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*Wildlife & Parks*

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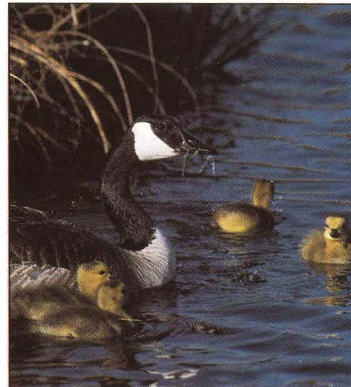
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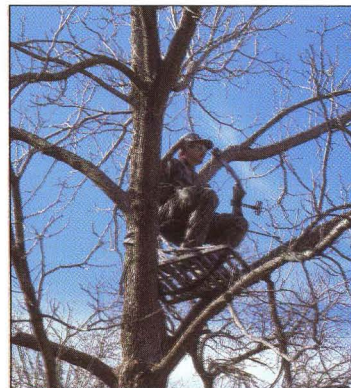
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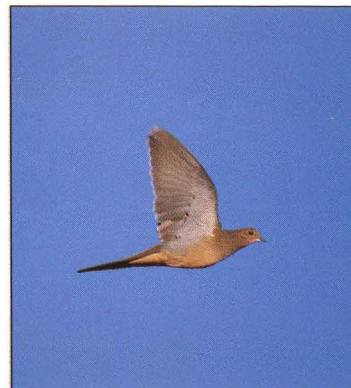
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**About the Covers**  
Front: A feeding Canada goose takes a break as it wades a shallow Ninescuh River backwater. Mike Blair photographed the scene with a 600mm lens from a waterlevel blind. f/8, @ 1/125  
Back cover: A bull elk strikes a regal pose near a wooded ravine at Maxwell Game Refuge near McPherson. Mike Blair took the December photo with a 400mm lens, f/11, @ 1/125.

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

**Equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from programs described herein is available to all individuals without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, age or handicap. Complaints of discrimination should be sent to Office of the Secretary, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, 900 Jackson St., Suite 502, Topeka, KS 66612.**



## Predator Watching

**O**n the usually uneventful drive to work one morning last summer, I was treated to a stunning sight. A gliding Swainson's hawk caught my eye. There's nothing unusual about Swainson's hawks, but this one was banking into a hard turn. Flying low over freshly worked wheat stubble, there was urgency in the hawk's movements.

I glanced back to the road, then quickly back to the hawk. It suddenly flared and then dropped a few feet straight down into the broken clods and upturned straw. The bird flutter-hopped and struck out with its talons, then flutter-hopped and struck again. I could tell by its posture after the second strike that it was breakfast time.

I felt lucky to have seen the brief life and death drama. In the few seconds it took me to rush by on the highway, I had witnessed real life. It brought excitement to my normally humdrum routine.

Predators are truly fascinating creatures. Man has always maintained a love-hate relationship with them. On one hand, predators are revered for their physical abilities and hunting stealth, and on the other hand many have been eliminated because of competition for the same prey, or worse, as threats. Man would rather kill an animal than live in fear of it.

But the attitude that all predators are bad is slowly changing. Where laws once encouraged killing predators, they now protect them. People are slowly recognizing that each predator fills an important piece of the ecology puzzle, and that to lose one is to leave the puzzle in danger of collapse.

Take, for example, the Swainson's hawk. My grandma would call it a chicken hawk. She calls all hawks chicken hawks because she grew up on a farm in southern Kansas, and hawks occasionally killed their chickens. To protect chickens, man killed hawks. In the 1950s, men believed hawks killed too many pheasants and quail, so they killed them in the name of conservation. Today we know that Swainson's hawks eat mostly rodents. In fact, they and other hawks are an important influence on rodent populations.

It sometimes takes time for a predator to gain man's respect. The coyote is a good example. For years the coyote was the target of concentrated extermination efforts, including trapping, shooting and poisoning. Even with a bounty on its head, the coyote not only survived, it actually increased its numbers and range. Today, many of those who hunted and hunt coyotes have the utmost



Dana Eastes illustration

respect for this versatile survivor.

I look forward to the fall hunting seasons because while I'm hunting, I am often treated to the glimpse of another predator at work. These wild predators are so much better at the hunt game than I, so much more in tune with their world, I am amazed. The Cooper's hawk mesmerizes me as it darts silently through twisted tree branch mazes. I'll stop whatever I'm doing to observe a coyote hunt mice in prairie grass. And chills run along my spine at the sight of a bobcat slinking along a trail. Wild predators teach me patience, perseverance and incredibly focused concentration. For that, and for the simple joy of seeing them, I am grateful.

Next time you're outside, watch for predators. It doesn't matter where you're at, there's probably a predator going about its business. The Mississippi kite catching a cicada in mid-air or the western kingbird maneuvering behind a fluttering moth both qualify. You'll marvel at the determination and efficiency with which they survive, and you'll appreciate the chance to see them in action.

**Mike Miller**  
Editor



# A Giant Comeback

by Marc Murrell

*Education and Public Affairs wildlife information representative, Valley Center*

photos by Mike Blair

**The giant Canada goose population is healthy and stable in North America, but the ancestors of modern birds that once nested in Kansas disappeared long ago. The restoration program is returning a resident nesting population of the big geese to Kansas.**

**T**he Canada goose, *Branta canadensis*, is the most widely distributed and well known member of the waterfowl family. It is found from the Atlantic to the Pacific and from Mexico to the arctic of Canada. There are approximately ten different races, or subspecies, of Canada geese. All are similar in coloration and are distinguished by size and vocalization.

Canadas have a black head and neck with white cheek patches that continue under the chin. The tail feathers are gray-brown to black and the bill, legs and feet are all black. Sexes have similar appearance with males usually being slightly larger. The cackling Canada goose is the smallest, weighing from 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>-3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> pounds and having a wingspan of 43 inches. The giant Canada is the larg-

est, weighing more than 20 pounds and spreading its wings to 6 feet.

Canada geese have several different types of communication calls. The most familiar call is a trumpeted, guttural *uh-whongh, un-whongh*, with the second note usually higher pitched. When cornered or threatened geese will hiss by exhaling air over an elevated tongue. A loud *honk* signals territorial ownership, alarm or greeting and helps maintain contact with flockmates in flight. A much quieter soft grunt *kum, kum* is used to communicate with a mate or, when the rhythm is increased, with goslings. A special greeting call made by the gander (male) to his mate similar to our "Honey, I'm home," is a loud, prolonged snoring like call.

Canada goose habitat is diverse and extends over a vast range de-

pending on the season. They are terrestrial in their search for food, primarily vegetarian and predominantly grazers. Shoots of grasses and sedges, berries, seeds and cultivated grains are at the top of the menu with an occasional insect, crustacean or fish also making the list. Feeding takes place in early morning and late evening. The rest of the day is spent lounging on open water, shorelines, sandbars or mudflats.

Because much of their preferred habitat has been destroyed or altered along migration corridors, Canada geese have radically altered migration routes and adapted to newly created refuges and feeding grounds. States north of Kansas have large res-

ervoirs and huge tracts of agricultural land that may cause geese to short-stop their migration and never reach Kansas.

The flocks of geese you see flying overhead are aggregates of different family groups in diagonal lines, forming the traditional V formation. Contrary to popular belief, the mature gander is not always the lead bird in formation. In fact, the lead position may change frequently during the flight. The biggest advantage of the V is wind reduction, and it also gives each bird a clear view of what's ahead.

Migration may occur day or night and altitude varies with weather conditions and distance between points

of departure and arrival. During severe weather, geese may fly at several hundred feet, however, in fair skies, pilots have reported geese as high as 8,000 feet. Under optimum conditions, geese may travel 50-100 miles between rests.

Canadas may pair and begin breeding at two years old, but most start at age three. Mates are usually chosen before the birds arrive at the breeding area. The pair may stay together for life, however, in some instances geese have chosen new mates for no apparent reason, and if one of a pair dies, the other will take another partner.

Sometime in April, depending on the temperature, the goose (female) will build the nest in a remote, undisturbed area that is usually elevated. Muskrat or beaver houses, gravel bars, islands, rocky ledges and tops of dikes all provide nest sites. Nest building begins two or three days before the first egg is laid. It begins with a bowl scraped in the substrate and lined with vegetation. Down is added about the time the second or third egg is laid and is added until incubation begins and hatching occurs.

Clutch size varies from one to 10 eggs but usually averages about five. Eggs are oval, smooth and creamy white. The goose is a very attentive mother, rising every hour or so to reposition the eggs and nest materials to ensure complete incubation. If the nest is destroyed or disturbed early in incubation, renesting may occur. The eggs usually hatch in 26-30 days. The gander acts as security guard and fiercely defends the mate and nest throughout incubation.

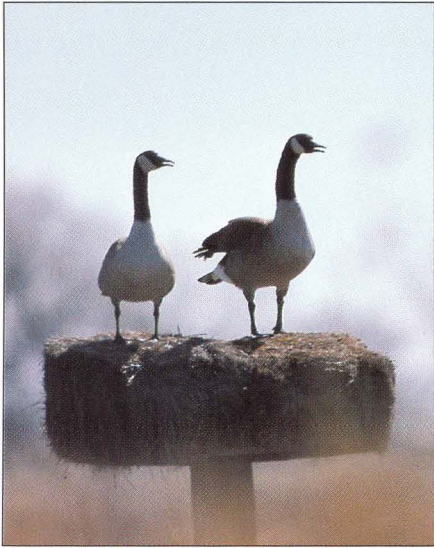
Peeping can be heard within the shell 48-60 hours prior to hatching, and it may take the gosling 8-36 hours to exit the shell after the first hole is made. The goose and goslings may stay in the nest the first night before relocating. The young goslings grow quickly and may be similar in size to the adults at two months. The goslings fledge in seven to nine weeks.

Historically, Canada geese nested across Kansas. Early settlers utilized geese as food, raising captured geese in captivity and hunting them year-round. This coupled with the destruction of critical habitat, caused



Parent geese aggressively protect the nest and young. The hissing demonstrated by this goose is a warning to any intruder. Shortly after hatching, the young will leave the nest and accompany the parents.





Elevated structures provide geese with predator-proof and flood-safe nesting sites.

the decline of several subspecies of geese common to Kansas. In fact, the giant subspecies nearly disappeared around 1906 and was thought to be extinct. This theory was happily disproved more than 50 years later when Dr. Harold C. Hanson of the Illinois Natural History Survey discovered a flock of giants wintering in Rochester, Minn. Later investigations uncovered flocks of giants scattered throughout the prairie provinces of Canada and certain areas of the northern U.S. Following these discoveries, many state and federal conservation agencies began restoration programs to return giant Canadas to their states.

In the late 1950s and 1960s, Kansas implemented restoration projects at Kirwin National Wildlife Refuge and Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Management Area. Wing-clipped birds were obtained and maintained in large pens. The flightless birds served as decoys to encourage migrating flocks to stopover. In theory, a wintering tradition would be established and some of the wild birds would inevitably nest in suitable areas surrounding the restoration sites. Young return to nest in the same area they hatch and fledge, and a resident flock of wild geese would be established. This initial program was successful for a period of time but ended in the early 1970s due to diminishing habitat at Kirwin and poor water conditions at Cheyenne Bottoms.



Fiercely territorial, two ganders battle over a trespass dispute. Most territorial disputes are handled vocally, with loud honks used to dispel intruders.



Once feared extinct, the giant Canada is alive and well in North America today. Many states, like Kansas, have implemented restoration programs designed to increase the number of birds nesting locally.



In 1980, subsequent restoration projects began throughout the state. The Department obtained surplus wild geese from Colorado, Wisconsin, Illinois, North Dakota and Nebraska. These birds were kept at the Marais des Cygnes Wildlife Area, the Pratt Hatchery and Cedar Bluff Reservoir. Artificial nest structures were constructed on floating platforms or on poles above the water to minimize losses due to predation and flooding. The young produced at these restoration sites are rounded up each summer before they can fly. They are then transported to farm ponds and lakes in the area and released. When the released birds mature, they return to the release sites to nest, creating a pattern for future generations of Kansas-hatched geese to follow.

Since the program began, other areas of the state have been added to the restoration effort. The South and Central Flint Hills areas near Emporia, the Mined Land Wildlife Areas in southeastern Kansas, Fall River, El Dorado, Cheney and Glen Elder reservoirs have received geese. In 1989, 1,931 geese were released, bringing the total number of geese

released in these areas to 9,693. That number does not include the geese produced in outlying areas by birds from the initial release.

As with most restoration projects, some of the introduction sites were closed to hunting for five years after the initial releases. This gives the birds a limited amount of protection to expand and maintain natural production.

The restoration program has been successful. The first limited dark goose season was held in 1987-1988 in the Marais des Cygnes unit. Last year free permits to hunt dark geese were issued by drawing to 750 hunters. Two hundred permits were issued in the Southern Flint Hills unit. Hunters in the Marais des Cygnes unit harvested 381 geese for a success rate of 66 percent, while 99 geese were harvested in the Southern Flint Hills unit for a success rate of 70 percent.

Public hunting areas managed by the Department of Wildlife and Parks received most of the hunting pressure. At Marais des Cygnes, 69 percent of the active hunters indicated they hunted public land while 72

percent of the hunters in the Flint Hills did the same.

Since sportsmen were responsible for funding this program, it's only fair they receive part of the reward of this comeback story. Hunters in these two units spent a total of 1,640 days afield and spent nearly \$43,000 in pursuit of Canada geese. Funds from hunting licenses, waterfowl stamps, federal excise taxes on sporting equipment, and private or group contributions have all been used to bring this majestic bird back to Kansas.

But sportsmen aren't the only ones who reap benefits from this successful return. Photographers, wildlife artists, birdwatchers, naturalists and anyone who spends time outdoors all receive a great deal of pleasure from these birds.

Whether you're a bird watcher or hunter, you should appreciate the effort of both the resource and the resourceful that brought this truly awe-inspiring bird back to Kansas . . . hopefully to stay for good. ♡



To hear and see a flock of Canada geese passing overhead in the familiar V formation is truly a privilege. If Kansas' Canada goose program continues its current success, the sight will become much more frequent.

# Three Years Later

by Robert L. Meinen  
*Secretary*



Mike Blair photo

**It's been three years since the Fish and Game Commission and the Parks and Resources Authority were combined. The now fully functional Department is ready to start a new era in resource management.**

**W**hen Gov. Mike Hayden signed the executive order in 1987, the Kansas Fish and Game Commission and the Kansas Parks and Resources Authority were officially combined into one Department of Wildlife and Parks . . . on paper. There was still a lot of work to do before the new Department functioned as the Governor intended.

With the reorganization of the agencies, Gov. Hayden brought Alan Wentz from the National Wildlife Federation in Washington D.C. to serve as Assistant Secretary and me from the Idaho Parks and Recreation Department to be Secretary of the Department. Ahead of us was the formidable task of molding two separate, but often overlapping agencies into one working department. This process is now complete, and the new Department is fully functional. Previously overlapping missions of the two agencies have been blended, and I feel the Department is now in a much stronger position to serve the outdoor needs of Kansans.

Through reorganization, adminis-

tration within the Department has been streamlined. The restructuring has reduced the previous six divisions to five, established five common regional boundaries instead of six, reduced funding for administration and relocated excess administrative positions to field level, public service areas.

Another monumental, but necessary task was the recodification of the former agencies' statutes with the Kansas Legislature. Kansas now has the most up-to-date wildlife-, park- and outdoor recreation-related laws in the U.S. All Department regulations are in the process of being reinstated under new laws, and this is about 75 percent complete.

Once the reorganization process was underway, our most pressing resource problem was renovating the Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area. This critically important wetland treasure had fallen on hard times in the 1980s, and it was clear that Gov. Hayden was personally interested in this project. The Department worked with various state conservation organizations to create public aware-

ness and gain support for Cheyenne Bottoms and successfully listed the area with the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance. Cheyenne Bottoms is the first non-federal wetland to be listed with the Convention. Nearly \$5 million of state and federal money has been designated for renovation of the Bottoms, and the Department is well along in developing a system to better deliver, conserve and manage the area's lifeblood: water. Additional manpower, equipment and attention have already been directed to one of the most important wetlands in the Western Hemisphere.

One of the Department's goals has not only been to protect the state's resources and provide public recreation, but to diversify available outdoor opportunities. The Department serves a wide variety of constituents and wants to continue to provide for the traditional users, as well as attract new ones. To do this the Department must investigate and develop new opportunities so that the public continues to enjoy quality recreation without harm to the resource. This

involves further development of existing areas and the acquisition of new lands.

In 1989 the Department finalized a lease agreement transferring 13,000 acres of the Hillsdale State Park and Wildlife Area to the state of Kansas. Since then approximately \$2.6 million has been made available to begin the construction of campgrounds, boat ramps, roads and other facilities.

In the past three years, the Department has acquired a total 2,237 acres at seven sites around the state. Six of these areas, because of their value as wetlands, were purchased with cooperation and matching funds from Ducks Unlimited. The Department has also worked with several federal agencies to assume management of federal lands and to protect important natural resource features on lands that are to be sold at public auction.

To additionally improve the public's outdoor recreation, the Department implemented long-range plans for all Department-managed lands. Each area will have its own plan developed to give management direction for current and future staff. Not only is it the first time that such individual, long-range plans have been made, but the public was allowed input throughout this planning process.

There's good news from the Milford Fish Hatchery. Many of the significant management problems have been corrected, and the hatchery is producing more fish than ever. Additional modifications are underway or planned and should increase production even more. Other state hatcheries have undergone considerable renovation while still producing the stocking requests for state waters. Last spring, the Department stocked twice as many wipers, saug-eye, walleye and striped bass than in any of the past five years.

Because more than 97 percent of Kansas is privately owned, the Department has taken an active role in developing and maintaining wildlife habitat on these private lands. The Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program (WHIP) has been revitalized and now has 3,754 cooperators with 1.5 million acres of land enrolled. More than \$300,000 has been given to landowners for improvements and habitat plantings on Conservation Re-

serve Program lands. A new position for agricultural liaison was established to provide direct communication with statewide agricultural groups on private land improvements, animal damage control and related topics.

The Department has cooperated with the Department of Corrections and Cooperative Extension Service at Kansas State University to develop a wildlife habitat center at the El Dorado Honor Camp on the El Dorado State Park grounds. The Center provides plant materials, equipment and a variety of bird houses, feeders and other items for wildlife habitat improvement programs.

The future looks exciting for Kansas deer hunters. More than 70,000 deer hunting permits were issued last year, providing more Kansans than ever before the opportunity to hunt deer. Innovative management techniques have been developed to make it easier to obtain one or more permits. The management program has been extremely successful and Kansas boasts one of the highest hunting success rates in the nation at nearly 70 percent. In addition, Kansas is recognized as one of the very best states in the U.S. for trophy-sized bucks. Not only has the deer program worked to provide more quality hunting opportunities, it has also directed efforts to work with landowners who suffer crop damage from too many deer.

One of the most gratifying wildlife success stories is that of the wild turkey. In 25 years, turkeys have gone from being nonexistent in the state to viable populations in nearly every county. The turkey management program has provided nearly unlimited hunting opportunity in the spring season. Growing turkey numbers have also allowed the Department to trade surplus turkeys from areas of highest populations to other states. Pronghorn antelope, Canada geese and elk have been received in return.

Protecting the states wild resources through law enforcement is a charge the Department takes seriously. To improve law enforcement efforts, the Department established a full-time special investigations section. The section investigates major wildlife crimes that cannot be effectively handled with conventional law


enforcement techniques. The program has successfully broken major commercial wildlife crime rings in Kansas.

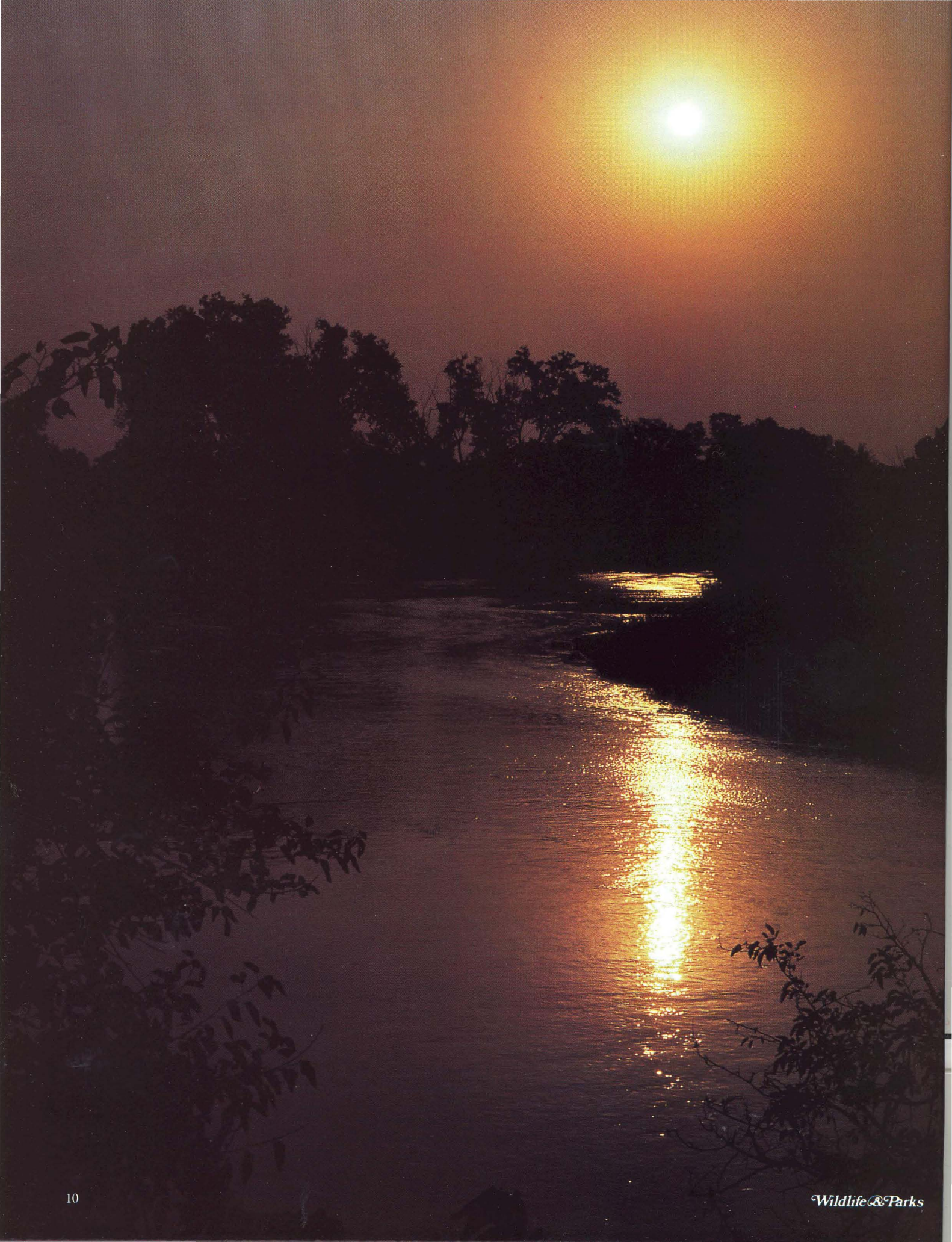
The Law Enforcement Division has also increased its forensics training and investigation capabilities and provided the necessary equipment to officers to utilize these new techniques. Selective enforcement operations such as the decoy deer program are now routine. They have been very successful in deterring troublesome wildlife violations such as road hunting.

Another deterrent to wildlife law violators was a new law passed by the Legislature that makes illegal commercialization in wildlife a felony.

Through a continuing effort to educate Kansans about their environment and wild resources, the Milford Education Center was constructed in 1989. The center has been open on a part-time basis providing tours, small meetings and Milford Fish Hatchery tours while construction of the wildlife displays continues. Visitation is expected to increase greatly when the educational displays are completed later this year.

Other Department improvements have meant better and more efficient service to the public such as establishing full-service regional offices, and streamlining service procedures.

I believe we are at a crossroad for wild resources as we move into the 1990s. There will be critical challenges ahead, and our decisions and accomplishments will ultimately affect future generations. Two key areas of concern for the Department will be providing Kansans with quality natural resource information and education and securing adequate funding to achieve the Department's goals and mission. Ideally, future Kansans will enjoy the same outstanding natural resources we have today. I realize that not all of our endeavors have been glowing successes, but in light of what we've accomplished in just three short years, I see a bright future for outdoor recreation and natural resources in Kansas. 



# River Of Life

by Rob Manes

*Parks and Public Lands staff supervisor*

photos by Mike Blair

**Just a meager prairie stream by some standards, the Smoky Hill River enriches the lives of Kansans all along its path. Follow its journey from a dry stream bed at the western border to its confluence with the Kansas River.**

I was a crocodile. Only my sinister eyes were visible above the moving water. Pieces of drifting cottonwood fluff stuck to my scowling eyelids. I waited for my prey.

I was a mountain man too, lying low in the water to escape my murderous enemies. I knew I'd be safe in the river. It was my friend and keeper . . .

As I grew older, this stretch of river became still more dear to me. Its sandy banks provided refuge for a confused college student—a place to escape preppyness and bad grades. Lately, it's become a place where I can dodge adult worries and be a youngster again. And it remains a family place.

The river conjures both memories and anticipation. I know it brings white bass in spring, channel catfish when it rains and flatheads on sultry summer nights. It offers deer and squirrels, and countless other wild things and wild times for my pleasure—my sanity, my peace.

Maybe the Smoky Hill River is no more special than any other, but I've witnessed its blessings to people all along its way. It's not an exaggeration to say that it brings life to people. More important, though, is the goodness it brings to lives. The Smoky Hill is truly one of Kansas' fine

streams, from its strife-ridden birth in the state's western end to its confluence with the Kansas River near Junction City.

The Smoky Hill was born in the high plains near the Colorado-Kansas border, where its now dry channel cuts through Kansas' youngest rock outcrops. The river runs here only when it rains. During rare periods of flow, its waters meander down from this highest region of the state, dropping some 1,800 feet over 260 miles to the river's end. A few dry days send the Smoky's water deep under the sand to join the endangered underground water.

Thirty miles east, the Smoky Hill cuts across the northeast corner of Wallace County and enters Logan County. It angles just south of Russell Springs, where the Butterfield Stage passengers and crew once found cool rest along its green, grassy banks.

Did those dusty travelers imagine that their river friend would be sacrificed for the price of irrigated crops?

Twenty more miles east, the river is joined by the also-dry Ladder Creek just before crossing into Gove County. This marks the western extreme of the Smoky Hills, which cover all of northcentral Kansas. These rolling grasslands were pre-

sumably so named because they are frequently blurred by natural atmospheric haze. Monument Rocks, huge Cretaceous Age chalk pillars just north of the river, are the eroded remains of great inland sea floors laid down more than 100 million years before the first European killed a bison. From Monument Rocks, the river flows almost straight east. With few trees on its banks, its path cuts through countless miles of shortgrass prairie. Pronghorn antelope, mule deer, coyote and collared lizard take refreshment from the river whenever it flows. Thirty more miles east, the Smoky passes just south of Castle Rock, another towering remnant of a long-gone ocean. It illustrates the passage of time in its strata.

Crossing into Trego County, the river remains only an ephemeral shadow of its historic abundance. Though flowing water is rare in this stretch, a few beavers persist. Their dams store water that allows a few hardy fish and some other creatures to survive the blistering Kansas summers. Through most of Trego County, the Smoky remains an arid, sandy signature between occasional sheared chalky limestone bluffs on either side. The eroded bluffs themselves are evidence of the former prowess of the river. But the Smoky



The first evidence of the Smoky Hill River is found near the Colorado-Kansas border. Although the river rarely flows here, the dry bed is a reminder of past glory.

remains underground here, because someone deemed modern amenities more important to the quality of life.

A little farther downstream, the river surfaces in an altered state—with “help” from the United States Bureau of Reclamation. A huge earthen dam stores the river’s meager water to form Cedar Bluff Reservoir. Though the lake is 40 feet deficient in water, people flock to its state parks from far off to partake of its fish, its waterfowl, its deer and its quenching oasis. Just before the Smoky’s channel enters Cedar Bluff Reservoir, it passes a feedlot. Its banks are lined with dense stands of trees on either side. Great yellow-white soft limestone cliffs, known as “the Chalk Bluffs,” beckon rock climbers and other adventurers.

Below the Cedar Bluff dam, an old fish hatchery certifies that there were days of more abundant water. Twenty miles downstream from the dam, at the small town of Schoenchen, the river is again most often dry. Here the channel is broader, flanked distantly with rounded, grass-covered bluffs. An abandoned sand pit sits at the river’s Highway 183 bridge. Oil wells dot the landscape north and south of the river, and a few leaking storage tanks threaten the river with their black or

salty poisons. Two-rut pasture roads cross the dry channel sand without bridges. The Hays City wells struggle to pull water from the Smoky’s once rich alluvium, and send it ten miles north to a thirsty town.

Just east of the Russell County line, the Smoky comes to life again. A trickle of water glimmers in the shade of thin tree lines on both sides. A few beaver have found this water suitable, and create larger pools with their finely engineered dams. It is about here that Big Creek, which comes from Hays, occasionally contributes its meager flows to the Smoky Hill River. Both streams cut through gently rolling pasture lands, their treeless banks looking much as they did when buffalo, elk and pronghorns grazed the land. An old iron bridge high above the water indicates that the river might have spilled over its banks many years ago. The land is cluttered with oil wells pumping the remains of great buried swamplands that existed on the surface about 300 million years ago. Some geologists speculate that the river once bent south here, feeding into Cheyenne Bottoms—that its path was diverted northward by new wrinkles in the Earth’s face millions of years ago. Evidence that the Smoky was once connected to the Arkansas River drainage via the Bottoms exists in fish species found in the Arkansas but not in the Smoky (and vice versa). Fish

from *both* rivers inhabit the small streams between them.

Bunker Hill—a small, unpaved town north of this stretch of the Smoky—overlooks a wide valley. Geologists say this valley is an ancient river bed, through which the Saline River once joined the Smoky Hill.

Crossing into Ellsworth County, the Smoky becomes a river again. Near Wilson, many fine tributaries donate to it. Some of these fine little prairie streams cut through steep-walled, white limestone canyons. Here the Smoky Hills are covered with tallgrass. Whitetail outnumber mule deer, and greater prairie chicken decorate the skies. The river offers catfish to those willing to try for them.

Through the tiny town of Black Wolf, it flows as a real river. From here it’s just a few short miles to the place where I learned to love the Smoky. High, steep banks witness that the river is alive and powerful here—also that modern man has inflicted his wounds upon it. Here and there, large flats of limestone lay on the sandy bottom, with clear water swirling around them. The river bounces off the adjacent hillsides in gently rounded curves, but maintains its relentless easterly direction.

A lone sign remembers the first site of Ellsworth just east of the present-day town. Built too close to the life-giving river, it was erased by a late-1800s torrent. It amazes me that modern man continues to settle close to the river and then curses it in fits of money throwing because floods carry away his worldly treasures.

Between Ellsworth and Kanopolis, the river bottom’s sands have covered many of my barefootprints. I remember my anger at the Smoky running too deep and muddy to allow a fishing trip with my grandad. I remember roaring sandbar campfires and stories told while waiting for flatheads to take trotline bait. I remember sadness and anger when fertilizer leaked into the river. I remember warm spring days with good friends in pursuit of spawning white bass. I remember the last deer I took with a rifle. I remember turkeys in the stream-side oaks. I remember cutting firewood with three generations of kin. I remember a day of poor fishing but good talking with my brother. I



More than flowing water is lost when the river dries. Trees and other wildlife habitat eventually die and disappear.

remember some of what I owe the Smoky Hill River.

Downstream . . .

From Ellsworth the river makes wide sweeps north and south, but continues mainly east. Its banks are heavily forested with cottonwood, oak, walnut, ash, mulberry and elm. At Kanopolis, several sandstone buildings mark the site of old Fort Harker, an Indian outpost that must have been situated purposely near the river. Just a little farther east, the Smoky falls slack behind the Kanopolis Reservoir dam. At the lake's upper end, great sandstone cliffs form deep grass-bottomed canyons. The canyons now covered by the lake must have been truly lovely. The Dakota Sandstone, left here by prehistoric winds and rivers, has been eroded away to form strange, giant mushroom-shaped formations found just north of the reservoir. These sands were deposited during the Cretaceous Period, 100 million years ago, when great reptiles roamed the region.

The Kanopolis dam formed the first such large impoundment in Kansas. Built in 1949 by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, it is also the site of the first Kansas state park.

Below the dam, the Smoky Hill River has left its tracks all across the adjacent farmland.

Its old paths are marked by numerous oxbows, old looping channels that have been cut off and abandoned by floods. The river travels southeast, just into McPherson County, gracing Marquette and Lindsborg, before heading north to Salina.

The people of Salina show their wisdom in paying homage to the stream each year in the Smoky Hill River Festival. Music, parties, dancing and arts all salute the life the Smoky carried to this prairie city.

Leaving Salina, the Smoky resumes its eastward trek, past the ancient burial grounds of a people who surely respected it more. Near the Saline-Dickinson county line, it becomes a Flint Hills stream. Deeper and wider, it offers the riverman big flathead catfish, late-winter ducks and a dazzling array of wild things.

Near Solomon, as elsewhere, farm land has ventured too close to the river, causing its banks to shift and fall away. Old cars and farm machinery, piled against eroding banks, ruin the river for looking, but preserve the farmland a while longer.


At Abilene, a two-mile-long man-made oxbow has been created by one of the many ill-advised channelization projects. This engineering ritual of straightening a stream to alleviate flooding and erosion actually only intensifies these problems downstream. Never-the-less, the false oxbow is created and a crude crossing allows a tractor into the fertile bottom land the river once protected.

Near Chapman, the Smoky is a big river. It becomes wide and flat, like the Kansas River it is about to feed. Great oxbows are scrawled everywhere—some new ones with deep channels and many trees, and some old ones all but faded into the flat river valley. A dredging operation sends the sands of the river's erosional work to building sites, roads and sandboxes.

The early city fathers of Junction City blasphemed the Smoky Hill River (surely out of ignorance, not malice) by putting their not-so-sanitary landfill on its banks. The river is not as clear here as it was in the Smoky Hills, but it remains a beautiful piece of jewelry on the face of Kansas.

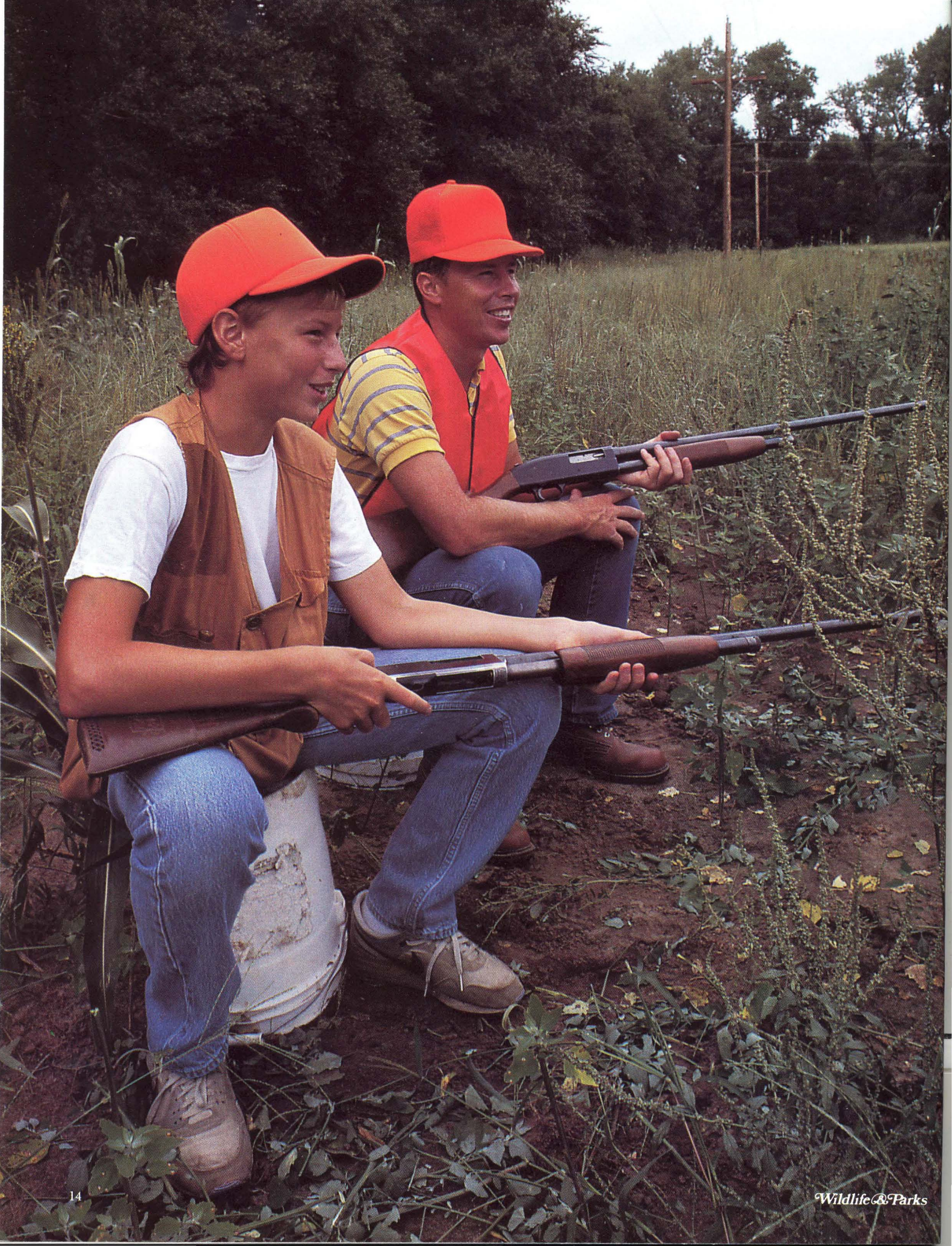
Not far past Junction City, the Smoky mixes with the larger, more powerful Kansas River, rolling with it toward the Missouri, the Mississippi and the Gulf of Mexico. Its waters, at this point have witnessed a great deal of living. They carry my memories and many, many others'. The river carries also anticipation and dreams . . . the future.

How many lives does one such common river bless?

It blesses mine. 



Without trees and other vegetation to stabilize the banks, high flows will steal away the valuable farm land, depositing tons of silt into the once clear river.





# A Blast From The Past And Into The Future: Youth Hunting

by Roy A. Grimes

*Parks and Public Lands, Region 4 Supervisor*

photos by Mike Blair

**Teaching youngsters about hunting is not only important to their development as conservationists but is also vital to the hunting tradition. Department-sponsored youth hunts may provide an ideal opportunity for parents and children alike.**

I nudged my six year old, "Psst, there's a squirrel in this shag-bark hickory tree beside us." Kris followed my gaze to the top of the tree, and sure enough, he could see the gray squirrel fetching another green nut. "Can you get him Dad," he whispered? "Yea, we're close enough, and he has no idea we're here. I'll steady my aim on this tree trunk and bring him down." I located the bushytail in my rifle scope and eased the gun's safety to the fire position. But before I could squeeze the trigger, our would-be supper dropped the morsel and jumped to an adjacent red oak, never looking back as he headed for parts unknown. I was flabbergasted! I *hadn't* moved too quickly, and the rodent *couldn't* have heard my safety's click. I looked at Kris, and the mystery unraveled. The youngster *had* heard the safety's click and immediately threw his hands to his ears to buffer the crack of the rifle. I advised my boy that he'd probably get a Christmas card from that particular tree rat. He responded with his standard, "Whoops, sorry Dad."

A couple of years later, same son, different quarry — we were dove hunting along a state wildlife area

sunflower field. Doves are pretty hard to hit. The fair aim will average 3-4 shots per dove while the worst performance I've heard of was 78 rounds to finally bring down one of these speedsters. My then eight-year-old discovered a method or two that doubled the number of shots I needed to pot a dove. The "ole hands thrown to the ears and rapidly pointing at incoming birds" both succeeded in providing ample warning to the doves which responded by darting to warp speed.

Like many sportsmen, I hunt today because my father introduced me to squirrel and rabbit hunting when I was only four or five years old. Of course I wasn't a very active participant of these early hunts. I didn't get to actually pack a gun until I was about 10, but I certainly enjoyed tagging along with Dad. The sights and sounds of the early morning squirrel woods were exciting and intriguing. It was nearly impossible to step where dad stepped and avoid cracking a twig or rustling a leaf (and his feet were so much larger than mine!). He would only look back to "Ssshhh" me on every fourth or fifth extra-loud twig snap. The highlight of the morning for me was to scramble to the

drop zone of Dad's most recent accurate shot. He probably thought I was going to wear the hide off the squirrel as I intently examined its whiskers, the orange teeth and those amazing feet that allowed the beast to leap like Tarzan from limb to limb.

While reviewing literature as I prepared to write this article, I was amazed at the number of youth (under age 16) that hunt in the U.S. Of the 16.7 million hunters in the United States, more than 1.8 million are under the age of 16. Of the 359,000 *Kansas* youngsters, 26,000 (7 percent) hunt. The percentage of youth that hunt in our state is nearly twice the national average of 4 percent. However, we don't come close to the 12 percent to 14 percent that hunt in the more rural states of Mississippi, Wyoming and Arkansas. The largely urban populations in New York, New Jersey and California send only 1 percent of their youth to the hunting fields each year.

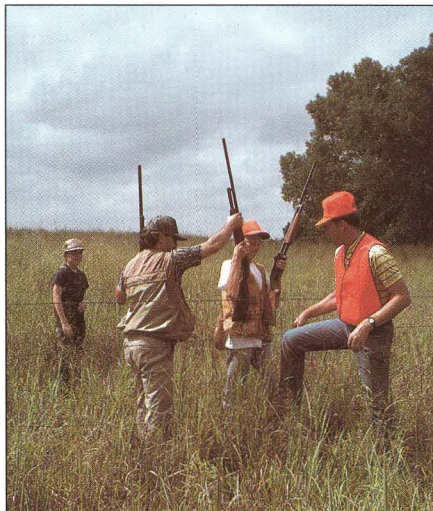
Even though many parents or guardians are introducing their youngsters to hunting, the numbers are declining. It is believed that this decline is the result of a migration to urban areas from the farms and countryside. Indeed, surveys indicate that

7 percent of rural youth hunt, compared to only 3 percent of urban kids. As access to hunting areas gets more difficult and as parents and children become distracted by "city-life," the tendency to participate in hunting is reduced.

Statistics indicate that most adult hunters are born as youngsters (another Einstein here?). Many hunters (3 percent) were first introduced to hunting as young as six years of age, however, most discover hunting between the ages of 12 and 15 (42 percent). In fact, more than 76 percent of hunters began this age old sport before their 16th birthday.

Not all citizens are concerned with a decline in hunters across the country. In fact, some would be overjoyed and even claim credit for the reduction. However, there are some very important values and benefits provided to wildlife management and to one's personal development through hunting. Sportsmen have always been and continue to be the most important contributors to the success of modern wildlife management. Many wildlife species that were nearly wiped out by government programs (buffalo and predator control), habitat destruction and 19th century market shooting have been restored via the avid support of the hunting fraternity. Pronghorn antelope, elk, wild turkey, wood duck and white-tailed deer are all tremendous wildlife management success stories. As a matter-of-fact, no species has ever been endangered or threatened with extinction by modern, managed sport hunting.

Other values of hunting are somewhat abstract but no less important. Youngsters that spend time hunting with their parents or other elders develop important skills such as patience, discipline, responsibility and self-dependence. Having presented hundreds of programs to school children, it has become obvious to me that students who exhibit the most complete and accurate understanding of our natural world are either hunters themselves or at the very least, close to active hunters. Even though I spend a tremendous amount of time with my son — seven years of little league, archery tournaments, class projects and even Nintendo marathons — none of these



Young hunters are instructed on safe hunting practices before the special hunt begins.

activities come close to the level of interaction that Kris and I enjoy while hunting *and* talking about it. He understands his responsibility to the game he hunts; to be respectful of wildlife and take care to kill as humanely as possible. He accepts and appreciates his responsibility to managers of private as well as public lands. Finally, he takes serious his charge to protect himself and those around him when handling firearms.

The Kansas Department of Wildlife & Parks is very interested in supporting and encouraging the proper introduction of Kansas youth to the hunting sports. Kansas was one of the first of now many states to require hunter education certification. Any would be hunter, born on or after July 1, 1957 must attend a minimum of 10 hours of specifically designed hunter education instruction. Our state has more than 1,000 volunteer instructors that train 13,000-14,000 students each year. About half of these students are youngsters between the ages of 10 and 15. By the way, these beginning student hunters do quite well in the courses. Although it takes an 84 percent on the final exam to be certified, the average youth scores between 88 percent and 92 percent on the test. This is a testament to the desire and interest these students have in learning and exhibiting the correct attitudes and techniques of a responsible and safe hunter.

While the Department has long been offering fishing clinics to en-

courage youthful anglers, it hasn't been as active in providing specialized youth hunting programs. Last year a youth dove hunt was offered at the Byron Walker Wildlife Area west of Kingman. Other state wildlife areas plan to offer more of these opportunities in the future. Hunted game might include squirrels, deer, waterfowl, doves and rabbits. Generally, a youth hunt is a controlled situation where only youth and their parents or guardians are permitted to participate. These hunts usually begin with some type of pre-hunt orientation. Hunter education certification is required, and hunt conditions are tailored to be especially attractive to beginning hunters. While the fathers, mothers, grandfathers, uncles, etc. that accompany the youth are usually permitted to hunt alongside their children, most accompany the youngster in an effort to provide guidance, encouragement and support. These accompanying adults enjoy a certain rekindling of the hunting spirit themselves, as they recall the times, places and people that are part of their hunting memory.

The young hunters don't normally "fill their daily bag limit." Filling the bag isn't the purpose of the hunt, and the kids know it. Instead the youngsters and adult partners share a special hunt experience in a controlled, quality situation. Lessons are learned, relationships grow tighter, and if some skill and luck come together, a meal or two of dove or squirrel will be enjoyed later.

To further encourage participation by youth hunters, the Department has recently changed certain big game hunting regulations. Beginning this fall, youth between the ages of 12-14 can hunt turkeys if they are accompanied by a licensed adult. I am almost as excited as my 11-year-old at the prospect of him joining me in the turkey blind next spring after his 12th birthday. If you happen to be turkey hunting in southcentral Kansas and your gobbler spooks for no apparent reason, look around and you might see a middle-aged father trying to get his son's hands off his ears. ♡



# center section

Edited by Mark Shoup



## LETTERS

### BUCK STOP ASSENT

Editor:

A friend in my office is from Kansas and lets me read his copies of *KANSAS WILDLIFE AND PARKS* from time to time. This morning, I read the May/June, 1990, issue, and surprise, surprise, the editorial on the first page sounded familiar.

I recently sent a letter to the Los Angeles Times newspaper saying, among other things, that "hunters of today know that raptors play an important part in keeping the balance of nature. Hunters don't destroy raptors. Vandals and slob with guns do, but they aren't hunters."

You can plainly see that we have thought the same thoughts and have taken the time to put them down on paper. Keep up the good work.

Pete Struck  
Los Angeles, Calif.

### ROMANIAN READER

Editor:

I am a 36-year-old English and geography teacher in Romania. Since the national uprising ousted the Communist Party and abolished the dictatorship in December, life has changed in many ways in Romania.

After many years of slavery and darkness, our people were given a chance: could we break the chains? We made it last December. Thank the Lord, we are free now! We are free to gather among foreigners, free to talk to them. In the past, such behavior would be reported to the omnipresent secret police of Nicolae Ceaucescu, the executed president.

Now we can get in touch with other people; we are free to write them, to know

them better. The year 1990 has marked the beginning, however precariously, of the real democracy in our country. But living standards are going to get much worse before they get better. Inflation and unemployment is the price that will be exacted for quickly transforming economics to free market systems.

However, since the new government has inherited a disastrous financial situation from the ex-president, it is unlikely we will receive any foreign currency until 1991.

A few days ago, thanks to the American Library in Bucharest that I was not allowed to visit in the past, I learned about *KANSAS WILDLIFE AND PARKS* magazine. I am very fond of nature, and I have recently joined the newly created Association for the Environmental Conservation in Romania.

Gentlemen, I would be very happy to read your publication. With all due respect, I ask you from the bottom of my heart to enroll me on your subscription list during 1990, free of payment obligation. Should it not be possible, please send me one issue at least, or those issues which are already out of print.

Considering the new circumstances in our country, I hope you see my request as an historic record and make an exception.

Dan Popa  
Bucharest, Romania

### EMPLOYEES & LICENSES

Editor:

Concerning a letter that Mrs. Carol Jean Garlow wrote in the May/June issue of *KANSAS WILDLIFE AND PARKS* magazine (Page 17) called "Military Licenses," I totally agree with her. Military

do get 30 days leave time, but most have children and they cannot take them out of school for 30 days, so they get to stay only seven to 10 days in the fall.

Wildlife and Parks personnel live in state, so they can take advantage of entire hunting and fishing seasons. I would like to know if Wildlife and Parks people have to buy licenses or if that is a fringe benefit they get.

You people probably have no idea how many military people took advantage of this [not having to buy a license].

Ray Bussell  
Osawatomie

Dear Mr. Bussell:

**Wildlife and Parks employees, regardless of their position, have to purchase all licenses required of the general public. They also have to apply for special permits, just like everyone else. I have yet to hear a Department employee suggest it should be otherwise. -Shoup**

### "PUBLIC" INFORMATION

Editor:

It has recently been brought to my attention that the Department of Wildlife and Parks no longer provides information to hunters and trappers on who is buying fur in Kansas. The reasoning behind this policy escapes me. The Department is a public agency financed by Kansas sportsmen through license fees for hunting, fishing, trapping, and through taxes we pay on sporting goods and donations we make to organizations. That makes any information the agency collects through research, questionnaires, surveys or planning "public" information and should be made available upon request.

Not only do sportsmen finance the collection of information, but many times contribute the actual information by responding to surveys, allowing research to

be carried out on their property and volunteering their time to help. I am certain that sportsmen would be willing to compensate for postage and duplication costs. In the case of the fur buyers on the list, if a particular fur buyer did not want his name on the list, it could simply be deleted.

Much more can be achieved in resource management through cooperation and education than through denial of requests for public information.

Galen Critchfield  
Osawatomie

Dear Mr. Critchfield:

The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks is bound by certain laws of the state, and your question deals directly with one such law.

The particular law affecting the use of names derived from public records went into effect in 1984, and reads:

"No person shall knowingly sell, give or receive, for the purpose of selling or offering for sale any property or service to persons listed therein, any list of names derived from public records," and it goes on to list a few exceptions.

We do and are obligated to provide lists for public information, as long as we comply with these laws. If we were to issue a list, and the purpose of the request was to find someone or some place to sell furs, then this would constitute use of the list "for the purpose of selling or offering for sale any property or service," and it would be clear violation of state law.

We agree that much can be achieved in resource management through cooperation and education -- and we are dedicated to that mission -- but we cannot violate state law and public trust in the process. That, also, is our mission. --Mike Theurer, chief, administrative services

## LEFTOVER NO MORE

Editor:

Today, I completed my 1990 Kansas Firearms Deer Application, which has been mailed along with my son's as a buddy application. Last year, we were unsuccessful in our unit of choice, Unit 7,

which is my home area. We were offered, and accepted, a leftover permit for Unit 1.

After a scouting trip to Unit 1, it became clear why there were leftover permits for Unit 1. There were few whitetails and fewer places to hunt them.

This, however, is not the object of my concern. Upon receiving my 1990 application for firearms deer, my attention was drawn to the required information area, question 1, "answer yes or no if you had a firearms deer permit in 1989, excluding 'hunt-on-your-own-land' or 'antlerless only'." After a phone call to Pratt, I was shocked to learn that I must answer "yes" to question 1, which thereby practically guarantees that my son and I will once again this year not be drawn to hunt deer in my home unit.

This is grossly unfair to be once again cast out of the drawing simply because we were foolish enough to apply for a leftover permit. Incidentally, we did not even attempt to hunt in Unit 1. I feel that in the future, anyone who accepts a leftover permit should be informed as to the possible consequences of accepting this leftover permit. Had I known this, I would not have applied for the leftover permit, and you may be sure I will not in the future. I feel that anyone who accepts a leftover permit should be treated as a "no" answer to question 1, thereby giving them an equal opportunity in the drawing for the unit of their choice.

Stephan L. Brown  
Beloit

Dear Mr. Brown:

Your experience of receiving a leftover permit in Unit 1 and then not having a place to hunt is regrettable. We are aware that this happens and advise hunters to get landowner permission prior to applying for a permit. Permitting and hunting are two separate responsibilities that the Department and the hunters must recognize. The Department is responsible for the resource (deer) and the recreational opportunity, and the hunter is responsible for pursuing the knowledge, the time and the place to hunt. Fulfilling of both responsibilities results in a rewarding experience.

I assure you that we did not allot permits for Unit 1 with the intent of drawing hunters into a poor quality hunt. Our biologists spend considerable time gathering and inspecting data and surveys before setting permit numbers in each unit.

You were informed correctly to indicate that you did receive a permit last year. Hunters who did not receive a permit last year will be given a higher priority than you in this year's drawing if there are more applicants than permits. This does not necessarily deny you a permit but provides fair opportunity for those who did not have the chance last year.

We do attempt to inform our constituents of our priorities in the drawing. We attempt to give hunters as many opportunities to hunt as possible. Because of this, our permitting system is fairly complicated. As hunters become better acquainted with the system, they will realize better hunting opportunities while the quality of the resource is maintained. --Mike Theurer

## GOOSE HOGS

Editor:

In the July/August issue of KANSAS WILDLIFE AND PARKS (Page 19), the article "Goose Hogs" did not have any names or fines. Why?

I have subscribed to your magazine for years, and you always printed the guilty ones' names and the amount of the fines. This is a pretty serious offense. Why isn't everybody treated alike?

Owen Briney  
Downs

Dear Mr. Briney:

When the information is available, we always try to print the amount of fines in these cases. In this case, the article was written before disposition of the case, so the information was not available.

We never print the names of violators for fear of lawsuits. This is especially true when suspects have yet to be convicted. --Shoup



# THE LAW

## DOVE PERMISSION

During the 1989 dove season, two Chautauqua County dove hunters found out the hard way that permission is required to hunt on private property.

It all started when the Chautauqua County Sheriff's Office received a complaint from two landowners about two subjects hunting doves on their property without permission. When asked to leave, the poachers had ignored the landowners.

This information was relayed to conservation officer Bill Ramshaw, Sedan, who responded to the complaint by ticketing the two for unlawful hunting. The poachers paid fines and court costs totalling \$284. --*Doug Sonntag, Region 5 Law Enforcement assistant supervisor*

## C.O. OF THE YEAR

Larry Dawson, Goodland, has been named the Shikar-Safari International Wildlife Officer of the Year. The award, which is presented to one officer per year in each state, recognizes officers for "exemplary performance of duties in the protection of wildlife, enforcement of game laws and implementation of conservation programs."

A representative of Shikar-Safari made the presentation at the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks' Division of Law Enforcement meeting in Salina last spring. The award is based on nominations from officers within the state.

Dawson, who has been a Department conservation officer for 13 years, said that he was "completely surprised" by the award. "I never expected or aspired toward it, but it's extremely gratifying. The other officers who have received it are role models for me. It's humbling that my peers consider me in the same light as these men."

Dawson is a native of Kansas City, Ks., has a degree in fisheries management from Utah State University and had completed two years of work on a master's degree when he was offered the job in Kansas. He started at Oberlin, where he spent 7 years, then worked in Lawrence

for 2 years before moving to his current position in Goodland.

"Law enforcement had always been in the back of mind," he says. "Now it is inconceivable for me not to be in this profession. I don't consider it a job."

Dawson says that although his work has continuous rewards in a variety of areas, he most enjoys seeing kids develop recreational ethics and sportsman's values. In this regard, he is involved in hunter education, fishing clinics, boy scouts and other youth organizations. "It's really important to give them an appreciation for the resource, for why we have something to hunt or a place to fish. If we lose them, we've lost the game."

Shikar-Safari International is a private, international hunting and conservation organization with 200 chapters worldwide. --*Shoup*

## IMPERSONATION

On the night of March 14, conservation officer Larry Stones, Kirwin, approached the back side of Kirwin Reservoir dam to check walleye fishermen. Night fishing during the spawn often leads to illegal snagging and takes in excess of creel limits.

While performing routine checks on fishermen, Stones encountered an individual he thought was wanted in several states for auto theft and forgery. Stones had met the suspected felon once before. However, this man was wearing a hat, chest waders, sweatshirt and heavy coat and had a bushy moustache. Stones was uncertain. When he asked for the man's fishing license, the suspect handed him a license with a Kansas City address. When Stones asked for further identification, the man gave him a U.S. Government driver's license.

The suspect then told Stones that he was a special agent for the Drug Enforcement Agency in the Kansas City area. Although all of his credentials looked authentic, Stones thought he recognized the man's voice as being that of the wanted man. Because there was no picture on the

driver's license, Stones asked for more identification, one with a picture, and the man produced a DEA ID card with picture.

Undaunted, Stones challenged the man, saying that he believed him to be the felon in question. The fisherman denied this, but admitted that he had been mistaken for this person before. To clear the situation up, Stones radioed the Phillipsburg dispatcher to contact Sheriff Ken Patterson. As Stones was making the call, the suspect admitted that he was the wanted man. Stones took him into custody and turned him over to the sheriff.

Local authorities had been looking for the felony suspect for a year because he was suspected of leaving a stolen vehicle on the Kirwin Refuge the previous summer. In addition to the IDs presented to officer Stones, the man was carrying a Wyandotte County deputy sheriff's badge and other identification. Along with the felony charges he faces in three states, he now has additional charges from the Department, including false representation to secure a fishing license and impersonation of a law enforcement officer. --*Shoup*

## HATCHET MAN

On the afternoon of May 7, conservation officer Doug Whiteaker, Ft. Scott, was on patrol at Crawford State Park when he noticed a man speeding around in his boat in a no-wake zone.

Whiteaker flagged the man to shore and informed him of the violation and that he was going to issue a citation. Although the man identified himself as a Farlington resident, he unfortunately did not have any identification with him. Whiteaker decided to radio the sheriff's office and run a computer check on the man.

As it turned out, there was a felony warrant for the man's arrest from Colorado. Whiteaker called for backup units, but none were available, so he arrested the man himself. Park manager Terry Miller impounded the boat while Whiteaker transported the suspect to the county jail.

The next day, the man paid an \$82 fine for violating the no-wake restriction, but the worst was yet to come. He waived extradition and was sent back to Colorado to face charges of attacking a person with a roofing hatchet. --*Shoup*



# ISSUES

## CALIFORNIA COUGARS

In a move toward taking wildlife management out of the hands of trained professionals and into the political arena, California voters recently approved a referendum called "Proposition 117," which deals with mountain lion hunting and funding for the state's various conservation agencies.

Conceived by anti-hunting factions and presented to the public as a conservation measure, the bill's most visible action is to ban all mountain lion hunting in the state. The supporters of the ban apparently ignored the fact that California has the largest population of mountain lions - conservatively estimated by the Department of Fish and Game at 5,100 animals - in North America.

According to Terry Mansfield, a wildlife management specialist with the Department, mountain lions are, indeed, doing fine. "Lions are being killed on the highways. They're showing up everywhere. No other species of mammal is protected in this way," says Mansfield. He points out that lions are found in a range of 80,000 square miles in California and that they are beginning to show up in habitat once considered marginal for the big cats.

"We have lions endangering our population of California bighorn sheep. There are only 300 California bighorns in the state, and they are on the state's threatened list. In this case, we are being forced to choose mountain lions over sheep," although California bighorn are threat-

ened and lions are not.

Mansfield adds that, because of expanding lion numbers and range, damage control is also becoming a problem. "In 1989, there were 169 confirmed incidents of lion damage in the state," he says. These incidents include the killing of sheep, goats, calves and other livestock. As many as 66 sheep have been killed in one lion incident. And livestock are not the only victims. In one case, a lion jumped a fence and killed a pet Labrador retriever in a man's back yard. Another lion killed a poodle on a woman's leash. In 1986, two children were injured in attacks.

Joe Kramer, chief of fisheries and wildlife for the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, says that "state conservation agencies need to be on the alert. We need to have the conservation data that will allow us to withstand the kind of court challenge resource managers in California faced." --Shoup

## CALIFORNIA DREAMIN'

In response to the above California referendum and the anti-hunting court challenges which led to the vote, *Outdoor Life* ran a series of articles in the June 1990 issue dealing with the progress of the anti movement. The following excerpt from a California resident's letter to *Outdoor Life* was included in the same issue. He comments on the nature of the movement and the California decision's implications for the rest of the country.

"These people scare me. They are in deadly earnest in their goal to stop all hunting in California. Let's not fool our-

selves, California is only a testing ground for the legal games they are presently employing to delay/stop hunting seasons.

"They will not be satisfied stopping in California; they'll grow heady with success and head for the other states. The only way to stop these people is for all concerned sportsmen and hunters to get out of their easy chairs and become involved NOW." (Todd Green, Pacifica, California). --Shoup

## ENVIRONMENTALITY

In 1972, the federal Clean Water Act declared that all rivers should be swimmable. But 18 years later, Kansas still allows its cities and industries to dump harmful wastes into rivers.

Nearly one-third of the rivers in Kansas have such high bacteria counts that they are not considered safe for boating or waterskiing. --Wichita Eagle

## PLASTIC CONSERVATION

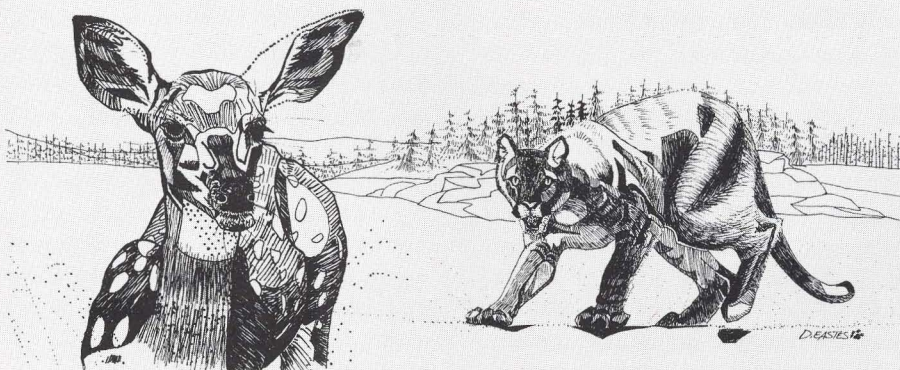
Plastic purchases can now help save endangered species and habitats. Fleet Norstar has introduced a new Mastercard/Visa to funnel funds into The Nature Conservancy's endangered species protection program. Likewise, MCI has begun donating 5 percent of all revenue generated by its new customers' monthly long distance calls to five environmental organizations: The Nature Conservancy, World Wildlife Fund, Ducks Unlimited, National Wildlife Federation and the Audubon Society. MCI expects to generate \$15 million for the groups in the first year.

Many conservation organizations, including Ducks Unlimited, now have their own Mastercards and Visas, and purchases made with these cards aid those organizations' conservation efforts. Members should check with their favorite conservation organization for details. -- Shoup

## JUNK MAIL BLUES

Junk mail kills trees. According to the Hutchinson News, if Hutch residents stopped their junk mail, they could save approximately 60,000 trees every year.

The newspaper also reports that Americans receive enough junk mail in one day to produce the energy needed to



heat 250,000 homes. Americans receive about 2 million tons of junk mail each year. About 44 percent of the mailings are never opened or read. -- *Shoup*

## MEXICAN WETLANDS

Mexico has launched 12 wetland protection and restoration projects under the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. The areas involved are major wintering areas for waterfowl and other migratory birds from the U.S. and Canada.

Mexican officials signed an agreement in 1988 to cooperate with Canada and the U.S. in implementing the plan, which aims to increase waterfowl populations to 100 million by the year 2000. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director John Turner traveled to Mexico recently and presented that country's wildlife agency with checks totaling \$125,000 to initiate the projects. -- *Wildlife Management Institute*

## PUBLIC TIMBER SALES

According to a June report from the New Mexico Wildlife News, the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish appealed two proposed timber sales in the Lincoln National Forest, asking that wildlife needs be reconsidered by the U.S. Forest Service. The Department has never before formally appealed an environmental assessment for a timber sale in New Mexico. The Department emphasized that it is not against logging, as long as wildlife needs are properly factored into timber harvesting activities.

The proposed Scott Able sale is for 5.1 million board feet of timber and involves building 11 miles of new roads. The other proposed sale, called the Poison sale, would harvest 2.2 million board feet and require two miles of new roads. The Forest Service concluded that no significant impact to the environment will result from either sale.

The Department believes the sales, as planned, would have significant negative impacts to wildlife. They would violate the Lincoln National Forest Plan, National Forest Management Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Clean Water Act, according to Department officials.

At the time of this writing in July, it was not yet known whether the appeal would be denied or not. However, officials with the New Mexico agency said that they have made another, similar appeal for an area in the Gila National Forest. A logging proposal for this area would take 11 million board feet of timber from 12,000 acres of land surrounded by other, unrecovered logged areas. -- *Shoup*



## ACID AMPHIBIANS

In the Baker Wildlife Area near Lawrence, the choruses sung by frogs and toads have gotten softer and softer over the years.

"The choruses are still there, but they are not as strong, as full and as lusty as they used to be," said Joe Collins, a biologist who documents the types of wildlife found in Kansas.

Scientists in Kansas are already noting a decline in reptiles, which are more visible than the amphibian frogs, toads and salamanders. Frogs are not as resilient as turtles. If reptiles are in trouble, experts reason, amphibians probably are, too.

"There is so little information on frogs and salamanders, we haven't been able to show a significant decline. It is probably there," said Marvin Schwilling, who coordinates the threatened and endangered species program for the Department of Wildlife and Parks. [He is now retired.]

Biologists worldwide are alarmed over the disappearance of amphibians. Theories of the decline range from pesticides to acid rain to natural predators.

Collins has found 92 kinds of amphibians and reptiles in Kansas. Of those, 24 species are on the threatened and endangered or in-need-of-care lists. At least one frog is feared extinct -- the pickerell frog, which made its home in the coal mining areas of southeast Kansas. It was

last seen in the 1950s. -- *Jean Hayes, The Wichita Eagle*

## NEIGHBORHOOD SPILLS

People who change, but do not recycle, their own car oil are responsible for more spilled oil than that found in Prince William Sound after the Exxon Valdez spill in Alaska last year.

"If communities are serious about preventing environmental disasters, they must provide and publicize places where people can take their car oil for recycling," says Jack Lorenz, executive director of the Izaak Walton League of America. "Consumers purchase and then waste many times more oil each year than the 11 million gallons of crude that coated Alaska's coastlines. Oil that is dumped down street sewers or washed off coated driveways by rain is just as deadly to wildlife here as in Alaska."

Lorenz urged citizens to call local auto shops and gas stations to check whether they accept oil for recycling. -- *Izaak Walton League Tip Sheet*

## RISKY REPELLENTS

A common ingredient in many insect repellents is R-11, known scientifically as 2,3,4,5-Bis. In an unusual move, McLaughlin Gormley King Co. of Minneapolis, the manufacturer of this chemical, told the government last spring that preliminary testing showed the additive gave tumors to laboratory rats and withered their ovaries. The company asked that its license to make the product be withdrawn.

Two of 67 insect repellent manufacturers pulled their products from store shelves immediately. S.C. Johnson and Son Inc., manufacturer of Deep Woods Off!, and Miles Inc., manufacturer of Cutter's, recalled their products. Both now have new formulas.

Consumers are urged to check for R-11 on labels before purchasing a repellent. Alternatives to repellents are eucalyptus, anise or lavender oils, or simply more clothing. Some sources contend that taking extra B-2 vitamin a few days before an outing will help deter bugs. -- *Associated Press*



# FISHING

## FORD COUNTY LAKE

The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks has acquired a new recreational area. Through an agreement with Ford County in southwest Kansas, ownership of a 315-acre parcel has been transferred from the County to the Department. The area is located five miles east and three miles north of Dodge City. Included in the area is a 48-acre site known as the Ford County Lake, which has been owned and operated by the county since it was built in the late 1930s.

In return for the land, the Department has agreed to assume the cost of renovating the lake, which was drained in 1987. This will involve removing silt from the old lake bed, constructing earthen fishing piers, developing fish habitat and providing boating access.

Through a unique arrangement, the area has been leased back to the county through an agreement signed by Department secretary Bob Meinen and the Ford county commissioners on May 31. The lease requires the county to assume management of the area, including providing routine maintenance and any additional development of recreational facilities the county might want to provide. The county has the option of charging user fees that can be used to offset costs associated with maintenance and development of the area and facilities.

Both the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks and Ford County benefit from the arrangement. The Department is able to provide much-needed additional recreational opportunities for southwest Kansas without assuming the maintenance responsibilities and expenses associated with the operation of state parks and fishing areas. The county is able to provide a renovated lake and recreation area for the people of Ford County and the surrounding area without the expense of a major renovation. --*Scotty Baugh, Region 3 Parks and Public Lands supervisor*

## 1990 FISH PLANTINGS

Hatcheries at Milford, Pratt, Farling-

ton and Meade all produce fish for state waters. Fisheries biologists make a request for a certain number of a particular species, based on population estimates for that body of water. The 1990 fingerling (2-4 inch fish) stockings included wall-eye, wipers (a cross between a female striped bass and a male white bass), and saugeye (a cross between a female wall-eye and a male sauger).

Nearly 840,000 fish were stocked in city lakes, state fishing lakes and federal reservoirs all across the state. This represents a 250-percent increase over production totals for any of the past five years.

Hatcheries also provide many other species of fish as well. Channel catfish,



largemouth and smallmouth bass, striped bass and bluegill are produced to stock in Kansas waters.

## FINGERLINGS 1990

### SAUGEYE NUMBER

SEBELIUS RESERVOIR

19,000

COUNCIL GROVE RESERVOIR

96,347

ELK CITY RESERVOIR 42,500

PARSONS CITY LAKE 11,000

### WIPER NUMBER

DOUGLAS CO.-LONE STAR LAKE  
1,950

JEFFREY ENERGY CENTER-MAKE  
UP LAKE 3,800

LEAVENWORTH STATE FISHING  
LAKE 4,000

PAOLA CITY LAKE 5,500

SEBELIUS RESERVOIR 18,375

CHENEY RESERVOIR 49,937

MARION RESERVOIR 45,000

WINFIELD CITY LAKE 24,572

MELVERN RIVER POND 1,437

YATES CENTER CITY LAKE 2,000

LA CYGNE RESERVOIR 76,042

PLEASANTON EAST LAKE 3,844

COLDWATER LAKE 2,666

PRATT COUNTY LAKE 4,954

FARLINGTON HATCHERY-INTER-  
MEDIATE PRODUCTION 23,000

### WALLEYE NUMBER

ALMA CITY LAKE 800

ESKRIDGE-LAKE WABAUNSEE  
5,000

GEARY STATE FISHING LAKE  
2,500

HERINGTON CITY LAKE 6,006

JEFFREY ENERGY CENTER-MAKE  
UP LAKE 3,105

JEFFREY ENERGY CENTER-AUX.

MAKE UP LAKE 11,563

SHAWNEE STATE FISHING LAKE  
3,375

COWLEY STATE FISHING LAKE  
2,200

EL DORADO RESERVOIR 197,216

LAKE AFTON 7,200

MELVERN RIVER POND 1,750

MOUND CITY LAKE 5,000

OSAGE CITY LAKE 3,500

WOODSON STATE FISHING LAKE  
4,890

YATES CENTER CITY LAKE 6,075

BIG HILL RESERVOIR 11,997

BOURBON STATE FISHING LAKE  
2,608

CHANUTE CITY LAKE 2,145

FORT SCOTT CITY LAKE 8,998

LA CYGNE RESERVOIR 67,551

MADISON CITY LAKE 2,850

MINED LAND WILDLIFE AREA  
4,000

MONTGOMERY STATE FISHING  
LAKE 2,625

PLEASANTON EAST LAKE 3,260

QUIVIRA SCOUT LAKE 11,875

SEDAN CITY LAKE 1,750

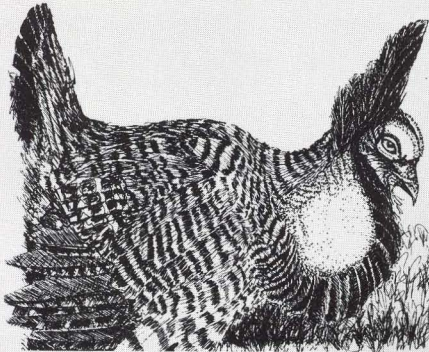
WILSON STATE FISHING LAKE  
3,000

--*Marc Murrell*





# HUNTING



## FALL CHICKENS

Last year was the first year Kansas had an early prairie chicken season, and it appears to have gone well. About 6,000 birds were harvested, representing about 19 percent of the total harvest for the year. Both landowners and sportsmen expressed satisfaction with the season, which gives hunters a chance to hunt prairie chickens with dogs in a walk and flush setting much like quail hunting.

The Department will continue the early prairie chicken season for another 2 years and then consider expanding the season to other parts of the state. This year's early season runs Sept. 22-Oct. 21. --John Herron, special assistant to the secretary

## SPECIAL HUNTS

A strong emphasis on habitat management has created excellent wildlife populations on Department public lands. While the majority of the species that benefit from this management are nongame, such as songbirds, small mammals, amphibians and reptiles, game species also flourish.

Last summer, the Department of Wildlife and Parks decided to examine the possibility of offering "special hunt" opportunities on state wildlife areas, where the hunting experience might be heightened by reducing hunter numbers. The state joined Ducks Unlimited in the purchase of a 667-acre tract of land in Sumner County known as the Slate Creek Wetland. The state also took over manage-

ment of the 1,123-acre Sand Hills State Park, near Hutchinson. By late summer, the Department's biologists, conservation officers and land managers had put together a controlled access "special hunt" program for both areas.

Sportsmen were assigned specific hunt dates, and permits were limited to either individuals or groups of two. Each area was hunted only two or three days per week. In order to collect management data, all hunters were required to complete hunt report cards (attached to the permit) at the completion of their trips. Wings from each quail and pheasant taken at Sandhills State Park had to be deposited in a drop box.

By all accounts, these special hunt programs were a tremendous success. The sportsmen thoroughly enjoyed having the area all to themselves. While not all hunters were successful in taking game, they all saw plenty and enjoyed a quality hunting experience.

Hunters at Slate Creek Wetland reported observing 18 pheasants per hunter each day. One pair of hunters reported seeing nine coveys of quail. Although many rabbits were seen in both areas, very few hunters sought them. Hunters also reported seeing a variety of other wildlife, including raccoon, turkey, mink, squirrel and coyote. (Several reported observing dogs chasing deer at Sandhills State Park.)

While these two hunts will be offered in 1990, a task force has also been assigned to investigate the possibility of setting up similar programs for other new hunting areas in Kansas. If you have an interest in upcoming special hunts (for quail, pheasant, deer or waterfowl), keep an eye on your favorite newspaper's outdoor section for details. You can also contact your nearest Department office for information on special hunts. If you are lucky enough to be issued a special hunt permit, be sure to pay attention to special regulations. Most of the hunts have rules which are different from those on regular hunting areas. --Roy Grimes, Region 4 Supervisor, Parks and Public Lands

## HUNT, FISH DAY

In a celebration of National Hunting and Fishing Day, the Department of Wildlife and Parks, the Elk City Advisory Board and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will host a full day of activities at Elk City State Park, five miles northwest of Independence.

From past to present, exhibits and displays will cover all aspects of hunting, fishing and camping. Events will include a rough fish tournament, a kid's fishing derby, turtle races and displays of taxidermy, photography, art, woodcraft, guns, archery equipment, knives, hunting dogs, boats, tents and muzzleloaders. Several live bands will be playing throughout the day, and food and soft drinks will be available.

Come on down and spend the whole weekend. This little part of Kansas is unique. The beautiful Chautauqua Hills, a variety of plant and animal species and a rich Indian history should give everyone plenty to see and do.

A permit is required to enter the park. For more information, contact the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, Box 945, Independence, KS 67301, (316) 331-6295. --Rob Riggan, seasonal naturalist, Elk City State Park

## MORE MIGRANTS

Sept. 1 is the opening of dove season, and every year thousands of Kansas hunters take to the field to pursue these fast-flying birds. During this time, most sportsmen overlook three species of migrating water birds. Common snipe and sora and Virginia rail are often very common during September, but few people take advantage of them.

Snipe and rails are wetland species. Snipe are found on mudflats and in flooded grasses on the margins of marshes, while the rails prefer taller stands of vegetation, such as cattails and bulrushes. During migration, local populations can vary greatly. Much like doves, the first cool weather will force many of the migrants to head to warmer regions. Hunting may be good one day and nonexistent the next.

The only way to successfully hunt

these birds is to don hip boots or an old pair of tennis shoes and stomp around in good snipe and rail habitat. A well-trained retriever will make it easier to find downed birds in the rank vegetation.

Snipe and rails flush in opposite fashion. Snipe fly low in a rapid zigzag pattern and usually utter a low, rasping "krkt." Rails are very difficult to flush, and when they fly, it is a weak, fluttering flight with legs dangling limply below their bodies.

One very important aspect of snipe and rail hunting is being able to identify these birds on the wing. Although rails cannot be easily mistaken for other marsh birds, only sora and Virginia rails are legal. All other species are protected. On the other hand, snipe are very similar to many other species of shorebirds. The best way to start snipe and rail hunting is to accompany an experienced hunter and practice shorebird identification whenever possible.

Any shotgun 10 gauge or smaller is legal for snipe and rail, but it must be plugged to hold no more than three shells. Since snipe and rail are hunted around wetlands, only steel shot should be used. A three-quarter-ounce load of steel 6 shot in a 20 gauge or one to one and one-eighth-ounce 6 shot in a 12 gauge is more than powerful enough. Any choke can be used, but a more open choke, like improved cylinder, should work best.

Since the nationwide take of these species is very low, the bag limits and seasons are generous. Snipe season runs from Sept. 1-Dec. 16 with a limit of eight per day and a possession limit of 16 after the first day. Rails may be taken between Sept. 1 and Nov. 15. Twenty-five rails may be bagged per day with a possession limit of 25. As with other migratory birds (except doves), a fully feathered wing or head must be left on the birds while transporting them from field to home.

There are many public wildlife areas in Kansas that can hold huntable numbers of snipe and rails. Look for those that are managed for wetland species. The upper ends of reservoirs can also be good places to look for these sporty birds. Since access and regulations may vary from area to area, be sure to check with the manager before hunting. --*Charlie Swank, wildlife biologist, Cheyenne Bottoms*

## FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH

### "DUCK" DOESN'T MEAN LOWER YOUR HEAD

by Mark Shoup



Clark was paddling the canoe around a bend in the river when he yelled, "Duck!"

I was in the bow, looking for good setline spots, and instinctively ducked my head to avoid some unseen limb. Above my friend's laughter, I heard a squawk and the thrash of wings on water. I turned just in time to see wood ducks explode from the surface, down the creek, and through the trees.

We saw three pairs of woodies that afternoon, and I didn't lower my head but once. One embarrassment, three thrills. The ducks were the second of two spring discoveries. The first had been the creek, the Pawnee River, or "The Crick," as we called it in my youth.

In the fifties and sixties, this was a steep, muddy-banked river with deep water and plenty of big flathead and channel catfish. It was a western Kansas stream reminiscent of many in the eastern part of the state. As a boy, I spent countless days playing Huckleberry Finn on The Crick. Then I moved away, and The Crick mostly dried up. Near my hometown, the Pawnee, like the Arkansas, was usually dry when I would visit. Both had become intermittent streams. By the late seventies, I was convinced that neither would again yield fish larger than a pound or two. I loved both rivers, but I lowered my head and gave up on them.

Then this April I discovered a spring-fed stretch of the Pawnee that had never dried up. Landowners in the area told me that there were still good fish in the creek -- catfish, even bass and crappie. Life was suddenly filled with anticipation, like the times when I was a kid and my father would say, out of the blue, "How'd you like to go fishin' this weekend?"

This weekend, thirty-some years later, the Pawnee beckoned again. Clark and I caught a few small bass and crappie, just enough to prove they were still around. But the catfishing was like old times. We caught several 3- to 4-pound channels,

and one flathead that weighed twelve. We saw wood ducks every day -- breeding pairs. Both river and ducks were holding on, despite a three-decade assault on their lifeblood, water.

Woodies, it can be said, are on the rebound, but western Kansas streams and ducks in general are not. Still, a few good days on the Pawnee showed me that nature is a wellspring of hope, clinging to parcels of habitat like freshwater springs on The Crick. In wet weather, when the pumps are silent, creeks and streams rise and flow again. Spring-fed "potholes" feed the flowing rivers with fish in nature's attempt to restock the channel.

So, too, ducks are hanging on to the prairie potholes that remain. Their habitat is much reduced, but they persevere, reproducing when they can, waiting for those wet years, those days when their habitat will return, perhaps through efforts such as the Conservation Reserve Program and the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. Ducks are unaware of their ultimate need: a concern for their plight that will hold the plows at bay.

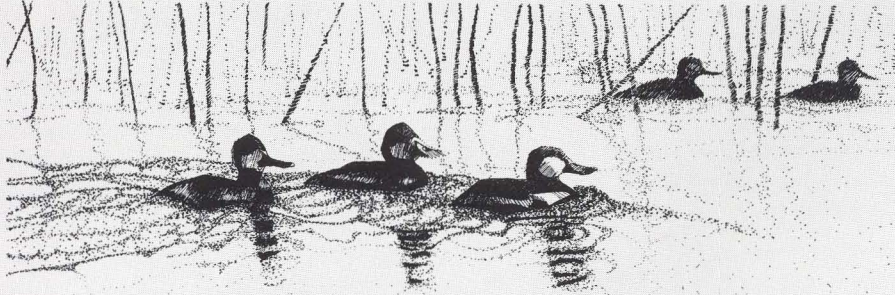
Mother Nature has taught me that there is hope for ducks and rivers, but hope is bridled to the hand of man. One July night, a farmer friend and I checked setlines on that same stretch of Pawnee. The water had been dropping for several days. A cornfield 500 yards from the river received generous amounts of flood-irrigation, and we were both curious about the source. In this area, there could only be two possibilities -- groundwater or the Pawnee. Groundwater would be cold and clear.

On the way out, we stopped by an irrigation pipe to take a look. My friend dipped his hands in the warm, muddy water and said, "Yep, crick water."

It's over for this year, I thought. Let the fish huddle in the deepest holes, waiting for spring rains. Let the woodies migrate. Let wise men control the reins of hope.



# NATURE



DANA GARDNER '92

## HABITAT SHOPPERS

There are three types of water bodies that are particularly important to waterfowl: sheet water, potholes and large marshes.

Sheet water provides timely nutrition for brief periods. This temporary water is the first available to returning waterfowl in spring. It is formed on frozen ground when snow melts or there are heavy rains. Sheet water is only a few inches deep and is usually found in croplands and pastures.

Within a few days after these puddles form, eggs and larva of invertebrates explode into production. These invertebrates are particularly important to returning hen ducks because they provide protein and calcium, which are needed for good egg production.

Potholes are where most prairie ducklings are hatched. Potholes were formed when receding glaciers left behind large pieces of half-buried ice. When these chunks of ice melted, they created an abundance of ponds, most of which are two to six feet deep and a couple of acres or less in size. They are usually rimmed with cattails and bulrushes that extend into the water to a depth of about three feet. In deeper water, submerged plants such as bladderwort and coontail grow, while the moist ground surrounding the outer edge of the cattails sports whitetop and sedges. Thus, pothole vegetation provides both food and nesting cover for ducks.

Large marshes are like very big potholes. Although they are not as important

for duck production as potholes, they are more important when it comes to molting. Ducks lose their flight feathers and grow new ones in mid-July and early August. They are unable to fly during this time. Large marshes -- with their mixture of water and vegetation, irregular shoreline and huge expanses of open water -- provide ducks with a better chance of survival during this flightless period.

As fall approaches, ducks gather on these large marshes for the flight south. Called staging, this activity begins in late August and ends months later when the marsh freezes. --*Ducks Unlimited*

## LIVING SNOWFENCES

A multi-agency program conceived in 1989 is available to interested landowners in certain counties of Kansas this year. This project is patterned after similar activities in Colorado, Nebraska and Montana. Called "Living Snowfences," the project is designed to provide snow-free roadways where blowing and drifting snow normally close off sections of roads.

The concept is not new, but the emphasis is. Following Governor Mike Hayden's call for a renewed and expanded tree planting effort on the part of all Kansans, several state agencies and private organizations banded together to form a tree planting partnership. This partnership is comprised of the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP), the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT), the Kansas Department of Corrections (KDOC), the Kansas State Forestry Division (KSFD), the Soil Conser-

vation Service (SCS), the Kansas Wildlife Federation (KWF), and the Kansas County Engineer's Association (KCEA).

Each agency and organization agreed to perform certain functions for which they are uniquely qualified. For instance, KDOC will provide inmate labor to fence out project sites, perform maintenance and aid in planting trees and shrubs. KDOT and KCEA will identify sites; KDWP will plant the trees; and KWF will aid in promotion.

The design of the snowfences will be a simple two-row, high-density planting with one row of evergreens and one row of shrubs. Wildlife will benefit from the additional cover, especially because the shrub rows will provide wildlife food, as well as cover. In 3 to 5 years, wildlife, livestock and travellers will begin to reap the benefits of these snowfences.

Living snowfences have other advantages, too. They are much more aesthetically pleasing than slotted fences; they are 10 times cheaper to install and maintain than slotted fences; they reduce the cost of snow removal; and they provide the makings for fine jellies and jams if chokecherries and plums are the shrubs of choice.

In 1990, those counties with the greatest need will have access to the program: Cheyenne, Dickinson, Ellsworth, Finney, Ford, Gray, Hodgeman, Kingman, Rawlins, Reno, Sedgwick, Sherman and Thomas. Landowners wishing to participate need only provide a strip of land 70 feet by 640 feet along a highway and deep-till it prior to planting. The cost of the materials and the planting, plus two-year replacements costs, are borne by the sponsoring agencies.

For more information, contact a local representative of the SCS, KDOT, KDWP or county extension agent. --*Bill Hlavachick, wildlife management supervisor*

## YAKITY YIP

*Outside* magazine cites a study by the Arizona Department of Game and Fish that named 11 separate coyote vocalizations: the woof, the growl, the huff, the yelp, the whine, the bark-howl, the lone howl, the group howl and three variations of the yip-howl. --*San Francisco Chronicle*



# NOTES

## WILDLIFE AT THE FAIR

It's Kansas State Fair time, folks -- that time of year when Kansans mark the last flagging days of hot weather and anticipate the coming of Indian summer. The fair is a celebration of change and a time to enjoy a potpourri of all that Kansas has to offer.

As in past years, the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks will maintain an exhibit to celebrate our rich wildlife heritage. Over 30 species of wild animals will be on display, including bass, catfish, and gar; a raccoon and a white-tailed fawn; various upland game birds and waterfowl; and reptiles such as the western hognose snake, the snapping turtle and the Great Plains skink.

Department personnel will be on hand to answer questions. A variety of literature will be available, as well as hunting and fishing regulations, archery permits and general outdoor information. Hats, T-shirts, belt buckles, magazine subscriptions and state duck stamps will also be available.

The Wildlife and Parks display will be in the poultry building at the southwest part of the fairgrounds, next to the highway patrol exhibit, and will be open from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Sept. 7-Sept. 16.--*Shoup*

## 1990 BELT BUCKLES

The Department of Wildlife and Parks has a few of the 1990 limited-issue belt buckles still on sale. The new buckles feature a white-tailed buck in a natural setting.

A few of the landmark 1989 belt buckles are also left, and these are available for \$10, including shipping, handling and tax.

All buckles will be sold to the general public on a first-come-first-serve basis.

The 1990 belt buckles cost \$14, including shipping, handling and tax. Send check, money order or Mastercard/Visa number with order to Belt Buckles, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, RR2, Box 54A, Pratt, KS 67124. Credit card orders can also be made by tele-

phone, (316) 672-5911. Expiration date and telephone number must be included with credit card orders. --*Shoup*

## NEW DU CHAPTERS

In the past year, Kansas Ducks Unlimited (DU), a conservation organization dedicated to restoring and preserving wetland habitats, has added four new chapters in the state: Ft. Riley, Wamego, Hugoton and Smith Center.

State DU officials hope the addition of these new chapters marks a reversal in the recent trend toward declining membership.

According to Lee Queal, Western Regional Director for Kansas DU, hope for Kansas DU membership translates into hope for declining duck populations. "The role of Kansas DU members is essential to helping ducks in the Central Flyway rebound," Queal says. "Their volunteer efforts and the money they raise through memberships, banquets and other events is aiding habitat restoration projects from here to Canada."

Officials are putting extra effort into their fund-raising and this year have added a newsletter, *Wetland Watch*. The *Watch* will be published three times a year and features news and conservation articles concerning waterfowl habits and habitat throughout the state and the Central Flyway.

For more information, contact Lee Queal, (316) 672-6100 or Larry Kramer, (913) 294-2102. --*Shoup*

## STEEL SHOT NOTE

Out of concern for waterfowl, the Kansas Wildlife and Parks Commission last summer passed a regulation authorizing the Department of Wildlife and Parks to enforce a statewide lead shot ban for waterfowl. This year, the regulation goes into effect, and all waterfowl hunting in Kansas will require steel shot, whether on public or private land. This includes ducks, geese, coots, rail and snipe.

Officials of the Department also remind hunters that many public hunting

areas in the state will be marked with "Steel Shot Only" signs. In these areas, steel shot is the only load allowed, whether ducks, upland game or other small game are being hunted.

In recent years, duck numbers have been declining at alarming rates. Destruction of habitat is the primary cause of this decline, but another factor is lead poisoning from lead shot scattered in waterfowl habitat. In areas that have been hunted consistently for years, lead shot is plentiful and easily available to ducks and other waterfowl, which mistake the small BBs for grit. Once the shot is eaten, it is ground by the gizzard and absorbed into the blood stream of the bird. This causes a general weakening of the bird, impaired motor skills and reproductive capabilities, and an inability of the system to digest food. Many birds simply die of starvation. In addition, birds of prey that scavenge the poisoned waterfowl are susceptible to the poisoning. --*Shoup*

## SMALL GAME DATES

**Dove:** Sept. 1-Oct. 30. Possession limit 15, 30 after second day.

**Pheasant:** Nov. 10-Jan 31. Possession limit 4 cocks, 16 after fourth day.

**Quail: east:** Nov. 10-Jan 31. **west:** Nov. 17-Jan. 31. Possession limit 8, 24 after third day.

**Prairie chicken: early:** Sept. 22-Oct. 21. **regular:** Nov. 3-Jan. 31. Possession limit 2, 6 after third day.

**Squirrel:** June 1-Dec. 31. Possession limit 5, 10 after second day.

**Cottontail:** Year round. Possession limit 10, 20 after second day.

For more information, consult your 1990 Kansas Hunting Regulations brochure. --*Shoup*

## STICKY BUSINESS

Oil spills aren't just isolated incidents anymore. From March 24, 1989, when the Exxon Valdez ran aground, to mid-March 1990, some 10,000 oils spills polluted America's land and water with almost 20 million gallons of oil. One or more of these spills occurred in 31 states. --*Wichita Eagle*

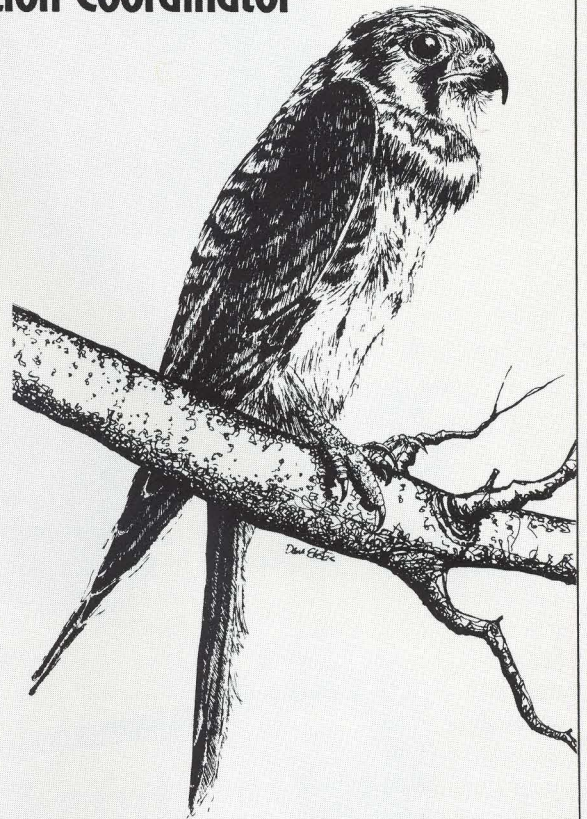
# NATURE'S NOTEBOOK

by Roland Stein Wildlife Education Coordinator

## BIRD ADAPTATION

What are birds? They are warm-blooded animals with feathers for body covering. Their body temperature is much higher than man, about 104 degrees F. Their forelegs have evolved into wings and their bones are hollow and air-filled to reduce their weight to make them light for flight. The young are hatched from eggs.

Where do you find birds? Look for birds in wooded park areas, in bushes, trees, near hedges and on or near bodies of water. Certain birds can best be seen in the early morning, others in the early evening. Bird viewing requires patience and silent, slow movement. Sensitive ears and eyes are also essential. Beginners should learn from someone who knows birds by sight and sound.



**In relation to their size, birds consume large quantities of food. What kind of food they eat is partially controlled by the shape of the bird's feet and beak. Here are a few examples. Can you match the descriptions given below to the pictures of beaks and feet on the following page?**

**Seed Eaters:** Heavy, thick beaks for cracking seeds. Feet for perching. (junco, cardinal and sparrows)

**Peck and Pullers:** Sharp, slightly hooked beaks, more slender than seed eaters. Feet for perching. (robin & thrushes)

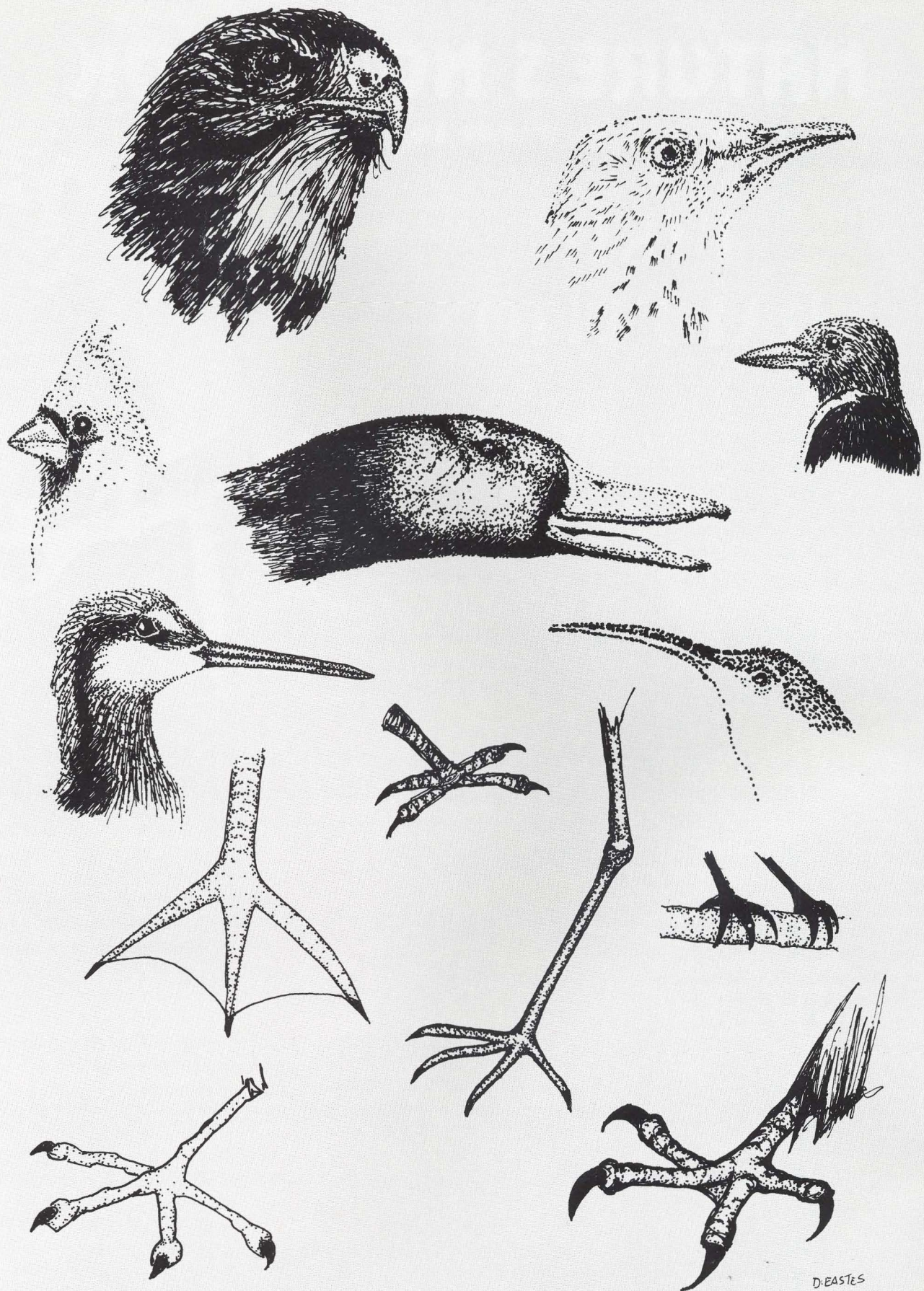
**Drillers:** Chisel-shaped, sharp, strong, pointed beaks. Feet for climbing, two toes front and two rear. (woodpeckers and nuthatches)

**Prey Catchers:** Strong hooked beaks for grasping and tearing flesh. Heavy claws and talons. (hawks, owls and eagles)

**Scoopers and Strainers:** Broad beaks notched at edges. Feet webbed for swimming and wading. (ducks, geese and swans)

**Mud Probers:** Slender, sensitive beaks. Long legs. (plovers, sandpipers)

**Nectar Suckers:** Slender, tubelike bill. Feet for perching. (hummingbird)



D. EASTES

# Kansas Outdoor Classic and Wildlife Art Expo

**September 28-30**  
**Century II Convention Hall**  
**225 West Douglas, Wichita, Kansas**

**Friday 5 p.m.-10 p.m. \* Saturday 10 a.m.-10 p.m. \* Sunday 12-6 p.m.**

**Admission—Adults \$2.00**

**Children 12 and under—Free**

## Join us for a wild weekend.

See realistic taxidermy mounts of the most magnificent whitetail and mule deer bucks taken during Kansas' 26 years of deer hunting. Browse through a sparkling collection of wildlife art displayed by many of the Midwest's finest artists. Learn how professional wildlife photographers capture nature's beauty on film and videotape. Attend seminars and demonstrations on a wide variety of outdoor subjects. Inspect the latest in outdoor gear displayed by sporting goods manufacturers and retailers. Win one of numerous door prizes to be given away. Take home a new appreciation for the rich wildlife resources of Kansas.



**Sponsored by Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks and KFDI Radio**

*gallery*  
by Mike Blair





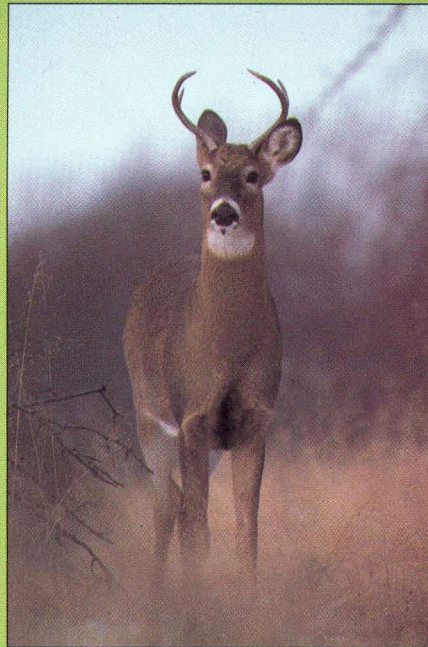
It seems strange today to envision elk on the Kansas prairie, but early American travelers told of seeing numerous elk on the prairie. Many early settlers preferred elk meat over other big game, and the animals were extirpated from Kansas before the turn of the century. Small remnant herds are maintained in several parts of the state today. A mature bull can weigh more than 700 pounds and the impressive antlers make their appearance truly magnificent. These photographs were taken at the Maxwell Game Refuge near McPherson. **Left:** 400mm lens, f/11, @ 1/125. **Right:** 400mm lens, f/9.5, @ 1/125. **Center:** 400mm lens, f/8, @ 1/250. **Bottom:** 400mm lens, f/11, @ 1/125.





# Take a Stand

text and photos by Mike Blair  
*staff photographer*



**Treestands give the deer hunter an extra edge for success. Here's the lowdown on choosing a stand along with hunting strategies from an expert treestander.**

**T**he November shadows were stretching long as I waited near a subtle trail suspected as a big buck runway. I wasn't confident in the stand site—there were no scrapes nearby, and the few rubs found were small. However, big bucks that passed farther up the creek always seemed to come from this direction. So I'd placed a portable treestand in a walnut tree before the season and figured to use it as a backup when vagrant winds spoiled my favorite stand sites.

This was such a day. It was November 13, and the whitetail rut was just starting. At 4:30 p.m., I held my bow ready, comfortably seated on the

treestand's fold-down seat. I'd seen a good buck head into this draw earlier in the afternoon, so I was hopeful. But I wasn't prepared for the tremendous animal that suddenly appeared on the trail, 40 yards away.

He was a typical five by five, a 180-class Pope and Young buck I'd never seen in months of preseason scouting. The deer walked down the trail without a hint of danger, pausing at 25 yards behind a screen of limbs. I drew my bow as the deer stepped into the open, and 20 years of waiting for a super trophy-sized buck climaxed at the release of the bowstring.

The arrow went low for a clean

miss!

It wasn't the treestand's fault, though. It had beaten the odds on swirling winds along the trail that made ground hunting impossible. And since the timber was composed primarily of young and valuable walnut trees, a permanent stand was out of the question. The portable treestand had offered the perfect solution to the nearly perfect hunt.

The value of treestands can't be overstated, particularly to bowhunters limited to close shots. Treestands conceal hunter movement and raise the hunter above normal scent streams. They allow excellent visibility and provide quiet platforms

from which to move and shoot. They may not be failsafe, but for stationary hunters, treestands are hard to beat.

When using treestands, hunters should act responsibly toward trees that may have timber value. Surprisingly, Kansas boasts a moderate logging industry that can be affected. Many commercial trees are ruined each year by thoughtless hunting practices, leaving landowners rightfully upset. Nails and spikes will not kill a tree, but they do cause staining and rot which lessen the value of the standing timber.

Tall, straight trees make the best logs, and special care should be taken not to harm them. Walnut, ash, pecan and many kinds of oaks are valuable and should be treated carefully when used for hunting. If you're not familiar with these trees, an inexpensive pocket field guide can help identify them. Check the species before constructing a stand or nailing steps on any tree.

Success or failure may ride on the selection of the right tree in your hunting situation. The first consideration is distance to the game trail. Always select a tree offering shots within your normal practice range. Setting a stand at marginal distances often means missed opportunities, or worse, the loss of wounded game.

If possible, look for trees offering "natural" blinds. These are usually short trees with lots of branches, allowing one or more comfortable waiting positions. They can often be climbed without special aids, a plus if located during hunting season when stand construction projects might disturb an area. Most important, there is no evidence that "something is up." Permanent stands are sure to tip off your favorite hunting area.

I learned this the hard way one season after building a treestand near a soybean field. A nice buck routinely passed nearby as the end of the first archery segment approached. Since I knew the stand would eventually offer a close shot, I left it up during the one-week gun season for use when archery season resumed.

Later, I learned several gun hunters found the stand and helped themselves to it. The buck I had seen and another smaller deer were taken from the vantage point I so carefully con-



Permanent stands may work in some areas, but they become unsafe after only a few years and can damage valuable trees.

structed. I imagine those hunters appreciated it!

If trees offering "natural" blinds aren't handy, modifications to non-commercial trees may be in order. This could be as simple as attaching enough steps to reach a comfortable fork, or might require elaborate construction. Permanent stands are worthwhile in places known to produce deer every year but should be built in spring or summer to avoid alerting deer.

Many times at ideal ambush sites, no tree lends itself to easy hunting. Because of distance or terrain, carrying construction materials to the stand site is not worthwhile. At other times, an ideal spot may be found

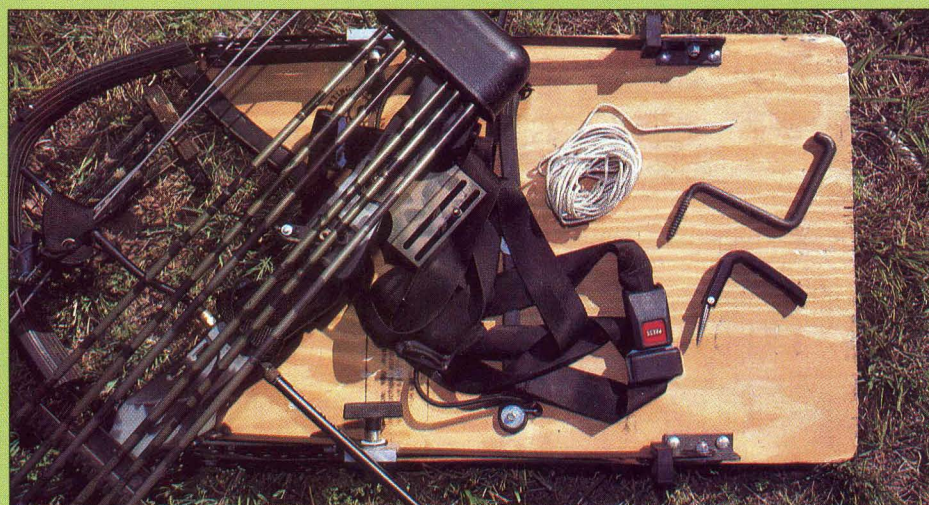
during the season when a major disturbance is risky.

In these cases, portable treestands are the ideal solution. They are easy to transport and offer harmless access to most kinds of trees. There are dozens to choose from, basically divided between hang-on and climbing stands. Climbing stands are popular in tall timber where limbs are impossible to reach without aid. They are best suited in Kansas to cottonwood, ash, hackberry or walnut bottomland sites.

Site selection is important when using portable treestands. Deer trails between feeding and bedding areas are ideal. Stands placed 100-200 yards from daytime bedding cover offer the best chance of seeing deer during legal shooting hours. Scrape lines or other predictable travelways are also good bets.

It's a common mistake to place treestands too close to trails. Where possible, keep them about 15 to 20 yards away from the trail. This separates ground scent from passing deer, makes the hunter harder to see and reduces the downward angle of the shot.

As with all deer hunting, wind is a major consideration. Place treestands downwind of a game trail, but don't count on that alone to guarantee odor concealment. Wind tends to swirl through timber, and the surest bet is climbing high off the ground. This is especially true when hunting near sharp breaks in elevation or at the edge of clearings, where the wind may swirl vertically.



Basic gear for successful treestand hunting includes a quality stand, climbing steps, a haul line and safety belt. Safety is a top priority for treestand hunters.

Riskiest stand sites lie along the base of hills, since even calm days produce thermal currents that travel upslope to deer bedding areas. In such locations, place stands at least 20 feet high.

Treestands have disadvantages as well as benefits. One risk is falling—every year there are many serious accidents related to treestands. Fear of falling is probably the main reason most stands are placed too low. Manufacturers advise, and common sense dictates, the use of a safety belt when hunting from most types of treestands.

Selection of a sturdy, well designed stand is important. Before buying, check weight ratings and quality of construction. Flimsy design does nothing for a hunter's confidence and may prove to be money wasted. Quality stands cost anywhere from \$60 to \$200 depending on the material used and the options included. But they are worth the price in comfort and security. With proper care, quality treestands last for years. Their value and cost should be reasonably equated with that of a sporting arm.

Treestands are worthless if a hunter is forced by discomfort to abandon his stand. Current research shows that deer, particularly rutting bucks, are quite active between noon and 2 p.m. Remaining on stand all day increases the chances of a successful hunt.

Unfortunately, many portable stands are difficult to stay in for hours at a time. The poorest have no seat, and force the hunter to stand while waiting. Others have built-in seats too small for comfortable, all day hunting.

Small treestands designed for light weight and low price may prove to be no bargain. True, for backpacking into wilderness areas, weight is important. However, in most midwestern states, access is easy and a few pounds make little difference. The comfort tradeoff makes roomier stands worthwhile.

Many treestands are available through retail outlets and sporting catalogs. Write manufacturers for information and compare features before buying. A wise purchase should pay off for years to come in successful deer hunting.

Beyond commercial treestands, another simple and useful item is the wedgeboard. This handy stand is small and lightweight, specifically designed for use in tree forks. As the name implies, it is wedged horizontally into an upright crotch, providing a level platform to stand or sit on. Wedgeboards are particularly useful in unfamiliar hunting areas where the hunter needs lightweight, temporary access to trees.

Homemade wedgeboards can be built with 2-inch by 12-inch lumber, 24 inches long and widely notched at both ends. A short metal "tooth" securely fastened into the apex of each notch helps bite into bark and wood for added safety. Several steel straps should be bolted crosswise with the wood grain to prevent splitting between notches. For added convenience, wedgeboards are sometimes hinged in the middle for compact carrying.

Existing treestands provide a final choice for hunting from trees. Popular deer hunting areas usually have an abundance of deteriorating permanent stands. Safety is the foremost consideration when hunting from these. Aging steps and platforms

should be carefully examined and tested. If questions about safety exist, the stand should be avoided or rebuilt.

Once a treestand is in place, one or more shooting lanes should be cleared to the trail. Arrow deflection is a common reason for misses from elevated stands. Remember to check for obstructions in the tree crown, as well as twigs and limbs on plants growing along the trail. Also, since deer often drift through an area without using the trail, it's wise to have shooting lanes in several directions around the tree.

When climbing to any stand, avoid dangerous accidents by hauling bow and other gear into the stand via a haul line. This way, both hands are free to climb, and a possible fall will not involve equipment.

Hunting from trees becomes as natural as pulling a bowstring. Proper selection and planning give the hunter a lofty advantage on deer and other game. This fall, take advantage of nature's own provisions—climb to better bowhunting. ♡



This illustrates a good stand location. It's close to a well-traveled trail, elevates the hunter above sight and scent streams, and the hunter's outline is broken by the tree. Shooting lanes should be cleared of limbs or other obstructions well before the season.



### TSS Intruder

**Type:** Climbing, hang-on  
**Weight rating:** 300 pounds  
**Options:** Tree seat, backpack straps, safety belt. **Platform size:** 30 inches by 19 inches.  
**Weight:** 16 pounds. **Retail:** \$80. **Advantages:** Rubber padding in platform notch and on steel band eliminates potential tree damage and reduces noise. **Disadvantages:** Comes unpainted; climbing aid is not available so hunter must hug tree or use strap when climbing.

**Comments:** "This is a heavy-duty stand

and is simple to use. The stand felt secure at all times, though it tended to shift slightly from side to side on small trees. It didn't squeak, even on the coldest days. Most stable of the tested stands in its price range. Without the optional companion seat, the intruder is somewhat tiring to hunt out of."

**Contact:** Total Shooting Systems, Inc., 390 W. Rolling Meadows Dr., Fond du Lac, WI 54935.

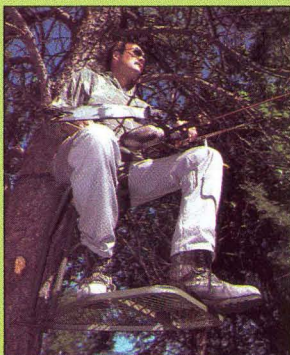


### Loggy Bayou

**Type:** Climbing, hang-on  
**Weight rating:** 350 pounds  
**Options:** Seat climber, adhesive camo kit  
**Platform size:** 18½ inches by 30 inches  
**Weight:** 10 pounds, 12 ounces  
**Retail:** \$199 (without climber)  
**Advantages:** Lightweight aluminum; prepainted gray; three-point sure-lock safety system to prevent slippage; six-year warranty; safety belt and 28-minute instructional video included.

**Comments:** "A truly excellent lightweight, portable stand—the best of the hand-climbers I tested. With the optional climbing aid, the stand climbed easily and quietly, or could be used as a hang-on model in limby trees. The stand was roomy, and the seat was comfortable enough to sit for long periods without fatigue. It was absolutely quiet and rock solid. There was no shifting from side to side, and the footing was sure. Excellent for bow and rifle hunters alike. I rate this stand an A+—well worth the money."

**Contact:** Loggy Bayou, Inc., 10397 LA. Hwy. 1, Shreveport, LA 71115, 1-800-544-8733.



### Timb-R-Lock

**Type:** Hang-on (doesn't climb)  
**Weight rating:** 250 pounds  
**Platform size:** 25 inches by 19 inches  
**Weight:** 8 pounds. **Retail:** \$64.95  
**Advantages:** Aluminum—very lightweight; safety belt included; T-bar screw provides additional support for chain and J-hook hanging system. Has built-in seat. Prepainted drab green.  
**Comments:** "The main advantage of this stand is light weight. It is somewhat cramped for space. Stand feels less stable on tree than larger models tested. May be best suited for situations where

a lightweight stand must be carried a long distance for temporary access to a tree."

**Contact:** Amacker Sales, Inc., 1212 Main, Delhi, LA 71232, 1-800-AMACKER.

### Tree Lounge

**Type:** Climbing, hang-on  
**Weight rating:** more than 350 pounds  
**Options:** Utility pack, gun holder, safety belt, bowhunting adapter kit.  
**Platform size:** Telescopes to 76 inches by 20 inches

**Weight:** 22 pounds. **Retail:** \$225 (includes foot climber)

**Advantages:** Reclining seat and footrest are the most comfortable design on the market. Stand offers easy 360 degree shooting angle, with potential rifle rests in every direction. Tree wedge (included) allows stand angle adjustment at hunting height. Easily converts to camp cart or deer carrier. Comes with instructional video. **Disadvantages:** Comes unpainted; though heavy, well-designed for packing (backstraps included), and carries easily. **Comments:** "This is arguably the safest and most comfortable treestand on the market. Stand is quiet and extremely stable. When bowhunting adapter kit is added, the center of balance makes quiet climbing more difficult. Optional safety belt is best design I've seen." Not sold in catalogs. **Contact:** Advanced Hunting Equipment, Inc., Box 1277, Cumming, GA 30130, (404) 887-1171.



### Loc-On LEM

**Type:** Hang-on (doesn't climb)  
**Weight rating:** 300 pounds.  
**Platform size:** 20 inches by 26 inches.  
**Weight:** 11 pounds. **Retail:** \$78.95.  
**Advantages:** Lightweight; carpeted base for quietness; safety belt included; built-in seat; prepainted gray. **Disadvantages:** Chain-on model simply hooks to stand around tree—no cinching system to tighten.

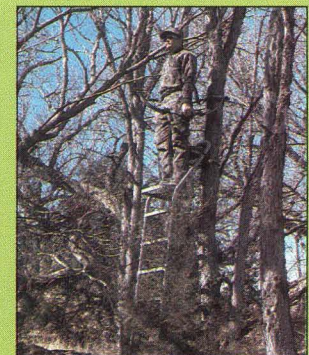
**Comments:** "This is a sturdy stand, best suited to thin-barked trees. The feeling of security is adequate, but since it cannot be cinched tight, it tends to shift slightly with hunter movement. Because of this, I found it to be noisy on thick-barked trees. The plastic base also may sag under a hunter's weight, though this is not threatening. The seat is large and comfortable." **Contact:** Loc-On Company, 1510 Holbrook, Greensboro, N.C. 27403, (919) 370-4411.



### Loc-On Ladder

**Type:** Chain-on ladder  
**Weight rating:** 250 pounds  
**Options:** Trebark model; ladder extensions  
**Platform size:** 16 inches by 18 inches.  
**Height:** 10 feet.

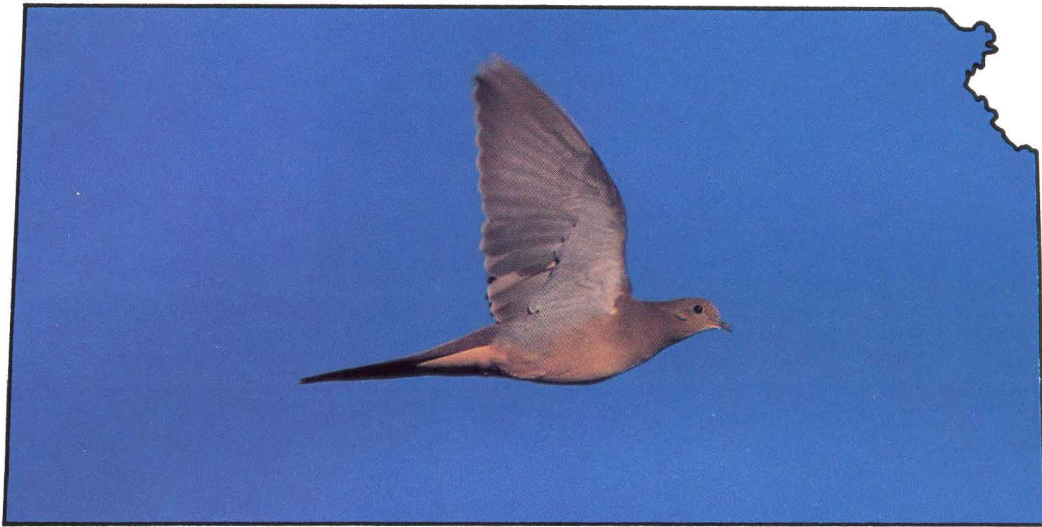
**Weight:** 20 pounds. **Retail:** \$179.95.  
**Advantages:** Breaks down to 40-inch sections that lash together for easy backpacking; stabilizer bar for added stability; ratchet assembly for tightening stand to tree; cushioned foldback seat; safety belt included. **Disadvantages:** Without ladder extension, limited to 10 feet. **Comments:** "An excellent stand, extremely quiet, secure and comfortable. Well suited for brushy areas with trees of small diameter, as well as older timber. Erection of stand is simple. Due to low platform height, pay special attention to wind patterns in hunting area before selecting stand location." **Contact:** Loc-On Company, 1510 Holbrook, Greensboro, N.C. 27403, (919) 370-4411.



**Note:** These stands represent only a few of the many portables available today. Manufacturers listed may produce other models throughout the price range and quality. Contact them for more information.

# Kansas

## Number 1 Dove State?



by Mike Miller  
*editor*

photos by Mike Blair

**More mourning doves spend the summer in Kansas than anywhere in the U.S. This congregation, along with the generous number of birds hatched and raised here, make fall hunting prospects exciting.**

If you asked bird hunters what they knew about Kansas, most would probably agree that the state offers some of the finest pheasant hunting found anywhere. Many would suggest that Kansas is tops for quail. (It's always in the top two or three states for both species.) And a few would mention that Kansas is undoubtedly the best state in the U.S. to hunt prairie chickens. Kansas has a fine reputation for its upland bird hunting, but how many out-of-staters would know that Kansas might be

one of the top mourning dove hunting states in the nation?

Although tremendously popular game birds locally, doves are often overlooked, especially by nonresident hunters. Most local hunters look forward to the Sept. 1 opener, and hunt doves two or three times in early September. But few Kansas hunters realize or appreciate that, according to surveys, Kansas consistently harbors the largest population of breeding doves in the U.S. The doves certainly appreciate Kansas,

raising as many as three broods through a summer. With a huge population of birds spending the summer here and the addition of the home-grown birds, Kansas' fall dove population can be phenomenal.

I'll never forget the first time my cousin from Missouri came to Kansas to hunt doves. He had hunted them once before in Missouri. "How many shells do I need to bring?" he asked over the phone. "Better bring at least three . . . make that four boxes," I said, not knowing how well he'd

shoot. Even four boxes might not be enough for two days of hunting, especially since that was the year the daily bag limit was upped to 15 birds. I figured we could always buy more shells here in town.

When Brad arrived, we couldn't wait until evening, so we left for a sandhill pasture in late afternoon. I cautioned him that the hunting might be slow at first. We were going to hunt near a windmill pond, and doves usually go to water shortly before roosting. It was slow at first, but only compared to the shooting we had later that evening. As soon as we took our positions around the pond, we started seeing doves. First a single from the north, then a double from the east. The shooting was steady and continued to improve, and by 7:30, after several boxes of shells were emptied, we each had our 15 birds. That was when the real dove flights began. We unloaded our guns and just sat and watched in amazement as doves poured in over the bluestem-topped hills. Instead of the singles and doubles, now we were seeing groups of four to 10 birds. It was a great way to cap an exciting hunt.

While the potential for that kind of dove hunting rests in Kansas every year, it's not always that easy. Doves are sissies when it comes to cold, damp weather, and it doesn't take much for the little gray birds to pick up and move south. In recent years, late summer dove numbers could only be described as awesome. It wasn't uncommon to see several hundred birds staging near a roost or watering site in mid-August. But much of our preseason excitement was dampened, literally, by cold, wet weather. Huge numbers of doves left the state before the Sept. 1 opener.

Mind you, we still had fine dove hunting, with many limits filled on opening day, but successful hunters had put in a little preseason scouting. The early cold snaps tend to congregate doves in larger flocks. As the birds stage before the move south, ponds and tree belts that previously held large numbers of birds will suddenly seem vacant. The areas where

This lucky hunter has found a perfect dove pond. The banks gently slope and are bare of weeds and grass.

the birds stage will be teeming with birds and will provide great hunting for several days. I guess we just get spoiled during dry, hot seasons when just about any tree belt or pasture pond is a good dove hunting spot.

Actually, it's best to do a little preseason scouting no matter what the late August weather. Even though the dove population will number in the millions, and doves will appear to be just about everywhere, they do prefer certain feeding and watering areas.

The key to finding fields where doves feed is open ground. Doves feed on grains and weed seeds, particularly white millet, Maximilian sunflower seeds and croton, but they prefer open, almost bare ground. A worked farm field with sunflowers and other forbs is ideal, as is a burned wheat stubble field. If the

field has thick vegetation, doves will avoid it. Look for water holes with open surroundings also. Doves water several times a day, and small pasture ponds can provide the best shooting of all. But the birds definitely prefer sparsely vegetated, shallow sloping shorelines. A flat mud or sand bank is perfect.

Dove hunters also enjoy good shooting near roosts during the evening hours. During warm, dry falls, nearly any group of trees is ideal, but if the birds have started the migration south, you'll have to do some scouting to find good roosts. Long, heavy shelter belts, locust groves or dense Russian olive stands are attractive to doves. The proximity of water and feed fields can also dictate which roosting areas will be best.

Many Department-managed wildlife areas provide excellent dove





hunting. When conditions allow, some area managers improve dove habitat by mowing weedy fields or burning wheat stubble. These areas will then be open to hunting on a staggered schedule. This prevents too much hunting pressure, which causes birds to avoid the area. To find a dove management site in your area, call the local Wildlife and Parks.

Once you find a good dove hunting spot, the real challenge remains: hitting the streaking balls of feathers. Doves might be the ultimate wing-shooting challenge. If you hit more than 50 percent of your shots at doves, you have an excellent average. Most hunters are far below 50 percent. Doves have an uncanny ability to swerve, dip and veer just as you pull the trigger. And they also take advantage of whatever wind velocity is available. (They fly fast enough without the wind.) The best advice is to use an open-choked gun—skeet, improved cylinder or modified—and 7½ size shot or smaller. The most common cause of misses is stopping the swing of the barrel as the trigger is pulled. Swing the barrel ahead of the bird, squeeze the trigger and keep the barrel swinging. Easier said than done.

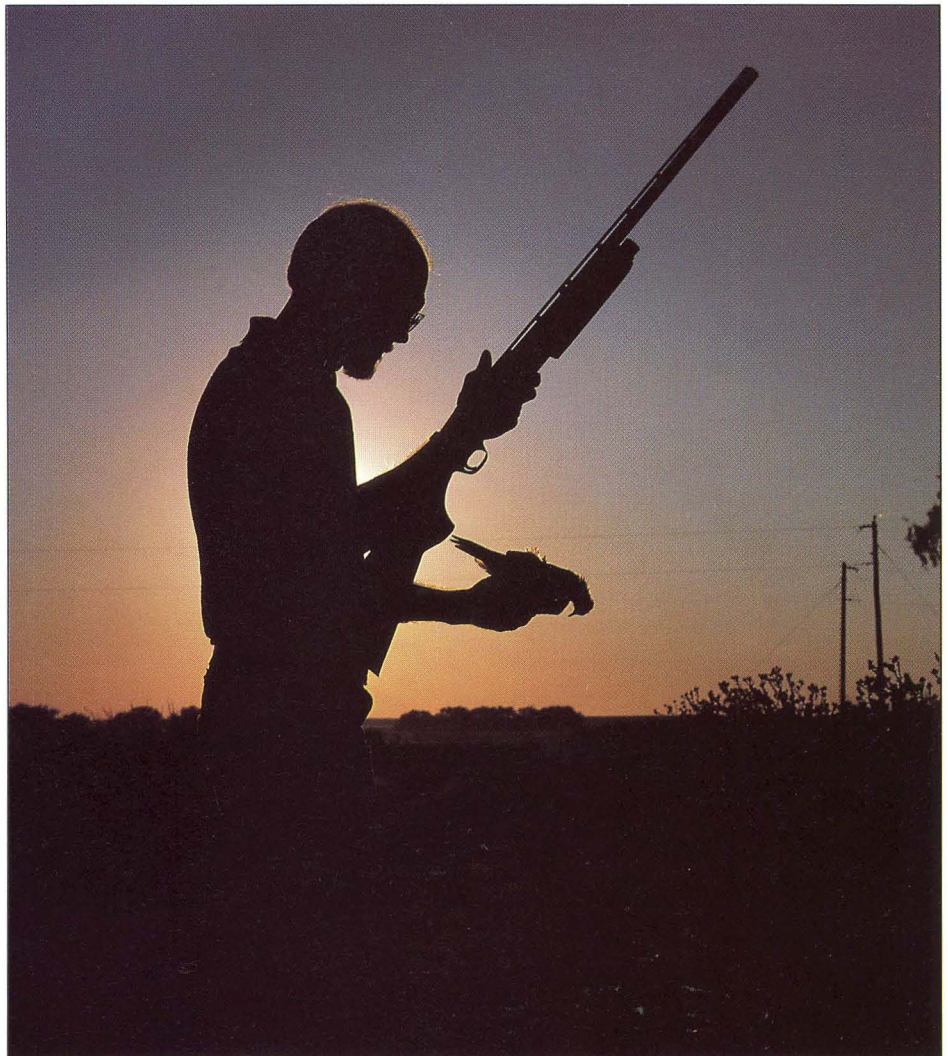
The Kansas dove season opens Sept. 1 and runs for 60 days. The daily bag limit is 15 birds and the possession limit is 30 after the second day.

Doves are dark-meat, and as a result, some hunters may think the meat too gamey. However, if prepared correctly, they are delicious to even the most discriminating tastes. (The fact that my wife will eat them each fall is proof of this.) One of the easiest and most delicious ways to fix doves is to wrap the breasts in a strip of bacon and barbecue them over a hot grill. If you prefer your game fried, fillet the meat from the breast, soak in buttermilk for 30 minutes, dip in flour and fry in hot grease. You won't be disappointed. ♡


Kansas dove hunting is hard to beat. 1990 dove numbers appear excellent, so, hunters should take plenty of shells to the field.



Doves prefer open feeding areas, too. Worked fields, burned areas or sparsely vegetated weed patches are ideal. Top dove feeds include sunflowers, millet, croton and crop grains.







# Oasis In The Sand: Sandhills State Park

by Jerry Schmidt

*Parks and Public Lands field supervisor, Region 4  
Cheney*

photos by Mike Blair

**For variety, beautiful scenery and solitude, Sandhills State Park is unequalled.**

**A**eons ago, vast sand dunes were formed along the Arkansas River in southcentral Kansas. Millions of tons of sediment from the Rocky Mountains had been carried into this area by the Arkansas River. Prevailing southwesterly winds blew the fine sand out of the river valley, forming a narrow band of unstable sand dunes. The sand continued to shift and change shape, molded by the wind, until vegetation established a foothold and stabilized the dunes. Part of this area is preserved in Sandhills State Park.

The 1,123-acre state park lies in the Arkansas River lowlands just north of Hutchinson. This is not a typical state park. There are no concrete trailer slabs, paved roads or buildings. In fact, there are few manmade "improvements" at Sandhills. It's a natural park—preserved for its sand dunes, grasslands, wetlands and woodlands. To protect its natural features and heighten human enjoyment of these features, this unique and diverse area is strictly limited to walk-in access.

In 1974, the Kansas Park and Resources Authority acquired 640 acres from the Kansas State Industrial Reformatory (KSIR). Originally used to pasture cattle, KSIR no longer needed the land when their farming operation was discontinued. Gov. Robert

Docking signed the House Bill making the property Kansas' 22nd state park. Shortly after this transfer, the Dillon family of Hutchinson donated an adjacent 320 acres of identical rolling hills to the Park Authority. Later, another 163 acres were purchased with Federal Land and Water funds creating the 1,123-acre park.

Original plans called for hiking trails, primitive camping, picnic sites, nature study areas, restroom facilities and even an amphitheater, but lack of funding prohibited any development. In the mid-1970s, members of a federally sponsored program called Young Adult Conservation Corps established a series of trails, removed interior fences and built several vault toilets. Still struggling with funding and manpower to manage the park, the Park Authority leased it to the Dillon Nature Center in 1983 for a period of five years. Dillon staff members re-established some trails and maintained the area until 1988 when the Department of Wildlife and Parks took over.

Diverse in its beauty, Sandhills attracts a diversity of visitors: hikers, birdwatchers, joggers, hunters, horse riders, photographers, wildflower enthusiasts, stargazers and various other special interest groups.

Visitors enjoy 4 miles of hiking trails leading through wetlands, across creeks, grasslands and woodlands. One trail takes the hiker to the top of a 40-foot tall sand dune, providing an excellent view and perspective of the entire park. From the lookout, many of the park's approximately 40 sand dunes, ranging from 10 to 40 feet tall, can be seen.

There is an interpretive trail located on the north side of the park. A self-guide brochure provides information about tree and shrub species and other natural features. The trail meanders through woodlands and wetlands with gigantic cottonwood trees scattered along the way. Hikers will enjoy studying and observing a wide variety of plant and animal life in a quiet, wilderness-like setting.

Another trail, starting along the

park's north boundary, leads to several large ponds. The marshy areas around the ponds provide an excellent area to observe waterfowl.

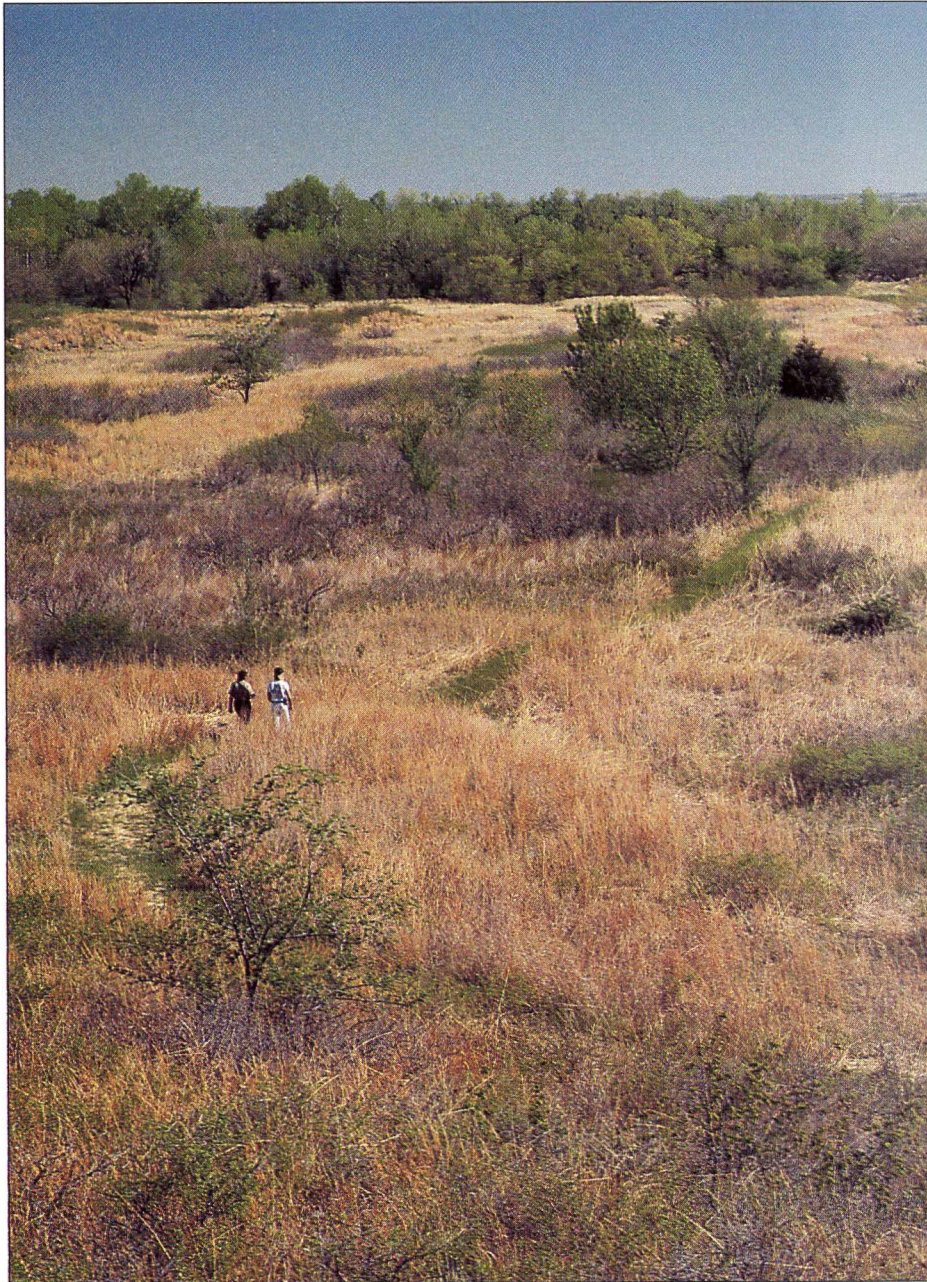
Along the trails, a variety of native vegetation grows. The sandy soil holds a mixture of short and tall grasses such as little bluestem, switchgrass, Indian grass, tall dropseed, sand love grass and prairie cordgrass. A variety of forbs are found in the upland areas, including annual plants in disturbed areas. Throughout the spring, summer and fall, a wide variety of wildflowers bloom including spiderwort, black-eyed susan, daisy fleabane, penstamens and prairie coneflower just to name a few.

Due to a relatively impervious subsoil layer, the depressions between the dunes, called playas, often contain temporary ponds or sedge marshes. Black willow trees grow around the marshes while red mulberry is occasional in drier soil. Prickly pear cactus and yucca grow on the well drained ridges. Button-



The park is limited to walk-in access to preserve the natural beauty. One of the hiking trails leads visitors to a sand dune nearly 40 feet tall. Varied in wildlife and habitat, the park offers sandhill prairie, wetlands and woodlands (right).





Sandhills State Park is a place to escape the crowds and noise; to see a piece of the Kansas prairie unaltered. Visitors included hikers, birdwatchers, horse riders, naturalists and hunters. Hunting is allowed by special permit only.

bush and roughleaf dogwood are common shrubs in wet places, and chickasaw plum grows on the dunes. Corralberry is found in the heavily shaded areas.

Due to the interspersed shrubby and open habitat, the abundance of water and the area's lack of human interference, there is an abundance of wildlife.

The park's playa lakes attract pied-billed grebes, green herons, American bitterns, American coots, mallards, blue-winged teal and many

others during migration season. In wet springs, some stay to nest. The rich in nesting songbirds. Many of these birds also nest elsewhere in the state, but some, like the eastern bluebird, are most common in the sandhills. Other nesting songbirds include the lark sparrow, field sparrow, orchard oriole, Northern oriole, yellow-billed cuckoo, mourning dove, Bell's vireo and Eastern meadowlark. The Sandhills supports an excellent population of bobwhite quail and good numbers of pheasants and

turkeys.

A variety of reptiles and amphibians are found here, too. The observant visitor will notice many frog and toad species as well as ornate box turtles, racerunners, fence lizards, earless lizards, garter snakes and bull snakes.

Mammals common to the area include opossum, mole, cottontail, plains pocket gopher, plains pocket mouse, western harvest mouse, eastern wood rat, coyote, raccoon, badger, striped skunk and white-tailed deer.

Horseback riding has always been popular here. Before riding, a special permit must be obtained from the park office. There are no designated bridle paths at this time, however, riding on the dunes is strictly prohibited due to the damage it causes.

Last year, the park was opened to limited upland bird and archery deer hunting for the first time. Special hunting permits were available through a drawing procedure. A limited number of archery deer hunting permits provided recipients with a quality hunting experience. Upland bird hunters who drew permits had the park to themselves on their designated day. Special hunting permits will be available again this fall through a similar drawing system.

Sandhills State Park is maintained and enhanced through a variety of management techniques. Fire is an important tool to maintain the quality native grasslands. Controlled burns are necessary to reduce woody invaders and excess dead vegetation. Another management project that will enhance the area's wildlife habitat involves developing the small pockets of wetlands into larger, interconnected wetland areas. The park's management plans are designed to benefit all aspects of nature, including man.

Future improvements include additional hiking trails, improved restroom facilities, an amphitheater, a self-guided nongame interpretive trail, an interpretive center and limited camping areas. This unique park provides grasslands, wetlands, woodlands, sand dunes and a wide variety of plant and animal life to enjoy. Best of all, visitors can enjoy it all in the solitude natural, uncrowded surroundings. ♡



by Mark Shoup

## A Deeper Look

There are a lot of nuts out there. You know who they are. They are easy to identify, the ones with the confused, twisted or downright evil ways of thinking. In a nutshell, they don't think like me. Sometimes, it seems like "they" are everywhere. The truth, of course, is that "they" are really not so easy to identify or categorize.

Before coming to Pratt, I spent more than 12 years in Wichita. During my last two years in the city, I worked with a man whom, if I had relied solely on first impressions, I might easily have judged a "nut." But our working relationship allowed me to learn about the man as well as his opinions. He is unassuming, almost shy and has a wry sense of humor. He is from New Jersey, but his quiet, friendly manner made so much foolishness of my Midwestern stereotype of Easterners.

As I got to know this man, I discovered that he is somewhat anti-hunting. Like most people today, he didn't grow up with hunting, and he finds it difficult to understand; but he was willing to listen to me. I described my life-long love affair with the outdoors. I explained that to a true hunter, pursuit and understanding of the animals he pursues is as important, often more important, than the kill.

I also explained the hunter's concern with habitat and the clearly dominant role sportsmen play in conservation efforts that benefit all species.

Of course, this line of conversation evolved over a period of months, but I like to think that my approach was rational—the voice of a friend with an opposing view. I think this approach helped convince my friend that hunters are not psychopathic killers. I hope he now understands that our concern for wildlife is as great, or greater, than any other conservation group.

The point is, my friend is probably like most people—ambivalent about hunting and a little uneasy with it, yet not ready to condemn the sport outright. If I had attacked his initial negative comments about hunting with teeth bared, I'm sure he would have turned harder into the anti-hunting camp. Of course, much of the credit goes to the man himself. There was an innate sense of reason and fairness in his comments and questions.

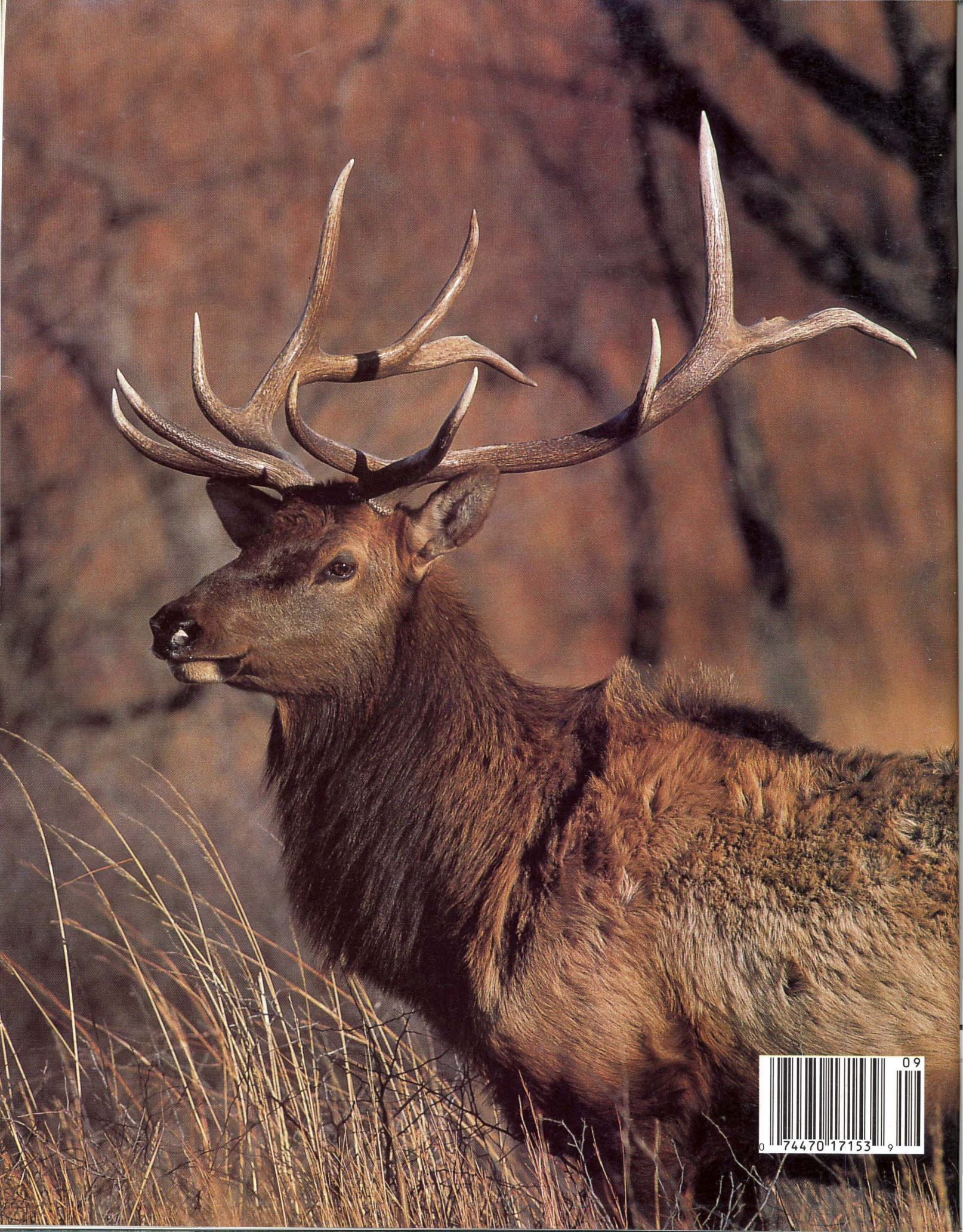


Dana Eastes illustration

It's human nature to be defensive when our opinions are challenged. It's also true that the views of hunters are often attacked irrationally, even hysterically. However, this is not always the case. Many people are just undecided about the issue, and sometimes their negative comments are really opportunities in disguise.

My friend is a case in point. I confess that he may never cast a line into a glassy pond at sunset or pump a shell into a Model 12 in the predawn frost. But I'm willing to bet that he'll listen more carefully the next time he works side by side with an avid hunter, that he'll never harass a 16-year-old bowhunter in the woods, and that he'll even subscribe to *Kansas Wildlife and Parks*.

In these times, hunters need to do more than just look for allies. We need to open the doors that aren't quite closed. One never knows what a deeper look at a person might reveal. ♡



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