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KANSAS

Wildlife & Parks Magazine



Venture to
Hillsdale
State Park
Pg. 40

U.S. Open of
Clay Shooting
Pg. 36



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FRONT COVER Kansas served as the host state to U.S. Open Sporting Clays participants in 2021. Isaac McNary photo.

INSIDE COVER Two Kansas bucks, just within range. Michael Pearce photo.

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

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This column is a chance for me to recognize some of Wildlife and Parks' bright stars who make up our galaxy of fine staff. These individuals have received important recognition recently from their peers, making this especially treasured as having come from those who know their work best.

KDWP Commission Chair Gerald Lauber

Gerald received an award from the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA), the western 20 states and five Canadian provinces and territories, at their 2021 summer meeting because of his longstanding leadership of our commission, and for the numerous challenging and innovative changes that he guided the commission through. At the end of a lengthy list of accomplishments, his nomination closed with this:

"This commission, with the stable leadership of Chairman Lauber, has consistently requested input from and listened to both department staff and the public. Dealing with controversial issues such as movement of wild-caught bait and preventing the spread of aquatic nuisance species, the commission has shown the leadership to make significant changes, but also the resolve to go back and make corrections when appropriate. The commission successfully transitioned to virtual meetings in 2020 and plan to maintain a virtual feature when in-person meetings come back to ensure the public has adequate opportunity to participate."

We have benefitted from Gerald's passion for the Kansas out-of-doors, his sense of fairness and ample wisdom.



Major Dan Heskett

Dan retired this fall after a productive 32-year career with KDWP. Before he left, he was nominated for and received special recognition from WAFWA last summer for his many accomplishments in our Law Enforcement Division. Maybe most impactful for our agency and Kansas was Dan's development and leadership of our boating program in wildlife law

enforcement and boating safety. Through his efforts, the training and boating equipment in use for search and rescue and law enforcement has been transformed from antiquated to cutting edge. As a result, Kansas game wardens can patrol our waters efficiently and effectively, leading to many water rescues over the years and their ability to quickly locate victims if a water tragedy occurs. These changes



to our program will allow our accreditation through the National Association of Boating Law Administrators, opening the door for additional funding through federal grants. Dan has truly lifted KDWP through his creativity and perseverance.

Beyond Fishing Video

In July of 2021, KDWP received a first-place honor at the Association for Conservation Information's (ACI) national awards banquet for our "Beyond Fishing: The Water is Waiting" video. Produced by Mammoth Creative (then Bajillion) and MotoVike Films, the video was commissioned by KDWP's Fisheries Division as part of their Beyond Fishing licensed angler recruitment campaign. Assistance was received from the Education and Public Affairs sections, but of all contributors, David Breth in Fisheries and Tanna Fanshier in Education were crucial to the video's success.

The Beyond Fishing campaign - which included the winning video and digital advertisements - launched in 2020 and aimed to inspire and support anglers of all skill levels, whether beginners, expert fishing enthusiasts, or past anglers who could potentially be "reactivated." The short video captures visually dynamic images of Kansas waterbodies and anglers, but sets the overall tone with constituent-generated images and videos submitted by Kansas families and anglers.

For communicators in the U.S. conservation community, this is the highest achievement possible, and I congratulate David, Tanna and our Public Affairs team that worked with Mammoth Creative and Motovike Films to create this top award winner.

I am lucky to be able to work with so many stars, and Kansas is the beneficiary of their brilliance! 🐃

Letters To The Editor

Late Issues and Cartoon Correction

Hi - We have been long time subscribers to your magazine (I spent my early years in and around Wichita) and always enjoy it. I have a question for you. The May-June 2021 issue just arrived a couple of days ago. I was surprised it was so very late. This wouldn't apply to us, but some of the subscribers might have wanted to get in on some of the programs, etc. that, as of this date, are long over! Was the delay just to some subscribers or all? And, since the tourism magazine was packaged along with the KW&P issue, was that the cause of the delay? Just wondering.

Also, we got quite a kick out of the cartoon by Bruce Cochran on page 14. For one reason, years ago, we had been searching for information about a bird we had seen in N. California, and came across the info as to the call of a white-winged dove - which sounded like "Who cooks for you?" Though we had forgotten what bird made that sound, we would laugh now and then, remembering a bird that would sound like that. So, when we saw the cartoon on page 14 and then noticed an owl was depicted as sounding like that, we somehow felt that was not the bird we remembered with that call! Thumbing through my copy of the Peterson guide, I found I had even circled that odd comment years ago, so it surely was not an owl making that call! Just thought I would pass that info along to you - we birders always like to get things correct about those critters!

Best wishes to all involved with the magazine. Nice to know some of what goes on in Kansas these days - surely had a good life back there as a child!

Sandra Rugh Davidson

Double the Luck

My five-year-old son, Hunter (pictured on right), was fishing with his dad, Nick, and 2 year old brother, Cannon, on their Papa Rick's Strip Pit in Pittsburg on the morning of July 15. Hunter caught and reeled in two fish caught on the same lure in the same cast!

Nick and Jennifer Hansen

Law Enforcement Kudos

This past Sunday, I watched as two law enforcement officers from KDWP (Milford State Park) rescue a boat in the middle of a bad storm at Milford Lake.

Having been in law enforcement for over 10 years, it was refreshing to see these officers act quickly and decisively.

The storm at high winds, driving rain and an occasional lightning strike. The stranded boater could not get his engine to start and was in the middle of the lake and storm.

Rick Dykstra

Dear Ms. Davidson,

First off, "Thank you!" for being a long-time subscriber; it's always a joy to learn that someone has stuck by our publication for some time; It means a lot.

To address your second item regarding the late issues you've received this year, this is something we've been actively working to resolve. Many businesses have been affected by COVID-19, and while our staff have remained healthy and active, some of our contract vendors have not been so lucky. Combine this with a delay in getting two of our magazine contracts approved and renewed by deadline, and it was a "perfect storm" for disrupting our publication schedule. All of these hurdles have since been overcome, so I'm confident that our production time will speed up beginning with our 2021 November/December issue. Thank you for your continued patience and understanding.

Lastly, in regards to the "Way Outside" comic you referenced, I can't speak to illustrator Bruce Cochran's true intent, only my interpretation. Having said this, it's very possible that (a) Bruce was poking fun at the inconsistencies of Google Translate, and/or (b) Bruce is poking fun at bird identification skills in general. Comics and Google Translate aside, there is one owl that I'm aware of that does, in fact, make the "Who Cooks For You" call and that is the Barred Owl. (Reference the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's website, AllAboutBirds.org, for more on this.)

Again, thank you for your readership and support. Kansas Wildlife & Parks Magazine wouldn't be here without readers like you.

Warmly,

Nadia Reimer, executive editor



BIRD BRAIN

with Mike Rader

Black-bellied Whistling Duck

September and October are great for bird watching here in Kansas. Fall migration has been going on for species such as shorebirds and hummingbirds for a few weeks, but other species, especially songbirds and waterfowl, initiate their southbound movement around this time. Many birds are somewhat harder to identify in fall, with young birds not in full adult-type plumage and other birds in worn plumage or transitioning into winter plumage from their often-brighter looks of the breeding season. It's a fantastic time to get out to practice those identification skills.

Be sure to look for the Black-bellied Whistling Duck – a species that is relatively new to the state. They're beautiful ducks with long necks, reddish-pink bills and feet, small black crests on the back of their heads, large white eye rings, large patches of

white in the wings, chestnut-colored breasts and black bellies. They were considered rare here a decade or more ago but have been increasing in numbers and in locations around the state with some regularity. They make a high-pitched whistle as a call, sort of like a squeaky toy. They used to be called tree ducks, mainly because of their habit of nesting in tree cavities, similar to the more common Wood Ducks.

Black-bellied Whistling Ducks were typically a duck of tropical regions, more often observed along the gulf coast of the U.S., Mexico and other areas of Central America. They have been reported as far north as Canada, as well as most of the states along the Great Lakes and New England. Since Kansas is now on the northern edge of their breeding habitat, we see them in late



spring throughout the summer, then leaving in the fall. It's hard to say how far south the ones that nest here go, but it would be interesting to find out. They have been seen back in central Kansas in mid-March, but none overwinter here as far as I know.

They can form flocks of up to 1,000 individuals, gathering to feed on waste grain and mostly plant materials where they are abundant in the south. Pairs form during winter, with courtship displays consisting of stretching out their necks horizontally, then dipping their bills in water and flicking it up over their backs.

Their total populations seem to be stable or increasing in many areas, and while it is a huntable species, they aren't taken often. They have been reported in a multitude of locations here in Kansas, especially in the last 5 to 7 years, with more regularity in central Kansas around Pawnee and Barton counties. Wolf Pond in Ellinwood has hosted more than 40 this year, with similar numbers observed in Larned, as well. People report them standing on the tops of houses in towns, at feed yards, as well as marshy areas and small bodies of water.



KDWP Law Enforcement Awarded **ANTI-POACHING GRANT**

Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) recently announced that its Law Enforcement Division has been awarded a \$10,000 grant from International Wildlife Crimestoppers (IWC) toward the purchase and outfitting of an educational anti-poaching trailer.

The “Wall-of-Shame” trailer will be used to highlight past criminal wildlife cases KDWP has investigated and provide educational opportunities to examine actual contraband seized from investigations.

“Poaching is a regrettable reality of wildlife conservation, especially for our Law Enforcement officers, so it makes it all the more imperative that our game wardens are equipped with the tools and resources they need to effect positive change,” said KDWP Secretary Brad Loveless. “I’m confident the Law Enforcement Division will be excellent stewards of

this grant money, just as all of our staff are, and that they’ll do a fine job of utilizing this trailer to its fullest extent.”

Through its membership in IWC, KDWP was eligible for the grant which is funded by Bass Pro Shops and Cabela’s Outdoor Fund. Guided by the visionary leadership of Bass Pro founder Johnny Morris, the Outdoor Fund empowers the 200 million annual customers of Bass Pro Shops and Cabela’s to support conservation efforts by “rounding up” their purchases.

KDWP Law Enforcement staff anticipate having the trailer road-ready by the first quarter of 2022.

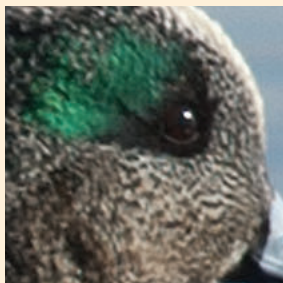
For more information KDWP’s Law Enforcement Division, or to request the “Wall-of-Shame” trailer for a future event, contact Major David Simonetti at (620) 672-0705 or david.simonetti@ks.gov.



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. People like to “dabble” with nicknames for me, like “Baldpate.”
2. I migrate to Kansas in the fall, sometimes staying through winter.
3. I really like showing off my colors!

>>> See answer on Page 13.



BOAT KANSAS

Personal Watercrafts

with Chelsea Hofmeier

Different types of boats are available for recreational use these days, all of which provide their own unique experience on the water. If you're a thrill seeker, you might gravitate toward one of the more adrenaline-inducing watercrafts on the market designed largely for individual, or personal, use. A personal watercraft (PWC) – commonly referred to as a jet ski, Wave Runner, or Sea-Doo – is a small vessel that uses an inboard jet drive as its primary source of propulsion and is designed to be operated by a person or persons sitting, standing, or kneeling on the vessel rather than inside the vessel. The U.S. Coast Guard includes them in the group of inboard vessels less than 16 feet in length. These boats are subject to the same laws and requirements as any other vessel, including boating education, towing requirements, registration, fire extinguishers, and sound-producing devices. There are also a handful of other laws specific to PWCs because they operate differently than other motorized vessels.

All occupants of a PWC, regardless of age, must wear a U.S. Coast Guard-approved personal floatation device (life jacket) while on board; inflatables are not allowed. If equipped with an engine cut-off switch, the lanyard must be attached to the operator. Unlike other motorized watercraft, PWCs may not be operated between sunset and sunrise. PWCs also must be operated at “no wake speeds” when

within 200 feet of docks, boat ramps, swimmers, bridge structures, anchored vessels, or nonmotorized vessels. Operators of PWCs must act responsibly by not jumping the wake of another vessel at an unsafe distance or weaving through congested waterway traffic, both of which are illegal on public waters in Kansas.

What makes jet skis fun can also make them potentially dangerous to operate. PWCs can operate at high speeds, which also means it takes them a much longer distance to stop after letting off the throttle. Since PWCs are propelled and controlled by jet and not a propeller and rudder, letting off the throttle also takes away the ability to steer. To avoid accidents, the mistake of letting off the throttle and turning the steering column is often made.

PWCs are allowed to tow a person on water skis, kneeboards, inflatable craft, or any other device as long as the PWC is designed to accommodate more than one person and does not exceed the PWC's own capacity rating. This is one of the more common PWC infractions seen on the water.

Jet skiing is an exciting recreational activity, but it comes with its own precautions. If awareness and education are part of the preparation, these unique boats can provide continuous and safe thrills for everyone involved.





Understand the Relationship Between HD & R3 with Tanna Fanshier

In his 1940 publication, “Wisconsin Wildlife Chronology,” conservationist, forester, and philosopher Aldo Leopold wrote, “Conservation viewed in its entirety, is the slow and laborious unfolding of a new relationship between people and land.” That relationship is one of intense complexity, and often takes specialized training to analyze and understand. Fish and wildlife agencies have the delicate task of managing our natural resources for the benefit of the wildlife, but also to the satisfaction of our diverse constituency. We often rely on social scientists and human dimensions specialists to understand this multifarious dynamic.

If you tuned in to the last episode of the Flatlander Podcast, you were introduced to KDWP human dimensions specialist, Susan Steffen, who walked us through some of her job duties, and the growing demand for human dimensions (HD) work in the conservation field. If you’ve ever participated in a KDWP Creel Survey, Licensed Angler Survey, or questionnaire after attending a KDWP Women’s Hunter Education class, you’re familiar with Susan’s efforts, which provide guidance vital to the future of our work, including R3.

Measuring the effectiveness of our recruitment, retention, and reactivation efforts are pivotal to the overall success of R3. HD and social science work are key components to understanding the way people adopt a new outdoor activity (recruitment), and the factors that motivate them to stay involved and share their passion with others (retention & reactivation). Because funding for fish and wildlife management and conservation comes primarily from the sales of licenses and excise taxes placed on fishing gear, firearms, and ammunition, understanding this adoption process through HD work helps us develop strategies to reduce barriers to participation in outdoor activities, encourage outdoor access for all, and ensure funding for conservation activities that support the health and longevity of the environment and its inhabitants for generations to come.

Our findings, however, are only as sound as the data that supports them, and that’s where you come in. In the podcast, Susan mentioned a drop in survey response rates and acknowledges the survey fatigue that exists in a world where we are questioned about each online shopping experience, directed to a link at the bottom of every receipt, and even polled on various social media platforms. And while surveys can feel tedious at times, completing surveys from KDWP and our partners ensures that your voice is being heard. These collective responses can have a tremendous impact on the way our programs are designed and how resources are managed. You can help us with our survey efforts by keeping the following in mind:

Ensure your email, mailing address, and contact information are up-to-date in your KDWP customer profile, and that KDWP emails aren’t being categorized as spam.

Complete surveys fully and in a timely manner.

Provide answers that are as honest and accurate as possible.

The “human element” can be complex, and one of the hardest factors to comprehend; however, thanks to the work social scientists and HD specialists like Susan are doing, we learn more about this complex relationship between people and the land (and its implications on our work) every day.

If you’re interested in learning more about the role of HD in wildlife management and conservation, check out the Flatlander Podcast and join us in learning about the wild faces and spaces that make Kansas more than flyover country.

“... Completing surveys from KDWP and our partners ensures that your voice is being heard. These collective responses can have a tremendous impact on the way our programs are designed and how resources are managed.”

The Full Range Experience

with Kent Barrett

I've written a few columns over the last 11 years about going to the range to practice shooting. Lately there has been quite a bit of discussion around the agency regarding new shooters and what they experience when they come to the range for the first time. What I most frequently hear is that it can be an overwhelming experience for a person new to firearms and shooting ranges. It also appears that experienced shooters can add to the discomfort; we can do a better job making people feel more welcome!

I would like to offer a couple of ideas about how we can make everyone's range experience more pleasant, and not just for new shooters.

First, as experienced shooters, we need to remember that everyone has to start somewhere. I remember the line from the old mountain man when the kid tells him he has never hunted before. The old man's reply, "Heck, I hadn't either until the first time." We

need to be patient and answer every question clearly and simply and without judgement. This isn't about us, it's about the new shooters we are inviting into the shooting community.

Next, be safe. Always use eye and hearing protection that fits and works. Make sure that the range is safe and explain all range safety rules BEFORE you start shooting. Don't wait until there is a problem to explain things.

To the new shooter, ask questions. Ask all of those "silly" questions because they are not so silly. The only wrong question is the one you didn't ask. This is a time to learn as much as you can from everyone you can. Build on the good stuff and file the rest away for future consideration.

Slow down and take your time. You don't learn to drive a car or ride a unicycle in a day. Be patient with yourself when learning new skills. We all are learning new things at the range. Put the

most veteran shooter in a new shooting disciple requiring a new skill set and they will be right back to where you are now. We all learn at our own pace so do not get discouraged. It is normal to feel anxiety when starting a new skill but don't let that stop you. Put in the effort and spend time at the range working through the rough spots and it will pay off. And, don't be afraid to ask for help.

Lastly, I will say to all, enjoy yourself. The rules are there to keep everyone safe on the range. Anyone can call "Cease Fire" any time there is something unsafe happening on the range. Range officers can seem very serious because they take your safety seriously. Don't mistake them for just being "grumpy." The more you know them, the more you will see that they are there to help you get better and become more comfortable. Now, get out there and enjoy the full range experience.

Biologists Seek Help From Migratory Bird Hunters

"Did you hunt geese, dove, or ducks last year? If yes, how many did you bag?" This is just one of a handful of questions that can provide biologists at the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) with information critical to managing migratory game bird populations.

Most game bird hunters in Kansas are familiar with the Harvest Information Program (HIP) permit, but some may not be aware of the short survey that is associated with its purchase. A HIP permit, available for just \$2.50, is required to hunt ducks, coots, geese, brant, swans, doves, woodcock, rails, snipe, sandhill cranes, band-tailed pigeons, and gallinules in Kansas; however, the associated survey is voluntary. Therefore, KDWP biologists are encouraging all HIP permit holders to, "Don't Skip the HIP" and complete the survey upon purchase.

The survey consists of 10 short questions related to the species each game bird hunter typically pursues. This information is provided to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to ensure that more detailed, nationwide surveys are sent to the appropriate hunters. For example, most surveys about dove harvest are typically sent to hunters who hunt doves, while most waterfowl harvest surveys are sent to hunters who typically pursue ducks and geese. The data collected is then used to make sound decisions concerning hunting seasons and population management of migratory game bird species. So in essence, hunters serve as biologists' eyes and ears in the field, helping to improve wildlife conservation efforts and pro-

tecting the hunting heritage.

Join KDWP in spreading the "Don't Skip the HIP" message! For more information about the HIP permit, visit ksoutdoors.com/Hunting/Hunting-Programs/Harvest-Information-Program-HIP.





Kansas State Parks

• FREE ENTRANCE - BLACK FRIDAY •

NOVEMBER

26

Celebrate Black Friday and #OptOutside with free entrance to any of our Kansas State Parks! Walk off some of that Thanksgiving dinner by enjoying the best of nature that Kansas offers in scenery and activity.



Please note: Camping and utility fees are required to stay overnight.

To find the state park nearest you, visit www.ksoutdoors.com.



Kansas Wildscape Foundation Celebrates 30 Years

by Marc Murrell

The Kansas Wildscape Foundation is pleased to announce plans to celebrate its 30th anniversary in 2021! The “30 for 30” campaign was unveiled earlier this summer with hopes of raising \$30,000 for future programs and projects in celebration of this milestone.

For those who don’t know, Wildscape was created in 1991 by Mike Hayden. Hayden, a former Kansas Governor and Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) secretary, wanted to set up a non-profit foundation dedicated to promoting and creating public outdoor opportunities for all Kansans. Governed by a Board of Directors with distinguished members from various businesses and organizations across Kansas, Wildscapes’ day-to-day operations are managed by an executive director and administrative assistant.

well as community recreation centers, among others. Most events are held from April through October with thousands of youth and their families in attendance. To date, Wildscape has invested more than \$200,000 in the O.K. Kids Program to help sites get started (grants ranging from \$100-\$500 are available) and promoted.

Another Wildscape program aimed at introducing children (and adults) to the outdoors is the Kansas WildLifer Challenge (www.kansaswildlifer.com). While it is online, it encourages participants to get outdoors and complete 15 out of 20 “challenges” ranging from planting a tree, catching a frog, shooting a bow and arrow, fishing, swimming or simply getting muddy. When the challenges are completed (photos of each challenge are uploaded to an individual account) the participant gets a certificate of completion and a prize package including a t-shirt (while supplies last).

Other projects Wildscape has assisted KDWP with include the Milford Wetlands Restoration Project, nature trail interpretive signage at Prairie Dog State Park, handicapped fishing



Wildscape’s most notable contribution occurred in the KDWP cabins project while they were being built in state parks and several wildlife areas. The late Bud Walker was a major proponent of this outdoor lodging opportunity and donated a substantial amount of money to kick start Wildscape’s involvement. Wildscape was involved in financing construction of 73 out of 120 cabins in various state parks and wildlife areas across Kansas. The cabins are available to rent (<https://ksoutdoors.com/State-Parks/Reservations>), but you better do so well in advance, as they’ve become increasingly popular over the years!

Wildscape is also dedicated to targeting the next generation of outdoor enthusiasts. Realizing a trend of too many kids left indoors attached to electronics, they set out to create a program to get kids outdoors. The Outdoor for Kansas (O.K.) Kids Program was born in 2001 and the first event found 4,000 to 5,000 kids venturing to Kansas state parks to enjoy outdoor activities like fishing, bird house construction and several shooting sports. Since that time, O.K. Kids’ events have grown to include city- and county-governed entities, as

access at Mined Land Wildlife Area, Milford State Park tree planting, a prairie chicken grant, Get Outdoors (GO) Kansas and several public access sites along the Arkansas River.

More recently, Wildscape was a major financial sponsor for the inaugural KDWP 2021 Great Kansas Fishing Derby where tagged fish at 35 different sites were worth up to \$250 each in prizes. Other projects in the near future will include working with KDWP Law Enforcement on a traveling trailer to bring awareness to wildlife poaching, additional cabin needs and maintenance, National Archery in the Schools Program, Becoming an Outdoors Woman Workshop and R3 (recruitment, retention and reactivation) efforts just to name a few.

Some of Wildscape’s programs and projects are sponsored by grants and donations from individuals or corporations including support from the McIlwaine Foundation, Capitol Federal Bank, Blue Cross-Blue Shield of Kansas, Bass Pro Shops, The Coleman Company, Bank of America and Evergy.

To learn more about Wildscape, or to contribute to the 30 for 30 Fundraising Campaign, visit www.wildscape.org, or email marcmurrell@wildscape.org.



FISHIN'

with Mike Miller

The Art of Fishing and Fishing Well

Fishing an art form? At some level, I believe it is. Hear me out.

I've always loved just about every aspect of fishing, including selecting and buying lures, rods and reels; dreaming of and buying a boat; discovering new techniques and methods (except trolling, I hate trolling); preparing for an upcoming fishing trip; figuring out how to catch fish on a given day; and, of course, catching fish. And while catching fish is still the goal, it is no longer the end-all of my quest.

Years ago, catching a fish was the adrenaline-surgic culmination of my fishing effort, and I fished longer and harder than most to fulfill it. My idea was that if I kept my lure in the water, good things would happen, and rather than think critically about how I should be fishing, I just kept switching lures and covering water. And it usually worked. When it didn't, "the fish weren't biting." Then I learned that someone always caught fish, even on those days when my persistence didn't.

I decided I needed to learn more and I've never lost that thirst for fishing knowledge. I read magazine articles, learn from trusted mentors, and watch fishing shows. Today, I desire to fish well; to adapt to the conditions and mood of the fish; to refine my skill; and to find fish using knowledge rather than simply eliminating water.

My brain still releases dopamine when I get a strike and feel the weight of a fish on my rod, but these days I'm much more in tune with why and how I caught that fish. And while catching a fish doesn't increase my heart rate like it once did, it is still gratifying.



I recently spent several days fishing for brown trout on the Rio Grande River in Colorado, something I've done each year for more than 25 years. In that time, I've learned to cast a fly rod relatively well, figured out which flies usually work best, and where I'm most likely to catch trout within the river's current. I've also learned that every day is a new day on the river and what worked last year, or even yesterday, may not catch fish today. That's the beauty of it, though, you have to constantly adjust and fine-tune your approach to catch fish consistently.

This year the river was lower than average and the weather was warm, so the fish weren't as cooperative as usual. I tied in lighter tippet, switched flies often, adjusted indicator depths, and searched out new water. Even though I struggled to catch more than a handful of trout on a couple of mornings, the half-dozen very nice trout I caught on the last morning were fulfilling. I made the right adjustments, presented the fly correctly, caught fish under difficult conditions and released each fish unharmed. I fished well that morning and that made me happy. That is the art of fishing.

WAY outside BY BRUCE COCHRAN



"HOW MANY TIMES HAVE I TOLD YOU NOT TO POINT GOPHERS?!"



Writings from a Warden's Daughter

with Annie Campbell

Spotlight Capture

It was mid-November of 2005, and Kansas game wardens turned their attention to nighttime activities; the furbearer season had just opened and complaints of illegal spotlighting for deer were increasing. On top of that, the waterfowl and upland bird hunting seasons were going strong, creating a delicate balancing act for game wardens. But poachers rarely work 8 to 5, so nighttime selective enforcement, aided by the Kansas Highway Patrol (KHP) aircraft, is a necessary deterrent.

On a dark moonless night, eight game wardens in four pickups, took positions in the common corners of Washington, Marshall, Pottawatomie, and Riley counties. The KHP aircraft flew over from Salina with two KHP pilots and one game warden aboard as an additional spotter. Sometime after 9 p.m., the aircraft began circling the four-county area and in no time, furbearer hunters' headlamps were spotted moving along the westside of the Big Blue River in Riley County. The closest pair of wardens were directed to the location and a quick check showed the hunters were after raccoons and were properly equipped and licensed. It was quiet until just after midnight when KHP officers notified the wardens working in southwest Marshall County that a spotlight was actively in use. Dad recognized the location as the Old Biglow area just off the Tuttle Creek Wildlife Area. Unfortunately, the first responding wardens were on the westside of the Big Blue River. They'd have to cross the river near Blue Rapids, and Dad was concerned their response time might take too long.

Dad and his partner were sitting atop a hill in northwest Pottawatomie County and were closer to the spot lighters, so they headed that direction. It was a 15-mile ride over low-maintenance, one-track roads as they listened to KHP track the movement of the suspect vehicle. Dad radioed their position when they reached the Biglow area, and just as they rounded the curve, they could see a spotlight shining across the open ground ahead. KHP confirmed they were headed straight for their target. Closing the distance quickly, they hit the lights and sirens when they were about 100 yards behind the suspect vehicle, while Dad stayed on the radio. The suspects took off and the ensuing chase reached speeds of 80 mph on isolated roads along pastures and cornfields. The suspects knew the roads and would outdistance the wardens only to let them catch up again. Dad used two radio

frequencies to communicate with KHP and the other game wardens as he coached his partner behind the wheel when to speed up and slow down.

Twenty miles into the pursuit, the vehicles were moving fast on a well-maintained gravel road and Dad's vehicle was just a couple hundred yards behind the spot lighters and the KHP aircraft was directly above them. But when the suspects increased their speed the wardens shut down their vehicle pursuit. The suspects, who'd been shining their spotlight back at the wardens' truck, now began shining it directly up at the KHP aircraft, hoping to evade detection as they entered the small Marshall County townsite of Vliets. But KHP officers maintained contact and directed the wardens to a dark alley and an abandoned new, limited addition pickup. Onsite, Dad's partner took off on foot toward what turned out to be a heavy-set 18-year-old and a 40-year-old man attempting to scale a fence, who were caught. Game wardens working the west side of the Big Blue River rolled in along with the Marshall County Sheriff's Office to aid in locating four other suspects. Unfortunately, efforts failed that night to locate the owner and driver of the truck so Marshall County Sheriff's Office called for a wrecker. The two detained suspects were arrested and transported to jail after refusing to cooperate in the investigation. In the weeks to follow, the Marshall County game warden worked with the Marshall County Attorney on filing charges against the four additional suspects whose identities were eventually discovered. Appropriate wildlife charges were filed against all suspects with additional traffic charges against the driver. A receipt for an AR-15 rifle, that was purchased on the actual day of the chase, was found in the suspect's truck. The rifle had been tossed by the suspects during the chase but was recovered and turned over to the county attorney's office. That rifle was later forfeited to the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. In addition to paying monetary fines and three weeks of storage charges for the suspect's vehicle, the hunting licenses of all suspects who had licenses were revoked, along with their hunter education cards. All six suspects lost hunting privileges for one year and all were required to take or retake a hunter education course. The success of that night was truly a team effort between the KHP, Marshall County Sheriff's Department, and of course the extra hours of effort by the game wardens involved.



THE UGLY TRUTH

Ever get that sinking feeling when you start to clean a fish that you've wasted your time, because the meat appears riddled with little yellow round BB-sized or rice-shaped balls? I have, and that prompted me to visit with fisheries biologists to get the "skinny" on my findings.

Yellow grub, a common fish parasite, can exist in any water in Kansas. Infestations are commonly noticed in shallow, weedy ponds where wading birds are often present. Eggs released from flukes inside wading birds hatch and infect snails in the water. Free-swimming larvae emerge from the snail and attach to the outside of fish and encyst under the skin. Infested fish are consumed by wading birds and the cycle continues.

Reducing the infestation requires a break in the life cycle. Common examples of how to achieve this could be: Introduce redear sunfish, which feed voraciously on snails; Reduce vegetation that snails inhabit; and, Discourage wading birds from

small impoundments.

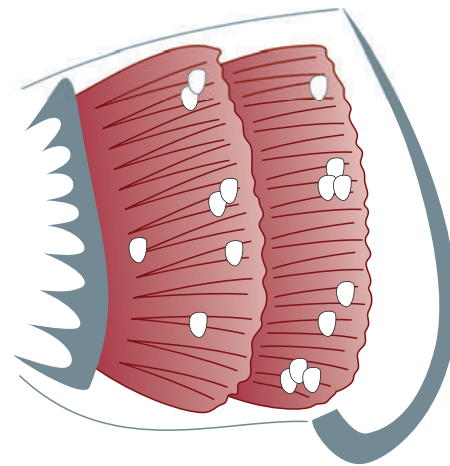
Infestations in the thin flesh around fins are often noticeable to anglers. Sometimes, if the fish is only mildly affected, the infection is only noticed while cleaning the fish. For the strong-willed, there be light. Most fish parasites do not affect humans. These parasites are designed for cold-blooded fish flesh and not warm-blooded animals.

With that being said, a pair of tweezers can be used to pluck small amounts from fillets, if you aren't too "icked out" by them; they can be easily removed.

Another common parasite is Neascus, also called "black grub," because it looks like black pepper flakes in the fillet meat. Its life cycle is similar to that of the yellow grub but removal can be more tedious.

Cooking fish eliminates the chance of these parasite affecting humans. On the off chance you ingest a viable grub, it would likely pass through your system unnoticed.

Another "ick" to look out for are viruses like Largemouth Bass



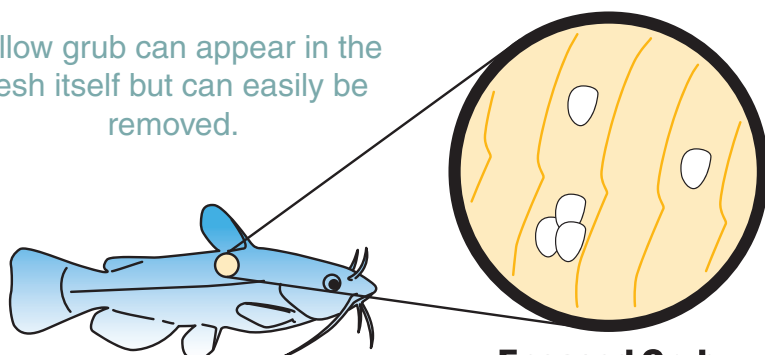
Yellow grub can affect the gills of a fish making this an easy in-the-field check.

Virus, or LMBV, when fish display darkened skin, a distended abdomen, or internal sores. Or dermal sarcoma and lymphocystis – in these instances, anglers often mistake the red growths for injuries from turtle predation or spawning.

There are many other parasites, viruses and bacteria that affect fish in Kansas and as always, if you don't feel comfortable processing an affected fish or are unsure of its condition – don't keep it. Instead, take a picture and contact your local fisheries biologist to shed some light on what it is and what to expect from other catches from that same waterbody.

Fish suffer from environmental and genetic conditions like any other animal and that's the ugly truth, but not always at a complete loss. Understanding environmental conditions that cause problems in lakes and ponds can help landowners and managers reduce or reverse infestations, returning a body of water into a producer of good eats.

Yellow grub can appear in the flesh itself but can easily be removed.



Fish

Encased Grub in flesh of fish

“WHAT AM I?” answer: American wigeon

Venison Cabbage Rolls

by Michael Pearce, Freelance Writer

With some of the highest success rates in the nation, most Kansas deer hunters annually have plenty of venison in their freezers. Cabbage rolls are an excellent use for ground venison, are easy to prepare, are healthy, and wonderfully aromatic while cooking.

They are also an ideal option for those who like to make meals ahead of time. They can be put together quickly before heading to work, or maybe even the night before, then placed in a slow cooker all day.

Batch size is large enough for great-tasting leftovers, re-heated in a microwave. No-salt tomato sauce and brown rice keep the rolls as healthy as possible. The corn and shredded carrots are optional but add color to the cabbage rolls as well as flavor.



Ingredients

1 Large head of cabbage, cored
2 Lbs. ground venison
1 1/2 Cups cooked rice
2 Eggs
1/2 Cup onion, finely chopped
1/3 Cup corn, frozen or canned (optional)
1/3 Cup carrot, shredded (optional)
4 Cloves garlic, minced
1/2 Tsp. thyme

1/2 Tsp. oregano
1/2 Tsp. rosemary
Toothpicks

Tomato sauce

2 Cups tomato sauce
2 Cups canned chopped tomatoes
2 Tbls. white vinegar
1/8 Tsp. sugar

Directions

Remove the leaves from the head of the cabbage. To do this, place the cored cabbage, stem-end down, in a baking dish. Add about 1/2 cup water to the dish, and microwave on high 8-10 minutes.

While the cabbage is cooking and cooling, mix the tomato sauce in a separate bowl. Carefully peel the cabbage leaves off the head. You should easily get 10-12 nice-sized leaves off each large head of cabbage.

Divide the filling into as many portions as you have pliable leaves.

Place a portion of the meat near the stem of a leaf. Roll the stem up atop the mixture, close in the sides of the leaf and complete rolling it up; insert a toothpick.

To begin cooking, pour about 1 cup of the tomato sauce mixture into the bottom of the slow cooker. Cover the bottom with a layer of cabbage rolls, pour over a small amount of tomato sauce mixture and repeat until all of the rolls are in the slow cooker. Any leftover sauce can be set aside and saved.

Cook on low for 8-10 hours. Heat any remaining tomato sauce and pour over individual cabbage rolls upon serving.

Variations

Cabbage rolls come out of a slow cooker tender enough to cut with a fork. But, they can also be baked. Repeat the process of pouring tomato sauce in the bottom of the baking dish, then atop the cabbage rolls. Most baking dishes only allow one layer of cabbage rolls. Cover tightly with foil and bake for 1 1/2 hours at 350 degrees.

For more spice, add 1/2-cup finely-chopped jalapeño.

If seasonal, a layer of sliced home-grown tomatoes can be placed atop each layer of cabbage rolls. Frozen garden tomatoes can be used to replace the chopped tomatoes or sauce.

Junior Nature Notes:

Animals in Fall and Winter

by Diedre Kramer
KDWP Education Specialist

Word Search

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Find the following words in the puzzle.
Words are hidden → ↓ and ↘ .

ADAPTATION
FOOD
HABITAT

HIBERNATION
MIGRATION
TORPOR

WATER
WINTER

UH-OH! Where did they go?

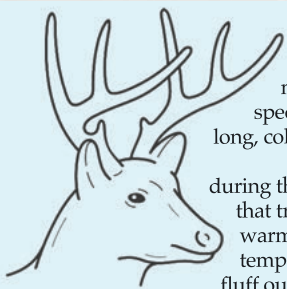
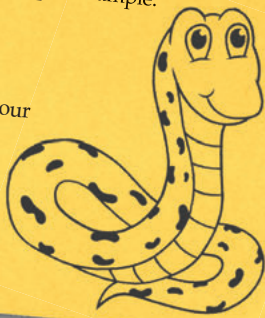
Have you ever wondered where wild animals go in the fall and winter? There are several ways that animals deal with extremely cold weather. Animals can hibernate, migrate, or they are permanent residents and stay active all winter.

There are different types of hibernation.

- **True hibernation** – Animals have lower body temperatures, slower breathing, and lower heart rates. Animals in true hibernation do not wake up during the winter months! Example: Sweat Bees
- **Torpor** – Torpor is sometimes called light hibernation. Animals will lower their body temperature and heart rate, but only for short periods of time. Animals in torpor will wake up several times in winter to drink water and eat food if it is available. – Example: Cave Myotis Bat
- **Brumation** – Brumation is like hibernation for cold-blooded animals like reptiles, turtles, or amphibians. Animals begin to enter brumation when the temperatures get colder, and the days get shorter. Animals in brumation wake up to drink water before returning to sleep. – Example: Western Ratsnake

How can you help hibernating animals?

- **Provide habitat**
Leave piles of leaves, branches, and logs in your yard over the winter. Animals including insects, reptiles, and amphibians can use the brush pile to hibernate over the winter.



Permanent residents are animals that stay active during the winter and do not migrate or hibernate. These animals have special adaptations that help them survive our long, cold winters.

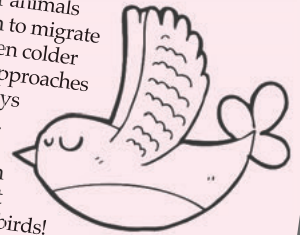
There are many ways animals stay warm during the winter. White-tailed deer have winter fur that traps air close to their skin. This air stays warm and protects the deer from cold wind and temperatures! Birds that stay for the winter will fluff out their feathers away from their body to help them trap the warm air. Permanent animals also change their diet during the winter and eat what they can find.

How can you help permanent resident animals?

- **Set out water dishes**
Fresh water can be hard to find during the winter. Set out a water dish or tub with a heater to provide a drinking spot for different types of wildlife. Make sure to keep your water dish or tub clean! If a water dish gets dirty, it can make a lot of animals sick.
- **Provide food**
Setting up bird feeders for the permanent resident birds can be helpful for them. Using bird suet, sunflower seeds, nyjer seed, or peanuts can help birds find enough food during the winter. Make sure to clean your birdfeeders regularly – dirty birdfeeders can make birds sick.

Other animals will begin to migrate south when colder weather approaches and the days get shorter.

The most well-known animals that migrate are birds!



Birds migrate to areas that are warmer to make sure they have plenty of food, water, and resources for raising their young. Migration can be a long and difficult journey for birds, but there are many things you can do to help them along the way!

- **Turn off unnecessary lights at night.**
Most migratory birds travel at night. The lights from our towns and cities can make it more difficult for birds to reach their destination. A simple way to help is to turn off lights outside during migration.
- **Keep birds from hitting your windows while they hunt for food!**
Birds cannot tell the difference between a window reflection and their habitat. To help them, use tempera paint and stencils to decorate your windows! Make sure you only leave 2 to 4 inches between your design and empty window space. Most birds will recognize they cannot fly between the spaces and will avoid your windows.
- **Start gardening!**
Migrating birds use a lot of energy and will need to eat along their journey. Many of them will not eat seed from a feeder. By adding native plants to your garden, you can help feed migrating birds by providing natural seeds and insects for the birds to eat!

Changing Lives **ONE ARROW** at a Time

by Gary Keen
Kansas Archery in the Schools State Coordinator



With more than 1.3 million students in 8,891 schools participating in archery annually, the National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP) has quickly gained popularity.

Unlike other physical activities, 58 percent of NASP participants feel more connected to their school due to the wide range of individual and team success they experience, across all age groups. Since 2002, interest in the NASP program has now increased outside of schools, growing from 7 million participants to 23 million. With figures like that, there is no doubt in my mind that NASP is changing lives, one arrow at a time.

Throughout the past 15 years as the NASP state coordinator for the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP), I've been constantly amazed at the physical and emotional benefits the program has to offer. Students are given

an opportunity to engage in a sport that encourages them to be outdoors, which has made most archers more confident and given them the desire to explore other outdoor activities. And, enthusiastic archery coaches also take teams and individuals to the national tournament, giving Kansas students the opportunity to compete at a higher level and potentially bring home never-before-achieved awards.





Personally, NASP has given me an opportunity to spend more time with my children as a coach and as a dad. While my children have grown not only as archers, they've also grown to become great instructors themselves. This last spring, I trained my third daughter, Sierra, as a Basic Archery Instructor (BAI). It was an honor to see yet another young adult join the ranks of future BAI trainers, and it was even more special knowing she will continue to pass on her archery skills to students as eager to learn as she once was.

In the same BAI course, the son of another current instructor was also trained to become a coach. As a competitive archer for the Chapman archery team, this individual competed in various target and 3-D archery tournaments as a student. His dad started the NASP program at the Chapman school district, which has since developed into one of the top archery programs in Kansas.

Another father/son NASP coaching duo in Kansas

includes Mike Bowman and son, Marcus. Mike teaches at USD 247 Southeast School and was trained as a NASP coach many years ago. While in college, Marcus saw how Mike used archery to impact his students. So, when Marcus would soon be teaching at USD 493 in Columbus, Mike encouraged him to become a NASP archery coach, too. Now, the father and son are coaching in neighboring districts and enjoy coaching their respective teams, especially when they meet in friendly competition!

In my family, my daughters Micaela, Lillian, Sierra, and Adeline have all attended archery-related events as instructors, such as OK Kids Days, National Wild Turkey Federation Youth Days, various tournaments and other youth archery events. My daughters will tell you, it is a lot of work to help a new archer learn how to hold a bow. However, once that child sees their immediate success, the work is worth the effort.

Each of these young ladies have seen their own success in archery in a variety of ways. Micaela, my oldest, was able to win four Overall Top Archer competitions for Kansas State NASP tournament bows. After high school, she was trained as a NASP BAI and her spouse Jay Brundage was later trained as a coach. Together, they began an archery program at King Solomon Christian Camp near Solomon, which has grown to become one of the more popular activities in the camp.

My second oldest daughter, Lillian, has been involved in NASP since the fourth grade. As a young archer, she would take



The Keen family is just one of many who have made participating in NASP a family tradition. From left to right are Keen kids: Lillian, Sierra, Gary, Jay, Micaela, and Adeline.

time to share the sport with her friends. Besides being involved in numerous tournaments and receiving awards, she was also eager to be trained as a NASP coach. She continues to help with youth events to this day.

Sierra, who was recently trained as a NASP coach, was also eager to learn archery at a young age. I had to start her with the mini Genesis bows, which she did not like because her sisters were using the bigger bows! She eventually got over her dislike, and through years of learning, has also earned various awards in competitions. Sierra will coach archery to youth groups and and at camps, as well.

My youngest daughter, Adeline, is still an archer in NASP and loves competing – especially with her sisters at home tournaments. This next year will be her first year participating in competitions without her sisters as student participants, but they are always looking at open competitions, so they can compete together once again. When she is old enough, Adeline hopes to also become a NASP coach.

Kansas NASP coaches are making an impact in schools, but they're also passing the tradition down to their own children. It's clear their desire isn't just to teach the skill of archery, but to use it as a tool to impact all Kansas youth (including their own) in a positive way, one arrow at a time. What a bullseye. 🐮

To learn more, contact Lyndzee Rhine, KDWP Bowhunter Education Coordinator, at lyndzee.rhine@ks.gov or call (620) 672-5911 today.

KANSAS WILDLIFE & PARKS

HARVEST

INFORMATION PROGRAM

DON'T SKIP
the **HIP**



PURCHASE THE HIP STAMP

The stamp, \$2.50, is required to hunt migratory game birds* in Kansas.

*Buy it online at
kshuntfishcamp.com.*

COMPLETE THE SHORT SURVEY

Did you hunt dove, or ducks last year? If so, how many did you bag?

A short survey is administered at time of purchase.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP!

Completing the HIP survey provides biologists at KDWP valuable information to help manage Kansas' incredible migratory game bird populations!

*Ducks, coots, geese, brant, swans, doves, woodcock, rails, snipe, sandhill cranes, band-tailed pigeons, and gallinules.



KANSAS
Wildlife & Parks Magazine
Venture to Kanopolis State Park
Inside: Mountain Biking in Kansas P. 28

DUCK COMMANDER
TEAL HEN
DUCK COMMANDER
DUCK COMMANDER

FEDERAL
SPEED-SHOK
WATERFOWL STEEL
30.06 GA. 2 1/2" 12-1000

b
bug repellent
bug repellent

REPEL
INSECT REPELLENT
SPORTSMEN MAX
40% DEET
REPEL & PROTECTS UP TO 10 HOURS
WITHOUT THE DISASTROUS FUMES
OF OTHER INSECT REPELLENTS
Protects Mosquitoes, Fleas, Ticks, and
Many Flies, Chiggers, and
Worms. LONG-LASTING PROTECTION

EARLY TEAL TACTICS

by Rob McDonald,
Modern Wildman Blog

Finally, fall is here. Daylight hours are shortening a little each day, and nighttime temperatures are cooling. That means it's the start of many of the state's early hunting seasons!

One of my favorite fall hunting seasons is without a doubt teal season. These small, acrobatic, early migratory waterfowl come cruising down the central flyway with the first of the cool fronts.

Let's take a look at some tips, tactics, and essential gear to help you along during your next hunt for blue- and green-winged teal:

Licenses, Permits, and Stamps - Whether you choose to purchase your hunting license and stamps from a vendor, online at ksoutdoors.com, or on the KDWP mobile app, HuntFishKS; a valid Kansas hunting license, Kansas State Duck Permit, Harvest Information Program (HIP) Permit, and a Federal Migratory Bird Stamp are all required to hunt teal.

Decoy Teal - Migratory waterfowl are social birds, and generally, both green-winged and blue-winged teal are no exception. Using decoys to attract teal into your hunting setup can be a highly effective tactic. Early season drakes are just beginning their plumage change in September, using early season decoys, or all teal hen decoys will more closely match the bird plumage you will encounter during your hunt. Spinning wing decoys can be an extremely effective tool for hunting teal, as well. If your decoy spread is made up of only "big duck" decoys, don't let that keep you from hunting the teal season. Teal will readily decoy into big duck decoys, too.

Teal Calls - Keeping with the social bird theme, blue- and green-winged teal are both vocal birds, and respond readily to calling. A higher pitched mallard hen call will work in a pinch; and, a variety of call manufacturers produce teal hen calls that are effective. Try a hen cadence like calling mallards, just shorten the quacks and speed them up. Drake teal make a sharp peep or whistle that can be easily replicated with any type of duck whistle call.

Shotgun & Shells - Teal are slight built birds that fly swiftly with aerial acrobatics. Hunting teal often requires quick shooting at fast-moving targets. Non toxic shotshells loaded in shot sizes from no.7 down to no.4 are appropriate for teal. Light, fast-swinging shotguns chambered in 20 or 12 gauge and choked with an improved or modified choke are ideal for teal hunts.

Warm Weather Hunting - Early fall in Kansas can be very comfortable with warm days and cool nights, but if summer is hanging on, teal season can sometimes be pretty darn hot. With a few extra items not usually found in

a duck blind bag, and planning your hunts during early morning and evening hours, early teal season hunts can be fantastic no matter the temperature.

Be sure to pack a few warm weather items like: sunscreen to block the harsh Kansas sun, bug spray to keep biting insects at bay, and a water jug to stay hydrated. A large brimmed camo hat, and no-glare sunglasses will help to keep the sun out of your eyes, and off of your neck, ears, and face, too.

Waders in warm weather can be absolutely miserable, especially if you're sporting late season insulated waders. Opting for lightweight chest waders, or even hip waders, is a terrific option. Breathable waders with removable insulated liners have become increasingly popular for their comfort and versatility. Utilizing breathable waders with the liner removed is another great option for warm-weather hunting.

Teal Hunting Tactics - Although warm weather may seem a little odd when it comes to duck hunting, rest assured, the rules of waterfowling still apply. Pay attention to cold fronts, especially north of your area along the flyway, it doesn't take much of a cool front to push teal down.

Hunt with the wind in your face and the sun to your back if you can. Teal will use the prevailing wind to help them get down into your spread (be sure your decoys are set up with a nice landing zone with the wind in mind).

Hiding is still important. While teal, especially in the early season, might not be as wary as late season mallards, a good blind is still critical to a successful hunt. Look for a change in vegetation like cattails, smartweed, bullrush, or willows to hide away. A camo folding stool, a plastic milk crate, or even a brown or green five-gallon bucket to sit on will go a long way to keeping you comfortable and hidden during your hunt.

Fall is a fantastic season for hunters and anglers in Kansas, there is so much opportunity to get outdoors and invest in time with family, friends, and yourself. I hope you make it outdoors in Kansas this fall!

The Winning Women

by Brent Frazee, freelance writer

When Taylor Kraus watched her 9-year-old daughter Charlee cast into the swirling water below Council Grove Reservoir, she couldn't help but reflect on her own childhood.

Years ago, she was the one who was hunting, fishing and loving the outdoors while her friends played with dolls.

Now, Charlee follows in her footsteps, apparently inheriting her mom's love of the outdoors.

"Growing up, I was one of the only girls that I hung around with who really liked hunting and fishing," said Kraus, 29, who was reared on a farm near Alta Vista. "I just thought it was a lot more fun than playing with dolls or shopping.

"I think Charlee feels the same way. I haven't forced it on her. It's

Charlee Chaney displayed one of many drum she caught and released during a fishing trip to the outlet at Council Grove Reservoir.



something that just comes naturally for her.

"We've always been an outdoors family."

Kraus and her daughter certainly aren't alone. Other Kansas women are discovering the joy of introducing their girls to the outdoors.

As female participation in outdoor pastimes such as fishing climbs, more moms and grandmas are taking a role in getting their girls involved.

"It's fine for them to still like the things other girls do," Kraus said. "Charlee plays softball and I coach her team.

"But more than anything, she likes to fish and hunt."

MALE MENTORS

That certainly isn't to say that Charlee doesn't have a male influence in her life. Far from it.

She does most of her hunting with her dad, Caleb Chaney, from whom Taylor is divorced. She fishes with her mom and her mom's fiancé, Brandon Albrecht; They all live in Morris County and are active in the outdoors.

At a young age, Charlee has accomplished more than some adults. She has shot two bucks with a crossbow, two wild turkeys with a shotgun and a wild hog with a rifle. She also has caught everything from catfish to crappie to bass on her rod and reel. And get this, she has even been noodling with her mom and Albrecht.

Charlee descended in the murky water of Council Grove Reservoir this summer and cautiously entered a big partially submerged log in search of a big flathead catfish.

of Kansas Outdoors



When she began feeling around for a fish, she lost her nerve.

"I was afraid there might be a big snapping turtle or a snake in there," Charlee said. She then became a spectator as Albrecht pulled several large fish out of their underwater lairs.

For now, Charlee has decided she will stick with the traditional method of fishing. That's what she did on a hot summer evening at Council Grove Reservoir recently.

Sitting on a concrete wall overlooking the outlet, Charlee cast a piece of a nightcrawler to the swirling water below and immediately got a hit. She set the hook and quickly caught a small drum.

No sooner had Albrecht unhooked the fish then she caught another. And then another. And so it went. Charlee spent almost an hour catching and releasing fish under the watchful eye of her mom, her dad and Albrecht.

All the while, she talked about her love of the outdoors.

"There aren't a lot of my girlfriends who like to go fishing," Charlee said. "They think hunting and fishing are for boys.

"But I keep telling them that they need to try it. Girls can do it, too."

A FAMILY LEGACY

That "girls-can-do-it-too" attitude is part of Tracy Strickland's family heritage. The old mount of a pronghorn antelope hanging in her den is proof of that.



Tracy Strickland and her daughter Austin enjoy time in the Kansas outdoors.

"My grandmother shot that antelope long before I was even born," said Strickland, 35, of Eudora.

Strickland's mom also loved to hunt, and she would take Tracy out from the time she was 10. Even after Tracy's mom and dad divorced, her mother continued to mentor her daughter.

"We grew up in Lawrence, but we were always going out to the family farm," Stacy said. "We would hunt, fish and even skip cow patties across the water. We were 'country.'"

That influence has played a big part in Tracy's life. Now married, she and her husband Adam continue to

hunt deer. And Tracy mentors her 11-year-old daughter Austin, as well as the couple's two boys.

"Adam and I mostly bow hunt now and Austin doesn't have the patience for that yet," Tracy said. "But she loves to turkey hunt with a shotgun."

MOTHER-DAUGHTER FISHING



AnnaBeth Liby, 3, is following in her mother's footsteps when it comes to a love of fishing.

Sarah Liby and her 3-year-old daughter AnnaBeth already are inseparable fishing buddies. "She makes sure she has her fishing rod in the car wherever we go," Sarah said. "Any time we go past water, she gets excited. "You can see the sparkle in her eyes when she catches something."

For Liby, a 23-year-old single mom who lives

in Topeka, that is special. She grew up fishing with her dad, and she's still passionate about the outdoors. Now she is planting the seed with a child of her own.

The mom and daughter duo often fish at Lonestar Lake and celebrate quality time together. Meanwhile, Liby is busy widening her own outdoors horizons.

"My parents didn't hunt," she said. "That's something I've always wanted to try, but I didn't know how to get involved. Then I heard about a group that helps women get started in different outdoors (pursuits) and I thought that would be a good way to learn."

That group is Wander Woman-Kansas, a non-profit that educates women about the outdoors in a non-intimidating fashion.

So far, Liby has participated in one trip to hunt for shed deer antlers and another to go bowfishing for rough fish, and she loved both.

"I'm learning, and I'm looking forward to doing even more," she said. "It's important to me that I can pass along a love of the outdoors to my daughter."

A VOICE FOR WOMEN

When Jessica White went turkey hunting with her dad several years ago, she started brainstorming.

"I wanted to meet other women who liked to hunt, but I didn't know where to go," she said. "I Googled different hunting groups, but they were all made up of men.

"I couldn't find anything for women."

So, White started her own group, Wander Woman—Kansas. The program was designed to help other women experience what she had already learned by growing up in an outdoors family.

"My dad is a hunter and angler, my mom is a kayaker and canoeist," said White, who lives in Shawnee. "So, I didn't want to make this all about hunting and fishing. Some women aren't comfortable about shooting a gun or hunting, but they want to learn about other outdoor activities.

"I wanted to include a wide range of interests and help women get started in a comfortable, non-intimidating way."

Now three-years-old, the program has proven to be a success. Promoting her group through a website, wanderwomankans.com, White has already attracted almost 500 members.


The group has two to three events per month, ranging from traditional outdoor sports such as hunting and fishing to more adventurous pursuits such as rappelling, juglining for catfish, hiking and crawdad hunting.

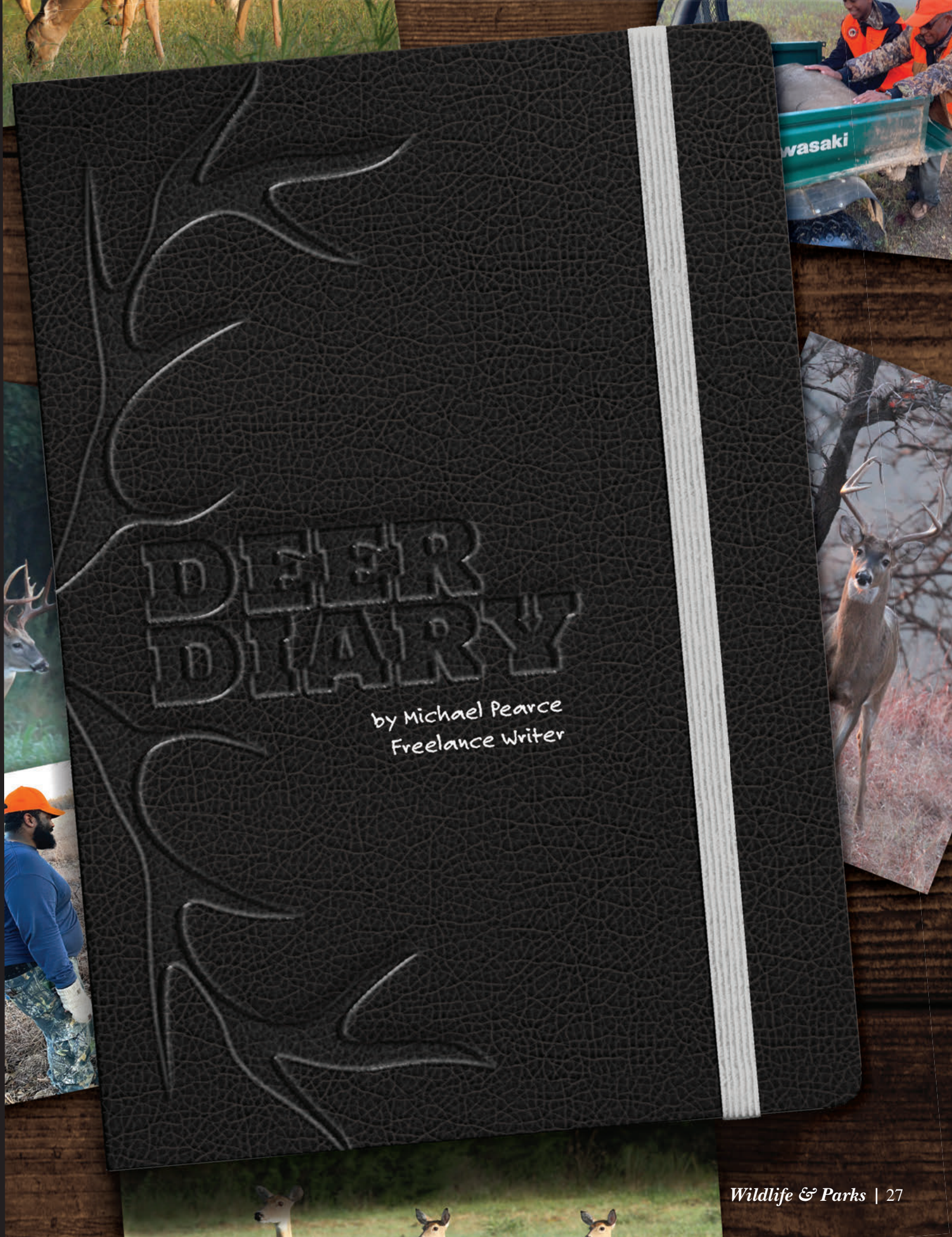
Another group, WildHERness (wildherness.org) also is based in the Kansas area and is designed to empower women in outdoors pursuits.

Its mission statement reflects its goals: "Creating a community of strong, adventurous females through participation in outdoor pursuits. Our goal is to build independence and self-sufficiency that empower all women to pursue more adventures outside."

WildHERness also offers a variety of special trips, everything from fishing and hunting to rock climbing to stargazing to birdwatching.

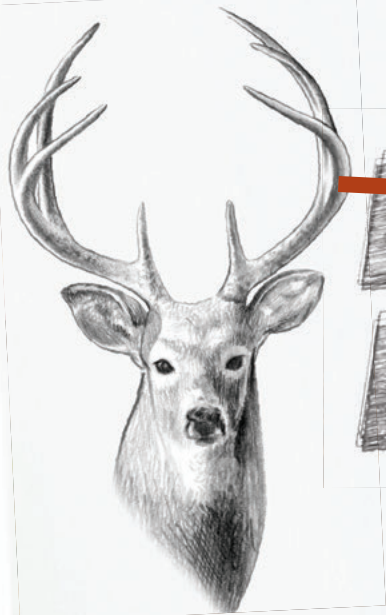
The bottom line? More Kansas women are getting involved in the outdoors than ever before.

"I really think more women need to give it a try," Kraus said. "They might be surprised at how relaxing and peaceful it is." 



DEER DIARY

by Michael Pearce
Freelance Writer



DEAR DEER DIARY

Going into the 2020-21 deer seasons, my goal was to hunt during each of Kansas' six main seasons. As well as solo, I looked forward to hunts with special friends and as many kids and beginners as possible. Throughout the seasons, I kept a running log of those hunts.

Youth/Disabled Deer Season

September 5, 2020

First sit success! Isaac Hawkins, (a cousin's 15-year-old grandson), made a perfect neck shot on a Douglas County doe. The time he'd spent practicing with a scoped .22 paid off with my .30-06. We had the quarters and backstraps from the deer iced in a plastic cooler in no time. The meat was especially clean because the deer's hair is short and the vegetation green.

Muzzleloader Deer Season

September 14, 2020

Holy Halo! Hunting with Ed Markel as he tries to get "Halo," a legendary buck on his Elk County ranch. Halo's antlers raise high and wrap totally around. He's got a mess of tines, and everything is massive! Tonight, we saw him, out of range, following other deer towards a creek crossing and soybeans. Plan to hide a pop-up blind near there tomorrow.

September 15, 2020

What a hunt, but no Halo. September deer can be so patternable. Probably had a dozen bucks, a few pretty dang'd nice, pass within 50 yards, and maybe as many does and fawns. It was the most deer I've had that close in 46 deer seasons! This early in the fall, it's Halo or nothing for my soon-to-be 80-year-old friend.

September 16, 2020

I shot a TREMENDOUS buck this morning - with a camera. I asked permission to take a doe for a family that needed meat and was lucky enough to get one early. I literally about spit coffee all over the inside of the blind a few minutes later when two stud-muffin bucks stepped into the field. One was in full velvet and the other perfectly polished. They were in easy muzzleloader range but

I'd asked permission to shoot a doe, so I picked up the camera. Showed the landowner the pics, and he thought I was crazy for not shooting. That'll teach me to be more specific.

September 23, 2020

I'm home from six days of muzzleloader hunting with Ed. No Halo, and deer sightings down greatly. Acorns are falling and deer prefer them over anything. Red oak acorns are so thick on the ground, it sounded like we were walking on bubble wrap as the shells cracked under our boots. I did a photo shoot with friend Greg Pickett and an ancient buck he arrowed with his recurve. He's a master at hunting natural food sources in September and early October.



Pre-rut Antlerless Season

October 9, 2020

Here I am, sitting on the porch of a cabin, watching sunlight fade, and wondering why I've never hunted during the special pre-rut antlerless season. This weekend's hunt looks promising. We have eight kids scheduled from the Pass It On program. Blinds are up, deer are moving, the weather is cool, but not cold. Some prairie foliage is already vibrant.

October 10, 2020

I was lucky to watch two lives change for the better this afternoon. Kiera McNellis' shout, "I got it!" when her first deer, on her first hunt, went down seemed as loud as the shot. The hug the teen and her dad, Jim, shared was priceless.

Her family, from Burlingame, contacted Pass It On and asked about a mentored hunt so they could learn about deer hunting together. They were very quick studies who helped field-dress and eventually processed the doe.

This was the first of eight Pass It On hunts Kiera and her family shared last season.

October 11, 2020

Mike Williams, and his grandson, Brian Brown, drove a long way in the dark to learn about deer hunting. They made the drive back not long after daylight with a lot of knowledge, a cooler of venison and even better memories. I'm still not sure who was happier when they drove off. Some of the fun was Grandpa's playful trash-talking when his grandson struggled to get his end of the deer loaded in a UTV.



Archery Deer Season

October 20, 2020

Today I participated in a good hunt, but with a frustrating ending. I've been hunting with young Isaac, 8 to 10 times, trying to get his first archery harvest, which he wants to be a buck. Tonight, we had a nice six-pointer set up perfectly at 12 yards. Isaac whispered, "Too small."

Basing a hunt's success on antler size is disappointing, especially for beginners. The shot would have been easy. The celebration and memories would have been golden. I wish he would have taken the shot. He may end the season feeling the same.

November 6, 2020

COVID-19 strikes and Isaac is under quarantine. My annual archery hunt in western Kansas is off because my Scott City friend just tested positive. I hunted our farm near Lawrence this afternoon and saw a nice buck out of range. Then, I thought I spotted a rare Kansas mountain lion through the brush. A few seconds with binoculars showed a tawny-colored coyote sneaking low towards a rodent.

November 12, 2020

Yesterday, Isaac, free from quarantine, and I accessed a food plot on our farm by canoe. Deer movement was great. His shot placement on a small buck at the edge of range wasn't; it wasn't recovered. Scavengers will make sure the deer doesn't go to waste. Isaac is ethical enough to make sure the experience wasn't wasted. Hunters often learn more from mistakes than successes. I liked what I learned about him.

November 18, 2020

We had a close encounter of the Halo kind! He was approximately 10 yards away from us in Elk County. Had the doe he was tailing taken a south trail, Ed could have had a 20-yard shot. Instead, she took the north, downwind, trail and the old buck got a snoot full of our scent. I doubt we see him at this stand again. Dang it! I was so mesmerized by his size, I didn't get a photo.

November 28, 2020

Temp was under 20 degrees at our farm. Frost-covered sycamore leaves sounded like china plates smashed on concrete as I walked. The only deer seen was an old buck with several snapped tines. He walked slowly and deliberately, his body swaying and his mouth open; He was obviously exhausted.

I know the feeling after so many days afield since September.

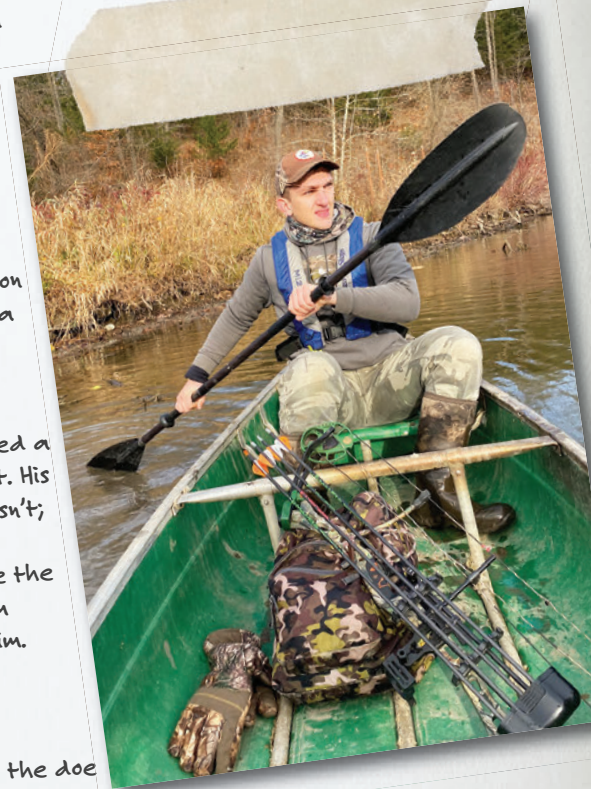
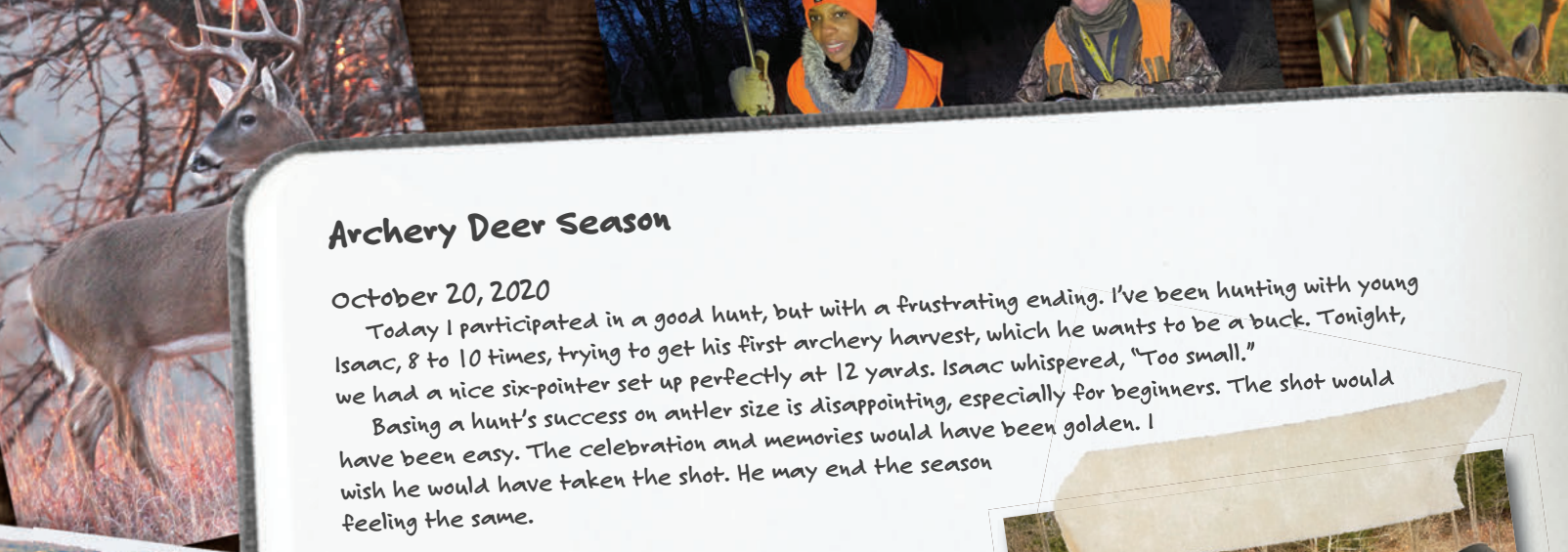
December 2, 2020

I spent the morning of opening firearms season with Ed. We saw a decent 8-pointer early. The highlight was watching a Pileated Woodpecker 15 yards away. We were so engrossed watching the comical bird, a huge buck could have passed under the blind and we would not have seen it.

December 13, 2020

It was the last afternoon of firearms season, which was spent in Ed's favorite blind. I photographed a gorgeous eight-pointer early, and saw a lot more. The last deer to appear was a monstrous eight-pointer. It was the largest bodied deer we'd seen all season. It's antlers were even higher and thicker than Halo's. (Halo's dad?)

Ed's 80-year-old eyes couldn't see the buck through his scope. His ears couldn't hear me ask if I could shoot it. We hunted together more than we had in many years - that's a trophy experience.



January Antlerless

January 1, 2021

Deer Diary, I have never been so glad I didn't shoot a deer. The opening afternoon of the January season was perfect on our farm in Unit 19. Six inches of fresh snow and I-don't-wanna-know wind-chills had deer headed to soybean stubble.

Wayne Simien, Sr. and I shivered within a ground blind. Wayne filled two tags. Thankfully, I didn't shoot. As it was, his donkey-sized does fell at the bottom of a steep slope. We surely looked like an "I Love Lucy" skit; two old guys so bundled we could barely walk, struggling to drag a plastic sled holding both deer, up a steep, slick hill. We got to Wayne's pick-up totally out of wind and the sweat we'd made starting to freeze. Not fun. Not smart. We should have gotten our tractor.

January 17, 2021

I almost hurt a child today. That's how hard I hugged 9-year-old Zion Davis. He shot a huge doe in the final minutes of this weekend's Pass It On hunt. His mom, Trina, got her first deer Saturday. Zion had been pretty withdrawn, but a different kid came back with the doe.

The real kicker was when he walked up to me near the campfire, thanked me and offered to share his hard-earned venison with me. I declined, but he got a heck of a hug for the offer. Ten of 12 hunters, mostly youth, got deer over the weekend. Just one missed.



January 23, 2021

This afternoon went so well, I'm calling it a season, even with a day of season and a tag left. The echo from my shot that killed my fifth doe had barely faded when another came from the west. Fifteen-year-old Lillian Johnson had finally connected while hunting with her dad, Brandon. She'd hunted more than any Pass It On hunter, endured some sits with no deer seen and watched her little brother get his first deer.

Seeing her wide smile and listening to the chatter between the jubilant Johnsons by the campfire seemed a fitting end. That's it for these seasons, Deer Diary. 🐮

A (real) SPECIAL



Four text messages and we were off on an adventure that would be new to everyone in the party. None of us knew much about “Special Hunts” or even how to apply but, as we would soon learn, help was readily available from Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) staff and other hunters who had participated in these hunts during past seasons. Our next mission was to figure out exactly what a Special Hunt entailed. Time for some reconnaissance.

What is a Special Hunt?

According to KDWP, Special Hunts are utilized as a tool to augment efforts in R3 or “Recruitment, Retention and Re-Activation.” Hunts are conducted on lands not normally open to un-restricted hunting and include department lands, such as state parks, wildlife areas, and refuges. The hunts also occur on Walk-in Hunting Access (WIHA) areas, national wildlife refuges, city and county properties, and other locations. Hunts range from upland birds and small game to big game to waterfowl, so there is an option no matter one’s favorite pursuit.

How to Apply?

One of the first things our group learned is how simple it is to apply. I Googled “KDWP special hunt” and the first link jumped to the agency’s special hunts webpage. This hub provides detailed information on timelines, types of hunts available, and the portal to complete an application.

My first click was on the “View Special Hunts List” link, and I was able to easily filter and search by species, hunt type, and area. This page also has a link to start your application which begins by either logging in to the programs area of the KDWP website, ksoutdoors.com, or creating an account if you don’t already have one.

When to apply is critical information if one is planning to make a run at a special hunt. The application period typically opens in early July for hunts the following fall/winter, so mark your calendars now to get ahead of the game.

Special Hunt “Hacks”

We learned that pre-identifying your hunting party members and communicating with them before applying is critical. Whether that communication is over a backyard barbeque, text, or Zoom, do it before

HUNT

BY BRADSTEFANONI
FREELANCEWRITER

anything else. There is no such thing as over-communicating.

We continued our investigation by contacting fellow hunters in our collective networks who had successfully applied and participated in special hunts. We picked their brains for intel and asked tons of questions.

The hunt we were selected for took place on the Grand Osage Wildlife Area, so I reached out to the area manager, Rob Riffin, months before our hunt to proactively open a dialog. Rob was accessible and very helpful to answer our questions and offer suggestions to enhance our hunt. He even offered a vehicle tour of the area to both help us get familiar with the terrain and brief us on area boundaries and regulations.

We fired up our onX Hunt apps as well as Google Earth to gain a better feel for which areas held the most promise for good bobwhite habitat. One challenge of special hunts is limited or no access to the areas prior to hunting season, so utilizing web-based resources was a good compromise to boots-on-the ground scouting.



The Hunt

All the preseason preparation and planning was in our rearview mirror as we arrived at our assigned meeting location on a crisp and clear December morning. We had done our homework. We had scouted. We had communicated and planned. We were prepared and excited in anticipation of the roar of wings of a covey rise of bobwhites. What we weren't prepared for were the intangible aspects that turned our special hunt into a very special hunt.

This hunt marked the first time all four members of our party had ever hunted together. Edgar and I are both freelance outdoor writers, and he and I met virtually through social media. We had traded enough texts, phone calls, and hunting stories to fill 10 years' worth of outdoor magazines but had yet the opportunity to share bobwhite covers or a duck blind.

Edgar and his best friend, Hutch, have hunted together for years but this hunt took place in a new part of the state that neither had ever explored. My younger son, Jack, joined our merry band in anticipation of harvesting his first bobwhite and maybe even watching ol' dad miss a bird or two.

Hutch's young bird dog hit the ground and immediately put his nose to work searching a hedgerow for birds. Hutch savored the moment as the hunt marked the first time hunting wild bobwhites for his new canine hunting companion. All the training, trials, and tribulations led up to this moment, so we paused a few beats to allow the two of them to share their first of, hopefully, many days afield.

We approached the intersection of two hedgerows that dissected a large soybean field. Nearby a native




grass waterway snaked through the field — excellent escape cover for bobwhites. If ever one could design good bobwhite habitat, this was it.

Almost on cue, a covey of birds erupted at the feet of my son Jack, who was walking near the edge. With quail flushing toward the three other hunters, Jack did not have a safe shot. Three birds tried to escape down the middle of the hedgerow, whizzing past me at seemingly 100 miles per hour. I tried a snapshot as the birds passed but only managed to drop a branch from a cedar tree. Jack claimed he saw a bird drop but after a 20-minute search with four humans plus a canine's nose, no bird was found. Bobwhites = 1; hunters = 0.

A few more hours of hunting turned up no more coveys, so as we ate our tailgate lunch each of us reflected on what made this hunt special to us. Hutch

opened a new chapter afield with his young bird dog. Edgar shared yet another hunt with his best friend and made two new ones. Jack walked smack dab into the middle of his first covey rise of bobwhites, a thrill never to be forgotten. And me, well, I spent a crisp December morning watching my son carry on our family's bird hunting tradition and enjoying the company of two new hunting companions.

A special hunt? Yes, it was pretty special. To learn more about KDWP's Special Hunt program, visit ksoutdoors.com/Hunting/Special-Hunts-Information. 

SHANE



SHOOTING SKEET

**Text by Rick McNary
Photos by Isaac McNary**

During the week of June 7-13, 2021, nearly 1,000 athletes competed for more than \$130,000 in prizes at the U.S. Open of Shooting Clays at the Claythorne Lodge near Columbus. This U.S. Open was spread out over more than 500 acres of land, approximately half of which is owned by Claythorne and the other half on the Mined Land Wildlife Area managed by the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP).

Three Types of Clay Pigeon Sports

There are three varieties of clay pigeon shooting sports: trap, skeet and shooting clays. In trap shooting, the clays are launched from a single machine or "house" and thrown away from the shooter. In skeet shooting, the clays are launched from two different houses and in intersecting paths that cross in front of the shooter. Both trap and skeet shooting can be done in a smaller, more contained area.

Shooting clays is considerably different because it involves a more complex course with many stations strategically located across large tracts of land. Rather than shooters standing in fixed locations, they move about the course much from station to station.

Although various competitions occurred during the week that were more of the trap and skeet-shooting variety, the signature competition was the three-day main event on Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

The Sport of Shooting Clays

The sport of shooting clays is often referred to as "golf with a shotgun" because of the way the course is laid out in unique stations. Each station - ranging from 10 to 15 stations per course - is created in such a manner as to present the clay pigeon targets, also known as birds, in ways that replicate how a hunter might encounter game like teal, dove, quail, pheasant or bouncing rabbits. The clays are pre-



sented in various quantities, patterns, angles, and origins in effort to test the reflexes and hand/eye coordination of the shooter. Some clays even “run” across the ground rather than fly.

“We brought in target setters from all across the U.S.,” says Frieda Lancaster, co-owner of Claythorne. “Each one designed a station to challenge the shooter and each station is like a hole on a golf course that presents two, three, four or five pair of birds at a time.”

“The preliminary events were Tuesday through Thursday, but the main event covered Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Each day of the main event, the shooters were challenged with 200 birds in three different courses – red, white, and blue. They shoot 66 on one, 66 on the other, then finish with 68 birds on the final course. The winner was Anthony Matarese, Jr., of Pennsylvania.” Matarese won with a score of 197 out of 200.

Each station ranges from 10 to 15 stations per course.



The Background of Claythorne

“We bought the property for the purpose of starting a preserve of game birds. In ‘92, Marc Murrell and Mike Miller of KDWP were producing a t.v. show and wanted to feature quail hunting, so they came down here. When they were here, I decided I needed to learn how to use a shotgun better, so I found another place to practice shooting clays and fell in love with the sport.”

Claythorne is part of an area in southeast Kansas that was strip-mined for coal using massive machines like Big Brutus, an electric coal shovel with a bucket so large it could fill three train cars with one scoop. That machine – now a museum open to the public near West Mineral – would dig strips up to 60 feet deep that were long and narrow which, over the course of time after they were abandoned, filled with water. More than 1,500 lakes cover this area which stretches 40 miles from east to west – much of which is the Mined Land Wildlife Area under the auspices of KDWP today.

“We have 280 acres, and the Wildlife and Parks has 250 that is adjacent to ours, so it works out great to spread the course out over a large area in partnership with them. This area is so diverse with terrain, prairie, trees and water so it provides the shooters with a wide variety of challenges.

“We tried to get the ‘96 Open but didn’t so we tried again and were able to host the 2000 Open. Now we’ve had the 2000, 2006, 2014 and this was supposed to be in 2020, but because of Covid, it was postponed a year. We’ve also hosted the 2003 World FITASC.”

FITASC, which stands for Federation Internationale de Tir Aux Sportives de Chasse, is based in Paris and is a unique style of shooting clays. Interestingly, various FITASC-style events were included in the U.S. Open at Claythorne this year.

Claythorne Lodge is located near Columbus.



“To win the award for the event requires we make a formal proposal to the governing body,” Lancaster said. “This is a process that takes time and a lot of support from the community. The Governor writes a letter of support as well as other groups because this is a great tourism draw for Kansas and the surrounding parts of Oklahoma and Missouri.”

“For example, we bring in 120 referees, set up 32 bathrooms, bring in 300 trap-throwing machines from various states, use a million clay pigeons and a ton of ammo which was very hard to get this year. In addition, we bring in 300 golf carts to rent plus the 300-plus personal golf carts and ATVs people bring. We have to be able to park up to 600 cars and have a certain amount of RV sites, hotels and relatively easy access to airports. It’s not easy, but it’s a lot of fun.”

The Rise in Popularity of Shooting Sports

There is a rise in the popularity of shooting sports, especially among women and high schools in the U.S. In fact, the fastest growing high school sport is clay shooting.

Dr. Drew Ricketts, extension wildlife management specialist and assistant professor of Wildlife and Outdoor Enterprise Management for Kansas State University, began working at Claythorne during high school. He attributes the rising popularity to competition, camaraderie and being outdoors.

“If you enjoy shooting a shotgun for hunting or targets in the backyard, going to a sporting clay range and shooting different presentations of targets is fun and challenging,” Ricketts said. “A lot of people like to hunt but that takes time and is often a solitary adventure. Shooting clays is a really good way to improve your shooting ability and spend time with family and friends.

“We are surprised by the number of bachelor parties who choose shooting clay lessons. It’s a chance for them to go outdoors, learn something new and unique and have some friendly competition.

“The best part is the relationship I have with people,” Ricketts continues. “I’ve been in this since I was 15-years-old and have great friends all over the U.S.. There’s about 3,500 to 5,000 in the sporting clays community and they are generous and helpful. It’s an amazing group; like a big family.”

Kansas Man Qualifies for Olympics

Derrick Mein of Paola won the Freedom Cup at the U.S. Open and qualified for the 2020 Olympics in Japan which was postponed to July of 2021.

“Sam and Frieda do a top-notch job with the U.S. Open,” Mein said. “It’s a well-oiled machine and a fantastic layout. It’s an event that draws the best shooters from all over the world; you have to be about perfect to win.




While his son won the Freedom Cup at the U.S. Open, Rick Mein (pictured) also competes in the sport.

“I grew up on a farm in southeast Kansas and started hunting quail when I was eight. Sporting clays just fit right in with that. I’ve been competing since 1995 and was running a gun club in 2014 when my wife convinced me to go out on my own and do shooting and coaching for a living. Here it is, seven years later and I’m going to the Olympics. It was supposed to be in 2020, but the extra year has given me a lot more time to improve.

“The competition at the Olympics is bunker trap which is quite a bit different than sporting clays. The clays are thrown at speeds of up to 70 miles per hour and you never know where they are coming from. At the U.S. Open, the speed is anywhere from 30 to 45 miles per hour so it’s almost twice as fast.”

Spotlight Shines on Kansas

Considering the competition that Claythorne competes against to host the U.S. Open here in Kansas, it’s remarkable that they continue to be chosen as the host. That speaks volumes about Kansas and the professional hospitality of our state, of the Lancasters and of Claythorne Lodge.

“We compete with major cities like Chicago, Atlanta and Houston and it’s a tough, two-and-a-half-year grueling process to be chosen as host,” Lancaster says. “Hosting the U.S. Open takes a lot of work but it’s worth all of the effort. We meet great people, host the best shooters in the world and be a part of something wonderful. We don’t make a lot of money, but we make a lot of friends!” 



HILLSDALE

STATE PARK

BY RICK MCNARY, FREELANCE WRITER

FISH • PADDLE • RIDE



If you get bored at Hillsdale State Park, just ask a friendly park ranger if there are any fun things to do. You'll be surprised at how many recreational activities are available.

"We aren't known for just one thing," says Mark Nepote, Hillsdale State Park manager. "We're known for a lot of things and that's the reason we had nearly one million visitors in the park in 2020. Our shooting range alone had just under 10,000 visitors last year. We are, in essence, in the suburbs of Kansas City and are a very popular spot."

In addition to offering the typical activities of state parks such as boating, fishing, camping and hiking, Hillsdale State Park offers outdoor enthusiasts' activities such as a runway for Radio Controlled Aircraft, a gun range with pistol, rifle and trap shooting, an archery range with 3-D targets, a 9-hole disc golf course, and 32 miles of equestrian trails. And, scattered in various locations in the campgrounds are playgrounds, soccer fields, swim beaches and volleyball courts.

Hillsdale is one of Kansas' newest reservoirs that was completed in 1982. Approximately 4,500 acres of water and 51 miles of shoreline are open to fishing. And, roughly 7,000 acres are open to hunting at Hillsdale within the wildlife area and state park.

Hillsdale Range and Training Facility

Located on the southeast side of the dam, the gun range is one of the finest in the state and is currently undergoing yet more improvements due to its popularity and use. In 2020, nearly 10,000 people used the gun range and the variety of pistol, rifle, and shotgun activities.

Gun ranges like this and others in state parks across America have an unusual background and partnerships among local volunteer groups, state, and federal agencies. For example, the land the range sits on is owned by the U.S. Army

Corps of Engineers (USACE), but the management falls under the purview of the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. However, neither agency has the bandwidth or the funding to build and maintain the facilities, so they rely on local groups to help with fundraising and operations - that's where the nonprofit Hillsdale Range and Facility comes into play. The Federal Wildlife Aid in Restoration Act was established 1937 and became known as the Pittman-Robertson Act because of the sponsors of the bill, Senator Key Pittman and Congressman Absalom Willis Robertson.

Previously, the 11 percent excise tax on all firearms and ammo went into the U.S. Treasury. However, the Pittman-Robertson Act redirected those funds to the Secretary of Interior with the purpose of providing revenue for states to fund wildlife restoration. Species nearing extinction, such as



whitetails and wild turkey, were restored because of this money. Amendments have been made to the Act to include excise tax on archery equipment.

“The Pittman-Robertson Act is federal money that is made available to states through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service,” say Kent Barrett, KDWP Hunter Education supervisor. “I’m involved in this process because Pittman-Robertson funds hunter education courses of which we have more than 1,300 volunteer trainers who certify more than 9,000 people each year. We can also apply for 75 percent of the cost for helping build new gun ranges or upgrading existing ones. The other 25 percent is paid for through the revenue from hunting licenses and permits or donations from groups like the National Wild Turkey Federation.”

For many years, the federal grant funds available were minimal. However, the escalation in gun and ammo sales of 158 percent between 2008 and 2015 provided extra grant money. The industry grew from \$19.1 billion to \$49.3 billion dollars in sales and grew related jobs from 166,000 to 280,000 in that seven-year period.

Archery Range

Located on the west side in the Sunflower Day Use area, the archery range offers a variety of targets and approaches. One section is a designated Youth Range.

“One of our improvements is to put in a new shooting tower,” Nepote says. “It will offer a lot more platforms and different shooting options. During certain times of the year, we also put out 3-D targets.”

Equestrian Trails

If you like horseback riding or want to try it for the first time, Hillsdale is the perfect place. If you own a horse, the Saddle Ridge equestrian area on the east side of the reservoir has approximately 32 miles of marked trails available to horseback riders. This campground has numerous camping spots with corrals in shaded areas which are ideal for sheltering horses.

If you don’t own a horse, S&S Stables is near the Saddle Ridge area and offers a variety of trail rides as well as boarding.

“We have a great relationship with S&S,” Nepote says. “They are great people, and we work together to build and maintain trails; it’s good to have that resource nearby for people who want to ride the trails but don’t have a horse or the experience.”

Trails

The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks and the USACE have partnered to develop a Hillsdale Lake Trail Brochure. Trails at Hillsdale Lake are multi-use trails, meaning many different types of users use the trails at the lake.

USACE’s “Hidden Spring Nature Trail” is designated for hikers and mountain bikers only (1.5 miles). Dogs must be on a leash at all times in the park and waste must be collected.

The State Park Trail (3 miles) is designated for hikers and bikers only. Trails that wander through Oak Hickory woodlands, native grass and wildflower prairies, grassy meadows, and wetland habitats are available for lake visitors.

Hillsdale also hosts an annual 1st Day Hike on January 1.

Fishing

Another unique aspect of Hillsdale Lake is the abundant amount of standing timber. When the lake was constructed, the trees were left standing which has created ideal habitat, also known as structure, to attract fish. Crappie anglers like Kim Burnett fish the lake year-round.

“I like the standing timber because it makes the structure visible; you know where the fish are going to be,” Burnett says. “Crappie like wood and they hang right by the tree waiting for something to swim by and ambush it. In the summer, you’ll find four or five around a tree, but in the winter - which is my favorite time - there will be hundreds around the trees. In the summer, I’ve caught them in five feet of water on a 100-degree day. Most anglers think they go deep in the summer, but they’re going to be wherever the shad are, and the shad are shallow because the water’s warm.”

In addition to crappie, walleye, catfish, largemouth bass, and bluegill are abundant.

Hunting

Hillsdale is surrounded by a wildlife area that is open to hunting. More than 7,000 acres are open for waterfowl, big and small game, and upland gamebird hunting which is allowed on state park and wildlife areas during the designated hunting seasons. Developed areas such as boat ramps, shelter areas, parking lots, beaches, campgrounds, and the dam are safety zones where hunting is prohibited.

Although the area receives a significant amount of pressure due to its proximity to a large population, seasoned hunters advise that the further you get off the road, the more successful you'll be.

Beaches & Swimming

There are two developed beach areas that are open from sunrise to sunset. One bathroom and one showerhouse are open from May 15 - October 15, sunrise to sunset. In order to provide public safety, the following items or activities are not allowed within the developed beach areas: glass containers, open fires, pets, fishing, boats, alcohol/beer.

Boating and Sailing

There are currently seven boat ramp areas (primitive and developed) available at Hillsdale Reservoir. All vessels propelled by machinery of any kind, or a sail, must be properly registered before operation in the state of Kansas.

Jayhawk Marina is a full-service marina and is located

on the west side of the lake, just past the entrance. Across the cove from the marina is the personal water craft area.

People often use the Sunflower Day Use area on the west side to launch canoes and kayaks due to the protected cove and easy access. The standing timber in that cove make it a unique area to guide your watercraft in and around.

Windsurfers use the east side and Windsurfer Beach, which is accessed by the Saddle Ridge Campground Road.

Camping

240 Utility Sites
75 Primitive Sites

East Side:

- Saddle Ridge Equestrian campground

West Side:

- Sunflower, the newest campground, comes with full hookups and some concrete parking pads.
- Rabbit Ridge; 1-31
- Scott Creek; 1-60
- Quail Run Primitive; 1-9
- Quail Run; 38-57
- Crappie Cove; 1-37
- Pintail Point; 58-98

To reserve camping spots, visit www.reserveramerica.com

Disc Golf

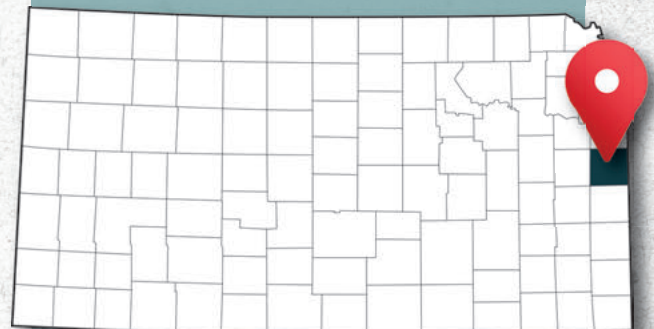
Located on the west side by Shelter 3 near the swimming beach, is a short course with small rubber tees that have an arrow pointing to the basket. The next tee is always within 30 feet of the last basket, which are numbered with a small sign hanging off the cage. 🐮



HILLSDALE — STATE PARK —

Park Manager
Mark Nepote

Park Office
26601 W 255th St.
Paola, KS 66071
Area Office:
(913) 594-3600
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Species Profile



Texas Brown Tarantula

Aphonopelma hentzi

While normally mild-mannered, the Texas Brown Tarantula will flick barbed hairs from its abdomen to all who dare to disturb it. While the barbed hairs will fend off some threatening predators, it's no match for the Tarantula Hawk Wasp – a wasp which stings the spider and drags its now paralyzed prey to a burrow before laying an egg.

Size

Body length around 2.3 inches

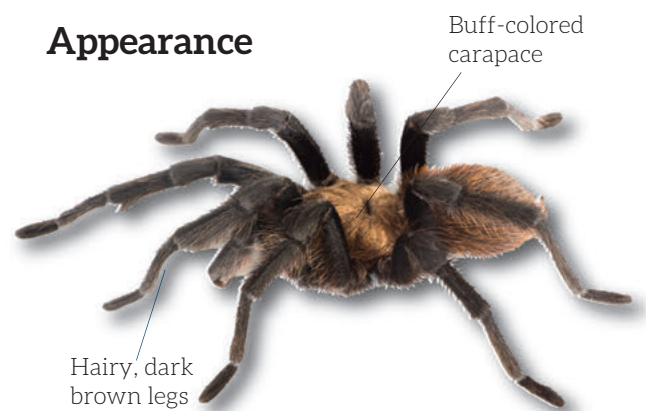
Diet

Beetles, crickets, and grasshoppers

Habitat

Under rocks in silk-lined burrows in rocky pastures and grasslands

Appearance



Hairy, dark brown legs

Buff-colored carapace

Did you know?

Each September, males leave their burrows in search of a mate. They can be seen crossing highways from sunset to sunrise. The males will then die in late autumn, while females can live for 25 years!



Backlash

with Nadia Reimer

Watch For Deer

As the days get shorter, weather patterns change, and we enter into a new season, it's not uncommon for human-wildlife interactions to increase. While Spring is well known as an ideal time to spot wildlife, especially young of the year, fall can be just as lively.

If you've lived in Kansas for at least one fall season, chances are someone who cares for you has said, "Watch for deer!" And there's good reason for that. The breeding season for deer, commonly referred to as the "rut," peaks in mid-November and marks the time of year when deer-vehicle collisions are most frequent.

Here are some helpful tips on how you might avoid deer-vehicle accidents:

- **Be especially watchful at dawn and dusk. This is when deer are most active.**
- **Watch for more than one deer, as they seldom travel alone.**
- **Reduce speed and be alert near wooded areas or green spaces such as parks or golf courses, and near water such as streams or ponds.**
- **Deer crossing signs indicate where high levels of deer/vehicle crashes have occurred in the past. Mind them.**
- **Use your brights to help detect deer as far ahead on the road as possible.**
- **Don't swerve to avoid hitting a deer – the most serious crashes sometimes occur when drivers swerve and collide with another vehicle or run off the road and hit an object.**
- **Always wear a seat belt and use child safety seats for kids.**



• **Not all deer-vehicle accidents can be avoided. If you hit a deer or other animal:**

• **Slow down, pull as far onto the shoulder as possible and turn on your hazard lights. If you are on a Kansas highway, dial *47 (*HP) from your cell phone for a highway patrol dispatcher, *582 (*KTA) for assistance on the Kansas Turnpike, or dial 911.**


• **Do not worry about the animal. Kansas Highway Patrol troopers or local law enforcement will remove the animal from the road. (If the animal is in the road, tell the dispatcher when you call for help.)**

• **If possible, remain in your vehicle and buckled up, so if a crash occurs involving your car or another vehicle nearby, you are more protected than if you were in the roadway or on the shoulder.**

• **If you must be outside of your vehicle, make sure it is as far off the road as possible and your hazard lights are flashing. Don't stand between your vehicle and another vehicle, and make sure your children are kept properly secured in your vehicle.**

• **If you have exited your vehicle, stay alert for traffic. If your vehicle is disabled at night, wait for law enforcement with extra lights so your vehicle is more visible to other motorists.**

This fall, keep in mind that roadways are often shared spaces between people and wildlife. To ensure the best outcome for you and Kansas wildlife, keep a vigilant eye. And when in doubt, slow it down.

Wishing you all safe travels this fall. 

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