer lined or unlined, and what kind of binding you'd find easiest to work with. Helpful supplies include colored pencils or pastels, tape, glue, pens and field guides.

Choose a style. Strictly scientific: Sunrise 6:56 a.m., sunset 5:12 p.m., overcast, 32 degrees. Twelve cardinals at feeder, spitting sleet. Or anecdotal: "Bought sunflower seed, thistle and suet cakes to satisfy the birds as winter feels like it has fully arrived and they're eating us out of house and home. Bundled up for a walk through the woods and saw deer tracks along the creek. Drank hot cocoa from a thermos as we listened to the chickadees flitting among the treetops."

Choose any of five components to include: maps; a species list; photos; sketches; phenology (recording when things first occur each year, like leaf bud dates, or waterfowl migration).

Hone observation skills. Do you see seedlings beginning where there were none? The tracks of animals in snow, dust or mud? Something that happens at a certain time each day? Each year?

Lastly, and most importantly, have fun!

HUNTING HERITAGE

WITH KENT BARRETT

Equipment and The Equipped

The Kansas Hunter Education program has a primary purpose of instructing students on the responsibilities of being a hunter – a predator in the natural world. One of those responsibilities is familiarizing ourselves with our equipment in order to be as efficient as possible. We, as instructors, believe that hunters owe it to their quarry to be aware of their own abilities, aware of what their equipment can do, and know the limitations of their equipment.

A few weeks ago at a hunter education field day, I asked a youth participant if he had ever shot before.

"I'm a sniper," he replied confidently.

"So what caliber of firearms have you shot before?" I asked, trying to get a gauge of what his definition of "sniper" meant.

".338 Lapua Magnum," he said. "I play Call of Duty!"

My instantaneous relief was quickly followed with a little anxiety. Was this student aware of the difference between reality and fantasy? Did they understand that a fantasy approach in a real hunting situation can have very real effects, especially for the hunted?

The more time we spent together on the firing line, the clearer it became that we had a little work to do before heading afield. I was happy to oblige.

Most equipment is only as good as the person operating it, and firearms are no exception. But how we operate can be just as important, if not more, than what we are operating.

Bird hunters, especially those pursuing doves, quail or pheasants, are most likely shooting from an unsupported, standing position. Waterfowl hunters may be standing or seated, but again, will most likely be firing from an unsupported position. Wingshooting, although an art to master, can be easily practiced by shooting clay targets.

Then, there are rifle hunters. Because rifle hunters are shooting only a single projectile, precise accuracy is necessary and difficult. Most rifle hunters use one of four basic firing positions –prone, sitting, kneeling or standing – based on circumstances of time, distance to target and terrain.

Shooting from the prone position, basically lying down behind the rifle with both elbows solidly on the ground, allows a hunter to be very steady, especially when using a rest. There are also accessories that can help provide a stable platform, including monopods, bipods, tripods, and even our hunting backpacks – a favorite of mine.

The sitting position has an advantage in that it allows a hunter to get above grass and low obstacles that can obscure the target. Although less

stable than the prone position, sitting still provides a steady platform. A bipod with longer legs can be a big help here, too. I use a pair of short shooting sticks that I manufactured with materials from the local garden center/hardware store. They're light, steady, cost me less than \$5 to build, and make me look like I almost know what I'm doing when I shoot.

Shooting from the kneeling position can be less steady without additional supports. Again, bipods or short shooting sticks make great platforms, especially when shooting over tall grass and smaller bushes. Another useful piece of equipment is the monopod or even using a hiking pole. While not always removing windage (sway) that can affect a shot, these accessories can make the elevation of the shot much more secure.

And lastly, there's standing, the least stable of the field positions. That doesn't mean it can't be a safe form of shooting, but it's one that definitely leaves more room for error. Hunters in Africa are regularly required to shoot from a standing position because of the rough and rugged terrain. Luckily here in Kansas, we usually don't have to worry about sitting among the thorns, prickly things and fire ants that live in Africa.

Regardless of the equipment you use, invest the time to learn the most accurate and stable shooting method for you. We owe it to our quarry to be using the right equipment, but we are responsible for equipping ourselves with the skills necessary, too.

WHAT AM I? ID Challenge

Using only the image and clues below, see if you can figure out this month's mystery species!



Clues:

1. I like to have a "hopping" good time.
2. You might make fun of my ears.
3. To hide, I just lay lowww!

>>> See answer on Page 9.



July/August:
Opossum

Fish Squeeze - Refit, But Not Yet Tired

WITH TOMMIE BERGER

In The Fall, We Sample It All

KDWPT fisheries biologists are busy this fall sampling fish, not only with a rod, but with gill and trap nets, and electrofishing boats. All fish species are active as the water cools, giving biologists the perfect opportunity to sample game fish in their lakes.

Gill nets are used to capture fish like catfish, white bass, wipers, stripers, walleye, and even smaller fish such as white perch. To evaluate these populations, biologists keep track of the number of a specific species caught per gill net. For example, each gill net set in Wilson Reservoir might have 20 walleye in it, while each Milford gill net may only have 15, giving biologists a rough idea of walleye density. The population can be broken down further by determining how

many of those walleye are young-of-the-year (YOY) or lunker size. Biologists can even determine if those YOY walleye were naturally produced or stocked.

Trap nets usually capture smaller fish species, primarily bluegill and crappie. If a lake has a good bluegill population, there may be 100 bluegill of all sizes in each trap net. As biologists look at size distribution, they can quickly tell if there are good numbers of catchable-sized bluegill, as well as forage-size bluegill that provide food for larger game fish. Biologists try to take these netting samples from scattered locations all around the lakes with a predetermined number of nets so that

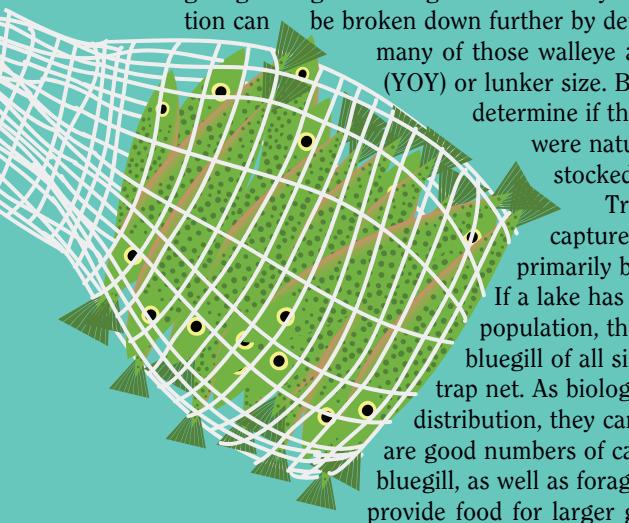
lakes can be compared to one another.

Electrofishing boats are primarily used for black bass sampling in the spring; however, some biologists will conduct bass sampling in the fall if they got a poor spring sample or are looking at bass reproduction or stocking success. Unlike netting methods, black bass populations are evaluated by numbers of bass found per hour spent electrofishing. I remember one fall day back in the mid-1990s when we were electrofishing for bass in Wilson Reservoir. We were sampling the rocks just outside of Nelson Cove when my summer aide hollered for me to stop. He was trying to dip up a huge fish, which turned out to be a striped bass weighing over 46 pounds, three pounds over the state record at the time.

Fall sampling also collects non-sport fish like carp, buffalo, and drum, giving biologists an indication of whether lakes need to have non-sport fish removed. High densities of non-sport fish such as carp and buffalo can affect water quality and take up space that could be inhabited by more desired species.

While gizzard shad population dynamics are often determined by summer shoreline seine samples or summer electrofishing, fall nets can give biologists an indication of the forage-size of shad going into winter – the smaller the shad, the better for the game fish. If the shad are too large, YOY sport fish may have trouble feeding on them through the winter.

By mid-November, fisheries staff will have seen thousands of fish of all sizes and have a pretty good idea of what is going on in their district. That turns into valuable information for anglers planning future fishing trips. Check out the latest fishing forecast and newsletter from fisheries biologists at ksoutdoors.com. Who knows, maybe there's a 46-pounder waiting out there for you.



FISHIN' WITH MIKE MILLER

On The Water

I love fishing small ponds, and I've done my share of walking shorelines. It's a simple form of fishing – just a rod and reel and a couple lures in my pocket, stalking along the bank. However, there are times when fishing from the water and casting to the shore

is much more effective.

Most of the structure in small ponds is along the bank in the form of vegetation mats, fallen trees and limbs, and undercut banks. And when fish are holding tight to the bank, vibrations made by an angler walking can alert them. In addition, your lure is only in a bank-hugging bass' strike zone for a second or two as you finish the retrieve.

I've always caught more fish by fishing out of a small boat or tube and casting into the shore. Not only can you approach likely fish-holding locations

more quietly, you can stay farther away. Bass are ambush predators and often hold just inside cover, facing out. From the water, you can retrieve your lure parallel to the bank and keep it in the strike zone much longer. Fishing from the water may also let you reach shoreline stretches that are too steep or choked with brush to be fished from shore.

Tubes or U-boats are great fun to fish from, getting you close to the water and making your approach almost undetectable. And tube fishing is also a great way to keep cool on a warm fall day.

Coots, Snipe & Rails

Coots, snipe and rails might be the Rodney Dangerfield's of game birds; they don't get no respect. While these diminutive, lesser-known waterbirds don't garner the attention that ducks and geese do, they're certainly intriguing to me.

Each fall when I purchase the Harvest Information Program (HIP) permit, the license seller asks about my past year's hunting experience as far as species pursued and harvested. They ask about ducks, doves and geese, as well as coots, snipe, rails, and gallinules. In the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism office where I work, the ladies who sell licenses tell me that in 20 years, I'm only one of a couple of hunters who have answered "yes" to pursuing coots, snipe, rails and gallinules.

I'm surprised because there are high-quality hunting opportunities for these species in Kansas. If you don't mind a few mosquitoes, a little sweat and a lot of exercise trudging through ankle deep wetland edges, snipe hunting can be a dream hunt for hardcore wingshooters. They're fast, elusive and as challenging of a target as you'll find. The daily bag limit is eight, and if you hit it right during the migration, you'll flush dozens in a couple-hour hunt. I've had some memorable days on the marsh, topping off early teal hunts by donning hip boots and wading the wetland edges hunting snipe.

Coots are unique birds; they have beaks rather than bills and lobed toes rather than webbed feet. They don't like to fly and often dive under water when frightened. When they do fly, it's for short distances, and they rarely get far above the water's surface.

I've never set up specifically to hunt coots, but I've shot plenty over the years while duck hunting. When my Labrador retriever, Gator, was a pup, he got lots of extra work one trip when I



Snipe often forage on mudflats, and in water less than three inches deep in wetlands and along shorelines. They use their 2- to 3-inch long bill to probe for aquatic insect larvae and earthworms. Photo via Shutterstock.

shot nine (daily bag limit is 15). I'm always fascinated every time I take a coot from Gator's mouth, flip it over and see their bullfrog-colored feet and lobed toes.

Rails are interesting little wading birds that inhabit wetlands, too. Seldom seen by the casual observer, they survive by jumping from stem to stem of wetland plants eating small insects or seeds. They may be less likely to fly than coots. When they do flush, they fly as if they've got a weight tied to their legs, and after only a short distance they drop like they're dead. The shooter who hesitates loses out. Once flushed, they can be almost impossible to flush a second time. They can be hunted in the same habitat as snipe, providing mixed bag opportunities.

The biggest obstacle to pursuing these birds isn't opportunity, but identification. If they haven't hunted them, hunters rarely see rails and snipe resemble protected shorebirds. However, a snipe's erratic flight and unique call can help with identification, and they often fly solo or in pairs rather than flocks. Coots are generally easy to identify and rails are, too, with a

little practice. Your best bet is to get a field guide, hit the marsh, and start wading.

I've never killed anything I don't eat and coots, snipe, and rails are no exception. In fact, those nine coots I mentioned earlier were cleaned and made into kabobs my boys and I gladly finished off. Their meat has a fine, delicate texture that is every bit as good, or better, than teal. The only problem with eating snipe or rails is they're just not very big. Fortunately, bag limits are generous: 8 per day on snipe, and 25 per day on rail.

Snipe season is Sept. 1-Dec. 16, 2016, rail season is Sept. 1-Nov. 9, 2016, and the coot season runs concurrent with the duck seasons. More information on these species can be found by picking up the *2016 Kansas Hunting and Furharvesting Regulations* from any license vendor, or at www.ksoutdoors.com.

Wetlands are beautiful, unique habitats where I love spending time, and pursuing coots, snipe, and rails extends my enjoyment of these areas. Anyone who enjoys waterfowl hunting should give it a try.



Life Unpaved

WITH Nadia Reimer (and sometimes "Kota")



THESE FIVE (YEP, 5) DOGS

Our pack of four has grown to five, with the addition of Reimer's Magic Marker "Molly," a female chocolate Labrador we picked up about a month ago. Yes, we planned on getting her. No, we're not crazy.

The surplus of leashes, collars and whistles hanging in the kitchen, the three 10 x 10 kennels in our backyard, the auto-ship order of dog food we receive every two weeks, the pictures on our fridge, the pawprints on our floors, and the posts my husband and I publish on Facebook all say "dogs are our family." That family consists of Bella, Kota, Zeke, Charlie, and now, Molly.

Bella is our oldest, a near five-year-old female chocolate Labrador who runs the roost. She's the matriarch and alpha of the pack and she'll keel over before she steps down from that honor.

Kota is our two-and-a-half-year-old female black Labrador who was first featured in *Kansas Wildlife & Parks* magazine in "The Promise Of A Pup." She's my soul sister, fellow short-stack (I'm not tall either) and hunting buddy.

Zeke is our only male, a two-

year-old black Labrador who has no idea how big he really is. He is all heart and all about his family.

Charlie is our five-month-old female black Labrador who is spunky, excitable, and always happy. She suffered an injury at three months old, leaving her with a temporary splint and vet's orders to stay kenneled for seven weeks and she took it like a champ.

And then there's Molly, our three-and-a-half-month-old love bug who looks like she was plucked straight from one of those cheesy Labrador puppy calendars. Her "don't leave me" face during crate training could melt the core of a glacier, but unbeknownst to her, we've had quite a bit of practice up to this point, so her crate training will continue.

Some people might look at us and say we've got five dogs to clean up "number twos" after, five times the vet costs, five dogs that need exercise and attention, and five dogs to make messes in our home. While that is our

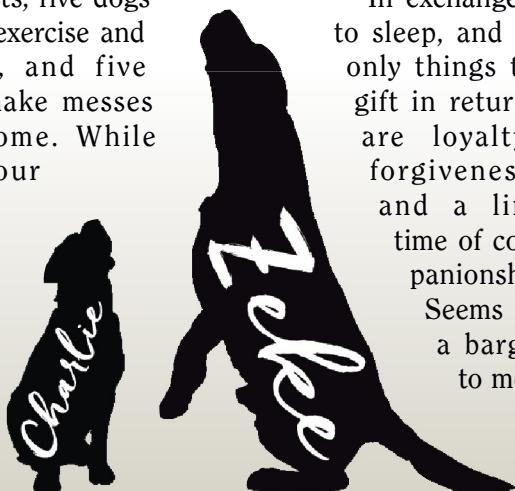
reality, I would add that I have five kids who wag their tails every time I come home, five consolers willing to smother me in kisses when I've had an off-day, five friends to play and explore with, five garbage disposals to help clean up my messes when my less-than-master-chef cutting skills cause a piece or two of food to fall on the floor, and five great reasons to get outdoors as much as possible.

Now, it would be disingenuous of me to act like raising five dogs from puppyhood doesn't come with challenges. When done right, it's time-consuming, messy, stinky, and can be costly, not to mention the fact that it is (or at least should be) a commitment for the lifetime of your dog. But Labradors are a huge part of where we find enjoyment and they add to the quality of our lives in far more ways than anything else could.

In exchange for kibbles, a place to sleep, and some attention, the only things these five dogs can gift in return

are loyalty, forgiveness, and a lifetime of companionship.

Seems like a bargain to me.



Park View

WITH
KATHY PRITCHETT

The traditional summer camping season is almost over, but our parks never close to campers. In fact, camping outside the Memorial Day to Labor Day window offers many advantages that peak-season campers may never get to enjoy.

If you don't like crowds, off-season and mid-week camping will give you fewer neighbors in the campgrounds as most kids are back in school and families may have to crowd their outings into weekends. Mid-week visits may also mean not having to wait in line at the boat ramp. If you're a hunter, camping in the state park may put you closer to public hunting areas than staying in a motel, and cost less. Plus, groups may be more likely to find adjacent campsites.

The weather is often nicer off-season, too. The sometimes oppressive heat of

July and August give way to cooler evenings and balmy days. You're less likely to encounter insects and reptiles as fall approaches. And all migrations bring plenty of bird species to watch.

Changing fall colors offer a warm visual contrast to summer greens.

If you're a people person, camping can encourage community, as well. Insulated and busy inside our homes during our "regular" lives, when camping, people come outside. They gather around a campfire and talk among themselves, something that is becoming a rarity in our lives. Soon, they are chatting with their camping neighbors. Some families make it a tradition to camp with the same people year after year, while others build new friendships.

Camping is also a great way for our

Why Not Camp?

kids to learn new skills – fishing, helping set up the tent or site, making s'mores, following a trail, identifying wildlife, building confidence, and teaching them self-reliance.

Studies show that being outdoors and unplugged is good for childrens' (and adults') brains. Americans forfeit more vacation days every year than citizens of any other developed country. I think we forget all too often that taking time to relax and unwind – smell the campfire instead of roses – allows us to return to the job refreshed and renewed.

So, don't bemoan the fact that summer is over and you haven't camped as much as you'd like. There's still time! Make a reservation today at reserveamerica.com.

K-State's Alsop and Bivins Champion Anglers

The Kansas State University (KSU) Fishing Team added another feather to its fishing cap, winning the 2016 Carhartt Bassmaster College Series National Championship in July. KSU team anglers Kyle Alsop and Taylor Bivins earned KSU its second national championship, weighing in 36 pounds, 4 ounces of bass, besting the field of 89 collegiate pairs.

"It was a grind," said Bivins, who just graduated in May with a degree in wildlife and outdoor enterprise management.

"We had to fish really slow the whole time."

"Slow is not our preferred way to fish," added Alsop, a senior majoring in engineering. "I hate it. But it was our only way to be consistent."

Alsop and Bivins also brought in the tournament's biggest fish, a 6-pound, 13-ounce largemouth, as well as a 5-pound, 9-ounce bass on day three.

"The key was definitely the big bite," Alsop said. "We were blessed to get one big one every day."

Alsop and Bivins caught their fish on a main-lake point and concentrated on a flat with a big ledge on it. They admitted there were 20 boats or so on it the first couple days, but they found a little spot a short distance away where the water depth went from 20 feet to 50 feet deep and had that to themselves.

Alsop fished a Carolina rig and Bivins fished a shaky head. Green pumpkin with black flake or watermelon with red flake were the best colors.

"We knew there were lots of fish on those channel swing points," Alsop said. "We just had to keep our heads down and



keep working until we caught them."

The KSU Fishing Team received \$2,500 from Carhartt and another \$2,500 from B.A.S.S. for the championship win. Alsop and Bivins were also awarded a Hummingbird Helix unit.

Second place in the collegiate tourney went to Bethel University's team of Brian Pahl and John Garrett who had a cumulative weight of 35 pounds, 7 ounces.

To fish in the college championship, teams had to qualify through any one of five regional events or a single wild card event. More than 500 teams from 200-plus colleges around the country competed for a chance to qualify for the championship.

The first-ever national championship win for KSU came in 2012 thanks to Ryan Patterson, who despite complications with his partner, was still able to win the title on his own. — Murrell

Photo courtesy www.bassmaster.com



WITH ANNIE CAMPBELL-FISCHER

Are You A Master Angler?

If you've applied for a Master Angler award this year, chances are you received communication from me. I'm Annie Campbell-Fischer and I serve as the administrative specialist in Information Services at the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism. While my primary responsibility is overseeing *Kansas Wildlife & Parks* magazine circulation, I also process all Master Angler Award applications.

Master Angler Awards are frame-worthy certificates issued to anglers who catch and enter qualifying fish. While the application process is user-friendly, here are a few helpful tips that will ensure your application is processed without any snags.

It's good to know that these awards differ from state records. State record fish applications go through a different process (which I'll explain in a later column), and submitting an application for a Master Angler Award will not meet the requirements for a state record application. To obtain a Master Angler Award, simply catch a fish that meets or exceeds the minimum length for that species, measure it, take a color photo and fill out the application. Application forms and a list of minimum lengths for each species can be found in the Kansas Fishing Regulations Summary or online at www.ksoutdoors.com by clicking "Fishing," then "Special

Fishing Programs For You."

Make sure your application is complete and each line of information is filled out. This sounds simple enough, but you'd be surprised how many people forget a line or two, and I need every bit of information to accurately process your certificate and keep a record of your catch.

It's important, too, that your handwriting is legible on the application. It would be a shame to catch a great fish, qualify for the award, and receive a certificate with your name misspelled because I couldn't decipher your handwriting.

The photograph that accompanies the application should be a full-color, close-up shot of the fish you caught – while it's being measured, if possible. The photograph ensures we identify the species correctly and a tape or ruler in the photo makes it easy to verify the fish's length.

Mail applications should to: Information Services, Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism, 512 SE 25th Ave., Pratt, KS 67124. There is no limit to how many Master Angler Awards you can obtain.

One of the highlights of my job is opening Master Angler applications for fish caught by kids and seeing their smiles in the photos. I encourage parents to assist their children in pursuing these awards. The Master Angler Award is a fun way to commemorate their hard work and dedication to a wonderful pastime. Kids love to get mail and following the directions on the application is a great way to teach them the importance of attention to detail, too!

Applications typically take about two weeks to process. If you have any questions about your application or the Master Angler Award program, you can reach me at anna.campbell-fischer@ksoutdoors.com or 620-672-0756.

I look forward to seeing your next catch!

Outdoor Writing Icon Retires

After 34 years of gracing the pages of the Kansas City Star with outdoor adventure stories, Brent Frazee announced his retirement in August. Frazee was a fixture in the outdoor communication world, traveling across Missouri and Kansas in search of interesting and unique stories about outdoor recreation and the people who enjoyed it. While his fan-base was broad, hunters and anglers will miss him most.

Frazee was active in several outdoor writing organizations, including Outdoor Writers Association of America (OWAA) and the Outdoor Writers of Kansas, serving as president of the latter for the past 10 years. His writing received numerous awards through OWAA over the years, and he was recognized by many local and regional conservation organizations.

Personable and likeable, Frazee never put on airs or acted like he was an expert at anything. However, his passion is fishing, and on water with pole in hand, he is indeed an expert. His easy-going style came through in his writing, and his stories flowed smoothly off newsprint, letting readers enjoy his adventures vicariously.

Frazee indicated that he would continue writing in retirement, and I will do everything in my power to bring his new stories to *Kansas Wildlife & Parks*. I know readers who are familiar with his writing will appreciate it and those who aren't will enjoy discovering it. -Editor





DEER: A NEW TECHNIQUE

WITH DUSTIN TEASLEY

EAT

When our local K-State extension agent, Jodi Drake, asked if I could secure a deer for an upcoming seminar for deer hunters on field care, butchering, and cooking demonstrations, I was happy to oblige. I secured a hunting location, scouted the area, and found a freezer to hold the carcass for a day or two, if needed. Now the hunt was on. Enjoying my time spent afield, while being aware there was a deadline, I pulled through and was able to take a small deer, perfect for this demonstration, the evening before the event.

After hanging the dressed and skinned carcass from a front-end loader bucket at the local 4-H building, I decided to stay and watch. Professors Bob Danler and Liz Boyle arrived donning lab coats with matching aprons, head nets, and magnetic belts with knives attached. They taped butcher paper over two tables and began their demonstration.

Danler interjected humor throughout the presentation, and at one point, commented on out how small the deer was and that a larger specimen would have provided more meat. I figured he didn't have to pack it out of the woods, but nonetheless, his comments were in good nature.

I also noticed Danler took great care in removing belly meat, explaining how this particular cut was fantastic for fajitas. This caught my eye because that was a cut I normally threw in a

grind pile.

For the next hour, he continued to methodically remove cuts of meat from the carcass, explaining as he went, then handing them to Boyle.

Boyle would trim each cut, then place it on butcher paper and label it. When the two were finished, every conceivable cut of meat had been laid out and labeled on the table perfectly.

Over the past 30 years, I've processed nearly 100 deer and have developed a tried-and-true method, but even I learned some new techniques that day, using them later that fall. It brought truth to the statement that "there's more than one way to do something," and I'm glad I opened my mind to some new techniques. I'll surely help and attend another similar event in the future.

If you're interested in an event like this, contact your local K-State Extension Office. If you're interested in trying it out on your own, field dressing is the first step. Check out the field dressing video on ksoutdoors.com where I walk viewers through my step-by-step process. Who knows, you may learn a new technique.



Good, "Clean" Sailing Fun



The Walnut Valley Sailing Club, along with the Ninnescah Sailing Club, recently held a youth regatta at El Dorado Lake for 16 area sailors enrolled in a junior sailing program. The regatta was certified as a "clean" regatta thanks to an event partnership with the conservation organization, Sailors For The Sea. The event received national recognition as a silver level clean regatta by implementing several conservation best practices into the race and race management.

A total of 13 best practices had to be documented to receive the silver level recognition. Some of those practices implemented during sailing camps and at the regatta included the elimination of single use plastic water bottles and providing a continual water refilling station during

camp and races; complete elimination of Styrofoam products; implementing paperless race management practices; recycling and composting of all products and food leftover from the regatta; and the implementation of reusable signage for future use.

Trophies were also re-created by the young sailors during camp by using parts from previously won trophies donated by club members, and all other prizes given to sailors were usable and recyclable such as flashlights, lunch boxes, waterproof bags, and coolers.

The clean regatta initiative will continue to be part of the Jr. Sailing Program at the Walnut Valley Sailing Club and its event organizers and participants hope others will join in their efforts to continue protecting our local waters.



The Way I See It

WITH TODD WORKMAN

I'm Bugged

I'm an outdoorsman, but there are things about being outdoors I dislike. I find heat to be evermore annoying and I don't care too much for extreme cold or wind. But above all, I hate bugs. Bugs outnumber us humans 200 million-to-one. I know they're a critical part of the ecosystem, I just don't need them in mine.

I don't characterize bugs as insects or arachnids. My categories are pragmatic: Fliers, jumpers, crawlers and mimics. And in my world, all insects that fly, jump or crawl are biters or stingers until proven otherwise, and I prove otherwise by looking at their dead carcasses.

Fliers are a big problem for me. Fliers can range from a gnat up to a praying mantis. I'm convinced a small flier's main goal in life is to fly into one of my facial orifices. Bigger fliers are like Top Gun pilots, delighting in buzzing my face. Get a big buzzer in my ear and I will usually use an open hand to slap myself silly. June bugs are the worst because their buzz is foreboding and they have serious mass. June bugs not only get a ferocious swat reaction, but they also make me run blindly. And that's bad because at night when you usually see them, running blindly in can lead to tragedy. After such an episode last week, I have to buy a new hose reel that I tripped over, and subsequently decided that the dog had to find a new "potty area."

Jumpers are tricky. They are fairly big and a UJC (unidentified jumping creature) that springs onto your leg without warning could be a giant blood-sucking tree spider. At any rate, jumpers receive the same Chuck Norris open-hand slap that fliers get. Jumpers are usually slower than fliers, and are more easily destroyed. And



Show me a guy with bug guts dripping from his legs and I will show a guy who went pond fishing in his jeans shorts.

Crawlers have the ability to create chain reactions. When the people around you realize you've found a tick crawling on your shoulder, their sensitivity level increases and they begin "feeling" ticks on them. During turkey season I was with a friend who, after seeing me pluck a tick from my pant leg, detected a tick on his upper middle back. That's an area that is impossible to reach, although a person will throw their shoulders out trying to. In this particular case it didn't matter that he was driving down the road. Both hands left the wheel as he attempted to unlatch the parasite that he was convinced was injecting rocky mountain spotted fever, diphtheria, and whooping cough into his body. The truck slid to the shoulder of the road as he flailed to reach the unreachable. We later discovered it was just a piece of tickle grass, but our nerve endings were on high alert. It sounded like a bag of microwave popcorn in the truck, as we slapped the crap out of ourselves, attacking phantom ticks and chiggers.

A mimic is a bug with a sick sense of humor. Mimics will rattle your nerves in an attempt to move you back into the house where you

belong. Case in point: My dad is deathly afraid of snakes. While out fishing at a pond one day, we spotted a snake slithering through the grass. It was probably a garter snake, but it made the grass sway like a bushmaster.

"Was that a rattler?" Dad asked.

"I don't know, Dad, I couldn't see him," I replied.

About that time a couple of grasshoppers shot out of the grass making those clicking noises with their wings.

"I heard a rattler then!" shouted Dad.

"Those were grasshoppers, man!" I shot back.

Another squadron of grasshoppers took off.

"This place is crawling with rattlesnakes!" Dad exclaimed, looking wildly at me. "We are leaving now!"

He left so fast I could only follow his vapor trail. I sure thought I heard those grasshoppers chuckling, but I wasn't sticking around, half convinced that Dad was right.

I'm convinced bugs sole purpose is to hurt and embarrass humans, especially this human. In a dilapidated trailer at Vern's Fishing Camp in Oklahoma I slept restlessly because rain earlier in the day turned the roads into a playground for tarantulas. There were thousands of them! In the darkest part of the night I woke up to the pitter-patter of little feet across my face. I smacked myself in the eye with enough force to drop a grown ox trying to kill one, but post-mortem on the remains left on my cheek confirmed a box elder bug had picked the wrong road home. It died a brave soldier, but I had a hard coming up with a story to explain my minor concussion and black eye to the boys in the morning. Darn bugs.



Galls Go For The Gold BY KRISTA DAHLINGER

More than 100 species of goldenrod (*Solidago* – Aster Family) plants grow across the Great Plains – 10 or more of which are commonly found in Kansas – making a showy appearance of tall, bright yellow, flowering plants in open natural areas each fall. Since they do best in full sun and in all soils except for extremely dry or wet, nearly every Kansas state park is home to this plant. They may go unnoticed early in the year before flower structures are visible, but once they bloom, they're hard to miss.

Goldenrod is often blamed for causing hay fever symptoms that are actually caused by ragweed plants blooming simultaneously. In fact, these plants do more good than harm. Goldenrod serves as a late season source of nectar, pollen and shelter for bees, butterflies and other insects.

It wasn't until I had several years of examining native plants under my belt that I was able to identify non-blooming goldenrod early in the year. And during those observations, I noticed some goldenrod plants had a lump or ball shape in the stem, usually located a foot or two above the ground. These lumps also appeared in dried stems from the previous year. I did some research and found these structures had quite the story behind them.

The ball shapes at the stem are galls – plant tissues changed by an insect using the plant for food and shelter. Insect activity can cause gall structures to form on stems, leaves and flowering parts of a plant. Burrowing activity creates a wound in the plant tissues, while chemicals secreted by chewing insects cause the plant tissue to harden. Chances are, you've probably seen similar pea-sized galls on hackberry leaves caused by aphid-like psyllid insects.

Oddly enough, galls have many historical uses by humans, including iron gall ink, which has been prepared from oak galls for hundreds of years and is prized for being a waterproof and

non-fading ink.

Three main types of insects create galls on goldenrod plants: gall flies, gall moths and gall mites. Apart from round lumps, other shapes they can produce include elongated spindles and short-branched rosettes of leaves.

Despite these insects' intrusions, galls don't cause major damage to plants, and plant tissues continue to grow throughout the year without interruption of flowering and seed production.

Pictured is the common ball-shaped gall, created by the goldenrod gall fly - *Eurosta solidaginis*. After mating in the spring, the female gall fly lays eggs on the stem of a fast-growing goldenrod plant. About 10 days later, larvae hatch from the eggs and burrow into the middle of the stem. This causes the plant to produce additional tissue around the wound area, which expands, and creates a protective enclosure for the larvae to develop. Gall fly larvae remain inside the gall through the winter, producing their own "anti freeze" chemical, preventing their body fluids from freezing. Late in the year, the larvae create an exit tunnel from the center of the gall almost to the outer wall.

The gall fly larvae pupate through several stages and in the spring, the gall flies emerge from the exit tunnel. After all that work, adult gall flies only live a little less than two weeks – long enough to mate and produce eggs for the next generation. Once hatched, gall flies don't travel long distances. And when it's time to lay their own eggs, they usually do so on the same species of goldenrod they hatched from. Considering the gall fly spends only two weeks as an adult and the remainder of its life cycle as a larva inside of a gall, it is not surprising they are specific about which goldenrod to use as a host plant.

The next time you explore a park or wildlife area, look for goldenrod plants to see if you find any gall shapes in stems or leaves. You might have an idea now about what is inside.



A Tale of Two Marshes

by Dan Witt

The Cheyenne Bottoms basin is a 41,000-acre prairie marsh with several different owner/manager entities. The Hoisington Duck Club and several private landowners own small parts of the marsh, the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT) owns and manages just more than 19,000 acres, and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) owns and controls almost 8,000 acres. Each entity has a unique goal, but collectively the area is a treasure that is vital to the existence of many wildlife species and visitors. In this column I'll talk a little bit about the two larger marshes and the practices in place at each. But first, I'd like to thank KDWPT's Karl Grover and TNC's Rob Penner for their expertise and kindness in providing this information for me to share.

TNC's marsh is being evaluated for more "hands-on" management. The intent of that marsh is to support grassland birds, shorebirds, and waterfowl in that order. No hunting is allowed. The original plan was to be "hands off" and let nature take its course, but Penner explained that this method only works with the normal ebb and flow of water, which doesn't happen anymore. Without normal water level fluctuations or the

ability to drain, invasive marsh cattails can't be controlled with disking. However, it's reassuring to hear that funding from Ducks Unlimited and a North American Wetlands Conservation Act grant will be used to spray the cattails. Spraying is not TNC's first choice, but it appears to be the most effective solution to enhancing the shorebird habitat. The energy and dedication of TNC staff is admirable and we birders and photographers are truly grateful.

The KDWPT marsh has its own story. This marsh has been used in many ways over the years, but I am still stunned that it was used for aerial gunnery practice during World War II. Providing waterfowl hunting opportunities has been a primary purpose of this marsh since the area was purchased by KDWPT in 1957. Originally, concrete bunkers were spaced at 300-yard intervals for hunting blinds and I can still remember arriving at the area office before dawn to draw for one. Today, hunters can hunt anywhere within open pools.

Regardless of a marsh's intended use, periodic drought can help keep a wetland healthy. The downside to that is droughts will cause temporary, but

drastic decreases in hunting, birding and photography opportunities. Managing the marsh for consistent recreational opportunities requires the ability to store and move water among pools, as well as some cooperation from Mother Nature. Spring and early-summer rains this year made cattail control difficult. And water that runs in from the Arkansas and Walnut rivers is loaded with silt, which settles at the corners around pumps and must be dredged with big machinery. Too much rain also prevents the planting of food such as millet, which attracts and holds waterfowl on the marsh. And then there are the miles of roads that must be maintained. Managing a marsh for the benefit of such a variety of wildlife and such a wide spectrum of people is complicated and labor-intensive, but the KDWPT staff at Cheyenne Bottoms do an exquisite job.

Both marshes are open to the public without fees and I visit them frequently, regularly seeing jaw-dropping sights. Enjoy these marshes. Listen to the beat of their heart as the waves of birds migrate through each year and know how lucky we are – birders, hunters, and photographers, alike.



Deadline to enter is Nov. 4!

Photo submissions for the 4th annual "Wild About Kansas" photo contest are being accepted now through Nov. 4, and new this year, categories have been expanded to include "Other Species" and "Hunting and Fishing."

Divided into five categories, participants can submit photos related to:

-Wildlife (game and nongame animals, primarily mammals, migratory birds, furbearers, etc.)

-Outdoor Recreation (people participating in recreational activities outdoors, not hunting or fishing)

-Landscapes (scenery; wildlife may be present, but should not be the sole focus of the image.)

-Other Species (insects, reptiles, and amphibians)

-Hunting and Fishing (hunters and anglers; set-up shots following a hunting or fishing trip. Photos with dead game will be accepted, however, "action" shots, or photos taken during the activity will be given preference.)

RULES

Photographers can submit up to three photos total. Photos must be taken within the state of Kansas and must be the entrant's original work. The contest is open to both residents and non-residents of Kansas, and there is no age limit.

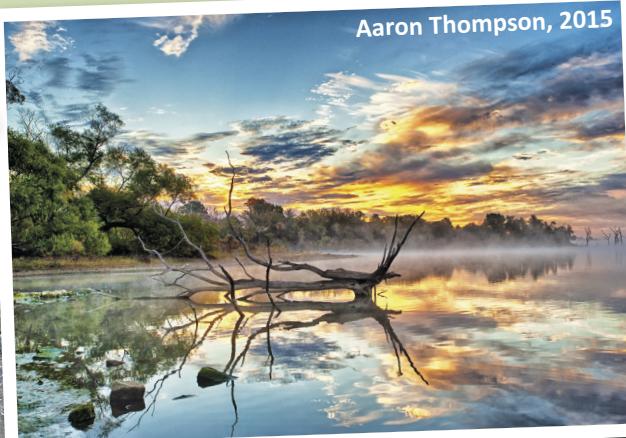
JUDGING

Each photo will be judged on creativity, composition, subject matter, lighting, and the overall sharpness. Photographs from participants under the age of 18 will be placed in a youth division; all others will compete in the adult division. Winning entries will be featured in the 2017 January/February photo issue of *Kansas Wildlife & Parks* magazine.

DEADLINE

Entries must be submitted no later than **5 p.m. on Nov. 4, 2016**. Photo format should be JPEG or TIFF and file size should be not less than 1mb and not more than 5mb.

To enter, visit ksoutdoors.com and click "Services," "Publications," "Magazine," then "Wild About Kansas."





— Joseph R. Tomelleri — NOT YOUR AVERAGE JOE

by Mike Miller, executive editor, Pratt

photos by Marc Murrell

fish illustrations by Joseph R. Tomelleri

Have you ever wondered how to tell the difference between a sand shiner and a big-mouth shiner? (Maybe you haven't, but humor me.)

The differences are not obvious, but if you really had to know, Joe Tomelleri can help. Tomelleri, born and raised in Kansas City and now living in Leawood, is perhaps the premier scientific fish illustrator of our generation. He has made a career of teaching people what fish species look like; exactly what they look like.

For more than 30 years, Tomelleri has been creating precise color illustrations of fish, which have graced the pages of more than 30 books, dozens of magazines, regulation pamphlets, advertisements, greeting cards, posters, identification guides, t-shirts,

and even beer cans. When asked how many species he has illustrated, Tomelleri pauses to think.

"Oh, I haven't counted recently, but I know it's somewhere between eleven and twelve-hundred," he says with a dry chuckle.

Many of his illustrations were produced on contract with state agencies or universities to document species native to a drainage, state or region. For example, he recently completed more than 90 illustrations for a book on the fish species found in Puget Sound. Although logistics didn't allow Tomelleri to spend much time on Puget Sound, he is usually very involved in the collection effort for a project, working with biologists and scientists to capture spec-





In the studio, Tomelleri illustrates from color photos on a computer screen and a specimen in hand. Precise accuracy is a hallmark of his work

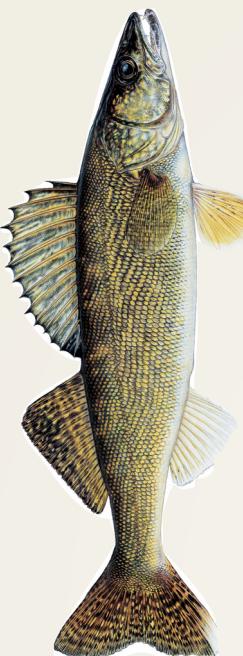
mouth is a tiny bit longer in the bigmouth shiner (now you know). That is a difference they have quantified – the two species may have internal differences you can't see, but to identify them by sight, you need to know this. Tomelleri's illustrations will show this subtle physical difference.

"When I illustrate a largemouth bass, I'll count the number of scales in the lateral line of the specimen I'm using for reference, and if the specimen I have in front of me has 59 scales, that's what I put in my drawing. All largemouth bass may not have 59 scales in their lateral line, but they will be within a range of say 59-65. If you get lazy and only put 50 scales in the largemouth bass's lateral line, you change the whole look of the fish because you're drawing scales that are too large and you're making it something that it's not. No largemouth bass has 50 scales in its lateral line."

No detail is overlooked. For example, if you look closely at a smallmouth bass, you'll notice it has small scales on its cheek and larger scales on its opercle. The largemouth bass has large scales on the cheek and the opercle. Tomelleri's illustrations show this.

"Some of these details you're not even going to see when you're looking at a fish, and I kind of see it as my job in the drawing to include very subtle details that aren't obvious or you just can't see when you're holding a fish."

Tomelleri takes precise measurements of every specimen he's working from to ensure proportions are accurate. He starts an illustration by drawing a horizontal line that he



calls his level line. He marks where the snout will be and where the tail will be, then he measures from the snout to the eye, to the pelvic fin, to the anal fin, and so on. Once measurements are made and marked to scale, Tomelleri sketches the fish freehand with a graphite pencil.

"If I'm drawing a minnow and my specimen is three inches long, I can't draw it that size and get the detail I want with colored pencils. So, I'll draw it maybe 12 inches long – four times larger than my specimen."

To see detail on smaller specimens, he may use a dissecting scope, which enlarges things 40 times and shows details in three dimensions.

Once the sketch has the detail he needs, Tomelleri begins adding color with Prismacolor colored pencils. It is a slow and tedious process.

"Colored pencil is mixed right on the drawing board, which is different from paint, which is mixed on the pallet and then transferred to the canvas. With colored pencil, I have to layer colors on the drawing board. Each color has to be put on softly, leaving some of the grain of the paper or board to show through. If I were to put any one color on hard and burnish it, then it's very difficult to put any colors over that because I've taken the grain from the paper."

Tomelleri layers three or four colors to get it right, and he'll make it darker than he wants it in the end. Then he'll use a lighter color when he burnishes it, taking all the grain of the paper out and making it appear shiny. For fine detail or glint on scales, he may go back in with some white acrylic.

When you look at Tomelleri's illustrations, your first impression is that they look real. But his illustrations show detail that would not show in a photograph. When you learn



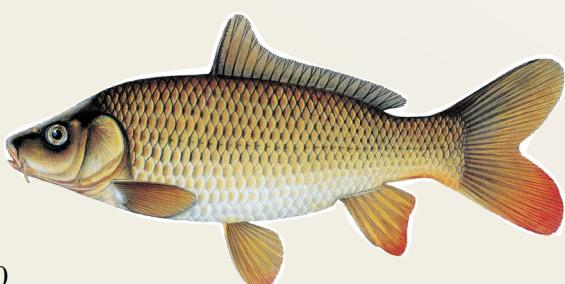
Tools of Tomelleri's trade are relatively simple – a ruler, graphite pencil, eraser and colored pencils. When working with colored pencil, colors are mixed on the drawing paper rather than on a pallet.

that the media he uses is colored pencil, you are even more amazed, and you'll look more closely. Only then can you appreciate what a time-consuming and tedious process he goes through to produce every piece. Other media would be faster and easier, so the question is: Why does he work in colored pencil? The answer brings us to the start of his career in fish illustration.

While attending Fort Hays State University, Tomelleri and friends spent a lot of time fishing in the area.

"When I was living in the dorm, some friends and I formed a fishing club called the Big Creek Fishing Club. Basically, we'd go out and drink beer and catch bullheads and carp," he laughed. "I remember somebody writing something in the school newspaper that there weren't any fish in Big Creek. Well, we knew that wasn't the case, so we decided to go out and see how many species we could find. I think we ended up with close to 30."

The group then approached the university about publishing a book about the fish and





the water issues surrounding the creek. They planned to photograph the specimens , but ran into technical difficulties.

"I knew I could draw them, so I volunteered to take on the project," he added.

Tomelleri had no formal art training, but he knew he could draw from a young age.

He went to an art store in Hays and told the salesman he wanted to draw some fish but wasn't comfortable with watercolor and didn't like acrylic. The guy sold him some Prismacolor pencils and he's been using them ever since.

After producing the Big Creek pamphlet, for which Tomelleri produced 30 illustrations, he kept drawing fish as a hobby. Making a career of fish illustration wasn't on his radar, but he thought it would be fun to draw all the main freshwater sport fish species.

His first break came when he was introduced to well-known Kansas angler Ned Kehde. After seeing Tomelleri's illustrations, Kehde thought *In-Fisherman* magazine might purchase some for a catfish article he was writing for them.

"I sent the *In-Fisherman* editor, Doug Stange, three of my illustrations, and Doug liked them and they published them. I can't remember what they paid, maybe \$100 a piece for three pictures, but that was a lot of money back then," he laughed.

Encouraged by the response and national exposure, Tomelleri approached the University Press of Kansas.

"I said 'I've got all these pictures and they would be really cool in a Kansas fish book.' Fred Woodward was the editor at the time and he liked

Painstakingly detailed, Tomelleri's artwork requires precision and patience. Depending on the size and species, a drawing may take 10 hours or up to 80 hours to complete.





"I kind of see it as my job in the drawing to include very subtle details that aren't obvious or you just can't see when you're holding a fish."

my pictures and said he would try to find somebody to write the book."

When they couldn't find an author, Tomelleri proposed that he write the book. With help from Mark Eberle, Department of Biological Sciences Lab Coordinator at Fort Hays State University, he put together a writing sample. It passed muster, and Woodward agreed to publish the book, *Fishes of the Central United States*, Joseph R.

Tomelleri and Mark Eberle, illustrated by Joseph R. Tomelleri.

Tomelleri makes his living today selling one-time reproduction rights to his illustrations. From the beginning, Tomelleri has only sold one-time rights, maintaining ownership of all of his images. Some images have sold more than 300 times in the past 25 years. He doesn't usually keep the original drawing, selling most of those to collectors. Sport fish originals sell quickly, and original illustrations of lesser-known, non-sport species may be purchased by scientists who study them. Digital technology has streamlined his business immensely, and sending customers images for publication is now done with the stroke of a key. He markets images, prints and original art through his website,



Many of Tomelleri's illustrations were produced for books and ID guides, but they have adorned everything from t-shirts to temporary tattoos - even beer cans.

Tomelleri sells one-time rights to the images, and has sold some as many as 300 times over 25 years.





www.americanfishes.com.

When asked about some of his adventures in collecting specimens, Tomelleri doesn't hesitate to highlight his trips to Mexico. He and several other biologists began traveling to Mexico in 1997 in search of new trout species. Through research and anecdotal reports, they were convinced that unidentified trout species swam in streams kept isolated by large valleys that drain into the ocean. After many futile trips and many hours of sampling, they captured several previously undocumented trout species, but Tomelleri's tales focused more on the rugged mountainous country, his comrades and the local Mexican natives. On occasion, their accommodations were sketchy.

"We traveled to a little one-horse town in Durango, La Ciudad, and stayed in this old motel. We go in the motel and there's just a long dark hallway, and you can imagine; it's kind of dirty and there are wires hanging out of the ceiling, and there was this very strange smell. I was with Dean Hendrickson from the University of Texas who has traveled extensively down there, I said 'Dean what's that smell,' and he knew, 'Oh, they swab the floors with a mixture of diesel fuel and insecticide.' I thought, oh man, I'm not sleeping in that bed," said laughing.

When asked about current and future projects, Tomelleri said he is currently working on illustrating several species of bass found in Georgia.

"Ultimately, I'd like to get all the freshwater fishes in the U.S. Every fish is a piece of the puzzle, and I feel like everything I do is part of the big puzzle," he said pensively.

"I think that's what keeps me going because a lot of artists get to a point where they don't really want to draw a certain subject any more. I don't know why I've never lost my passion for it," he added. "I think part of it is because I get to go out and help catch the fish."

courtesy photo

Believe it or not, when Tomelleri's not collecting specimens or drawing fish, he's fishing for fun. His specialty is catching common carp on a flyrod.

That's good news for those of us who appreciate his work, and good news for the scientists documenting and recording our fishes. However, Tomelleri's work will be around and relevant long after we're gone because of its quality and accuracy. 

END OF THE YEAR OUTDOOR HOORAHS

by Jennifer Leeper
freelance writer,
Kansas City, MO

Want one last "hoorah" out-of-doors before you run out of year, wind up with only a resolution on January 1, just to have cabin fever by Groundhog Day? Me too! Before your schedule becomes monopolized by holiday parties, cold and flu medicine, and arctic blasts of ice and snow, set aside a week, weekend or even a day to make room for another Kansas outdoors adventure. I've even done the legwork for you.

FOR THE "LET'S DO IT ALL" ADVENTURER

These places will let you take your time exploring unique and inspiring regions of the state.

Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve

You can start (or wind up) your road trip hiking one of the last stretches of tallgrass prairie, and if you're lucky, witness a herd of bison grazing in their natural habitat. About two hours southwest of Kansas City, and a couple of miles north of Strong City, at the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve you can experience the wonder of those who ventured across this ocean of tallgrass as pioneers or Native American tribes, searching for the iconic symbol of the Plains: the buffalo.

If you prefer to enjoy the gently rolling, tallgrass vistas from the road, the Flint Hills Scenic Byway is a memorable 47-mile stretch along K-177 between Council Grove and Cassoday, which passes by the national preserve and offers a scenic overlook just south of Cottonwood Falls.

For more information about the preserve, visit www.nps.gov or

call (620) 273-8494. For more on the scenic byway, check out www.travelks.com/ksbyways/ or call 1 (800) 684-6966.

Arikaree Breaks

If the rolling Flint Hills aren't convincing enough that Kansas isn't all flat, the Arikaree Breaks in the northwestern corner of the state will silence all doubters. The breaks run a span of 36 miles long – two to three miles wide in some spots – begin-

ning in the southwest corner of Nebraska, cutting through Kansas into northeastern Colorado.

These Kansas badlands are accessible from Highway 27 just outside of St. Francis and you can view them from your car window, following the contours of the Arikaree River, which extends for just



Arikaree Breaks

three miles across Kansas. Yucca and prickly pear cactus are reminders that the semi-arid high plains of western Kansas were once known as the Great American Desert.

Keep a sharp eye out, you might see mule deer and coyotes, or enjoy a serenade by a western meadowlark or horned lark. Visit www.kansassampler.org or call (785) 332-2809 for more information.

Cimarron Grasslands

It's not the official gateway to the southwestern United States, but these grasslands spotted with yucca and sagebrush more closely resemble parts of Colorado and New Mexico than Kansas. This 108,175-acre grassland is only one of 20 National Grasslands managed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service.

Start your Cimarron exploration 8 miles west of Elkhart at Eight Mile Corner, where you can stand in three states at once at the Kansas Tristate Point, representing Oklahoma, Colorado and of course, Kansas. Here you can see yucca blooms, prairie dogs and burrowing owls.

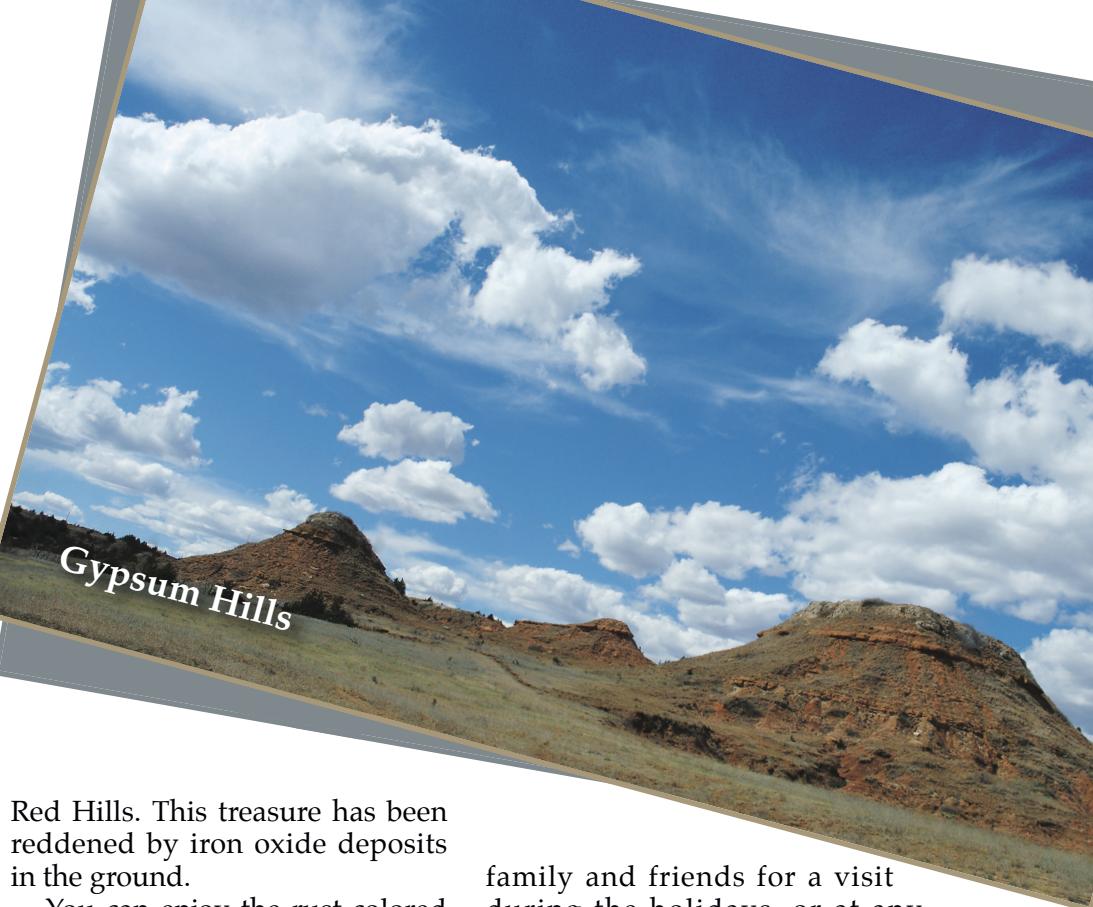
Beyond the Tristate Point, you can scale rock cliffs and overlook a starkly beautiful landscape of sagebrush, contrasted by cottonwood groves.

To find out more about the grasslands, visit www.kansas-travel.org or call (620) 697-4621.

Gypsum Hills

Seeing red isn't necessarily a bad thing if you're talking about

the Gypsum Hills, also commonly referred to as Medicine Hills, Gyp Hills and



Red Hills. This treasure has been reddened by iron oxide deposits in the ground.

You can enjoy the rust-colored mesas, buttes and canyons on a paved scenic byway along U.S. Highway 160 between Medicine Lodge and Coldwater, and further south on U.S. Highway 281, or enjoy a closer look at the rolling prairie hills on the dirt roads that cross this area. Turkey, quail, deer, and many other species that call the Gyp Hills home might just make an appearance for you.

Find out more at www.kansas-travel.org.

FOR THE "JUST FOR THE WEEKEND" TYPE

You only need a couple of days in your back pocket to check out these gems.

Great Plains Nature Center, Cheyenne Bottoms, Quivira National Wildlife Refuge

Start your weekend off with an inside-out look at the ecosystems of Kansas and surrounding areas at the Great Plains Nature Center (GPNC) in Wichita.

"The Great Plains Nature Center is the perfect place to bring

family and friends for a visit during the holidays, or at any time for that matter," said Marc Murrell, GPNC manager for the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism. "It showcases the wildlife and habitat associated with the Great Plains and provides the perfect opportunity to learn about the unique flora and fauna of this area through interactive displays, dioramas and a 2,200 gallon aquarium. And It's free."

Find out more by visiting www.gpnc.org or by calling (316) 683-5499.

While the GPNC is closed on Sundays, you can explore Cheyenne Bottoms and Quivira National Wildlife Refuge, located 20 miles apart in Barton and Stafford counties, respectively.

Cheyenne Bottoms is the largest freshwater marsh in the interior U.S. and serves as habitat and a migration layover point for at least 320 bird species. For avid bird-watchers, these 41,000 acres are prime viewing grounds, with peregrine falcons, whooping cranes, piping plovers and other threatened and endangered species



Cheyenne Bottoms

JAY MILLER PHOTO

finding refuge here. It's also a world-renowned hunting hot spot for waterfowlers seeking a mixed bag.

The Quivira National Wildlife Refuge features more than 22,000 acres of prairie grass, saltwater marshes, sand dunes and canals, luring more than 500,000 birds to its grassy waters during spring migration. Awesome in it's own right, don't forget to make a pit stop here, too.

To view both places, visitors can drive the 76-mile Wetlands and Wildlife National Scenic Byway that starts at K-4 and U.S. 281 near Hoisington.

You can find out more at www.travelks.com or by calling (620) 486-2393.

Kansas (or Little) Ozarks: Elk River Hiking Trail

You might wonder if you're in Missouri in this part of the state, but rest assured, you're still in Kansas even though your hike might take you a little more than 11 miles over and through heavily forested hills that can test your knees, feet and lungs. Whether you hope to conquer the whole

trail or are satisfied with partial completion, camping out at least one night is a good plan so you'll have plenty of time to enjoy the scenery passing by at whatever pace you set for yourself.

The southwestern trailhead begins south of Elk City and can be picked up from Highway 160, while the northeastern trailhead offers access across from the KDWPT park office.

To discover more, visit www.kansassampler.org.

FOR THE "ONE SHOT LEFT" OPPORTUNIST

If you only have a day to grab one more natural Kansas experience, there are plenty of there-and-back-in-24-hours-or-less places to explore in this list. On your mark, get set, go!

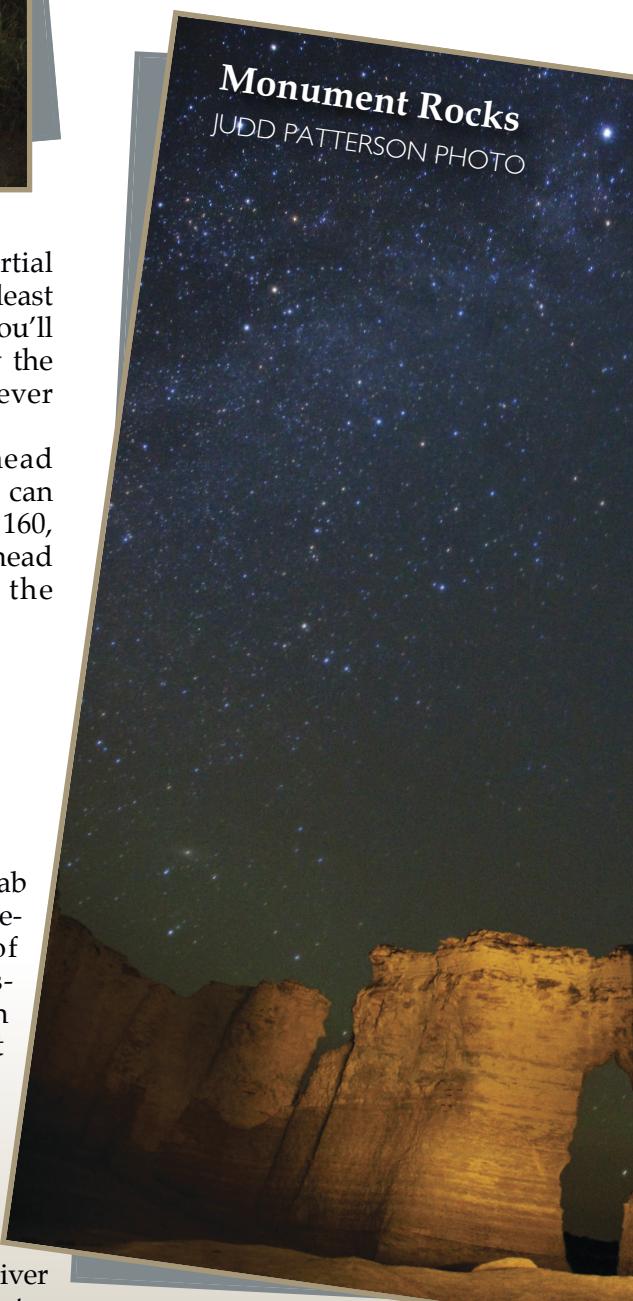
Glacial Hills Scenic Byway

For those in the northeast part of the state, there are three counties and 63 miles worth of hill country that deliver plenty of year-round beauty.

Beginning in Leavenworth at the intersection of K-7 and K-92, you can marvel at Missouri River bluffs or rolling farmland once covered in glacial ice.

Don't forget to stretch your legs at the Four-State Lookout along the Missouri River, near White Cloud where you can overlook Missouri, Nebraska, Kansas and Iowa.

To plan your scenic drive, visit www.legendsofamerica.com.



Kanopolis State Park

If you're in the central part of the state, near Ellsworth County, get an early start and head to Kanopolis State Park, where you might wind up with a mesmerizing lake view surrounded by sandstone bluffs and canyons all to yourself. Although it's consistently voted one of the most picturesque parks in Kansas, Kanopolis is still one of the state's best-kept secrets.

With several hiking trails threading below and atop sandstone cliffs, horseback riding is a



popular way to travel through the sometimes hauntingly quiet rocky hills and valleys, where you may find yourself face-to-face with a statue-still deer playing "who flinches first." Serious cyclists can also test their endurance on steeply-graded and windy trails.

For a truly unique experience, visit Mushroom State Park just north of Kanopolis Reservoir to see amazing rock formations.

Find out more at www.ksoutdoors.com or by calling (785) 546-2565.

Monument Rocks and Castle Rock

From a distance, the Monument Rocks and Castle Rock limestone formations, located outside Quinter in Gove County, look like something you might encounter on another planet as they abruptly rise up in contrast to a vast, flat plain in western Kansas. These formations are actually eroded chalk beds, sculpted by the elements into unearthly shapes that have intrigued artists, geologists and many others over the years. I could explain more, but really, you've GOT to see them.

Plan your trip to these alien formations at www.kansassampler.org.

Mount Sunflower

For many, the name Mount Sunflower might be a misnomer since the highest point in the state is actually just a flat spot on the high plains. Mount Sunflower may be 4,039 feet above sea level, but there's no need to train for this climb. You might, however,

want to practice your elevated selfie pose in advance if you decide to make your hike a solo ascent.

Plan your climb at www.kansastravel.org. 

Whether you're a hardcore trekker, casual stroller, or simply prefer to enjoy the outdoors from the comfort of a car, there is still plenty of year left to discover the natural gifts Kansas has to offer.

What will be your end of year hoorah?



Mount Sunflower



Stewardship in The Sunflower State



by Matthew Hough and Becky Jones Mahlum, Ducks Unlimited

In the Central Flyway, Kansas wetlands attract waterfowl in the hundreds of thousands during spring and fall migrations. A wide variety of birds feed and rest in the state's wildlife areas during these seasonal journeys to breeding grounds in the north and wintering grounds in the south. An estimated 45 percent of the North American shorebird population stops here, and whooping cranes are biannual visitors, too. But it's not just birds that can be seen in Kansas. Ducks Unlimited can be seen here, too.



Ducks Unlimited (DU) – an American nonprofit organization dedicated to the conservation of wetlands and associated upland habitats for waterfowl, other wildlife, and people – has been working closely with the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT) and other partners for many years to create, maintain, enhance and protect Kansas wetlands.

Kansas is a high-priority state for DU and wetland conservation efforts because of its location and historical losses of wetland habitat. Only an estimated 48 percent of the original total wetland acres remain today, and that's why the partnership between DU and KDWPT, working together to put a halt to that trend, is so important.

Through leveraged funds and several recent grants, approximately \$8.8 million dollars will be spent over the next three years to restore, enhance, and protect more than 19,000 acres of vital habitat in Kansas. DU is expected to conserve an additional 7,000 acres in the next fiscal year alone. And the best part? More than 80 percent of those acres will include public access. In a state where 97 percent of land is in private ownership, every acre of public lands is vital.

Matthew Hough, DU's regional biologist for Kansas, says working with KDWPT and other partners gives DU the ability to do more conservation work than either could alone, plus there's the added benefit of contributing to more public access for sportsmen and women.

"The partnership between KDWPT and DU is very successful, and a natural fit, considering our overlapping objectives in Kansas," Hough said. "With KDWPT and our other partners, we are much stronger and more effective, and will accomplish



Cheyenne Bottoms



much more for wildlife habitat together."

The work happening on the ground in Kansas is largely possible because of the North American Waterfowl Conservation Act (NAWCA), which provides the bulk of the funding for landscape conservation projects significant to waterfowl. NAWCA provides competitive, matching grants to organizations and individuals that have developed partnerships to carry out wetlands conservation projects in the United States, Canada and Mexico for the benefit of wetlands-associated migratory birds and other wildlife. DU and its partners match NAWCA funds at least dollar-for-dollar, and many times at two to three times the amount.

"Through our ability to leverage partner funds, DU is able to raise significant habitat dollars through grants, such as NAWCA, for wetland projects across Kansas," Hough said. "These opportunities for funding are what make our conservation program as successful as it is today."

Here are several places where you can see the DU/KDWPT partnership at work in Kansas:

Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area

Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area (CBWA) is part of the largest marsh in the interior United States. The area, designated as a Wetland of International Importance, is considered to be the most important shorebird migration point in the western hemisphere.

Here, DU and partners are working to enhance the wetland through a more than 1,000-acre, multi-phase project which includes aerial spraying of invasive vegetation, primarily cattails and phragmites. These nonnative species overpopulate the marshes, outcompeting native species that provide ideal food sources for waterfowl and other species. This project has been occurring through summer and will continue into the fall, better enabling staff to focus on other habitat management on CBWA, as well as provide necessary forage for waterfowl.

Apart from spraying efforts, DU is working with private landowners to potentially restore water at many of the areas that have been drained or filled in the past.

But the work at CBWA doesn't stop there. DU's acquisition fund is being used to assist in acquiring

priority wetlands in the area, too, with a 320-acre tract bordering CBWA being the most recent.

"This acquisition lies on the edge of the greater Cheyenne Bottoms basin and, once restored, will help KDWPT to better manage their adjacent wetlands," Hough said. The land is also open to the public and will be outlined in the Walk-in Hunting Access (WIHA) atlas this fall.

Quivira National Wildlife Refuge

Quivira National Wildlife Refuge (QNWR), a 22,135-acre area comprised of inland salt marsh and sand prairie, is another key focal point of DU's habitat enhancement efforts. QNWR's marshes attract thousands of waterfowl each year. QNWR is also one of the most important whooping crane stopover points in the continent. Because of the significance of this location, DU and partners have begun a 3,692-acre wetland restoration and enhancement project on the refuge.

DU will be replacing a non-operational, 1950s-era water control structure on the Little Salt Marsh, which delivers water to the rest of the refuge, subse-



Jamestown

“Through leveraged funds and several recent grants, approximately \$8.8 million dollars will be spent over the next three years to restore, enhance, and protect more than 19,000 acres of vital habitat in Kansas.”

quently enhancing thousands of acres of shallow water marsh by restoring natural water levels. The project will also remove old oil roads that are blocking natural drainage and spring-fed water from reaching Big Salt Marsh.

Jamestown Wildlife Area

Located in northcentral Kansas, Jamestown Wildlife Area is comprised of grasslands, cropland, woods, and wetlands. The area is split up into five primary marshes – Game Keeper, Gun Club, Marsh Creek, Buffalo Creek, and Pintail – with several smaller marshes mixed in.

Grant and matching funds will be used to restore 730 acres on the area. This project includes raising Gamekeeper Dam and the construction of the “Pool 1 Levee” that will provide independent water management for a large portion of the project area. When raised 18 inches, this dam will restore at least 430 acres of wetland habitat where there is currently wetlands functioning as uplands or very seasonal wetlands, except during severe flood events. This project will also enhance 300 acres of existing wetland habitats by enabling KDWPT staff to better control water levels on areas that are currently inundated.

Talmo Marsh

Talmo Marsh is one of the original salt marshes of Kansas, a diverse mix of saline and freshwater habitats to produce rich wetland complexes with diverse plant communities that support a wide variety of wetland species.

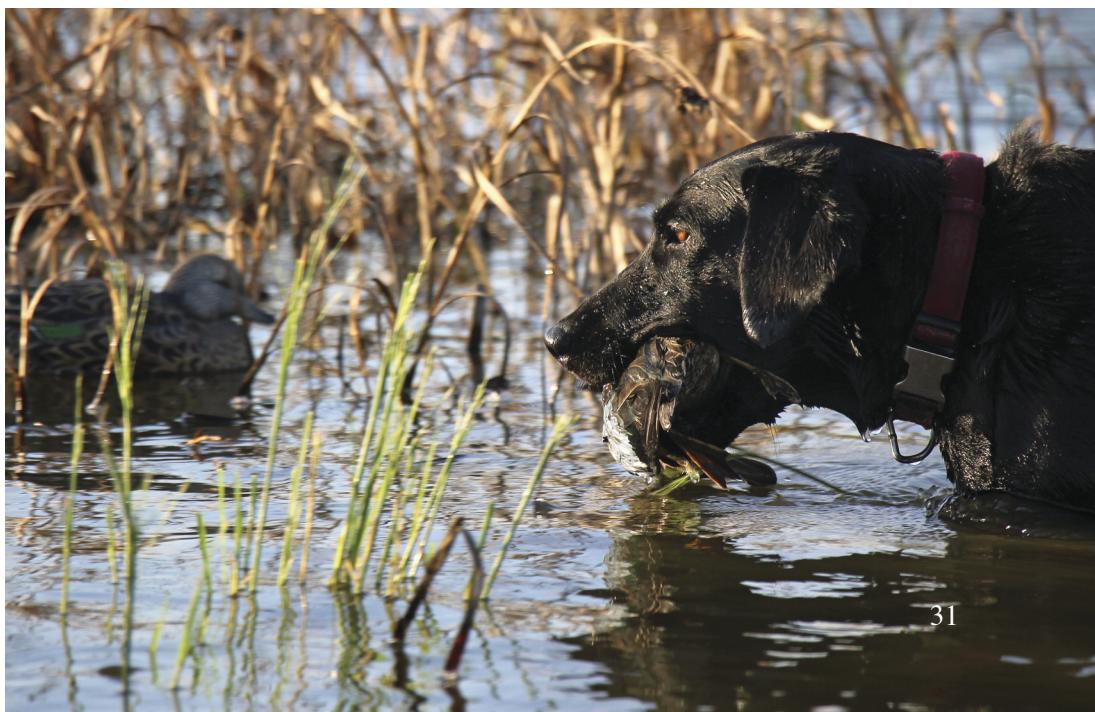
DU and partners will restore almost 300 acres of wetland habitat on the 1,000-acre marsh complex located in Republic County.

Levees will be removed, ditches plugged and water control structures installed. DU has transferred two tracts near Talmo to KDWPT to add to this complex, and additional work on adjacent private lands will also benefit the area.

Neosho Wildlife Area

Neosho Wildlife Area, comprised of more than 3,000 acres of vital wetland habitat, is the focus of another major renovation taking place thanks to the partnership between DU and KDWPT.

Together, both organizations are working to install a new pump and water delivery pipeline. The water control structures and levee improvements will allow KDWPT to better manage the wetland, decrease pumping costs and help conserve water, and the new enhancements will also provide more forage for waterfowl, providing higher quality habitat.





In addition, the realignment and movement of certain levees and access routes will lead to less wildlife disturbance and habitat fragmentation, as well as increase connectivity across the wildlife area and surrounding properties.

Byron Walker Wildlife Area

Byron Walker Wildlife Area – the 4,685-acre wildlife area west of Kingman, comprised of wetland habitat, upland habitat, and Kingman State Fishing Lake – is the location of a new project between DU and KDWPT, as well.

Activities planned include the

raising and extension of an existing levee and installation of water control structures to both restore existing wetlands and facilitate proper management of the wetland units for migratory birds.

Sediment excavation will also take place to further enhance water depths for migratory birds.

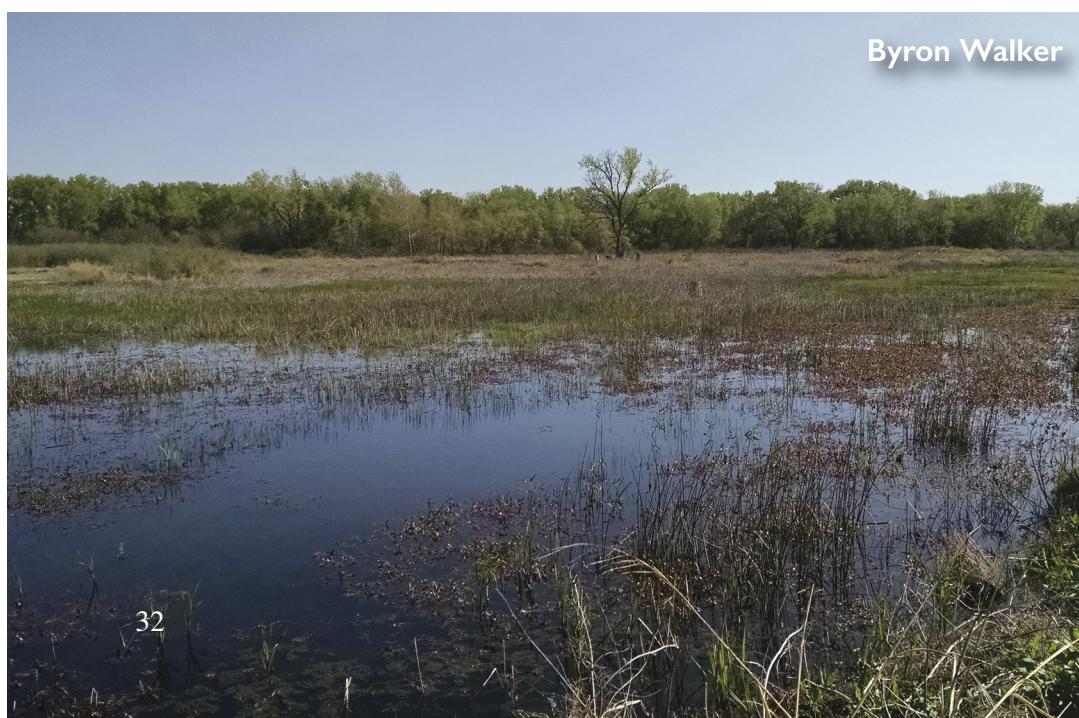
Another facet of this project includes the installation of another levee south of Highway 54 to restore the natural water levels of a drained wetland on the south end of the area.

Overall, these efforts will restore more than 50 acres of wetlands that will provide new hunting opportunities and enhanced wildlife habitat.

Other Public Lands

The list of places DU and KDWPT are working together aren't limited to the previously

Byron Walker





mentioned sites. DU is collaborating with KDWPT and other partners to complete wetland projects across the state at Perry, Marais des Cygnes, Gurley Marsh, Clinton, and Wild Turkey Playa wildlife areas; Kirwin National Wildlife Refuge; Kanopolis Reservoir; and the Great Plains Nature Center in Wichita.

Private Lands

Aside from DU's public land efforts, a robust private lands initiative is also beginning in Kansas. With most of Kansas' wetland resources located on private lands, DU is working with partners to address many of the issues facing landowners through habitat restoration projects, cost-share opportunities, and technical assistance.

A major focus of this initiative is the playa region of western Kansas. Kansas is home to more than 10,000 playas — shallow wet-

lands that support a variety of plants and invertebrates and provide cover and food for migrating waterfowl in the Central Flyway. Unfortunately, 70 percent of these wetlands have been damaged or destroyed, so restoration of these resources is critical. In response, DU has initiated its first attempt at a large-scale playa conservation with a goal of restoring more than 1,400 acres of playas and adjacent grasslands. Restoration work will include filling drainages, planting upland buffers, and removing sediment, with additional program options available.

When most people think of DU, it's likely they think of the iconic "duck head" stickers on truck rear windows, banquets, t-shirts, or maybe even the volunteers — all of which are a huge part of the DU mission. But we hope, too, that people will think of the efforts on the ground, the partnerships

formed, and the lasting legacies that will endure as a result. At the end of the day, it's about the wildlife — game and nongame species alike.

Kansans and those traveling to the sunflower state can expect to see a continued expansion of wetland programs here and the great partnership between DU and KDWPT. 

For more information,
and to find out how
you can help, visit
www.ducks.org/kansas.

CANDID "TRAIL" CAMERA

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY MARC MURRELL
MANAGER, GREAT PLAINS NATURE CENTER, WICHITA



SIMMONS

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Trail cameras have been used to officially confirm the presence of mountain lions in Kansas with images that leave no doubt as to the subject. However, many more images like the one above tend to make the rounds and create quite the interest in social media circles. Is it a bobcat? Mountain lion? House cat? It's the former.

The 1960s-era television show "Candid Camera" still makes me laugh. It featured a hidden camera catching unsuspecting people in unusual, embarrassing or ridiculous circumstances. Modern day versions like "Punk'd" offer the same thing, although the practical jokes are a bit more elaborate.

Trail cameras used by hunters today operate on the same principle, catching wildlife going about their daily routine. Deer hunters have latched onto these gadgets, hoping to find the buck of their dreams.

Trail camera technology has evolved at a pretty rapid pace. The first trail cameras used film, which had to be developed, and that was time-consuming and expensive. Then, we ditched the film and went digital, allowing trail camera users to store photos on memory cards. Today's high-end trail cameras one-up that, wirelessly transmitting photos to smartphones or laptops and alerting the user when new

photos have arrived. It's technology that has proven valuable, because many deer hunters aren't hesitant to shell out big bucks (yes, that was intentional) if it means they can see what's roaming around their hunting spots when they can't be there.

Trail cameras can range in price from \$50-\$200, and each brand sports their own selling points such as trigger speed, battery life, storage space, resolution and durability. The latter has proven to be the most difficult to predict in the ones I've experimented with, even with some of the more expensive brands. Durability is especially important to hunters who leave their cameras up year-round, which is possible thanks to increased battery life and storage space.

Many deer hunters are fascinated with photos taken during the summer when bucks' antlers are growing – sometimes as much as an inch a day – because they can witness their progress over time.

"TRAIL CAMERAS HAVE ALSO PLAYED A KEY ROLE IN VERIFYING THE EXISTENCE OF MOUNTAIN LIONS IN KANSAS. SINCE 2007, 14 TRANSIENT MOUNTAIN LIONS HAVE BEEN CONFIRMED IN KANSAS, MOST THROUGH PHOTOS TAKEN BY REMOTE TRAIL CAMERAS."

Antler growth is one of the most amazing processes in the wild, and trail camera photos document it and provide hunters with a preview of what they may see when the season opens.

For some trail camera owners, the subject they're after may not have antlers at all. I've heard of landowners and rural homeowners using trail cameras for security on their property. Some will mount them near their home, garage, outbuildings or on driveway entrances to record any activity. Trail cameras can provide evidence in a theft, break-in, trespass, or act of vandalism, potentially aiding law enforcement in prosecution or property recovery.

Trail cameras can also be used for the sheer enjoyment of seeing the natural activities of wildlife. In the May / June issue of Kansas Wildlife and Parks maga-



Trail cameras have come a long way since the first ones, which required film developing. Image quality is now greater, and advancements in technology have improved trigger speed, resolution, memory storage, battery life and durability over time. Hunters use trail cameras mostly for big game observation, but they can also catch glimpses of other wildlife species.

zine, we featured photos from a trail camera placed in a barn, chronicling two turkey vultures from hatching to fledging over the course of four months. These "natural" or "as-they-happen" images couldn't have been captured had a human been near.

Not all wildlife interactions caught on trail cameras are as warm and fuzzy as young coming into the world. I've set up trail cameras on dead animal carcasses to see what comes in and observe the interac-

tion among predators, prey and scavengers.

I've always been amazed at the variety of species that take advantage of a free meal and several things are consistent. Raptors and crows take full advantage of a meal during daylight hours and the occasional owl visits at night. Opossums are frequent visitors, but they're shy and non-confrontational, especially when matched up against the kings of carrion, skunks. Skunks are aggressive and will defend their cache against all comers, including coyotes! I've seen skunks charge coyotes and skid to a stop, tail up, backing the top predators off.

Trail cameras have also played a key role in verifying the existence of mountain lions in Kansas. Since 2007, 14 transient mountain lions have been confirmed in Kansas, most through photos taken by remote trail cameras. To complete verification, KDWPT staff visit the sites, matching the landscapes with the photos. Unfortunately, many trail camera photo hoaxes have been instigated through social media. It's on Facebook, so it has to be true, right?



Trail cameras have revolutionized deer scouting. They've developed to the point that some can now send images to your computer or cell phone. While many hunters only use them during, or just prior to, their hunting seasons, others opt to leave them up year-round.

Regardless of how one uses them, trail cameras make for a worthwhile tool and/or hobby. But like anything else, advancing technology makes it hard to keep up with the newest developments. There's

"CONSIDER PROGRAMMING YOUR TRAIL CAMERA TO FUNCTION IN A TIME-LAPSE MODE, CAPTURING IMAGES AT SPECIFIC INTERVALS."

always a "smaller, better, faster" trail camera each season, since bigger isn't better when trying to be inconspicuous.

If you have yet to experiment with trail cameras, be warned, it can get addictive, and subsequently expensive. The upside to this is that trail cameras can provide often untold stories of wild animals, and for deer hunters, valuable information about deer and their movement in a particular location.

To get started, remember that it's important to become comfortable with how the camera works before setting it up in the field. This sounds like a no-brainer, but you'd be surprised how many new cameras have sat idle in the field because the owner didn't learn to use them first. To get a handle on your new camera, set it up in your home or backyard to practice operating it correctly.

Next, carefully consider where to mount the camera. Most trail cameras for deer are set up on feeders, mineral blocks, water sources or heavily-used trails. On a trail, place the camera at a 45-

degree angle to the trail, rather than perpendicular. This gives you more latitude with trigger speed and a greater likelihood of getting the entire animal in the photo, coming or going.

When possible, set your trail camera facing north to avoid back-lit images, and to avoid sun flares and over-exposure, particularly at dawn and dusk. Check for any brush or grass between the camera and subject that could interfere with the image.

Selecting batteries can be an important decision, especially if you plan to leave your camera out for a long period of time or during cold temperatures. Lithium batteries should last longer than alkaline batteries and may not experience power loss during cold snaps, but they're more expensive. Whichever batteries you choose, don't mix and match new and old batteries, or brands, as some cameras can be temperamental. The same can be true for memory cards, so it's a good idea to test different types before going afield.

Time it right. Most trail cameras have timer



I showed up to my treestand one day thinking this deer feeder had been vandalized. However, upon further review of my trail camera, I saw these bovine had a "Cows Gone Wild" moment and trashed it in their haste to devour the feeder's contents.



Trail cameras can tell a hunter what deer are using a particular area, providing insight on where to place a treestand. They can also tell you what wandered by, like the buck shown above, should you choose to stay home, hunt another stand, or in my case, attend the wedding of a friend's daughter.

options, including time-lapse, and can take photos or video. Rather than taking photos when triggered, which can lead to lots of photos of swaying branches, falling leaves, and other peaceful, but unhelpful images, consider programming your trail camera to function in a time-lapse mode, capturing images at specific programmed intervals. Setting the camera to shoot at 30- to 60-second intervals two hours around dawn and dusk is a good option. The lone exception is during the rut in November when many hunters will use this option all day.

Determine how you want to view photos. Checking trail camera memory cards can be a Christmas morning equivalent for many hunters. A lot of users will swap out full cards for empty cards, and view the images at home on their computer. Others use devices in-field to view their images, so they can make immediate decisions on stand selection based on sightings and current conditions. Many hunters will reduce the frequency at which they check their cameras during hunting season to avoid being patterned by deer. They may also avoid an area altogether unless hunting, or simply restrict their movements to the dark hours of

the day to check images.

Protect your trail camera. Unfortunately, trail cameras are common targets for thieves. Bark, sticks or leaf litter attached to the cover (still allowing the camera to be opened and function) with a hot glue gun can help hide it. Some can be locked with passwords and it's not a bad idea to engrave or somehow otherwise record your information on it should it show up with other stolen goods. There's a slim chance you'll get it back, but it doesn't hurt to try. Just remember, the better the hiding place, the less likely animals and thieves will notice it.

Trail cameras have revolutionized the way we scout for deer and the way we view wildlife from afar. It's a fun way to figure out what bucks are where, and see what other wildlife are up to when we're not around. If you're lucky, you may even get a pay-per-view fight for free of two does standing on their back legs "boxing."

Give it a try and see what you can catch on your very own candid trail camera. 

Energy To Hunt

by Brad Loveless, Westar Energy

A father and son from Kansas City had never been hunting before their trip to Westar Energy's Jeffrey Energy Center (JEC) near St. Mary's. I was their guide and remember it well.

It was an early morning hunt in a plywood blind on the edge of JEC's largest field, "Big Alfalfa." Ironically, the field hasn't had alfalfa on it since 1998, but the name stuck. As the first glimmer of light started to the east, turkeys began getting restless and vocal – their calls mixing with an argument between two barred owls. A couple coyotes skulked up to our decoy just 15 yards away before smelling us and heading back into the timber.

The hens came out of the timber first. One hen, challenged by our decoy and possibly persuaded by our calls, closed the 150-yard gap within minutes. As she circled our decoy, I heard something special that we guides love: a youngster's racing heart. Not wanting to mar the moment any more than a baseball announcer wants to interfere with a crowd's home run cheer, I remained silent.

The hen paused and putted, realizing she'd been duped, and trotted away. Father and son excitedly recounted the bird's choreography.

Not long after, a lone jake emerged from our left. His slow, cautious pace gave our hunter plenty of time. Resting his shotgun on the base of the blind's front opening, the kiddo positioned for the shot, clicking off the safety. When the jake hit 25 yards, I whispered that the bird was in range and our hunter could shoot when he was ready.

After about a minute of pecking at the corn and eyeing the decoy, the jake stiffened his posture. I whispered that the jake might be getting nervous and could leave soon. Still, no report from the shotgun or boy. The bird started away and I alerted our novice that the jake was just about out of range. Again, no reply. As the jake left our sight, the youngster exhaled, pushed the safety back on, and lowered the gun. All this time, neither father nor son uttered a syllable. Worried the boy was embarrassed or disappointed, I spoke to break the silence.

"So, what do you think?" I asked.

"That was cool!" the young hunter replied. It was all I needed to hear. Despite no bird, we all agreed it was a great hunt. And it was.

Since the late 1990s, Westar's volunteers have hosted hundreds of youth and their mentors on their



first deer, dove and turkey hunts at JEC.

I never tire of the thrill brought by those mornings and afternoons spent with youth and their family. And while I've lost count of the number of wonderful thank you notes and comments our volunteer guides have received, there is one that has always stuck out in my mind. In the fall of 2007, I received an anonymous e-mail critical of our program from a person who had just read about it. It said:

"I am amazed that Westar would sponsor a program focused on teaching our youth to kill things. With so many important things for kids to learn, how can you justify such destructive training?"

Recognizing that the writer likely had a deep-seated objection to hunting, I resigned myself to the probability that no amount of explanation from me would affect a change in the writer's opinion. Nevertheless, I responded anyway:

"Our hunting experience typically means three or four hours in a blind with their mentor and our guide, either as the day is beginning or ending. That time is occupied whispering about safety, the stars and changing seasons, school and other interests, wildlife biology, management and hunting strategy, sportsmanship and environmental ethics. We talk about shot selection, respecting your quarry and recipes to maximize your appreciation of any game you might harvest. Pulling the trigger, while a critical point in a hunt, turns out to be a very brief part of it. What lasts, what I and our other volunteers keep doing this for, is all the rest."

I ended by inviting that person to join me for more



conversation or observation of a hunt. I wasn't surprised that they wrote back quickly, but I was surprised at their response:

"I underestimated the breadth of the experience that your Westar volunteers offer. While I won't come along, I now have an appreciation that much of value happens during the youth hunts. Thanks for your work."

When land was being purchased for JEC in the 1970s, plans for potential expansion meant that nearly 11,000 acres of prairie, farm and woodland were secured. While JEC, Kansas' largest power plant, provides electricity for more than 700,000 households, the three generating units, their support facilities and water supply lakes only occupy about half of that acreage.

In 1985, Westar entered into an agreement with the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT) that would allow the public to use the plant's lakes and extra land with the agency's help in managing the areas. This partnership has worked so well that it was renewed again in 2015 for 20 more years.

JEC's youth hunts are for youth between 12 and 16 years old with an adult mentor. Guided youth are the only hunters allowed to pursue deer at JEC during

the rifle season and hunt the first days of both turkey and dove seasons. Automatic feeders are also used on deer and turkey fields, further increasing the likelihood youth hunters will see game and other wildlife.

Each year, Westar typically host 15 to 20 deer hunters, 12 to 17 turkey hunters, and 12 to 20 dove hunters – all of whom are guided. Since our goal is to help inexperienced individuals who otherwise wouldn't know how or where to hunt, we give preference to both youth and mentors with little or no hunting experience. Prior to hunting, deer hunters are required to attend a seminar on hunting safety and deer biology, and are given an opportunity to sight in their rifles, or practice with ours.

Deer and turkey hunts can take place from one of seven enclosed blinds scattered amongst JEC's isolated crop fields and pastures. The blinds make it much easier for guides and their guests to talk and the new hunter to fidget while remaining undetected. The blinds also add a valuable extra layer of safety. Guides know which fields are being used during a given day and that youth are shooting only from designated blinds.

JEC's dove hunts are also a highly-sought after experience. JEC dove fields are managed by KDWPT using wheat or sunflower food plots. Given the challenge doves present to even experienced wing-shooters, Westar measures success in the number of shots taken by the novice shooters and hope they shoot at least 50 times. Often, that's doubled.

While this article is meant to highlight the youth hunting opportunities provided at JEC, the emphasis on volunteer guides is no coincidence: the success and longevity of Westar's youth hunt program are largely due to the generosity of our employee/retiree guides and their passion for introducing youth to hunting.

Our hunts take place when game is most active – very early in the mornings and late in the day – and our guests are most available on weekends, so volunteers spend many personal hours each season to make these hunts possible. While volunteers come from all across Westar, the core of stalwarts has always been JEC-based. Employees managing coal movement, plant operators and plant maintenance staff have led, and continue to lead, the great majority of the hunts. Without their self-sacrifice and long-standing commitment to these youth, this program would quickly wither. If you ever get the chance to visit with any of our volunteer guides, you'll understand why we believe that the future of this rewarding program is safe.

For information about how to participate in Westar's youth hunting opportunities, visit www.westarenergy.com/green-team-overview.

A PICTURE OF PERRY VISITING PERRY STATE PARK

BY ANDRA BRYAN STEFANOVI, FREELANCE WRITER, PITTSBURG



With just a few weeks of summer left, my family agreed: We had been inside entirely too much.

Day after day of heat indexes hovering near 100, combined with unusually high humidity, put a damper on our usual outdoor exploits. So when the weather forecast showed a cool front moving into northeast Kansas one weekend in July, we jumped at the chance to continue exploring Kansas' state parks.

Perry State Park, between Kansas City and Topeka, is just a few hours drive from our neck of the woods, and it offers something especially appealing to would-be campers: cabins. That meant packing less gear than we would for tent camping, and a guarantee against getting drenched by pop-up rain showers that were forecast.

My companions for the trip included my husband, Brad, and our two sons, Jack and Dominic, none of whom had visited this state park before. After I called the park office to reserve a cabin, we hurriedly threw together coolers of food, bed linens and towels, a change of clothes, swim trunks, and a board game, and were on the road.

THE CABINS

We were eager to see our cabin; we've watched the "Tiny Houses" shows on HGTV and wondered if these would be similar. And somehow, staying in a cozy little place a few hundred miles from home seemed exotic. We made ours – the Stonefield, which overlooks Perry Reservoir – our first stop, and were pleasantly surprised. With a log exterior and paneled interior, it has withstood wear and tear and is easy to keep clean. Using a passcode from the park office, we found our key in a lockbox on the covered front porch.

Each cabin is similar, including a small sitting/eating area equipped with a futon and a dining table; a bedroom outfitted with a full-size bed, ample drawers, and a cupboard; a galley-style kitchen, connecting both rooms, complete with a stove, refrigerator, sink, microwave, and coffeepot; and a full bathroom. A bonus that the kids loved was the carpeted loft accessible by ladder, with two reading lights, two windows and plenty of room to sprawl out with board games and books.

Despite our newfound cabin excitement, the pull of the water was growing strong in us. With a few hours to go before sunset, we unloaded our bikes from the car and headed out to explore.



THE WATER

Created when the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) dammed the Delaware River in 1966 to control flooding downstream, Perry Reservoir is a hub of activity from morning to night. But it is large enough – 11,630 acres and 160 miles of shoreline – that it doesn't feel crowded.

Terns that congregate daily in a parking lot near the cabins greeted us, a great blue heron fished in the shallows, and mallards flew up off of the water when we got close. Further out, we saw motor boats pulling tubes occupied by squealing children and sailboats navigated by their captains.

We parked our bikes at the swim beach near the Mulberry Grove primitive campground – one of six primitive camping areas that includes 200 private and shady spots to pitch a tent – and discovered a wealth of chipped sandstone just right for skipping rocks.

We also discovered the jawbone of a fish, and we used pieces of driftwood to scratch our initials into the beach before the lapping waves erased them. We waded and squished our bare toes into the sand. We freely explored, something families seem to have less and less time to do nowadays.

As we watched anglers pulling into a nearby cleaning station with their catch of the day, we made a mental note to return for a longer stay with all of our fishing gear.

"I've been fishing here for 15 years," said Gene Breitenstein, "and I think it's just great. It's a nice lake, positioned well so on windy days you can get out of the wind. There's easy access to boat ramps, too."

Breitenstein, a retired Chicago native who knows lakes, likes it so much that he drives the 22 miles from his Topeka home to fish three or four times a week. His efforts paid off on this particular day; he and his fishing buddy, Keith Kerns, were taking home 23 crappie, some longer than 14 inches.

The reservoir also has healthy populations of white bass, largemouth and smallmouth bass, channel, blue and flathead catfish, walleye, sauger, bluegill, and sunfish.

"Kansas has a lot to offer when you get off of I-70," Kerns said.

THE TRAILS

After a solid night's sleep back at our cozy cabin, I was eager to take my family on a mountain bike adventure on what I had read were among the state's best trails through forested terrain. As we pulled into the paved parking lot in the Delaware Area of the park in search of the trailhead, I realized I had, in fact, been at that very spot before. In my 20s I raced mountain bikes and had competed on what was a newly-built trail in about 1997. There was no parking lot nor signage at that time.

Today, that single trail has become a complex system connecting 22 miles of well-marked trails of varying difficulty and length, from the 2.5-mile difficult Blackfoot Trail with several steep switchbacks, to the easy Kid Rock Trail that is less than a mile and perfect for beginners.

We opted for the Skyline Trail, designated as a moderately easy 3-mile loop with some technical aspects thrown in: roots and rocks to maneuver up and over, some fast runs, and a few climbs.

I couldn't believe our luck when we finished the trail and met one of the bikers responsible for building it, Lyle Riedy, in the parking lot just coming off of a ride himself.

"In the mid-1990s when mountain biking exploded, we were very limited around here on what trails were available; they were either overcrowded or overused," explained Riedy, 56.

Now the trail manager and coordinator for the Kansas Trails Council (KTC), Riedy headed up a cadre of volunteers to build the trail system with approval from the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism, USACE, and KTC.

He and another teacher, often accompanied by a

group of students, as well as dozens of volunteers over the years, worked several hours each week with hand tools to clear singletrack.

Sixty-year-old Tom Travis, who pulled up on his mountain bike during our visit, was one of the volunteers and still rides three times a week.

"It was selfish and self serving of us to build these," Travis laughed, "so we don't deserve any special praise – it was a place where we could do what we wanted to do."

"But sure, it's cool to see that it gets used by others."

Bruce Phillips, a native of Wisconsin who now lives in Lawrence, was just finishing up a morning hike of seven miles.

"I discovered this place three weeks ago, and this is the third weekend I've been out here," Phillips said. "It's peaceful, and there is variety. You can do out-and-backs easily because of the way it's laid out."

"I've really been enjoying it. I can get here from my house in 20 minutes. It's very surprising to find this in Kansas."



THE MARINA

I could see right away that one of the advantages of Perry Reservoir is that you feel like you're away from it all, but there are plenty of amenities close by so you don't have to do without. That includes two large marinas operated by independent concessionaires and a yacht club.

It was a treat to stroll the docks to show our boys boats of every size and shape, some of them moored at slips and others heading out for a day of fun.

Heidi and Ben Byers were just putting sunscreen on their sons, Jacob and Connor, for a boat outing.

"We keep a boat at the slip here, and drive up

from Olathe, which is just an hour away," Heidi said. "We like the size of the lake because it's big enough we feel we can get out and not be restricted. And it's family friendly."

"They fish and I just enjoy relaxing," she added.

We spontaneously handed over lunch cooking duties to Mulligans at Rock Creek Marina, where we enjoyed pub grub like BBQ pulled pork, chicken wings, and French fries. Had we needed quick snacks or supplies, we could have purchased them at the bait shop next door.

And had my husband and I been there without the kids on a Saturday night, we could have enjoyed the band that plays each week in the ballroom and bar.

MORE TO SEE

Before ending our trip, we took a driving tour of as many miles of shoreline along the southern and eastern edge of the reservoir as we had time for. We toured the nearby 568-acre Rock Creek Public Use Area, managed by USACE, which also operates nearby Slough Creek, Longview, and Old Town public use areas, and the enormous dam that formed the reservoir.

We also investigated the Wild Horse Trails equestrian camping area in Perry State Park, where horses rested at shaded hitching posts after rides on 34 miles of designated horse trails.

On future trips to Perry State Park, my to-do list includes:

Wildlife viewing along the 1.75-mile Delaware Marsh Trail, an easy hike through wetlands where migrating shorebirds and waterfowl congregate.

Hiking the 2.5-mile Thunder Ridge Trail through Slough Creek Public Use Area, which offers a self-guided hike with 30 stations and a variety of ecosystems.

Checking out the 30-mile Perry Lake Hiking Trail — one of the first National Recreation Trails in Kansas. It begins at Slough Creek Public Use Area and extends in a continuous loop with reportedly beautiful scenic overlooks.

THINGS TO KNOW

There is a \$5 day pass fee to ride on the mountain bike trails, payable at the trailhead kiosk.

The summer season, particularly one that's been overly warm and damp, is also tick and chigger season near water and in forested areas. Prepare by using insect repellent and wearing loose-fitting clothing.

Maps, fees and other park information can be found at www.ksoutdoors.com, and overnight reservations can be made at reserveamerica.com.

2016 SPORTSMEN'S CALENDAR

SQUIRREL

June 1, 2016-Feb. 28, 2017

BULLFROG

July 1-Oct. 31, 2016

DOVE

Sept. 1-Nov. 29, 2016 (*mourning, white-winged, Eurasian collared, and ringed turtle doves*)

EXOTIC DOVE

Nov. 30, 2016-Feb. 28, 2017 (*Eurasian collared and ringed turtle doves only*)

RAIL

Sept. 1-Nov. 9, 2016 (*Sora and Virginia*)

SNIPE

Sept. 1-Dec. 16, 2016

DEER

Archery: Sept. 12-Dec. 31, 2016

Pre-rut Whitetail Antlerless: Oct. 8-9, 2016

Muzzleloader: Sept. 12-25, 2016

Regular Firearm: Nov. 30-Dec. 11, 2016

Firearm Extended Whitetail Antlerless Season:

Jan. 1-2, 2017 (Units 6, 8, 9, 10, 16, and 17)

Jan. 1-8, 2017 (Units 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 11, 12, 13, and 14)

Jan. 1-15, 2017 (Units 10a, 15 and 19)

Archery Extended Whitetail Antlerless Season:

Jan. 16-31, 2017 (Unit 19 only)

FALL TURKEY

Oct. 1-Nov. 29, 2016 AND Dec. 12, 2016-Jan. 31, 2017

SEPTEMBER TEAL

High Plains Unit

Sept. 17-25, 2016

Low Plains Zone

Sept. 10-25, 2016

WOODCOCK

Oct. 15-Nov. 28, 2016

DUCKS

High Plains Unit

Youth: Oct. 1-2, 2016

Oct. 8, 2016-Jan. 1, 2017 AND Jan. 20-29, 2017

Low Plains Early Zone

Youth: Oct. 1-2, 2016

Oct. 8-Dec. 4, 2016 AND Dec. 17, 2016-Jan. 1, 2017

Low Plains Late Zone

Youth: Oct. 22-23, 2016

Oct. 29, 2016-Jan. 1, 2017 AND Jan. 21-29, 2017

Low Plains Southeast Zone

Youth: Nov. 5-6, 2016

Nov. 12, 2016-Jan. 1, 2017 AND Jan. 7-29, 2017

DARK GEESE (*Canada, brant*)

Oct. 29, 2016-Jan. 1, 2017 AND Jan. 4-Feb. 12, 2017

WHITE-FRONTED GEESE

Oct. 29, 2016-Jan. 1, 2017 AND Jan. 21-Feb. 12, 2017

LIGHT GEESE

Oct. 29, 2016-Jan. 1, 2017 AND Jan. 4-Feb. 12, 2017

LIGHT GEESE CONSERVATION ORDER

Feb 13-April 30, 2017

TROUT

Nov. 1-April 15, 2017

SANDHILL CRANE

Nov. 9, 2016-Jan. 5, 2017

PHEASANTS

Youth: Nov. 5-6, 2016

Nov. 12, 2016-Jan. 31, 2017

QUAIL

Youth: Nov. 5-6, 2016

Nov. 12, 2016-Jan. 31, 2017

GREATER PRAIRIE CHICKEN

Early Season: Sept. 15-Oct. 15, 2016

Regular Season (Greater Prairie Chicken Unit):

Nov. 19, 2016-Jan. 31, 2017

Southwest Unit: No open season for prairie chickens

CROW

Nov. 10, 2016-March 10, 2017

TRAPPING/HUNTING

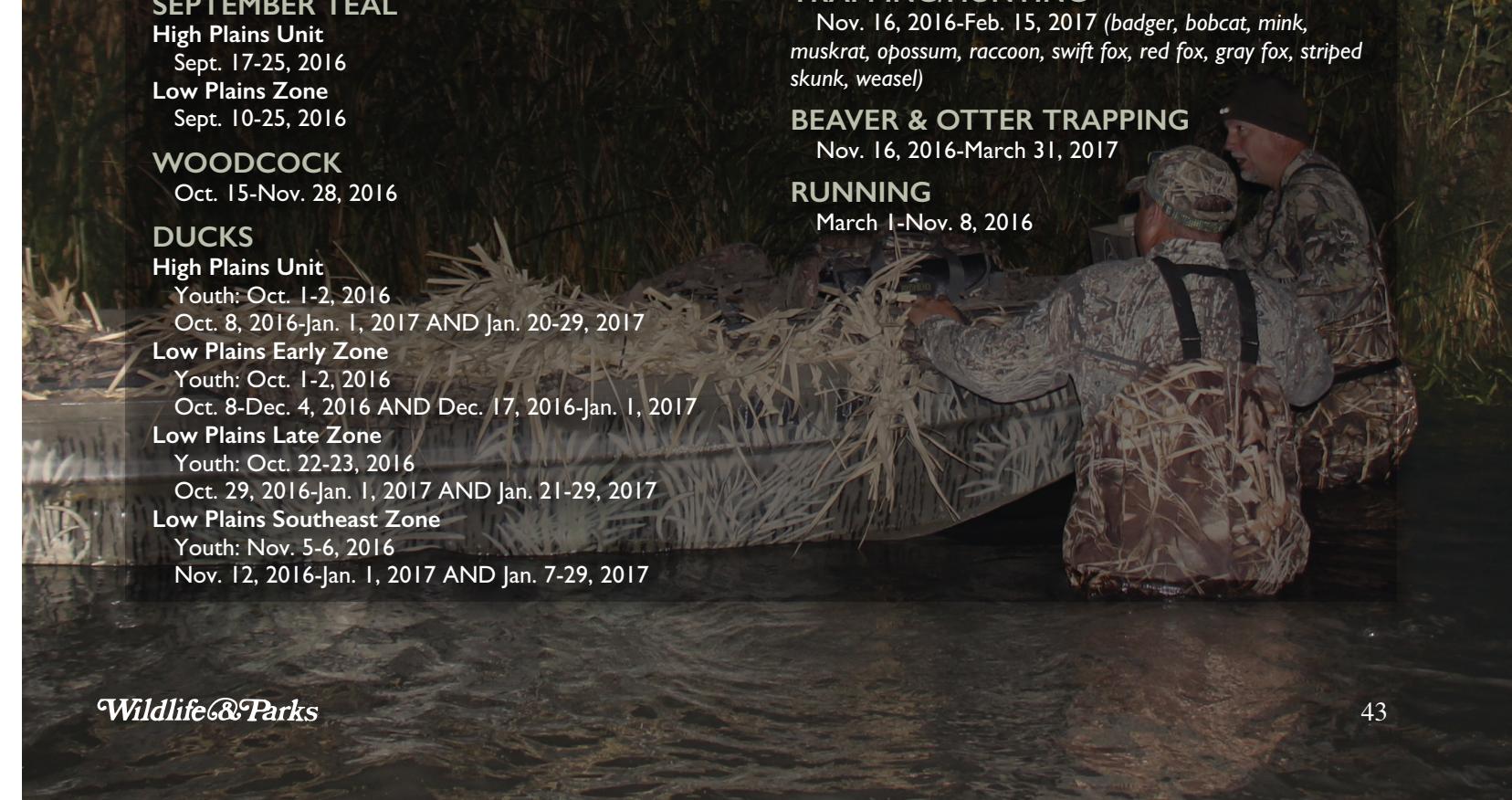
Nov. 16, 2016-Feb. 15, 2017 (*badger, bobcat, mink, muskrat, opossum, raccoon, swift fox, red fox, gray fox, striped skunk, weasel*)

BEAVER & OTTER TRAPPING

Nov. 16, 2016-March 31, 2017

RUNNING

March 1-Nov. 8, 2016



Species Profile

Greater Yellowlegs

It's not hard to guess how this 6-ounce, wary shorebird known as a greater yellowlegs got its name. Its characteristic solid yellow legs can be a stark contrast to its speckled feathering. Although similar in appearance to lesser yellowlegs, greater yellowlegs have a much more pointed, and slightly upturned, bill that is often lighter at the base.

Greater Yellowlegs are quick to let out a loud, piercing call of "tee-tee-teeu" at the slightest scare, and usually only fly solo or in small groups. Observers may see this shorebird bobbing its head, but not for apples – small fish, aquatic invertebrates, frogs and occasionally seeds and berries are on its menu.



Bob Gress photo



Backlash

WITH MIKE MILLER

Ignorance Was Bliss

I've spent a great deal of my life learning to hunt and fish, and I've enjoyed every second of it. But there's more to it than just having fun. Part of the quest has always been about gaining experience and improving my skills. I get a great deal of satisfaction from softly landing a fly in the current seam or crushing a 40-yard crossing shot. And I believe I owe it to my quarry to be as skillful and efficient as possible.

It's a lifelong journey of learning through experience and spending time with trusted mentors, and I'm still striving to improve my skills. An unfortunate casualty along the way was the youthful exuberance that came with ignorance.

When I was young, I didn't know or care that opening day of the early teal season would be crowded at the local public marsh. I couldn't wait to hunt teal and the anticipation of that opening morning was intense. I enjoyed being with my friends and we fed off of each other's enthusiasm. The hunters who set up too close to our blind and shot just when a group of teal looked like they would fly in range were minor inconveniences. We were hunting and that's all that mattered.

I had no idea that driving three hours to fish for walleye at Waconda Lake when July temperatures hovered around 100 was mostly futile. Kevin and Gene were going and I was beyond excited. We never caught a walleye – although a couple of large drum had us scrambling for the net – but I gained experience reading and interpreting my sonar. Even though we fished all day in stifling heat and arrived home late, remembering that trip brings a smile to my face.

When I was 25, I learned the hard way that uninsulated leather gloves wouldn't protect my hands from single-digit cold during a rabbit hunt, but they looked cool. My boots also left something to be desired while trudging through 10 inches of new snow. But it didn't matter because I was carrying my granddad's .22 rifle and still-hunting cottontails in the snow for the first time. We had a great hunt but I can clearly recall the stinging sensation in my fingers as I carried two rabbits in my inadequately-gloved hand. I was miserably cold, and yet had the time of my life.

Rob and I still laugh about a bowhunt during a sleet storm. We planned the hunt earlier in the week, and when the weather turned nasty, our ignorance and machismo wouldn't let us back out. The north wind blew 20-25 mph and rain spit on the windshield of Rob's truck during the 25-minute drive to the sandhills. We split up and went to our treestands as the temperature plummeted, turning raindrops into ice pellets. After an hour of enduring stinging sleet on



my face and not seeing a deer, I hoped Rob was as ready to quit as I was. I think we climbed down about the same time and were relieved when we learned the other was also ready to quit. If I learned anything that day, it was that deer are smart enough to lay up in heavy cover in bad weather and wind-driven sleet hitting my cheeks makes me flinch.

Marc and I let the lure of smallmouth bass overrule better judgment when I motored out of the sheltered cove at Wilson Reservoir and pointed the nose of my 16-foot bass boat into the wind. There were white caps, but I knew the water would be calmer along the south shore. Youthful enthusiasm kept me from considering the ride back. I don't think we caught a smallmouth that morning, and the wind didn't let up. In fact, as I watched the waves on the main lake, I thought it might be getting worse. The ride back to the ramp was rough, and about half way back, my paper graph jarred loose from its mount on the console. Marc caught it so it didn't get destroyed banging against the console. He balanced in a squat, holding on to the graph with one hand and the opposite gunnel with the other. I had one white-knuckled hand on the steering wheel and the other on the throttle, adjusting as I climbed and descended waves. We survived, and I learned about handling a boat in rough water and that it's always best to launch on the lee side of the lake.

Older and wiser now, it's easy for me to talk myself out of a trip – it's too hot, too windy, too crowded, too whatever. And while those assumptions are sometimes true, I've also missed opportunities when I stayed home. It's been a fun journey and I've made plenty of mistakes, but if I had to go back, I'd do it all over again the same way. I do wish, though, I still had some of the unbridled enthusiasm of my youth.



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Ryan Donnell photo

nature.org/kansas

