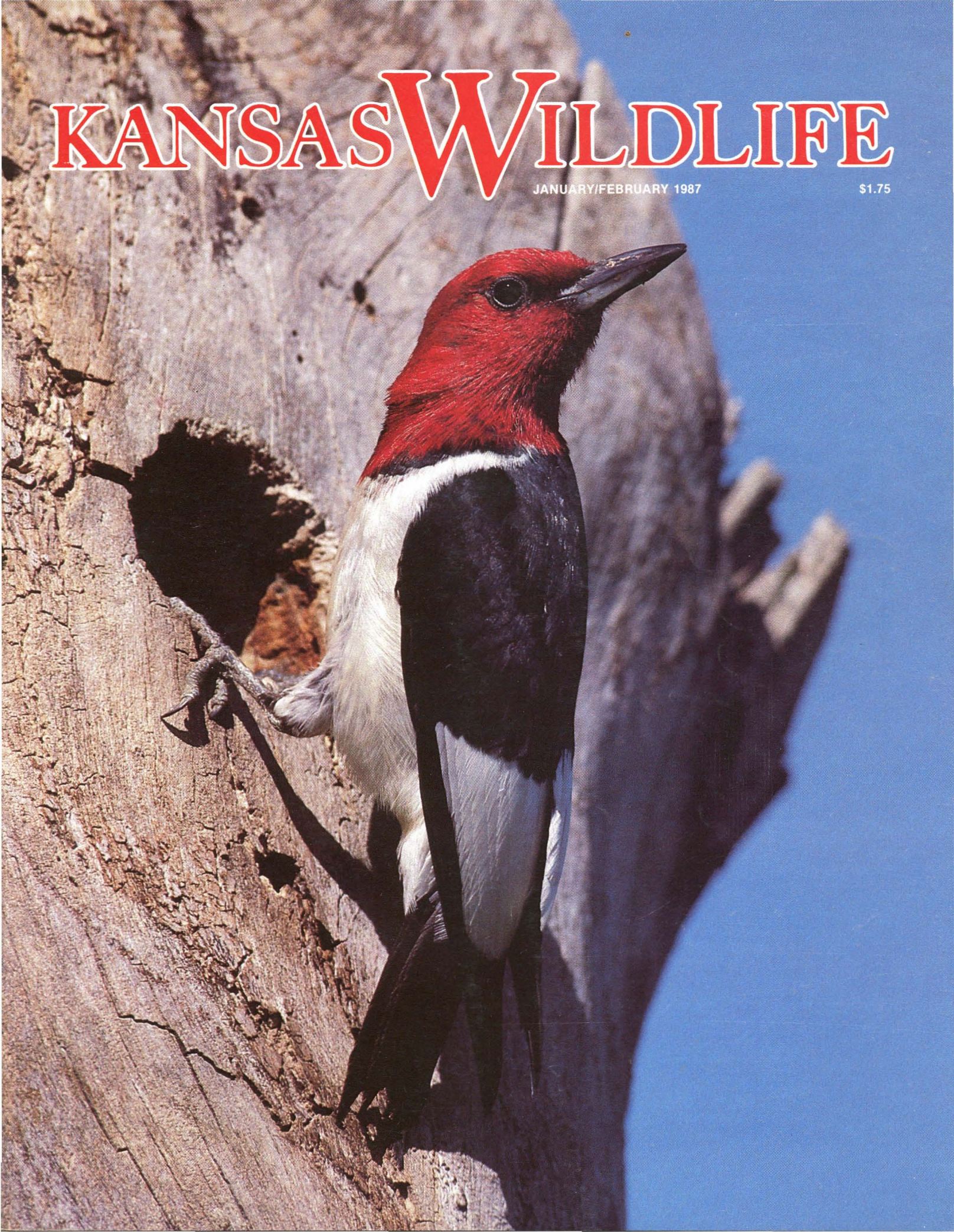


# KANSAS WILDLIFE

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1987

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# KANSAS WILDLIFE

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1987

Vol. 44, No. 1

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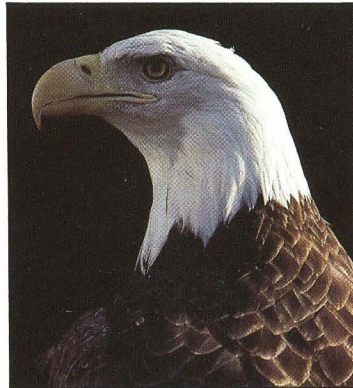
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**THE BUCK STOPS HERE**

The Pitch

1

**Nongame Wildlife & You**

The Chickadee Checkoff supports state nongame programs. That's reason enough to contribute. Now there are two more reasons. by Joe Schaefer

2

**Calling All Predators**

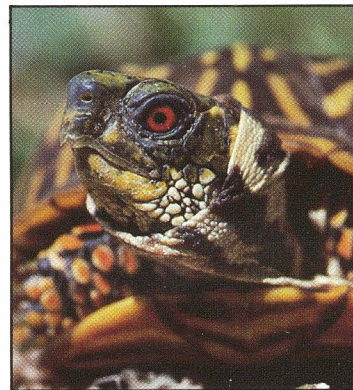
A coyote running straight at you is unnerving, no matter how experienced you are. So it pays to be prepared. by Tommie A. Berger

6

**For Sale: Frogs, Turtles & Snakes**

It's time for those who harvest and sell reptiles and amphibians to pay for their pursuit through a permit fee. by Robert F. Hartmann

10



**Kansas Deer: A Biologist's View**

Got a complaint about the deer in your area? We've probably heard a similar story elsewhere. Here's how we respond. by Darrell Montei

14

**the center section**

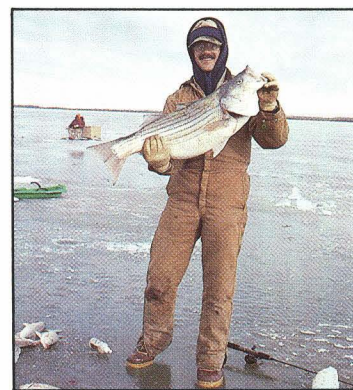
edited by Mike Miller

15

**10 The Icefisherman Cometh**

The interest in Kansas icefishing is booming. Here's what you'll need to know to take advantage of this fantastic winter fishery. by Mike Miller

27



**Diversity Is Our Strength**

Even I have trouble explaining my job without going into a lengthy speech. I'm a wildlife biologist. But wait, there's more. by Randy Rodgers

32

**KANSAS WILDLIFE Gallery**

photos by Mike Blair

36

**Measuring Up**

You may have heard about the Boone and Crockett Club system for scoring racks. Here's how all the points add up. by Steve Capel

38

**HIGH GROUND**

For A Few Pounds More by Mike Cox

41



**About The Covers**

**Front:** Mike Blair captured this red-headed woodpecker at its nest using a 400mm lens. Blair set his aperture at f/11, his shutter speed at 1/125th of a second. See related cover story beginning on Page 2.  
**Back:** Male collared lizards are among Kansas' most beautiful reptiles. Mike Blair collared this lizard using a 105mm lens and a flash. He set the aperture at f/16, the shutter speed at 1/60th of a second. See related story on Page 10.

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

# THE BUCK STOPS HERE



## The Pitch

**B**y now, I'm sure, many of you have seen the *Sports Illustrated* commercials on TV. The one I'm thinking of, in particular, features Lyle Alzado. He's the retired, hulking defensive lineman who for years terrorized NFL quarterbacks. Remember Denver's famed "Orange Crush"? Alzado was one of the Crushers.

Anyway, in that commercial an *SI* pitchman tells us about all the neat stories and photographs his magazine will bring into our homes each week. Alzado, who stands behind (dwarfs) the little guy, smiles pleasantly, nods occasionally and prods the guy in front to tell us about the free gifts we'll receive if we subscribe to *Sports Illustrated*.

Seeing those two fellows make their pitch always brings a smile to my face. And I guess that commercial comes to mind now because I'm about to make a similar offer. But a couple of things are different. For openers, Alzado's not on the payroll. And two, I'm making my pitch from behind a typewriter, so you don't have to watch me make my spiel. All I ask is that you read on . . .

1987, the year for which we file our 1986 income tax return, marks the seventh year of the Chickadee Checkoff program. The Checkoff, an arm of the Kansas Fish and Game Commission, funds all nongame projects in the state. Nongame wildlife encompasses any bird, animal or fish that is not pursued by hunters, fishermen or trappers. Bluebirds, butterflies, chipmunks and golden eagles are only four of more than 22,000 nongame species that either live or winter in Kansas.

During 1986 almost 21,000 Kansans contributed about \$131,000 by checking off on their 1985 state income tax form. The average contribution was \$6.38. Which brings me to that special offer I was talking about — the one I hope you'll find hard to refuse. Here it is:

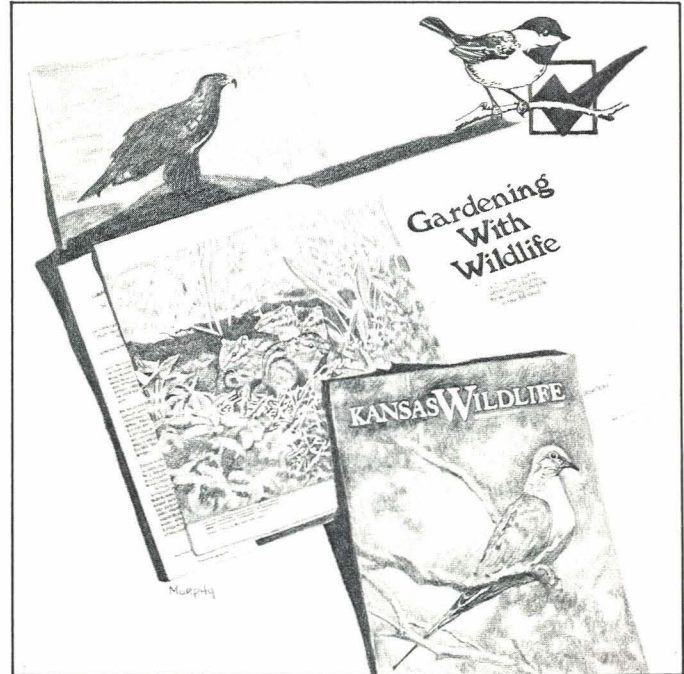
Contribute \$15 or more to the state nongame program — either by checking off on your 1986 state income tax form or by direct donation — and we'll send you a year's subscription to *KANSAS WILDLIFE* magazine. If you already subscribe, we'll extend your subscription by six issues.

Contribute \$20 or more and receive both a year's subscription to *KANSAS WILDLIFE* and a hardback copy of *Gardening With Wildlife*, a guide to attracting and enjoying wildlife in your backyard.

Make any contribution, however, and you'll receive a free 8-inch by 10-inch color photograph of a golden eagle.

Through the first six years of the checkoff, Kansans have contributed more than \$750,000 to the state's nongame program. Bluebirds, eagles and house finches, to name only three of many species, have benefited from those contributions. New programs will continue to provide for the thousands of nongame species in the state. But your personal enjoyment of these species tops our list for 1987.

Two programs planned for the new year include a Wild Neighbors pamphlet series, which will list the life history, distribution and feeding habits of your favorite nongame species. Included in each pamphlet will be tips on how to attract these wild neighbors to your property. Some of the



species tentatively slated for the series include the house wren, purple martin, robin, ornate box turtle, ruby-throated hummingbird, goldfinch and cardinal.

We'll also be making available a free guide to watching wildlife on public property. Public lands will be listed along with the species you'll most likely find in those areas. The new year truly looks promising for Kansas wildlife observers.

My pitch may not be as slick as one drafted high above Madison Avenue, but then we're not selling weekly reports on national sporting events either. We're selling an idea — that contributing to the state nongame wildlife program is a worthwhile giving of your dollars. We'd like to send you a 8×10 color photograph, a year's subscription to our magazine and a 190-page hardcover wildlife book to show our thanks. It's an offer even Lyle Alzado couldn't refuse.

Unless he wanted to.

*Paul*

**Paul G. Koenig**  
Editor

*For more information on the Kansas Nongame Wildlife Program and how to take advantage of this special offer, see Joe Schaefer's cover story. It begins on Page 2.*

# Nongame Wildlife & You

The Chickadee Checkoff supports state nongame programs. That's reason enough to contribute. Now there are two more reasons to consider.



Red-headed woodpeckers benefit when landowners allow dead or dying trees to remain standing. A dead tree, above, provides for another form of life.

by **Joe Schaefer**  
*Nongame Biologist*  
*Wichita*

photos by **Mike Blair**

If you read KANSAS WILDLIFE, you're one of many fortunate Kansans who probably enjoy and appreciate wildlife. Be it through bird-watching, nature hikes, hunting or fishing, you've come to understand how important wildlife is in your life. But what do you do to repay wildlife for all of the pleasure you receive? Your contribution to the Chickadee Checkoff is one way to help ensure that nongame wildlife will remain an important part of our Kansas heritage.

## What is the Chickadee Checkoff?

The Chickadee Checkoff is a line item on the Kansas Individual Income Tax Form K 40. This is the seventh year for the Checkoff. Last year almost 21,000 Kansas taxpayers contributed about \$131,000. We also received thousands of letters of support. This year, for the first time, the words "Chickadee Checkoff" will appear on

the Checkoff line. We believe the wording change will make it easier to contribute and process.

## Free Gifts for You!

To show our appreciation for your support, we'd like you to have an 8-inch by 10-inch full-color golden eagle photo for any contribution you make. A thank-you message from our director and information about golden eagles is printed on the back. These photos are available from many tax preparers and all Kansas Fish and Game offices.

But here's a special offer you'll want to consider. Donate \$15 or more and receive a free 1-year subscription to KANSAS WILDLIFE magazine or, if you already receive the magazine, we'll add a year to your current subscription. Donate \$20 or more and we'll send you both the 1-year subscription and *Gardening With Wildlife*, a 190-page hardcover book pub-

lished by the National Wildlife Federation. The book features many tips on attracting wildlife to your yard.

To receive the free magazine subscription and book, please send your request and a copy of the bottom portion of your 1986 tax form, which includes the Checkoff line and your signature, to:

1987 Chickadee Checkoff  
Kansas Fish & Game Commission  
RR 2, Box 54A  
Pratt, KS 67124

These thank-you gifts will be given only to those who contribute on the 1986 Kansas individual tax form or send a donation directly to the Kansas Fish and Game Commission (at the above address) by Dec. 31, 1987. Tax preparers and local Fish and Game offices do not have the free books nor can they process your free subscription

(or extension) to KANSAS WILDLIFE.

#### Where Will My Donation Go?

The Department of Revenue puts all contributions made through the tax form into a special fund. Donations sent directly to the Kansas Fish and Game Commission are deposited into this same account, separate from all other agency revenues.

#### How Will My Donation Be Used?

Kansas law requires all Chickadee Checkoff donations be used specifically for helping endangered species, songbirds and other nongame wildlife that are not taken through hunting, trapping or fishing. Other revenues received by the Kansas Fish and Game Commission go to projects relating to game species such as deer, pheasant, quail, fox, beaver and catfish.

Past Checkoff donations have been used in many ways. For example, we've provided bald eagle perches at several reservoirs. About 500 of these majestic birds migrate south to winter in Kansas. Eagles will not use an area unless, of course, they can sit up high and look over open water for fish and waterfowl.

We've also established food caches for eagles at Cheney and John Red-



Bald eagles, right, and prairie dogs, below, benefit from your Checkoff donations.





The Eastern bluebird is making a comeback in Kansas. Money from the Chickadee Checkoff has paid for several hundred nest boxes. More than 50 bluebird trails have been established in Kansas.

mond reservoirs. This serves a dual purpose: providing food and concentrating the birds so people can more easily find and watch these symbolic visitors.

We're also trying to learn more about our endangered and little-known species. There are only about 50 pairs of least tern, a small shorebird, nesting in Kansas. These birds winter in Peru

and Venezuela. We want to help save the least tern and other birds and animals from extinction.

The alligator snapping turtle is rarely seen in Kansas. When one was captured in Montgomery County last spring, a radio transmitter was attached to the shell so we could learn more about the movements of this large, fierce predator. Throughout its

range, populations of alligator snappers have declined. We'd like to learn how to reverse this trend.

The Neosho madtom, an endangered fish species, is found only in the Neosho, Cottonwood and Spring rivers. It has the smallest range of any fish in Kansas. We're trying to find out why.

Many Kansans put out nesting boxes to attract certain birds. From a study recently conducted in Wichita, we found that wren populations will greatly increase if more houses are available. So now we're promoting the use of wren-sized houses to help this bird and to enhance your enjoyment of backyard birding.

The red-headed woodpecker is another cavity-nesting bird that has delighted many people with its striking colors and unique behavior. It is sometimes called "shirttail" because, when perched, the large white wing patches fold around its back and resemble the bottom of a shirt. The bird's wing coloration and 100 percent red head make it easy to distinguish from other woodpeckers.

Sound is another way to identify the redhead. Its call is among the loudest of all woodpeckers. And only one of its kind would nominate a redhead for the Top 10 vocalists. The birds seem to be fond of making noises. When they're not calling, they usually can be heard drumming loudly on a dead tree, telephone pole or metal vent pipe.

Most woodpeckers prefer to set up housekeeping in cavities they build rather than in artificial ones. So to help the redhead and other cavity-nesters, we manage our public areas and advise landowners to leave about five dead or dying trees per acre.

Bluebirds are not commonly seen in urban areas but can be easily attracted to the Kansas countryside. Kansas Fish and Game personnel have set out more than 400 bluebird houses around the state. Most of this work has been accomplished through cooperative arrangements with local scout troops, birdwatching groups and concerned individuals.

The small kestrel, or sparrow hawk, also has been affected by the lack of natural cavities. In cooperation with the Kansas Department of Transportation, we've placed several large nest boxes on the backs of highway signs. Some kestrel pairs have used these artificial tree cavities. Passing motorists now have a better chance to see a beautiful kestrel hovering above a highway shoulder as it waits for an unsuspecting grasshopper or mouse. We plan to put out more of these large nest boxes in 1987.

Eastern chipmunks were once fairly abundant in eastern Kansas but almost became extinct in our state. We've live-trapped chipmunks in Missouri and released them in Lawrence and Emporia. Tennessee also will be sending us some for Wichita and Big Hill Reservoir, to name only two of several areas to receive chipmunks.

Many Kansans are fascinated with the mysterious feathered predators of the night. Because owls are mostly nocturnal, we don't know as much about them as we do other birds. For the past two years, Wichita residents have reported sightings of great horned owls. We, in turn, tell people where most of the owls have been seen so they might catch a glimpse of nature's perfect mousetraps.

We recently initiated a project that's evaluating non-poisonous methods of controlling prairie dogs. Toxins used for prairie dog control also can kill black-footed ferrets and other predators that eat the poisoned dogs.

#### Providing Opportunities for Kansans!

There are many other ways the Chickadee Checkoff provides opportunities for Kansans. The *Kansas Nongame Notes* newsletter informs people about Kansas wildlife, Chickadee Checkoff projects and wildlife-related events and opportunities. So far about 6,000 Kansans receive this bimonthly newsletter. For a free subscription, contact your local Fish and Game office.

The Chickadee Checkoff Program pays for bluebird trail materials and maintenance. Several individuals and organizations have received \$5 per box for trails that have qualified for this project.

Birdfeeders and bird seed have been distributed to more than 200 Kansas nursing homes. This not only provides a food source for songbirds, it also gives the residents of these homes a chance to enjoy watching birds that are attracted to the feeders.

The Backyard Wildlife Program recognizes Kansans for providing for wildlife in their yards. Each person who enrolls in this free program receives a beautifully illustrated certificate signed by the director of the Fish and Game Commission, plus a sign with the inscription: **I DID SOMETHING WILD IN MY BACKYARD.** Information on attracting songbirds and other wildlife also is included.

Wildlife photography is another recreational activity the Chickadee Checkoff addresses. This is the third year for the Chickadee Checkoff Photo Contest. Last year about 30 shutterbugs took up the challenge to photo-

graph elusive birds of prey. Bob Gress of Wichita took first place for his golden eagle photo, Gerald Wiens of Arkansas City placed second for a red-tailed hawk photo and Karen Gilchrist of Wichita took third for her rendition of great horned owl chicks. For a copy of this year's contest rules, contact the nearest Fish and Game office.

#### What's Down the Road?

New projects are necessary to ensure healthy wildlife populations and to maintain your outdoor opportunities. Future projects include:

- \* Restoring peregrine falcons and introducing golden eagles and ospreys in Kansas.

- \* Starting a Wild Neighbors information pamphlet series on popular species.

- \* Developing more ways to protect endangered species and their habitats.

- \* Publishing a guide to wildlife watching in Kansas.

#### We Listen To You!

Aside from caring for endangered species and other nongame wildlife, we'd also like to address your wildlife-related needs. To do this, we develop projects and opportunities based on our experience and your comments. Hearing from you is extremely important to us.

Two years ago Kansans told us how they wanted their Checkoff contributions used. Helping endangered species, restoring wildlife species in Kansas, printing wildlife information and developing more opportunities to enjoy wildlife close to urban areas were all given high ratings. As a result, we give greater priority to projects that address these needs.

As with other Kansas Fish and Game programs, the Chickadee Checkoff consists of concerned people helping wildlife. Your donations and suggestions make it successful.



As with bluebirds, house wren populations increase where their housing needs are met.



Mike Blair photo

The author, camouflaged from head to toe, calls to Kansas coyotes.

# Calling All Predators

A coyote running straight at you is unnerving, no matter how experienced you are. So it pays to be prepared.

by **Tommie A. Berger**  
*District Fisheries Biologist*  
*Dodge City*

*The bear can smell a snowflake fall  
 The deer can hear a snowflake fall.  
 And the eagle can see a snowflake fall.  
 But the coyote can do all three.*

Anonymous



Calling is an often-used method of hunting designed to attract and locate waterfowl, turkeys, elk, moose and predators. Other variations, such as rattling horns, are highly successful in hunting white-tailed deer. Most of these calling techniques are used to lure the animal into gun range by appealing to their communal nature, sexual urges or territorial instinct to defend their home range.

Predator calling, however, involves one basic difference — rather than imitating the call of the quarry or its mate, the hunter is appealing to a much more basic instinct, the need to eat. Most predator calls are designed to imitate the animal's prominent food source and to lure it into range. This makes predator calling a unique sport.

Years ago, predator calling was not taken seriously. It was simply the sport of varmint shooting. A few hunters called for something to do between seasons or, better yet, to protect their chicken coop or livestock. But it wasn't until after World War II that predator calling became widely recognized as genuine sport.

Nowadays many sportsmen are so hooked on the sport that they will forego big-game hunting and bird hunting just to experience the thrill and challenge of duping a predator. The most popular predators in Kansas are the coyote, bobcat, fox.

Most hunters enjoy the hunt regardless of whether they walk back to their truck with a pelt slung over their shoulder. And I guarantee that a coyote running full-tilt straight at you is unnerving, no matter how much experience you have. The air of anticipation between calls never seems to lose its excitement.

Predator calling came of age one day in Texas when Morton Burnham watched several coyotes home in on a jackrabbit caught in a fence. Burnham discovered he could call in predators by simulating distressed prey. The rabbit distress call was born, changing the whole technique of predator hunting to one of skill and excitement rather than just luck.





Clever as it is, a coyote can be as dumb as a box of rocks and come blundering into a call like a cat to a bowl of milk.

Over the years, dozens of companies have manufactured calls of all makes and models. Still the most widely sold are the rabbit distress calls in both cottontail and jackrabbit versions. Some of these calls are closed-reed, tube-type calls while others prefer the open-reed callers. They come in squallers, squealers and squeakers, and each has its own distinctive tone.

Other calls sound like injured rodents. These calls, for close-range calling, seem to work well on foxes. And there are bird distress calls, which imitate a wounded woodpecker or flicker. These calls work well in wooded areas and are especially effective on bobcats. Just out in the last few years are the coyote howler calls designed by a fellow in Wyoming. These callers talk coyote talk and appeal more to the communal and territorial instincts of the coyote.

Some predator hunters forego all these calls, however, and depend on electronic calling devices, which use cassette tapes that contain calling sequences. These electronic devices are legal for Kansas predator hunting. Other hunters use crow food calls, a single-syllable, high-pitched call crows use when they locate a dead animal. Predators identify these calls with food and will sometimes move in to investigate. Then, too, there are times when you don't need a calling device. A simple squeaking of the lips or sucking on the back of your hand will imitate distressed prey.

A quick flip through most outdoor catalogs or hunting magazines provides a host of companies selling predator calls, cassette instruction or calling tapes, and the electronic callers. Companies such as Lohman, Weems, Circe, Tally-Ho, Critter Call, Call of the Coyote, Burnham Brothers, to name a few, all have calls that work fine. Just start out by ordering a good, long-range rabbit call and learn the basic rabbit distress sequence.

**P**erfect calling technique is not nearly as important as stand location, camouflage and wind direction. Experience has shown me that if a coyote is hungry and

close enough to hear, it'll come even if you sound like the worst dying rabbit in the world. But if the animal sees or scents you, it will disappear immediately.

As I mentioned earlier, coyotes, bobcats and foxes provide the main excitement for Kansas hunters. Occasionally you may call in a badger, raccoon or a hawk, and I've even had to move quickly when a striped skunk, responding to my call, came bouncing up the trail. But the coyote is the mainstay of the calling sport and draws most of the attention. A bobcat or fox is generally a luxury item that you'll be lucky to get a chance at once or twice a season, unless you hunt specifically for them.

Found throughout Kansas, the coyote can be hunted year-round except during the opening weekend of firearm deer season. But most hunters prefer to hunt them when their pelts are prime, generally from mid-November through February. There are an estimated 200,000-300,000 coyotes in Kansas; in prime habitat there may be up to three per square mile. Kansas hunters and trappers harvest 70,000-100,000 coyotes each year.

The coyote has super-keen eyesight, a far-reaching sense of smell, excellent hearing and a sixth sense for danger. When you combine those attributes with a speed that can approach 40 mph and maneuverability to turn 90 degrees on a dime, you have an animal that's definitely a challenge. Add to this the fact that an average coyote is only 3 feet long and barely 2 feet high at the shoulder. All that makes for one tough, long-distance target.

Coyotes are among the most intelligent game species. They're tuned in to every sound and scent in their territory. They are opportunists, eating anything from live critters, to carrion, to berries, fruits and anything in between. Their staples, however, are rodents and rabbits.

Clever as it is, a coyote can be dumb as a box of rocks and come blundering into a call like a cat to a bowl of milk. I've had them run in upwind and practically run over me before they realized their mistake. Still, coyote calling is usually far from easy.

Bobcats, which aren't nearly as abundant as coyotes, seem



Mike Blair photo

Proper location is vital for hunting predators. Position yourself on high ground, where you have good viewing in at least three directions.

much more mysterious. They generally move in slowly and secretively to a call, seeming to materialize before you like a ghost. They prefer thick, brushy hillsides, rocky areas and grassy fields where their approach is well-concealed.

Their diet consists primarily of mice, rabbits, squirrels and birds, preferring to eat fresh meat over carrion. Patient predators, bobcats feed by sight more than by their other senses. I suspect that a responding bobcat probably saw me long before I had a chance to see him, so I have yet to harvest my first cat while using a predator call.

Foxes are our third-most abundant predator and some say the easiest of all to call. Kansas contains three species: the gray fox from the east, the red fox statewide and the swift or kit fox in the far west. Foxes are primarily rodent eaters, so the sound of a mouse in distress creates fast action. A fox rarely passes up a chance for a free meal, but I've called in some prime fox country and have yet to see a fox on his way to my dinner bell. Remember, too, that bobcats, foxes, badgers and raccoons can only be taken during open fur-bearer seasons. Check your local hunting regulations.

There are some basic rules of predator calling that are the same for each species and situation. These basics include proper stand location, camouflage, using the wind to your advantage and minimizing your own movements. The actual calling technique is not nearly as important as these four factors. Even the most expert caller will not see an approaching predator if he does not follow these rules.

**S**tand location is of vital importance. Take a stand at or near the highest point available, on a hilltop or ridge that allows good visibility in at least three directions. The primary direction should be into the wind. A high vantage point is a plus; you can watch the critters deviate from their course to take advantage of wind currents. Most predators try to get downwind of your location, so position yourself either to prevent them from doing so or set up where you can see downwind. See the critter first or before it scents you.

Approach your calling location quietly and with the wind in your face. Don't sit directly on top of the hill or ridge. Sit just over the edge so you're not backlit or silhouetted. Sit with your back against a tree, rock, bush or anything to break up your outline. Some hunters call from roads, even while sitting in their vehicles. My experience is that most coyotes are road-wary and the minute they see a vehicle, they immediately head the opposite way. So hide your vehicle before walking to your stand.

Camouflage clothing is important, too. You must blend into the surroundings. Many predator callers even camo their guns. A face net and gloves are helpful. Green or brown camo is adequate during fall and winter, before the snows come. But white camo is a must when there's significant snow on the ground.

Wind is probably the most important factor to consider. Kansans must live with the wind, so learn early how to use

this force to your advantage. Calm conditions, of course, make for the best calling situations. On calm days, the call can be heard at a greater distance, up to one mile or so, in fairly flat terrain. Too, you don't have to worry as much about the predator getting downwind, but it will still try even if there's just a slight breeze. Avoid walking into your stand through a predator's area of approach. Your trail will be easily detected.

When an animal approaches a calling location, it already has a definite fix on the location of the call. It has you pinpointed so any unusual movement quickly tips off the animal. Sit still and move only your eyes as you scan the landscape. Have your gun on your knee, and be ready to shoulder the firearm with minimal movement. Move your hands only to operate your call. If an animal is coming in, don't call unless it stops, appears hesitant or disappears from sight. You can get away with a poor location and poor camouflage . . . if you sit extremely still.

A few other factors also should improve your chances. Avoid calling on days when the wind is more than 15 mph unless you can hunt creek bottoms, draws or other protected areas. During most of the prime fur season, early and late in the day are best times to call because critters are most active then. But I've also called coyotes at midday. Cloudy days seem to be better than clear days, at least for me.

Use the sun to your advantage. Try to make the predator approach with the sun in its eyes. A wary predator may circle before coming in while others may charge straight in. A running target is tough, so a quick whistle or a "Hey, coyote!" may be needed to stop one in its tracks. That may not always work, but it's worth a try. Last year Ron Spomer and I were calling when a coyote crested the hill at full speed. A whistle failed to stop it, and neither did a "Hey, coyote!" But when the coyote closed to within 20 yards, Ron tumbled it with a quick, head-on shot. That animal certainly got our attention.

Lots of callers end their stand after killing a coyote, even if it was only a few minutes into the calling sequence. I usually spend at least 15 minutes at each stand, sometimes 20. If you kill an animal, continue to call. The shot doesn't appear to bother other incoming coyotes. Last winter I killed three coyotes from one stand, the final two killed after it took me three shots to down the first one. Even if you miss, continue to call. I've had a coyote run off, then come trotting back to the call a second time.

What follows is a likely calling sequence: I drive to a promising spot and park my vehicle behind a hill or in a draw, hidden from the spot I intend to call. I then walk several hundred yards to the head of a draw or a hill overlooking a large area I suspect holds coyotes. I pick a stand, generally just over the crest of the hill, next to a yucca plant, a tree or beside a plum bush. I position my gun, then put on my face net and gloves before calling.

My first call is usually a muffled calling sequence, maybe 30 seconds long. It's a quiet sequence in case a coyote is nearby. Then I'll wait two minutes. Then call again, louder this time, for 30 seconds to one minute. Then I'll wait three minutes. Call again and wait. Again and wait. One more time and wait. If I haven't seen anything move in 15 minutes, I move to another stand.

As for hunting gear, a flat-shooting scoped rifle chambered in .22/250, .223 or .243 is ideal, but your favorite deer rifle with light loads is adequate. These smaller calibers will minimize pelt damage and allow you a better price for your fur. Bullet size should be 100 grains or less, with 55- or 80-grain slugs the ideal. A good 7× or 9× scope is invaluable for long-distance shots. The detachable bipods also are desirable for those long shots.

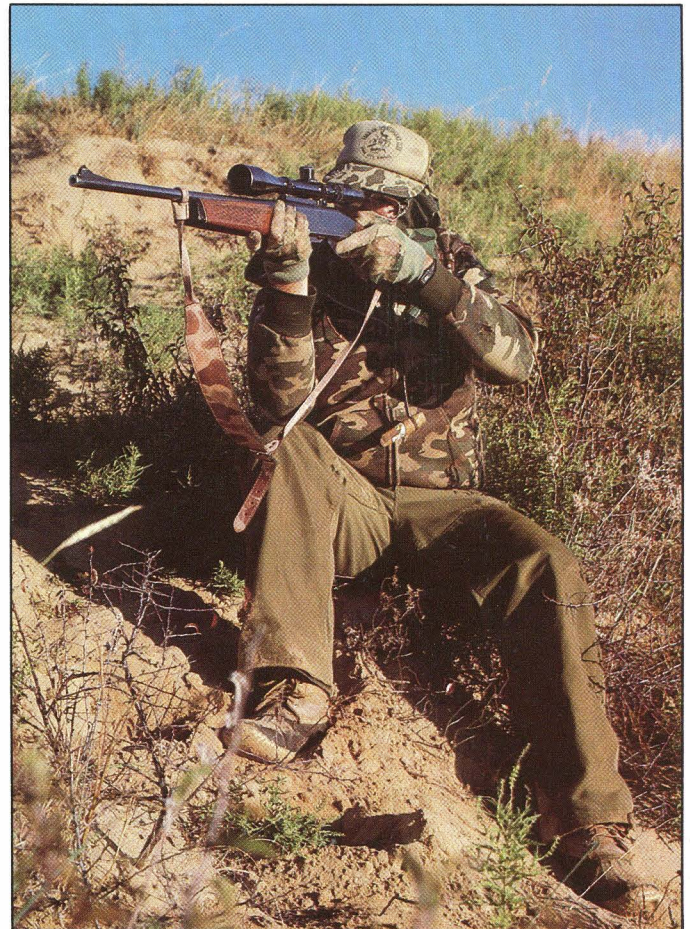
In the thick, wooded areas of eastern Kansas, some hunt-

ers prefer to use a shotgun. Shells loaded with No. 2 shot or larger are popular. Even in western Kansas, I imagine 25 percent to 50 percent of the coyotes called in are well within shotgun range. Some callers team up, one with a rifle, the other with a scattergun. Some even prefer combination guns, a rifle bore over the shotgun barrel. Handgun hunting is growing in popularity, as is blackpowder. Don't use your .22-caliber rimfires, however. You'll wound and lose too many critters.

You'll need a hunting license and a furharvester license. And that's about it unless you plan to work your own fur rather than sell the carcassed furbearers to your local fur dealer. Proper care of predator pelts can help you earn some extra money. Exactly how much depends on the pelt, the area and the year. Coyotes can bring from \$5 up to about \$50. We averaged \$23 for coyotes here in western Kansas last year. Bobcats can bring between \$20 and \$100, and a fox pelt generally pulls about what a coyote pelt will. These are finished prices. Expect lower returns for carcass sales.

Another factor makes this sport even more appealing. Permission to call predators, especially coyotes, is remarkably easy to get as compared to other forms of hunting. Many ranchers and landowners welcome callers who are willing to harvest some of their problem critters.

Calling predators can provide many hours of hunting challenge and can add a bit to your pocketbook as well. Still, the sport of predator calling is just that, a sport. Outwitting a smart furbearer in its own environment will tax the most accomplished hunter. And if you add a fur to your stretcher, well, think of it as a bonus.



Mike Blair photo

Your favorite rifle and light loads is adequate for predator shooting.



J. T. Collins photo

Before a tiger salamander matures, above, it is prized by fishermen as an excellent bait. The bait, in the gilled aquatic stage, is called a waterdog.

## For Sale: Frogs, Turtles & Snakes

It's time for those who harvest and sell reptiles and amphibians to pay for their pursuit through a permit fee.

**Robert F. Hartmann**  
*Supervisor*  
*Fisheries Investigations &*  
*Development Section*

**Y**ou say you're looking for a super bait that will fool a huge striper or a big sow walleye? Have you tried waterdogs? Waterdog is an everyday term many anglers use to identify the native tiger salamander (*Ambystoma tigrinum*) in its immature, gilled aquatic stage. Not until the waterdog loses its gills is it able to leave the security of a snug pond as a mature, yellow-and-black spot-

ted, air-breathing salamander. Only while in this gilled form is the tiger salamander a superior bait for big fish.

Commonly found in central and western Kansas ponds, immature salamander populations build to high densities to the detriment of almost all other aquatic life including fish, frogs and insects. Because of these high densities, dietary and mineral imbalances prevent metamorphosis, or normal

gill loss. The result: The waterdog is trapped in this neotenic or xelotal aquatic life stage.

But not to worry. Under such stress the xelotal has adapted and may mature sexually, producing viable eggs or sperm and assuring even more waterdogs. Kansas Fish and Game Commission personnel are regularly asked what can be done to improve a fishing pond when the owner discovers a waterdog problem. The recommendation: Eliminate the waterdogs by applying a suitable fish toxicant or, better yet, sell them to a bait dealer.

\*\*\* Do you ever fish for channel catfish? If so, when was the last time you waded a stream drifting a striped frog or a toad as bait? Leopard frogs in Kansas' summer streams are synonymous with a stringer of hard-hitting 8- to 10-pound channel catfish. If you're lucky, you can find leopard frogs or toads at a bait shop and forgo wearing out your knees to catch a few.

\*\*\* Our Fish and Game staffers are frequently asked how to catch and remove turtles from ponds. Aquatic turtles may become so numerous in central and eastern Kansas ponds that fishermen find it difficult, if not impossible, keeping a hook baited. Turtle trap designs are available from the agency on request.

These three scenarios are prime examples of how Kansans view and use some of our more common or nuisance wild amphibians and reptiles.

But amphibians and reptiles are not the only Kansas

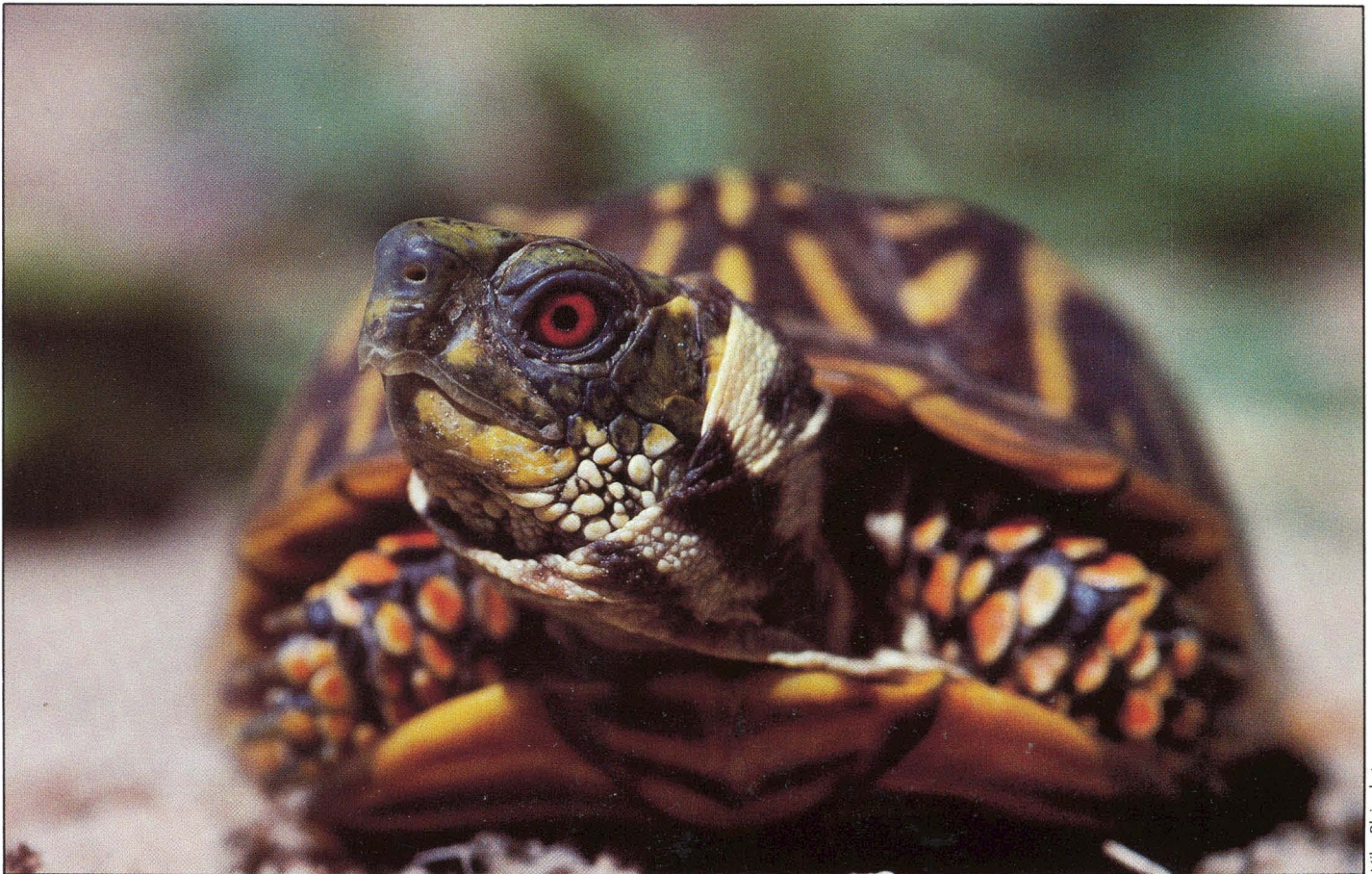
wildlife commonly sold or traded. Since the earliest exploration and settlement of Kansas, explorers, trappers, farm boys and sportsmen have harvested furbearers and sold the pelts. The commercial take is now systematically regulated through agency-issued furharvester and dealer fee permits.

Commercial harvest of Kansas hares and cottontail rabbits went uncontrolled until 1949. Harvest continues under a fee permit system that allows for capture and sale of rabbits to out-of-state sporting events and dog training.

Historically some Kansas stream fisheries and shellfish have been commercially exploited. That's still the case today. Licensed commercial fishermen caught non-sport, or rough fish, as well as catfish from most Kansas streams until 1922. Commercial fishing has since been eliminated from all but the Missouri River. The practice continues today throughout all lower Missouri River basin states. Freshwater mussels and clams were the principal support for the nation's button industry until the advent of plastic. "Shelling" under a fee-permit system now provides the nucleus seed for much of the Orient's cultured pearl industry.

**W**ith the completion of the first federal reservoir in Kansas during the early 1950s, commercial fishermen contracted to reduce rapidly expanding rough

Schoolchildren are learning about our state reptile, the ornate box turtle. For many, holding a turtle is their first chance to appreciate wildlife.



Mike Blair photo

fish populations of carp, buffalo, carpsucker, drum and gar from Fall River Reservoir and El Dorado City Lake. Since 1978 competitively bid contracts have been awarded each year. These contracts were written for all but a few of the Corps of Engineer- and Bureau of Reclamation-constructed lakes in Kansas.

Through the mid- to late 1960s our central and western streams provided a reliable supply of bait minnows. Dealers sold minnows in their Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas Gulf Coast bait shops. But dwindling stream flows combined with massive commercial minnow harvest during late 1960s and early 1970s caused concern. Not until new Fish and Game regulations were imposed in 1982 was the commercial take of minnows from all Kansas streams eliminated. The 1982 regulations were a product of the 1980 recodified state fishing statutes. Now such harvest and sale is limited to private impoundments.

The 1980 recodification of fishing statutes also mandated the Fish and Game Commission to manage the state's commercial amphibian and reptile harvest. Banned from harvest, however, were those species listed under a 1975 state endangered, threatened and nongame species act. But snakes, lizards, skinks, frogs, toads, salamanders and turtles, until 1980, had been free for the taking. The regulation imposed in May 1983 required that anyone wanting to take these

animals for sale or trade obtain a Conditional Wild Amphibian and Reptile Commercial Harvest Permit. Authority to charge a permit fee, however, had been omitted.

1980, coincidentally, also was the year that the agency re-evaluated its policy on the commercial use of game animal parts and pieces. Statutes and regulations were altered to liberalize the use and sale of earrings, belts, buckles and hatbands, for example, made from legally taken game animal parts.

Anyone who's seen the cinema version of John Steinbeck's *Cannery Row* will relate to the commercial frog hunt as a sporting event. More uses are made of Kansas amphibians and reptiles than the medical and educational specimen supply to which this movie alludes. Reptiles and amphibians also are used for human consumption. Rattlesnake meat is a gourmet food. So is the meat from soft-shelled turtles and common snapping turtles. Both are ethnic delicacies in northern markets. But the greatest variety and numbers of amphibians and reptiles commercially harvested are targeted for the pet trade.

Snakes, turtles and lizards are particularly attractive as pets in metropolitan areas. Apartment dwellers may want a dog or cat for a pet, but a landlord may have rules to the contrary. An amphibian or reptile may be the next best choice. Pet turtles have become so popular in Southern

The common kingsnake, or speckled kingsnake, is found in many pet stores. Apartment dwellers are especially fond of this reptile.



J. T. Collins photo

California that turtle and tortoise clubs have formed. The Sacramento-based Turtle and Tortoise Education and Adoption Media (TEAM) provides emergency recovery service for abused and abandoned turtles and tortoises. This society publishes a newsletter and care manuals for its membership.

Sound ecological principles were considered while drawing up the Kansas reptile and amphibian permit system. Kansas Herpetological Society and the University of Kansas Museum of Natural History officials provided the technical standards for the system.

**T**his cooperative effort produced a set of uniform conditions. Included were:

- \* Closed breeding and a nursery season for those species needing reproductive protection.
- \* Complete records required of all transactions, sources, quantities and dispositions.
- \* Business place open to inspection.
- \* Habitat to remain unaltered and each niche left intact after harvest.
- \* Capturing and handling methods to be humane.
- \* No exemptions from other required permits, either federal or state.
- \* Agency assumes no liability for consequences resulting from permittee actions.
- \* Permit must be in the permittee's possession while involved in all authorized activities.
- \* Permit is not transferable.
- \* By statute, an annual report must be submitted by Jan. 10 of the year following permit issuance. The report must detail all harvest records.
- \* Failure to comply with permit conditions will result in permit revocation and may disqualify the permittee for future permits, or until conditions are met.

Specific conditions of each commercial permit designate which animals may be harvested and in what numbers. A Kansas wildlife conservation officer then reviews the operation with the applicant before the permit is issued.

## The Kansas Fish and Game Commission sees the need to charge a fee consistent with other commercial wildlife harvest permits.

Sale and promotional use of aquatic turtles as pets is prohibited by a 1972 Kansas Department of Health and Environment regulation designed to protect children from bacterial infections. Six endangered and threatened species identified in 1978 Fish and Game Commission regulations, in addition to 13 amphibians and reptiles named in a 1979 Commission listing of wildlife "Species In Need of Conservation," are also protected. Horned lizards are protected because the appropriate pet food is not readily available to most pet owners.

Yet the number of applicants granted permits has grown steadily since 1983 while the recorded harvest has varied from species to species. Please see the table above.



J. T. Collins photo

Milk snakes command the highest price of all pet reptiles and amphibians.

### Reported Commercial Harvest in Kansas

	1983	1984	1985
<b>Frogs</b>	1,597	4,000	124
<b>Toads</b>	50	50	21
<b>Salamanders</b>	3,218	13,990	1,671
<b>Lizards &amp; Skinks</b>	429	77	363
<b>Snakes</b>	48	176	556
<b>Turtles</b>	162	1,326	1,004

The most popular species appeared to be neotenic tiger salamanders (waterdogs) and box turtles. Except for rattlesnakes, used primarily in process goods, most reptiles taken in quantity enter the pet trade.

Even since the Kansas Legislature designated the ornate box turtle as our official state reptile, we've received numerous inquiries about keeping the esteemed turtle as a pet. Whether its populations are adequate to sustain uncontrolled harvest as well as a regulated commercial harvest is questioned. It should be noted, however, that not until 1983 did any commercial harvest restrictions exist. Yet these turtles prospered in the face of adversities — highway hazards, land tillage and the family dog.

The natural histories of both box turtle species are relatively well known. But population dynamics, particularly recruitment and mortality rates, and the impacts of both unrestricted and controlled harvest are largely unknown. These same unknowns apply equally to most of the other reptile groups as well as many of the amphibians.

There is no intent by the Kansas Fish and Game Commission to eliminate the personal possession of the more common and plentiful amphibians and reptiles. Access to these popular kinds of Kansas wildlife, specifically for children, can only ensure interest and concern for the future of these species.

Sound biological and ecological information is needed to manage and protect these animals. This need will become increasingly important in the future.

The Kansas Fish and Game Commission sees the need to charge a fee consistent with other commercial wildlife harvest permits. Commercial fishermen and furharvesters understand the importance of their license and permit dollars. Those who harvest reptiles and amphibians surely must see a similar need in their pursuit.





Crop damage is the most frequently reported complaint from landowners who report problems with their deer herds.

## Kansas Deer: A Biologist's View

Got a complaint about the deer in your area? We've probably heard a similar story elsewhere. Here's how we respond.

by **Darrell Montei**  
*Chief  
Game Division*

**T**o a hunter, the first deer is unforgettable. But the person who doesn't draw a permit may be unhappy with the whole system. People returning home from a drive may fondly recall seeing deer, but those same deer in a cropfield may not be as welcome to a farmer. Our deer resource is of interest to many Kansans, each of whom seems to have an opinion about the animal and its management.

Not long ago deer and deer hunting were novelties in Kansas. But by 1985 nearly 50,000 archery and firearm deer permits were issued for that year alone. Sportsmen enjoyed 400,000 recreation hunting days while bringing home 26,000 deer.

Accompanying that growth is the increasing importance of balancing a natural resource with recreational demand and landowner concern. That's one of the jobs of our Game Division.

Although half of all deer permits are reserved for landowners, there are farmers each year who do not draw one. Their responses vary from disappointment to anger; they believe they should receive a permit every year. Yet fear of overharvest has prevented our giving deer permits to all landowners. In most hunting units, however, our concern has lessened due to the growing deer herd.

We are considering issuance of special hunting permits to those farmers who do not receive a permit in the regular drawing. All firearm deer hunters are encouraged to apply for all available permits in units they wish to hunt. Often applicants were unsuccessful in the draw because they applied for only one type of permit. Otherwise, many unsuccessful applicants would have received a deer permit.

Our drawing system grants preference to those individuals who did not receive a permit the previous year. Unfortunately, it's also a reason why many people won't apply for permits that only allow harvest of antlerless deer. Once they get an "antlerless" permit, their chances of receiving an "any-deer" permit the next year are reduced. We're considering grouping persons who received an "antlerless" or a special permit for the previous year in the same category as those who didn't have or didn't draw a permit.

Hunting is the best and most economical method for controlling the size of a deer herd. Does must comprise up to 60 percent of the harvest, depending on the unit. Landowners can help by requesting that hunters with "any-deer" permits harvest does and by allowing hunters access.

We continue to issue more deer permits each year. Because that places an increasing burden on landowners, we're studying the possibility of two separate firearm seasons. Trouble is, most everyone would want to hunt the first segment, and some landowners are opposed to lengthening the deer season.

It has been suggested that an open deer season with no restrictions would keep the herd in check. Several other agricultural states have done just that and still have problems. Why?

Much of the hunting pressure occurs on bucks, and up to 90 percent of the bucks harvested are yearlings. The doe and big buck harvest, therefore, decreases. We manage for about a 65 percent to 75 percent harvest of yearling bucks so that some trophy-sized deer are present. Furthermore, unlimited hunting generally lowers the success rate. More hunters may be in the field, but with less success. Thus the harvest may not increase, and there is potential for local overharvest.

About 7 percent of the landowners surveyed in 1965 reported some type of problem with deer, but almost 28 percent noted problems in 1985. Eating or trampling of crops is most frequently noted along with fence and orchard damage.

We respond to deer problems in several ways. Scare devices and noisemakers are often effective. Chemical deer repellants, improved fencing, seedling tree protectors and timely crop harvest will reduce certain damages. Food plots will divert deer from other cropfields intended for harvest and may qualify for cost-sharing through the county Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS) office. Dusting of deer with light birdshot from a distance also can discourage their presence.

Still, controlled hunting is the best method for controlling deer. More than 90 percent of the landowners surveyed in 1985 allowed some type of deer hunting. This speaks well of the landowners' desire to help with deer management.

Slightly more than 30 percent of the landowners wanted no deer in 1965, yet only 12 percent felt the same way in 1986. Landowners are willing to share their lands with a wildlife resource that's important to all of us. As hunters, we can help by being sportsmen at all times. About 12 percent of the landowners reported problems with deer hunters. There is no reason the percentage should not approach zero.

We in the Game Division don't have all the answers. But one thing's certain: We will continue to explore management techniques that take into account public, sportsman *and* landowner interests.





# the center section

Edited by Mike Miller

## LETTERS

### WE BELIEVE YOU

Editor:

I enjoy KANSAS WILDLIFE. I have been a Kansan all my life (70 years). The first pages I read are The Law section of the yellow pages. I get a bang out of the convicted poachers.

I'd like to tell of a couple of hard-to-believe experiences. About eight years ago I caught a few frogs out of my pond. When I dressed them I noticed one had an unusually large stomach, so I looked into it. I found a full-grown blackbird. I didn't tell anyone I knew because I knew they wouldn't believe me. This summer my son and his boy helped me catch some frogs. One of those had a large stomach, and we looked into it. It had two full-grown mice in it.

I'm not expecting anyone to believe this, but all three of us will swear it's true.

Ruben Miller  
Paola

Dear Mr. Miller:

**Anyone who has seen a large bullfrog attack a big bass plug will believe you. Frogs are very effective predators and will take advantage of any opportunity. The two meals you mentioned are probably uncommon, although the bullfrogs I've observed try to eat anything they can catch.** *Miller*

### A TRUE STORY

Editor:

Fifteen yards and a tree separated my bow-hunting husband from his first deer. I should know. I was there.

My husband stood up in the tree stand facing a wheat field. I was on the ground directly below, facing him and a creek. My husband had told me about the importance of being patient, quiet and still. I was nervous.

After a few minutes I heard something moving. My heart started thumping and I felt a lump in my throat. I laughed to myself when I saw a squirrel.

Shortly after the squirrel, two young does spooked on the other side of the creek. I only hoped I didn't do it. About one-half hour later I heard a twig snap to my right. My heart started thumping, and the lump in my throat was back. I looked up slowly and noticed the serious look on my husband's face. As I read his lips he said, "Don't you move." Then I knew it was a deer.

Looking out of the corner of my eye I spotted the deer. It was the does spotted earlier. They were feeding slowly toward us. I was excited, nervous and shaking. After about 15 minutes (which seemed like an hour) it finally happened. The deer stepped out from behind a tree, and the arrow hit. My husband handed me his bow and said, "I got her!" Now we were both shaking.

This is one of the most exciting experiences I've ever had. And I shared it with my husband. If you don't understand what your husband gets out of hunting, go with him sometime. I know it isn't for everyone, but it got me interested in hunting. I am now target shooting with my husband, hoping to get accurate and strong enough to hunt next year. Who knows, maybe he will get to see me shoot my first deer.

Jan Sneddeker  
Burnsville, Minn.

### WHY CRANES?

Editor:

I enjoy your magazine very much and think it is a wonderful publication. I have hunted all my life and in several parts of the U.S., but lost an arm a few years ago (not a hunting accident), so that has been curtailed. However, I enjoy all kinds of wildlife and have worked considerably toward its preservation.

Noting the controversy on a sandhill crane season, I am surprised that a regular hunter would even consider shooting a bird such as that. Maybe every hunter should be allowed one crane *if* he would *eat* it — which is the only value they could have. From my own experience, they would never shoot another crane. Hunters who want to shoot sandhill cranes, it seems to me, would be in the category of those who shoot owls, hawks, meadowlarks and road signs.

Another thought on this subject is the fact that at least 50 percent of our people do not know a sandhill crane from a whooping crane (or great blue heron, for that matter). I think you would be leaving yourself wide open along that line.

Glade E. Larsen  
Goodland

### WHAT'S THE LAW?

Editor:

I recently took my 16-year-old grandson to the sporting shop to buy a box of shotgun shells. The sales person asked him his age, and my grandson correctly said that he was 16 years old. The sales person told him that he could not legally buy shells until he was 18 years old. If a 16-year-old person is required to have a license to hunt, why does he have to be 18 to buy shells?

Was the sales person correct in not allowing a 16-year-old to buy ammunition?

Vick Hill  
Iola

Dear Mr. Hill:

Yes, the sales person was correct. Laws governing the sale of ammunition are handled through the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (BATF). I talked with agent Larry Cooper, based in BATF's Wichita office, about your question. He said that federal law prohibits the sale of shotgun shells to anyone under the age of 18. Persons must be 21 years of age to buy handgun ammunition. *Miller*

## NO EDITORIALS PLEASE

Editor:

KANSAS WILDLIFE is a valued part of my office library. Dated copies fall into the hands of my children, who enjoy the beautiful photography and interesting stories, including Nature's Notebook. As an avid hunter, fisherman and outdoorsman, I have come to appreciate your timely articles on all kinds of fish and game activities.

I am troubled, however, by the occasional intrusion of the handgun issue and the partisan musings of the author. (See "New Pro-Gun Law?" November/December 1986.)

In light of your editorial creed: ". . . to promote the conservation and wise use of our natural resources, to instill an understanding of our responsibilities to the land," these excerpts from an NRA publication and other sources seem inappropriate. At best, such articles are excess verbiage on a very divisive issue. At worst, they have nothing to do with KANSAS WILDLIFE.

So put a lid on the editorializing of gun issues and use the space for another exquisite photograph by Mr. Blair.

Dennis D. Webb  
Wichita

Dear Mr. Webb:

The article you mentioned was not meant to be an editorial. When we report an issue we don't necessarily support it. We do in fact try to live by our editorial creed. But a magazine must inform, educate and entertain its readers. The handgun issue is important to many Kansas sportsmen. Handgun enthusiasts are allowed to use certain handguns while deer hunting or antelope hunting.

Kansas sportsmen should follow current issues such as handgun bans and anti-hunting movements. The Center Section in KANSAS WILDLIFE strives to be a source of information for the sportsmen. The information is here for our readers to read and form their own opinions. *Miller*

## WHY NO PERMIT?

Editor:

I really enjoy the magazine, and it is one of the few that I take time to read.

I applied for a firearms permit for deer in northwest Kansas (Unit 1, I believe) and was unsuccessful. However, after my check was returned I read in the paper that there were more than 500 permits left for the area I applied for.

Would you tell me why I was refused? I've lived in Kansas all my life and have never bagged a Kansas deer. I have never had a permit for "any deer." All have had to be antlered except last year in Hamilton County. I had an "antlerless whitetail" permit, but antlerless whitetails were scarce as hen's teeth. Maybe I will have better luck next year. I hope so.

T.S. Hines  
Wichita

Dear Mr. Hines:

On your firearms deer application that we received in July, you made only two choices. You applied for an "any deer" permit (Hunt No. 102) and a "buck only" permit (Hunt No. 101). In Unit 1 there were also "any whitetail" permits available and "whitetail antlerless only" permits available. In order to go through these drawings you would have to make the whitetail choices, (Hunt No. 105 and Hunt No. 104). *Karen Beard, licensing clerk*

## MORE AT ROADSIDE

Editor:

Mary Winder wrote a good article, "What's Wrong at Roadside," in the November/December 1985 issue of KANSAS WILDLIFE. She completed a lot of research on the subject and presented some good suggestions.

Do you plan to have her write a follow-up on the subject? Has anything been done on the state level?

In addition to the increased wildlife habitat, less mowing would improve the scenery along Kansas highways.

Barten H. Smith  
Coffeyville

Dear Mr. Smith:

Prior to 1962, roadside management policies in Kansas were, as Mary Winder's article indicates, detrimental to wildlife. In 1963 the Fish and Game Commission began working with the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) and suggested the department alter its maintenance policies to benefit wildlife. It was not until the early 1970s, however, that we began to see results.

Since then, major improvements have included designation of unmowed wildlife areas, conversion to a standard seeding mixture emphasizing native grasses, protection of native shrub stands and spring mowing limited to the shoulder and shoulder slopes. The most significant achievement, however, occurred in 1980. That's when the Fish and Game Commission and KDOT agreed to

allow Commission biologists the opportunity to review and comment on all projects processed through the KDOT.

Even with these gains, there is still room for improvement. KDOT could make greater use of woody plantings and implement more timely mowing, which will enhance rights of way for both nesting and winter cover. Furthermore, the Kansas Legislature should grant KDOT the authority to use state highway project funds to replace wildlife habitat destroyed by highway construction.

I'd like to close by saying that Mary Winder's interest in roadside wildlife habitat is refreshing. For more than 20 years, the Fish and Game Commission has been the only entity that has consistently worked for consideration of wildlife in highway design and maintenance. Although we've been successful in part, greater public involvement and concern will help gain additional wildlife considerations. To further voice your concern, write the KDOT district maintenance engineers and the secretary of transportation. Public sentiment can have marked influence on how mowing and spraying are carried out on roadsides.

You can be assured the Kansas Fish and Game Commission is committed to continue working with the KDOT to get maximum consideration for wildlife in road project design, construction and maintenance. *Robert D. Wood, wildlife ecologist*

## MYSTERY BIRDS

Editor:

We have noticed huge flocks of large black birds flying in long, long streams. They are sometimes headed north and sometimes east or west this time of year. What is the purpose of their flight, and why isn't it toward the south? We would appreciate any explanation. We looked in some of our bird books but didn't find an answer. We enjoy KANSAS WILDLIFE.

L. E. Frazier  
Merriam

Dear Mrs. Frazier:

The birds you saw are probably crows. It is not uncommon for large groups of crows to congregate in Kansas during the winter. The huge flocks will roost at night in a relatively small area, usually in tree rows or even in urban areas. In the morning the birds will fly in long random lines to feeding areas and return to roost in the same manner. The lines can be several miles long. *Miller*

# THE LAW

## KEEPING BUSY

Wildlife conservation officer (WCO) Jack Dunbar found things busy the first week of September. On Sept. 1 he received a call about trespassers in Kingman County so he drove out to check them. He found five dove hunters who weren't actually trespassing, but he checked their licenses anyway. One of the five didn't have a gun when he walked out of the field and claimed he wasn't hunting. Dunbar thought the man was lying and may have hidden his gun, so he waited around for the group to leave. Dunbar radioed for assistance and received plenty. WCOs Jeff Gayer and Mack Long were both in the area and heard his request. So did the Kingman County undersheriff and the Cheney State Park ranger.

While waiting for the help, Dunbar saw the hunters drive by on a nearby road. This confirmed his suspicions. Two of the hunters finally returned and said they wanted to continue hunting. When the other officers arrived at the scene, the two admitted that they'd hidden a gun. A Wichita man was charged for hunting without a license, a hunter-safety certificate and a plug in his shotgun. He paid \$150 in fines and \$28 in court costs.

On Friday of that week Dunbar was home enjoying his day off when the phone rang. A lady told him to get to her house quickly. There had been some shooting nearby and her husband hollered at her to call the game warden as he ran down the drive. She didn't know what had happened. Dunbar radioed the Kingman County undersheriff and they met at the couple's rural residence, where the woman's husband had a suspect by the arm. The suspect said that two guys riding in the back of his pickup truck had shot at something as he drove by the house. They were out in the field looking for it when the caller's husband ran up and the two ran out across the pasture. Dunbar asked the young man to find his friends. The young man returned saying that he couldn't find them, but he did find a dead hen turkey.

Dunbar and the undersheriff waited for the two escaped suspects until after dark and then split up, hoping to intercept them. Dunbar drove to the driver's residence and met him and the other two suspects coming out of the drive. The two suspects confessed to shooting the turkey and later appeared before Kingman County Judge Gene Shay. The two shooters

were fined \$250 each for taking a turkey out of season, \$100 each for shooting out of a motor vehicle and \$28 in court costs. The driver was fined \$100 plus \$28 court costs for pursuing game with a motor vehicle. *Miller*

## EXPENSIVE TARGETS

On Oct. 22 wildlife conservation officer Randy Benteman of Beloit had just finished patrolling Glen Elder Reservoir when he got a call on the radio. The dispatcher said that a woman reported someone shooting turkeys near her home. When a sheriff's officer arrived at the woman's house, he found her holding a subject. Then Benteman arrived and questioned the subject, who said that he and two friends were target shooting when the other two walked into the timber. He heard shots and one of them yell for him to get the vehicle. When he ran to the car the woman was standing there, and she kept him there until the officers arrived.

The other two subjects never returned at the car so Benteman gave the man his name and number and told him to call when the other two arrived in Beloit. At 5:30 a.m. the next day the man called Benteman. The two had walked the 18½ miles back to Beloit in the rain and had just arrived.

Benteman took each man down to the sheriff's office separately for questioning. One of the two who fled finally broke down and told Benteman that he'd shot into a group of turkeys as he walked through the timber. He killed two of them and hid them in the grass. Benteman had the subject take him to the scene. There he found three shotshell hulls. Benteman said the loads were magnum 4s and magnum buckshot, expensive loads for target practice. After finding the turkeys, Benteman charged the man with two counts of taking turkeys out of season.

The subject pleaded guilty in court. The judge sentenced him to 10 days in the county jail and \$250 for each count. The jail sentence was suspended, and the subject was placed on one year of supervised probation. The total fine with court and probation costs came to \$553. The guilty man also must report monthly to a probation officer. *Miller*

## DEER TAG LAWS

Kansas regulations state that a harvested deer must be immediately tagged. The tag, issued to the hunter with his permit, must be signed and dated. The tag must remain affixed to the deer carcass until the deer is processed. The hunter should retain the tag as long as he has deer meat in the freezer. Not abiding by these regulations cost a Clay Center man a stiff fine.

Wildlife conservation officer Dick Cole made a routine check at a local meat locker and found a deer carcass without a tag. (The hunter's tag should remain with the meat at the locker.) The butcher provided the name of the man who brought the deer in so Cole paid the man a visit. The man said a total stranger had brought the deer to his house and given it to him. Cole wondered if the man was just covering up for a friend who didn't want to tag the deer. He told the man he only wanted the friend's name. But the man held fast to his story, and Cole had no choice but to write him a ticket for illegal possession of a deer. The man paid a fine of \$250 plus \$28 in court costs. The deer was confiscated and given to a local Boy Scout troop.

Possessing a deer without a permit is against the law. If someone gives you deer meat, take their permit number, name and address and keep it until the meat is eaten. *Miller*

## OGT SUCCESS

Since its beginning in 1984, Operation Game Thief's success has pleased Kansas Fish and Game officials. The conviction rate is running about 20 percent, meaning 20 percent of all calls result in the conviction of a suspected poacher. The toll-free number, 1-800-228-4263, can be called any time, day or night, to report a wildlife-related violation.

The caller is either in contact with Fish and Game law enforcement personnel or a dispatcher who can immediately notify a wildlife conservation officer. The speed at which an officer can reach a scene results in successful cases.

The public must get involved if the program is to continue being successful. Sportsmen should remember that deer poachers probably take as many deer as hunters do each year. Poaching figures must be considered when seasons and permit numbers are set. People hunting or fishing without licenses, without permission, out of season or taking more than the limit damage these sports. These people are not hunters or fishermen; they are poachers and criminals. But they are viewed by the non-hunting and non-fishing public as sportsmen.

Private land that may have formerly been open is now closed largely because of poachers.

Protect the sport and wildlife you love. If you see anything suspicious or anyone committing a wildlife-related crime, call the Operation Game Thief number. You don't have to give your name. It is important that you give as much information about the incident as possible. Be specific about the location, vehicles involved, number of subjects involved and the crime committed. *Miller*

## OPENING DAY PATROL

Ellsworth wildlife conservation officer Val Haworth met some interesting characters last Nov. 8, the opening day of pheasant season. Haworth was doing routine license checks in the Ellsworth area. When she asked an Overland Park man for his hunting license, he handed her a 1963 Kansas hunting license.

"Sir, I don't think this is this year's license," Haworth said. "Oh, I must have picked up last year's license off the dresser this morning by mistake," the man replied.

Haworth wondered if the man had been asleep for 23 years. "Rip van Winkle's" ploy didn't work, and the man received a ticket for hunting without a license. He forfeited the \$80 bond rather than appear in court.

The second case involved a group of five pheasant hunters, two from Missouri, two from Inman and one from Hutchinson. It seems the five were hunting on the public hunting area at Kanopolis Reservoir when they wondered onto private land, even though the private land was well posted. When the landowner found them he decided to just charge them a fee. "OK boys, that'll be \$20 from each of you," he ordered. Each man begrudgingly gave the landowner the money. "Now, I don't care if you hunt on my land. I just want to be asked first. I'm going to donate this money to the American Heart Association."

That's when the wise guy in the group of hunters may have lost four friends. "How do we know you'll really give that money to charity?" the man quipped. That was better left unsaid. The landowner promptly handed each of the men their \$20 back and called Haworth to the scene. Each of the five was charged for hunting without written permission. They each paid a \$25 fine and \$28 in court costs. *Miller*

## WANTED MAN

Wildlife conservation officer Verle Warner, was patrolling in Harvey County on Nov. 15 when he made a routine check of four pheasant hunters. But he became suspicious as he

read their licenses. Several of the men listed the same addresses and had no driver's license numbers. He wondered if they were non-residents hunting with resident licenses.

Warner let the men continue hunting while he ran a check on them. When the information came back from the dispatcher, Warner learned that one of the men was wanted on an outstanding warrant in Sedgwick County. The man was wanted for kidnapping and aggravated robbery. Bond had been set at \$250,000.

Warner immediately called the Highway Patrol and Harvey County sheriff's deputies for assistance. The man was arrested and transported to Sedgwick County. *Miller*

## HUNTER ORANGE

In 1987 firearms deer hunters will be required to wear florescent orange clothing while in the field. The current law requires hunters to wear red or orange. But research has shown that red is ineffective in increasing hunter visibility. Hunter orange, which is much more visible, seems to have little effect on hunter success. The new law, which specifies that firearms deer hunters must wear an orange hat and at least 100 square inches of orange visible from the front and 100 square inches visible from the back, goes into effect Jan. 1, 1987. *Rob Manes, education coordinator*

## OUTFITTER CHARGED

A former Tres Piedras big-game hunting guide and outfitter has agreed to plead guilty to two felony violations of federal game laws. The man, who operated under the name of Sonny Elan, was charged as a result of a 3-year joint investigation by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish.

The outfitter also agreed in plea bargaining to pay a \$10,000 fine and to be placed on probation for 18 months. In addition, he has agreed to cooperate in an on-going investigation of illegal big-game activities in New Mexico. The case will be transferred to federal court in Los Angeles, his current residence, for disposition.

The charges resulted from the investigation into illegal guiding and outfitting practices. During the course of the investigation, officers uncovered cases in which black bear, elk, antelope and other big game-species were killed, possessed, transported or sold illegally by the outfitter or his clients. The violations involved hunting without licenses or with another person's license, killing big-game animals during closed season or in closed areas, spotlighting, baiting and failing to tag animals after they were shot.

One of the felony charges resulted when one of the man's clients, hunting in a closed area, allegedly killed an elk then retrieved it later. The second occurred when a client killed a bear that had been illegally baited in. *New Mexico Game and Fish Department*

## THE NET COST

Last August a Marion Reservoir angler was furious to find a gill net entangling about 300 pounds of dead fish. Those fish, as he saw it, were purchased with his fishing license dollars, and someone was stealing them.

Two days later the angler's report put wildlife conservation officers (WCOs) Charles Schmidtberger and Jerry Almquist in the right place at the right time. The officers were patrolling Marion near where the net had been found. It was about 5 p.m. when they saw a group of three men, four women and several children drive into the Marion Cove campground.

The group didn't really look more suspicious than other campers in the area, but Schmidtberger and Almquist watched a little longer. Surely nobody would try to set nets with so many campers around, Schmidtberger thought. It was, after all, a midsummer Saturday night, and many boats were on the water.

Then just before 10 p.m., the officers saw two of the campers get in a rubber raft and paddle across the cove. Straining to look through their spotting scopes, Schmidtberger and Almquist couldn't see what the men were doing in the unlighted boat. About 30 minutes later the suspects paddled back to camp, and it appeared the entire group had settled down to sleep.

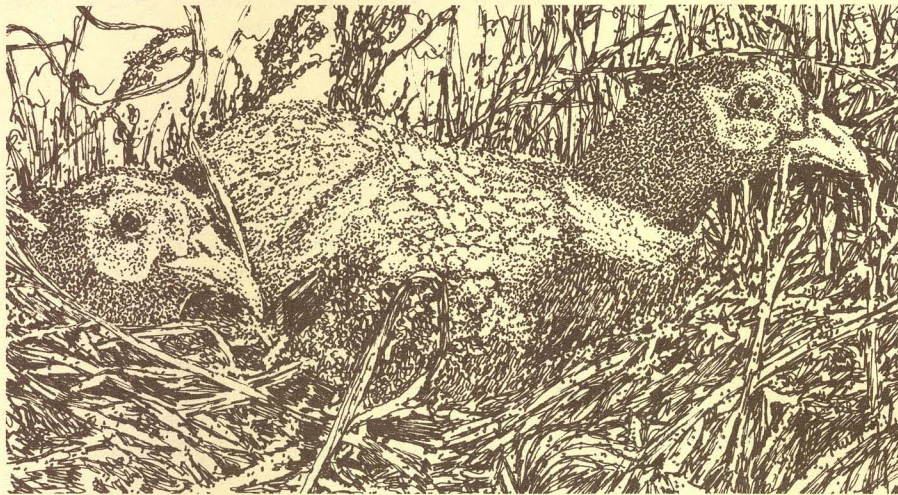
Schmidtberger and Almquist were still watching at 2:30 a.m., when all three men left the camp and rafted across the cove. When the suspects returned about 3:15, WCO Mack Long was called to assist with the case.

Schmidtberger, Almquist and Long watched from a distance, until they could enter the camp without giving the three men a chance to hide evidence. It was almost 3:30 a.m. when the officers moved in on the camp. Would their long wait be worthwhile?

It was. The WCOs found a freshly-run gill net loaded with fish. They charged the three suspects with fishing by illegal methods. Two of the men were also cited for fishing without licenses, and one received a third ticket for having no life jackets in the raft.

Marion County Judge Melvin Gradert took a dim view of the fish stealing, fining each thief \$500 for the gill netting offense. The three men paid a total of \$1,694. They also forfeited their raft, net and all equipment involved in the fish theft. *Rob Manes*

# HUNTING



## JANUARY PHEASANTS

The upland bird season is open through Jan. 31, but this part of the season is often forgotten. Most of the emphasis is put on the opening day of pheasant season, when most of the hunters are afield and many birds are harvested. But the weather in early November is often mild and may not provide the best hunting.

In January, however, you may have the fields to yourself. Hunting permission may be easier to get because the landowner isn't bothered by hordes of hunters. Another advantage of January hunting is the cold, often snowy weather. After a snow, pheasants will gather in large flocks usually congregating in thick cover. Opening-day pheasants, you may remember, usually are dispersed.

Some of the best late-season hunts occur right after snows. Any patch of thick thistles and grass may hold birds, but look for isolated patches. A lone patch of thick weeds in the middle of open ground or winter wheat will often harbor lots of pheasants. If the wind is calm, quietly approach the cover from across the open ground. *Miller*

## TAXIDERMIST'S TIPS

Most avid hunters or fishermen will some day bag that game animal or catch that fish of a lifetime. An attractive mount of a deer, pheasant or largemouth bass will preserve the memory of the experience as well as the specimen. It can be expensive, but it is better to pay for the services of a skilled taxidermist

than to receive an inferior mount.

The hunter and fisherman must do their part with the game before it ever reaches the taxidermist. A poorly prepared pheasant will never look good on the mantel. Greg Wright, a Wichita taxidermist, gave some of the following tips:

**BIRDS** — Never ring a bird's neck or damage the feathers in any way. Keep blood off the plumage, and you might even plug the bird's beak with cotton or tissue. Freeze the bird whole until you can take it to the taxidermist. Don't gut the bird. If you want to save the meat, freeze the bird as soon as possible. The taxidermist can save the meat after he skins it. The feathers must be kept smooth and flat in the freezer. The best way to do this is to slip the bird into the leg of a pair of old panty hose. A funnel made from newspaper also will work. Wrap the newspaper or panty hose-wrapped bird in a plastic bag and seal it. The plastic will prevent freezer burning.

**FISH** — Fish should also be frozen whole. Never gut or skin them. Wrap the fish in a wet towel, seal it in a plastic bag and freeze it. Fish are very susceptible to freezer burn, so make sure the bag is airtight. It takes 6-12 hours for a fish to thaw, so it will be fine even if the taxidermist is several hours away.

**DEER** — If you're lucky enough to bag a trophy-sized buck, you need to take care when field dressing. When gutting the deer, don't cut the hide past the front shoulders. When skinning the deer, cut around the chest and up the back of the neck to the ears. Skin the neck and shoulders, and cut the head off at the first or second vertebrae. Don't attempt to skin the head unless you know what you're

doing. This is better left to the taxidermist. The head and cape can be frozen until taken to the taxidermist.

If you don't know of a good taxidermist, ask around. Always ask to see mounts. Your friend's opinion of a good mount might not agree with yours. Look at mounts in sporting good shops. These displays will usually have the taxidermist's name and location on them. Never take your game to someone without first seeing his or her work. A poorly done mount may save you money, but it won't be worth the grief you'll feel every time you look at it.

*Miller*

## CARRY A CAMERA

Most sportsmen like to keep a scrapbook of hunting and fishing snapshots. A quick glance at a photo can bring back the good memories. To make these photos even better, take them in the field rather than in the front yard at home.

Most of the top camera companies sell automatic 35mm cameras. These pocket-sized cameras are the same size as the instamatics but take better photos. The 35mm may cost more than the instamatics but they're more durable, take sharper photos and are worth the extra dollars.

If you want prints, carry color print film with an ASA of 100 on sunny days or 400 on overcast days. For slides, Kodachrome 64 gives very good color and detail. A color snapshot of a bowhunter's first deer or a boy's first pheasant will mean more if the photograph is taken in the woods or stubblefield. *Miller*

## WINTER COTTONTAILS

Instead of staying in when snow falls and temperatures drop, try the ultimate rabbit-hunting challenge. Still hunt cottontails with bow and arrow. You'll enjoy sneaking close to cottontails in weedy draws. And if your stalk and shot are successful, you'll put some fine eating on the supper table, too.

With snow cover, cottontails will often run or hop only a short distance before stopping. A cautious hunter can often creep to within 10-15 yards. A .22-caliber rifle may be more accurate at that range, but a bow will add a new dimension to your hunting. Cottontails provide a small target, so practice with the bow before you hunt.

Archery deer hunters find rabbit hunting a great way to keep shooting skills sharp. It's also a good way to stay in the field long after the deer season is over. The same bow used for

deer hunting works fine, but some hunters prefer different arrowheads for small game. Blunts, practice points with Game Stoppers attached, judo points and broadheads are effective. Judo points with small wire stoppers may save lost arrows because they won't snake under grass or snow. Practice points should not be used without a multibladed Game Stopper attached. If broadheads are used, keep them sharp.

Rabbit season is open all year long. The daily bag limit for cottontails is 10 with a possession limit of 20. There is no limit on jackrabbits. *Miller*

## HUNTING ENJOYED

Hunting is the most enjoyed recreation, according to a nationwide survey published by the National Park Service. The survey showed that more people participated in swimming than any other outdoor sport, but it also asked about the amount of enjoyment they received from each activity.

In the section that asked which outdoor activities Americans "particularly enjoyed," hunting rated No. 1, topping 26 other sports mentioned. Three out of four hunters said they "particularly enjoyed" hunting.

By comparison, only 18 percent of the swimmers indicated they particularly enjoyed swimming. Satisfaction levels of some other sports are: boating, 16 percent; hiking, 37 percent; jogging, 19 percent.

Hunting is a sport with tradition. While some sports enjoy a few boom years and then fade away, hunting participation remains steady. As a percent of the U.S. population, the numbers of hunters during the past 25 years has stayed remarkably consistent — between 7 percent and 7.5 percent of all Americans hunt. During the past 10 years the number of hunting licenses sold has ranged between 16 million and 16.5 million. The actual number of hunters is closer to 20 million, however, as some hunters — those 65 or older, for example — may not be required to buy a license.

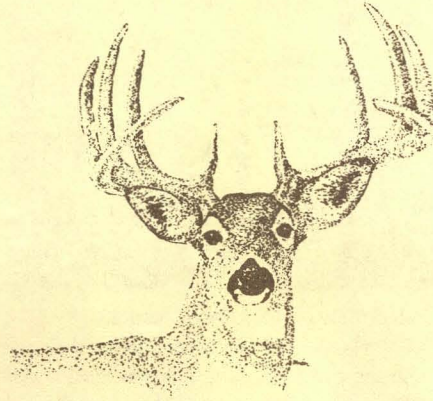
*National Shooting Sports Foundation*

## TURKEY CALL WINNER

Yellville, Ark., hosted its 41st annual National Wild Turkey Calling Contest on Oct. 11. Joe Drake of Columbus, Ga., took the King of Champions title by winning the competition among past national champions. He also placed third in the national competition.

First place in the national division went to Preston Pittman of Hattiesburg, Miss. Tom Drake of Columbus, Ga., placed second.

Alex Rutledge of Birch Tree, Mo., took first-place in the Amateur Division. But a 103-year-old Bergman, Ark., man stole the show in the Amateur Division. Joe Bailey used a well-worn slate friction caller to make the traditional mating call that impressed everyone. When asked to make the fly-down cackle and lost *kee-kee* run he declined, saying he didn't use them. Instead he gave everyone a sample of his usual hunting call sequence, thereby convincing them of his calling skill. *Arkansas Game and Fish Department*



## TROPHY SCOUTING

Big buck fever afflicts many veteran deer hunters. After several years of filling their tags, they decide to increase the challenge and hunt big bucks. Record-book whitetail bucks are thought by some to be the wariest and most difficult big-game animal to hunt. The bucks reached old age by learning to avoid hunters.

While some trophy-sized deer are taken with beginner's luck, most are taken by dedicated, skilled hunters. A trophy hunter scouts an area and spends a lot of time hunting it. Passing up small bucks with the risk of not filling a tag is a part of trophy hunting. It takes a different breed of hunter to diligently pursue big bucks.

The work isn't done when the season ends in December. January is a good time to scout for big bucks. In late winter the deer congregate in winter feeding areas. They may spend more time feeding and become more visible during the day. Some trophy hunters will spend hours driving backroads looking for deer. When a buck is spotted he is noted for further scouting. This way, the hunter can talk to the landowner and secure hunting permission early. The sighting doesn't tell the hunter where the deer will be next fall, but it does give the hunter an idea of the buck's home territory. Fall scouting will pinpoint the buck's movements.

Trophy hunters have been given a bad reputation as hunters who kill only for the glory

or for the antlers on the wall. Most often, this is not the case. Many trophy hunters want to be in the field as much as possible. Scouting all year gives them more time. Passing up young deer and watching deer in the field lets the hunter learn more about deer. Most are dedicated and only want to increase their hunting enjoyment. *Miller*

## SAFETY TIPS

Most hunting accidents are in the "line-of-fire" category. Such incidents, for example, include situations in which the victim was out of sight of the shooter, was covered by a shooter swinging on game or moved into the line of fire. While not every accident can be attributed to a single cause, careless positioning and indiscriminate movement in the field contribute to hunting accidents. Poor planning can often set the stage for a tragic incident in the field.

Most "line-of-fire" accidents involve members of the same hunting party. So before you head out be sure to keep these safety points in mind:

\*Always spend some time planning your hunt before you head out. Your first consideration should be that no one in the group will end up in the line of fire of another and that everyone has a clear idea of his safe zone of fire. The larger your group, the more important positioning becomes.

\*Once you've agreed upon a strategy, stay with it throughout your hunt. If you need to move to another location or change your line of travel, be sure to let your partners know.

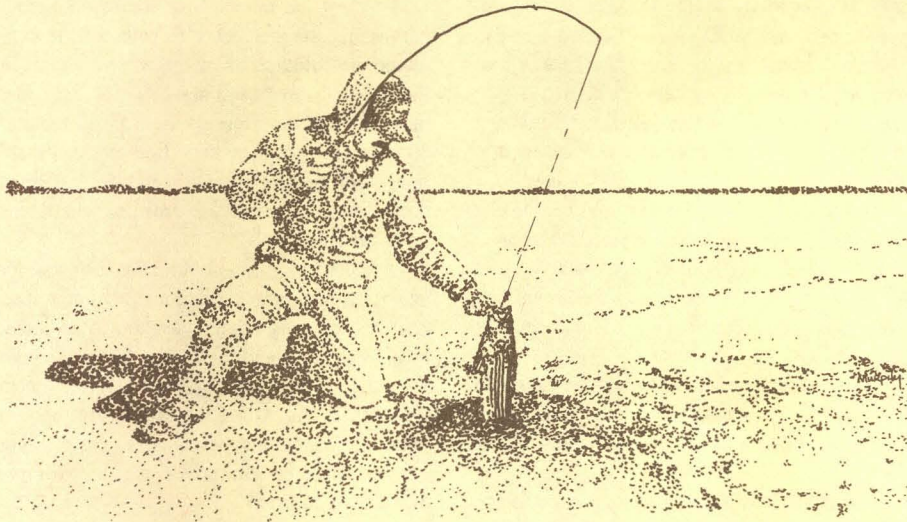
\*When hunting in heavy cover or in poor light conditions, move with extra caution. Remember, if you don't know where your partners are, you can't know in which direction it's safe to shoot. Communicate with each other.

\*Hunter orange clothing not only helps in avoiding the risk of being mistaken for game, but is also a great aid in helping you maintain visual contact with your partners.

\*Matching your strategy to the game you're hunting also is important. For example, never try to stalk a turkey. Many turkey hunting accidents involve a hunter who stalked behind what he believed was a calling turkey.

\*When hunting from close quarters such as a pit or blind, be sure you and your partners know their safe zones of fire. And if you plan to take turns shooting be sure everyone knows the shooting order. *National Shooting Sports Foundation*

# FISHING



## KEEPING WARM

Icfishermen are an odd group. They're willing to withstand wind and freezing temperatures, just to catch a few fish. Most have also learned to stay warm under these conditions. It doesn't take super-human toughness, but rather a combination of the right clothes.

The first consideration should be the feet. They will, after all, be in contact with the ice all day long. A thin polypropylene sock is the first layer. This will keep the moisture away from skin as feet perspire while walking. Then add several layers of heavy socks, preferably wool. Slip these into a felt-lined, rubber-bottomed boot and you're set. And carry a small piece of carpet. Rest your feet on it while you fish. This will also keep your toes toasty.

Clothing should be layered on. It's easy to take a layer off if it warms up, but it's a long walk back to get more clothes. Insulated underwear is a must. Next layer on heavy pants, shirts, sweaters, a hooded sweatshirt and a down vest. A hooded sweatshirt or jacket will keep the cold wind from sneaking down your neck. Then over all of this wear a pair of insulated coveralls. The one-piece garment keeps out the cold and allows easy movement.

The other extremities, hands and head, should be covered at all times. A heavy stocking hat or insulated cap should cover the head and ears. Much of your body heat will be lost through an uncovered head. Hands that handle fish can get cold even on mild days. They

must be kept warm enough to handle the fishing rod and reel and tie knots. Insulated gloves with waterproof liners work great. *Miller*

## ICE SAFETY

Ic fishing is often tremendous right after freeze-up and right before thaw. Unfortunately, these are the most dangerous times to be on the ice.

Right after freeze-up is a very tempting time to fish. This is when anglers will pull huge catches of white bass through the ice. The problem on Kansas reservoirs is wind. Wind action may keep areas of water open on the reservoir. It can also cause pressure ridges as the wind pushes the ice around. This early ice should be tested with caution. It may take a week of temperatures in the teens to make good ice, which is thick and clear. Most fishermen prefer a 3-4 inch minimum. If you're unsure, test the ice with a spud bar or auger. Avoid walking around open water, ridges, cracks and dark-colored ice.

Right before thaw will often be just as good as just after freeze-up. Fishermen have been walking out on the ice all winter and tend to trust it. In late winter the warm days will thaw the ice, then the cold nights will refreeze it. When this happens the ice changes structure and loses its ability to support weight. Remember that black ice and honeycombed ice with air pockets are hazardous.

Warm clothing will keep you warm only

when dry. Your skin radiates heat 32 times faster when wet. If you fall through the ice, hypothermia (dangerously low body core temperature) can set in rapidly and kill quickly, too. Ice safety is nothing to take lightly. *Miller*

## MOST IMPORTANT LINK

The old saying, "A chain is only as strong as its weakest link," rings true for fishermen. That link between angler and fish is monofilament fishing line. A poorly tied knot or old, weakened line will result in lost fish.

Most serious fishermen change line frequently. Depending on how often they fish, they may change each week or once a month. Line that has been stored in extreme heat (in the trunk of a car, for example) also should be replaced.

Fresh line is even more important when ic fishing. Old monofilament won't hold up in cold water. The frigid temperatures also force fishermen to use light line, usually 6- to 8-pound-test. A heavier line will stay coiled and result in lost sensitivity.

Keeping fresh line on your reel doesn't have to be expensive. On reels that hold 200 yards of line, strip the first 100 yards off and tie on new line. It's also a good idea to take 10-15 feet of line off the reel after each trip. The first few feet of line are most likely to have cuts or abrasions. *Miller*

## AQUATIC EDUCATION

The Kansas Fish and Game Commission has a new program available to Kansas schools and fishing clinics. The Kansas Aquatics Resource Education Manual offers fishing clinic instructors and secondary-level teachers lessons in aquatic education. The manual includes teaching techniques, information on aquatic resources, lesson plans, an exam, activities, references and a glossary. The manual is divided into four lessons: The Aquatic Environment, Fish Identification, Aquatic Management and Safety, and Catching Sportfish.

The program's goal is to teach Kansas youth an appreciation, awareness and wise use of our aquatic resources. It is designed to include actual outdoor experiences along with written information. The program is partly funded through Dingell-Johnson funds (excise taxes collected on fishing and boating equipment). For more information, write the Kansas Fish and Game Commission, Rt. 2, Box 54A, Pratt, KS 67124. *Joyce Harmon Depenbusch, wildlife education coordinator*

# ISSUES

## AMORY'S SLATE CLEAN

Cleveland Amory, a well-known anti-hunting activist, was not cited for cruelty to animals last March, as was reported on Page 18 of the September/October issue of *KANSAS WILDLIFE*. We reported that Amory had been charged during an animal rights demonstration involving a calf. The story was reprinted from *Voice of the Trapper*, the official publication of the National Trappers Association, Inc. *Voice of the Trapper* attributed its story to Update, the quarterly newsletter of the Wildlife Legislative Fund of America (WLFA). It appears the information we originally relied upon was inaccurate.

The stories ran after a March 31 animal rights rally in Washington, D.C. Demonstrators had gathered to protest USDA regulations requiring culled dairy calves to be face branded. As part of the demonstration, a calf was brought out of a trailer with a brand painted on its face. Local law enforcement officials confiscated the animal. According to the acting officer's report, the calf was "in very poor condition, weak and foaming at the mouth due to being subjected to extreme heat during transportation."

Following WLFA's story in its June newsletter, the organization received a letter from Amory's lawyer stating that Amory was "not cited for cruelty to animals, did not bring the calf to the rally, nor was the calf under his care and control." Furthermore, Amory's lawyer said the calf "was not in a small trailer, was not semiconscious, was not restrained and was not without adequate water or ventilation."

Before the WFLA reported the March 31 incident in its newsletter, WLFA staffers checked the story with Washington sources, including the investigating law enforcement agency. WLFA staffers confirmed the report that Amory had been cited for cruelty. But upon receipt of the letter from Amory's lawyer, WLFA looked into the matter even further. The organization found that Amory had in fact not been cited, other than by media reports.

Rick Story, WLFA communications director, told us recently: "I talked to Brenda Purvis of the Washington, D.C. Humane Society, and she said that her organization declined to file charges against another animal welfare organization." Upon confiscation of the calf, the National Park Service Police determined that the calf's treatment violated D.C. Code

22801 concerning cruelty to animals. The calf was turned over to the D.C. Humane Society.

Alex Hershaft, President of the Farm Animal Reform Movement (FARM), organized the protest and was responsible for bringing the calf to the rally. Hershaft was called into the Humane Society office and "talked to," Purvis told WLFA. Hershaft told Purvis that he brought the calf to the demonstration because a very well-known animal rights activist told Hershaft he would not attend unless animals were part of the demonstration. Purvis thought this well-known activist to be Amory.

Amory, being the most prominent person in view, got the media's blame for the impropriety of his less-known associates, according to the WLFA.

KANSAS WILDLIFE believes it is important to report this clarification of our original story, and regrets any imputation of wrongdoing on the part of Amory. *Miller*

## TROUBLED FORESTS?

The Reagan administration's newest long-range plan for managing America's national forests lopsidedly favors timber cutting at the expense of wildlife protection and recreation. On Sept. 19, President Reagan transmitted to Congress the 1985 Resources Planning Act (RPA) Program update, titled "A Recommended Renewable Resources Program: 1985-2030." Twenty-one months late in delivery, the document provides direction for the activities of the U.S. Forest Service over the next five decades.

The RPA is a long-range plan that lists the projected level of program activities such as timber cutting and identifies the amount of money to be spent. The plan also describes and evaluates the resulting benefits to the nation.

An assessment of the nation's current resource base and projected future demand for forest resources is conducted every 10 years. The RPA is required to be updated every five years, and Congress uses the RPA program as a guide for formulating Forest Service budgets, as well as examining past accomplishments.

The new RPA, at the lowest recommended level of spending, would defer spending on fish and wildlife programs until 1990, after which spending would increase sharply. In

1990 a new RPA will be released, however, which could again defer investment. Projected benefits for fish and wildlife recommended by the 1980 RPA were never realized because the required additional spending was not provided. Nevertheless, timber harvest activities were funded near the highest levels proposed.

To meet the demands of increased timber harvesting, the 1985 RPA calls for the continued construction of many miles of roads in the national forests. Conservationists fear that most of these new roads would be in remote, mountainous areas, where timber values are poor, and wildlife habitat is fragile. Roads in these areas can cause soil erosion, which silts up trout streams.

On Montana's Bitterroot National Forest, for example, the construction of a 2,500-mile road construction program has resulted in sediment levels which exceed the Forest Service's own standards. The result has been a reduction in fish populations. Moreover, road construction leads to clearcutting, which destroys wildlife habitat such as elk cover areas. *National Wildlife Federation*

## BUYERS BEWARE

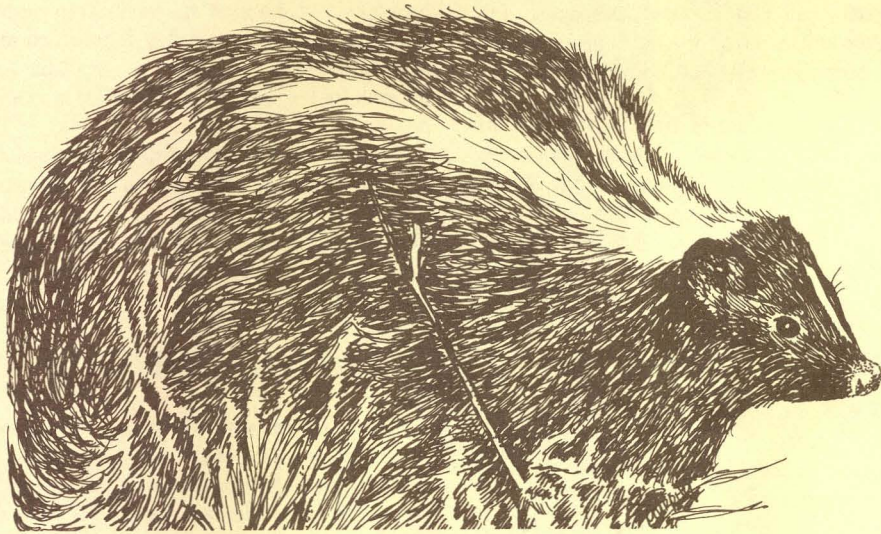
Persons traveling abroad should be extremely careful when buying exotic animals and plants. The prospective buyer is entering a realm where the laws are complicated and the pitfalls considerable.

While some of these products are legal to import into the United States, many others run afoul of federal and international laws protecting animals and plants that are facing extinction. Often what starts as an enjoyable vacation ends with a bitter lesson when these illegal items are confiscated.

Now the Fish and Wildlife Service, in cooperation with the World Wildlife Fund-U.S., has developed a new brochure alerting travelers to the pitfalls of buying wildlife products abroad. "Buyer Beware!" describes the animals and plant products that are most commonly sold in foreign countries and whose importation into the United States is illegal. It also explains the federal and international laws and treaties aimed at stemming the growing trade in illegal products. Travelers with specific questions about certain countries they will be visiting, or products, should contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or the World Wildlife Fund before leaving the country. Single copies of "Buyer Beware!" are available free from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Publications Unit, Room 148 Matomic Building, 1717 H Street NW., Washington, D.C. 20240. *U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*



# NATURE



## PROBLEM SKUNKS

Each winter skunks seem to find their way to occupied houses. Crawl spaces, porches, garages, sheds or woodpiles are attractive shelters for the smelly critters when the weather turns cold. The problem doesn't go unnoticed as the skunk's presence is usually announced before it's seen. Perplexed homeowners are at wits' end over what to do. Many of them call Kansas Fish and Game personnel. If skunks are a problem at your house, you can solve the problem yourself.

The unsuccessful methods include using gasoline, varnish, insecticides and even moth balls, but the safest and most successful technique is to live-trap the animal in a cage-type trap. The trap should first be covered with cloth leaving only the entrance and carrying handle exposed. Set the trap at the entrance the skunk uses, and bait with tuna fish, hamburger or sardines. If the entrance is large, block it so there's no way around the trap. Other entrances should also be blocked. Skunks are nocturnal, so the trap should be set before dark.

Check the trap carefully the next morning. Now comes the tricky part. Without disturbing the trap make sure it is completely covered. Gently pick it up and transfer it to a vehicle. If the skunk is kept in the dark and not jostled, it probably won't release any perfume. Take the critter several miles from residential areas for release. The trap door can be opened with a length of cord or slowly opened by hand.

Slowly back away from the trap, and the skunk will go on its way. As long as the animal is not threatened or chased, it won't feel the need for defense. *George Schlecty, retired education coordinator*

## WHOOPEERS VISIT

The fall migration of the whooping cranes is usually observed in late October. Depending on the weather, the rare birds will make the trip south between Oct. 10 and Nov. 10. And it's common for several to be seen in central Kansas at this time. Whoopers usually travel in small family groups of twos and threes, but their visit is usually brief.

This year, however, was different. Nearly one-fourth of the total wild population (about 130 birds) was seen at Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area. On Monday, Nov. 3, 10 whooping cranes were spotted. As usual, hunting was stopped to protect the endangered species. The 10 were monitored so that when they left hunting could continue. Eight of those birds continued their journey the following morning. The remaining two stayed the night and left Wednesday morning, Nov. 5. Just before the marsh was opened back up to hunting, two more cranes stopped in. These birds didn't stay and hunting was opened up for the day.

The hunting didn't last long, however,

because Wednesday evening nine more whoopers landed. Hunting was closed again, and it was assumed that these birds would leave the following morning. Things didn't go as planned, though, when Thursday morning brought a stiff south wind. Rather than fight a tiring head wind, the nine birds decided to stay the day.

Fish and Game personnel were concerned about the situation because Saturday, Nov. 8, marked the opening of pheasant season, the second segment of the duck season and light goose season. A lot of hunters would be to traveling to the Bottoms to hunt. Television and radio stations around the state were notified in an attempt to inform hunters. It was advised to call ahead to the Bottoms office and learn if the cranes were still present before making a trip.

The nine birds waited out the storm front through Friday, and hunting was not allowed Saturday morning. Stan Wood, area manager, was kept busy Saturday answering the phone and telling arriving hunters they couldn't hunt. According to Wood, most of the hunters were supportive. "I'm sure some of them weren't too happy with me," he said. "Many of them are fully capable of identifying whoopers and don't like being included with hunters that might make a mistake."

The nine whoopers finally left at 10:30 a.m. Saturday. Hunting was again allowed only to have three more whoopers land that evening. The last three birds left Sunday morning and things were back to normal at Cheyenne Bottoms. *Miller*

## WILDLIFE EDUCATION

*Partners with Wildlife*, a wildlife education curriculum, is available to Kansas students through the Kansas Fish and Game Commission. Biology and natural science teachers at the intermediate and secondary levels will be receiving the manuals in 1987. The three-ring notebooks include references and activities about Kansas wildlife resources.

The manual will cover hunting and wildlife management, migratory birds, wetland conservation, urban wildlife, habitat varieties and will include information sheets on a variety of wildlife species.

This latest program for grades 7-12 completes the Wildlife Education Service curriculum. The K-6 grade manuals are already in use in Kansas schools. School librarians in every public and private school in the state will have a complete set of manuals. For more information, contact Joyce Harmon Depenbusch, Kansas Fish and Game Commission, Rt. 2, Box 54A, Pratt, KS 67124. *Miller*

# NOTES

## STATE AWARDS

The Kansas Wildlife Federation presented 1986 Conservation Achievement Program awards at its annual banquet in October. The winners were nominated and selected for their significant contributions to the conservation of Kansas' natural resources. Their efforts were substantial during the past year and reflect a strong commitment to natural resource conservation. The award winners are:

**Conservationist of the Year—** Joseph T. Collins, Lawrence. Currently employed by the State of Kansas at the University of Kansas Museum of Natural History, Collins has done much to advance the knowledge and acceptance of Kansas amphibians and reptiles. He has written field guides *Amphibians and Reptiles in Kansas*, *Turtles in Kansas* and *Fishes in Kansas* as well as his latest work *Natural Kansas*.

**Wildlife Conservationist of the Year—** Terri Shuman, Overland Park. While working for the Kansas Fish and Game Commission as a district biologist, Shuman helped to establish the first-ever Kansas Wildlife Heritage Month in March 1986. During her three years with Fish and Game, Shuman enrolled more than 100 schools in a birdfeeder and habitat educational program.

**Air Conservationist of the Year—** Joyce Wolf, Lawrence. When asked by the National Clean Air Coalition to coordinate lobbying and information efforts in Kansas, Wolf went to work. She met with numerous organizations, sent more than 2,700 letters, and organized media support and press conferences. Prior to committee mark-up of the bill, Wolf had a letter from the Coalition hand-delivered to 2nd District Representative Jim Slattery, who represented the deciding vote. Wolf then followed up with a conference call to further discuss his position on the acid rain bill. \*

**Conservation Educator of the Year—** Tommie Berger, Dodge City. Berger has been a fisheries biologist for the Kansas Fish and Game Commission for 13 years. He has participated in numerous fishing clinics, furharvester and hunter-safety courses in his efforts to educate the public about conservation. Berger also writes weekly outdoor columns for

several southwest Kansas newspapers. His feature articles have appeared in many outdoor magazines, including KANSAS WILDLIFE.

**Conservation Communicator of the Year—** Randy Winter, Manhattan. Winter is a part-time freelance outdoor writer. He writes a twice-weekly column for the *The Manhattan Mercury* and has been featured in numerous outdoor magazines. Winter devotes much of his writing to serious environmental issues such as steel shot, pollution, acid rain and water overappropriation.

**Land and Soil Conservationist of the Year—** William Loucks, Manhattan. Loucks is responsible for administering the Kansas State University Tree Distribution Program, which sells more than 1 million tree and shrub seedlings each year for conservation purposes. Loucks has made a significant contribution to protecting the land and soil of Kansas.

**Conservation Organization of the Year—** Riley County Fish and Game Association, Manhattan. The Riley County club was organized in the early 1930s by a group of conservation-minded sportsmen. The club, which boasts a monthly meeting attendance of 40-60 members, assisted the Kansas Fish and Game Commission in the elk relocation to Ft. Riley. Members provided trucks and trailers to the state agency.

**Forest Conservationist of the Year—** Rocky Stramel, Wallace. Stramel is one of the few landowners in western Kansas who is a member of the American Tree Farm system. A tree farmer since 1980, he received the Kansas Windbreak Farmer of the Year award in 1984. An avid promoter of windbreaks and tree plantings in western Kansas, Stramel has established 10 acres of excellent windbreaks on his property. In addition, Stramel has cooperated with the Kansas Fish and Game Commission in establishing wildlife plantings on a right of way near his home.

**Conservation Legislator of the Year—** Sen. Merrill Werts, Junction City. Sen. Werts has always listened to natural resource proponents. He was supportive of the effort to re-establish elk on the Ft. Riley Military Reservation in 1985. *Kansas Wildlife Federation*

## SONGBIRD PRINT

Kansas Fish and Game Commission's Chickadee Checkoff Program is offering a bird poster to bird lovers. The 19- x 25-inch full-color print was painted by Al Dornisch. It features 28 of the most commonly seen birds at Kansas birdfeeders. A key is provided to identify the birds. The prints are available at \$2 each for less than 10 or \$1 for 10 or more prints.

To order the Feathered Friends print make a check or money order out to "Wildtrust-Feathered Friends." Mail your request to Feathered Friends, Kansas Fish and Game Commission, Rt. 2, Box 54A, Pratt, KS 67124. *Miller*

## WILDLIFE HERITAGE

Kansas conservation groups are striving to make people aware of the value of wildlife. In that effort the groups have planned a second Kansas Wildlife Heritage Month for March 1987.

According to Maure Weigel, of the Prairie Raptor Project in Tescott, this is an opportunity for conservation groups to pool their efforts toward the same goal. The program's theme is "Wetlands — A Habitat Worth Saving." Activities during March will stress the importance of wetlands to animals and people. Kansas is losing wetlands at an alarming rate. Important legislation dealing with wetlands such as the State Water Plan, Cheyenne Bottoms Restoration and a State Waterfowl Stamp will be debated in the 1987 Kansas Legislature. Both houses will be in session in March, and there will be a Kansas Wildlife Heritage Day held at the State Capitol to demonstrate the value of wildlife and wetlands to legislators.

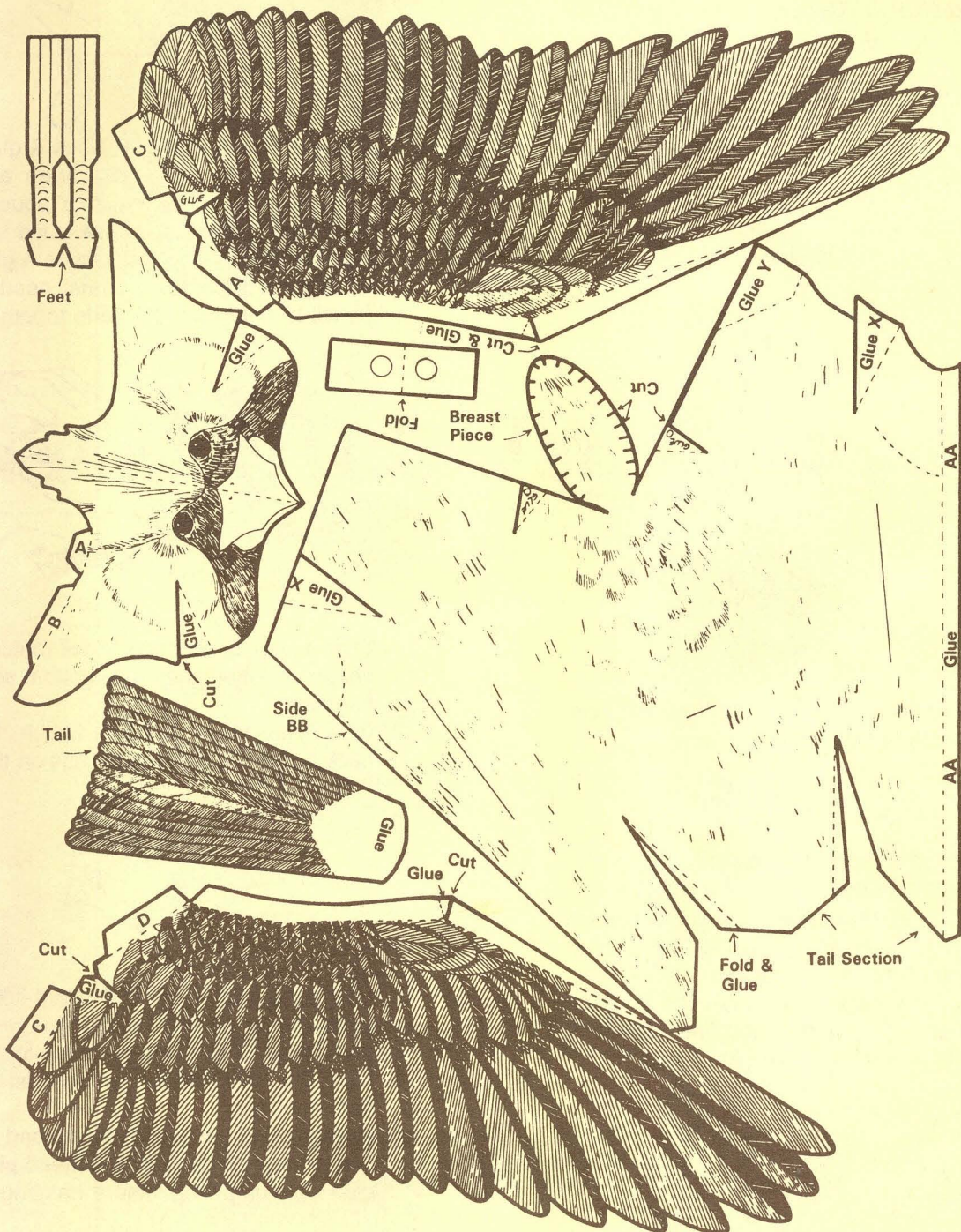
In conjunction with Wildlife Heritage Month, the Kansas Wildlife Federation is sponsoring a statewide poster contest. The contest will feature two divisions, Junior for grades one-four and Intermediate for grades five and six. Each grade school will conduct its own contest and send its winning posters to a KWF regional collecting point. Twelve regional posters will then be evaluated by the KWF Conservation Education Committee to select the state winners.

The posters should reflect the theme "Wetlands — A Habitat Worth Saving." Elementary school teachers throughout Kansas have received information regarding the contest. For more information contact Emily Kling, KWF Poster Contest Chair, 210 Umberger Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (913) 532-5800. *Miller*

# NATURE'S NOTEBOOK

by Joyce Harmon Deppenbusch Wildlife Education Coordinator

## CARDINAL



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Provided by Kansas Fish & Game Commission

# CARDINAL MODEL

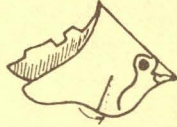
## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Paste bird parts onto a piece of white construction paper.
2. Color or paint pieces of the model.
3. Following the Assembly Directions listed below, construct your model. *Please be sure to read all of the Directions before you do any cutting or pasting.*

## Assembly Directions

(*Special Note: When working with the model pieces, cut along the solid black lines; fold the dotted lines.*)

1. Fold head piece on dotted line. Glue 'cheek' tabs over to dotted line.



2. Glue back neck of head piece to tabs A & B carefully. It will form a curve. Keep a finger inside head to help hold the glued piece stable.

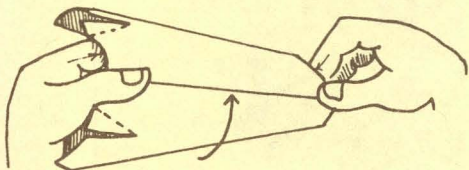


3. Fold tabs on feet down & curl feet with scissors or roll tightly around a pencil.

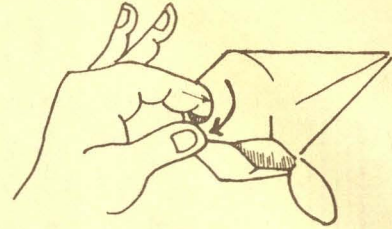


4. Fold dotted lines on wing carefully. 'Score' or draw on the dotted lines with a pencil first to make folding easier. Glue areas that are cut over to the dotted line. Tabs C & D fold under the wing. Wing will be curved.

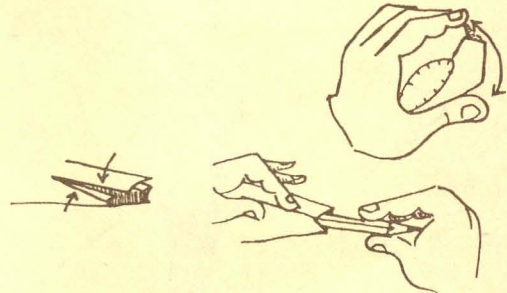
5. Roll body piece so that side 'BB' is glued over side 'AA' to the dotted line. Use both hands to hold piece until glue holds.



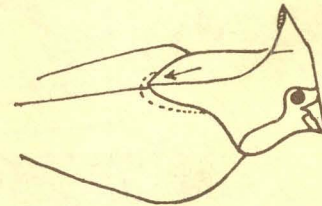
6. Glue tabs marked 'X' over to dotted line.
7. Glue the 'O' tabs same as 'X' tabs.
8. Glue corner flap over 'Y'. Body will form a cone shape.



9. Clip solid lines on breast piece & glue piece over the hole. Clipped edges allow for 'shaping'. You may have to squeeze the body gently until edges are glued tightly.
10. Fold tail sections on dotted lines & glue them to edges of upper tail. You may need to use a pencil to help hold the parts together.



11. Slide tail in & glue top to tail matching the shape of dotted line. Glue bottom section to tail also.
12. Glue head piece to body. Match the back neck section to the dotted lines on the back.



13. Glue wing tabs 'C' & 'D' to solid line on the back. Press gently (tabs under wing) until glue holds. It may take a few minutes.
14. Glue the feet tabs to the solid line on the cardinal belly.
15. Fold hanging tab, punch holes, and glue tab to the back right behind the head piece. Let glue dry completely before hanging.



The author hefts the 21-pound striper he caught through the Cheney Reservoir ice in February 1985. The huge, trophy-sized striped bass fell to a half-ounce jigging spoon tied to 12-pound line.

# The Icefisherman Cometh

The interest in Kansas icefishing is booming. Here's what you'll need to know to take advantage of this fantastic winter fishery.

by Mike Miller  
*Associate Editor*

photos by Gene Brehm

**W**hat a beautiful morning, I thought to myself. The yellow rays of sun peeking over the horizon made the snow and ice sparkle. The pre-dawn colors of green and blue gave way to the sun, and it began to feel warmer. The tempera-

ture hovered at 30 degrees, the wind was calm. A perfect day for icefishing.

My thoughts were broken when I heard a nearby fisherman grunt. I turned in time to see him flop a 2-pound white bass on the ice. The sight sparked my enthusiasm, and I concen-

trated all the more on my fishing. Holding my slab spoon suspended after jigging it, I saw the rod tip twitch up slightly. I set the hook as quickly as my chilled muscles could react. This time I was quick enough. My little ice rod bent double until the scrappy



An ice skimmer helps this angler keep his fishing hole free of ice chips, which could dull the feel he must have for his lure. The payoff, on the adjoining page, is a 6-pound striper.

white popped through the hole. One of my fishing buddies complimented me as I unhooked the fish. Another mumbled something about blind luck.

If it weren't for the sometimes uncomfortable weather, icefishing might be the perfect winter sport. It doesn't require a boatload of expensive equipment, and a man without a boat can fish anywhere on the lake he wants. Nor does icefishing require rigid physical conditioning. You and your fishing buddies can sit and enjoy each other's company while catching fish. Lots of fish.

In the last couple of years icefishermen at Glen Elder and Cheney reservoirs have enjoyed tremendous success catching big white bass, walleye and stripers. Perry and Milford reservoirs have been a crappie fisherman's dream. Truly, icefishing is the average fisherman's best chance to catch trophy-sized white bass and stripers.

Kansans have only recently made a commitment to icefishing. Ice huts, three-wheel ATVs, portable depthfinders and catalytic heaters are showing up on the ice. But all that gear isn't necessary for beginners. Many Kansas

anglers refuse to invest much money in a sport that may last just a few weeks. Short, sensitive rods are best but most fishermen use their spinning rods. I've fashioned a 3 1/2-foot rod from a broken spinning rod, and it works great. The shorter rod seems to be a little more sensitive and easier to handle around the hole.

You will need to spend a few dollars for lures. Some fish are caught on jigs, but the most productive lures are jigging spoons and slabs. Kastmasters, Dardevle-type spoons and simple lead teardrop slabs in white, silver, gold, yellow and chartreuse are the most popular. I like a heavier lure for vertical jigging and usually use one-quarter- to one-half-ounce spoons. The line stays tighter and is more sensitive with the heavier lure.

Icefishing lures must attract attention. The water is very clear under the ice, and fish can see long distances. Ken McCloskey, the fisheries biologist at Glen Elder Reservoir, explains the theory behind ice jigging: "Shad are stressed by the cold water. There will be dead shad and shad in trouble drifting along the bottom. Every so

often, live shad will suddenly dart upward then drift back to the bottom. The sportfish are feeding on these dead and dying shad, so make your lure imitate (these baitfish)."

There's not much to vertical jigging. You'll catch most of your fish near the bottom, so that's where to begin. Let the lure sink to the bottom and raise it a few reel handle turns. From there it's a matter of finding a jigging motion that produces strikes. Some days you'll need to raise the rod several feet and other days only a few inches. After raising the rod tip, let the spoon flutter back down. After the line is tight, hold the lure suspended for 10-30 seconds. The spoon will spin slowly. That seems to trigger strikes.

**T**he key in ice jigging is getting the fish's attention. You have to convince the fish that your lure is something to eat. I learned a valuable lesson on Cheney Reservoir one blustery day. It was late winter, and the fish were being caught in deep water. My buddies and I walked out on the open ice and found a cluster of holes where other anglers had fished the day before. I picked two holes, knocked out the skim ice and began fishing. I was using a 5-inch jigging spoon on a pole rigged specifically for stripers and a smaller silver spoon on the other rod for white bass. Throughout the morning I kept busy landing white bass. Amazingly, the big jigging spoon was catching almost as many white bass as the smaller spoon was. It also seemed to attract more fish as I was doing much better than anglers just a few feet away. On that particular day, the bigger spoon was more visible to fish in the murky water.

Don't expect earth-shattering strikes when you're jigging. Cold water makes fish somewhat sluggish. Strikes will most often be detected as light taps when the lure is held suspended just off the bottom. Strikes will also come as the lure is sinking. I like to let the spoon freefall. I don't keep my line tight as the lure is fluttering down, but I do watch the slack in the line. I know that my lure won't hit the bottom, so if it quits sinking I set the hook. Other strikes will be very subtle.

I believe many fishermen catch only half the fish that actually hit their lures. To catch more fish, you must really concentrate. I usually fish with just one pole, hold the rod with both hands and watch the rod tip. I've



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Some of the best icefishing happens right after a lake freezes. But don't be in a hurry. Wait for at least 4 inches of ice . . .

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Day is done for these two icefishermen. Part of the take includes the author's 21-pound striper, nestled on the bottom of the toboggan.



caught lots of fish because I set the hook when the rod tip twitches up slightly. This happens when a fish inhales the lure from just above. The weight of the lure is taken off the rod tip. If you're not watching, you'll feel a bump when the fish spits the lure and the lure hits the end of the line.

The only other piece of specialized equipment you'll need is an auger. Other tools will cut holes in the ice, but when it's more than 8 inches thick the auger is best. Several anglers can pool their money and buy an auger for \$30-\$40.

Keep track of area lakes when tem-

peratures stay well below freezing for a week or more. Call bait shops or local Fish and Game offices for ice reports. Some of the best icefishing happens right after a lake freezes. But don't be in a hurry. Wait for at least 4 inches of ice, and do not fish when large areas of open water are present.

When you hear that there's good ice, grab your rods, spoons, a small sled or toboggan to haul your gear, and a stool or bucket. That's your ringside seat. Then go fishing. Early in the season start in the shallow flats in the upper end of the lake. Try water 10-15 feet deep, but always stay near a creek

channel. Fish will move into deeper water later in the season. Heavy fishing pressure also will move the fish into deeper water. Fish over the creek or river channel in water at least 20 feet deep.

Fishing usually gets hot right before temperatures warm up. Often the fish are back on the shallow flats just off the channel. This is also a good time to catch a big striper. In fact, the former state-record striped bass was caught on Cheney Reservoir in mid-February.

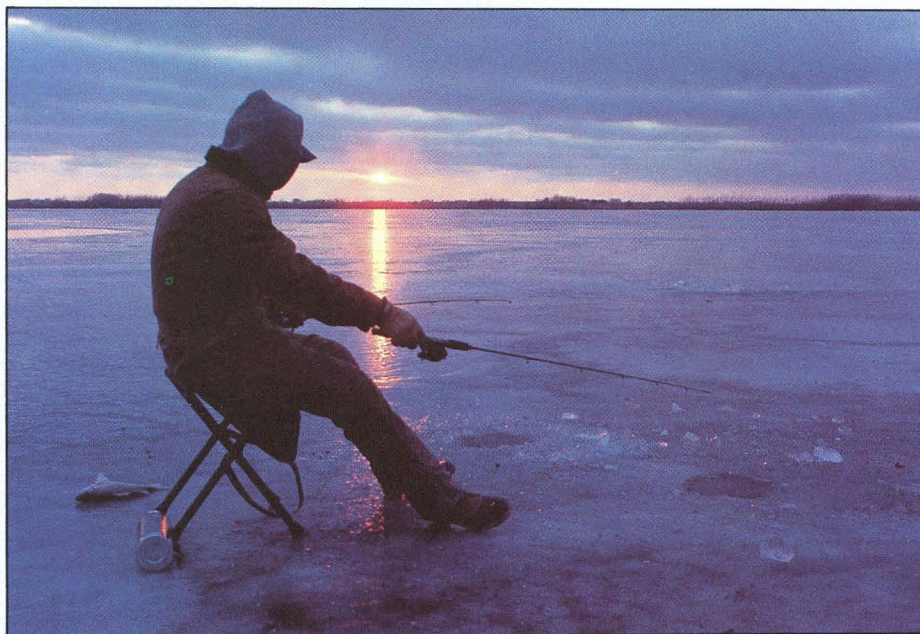
One of the best ways to find fish is to look for other fishermen. Where fishing was good yesterday is usually the best place to fish today. Finding a large cluster of holes from the day before is a good way to find a starting place. I always look for a hole with fish marks around it. Fish marks are impressions left in the ice by fish caught the day before. That tells me that a particular spot was productive.

Don't drill holes next to a fisherman who's catching fish. Excessive traffic on the ice will spook fish. My buddies and I once watched an angler catch fish just as fast as he could get his lure down to them. We stayed back and respected his territory. When the man had caught all he wanted, he motioned us over to take his place.

It's common for large numbers of white bass to be caught early in the season. There's no limit on white bass or crappie in Kansas, but each fisherman should set his own standards. Ethical fishermen will take only what they can use. And once fish have lain on the ice for even a few minutes, you're committed to keeping them. Fish won't survive unless immediately returned to the water.

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This Cheney Reservoir icefisherman gets an early start on a beautiful morning.







White bass and crappie are the species most commonly taken through Cheney's ice, but walleye such as this 4-pounder also are susceptible to the icfisherman's offerings.

## Icefishing The Big 2: Cheney & Glen Elder

**G**len Elder Reservoir, about 50 miles northwest of Salina, and Cheney Reservoir, 20 miles west of Wichita, may be the two hottest icfishing spots in Kansas. Both boast big white bass, stripers, some walleye and an occasional crappie.

Ken McCloskey, fisheries biologist at Glen Elder, has taken icfishing creel surveys. "Last year fishermen averaged 10 fish per trip here," he says. "Two years ago we had even better fishing. That year the lake was 7

feet below conservation pool level, and last year it was down 4 feet. The low water concentrated the fish and made them easier to find and catch. This year the lake will be within a foot of conservation pool level, and the fishing may not be quite as good."

McCloskey says the best time to fish is just after first ice. When the ice is thick enough (4 inches or more), fishermen should try above the causeway. Both the north and south forks of the Solomon rivers meet there, and the

flats along the channels usually provide good fishing. Granite and Walnut creeks are also good areas to try. McCloskey says that heavy traffic on the ice will move fish into the deeper water of the river channel later in the season. Another good tip is to fish areas where boat fishermen caught fish earlier in the fall.

One-quarter-ounce teardrop slab spoons in white and chartreuse and silver Kastmasters were the most productive lures last year.

Gordon Schneider, the fisheries biologist at Cheney, also made creel surveys and found fishermen averaging five fish per trip at Cheney last year. Most of those fish were white bass. "We see very few crappie caught and just a few walleye. White bass and striped bass make up the numbers for our survey," Schneider says.

The old saying — "First ice is best ice" — is true at Cheney. Says Schneider: "It can get kind of dangerous because fishing is so good early. Some fishermen will take risks fishing on ice that isn't safe yet." Cheney is a shallow, unsheltered reservoir and wind action may keep water open until temperatures plummet.

Early in the season most fishing starts around the Fish Cove area. The flats near the river channel there are about 15 feet deep and usually provide good action. Two other good areas to try are Heimerman Point and Mud Creek Cove. Schneider says he watches anglers to locate fish. "They really leapfrog after the fish. When fishermen at one end of a group quit catching fish they simply go around to the opposite end and start fishing again."

Icfishermen at Cheney catch most of the stripers in the upper third of the lake. And according to Schneider, that's the only time of the year stripers congregate in the upper end. In the last several years icfishermen have taken several stripers weighing more than 20 pounds. The fishing moves out to the middle of the lake later in the winter and is done mostly over the river channel in water at least 20 feet deep. As the weather begins to warm most fish will be caught in the upper end over shallower water. Fishing is usually good right before thaw, but fish cautiously at this time. Dark ice, honeycombed ice, pressure ridges or cracks and ice near open water should be given a wide berth.

The most productive lure at Cheney is the silver or gold Kastmaster. Even with ice cover Cheney may be more murky than other reservoirs so big, flashing lures may work best. — *Mike Miller*

# Diversity Is Our Strength

Even I have trouble explaining my job without going into a lengthy speech. I'm a wildlife biologist. But wait, there's more. Last of a series on state conservation jobs.

by **Randy Rodgers**  
*Wildlife Research Biologist*  
Hays

I've always been just a little envious of wildlife conservation officers (WCOs), more commonly called game wardens. Even a kid seems to know what they do.

Me? I'm a wildlife biologist. I don't know how many times people have asked me what sort of job I have. I tell them, only to see them struggling to make an association when I say the words "wildlife biologist." Many folks respond with something like: "That must be interesting." But deep down I know most know little of what the job is all about.

I've often wondered why it was that people so poorly understand what biologists do. I suppose one reason is that the profession is very young. The Kansas Fish and Game Commission hired its first professional biologist only three decades ago. But even I have trouble explaining my job without going into a lengthy speech. That

Wildlife conservation officers frequently help game biologists with restoration projects. Here WCO Tracy Galvin transports a Rio Grande turkey from the trapping site.

thought made me realize that our diversity is a source of confusion. No wonder people have a problem recognizing what we do. We're tackling so many different tasks that it's also impossible to label the term "wildlife biologist" with a quick definition.

Our wildlife biologists and managers work in the Game Division, which is divided into three sections: species management, land management and environmental services. The species management section consists of 10 biologists, each of whom specializes in a particular group of species: nongame wildlife, upland game, migratory gamebirds, big game and furbearers. These biologist are in charge of such things as recommending hunting seasons, wildlife population surveys, species restoration and problem-solving studies.

The much larger land management section is composed of supervisors in each of the state's six regions, as well as district biologists, area managers and conservation workers who manage Kansas' public wildlife areas. These people handle all forms of wildlife management within their region. Boundaries between these sections often blur when goals such as species restoration require cooperation.

Bob Wood is the one-man show behind our third section, environmental services. Wood provides technical wildlife advice for planning, impact assessment and construction phases of flood control dams, roads, pipelines and industrial facilities. He also administers the Fish and Game Commission's regulatory protection program for threatened and endangered species.

Without question, a wildlife biologist's most understood activity is species restoration. Overexploitation has resulted in the extirpation, or local disappearance, of many wildlife species in Kansas. Some were lost a century ago while others disappeared during the Dust Bowl days of the 1930s. Efforts to restore these native species to their original Kansas range essentially had to wait for the hiring of professional wildlife biologists.

Restoration of the wild turkey is a hallmark of what can be done with the right knowledge and years of persistent effort. Wild turkeys were lost from Kansas early in this century. In 1966 Kansas biologists received Rio Grande wild turkeys from the King Ranch in Texas. Since that first successful reintroduction, the birds have been trapped and moved to new areas. New flocks have flourished under proper management. The Eastern subspecies of wild turkey also has been restored to

Kansas. These efforts continue, and wild turkeys are becoming common where suitable habitat exists.

The turkey restoration project is a prime example of cooperation between the land management and species management sections. The project was coordinated in species management, but biologists and managers in land management trapped and moved most of the birds. They even collected the native forb seed that was traded to Missouri in return for Eastern turkeys.

Turkey restoration is the most spectacular of these projects, but consider that there have been nine other restoration projects active in recent years. They include introductions of river otters, pronghorn antelope, Eastern chipmunks, mountain plovers, giant Canada geese, ruffed grouse and sharp-tailed grouse. Restoration of swallow-tailed kites is on hold, and a project to establish peregrine falcons is being considered. Species management biologists are handling these projects with assistance from land management biologists. But species biologists have no monopoly on restoration. District biologist Mark Sexson and area manager Mike Gilbert are successfully expanding the range of scaled quail through the fragmented habitat of southwestern Kansas.

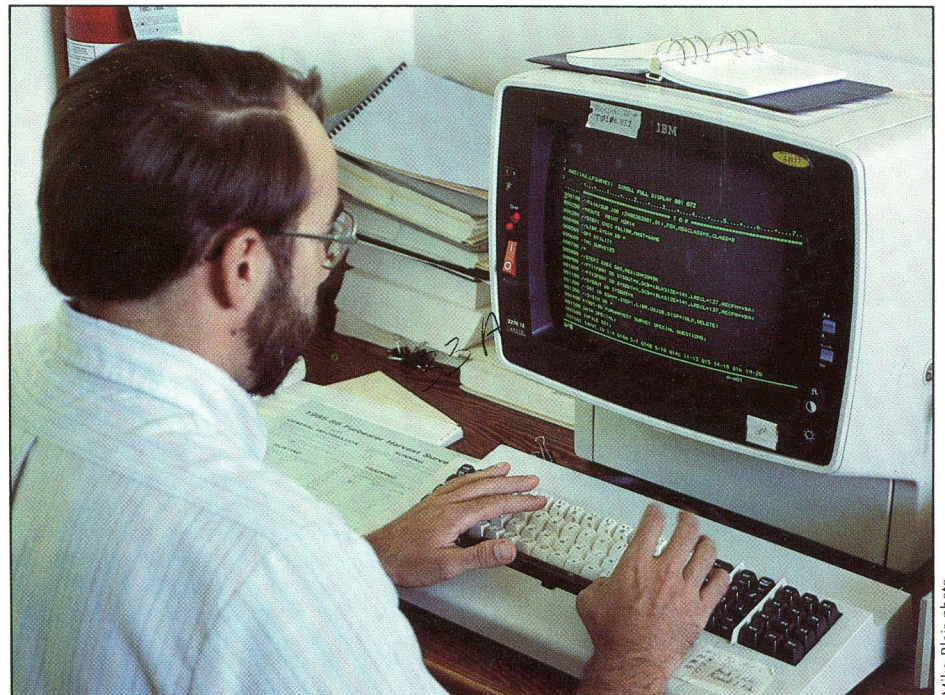
Two of the restoration projects — for the ruffed grouse and sharp-tailed grouse — have been my babies from

the start. Each takes considerable time, but it's surely worth the long hours and headaches to see these species again occupying their original ranges. I must confess that the sharp-tail project is a greater source of pride for me. Efforts at restoring prairie grouse had failed in other states, and many had given up. It took a new technique to overcome the problems and, I'm pleased to report, the technique is working. A possible spinoff is that this success may help renew prairie chicken restoration projects in other states. That will benefit Kansas because we can trade chickens for species we're working to restore here. Innovation is just part of a wildlife biologist's job.

Problem-solving is a major effort for species management biologists. An excellent example is a study being conducted by Lloyd Fox, our furbearer biologist. He's using radio telemetry to determine what effect the running season may have on raccoon reproduction. Lloyd's work will produce recommendations for future raccoon management. Recent research projects include measuring the effect of grazing intensity on bobwhite populations, working with WCOs to discriminate hen pheasants from cocks after they've been cleaned and determining how herbicide sagebrush control affects songbirds in southwest Kansas.

Our area wildlife managers and con-

Furbearer biologist Lloyd Fox uses a computer to compile data from his furharvester surveys.



Mike Blair photo

ervation workers are at the core of the Game Division. They must have an extensive knowledge of farming and wildlife so they can adjust a farming operation to maximize wildlife production. Most of our public areas incorporate farming to produce food for wildlife. Since most are too large for the area manager alone to operate, we contract with area farmers. The farmer grows a crop on public lands and receives a share for his efforts. The remainder is left in the field for wildlife. Occasionally some of the state's share is harvested to help pay for habitat planting and area maintenance.

A major responsibility of our area managers is the annual farm leasing operation. To do it effectively, the manager must understand crop rotations, cultural practices, farm equipment, and how to modify all three to produce wildlife. In the process, he becomes part lawyer, part contractor and part rural sociologist. In the fall, the area manager becomes a recreational expert advising hunters and other wildlife enthusiasts where to go for certain species. He also must keep the public informed of area regulations. Midwinter is a time to plan and prepare for spring, when the area manager plants trees, shrubs and grasses for wildlife. Controlled burns are also used to maintain established native grass plantings.

The district biologist's primary charge is to protect and enhance wildlife habitat on private lands. Since they're attempting to influence private land use, these biologists must become salesmen. Through WHIP (Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program), district biologists meet with landowners to discuss what can be done to help wildlife on their properties. Frequently that means seeding native grass or establishing tree and shrub plantings. The agency cost-shares many such habitat developments and often helps with the planting.

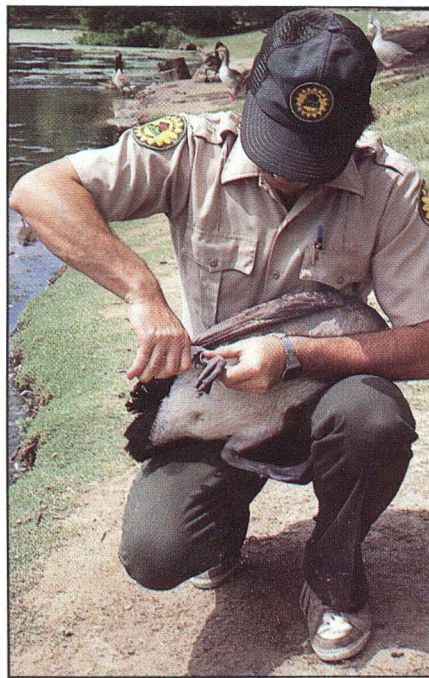
Perhaps even more important than the time district biologists spend planting native grasses, trees and shrubs is the advice they give landowners on how they can farm or ranch to benefit wildlife while maintaining production. The payoff for wildlife occurs when the landowner accepts that he can manage both for profit and for wildlife. Here's an example of what I mean. A rancher in the southern Flint Hills had a serious infestation of annual three-awn (grass of little value to livestock or wildlife) in one of his pastures. Carroll Lange, district biologist at Winfield, suggested a fall controlled burn. And although the rancher had doubts about using fire, he decided to

try it. The rancher was glad he did, and Carroll earned instant credibility with other area ranchers. Carroll's suggestion has led to a dramatic increase in the use of periodic spring burning in the southern Flint Hills. The burning has improved pastures for both cattle and wildlife.

Another example comes from Steve Capel, regional wildlife supervisor at Valley Center. Steve has tried for years to convince farmers not to bulldoze hedgerows in central Kansas. He correctly argued that hedge borders increased crop yields by providing wind protection more than they decreased yields by competing for moisture.



Biologists work with landowners. Here Randy Clark bands a goose on private property.



Mike Blair photo

Nevertheless, many farmers continued to remove the hedgerows. Confronted with this situation, Steve not only became an innovator but an inventor as well. He developed a root plow, which allows farmers to cut the hedge roots along the field border. The result: Crop yield along the field edge can be increased, the hedgerow remains intact, and the farmer no longer perceives a need to destroy this valuable wildlife habitat. In a few short years more than 200 root plows have been constructed for use in eight states. Steve's invention has saved thousands of acres of wildlife habitat.

Being a wildlife salesman means

personally contacting landowners, of course. But it also means giving talks to groups, writing articles for newspapers, preparing reports and giving interviews on radio or TV. Education of the public, especially the children, is a big part of the job.

Several years ago I directed information to western Kansas wheat growers. In 1980 and 1981 I conducted a study that demonstrated up to 50 percent of the bird nests located in wheat stubblefields can be saved if a farmer will use an undercutter without treaders instead of an offset disc for spring weed control. The technique has the potential to save untold numbers of wildlife nests and was agronomically beneficial as well. This method saves more soil, requires less fuel and can increase crop yields better than conventional discing. Furthermore, most farmers already have the right equipment. The technique was widely publicized by the farm media and supported by many Soil Conservation Service employees.

The technique has been slow to catch on as it requires more careful management than discing. An undercutter isn't as easy to use as a disc and may not control weeds as well if used improperly. The traditional desire to have clean (bare) fields is also still a strong motivation to many farmers. Yet the technique is being used.

One clear benefit from that effort was that it gained widespread recognition. I was asked to participate in a 1984 workshop in Washington, D.C. The Office of Technology Assessment (OTA) invited 15 wildlife and agriculture consultants to suggest how federal agricultural policy, particularly the 1985 Farm Bill, could be modified to benefit wildlife. The mood among the participants was one of pessimism, yet most of our primary recommendations would eventually become part of the 1985 Farm Bill.

Farmers, environmental groups and even politicians had recognized the conservation portions of that legislation as the best part of the bill. Yet I doubt if many farmers realize that wildlife biologists were a major force in gaining that legislation.


The implications of the Farm Bill's Conservation Reserve section for Kansas wildlife are tremendous. Already about 600,000 acres of erodible Kansas cropland have been signed-up to be replanted to permanent cover, and the program is only beginning. Game division personnel continued their efforts on the Conservation Reserve even as state and county administrative policy was being formed. Our wildlife biologists and managers worked closely

with the Soil Conservation Service and county committees to ensure that the best wildlife practices were considered.

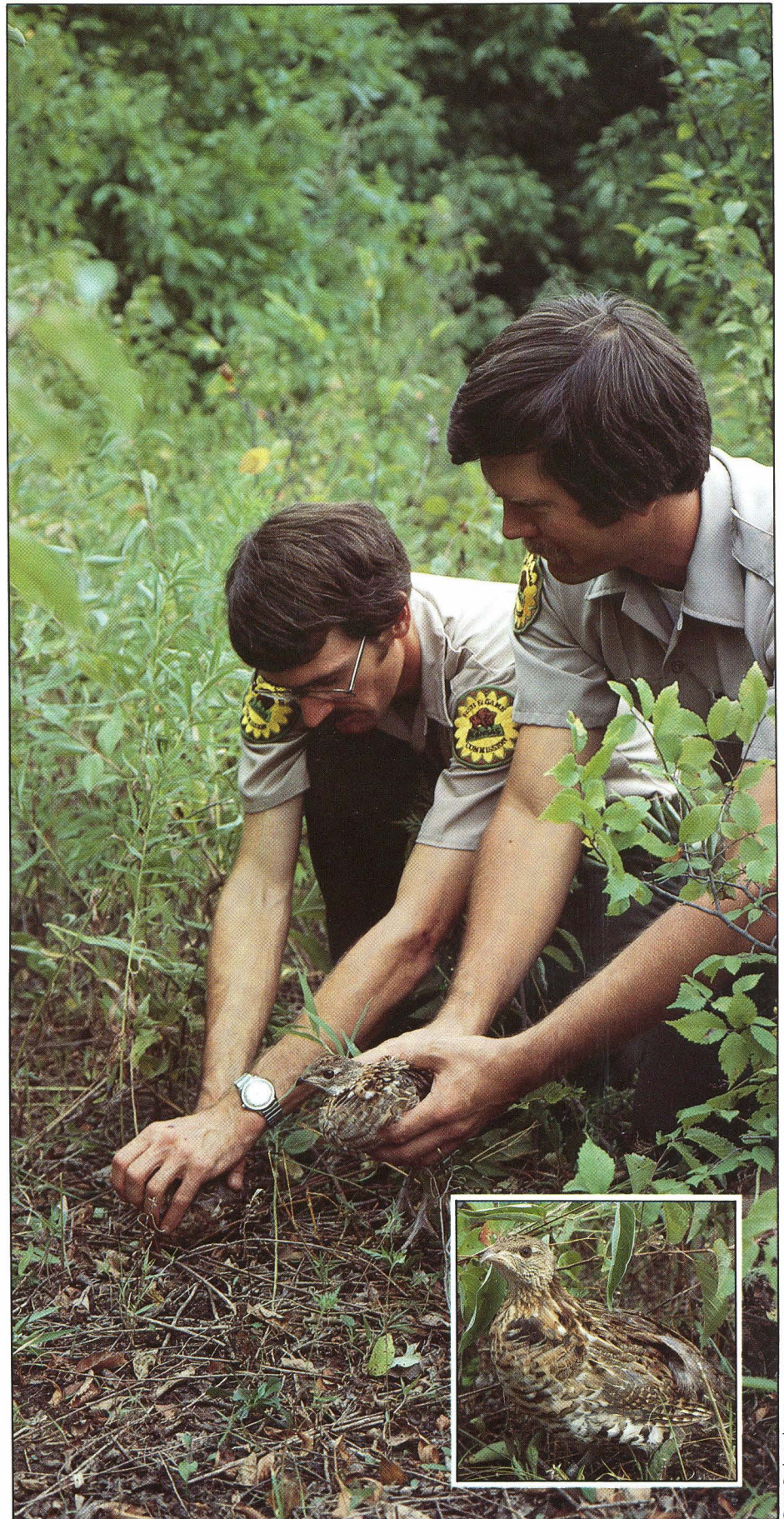
They were even successful at including the use of native grasses for cover establishment in many eastern Kansas counties, where fescue (a grass almost worthless for wildlife) has traditionally been king. I heard a very telling comment from Tom Swan, district biologist at Mound City, about this success. He noted that the adoption of native grass for the Conservation Reserve in eastern Kansas came not only because wildlife biologists participated in those county meetings, but because biologists have been promoting native grasses for both cattle and wildlife for years.

But wildlife biologists aren't working only with Kansas farmers and ranchers. Increasingly we work in the cities as well by giving talks, doing TV spots and setting up displays. This also means developing wildlife habitat in city parks, at commercial and industrial sites and in private yards. Our biologists and managers have furnished birdfeeders and seed to hospitals and nursing homes all over the state. Joe Schaefer, our urban non-game wildlife biologist in Wichita, is nationally recognized for his innovative projects.

Kansas wildlife biologists spend a good bit of time reviewing professional literature and participating in national and international organizations. This work also has important implications for wildlife. One such example comes from Marvin Kraft, one of the agency's two migratory gamebird biologists. Through his participation in the Central Flyway Council, Marvin has become highly knowledgeable about the lead-shot poisoning of waterfowl. He's launched an effective campaign to educate Kansas hunters about the wildlife waste lead poisoning causes.

Wildlife biologists and managers are more than just scientists. Of necessity, we're part salesman, teacher, lawyer, farmer, range manager, researcher, writer and game warden, to name a few hats we occasionally wear. I guess that's what it takes when you're charged with managing about 850 terrestrial vertebrate species for several hundred thousand wildlife enthusiasts. Diversity is our strength. 

The author, left, and fellow biologist Jim Bennett transplant ruffed grouse as part of the state's effort to reintroduce the bird, inset.



Cene Brehm photos

# KANSAS WILDLIFE

## Gallery

photos by Mike Blair



A lone Canada goose, unaware of its beautiful image, soaks up the afternoon sunshine, at left. It's ice-out time, and the spring migration will soon begin for this bird. Shot with a 400mm lens, f/8, 1/250. Below, white chin-straps are the trademark of all 11 subspecies of Canada geese. Six of the subspecies migrate through the Sunflower State. The birds range from 3 pounds to 12 pounds or more, depending on kind. Shot with 400mm lens, f/8, 1/250.

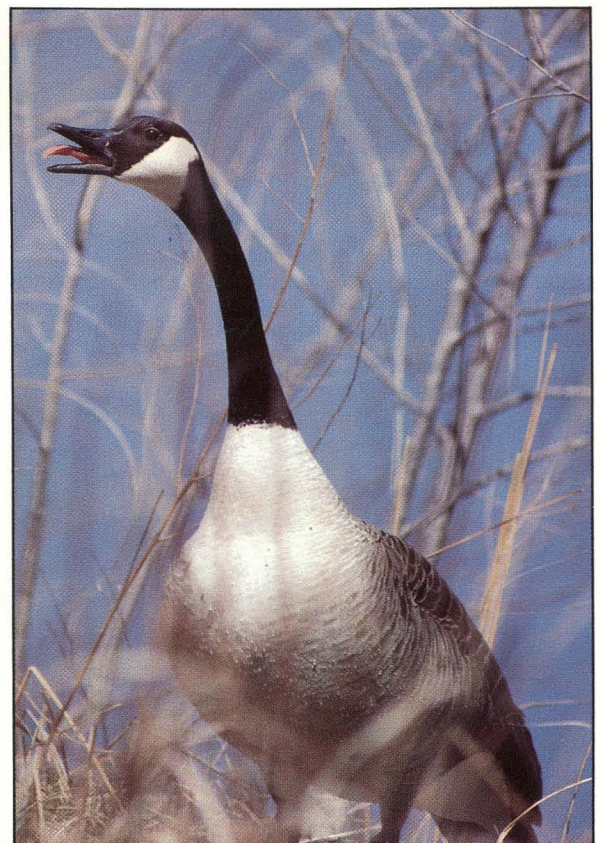




**Top:** Their wings set to land, these Canada geese provide one of the most stirring experiences nature can provide. Photographed with 400mm lens, f/5.6, 1/500.

**Left:** A small flock of Canadas takes time for a nap on a winter afternoon. Soon the cold will send these birds searching for food. Shot with 400mm lens, f/16, 1/125.

**Below:** Fearlessly defending its nesting mate, a Canada gander hisses a warning to an intruder. Kansas has a growing resident goose population, thanks largely to the state's restoration program. Shot with 50mm lens, f/5.6, 1/500.





# Measuring Up

You may have heard about the Boone and Crockett Club system for scoring racks. Here's how all the points add up.

by Steve Capel  
*Regional Wildlife Supervisor  
Valley Center*

photos by Mike Blair

Photograph shows how to take the inside spread measurement, used in scoring a deer rack under the Boone and Crockett system. Stretch the metal tape across the rack at its widest point, from the inside of the right main beam to the inside of the left main beam. Then record the length.

**E**very winter about this time the conversations at coffee breaks, over a beer or while driving to the next hunting cover frequently turn to deer, deer hunting and past hunts. In the course of such reminiscing, discussions invariably turn to memories of big deer, large racks and whose rack is bigger. Contrary to popular belief, fishermen do not hold sole possession of the it-gets-bigger-the-more-the-story-is-told territory.

Deer hunters have traditionally engaged in this sport. In fact, most deer grow rather dramatically from the time the trigger is pulled to the time it's skinned and hung in the garage or barn. The exact size is often a factor of how far the hunters had to drag it.

Hunters have several ways to compare deer they've taken. Weight is certainly one approach, but comparing weights can be confusing, depending on how the deer was handled in the field. "Field dressed" certainly means different things to different hunters. Speaking from several years of experience at working deer check stations in the 1960s and 1970s, I know that hunters have different ideas of how to handle their deer in the field. The weights we got were OK and certainly usable, for example, in comparing deer taken in Smith County with those from Chautauqua County, but variations in field-dressing techniques would not have permitted valid individual deer comparisons.

Another problem in using weights to compare big deer is that the heaviest deer do not always produce the largest antlers. Deer body weights increase from south to north across North America, but antler development doesn't necessarily follow the same pattern.

Many hunters use the number of points as a quick reference to deer size and trophy quality. Yet points may be

interpreted differently. In the East where whitetails are predominant, hunters have traditionally counted every point 1 inch or longer in describing their racks. In the western states where mule deer predominate, hunters count only the points on one side — the side with more points if it's not a typical rack.

This has created some confusion in plains states such as Kansas and Nebraska, where both whitetails and muleys are found. Which do you use? Eastern or western count? Most, but far from all, hunters in Kansas use eastern count for whitetails and western count for muleys.

Point counts, however, do a poor job of describing trophy-size animals. This is most dramatically seen in yearling whitetails, which have about the same number of points as 2½-year-old whitetails. The 2½-year-old whitetails, however, have racks that may be twice or three times the mass of yearlings (bigger diameter and longer tines). Most yearling racks would fit inside racks of older deer with the same number of points. Truly, you *can not* tell the age of a buck by the number of points. Neither does a buck's rack continue to grow throughout its life. Although there is variation, most bucks' racks begin to lessen in quality by the age of 6 or 7.

Through the years hunters have compared the game animals they've taken for bragging rights, to illustrate comparative bravery and for the fame that slaying an extremely large animal may have brought. Weights, numbers of points and single measurements were used in comparing deer, but not until 1932 when Dr. James L. Clark of the America Museum of Natural History developed a system of scoring heads based on multiple measurements had anyone come close to a fair system of ranking deer racks. After considerable debate among hunters, taxidermists and biologists, Dr.





The author shows how to measure the main beam. Start at the base of the antler and follow the outside curve all the way to the tip. James Bell of Derby killed this typical white-tailed deer in Saline County during the 1985 firearm season. The rack measured 184 B&C points.

Clark and Grancel Fitz, who had written a chapter on trophy measurement for the Boone and Crockett Club, combined their approaches and produced a series of scoring charts for 15 species of North American big game.

This system, accepted as *the* system for ranking big-game animals in North America, was published in the 1952 edition of *Records of North American Big Game*. This system also recognizes separate categories for non-typical whitetails and muleys to keep the freak racks separate from the typical racks. With a few modifications, this system is still used today by most hunting groups that keep records. The Boone and Crockett Club has copyrighted the system but has granted the Pope and Young Club permission to use it. Pope and Young keeps the records of trophy-size animals taken with a bow.

**B**oth clubs have established minimum scores for each species they recognize. In addition, each club certifies measurers for their particular club. In Kansas, many measurers are certified by both groups.

### Big Buck Minimum Scores

	Whitetail-tailed Deer		Mule Deer	
	Typical	Non-Typical	Typical	Non-Typical
Boone & Crockett				
3-Year Awards	160	185	185	225
All Time	170	195	195	240
Pope & Young	125	150	145	160
Kansas Fish & Game				
Firearms	135	150	150	185
Archery	115	120	135	150

### Measuring Procedure

All antlers must dry for at least 60 days before they can be measured. Shrinking will occur and although it's quite small, it can affect the measurement totals. Either the entire skull must be intact or, if a skull plate is left when cutting off the antlers, the two sides of the rack must be rigid and not broken or separated. This could change spread measurements and would invalidate any scoring of the trophy.

Equipment you'll need to rough measure your trophy includes a one-quarter-inch steel tape (a half-inch tape is too stiff to adequately follow the curvature of the beams), pencil and paper to record each measurement. I've found it convenient to use a piece of aircraft control cable or some other flexible, coated cable and an alligator clip to measure the main beam length. The cable flexes smoothly around the entire curvature of the beam. Then attach the clip at the end, place the cable next to your tape and record the exact length.

Boone and Crockett scoring is based on comparing identical measurements on the left and right sides, subtracting any differences, then adding the length of the main beams' inside spread. Start by counting the points on each side. A point is a projection 1 inch or greater that is longer than it is wide. Then separate the typical and non-typical points on each side. Non-typical points are those that do not rise from the main beam (beneath the main beam, for example, or fork from a point).

The first measurement is the inside spread of the main beams. This is measured at right angles to the center and at the widest point between the beams. This and all other measurements are made in one-eighth-inch increments. Record this figure.

Now rule your paper into three columns. Label the columns Left, Right and Difference. As you make each succeeding pair of measurements, enter them in the appropriate column, subtract the difference between them and enter this figure in the Difference column.



Tape marks show how the points of a beam are numbered. The brow tine is No. 1. Point No. 5 is measured only once, as part of the main beam.

Measure the length of the main beam. This is easy to determine on a whitetail. Just follow the outside curve from the base of the antler to the top of the main beam. Determining the main beam on a mule deer is a little trickier. Start at the antler base, follow the outer curve up and forward. Then repeat the measurement on the other side's main beam. Enter the difference between the measurements in the Difference column.

Mark the base of each point with a pencil. Then measure the length of each typical point. On whitetails, all typical points must rise from the main beam. On muleys, determining the typical points can be a bit tougher. The first point is the brow tine (if present). The second point is on the fork rising from the main beam that reaches the highest point on the rack. The third point is the other point on the fork with point No. 2, measured from its attachment to point No. 2. The fourth point forms a fork with the tip of the main beam and also is measured from its attachment to the main beam.

**T**hen measure the similar point on the other beam and, again, subtract and enter the difference. Repeat for each pair of points.

Then take a series of four circumference measurements on each main beam, pair those numbers with the similar measurements on the other side and subtract the differences. On whitetails, the first circumference is at the narrowest point between the base and first point. The second is the narrowest place between the first and second points. The third circumference is between the second and third points. The fourth circumference is between the third and fourth points. If the fourth point is missing, take a circumference halfway between point No. 3 and the tip of the main beam.

On mule deer, the first circumference is again between the brow tine and the base. If the brow tine is missing, take both the first and second circumferences at the smallest point between the base and second point. The third circumference is the smallest point between the base of the second point and the base of the third point. The fourth circumference is the smallest point between the base of the second point and the base of the fourth point.

For both whitetails and muleys, only four circumferences are measured, even if more typical points are present. If a point is missing, take two measurements at the narrowest point near the missing point.

Then in another column record the length of each abnormal point. Total the column.

Now you're ready to determine the rack's total score. Add the column for the right beam. Then total the column for the left beam. Add the figures for the two beams to the inside spread measurement.

Then add the total of the difference column and the total for the abnormal (non-typical) points. Subtract this so-called deduction figure from the total of "plus" points (the right beam, left beam and inside spread). This figure is the final score for your rack.

You now have a figure that allows you to compare your buck with any other deer in the same category, no matter where the deer was taken. You also can determine if it's worth contacting an official scorer by checking the category in the accompanying table. This is the same basic scoring approach used for elk, black-tailed deer, and with a few minor modifications, even moose and caribou.

Sportsmen frequently make a couple of additional measurements just for the fun of it. One is the tip-to-tip spread. This is the distance between the tips of the main beams. Another measurement often made is the greatest spread,

which is made by placing the rack next to a wall with the rack squared and measuring to the widest point (farthest out from the wall).

While this is a simplified version of the Boone and Crockett system, it should get you pretty close to the true score. Non-typical racks are scored much the same way, but the total length of abnormal points is added rather than subtracted from the total. Differences are still calculated for typical points and the circumference measurements, however.

So grab your tape, take that rack down from the mantel and see where that buck of yours stacks up. You may be surprised.



### POPE & YOUNG (archery) and BOONE & CROCKETT (firearms) SCORERS

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\* Designates Boone & Crockett scorers only.

# HIGH GROUND



by Mike Cox

## For A Few Pounds More

**L**ate-season Canada goose hunting in Kansas is a double challenge. You have to outsmart the geese and bear the elements.

Two years ago a goose hunting buddy and I were preparing for such a challenge. The forecast was for cold, windy weather and a chance of snow. The geese were here, and the prospect of bagging a giant Canada was good. Geno and I talked about how good.

On the trip to our pit blind we both decided to hold out for our biggest birds yet. Neither of us had ever taken a goose that weighed more than 12 pounds; we felt this day would be it.

The sky was full of geese at daybreak, and our excitement grew. Several small bunches folded right into our decoy spread. None, however, were magnums.

A cold wind blew from the northwest. The ground was hard as a rock, and exposed our skin felt like it was being cut. Hot coffee was too hot the first sip, almost right the second, and cold by the third. Our calls were freezing up after each use, so they had to be stuffed under our numerous layers of clothing.

Geese continued to trade across the feed fields, but no magnums had given us a second look. About 10 o'clock our conversation went something like: "You know, small geese are better eating," and "The bigger they are, the harder they are to pick."

I went to the thermos for another cup of coffee, but the lid had frozen and I couldn't remove it. The temperature dropped as the wind grew stronger. Snow began to fall. Neither of us stayed seated as we kept trying to keep some circulation going.

Suddenly from behind us came a deep *honnkk!* Eight geese heading our way. One, however, dwarfed the others. It was the magnum of magnums. We both began calling. Immediately the giant bird set its wings, and two or three others followed the lead. You could see the big bird cock its head for a better look at our spread.

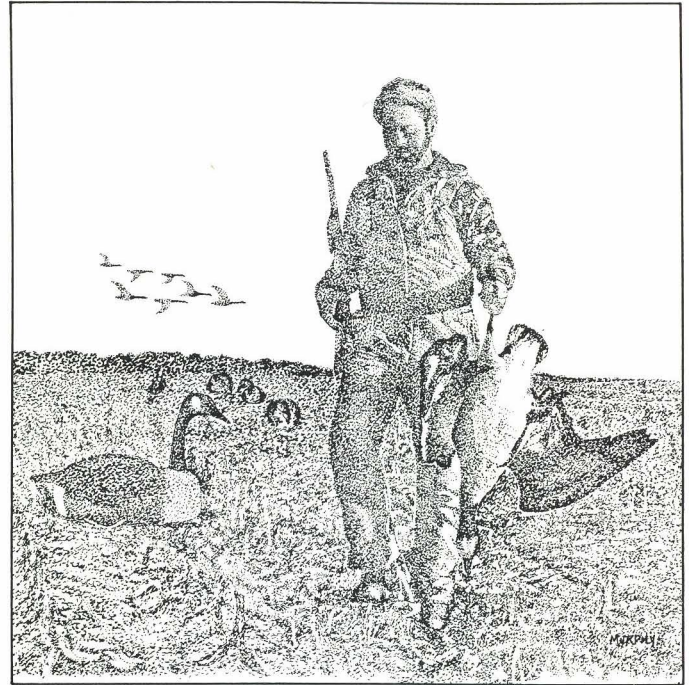
The other birds in the flock had not committed. Then suddenly the big bird returned to the formation and was gone almost as quickly as it had appeared.

The conversation now went like: "That was the biggest bird in this state," and "He looked like an airplane compared to the others." I jarred the lid loose from the thermos and quickly tucked the calls into warmer surroundings.

Soon a group of about a dozen geese approached from the east. As we called, they locked solid and floated into gun range. Their legs were down, yet neither of us made the call to raise and fire. These were Canadas, but not the magnums we'd been waiting for.

Shortly after noon, a group of about 20 Canadas began working our decoys. There were two big ones in this bunch — though not as big as the first one — and we decided to go for them if given the chance.

Their glide into gun range seemed to take forever. Time had become disoriented; an altered state of awareness had set in. The birds looked much closer than they actually were. A big goose will look in-range and still be 60 yards out.



Patti Murphy illustration

Maybe that's why the last 30 yards of an approaching goose are always the most tense.

In my early years at this sport, the excitement often overcame me and I'd stand only to see the goose was much too far. Then my objective was to simply bag a goose. It didn't matter how big or what technique I used. Pass shooting and pond jumping provided for a few geese, then came calling and decoys. A limit provided the challenge. On this cold, late-season goose hunt, however, the objective was a big Canada . . . one bigger than I'd ever taken.

I don't know who called the shot as the flock turned broadside at 35 yards, one giant in front, the other bringing up the rear. The guns seemed to come up in slow motion and fire at the same time. Both birds fell. They were big but not personal records.

On the way home the radio announcer said the chill index had plunged to 27 degrees below zero. Geno and I both went through the painful process of warming our hands and feet. I wasn't able to warm completely until after I'd showered and eaten some hot food.

There were moments throughout the day when I thought we were crazy to be going through so much pain for just a few pounds more. Never again would I punish myself like that. Never.

But as I started to doze off for a much-needed nap, the sharp, clear image of that super-big goose appeared, head turned looking over the decoys. Wings locked. Fully committed.

On second thought, never say never.





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Barcode and identification numbers