

\$3.75 | July-August 2021

KANSAS

Wildlife & Parks Magazine

Venture to
Wilson
State Park
Pg. 40

Inside:
**Beyond the
Game Bag** Pg. 28



Notice to Subscribers

This issue arrived in your hands much later than usual. For this, we sincerely apologize. We are working diligently to prevent future delays in distribution. We thank you immensely for your patience and continued support.

– *Kansas Wildlife & Parks Magazine staff*

STATE OF KANSAS

Laura Kelly, Governor
David Toland, Lt. Governor

KDWP COMMISSION

Gerald Lauber, Chairman
Gary Hayzlett
Aaron Rider
Emerick Cross
Troy Sporer
Lauren Queal Sill
Warren Gfeller

KDWP ADMINISTRATION

Brad Loveless, Secretary
Mike Miller, Assistant Secretary
Jake George, Wildlife Director
Doug Nygren, Fisheries Director
Stuart Schrag, Public Lands Director
Linda Lanterman, Parks Director
Greg Kyser, Law Enforcement Director
Jessica Mounts, Licensing/Ed. Director
Debbie Rosacker, HR Director
Chad Depperschmidt, Budget Director
Steve Adams, Chief of Planning/Fed. Aid

Chris Tymeson, Chief Legal Counsel

Joy Duncan, Chief Fiscal Officer

James Schneider, Chief Engineer

Nadia Reimer, Chief of Public Affairs &
Engagement Officer

Chris Berens, Chief of Ecological Services

Aaron Austin, Chief of Education

Shanda Knapic, Chief of Licensing

Jason Dickson, Chief of IT

KANSAS
Wildlife & Parks Magazine

- 2 | Common Ground**
Write it Down *By Brad Loveless*
- 18 | Carp Diem**
They're seizing every opportunity to land one more carp. *By Michael Pearce*
- 22 | Beyond the Game Bag**
This kind of hunting doesn't require a license. *By Brad Stefanoni*
- 26 | Stride for Stride**
Well-known outdoor writer tallies up Kansas' best trails. *By Michael Pearce*
- 29 | Redemption**
Decimated grounds are reclaimed for outdoor access. *By Rick McNary*
- 35 | Kansas Channel Cats**
Rivers and riffles are the name of this cat-chasing game. *By Brent Frazee*
- 38 | Tree shak'n, Trotlinin', Juggin'-good Fun**
Fishing with a pole doesn't appeal to everyone. *By Rob McDonald*
- 40 | Wilson State Park**
Rugged but rich, Wilson is a desert-lover's paradise. *By Rick McNary*
- 43 | Species Profile**
Grasshopper Mouse *By Jessica Ward*
- 45 | Backlash**
Hope, and Hunting, Are on the Horizon *By Nadia Reimer*

Contents

MAGAZINE STAFF

Nadia Reimer, Executive Editor
Jessica Ward, Managing Editor
Dustin Teasley, Print Manager
Megan Mayhew, Digital Content Manager
Annie Swisher, Circulation

FRONT COVER Wayne Simien, Sr. spends a few mornings in the heat of the summer fishing for carp. Michael Pearce photo.

INSIDE COVER Wilson State Park offers scenic views to all who visit. 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.

Kansas Wildlife & Parks Magazine (ISSN 0898-6975) is published bimonthly (every other month) by the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism, 512 SE 25th Ave., Pratt, KS 67124. Address editorial correspondence to *Kansas Wildlife & Parks Magazine*, 512 SE 25th Ave., Pratt, KS 67124, (620) 672-5911. Send subscription requests to *Kansas Wildlife & Parks Magazine*, 512 SE 25th Ave., Pratt, KS 67124. Subscription rate: one year \$13; two years \$22; and three years \$32.

Articles in the magazine may be reprinted with permission. Periodical postage paid at Pratt, KS and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Kansas Wildlife & Parks Magazine*, PO Box 856, Lincolnshire, IL 60069. For subscription inquiries call toll-free 1-866-672-2145.

Equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from programs described herein is available to all individuals without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, political affiliation, and military or veteran status. Complaints of discrimination should be sent to Office of the Secretary, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, 1020 S Kansas Ave., Topeka, KS 66612-1327.



COMMON GROUND

with Brad Loveless



Write it Down



Tonight, I had a déjà vu moment that I haven't had in years. In fact, I haven't had that particular feeling in decades. It came to me while sitting at the dinner table. The feeling was anxiousness mixed with excitement that I needed to finish eating so I could go out to fish before dark.

Now, if you think that hurrying through supper is no big deal, you haven't experienced my Mom's, or wife Mindy's, cooking. Evening meals are a treat that nobody wants to miss. Rushing through one is like eating an ice cream cone in a few bites instead of savoring each lick.

Nevertheless, here I was wanting to hurry and finish so I could get to the water. My mind scrolled back to when I was a kid, vacationing by the lake. I'd be sitting at the dinner table looking at the sun getting lower and lower and my fishing pole with the lure tied on, leaning next to the door. This was the same exact feeling from 50 years earlier.

I believe that emotions like that should be enjoyed, dwelt upon, and certainly not ignored, which delivers us to this column's point: When you and I become aware of a future outdoor Kansas experience that evokes excitement, anticipation and joy, we must write it down and plan so it takes place; these are too important to not make happen. As you think through fish, fishing locations and circumstances - whether it be fall with water temperatures dropping and fish gorging themselves for winter, winter through the ice, spring spawn or summertime chasing shad on the surface - I bet you can start a list of experiences you have to make happen; write them down and put them on your calendar.

Do spring, summer, or fall waterfowl migrations get your heart pumping? Then write down your plan to visit Cheyenne Bottoms, Quivira or any one of the other fantastic wetland complexes that Wildlife and Parks manages across Kansas. There are beautiful campgrounds you haven't visited and spectacular trails you might haven't yet hiked. Make a memory by going during seasons you haven't experienced before. Write them down!

Are there hunts that trip your emotional trigger? A cool fall squirrel hunt in northeast Kansas oak woods? Ever take your dog on a late summer prairie walk in search of greater prairie chickens? How about a deer, teal, quail, pheasant, or mallard in a previously unexplored part of Kansas? Let your imagination and heart be your guide.

And what about the human element? Imagine any one of these remarkable scenes, now add a good friend, a daughter, grandson or granddaughter, a new companion - one who you can introduce to the wonders of Kansas. Sharing an outdoor experience magnifies it, creates a permanent connection between participants and equips those invited for their own future adventures.

In Kansas, we are blessed with several lifetimes of outdoor opportunities, but time has a way of passing us by. The formula to change this:

- Dream, imagine and make your plan.
- Invite a guest to multiply the fun.
- Get your calendar and write it down.
- See you outside!

Blue Catfish Tagging Project Continues at Tuttle Creek Reservoir



Blue catfish are native to major river basins in eastern Kansas and can reach massive sizes; in fact, the current state record caught from the Missouri River weighed more than 100 pounds. As blue catfish populations become established in Kansas' largest reservoirs, popularity of the species among recreational anglers also continues to grow. One waterbody that has been seeing increased attention from blue catfish anglers is Tuttle Creek Reservoir.

Tuttle Creek Reservoir is a 10,000-acre impoundment of the Big Blue River near Manhattan. Blue catfish likely occurred natively in small numbers in the Big Blue River but were first observed by the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) in Tuttle Creek in 2002. Between 2002 and 2016, approximately 162,000 blue catfish were stocked into the reservoir to help develop a naturally-sustaining population. Additionally, a more restrictive 35-inch minimum length limit and five fish daily creel were implemented in

2018 to allow fish an opportunity to spawn prior to reaching the legal length limit.

The primary long-term goal for the blue catfish fishery in Tuttle Creek Reservoir was to develop a self-sustaining population that would allow harvest opportunities for anglers. Natural reproduction was first observed in 2016 and has been documented each year since. And, a particularly large year class was produced in 2019, suggesting this population is now self-sustaining and capable of supporting increased angler harvest. As a result, KDWP fisheries biologists will propose to change the harvest regulation in 2022 to a 10 fish daily creel that can include one blue catfish larger than 30 inches.

As with any new regulation, large amounts of data are needed to gauge effectiveness. To collect the data, KDWP fisheries biologists will tag up to 2,100 blue catfish in Tuttle Creek Reservoir this summer. The tag will be a small yellow or orange vinyl tube affixed beneath the dorsal fin. One side of the tag will display a number unique to that fish and the other will display a phone number to report the catch. Biologists hope to gain information about population size, entrainment through the dam, and susceptibility to harvest.

The success of this project will depend largely on anglers reporting the capture of tagged fish. Biologists need the general location of where the fish was caught, length of the fish, harvest date, tag number, and whether the fish was kept or released. Anglers with this information can call (620) 342-0658 to report their catch and receive their reward. If the fish is not legal to harvest, anglers should return it to the water immediately after recording this information. If the fish is legal to harvest, anglers can either harvest or release the fish. Because part of this study is to evaluate harvest patterns, biologists encourage anglers to not let the presence of a tag influence their decision.

For questions about this project or angling in Tuttle Creek Reservoir or the Manhattan area, contact district fisheries biologist Ely Sprenkle at ely.sprenkle@ks.gov.

For information on fishing in Kansas, visit ksoutdoors.com/Fishing.

Current KDWP Employment Opportunities

Permanent Positions

Facilities Specialist at Clinton State Park (Reannounced)

Seasonal and Temporary Positions

Cedar Bluff State Park - Seasonal Maintenance Worker

Cheney State Park - Seasonal positions

Clinton-Perry Lake - Temporary Boat Holder

Clinton Wildlife Area or Topeka Regional Office - Seasonal Law Enforcement

Colby District Office - Seasonal Wildlife Biologist Aide

Cross Timbers State Park - Seasonal Volunteer positions

Emporia Research and Survey Office - Aquatic Nuisance Species/Fisheries Research position

Fall River State Park - Seasonal Volunteer positions

Glen Elder Reservoir - Fisheries Aide

Kanopolis State Park - Seasonal Maintenance positions

Kansas City District Office - Temporary Office Assistant

Kaw River State Park - Seasonal Worker

Marais des Cygnes Wildlife Area - Conservation Tech

Meade Fish Hatchery - Temporary Fish Hatchery Aide

Apply today at www.ksoutdoors.com/jobs

BIRD BRAIN

Southbound Migration of Shorebirds

with Mike Rader

The months of July and August in Kansas can seem long, hot, dry and uneventful in the world of birding. Many of the marshes, playas and other waterbodies that may have filled during the spring rainy season are drying down and seem to be devoid of anything that birds might look for. Daytime temperatures in the 80s to 100+ degrees are generally the rule, with many of us longing for the cooler breezes of October. While we are that much closer to fall and more moderate weather, it is the beginning of exciting times.

Shorebirds begin their southbound migration in summer, with numbers increasing in late July and August, especially with adult birds that have fulfilled their obligation of breeding and producing young. There are also adults that may have been unsuccessful nesters that hang around wet areas in our state, but there is a big push from the north and especially the Arctic. Most adult shorebird species flee the summer breeding grounds, leaving the young birds to fend for themselves and find their way to wintering areas in the southern U.S., and Central and South America. It is amazing to me that these youngsters, with the information that is hard-wired into their brains, can navigate successfully and make the long journey.

These shorebirds are usually a little slower in the southern migration, with many staying in wet areas to loaf, find food before eventually picking up and flying southbound again. It's a great time to observe shorebirds, but some time spent with a field guide brushing up on identification is time well-spent, too.

Plumages vary in most species, with older birds having feathers that may be in poorer condition than the new growth exhibited by young of the year. It takes practice and time in the field at some of our important stopover sites; it can be a

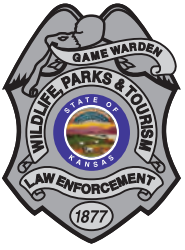
challenge, but also very rewarding.

The months of July and August also signal the southward migration of many of our continent's hummingbirds. Many of the species that breed in the northern parts of the continent and in the mountains of the west start to frequent Kansas, with most of the species' diversity seen in the western half. Many of the hummingbirds seen in the east are Ruby-throated hummingbirds that could have been local nesting birds and young, or migrants from the far north. This species dominates the hummer sightings in the state in the spring, but the "western" species (Rufous, Broad-tailed and Calliope) usually make a decent showing this time of year, as well, in the central and western regions of our state. There are some rarities that will show up from time to time, so look for something out of the ordinary and you might be rewarded.

Adult male hummingbirds are usually the first ones we see in late July, followed by adult females and young birds the rest of the year, dragging out migration through the fall. They are more difficult to identify and as with shorebirds, it takes practice and good field guides if you want to confirm what species are dropping in. A good stand of flowers helps draw these tiny visitors to yards, but they will readily take to feeders if available, utilizing both sources of nectar and consuming small flying insects. Be sure to change sugar-water frequently in feeders, as the hot weather tends to make it go bad in less time.

It's a great time of year to look for birds, despite the hotter and drier weather. It can also get you in better practice for the waves of migrating birds that pass through Kansas in September and October!





LAW MATTERS

Adventure Awaits



I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself; My name is Greg Kyser and I currently have the honor of serving as the Colonel of the Law Enforcement Division at the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks.

Listening to stories from one's grandfather is something I'm sure many of us grew up experiencing. Some of those stories from my childhood revolved around my grandfather's adventures as a Kansas game warden. These stories, in turn, led me down a path into law enforcement.

I started my career with the Allen County Sheriff's Department in Iola, not far from my hometown of Elsmore.

After a few years, I applied for the Kansas Highway Patrol (KHP) was accepted, graduating in class 24 at the KHP Training Academy in Salina in 1988. For 30 years, I was proud to serve on the KHP in multiple ranks and roles, finally retiring as a captain over Troop T in Topeka.

I quickly realized that while I had fulfilled some of my lifelong dreams throughout my career as a KHP trooper, I still aspired to live out my childhood dreams of following in my grandfather's footsteps. After this realization, I applied to KDWP and was hired as a game warden in Anderson County. By 2020, I was promoted to Lieutenant and supervised a district south of Topeka.

I was appointed to Interim Colonel after Colonel Ott's departure from KDWP late last year. I transitioned into the position permanently after being appointed by Secretary Loveless in May 2021. The position was, and is, a great honor and I do not take this position lightly. I hope to bring new and exciting advancements within the Law Enforcement division of KDWP in the years to come.

Someday, I hope to tell my future grandchildren about the adventures I had serving as a Kansas game warden. Until then, I'm going to do my best to make this agency and the state of Kansas proud.



Follow **Kansas Wildlife & Parks - 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. I once roamed Kansas in herds of millions.
2. I can reach weights of 2,000 pounds
3. I became the Kansas state mammal in 1955.

>>> See answer on Page 15.



Vamos A Pescar with Tanna Fanshler

At the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP), we believe the Kansas outdoors are for everyone. That's why we are proud to work with the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation (RBFF) and other partners to utilize the George H.W. Bush Vamos A Pescar (VAP) Education Fund. Made possible by an initial donation from Bass Pro Shops Founder and CEO Johnny Morris, the George H.W. Bush Vamos A Pescar Education Fund was born in 2014, with the goal of funding state and local initiatives that engage Hispanic families in fishing, boating, and conservation. RBFF provides this funding to states in the form of a grant, which can then be sub-granted to local groups and organizations.

This year, KDWP is excited to report that three local groups have been awarded funding through the VAP Education Fund to support their efforts to engage Hispanic families in fun, educational fishing opportunities. A huge congratulations to the Emporia Migrant Education Program, Fishing's Future, and wildHERness for supporting outdoor

access and opportunities for all!

We are grateful for our partners at RBFF for making funding available, and to the many dedicated groups around Kansas passionate about bringing fishing fun to Hispanic families. These efforts couldn't have happened at a better time, following last year's launch of KDWP's Afuera Para Todos or "Outdoors for All" language access plan, and the associated Spanish translation of the Kansas Fishing Regulations Summary. Contact the Pratt Operations Office or your nearest license vendor for a hardcopy or visit our website at ksoutdoors.com/Espanol to download a digital copy of the translated regulations. There, you will also find additional resources available in Spanish.

Interested in learning more about VAP? Visit takemefishing.org/educationfund/ to watch a short video, make a donation, or learn how your local group can apply for funding.



Researchers Discover Undocumented Crayfish Species in Kansas

Widespread sampling for invasive crayfish had never occurred in Kansas lakes – that is, until the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) recently funded a university project focused on the freshwater crustacean. KDWP's Aquatic Nuisance Species Program and Ecological Services section funded the project with the overarching goal of establishing sampling protocols that could then be used for long-term monitoring of both native and invasive crayfish in Kansas. To the surprise of staff and researchers, the need for such protocols would be validated almost as quickly as the research project began.

During capturing efforts at McPherson State Fishing Lake – one of several small waterbodies slated to be inspected in the state – university researchers collected multiple Rusty

Crayfish. Rusty Crayfish have not previously been documented in the wild in Kansas, making this official "discovery" the first of its kind. Rusty Crayfish captured at McPherson consisted of both males and females of varying ages, indicating a reproducing population is established in the lake. Unfortunately, this isn't the type of species staff and researchers would hope to find, as the Rusty Crayfish is an invasive species known for the considerable ecological damage it can cause in waterbodies.

This large, aggressive crayfish is not only known to attack the feet of unsuspecting humans and animals standing in freshwater, it outcompetes both native fish and crayfish species for forage – forage that also acts as important cover for select prey species.

HUNTING HERITAGE

Classic Cartridges .30-30

with Kent Barrett

The .30-30 Winchester cartridge was originally designated the .30 Winchester Center Fire or .30 WCF and was chambered in the John Browning designed Winchester Model 1894 carbine and rifle. The Model 1894 was initially introduced in .32-40 and .38-55 calibers, both still loaded with black powder. In August 1895, Winchester's catalog No. 55 unveiled the .30 WCF cartridge, what is commonly accepted as the United States' first small bore, sporting rifle cartridge designed for smokeless powder. Though, there is some question regarding this, because in 1895, Arthur Savage introduced his Model 1895 lever action rifle in .303 Savage. The .303 Savage cartridge was also being developed in 1894, so it is fair to assume that these developments happened during the same time frame, and it is unclear as to who reached their goal first.

The .30-30 designation was not a Winchester invention. Rival gunmaker John Marlin quickly adapted his Model 1893 lever action rifle to fire the new cartridge and called it the .30-30 or .30-30 Smokeless. Since Marlin did not manufacture ammunition, they worked closely with the Union Metallic Cartridge Company (UMC) replicate the .30-30 cartridge. Both Marlin and UMC dropped the Winchester reference as they did not want to put their rival's name on products they manufactured. The .30-30 designation followed the black powder cartridge practice of naming the cartridge using the nominal bullet diameter followed by the charge weight in grains of powder. This designation also helped to prevent customer confusion with the different but similar .30-40 Krag cartridge, which was referred to as the .30 U.S. or .30 Army, the accepted cartridge of the U.S. military at the time, replacing the Trapdoor Springfield rifle chambered for the .45-70 cartridge.



The new smokeless powder cartridges offered much higher velocities and flatter trajectories than was possible using black powder. Hunters quickly saw the possibilities this new powder provided. Most hunting rounds in 1895 cruised along between 1,200 and 1,600 feet per seconds, or fps. But with these new powders, a problem surfaced. As velocities approached 2,000 fps, pure lead bullets began to strip away as they traveled down the barrel, fouling bores and compromising energy. The .30-30 cartridge was originally designed using a 160 grain lead bullet with a "metal patch" or jacket of copper, brass or some gilding metal wrapped around the lead core. Incorporating a jacket also addressed the problem of over expansion of soft lead slugs impacting at high velocity. This entry into longer, heavier, and thicker jackets gradually perfected the balance between expansion and penetration.

It is commonly stated that the .30-30 has accounted for more harvested deer than any other cartridge. In all honesty, if you stick more than 7 million Winchester 1894s alone in the hands of an equal number of dedicated hunters over 125 seasons, you are bound to pile up a few harvested deer. In this day and age of overly built, long, bulky and heavy rifles, a good, easy shooting, easy recoiling, and nicely balanced "old fashioned" cowboy gun is just plain fun to hunt with. Though .30-30 has only been around for 125 years, but it is certainly worthy of being considered a classic cartridge.

"The most likely cause of the Rusty Crayfish making its way into Kansas is through its use as fishing bait," said KDWP Aquatic Nuisance Species coordinator, Chris Steffen. "This species is a prime example of the importance of always draining water from your boat, livewell, and bilge before leaving a waterbody, and of never moving bait from one waterbody to another. You just never know what could be hitchhiking a ride."

Staff and researchers working on the crayfish project will continue to experiment with multiple capture methods and techniques on a small number of waterbodies around the state. Once an effective and efficient sampling protocol has been identified, staff will continue the sampling efforts across a large number of lakes across the state.

Anglers, boaters and watersport enthusiasts are encouraged to keep their eyes open for this invasive species, which can be identified by its trademark large, black-tipped claws and rust-colored spots on its upper shell. If one is discovered, freeze it in a sealed plastic bag, note the date and location of capture,



and contact KDWP's Emporia Research and Survey Office at (620) 342-0658.

For information on other aquatic nuisance species in Kansas, visit ksoutdoors.com/Fishing/Aquatic-Nuisance-Species.



Pitcher's Sage

BY KRISTA DAHLINGER
Kansas Native Plant Society

Spikes of sky-blue flowers appear during the heat of summer, on tall delicate prairie plants commonly called Pitcher's sage, *Salvia azurea*. It is sometimes referred to as blue sage. As a tall thin plant in a windy state, it is often seen swaying in the breeze, and is nearly impossible to photograph with good focus. Pitcher's sage is a member of the Lamiaceae "mint" plant family, and has square stems as do other plants in the mint family. The plant is named for Dr. Zina Pitcher, an army surgeon and amateur botanist.

Pitcher's sage grows 3 to 5 feet tall, usually on a single stem. A mature plant may branch at the upper fifth of the stem and produce two flowering spikes. Leaves appear on opposite sides of the square stems, on short stalks, and are thin and lance shaped, up to 4 feet long on the lower parts of the plant and shorter on the upper stem. The blooms open at different times so that each flower has adequate space. The flower has a drooping rounded petal that is slightly ruffled. Insects land on the drooping petal while probing for nectar, and as they do, pollen is released onto them and they distribute it to the next flower. Pitcher's sage also has a long flowering period, from July to October.

Pitcher's sage prefers dry, rocky and sandy soil and is found across all but the western counties in Kansas in undisturbed prairies, hay meadows and on roadsides. It occurs south into Oklahoma and Texas, also across the southeastern portion of the U.S., on higher ground where the roots do not encounter saturated soil. Pitcher's sage is a herbaceous plant, dying back to the ground

every winter and regrowing from roots each spring. The roots grow up to 8 feet deep, giving the plant ability to survive drought. Seeds do not have obvious hooks, barbs or floss for dispersal by animal fur or wind, and so several plants may be found growing in a general area. Birds that eat the seeds likely help carry the seeds farther away. The plants do not form dense colonies or crowd out other plants.

Pitcher's sage is palatable and nutritious, and grazing animals will seek out the young tender plants in the early summer. It will recover after being browsed and will continue to grow and flower later in the year. Pollinating insects seek it out as a nectar source in the heat of summer when other plants take a break from blooming during times of heat stress.

Pitcher's sage does not survive being transplanted when the long roots are severed by digging. Ideal soil is well drained, sandy and rocky. Pitcher's sage can be grown from seed by spreading seed on the ground in the fall to be stratified during winter, or by placing seeds in cold moist conditions for one to two months before planting in soil in the spring. When cultivated in a garden setting without tall grasses nearby, it may become too tall and fall over onto the ground. The remedy is cutting the plant back to a height of 12 - 18 inches in late June, before blooming, to help the plant maintain a more upright form. Because the flowers bloom and set seeds at different times, it is best to collect seeds after the entire blooming spike has browned.

EVERYTHING OUTDOORS

Persistence Pays Off

with Marc Murrell

No matter the activity or vocation, there is always a learning curve. And when it comes to fishing, nobody said the curve was steep, but successful anglers, regardless of species, have a certain mindset and “never give up” attitude. This key to success was clearly conveyed on a fishing expedition with friends.

Nadia Reimer, Lyndzee Rhine and Jessica Ward had jumped in my boat one Saturday at Milford Reservoir during the Outdoor Communicators of Kansas Conference last May. Plans

were to catch smallmouth bass, wipers, crappie and whatever else might bite.

Mother Nature was not too cooperative as 30-plus miles-per-hour winds limited our fishing choices. But we all were happy to be out, and optimism was still high.

Still, the first cove yielded only one beautiful, breeding male white crappie that Nadia caught as we all cast jigs and bobbers trying to find spawning slabs. A couple hours into the trip and that was the only fish landed.

The next cove yielded another catch for Nadia as she began experimenting with lures. She had tied on a small, shiny spoon and caught a 16-inch walleye. A white bass a few minutes later and we were commenting on Nadia’s success.

Nadia has been on the receiving end of some crazy-successful fishing trips with her other KDWP coworkers, and she’s obviously paid attention to decades of fishing wisdom.

“Fishing is 90 percent persistence,” she said. “You just have to keep trying lures until something works.”

She is absolutely right. The successful anglers I know think they can catch fish in a mud puddle. And some of them probably can. Good anglers replicate whatever they were doing when they caught a fish for

continued success. If nothing seems to be working, try something else until it does. And never give up.

Which is exactly what Lyndzee was doing. I helped her tie on several different lures trying to find success. I was impressed with her tenacity and optimism, despite a few hand cramps from cranking the reel for several hours. She never complained or put the rod down for even a second.

Lyndzee’s persistence would soon be rewarded. We

traveled up the lake avoiding the wind and fished a rocky point. Lyndzee was using a RoadRunner, a small, bladed-bait type jig. It was tough to cast, but it is a favorite of spawning crappie and she kept chunking and winding without missing a beat.

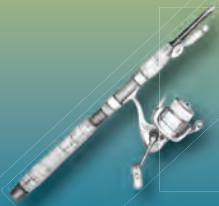
I heard a holler and looked to see Lyndzee’s rod bent nicely, and she was reeling feverishly. I grabbed the net and when I got to the back of the boat her fish was flopping at the surface. A quick scoop and we were all whooping and hollering as Lyndzee had a beautiful, slab-sided female crappie that probably weighed a pound-and-a-half. Jessica took a few photos and did not have to tell Lyndzee to smile, as she already was ear to ear.

Lyndzee was not done, either. With that taste of victory came more persistence and more success. She landed several other nice crappie and Nadia did the same with a kicker 20-inch blue catfish that put up a heck of a battle on light tackle.

It was not a banner day of fishing, but in the end, we had 7-8 fish to clean that would provide a nice meal or two. It did not take a lot to salvage a slow day, either. Persistence indeed paid off, and it is something we will all remember on our next fishing adventure.

Lyndzee Rhine, 2021





FISHIN'

with Mike Miller

Top Five Farm Pond Lures

Ask any group of anglers what their favorite pond lure is and you'll get as many different answers. While there may be some overlap, it's safe to say that my favorite lures won't necessarily be your favorite lures. However, I know my top five will catch fish in just about any farm pond you cast them into. Here they are, in no particular order:

1 Black Jitterbug

This tried and true topwater bait is guaranteed to catch bass on a calm summer evening. And there's nothing quite as exciting as listening to the rhythmic "plopping" sound of the lure before the water around it explodes when bass violently strike. Hang on!

3 Floating Minnow

Of course the standard here is the Rapala, 4-inch in silver and black or gold and black. The beauty of the floating Rapala is that it can be twitched on the surface over shallow weeds like a topwater bait, or it can be fished fast and erratically to elicit reaction strikes.

5 Jig

A jig with a plastic twister-tail body or a chenille and marabou body will catch any fish that swims in a pond. And the weight of the jig head can be varied to adapt to just about any water depth. Add a small float and you can fish the jig over brush snag-free – perfect for crappie and bluegill. The larger, heavier bass jig with a rubber strand skirt and plastic trailer imitates a bluegill or crawdad, two favorite meals of big bass.

2 Plastic Worm

I started fishing plastic worms 50 years ago with the Mann's Jelly Worm, grape color, Texas rigged with a bullet slip weight. It was dependable, but could be difficult to fish in heavy vegetation because of the weight. Under those conditions, I liked a black six-inch twister tail worm, rigged weedless and weightless, and reeled in just above sub-surface vegetation.

4 Spinner

While a No. 5 Mepps with a yellow bucktail is hard to beat for bass, the treble hook can be tough to fish in weeds. So I prefer the safety-pin spinner, with its single upturned hook. Smaller versions, such as a Panther Martin or a Beetle Spin, will catch all varieties of panfish.



Writings from a Warden's Daughter

with Annie Campbell



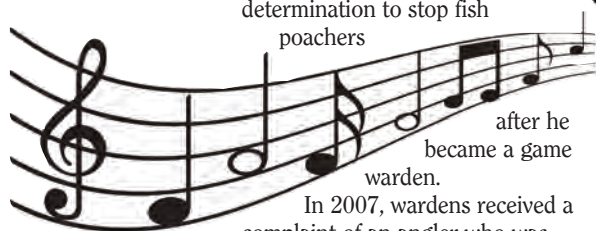
The Whistling Bandit

Reservoir outlets, or stilling basins, are popular fishing spots, especially when sport fish species congregate in the roiling waters. But not all who fish these waters are what they seem. Some individuals take advantage of conditions to take fish illegally and in excess of daily creel limits. And since a lot of illegal fishing takes place under the cover of darkness, game wardens spend many hours doing nighttime surveillance.

Throughout Dad's career, he worked many night details with other wardens at Perry, Melvern, Pomona, Milford and Tuttle Creek outlets. Usually, it was after midnight when poachers would tie on big, weighted treble hooks and jerk them through the water hoping to snag fish. Snagging is only legal during the March 15-May 15 paddlefish season in designated waters. And only paddle fish and rough fish may be taken. At any other time and place, fish not hooked in the mouth must be immediately released.

However, Dad's first encounter with a fish poacher took place long before he became a game warden. While attending K-State, he and a fishing buddy were fishing at the Tuttle Creek outlet when a tall, lanky fellow showed up one night and proceeded to drop his line with a pair of large treble hooks at the far end of the spillway wall. He then walked behind the other anglers letting out line as he held his fishing rod tip above everyone's head. When he reached the top of the outlet, he began to violently jerk those hooks as he reeled in line. He occasionally snagged other anglers' lines, including Dad's, and he would politely walk down and free his hooks. The second time he caught their lines, Dad waved his bait-cutting butcher knife at him and threatened to cut his line if he snagged them again. The man just laughed. Dad never forgot the man and the encounter

probably had an impact on Dad's determination to stop fish poachers



after he became a game warden.

In 2007, wardens received a complaint of an angler who was routinely taking channel cats and flatheads in excess of the daily creel limit from the Tuttle Creek outlet. He was referred to as the "Whistling Bandit" because he whistled while he fished. Rumor was he had a buddy who would illegally sell or trade the fish. Wardens increased night surveillance of the outlet area to identify the Whistling Bandit and his buddy, as well as what vehicle they drove. They then monitored the poachers' movements.

When a concerned angler gave wardens a first-hand report of channel catfish stacking up in the Tuttle Creek outlet, and that the Whistling Bandit was back at it, game wardens knew who to look for. Surveillance intel told Dad the Whistling Bandit never started fishing before midnight, so he arrived at the outlet just prior to midnight. At five minutes after midnight on a hot August night, Dad watched alone from above the outlet when the Whistling Bandit arrived. There were no other anglers present when the Whistling Bandit dropped his legally baited lines into the outlet waters. True to form, the man whistled a tune almost constantly. Within 10 minutes he caught his first channel cat, about a 5-pounder. Dad noted the time and continued to observe and recorded every fish caught. The Whistling Bandit would collect several fish, then drive around to the opposite side of the outlet, placing them in trough at a fish cleaning station. By 5:30 a.m., Dad had recorded 18 channel catfish caught and retained. The daily creel limit for channel catfish is 10, so the man was eight fish over his limit.

Dad drove to where the Whistling Bandit was fishing and asked to see his fishing license, noting two channel cats in a bucket in the bed of his truck. Dad commented on the fact that he had "only" two channels for the night, at which time the Whistling Bandit announced, "Oh, I did better than that." So Dad drove to the fish cleaning station and loaded the 16 channels into a large cooler. He presented the fish to the Whistling Bandit and warned him he was over the creel limit by eight. Immediately, the man claimed he caught ten of them before midnight, which was the previous calendar day. However, Dad pulled out his notes and advised him of his arrival time after midnight, as well as the recorded times of each fish caught. Reluctantly, the man signed a notice to appear in court for taking fish in excess of the daily creel limit. Two weeks later the Whistling Bandit appeared in court and paid a fine of \$400 and court costs. The channel catfish were donated to a local family in need.

WAY outside BY BRUCE COCHRAN



"WHO LIKES THEIRS BURNT AND DROPPED IN THE DIRT?"



LET'S
WITH DUSTIN TEASLEY
EAT

EAT THE DRUM!

I admit it, I may be obsessed with niche groups on Facebook. I often go looking for people who have similar interests as me so I can learn. While I often do learn something new, I am also reminded that I sometimes take for granted what I've learned in my 27 years with KDWP.

Recently, I followed a "Boatless Catfishing" page in hopes I might come across a new catfish rig or bait to use for catching channels. And I did! I learned about a rig set up I've never seen before that is not only effective for channels but great for carp, too. The "Method Lead" rig is first built using a "Hair" rig - both of which were new to me! And I've also benefitted from learning different cleaning methods - all thanks to the expertise of my new Facebook group friends. However, not everyone is so fortunate on these group pages.

Lately, I've seen many people post photos, asking the group "Can someone help me ID this fish?" Most responses are helpful while others are just plain wrong or even poke fun at the angler for not knowing.

One such photo was a picture of an angler with a freshwater drum - also referred to as a sheepshead, gaspergou, bubblers, croakers, gray bass, grinders, grunts, lake drum, silver bass and thunder pumpers. I'm sure there are more, but at the end of the day, they are referring to the freshwater drum.

Most often, group members

respond to the novice angler by encouraging them to use their drum as cutbait, but a few suggest filleting and eating the fish. I am considered part of "the few."

I've caught a variety of fish while targeting catfish - especially when using worms or chicken liver - including bullhead, carp, wiper, walleye, white bass, and yes, even drum.

While I don't often target them, when I land a 3-plus pound drum, I am keeping the fish and taking it home.

They put up a good fight, and the flesh is white and mild in flavor - a win-win in my book.

Once cleaned, I use the same seasonings and cooking methods as I would for crappie. (Now, I am not saying a drum can compare in taste to crappie, but the milder flavor of drum calls for similar seasonings as crappie.)

Seasoned anglers should realize, when outside our local fishing circles - especially when engaging on social media platforms like Facebook - we are interacting with folks with a wide variety of experience levels.

I've been fishing a LONG time, but even I know I still have plenty to learn.

Although it may seem like we are beating the same ol' drum (pun intended), let's be encouraging to less seasoned anglers. You never know, they just might teach us something one day.



Be a Force for Nature
with Daren Riedle

Be a Force for Nature.

That is our new charge as we move forward with the Chickadee Checkoff program, one of our agency's most important nongame programs. The Kansas Nongame Wildlife Improvement Program, Chickadee Checkoff, was adopted in 1980. Since then, it has appeared as a line on the Kansas Individual Tax Forms, providing Kansans an opportunity to contribute to nongame wildlife programs through a donation on their individual tax return.

More than 4,500 birds, mammals, fish, reptiles, amphibians, crustaceans and mollusks are considered nongame species in Kansas, species that are not trapped, fished, or hunted. We share our state with hummingbirds and herons, bats and butterflies, turtles and toads, mussels and snakes, and almost everything in between. Collectively, nongame wildlife make up more than 99 percent of all species in Kansas. Within our agency's State Wildlife Action Plan, 285 of those species are recognized as Species of Greatest Conservation Concern.

The number and types of projects and activities that Chickadee Checkoff has funded over the years is large and quite varied. Awards through Chickadee Checkoff have been used to fund experiential learning activities at the K-12 grade levels, as well as provided seed money for larger university pro-

jects throughout Kansas. The Chickadee Checkoff has also provided matching dollars for large habitat improvement projects within the state.

Despite early success, donations to Chickadee Checkoff in the last several years have dropped off. To try and reverse this decline in donations, we knew we needed to better promote and advertise the program. Those of us in charge of Chickadee Checkoff realized we were still using the same promotional materials and methods developed during the program's inception 41 years ago. That lack of change, in part, stems from the fact that we are biologists with no advertising or marketing backgrounds.

Enter our partnership with Bajillion Advertising to rebrand and modernize the Chickadee Checkoff program. After many discussions and designs we updated the Chickadee Checkoff logo and adopted the tagline, "Be a Force for Nature." By contributing to the Chickadee Checkoff program, you truly are making a difference for Kansas wildlife. Donations can be made at any time - not just tax season - and can be made at chickadeecheckoff.com.

During this process, we also wanted to do a better job sharing what we do. The Chickadee Checkoff landing page was developed to provide basic information and links to specific projects. It is our plan to continually update this page as current projects end and new projects begin. Finally, we will be posting more timely information on our new Facebook page Wildlife Diversity - Kansas Wildlife and Parks. I encourage you all to come visit our pages, and be a force for nature. Donate today.





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:

- Game Species** (primarily game 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.)
- Non-game Species** (any non-game 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.

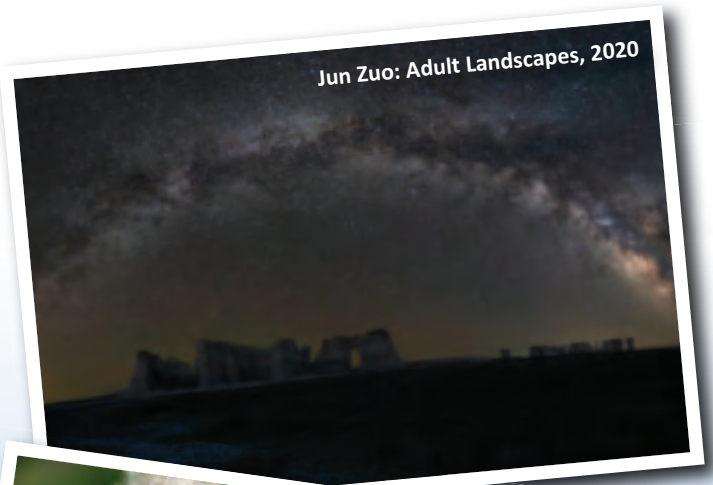
JUDGING

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 and click “Publications,” then “2021 Wild About Kansas Photo Contest.”



BE A FORCE FOR NATURE



Donate to the Chickadee Checkoff this Tax Season and Year-Round

The Chickadee Checkoff was the first checkoff in Kansas and started in 1980. This income checkoff program has allowed taxpayers to contribute to charitable organizations on their state income tax form.



Chickadee Checkoff
www.chickadeecheckoff.com

Junior Nature Notes: Birds

by Jennifer Rader
KDWP Education Specialist

Birds are a great 'gateway' to exploring nature. They can be found everywhere, with little effort, thanks to one of the most important characteristics they have: wings! Not all birds can fly, but most can and do to places where they can easily be seen by humans all over the world. Have you ever woken up to a bird song in the spring, or witnessed bird parents feeding their young out in your own yard? You didn't even have to leave your house to get a nature experience! Whether you're in the middle of a massive city or out in the middle of nowhere, you're likely to come across a bird and during any season.

Many people enjoy birds and their songs. It doesn't take much to find them, and birds come in a variety of colors and shapes that people find appealing. But birds are much more important than that! Just like all other organisms in nature, they are a key element in their ecosystems for many reasons.

Seed Spreaders

For birds, nature is their bathroom. Fruit-eating and seed-eating birds spread seeds through their droppings, and even when they accidentally drop a seed they were attempting to eat. Birds can bring back or change entire ecosystems just from this type of seed dispersal.

Pollination

Bees aren't the only pollinators! In Kansas, the Ruby-throated Hummingbird is an example of a pollinating bird. Across the world, many other bird species help pollinate wildflowers and other plants, including some plants used by humans for medicine or food.

You can find birds by using your eyes and ears. How many items can you check off from the list below?



Bird evidence

- feather
- droppings
- nest

Birds using habitat— look for them:

- on a branch
- on a wire or roof
- flying or soaring
- on the ground
- swimming
- eating
- drinking

Variety of birds

- group of three or more birds
- two birds together
- colorful bird
- bird that is mostly black
- bird with white on its body
- bird with a long tail
- bird with a short tail



Illustrations on this page by Evan Dethier, Bartels Science Illustration Intern

Clean-up Crew

Vultures get a bad rap, but we absolutely need their presence in ecosystems. By being able to quickly locate and eat dead animals (carcasses), birds like Turkey Vultures help get rid of smelly carcasses much faster than other scavengers and can also prevent the spread of diseases that might live in the carcasses. Many scavengers, especially mammal scavengers, are not as resistant to diseases as vultures.

Vultures can help stop the spread of diseases thanks to their efficient clean-up skills and strong stomachs!

Pest Control

Purple Martins specialize in eating flying insects such as beetles, mosquitoes, moths, termites and more, and many of which are pest insects. A single Barn Owl can hunt as many as 12 mice a night. The Yellow-billed Cuckoo is particularly good at breaking into tent caterpillar nests to feed on the caterpillars. These are just a few examples.

CARP



DIEM



Wayne Simien, Sr., is a hardcore crappie and bass angler who spends a few mornings in the heat of the summer fishing for carp.

Michael Pearce

freelance outdoor writer

Whenever a UPS truck rolls into Norton these days and some residents think, “I wonder how much Tom Huber spent on fishing tackle this time?”

Anybody who’s looked in his garage knows he’s already spent a lot.

Huber has rows of the kind of fancy spinning outfits that tempt his walleye fishing buddies to consider theft. Huber has more high-end hooks, weights and other tackle than most bait shops. He ties specialized gear with the precision of a watch maker. Huber has choreographed and practiced the footwork for a perfect cast more than most Dancing with the Stars contestants do the next dance. And, he uses underwater cameras to study how his favored fish react to his baits.

His “favored fish” are carp, both common and “grassies” or grass carp.

“I guess some might think this whole thing (specialized carp fishing) has gotten a bit out of hand,” said Huber. “I started out wanting to catch one to two-pound carp for flathead bait. It’s escalated from there. They’re about all my buddy, Troy Collins, and I fish for now.”

At a 2019 annual carp tournament at nearby Sebelius Reservoir, Huber and Collins caught 76 carp, even though they slacked off the last few hours of the competition because of exhausted arms. They routinely catch double digit num-

The Casual Carpster

Wayne Simien, Sr. is as avid as can be for crappie and bass. Still, during the heat of the summer he'll do some carp fishing.

He mostly fishes with the same spinning tackle he uses for some bass tactics. They're 7-foot medium action spinning rods and the reels spooled with 20-pound test braid. He used 12-pound test monofilament, successfully, for years.

His main bait is a family dough ball recipe. Ingredients are easily found in most grocery stores.

Branflakes
Wheatgerm
Cream-style corn
Molasses
Garlic powder

Simien first mixes half a box of branflakes with the cream corn. He adds half a jar of molasses. Lastly, he mixes in enough wheatgerm to give the bait firmness.

The dough is refrigerated overnight to help it tighten. He'll keep it on ice while fishing, making nickel-sized doughballs as needed. If multi-species fishing, he'll work some garlic powder into the dough as it's being made into balls. Channel cat and, sometimes carp, seem to appreciate the added flavor.

Simien places no weight on the line, but attaches a small bobber between the middle eyes on his rods to help detect subtle bites.

When the bobber hits the rod, it's time to set the hook.



bers that weigh double-digit pounds. That includes common carp over 20 pounds and grass carp (white amur) over 40 pounds.

Yet Huber covets bigger. Their search for the “great yellower whale” is taken very seriously.

Chum it, and they will come

The concept of chumming are simple – the more carp around your bait, the higher your odds of catching a carp – or 20. The best way to concentrate those fish is by offering them easy, and excessive, eats.

For Huber, putting out 100 pounds of chum is a ho-hum effort. To win that 2019 tournament, Huber and Collins poured over 600 pounds of chum on their fishing spot, beginning several days before the tournament.

“Probably 90 percent of the stuff I use I can get at a supermarket or feed store,” said Huber. “It’s not terribly expensive. Well, I guess it could add up.”

Huber’s preferred carp chum begins with a 50-pound bag of whole corn. After it’s washed well, he lets it soak – in full sun when possible – for 24 hours. It is important tap water isn’t used. The next step is crucial.

“You need to have it in a metal bucket, with that water, and boil it for about two hours,” said Huber. “You want it to be soft to the touch. When it’s soft, it’s a lot easier for them to digest and they’ll really eat it up.”

If he’s primarily targeting common carp, Huber likes to put two or three buckets of the boiled corn out the night before he fishes. If it’s a trip for grass carp, he can get by with chumming early in the morning, then fishing a few hours later. Ideally, he’ll chum a spot that’s in about 6-7 feet of water, close to the shallows.

You can lead a carp to bait...

Huber’s underwater cameras quickly taught him what all carpholics know.

“Carp are a smart fish. It’s amazing how fast they can distinguish ‘right’ from ‘wrong’ when they’re feeding,” said Huber. “They can suck a bait in and spit it back out so fast the angler probably never even knew it.”

Huber often fishes with a few kernels of the boiled corn on a hook. Two or three kernels of canned sweet corn have served Huber well, too.

When he’s after common carp, Huber literally sweetens his offering by pouring about a cup of molasses into a gallon bag about half full of corn the night before. A little special flavoring really improves his success.

“Anything citrus related, the grass carp are really

suckers for,” said Huber. “We use pineapple juice and it’s a real game changer. They love it!”

As with molasses, Huber pours a can of pineapple juice into a gallon bag partially full of softened corn the night before he fishes. He may use some of it for chum, but always keeps enough for fishing.

When super-serious, Huber fishes with hard-boiled dough balls known as “boiles.” The concept began over 50 years ago in England, where common carp are as revered by anglers as largemouth bass are in America.

Most boiles are made with eggs and whole-wheat flour, with some flavoring and coloring mixed in. They also float a few inches off the bottom of the lake, which makes them easier for carp to find.

A quick online search brings up a wide variety of boiles with more flavors and colors than a good ice cream shop - tutti-fruity, pineapple passion, strawberry, raspberry and others. YouTube offers tutorials on how anglers can make their own boiles, as well.

Huber’s trial-and-error experimenting of finding what boiles work best on local carp adds fun to making his own, and can save money. Huber uses a combination of commercial and homemade boiles.

He catches more, and bigger, carp when his boiles don’t hold a hook. No, that’s not a typo.

Bait set-ups, known as hair rigs, have baits threaded on a short piece of line, with the hook an inch or so above the boiles, corn or other bait. Ideally, the carp pick up the bait, feels nothing wrong, then sucks it, and the hook, in.

Specialized carp tackle

Huber spools his spinning reels with 12-pound test monofilament. His medium action spinning rods are 10-feet long for a reason.

“The longer rods, with that (relatively) light line, really give me a lot of casting distance and accuracy,” said Huber. “I want to be within 5 feet of the chum, no farther. I use a baseball analogy. You can’t win a game if you’re not throwing strikes. With those rods, and lighter line, I can cast 70 to 100 yards. It takes a lot of practice, but it can be done.”

(Yes, he really has painstakingly studied, and



Tom Huber, of Norton, goes to extremes to catch lots of big common carp, like the one pictured above.

rehearsed, the methods of special long-distance casting.)

Huber is a fan of Gamakatsu #6 circle hooks that’s he’s filed to maximum sharpness. They’re fished Carolina-rig style, with a 12- to 14-inch leader, below a one ounce sliding weight.

Huber freely admits that Kansas carp can be caught with rods and reels commonly used for crappie, walleye and bass; and that dumping hundreds of pounds of chum isn’t the only way to catch carp. But, he likes the results it can bring.

“If you put two or three, 5-gallon buckets of boiled carp chum out the night before, it can be non-stop most of the next day,” said Huber. “You know what it’s like when you’re really into bluegill? Well, it’s like that, but you’re catching carp that fight like a 12-pound bluegill as fast as you can. It’s that much fun.” 🐊



Don't get me wrong, I love placing a few birds in my game bag just like any other hunter. The more hunting seasons I put behind me though, the more I've started to recognize what really matters to me: the experience. Creating memories with family and friends take up more space in my game bag these days than mallards and rooster pheasants.

BEYOND THE



GAME BAG

BY BRAD STEFANONI
FREELANCE OUTDOOR WRITER

Toolkit

Here are a few pieces of gear you might consider having on hand to aid in your exploration of the Kansas outdoors:

- **Smartphone and/or camera.** Most smartphones take high quality photos but any camera will work to capture images of moments in time you want to cherish.
- **Binoculars.** I prefer a pair of compact 10x42 binoculars that are easy to toss into a pocket and also easy on your budget. A good pair can be found starting around \$35.
- **Notebook.** Any cheap notebook will work. Or, invest in a quality outdoor journal.
- **Field guides.** A key piece of gear when mentoring young and/or new hunters in the field. Start with a bird guide as they contain hundreds of colorful drawings and photos. A mammal guide would be my next choice. I spent many a slow morning in the duck blind entertaining my young sons with bird and mammal field guides.

It's November 1984. A short, scrawny 10-year-old boy is following closely behind his grandfather through the hedgerows and plum thickets of southeast Kansas. He feels the blackberry thorns scratch his skin. His ears follow the sounds of their German short-haired pointer winding his way through the dense brush. His eyes notice the golden tones of native grass contrasted by the crimson leaves of the sumacs. He hears the whirring roar of a covey rise. It's sensory overload on a first quail hunt.

That scrawny boy was me and, although no birds were harvested that day, my game bag was overflowing with experiences for which there is no daily limit. At the time, I didn't have enough hunting seasons in my rear-view mirror to realize that I had received my first lesson in the "non-consumptive" joys of the outdoors.

But even at that young age, I was well-versed in hunting. My father, grandfather, and great-grandfather were quail hunters. Each autumn weekend, I eagerly awaited their arrival back home after the hunt to explore with my own senses the

bounty of their harvest. I had followed my grandfather into the field and watched him effortlessly take two quail on a covey rise. Birds were the name of the game. I got it.

Looking back on it now, I realize I simply lacked the maturity to fully appreciate the non-consumptive aspects of the hunt. My five senses were firing on all cylinders. I felt the blackberry thorns puncture my skin and saw the palette of auburns and golds painting the upland landscape. I heard thunderous covey rises of bobwhites. I remember smelling the damp morning grass and the musty aroma of my grandfather's hunting coat. I remember the sweet taste of a pear eaten as a morning snack.

My nostalgic stroll down memory lane has a purpose: to encourage others to fill their game bag to capacity with experiences and memories just as easily as you can fill it with feathers and fur.

Last November, my wife, younger son, and I visited a nearby Walk-In Hunting Access (WIHA) area with our Labrador, "Raven," for a morning of quail hunting. We had taken only a

The sensory experience of a duck hunt leaves memories that can last a lifetime - even without ever firing a shot.





Quail might not fall to our shotguns on some hunting trips, but we always leave with some great photos and an experience outdoors shared with family.

few steps from our truck when we were surprised by a half-dozen white-tailed deer bounding from a nearby thicket. We captured a few quick action photos to add to our digital album of wildlife sightings. Later that morning, we heard the barking of migrating snow geese as we explored the ruins of a deserted farmstead. No quail fell to our shotguns, but we left with some great photos, questions about who homesteaded that old farm, and an experience outdoors shared with family. Success.

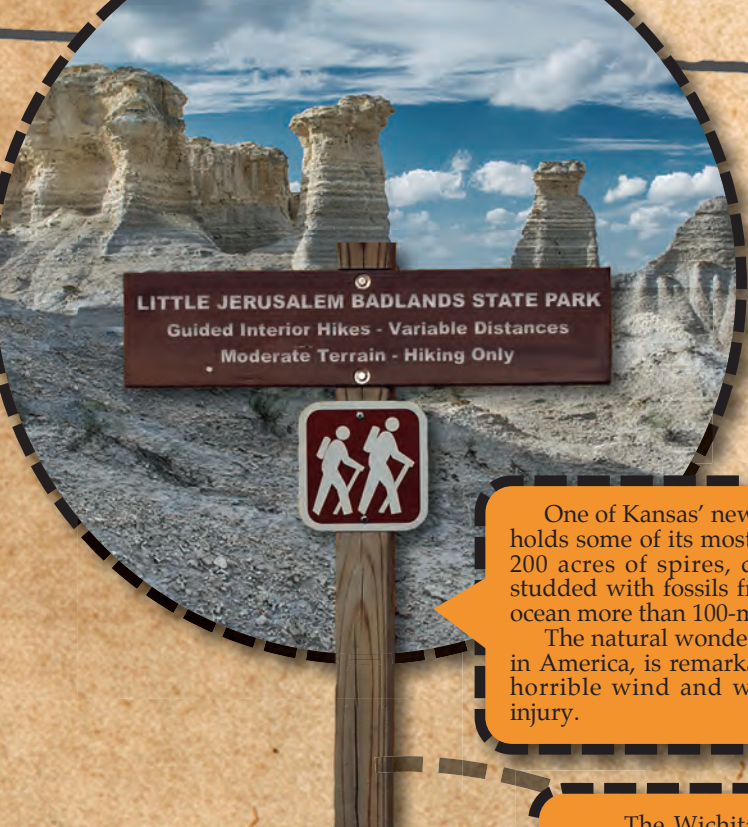
My young nephew, Jaxon, can confirm that spending a morning in a cold duck blind can check off all the boxes for a truly unique sensory experience. He followed me to the marsh during Thanksgiving week a couple of years ago where he felt the cold plastic decoys in stark contrast to a hot mug of cocoa. We saw mallards, Canada geese, bald eagles, northern harriers, and a coyote.

A wet dog and a musty pit blind are both unique

smells, but we would argue they are the perfume of the duck marsh. We listened to the soft whistling of mallard wings in the predawn darkness with eager anticipation of the morning flight. Touch, sight, hearing, smell and taste...check! All in one morning that we'll both remember for a lifetime. And "Uncle Brad" never fired a shot.

Don't get me wrong, I love placing a few birds in my game bag just like any other hunter. The more hunting seasons I put behind me though, the more I've started to recognize what really matters to me; the experiences. Creating memories with family and friends take up more space in my game bag these days than mallards and rooster pheasants.

So, my challenge to you this upcoming season is to get out into the beautiful outdoors of Kansas and focus on some of the non-consumptive aspects of hunting. You may just discover a whole new world out there! 🐃



One of Kansas' newest state parks, Little Jerusalem Badlands, holds some of its most amazing landscape. There are more than 200 acres of spires, deep crevices and tall cliffs, much of it studded with fossils from when western Kansas was part of an ocean more than 100-million years ago.

The natural wonder, one of the most of impressive of its kind in America, is remarkably fragile. A misplaced step can lead to horrible wind and water erosion or, much worse, personal injury.

The Wichita Eagle once described Buffalo Tracks Canyon Nature Trail as "stride for stride the best hiking trail in Kansas." Don't let the short distance fool you, this trail takes several hours because there's so much to see.

The well-maintained trail starts at the northern edge of the state park, beside the lake, and traces Bison Creek as it moves across prairie and into the actual canyon.

Two caves are important parts of the hike, one each side of the trail. Legend says native people smoked and dried meat within the north cave, after driving herds of buffalo off nearby cliffs.

As per the trail's name, there's a stair-step trail carved into one of the cliffs from thousands of buffalo hooves coming and going through the eons. From atop the cliffs is an incredible view of prairie, largely unchanged since the likes of Kit Carson, George Custer and Buffalo Bill Cody crisscrossed the area. Hikers can double-back on the main trail or climb from the canyon near the buffalo tracks and follow a horse trail as it winds back to the trailhead. The steep hill south of the parking lot is a great place to watch the sunset over the lake, too.

STRIDE FOR STRIDE

Michael Pearce
freelance outdoor writer

Kansas' 4,000 miles of trails are rightfully getting the attention they deserve, both nationally and around the world. Some have visitors from more than 45 states and a dozen foreign nations annually.

It's not a surprise many of those trails are accessed in your Kansas state parks.

Here's a selection of can't miss winners for the next time you want to stretch your legs and see some magnificent scenery.



OSAGE STATE PARK
 Backs Canyon Nature Trail - 1 mile each way
 Moderate Difficulty - Hiking Only



The once abandoned rail line now offers about 95 miles of trail through a wide-variety of landscapes including mature woodlands, riparian areas, wetlands and near-perfect prairie. Most of the trail is hard-packed limestone chips, ideal for cycling, as well as hiking and horseback riding. Accolades are flooding in from visitors from as far away as both coasts.

Tough to beat day cycling through some of the trail's best parts of the Flint Hills, like from Council Grove to Osage City. You can drop a vehicle off in one town and cycle a leisurely 25 miles. Or, hit the trail early and do a round-trip, getting back into Council Grove in time for a great dinner at the legendary Hays House. (Be sure to check ahead for open hours.)

There are parks in Osage City with picnic facilities and public toilets. Henry's Coffee House, on the main drag, is a great place for a fresh fruit smoothie, great sandwich wrap, craft brew or glass of wine. Lastly, don't overlook fall rides when the prairie will sport amazing colors up to a month or more before the woodlands.

FLINT HILLS TRAIL STATE PARK
 Council Grove to Osage City - 25 miles each way
 Hiking, Cycling and Horseback Riding



ELK CITY STATE PARK
 Table Mound Trail - 2 ¼ miles each way
 Moderate Difficulty - Hiking Only



The Table Mound Trail is a shorter version of the legendary 15-mile Elk River Trail at Elk City Reservoir. Table Mound offers some great views of the lake, bisects mature oak-hickory forest lands but, like the longer trail, is best known for its "I didn't know we had this in Kansas" giant rimrock boulders.

It's best to enter the trailhead within Elk City State Park. You get a bit of a warm up and stretch tracing the lake shore before you turn and start a serious climb towards the rimrock far above.

Allow yourself at least an hour poking around the giant rimrock atop the ridge. You'll find boulders the size of small houses and some true "suck the gut in" passages where gravity has pulled giant boulders apart. Kids absolutely love it there!

There's no bad time to hike the Table Mound Trail, but early spring can have the countryside painted with the pastel lavenders of blooming redbuds. And, delicate columbine flowers sprout from the tiniest of cracks on the boulders.

There's a parking lot atop the ridge, for those who may want to do the trail one-way and drive back to the park. Some chain bikes atop and ride them back down to the state park, as well.

*Coal mining in Crawford County,
Kansas State Historical Society*

Stories of redemption inspire us and there is perhaps no better example in
of the redemption of natural resources - turning something severely da

REDEMPTION



Rick McNary
freelance outdoor writer

nature then the Mined Land Wildlife Area (MLWA). It is a compelling story
damaged and useless into something breathtakingly beautiful and useful.





Big Brutus, a massive oil coal shovel, is still on display where it came to rest near West Mineral.

The MLWA covers more than 15,000 acres sprawling across Crawford, Cherokee, and Labette counties. Home to more than 1,200 lakes, this serene and tranquil area now characterized by woodlands, healthy grasslands, and abundant wildlife, was once a deeply scarred land because of coal mining.

To fully grasp this redemptive narrative, one must first understand the history of the land and the transactions that made it possible for it now to be a premiere recreational resource for hunters, anglers and other outdoor enthusiasts.

The story of the Mined Lands, also known as strip pits, begins in the 1800s when thin layers of coal were discovered below the surface. Unlike deep caves bored into mountains with shafts that lead miners deep into an abyss, access to this type of coal was gained by stripping off the top layers to reach the thin layers. The soil, rocks and trees removed is called overburden.

As technology increased in the early 1900s, the methods of removing the overburden became more advanced as larger equipment was used for efficient removal and relocation. The apex of machinery was Big Brutus, a massive coal shovel still on display where it came to rest near West Mineral, now home to a private museum and other pieces of equipment. This electric powered machine with a scoop bucket so large it could fill three train cars with one scoop, was finally retired in 1974 because it was too expensive to operate. When it was initially fabricated in 1963, it required 150 train cars to haul all the pieces and parts. This massive machine is open to the public and is a must-see when you are in the area. Standing in the enormous bucket, which could dig as deep as 65 feet, gives one a sense of the magnitude of the operation.

In September 1987, the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) designated Big Brutus a Regional Historic Mechanical Engineering Landmark, the 10th since 1971 to be so designated. And, in 2018, Big Brutus was placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

After the pits were dug and the coal was put in train cars and shipped elsewhere, the pits were abandoned as workers continued to the next location. The overburden that was left in piles, also known as spoil tips, were left without any type of mitigation or reclamation. The spoiled, severely damaged ecosystem was abandoned without any natural resource management plan for improvement. Slowly, surface water and springs filled the pits turning them into lakes.

Efforts arose to pressure the companies mining the land to turn the wasteland into something productive. Finally, in 1969, the Kansas Legislature passed the Mined-Land Conservation and Reclamation Act. This act required companies to develop strategic plans to reclaim the area with conservation programs.

Over time, more than 15,000 acres stretching across 40 miles and three counties were gifted by the Pittsburg and Midway Coal Company to the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP). Unlike most public use areas, like state parks, that are connected, this managed area is divided up into units which are not connected in contiguous geography.

Before you go, it's helpful to research the area with a map of the units. If you have access to satellite imagery through a program like Google Earth, it helps one get a sense of the magnitude and scale as well as the displacement. The area where the pits dot the landscape are stretched out rather haphazardly. If you drive around the area, you might be driving parallel to a pit just a few yards on the other side of a dense tree line and not even know it. There is a map which can be downloaded from ksoutdoors.com that is helpful, too.

Under the guidance of KDWP and a strategic plan for conservation and reclamation, the area now attracts outdoor enthusiasts of all ages with a unique offering of diverse opportunities as well as a vast area to hunt, fish, hike, camp and photograph.

Choosing where to begin can be a challenge for someone whose never been there before. The most popular lake is the Trout Pit in Unit 30. In addition to having two cabins available for rent, there is a boat ramp and quite a bit of area to fish from the bank. (Since it is stocked with trout, it does require a trout permit in addition to the regular fishing license.)

One important note about these lakes are that the sides drop off sharply, so these are not good areas for wading. While there are boat ramps on most of these, it is also

important that you don't back down into the water too far; it gets deep, fast. Think of the shapes of these lakes like a bathtub; that gives you a sense of what's below the water.

Fishing

Several hundred water-filled pits dot the MLWA, creating about 1,500 acres of public waters. Sportfish include largemouth bass, rainbow trout, walleye, channel catfish, crappie, bluegill, redear sunfish, spotted bass, wipers, bullhead, and warmouth; some lakes have been specially managed to favor certain fish species.

Most MLWA waters are quite clear, and fishing is challenging. Anglers who approach the water quietly, use light line and fish during low-light hours are more successful. Boats, particularly

smaller ones like kayaks and canoes, help reach many of the prime fishing spots. The lakes are mostly sheltered from wind and are too small for larger boats.

The trout lake, a 28-acre strip-mine lake, is stocked with rainbow and brown trout. The deep water and other characteristics allow the trout to survive and grow year-round.

KDWP fisheries biologist Connor Ossowski is creating bathymetric maps for the MLWA strip pits. This is an ongoing effort, so new pits will be added on a weekly basis. The bathymetric maps show the depth (some 65 feet deep) and reveal the contour of the bottom.

In addition, habitat improvements are made through the use of hinge-cutting, cedar trees, and Georgia Cubes which have been placed throughout the unique strip.



Wildlife Area

The MLWA has a diversity of habitats, including native grassland, woody shrub areas, oak-hickory forests, and wetlands. Native grass establishments, timber stand improvement, food plots, and shrub planting continue to improve quail habitat. Cottontail rabbits and fox squirrels are abundant. Several large food plots are managed specifically to attract doves in September. Several marshes have been constructed to attract ducks. A waterfowl refuge often holds several hundred Canada geese in the area. The woodlands areas of the property hold good populations of white-tailed deer and eastern turkey. The area supports good numbers of raccoons, muskrats, bobcats, beavers, and coyotes. And, other furbearers, including mink and fox are also common.

Regulations

Vehicles are restricted to maintained roads and parking areas; some roads are closed to all traffic. Do not leave vehicles parked on boat ramps. Use caution when launching boats because ramps drop off sharply, and trailers backed too far may become high-centered.

Boat ramps are available on most large lakes. Lastly, swimming is not allowed on the area.

Tent camping is allowed at any location except refuge areas. RVs may be parked in designated areas or parking lots. RVs may not block boat ramps, restrict road traffic, or drive off-road. No hookups are available.

Visitors must take their trash with them. Check the Kansas Fishing Regulations Summary and all posted notices before fishing.

Certain areas may be closed to hunting and fishing periodically.


Target shooting is not allowed.

Off road vehicle and horse use is prohibited

No firearms are allowed on units 1, 2, 23 and a portion of 22.

Archery equipment may be used on these units for hunting.

Set lines are prohibited.

For more information on MLWA, visit ksoutdoors.com/KDWP-Info/Locations/Wildlife-Areas/Southeast/Mined-Land. 



The "Four State" Boundary Waters of Kansas

by Connor Ossowski, KDWP fisheries biologist

The alarm sounded and the clock read 5:15 a.m. It was a welcoming crisp and cool morning in contrast to the typical humid and hot summer weather of southeast Kansas. I was waking up to a quail whistling and distant gobbles from a turkey to go fishing on the Mined Land Wildlife Area (MLWA) – an area that holds 1,000 individual "strip pits" and 14,500 acres of public land tucked in the corner of southeast Kansas and managed by the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. Many hear the word "mined" and automatically assume a lack of wildlife, but that could not be further from the truth.

I got to one of the 88 concrete boat ramps that are available for angler use and launched my 14 ft. aluminum boat. I was trembling with excitement; the water temperature was 68 degrees and that signals it is the beginning of the bluegill spawn. Bluegill spawn in colonies and create spawning beds that are a fin-made masterpiece at the work of a small aquatic species that many would mistake for craters on the moon. It did not take long to see the ripples at the surface of the water made by a male bluegill guarding the nest; I had found my first casting site. I cast my slip bobber set at 2 feet rigged with a Glyceridae (i.e., blood worm mimic) imitation lure and WAM! It did not take two seconds and the first male bluegill took the bait. The male bluegill will guard the nest viciously and have all its attention, so any kind of bait will get a reaction strike. I reeled in the pound for pound, best fighting fish – for what it may lack in size, it makes up for in vigor – into the boat and quickly realized it may beat my all-time personal record for bluegill. It tied it; measuring 9.75 inches. I quickly released the tenacious bluegill dressed in spawning tuxedo colors back into the water.

I ended up catching 53 bluegill that day. They ranged in size from 7.5-9.75 inches. However, that was not all that I was after this beautiful day on the MLWA. I caught 17 largemouth bass ranging in size from 12 to 15 inches, seven warmouth that measured 7 to 10 inches, one channel catfish that weighed 6 pounds, and 13 redear sunfish that were 8 to 10 inches. The diversity in this individual "strip pit" was spectacular. I used to consider panfish of all species as the category of bait for when I would target flat-head catfish and channel catfish, but I can now speak to how the "panfish slam" of bluegill, redear sunfish, and warmouth have hooked me for life and diversified my tackle assortment tremendously.

The opportunities are endless if you are willing to put in the time to learn the area and understand the different techniques that are required for fishing a strip pit. The water on the strip pits are crystal clear; some pits contain water clarity up to 10 ft. The banks are steep in the larger strip pits with depths up to 68 feet. Strip pits that have a more gradual slope and shallow water in the coves and ends of the strip pits will be more productive to spend your time casting a line. Slip bobbers rigged with a worm, or

imitation insect lures, are your best friend and deeper sinking lures, such as a Texas Rig, will yield many largemouth bass. The majority of the strip pits have high densities of largemouth bass and you'll catch many 12- to 15-inch fish, and if you have enough patience, you can find a largemouth that will tip the scales at 5 to 6 pounds, which is not uncommon.

The diversity of wildlife on the MLWA is not limited to aquatic species. I was in awe of the sightings of the red-bellied woodpeckers, ruby-throated hummingbirds humming above honeysuckle and Bur Oak trees, red cardinals, white-tailed deer, eastern turkeys, beavers, river otters, and mink – all on that same day of catching bluegill, redear sunfish, warmouth, channel catfish, and largemouth bass.

It won't be long now and September will be here signaling the beginning of deer season. The hunting opportunity is just as much an experience as is fishing. The fisheries and wildlife resources in this gem are second to none. I often think of it as the state's very own Boundary Waters tucked in the corner of Kansas, Oklahoma, Missouri, and Arkansas. The kayaking, bird watching, hiking, fishing, and hunting opportunities are tremendous. The area is bountiful with concrete boat ramps and angler access to launch their kayaks and enjoy the scenic area of the MLWA. Who knows, you may be hooked into mining for your next 6 pound largemouth bass!





SEPT 17 — 19

2021

BECOMING AN OUTDOORS WOMAN

ROCK SPRINGS RANCH
JUNCTION CITY, KS

NATURE • OUTDOOR SKILLS • FUN
ksoutdoors.com/bow



Kansas Channel Cats

by Brent Frazee
freelance outdoor writer

Bill Hopkins chuckles when he relates his favorite fish story.

"One time I was fishing the riffles on the Cottonwood River," he said. "I let my line drift quite a ways with no sinker.

"I thought I felt a bite, but then there was nothing, so I started reeling in. When I got it close, I felt a fish tugging.

"But pretty soon, my line was going upriver. That fish swam through my legs and was heading the other way. I had to step over the line to fight the fish, but I got him. Turns out, it was a 4-pound channel cat."

Kansas rivers, riffles and big channel cats—that pretty much sums up Hopkins' passions.

He is 75 now and can look back at a lifetime pursuit of the whiskered fish that are the Kansas state fish. He started as a youngster tagging along with his dad on trips to the Verdigris River. Today, he is still after it, dreaming that his next bite is going to be the big one.



Some things never grow old

"I grew up fishing for catfish; that's about the only fish that amount to much in these rivers over here," said Hopkins, who lives in Reading. "The Cottonwood, the Big Neosho, the Verdigris, the Marais des Cygnes—they all have lots of channel cats, and they have since I started fishing.

"I don't really need anything else. The channel cat is a good fighter, he can be a challenge, and he provides some good eating once you catch a stringer full of them."

On a spring day, Hopkins and his friend, Danny Hamman, drove to a spot along the Big Neosho River and scrambled down a steep bank to a spot that looked good from an elevated view.

Within minutes, they had baited their hooks with shad and nightcrawlers and cast them into the muddy water of the gently flowing current. It didn't take long for the fish to show up. First, Hamman caught a big carp and was immediately needled by Hopkins.

"We're after channel cats, not carp," Hopkins said.

Moments later, Hopkins watched one of his rods bend over and he set the hook on a channel cat. Not long after, there was another bite and Hopkins pulled a big soft-shelled turtle to the bank.

"You never know what you will catch on this old river," Hopkins said.

It's been that way since Hopkins got his first fishing pole when he was a youngster. He had been doing lawn work for an Emporia resident and he did such a good job that the man provided Hopkins with a bonus.

"He took me to a hardware store next to his drug store and told me I could pick out whatever rod and reel I wanted," Hopkins said. "That's something I'll never forget."

It wasn't long before that fishing rod was getting a workout. When Hopkins was in his early teens, he regularly walked down to the banks of the Cottonwood and fished below the outtake from a meat-packing plant.

The channel cats swarmed to that spot to feed on the residue being flushed into the river, and Hopkins would sit for hours catching them.

"One of the workers would give me beef spleen to use as bait," Hopkins recalled. "I would cut them up into chunks and I had the perfect bait.

"It was real bloody and a mess to handle. But that's what those channel cats wanted."

Later, Hopkins would wade the rivers from riffle to riffle.

He and his friends learned to give the catfish a natural presentation. They would use spring frogs as bait and let their unweighted line drift through the riffles past rocks, root wads and brushy areas. The current often took the bait

Bill Hopkins caught a small channel catfish while fishing on the Big Neosho River.

into the nooks and crannies where the big channel cats hid.

"You'd catch a channel cat behind a rock one day and you'd come back the next and find that another fish had already moved into that exact spot," said Hopkins, a retired tool and die maker. "The fish know where the good habitat is."

In his younger days, Hopkins would wade several miles, stopping to fish the riffles along the way. He caught channel cats as big as 18 pounds and many others that were perfect for the frying pan.

He and his friends would fish year-round, even in the chill of winter. But the heat of summer was the time to be out there, he said.

"The best fishing usually comes in later June, July and August," he said. "Those hot, lazy days have always been the best for river fishing."

Hopkins no longer wades the river. At his age, he no longer has the balance to wade through the knee-deep water where he once found catfish.

But that's not to say Hopkins has given up his favorite type of fishing. Today, he and Hamman use a drift boat Hopkins brought back from his place in Colorado. He once planned to use the pontoon-type boat for fly-fishing in Colorado. Today, it is the ideal catfish craft, buoyant and easy to maneuver.

"We just row," Hopkins said. "We'll park one vehicle at the place where we plan to take out, another at the spot where we put in, and we just stop at the riffles along the way."

He still fishes the Cottonwood, but he also likes to drift the Big Neosho, the Verdigris and the Marais des Cygnes.

He fishes with baitcasting equipment and 12-pound test line. That's strong enough to handle a big one but still light enough to enjoy the fight of a big channel cat, he said.

He keys on riffles as he always has, but he also likes to hit the mouths of the rivers where they hit big reservoirs.

"If there's some moving water, they'll come out of the reservoirs into some of these creeks to feed," he said. "That's when the fishing can really get good."

Kansas Channel Cats

- **STATUS** – Channel catfish, often overlooked in many states, are the stars of the show in Kansas. Native to the state, they were named the state fish in 2018. They are found everywhere from major rivers to reservoirs to small lakes in the Sunflower State. Throw a dart at the Kansas state map and you'll probably be near a body of water where channel catfish live.

- **HABITS** – Channel catfish are not picky eaters. Often classified as scavengers, feeding on dead or rotting carcasses, they also will feed on live prey. Popular baits include commercial stink baits, chicken liver, rotten cheese, blood bait, dead shad and even Ivory soap.

- **STATE RECORD** – 36.5 pounds, caught in 2003 in the Mined Land Wildlife Area. That fish was 38 inches long.

- **COMMON SIZE** – Fish in the 2- to 5-pound range are common. A channel cat over 10 pounds is considered a trophy.





TREE SHAK'N', TROT LININ', JUGGIN'-GOOD FUN

by Rob McDonald,
Modern Wildman Blog

Warm summer months are the perfect time to get outdoors and enjoy some time on the water, and when the water warms up, so does the catfish bite! If you're looking to put some catfish fillets on the table or just want a chance to land big ole catfish, then setting and running setlines (limb lines), trotlines, and catfish floatlines (jugs) should be right up your alley!

Trotlines, setlines and floatlines are an exciting, and often extremely productive way to up your chances of success when you're in the pursuit of catfish. Often, catfish lines are placed, baited, and checked from a boat, but bank anglers can have success, as well. These age-old fishing tactics rely on an aggressive catfish to take the bait and hook themselves, and it's the angler's job to collect the prize.

Be sure to check the *Kansas Fishing Regulations Summary* for the most up to date details concerning the various types of "line" fishing opportunities available on Kansas waters.

Let's break down a few tips and tactics when it comes to the various types of lining for catfish:

Trotlining

Trotlines consists of a line strung between two objects across water with attached baited hooks. Think of a line between two submerged trees in a lake or river. Drop lines with hooks are hung from the trotline, baited, and set waiting for a hungry catfish to come cruising by.

Making your trotline drops with hooks and swivels, then wrapping them around a piece of plywood, is a fantastic way to keep sharp hooks out of harm's way, and it will go a long way in keeping your trotline untangled. Be sure to utilize sharp, heavy-made hooks, large enough to easily accommodate the size of your bait.

Setlining

Known as limblining to many anglers, a setline is made up of a single line with one or two hooks, and often a weight, hanging from a solid green tree limb or bank pole. One end of the bank pole is pushed into the mud along the shoreline, angling the top of the pole with the line attached out over the water. Once hooked, a fish will work and tire itself fighting against the flex in the pole.

Sections of PVC pipe, fiberglass rod planks, and natural green tree limbs are all fine choices when it comes to setlining. Catfish fight hard and tend to roll when they are fighting a hook, so plan your tackle accordingly. Use heavy-built swivels to avoid line twist, and give the knotless, hook shank knot a try for its increased strength.

Floatlining

Floatlining, or jug lining for catfish, is new to Kansas waters, and is currently in a trial period. Anglers can attach a line, swivel, weight, and one or two hooks to a float, or "jug," to hook into a Kansas catfish.

Floatlining is new to Kansas and carries with it a few unique stipulations. Floatlines are only allowed on certain waterbodies at this time, and floats must be constructed of closed-cell material to help reduce the risk of transferring aquatic hitchhikers.

A fishing license is required for any individual who requires a license to fish with a rod and reel. Anglers can up their odds of a successful fishing trip by combining rod and reel fishing with setting lines on bodies of water where it's permitted: More baited hooks means more chances of landing a catfish.


While catfish are often opportunistic feeders, live bait such as fresh caught sunfish and shad make excellent baits for anglers setting lines. Try utilizing a submersible bait bucket to keep your bait fresh, healthy, and active. All setlines, trotlines, and floatlines must be labeled with the angler's name and address, and lines may not be set within 150 yards of dam.

A large, sturdy net with a long handle is ideal for scooping up big, stout catfish when you're checking your lines.

Materials like needle nose pliers, heavy bank line, stout swivels, large sharp fish hooks, and heavy sinkers make building and setting lines a manageable task.

This season, give it a try! Make it a family adventure and tradition that friends and family will look forward to each year. And, take the time to introduce someone new to fishing this summer!

Wilson State Park



If you draw inspiration from gliding in a kayak as the sun casts golden rays on rugged sandstone formations painted with hues of the desert southwest, fishing some of the clearest water in Kansas, mountain biking on one of the finest trails in the nation or camping under the umbrella of a cotton wood tree, then set your course for Wilson State Park. With a reputation as being one of, if not the, prettiest lakes in the state, Wilson waits to reward visitors with a variety of scenes and activities of the Smoky Hill region sure to bring refreshment to the weariest of souls.



Rick McNary
freelance outdoor writer

Located just a short, seven-mile drive north of I-70 near Russell, those who purpose to take the exit quickly leave behind the frenetic pace of a hurried life to enjoy the serene landscapes, multiple recreational activities and scenes unseen by those who fly over or fly through our great state.

Lake Wilson is in the Smoky Hill region, an area in north central Kansas with three primary types of geologic formations formed by sediment during the Cretaceous Period. If you were to drive from around Salina on the eastern edge to around Oakley on the western edge, you would notice a change in those formations. They are largely formed of sandstone which are revealed in the beautiful outcroppings in the Hells Creek area of the state park. The second kind is limestone, as is evidenced by the fence posts jutting above the prairie like silent, stately sentinels of days gone by – this is Post Rock Country. Lastly, yet equally as stunning, is the Niobrara Chalk formations of which Little Jerusalem Badlands State Park, south of Oakley, is comprised.

Perhaps the most stunning landscapes in and around the lake are the rugged outcroppings of sandstone of the Dakota formation in the Hell

Creek area. The naturally soft stone erodes easily with wind, weather and water, exposing various hues and shapes that capture one's imagination like guessing animal shapes in a cloudy sky. Fossils of sealife from the Cretaceous period are often found in the rocks, too.

Evidence of this Dakota formation is abundant, yet surprising, in this region. For example, an hour's drive south of Wilson is Mushroom Rock State Park - a singularly unusual formation that seems to just rise up out of the prairie. One unusual thing to look for in any of these sandstone formations are places where the rock turns from soft to as hard as concrete. It's the same sediment, but a process occurred when the stone was under water called "concretions," where it formed that hardened surface. The cap of Mushroom Rock is made from concretions.

Further south is Kanopolis State Park with its' famous trails system which winds hikers, bikers and horses through a labyrinth of sandstone.

Further west a little more than a two-hour drive are the Monument Rocks, Historic Lake Scott and Little Jerusalem Badlands State Park. Turning back to the east an hour's drive from



Wilson, the Rock City in Minneapolis, north of Salina, are all part of this same geologic wonder.

The area is rich in Native American history as is reflected in the name of one of the areas of the park, Otoe. Named after the nomadic tribe that coursed this region, hunting bison and other wildlife, this tribe was the first group encountered by Lewis and Clark in their expedition in 1802.

Early American pioneers like Zebulon Pike began using this Smoky Hill Region as an increasingly traveled conduit in the exploration and settlement of the west. The Homestead Act of 1864 signed by President Lincoln caused a westward movement of pioneers who laid claim to 160-acre tracts given by the government and secured by agricultural improvements.

South of the state park is the city of Wilson, an excursion worth your time. Known as the Czech capital of Kansas, this quaint city is filled with stories of the area's history. One particular story explains the origin of Cooper's Point on the lake.

In 1877, brothers Albert and John Cooper homesteaded the area and built an impressive ranch which they named The Gilt Edge Ranch. Over time, they constructed one of the most elegant limestone houses and barns west of the Mississippi. However, those stone structures were torn down because of their location in relation to the new lake; they are now buried beneath the lake. It is said that, on a clear day from an airplane, you can see the outline of the barn and house below the surface of the clear water.

For centuries, the river systems in Kansas were undammed and served as major highways of transportation and commerce for people. Since many people were nomadic, the raging floods were not of much consequence because people intuitively knew to find higher ground.

However, with westward settlement of pioneers came the concept of permanent towns and cities

which sprung up near major rivers because of the ease of river transportation. Once that occurred, flooding became a major issue, so plans began for controlling flooding on all the major rivers that fed into the Mississippi.

Therefore, the reservoirs in Kansas had their primary function as flood control. However, Wilson was unique in its construction because it was built additionally for irrigation. Unfortunately, since it is the drainage of the Saline River – thus named for the salinity content – irrigation was deemed ineffective. The Bureau of Reclamation then turned it over to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), a federal agency.

As is the case in most Kansas state parks, the Corps owns the land and the water and leases it to Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) for management purposes. Once you are at Wilson, you will notice other campgrounds that are not a part of KDWP; they are controlled by USACE.

Both the Otoe park and Hell Creek areas are facilities under the purview of KDWP. As you pull into the park, Otoe sits on the north part of the lake and Hell Creek is on the southside. As you cross the bridge going south, stop at the first turnout on the right. A short hike down that trail places you in the midst of some of the most stunning sandstone formations on the lake, as well as on the Switchgrass Trail.

"There is so much to love about this lake," says Wills Ohl, park manager. "The water is clear; the fishing is fantastic and it's just right off I-70. The only thing I dislike is when a storm comes up. The weather can turn crummy in 3 seconds and you'd better get off the water quick.

"Our camping facilities range from full hookups for RVs to some of the best primitive tent camping right on the water. It's a family-friendly lake."

Switchgrass Trail – Wilson State Park is home to

Switchgrass, a premiere labyrinth of mountain bike trails totaling more than 25 miles in length. Located in the Hell Creek area, Switchgrass draws cyclists from various parts of the nation who enjoy the challenge, scenery and convenience as well as easier air to breath at 1,500 feet elevation.

“Bob Nicholson was the original designer of the trail which was classified as an Epic Trail in 2012 by the International Mountain Biking Association,” Ohl said. “Sara Kay Carrell was another key figure in the creation and development of the trail. It was a lot of work and it is world class.”

Carrell, a naturalist for KDWP for Historic Lake Scott State Park and Little Jerusalem Badlands State Park, gives a lot of credit to Mike Goodwin of the Kansas Trails Council (KTC) and The Sunflower Foundation out of Topeka.

“Mike has been a great resource for the things we need,” Carrell says. “Recently, I needed a mower for the trail, and he wrote a grant with all my specs and a few weeks later, delivered a beautiful new unit. The Sunflower Foundation also provides KTC “Trails in a Box,” which are trailers full of the kind of equipment needed to build and maintain trails.”


The Dakota Trail in the Hell Creek area is another trail that provides users with some of the

best views of the prairie and lake. An interpretive, self-guided brochure is available and makes the trail much more enjoyable; this hike goes up a hill and is a bit strenuous.

The Cedar Trail in the Otoe Area is handicap accessible and wanders through a mix of prairie grasses and hardwoods. Another must-see place to witness the incredible Dakota sandstone formations is The Rock Town Trail, accessed either by water or through a 2.5-mile trail in the USACE’s Lucas Campground.

Wilson Wildlife area is located on the upper end of the reservoir and includes 8,069 acres of public hunting area. Of this area, 5,000 acres are rugged hills of native prairie, 2,000 acres of cropland and 1,000 acres of riparian timber along the Saline River, Cedar Creek, Turkey Creek and Elm Creek. The area also has a waterfowl refuge that was established in 1996.

Wilson is also a great location for birders. A brochure on the Birds of Wilson Reservoir can be picked up at the park office located in the Hell Creek area.

Perhaps the best part of Wilson State Park is that it leaves you wanting to come back for more. She waits to surprise you with every sunrise and sunset. 



Wilson State Park

Reservations

www.reserveamerica.com

Camping

Cabins: 4 in the Otoe, 4 in the Hell Creek area

RV sites: 139 with utilities

Primitive – anywhere that is mowed

Boat Ramps: 2, 3-lane ramps with courtesy docks

Shower Houses: 6

Vault Toilets: 2

Park Manager

Willis Ohl

Park Office

#3 State Park Road
Sylvan Grove, KS 67481
(785) 658-2465



Species Profile



Grasshopper Mouse

Onychomys leucogaster

Hungry like the wolf grasshopper mouse

Don't be fooled by its cute exterior – the grasshopper mouse is the most carnivorous of all mice species. As its name suggests, the grasshopper mouse preys mainly on grasshoppers, but will also take down centipedes and scorpions since they are immune to their venom. Also on the menu - other mice!



Did you know?

Because of their strong social bonds, predatory lifestyle and loud, high pitched howls, grasshopper mice have been compared to large carnivores like wolves. Some even call them “werewolf” mice!

Size

5.4 to 6.4 inches
1.1 to 1.6 ounces

Reproduction

Two to three litters of two to six young each spring to early fall

Habitat

Dry, sandy grasslands and shrublands



Backlash

with Nadia Reimer

Hope, and Hunting, Are On the Horizon

Life is complicated and no year was probably more complicated for us all than 2020. It was a year of change, of loss. We saw glimmers of hope that we would return to “normalcy” as we entered the New Year, only to find ourselves traversing a path very similar to last year’s – one filled with event cancellations, mask mandates, social distancing, and more. It can be difficult to identify the positives in life when we feel surrounded by nothing but change, but it’s not impossible; We need only something to be hopeful for.

I took a yoga class once and I remember the instructor telling us that if we felt unsteady attempting to hold a pose that we should focus our eyes on something small, something fixed. She explained that it focuses the brain, deafens the distractions around us, and helps us to find some semblance of balance. In applying this thought process to the current pandemic, I believe outdoor activities – such as hunting – can be that “small, something fixed” many of us can rely on for stability and balance in a time of flux. Kansas outdoors will always be a constant, something no man or virus can take away from us. Find hope in this!

If you or someone you know could benefit from having something to look forward to in the coming weeks and months – I encourage you to consider getting out-of-doors, and perhaps even hunting. Opportunity abounds in our great state, and in many instances, no mask may be required (unless it’s the camouflage kind, of course). To help get you started, here’s a look at a handful of seasons coming up on our horizon.

DOVE (mourning and whitewing).....

Sept. 1 – Nov. 29, 2021

TEAL.....
Low Plains
Sept. 11-26, 2021

High Plains
Sept. 18-26, 2021

DEER (whitetail).....
Sept. 4-12, 2021 – Youth and Disability
Sept. 13-26, 2021 – Muzzleloader
Sept. 13 – Dec. 31, 2021 – Archery
Oct. 9-11, 2021 – Pre-rut Antlerless-only
Dec. 1-12, 2021 – Regular Firearm

PHEASANT & QUAIL.....
Nov. 6-7, 2021 – Youth
Nov. 13, 2021 – Jan. 31, 2022 – Regular Season

DUCK.....
High Plains and Low Plains Early
Oct. 2-3, 2021 – Youth/Veteran/Active Military

Low Plains Early
Oct. 9 – Dec. 5, 2021 & Dec. 18, 2021 – Jan. 2, 2022

High Plains
Oct. 9, 2021 – Jan. 2, 2022 & Jan. 21-30, 2022

Low Plains Late
Oct. 23-24, 2021 – Youth/Veteran/Active Military

Low Plains Late
Oct. 30, 2021 – Jan. 2, 2022

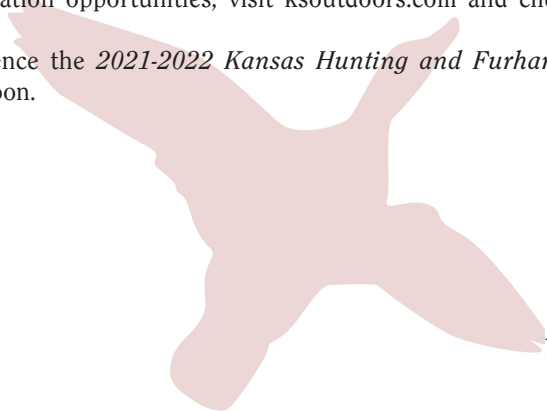
Low Plains Southeast
Nov. 6, 2021 – Jan. 2, 2022 & Jan. 15-30, 2022

Whether you’re a lifetime license holder or purchasing our apprentice license for the first time, getting your necessary licenses, permits and tags has never been easier. You can purchase directly from KsHuntFishCamp.com, KDWP’s “HuntFish KS” mobile app, or through any retail license vendor.

To locate information on upcoming Hunter Education opportunities, visit ksoutdoors.com and click “Education” then “Hunter Education.”

To locate all applicable rules and regulations, reference the *2021-2022 Kansas Hunting and Furharvesting Regulations Summary*, set to hit shelves – and ksoutdoors.com – soon.

Now, let’s get hopeful and get hunting.



KDWP & KWF PRESENT

Flatlander

PODCAST

Flat is a state of mind! Get to know the people, science, and stories that make the Kansas outdoors more than flyover country.

SUBSCRIBE



ksoutdoors.com/Flatlander

