

KANSAS

FISH & GAME



January-February 1975

KANSAS FISH & GAME



January-February, 1975

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Cover Photos

Front cover—Lesser prairie chicken. Kodachrome transparency by Ken Stiebben.

Back cover—Burrowing owl. Kodachrome transparency by Ken Stiebben.

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Help Us to Help You ! ! !

To thousands of Kansans happiness is receiving regular issues of KANSAS FISH & GAME magazine.

To the Kansas Forestry, Fish and Game Commission which publishes and distributes the magazine free of charge, happiness is providing the magazine to as many Kansans as possible at the lowest possible cost.

To make sure everyone has a happy experience, all readers can help in a variety of ways.

First, make sure you notify the Commission's Information-Education Division whenever you have a change of address. Many readers fail to do this and as a result the reader is dropped from the mailing list. Also, the Commission may pay additional costs which would not be required if direct notification was given.

By failing to notify the I-E Division, the magazine is sent to the wrong address. The Post Office is unable to deliver it and the address label is clipped from the magazine and returned to the Commission. The magazine is discarded (at a loss of about 20 cents for printing and postage costs) and a 10-cent charge is made by the Post Office for clipping the address label.

Once the wrong label is received from the Post Office a master listing is compiled of all address deletions which is delivered to the agency's mailing contractor, Turner Associates in Topeka. To delete this name costs the agency another two cents.

Within a few weeks the former magazine reader will realize he is no longer receiving KANSAS FISH & GAME. He then writes to the Commission's Pratt headquarters and requests to be placed on the mailing list once again. This can be done but adding a name to the computerized listing costs eight cents under the contract agreement.

Thus by failing to notify the Commission of a change of address, a total of 40 cents (including the wasted original magazine) has been expended. By notifying the I-E Division directly, an expenditure of only 10½ cents would have been required to change the address on the computerized listing.

To notify of a change of address, please return the address label with the wrong address and include in writing the correct information. Mail this to: Kansas Forestry, Fish and Game Commission, I-E Division, Box 1028, Pratt, KS 67124.

Since many of the original requests for inclusion on the magazine's mailing list have been submitted in writing, some mistakes have been made. Another way you can help is by checking your present address label which is attached on the back cover of this magazine. Is your name spelled correctly? Is your address, including zip code, current, correct and complete? If any changes are needed, please notify the I-E Division at the Pratt office immediately. Provide the correct information (please print or type) and attach the incorrect label.

Next, check around to see how many in your family are now receiving regular issues of KANSAS FISH & GAME. While the magazine is published and distributed without charge, printing costs for each magazine average nearly 18 cents apiece and an additional two cents is required for mailing. Therefore, the Commission requests families living in the same household refrain from requesting more than one copy. Where duplicate copies are now being received, please notify us immediately and let us know which names you wish to have deleted.

The same procedure should also be followed in places of business since KANSAS FISH & GAME is mailed to many barber shops, doctor and dentist offices, public libraries, hospitals, etc.

Several readers have suggested that the Commission consider charging a subscription fee for the magazine rather than providing it free of charge. No legislative authority has been enacted which will allow the agency to charge a subscription fee.

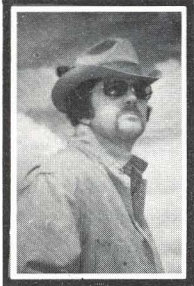
However if you are receiving the magazine regularly but are not purchasing a hunting or fishing license, the Commission encourages you to purchase a license in lieu of the subscription fee. The Kansas Forestry, Fish and Game Commission is supported entirely by sportsman through payment of license fees. All services provided by the agency, such as publication of the magazine, are financed by these license fees; no general tax monies are used for any of the activities of the Commission.

Keep us notified of your current address, share the magazine with your family and friends who don't receive it, and buy a current hunting or fishing license. These are ways you can help us help you.

—Leroy E. Lyon.

Chief, Information-Education

YOU HEAR the booming first—a deep resonant sound that rolls across the prairie grasslands. It sounds like someone is blowing across the open neck of a jug, but much deeper. As the booming sound fades away the breezes carry a spasmodic burst of wild cackling. Pushing slowly through



McLeran

the weeds of a prairie swale, you spot the source of all this racket—prairie chickens, engaged in their age-old courting ritual on the spring booming grounds. A large male prairie chicken makes a short snappy dash of several feet to the center of a patch of short grass. Stopping quickly, the cock stamps his feet rapidly in one spot. Pivoting, the bird erects his pinnae—short tufts of stiff blackish-brown feathers on the top of his neck.

PRAIRIE BOOMER

By Vic McLeran, Editor

At the same time, he inflates orange air sacs found on each side of his neck. The bird's tail is spread in an upright fan and his wings droop close to the ground. Fleshy orange eyebrows flash and wink during the performance.

Again the deep resonant boom echoes across the prairie as the orange air sacs quiver. The birds' sounds are

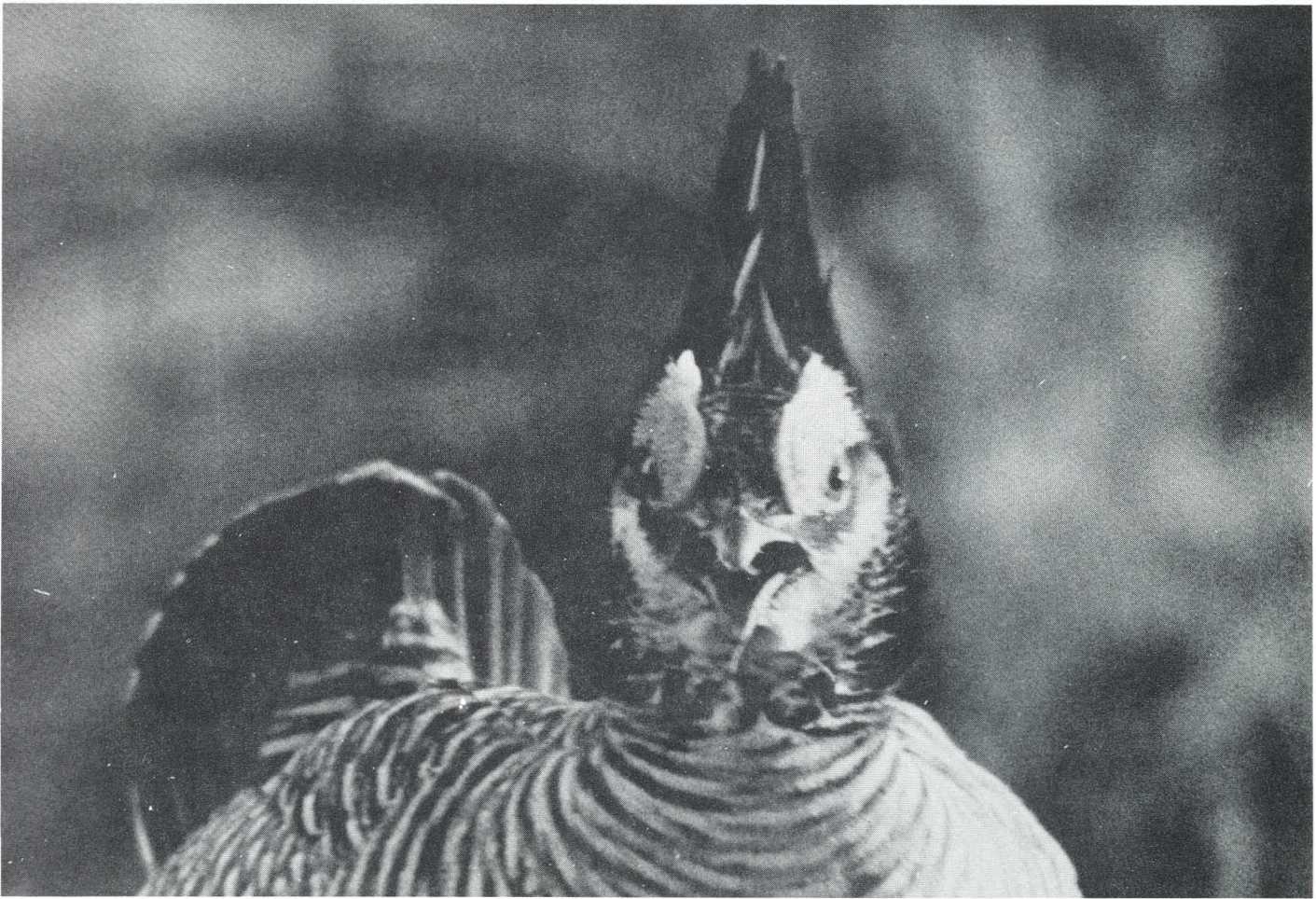
produced in the voice box and amplified by resonance in the air sacs. Suddenly the air sacs deflate and the bird leaps into the air cackling repeatedly. Lowering his head, the cock rushes toward a smaller prairie chicken several feet away. Together the two leap into the air, wing-slapping and striking out with their feet. A few feathers

Male prairie chickens, both greater and lesser varieties, perform each spring on age old booming grounds.



Ken Stiebben

Fish and Game



The male's booming is designed to attract hens, intimidate other males and establish small territories within the booming grounds.

fly and the smaller bird retreats toward the edge of the booming ground.

Now, several hens appear on the far side of the booming area. Swaggering proudly, the dominant cock repeats his performance. He's joined by other males as they too perform for the hens.

The reason, of course, for this entire ritual is to attract hens, intimidate other males and establish small territories within the booming grounds. Although most booming occurs during the early morning hours, there is some activity in the evening. These morning booming periods begin about a half hour before dawn and continue for two or three hours, while the evening performances start an hour or so before sunset and last until dusk. These deep resonant calls prompted early day settlers to refer to the bird as "prairie boomer."

The prairie chicken's deep booming is a hollow reminder of the days when virgin bluestem prairies waved gracefully in the wind and the white man's plow was still a stranger.

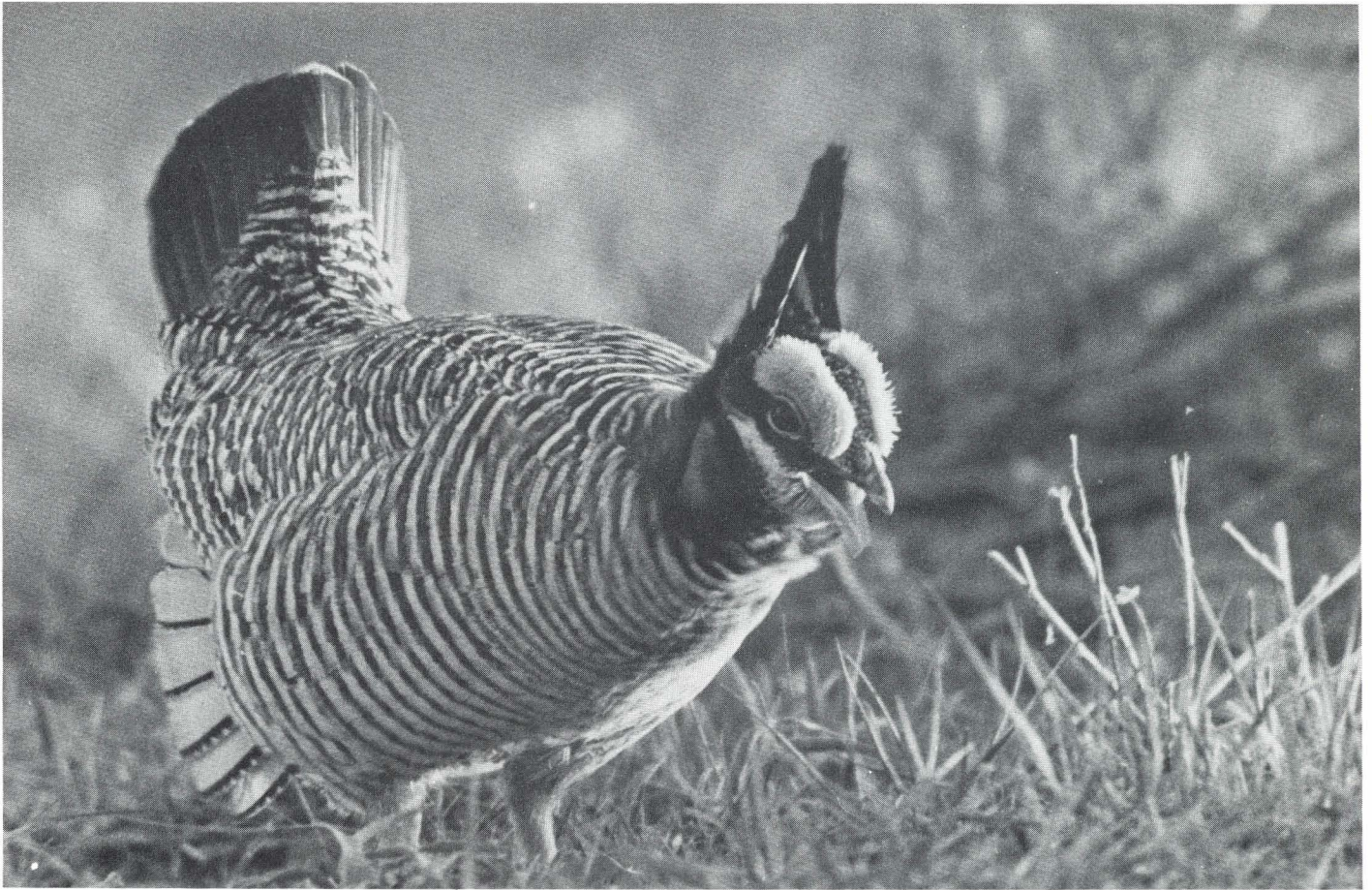
During the last half of the 19th century, most of the graceful bluestem grasses were ripped and torn by the plow—in their place corn and other small grains were planted. Destruction of this range plus an incredible toll by pioneer market hunters drastically reduced the prairie chicken populations. Recent game management practices have increased prairie chickens in Kansas to where the Sunflower State now has the largest hunt-able flock of chickens in the U. S.

The males in the center of the booming grounds are the dominant birds. These are the ones that will do most of the breeding. The males on the perimeter usually get nothing but

exercise. But later, as the dominant males die or are killed, the younger males replace them in the center. Booming grounds are often located on a slight rise or ridge. These locations are used year after year, some for as many as 50 years.

Observers have watched male prairie chickens on the booming grounds challenge and scuffle with both sharp-tailed grouse and ring-necked pheasant where the species' range overlaps. Interestingly, prairie chickens will occasionally breed with sharptails in northern prairie states. In one encounter with a pheasant, a male "boomer" was forced off his ground by the larger, more aggressive ring-neck.

Most breeding occurs during the first two or three weeks of April although the males will continue booming for several weeks. After the fe-



male has mated, she goes about the business of selecting a nest site for her dozen or so tan and brown-flecked eggs. The area selected usually contains grass cover like pastures, hayfields and marsh edges. The nest itself is merely a hollowed-out depression in the ground and it's sometimes covered with a canopy of weeds and grass. One study in Kansas found that most nests were situated on the north or west-facing slope of a hill.

Eggs are laid at a rate of about one a day and incubation takes 23 or 24 days. In Kansas, most prairie chickens are hatched in May. Early in the incubation period, the hen is easily flushed but later she lies quietly, relying on her protective coloration to protect her. Renesting by the hen will occur if the nest or clutch has been destroyed in the early stages of nesting but hens whose nests are destroyed late in the incubation period are reluctant to renest.

Newly-hatched prairie chickens, garbed in a greenish-yellow down

and splotted with black, leave the nest as soon as they dry off—just like other precocial birds such as pheasant and quail. The adult cocks play no part in incubating the eggs or raising the youngsters.

For the first several weeks of a chick's life, the hen keeps them near dense cover where they feed mostly on insects. At four weeks of age the young prairie chickens are flying well enough to evade most predators. About this time the hen begins taking them farther afield where they are introduced to native weed seeds, domestic grains, wild berries and greens. Lack of water seldom bothers the prairie chicken because he obtains much of his moisture requirements from dew and succulent vegetation.

As summer draws to a close, the broods begin to break up, usually in late August. About this time the adult birds undergo the moult. Then, in September, the birds begin to congregate in large flocks, sometimes numbering a hundred or more. About this

time, there's some feeble and infrequent booming activity on the grounds. This picks up in intensity until mid-November when there is again much territorial scuffling among males on the grounds. Snow and the frigid Kansas winter soon puts a halt to the performances though.

The birds feed twice a day during the winter; once in the morning and again in the late afternoon. As darkness shrouds the prairie, the boomers fly together to a roosting site among tall grasses. There, each bird snuggles down in a "form" where it spends the night. If snow falls during the night, the birds remain where they are, exploding from the snow cover at dawn.

In the winter, when green foods like wheat are covered with snow, the prairie chicken will spend much of its time in the trees, browsing on tender buds.

Prairie chickens are rugged birds, well-equipped for survival during the harsh Kansas winters. Weighing up

to two and one-half pounds, a cock prairie chicken is about one and one-half feet in length with a wingspan of more than two feet. Hens are slightly smaller and lighter in weight.

The birds' large sizes makes them susceptible only to minor predation. Snakes, crows, ground squirrels and skunks get a few eggs while foxes and coyotes will take an occasional chick or crippled adult when the opportunity arises. Then too, collisions with farm machinery and automobiles account for a few prairie chickens each year.

Prairie chickens are occasionally bothered by *Mallophaga* feather lice. These parasites lay their eggs at the base of a feather, usually in the head and neck region. The adult lice chew the feathers and irritate the birds' skin but frequent dust baths seem to rid prairie chickens of these pests.

Fourteen months appears to be the average life span for a prairie chicken

but some birds have lived as long as seven years.

The prairie chicken's greatest hazard is the shrinking amount of native grasslands which the bird requires for its booming, nesting and feeding. As more and more native grass has been put to the plow, the prairie chicken population has shrunk accordingly. Overgrazing and too frequent burning of pastures has also destroyed much of the birds' habitat.

In Kansas, the birds reach their largest concentrations in the Flint Hills, an area where land use is devoted primarily to cattle production. This usage involves the maintenance of large permanent pastures which the birds require. Areas where alfalfa and hay are produced also provide many nesting and roosting requirements for prairie chickens.

In years past, Kansas hunters have bagged as many as 30 to 40 thousand birds annually, although this amount has probably dropped considerably since the quail and pheasant seasons

now open concurrently with the chicken's. Sportsmen who are interested in hunting prairie chickens usually locate a flyway and pass shoot the birds as they fly from their roost to the feed fields. Gunning is apt to be best later in the season after hard frosts have killed the insects and the birds are using the feed fields exclusively. A few hunters take prairie chickens over a good bird dog but a hard working, wide-ranging animal will often flush the birds out of range. I've seen prairie chicken killed with an open choke 20 gauge holding No. 7½s but if you're pass shooting or gunning for birds that flush long distances, a tightly-bored 12 gauge with No. 6s is a more realistic tool.

The prairie chickens' future in Kansas is, to some degree, dependent on all Kansans; but those who work the land—the ranchers and farmers—actually hold the birds' future, as they do that of the land, in their hands.

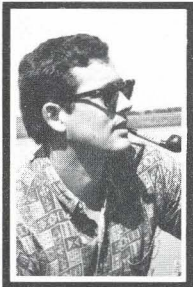


Ken Stiebben

Turkey Hunting Comes of Age

By Bill Scott, Staff Writer

GLENN BALES was disheartened. Now, there's nothing unusual about a disheartened hunter. There have been many before him and there will be many after him. The unusual thing was that never before in the 20th century in Kansas had a hunter been disheartened by not getting this game bird.



Scott

At least for now.

There would be another day.

The Rio Grande wild turkey had taken its bows and strode onto the Kansas hunting stage amid the cool, crisp days of April 1974.

It's getting close to a year now since that time. Man met turkey legally in Kansas for the first time in more than 70 years then, and for those hunters making the turkey's acquaintance it has been perhaps the high point of a hunting lifetime.

It was so for Glenn Bales. For the

former heart patient, persistence paid off. Let him tell his own story:

"I practice with a box call around home ("home" is in Elkhart) and my wife got pretty tired of it. (A turkey call sounds roughly like a rooster with laryngitis.)

"That call didn't work for five days. Laid out there in my camouflage coveralls and hood—did no good at all. Tried walking all day up and down the Cimarron river and saw quite a few turkeys, but couldn't get close enough for a shot. That day I saw 17 hens and five toms sitting in a roost tree and seven guys were hunkered down, waiting for them to come down! All five toms were shot, as I recall.

"On the fifth day I got out about 9 a. m. Made a 'kyelp, kyelp, kyelp' on the call. Kept still for 10, maybe 15 minutes. I had a hunch I had been calling too much, so I kept still. Nothing happened.

"I was just ready to give up when a tom came in on the run, huffing and puffing. Must have come from a long way off. He was right in line with a tree and I couldn't shoot.

"That artificial valve in my heart makes quite a bit of noise and I was worried that the tom would hear it for sure. But I waited for him, and finally he stepped out."

The tom was about 35 yards out when a horde of 12-gauge full choked 3-inch, No. 4 buckshot struck the neck. "Never knew what hit him," commented Bales.

From just about any angle you care to look at it, the first turkey season in modern times for this state was a resounding success.

From a biologist's dream in the 1960's to exciting reality in 1974, this triumph of game management zoomed from stocking a handful of birds in a single area to the sighting of 3,052 turkeys by the open-mouthed hunters of '74.

April 20 to 28, 1974, saw 308 hunters bag 123 turkeys. That's a hunter success ratio of 39.9%. Missouri's is usually from 17% to 23%, by way of comparison. But that's unfair: Missouri's eastern turkey is a bit warier, cannier bird than our Fish and Game Commission - introduced Rio Grande

turkey and our terrain isn't studded with blackjack and pin oaks for acres. In other words, our turkeys are much more visible.

Other hunters had it easier than Bales—almost scandalously easy. Lawrence Smith of Elkhart walked no more than one-fourth mile from his pickup when he spotted a tom coming toward him that other hunters had flushed from some cottonwood roost trees. Smith simply stepped behind a tree and pulled up and fired as the turkey roared past. His bird was down within one-half hour after the season opened.

Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Cannon of Humboldt owe a great deal of their astounding hunt to the Anthony Chamber of Commerce and Phil Arnet. A delightful couple, the Cannons explained that they knew no one in the Anthony area. Bill Cannon wrote the Chamber and they suggested the Cannons contact Phil Arnet, an avid hunter in the Anthony area. They did. Arnet, true to the hunter's code, graciously invited the Cannons to go hunting with him. Bill Cannon tells how it went:

"We saw two turkeys out on a grain-field near a little running stream near some old cottonwood trees. We camped nearby and listened to them that night. We got out there about daylight and went up to the area. We heard some gobbling and walked up under the trees and Polly (Mrs. Cannon) got her bird flying off the roost with one shot." "I think I was probably shaking," Polly said. She probably was, at that.

Bill continued. "Phil took us to other areas and we saw three gobblers an hour later running across a pasture headed for the timber. I got one on the run."

Now it was Arnet's turn. He popped his bird, although this one was ill-fated. The bird came down hard but it was crippled, not a clean kill. Bill Cannon is still shaking his head over that one. "It just wasn't possible for that bird to get away like that in that shortgrass pasture," he reflected.

In any event, the trio had three birds down before April 20 was an hour old. And Arnet did bag his turkey later.

There's another lesson to be learned from the Cannons' hunt. Polly's permit was eighth alternate. Seven people before her turned down the permit. She leaped at the chance, and bagged her turkey. Why did the seven turn down the same chance? It's hard to say, but probably they couldn't get permission to hunt anywhere. Perhaps writing the local Chambers of Commerce would have helped them!

However, limited research did reveal that "knowing somebody" was a definite asset. Landowners would more readily grant permission to other landowners than general residents, which is hardly surprising.

What was interesting was that if you were a total stranger to the rancher or farmer, you had two strikes against you—perhaps three—before you ever opened your mouth.

Of equal interest is that many landowners wouldn't have let their own father or daughter-in-law on their place to hunt turkey. Will this protectionistic attitude among landowners ebb as time goes by? Kent Monte, big game biologist at Hays, feels it will.

"I think this protectionism will subside. We realize landowners love to see these birds and are feeding them,

The 1973 spring turkey season in Kansas, the first of its kind in more than 70 years, was an outstanding success.



Leonard Lee Rue

but they are doing an injustice to the turkeys.

"After all, they are a wild bird. The turkey can survive 32 to 50 degree temperatures for 21 days on water alone and still recover. There is no place in southwest Kansas, even when the winter is severe, that the big and hardy turkey cannot scratch through ice or snow to find grain.

"The worst thing is to have turkeys congregated around a well meaning person's feeding area, making it simple for a predator to wait and prey upon them. Turkeys domesticate readily, being a lazy bird."

For Virgil Graham of Topeka, getting a turkey meant many miles of travel and weary hours of tramping. "We walked 20 miles that first weekend, I'm sure," recounted Graham. This was after driving darn near across the state on a northeast-southwest angle from Topeka to the Cimarron National Grasslands in Morton county.

Graham and his hunting buddy, Don Scheuyler (Sky-ler) returned Thursday night. That night, Graham remembered, there was a violent thunderstorm accompanied by a spectacular lightning display. He continued:

"Early Friday morning we couldn't find a bird in the roost trees. Not even a track. I'm wondering if that lightning didn't scare them out." (This is questionable, according to Monte; but he admits, "You never know with wildlife.")

"About 5 p.m. after running the river all day we spotted some turkeys leaving the roost. We headed there and waited for them to come back. Around 7 p.m. a hen came through the trees. Behind her another hen, then another. All were about 75 to 80 yards away. Then the big tom came through, angling over toward the river."

Graham, brandishing his 12-gauge loaded with 3-inch magnum 6's, noticed a mound alongside the Cimarron. He ran along the mound, attempting to cut the turkey off. Scheuyler thought the turkey had spotted him and stayed put.

"I picked a clearing and waited for him. Then I saw him. He was going through the willows along the river and heading for the cottonwoods. He

came by about 30 or 40 yards away and I hit him in the head."

Scheuyler, arriving on the scene, grabbed the already-dead 20 lb. bird a little too quickly. The tom's big spurs raked him between the knuckles, leaving a scar he has to this day. "He's a marked man," quipped Graham.

One of the permits issued to hunters in the Eastern Management Unit went to 18-year-old Jeff Towell of Haven.

"I hunted on the north fork of the Ninnescah river only on the second weekend of the season. I'd never seen or heard a wild turkey then.

"The farmer, who helped me a lot, showed me the catalpa and cottonwood trees they were roosting in.

"I'd been hunting about 45 minutes in a light drizzle when I heard him gobbling. I was holding binoculars in one hand and the gun in the other. I said to myself, 'To heck with that;' and laid the binoculars down. Then I clicked off the safety. That old tom was close enough by now he saw my hand move.

"He stopped and studied me for close to five minutes. Then he started to sidestep into the catalpas—but he didn't make it," Jeff said with a delicious shiver. Young Jeff Towell had just dropped a 22½ lb. tom.

The Towells were surprised to find when they cleaned the bird that a wild turkey isn't built like a domestic turkey at all. They're streamlined, without the thick breast or thighs. "They have a lot of neck and head," they said.

The original hard luck story has to go to Russ Biberstein of Attica.

"I hunted hard, about three to four days and two hours a day. Saw a lot of turkey in the Bluff Creek area and finally saw my tom no more than 35 yards away.

"I pulled the trigger. The pop sounded like a capgun—a misfire! I got another shell in and the tom stood there and looked at me. Pulled the trigger—another pop!"

For obvious reasons, the name of that ammunition manufacturer shall go unnamed.

Charles Cooper of Coats is still gasping how a 17- to 24-lb. bird like the turkey can be so fast on the takeoff.

"Give them two flops to get up there and forget it," Cooper remarked.

Hunting along the Medicine river in the eastern unit on a good friend's land, Cooper shot his tom as he was flying over a small stream swollen by a big rain the night before. Cooper remembers:

"He fell into some little cedars. I got right over there, 'cause I thought a crippled turkey would run like a pheasant does. I looked and stood quiet. I heard a little rustle and there he was sneaking out of those cedars. Instead of running with that broken wing, he hid."

Bringing down that 22 lb. bird was "the toughest hunting I've ever done," Cooper said. He hunted three to four hours a day and bagged his bird the third day.

Allen Anderson of Ulysses was another member of the minority—that is, he used a call successfully to bag his bird. Hunting on the Cimarron National Grasslands, Anderson called his 20 lb. tom up to the opposite ridge Anderson was crouched behind.

"He had me mislocated, evidently, he peeked over that ridge and all I saw was his head and neck." At 20 yards a load of 3-inch magnum 2's from a 12-gauge does mighty fine work on the head. Anderson's tom was down before sunup opening morning.

The spring season also has Commission biologists smiling for another reason. By having the season in late April, it allowed the birds to successfully complete the peak of the breeding season. One tom can service several hens; so in effect hunters were harvesting surplus toms not needed for breeding.

Commission biologists are also hearing that exactly what they hoped would happen is happening; that the birds are dispersed over a wider area and that production is up where hunting was allowed.

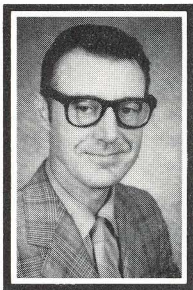
Let's hope those landowners who are fearful of the effects of hunting on turkeys also get that message.

When you give a hunter a thrill that has him walking on the ceiling nearly a year later and maintain the wildlife resource, that's a winner.

Wasting Sportsman's Dollars

By Paul Bocquin, Staff Writer

IT WAS JUST like any other evening at Jamestown State Fishing Lake, eight and one-half miles south of Courtland in north central Kansas.



Bocquin

Suddenly, the calm was shattered with an ear-splitting blast.

Mr. and Mrs. Dean Barret, who lived a quarter mile from the lake, said the explosion shook their home.

But the couple attributed it to a

sonic boom created by high-flying aircraft. Next morning, it was discovered that vandals, using an explosive charge, had blown up a double unit, cinder block restroom at the lake. Lawmen investigating said it was possible either dynamite or nitroglycerin was used to destroy the building, which housed both men's and women's rest rooms. One wall was demolished, two others had gaping holes and the roof was lifted two inches off the support walls.

The building, owned by the Kansas Forestry, Fish and Game Commission, was one of many such facilities stationed at outdoor recreation spots such as public fishing areas and game management areas throughout the state. Damage to the Jamestown installation was estimated at \$1,200.

Pranksters and vandals who have an odd way of getting their kicks are a frowning menace. State game protectors who must patrol comparatively large territories point out that "people management" poses a greater challenge than wildlife management.

Public use areas located close to the larger cities suffer the worst vandalism. Unfortunately, they also become hangouts for gangs who flee from the better patrolled cities.

An itemized report of damages to public hunting areas in north central Kansas gives a striking example of just one region of the state. Damages occurring on five federal reservoirs and other installations have accumulated to the tune of \$6,270 over a year's time. Indiscriminate use of vehicles at Milford Game Management Area resulted in \$400 worth of crop and habitat destruction, and \$200 worth of wooden planks were taken from floor bridges.

Restroom repairs to five units at Glen Elder Game Management Area cost \$500 which included painting the disfigured walls. It cost \$1,850 to clean up litter from these north central Kansas installations.

"In my opinion this is almost a form of vandalism," stated Darrell Monte, regional game supervisor. "It is a needless act which requires a good many hours to clean up, time which could be better utilized on more productive activities.

"People say to provide trash barrels and this won't happen. This is done, but we can't put a trash barrel everywhere. Even then, littering still occurs. I would prefer to emphasize the

Thousands of dollars in sportsmen's monies are wasted each year by acts of vandalism like this.



concept of 'carry home what you carry out.' It would solve a lot of problems," Montei pointed out.

At Shawnee State Fishing Lake in northeast Kansas, an attempt was made to steal a tractor-loader. The tractor was stored inside a fenced enclosure which was padlocked. The machine was started up and driven through the chain-link fence. The fence was battered and the tractor case was cracked. Cost of replacing the tractor parts was \$800 plus \$300 for the labor. Material to mend the fence was \$120 and the labor \$50.

A picnic shelter at the Shawnee Lake was burned. Repairs cost \$200 for material and \$50 for labor.

On the night of October 29, 1974, thieves broke into the field services maintenance building at Shawnee and confiscated equipment valued at more than \$1,200. Missing items included a drill press, new outboard motor, arc welder, gauges, cutting torches and hoses off an acetylene welder, axles and running gears off a boat trailer,

portable air compressor, 10 x 12 foot tarpaulin and miscellaneous hand wrenches. Three barbed wires were cut at the top of a chain-link fence surrounding the premises and a door lock was slipped to gain entrance to the building.

It is a well known fact that the Fish and Game Commission is not tax supported. Funds for the operation and maintenance of its many game management and fishing installations come from the sale of hunting, fishing, trapping and boating licenses.

The \$1,200 damages from this one night's incident at the Shawnee maintenance building is equal to the price of 240 hunting or fishing licenses at \$5.00 per license and 400 boating or trapping licenses at \$3.00 per license.

It also means \$1,200 out of the current operating budget that could have been used for other much needed expenses, according to Walter Harrison, chief of the field services division. There is no special fund and no insurance carried by the Commission

against theft and vandalism, as the premiums for such high-risk coverage would be prohibitive.

At Atchison State Fishing Lake, three units in the concrete restrooms were destroyed by explosives, resulting in \$75 replacement cost for materials and \$20 for labor.

Pottawatomie State Fishing Lake No. 1 had two wooden restrooms destroyed, \$70 for material and \$75 for labor, \$50 worth of signs damaged, redwood picnic tables valued at \$75 were destroyed and a \$25 restroom vent damaged.

Earlier this year, vandals hit Douglas State Fishing Lake, located one mile north and one mile east of Baldwin, doing an estimated \$215 damage to facilities there, according to Raymond Kokenge, supervisor of field services in northeast Kansas. He said considerable damage was done to the eight-inch concrete block restroom and that 4 x 4 posts were broken off which supported a sign displaying regulations for use of the lake.

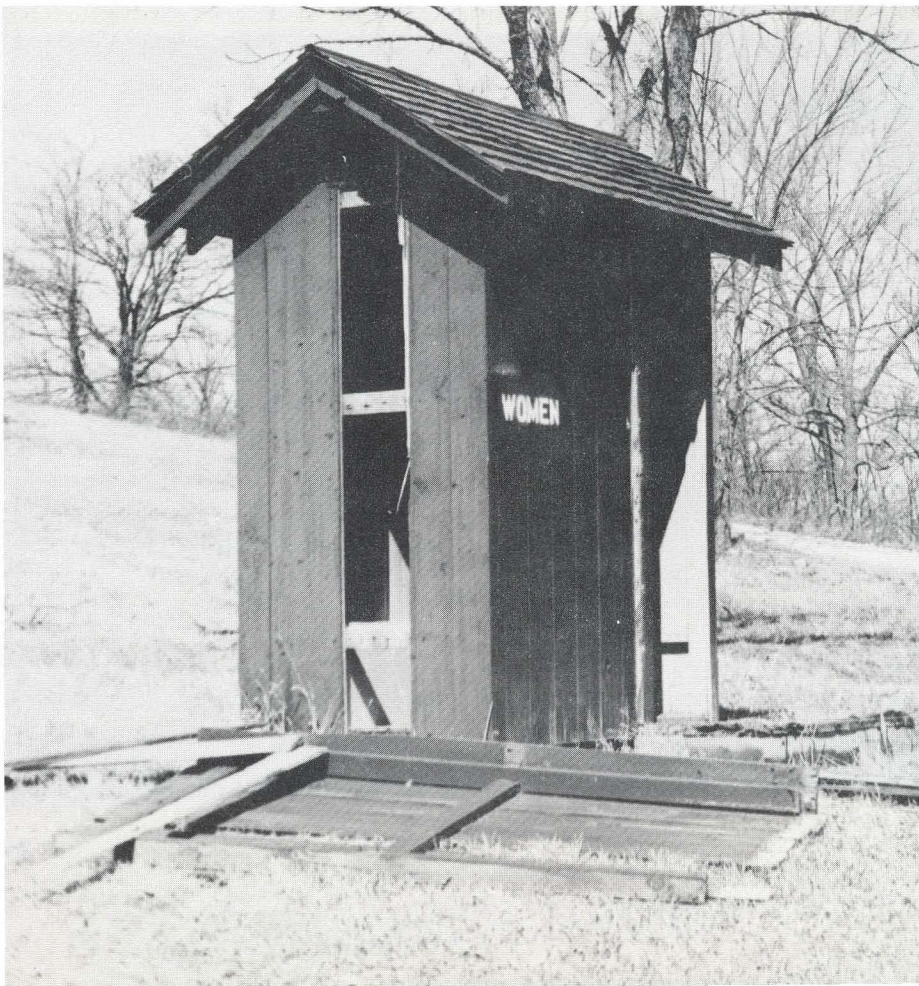
Game protectors who enforce the law are themselves not immune to being victimized occasionally. Dick McCullough, district game protector for Linn and part of Miami county, in southeast Kansas, lost a brand new 20 horsepower Mercury outboard motor in July, 1973, from a public refuge area, valued at \$350. Mike Shanley, district game protector for Meade, Comanche and Clark counties, lost an identical outboard in July, 1974, at Marais des Cygnes Waterfowl Management Area.

Heavy damage is done each year at the Strip Pits in southeast Kansas, according to Jim Bryan, law enforcement supervisor. Wooden restrooms that were broken and damaged have been replaced by metal units and these more durable units are the targets of rifles, pistols and shotguns. Outdoor grills, guideposts and trash barrels are damaged or carried off by the dozens.

Less heavily populated regions of Kansas such as the northwest also receive their share of public destruction, according to Don Davis, area game manager.

"On the Norton Game Management Area, we budget about \$400 a year to

Kansans are encouraged to report any suspicious activity on fish and game lands to their local sheriff or game protector.



KANSAS FISH & GAME



NEWS

P.O. BOX 1028

PRATT, KANSAS 67124

News contact: Paul Bocquin
or George Anderson

Phone— 316/672-6473

RELEASE _____

NIGHT HUNTERS CAPTURED

(released December 12, 1974)

SEDAN--Illegal night hunting activity in the Chautauqua Hills was delt a blow this week through inter-agency cooperation between the Kansas Highway Patrol Aircraft division and the Kansas Fish and Game Commission.

Sgt. Walt Wiltse, pilot for the Highway Patrol, and Everett Wilnerd, game protector, while flying night aircraft surveillance for illegal activity, spotted a vehicle shining lights into the timbered area. Wilnerd radioed game protector John Lingg, a member of the commission support team on the ground.

Wiltse said after a 20-minute ground chase by game protectors Lingg and Tom Yount the suspects abandoned their vehicle in a farm yard and were later apprehended in a barn loft.

Gregory L. Morris, 20, of Sedan and Edward Richardson, Jr., 28 of Peru were charged with illegal use of an artificial light to locate wildlife and fleeing from an eluding peace officer.

Both suspects appeared before Chautauqua county court Judge Carrol Burch and after being found guilty were assessed court fines and costs totaling \$442.60

Harold Lusk, Chief of Law Enforcement for the Commission, and Lt. Lund of the Kansas Highway Patrol said that inter-agency cooperation between the two agencies has been excellent and both look forward to the continued efforts.

Lusk also issued a warning to wildlife law violators. "We are going to concentrate our efforts to curtail fish and game violations throughout Kansas."

####

HUNTING, FISHING &
TRAPPING LICENSES
GO UP JANUARY 1

(released December 12, 1974)

PRATT--The cost of Kansas hunting, fishing and trapping licenses and the special permits issued for deer, antelope and turkey will be increased effective Jan. 1, 1975, according to George Axline, assistant chief of business management for the Fish and Game Commission. This is the first increase in 15 years.

Resident hunting licenses will be increased from \$3 to \$5. A person may obtain a special license to hunt on legally established game bird breeding and controlled shooting areas for \$3. A combination resident hunting and fishing license was raised from \$6 to \$10.

Resident fishing licenses will be raised from \$3 to \$5 in 1975. Non-resident licenses went up from \$5 to \$10 in 1974. However, a non-resident fishing license may be issued for a period of 10 consecutive days for \$5.

Trapping licenses, issued to residents only, will be increased from \$1.50 to \$3. for Kansas residents.

License fees for special deer, antelope and turkey permits have been \$10 for each resident landowner or tenant and for each general resident chosen in drawings to hunt these game. As of Jan. 1, these special permits will be \$15.

A Kansas resident 65 or older is not required to buy hunting or fishing licenses. In addition, certain Indians, resident hunters and fishermen under 16 and landowners who hunt and fish on their own property are exempt from purchasing licenses.

Axline said the new license rates to sportsmen is the first increase since 1960.

####

COYOTE HUNTERS
ABUSE FARMER

(released December 13, 1974)

BUFFALO--A group of coyote hunters recently invaded the farm of A.L. Clarkson, cutting fences and letting their dogs chase and harass livestock.

"After the hunters left, I found one calf with a broken leg and another that had been chewed up on the hip and leg," Clarkson said. Another calf is missing and I still haven't found it."

"If they had just telephoned me, I could have shut the cows and calves into a pen and avoided all this trouble," he said. He has since turned the whole thing over to the sheriff and county attorney.

(more)

"I had my pasture gate padlocked, but they cut and untied the other end," Clarkson noted. One of the hunters has already paid Clarkson \$100 for damages. But another hunter said they would give him \$25 to forget the whole thing.

Surprisingly, Clarkson said he will continue to allow coyote hunters on his land.

"This is a classic example of how a few slob hunters can damage the reputation of hunters in general," said Jim Bryan, Chanute, law enforcement supervisor for the southeastern region.

###

DISABLED HUNTING PERMITS
NOT ISSUED UNTIL 1975

(released October 25, 1974)

PRATT--Special hunting permits for disabled persons will not be available for hunting until the 1975 seasons, the Kansas Forestry, Fish and Game Commission announced.

A bill passed by the 1974 Kansas legislature provides that a permanently disabled person who is unable to walk or is able to walk only with the aid of orthopedic appliances may apply to the director of the Commission for a permit, allowing him to take fish and game from a land or water vehicle especially adapted for that person.

The regulation which implements the new law was adopted at the Sept. 18 public hearing of the Fish and Game Commission. However, it must be reviewed by the 1975 session of the Kansas legislature. Unless modified or rejected, it will become law May 1, 1975.

The holder of the permit will otherwise observe the same laws and regulations as other sportsmen. The permit is valid for a period of two years, at which time the disabled person will submit his permit for revalidation by the director.

Another law passed by the 1974 Kansas legislature has delayed implementation of any permanent regulations until next May. This law prevents the Commission from implementing any new permanent regulations until they have been reviewed by the legislature.

###

RARE WHOOPERS
CAPTURED ON FILM

ALDEN--A flock of rare whooping cranes recently stopped near here on their migratory flight south to the Gulf Coast. During their brief visit, Ken Stiebben, wildlife photographer for the Kansas Forestry, Fish and Game Commission, recorded these unusual birds in a rare sequence of film. Seldom seen, these shy birds are not often photographed.

Marion Steinmetz of Alden, notified Fish and Game personnel that the birds were feeding in milo and wheat fields on the Calvin Koch farm north of Alden. Stiebben spent the next two days stalking and photographing the rare cranes.

Using a Pentax spotmatic 35mm camera loaded with Plus X and Panatomic film and equipped with a Tamron zoom lens, Stiebben exposed several rolls of film on the whoopers. Carefully stalking through maize and weed cover, Stiebben was able to crawl within 30 feet of the birds. His excellent results appear here.

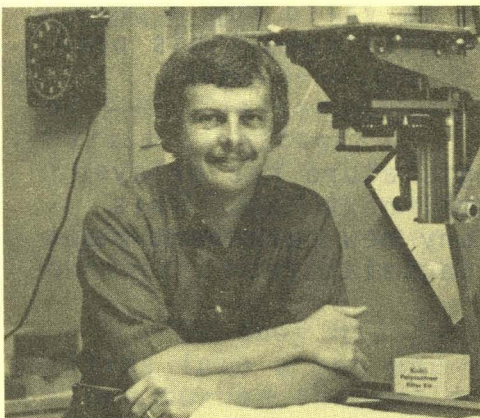
George Anderson, informational writer for the Commission, accompanied Stiebben with electronic equipment and made sound recordings of the large birds as they fed and called.

The whoopers were on their way from the summer nesting grounds in Saskatchewan's Wood Buffalo National Park to their winter quarters at the Aransas Wildlife Refuge on the Texas coast.

From a population low of 15 birds in 1940, whooping cranes have increased slowly until there are now around 50 birds in the wild. Wildlife scientists have built up a captive flock of 21 cranes from which they hope to raise birds for future stock.

A new project currently under consideration would include placing fertile whooper eggs in the nests of sandhill cranes, close relatives of the whoopers. Since the two birds' migratory pattern are similar, scientists are hopeful the sandhills will help the whoopers establish some new breeding colonies.

Ken Stiebben







BACKYARD BIRD BUNDLE

The Kansas State Forester, State Extension Service, and Forestry, Fish and Game Commission are pleased to announce the availability of a program to help urban homeowners develop songbird habitat in their backyards.

The three agencies have jointly developed a bundle of plants, available through the State Forester, that are suitable for use in backyard landscapes and are selected for their attractiveness to songbirds. When planted and grown, the trees and shrubs will provide year round shelter for birds plus supplemental food during late summer, fall and winter.

If you are interested, or know someone who is, clip the order form below and send it to the State Forester today. Bundles will be sent direct to you post paid at the proper spring planting time. Each bundle will contain 3 red cedar, 2 each aromatic sumac and rough-leaved dogwood, 1 bush honeysuckle, and 5-7 coralberry. Orders will be filled as long as supplies last.

If you have additional questions about developing wildlife habitat in either urban or rural settings, please call on the Forestry, Fish and Game Commission for assistance.

* * * * *

BACKYARD BIRD BUNDLE ORDER

To: Kansas State Forester
2610 Claflin Road
Manhattan, Kansas 66502

Please send me _____ "Backyard Bird Bundle" at \$5.00 each.

*Enclosed is my check in the amount of \$_____.

Bundles are to be mailed post paid to:

Name _____

Street _____

City _____

Zip

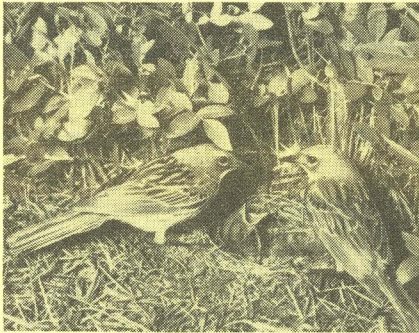
*Note: Full payment must accompany order

Once upon a time, not so very long ago...

our sprawling suburbs were wilderness areas. What was once forest and field where our wildlife could abound is now a patchwork of pavement and housing where humans abound.

This continuing encroachment of land by the human population is rapidly forcing animal and bird life to retreat into an ever-shrinking habitat.

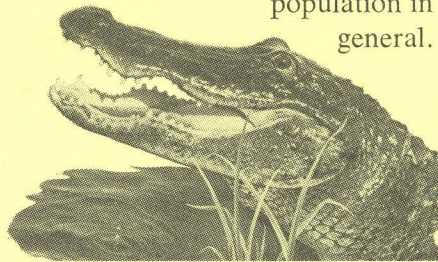
It's to a point now that the animal world has been disrupted so severely that hardly a year goes by



without some wildlife species disappearing forever.

Obviously, there's cause for concern. But, unfortunately, a lot of concerned people are misin-

formed. They're blaming hunters for the threat to wildlife instead of blaming the human population in general.

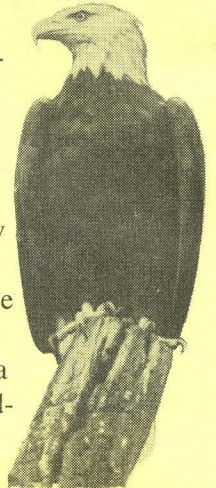


The fact is that for over 75 years no group in this country has been more dedicated to or worked harder for our environment—land and wildlife conservation included—than hunters.

Over the past 50 years, hunters have contributed over \$2.5 billion to the cause. And today more and more of this revenue is being used in the fight to preserve endangered species such as the Kirtland's Warbler, the American Alligator and the American Bald Eagle.

We hope you're one of the people who are concerned enough about the problems of conservation to

find out more about it. If you are, we have a booklet that'll help you be better informed. It's called "The Hunter and Conservation." And because we're a non-profit organization, it's priced at 25¢ to cover the cost of printing. Please use the coupon below and send for your copy today. It'll be a step in the right direction toward a better understanding of one of the serious problems we face in this country today.



National Shooting Sports Foundation, Inc.
1075 Post Road, Riverside, Conn. 06878

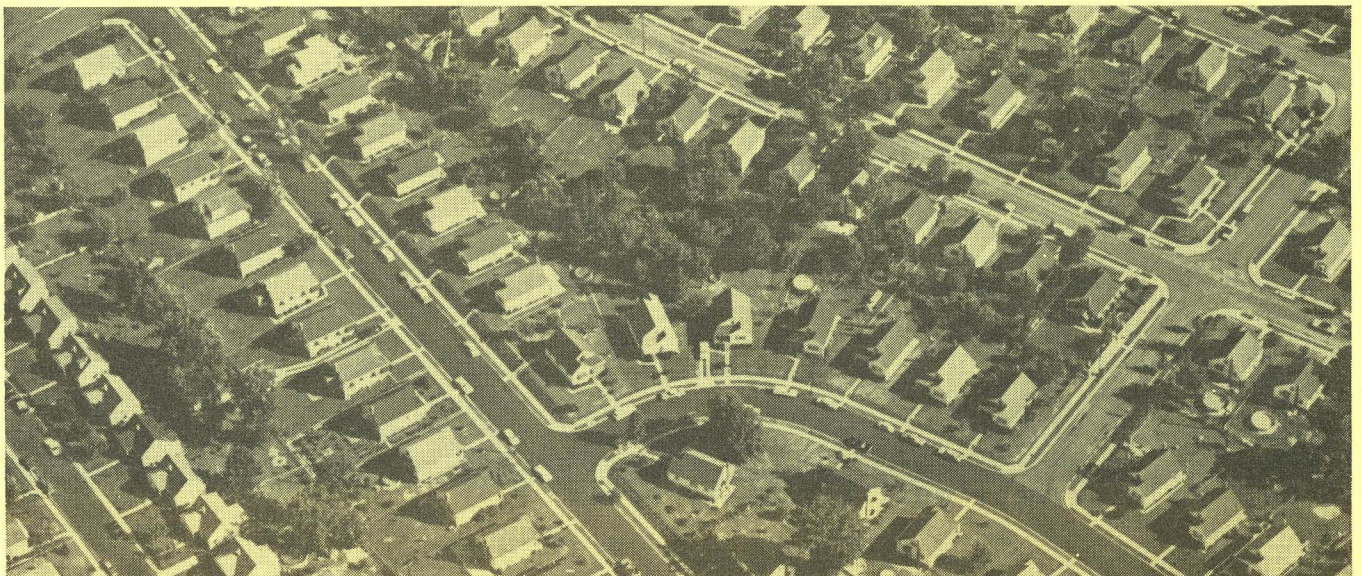
THE HUNTER AND CONSERVATION is mailed postpaid for 25¢ a copy or \$1.00 per package of 5 copies.

Yes, please send me your booklet. I enclose \$ _____ for _____ copies.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____



replace signs and we almost always spend that much in signs, time and vehicle mileage," he reported.

At the Almena Game Management Area, glass windows have been shot out, a new hand pump water well installation vandalized, restroom doors ripped off and toilet tissue brackets broken off the walls.

State fishing lakes in southwest Kansas also receive some petty vandalism which adds up to a sizeable figure over a period of time, according to Larry Kerr, maintenance supervisor. At Kearny State Fishing Lake three restrooms and one vent were destroyed, two doors broken up, two toilets marked up with spray paint and marking pencils and picnic tables chopped and broken.

At Hamilton State Fishing Lake, holes were shot in plastic sun shades, picnic tables broken and restroom screens picked or poked out.

At Marion Reservoir in south central Kansas, 10 rolls of barbed wire were stolen last summer at a loss of \$300 and a hole cut through a chain link fence to remove the wire, reports Raymond E. Parish, area game manager.

"We do not have a lot of vandalism, just a few signs shot, about five to ten per year," Parish added.

Cheney Reservoir located west of Wichita, where heavy concentrations of people gather almost the year around, is one of the most heavily abused public recreation areas in the state.

During the past year, the following items have been stolen or vandalized at Cheney: 274 permanent signs, 150 cardboard posters, 179 steel and wood posts, 7 cable gates, 15 padlocks and 1 roll of barbed wire. In addition a dozen trash barrels have been shot up, burned and repainted several times. Five of these barrels were stolen and the locks holding them damaged.

Another form of vandalism has plagued the Cheney Game Management Area, where vegetation and other improvements were mistreated, according to Steve Sorensen, district game biologist.

"All too often, we have planted trees on the area only to have them de-

stroyed by vehicles driving through the tree plot. Many times, these trees are several years old and just beginning to provide benefits for wildlife. Grass plantings, forb plantings and weedy areas are destroyed, primarily by vehicles," Sorensen said.

"Accidental fires have set areas of grass on fire and destroyed the benefits they provide for wildlife. We even have terraces destroyed by people driving across or down the middle of them."

The Cheney game biologist said agriculture crops planted by leasers of the property are also victimized by vehicular traffic.

"I feel our biggest problem comes from Wichita, as the people there are so far removed from the land that they have lost a feeling and respect for it. I am sure that if some of the farmers were to camp on their front lawns or drive through their gardens, they would have a completely different viewpoint about the offense."

The maintenance building at Fall River Game Management Area was broken into twice during the past year. Stolen items included a cutting torch, spotting scope, set of open end wrenches and other miscellaneous tools.

"I would say around 120 signs plus 25 posts are shot and torn down each year," said John R. Bills, a farm worker at Fall River.

Needless to say, the Fish and Game Commission as well as reputable hunters and fishermen take a dim view of theft, vandalism and littering of these public recreation areas. A concerted effort is being made by law enforcement officers to crack down on public offenders. Vandalism to state property carries up to \$500 fine and a six-month jail sentence.

The vigilance of law enforcement officers in cracking down on vandalism is showing results. For example, in September, 1974, a 19-year-old man from Wichita was arrested and charged with destroying a restroom at Kingman State Fishing Lake in south central Kansas.

He appeared before Kingman County court Judge Gene Shay and pleaded guilty. He was paroled from a 30-day jail sentence on condition that he pay court costs and restitution for the damage. His rights to be on any lands controlled by the Commission in Kingman County were revoked for one year. Game protector Jack Dunbar was the arresting officer.

"Some people will dump their toilets in the campgrounds, out on the roads, or even while driving down the highway," stated Byron Walker, area game manager at Kingman.

Some motorcyclists and other motorists use the grassed hills and steep slopes at Kingman as playgrounds, although it is illegal to drive anywhere except on established roads or trails in the campgrounds.

"A lot of people believe they can bring an unlicensed mini-bike into a state area, put an unlicensed driver on it and give him absolute freedom to drive wherever he wants. This is not only unfair to the child but extremely dangerous to him. Neither do these parents take into consideration the liabilities involved if the child is in a wreck or causes one," said Walker.

Surprisingly enough, some of the handiwork of these self-styled lake and resort bums is serving to educate and improve the attitudes of young people. Many of the shot-up signs are given to firearms training instructors as training aids. The Kansas Hunter Safety program is teaching these youths a new respect for the land and for public and private landowners.

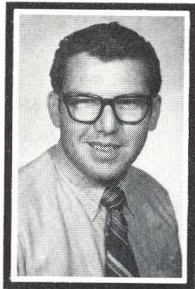
Public support is appreciated in reporting all suspicious activity to the state game protector in that area or to the county sheriff's office. Write down the violator's license number and any identifying characteristics. Writing the information down prevents confusion and distortion of facts and allows the details to be reported later in a logical manner.

And finally, keep in mind that the protection of our fish and wildlife resources is everyone's responsibility.

WATERFOWL BASICS

By Farrell Brewer, Staff Writer

WATERFOWL FEVER is not a disease common to ducks and geese migrating southward in the fall of the year. It is, however, a disease common to almost every hunter who has gone afield plying his skills on those migrating birds.



Brewer

For those of you who have not crouched in a blind, shotgun in hand, there is a new hunting experience in store. This experience is yours for the taking.

However, newcomers should be cautioned that waterfowling is a disease and it has addictive powers. You might have some doubts before that first flight drops out of the sky over your decoys, but once you take the first shot, you'll always be back for more.

As with other types of hunting, success at waterfowling depends on how well you know the critter you are after. You need to understand ducks and the instincts which govern their movements. Once you learn you will be a much better duck hunter.

Some of those already initiated into the hip boot clan hunt ponds, rivers and lakes, while others prefer grain fields. Regardless of where they hunt, they all have a number of items that must be taken care of before that first mallard sets its wings over the decoys on opening day.

One of the first items is to find a location to hunt. Permission is necessary to hunt on private property in Kansas. Many landowners lease their ponds, while others allow hunting with per-

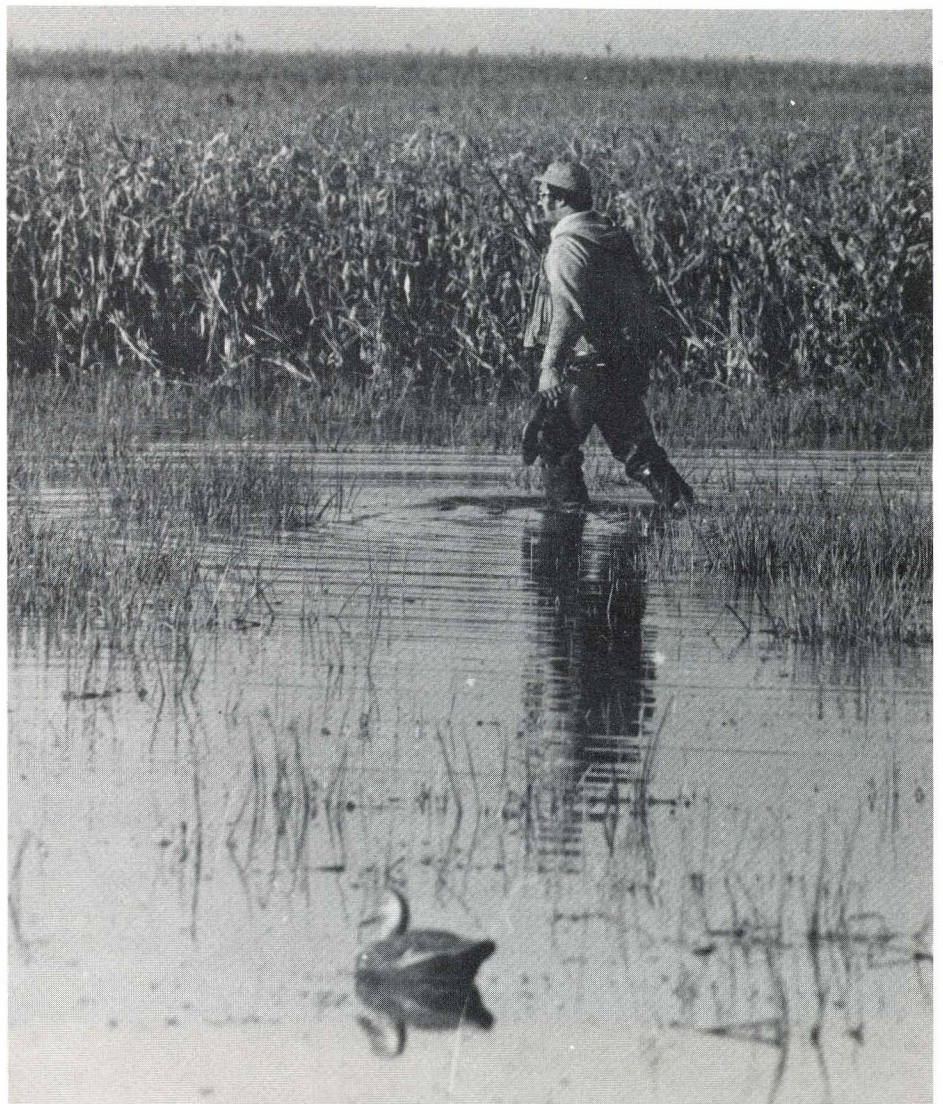
mission. If you intend to build a blind on private land, be sure to discuss this with the owner to avoid difficulties at a later date.

When looking for a suitable hunting location, it would be well to find out what the hunting conditions have been like in past years in the area from someone who knows the area. It won't do you much good to lease a pond or

obtain permission to hunt in an area that the ducks don't fly over.

There are many public hunting areas in the state that also provide some excellent waterfowl hunting. It would be good to check regulations applicable to each area before taking to the field. If you do this you can avoid disappointing circumstances. A hunter came into the Fish and Game

Many public hunting areas in the state provide excellent waterfowl hunting.



Ken Stiebben

office the other day and asked for a map of a certain reservoir with the refuge area marked on it. I questioned his interest in the refuge area and he replied "I wish I would have asked you for this map last week as I was hunting on the refuge and received a citation." As I said before, check local regulations to avoid situations like this.

After locating a hunting site, your next task will be to construct a good blind. Again, you should check local regulations on public hunting areas as there are restrictions on blind construction there.

One thing to consider when constructing a blind is that ducks and geese have exceptional vision and seldom fly into shooting distance unless the hunter is concealed or sufficiently disguised.

Your blind can be temporary—for a one time shoot—where the habits of ducks are not stable, or a semi-permanent structure along an established flyway. There are generally enough natural materials everywhere and it is up to each individual to make the best use of them.

Camouflage is very important in blind placement. You should not change the surrounding landscape any more than necessary. Use local materials and avoid using those which stick out and clash with other cover in the vicinity. Take care when constructing your blind to gather materials away from the blind and avoid packing down the area near the blind.

A permanent blind should be built as long as possible before using it to give the ducks time to get accustomed to the blind. You should also keep the area around your blind litter-free, as the litter might seem unnatural to a duck.

Some valuable equipment for building a blind includes a hand axe, shovel, baling wire and twine, burlap sacks and staples. Some hunters use chicken wire or other wire to weave grass into. The burlap is used to line the inside of the blind to insulate it.

How you build the blind is really up to each individual; I have seen elaborate set-ups and some that are very primitive. As long as they blend into



When waterfowling, there's always the possibility of bagging some Canada geese, like the two shown here with Tim Marnett, Leawood goose hunter.

the natural surroundings either type will turn the trick.

Another item I consider essential to duck hunting is a good string of decoys. If you are buying new ones, select the ones that look as much like wild ducks as possible. If you have bought some used ones be sure they are in good shape; if the paint is flaking, chipped or scuffed, repaint them. Paint can be obtained from several sources. I use an oil base paint on mine. Before painting, check

for cracks and pellet holes. Mend these with epoxy cement. Also check the cords; if they are frayed replace them. Another trick is to attach a swivel to the cords; this will allow the decoy to turn if the wind changes on the surface.

Usually waterfowl will decoy best to large number of their own species. This means the more decoys on the water or ground the better your chances are of pulling in birds.

Some hunters I know use as many

as 200 decoys, but if you don't have any, I wouldn't recommend running out to the store and buying that many. It's better to start with a dozen and build up your string each year, as good decoys cost plenty and in my estimation cheapies aren't worth carrying home.

Along with your duck decoys set a few goose decoys; this seems to add authenticity to your spread. When setting your decoys be careful not to mix paddle ducks and divers; separate them by at least twenty-five yards.

The type of set you use is up to your own judgment; there are many to choose from and there have been volumes written on the subject. I will not attempt to go into detail here but will give you a few ideas.

When arranging a spread before a shoot, place all your decoys at least four to five feet from each other. Feeding ducks ordinarily will not bunch together. A valuable trick is to leave a large open space among the decoys within easy shooting range of the blind. The actual spread can be an oval, heart, or fishhook shape, but be sure to leave ample space for new arrivals to land in the center.

Clothing is a very important item to a duck hunter since nothing will ruin a hunt faster than getting cold and wet. Ducks fly in all kinds of weather—rain, sleet, snow and sunshine—so you need to be prepared. I suggest wearing layers of clothing rather than one big bulky coat or heavy wool pants. A camouflage coat is a real asset, and I prefer the waterproof type. Stay away from shiny materials. Remember that you can always take the clothes off but you can't put them on if you don't have them with you. Hip boots or chest waders are a good item to take along as they will keep your feet dry.

A good duck call is another important item in your waterfowl hunting gear. However, the call is not nearly as important as being able to use it. Practice is the best method to learn to use a call. Here again there have been volumes written on this subject by experts. There are several good books on the market, sometimes packaged with records or tapes. By listening to the experts and following their

advice you can soon become adept in the art of calling. If you don't learn to call properly, leave your call at home because improper calling will scare the birds rather than attract them.

Before you take off for the pond it is a good idea to check your equipment to be sure you have all of it. I make up a check list and follow it to the "T." If you don't, you will find yourself in the same predicament I once did. I left my hat and weather-proof coat at home and had a miserable day in the cold and rain.

Here is my check list that includes the basics; you may want to add some items.

- Shotgun (plugged for three shells only)
- Shells (duck and goose loads)
- Decoys (duck and goose)
- Waders or hip boots
- Duck and goose calls
- Waterproof camouflage parka and cap
- Hunting license
- Waterfowl stamp (signed and attached to license)

Hunting regulations and sunrise-sunset table

Duck identification booklet

Plenty of clothing with extra socks and gloves

Thermos of coffee and a lunch

Flashlight

Many a hunter has gone through all of these preparations and when he got to the blind and the ducks came buzzing by he missed the easy shots. To prevent this happening, there is one more preparation I would recommend. Get a box of clay targets or the new Super Pigeon targets and practice before you go hunting.

You may wonder if all this preparation is worth it. The only way to find out is to try it. I'll guarantee that until the ducks slip up behind you, you haven't lived. You'll really appreciate hunting when that raft of mallards come into your decoys and you drop a couple.

Just remember, you have been warned that waterfowl fever results from a good duck hunt and that you are subject to becoming addicted.

A brace of mallards can represent the end of a perfect duck hunt.



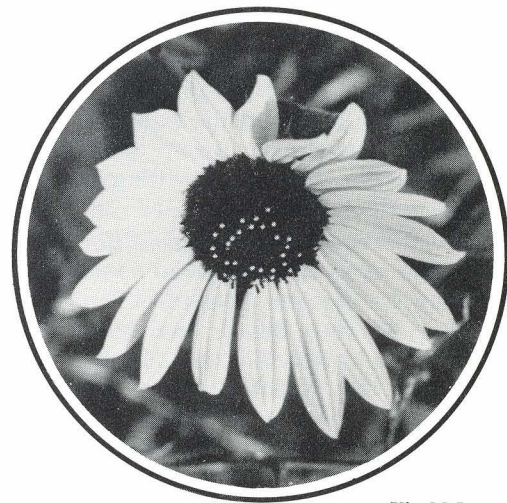
Ken Stiebben

Blue and Gold Impressions

By Vic McLeran

*"Gold was just a windy Kansas wheatfield,
Blue was just the Kansas summer sky."*

Words and music by John Denver



Vic McLeran

JOHAN DENVER got those lyrics together in a tune called *Matthew*, a ballad about his uncle who was born and raised just south of Colby. As Denver tells it, a twister wiped out his uncle's farm and he subsequently came to live with Denver's family, where he passed on some of his northwestern Kansas impressions to young John.

The impressions were pretty solid, because if you've ever stood alone in a Rawlins County sea of gold while thin cirrus clouds drifted across the vast blue ceiling, you know what Denver was singin' about.

Driving west across I-70 through Salina and on into the high plains, you'll travel through counties with names like Sheridan, Rawlins, Cheyenne and Sherman — rugged names that conjure up visions of homesteaders feuding with big cattle ranchers and bronzed Pawnee warriors.

Northwestern Kansas is high plains country, a wide open sprawling territory where they call 22 inches of rainfall a wet year. It's a region where spacious grasslands climb 4,000 feet to meet the Colorado line on the west and Nebraska to the north; a land scarred here and there by deep yucca-studded arroyos, an area where weird rock formations dot the landscape and carry you out to Idaho or Utah. Formations like Gove County's Monument and Castle Rocks, remnants of ancient marine life that's been eroded



Vic McLeran

by centuries of wind and water, throwbacks from a time when Kansas was an inland sea. It's a territory of dusty chalk-colored county roads flanked by blue-green sagebrush where lizards dart across the path raising little puffs of dust as they go.

And there are watercourses lined with enormous cottonwoods, creeks carrying picturesque names like Prairie Dog, Sappa, Beaver and rivers like the Smoky Hill, Solomon, Republican and the quaint little Arikaree that trickles down from the Colorado plains across the extreme northwestern corner of Kansas and on into Nebraska where it joins forces with the North Fork of the Republican, and whose waters run so cold in some spots that it harbors rainbow trout.

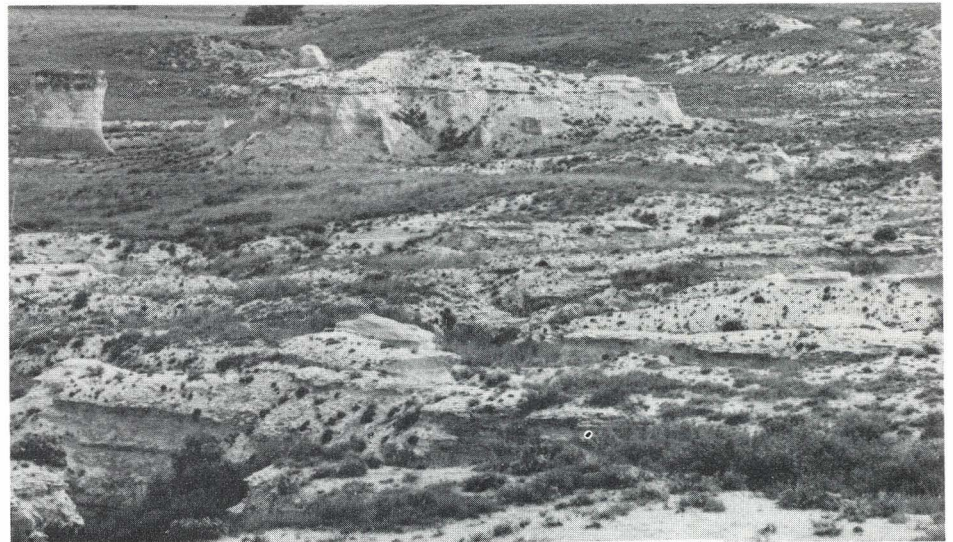
It's a country where the August mornings are cool enough to make the wool of a Pendleton welcome until the rising sun burns off the chill. It's territory where the blues and golds of summer are replaced with iron skies, brown dormant trees and the green of immature wheat during the winter; where January weather is so harsh that 10 below is no real conversation piece and where the frigid temperatures bleach the coats of long-tailed weasels snow white and they're called ermine.

And northwestern Kansas is pheasant country. Lord is it ever pheasant country. It's a place where during the '50s, a man could flush flocks of 300 roosters from the soil bank fields of native grasses. It's a place where later in life you'll remember your son when he dropped his first pheasant and how he watched wide-eyed as a soft-mouthed setter dumped the gaudy bundle at his feet. And it's an area where some of us can recall getting out of the car with an empty Browning and watching in shock as a dozen roosters exploded from a roadside plum thicket, churning the air with pumping wings and peeling off to the south in a long glide. We'll remember talkin' ugly about the empty Browning but we'll remember the high too—the high of the flush and the crisp November air laced with burnt powder from a friend's Model 12.

Vic McLeran

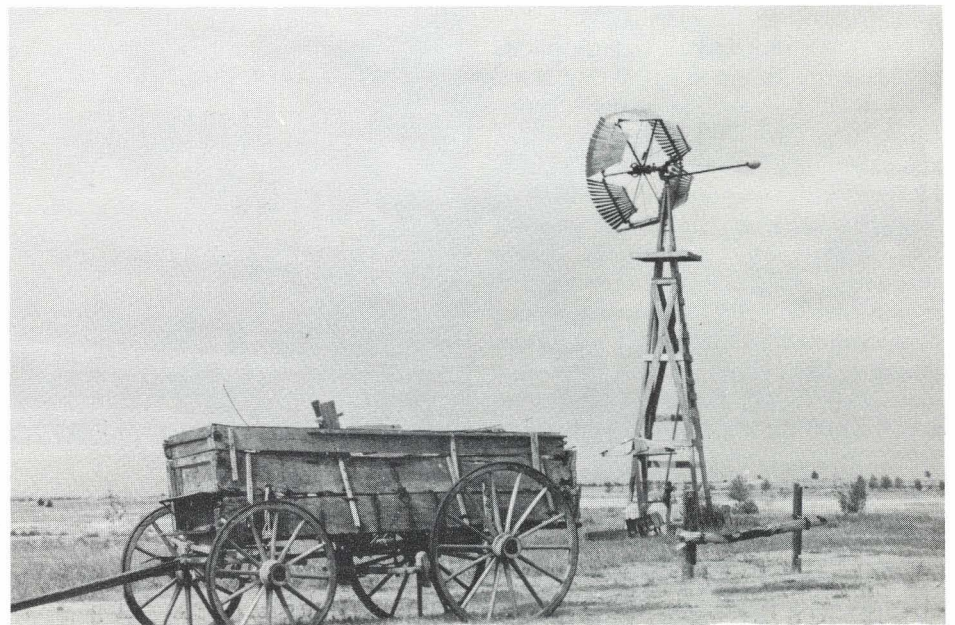


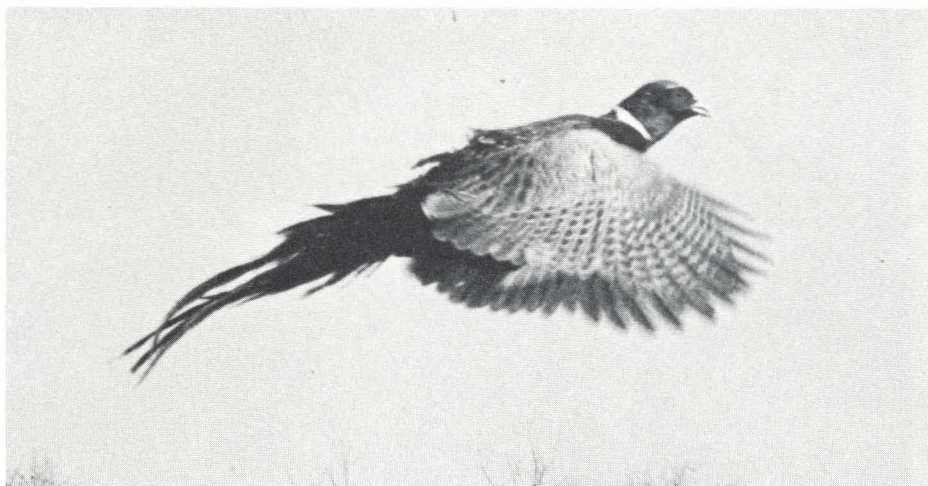
Vic McLeran



Vic McLeran

Vic McLeran





Ken Stiebber



Ken Stiebber



And for the dust weary pheasant hunter, northwestern Kansas is a friendly little tavern up along the Nebraska-Colorado line that sells ice cold Coors in sweat-beaded brown bottles. It's the kind of tavern that has what songwriter Kris Kristofferson calls "friendly shadows," and where for a nickle, you can hear Merle Haggard or Johnny Cash. It's a place that sells those great big ol' juicy hamburgers complete with tomato slices, crisp onions and tangy pickles—like the ones you used to buy wrapped in wax paper. And when you bite into 'em, the warm salty juices trickle down your chin.

This sprawling high plains country is where, driving the roads at sunup, you'll see pheasant roosters strutting along the eastern side of a cut maize field catching those early morning rays that burn off the cold wet frost which the big cocks hate. And it's country where you'll hear old-timers griping about the shortage of birds since the soil bank days are gone. They blame it on the stubble mulching process which leaves a field sterile as far as wildlife is concerned. But then, that kind of attitude depends on where you're standing—depends on "whose ox is bein' gored," as one ol' "grizzly" once told me. And from a non-pheasant hunting farmer's point of view, stubble mulching can be a beautiful thing.

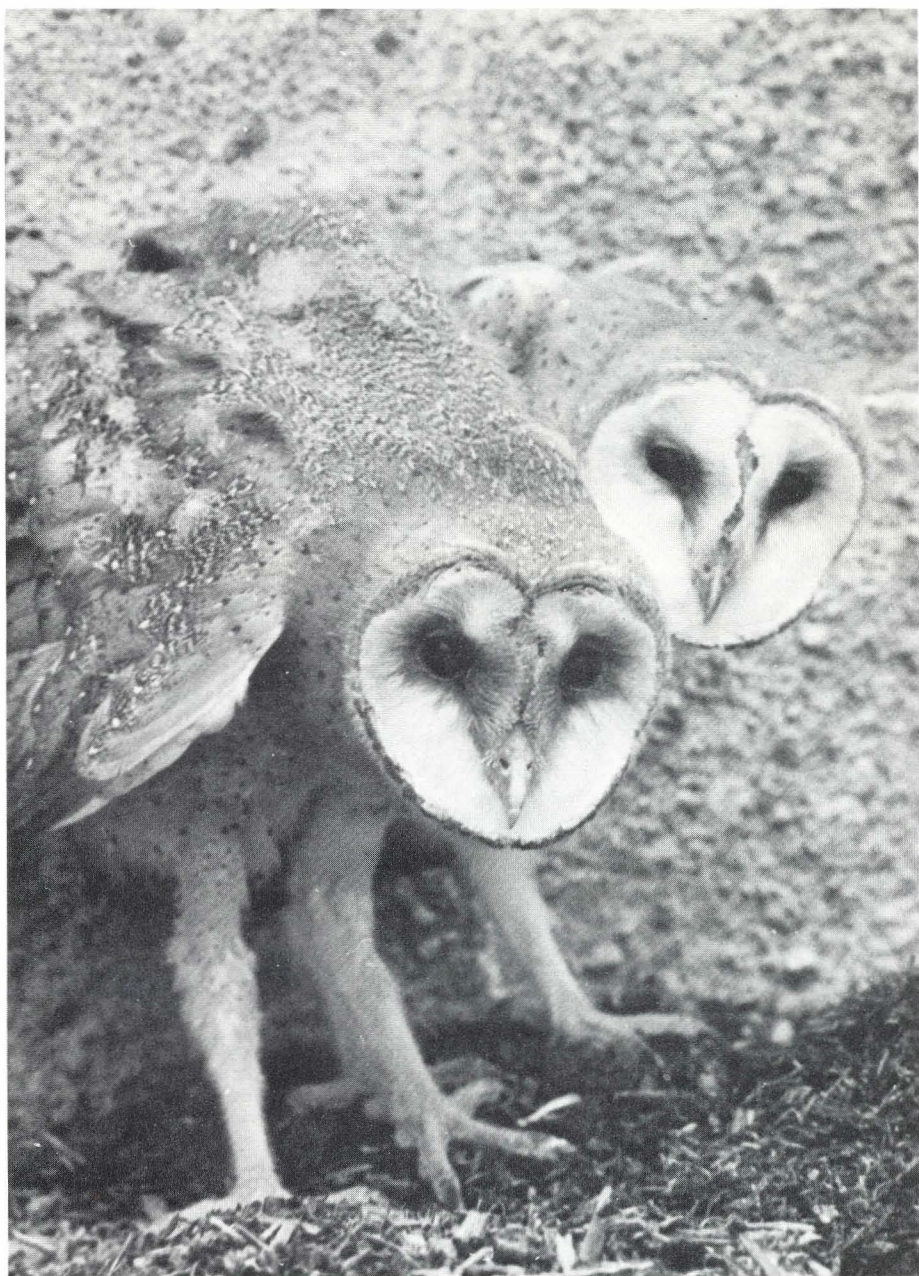
But pheasants aren't the only game birds in the Northwest. You'll see rugged robust bobwhites, that thrive in the grainfields and edge cover; and remnant bands of prairie chickens that cling tenaciously to this harsh high plains country. And late in the fall, you'll find little creeks and prairie potholes which contain fat grain-fed mallards that scramble into the sky as you approach. If goose hunting is your thing, you can see flock after flock of Canada geese over around Kirwin Reservoir, the large Vs wavering as the birds drift out to the feed fields.

Northwest Kansas is a land where *Crotalus viridis*, the sullen prairie rattlesnake is boss among things that creep and crawl, a land where this Irish-tempered reptile strikes at any-

thing threatening within two feet and if he hits you—you got problems. It's country where George Whitaker, a weathered old law enforcement supervisor and veteran of nearly 30 years with the commission, once watched a rough-legged hawk kill a prairie rattlesnake, carrying the reptile high above the prairie and dropping it; and it's where he watched a doe cottontail drive a long-tailed weasel, one of the state's fiercest predators, away from her nest of young.

It's a region where bull snakes slither into the burrows of prairie dogs to constrict and eat their pups and it's the kind of country where one biologist found a five-foot bull snake wrapped around an adult prairie dog—both combatants dead.

If you're into raptors, northwestern Kansas is your kind of country. It's a great horned owl, flushed from the face of a rock cliff, drifting out across the grasslands; and it's the snowy owl, a giant ghost-like bird from the northern tundras, come south because of the cyclical rodent shortage in its home land. These great owls have seen so few humans they'll sit on a fencepost and let you pull alongside in a car. It's a country where you'll occasionally spot the dusty-colored prairie falcon as he hurtles down across the Colorado line at speeds approaching 100 miles per hour to knock a Wallace County ground squirrel 30 feet across the sands. Or you might spot a goshawk, that gray warrior from the Canadian spruce forests, as he knifes through riverbottom willows after a terrified cottontail. During the summer there's always the Swainson's and red-tailed hawks, wheeling high above the plains in great lazy circles, or the little kestrels, stooping falcon-like from their high line perches to take a mouse or grasshopper. And there are marsh hawks, drifting low across the fields with their winnowing flight. In the winter when the big reservoirs like Norton and Cedar Bluff have iced over, you can take a pair of field glasses and watch bald and golden eagles as they hunt crippled ducks.



Ken Stiebben

Ken Stiebben

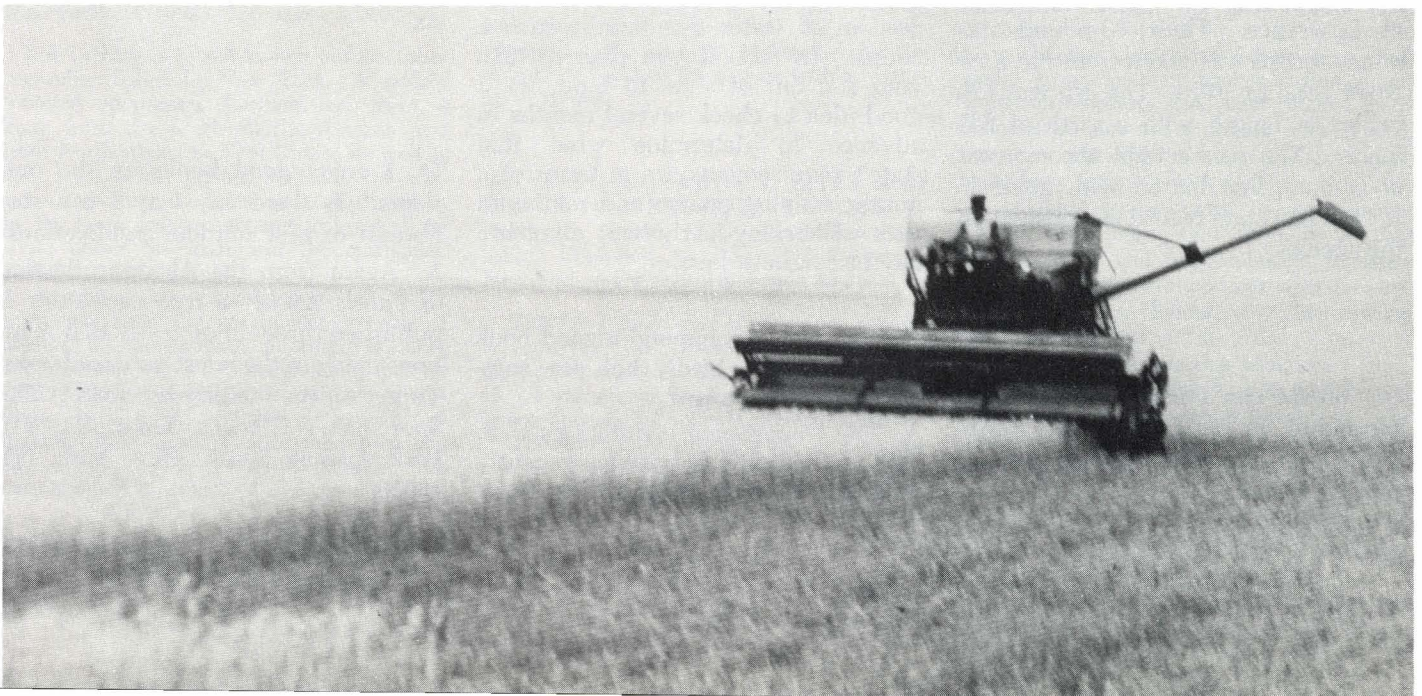


And northwest Kansas is a land where wide-eyed mule deer appear suddenly, gray and ghostlike in the early morning mists only to disappear in the wooded draws and brushy canyons. Out along the Colorado line in Wallace and Sherman counties, you can see pronghorn antelopes, their white rump patches flared in alarm as they streak away. And always, there is *Canis latrans*, the little prairie wolf, probably the most clever predator on the North American continent. Occasionally you'll see a pair of coyotes as they team up to chase a black-tailed jackrabbit in relays. Always an opportunist, the coyote has been observed following a badger and snatching up ground squirrels which were dug out and flushed by the slow moving badger. In the region's prairie dog town, ranchers occasionally report seeing black-footed ferrets—those extremely rare little prairie weasels.

I guess I've rambled some here, but northwestern Kansas is that kind of country—an enormous sprawling territory that can't be neatly categorized; just the kind of country you get a whole lot of good feelings about. Any narrative on a region is only one man's impression of that region, and impressions are based, in part at least, on the sum of a man's experiences, observations, perceptions and his feelings about things.

These have been some of mine—on the blue and gold country.

Ken Stiebben





Fish and Game Forum



Q. Exactly what are the differences between channel catfish and blue catfish?

A. First off, forget about coloration because it's not a totally reliable criteria for identifying these fish. There is a distinct rise or angle, from the top of the blue cat's head to its back or dorsal fin. This angle gives the blue a humpbacked appearance while the shape of the channel catfish is more slender. Then too, the tail of the channel cat is usually more deeply forked than the blue's, but here again there are exceptions. The most infallible identification point is in the number of rays or spines in the anal fin. The channel catfish has 24 to 29 while the blue possesses 30 to 35. A simple rule is—"30 or more, it's a blue."

Q. What are the current state records on these two fish?

A. The state record for channel catfish is a 32-pound lunker taken from Gardner City Lake by Mr. E. S. Dailey on August 14, 1962. The fish measured 40½ inches in length. Dailey caught the big channel cat on a throwline baited with a small sunfish. The blue catfish state record is owned by Harold Hunsinger and Gordon Chappell of Lawrence. Their 33-pound, 12-ounce record was taken from the Kaw River June 21, 1974. The fish was 42¼ inches in length with a girth of 23¾ inches. The pair caught the monster on a bank line baited with goldfish. It's the first state record established on the species.

Q. Where can I find some good information on mushrooms and mushroom hunting without buying an expensive book?

EDITOR'S NOTE: Each month, hundreds of letters reach Fish & Game Commission headquarters with questions regarding various phases of the department's activities, policies, projects and plans. In addition, we receive numerous queries about hunting, fishing, trapping and wildlife. As space permits in future issues, we'll publish some of these questions and their answers to provide Sunflower sportsmen with a greater appreciation and understanding of their Fish & Game Commission and the Kansas outdoors. If you have a question, mail it to FISH & GAME FORUM, Box 1028, Pratt 67124.

A. The Cornell Extension Bulletin 386, entitled *Common Mushrooms: Edible and Poisonous*, provides tips on collecting morels and other edible mushroom species and describes how to avoid those species that are poisonous. Single copies sell for 25 cents and are available from the mailing room, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14850.

Q. If I'm taking my son to hunt in another state that requires youngsters to possess a hunter safety card, will the Kansas Safe Hunter card suffice?

A. Yes, successful completion of the Kansas Hunter Safety Course is honored in all states that require such a course. In fact, if you plan to take your son out of state to hunt, it's a good idea to check several months in advance to determine what that state's requirements are in terms of a hunter training course and minimum ages. Checking early will eliminate any last minute hassles.

Q. Can you recommend a good book for identifying birds that are commonly found in town?

A. The Department of Interior's U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service has recently published a book entitled *Fifty Birds*

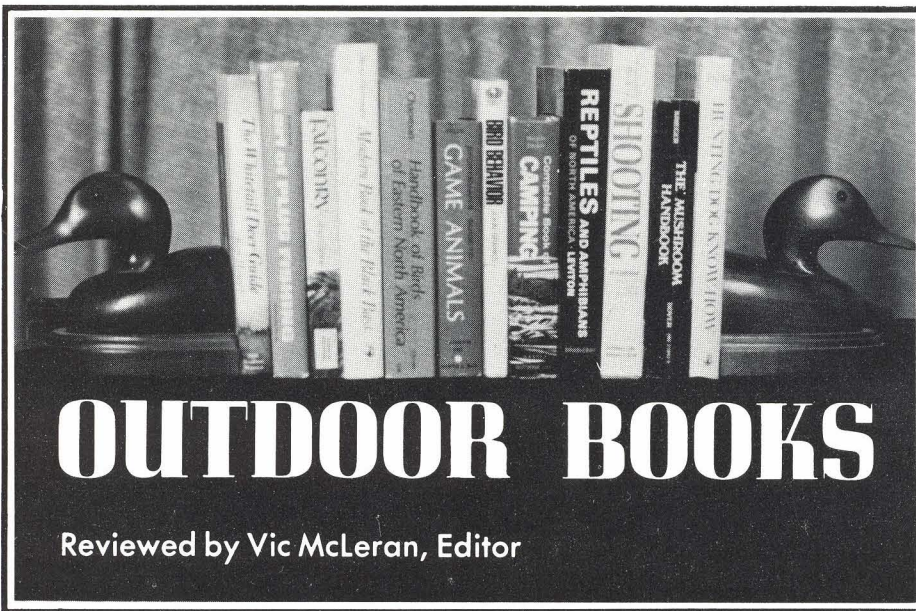
of Town and City, which is an excellent guide to identifying many species found within the city limits. *Fifty Birds of Town and City* is available from the Government Printing Office at \$4 hardback or \$1.05 paperback. Orders should be mailed to The Manager, Public Documents Distribution Center, 5801 Tabor Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19120.

Q. What's a good simple recipe for squirrel stew?

A. We pulled this one out of the October 1974 *Sports Afield* Almanac. Cut up three squirrels in convenient-size pieces and place them in a large kettle. Add three quarts of water, bring to a boil (about 1½ to 2 hours). Skim the surface of the water occasionally. Remove the meat from the bones, and put back in the water. Add ¼ cup of diced bacon, ¼ teaspoon of cayenne, ¼ teaspoon of black pepper, two teaspoons of salt, one cup of chopped onion, two cans of tomatoes (drained), two cups of diced potatoes and two cups of fresh or frozen lima beans. Cook for one hour. Then add two cups of fresh or frozen corn and cook for another ten minutes. Serve with cole slaw and corn bread. Serves six.

Q. I enjoy good books on the outdoors. Is there any way I can stay abreast of new outdoor publications?

A. Again from the Almanac Section of *Sports Afield*—a free newsletter is published three times yearly that mentions many of the latest outdoor books. To get on the mailing list write: The Sportsmen's Classics, Dept. SA, 419 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016.



COOKING THE SPORTSMEN'S HARVEST by the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks, Pierre, SD 57501; 144 pages, \$1.

Baked Fish in Tomato Dill Sauce, Pheasant Tetrizzini, Duck A'la Orange, Rabbit Oswego and Venison Teriyaki are only a few of more than 300 recipes found in this new cookbook. Two years in the making, the game and fish cookbook is a compilation of recipes for every type of fish and game in the Coyote State. The recipes contained in this 144-page book were contributed by the people who know wild game and fish cooking best—sportsmen and their wives. And if a South Dakota housewife can't cook up the best pheasant dish around, who can? This little cookbook is a valuable addition to any sportsman's cookbook shelf.

KNIVES AND KNIFEMAKERS by Sid Latham; Winchester Press, 460 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10022; 152 pages, \$15.00

Sid Latham is a well-known outdoor photographer based in New York. A widely traveled sportsman, Latham has worn a knife from the Arctic to the Amazon and from North Africa to New Guinea as well as over most of the United States. A no-nonsense knife user, Latham was recently bitten by the knife bug and set out to learn all he could about the craft and the craftsmen. This book is the result.

A remarkable phenomenon in recent years has been the spectacular growth of interest in benchmade hunting, skinning and fighting knives. Although knife making is as old as our country, the craft was dwindling, kept alive by only a handful of makers, little known outside their own circle. By the end of the Depression, the mass-produced, manufactured product had

all but eliminated the hand craftsman. Then in 1937 "Bo" Randall decided to turn his hand to knifemaking. Without realizing it, he lit the slow fuse that was to detonate some three decades later and transform the custom knife business into a growth industry.

Knives and Knifemakers provides a complete and beautifully illustrated rundown of all the pertinent facts. Starting with a discussion of all the materials employed, from special steel alloys to exotic handle materials, Sid Latham details the handcrafting process and surveys the whole range of special-purpose designs. He discusses all the factors to consider in buying, ordering or designing a knife yourself, and explains the best ways of caring for knives from sharpening through display for the collector. He concludes with an evaluation of sheaths and special custom decoration, and includes as an appendix a listing of more than a hundred established knifemakers and the major supply house.

Liberalized seasoned with comments and explanations from the makers themselves, this book will delight the veteran collector and novice knife buff alike. It's readable enough for the layman yet detailed for the expert. It's a book for anyone with an interest in knives.

WHAT TO DO ABOUT BITES AND STINGS OF VENOMOUS ANIMALS by Robert E. Arnold, M.D.; MacMillan Publishing Company, Inc., 844 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10022; 122 pages, \$5.95.

This book could save you a finger, a hand or even your life. Basically it's a guide to the proper care and treatment for the bites of all dangerous snakes, lizards, spiders, insects and marine animals of North America.

The result of five years' work, this volume covers all venomous animals, including blister beetles, centipedes, assassin bugs, milli-

pedes, caterpillars, lionfish, marine snails, sea urchins, stinging corals, scorpionfish (the most dangerous poisonous fish in North American waters), stingrays, jellyfish, sea snakes, pit vipers (rattlesnakes, copperheads, water moccasins), all spiders, ticks (and tick paralysis) and Gila Monsters. If it's dangerous—this book covers it.

Dr. Arnold tells you what to avoid, how to avoid it, what to do if you're bitten and what will prevent or cure a venomous bite. He includes telephone numbers, emergency and regular, of antivenom locations, and illustrates the book with pictures of the animals discussed as well as anatomical drawings. He writes, "Unfortunately for the poor physician he may have some fuzzy, ill-defined notions gleaned from an old outdoor magazine, or Merck manual, but this subject is usually ignored in standard medical texts. The result is usually chaos."

What To Do About Bites and Stings of Venomous Animals belongs in the office of every M.D. in the state; in the pack of every Scout Leader, and in the library of everyone who hunts, camps, fishes, mushroom hunts, picks berries or hikes across the woods and fields of Kansas. Its price is nothing compared to the loss of a finger—or a life.

FISHING FOR BASS by A. D. Livingston; J. P. Lippincott & Co., 521 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10017; 256 pages, \$8.95.

This time of year many bass fishermen are sitting around plotting strategy for next spring's bass fishing. Author Livingston's articles have appeared in *Sports Afield*, *Field & Stream* and *Outdoor Life*. His previous books have been on poker and gambling but as he puts it in his preface, ". . . the two pursuits have much in common. The character traits of the expert poker player and the outstanding bass fisherman are similar." The author devotes nine chapters to fishing every artificial lure from Arbogast's Jitterbug to Zorro's spinnerbaits. There's a great deal of material on rigging and fishing soft plastic worms, the most deadly bass catchers ever devised by man or nature. Five chapters deal with fishing gear and tackle, from the basic hook and line to today's ultrasophisticated bass boat. Four chapters are devoted to fishing with natural baits (an area which some of the latest bass books have ignored) with emphasis on catching trophy-sized bass with 10-inch shiners. There's also information on how to fish streams, lakes and impoundments by time of day, weather conditions and other factors; full coverage of fishing with bait-casting gear, spinning rigs and fly rods.

The thing that sets this book apart from others on the same subject, is its many anecdotes, told by a man who loves both bass fishing and writing about it. It's another book Kansas bass fishermen will want to read and own.

