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# KANSAS

*Wildlife & Parks Magazine*

*Venture to*  
Kanopolis  
State Park

Pg. 28

*Inside:*

**Mountain Biking  
in Kansas** Pg. 38



## Notice to Subscribers

You'll notice this issue arrived in your hands much later than usual. For this, we sincerely apologize. Magazine staff recently encountered an unforeseen hurdle which delayed distribution of this issue. This delay will not become a regular occurrence, nor will it affect your subscription in any way. We thank you immensely for your patience and continued support as we worked to fix this "kink."

– *Nadia Reimer, executive editor*



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**FRONT COVER** Mountain bikers conquer the thrilling trails of Wilson State Park. Agency photo.

**INSIDE COVER** A sky’s reflection at Kanopolis State Park. Agency photo.

**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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# COMMON GROUND

with Brad Loveless



## Go Fish!



1) Consider adding some other natural, historical or culinary stops along your way. Kansas is packed with features and people no matter which direction the fish are pulling you. Go to [travelks.com](http://travelks.com) and get started by picking your Kansas region under “Places to Visit” and then check out “Events,” “Things To Do” and “Places To Stay” so you can squeeze the most out of the trip you’re planning.

2) Introduce a new angler to the sport or invite one that’s been dry-docked. We know that the biggest barrier to a person going fishing (or hunting, hiking...) is having someone to enjoy it with. There is scientific data that says food tastes significantly better to us when we’re dining with another person. You and I both know that a shared fish or sunset is better too, and that then becomes a treasured, shared memory. I bet you can think of a number of youth or adults who would love to join you on your adventure. All you have to do is ask.

Don’t let this opportunity to catch Kansas fish in 2021 pass you by. We’re here to help you every step of the way, and to make each step there and back more memorable and fun. 🐾

While contemplating the subject of this issue’s column, a whole host of pertinent topics ran through my mind, but my thoughts kept coming back to a particularly exciting part of our agency - current fishing opportunities in Kansas.

I expect that you looked over the 2021 Fishing Forecast in our March/April issue and, as I was, were very impressed with the spectacular opportunities across Kansas. Whether you are an experienced angler or just wanting to get started, the data our fishery staff have compiled for you is absolutely the best way to target your favorite fish species and the small or large water body to find it in. Our website, [ksoutdoors.com](http://ksoutdoors.com), also includes frequently updated, detailed fishing reports from our biologists who manage and monitor these waters, along with bathymetric maps and the locations of our fish habitat structures. In short, we’ve supplied you with all the data and coaching to make your angling most successful and enjoyable.

After talking with our Fisheries managers across Kansas, I’m confident that the numbers and quality of fish that are available to you have never been better than right now. This period will be one that we look back on fondly because of the breadth of unusually good angling opportunities. It is a golden time for you to plan your next trip. In order to broaden your experience and enjoyment, let me suggest that you consider two other trip components:



Sebelius Reservoir	91.18	32.35	0.00	4.32	67.56	Good
Webster Reservoir	73.53	21.18	0.00	3.99	40.74	Good
Wilson Reservoir	72.76	42.88	1.24	5.78	43.35	Good
LaCygne Reservoir	55.42	33.13	6.02	6.49	51.34	Excellent
Big Hill Reservoir	50.42	23.53	2.52	5.44	30.40	Good

## Letters To The Editor

### Fishing Family Spans Multiple Generations

When I started school, I was getting big enough to help dad seine minnows and crawdads, and my fishing career started. We fished farm ponds, big creek, smoky and saline rivers, catching mostly channel cats and bullheads. We had a favorite crappie pond that was built by the CCC in the 1930s. We caught a lot of crappie and channel cat there. Dad and grandpa liked to set trot lines and used crawdads for bait - that's all he ever used for trot lines. We started in the spring and quit when hunting season started in the fall. World War II had also started, and the Walker Army Airbase was built only a mile and a half from our house. Dad would sometimes take the soldiers fishing and hunting and worked on some of their cars. Some of them never forgot and actually came back to see us after the war.

By the time I started high school, Cedar Bluff was being built. It filled up with the 1951 flood. Dad bought our first boat, a 12-foot aluminum fishing boat and small outboard motor. We started going to the lake and the trot lining slowed way down. We learned to fish for white bass, then walleye and it was a lot of fun.

I graduated high school in 1954 and in a few days, was working in the oilfield on a pulling unit. After about a year and a half, I went to work as a roustabout for the company I spent 42 and a half years with. In a year, they gave me a pumping job in Graham County near Palco. Webster Lake was being built and it was only about 30 minutes from where I was to the lake. It is still one of my favorite lakes. I had also gotten married in 1956, and when the company bought a group of wells near Zurich, they let me move there. I was then only 12 miles from the lake. Dad had given me the 12-foot boat and



Ted Crawford at 10 years old.

bought himself a larger one, which I also ended up with a few years later. My folks came to see us often and we fished Webster a lot, catching crappie and walleye.

In 1963, the company gave me a foreman job and we had to move to Hays in early 1964. The job change also changed the fishing to mostly weekends and vacations. Of course, all of our kids learned to fish, then to water-ski when they got old enough, and this included many of their friends. Many of our vacations were around some kind of fishing. We fished in the ocean a couple of times with my mother's father and caught halibut, mackeral and sometimes a barracuda. We also caught trout in Colorado and pike and walleye in Minnesota. When it's all compared, the Kansas fishing and recreation will hold its own against all of them.



Ted with his father and grandfather.

We now have nine grandkids, seven boys and two girls, and they all like to fish.



Ted Crawford with his mother and future wife.

Before the first one needed a fishing license, we bought all of them lifetime fishing licenses for Christmas. Since then, we have bought lifetime hunting licenses for the ones that wanted to hunt, and most took us up on that.

Just last spring, our grandson, Austin, and I went to Saline to fish for channels. Shortly after starting, Austin hooked a good one and it broke him off. I told him he was in too big of a hurry. After catching several keepers, we decided it was time to head home and I hooked a good one. After about 10 minutes of struggle, Austin dipped a 10 pounder for me. He immediately said, "That's my fish!" It was the one that he had lost when we started. It still had his hook and pieces of line in its mouth. When we cleaned it, it had an 8-inch white perch in its stomach.

Ted's passion for fishing passed along to his grandkids.



Recently, our son-in-law Mike Smith set up a guided trip for as many of us who could make it to Glen Elder. We stayed at Outdoor Obsessions lodge in Downs and fished an evening and the next morning and caught over 100 channel catfish. We had three pontoons with guides, and it was a lot of fun. Six of our nine grandkids, one son, and several of Mike's family also made it. We're going to try it again this summer.

Six of our grandkids are now married and we have seven great grandkids, so we're not going to run out of fishermen and ladies.

We also like to hunt, but that's another story.

Ted Crawford

# BIRD BRAIN

## Shorebirds and Songbirds Offer Spring Treat

with Mike Rader

The months of late spring and early summer are great times to go out and look for birds. Waterfowl migration has wound down, but shorebirds and songbirds are plentiful and easy to see. It's also a great time to get out to practice and sharpen your identification skills while birds look their best for the breeding season. Trips to local woodlands, marshes and grasslands can all be a treat, with ample opportunities to find many migrant species, as well as the breeding birds of our state that are setting up territories to begin courtship and nesting.

It has been an interesting year for weather and birding so far, with a relatively warm start in January to the deep freeze with record low temperatures in February. As I'm writing this column, we are at 72 degrees here in Pratt, quite the step up from the high temperature of ZERO, just a little over a week prior! Temperature range extremes are difficult on all forms of life, but most can get through it. I'm sure we lost wildlife during the extreme cold, but it is part of nature. I have seen reports of folks finding a few dead birds in their yards and reports of raptors found dead along highways, probably struck by auto traffic when trying to utilize the shorter vegetation to hunt.



### Black Tern

I hope we see a mild spring and summer, with adequate moisture, few thunderstorms and severe weather events, but I really don't want to count on that. Birding opportunities will still be out there, no matter the weather, but it does make it more difficult, especially in our marshes when we are either too wet or too dry. With COVID-19 still at the forefront, we had to conduct the Wings and Wetlands Festival at Cheyenne Bottoms and Quivira virtually, the first effort of its kind for that event. The spring meeting of the Kansas Ornithological Society is being held

virtually again as well, as was the case in 2020. We hope that we can be back together in-person in the fall of 2021, but that is yet to be determined.

Birdwatching popularity has continued to grow through the pandemic, with it being a hobby that can be pursued rather safely, if folks follow protocols and measures to keep us all out of harms way. I am really looking forward to being able to get back to a more normal existence, where I can bird with friends without worrying about the chance of spreading this wretched disease.

I am involved with a new project of establishing a birding trails program for Kansas, with the help of some very knowledgeable and dedicated people. It will be great to get this initiative in place to help direct birders from Kansas and anywhere in the country and world to our fantastic birding locations. More information about this project will be available later in the year.

By the time this column comes out, I hope to be working on more bird-related projects, such as the annual Breeding Bird Survey, which was given a hiatus during the worst part of the pandemic in 2020. As we are able to do more and more of these things safely, I'm going to take pause and appreciate it so much more, especially since it was so recently taken away.



### Sanderling




# LAW ENFORCEMENT SPOTLIGHT

## Top Social Media Posts

**Kansas Wildlife, Parks & Tourism - Game Wardens**  
March 10

The carcass of an American Alligator was discovered in the Ninnescah River by a KDOT worker working on the riverbank in Sumner County. A local Herpetologist (Marty Capron) identified the alligator carcass as approximately three years old. This was obviously someone's pet since alligators are not native to Kansas. This is a reminder that even though they might be cute babies, they will grow up to be a dangerous predator. They grow a foot per year for their first ten years of life, after which the rate of growth slows. People never really think about the consequences of having an animal that is meant to live in the wild and trying to raise it as a pet. A captive raised alligator, even if it's for only a year or so, can NEVER be released into the wild. Captive raised alligators, and other wild animals, quickly learn to associate food with people unlike wild animals who must hunt and forage for their next meal and tend to shy away from people. Most zoos do not accept unwanted pets, they simply don't have the time or space. When these animals are dumped in the wild it is detrimental to the animal and local wildlife (case in point, Florida's problem with Burmese Pythons).

We want to thank and recognize Marty Capron for his expertise in identification and information he provided concerning this issue.



1.4K 373 Comments 1.5K Shares

**Kansas Wildlife, Parks & Tourism - Game Wardens**  
March 6

Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks & Tourism's Region 3 Law Enforcement Division 2020 Regional Boating Officer of the Year award was presented to Game Warden Evan Deneke in recognition for his outstanding efforts and achievements in recreational boating enforcement in the Region. Please help us thank Game Warden Deneke for his work to keep our boating constituency safe while enjoying the recreational water activities in the Region. Great job Game Warden Deneke!



and 548 others 41 Comments 22 Shares

**Kansas Wildlife, Parks & Tourism - Game Wardens**  
April 29 at 7:15 PM



**Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism**  
April 29 at 7:00 PM

Congratulations are in order! KDWP Secretary Brad Loveless announced Greg Kyser as Colonel/Director of Law Enforcement.

Colonel Kyser started with KDWP as a game warden in 2018 after retiring from the Kansas Highway Patrol in 2017 bringing with him more than 30 years of law enforcement experience.

Secretary Loveless recognized Colonel Kyser Wednesday with a brief pinning ceremony "In the time that he has served as interim director, Greg has done a great job demonstrating his willingness to be a team player and has shown a commitment to quality and a genuine interest for improving workplace practices for the division."

Join us in welcoming Colonel Kyser into his new role!

Head over to the [Kansas Wildlife, Parks & Tourism - Game Wardens](#) page and give them a friendly follow.

188 22 Comments 3 Shares



Follow **Kansas Wildlife, Parks & Tourism - Game Wardens** on Facebook to stay up-to-date on poaching cases, rules and regulations, events and more!

## 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. My young are referred to as "pups."
2. I can consume up to 1,200 mosquitoes an hour.
3. I am the only mammal capable of true and sustained flight.

>>> See answer on Page 15.



# BOAT KANSAS

The Silent Killer  
*with Chelsea Hofmeier*

There are many hazards to be aware of while boating. Most of them are pretty straight forward or even obvious to the naked eye, and therefore can be easily avoided with proper awareness and education. There is however, one boating hazard that can be silent and virtually undetectable until it's too late.

Carbon monoxide (CO) is an odorless, colorless and tasteless gas that is produced when a carbon-based fuel burns. CO can make you sick in seconds, and exposure in large or even small amounts for a long period of time can result in death. Gasoline engines, gas generators, cooking ranges and heaters can all be a source of excess CO. Since the threat of carbon monoxide poisoning is often associated with something that occurs inside your home, people are often surprised that it is something that can happen during an outside activity as well.

The early symptoms of CO poisoning include irritated eyes, headache, nausea, weakness and dizziness. Unfortunately these symptoms are often mistaken for intoxication, too much sun and not enough water, or even motion sickness. Traditionally CO poisonings have occurred on houseboats or vessels with overhead canopies, but there are



many other ways that one can be exposed. Hanging out around the swim platform while the boat is running, teak surfing, and driving at a slow speed to where the air moves around the boat and forms a low-pressure area behind the transom, allowing CO to enter the area (Station Wagon Effect) are all ways that CO exposure can occur.

While carbon monoxide poisoning is not the most common cause for boating accidents or deaths, it is still a very serious hazard to be aware of while out on the water. Nationwide, between

1990 and 2015, there were 832 reported boating-related CO poisonings, including 174 deaths according to the U.S. Coast Guard Recreational Boating Statistics. To protect yourself and others against CO poisoning while boating, use a marine carbon monoxide detector, ensure proper ventilation, inspect exhaust systems regularly, avoid teak surfing, educate children and avoid other idling vessels.

Educating yourself and your passengers about the dangers of carbon monoxide is just another way to prevent unnecessarily tragic accidents. Have a great day out on the water by boating safe and boating smart. And always remember to Wear It Kansas!

## WALLEYE INITIATIVE CREATES MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR KANSAS ANGLERS

In March, Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWP) fisheries biologists and other staff collected nearly 100 million walleye eggs. Thanks to the Kansas Walleye Initiative, a record percentage of the walleye and saugeye hatched from those eggs will likely end up on the hooks of Kansas anglers.

"We've been having some great success, and the program is only four or five years old," said Scott Waters, KDWP Fisheries biologist and chairman of the walleye committee. "It's already leading to more catchable walleye."

The program began in 2015, with meetings between fisheries biologists and a variety of researchers and hatchery staff. Waters was also quick to thank the Kansas Wildlife, Parks and Tourism Commission for ongoing support for the program.

The initiative has led to the following:

### Higher survival rate for stocked fingerlings

One of the program's goals is to increase the size of stocked walleye fingerlings from about 1.25 inches to 1.7 inches, giving fingerlings a chance to develop scales before being stocked and a better chance of survival. The increased size makes it easier for them to find food, and scales protect against fatal infections.

### Bigger and better walleye for stocking

The Kansas Walleye Initiative has also led to hatcheries implementing an intensive walleye culture process that has increased production of "intermediate" walleyes that are 8 to 10 inches long when stocked. These fish are stocked in the fall, have very high survival rates and are well on their way to being of a desirable size for anglers. Last year, about 20,000 intermediates were produced and stocked in Kansas lakes and reservoirs. Waters said the department's goal of producing 75,000 intermediate-sized walleye is within sight.

Specialized management plans  
Largely depending on their capabilities, reservoirs and lakes are now classified and managed in four categories:







## The Flatlander Podcast with Tanna Fanshier



Are you a proud flatlander?  
At KDWPT, we recognize the beauty and wonder of our not-so flat state and are thrilled to invite you to explore it with us in new and exciting ways. Through the Flatlander Podcast, a collaboration between KDWPT and the Kansas Wildlife Federation, we hope to highlight the people,

science, and stories that make Kansas more than flyover country. Each episode, we promise to bring diverse perspectives, expert knowledge, and a wide range of experience levels all dedicated to highlighting the fantastic opportunities our Kansas outdoor spaces have to offer! New episodes air every two weeks, with occasional bonus episodes in between.

Follow along as we dive into the North American Model of Conservation with Brad Loveless, KDWPT secretary and Steve Bender, director of conservation partnerships with the National Wildlife Federation. Forage through the undergrowth as we explore the mysterious world of morel mushrooms with outdoor skills coordinator and fungi expert Lyndzee Rhine and fisheries program specialist Jeff Conley. Talk turkey with small game biologist Kent Fricke. Learn from wildlife rehabber Kyla Beavers on what to do if you encounter orphaned or abandoned wildlife this spring and join us from the field as the Flatlander team seeks out new and exciting experiences throughout the Sunflower State.

Subscribe to stay up to date on all our adventures, share us with your friends, and rate and review to let us know how well we are capturing the Kansas outdoors that you know and love!

We can't wait for you to join us in celebrating life in the Flatlands! Listen now at [ksoutdoors.com/KDWPT-Info/News/Flatlander-Podcast](http://ksoutdoors.com/KDWPT-Info/News/Flatlander-Podcast).



- Harvest lakes are managed to allow anglers to harvest walleye or saugeye and have a 15-inch minimum length limit.

- Trophy waters are managed to give anglers their best chance at a walleye or saugeye of trophy-sized proportions, using 18- or 21-inch minimum length limits and sometimes reduced creel limits.

- Brood walleye lakes are managed to provide good fishing yet a ready supply of healthy walleye eggs for the program.

- Biological control lakes are managed to keep good numbers of big walleye and saugeye in the water to help control problematic species, like white perch.

Waters said the plan is to keep at least one lake from each category within an easy drive of most Kansas anglers.

### Stocking based on priority and potential

Kansas reservoirs and lakes are now more closely studied and ranked based on walleye or saugeye need and potential. Rather than randomly distributing fish for stocking, fry, fingerlings and intermediates are sent to where they're most needed, yet likely to survive and thrive.

### Funding the project

The Kansas Walleye Initiative's goals are becoming realities because of significant funding improvement for the state's walleye hatchery program. High on that list is a \$2 million specialized walleye facility being constructed at the Meade Fish Hatchery. Another \$225,000 has been spent to improve specialized equipment at the department's Milford Fish Hatchery. There's also an annual budget of \$280,000 to cover the enhanced feed and energy costs, plus the purchase of fingerlings from private fish producers when needed.

Two full-time employees have been hired specifically for the program and funding to hire part-time employees, when needed, is also available.

Waters said the majority of the funding comes from fishing license revenue and the Dingell-Johnson (D-J) fund, derived by federal excise taxes placed on fishing gear. D-J grants can only be used on projects that improve fishing and require 25 percent matches, provided by license revenue.

"As usual, everything goes back to the anglers really being the ones who pay for projects," said Waters. "We should get a really good return on the investment. We see an excellent future."



**FERTILIZED WALLEYE EGGS**

# HUNTING HERITAGE

## Classic Cartridges .45-70

with Kent Barrett

The .45-70, officially known as the .45-70-405 or .45-70 Government cartridge, was developed in 1873 and was the cartridge that “Won the West.”

Originally developed for use in the Trapdoor Springfield rifle, it replaced the .50-70-450 cartridge adopted by the United States military in 1866 at the end of the Civil War. The official name was representative of the major properties of the cartridge: .45 caliber bore diameter, 70 grains of black powder for the charge and 405 grains for the bullet weight. The .45-70 was the long gun issued to all infantry soldiers during the U.S. expansion to the West, the Indian wars and up to the Spanish American War. The carbine version utilizing the .45-55 cartridge was the issue long gun of the Seventh Cavalry at the Battle of the Greasy Grass, or the Little Bighorn as known to most Americans.

The .45-70, along with the .50-70, played a huge role in the near extermination of the American bison and became a favorite cartridge of hunters and long-range shooters for

more than a century. The .45-70 was even issued to soldiers with cartridges known as forager rounds, which consisted of a thin wooden bullet filled with bird shot and was intended to help supplement the soldier’s meager rations of beans and hardtack. That round, in effect, made the .45-70 into a 49 gauge shotgun.

The .45-70 round was most commonly chambered in large single shot rifles – we have all seen the western movies where very distinct Sharps single shot rifles are shot. Today, it is still chambered for “vintage” single shot replica rifles, but the cartridge’s current popularity is associated with the big modern lever action rifles like the Marlin 1895 and the Henry Lever Action .45-70. Henry also chambered this classic cartridge in a new model break open action single shot rifle with either blued steel or polished brass receiver.

A good friend from Mountain Home, Idaho currently hunts with a custom single shot .45-70 rifle sporting a long octagonal barrel, tang



mounted open sights and built using a vintage Martini receiver. The extra weight of the additional barrel length really helps to tame the robust recoil of this cartridge. My wife shot this firearm and while she may not be a fan, she was impressed by the stout but manageable recoil. Without the addition of a telescopic sight the range is limited but it is still a serviceable rifle according to the amount of one’s practice and experience.

Modern lever action and single shot rifles are strong enough to handle heavy loads and with proper bullet selection, will take the .45-70 into a different class of hunting firearm. Adequate for even cape buffalo, the .45-70 is a capable choice for deer, elk, moose, bear, wild hogs and even a T-rex, if you could get a permit and find one in season. Even after 148 years of service, the .45-70 is certainly worthy of being considered a classic cartridge.



## Goose Banding Project by William Beckmann

would react, but I was also excited for the cool experience and to help.

At the first capture location, I was handed a metal-framed panel with the center made of netting. There were about 7-10 panels that were used total, depending on the size of the flock. Charlie Cope, “The Goose Whisperer,” as the other biologists call him, worked with Tom, Jeff, Vickie, Marc and other biologists to find the geese. Once the flock was located on or near the pond, Charlie threw out some corn to calm them down. Then, those of us with panels surrounded the geese in a circle and walked towards each other making the circle tighter. As we got closer, we removed panels until we got down to a four-sided cage. We tied the corners of the panels together to keep the geese in place. Two biologists would step into the cage to hand geese over the panels to those of us on the outside. (If a flock of geese were on the water, we used two kayaks to herd the geese onto the grass so we could catch them.) I learned that geese molt their flight feathers during this time of year and grow new replacement feathers, so they are flightless for a few weeks. This is why we could catch them using the panels.

In the mobile pen, we would first look for re-captures (geese that had been banded in previous years), pull them out and read their band numbers to the person recording data, adjust any bands that needed adjusting and then we let those geese go. Next, we would

handle goslings. I was the first one pooped on by a gosling in the day! Having a goose poop on me was a new experience. The goslings were cute and not feisty like the adults.

When a goose was handed over the mobile pen, a handler would safely hold the bird by the wings and feet so that a biologist could place a silver band around their right leg. Each band had numbers that identified the goose and its capture location. Then I, along with other handlers, would take the goose over to Tom to determine if the goose was a male or female before letting the goose go.

As the day went on, I felt brave enough to handle adult geese along with hatch year geese. Adults were much harder to handle and strong! They would hiss, scratch and bite. I was able to avoid being bitten but did get a few scratches.

I asked why the geese were banded and the biologists told me the bands are used to record where geese are captured and to track goose population sizes, survival and movements. The information is used to manage the goose population in Kansas and across the country.

In all, we caught and handled about 600 geese in one day; my hands were cramping and tired by the time we were done! I learned that biologists and other employees at KDWPT work hard to protect and manage wildlife for people like me who live in the state. It was fun to meet and talk to the biologists and I thank them for the opportunity to volunteer.

In June 2020, as a student, I had the opportunity to volunteer on a Canada goose banding project with the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT) throughout Sedgwick County. It was a hot day and we worked hard for 12 hours finding and capturing flocks of geese in the area. We met early in the morning and Tom Bidrowski and Charlie Cope, two biologists with KDWPT, taught us how to capture the geese and safely handle them. After our early morning meeting, we went out to our first capture location. I was feeling a bit nervous because I have never caught or handled geese before and did not know how they



# False Indigo Bush

BY KRISTA DAHLINGER

With purple flowering spikes up to 8 inches long blooming from May to June, the false indigo bush is hard to miss in the springtime. False indigo bush grows as a dense leafy gray-green mass as the “bush” in its name suggests, but it can also grow in a tree form with a bare trunk on the lower portion of the plant with a leafy crown above. The most distinctive part of the plant is the inflorescence – the flowering spike – which consists of rows of small dark purple flowers along a stem that tapers toward the end of the spike. Each flower is constructed of a single petal wrapped around a bundle of ten bright yellow, pollen producing stamen. In fact, the scientific name, *Amorpha fruticosa*, is derived from the single petal. *Amorpha* means “deformed” or “without form” and the flower having a single petal represents an unusual form for a plant that belongs to the legume, Fabaceae family.

Another identifying attribute of false indigo bush is the leaf construction. Referred to as odd-pinnate, the leaves appear in pairs on either side of a central stem with a single “odd” leaf at the apex of the stem. Leaves are oval and appear in 11 – 35 pairs along the stem and are slightly hairy. This is a deciduous plant.

False indigo bush grows in wet areas near lakes, ponds, or stream edges, in wet woodlands or in ditches. It can thrive in open sunny areas or in the shade as an understory plant. When this shrub takes on a tree form, it can grow up to 15 feet tall below other trees in a riparian habitat.

Apart from the dry southwest counties, false indigo bush can be found throughout Kansas. Its range is from Canada to Mexico across the Great Plains to the Mississippi River, and along the southern tier of states into Florida. In some parts of the U.S., it is seen as an aggressive invasive plant that interferes with native plants by forming a spreading monoculture. It reproduces by sending out suckers from the root system or by seed dispersed by birds, wind, or water.

The numerous flowers that line the relatively long flowering spikes contain high quality nectar and pollen to attract and benefit insects. The plant foliage is also used by the silver spotted skipper, gray hairstreak butterfly and Io moth to host eggs and caterpillar larva. False indigo bush does not offer much forage value for browsing wildlife.

The plant flowers are said to yield a very weak indigo dye color, though not reliably enough to be in demand as a dye plant. Perhaps the common name “false indigo” was given in reference to the weak properties of dye color made from the plant.

False indigo bush can be incorporated as an ornamental tree-like shrub in the landscape. It has an extensive root system and can be used for stream bank stabilization in Kansas. As a legume, it helps fix nitrogen into the soil. To plant seeds gathered in fall and winter, soak the seeds (the following spring) in water for 12 hours, then plant into large containers for the first year to allow a root system to become established. The most vigorous plants can be transferred into the landscape the following spring.



# EVERYTHING OUTDOORS

## Strange Tales From The Deep

with Marc Murrell



Fishing brings joy to young and old. It's a great activity as many days are like Christmas morning and you never know what you might catch. Occasionally some of those catches are rare, unique or just plain crazy coincidence and may not even involve fish!

One of the strangest "tales from the deep" happened in July a few years ago and started innocently enough. I had my sister, Chari, niece, Shyanne, and nephew, Dylan, in my boat as well as a couple of my own kids, Brandon and Cody, and we were fishing for channel catfish on a favorite chum hole. Chari connected on the first big cat of the morning and as I leaned over to net the fish, my very expensive pair of sunglasses fell from the brim of my hat (the sun hadn't even peaked over the horizon yet so I wasn't wearing them) and right in the drink. I swiped at them with the net, but they disappeared to the depths. I netted the fish and grumbled about my ill fortunes. Even though the sunglasses were a gift, I hated to lose them as they were my favorite!

Fast forward a couple months to late September. I had my neighbor, Deb, and

her daughter, Lacey, in the boat with me for a similar catfishing trip in the same general vicinity. For whatever reason, I told the story of the lost shades and they both laughed as we pictured some fish wearing them. We caught plenty of fish and I laughed at them setting the hook left and right. It nearly became routine and I wouldn't immediately look back when I heard them set the hook. After one instance, I heard Lacey scream, "I caught your sunglasses!"

"You're full of it," I said and turned just in time to see her swing them towards me as one of the treble hooks was stuck firmly under the nose piece.

Sure enough, in 18 feet of water, months apart, Lacey had indeed snagged my sunglasses. I rinsed the mud off and tried them on for size. While they fit, the protective coating had disintegrated, and they were toast. We still laugh years later about that story and the odds of it happening.

On a more recent trip last summer, I had my daughter, Ashley, and son-in-law, Jake, out for another catfishing trip on a weekend camping trip. We usually fish every day, weather permitting, and on

Friday, I hooked a monster cat. As I removed it from the net, Ashley noticed something unique.

"Look at that big knot on its chin, Dad!" she said.

It was as big as a plum on the bottom of its jaw. The fish looked healthy otherwise and after weighing it at 9-plus-pounds and shooting a few photos, I eased it back over the side.

Two days later, Jake set the hook and knew it was a good fish. It neared the surface and as I netted it, Jake noticed something all too familiar with the fish. It had a big knot in the EXACT same place; we were certain it was indeed the same fish from Friday. It got another reprieve as Jake turned it loose a second time and we laughed at the odds of catching the same fish 48 hours apart.

It's safe to say you never know what you might hook when you're fishing. Others have snagged fishing poles, shoes and boots, mussel shells and an assortment of other stuff you'd never figure would stay on a hook. So, it's not only fish that make fishing fun, but you just might catch something strange, too!



# FISHIN'

with Mike Miller

## “Dam” Good Fishing

Early June is a great time for fishing in Kansas. Water temperatures in the high 60s and low 70s are perfect to find active fish in shallow water. And when fish are shallow, they are easier to catch because they are usually looking for something to eat.

It's easy to find shallow fish in small lakes and farm ponds – look for weed bed edges, downed trees, and other structure such as docks near the shoreline. However, in Kansas' aging reservoirs, finding that type of structure is more difficult. Varying water levels, wave action and siltation prevent aquatic vegetation from growing, and woody cover is usually sparse unless the lake is flooded. But there is fish-holding structure that all public reservoirs have: concrete or rip-rap dams and jetties and boat ramps.

The concrete and rocky structure provides spawning areas for some fish such as crappie, and forage fish such as shad are often present. I've caught just about every species of sport fish that swims while casting jigs and lipless crankbaits along this shallow rocky structure. I prefer an eighth-ounce jig with a

curly-tail or marabou body, white or chartreuse. A Roadrunner with an orange head and white marabou body might be the perfect lure for this kind of fishing. I tie it on to a medium-light spinning outfit with a six-pound superline or braid and a monofilament or fluorocarbon leader.

Pay attention because for some reason, there is usually a stretch of the dam or jetty that will hold more fish. Make more casts to those stretches. When casting a boat ramp, I focus on the side edges and the end, where I visualize a sharp drop-off.

Strikes will often come within a couple feet of shore and you never know what you've hooked until it reaches the boat. Hang on tight because it's not unusual to catch a big wiper or catfish while casting the dam.



## Kansas Teen Wins 2021 National Junior Duck Stamp Contest



A Kansas teen has won the prestigious 2021 National Junior Duck Stamp Contest, marking the first time a Kansan has won since the contest began in 1993. Margaret McMullen, 18, of Wichita, entered an acrylic painting of a drake and hen hooded merganser pair to take the top honor. The National Junior Duck Stamp Contest, sponsored by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), was created as a way to educate youth on the importance of the nation's waterfowl and wetlands. The junior contest is open to youth in kindergarten through the 12th grade. This year, nearly 9,000 entries from all 50 states and two U.S.

territories were submitted.

McMullen, a home-schooled high school senior, will be awarded a \$1,000 scholarship for her winning entry. Collector's stamps featuring her winning image will go on sale on June 25 with proceeds going to programs that promote wetland conservation.

Prior to being entered in the national contest, McMullen first had to win at the state level. This was the third consecutive year she won the Kansas contest, defeating 105 other entries. Up to 400 youth have entered the Kansas contest in recent years; Lori Jones, USFWS liaison for the Great Plains Nature Center in Wichita, said COVID-related issues kept some schools from sending in entries this year.

McMullen is a self-taught artist and began entering the contest when she was in the fourth grade. She said it's been a slow, but steady progression to where she ranks now as one of America's top wildlife artists.

"I've been drawing since I was about 3.

It just has always kind of been there in me," McMullen said. "I started out drawing with pencils, then went up to colored pencils. The last few years I've been getting into painting. I've always been a perfectionist with my work and want to make it as realistic as possible. I found paint gave me the best detail possible."

McMullen has never seen a live hooded merganser on the waters near her home, so she studied photographs to obtain the intricate details necessary for her entry. She's not sure how much time she invested in the 9- by 12-inch entry, other than "it took a long time."

McMullen is currently unsure of her future career plans but she is interested in learning more about photography. No doubt, wildlife may end up being some of her favorite subjects to photograph.

"She has always –said she'd like to live in the country and be closer to nature," said Liz McMullen, Margaret's mother. "She's always been an animal lover. We're trying to figure out what God wants her to do with her life. It will probably involve animals."


For more on the USFWS's junior duck stamp contest, and to view McMullen's winning entry, visit [www.fws.gov/birds/education/junior-duck-stamp-conservation-program.php](http://www.fws.gov/birds/education/junior-duck-stamp-conservation-program.php).

**LET'S**  
WITH DUSTIN TEASLEY  
**EAT**

# WHAT'S IN A CUTZE?



Shutterstock/YARUNIV



These days, my Facebook newsfeed looks more like an outdoorsman's reference guide than posts from friends and family. I enjoy "liking" pages from homesteaders, Kansas fishing clubs, jerky makers, BBQ enthusiasts, Blackstone griddles, and butchering groups, just to name a few. But of all the pages I follow, one of my favorites has to be the meat curing group.

Curing is processing meat to protect it from harmful bacteria and to retain color. Salts and sugars are used to aid in moisture removal, lowering the meats PH to inhibit bacteria growth and add flavor, while nitrites are used to kill and prevent harmful bacteria on or in meats from propagating. Correct nitrite usage is critical when curing meats, and the health safety benefits far outweigh the bad; avoiding nitrites can also be dangerous.

Proper curing practices promote growth of beneficial bacteria and kills and prevents harmful bacteria that cause food poisoning, such as botulism and listeria. Cure is often thought to help prevent mold growth on curing meats or only allowing certain ones to grow during aging also, which is incorrect; Mold is a fungus and not a bacterium, but that's another story.

The two most common cures used in sausage making and meat curing in the U.S. are Cure #1 and Cure #2. Cure #1 is commonly referred to as Prague Powder #1, Pink Salt or InstaCure. This cure contains 6.25 percent sodium nitrite (NO<sub>2</sub>) and 93.75 percent common non-iodized table salt. It is colored with red dye to give it a pink color to keep consumers from mistaking it from any other product that may be in the kitchen. The sodium nitrite is the key component in the cure and is cut with non-iodized table salt to reduce overuse of the nitrites since it requires very little. For example, only 1 ounce of the above mixture is needed for 25 pounds of meat. Some mistakenly think that Himalayan pink salt (98 percent sodium chloride) is the same thing as "Pink Salt" cure, which it is not. The trace minerals in Himalayan pink salt make it appear pink and gives it a different taste than table salt, but it is essentially table salt.

Cure #1 is used in sausages I call "short-term" sausages, which are fully processed and either cooked and/or frozen within a couple of weeks of being made. These sausages are intended to be cooked to an internal temperature specific to the type of meat being used. The nitrite creates an environment in which certain bacteria cannot grow. Sausages like bratwurst, hotdogs, snack

sticks and some jerkys are what I consider short-term.

Cure #2 contains sodium nitrate (NO<sub>3</sub>) as well as sodium nitrite (NO<sub>2</sub>). It differs from Cure #1 in that it is designed for "long-term" curing, aging, and drying of meat that is not cooked. Cure #2 is often referred to as Prague Powder #2, Pink Salt #2, InstaCure #2, Modern Cure #2 or D.Q. Powder #2. Cure #2 varies in the percentage of nitrates to nitrites, but a common cure mix contains 6.25 percent sodium nitrite, 1 percent sodium nitrate and 92.75 percent common non-iodized table salt. Like Cure #1, it can also be pink or it can be white or yellowish in color.

As with the Cure #1, the nitrites in the Cure #2 create an environment where harmful bacteria die and cannot grow. But, with time, if the harmful bacteria do begin to grow, this bacteria will seek out and consume the nitrates. The resulting biproduct is nitrite which therefore, kills remaining bacteria. Since the potential harmful bacterial growth happens very slowly (due to the lowered PH and moisture reduction), less of the nitrates are needed than the nitrites, which have a bigger job to do early in the curing process.

The Morton Salt Company makes a curing salt most commonly used in home curing known as Tender Quick, which contains nitrites at 0.5 percent and nitrates at 0.5 percent, which would be considered a #2 Cure. The ratios are less proportional than the specific Cure #1 and #2 mixes, but this product is often used in amounts of more than 1 ounce per 25 pounds.

Another less common cure is potassium nitrate (KNO<sub>3</sub>), commonly referred to as Saltpetre. In smaller converted doses, it can be used like Cure #2 and functions in the same manner. It is not used as widely today as in years past, but many old recipes still call for it. It is used in much smaller doses since it is not cut like Cure #2. In other countries, they also use a product called Saltpetre that is potassium nitrite (KNO<sub>2</sub>) and is used like Cure #1. I don't fully understand why the Saltpetre lost its favor with sausage makers, unless it's the fact that you can also make fireworks and gun powder from it. Having said this, potassium is better in some ways with those who need to reduce their sodium intake.

Whew! Now this all sounds a little confusing but a little way I remember is "nit-rite" is right now and "nit-rates" like interest rates, are meant for over time. Happy curing.

# Great KS Fishing Derby!

A Kansas angler's prized catch may actually be worth a prize this spring and summer. The first-ever Great Kansas Fishing Derby will run May 1 to July 31, 2021, with at least 500 specially tagged fish located in up to 37 public waterbodies in Kansas. The Great Kansas Fishing Derby is sponsored by the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT), Kansas Wildscape Foundation, the Bass Pro-Cabela's Outdoor Fund and many local retailers across Kansas.

"The main goal is to get more people fishing. We had a lot of anglers join the party in 2020 and we want them to keep participating," said David Breth, KDWPT sportfishing education coordinator. "We also want to make sure businesses know about their local fishing waters and just how many people visit these nearby fishing spots."

## How It Works

Pre-registration is not required, and participation is free, though normal fishing license requirements remain in effect. To get your Kansas fishing license, visit [kshuntfishcamp.com](http://kshuntfishcamp.com) or download KDWPT's mobile licensing app, "HuntFish KS," here [ksoutdoors.com/License-Permits/HuntFish-KS](http://ksoutdoors.com/License-Permits/HuntFish-KS).

Anglers who catch a tagged fish as part of the Great Kansas Fishing Derby must register the tag number at [ksfishderby.com](http://ksfishderby.com). A follow-up communication will notify the angler of what they've won and where to claim the prize. [ksfishderby.com](http://ksfishderby.com) will also allow anglers and non-anglers to register to win additional prizes through weekly drawings.

Businesses across Kansas are supporting the Great Kansas Fishing Derby by providing prizes in the form of gift cards, merchandise and more - including a city zoo that has pledged an annual family pass. KDWPT will also contribute gift cards, which can be credited toward any department-issued license or permit, or magazine subscription. KDWPT gift cards are also honored at all Kansas state parks.



Look for tags similar to this. Follow the instructions on the tag to receive a prize!

Anglers who submit valid tags also receive a certificate.



## Where To Fish

All participating waterbodies are open to the public and managed in whole or in-part by KDWPT. Also included in the list of participating waters are ponds and lakes currently enrolled in KDWPT's Community Fisheries Assistance Program (CFAP). By leveraging funding from federal excise taxes on fishing equipment, KDWPT leases public access - at no additional cost to the public - to gorgeous waters that once required special county, community or city permits. A complete list of waters with fish tagged for the Derby is posted on [ksfishderby.com](http://ksfishderby.com).

"We'll have popular sportfish tagged, like bass, crappie and walleye," said Breth. "We'll also have some non-sportfish like carp, gar and drum. We have people who like to fish for them and a lot who also participate in bow fishing. There will probably be some big bluegill tagged because we'd love to see kids

win some of these prizes, too."

Most tagged fish will meet legal length limits and can be legally kept. However, anglers may release their catch if they first remove the tag (see [ksfishderby.com](http://ksfishderby.com) for instructions).

Businesses and groups interested in sponsoring tagged fish for this year's Derby can find sponsorship details at [ksfishderby.com](http://ksfishderby.com). Breth added that more than 500 fish could be tagged as sponsorship grows. He also hopes the Derby becomes an annual event, as it's become in Washington state.

Many fish species were tagged including bluegills like this one.

"They've been doing it with trout, which they raise in hatcheries, since 2016," he said. "It's really popular with anglers and (sponsoring) vendors. It keeps growing every year for them, so we're hoping that will be the case here."

**Visit [ksfishderby.com](http://ksfishderby.com) today!**



# KDWPT Maintains Key Role in Lesser Prairie Chicken Conservation Despite Proposed Federal Listing



Kansas is home to the most extensive remaining range and largest population of lesser prairie chickens in the U.S. However, despite the successful work of the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism, Kansas farmers and ranchers, the Lesser Prairie-Chicken Interstate Working Group, and midwestern states throughout the bird's range, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) announced on Wednesday, May 26, 2021 its intent to federally list the prairie grouse species, *T. pallidicinctus*, under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). If the ruling stands, lesser prairie chickens that exist in eastern New Mexico and across the southwest Texas Panhandle will be listed as "endangered." Lesser prairie chickens that exist in southeastern Colorado, southcentral to southwestern Kansas, western Oklahoma and the northeast Texas Panhandle will be listed as "threatened."

"Coming from a state where population densities are largely trending upwards, it's regrettable that the USFWS is recommending listing the lesser prairie chicken as threatened," said KDWPT Secretary Brad Loveless. "For several years now, our staff have done a stellar job partnering with local landowners, the Lesser Prairie-Chicken Interstate Working Group, and fellow wildlife biologists from our neighboring states to implement the 'Lesser Prairie-Chicken Range-wide Conservation Plan' (RWP). While this proposed listing does not adequately reflect the success of our efforts in Kansas, we're confident in the value of the range-wide plan and will continue managing this important species to the very best of our ability, alongside our partners."

The USFWS's proposed ruling was submitted to the Federal Register on May 26, 2021, and contains the ESA's Section 4(d), commonly referred to as the "4(d) rule," that would tailor protections for the bird in Kansas, Colorado, Oklahoma and the northeast Texas Panhandle. According to

a news release issued by the USFWS, the 4(d) rule would allow any direct or indirect "take" of the bird associated with "the continuation of routine agricultural practices or the implementation of prescribed fire." The ESA broadly defines take to include both direct take (to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect or attempt to engage in any such conduct) and indirect take, which applies to the modification or degradation of the species' habitat.

"Our agency will remain vigilant in following this proposed ruling as it continues to develop, providing comment where appropriate, and of course, partnering with our local farmers and ranchers to ensure we, as a state, carry out what's best both for this species and for our landowners," said Loveless. "We have a strong network in place, so we'll keep the lines of communication open and work with our counterparts at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure they operate with the best possible data from Kansas and neighboring states."

Interested parties are encouraged to comment on the proposed listing up to 60 days after the draft entry appears in the Federal Register. For instructions on submitting comments, visit [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov), enter "FWS-R2-ES-2021-0015" into the search box, and click "Dockets."

## WAY outside BY BRUCE COCHRAN



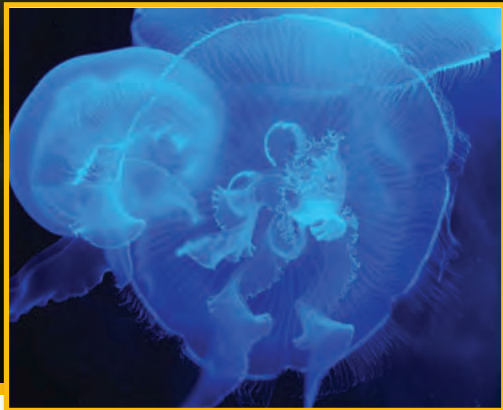
“WHAT AM I?” answer: Bat (Cave Myotis)

# Junior Nature Notes: Fireflies

by Pat Silovsky  
KDWPT Education Specialist

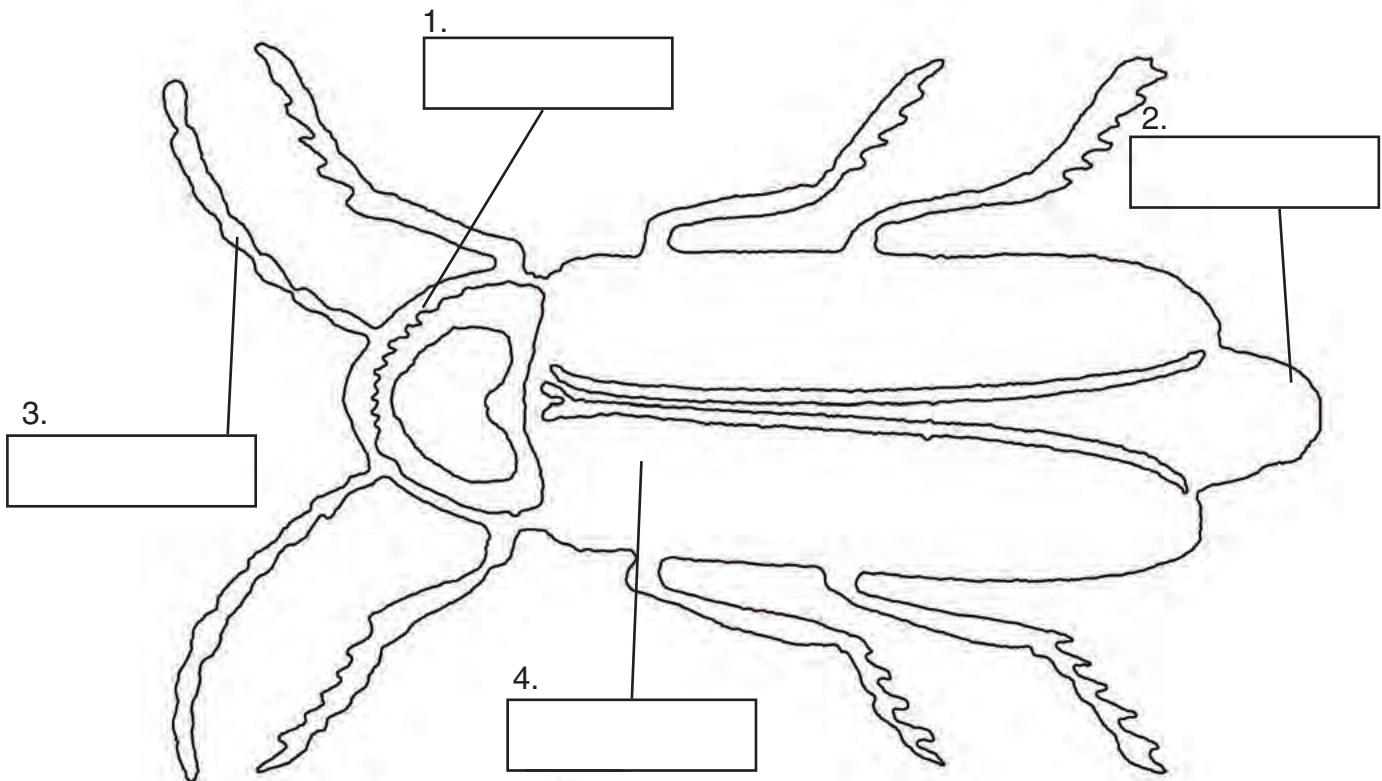
**Fireflies**, which are a family of **beetles**, are found on every continent except Antarctica. In Kansas, fireflies – or **lightning bugs**, as they are also called – flash their **abdomens** on warm summer nights to attract mates. However, not every firefly species flashes. In fact, only two-thirds of the 2000 species of fireflies create light!

With their ability to flash, fireflies are one of the few insects to exhibit **bioluminescence** – the production of light by an animal. Most bioluminescent animals are deep sea-dwelling fish and other creatures.



## Color and Label

Color the firefly below and label the **antennae**, **head**, **thorax**, and **abdomen**!



ANSWER: 1. Head, 2. Thorax, 3. Abdomen, 4. Antennae

## "On the Fly" Facts

- The adult firefly has a special organ in its abdomen called a lantern.
- The flashing is controlled by the firefly's nervous system.
- Chemical messages cause fireflies to start or stop their bioluminescent chemical reaction. [A chemical reaction is when a substance (or a few substances) change into another substance. Chemical reactions are chemical transformations.]
- The insects take in oxygen and, inside special cells, combine it with a substance called luciferin to produce light with almost no heat.
- Firefly luciferase is used in forensics, and the enzyme has medical uses. Researchers use the luciferin from fireflies to check for bacteria in samples of beef or other foods. If the bacteria (*E. coli*) is in the food, the luciferin attaches to the bacteria, making it easy for researchers to see it.

Larvae of fireflies also glow, but this appears to be a warning signal to predators. Because of the chemicals necessary for the production of light, most fireflies taste bad and are left alone.

The larvae of most species are specialized **predators** and feed on other larvae, terrestrial snails, and slugs. Both the larvae and adult of the most common species in Kansas (*Lucidota atra*) are predacious and good to have around.

## Become an Official Firefly Watcher

If you're planning to spend some time looking for fireflies this summer, become an 'official' Firefly Watcher (your real title would be a 'citizen scientist').

Mass Audubon, along with Tufts University, asks people from across the U.S. to spend some time watching and reporting their firefly sightings.

It's easy to register, and you can keep a field journal to record the days and times you are watching, how many fireflies you see, what color is their light (yes, fireflies have different color lights) and more fun observations.

One of the reasons for this project is that scientists are concerned that fireflies are becoming scarcer. There's still much to learn about where they are seen each year and why populations might be getting smaller.

Register at [www.massaudubon.org/get-involved/community-science/firefly-watch](http://www.massaudubon.org/get-involved/community-science/firefly-watch).

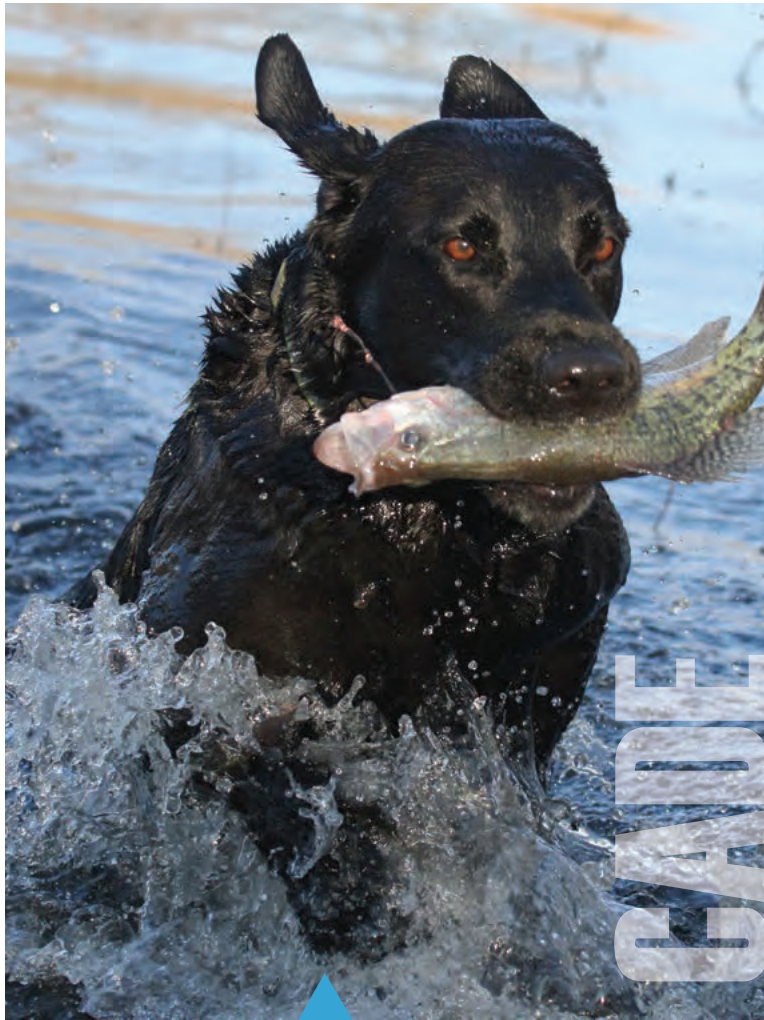
## Firefly Word Search

N	I	R	E	F	I	C	U	L	T	N	L	I	G
H	W	T	I	E	A	V	R	A	L	O	E	L	I
S	H	I	L	N	N	U	G	E	E	F	O	H	N
I	N	M	U	L	G	I	L	H	F	W	H	I	R
B	I	O	L	U	M	I	N	E	S	C	E	N	T
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O	L	L	F	Y	L	F	E	R	I	F	L	I	S
T	N	A	U	L	H	A	A	F	N	E	F	A	U
G	I	N	Y	U	C	Y	S	I	G	N	N	E	M
L	G	U	B	G	N	I	N	T	H	G	I	L	M
A	H	F	L	N	N	I	S	B	B	N	D	N	E
S	T	G	N	N	O	E	E	G	F	W	E	E	R
E	I	G	N	T	A	B	D	O	M	E	N	L	N
T	B	T	C	E	S	N	I	F	L	A	S	H	N

Firefly  
Lightning Bug  
Wing  
Glow

Night  
Flash  
Abdomen  
Bioluminescent

Insect  
Larvae  
Luciferin  
Summer



# FISHIN' DOGS

*by Michael Pearce, freelance writer*

It seems hunting is not the only outdoors passion in the lives of some dogs. Across Kansas are canines that enjoy fishing as much as the two-legged anglers who take them. As well as proficient, some of these fishing dogs are downright humorous!

## Fins or Feathers, No Matter

Our Lab, Cade, started fishing at seven weeks old at a pond near Newton. Jerrod, our son, fly-caught a small bass and dropped the unhooked fish into the shallows. Then, tiny paws sent water flying as Cade charged after the fish swimming in a few inches of water. He eventually grabbed the bass and proudly brought it to me.

It was Cade's first fetched animal, and also his second, third, fourth and fifth as he pounced on the bass every time I dropped it into the shallows. When I finally tossed the poor fish 30 feet from shore, Cade swam to the spot and dove beneath the surface looking for the fish.

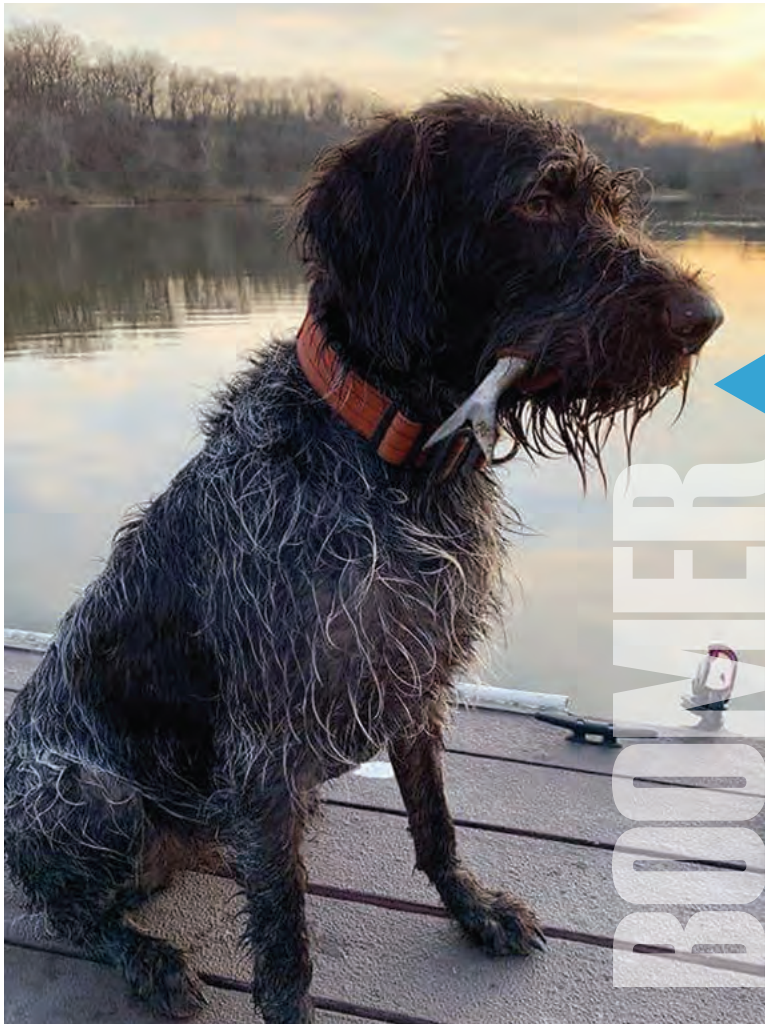
No, he didn't come back up with the bass, but he's begged to fetch all we've landed, since.

Stuck in perpetual "puppyhood," Cade remains as excited about fetching fish as the thousands of upland birds and waterfowl he's found on Kansas hunts.

These days, Cade goes into a full-blown "Tigger bounce," jumping high enough to look me in the eye, until I let him fetch a fish a time or two. Totally trial-trained, he takes hand and whistle signals to retrieve an unseen fish as he does a duck.

Earlier this year, a count showed my bucket was missing a crappie. I sent Cade across the pond, stopped him with a whistle and told him "hunt dead." He crashed in and out of weeds and willows like a dog possessed.

Water flew at least five feet when he hit the pond with a full-speed leap after he'd found the fish and was headed my way. The fish was alive and not missing a single scale when delivered. Success.



## Equal Opportunity Angler

Living on a 100-acre lake near Leavenworth, Boomer, a four-year-old German wirehair, fishes more than most blue herons. He doesn't need any human assistance, either.

"He's pretty much fishing every morning by himself, going along the shoreline, looking," said Lynn Rolf III. "He spends a lot of time fishing like a bear, walking slowly in the shallows. He'll put his head underwater and when he raises it, he usually has something."

As well as every species of fish in the private lake, Boomer has found and fetched turtles, bullfrogs and a very upset water snake.

His delivered treasures have not always been welcome. Some finds have been dead long enough to smell beyond "fishy;" even live shad don't smell like roses.

"Boomer once jumped in bed with my fiancé and dropped a little bluegill," said Rolf. "You just never know what he's going to bring next. He's a heck of a bird dog, but he really loves fishing."

## Buzz-baits, Please

Like Keith Pflumm, Bear, his golden-doodle, loves top-water bass fishing.

"He just sits in the bottom of the boat as we're riding, but as soon as I put the boat in neutral, he's up on the casting deck, waiting on me to start fishing," said Pflumm. "He's really intense watching a top-water bait and knows what's happened when a fish blows up on it."

Pflumm describes Bear as "hands down the best fishing buddy I've ever had." Bear's always ready to go, never wants to quit and never complains.

The dog does, however, have one drawback – an adoring public.

"People pull up all the time and ask about Bear. He loves the attention. He's a real people-puppy," said Pflumm. "Some people recognize him now and they just like to come over and watch him while we fish. It can take time from fishing, and get a little crowded, but it's all fun."



## On Turtle Patrol

Half lab and half Australian shepherd, Hank's DNA consists of fetching birds and guarding herds. And, he's just as good at fetching fish and guarding them against snapping turtles.

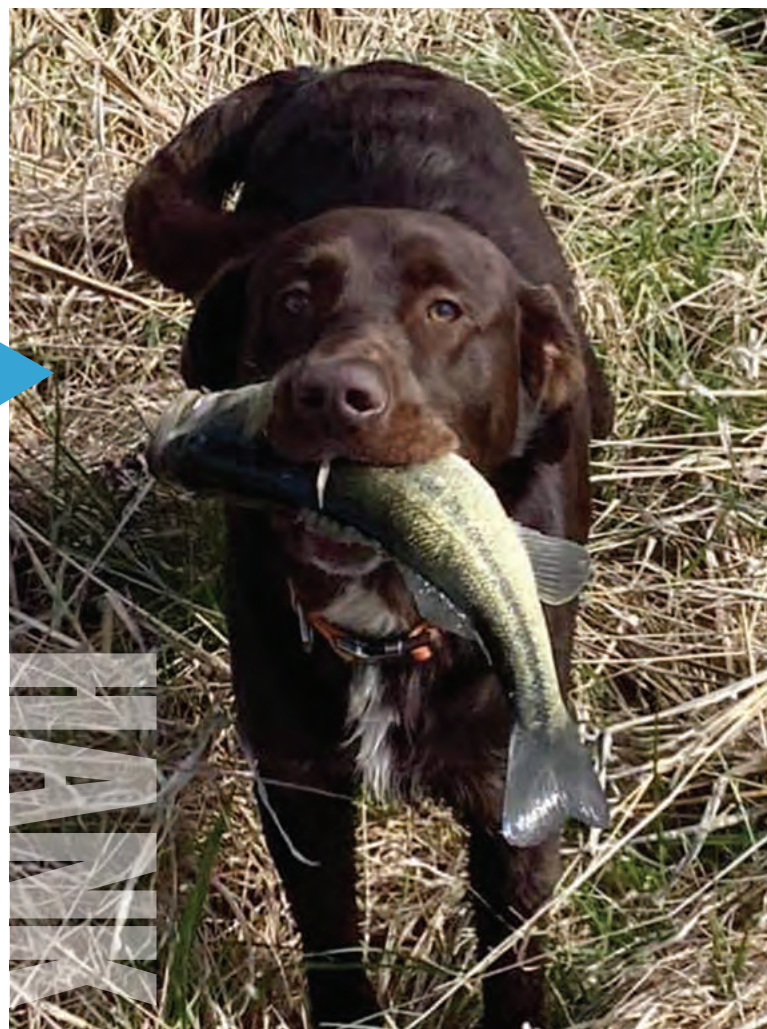
Hank roams with young girls Charlee and Lucy Metzger, and their dad, Cole Metzger. When the girls are catching fish, Hank is, too.

Metzger said Hank prances proudly whenever he can carry a caught fish around. On an early trip, Metzger was about to put a fish on a stringer when a sizable snapping turtle appeared, hoping for an easy dinner.

Metzger yelled, "turtle!" then moved closer to scare the snapper away; Hank assessed the situation.

Now, Hank spends much of his fishing time sitting by a stringer, guarding the catch.

"While I'm fishing, if I say 'turtle,' Hank goes running to the fish," said Metzger. "There's no doubt he's guarding them for us."



## No Place for Failure

Brian Ondrejka is often under a lot of pressure when he takes people fishing. Owner of Kansas Angling Experience Guide Service, he's paid to help clients put fish into his boat.

He's also under pressure to land every wiper, white bass or crappie hooked when fishing with his dog, Tucker.

"He loves watching me fight a fish. Tucker knows what's going on when I set the hook," said Ondrejka, of Lawrence. "He gets pretty wound up but he also knows when one gets off. He just looks up at me like, 'Hey, what happened? You were supposed to bring that fish into the boat.'"

Ondrejka fishes almost as much without clients as with, to make sure he's up on current patterns. Tucker goes on most trips without clients.

"He's always been pretty obsessed and excited by fishing," said Ondrejka. "He hears that drag on a reel or hears the (braided line) going through the eyes of the rod, he's going to be all over the place."



# 2021 Deadline to enter is Oct. 18!

Photo submissions for the 9th annual “Wild About Kansas” photo contest are being accepted now through Oct. 18, 2021. 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 2022 January/February photo issue of *Kansas Wildlife & Parks Magazine*.

## HOW TO ENTER

Entries must be submitted no later than **5 p.m. on Oct. 18, 2021**. Photo format should be JPEG or TIFF. All photos must be submitted electronically. Photos that do not meet the minimum file size requirements (1 MB) will NOT be accepted. To enter, visit [ksoutdoors.com](http://ksoutdoors.com) and click “Publications,” then “2021 Wild About Kansas Photo Contest.”







By Brent Frazee

# DIVERSITY IN THE OUTDOORS



Shutterstock/smallsketch

When Wayne Hubbard and his wife, Candice Price, embarked on a journey to bring fishing to the inner-city of Kansas City, they had modest goals. But they were surprised to see that the lure they cast out was much more desirable than they ever imagined.

“When we had our first derby at the college (Kansas City Community College), we thought it would be a small event; maybe 50 kids,” Hubbard said. “But we had 430 kids and their parents.

“It was all about diversity. We had black kids, white kids, Hispanic kids, Asian kids, you name it. It was like a little ‘United Nations.’”

To Hubbard and Price, a black couple from Kansas City, that was an exclamation point to their longtime mission – to achieve inclusion in the outdoors.

Almost 20 years ago, they noticed the lack of representation of people of color in outdoor television programming and decided to do something about it. They established their own show, *Urban American Outdoors*, an outdoors lifestyle program that features diversity.

The show became an immediate success and soon aired across the country. Today, it’s more popular than ever.

With Hubbard in the starring role and Price as the executive producer, *Urban American Outdoors* features everything from hunting and fishing to scuba diving. It also focuses on black history, includes segments on Hubbard’s wild-game culinary skills, and highlights the kids fishing derbies they now put on across the nation.



Wayne Hubbard and his granddaughter Zaniyah Seawood share a happy moment after catching channel catfish.

## THE UNDERLYING MESSAGE: INCLUSION

"There is a place for everyone in the outdoors," Price said. "Nature doesn't discriminate."

Other African Americans in Kansas who are avid anglers and hunters echo Price's thoughts. Though there are still obstacles for people of color to become involved, many see a day when there is far more diversity in the outdoors.

"A lot of black people don't look at fishing as something they can get involved in," said Kim Burnett, an African American who lives in Olathe. "It's like golf. If you aren't brought up with it, you aren't going to be real comfortable doing it."

"But if we get kids away from their computer and their phones and get them to try fishing, I think a lot of them would like it."

"I started tying my own jigs because I was frustrated with the plastic baits I was using," Burnett said. "They just weren't durable."

"These marabou jigs of mine will hold up, and they're effective because they undulate in the water. You can hold them still and they'll still move. Especially in cold water when crappie aren't going to chase anything, they'll see that slight movement and they'll hit."

Burnett has proven it time and time again. He is a walking advertisement for his product. When he fishes from marina docks, he often is "that guy" – the one who is catching fish consistently while others struggle to get a bite. When he shows them the homemade jigs he is using, he often gains customers.

But most of his business comes from his Crappie Stopper Facebook page, where he displays his many color patterns. Anglers order and Burnett sits down at his

tying bench to create the jig. There is no mass production in this business.

Burnett ties all of his own jigs and is at it seven days a week. "I can tie about 30 an hour," said Burnett, who is a custodial supervisor in the Olathe school district. "So it keeps me busy."

When Burnett isn't tying, he often is teaching children to fish. He is a certified Master Angler for Fishing's Future, a non-profit that is dedicated to getting kids and their families outdoors.

He also gives fly-tying demonstrations at retail outlets and on the internet, and teaches others to fish.

"Fishing has been good to me, and I feel like it's my duty to pass it on," he said.



Don Coffee has gained a following for his YouTube fishing program, *Don the Outdoorsman*.

## A SUCCESS STORY

Burnett could certainly fit the bill as a role model.

He is a rising star in the fishing industry. He ties his own jigs and flies, and he became so successful catching crappie and bluegill on them that word quickly spread. Soon, he began selling his work under his Crappie Stopper brand and orders began streaming in from across the nation.

## ANOTHER ROLE MODEL

When Don Coffee attended a friend's wedding several years ago, he learned just how far his YouTube fishing channel reached.

"A guy from out of state tapped me on the shoulder and said, 'I know you. Don the Outdoorsman,'" said Coffee, who lives in Topeka. "He told me that he watched me all the time on YouTube."

"I was amazed. When I started this, I had no idea my

show would have that kind of exposure.”

Coffee started his YouTube channel when he viewed dozens of other shows and noticed one common thread that was missing: People of color.

A lifelong hunter and angler, Coffee had one of those “Why not me?” moments and he established his show. Segments include everything from rabbit hunting to crappie fishing to how to clean his catch, and viewers have responded favorably.

He often includes other black people on his shows and hopes his segments will encourage others to get involved.

For Coffee, hunting and fishing come naturally. He was brought up in the Missouri Bootheel, hunting and fishing.

“Rabbit hunting was our big thing,” Coffee said. “We raised beagles and we got good at hunting.

“Me and my brother Kendy would go out with seven (shotgun) shells and we would come back with seven rabbits.”

Eventually, Coffee enlisted in the Army and was stationed at Fort Riley. That’s when he discovered what he describes as “a sportsman’s paradise.”

After serving in Desert Storm, he left the Army but returned to Kansas. He has worked the last 25 years at Hallmark Cards. When he isn’t working, he often is out fishing or hunting.

“I take a lot of my friends who are combat vets out fishing,” he said. “Some of them have been through a lot. I want to show them how peaceful and soothing being out on a lake can be.”

## GROWING DIVERSITY

The Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism doesn’t track the race of people who buy fishing or hunting licenses in Kansas. But nationally, surveys show that people of color are increasingly participating in outdoors sports.

Almost 4 million Black Americans nationwide now fish, according to the latest findings of the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation. That represents a jump of almost 1 million from 10 years ago.

Hubbard believes totals of black participants may actually be even higher than that.

“All too often, I think they look at centers of influence

## THE ROOTS OF DIVERSITY IN KANSAS’

E.J. Alexander would be happy about the way the land he left behind is being used today.

Alexander, a former slave, died in 1923 and left a will with a simple request – that his land near Emporia and savings go to the orphaned and needy children of the area.

Today, the sounds of excited kids carry across the land he once farmed. Each summer, children attend Camp Alexander and fish, swim, canoe, hike and bicycle through the beautiful property Alexander left.

It’s just as Alexander would want it. He arrived in Emporia in 1854 and quickly established himself as a successful businessman.

He was best known for his produce business. He raised fruits and vegetables on his 40-acre farm, then hitched up a wagon pulled by a team of horses and sold the fresh produce to the residents of Emporia.

But Alexander also was known for his soft spot for children. Historical accounts showed that he gave away more fruit and vegetables to children than he sold to their parents. He felt that kids, regardless of their race, deserved to spend quality time outdoors.

A soft-spoken man, Alexander took many needy children under his wing and showed them the importance of living close to the land.

Today, his legacy lives on.

– Brent Frazee



E.J. Alexander

and judge participation that way,” he said.


“They’re overlooking places where blacks are engaged—places like Mississippi, Alabama and the Carolinas.

“There are huge blocks of people of color fishing there.”

Hubbard and Price are national leaders in the fight to achieve diversity in outdoors activities. They and their national television show have won many national awards, and the couple have both served on prestigious federal advisory boards. Hubbard recently was called on to address the Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation in Washington, D.C.

Their message is clear. Progress has been made, but there still is a long way to go.

There still are barriers to overcome—a lack of transportation, racism, and a sense of not belonging.

“A lot of times, blacks don’t see themselves in that (fishing) space,” Hubbard said. “We have to show them that they have some equity, some ownership in it, the same way as anyone else.” 

# Heavy Hitters

by Rob McDonald, Modern Wildman Blog

Kansas waters are blessed with a great variety of fishing opportunities, and fish species to pursue. From panfish and trout, to bass and paddlefish, Kansas is home to some fantastic fishing. Whatever your fishing passion, be sure to have a current Kansas fishing license from a retailer or purchase your license on KDWPT's "HuntFish KS" mobile app. It's also important to know the fishing regulations of the water you plan on fishing. One of the most sought-after fishing pursuits in the state by anglers, and rightly so, is the pursuit of catfish.

The pursuit of catfish with a rod and reel in Kansas is a fantastic pastime, but it should be known that the pursuit of gargantuan Heavy Hitter catfish in Kansas is the reel deal! While any fish on the end of a line is time well spent, pursuing big brute whiskered fish is a passion unto itself.

Kansas is home to flathead catfish, bluecat catfish, and channel catfish with state record fish weighing in at 123 pounds, 102.8 pounds, and 36.5 pounds accordingly. Most Kansas waters hold a variety of catfish species, and the potential for a real giant is a reality.

With big Heavy Hitter Catfish in mind, here are some considerations for gear and tactics to help you land your next GIANT catfish.



**Where to Find BIG Catfish** - Large catfish are predatory fish, typically feeding on small bait fish like shad, panfish, suckers, shiners, and other smaller catfish. Look for structure where big cats can hide and ambush their prey: drop offs, sunken snags, current edges, creek channels, rocky bottoms, and mud banks with hidden holes. If you're utilizing sonar, find the bait fish utilizing structure, and you'll find the big cats.

**Baiting Up** - While there are no hard and fast rules in fishing, generally speaking, big fish take bigger baits. We've all heard stories, or have first hand experience of large cats being caught on crappie jigs, crank baits, or on a small dab of night crawler; by in large, however, big cat anglers have their best success using bigger baits. Utilizing a Cast Net is a terrific way to obtain bait fish native to the water you are fishing, and to avoid spreading non native aquatic species hitchhikers. Look for live shad, bluegill, or golden shiners to use as live bait, or cut bait for big catfish.

**Big Cat Tackle** - Large, mature catfish are tough, and they fight hard! Matching your tackle to the fight in these fish is a must! Think strength and durability when choosing tackle for big catfish.

**Rods & Reels** - If you're planning to target big cats, medium/heavy and heavy action rods are a good fit to help you tire out a hooked catfish weighing in over the twenty pound mark. Large, quality built reels with adjustable drag systems will help you win the fight with a big catfish. Look for a reel with a bait clicker option as a bonus. Heavy built bait casting reels are a terrific big catfish choice, they hold plenty of line, and are made to last. Overbuilt spinning reels can be a great option as well. Spinning reels can be found with the bait clicker feature, and while they won't spool as much line as bait casters, they can cast heavy weights and big baits further with ease.

**Let There Be Light** - Catfish in general can be caught during the day, but generally speaking, catfish are more active at night. Bringing along a lantern, headlamp, flashlight, or even a bug off candle can offer light to help you keep an eye on your rods, and tie on tackle when fishing in the dark.

**Catfish Fishing Line** - The name of the game when it comes to big catfish fishing line is strength. Big cats fight hard, and will test your line and knot strength.

**Braid** - Heavy braid, and high test monofilament are both terrific options. Braided Line offers unsurpassed strength per its diameter, is easy to spool, and will often last an entire season. Braid's downfalls include poor abrasion resistance along rocks and in snags.

**Monofilament** - Monofilament is tough stuff, standing up to some abrasion in gnarly catfish hideouts, and it holds a knot well. Unfortunately, mono has some stretch and line memory, and it is susceptible to UV damage from the sun.

**Hooks, Swivels, and Sinkers** - The common theme for big catfish is heavy duty gear. The theme stays true when it comes to hooks, swivels, and sinkers for catching Heavy Hitter catfish.

**Hooks** - Sturdy built, extra sharp hooks from 1/0 to 8/0 depending on bait size are ideal. Wide gap hooks are a great option, offering more room to accommodate larger baits, and hook ups in a big catfish's mouth. J Hooks, circle hooks, and octopus hooks are all great options for big catfish.

**Swivels** - Large heavy swivels are a critical component for big cat fishing. Catfish tend to roll in the water after being hooked, and a Quality Snap or Inline Swivel that can surpass the cat's strength is a must. A three way swivel works well to rig up a drop weight bait presentation for catfishing.

**Sinkers** - Utilizing a sinker to get your bait down, and to hold it in place is an important detail for just about any kind of bait fishing. Egg sinkers, bell sinkers, bank sinkers, pyramid sinkers, and no roll flat sinkers are all examples of weights that will work for catfishing. The size and shape of the best sinker for your fishing location will depend on current, water depth, and the size of your bait. Sliding a nylon bead onto your line between a sliding weight and swivel or hook knot will help protect the knot from damage from the sinker.

**Other Tools of the Trade** - Large cigar floats can be used over deeper water for suspending baits over snags or just off the bottom in rocky areas. Floats can also be used for drifting baits in the currents of streams and rivers. Tools like needle nose pliers, a bait knife, and nail clippers can all come in handy for any type of fishing, and they definitely have their place when you are pursuing Heavy Hitter Catfish!

*I hope you find some time to venture out to the local fishery near you this summer and wet a line. If you're up for an adventure and a fight, try your luck at hooking up with a BIG catfish, good luck and hang on! I'll see you out there.*



# Kanopolis *State Park*

If you enjoy hiking, biking or horseback riding, Kanopolis State Park has one of the finest collection of trails in the nation. Located just off Scenic Byway K-141, 33 miles southwest of Salina, the oldest recreation area in Kansas invites you to enjoy the pristine landscapes that looks much the way it has for centuries.



## Rick McNary

freelance outdoor writer

With nearly 30 miles of trails that traverse the Smoky Hill River Valley, all who wander upon them agree that it feels like stepping back in time.

“The resources that you find around the area are what the early settlers had,” says Wendy Bowles, conservation worker for Kanopolis State Park. “You can go on a two-hour hike in Horse Thief Canyon and think you are the first person to ever walk there. In a three-quarter mile stretch of the trail, the habitat changes three times from semi-arid at the trailhead down into a canyon with tropical plants, and areas with fruit, beavers and spring water coming up of the ground.”

“The resources that you find around the area are what the **early settlers** had,” says Wendy Bowles, conservation worker for Kanopolis State Park. “You can go on a **two-hour hike** in Horse Thief Canyon and think you are the **first person** to ever walk there.”

## History

To grasp the full impact of the history of Kanopolis and the Smoky Hill area surrounding it, the Kanopolis Lake Legacy Tour is an excellent way to get a sense of both the pre-historical and historical area. This self-guided car tour – brochures of which can be found at the park office, the Corps of Engineers office or at the local Ellsworth County Historical Society – provides an excellent understanding of the lore, the legends and the legacy that this part of Kansas had in shaping our state.

Just north of the Kanopolis State Park, and under its jurisdiction, is Mushroom Rock State Park, a fascinating combination of giant mushrooms made of Dakota sandstone with hardened surfaces formed when the



Many hiking and biking trails offer scenic views, such as this water crossing located on the blue trail.

area was once a sea during the Cretaceous Period. Sandstone and sedimentary rock are held together by a natural cement which leaves some parts of the rock sandstone-soft, while other parts are extremely hard. This five-acre state park is a must-see for those who enjoy being awestruck with the forces of nature.

Evidence of various Native American cultures are plentiful in the area known as the Smoky Hill Complex. Comanche, Sioux, Arapaho and Kiowa depended on the river and the prairie for sustenance. The Smoky Hill Trail was a conduit for those headed towards Colorado first on foot, then later by stagecoach and then trains. The 20,000 square mile drainage of this valley which supplies Kanopolis stretches clear to the headwaters of the Smoky Hill River in the high plains of eastern Colorado.

Early explorers included Coronado in the 1540s, who gave up his search for the Seven Cities of Gold approximately 20 miles east of the state park around Lindsborg at Coronado Heights. Later, American explorers like Zebulon Pike, Kit Carson, Buffalo Bill Cody and John Fremont coursed through this area

headed west.

Once westward expansion of settlers began and the Smoky Hill River Valley became the main conduit for travelers headed west, military forts were established. Fort Harker, after General Charles Garrison Harker who was killed in battle during the Civil War, was built after Fort Ellsworth closed and became a key center of activity in the west. For a period of time, General Custer used the fort as a base.

Once Fort Harker was closed by the government, land speculators from the east purchased the land around the fort with aspirations of making the area the Central Metropolis of the region, hence the name of the city, Kanopolis, for which the state park is named.

Perhaps the most notable part of the state park, and an area rich in fact and fiction, is Horsethief Canyon. The most popular, albeit unsubstantiated, story of the canyon is that a local inn/stagecoach station owner in the 1800s was deputized to hunt horse thieves. He allegedly shot them and returned to bury them in the canyon, thus giving rise to the name.



The Buffalo Track Canyon Nature Trail is a 1.5 mile trail that follows Bison Creek.





### Construction of the Reservoir

“Construction began in 1940,” says Jason Sunderland, park manager. “Construction was interrupted in 1942 during World War II then started back up in 1946. The final completion was in 1948, then, in 1959, the Kansas Park Authority dedicated two areas which are now the state park: Langley Point (South Shore) and Horsethief (East Shore/Horsethief Canyon).

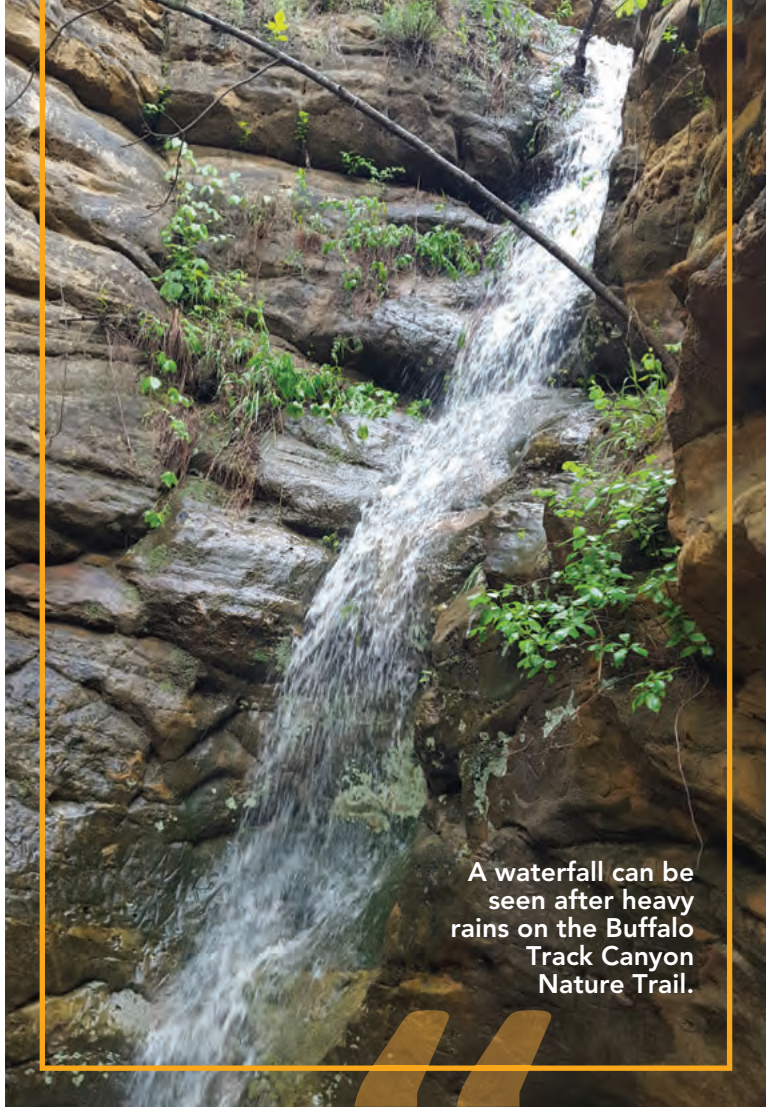
“Like other state parks in Kansas, the land and the reservoir are owned by the Army Corp of Engineers- a federal agency – but the state park and surrounding Smoky Hill Wildlife areas are managed by the state park.

“The reservoir itself has 3,500 acres of water and the surrounding state park has 1585 acres. However, the state also has 5,000 acres of the Smoky Hill Wildlife area around that state park and reservoir that it manages.”

Kanopolis was originally designed to be a 50-year reservoir. The expectations at the time were that it would become silted in and a new reservoir would be built further upstream. However, modern farming practices such as no-till and cover crops has extended the life of the reservoir indefinitely.

### Construction of the Equestrian Trails

The park is best known for its equestrian trails and campgrounds. When Bowles joined the staff at Kanopolis in 1990, the total trail length of all trails was only three-quarters of a mile. However, she was approached by an equestrian group that wanted to mark out a 36-mile competitive trail ride. That began a



A waterfall can be seen after heavy rains on the Buffalo Track Canyon Nature Trail.




Beauty is that which gives pleasure when seen.



series of trail building activities that now makes Kanopolis famous for its trails.

“We could not maintain the trails without great volunteer groups,” Bowles says. “There are a variety of equestrian groups as well as an ultra-marathoner group whose work in maintaining the trails are critical for our success.”

With the early importance being placed on equestrian trails, Kanopolis also began creating equestrian camp sites to accommodate both campers and their animals. The development of these accommodations makes Kanopolis a popular, nation-wide destination for horse lovers. It is the trails of Kanopolis that reveal her greatest beauty.

Kanopolis State Park has a unique personality forged over time with legends, lore and landscape. She invites you to know her more intimately because at each bend in the trail is a surprising part of her beauty that reveals the glories of her past, the elegance of her present and inspires hope for the future. She illustrates best the definition by Thomas Aquinas, the 13th century philosopher, who stated, “beauty is that which gives pleasure when seen.” 





Students in local school districts, such as Hesston, have enjoyed visiting the park for field trips throughout the years.

## Camping

Camping reservations are made at: [www.reserveamerica.com](http://www.reserveamerica.com)

- 14 Campgrounds
- 133 Utility Sites
- 200 Primitive sites
- Four Deluxe Cabins in the Langley Point Area
- The Rockin' K campground is designed for equestrians.
  - o 1-10 are available for non-equestrians
  - o 1-4 are ADA accessible. All sites are reservable.

## Boating

- Langley Point
  - o Marina
  - o Two boat ramps
- Horsethief
  - o Two boat ramps

## Trails

### Hiker-Only Trails

- Buffalo Track Canyon Nature Trail - this 1.5-mile trail follows Bison Creek and is marked to correspond to an interpretive brochure you can pick up at various locations around the park.

### Multi-use Trails

Kanopolis offers 27.38 miles of trails open to hikers, mountain bikers,

and horseback riders, 15.3 of which are on the Smoky Hill Wildlife area.

- Rockin' K trails that go to and from the Rockin' K campground.
- The Horsethief trails loop through canyons and trees.
- Prairie trails take you through high prairie and Red Rock Canyon, a sandstone canyon that will take your breath away.
- Alum Creek trails, which cross the vast prairie and water crossings.
- The Split Boulder Trail is a beginner mountain bike trail. It starts at trailhead E. This 1.63-mile trail loops through interesting boulder formations, near the shoreline, through trees and meadows back to the trailhead. Hikers are welcome to use this scenic trail.
- Wildlife Viewing Area Trails - The 40-acre Wildlife Viewing Area has a .6-mile ADA accessible trail circling through a marsh and around two ponds, five photo blinds, and an observation deck that offer opportunities for birders, photographers, and outdoor enthusiasts of all ages. Contributions from generous donors helped restore this area from an unused motorcycle racetrack into a natural sanctuary.
- Kid's Pond ADA Fishing Access and Trail - This trail offers excellent

access for people of limited mobility to fish, view wildlife, and enjoy being outside.

**Trail Season:** The Prairie trails and Alum Creek trails are closed to horseback riding and mountain bikes from Nov. 1 through Jan. 31. This is a safety precaution during hunting season. Trails inside the park are open year-round. Portions of the trails may be closed during high water because low water crossings become hazardous or impassable at times; always approach crossings with caution.

**Trail Access:** All trails start in Kanopolis State Park. Camping equestrians use the campground (trailhead A). Equestrians visiting for the day use Horsethief Canyon (trailhead B). Hikers and mountain bikers use Buffalo Track Canyon (trailhead C). Stay on trails and do not trespass onto private land. Hikers and advanced mountain bikers who are camping can easily access trails through Rockwall campground (trailhead D). Beginning mountain bikers might consider the Split Boulder Trail (trailhead E).



## Hunting

Approximately 11,000 acres are managed by the Corps and are open to the public for hunting. Game animals include pheasant, quail, prairie chicken, deer, furbearers, turkey, squirrel, rabbits, coyotes, and a variety of waterfowl.



## Fishing

Kanopolis Reservoir offers excellent fishing for white bass and crappie. White bass may be taken soon after the ice melts in the shallows near Bluff Creek or in the Smoky Hill River during their spawning runs, usually in April. The best crappie fishing occurs from March to May, but crappie may be caught year-around in Tower Harbor and Yankee Run coves or along the face of the dam. This lake also supports walleye, saugeye, wiper, largemouth bass, and channel catfish. Call the fisheries biologist for information, (785) 658-2465. All federal and state fishing regulations are enforced.

## Smoky Hill Wildlife Area

Managed by KDWPT, the Smoky Hill Wildlife Area encompasses over 5,000 acres of diverse wildlife habitat. Native mixed grass prairie and wooded creeks lead to the Smoky Hill River that winds through the area. This

popular area is known for its deer, turkey, and quail hunting. Waterfowl frequent the wildlife refuge and special hunts on the refuge provide additional hunting opportunities.



## Upcoming Events

- June 12-13, 2021 - Annual Spring Benefit Ride, held annually to raise money for the horse campground
- September 18-19, 2021 - Annual Winter Breeze Benefit Ride, held annually to raise money for the horse campground
- October 2-3, 2021 - Best of America by Horseback will be filming on the trails, this ride is open for the public to join, call Tom Deay at (540) 829-9555 to get your spot on the ride.
- October 23, 2021 - Free Park Entrance Day at Kanopolis to encourage people to attend the Prairie Long Rifles event
- October 22-24, 2021 - Prairie Long Rifle Annual Rendezvous event at Mulberry Campground - sign up for shooting competitions in camp - event open to the public - trade tents and kid's activities all weekend

Please call the park to make sure these events are happening as scheduled, some events may be cancelled or postponed.




# Kanopolis State Park

**Park Manager**  
Jason Sunderland

**Park Office**  
200 Horsethief Road  
Marquette, KS 67464  
(785) 546-2565

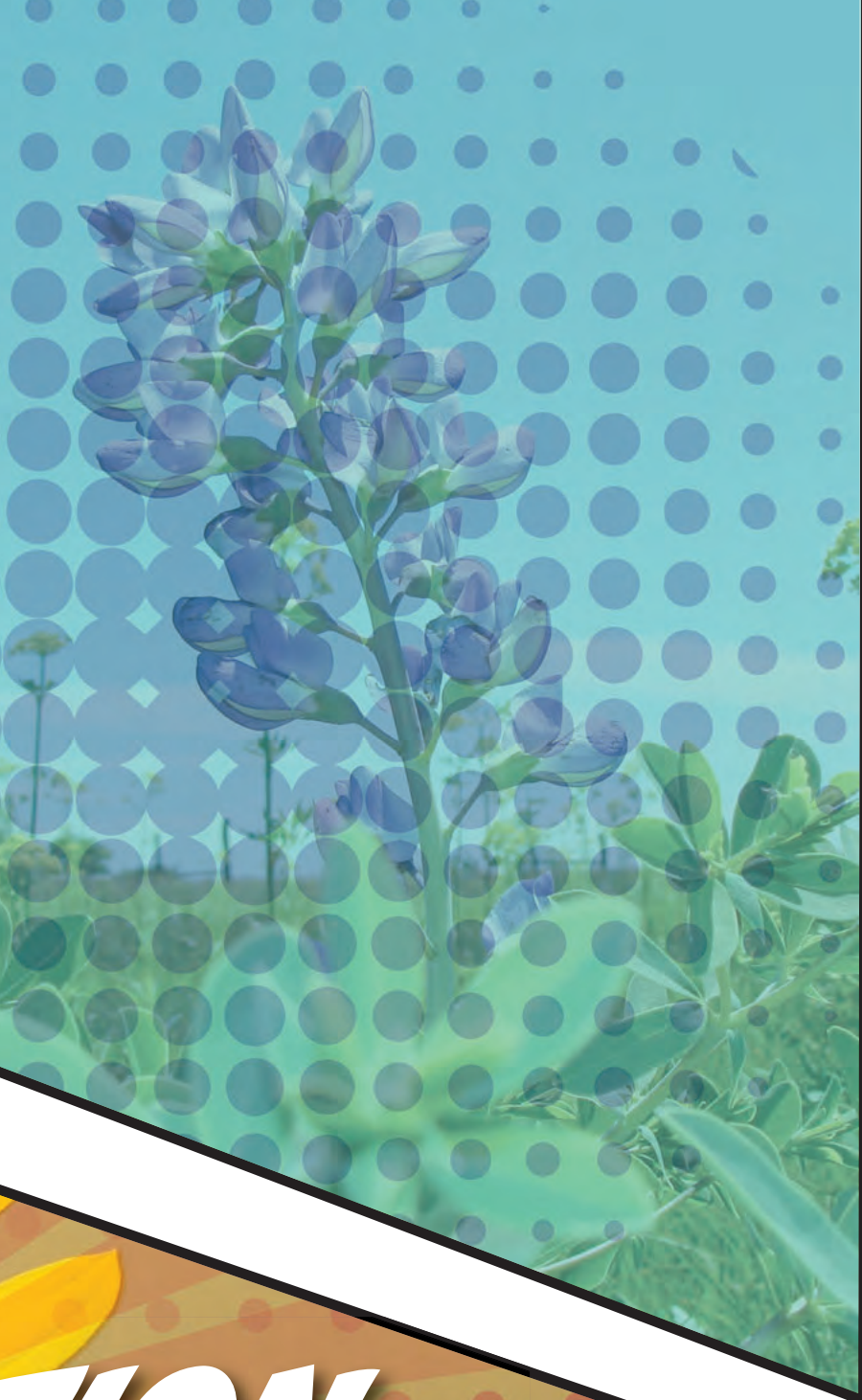


Events like the Horsethief Canyon Trail Marathon bring people from across the region to Kanopolis State Park.



*Hidden  
Heroes of*

**CONSERVAT**



**TION**



### ***I KNOW TWO SUPERHEROES.***

They cannot fly. They do not wear capes. And the only trait even remotely close to a superpower either of them have is the gift of gab. But, they both make a difference in wildlife conservation. Their small southeast Kansas property is living, breathing proof of the old adage “100 pennies make a dollar.” This is their story.

### ***IN THE BEGINNING***

In 2005, Mike and Shelly Bodensteiner purchased 40 acres of tillable land southwest of Girard. The only thing they knew for certain was they wanted to use three of their acres to build a home.

“One of the things I noticed as I traveled around the state for my job was there seemed to be fewer and fewer small, family farms every year,” Mike said. “And as the farms grew cleaner and more efficient, the habitat for wildlife was disappearing, so we decided we wanted to try to make a difference and bring back our own version of the small family farm.”

With a shared love of wildlife and the outdoors they set out on their adventure with limited knowledge, a few hand tools, and one farm implement: a lawn tractor. The first order of business was to pick up 700 pounds of sheet metal deposited across their land by a recent tornado that passed by less than a mile to the south.

While 40 acres may not seem like much compared to expansive state wildlife areas such as the sprawling 41,000-acre Cheyenne Bottoms, the history of wildlife conservation in Kansas is steeped in small farms and ranches. Mike and Shelly were confident they could have a positive impact on wildlife, and they were committed to the creativity, financial investment, and sweat equity

they knew would be required to make their dreams a reality.

"So, what was your plan for your 40 acres?" I asked.

They both laughed as they shared that they've answered that question dozens of times over the last 16 years.

"Our 50,000-foot view was to try to squeeze as much habitat diversity as we could out of our 40 acres," Mike said. "But, we quickly realized we needed help because neither of us has a background in biology or conservation."

One of their first calls was to Mark Sooter, soil conservation technician with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office in nearby Girard.

"Mark was invaluable in helping us create a plan that included a wetland, pond, and food plots, as well as guiding us through the various conservation programs available to us like CRP (Conservation Reserve Program)," Mike said.

As the three of us chatted in their home which overlooks their wildlife oasis, I asked them another question they said they've answered over and over: "Why did you want to do all of this?"

They each had their own reasons that aligned with two common themes in wildlife management: non-consumptive and consumptive interactions with wildlife.

"Well, I love to take pictures," Shelly said. "I'm not a professional photographer but I enjoy seeing the flowers in spring and the grasses in fall and trying to capture those in photos."

"I grew up hunting with my dad and grandpa," Mike said. "But, while I still enjoy hunting, I've reached a level of maturity where it's not about shooting

limits anymore, now it's about enjoying time outdoors with family and friends and seeing the fruits of our labor because of the habitat work we've done."

The first project they tackled was a wetland.

"We really relied on NRCS to design a wetland that fit into the topography and landscape of our farm," Mike said. "Heck, the contractor was moving dirt for the wetland even before we broke ground on our house."

Almost immediately, they began to realize some of the challenges they would face in transforming their blank palette into a wildlife area.

"We had no equipment, very little knowledge, and the two of us were our only manual labor force," said Mike.

***"THIS PLACE LOOKS COMPLETELY DIFFERENT THAN WHEN WE BOUGHT IT AND THE TRANSFORMATION HAS BEEN FUN TO WATCH."***

The pair planted their first food plot of sunflowers by spreading seeds out of an old soda can drilled with holes pulled by a chain behind their old truck.

"Money comes into play, too, even with the financial support of the state habitat programs," said Mike. "It turned into an exercise in rationalizing the out-of-pocket expenses as we balanced conservation spending with everything else in our lives."

Construction of the wetland was followed by sowing about two-thirds of the remaining tillable ground to native grasses and forbs. A pond came the next year along with multiple food plots for deer, quail, and doves.

"We couldn't afford to do everything all at once, so we relied on the experts from both the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism and

NRCS to help us both develop and stick to a multiyear plan," Mike said.

Drive by the Bodensteiner farm today and you will see a wildlife oasis amid a patchwork of agricultural fields and pastures. On the April evening I shared with Mike and Shelly, there were blue-winged teal fueling-up in their wetland for their migration north. Mourning doves and meadowlarks buzzed through their backyard. They flushed a covey of quail a few days prior during one of their evening walks with their dogs.


"This place looks completely different than when we bought it and the transformation has been fun to watch," Shelly said.

The two described their farm today as like a Christmas tree.

"We have the Christmas tree so now we get to choose how we decorate it," Shelly said.

Continuing with that metaphor, one would consider their shrub thickets as the tinsel placed on their tree sparingly but strategically. Their wildflowers would be the homemade cinnamon ornaments attracting pollinators with their sweet aroma. The wetland and pond are the white lights on the tree that illuminate the path for migrating waterfowl.

The Bodensteiners took 40 marginally productive acres of rocky soil and, through hard work and creativity, achieved their humble goal to make a difference for wildlife. A true testament to the spirit of the small farm habitat of days gone by.

Are they superheroes? No, but I still think I will try to find them a couple of capes to wear as they stroll the acres of their hidden gem. 



Mike and Shelly Bodensteiner purchased 40 acres of land southwest of Girard in 2005 and since then, have developed most of it into diverse wildlife habitat.



While not a professional photographer, Shelly enjoys seeing flowers in the spring and grasses in the fall and trying to capture them in photos.



The Bodensteiners plant food plots to attract and feed wildlife.



# MOUNTAIN BIKING IN KANSAS

*If you like to get away from the crowds and the noise for some outdoor adventure, then mountain biking on a Kansas state park trail might be the perfect fit for you.*

*by Rick McNary, freelance writer*

Trails at Kansas state parks are specifically created for those who enjoy the different pace, scenery and challenges that mountain biking affords.

"I love all kinds of cycling," says SaraKay Carrell, naturalist for Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT) at Little Jerusalem State Park. "But mountain biking is my favorite. I love being away from the noise of roads and towns, being able to see

critters and footprints of various critters, sunrises and sunsets that you won't see from anywhere else."

Although Carrell has an impressive collection of trophies and medals from local, regional and national cycling competitions, her favorite part of mountain biking is working with beginners.

"Some people are a bit fearful about mountain biking," Carrell said. "But I tell them, 'Come ride with me and I'll show you how





# MOUNTAIN BIKE

## TERMINOLOGY

### **Bunny Hop**

Hopping over an obstacle with your bike

### **Endo**

Flying headfirst over the handlebars and crashing

### **Brody**

The switchback turn is so tight you have to get the front wheel around the corner, then simultaneously lift and swing the back end to make the turn

### **Biff**

To crash

### **Bark Tattoo**

Skin abrasion you get from scraping a tree

### **Chain Tattoo**

Marks left on your leg by the chain

### **Danger Noodle/Nope Rope**

Snake

### **Racing Stripe**

Mud thrown on your back by your back tire

### **Skinny**

Man-made feature barely wider than a tire

### **Taco**

When wheel is shaped like a taco after a crash

### **Yard Sale**

When a rider crashes and all of their stuff—water bottles, nutrition, backpack, seat bag, etc.—goes everywhere

### **Single Track**

One trail

### **Double Track**

Two trails, side-by-side, such as a jeep or 4-wheeler trail

### **Muni**

Mountain unicycle





**SaraKay Carrell has a massive collection of trophies and medals from cycling competitions, but her favorite part of mountain biking is working with others.**

much fun it is! I know of three people that were fearful when they started riding with me and they've gone on to win local and national competitions."

In addition to offering a different pace and scenery, mountain biking comes with a set of different challenges than road cycling or riding on gravel, also known as gravel grinding. However, trails are marked as beginner, intermediate or advanced so the rider can choose a trail that suits them. One such trail is Switchgrass Mountain Bike Trail at Wilson State Park.

"Switchgrass is a stacked loop trail," Carrell says. "In a stacked loop system, the key is that if you turn left, it takes you longer; if you turn right, it takes you back to the trailhead. I recommend you start with the easy loop which is a mix of a lot of easy and a bit of intermediate, but nothing advanced. It's a great way for people to advance their skill sets as they try out more loops."

Carrell began riding Switchgrass in 1998 when there was only one six-mile loop. Now, there are 24.5 miles of trails and Carrell has been a part of creating, and maintaining, that

system as a volunteer. Although her job with KDWPT relocated her to both Lake Scott and Little Jerusalem State Parks, her affection for Switchgrass, and for mountain biking in general, is contagious.

"The best way to get involved in mountain biking is to volunteer to work on a trail," Carrell says. "The Kansas Trails Council has a coordinator for each trail and if you contact them or the state park office to volunteer, you'll meet a lot of people willing to help you learn. There's always someone in the group that says, 'I'm the slow one, let's go ride together.' The people you meet are phenomenal; I haven't met a bad mountain bike person, yet."

In addition to the different pace and scenery, it is the physical challenges of mountain biking that appeals to riders like Carrell. Rather than focusing on racking up the number of miles such as road cycling, mountain biking is about increasing your skills.

"I like mountain biking because it's so much more of a physical challenge and requires learning new technical skills," Carrell said. "For

example, there is a Black Diamond part of Switchgrass that is very advanced. It's a mile-long rock garden and the pedaling is quite technical – you can't do a full circle with your pedals, so you have to rocker the pedals to make it through."

"I learned to ride a unicycle when I was 9-years-old by making 77 trips around my Dad's '66 Chevy Pickup," Carrell says. "On the 77th time around, I shot across the street and crashed in the neighbor's shrubs. I learned how to stop after that."

Carrell is a cheerleader for the sport and offers various suggestions for people to get involved such as asking a local bike shop to put them in contact with mountain bikers or to join various groups around the state.

"So many people have mountain bikes but all they ride are dirt roads or on city streets," Carrell said. "They might be afraid to ride a mountain bike trail, but once they ride it their fears are reduced. I had one friend who was fearful, so I offered to let her ride my bike which had a lot more upgrades than hers. She got to one obstacle and stopped to walk over it, but later told me, 'I knew that

SaraKay's bike had never walked over that and I didn't want to disappoint the bike, so I turned around, and road over it! Overcoming fear is the first step, but when you realize how much fun it is, you go back for more."


Kansans like Carrell aren't the only ones that go back for more at Switchgrass and other state park trails. John Tipton makes the seven-hour journey from Belleville, Ill., just to ride Switchgrass.

"For those who say Kansas is flat, they need to leave the interstate and hop on Switchgrass," Tipton said. "The diverse terrain, the simplicity of the area, is kind of a step away from the hustle and bustle, yet some of the best mountain bike trails short of Colorado."

"The best part of the trail is that it is a one-way trail system, so you don't have to worry about meeting someone head-on coming around a blind corner. They developed break-outs so you can get out easier and don't have to go out in the middle of all those miles. It's also very well marked so you always know where to go. Kansas trails are some of the best in the nation."

That reputation is the result of hard work, long-term planning and strategic partnerships. One in particular is the relationship between KDWPT and the Kansas Trails Council. This partnership creates a mutually reinforcing synergy that has the same goal: create opportunities for people to enjoy the various health benefits of being outdoors.

"Mike Goodwin with the Trails Council is wonderful," Carrell said. "I needed a new mower, so he wrote a grant and I had it in short period of time! The Sunflower Foundation has also provided KTC 'Trails in a Box' which are covered trailers filled with various tools to build and maintain trails – that is a huge help to us."

Although there are numerous trails in Kansas state parks that can be ridden with mountain bikes, here is a list of those which have trails that are designed specifically for mountain biking. More detail about these can be found at [ksoutdoors.com](http://ksoutdoors.com). To volunteer to work on the trails, contact any of the park offices listed to the right. For a complete listing of all trails in Kansas or for more information on how to volunteer, visit: [www.getoutdoorskansas.org](http://www.getoutdoorskansas.org) and [www.kansas-trailscouncil.org](http://www.kansas-trailscouncil.org). 

# STATE PARKS

## WITH BIKE TRAILS

Clinton State Park  
798 N 1415 Rd.  
Lawrence, KS 66044  
(785) 842-8562

Kanopolis State Park  
200 Horsethief Rd.  
Marquette, KS 67464  
(785) 546-2565

Cross Timbers State Park  
144 Hwy 105  
Toronto, KS 66777-9749  
(620) 637-2213

Kaw River State Park  
300 SW Wanamaker Rd.  
Topeka, KS 66606  
(785) 273-6740

Eisenhower State Park  
29810 S Fairlawn Rd.  
Osage City, KS 66523  
(785) 528-4102

Milford State Park  
3612 State Park Rd.  
Milford, KS 66514  
(785) 238-3014

El Dorado State Park  
618 NE Bluestem Rd.  
El Dorado, KS 67042  
(316) 321-7180

Perry State Park  
5441 West Lake Rd.  
Ozawkie, KS 66070  
(785) 246-3449

Fall River State Park  
2350 Casner Creek Rd.  
Fall River, KS 67047  
(620) 637-2213

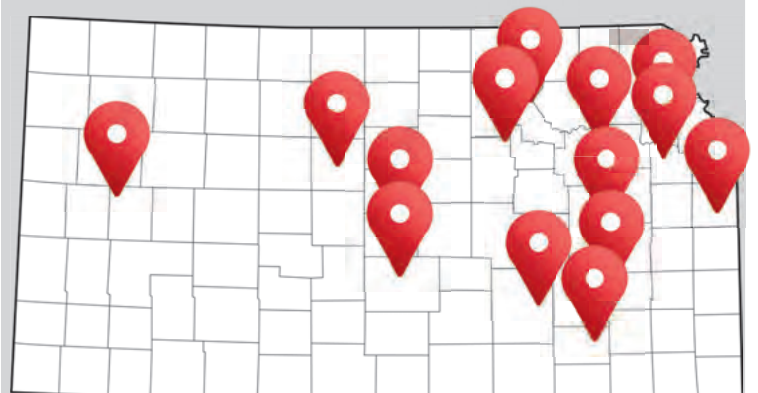
Sand Hills State Park  
4207 E. 56th  
Hutchinson, KS 67502  
(316) 542-3664

Hillsdale State Park  
26001 W 255th St.  
Paola, KS 66071  
(913) 594-3600

Tuttle Creek State Park  
5800A River Pond Rd.  
Manhattan, KS 66502  
(785) 539-7941

Historic Lake Scott State Park  
101 W Scott Lake Dr.  
Scott City, KS 67871  
(620) 872-2061

Wilson State Park  
#3 State Park Rd.  
Sylvan Grove, KS 67481  
(785) 658-2465



# Species Profile



Daren Riedle Photo

## Slender Glass Lizard

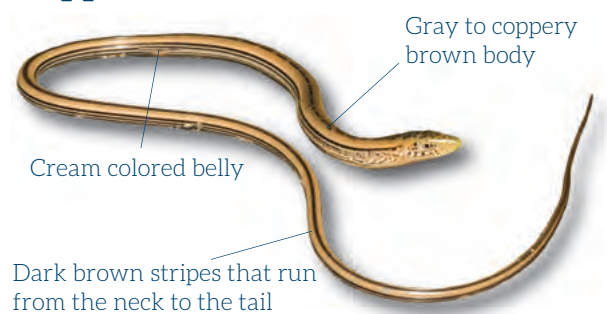
*Ophisaurus attenuatus*

**It's a worm! It's a snake! It's a lizard?**

**D**espite its snake-like appearance, the slender glass lizard is exactly that – a lizard. No other limbless reptile in Kansas has eyelids or external ear openings, separating this species from our other slithering friends. With a length up to 34 inches in Kansas, only the first few inches of this lizard is its body – the rest is all tail.

<b>Size</b> Up to 34 inches in Kansas	<b>Diet</b> Insects, spiders, snails, frogs and snakes	<b>Habitat</b> Tallgrass prairie, sand prairie and open woodlands
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### Appearance



### Did you know?

Glass lizards earned their name by their ability to “shatter” their tail. The tail will continue to writhe after coming off, confusing any predator that has ended up with this part of the animal.



# FISH. CATCH. WIN.

MAY 1 - JULY 31, 2021

1

GET A KANSAS  
FISHING LICENSE

2

CATCH A TAGGED FISH  
AT A SELECTED LAKE

3

REDEEM YOUR  
PRIZE

**KANSAS**  
WILDLIFE & PARKS



Get your fishing license,  
find a selected lake, and  
redeem your prize at  
[www.KSFishDerby.com](http://www.KSFishDerby.com)



# Backlash

with Nadia Reimer

## Death – A Necessity of Life

Death is an anxiety-inducing topic for many. It's natural that the thought of life ceasing would make many of us uncomfortable; what happens after "life" is something we know almost entirely nothing about. And, we have a tendency to fear the unknown.

Fears aside, I recognize that death is necessary to life; that death is literally around us all of the time. The wilting salad in my fridge, the young robin fledgling that fell from my tree in the front yard, the graying hairs of my dog's chin, the fiddle leaf tree dropping leaves in my office, the deer mount I walk past every morning, the "celebration of life" invitation that just arrived in my inbox, all serve as reminders that death is inevitable.

But I didn't write this column just to talk about death. In fact, the impetus for this column was much more trivial. Passing the time on a 3.5-hour drive home, my colleagues and I began a discussion about unique accounts on social media that were worth following. It was then I learned about an Instagram account called, Nature is Metal (insinuating that Mother Nature is fierce, hardcore, intense, etc.). My coworkers went on to share that Nature is Metal is an account devoted entirely to images and videos of animals attacking and/or eating other animals. "How odd," I thought to myself, wondering who in the world would want to focus on such a dark and gruesome topic.

Later that night, curiosity got the best of me and I picked up my phone, searching for Nature is Metal on Instagram. To my surprise, the account had well over 3 million followers.

I began scanning past posts, many of which had been temporarily shielded by Instagram, with the warning, "Sensitive Content - This photo may

contain graphic or violent content." I clicked through.

While the images and videos were, in fact, graphic, the page wasn't designed around the gore or the "action," as I had so quickly assumed. Nearly all of the account's posts had an educational component, highlighting each species' diet and/or hunting habits. It was an account about something much greater – the fact that survival of one species is often dependent on the death of another; after all, we all must eat to survive.

Post after post, click by click, I challenged myself to remain in that "uncomfortable but curious" state to see what else I could learn. "Some of this content might actually be useful for my job," I thought.

I took in a post about the cannibalistic nature of black-tailed prairie dogs – I had no idea they eat their own as a means for lessening competition for resources. I witnessed a lioness ferociously defend her fresh kill from a loitering lion, but the male came to its senses and fled mostly unscathed. It's still so fascinating to me that lioness' do the majority of the hunting. I also watched a clip of a wildebeest calf fighting to free itself from the clutches of a leopard. The wildebeest's mother comes into frame and appears to show aggression toward the calf, but as you read on, you learn the mother's behavior wasn't aggression at all, rather an attempt to get its calf on its feet. Ultimately, the wildebeest calf succumbed to the leopard and the wildebeest mother rejoined its herd without its calf. That day, the leopard would eat. It would survive another day, at the cost of the wildebeest calf. Death for life.

Though some of the videos

Shutterstock/hadkhanong

remain uncomfortable for me to watch, I still check the Nature is Metal Instagram account from time to time. And each visit, I come away having learned something new. I discover respect for species I previously villainized. I develop a greater sense of appreciation for the food I can so easily gather and consume each day. And, I inch just a little closer to the idea that maybe death shouldn't be so scary after all. Without it, we wouldn't have life.



Follow KDWPT on Instagram at [instagram.com/kswildlifeparkstourism](https://www.instagram.com/kswildlifeparkstourism)

KDWPT & KWF PRESENT

# Flatlander

PODCAST

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