

KANSAS

Wildlife & Parks

November/December 1993

\$2.25



GOVERNOR

Joan Finney

COMMISSIONERS

James Holderman, Chairman
Wichita

George Hinch, Vice Chairman
Elkhart

J. Jean Brungardt
Hays

William A. Anderson Jr.
Fairway

Carl Coonrod
Elk Falls

Peg Ann Ranney
Dodge City

Al Ward
Topeka

ADMINISTRATION

Secretary

Theodore D. Ensley

Chief of Staff

Tom Kirker

Ass't. Secretary/Admin.

Richard Koerth

Ass't. Secretary/Operations

Doug Sonntag

Director of Administrative Svcs.

Mike Theurer

Director of Fisheries & Wildlife

Joe Kramer

Director of Parks & Public Lands

Jerold (Jerry) Hover

Director of Law Enforcement

Omar Stavlo

MAGAZINE STAFF

Chief of Public Information

Bob Mathews

Editor

Mike Miller

Associate Editor

J. Mark Shoup

Illustrator

Dana Eastes

Photographer

Mike Blair

Staff Writer

Marc Murrell

Editorial Assistant

Bev Aldrich

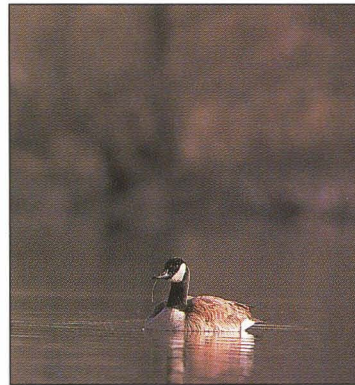
Circulation

Barbara Theurer

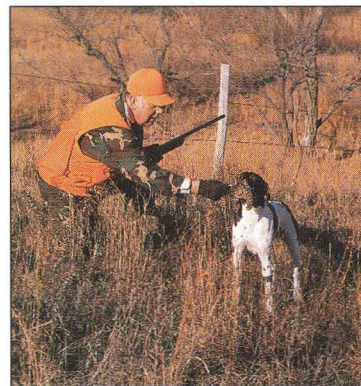
KANSAS WILDLIFE & PARKS (ISSN 0898-6975) is published by the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, 900 Jackson St., Suite 502, Topeka, KS 66612. Address editorial correspondence and subscription requests to Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, RR 2, Box 54A, Pratt, KS 67124 (316) 672-5911. Subscription rate: one year \$8; two years \$15; and three years \$21. Articles in the magazine may be reprinted with permission. Second class postage paid at Pratt, KS and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, RR 2, Box 54A, Pratt, KS 67124.



2



16



27



About the Covers:

Front: Velvet stripped from its antlers, a buck ventures into the early evening as rutting season approaches. Mike Blair photographed the scene with a 400mm lens, f/3.5 @ 1/250. **Back:** Snow geese over Marais des Cygnes WA land as the sun sets in November. Mike Blair photographed the scene with a 400mm lens, f/22 @ 1/30.

From The Secretary's Desk

Working With Mother Nature

by Ted Ensley

1

A Year of Deer

Deer are common in Kansas today, and their daily drive to survive provides an intriguing diary. by Bob Mathews

2

These Are The Good Old Days

A New York outdoor TV show discovered the secret of Kansas hunting, and they vowed to return. by Bill Saiff III

10

Flood Recovery

The 1993 floods have left many state parks and wildlife areas reeling from both damage and reduced revenue. by Tom Kirker

13

The Call Of Geese

The sound of calling geese signals winter's approach and thrills those who take a moment to listen. by Mike Blair

16

Come To Kansas, Elmer Fudd!

Poor Elmer never gets his rabbit so, why not visit Kansas and enjoy fantastic rabbit hunting. by Marc Murrell

24

To Be A Quail Hunter

Hooked by a childhood quail hunt, the author believes Kansas is a great place to be a quail hunter. by Mike Miller

27

The Kansas Outdoor Store

31

The Real Stuff

32

Wild Currents

Edited by Mark Shoup

33

High Ground

When Things Go Wrong . . .

by Mike Miller

45



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, sexual preference, religion, 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.

Working With Mother Nature



As caretakers of the state's natural resources, we take pride in how we manage our wildlife, fisheries and outdoor recreation areas. Many talented and dedicated professionals work hard to make sure that our public lands and private wildlife resources are in good condition for the people of Kansas.

Sometimes, however, nature steps in and lets everyone know who is really in charge. The "Floods of '93" reminded everyone, including resource managers, that nature always has the final say. Although small when compared to loss of private property, damage to state parks and wildlife areas has been considerable. Damage to facilities alone will top \$4.5 million. Habitat on some public wildlife areas is non-existent. Three parks will be closed for the rest of the year, and others have reduced services.

Just as surely as nature created this summer's floods, natural processes will heal the damage. The cycles of nature are ones of growth, death and renewal. Our fish, wildlife and recreational resources will again flourish but perhaps not in the same ways as before. Moreover, we must be patient as work goes on to open recreation areas and re-establish wildlife habitat. Nature works at its own pace.

Where there are problems, there are always opportunities. We have a chance to make our operations more efficient and to use our resources to the best advantage as we repair flooded areas. Unfortunately, the funding

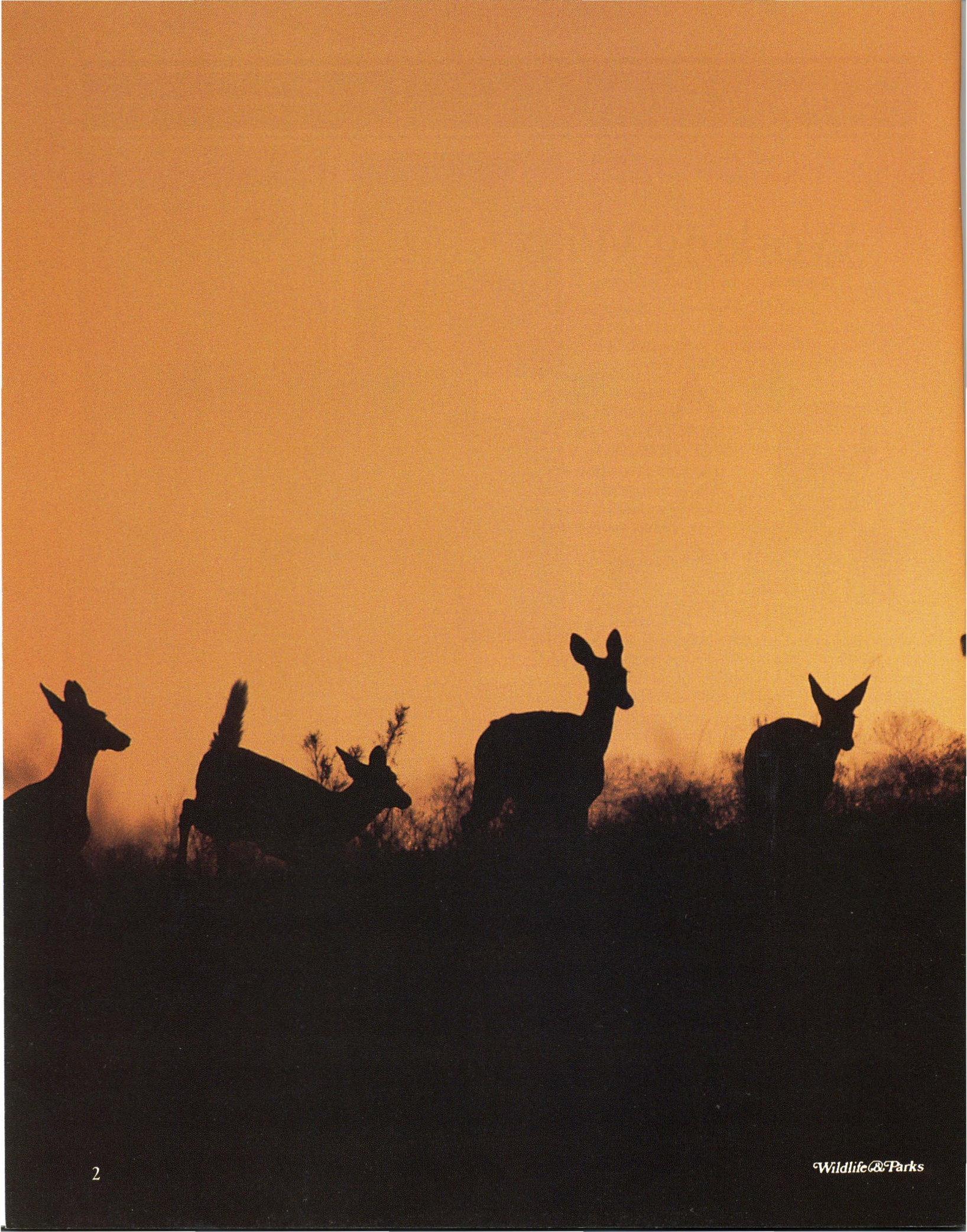


Marty Burke photo

to accomplish this task will be difficult to come by. Along with physical damage, there has been a significant reduction in revenues due to the flooding. There will be difficult decisions involved in allocating resources for flood repair, and recovery will take time.

This summer's floods are a vivid reminder of the power of nature. This power can create as well as destroy, and as we labor to manage our wildlife and recreational resources, we must work with nature's forces to help the process. As a department, we must also devote our energy to finding the means to help accomplish this task. With nature's help, we will succeed.

Ted Ensley





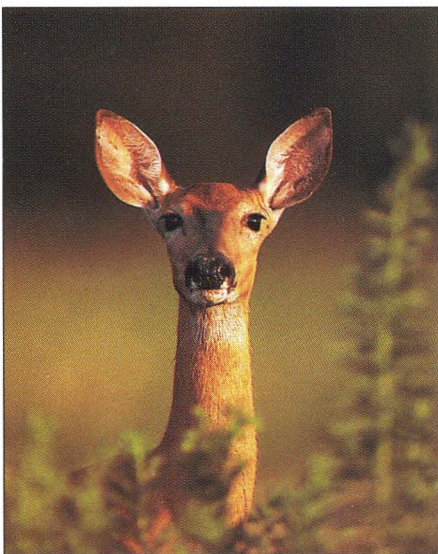
A Year Of Deer

by **Bob Mathews**
chief, Information Section, Pratt
photographs by **Mike Blair**

From my perch in a ragged elm tree I watched the sky brighten by slow degrees one fog-shrouded October morning. I shuddered for a moment, partly in response to the damp cold and partly in anticipation, as I peered down the trail to the west. Five minutes earlier, I thought I had seen a glimpse of movement in the locust grove a hundred yards away. It was too dark, and I was still half asleep to know for certain, though.

Now I was wide awake and straining for a better look, as if by sheer concentration I could shed more light under the murky canopy of the trees. Suddenly, there they were. I saw the doe's feet beside a small cedar tree no more than 20 yards away. Although the wind was in my favor, the doe saw just enough movement as I tilted my head under a limb to get a better look at them. Or she might have heard the rustle of my jacket as I shifted my body to cast a glance their way. Or she might have simply felt that something wasn't quite right. She stared my direction for 20 seconds, stamped her foot once, then led the fawn out into the grass and away from the shelterbelt.

They were the "movement" I had seen minutes earlier, but somehow they had closed the distance between us without a sound. I was enervated by the encounter and,



Ears like radar are second only to the whitetail's nose in detecting danger.



A flash of white as a doe flees is a familiar sight to predators, including human hunters. The whitetail's senses and wariness make it difficult prey for any hunter.

once again, reminded that deer comprise an enviable collection of finely-tuned senses and wariness. I told myself I'd have to be a lot smarter next time. Then I consoled myself with the rationalization that I'd be finely-tuned myself if I spent every hour of my life coping with the variety of challenges a deer faces in its life.

As with any prey species, deer have distilled an impressive array of survival skills through thousands of generations. They have developed superlative senses of smell and hearing to keep track of threats sharing their woods and fields. Every day of their lives they put their instincts and senses to use. A year in the life of a deer is a concentrated curriculum in survival. The reward for winning is to live one more day.

AUTUMN

Autumn is their busy season. As with other times of the year, they

are still most active around sunrise and sunset. With the onset of cooler weather, they feed heavily in preparation for the winter ahead.

Deer eat more food in autumn simply because so much food is available. In addition to wild foods, such as acorns, grasses, forbs, and browse, they have available a variety of agricultural crops and crop residues. They feed longer and more often and move about within their home ranges more than any other time of the year. In Kansas, both mule deer and white-tails rely on agricultural crops or crop residues for about half of their diet requirements.

November and December are characterized by the rut — or breeding season — that will ensure the survival of their species. It's the one time of the year when their minds are occupied with something other than avoiding danger and finding food. This time of year a



Two young bucks confront one another in typical territorial aggression on a foggy November morning. Although young, they are learning the ways of the rut.

buck's thyroid, adrenal, and testicular glands reach a peak of activity. Since bucks are sexually primed long before the does are willing or able to accept them, they become

much more aggressive. Although they don't completely throw their customary caution to the winds, they travel more and are less inclined to confine their movements



An older, dominant buck rubs a cedar tree as the rut gets underway. The rub not only vents aggression but also may provide visual and scent cues, identifying this buck's territory to other deer.

to the hours between sunset and dawn.

You'll see signs of their passing in the form of rubs and scrapes. Rubs — the white scars of rubbed-off bark on young trees — begin appearing as early as late August and September, when bucks are scraping the last bits of dried velvet from their antlers. They'll thrash their antlers against shrubs and trees at the onset of the breeding season, too, to vent their frustrations and aggressiveness.

Another characteristic behavior in autumn is the development of scrapes — circular patches of earth pawed free of leaves and grass. Rubs and scrapes are a buck's way of advertising his presence to other deer. Scent from glands near the eyes and forehead of the bucks is deposited on rubs, and bucks urinate over their hock glands into the scrapes.

Scrapes provide a vital communications link between bucks and does that are ready to breed. Does in heat visit a scrape and leave their scent. Using their keen sense of smell, bucks will visit the scrapes, or scent-check them from downwind. If the scent tells him a doe is ready to breed, the buck will trail her and the pair will breed. Both whitetail and mule deer bucks will tend a single doe two to three days before estrus and then accompany her for three to four days after breeding.

During this time of year, bucks range far and wide. A dominant buck will probably not be challenged by other bucks inhabiting his home range. Most fighting that occurs during this season is between dominant bucks whose extended home range overlaps with other dominant bucks. If competing bucks encounter each other they will often fight, lunging at each other with their heads down, ears laid back, and antlers poised for battle. Using their antlers as battering rams, they will charge into each other, then push and shove in an effort to force the other buck backward or to the ground. Although they are scarred in these



Bucks lose some of their normal caution and wariness and roam day and night during the rut, searching for receptive does. Once a doe is found, the buck will tend and defend her from rival bucks for several days before moving on.

frays, there seldom is a fight to the death. Instead, the lesser animal will give way and run off when he knows he is beaten.

The rutting season usually lasts about 60 days. As the rut wanes, the buck loses interest in the does and virtually disappears from sight to recuperate from the stresses of the season and to feed in preparation for the colder months ahead.

WINTER

Behavior patterns of deer change with the onset of winter. Deer begin to adjust physiologically to the harsh season ahead by feeding heavily. Unlike other times of the year, they are often active during the daylight hours in winter.

To conserve energy, a deer's metabolic rate slows this time of year. Ensnared in their heavy winter coats, they remain bedded through the long, cold nights. Lying still conserves energy. Bedding areas are located in heavy cover to provide shelter from the wind. Daily feeding forays are confined as much as possible to areas

sheltered from the energy-depleting winter winds.

Mule deer often congregate in large groups this time of year. Whitetails, however, will not normally form large groups unless a winter is particularly severe.

Antlers are normally shed in January, although they may be lost as early as November and as late as March.

SPRING

Deer respond to increasing sunlight in springtime just as plants do. The new-sprouting vegetation brought on by lengthening days and milder weather is more nutritious than at any other time of year. Daily feeding patterns become longer and more

frequent to meet the physiological demands of growing antlers in the bucks and growing fetuses in the does.

Deer may feed for two or three hours before dawn, then bed down for the rest of the morning. Does



Metabolism slows during winter and deer feed more than ever, bedding in heavy cover at night to conserve energy.

may feed even longer, until mid-morning or so, to nurture the developing fetuses. They may feed again for an hour or two in early afternoon, then bed down again until sundown. The twilight hour of evening launches another three or four hours of feeding, followed by rest until the pre-dawn feeding routine begins a new day.

Most fawns are born in late May and June, after a 200-day gestation period. As fawning time approaches, pregnant does seek solitude. If fawns

from the previous year are still accompanying her, she will try to elude them and discourage them from hanging around.

Newborn fawns weigh 6 to 8 pounds, and it appears most of that is long, spindly legs. Within a few minutes of their birth, however, fawns are attempting to stand. By the time they're 30 minutes old, they are normally able to walk a few steps. As soon as the fawn is able to walk, the doe leads them elsewhere, an instinctive response to avoid predators by leaving the scent-laden birthing site. Normally, a doe giving birth for the first time will have a single fawn; twins are more common thereafter.

During its first week of life, a fawn does little more than remain motionless on the ground. They will nurse four to six times per day during that first week. Fawns are essentially scentless during this time, and does will leave them alone to forage nearby. It is during this critical time that people sometimes find fawns they assume are orphaned. However, a doe will rarely abandon her young. More often than not, she will be close by.



Fawns are born in May and June. Though able to walk 30 minutes after birth, the fawn spends most of the first week lying hidden to avoid predators. The doe returns four to six times a day to nurse the fawn.

Fawns depend on their mother's milk until five weeks of age, although they may nurse up to three months of age. At two to three weeks old, fawns begin to forage, sampling the variety of vegetation available to them and developing taste preferences. They are quickly educated how to take care of themselves and will accompany the doe for increasingly longer distances and longer periods of time spent feeding.

SUMMER

A deer's home range is smallest in the summer because their food, water, and shelter requirements are most easily met during this season. Ranges in western Kansas are larger, on the average, than those in eastern Kansas since water supplies are more scarce and scattered.

Summer is a time

of relative inactivity, compared to other seasons. Because of the heat, deer change their feeding patterns to primarily a nocturnal activity. Does and fawns may emerge from their cover just before sunset to begin their first feeding of the night. Bucks will typically wait a while longer, until well after the sun sets.



Summer life is easy with abundant food, water and cover. Deer move less now than at any other time of the year.





Fawns depend on mother's milk until 5 weeks of age, when they'll begin to sample vegetation and browse. Does usually wean fawns by 3 months.

Normally, they will feed heavily from sunset until midnight, then again just before dawn.

Not long after she gives birth to new fawns, the doe may be rejoined by her fawns from the previous year. In some cases, the yearling does she gave birth to the year before may have fawns of their own. Doe-fawn

groups are sometimes large during this time as the young are developing their survival skills. In August and September, fawns begin losing their spots, replacing their thin, reddish summer coats with the heavier, grayish winter coats.

The bucks' antlers, which began

growing in April or May have reached their maximum growth. The long daylight hours spur the production of testosterone which causes antlers to harden and the nurturing velvet covering to dry up. The hormone also results in more aggressive activity among the males, and they begin rubbing and scraping their antlers on shrubs and saplings to remove the dried velvet.

As summer wanes, the stage is set for the frenzied activity of another rutting season. In preparation, whitetails and mule deer alike begin to feed heavily, partaking of the bountiful supply of both wild and cultivated forage. That bounty, together with careful management of the state's deer herd, has enabled an unparalleled recovery of deer populations in Kansas in the past century. Their own unique biology and behavior is due a substantial share of the credit as well. They have proven themselves exquisitely adapted to the variety of challenges they confront throughout the year. ♣

Antlers are amazing. They emerge and finish growth, even on large bucks, in five months. The growing bone is vessel-filled and covered with a blood-rich skin called velvet. By August, growth is complete and the velvet is shed. The hard antler is dropped off each winter, usually in February or March.



These Are The Good Old Days

by Bill Saiff III, host of Cabin Country television show
Watertown, New York



Steve Harper/Wichita Eagle photo

When “Cabin Country” show host Bill Saiff III and cameraman/producer Tom Carroll (above) traveled from New York to Kansas, they discovered that Kansas hunting really is “America’s Best Kept Secret.”

It’s the future. 1993 — a time when many areas of the United States, traditional hunting areas, have given way to the booming metropolis. Who needs trophy white-tailed deer? I certainly couldn’t be excited by a multi-colored cock pheasant breaking cover in front of a well-trained lab; quail that flush by the dozens, mallards and teal hovering over decoys or Canada geese approaching field bunkers like bombers on a low-level mission. This kind of wild game, in

well-managed numbers that are actually on the increase, certainly couldn’t compete with hunting in the good old days. Believe me, the “Good Old Days” are now, and they are in Kansas.

As host of the outdoor television show “Cabin Country,” I get to travel around the country in search of wild game and sample a wide variety of styles of hunting. Many areas of our country can boast excellent hunting opportunities for hunting specific species of game.

These phenomenal hunts usually take place under optimal conditions at very precise times of the year. Kansas hunting offers a variety of excellent hunting opportunities throughout lengthy seasons that will accommodate the busiest hunter.

Last January found western Kansas gripped in the clutches of a major snow and wind storm. I wondered how the drifting snow would affect the pheasant populations at Pheasant Creek, the ranch where I

was to hunt. The van slowly made its way along icy U.S. Highway 54 as we left Pratt and headed for Lakin, normally 2 1/2 hours west.

I was to be the guest of J.R. Dienst for a 2 1/2-day pheasant hunt. I'd heard plenty of stories about the vast numbers of ringnecks in western Kansas, but I wasn't prepared for the lack of landscape. I wondered where on earth a pheasant would find shelter and thought the treeless landscape was like an arctic scene where snow meets sky, and the horizon is lost. I didn't realize how the eye could be deceived until the afternoon hunt began.

Twenty thousand hunting acres were at our disposal at Pheasant Creek, and Dienst assured me that the snow would not hinder our hunt. He explained that pheasants flock up in heavily weeded draws during severe weather. It wasn't until we left the comfort of our four-wheel-drive that I began to see the landscape take shape. What had looked like nothing, soon became a series of brushy draws with food plots intermixed, providing excellent pheasant habitat. Two labs, Lucy and Bear, were unleashed and our hunt was on.

The labs quartered the cover nicely while I struggled to keep from tripping in the knee-deep snow. I pondered Dienst's sanity when he asked, "Are you having fun yet?" Before my wind-numbed brain could think of a response, Bear circled a patch of cover and a beautiful rooster launched into the air with a series of scolding cackles. While I was still trying to put these quickly occurring events into perspective, my partner's 20 gauge barked and a splendid Kansas pheasant was brought to hand. My hunting partner, Steve Harper (outdoor writer for the Wichita Eagle) and Dienst both proceeded to explain that firing my shooting iron would increase my chances of taking a limit. I explained that, even though I was a guest, I felt resigned to give them the first opportunity. I turned away hoping they bought it.

All the stories I'd heard about



Steve Harper/Wichita Eagle photo

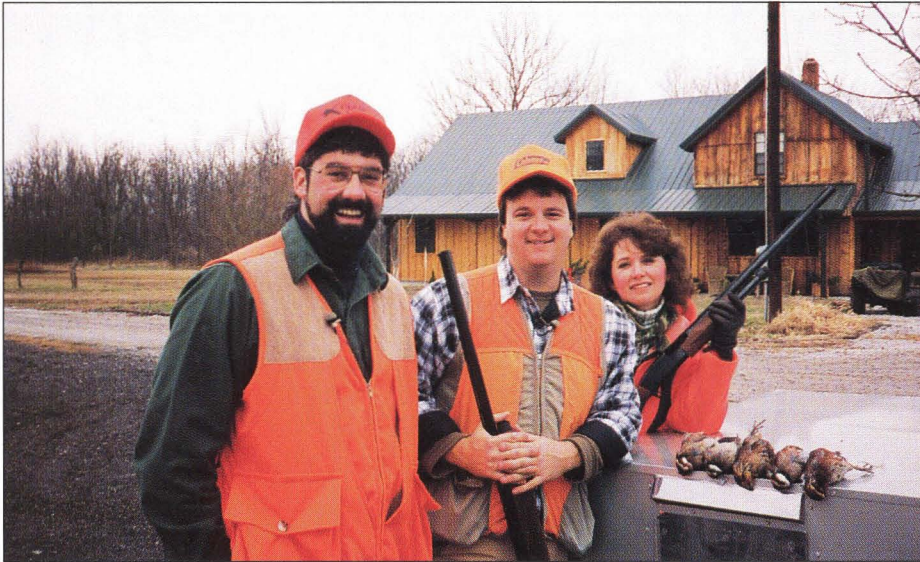
While pheasants were the main focus on a trip to Pheasant Creek Ranch near Lakin, Saiff was thrilled with this lesser prairie chicken he took with owner J.R. Dienst.

western Kansas pheasant hunting were suddenly reality, and my enthusiasm soared. I no longer felt the cold. We lined out and approached a strategically placed food plot. I could hardly believe the number of pheasant tracks entering this piece of cover. I was sure that the birds would run and flush near the end of the cover. Lucy began to get birdy in some fairly open cover, but we could see no evidence of a bird. I moved up quickly just in case, and nearly stepped on the bird. Snow erupted 2 feet from me as a rooster flushed, blinding me with scattered snow, and my heart stopped for what seemed like an eternity. As I raised my pump gun, I could hear faint chuckles coming from my hunting partners. When the barrel's bead crossed the rising bird, I instinctively squeezed the trigger and was rewarded with a cleanly downed bird. Harper and Dienst slapped each other on the back and relived the terrified look on my face when the bird had flushed.

We continued walking to the end of our weed patch in traditional pheasant hunting fashion. Most of the birds did run ahead, but whistle commands from Dienst kept the dogs from ranging too far out. Lucy quartered to the right side of the draw while Bear appeared birdy to

my left. The big lab flash pointed, then dove into cover. Pheasants flushed in every direction, and Harper and I picked out two roosters. Two quick shots rang out, and two birds came down. I watched in amazement as more cocks flushed. We could have easily limited out on the 20 or so birds that flushed, but just watching them streak to other cover patches was enough. Perhaps too much emphasis is placed on getting limits these days. The camaraderie and quality dog work are the things I will remember for the rest of my life.

Quail hunting was also on the list during our January trip to Kansas. We traversed the state to the southeast corner, near Columbus. There I met good friend Marc Murrell (public information officer with the department). Marc and I were to be the guests of Sam and Frieda Lancaster, who run Kansas Outfitters. The Lancasters met us at their lodge and talk quickly turned to the abundance of quail in the area. My buddy Marc never misses a meal, so while he sampled some of Frieda's fabulous cooking, Sam and I went out to the dog kennels to check out the Brittannies we would be hunting over. I wasn't familiar with Brittannies, but soon learned why Sam was fond of them. These



Marc Murrell photo

Saiff and Carroll were equally impressed with the Kansas people they met. Saiff poses here with hunting partner Marc Murrell and Kansas Outfitters co-owner Frieda Lancaster during a quail hunt in Cherokee County.

are tough little dogs with an unbeatable desire to hunt. The thickest tangle could not dissuade these bundles of energy.

To prepare for the hunt, Sam threw clay targets, testing our shotgun prowess. Marc instructed me as to the sound whipping I was about to take, but after he missed his first two targets and I broke mine, I quit while I was ahead. Frieda was breaking targets regularly with her Browning Citori so, we decided it was time to hit the field.

The quail held much better than the pheasants, and I was impressed with how Sam's Brittany Dolly never pressured the birds. The first scent encountered was enough to lock her on point, while the other dogs honored her.

Dolly's first point was in a relatively large piece of cover. Frieda took the left side, while I moved up on the right. The plan was for Marc to flush the birds and provide shots for all three hunters. I noticed movement in the tangle and saw a single quail sneaking away. I relaxed, thinking the dogs had pointed a single bird. Marc took three steps, and no less than 30 birds flushed in one of the prettiest covey rises I've ever seen. Frieda fired, Marc fired and my gun jammed. Two quail were collected,

and I had a chance to let my heart stop racing. The quail sped away like out-of-control F-16 fighter jets. I'll never understand how those birds can so completely conceal themselves in sparse cover, leaving the hunter dependent on the pointing dog's nose.

We worked singles from that first covey and found several smaller groups of birds that gave us consistent shooting for the rest of the day. Dolly pointed in a triangular-shaped piece of cover, and the other dogs honored from the opposite side. There was no doubt that the dogs had the quail surrounded. I volunteered to flush the birds. Three quail erupted less than 4 feet from Dolly's nose, and I was fortunate enough to double on a pair that streaked straight away. We took many birds, but the most memorable moment was a 150 yard honor.

We were working singles in a grass field, and Dolly was hot in the north corner. As we moved toward her, she froze in a solid point. One of the other dogs honored her point from 80 yards and the other froze 150 yards away! The field was flat, allowing the dogs good visibility, but I must admit, I've never seen an honor from that distance.

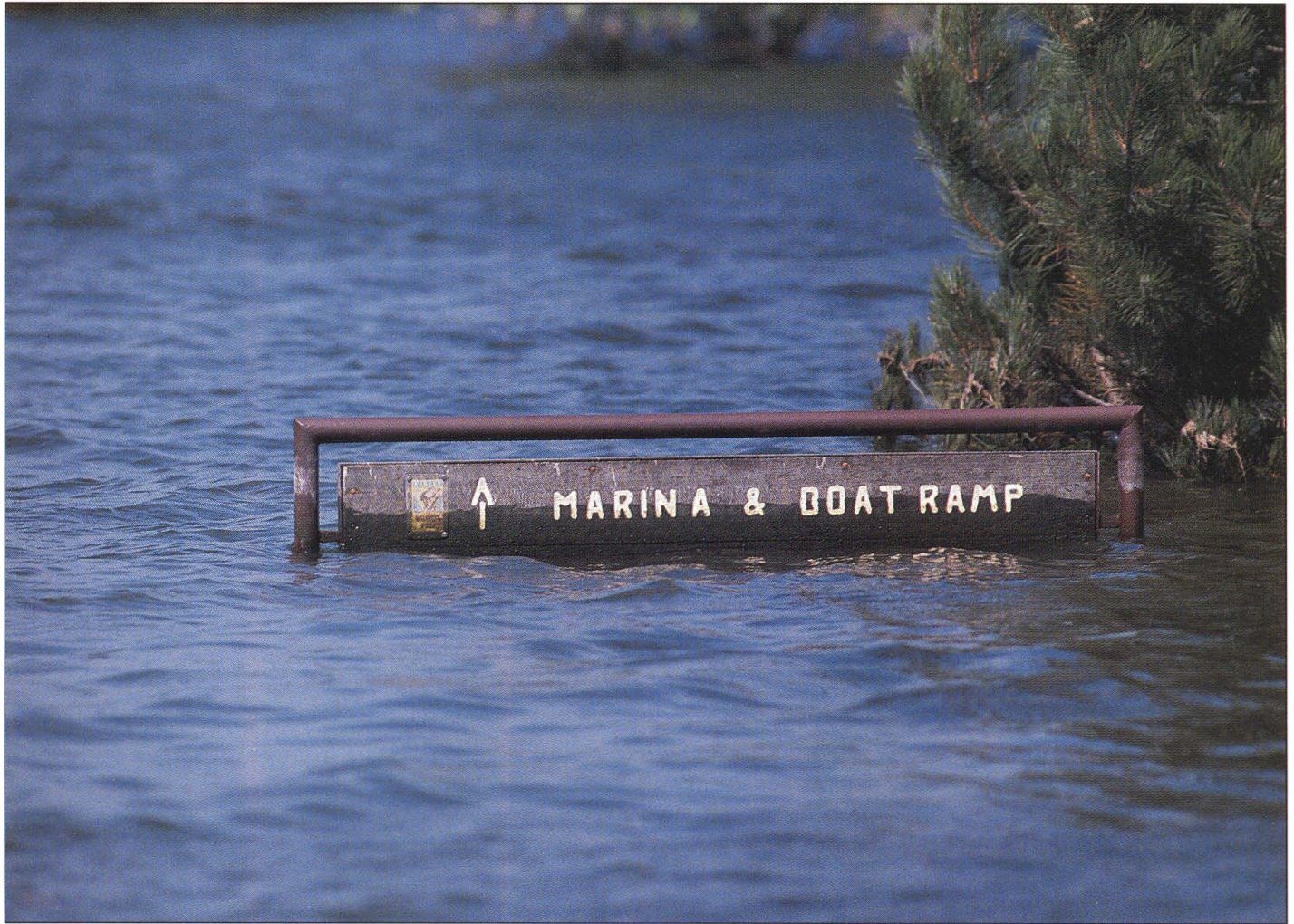
While spending time with the Lancasters, I couldn't help but

notice their keen interest in preserving our hunting tradition. Frieda and Sam expressed the need to involve children and families in outdoor pursuits, and we agreed that the future of the hunting and shooting sports in our country rests with the young people. As hunters, we must accept the responsibility to teach our youngsters sound game management and conservation principles as well as safe and ethical hunting practices. I spent the evening in the Lancaster's trophy room discussing past hunts and experiences. I left Kansas Outfitters knowing that, for the time being, the hunting tradition is safe in their part of the world.

The remainder of my 10-day Kansas experience featured sporting clays at the Flint Oak Ranch, shotgun fitting with Michael Murphy and Sons and a crow hunt near the Wichita city limits. While we didn't connect on a predator calling hunt in Pratt, a rabbit hunt proved fast and furious. Mike Cox, (then director of the Education and Public Affairs division of the department) showed me how overlooked the cottontail population was in Kansas. I was impressed with the number of rabbits we saw, and Mike's dog Roscoe definitely ranks among the top rabbit dogs I've hunted behind.

Throughout my stay, I was told that Kansas hunting was the state's best kept secret. There is no doubt in my mind that news of Kansas' wealth of game will soon spread. The next time I hunt Kansas, perhaps it will be for geese, ducks, dove or maybe turkeys. I look forward to my next trek to the geographic center of the U.S. The camaraderie, hospitality and abundance of game are hard to beat. ♡

Bill Saiff III hosts "Cabin Country," a hunting show produced and broadcast by WNPE public television station in Watertown, N.Y. The show is seen on 85 public stations across the U.S. including KPTS in Wichita, KOOD in Bunker Hill and KTWU in Topeka. The show runs 26 weeks, usually from July through December.



Mike Blair photo

Flood Recovery

by Tom Kirker
chief of staff, Topeka

Department officials are still assessing the damage to wildlife areas and state parks as the waters from the flood of 1993 recede.

Significant damage was suffered to facilities in state parks, and habitat was destroyed on wildlife areas. Another problem facing the department is the loss of revenue as a result of low visitation on flooded areas.

The summer of 1993 was not kind to the Department of Wildlife and Parks. During the heavy rains and floods of summer, the department suffered severe losses in park user revenue, agriculture revenue and damage to facilities. Areas hit the hardest were Perry, Milford, Wilson, Tuttle Creek, Glen Elder and Kanopolis state parks. The amount of property owned or managed by the department which was flooded stands at: 1,355 park acres, 32,000 agriculture acres, 44,000 rangeland acres and 23.5 miles of shoreline.

Facilities suffered extensive damage from high water, wind and wave action. Brick bathhouses and restrooms were left in ruins. Fishing piers and docks were twisted and destroyed by high water and waves. Trees were uprooted. As the water slowly recedes, exposing structures to wind, waves and



Mike Blair photo

A state park area slowly disappears as the flood waters at Milford Reservoir rise in August. Damage to facilities is considerable, but cleanup and repair has already begun. Three parks, Tuttle Creek, Glen Elder and Wilson will remain closed the rest of 1993.

freezing, damages will continue to escalate throughout the fall, winter and spring. Some of the facilities damaged include four pit toilets, five sewage dump stations 38 boat ramps, 1,367 primitive campsites, six bathhouses, 326 miles of gravel roads, 715 improved campsites with utilities and 25 docks and piers.

Three parks, Glen Elder, Wilson and Tuttle Creek were hit extremely hard and will remain closed for 1993. All of Glen Elder remains under water and may not be available for inspection until 1994.

The department requested \$1.7 million in supplemental state general fund financing for Fiscal Year (FY) 1994. The FY 1995 budget proposal contains a request for \$1 million from the state general fund. These requests were based on preliminary damage estimates and may increase as engineering and damage assessments are completed.

Throughout the crisis of 1993, department personnel worked long hours to help communities, residents and farmers. "Many Wildlife and Parks employees made tremendous sacrifices to help the people of Kansas during this crisis. Some

risked their lives to serve the public. We really need to thank them," Secretary Theodore Ensley said.

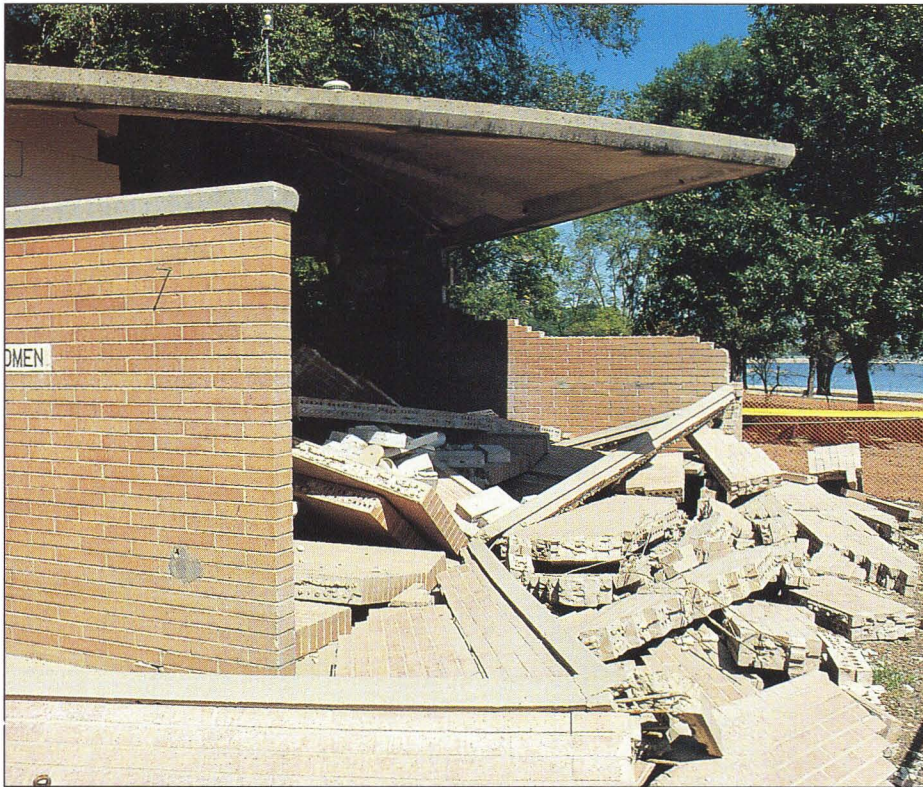
Bill Porter, field supervisor, and

staff from Tuttle Creek State Park and Wildlife Area were asked to help the city of Frankfort. Pumping equipment and personnel from the



Marty Burke photo

Water damage and silt deposits are not the only problems. Wave action on areas under water for several weeks has destroyed courtesy docks and buildings.



As waters continue to recede this fall, department employees will get a better grip on the actual damages. Total losses could be more than \$4.5 million.



The force of flood waters are never more evident than by the gorge carved here by water released at the emergency spillway at Tuttle Creek Reservoir.

Marty Burke photos

department worked to keep water out of the town's levee system.

In Manhattan, conservation officers Rand Conrad and Rick Campbell and fisheries biologist Chuck Bever worked to rescue citizens trapped on Hunter's Island. Riley County Police Department Captain Steve French commented, "When Hunter's Island became 'Hunter's Lake,' we asked for help from Wildlife and Parks. They responded with equipment and helped people get their belongings and get out of their homes."

As the flood water began to rise at Milford Reservoir, Hatchery Manager Tommie Crawford and staff prepared to salvage as much as possible. When the water threatened to flood the pump house, decisions to move fish were made. Crawford explained, "When we realized we would have to shut down our pumps, we got the paddlefish out of here. They were stocked in Kaw Reservoir in Oklahoma. As the paddlefish reach maturity, they will work their way back to Kansas."

By early August, the Kansas Department of Human Resources (DHR) and Wildlife and Parks were working together to help people who lost jobs as a result of the flooding. Through the Displaced Worker Assistance Program, which is administered by the Job Training Placement Act Offices, flood victims have been working in state parks and wildlife areas cleaning up debris. Money for this project was made available to DHR by the U.S. Department of Labor.

The department has also been in contact with Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). However, because most park and wildlife properties are located in designated flood pools, there is a very small chance money will be available to repair those facilities. Money could be available to reimburse the department for damage to facilities outside the flood pool and for rescue efforts, sand bagging and other costs associated with aiding the public during the crisis. ♡



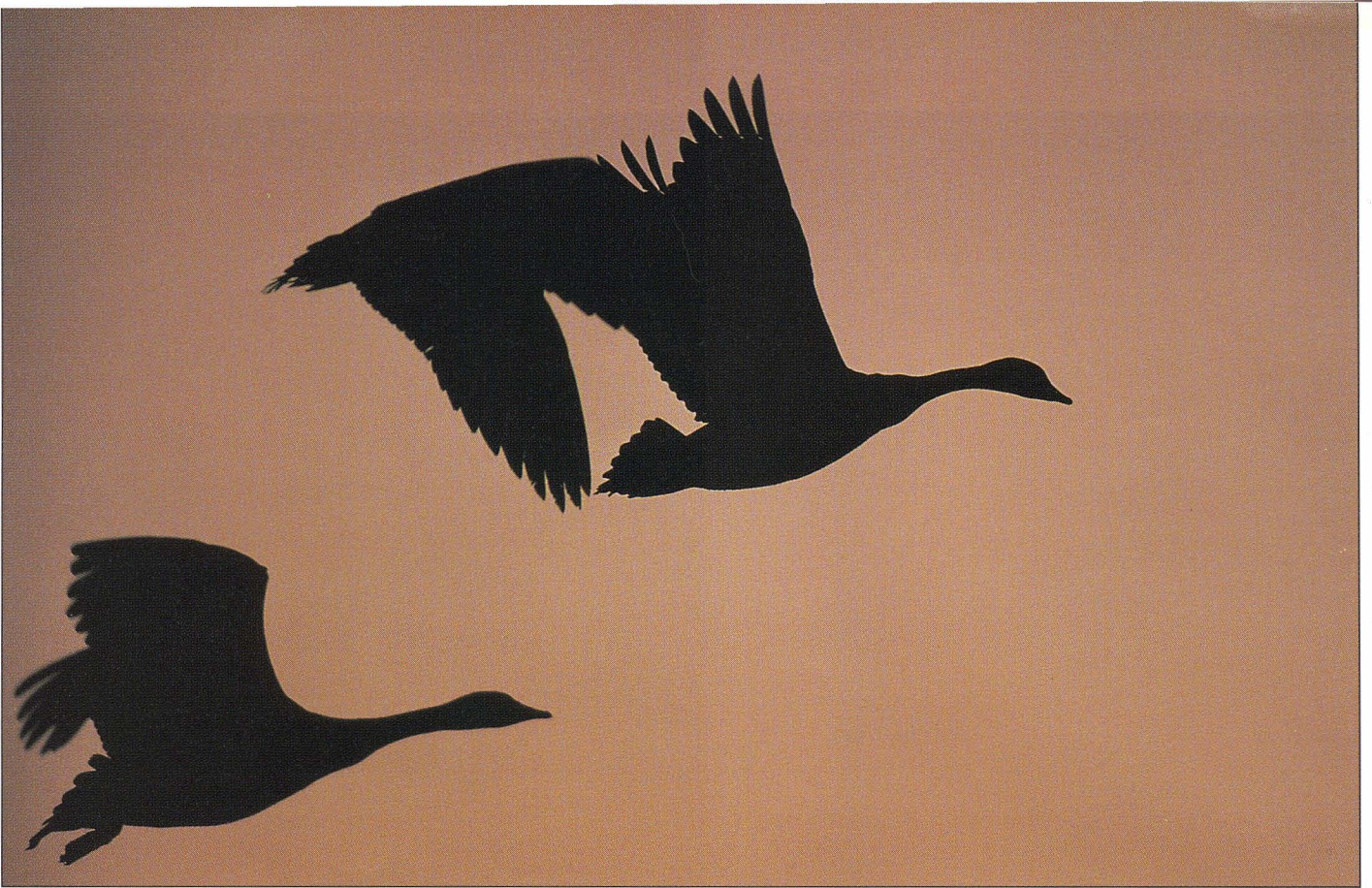


The Call Of Geese

text and photos by Mike Blair
staff photographer, Pratt

Karunk... kahonk...

*They're up there tonight,
against the dim geometries of
Draco and Orion,
Andromeda and the Great
Bear. Wave after wave they
come, passing unseen against
the nighttime blackness.
Only their voices betray their
presence.*



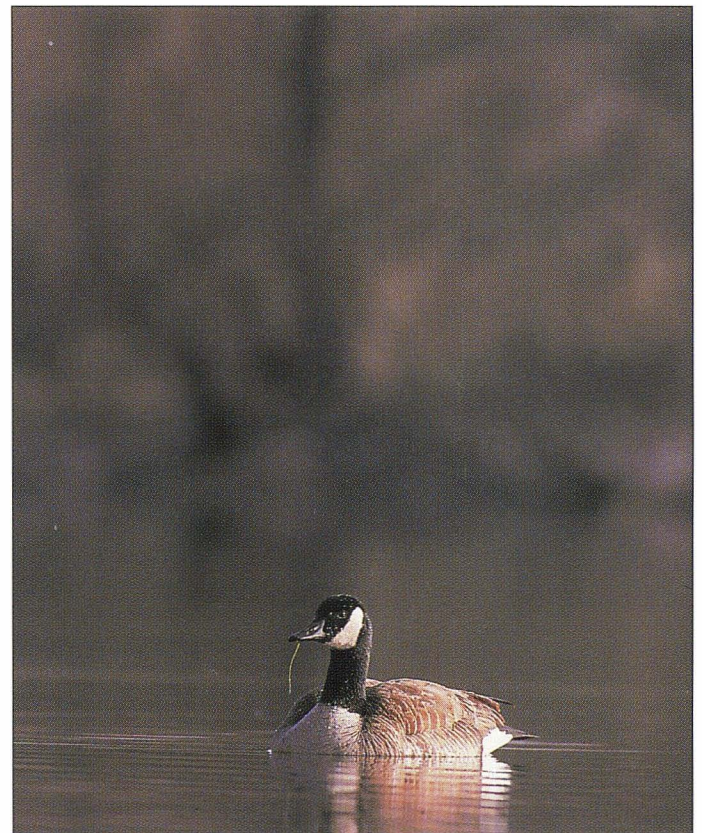
From the edge of sleep we stir to life, caught in the timeless web of goose music. Like the Siren's song, their distant calling touches our souls and beckons us upward to join their ranks — ever shifting, ever changing as they sail in an ocean of darkness.

Stars are the roadmaps that help them find their way. Instinctively they chart their courses, led by intuitions lost upon the reasonings of Man. The twinkling world beneath them is strange and confusing in the darkness. They look to the heavens for unerring guidance.

Somewhere in the distance lay warm, southern waters. Their long flights carry them away from Canada's cold, to bayous and coastal marshes, to open reservoirs of the southern U.S. Farm country will feed them; the south will sustain them until spring bids their return.

Tonight they're in our sky. We catch our breaths and follow their unseen progress as long as hearing will allow. Their notes ring with freedom and herald the changing of seasons.

Fainter, fainter grow the sounds, until finally they're gone. To the echoes of their ageless messages, we sleep in peace.



Kansans are blessed with the opportunity to know American geese. Within the Central Flyway, the Sunflower State actually hosts 5 distinct goose migration corridors that parallel each other from west to east. Migration is greatest in the central and eastern parts of Kansas, but all of the state is afforded the chance to watch and hear migrating geese. Many states without flyway routes are denied this opportunity.

Besides providing important travel lanes, Kansas also provides excellent stopovers for migrating birds. Quivira National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area (WA), Kirwin NWR, Flint Hills NWR and Marais des Cygnes WA are particularly attractive to geese. In addition, many of the larger reservoirs, especially power plants maintaining warm water throughout winter months, may be utilized.

Unlike ducks that hopscotch down the flyway, geese often migrate in long, singular flights to the wintering grounds unless stopped by inclement weather or exhaustion. Since they are generally hardier than ducks, they often winter farther north. In all but the coldest years many geese of various species overwinter in the farmlands of the midwest. This places them in close contact with Kansans for several months each year.





Though most kinds of birds migrate, geese are distinguished among migrants by their large size and familiar calls. Depending on species, migration flights may cover more than 1,600 miles and entail 40 hours of nonstop flight. Many of the larger geese, such as Canadas and white-fronts, migrate at average altitudes of about 2,000 feet, but lesser snow geese fly much higher. Averaging migration altitudes of 8,000-10,000 feet, they have been documented above 20,000 feet. Generally among geese, the longer the migration flight, the greater the altitude flown.

Like most migrating waterfowl, geese generally begin their long flights at sunset or during the night. However, weather may dictate daytime takeoffs. Strong, favorable winds, snowy, overcast skies and falling temperatures sometimes force mass migrations

known as grand passages. When these occur, Kansas goose populations may swell from a few thousand to upwards of a half-million, literally overnight.

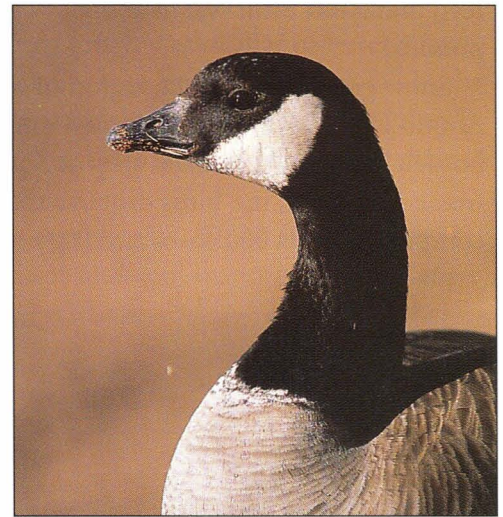
Geese navigate by various means, including visual cues on the ground. Bodies of water seem particularly important as landmarks; rivers and lakes are often turning points where birds make course corrections both day and night. Navigation at night appears to rely heavily on star cues. Unerring directional accuracy in dense clouds also suggests non-visual guidance systems, probably based upon the earth's magnetic fields. However, though direction remains steady under blind conditions, migrating birds may underfly or overfly their traditional wintering areas. These mistakes are quickly corrected when skies clear and geese can resume flight.

There are six goose species in North America, four of which are commonly observed in Kansas during migration periods. Additionally, approximately 100,000 geese overwinter in the state each year.

Most familiar to Kansans are the Canada geese, which are comprised of 11 races similar in coloration but markedly different in size. All have a black neck and head, interrupted by a large white cheek patch. Bills and feet are black, and the body is uniformly grayish-brown. The largest Canada geese, the giant Canadas, may weigh more than 12 pounds and have wingspans exceeding 4 feet. cackling Canadas, the smallest race, average about 3 pounds and have 3-foot wingspans — scarcely larger than a mallard.

The smaller Canada geese that migrate or winter in

Kansas are part of a population known as the Tallgrass Prairie Population. This group has the longest migration range of any North American Canada goose population, stretching from north of the Arctic Circle to south of the Tropic of Cancer. Also, as the population of giant Canada geese continues to develop through intensive management practices in the midwestern U.S., there is a trend toward increased wintering of larger birds in Kansas and Oklahoma. More than twice as many Canada geese winter in Kansas now than in the 1960s. At the same time, traditional wintering areas further south continue to maintain their wintering flocks, indicating a welcome increase in the Tallgrass Prairie Population.



Canada geese typically migrate in V-formations. The average migrating flock contains about 100 birds. Voices of Canada geese range from a deep *uh-whonk* in larger races, to the higher-pitched *unc* of smaller birds. Migrations through Kansas actually reach their fall peak in mid-November, but appear to peak in December with the build-up of winter populations. Spring migration peaks the third week of February.

Lesser snow geese are also familiar migrants and winter residents in Kansas. They exhibit two color phases: white and dark, or the so-called "blue" phase. Blue geese were once thought to be a separate species that intermingled with snows, but it is now known they are the same species.

White-phase snows are pure white, with black wing tips. Blues have slate-gray bodies with white upper necks and heads. The feet and legs of all snow geese are rosy-red, and the bills are pink. Wingspans are approximately 3 feet, and adult birds weigh about 6 pounds.

Snow geese breed in the region of Hudson Bay and northward, staging in early October for flights south. About 2 million lesser snows pass annually through the major corridor that straddles the Kansas-Missouri border. Nearly 1/4 of these stop at Squaw Creek NWR northwest of Kansas City in mid-November. When freeze-ups occur, the birds disperse southward to open water, many wintering in Kansas. Lesser snows often comprise a larger Kansas wintering population than Canada geese.



Migrating snow geese fly in an undulating pattern, with individuals rising and descending slightly in disorderly rhythms. They seldom form the even Vs of Canada geese, instead flying in Us, ragged lines or irregular masses. Their uneven flight pattern gives these geese their alternate name: wavies.

Lesser snow geese are the most vocal of all waterfowl, and given their large flock sizes, can be heard for great distances. Their call is a high-pitched *ou, ou*. Sometimes migrating flocks include many thousands of birds. The fall snow goose migration peaks in Kansas in late November; the spring peak occurs in mid-March.

White-fronted geese are also common Kansas visitors during migration. A few winter in our state each year, but most continue southward to Texas, Louisiana and Mexico. Continent-wide, white-fronted geese form a relatively small population. Probably less than 300,000 white-fronts exist, and about half of these migrate through Kansas.

White-fronted geese are sometimes called “specklebellies,” due to black streaks that mark the brown breasts of adult birds. The adult bill is pink, and legs are orange. The head, neck and upper back is grayish-brown, and adults of both sexes have a white face patch. White-fronted geese are similar in size to lesser snows, weighing 6 pounds and having 3-foot wingspans.

White-fronts migrating through Kansas begin their fall flights from breeding grounds in the central Canadian Arctic and Northwest Territories. Some shift eastward from Alaska to join these flights. Like Canadas, they fly in Vs, but form larger flocks. They are distinguished by their calls — a characteristic, laughing *kow-yow, kow-yow*. They call frequently during flight.

White-fronts migrate earlier than most geese, reaching peak fall numbers in Kansas about the third week of October. In spring, they peak the first week in March.

Ross’ geese are the final species regularly seen migrating through Kansas, though these birds are

considered somewhat rare throughout North America. Best estimates indicate a total Ross’ goose population of less than 50,000 birds. Their migration corridors are generally west of Kansas, but sightings in our state have become rather common in recent years as they are apparently shifting eastward.

Ross’ geese are similar in appearance to lesser snows, with white plumage marked by black wing tips. However, they are substantially smaller and have short, stubby bills. Adult Ross’ geese weigh 4 pounds, and have wingspans less than 3 feet. Many Ross’ geese have warty protruberances at the base of the upper bill.

Ross’ geese are early migrants, leaving their breeding grounds in the central Canadian Arctic in early September. Apparently they stage in southern Canada for some time, since their fall arrival in Kansas corresponds roughly with that of lesser snows. Ross’ geese are usually seen both spring and fall in the company of these larger lookalikes. Therefore, they assume no characteristic migration patterns of their own.

Geese — they captivate us. When the sun crosses the autumn equinox and cool fronts paint the Kansas landscape, geese can’t be far behind. Watch for them; listen for them. They trek our unseen highways, travelers from afar that prove again the great natural order of Life. As they come, they enrich the wild heritage of the Sunflower State. ♡





Come To Kansas, Elmer Fudd!

by Marc Murrell
public information officer, Valley Center
photos by Mike Blair

Rabbit hunting is usually incidental to bird hunting in Kansas, but more rabbit fans are learning that the Sunflower State's rabbit hunting is as good as any in the Midwest.

"SHHHHHHH! Be vewy, vewy quite. I'm hunting wabbits." Those were usually Elmer Fudd's last words just before Bugs Bunny made his escape, making Emler look pretty silly in the process. Poor Elmer. I feel sorry for our most famous rabbit hunter. I'm considering inviting him to Kansas to hunt wabbits for two weasons, (I mean rabbits and reasons). First, I'd hate to see him ever catch Bugs and put an end to the long-running cartoon series, and second, Kansas might be one of the best rabbit hunting states in the country.

Kansas' cottontail population is overlooked and underutilized. In fact, most pheasant and quail hunters scoff at rabbits and even avoid them since their bird dogs sometimes chase the streaking balls of fur. But to those of us who enjoy the thrill of the chase, it doesn't get any better than it is right now.

There are those bird hunters who will take an occasional rabbit while hunting, and that incidental harvest probably accounts for most of the rabbits taken in Kansas. But for those who would rather hunt fur than feathers, there are several options.

Stillhunting through old farmsteads, small overgrown timber lots or old farm junk yards can be productive, especially after a snow. Hunters move slowly, stopping and watching more than walking, and try to spot rabbits before they bolt. A sharp-shooting .22 rifle is the gun of choice, although it can be a great challenge for bowhunters.

Shotgun hunters walk and flush rabbits from heavy cover. Most shots are at fast moving targets and will test the shooter's skill. Short, quick shotguns with open chokes are best for this hunting.

Perhaps the most enjoyable way to hunt them, following squalling

beagles, is gaining popularity in Kansas. While Eastern hunters have long known the fun and effectiveness of hunting with beagles, it has only been recently that Kansas hunters have caught on. Mike Pearce, a rabbit fan from Newton, and Jon Blumb, a cottontail hunting veteran from Lawrence, are two beagle hunting promoters. Neither would consider hunting rabbits without beagles.

Pearce has trained and hunted behind golden retrievers most of his hunting career, but he broke down and purchased "his" first beagle last year. Nine-year-old daughter Lindsey and 6-year-old son Jerrod claim ownership of the pup, and the kids helped with training. Pearce's children get the kind of pet every child dreams of, and they let Dad "borrow" Freckles occasionally for a day of rabbit hunting.

"Every time I rabbit hunt, I know that if anything happens to the dog,



A little snow makes rabbits easier to spot, and the cool air and moisture give the beagles better scent conditions. Abandoned farmsteads and field edges are prime spots.

I can't come home." Pearce laughed.

Blumb and his black, tan and white rabbit hunting associates have been on the trail of Kansas rabbits for 13 years. Ben, a 12-year-old, slightly graying beagle, has jumped more rabbits than most beagles dream about. Ruby is 6 years old, and her high-pitched baying is music to rabbit hunters' ears, although to the uneducated it might sound as if someone has stepped on her tail while she was sleeping. Buster, a 2-year-old offspring of Ben and Ruby, is the "pup" in the pack and is still learning but shows good potential.

What's so great about hunting rabbits with beagles? Blumb replies: "The most fun for me is watching the dogs, just as a bird hunter likes to see points and good retrieves. With this kind of thing, it's not nearly as programmed. This is more free-formed. Something different can happen every time."

Pearce readily agrees.

"I was raised around some good bird dogs, and I haven't seen anything that hunts as hard as a beagle," he said. "When you see a beagle dive into a brush pile carrying out sticks trying to get to that rabbit, you know it's serious."

The diverse habitat in Kansas is responsible for healthy rabbit populations. As far as daily requirements, food in the form of grasses

and browse, water and a place to hide are all rabbits need.

Blumb likes to hunt old farmsteads and abandoned houses. Overgrown shrubs and brush provide an ideal canopy, and old junk left behind and crumbling foundations provide additional cover.

"Beyond that, the usual places are weedy draws that are along creeks, typically in the middle of crop fields, maybe winter wheat on one side and harvested milo on the other," Blumb says. "It's not always easy to find, but a place with a lot of brush piles is usually great, too."

Other good rabbit spots include gardens, grown-up pasture edges, plum thickets and tree farms. There are a few clues that will indicate a good hunting spot.

"You can look for droppings and places where they've been browsing," Pearce recommends. "If you look down on the side of sumac, and it's freshly peeled, and it looks like a bunch of 2-pound beavers went crazy, you know you're in the right spot."

Some of the best "rabitat" is not the most aesthetic but can be extremely productive.

"We hit an old junk yard one time out in western Kansas — Jon and another friend of mine. I think we took 22 rabbits in a half-hour," Pearce said. "The number that we took wasn't as impressive as the

number we saw. It was literally like rats in a dump."

The by-the-book beagler's ideal hunt involves a complete circle. Rabbits have a remarkable trait of running a circle when pursued, often returning to the same area they were flushed from. Ideally, the hunter jumps the rabbit and gives it a head start. If the dogs flush the rabbit, it may be pressured too quickly and hole up, ending the chase.

Once a rabbit is flushed, the hunter yells, "Tallyho! Tallyho! Tallyho!", an old term borrowed from fox hunters to call the hounds so the chase can begin. Others use "Here he is! Here he is!" to get the dogs' attention. The hunter gives the dog the line of the rabbit's path, and the chase begins as beagles take off, baying when they pick up the scent.

The size of the circle depends on the habitat. In linear cover such as creek bottoms, the rabbit may run to the end, cross the creek and return on the other side. In large fields, the circle is much more pronounced, and the hunters must position themselves quietly in hopes of getting a shot at the returning rabbit.

Each howling beagle has a distinct voice. Experienced beaglers can interpret what is happening in the chase simply by sound.

"It's like listening to play by play of a baseball game. You can tell everything that's going on. You can tell which dog's doing what, if they lose the trail, which dog finds it again," said Pearce. "There's something about the sound of a hound working game as you can hear everything progress. They take the rabbit one way and then they turn. That's when your pulse starts pounding!"

When the beagles see the rabbit, it sounds like kids leaving the building on the last day of school. Sight chases are common but usually short-lived, and the dogs nearly always rely on their sensitive noses.

Scenting conditions for dogs are ideal when the ground is slightly damp, not frozen, with cool temperatures. Rabbits passing over melting

snow and ice have an advantage over the dogs as their scent dissipates as it melts, making it difficult for the dogs to keep the line.

Access to private land to rabbit hunt is much easier to get than it is for other species. Blumb said that he gets some interesting responses when seeking permission, and farmers usually chuckle when he describes his and his dogs' intentions.

Rabbit hunters need to be particularly aware of safety since most shots are at ground level.

"People that aren't used to shooting on the ground could have problems," Blumb said. "Blaze orange is good. You've got to know where everybody is, and you've got to know where those dogs are."

Blumb's favorite rabbit gun is a lightweight double-barreled 12-gauge shotgun choked modified and improved cylinder. He shoots a light load equivalent to a AA trap load with 7 1/2 shot.

"I like a dense pattern. You don't need a lot of firepower because most of your shots are close. If you

get out ahead of them and lead them enough, you'll be able to connect on most rabbits."

Blumb summarized the excitement of the sport and why he likes it so much.

"If you have some beagles with you, you'll always find a rabbit to chase. How many chases you get during a day depends on how good of place you've found to hunt. You'll seldom be bored."

Having so many places to hunt with so much rabbit hunting opportunity is why hunters like Blumb and Pearce have become converted rabbit men. I think Elmer would truly love to hunt Kansas rabbits.

Tularemia In Rabbits

The rabbit season is open year-round in Kansas with a generous daily bag limit of 10. The peak rabbit running season generally occurs from November through March and barring a severe winter, the end can be as good as the beginning. Heavy snows can take considerable tolls on rabbit populations by limiting their food supply and making them more susceptible to predators.

Some hunters swear by not starting to rabbit hunt until after a hard freeze for fear of "rabbit fever" or Tularemia. The assumption is that infected rabbits are killed by the freeze. This is not necessarily true. Actually, a hard freeze kills ticks and fleas on both healthy and infected rabbits, and this eliminates one method of transmission of the disease between rabbits and from rabbits to humans.

Tularemia is a life-threatening human disease, and anyone who shows signs of illness after a known or potential exposure to the organism should consult a physician.

Symptoms include fever, infected sores at point of entry, swollen lymph nodes and general flu-like symptoms that progress rapidly. With prompt medical attention, diagnosis and antibiotics, few cases are fatal.

Tularemia cases in Kansas are somewhat high compared to the rest of the U.S., according to Janet Alexander, a summer intern from the University of North Carolina working at the Center for Disease Control in Fort Collins, Colo.

"From 1985-1992, Kansas had 50 reported cases of Tularemia," said Alexander. "Based on that number, Kansas ranked sixth in the number of reported cases."

Arkansas had the most cases reported with 338, while Missouri and Oklahoma had 320 and 123 cases respectively.

Telltale outward signs of tularemia are often unnoticed in wild cottontails but may include lethargy, incoordination and stupor. Tularemic rabbits often are easily caught by people or dogs. Internal signs include pin-point size white spots on the liver and spleen.

One of the most common methods of transmission is through contact during cleaning of a rabbit, and this is most likely if there are cuts or open sores on the hands. Ingestion is also possible, but thorough cooking usually kills the bacteria.

Tularemia sounds ominous, but an average of just more than six cases a year is not cause for alarm when you consider the hundreds of thousands of rabbits cleaned each year in Kansas. And the odds can be lessened with a little common sense and precautionary measures.

One of the best ways to eliminate the possibility of becoming infected is to wear rubber gloves when cleaning rabbits, especially if you have any open sores. Using tick repellents and self-inspections after any spring or summertime outing are also recommended. Any rabbit with tularemia symptoms should be disposed of.



Hunting rabbits with beagles is not only enjoyable but, as illustrated above, it can be very productive.

To Be A Quail Hunter

by Mike Miller
editor, *Pratt*

photos by Mike Blair

Quail hunting is rich with tradition, and Kansas is fast becoming known as a quail hunter's mecca. The tradition continues with a new generation of hunters, who cherish the same sights, sounds and experiences as the hunters of old.



quail hunting in the Red Hills

At 12 years old, the boy decided to be a pheasant hunter. He had recently been introduced to hunting, a wide-eyed youngster cradling an old used 20-gauge pump, on an opening-day pheasant hunt. The sights, sounds, smells and excitement of the hunt were more engaging than anything the boy had done. Even the smell of cigarette smoke became a pleasant reminder of the treasured winter mornings when he, his father and his father's friend would ride in the old, laboring International pickup to the fields. Yes, the boy thought, he'd found his calling.

They hunted the narrow fallow and stubble strips of southcentral Kansas; sandy soil, thick with Russian thistle, kochia, crab grass and sand burs -- Tough walking but great pheasant cover. Through the boy's first season, he never quite recovered enough from the startle of a close-flushing rooster to make an accurate shot. Even though the gun's magazine held two more of the yellow shot shells, the boy never once thought to pump in a second round and shoot again. It didn't

matter. The excitement was there, and sleep was always difficult on Friday nights through November and December.

Then, only a season or two after he'd started hunting, the boy was treated to his first real quail hunt, complete with pointing dogs. The boy and his father hunted the rolling hills of Comanche County with several of his father's friends. This land was much more interesting than the flat crop fields he was used to, and he couldn't have known how much he would enjoy watching the dogs hunt. He vowed that someday, he'd hunt behind his own pointing dog.

That first quail hunt was 20 years ago, but the man can still remember the first point of the morning, although it was anti-climactic. One of the dogs was a square-headed, yellow and white English Pointer. The dog was all business and had a superb nose, but he tended to range a little too far out, like several miles too far. The dog's owner tried to slow him by hanging a heavy pipe elbow round his neck on a chain. It worked for awhile.

When the pointer locked into a

solid point in the first patch of cover that morning, the young hunter was thrilled. Walking in to flush the unseen birds was incredibly exciting, but no amount of brush stomping could flush even a single bird. The dog wouldn't budge. Closer inspection revealed a credit-card-size patch of quail breast feathers, apparently from a quail killed and dissected that morning by an unknown predator. The boy was amazed that the dog could detect and identify the small patch of feathers by scent alone.

Although he didn't kill a quail that day, the boy saw plenty of birds and was captivated with the dogs. He immediately began to rethink his earlier decision to become a pheasant hunter.

Twenty years later, the man has committed to being a quail hunter. He still hunts pheasants on occasion, but a high-spirited Brittany pup discouraged him from doing much pheasant hunting years ago. There was nothing more frustrating than hunting pheasants in a row-crop field behind a young pointing dog. The devil birds delight in teasing young bird dogs, nearly



The brush-filled draws and creek bottoms throughout the Flint Hills are quail hotspots. Highest quail densities within the huge grassland region are usually near small crop field/creekbottom/pasture edges. Quail hunting in the southern portion of the Flint Hills region is expected to be good in 1993, however, quail numbers are expected to be down in the northern half.

always flushing out of range of the screaming hunter but staying just ahead of the befuddled pup. The man found quail hunting much easier on the dog . . . and the hunter. Besides, a leisurely quail hunt through the beautiful Red Hills or a sandhill pasture is much more appealing than a forced march down a stubble field or a blind blunder through head-high CRP grass after pheasants.

Indeed, the man is much more suited to be a quail hunter. And he's fortunate to live in Kansas. His home state offers some of the best quail hunting found anywhere in the U.S. Yearly harvest averages nearly 2 million birds and has been as high as 3 million. In fact, a study of the biology of bobwhites is underway in Kansas because the population here is so stable. Quail numbers in the Southeastern U.S. have been seriously declining in the last several decades, and biologists are interested in knowing more

about the popular game birds.

While quail abundance is certainly a factor of the success or failure of the hunt, perhaps Kansas' greatest attraction is the bobwhite's range across the state and the variety of habitats in which it is found. The man has become particularly fond of hunting in the southeast corner of the state. This region generally holds the highest densities of birds, and in good years, the hunting is nothing short of phenomenal. During his earlier years, the man once flushed seven coveys on a single 140-acre farm — alone, without a dog.

The southeast is characterized by heavily wooded stream and creek bottoms, large woodlands and small grain fields. The native grassland pasture here is in a constant battle with the process of succession; the woody vegetation is always encroaching. It was in the southeast where the man learned about the bobwhite's love for

“edge” habitat. After walking most of the afternoon through blackberry briar and grass, trees and weed patches, the man finally found covey after covey along the edges of the zones. Where the grass and briars butted up against a small milo field; where a clear cut through the timber came to a brushy pasture; and where a small creek bordered a soybean field.

Shooting in the southeast is often fast and in thick cover. These timber-loving birds know how to use the trees and often disappear before a shot is fired. A strong-hearted dog and a good pair of hunting pants are necessary in the thick and sticky cover.

To the north and west, the land is more open. Although he's only seen the huge grasslands of the Flint Hills from the highway or air, the man has dreamed of hunting this vast area for quail. The Flint Hills is a geographic phenomenon. Starting in the south corner of Washington

County, this region runs north and south, about the width of Salina to Topeka, to the Oklahoma border. A layer of rock just below the surface prohibits much of this grassland from being altered, except by grazing, haying and a few small cropland areas.

The 7,000-square-mile region is famous for its population of greater prairie chickens, but it also harbors respectable numbers of bobwhites. In many of the river and creek bottoms there are small soybean and milo fields, and this combination of grassland, small crop fields, and wooded creek bottoms and draws provides excellent quail habitat. Large tracts of grassland are unbroken by roads and are often dissected by clear-running creeks and dotted with watershed ponds. It is a quail hunter's dream.

Farther south and west, there is an area the man has become very familiar with. Starting in Harper County, a region of broken grasslands called the Red Hills runs along the Oklahoma border west to Clark County. This region, named for the red dirt exposed on the bluffs, is rolling mid-grass prairie with steep draws often choked with timber and redcedar trees. Many sandy-bottomed streams wind through, providing additional timber cover. The grasslands are dotted with sandplum bushes and smooth sumac stands, which also provide bobwhites with good cover. Some of the bottomland is farmed in small wheat and feed fields, and as in other regions, the edge areas along crop fields hold more quail. The large pastures do provide ample forbs and other foods to sustain quail and offer a scenic hunt away from roads and other human disturbances. A man and his dog can literally lose the real world on a short walk into this grassland, where the atmosphere and surroundings make shooting quail truly secondary.

Just to the north of the Red Hills is a habitat traditionally described as the Sandhills. The mid-grass prairie runs along the Arkansas River bottom nearly to the Colorado

border. Although it is much more intensively farmed, there are still some vast areas of prairie, and the Conservation Reserve Program has returned some large tracts to native grass. Shelter belts, planted in the 1930s to ease wind erosion, divide much of this sandy-soil region, and this combination of farm ground, grassland and tree rows can provide excellent quail hunting. When a mild winter is followed by a warm, dry spring, quail numbers can be spectacular, and hunting can be equally good in the sandhill-plum-riddled pastures as they are in the shelter belt-lined farmlands. Because this area is more intensively farmed than the Red Hills, quail numbers of often higher in favorable years but are generally less stable because of changing land use.

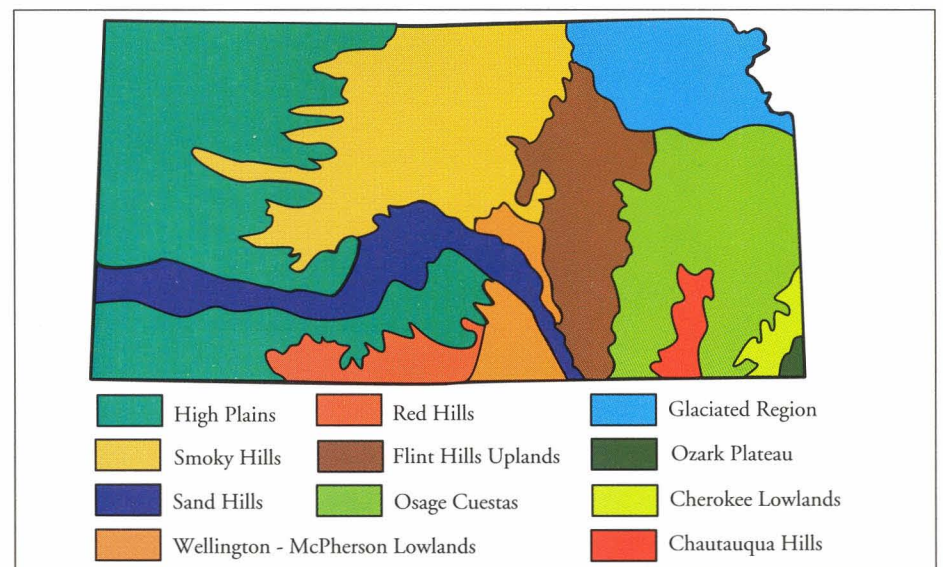
Hunting in the sandhills taught the man much about quail and their habitat. It is here that he learned just how much of a homebody the bobwhite can be. Find a covey one trip, and you can usually return weeks later and find the birds within 100 yards of where you first flushed them. And the man learned how quickly sand burs can stop a tender-footed Brittany and how handy a set of dog boots can be.

He also learned about scent conditions here. The sandhill region can

be quite dry, and when temperatures are warm and the grass is dusty, smelling quail can be nearly impossible for dogs. But with cooler temperatures and a little humidity, the dog's nose becomes quail-finding radar. On one particular hunt, the cover was dry, and the wind blew hard. The dogs were frustrated, and a few coveys and singles were found or bumped. But in late afternoon, the wind died, cool, moist air settled, and suddenly, dogs were finding and pointing quail everywhere. The last hour of hunting saved the day.

In the northcentral region of Kansas, the land is dominated by the Smoky Hills, rolling grasslands that follow three main river courses, the Smoky Hill, Solomon and the Saline. Parts of the region are farmed extensively, but there are still large tracts of prairie. This region provides perhaps the best chance for combination hunts, supporting good populations of pheasant, quail and greater prairie chickens. The bobwhite population fluctuates more here than in the southeast and southcentral because of changing land uses and more severe winter weather.

The western fourth of the state is pretty much dominated by the ring-necked pheasant. Bobwhites are present, but are usually a bonus to



pheasant hunters. Good bobwhite hunting can be found in areas of the southwest, and in southwest corner, an ambitious hunter might see four upland species in one day: bobwhites, pheasant, lesser prairie chickens and scaled quail.

Since the man has devoted much of his energies to hunting bobwhites, he's not explored much of the west. There is still so much to hunt in the southcentral region, near his home. And he's learned that quail hunts through the Red Hills are more of an adventure, where treasures such as an old farmstead, or an ancient buffalo skull washed clean by a silvery stream, are as much valued as the flush of a covey.

Today, the man looks forward to each quail hunt as much as the boy did those first pheasant hunts so many years before. He savors the warmth of the first rays of sun streaking over the bluestem horizon. He longs to kick the first frost from the brown grasses and weeds while keeping an eye on the

zig-zagging Brittany. He still is thrilled by the sight of the dog, quartering at full gait, slamming back to a stop then cranking its head to point a scent that must electrify the dog as much as the sight electrifies the man.

When the dog is down, the excitement is riveting. There is perhaps no greater anticipation in the man's life than when he walks up behind the dog. And no matter how many points have been approached, no matter how routine the man makes the walk to the flush, the moment the small feathered rockets explode from the grass never fails to top out his adrenalin levels. When he was a boy, before he'd seen or heard his first quail flush, his grandfather told him that quail were difficult to shoot because they always "scared the slobbers out of you when they flushed." Today the man knows all too well what his grandfather meant.

After the flush, time accelerates. Pick one small blur of feathers and make a clean shot. No need to try

and shoot more than once or twice. Mark the downed bird. "Dead bird. Fetch the bird, boy." The dog finds the nearly invisible bird, and places it in the man's outstretched hand. The dog's eyes are glazed with the intensity of the hunt, and the man is pleased have shared the moment with a being that enjoyed it as much as he. The team has been successful, and they push off to find singles or another covey. Numbers and limits are no longer important. But the drive to repeat the performance never subsides. If not today, another.

If the excitement ever does subside, the man will quit the hunt, but he hopes it never does. The rush of adrenalin and the thrill of the chase pump a primal pulse through the man and his dog, and temporarily remove them from the neat, civilized world. It makes the coming of fall slow and the passing of fall quick. It's worth living for and a good reason to set deep roots in Kansas. ♡



The sandhills are scenic and filled with excellent quail habitat. Surveys of this mid-grass/agricultural region in southcentral Kansas predict good quail hunting in 1993. Areas near crop fields and CRP land are also good bets for quail/pheasant combinations.

The Kansas Outdoor Store

"Products to show your pride in the Kansas outdoors"



QTY	ITEM	SIZE	PRODUCT DESCRIPTION	PRICE EACH
	1470T		Old Timer Pro Fisherman fillet knife ("Fish Kansas")	\$30.00
	1420T		Old Timer Guide Master skinning knife ("Kansas Big Bucks")	\$30.00
		S M L XL		
	L204		Adult sweatshirt with prairie chicken	\$20.00
	L213		Youth sweatshirt with prairie chicken	\$15.00
	1001		Adult T-shirt with white-tailed deer	\$10.00
	5001	N.A.	Youth T-shirt with white-tailed deer	\$8.00
	1002		Adult T-shirt with walleye	\$10.00
	5002	N.A.	Youth T-shirt with walleye	\$8.00
	1003		Adult T-shirt with scissor-tailed flycatcher	\$10.00
	5003	N.A.	Youth T-shirt with scissor-tailed flycatcher	\$8.00
	301		Blaze orange hunter's cap with white-tailed deer	\$8.00
	401		Hiker's fanny pack with belt	\$15.00
	701		Kansas wildlife coffee mug with white-tailed deer	\$8.00
	702		Kansas wildlife coffee mug with largemouth bass	\$8.00
	703		Kansas wildlife coffee mug with pheasant	\$8.00
	704		Kansas wildlife coffee mug with mallard	\$8.00
	801		Windsurfer 22 oz. insulated mug	\$4.00
	901		Keyfloat with 1-800 Outdoor Alert phone number	\$2.00
	2000		Kansas Wildlife & Parks magazine 1-year (6 issues)	\$8.00
	2001		Amphibians and Reptiles In Kansas book	\$20.00
	2002		Watching Kansas Wildlife book	\$10.00
	2003		Fishes In Kansas book	\$13.00
	2004		Birds In Kansas book (vol. 1 or vol. 2)	\$15.00
	2005		1989 Belt Buckle (buffalo)	\$10.00
	2006		1991 Belt Buckle (jumping bass)	\$14.00
	2007		1992 Belt Buckle (pronghorn)	\$14.00
	2008		1993 Belt Buckle (pintails -- not pictured)	\$14.00
	2009	<input type="checkbox"/> camo <input type="checkbox"/> tan	Kansas Wildlife & Parks magazine hat	\$5.00
				shipping and handling total amount

Mastercard and Visa accepted for phone orders; call (316) 672-5911 Mon.-Fri. 8a.m.-5p.m. Send check or money orders to Kansas Dept. of Wildlife and Parks, Rt. 2, Box 54A, Pratt, KS 67124. Please add \$3.75 shipping and handling for orders less than \$15.00; \$5.50 s/h for orders between \$15-\$30; \$6.30 s/h for orders between \$30-\$45; and \$6.95 s/h for orders between \$45-\$60.



— THE REAL STUFF —

Nothing stuffs a Christmas stocking like Kansas Wildlife & Parks magazine. Six times a year, it keeps you in touch with the real Kansas, a land where east meets west and American plants and animals flow together in a diverse community. Keep up on state parks, environmental issues and learn of outdoor recreational opportunities. Pick up a fishing tip or join a writer on an upland hunt.

See the best of Kansas in words and pictures. Kansas Wildlife & Parks magazine. The \$8 stocking stuffer that gives throughout the year.

Edited by Mark Shoup

KANSAS CONVERT

Editor:

Being a Colorado native (temporarily transplanted to California), prior to the summer of 1988 I was predisposed to think that Kansas was just a place to cross on my way to somewhere else. Not any longer! My apprehension turned to appreciation in one Mr. E. (Lee) Haring of Bushton.

I met Mr. Haring exiting a tackle shop in Colorado after watching him scrutinize the high-priced fishing flies sold therein. (I don't believe he purchased any, either.) Needless to say, talk of fishing turned into a friendship, and I looked forward to his return to fish the water near my home the following summers. We spent not enough very fine hours fishing together.

Through him, I was introduced to KANSAS WILDLIFE AND PARKS magazine. The information and photos contained therein make it absolutely the best publication of its kind, and I eagerly await each issue.

I just wanted to write and say "Thank you" for such a fine magazine and thanks to a wise and knowing Kansas gentleman who set me straight about Kansas.

A. J. Borrego
Thousand Oaks, California

WHERE'D THE JACKS GO ?

Editor:

A recent topic at the Cafe Whitewater's "Information Center" (Coffee Shop) was jackrabbits. Many of us remember the 1940s when drives were made to reduce the number of rabbits, both jackrabbits and cottontails. Cottontails seemed to survive, but I haven't seen a jackrabbit in these parts for many years.

I have relatives living in the Phoenix, Arizona, area, and there are

jackrabbits and quail on the golf course. Why would that desert area have jackrabbits?

Here in the town of Whitewater, there seems to be more than the usual number of cottontails. Maybe we have fewer dogs running loose, or maybe the crops are larger.

Do we have areas where jackrabbits are abundant? If so, where are they?

Wildlife is rather strange. I am 73 and as a boy growing up and going hunting and fishing with my dad, I never saw such animals as deer and turkey, but one common animal was the jackrabbit. Now there are none.

Rollan K. Eberhard
Whitewater

Dear Mr. Eberhard:

There are a variety of factors that would affect the jackrabbit population in any given area. Diseases can drastically reduce jackrabbit numbers in a region in as little as two months, but perhaps one of the most influential of the factors is land use. Changes in land use, combined with weather trends, can have dramatic effects on the populations of certain wildlife species. Jackrabbits are adapted to shortgrass prairie or agricultural land with short, sparse crops, where they can see and avoid predators at great distances. If changes in farming methods and grazing techniques make vast areas unsuitable for them, such as tall grass or tall, lush crops, numbers will decrease.

In the 1930s through 1950s, when jackrabbits were quite numerous, the prairie region was still showing the effects of the severe drought. The drought, along with common grazing and farming methods, probably kept large areas ideal for jacks.

Prime predators of jackrabbits would include coyotes, foxes, bobcats,

hawks and golden eagles. I'm not sure what the status of these species' populations were in the time you described, but I do know that it's only been in the last 20 or so years that birds of prey have been protected. Prior to that time, eagles and hawks were killed indiscriminately. That is not to say that an increase in birds of prey is responsible for the decline in jackrabbits. If there were ideal conditions and habitat for jackrabbits, there would be plenty of them around.

As I stated earlier, it's more of a combination of many complex factors involved. The most important has probably been land use.

There are several species of jackrabbits in North America. In Arizona, the antelope jackrabbit, which looks very much like the black-tailed jackrabbit common in Kansas, is adapted to desert conditions. This is probably the critter you've seen.

There are areas of western Kansas that harbor healthy populations of jackrabbits. I've not heard of any areas with concentrations similar to that of the 1930s or 1940s, but it's not unusual to see them in certain counties over the western half of the state.
—Miller

JULY/AUGUST KUDOS

Editor:

I have read the superb copy of the July/August issue of your great magazine. This is one of your many bests on portraying in so many aspects the wonders of the Kansas outdoor scene. "Wildlife At the Waterhole" is so true and represents the many faces of nature.

I have noted through the years that a quiet approach by water in a float tube does not alarm wildlife. Last summer, when my son and I were tubing a gin-clear stream and bass-bugging its pockets, we saw a bobcat with two kits drinking, and also a coyote.

My favorite article is Mike Blair's "Sleeper Streams," which I have noted after 50 years of Flint Hills experience in Kansas and northern Oklahoma, is so accurate and perceptive as to the existence and character of the streams and fly fishing method and equipment. This article is similar to one I had in mind about the "Lost Treasures of Kansas," referring to the little-known fishing quality of larger Kansas streams, especially bass-bugging from a float, which I have been enjoying since 1937.

Then the hiking-trail piece on Elk City, the canoeing and its perils on the Missouri, the bait production from nature's source, are excellent as to content and photography. As usual, Mike Blair's flower photos portray the beauty of our rural areas. I like the anonymity of the "Sleeper Streams" article, but one could hazard a good guess as to general location that the existence of the red soil probably placed it in the Gypsum Hills region.

On the whole, it was a terrific issue on Kansas' outdoor recreational opportunities, which too few Kansans, especially in our cities, know or appreciate.

Frank G. Theis
Wichita

CURB YOUR DOG

Editor:

Last year we were able to return to our farm roots by purchasing some land east of El Dorado. The only thing that keeps the area from being perfect, and I'm sure this is a problem statewide, is free-ranging dogs.

There are laws to deal with trespass by people but not dogs. A landowner can legally take action if dogs are harassing or threatening your livestock, but if they do the same to wildlife, there is no law to prevent it. I have counted as many as five dogs running my property; by the first of the year my rabbits had vanished. When the nights get below freezing, I stop quail hunting by 2 p.m. to give them time to covey back up before dark. Dogs, however, hunt day

and night. Any covey they bust at dark or after stands little chance of getting back in covey, and single quail can freeze because they survive by sharing their body heat and forming a tight group in cold weather.

I do not allow my dogs to run free unsupervised or go on others' property without permission. I would ask no more of other dog owners. If everyone maintained control over their pets, we would then know the free-ranging dogs were strays and could live-trap them and turn them over to animal control.

Dave Leiber
El Dorado

Dear Mr. Leiber:

You point out a very real problem that is seldom given much attention. As noted in the May/June issue of KANSAS WILDLIFE AND PARKS (Page 37), game wardens and peace officers in Wyoming may shoot domestic dogs chasing big game. However, Kansas has no such law.

Short of lethal action, landowners do have some options. Contact your county animal control officer, if you have one. Another would be to do as you suggest — live-trap the dog and send it to the pound.

Dogs running in packs can kill just about any game animal in Kansas, including deer. They can also pose a threat to people because they don't have the innate fear of humans that wild animals have. —Shoup

DEER TAKE WORK

Editor:

Last deer season was pretty good for me, but the thing I heard a lot of people saying was that they didn't see any deer. I think numbers are down a little in some places, but the places I hunt have as many or more deer as the past.

I also think most hunters didn't see deer because deer are getting smarter, and hunters don't want to put in the effort to meet the challenge. Many

don't know how to hunt. I was sitting at my stand one evening when I saw a hunter walking through like he was hunting quail. He later told me that he hadn't seen a deer and couldn't understand why because he had seen pretty good sign.

Another reason people aren't seeing deer is that our season follows Oklahoma rifle season. Oklahoma has mismanaged their herd so that you seldom see anything with a big rack. Consequently, Oklahoma poachers come to Kansas to get their deer. I was bowhunting about two miles northeast of Chautauqua one evening, which happened to be the last weekend of the Oklahoma season, and I counted 19 rifle shots in that area. When I was going home, I ran on to two pickups parked on the road with Oklahoma plates. If you would set up your decoy deer down in this area, I guarantee you would have our jail full. It's gotten so it's not safe to be in the woods within five miles of the state line during Oklahoma's rifle season.

I think we still have good numbers of deer, and I saw more big bucks last year than in past years. I used to want our season moved into November like Oklahoma's, but I think that is part of their problem. They kill a lot of bucks before they breed.

Dennis Brewer
Sedan

Dear Mr. Brewer:

I'm glad your hunting has been good. You make some good points about understanding deer hunting. It does require hard work and study.

Concerning your experience with poachers, did you contact your local conservation officer, Bill Ramshaw? If not, I strongly encourage you to do so if you encounter such situations this year. Make a mental note of times, places and actions, take down license numbers, and call your conservation officer or our Outdoor Alert hotline, 1-800-228-4263. —Shoup

OUTDOOR ALERT WORKS

Turn in
poachers,
polluters,
unsafe
boaters,
and
public
land
vandals.



Prior to the pheasant season, a Wamego man discovered the effects of Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks' Outdoor Alert, 1-800-228-4263.

Conservation officer Larry Stones, Kirwin, received a call relaying a message from the Outdoor Alert that someone had watched a man shoot a pheasant from his vehicle, out of season, and on the ground. The caller had also taken down the shooter's license plate number, and Stones called the Norton and Phillips county sheriff's departments and asked for help tracking down the vehicle. Later

that evening, a mini-van with the plates in question was discovered at a motel in Norton. Stones and one of the deputies made a call on the motel and roused the man out of bed.

He admitted shooting the pheasant out of season, taking a game bird not in flight and unlawful discharge of a firearm.

The man's shotgun was confiscated, but it was later returned, against CO Stones' recommendation. However, court costs and fines cost this man \$247 — one expensive bird. —*Shoup*

TRASHY POACHER

Last spring, a rural Hiawatha man who operated a commercial animal damage control business was convicted in Brown County District Court for possessing untagged bobcat pelts.

Patrolman Donny Collins of the Holton Police Department was called to a Holton business because an employee at the business had seen a man throw something into their trash dumpster. Collins examined the contents of the dumpster, where he found two skinless bobcat carcasses. He then called me (CO Val Jansen). After examining the carcasses, I discovered that they were quite fresh and wrapped in a Hiawatha newspaper, if you can believe it, with the owner's mailing label on it.

CO David Hoffman, Hiawatha, and I contacted the owner of the newspaper at his residence, where we found two fresh bobcat pelts soaking in the bathtub.

The man was fined \$50 for the unlawful possession of bobcat pelts and ordered to pay \$40 court costs. This violation of the terms of his nuisance animal damage control permit resulted in his permit being revoked, as well.

Officer Collins also issued the man a citation for dumping unlawful refuse into a trash container, for which he forfeited a \$50 bond. —*Val Jansen, conservation officer, Holton*

NOTE: It was discovered that the man had a history of wildlife violations going back to 1973. This information was presented to the court. The result? \$50 for unlawfully throwing trash in a dumpster and \$50 for unlawfully taking bobcats. An interesting commentary. —*Shoup*

WRONG TURN TURNS RIGHT

After a snowstorm that produced a foot of November snow, I (CO Dan Heskett) decided to patrol northern Ellis County to see if anyone was out trying to "bag" some pheasants before season.

It was nearly dark, and I had just crossed over into Russell County in an area that I was not familiar with. I came to a T-intersection and made a right turn, then realized that it was a dead end. As I was backing onto the main road, I saw a red Toyota pickup with non-resident license plates turn in front of me. I watched the pickup go past a main intersection and down a leased oil field road, which had not been cleared.

The snow was flying as I pursued the vehicle, and when I caught up, it was stuck. Three men were trying to dig it out. As I walked up to the men, I noticed the truck had an Alabama license plate. A rooster pheasant lay behind the truck.

When I identified myself as a conservation officer, the mouths of all three men dropped open, and one said, "I guess we're caught."

After checking in the truck, I discovered another rooster pheasant, two hens, and three quail. After collecting the evidence, I helped the men get unstuck and escorted them to the Russell County Sheriff's Office. Upon questioning, one man admitted to shooting all the birds, shooting from the roadway with the aid of a vehicle, and not having a Kansas hunting license. Still, ten citations were written to the three men -- \$1,450 in fines and court costs.

Before the men left, they said that next time they came up this way, they were going around Kansas or they would be legal. —*Dan Heskett, conservation officer, Russell*



FARMERS PILOT WETLAND PLAN

Landowners in Jefferson, Reno and Neosho counties now have the opportunity to participate in a pilot program to demonstrate practices that protect and restore wetland and riparian (streamside) habitats. The Wetland and Riparian Area Protection (WRAP) program has been initiated in these three pilot counties to develop county wetland and riparian plans and implement them.

The Kansas Water Plan requires every county conservation district to write and implement a plan for wetlands and riparian areas (the vegetative borders along rivers and streams). These plans are nearing completion for the three pilot counties. Implementation of WRAP will be a joint effort of the conservation districts and several state and federal agencies, including the State Conservation Commission (SCC), the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP), State and Extension Forestry, and the USDA Soil Conservation Service (SCS).

WRAP provides assistance to landowners who would like to protect or restore wetlands or riparian areas for wildlife habitat as well as for other benefits. A number of possible practices or options are available, depending on the site and the interests of the landowner: planting trees or other riparian vegetation; minor bank stabilization, primarily with tree revetments; grazing of riparian areas; purchase or

donation of natural resource easements to protect key areas for the future while leaving them in private ownership; and restoration of former or degraded wetlands using techniques such as ditch or drain plugging or the construction of small dikes.

Cost-share funding will be available for selected sites through the SCC. Many practices will be covered at 70 percent of cost. KDWP will provide technical assistance (through the district biologists and other staff) and planting material through the Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program (WHIP).

KDWP also is administering a Natural Resources Easements Program to fund the purchase of easements from willing landowners to protect wetland and riparian habitats. This program involves more than deep-water "duck marshes." Riparian areas range from bottomland hardwoods of eastern Kansas to narrow willow/cottonwood corridors along western rivers. Wetlands of interest range from seasonally-flooded playas and potholes to wet meadows and shallow marshes to old oxbow lakes.

Following WRAP's pilot project in the three counties this year, two additional pilot counties will be chosen in western Kansas next year, and the program will be expanded statewide. Any interested farmers or landowners in Jefferson, Neosho or Reno counties should contact KDWP or their local Conservation District. —*Farmers and Wildlife newsletter*

SCS BACKS SOS

America's waters may run cleaner now that the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Soil Conservation Service (SCS) has formally agreed to promote stream monitoring techniques developed by the Izaak Walton League of America's (IWLA) Save our Streams (SOS) program.

In a memorandum of understanding, the SCS has agreed to encourage its 3,000 offices to help volunteers adopt local streams. Volunteers will use SOS methods of monitoring water conditions to evaluate pollution levels, detect sources of contaminating runoff and track water quality.

The 20-year-old SOS program has brought thousands of volunteers into an effort to improve water quality nationwide through simple biological techniques that anyone can learn. Often, volunteers detect violations of laws and regulations governing waste dumping or sediment control. The IWLA's extensive stream quality data base also provides statistical justification for establishing or revising water quality standards. —*IWLA newsletter*

POLLUTED RIVERS

Only 5 percent of stream and river miles in Kansas are considered clean enough for what they are used for — swimming, boating and providing a home for native fish and clean water for cattle, crops, communities and industry.

More than 20 years after Congress passed the Clean

Water Act, which set a goal that people should be able to swim and fish in all rivers by 1983, only 670 miles of 16,800 river miles regularly tested in the state are safe for all uses.

About 70 percent of the rivers in the country are fishable and swimmable, according to estimates from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Because each state tests its rivers differently, the agency cautioned that it is not easy to compare one state's water quality with another's. However, Kansas is considered typical for an agricultural state.

Four percent of the stream miles in Kansas are safe for all uses part of the time, according to studies by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE). About 91 percent — more than 15,000 miles of streams and rivers — don't even come close.

Ten percent, or about 1,700 miles, of the water tested is so polluted that it is not safe for boating or wading for fear that the bacteria in the water would cause flu, earaches or sore throats.

The health of the rivers affects those who pay water bills, fish or wade in a stream or boat down a river, or who live in a city that relies on surface water, as 71 percent of the state's population does.

Among those most at risk are children who wade and splash in the highly-polluted streams and drainage ditches that run through most communities, says Bob Angelo, a biologist with the KDHE. Those shallow streams pick up a heavy load of toxic

chemicals and bacteria that wash off of farm fields, industrial parks and city streets.

The quality of rivers has improved dramatically since 1972 when Congress passed the Clean Water Act, placing controls on what companies and cities can dump in rivers. Despite the improvements, the EPA has repeatedly told the KDHE that it needs to set additional limits on what municipal sewage plants and industry can release to the water. —*from Jean Hays article, Wichita Eagle*

SLINGIN' SLUDGE

On Feb. 19, 1993, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) published new sewage sludge regulations that strongly support the "beneficial reuse of sewage sludge" as a soil fertilizer and improver. Already, more than 33 percent of our sewage sludge is applied to the land as a fertilizer, but about 50 percent is buried in landfills or similar facilities and the remaining amount is incinerated.

Sewage sludge typically contains the three plant nutrients (nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium), smaller amounts of heavy metals (some of which are important micronutrients), microbial pathogens, and trace amounts of man-made chemicals. Oddly, the bulk of the sludge is actually the cell-mass of now dead micro-organisms that were encouraged to grow in the sewage treatment plant to break down harmful substances in the sludge.

To allay fear about the use of sewage sludge on cropland

and backyards, the EPA guidance states, "There are virtually no effects when sludge is disposed of on the land or used as a soil conditioner or fertilizer in compliance with these rules."

The new federal sludge rules set limits for 10 heavy metals in land-applied sludge. Under the new EPA rules, the cleanest sludges are considered safe to apply in the same way as commercial fertilizers. The rules also limit the types of crops that can be grown after the sewage sludge application. Generally, sewage sludge is used to fertilize animal feed crops such as corn, soybeans, hay, and pasture land. In addition, the rules set limits on the amount of pathogens allowed in sludge and also restrict public access to the agricultural land where application occurs. Farmers must also wait about 18 months before they plant food crops that contact the soil.

Some farmers remain skeptical of sewage sludge fertilization. A March 1992 article in *Farm Journal* cited municipal sewage sludge as the cause of groundwater contamination, a charge rebutted by proponents, who say that EPA rules limit the amounts of heavy metals that could contaminate groundwater. —*Rob Goldberg, Academy of Natural Sciences*

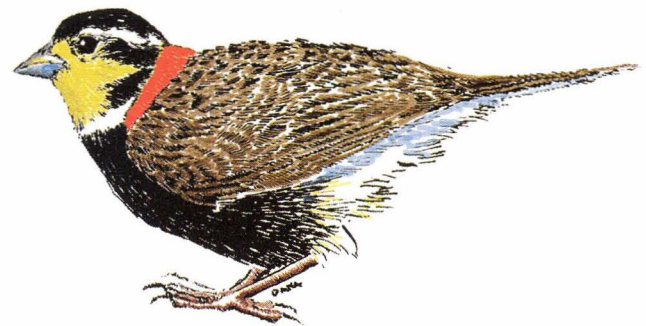
PLAINS BIRDS DECLINE

According to data from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) annual Breeding Bird Survey, seven of the 12 bird species considered endemic to the Great

Plains grasslands declined during the past 26 years. In addition, 16 of 25 more widespread birds that are considered "secondarily" evolved to grasslands also declined.

The findings are outlined in a paper by Fritz L. Knopf of the USFWS's National Ecology Research Center in Ft. Collins, Colo. The work will be published in a fall issue of the journal, *Studies in Avian Biology*.

The reasons for the population declines among grassland birds are not fully understood but are believed to be caused by changes in the grassland ecosystems of the Great Plains over the past 100 years, according to Knopf. Species like Baird's sparrow and McCown's and chestnut-collared longspurs



chestnut-collared longspur

evolved with grazing mammals like bison, while species like the ferruginous hawk, prairie falcon, and burrowing owl are associated with prairie dog towns. Some species depended upon periodic rejuvenation of their habitat by wildfires that swept the prairies.

Systematic slaughter reduced the plains bison from a population of 30 million or more to about 300 by 1889.

The other major grazer — the prairie dog — also was exterminated on a wide scale. The prairie dog ecosystem of the Great Plains has been reduced from an estimated 700 million acres in the late 1800s to about 2 million acres today.

Plowing also changed the plains landscape. In North Dakota, for example, less than 25 percent of the native prairie remains. In Iowa, only a small fraction of the original tallgrass prairie remains. Fire control and water management practices also altered the grasslands by making conditions favorable for the growth of shrubs and small trees.

Projects such as the North American Waterfowl Management Plan have already

helped species associated with wetlands. The USFWS is looking for other such cooperative partnerships to tackle the problem on an ecosystem-wide basis.

Because grassland birds evolved along with grazing mammals, researchers believe grazing of domestic animals can be compatible with and even help populations of some native grassland birds. —*U.S. Department of Interior*

BAIT PERMITS DUE

By regulation of the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, permits for the harvest, sale and importation of certain live fish baits expire Dec. 31. All commercial bait fishermen and dealers must purchase a new permit no later than Jan. 30.

The regulation requires permits for bait dealers who sell commercial bait or who purchase, harvest or import commercial bait for resale. This includes fish, mussels, salamanders, frogs or toads. Those who import crayfish, are also required to purchase a permit.

There are, however, a few exemptions to the commercial bait dealer requirement. Kansas commercial fish growers do not need a permit to sell fish for use as bait. In addition, crayfish harvested in Kansas and worms and insects may be sold without a permit.

Regulation prohibits the sale of tilapia, asian carp and rudd as live bait,

as well as those species declared to be endangered, threatened or in need of conservation. Other restrictions concerning harvest from department lands and waters also apply.

Permittees must keep accurate records of numbers and kinds of bait harvested and/or sold and keep records available for inspection on demand. The permit fee is \$20.50 annually. For more information and applications, contact the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, RR2, Box 54A, Pratt, KS 67124 (316) 672-5911. —*Shoup*

STOCKING UP

The Fisheries and Wildlife Division has completed most of its 1993 stocking. It was a productive though unusual year. Flooding at the Milford hatchery forced early stocking of channel catfish, and many large reservoirs received so much rainwater that biologists may not be able to accurately sample stocking effective-

ness.

Still, a lot of fish were added to Kansas waters in 1993. The following list breaks down the numbers by size of fish. Fry have just hatched from eggs. Fingerlings are generally about 2 inches long. Intermediate channel catfish run about 9-10 inches. Intermediate largemouth bass are 4-8 inches long. The list shows numbers and types of fish stocked statewide. (Numbers are rounded to the nearest one thousand.)

Bluegill — 200,000 adult; **Channel Cat** — 1,480,000 million fry, 12,000 fingerling, 1.25 million intermediate; **Largemouth bass** — 387,000 fry, 166,000 fingerling, 16,000 intermediate; **Paddlefish** — 12,000 adult; **Redear** — 51,000 adult; **Sauger** — 687,000 fry; **Saugeye** — 173,000 fry, 183,000 fingerling; **Striper** — 213,000 fingerling; **Trout** — 31,000 adult; **Walleye** — 15,840,000 million fry, 739,000 fingerling; **Wiper** — 5,324,000 fry, 383,000 fingerling, 23,000 intermediate. —*Shoup*

CHILLY CRAPPIE

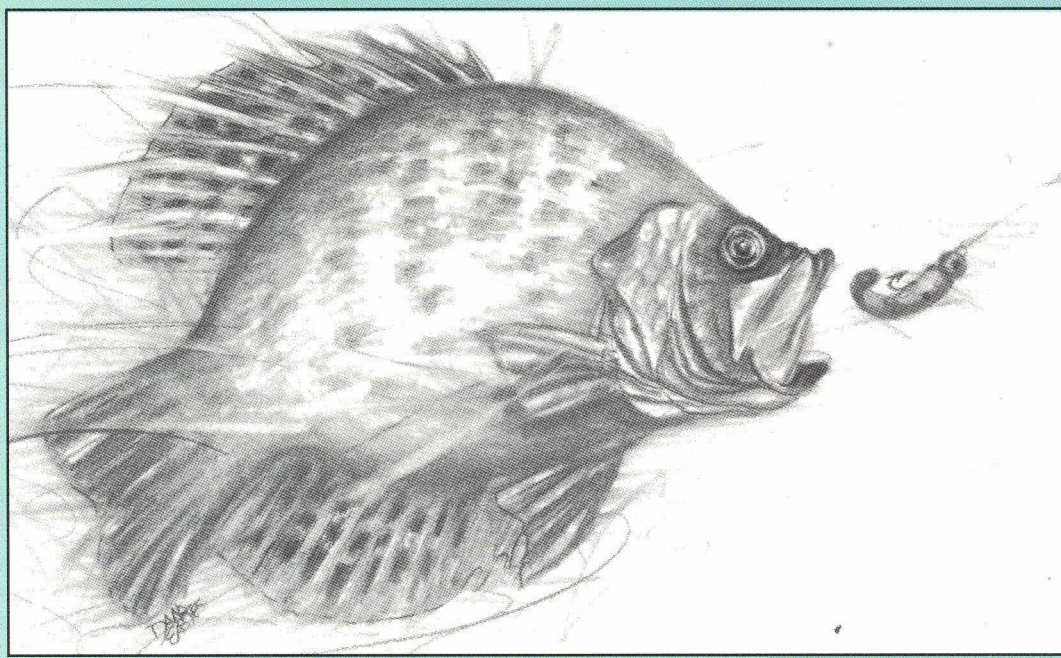
As the weather turns cold, many anglers are inclined to stay inside. Those who venture outdoors are usually pheasant or quail hunting, which is good this time of year. It's also one of

the best times to fish, but winter fishing is often overlooked, even by avid fishermen. The weather is often bitterly cold and windy, keeping all but the most die-hard anglers off lakes.

So what can you catch in the winter besides a cold? Crappie. In winter, crappie congregate in large schools. Most

fish are found along river channels, either suspended over the channel or in brush and structure at the edge of dropoffs. Fishermen with boats and depth finders often have an advantage in locating fish and structure.

Most crappie fishermen use ultralight tackle and jigs or minnows for bait. The bait is lowered to the bottom and raised several feet at a time until fish are located. After catching a fish, anglers note the depth then drop the bait back to that location. Once fish are located, the action can be fast and furious. —*Shoup*



UPLAND OPTIMISM

Although Kansas experienced heavy rains during the summer of 1993, the overall upland outlook appears to be more positive this fall, particularly in the south and west. Early spring rains were heavy in the south, hurting pheasant production, but rains subsided early enough that quail appear to have done well. The rains in the west improved cover conditions, providing better brood survival and significant increases in the number of quail and pheasants observed.

Of course, western Kansas is traditionally the most productive pheasant country, but in recent years these colorful birds have not done so well. This year's hatch should help them get back to normal, according to Wildlife and Parks' upland game research biologist Randy Rodgers.

"Pheasant recovery in the west seems to be pretty good this year," says Rodgers, "but last year was one of the poorest in a long time. This should put us back to average. Not spectacular, but much improved."

In southeast Kansas, commonly the most productive quail habitat in the state, quail were severely hurt by heavy rains last year. This year, however, moderate improvement is expected. Pheasants are essentially absent in this part of Kansas.

In the northcentral and northeastern portions of the state, upland birds may not have done so well. While pheasants may have increased moderately, quail numbers should be slightly down due to heavy rains in the summer. Floods reduced or destroyed habitat on public wildlife areas around most major reservoirs, including Glen Elder, Wilson, Lovewell, Kanopolis, Milford, Tuttle Creek and Perry. However, birds appear to have held their own in the higher areas of this region, above floodplains.

While not a great year by Kansas standards, upland bird hunting should be better than last year, and that's a pleasant surprise to hunters and biologists alike.

Now it's up to mother nature. If there isn't an early winter . . . *Shoup*

PRAIRIE POTHOLES PRODUCE

For hunters and bird watchers, the news for 1993 duck populations in the Central Flyway is mixed. After steady declines in duck numbers since the mid 1970s, many species seemed to be coming back last year. However, counts of breeding duck populations in southcentral Canada and the northcentral U.S. in spring and early summer indicated a drop of 11 percent in the total duck population.

This information has led many hunters to believe duck numbers in the fall flight would be down correspondingly. However, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which monitors the bird migration, has predicted a fall flight about the same as last year's.

Although these assessments seem contradictory, they are explained by one of the brightest pieces of news for ducks in some years: habitat in the prime nesting areas of southern Canada and the northern U.S. has improved dramatically this year. Waterfowl habitat monitored during the spring duck survey generally improved from last year in the northcentral U.S. and southern Alberta although southern Saskatchewan and southern Manitoba suffered from drought and intensive agricultural production. However, late spring rains improved conditions considerably, even in dry regions.

Improved habitat means more places to nest and more protection from predators. The result? An improved nesting season for ducks and a stable fall flight.

Populations of most duck species remain lower than their 1955-92 average, and recovery is still a long way off. But last spring's improvement of



habitat in southern Canada and the northcentral U.S. is cause for hope. Combined with additional habitat created under the federal government's Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) — in which farmers are paid to return their land to grass, trees, shrubs or even wetlands for 10 years — nesting ducks may have the opportunity for good production next spring in the "prairie potholes," the primary breeding grounds for North America's waterfowl. —*Shoup*

WHO CAN HELP?

Can someone who is not hunting assist a deer hunter in the hunt? The answer is yes, with the following restrictions:

1. the person assisting must have a valid hunting license, unless otherwise exempt;

2. the following restrictions apply to herding or driving deer:
 - a) persons herding or driving must have a filled or unfilled deer permit;
 - b) if persons herding or driving have filled their permits, they may not possess a firearm or archery equipment;
 - c) anyone planning to herd or drive deer after filling his own permit must first cut the lower right hand corner from his current year permit and carry it while herding; and

3. if the person assisting does not have a valid deer permit, that person may assist in other ways than herding or driving, such as calling and carrying deer. —*Shoup*

CONFUSION Over CRANES



Last August, I sat down for lunch with my wife.

“What’s new at work?” she asked.

“The commission approved a sandhill crane season,” I answered.

Rose comes from a long line of non-hunters on both sides of her family, so I think her reaction was typical of public concern over this issue.

“What’s that going to do to the population?” She lowered her gaze.

As I said, her reaction was typical. It was also reasonable. This is a logical question whenever humans take action that affects wildlife.

“From an approximate population of 500,000 in the flyway, they’re saying a maximum harvest of 200 birds,” I answered.

She nodded, satisfied that this was not an abuse of natural resources.

If public debate over this issue had limited itself to Rose’s primary concern — the general public’s concern — then perhaps the issue wouldn’t have generated so much controversy. Unfortunately, a number of newspapers across the state carried editorials blasting the season without bothering to ask this question of those who proposed and passed the new regulation. Unless one takes the position that all hunting is wrong — an issue that can be debated only on philosophical grounds — a sandhill crane season is justified.

Historically, cranes were a favorite game species of early market hunters. Unfortunately, unregulated commercial hunting and habitat destruction put

crane populations in jeopardy, and all crane hunting was halted early in this century. In modern times, sandhill cranes have been hunted in several states for thirty years or more with no detrimental effects to the population. Today, sandhills enjoy a stable mid-continent population of 500,000-550,000 birds. The projected harvest of 200 birds — insignificant in terms of the total population — may even be high.

At the commission meetings leading to the establishment of the crane season, concern was expressed that biological data on cranes might be lacking. However, U.S. Fish and Wildlife biologists have extensive data on sandhill crane biology, perhaps as much as any species that is hunted. From a biological standpoint, there is simply no way a limited crane season in Kansas is going to have a negative impact on the crane population.

Another concern expressed to the commission was that sandhill crane hunters might shoot whooping cranes by mistake. However, the season is set later than the whooper migration, and if whoopers should appear somewhere during sandhill season, that area will be closed down immediately. Will these precautions be enough? In the eight other states that have sandhill crane seasons, no sandhill crane hunter has ever shot a whooper.

A more philosophical concern is that sandhill cranes should be edible if we are going to hunt them. Simply put, those who hunt sandhills consider them the finest meat of any migratory game.

The sandhill crane season in Kansas

was approved under frameworks established by the Fish and Wildlife Service. Of those states given the option to hunt cranes, Kansas was the last to implement a season. Our bag limit is more restrictive (two compared to three in other states); our shooting hours are more restrained (sunrise

to 2 p.m. as opposed to one-half hour before sunrise to sunset); and our hunting area is smaller than other states.

None of this is to suggest that those opposed to the season — particularly the Kansas Audubon Council — do not have valid concerns. The Audubon Society has a long history of wildlife conservation, including sandhill crane conservation. In addition to breeding-ground projects in northern Canada and Russia, Audubon has helped protect much of the critical migration habitat along the Platte River in Nebraska. Audubon has, in effect, put its money where its mouth is. Given this commitment, their reluctance to endorse a sandhill crane season is understandable.

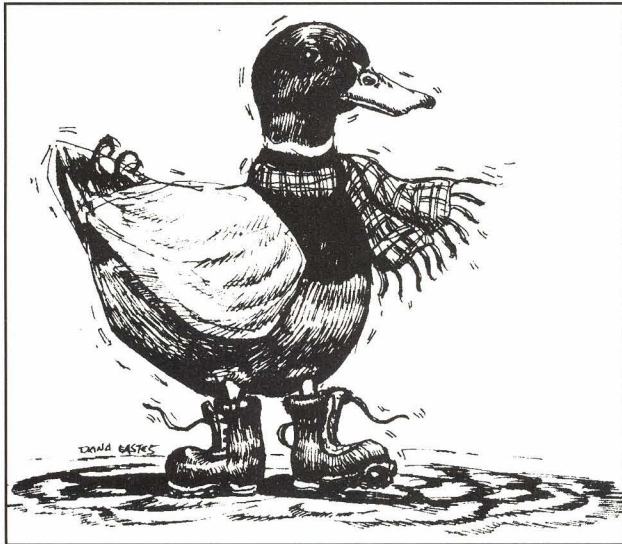
However, it is unfair to suggest (as some opponents have) that hunters are simply looking for another target. The hunters I know have acquired a strong conservation ethic chiefly through their interest in hunting. That they would prefer a variety of game species to choose from simply emphasizes their general interest in wildlife. Such general interest also ensures that undue pressure is not placed on just a few game species.

Neither side should let this become a permanently fractious issue. It’s time for old alliances to be reaffirmed and for important habitat conservation issues to take focus. Groups such as Audubon and Kansas Wildlife Federation will occasionally disagree with each other and with Wildlife and Parks, but this should not prevent them from seeking common ground, of which there is plenty. Disagreement on minor issues should not obscure this fact.

FEET BEAT HEAT

Ever wonder why the feet of ducks, geese and other birds don't freeze even though they may spend hours on frozen marshes or lakes in winter? You might think that they can pump more blood faster into these extremities to keep them warm, but actually an almost opposite body function is at work.

The feet of birds (as well as the flippers of seals and whales) are equipped with something called a countercurrent heat exchanger. Warm blood coming from the heart is carried by arteries. In the legs of ducks and geese, these arteries are surrounded by a network of veins carrying cold blood back to the



heart. At this point, heat from blood in the arteries is transferred to the blood in the veins. Thus, blood returning to the body cavity is warmer and less body heat is lost in reheating this returning blood. More importantly (for this discussion), blood reaching the extremities of the feet is actually cooler, resulting in little heat loss at that point.

Of course, the feet do get very cold. In fact, the blood in the feet of ducks standing on ice may be just above freezing, but that's all that's necessary.

Acclimation is also an important factor in this equation although not too much is known about how this actually works. Scientists do know that birds'

feet will freeze when placed in a very cold environment suddenly. Apparently, the nervous system must be given a certain amount of time to generate important enzymes connected with circulation.

In any case, no one can claim that ducks, geese, penguins and other birds never get cold feet. They just seldom freeze. —*Shoup*

FORMATIONS IN THE SKY

Why do geese fly in formation?

For a long time, it was believed that geese flew according to a pecking order, meaning older birds were to the front and young birds flew at the rear. Hunters often tried for a more tender young bird

by waiting until the end of the "V" flew into range.

Actually, geese take advantage of a physical phenomenon that aids a flying flock. Strict formation flight enables the birds that follow the leader, and subsequent birds flying behind each other, to use disturbed air for propulsion.

As geese flap their wings through the air, a distinct pattern of air disturbance is created. This disturbance is consistent and powerful — so much

so that a bird flying behind can use the spiraling air for lift. In doing so, it expends less energy. In fact, a bird following others can save more than 25 percent of its effort. Periodically, you'll see goose flocks change leaders. This allows the previous leader to recuperate while another bird takes the lead.

Formation flying by long-distance migrants is an adaptation that helps conserve critical energy reserves necessary for survival on wintering grounds, or successful nesting in spring. Formation flying also helps migrating birds keep visual contact with others, which aids navigation. —*Steve Lewis, Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation*

PRAIRIE DOG PARTICULARS

Five species of prairie dogs are found in North America: the black-tailed, Mexican, white-tailed, Gunnison's, and Utah. The most abundant and widely distributed is the black-tailed, which, as its name indicates, has a black-tipped tail. They live in densely populated colonies or "towns" scattered across the Great Plains from northern Mexico to southern Canada. Occasionally, they are found in the Rocky Mountain foothills, but rarely at elevations over 8,000 feet. A typical black-tailed prairie dog weighs one to three pounds and is 14-17 inches long.

The Mexican prairie dog also has a black-tipped tail but is smaller than its northern relative. They occur only in Mexico and are an endangered species.

White-tailed, Gunnison's, and Utah prairie dogs all have white-tipped tails. White-tailed prairie dogs live in sparsely populated colonies in arid regions up to 10,000 feet. They are usually smaller than black-tailed prairie dogs, weighing as much as two and one-half pounds. Gunnison's prairie dog, the smallest of the five species, inhabits open grassy and brushy areas up to 12,000 feet. Utah prairie dogs are a threatened species, limited to central Utah.

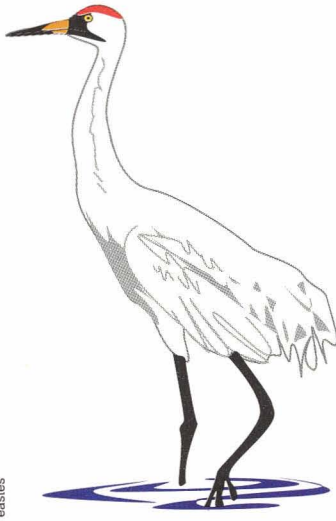
Prairie dogs are very social animals, living in towns most of which range in size from one to 1,000 acres. Larger towns are often divided into wards by barriers such as ridges, lines of trees, and roads. Residents of a ward may be able to see and hear those of adjacent wards, but movement among wards is uncommon. Within a ward, each family (or "coterie") of prairie dogs occupies a territory of about one acre. A coterie usually consists of a single adult male, one to four adult females, and any of their offspring less than two years old. —*University of Nebraska*

CHEYENNE BOTTOMS VIDEO

For a \$20 donation to Wildtrust, you can receive your own copy of a new video produced by the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. The award-winning video, entitled *Cheyenne Bottoms: Building For The Future*, details the renovation of Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area, near Great Bend. This wetland is considered one of the most important in the western hemisphere.

The 30-minute program emphasizes the importance of this wetland to both migratory waterfowl and humans and contains spectacular wildlife photography.

Make checks payable to Wildtrust and mail to Kansas Dept. of Wildlife and Parks, Gene Brehm, Rt. #2, Box 54A, Pratt, KS 67124. — *Gene Brehm, videographer*



d. eastes

**HOVER NEW PPL
DIRECTOR**

The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks is proud to welcome Jerry Hover, originally of Lawrence, Michigan, as its new director of the of Parks and Public Lands Division.

Jerry brings solid experience and educational credentials to the job. In 1968, he graduated from Michigan State University with a B.S. in park administration. That same year, he went to work as a park technician for Idaho State Parks and Recreation. He worked here for the next 18 years, advancing to positions as park manager, district manager and regional manager.

In 1986, he became associate director of park management and administration for the Utah Division of State Parks and Recreation. In 1991, Jerry earned a Master

of Business Administration degree from California Coast University, and in 1992 he received a Ph.D. in management from that same school.

Jerry takes over the position vacated by Todd Graeff, who became deputy director of parks for the State of Oregon in June. —*Shoup*

4-H WILDLIFE TEAM

On Aug. 1-5, the 1993 National 4-H Invitational Wildlife Habitat Judging contest was held at Eufaula, Ala., and the Kansas team placed fourth in a field of 24 teams. In the individual competition, Kansas team captain Ross Hellwig, Oswego, placed fourth out of approximately 100 contestants. The team was coached by Labette County High School agriculture instructor Dan Peterson and Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks wildlife specialist Tom Glick. Members of the Labette

County High School chapter of Future Farmers of America (FFA) comprised the team.

This is the third year that Kansas has participated in the event.

In addition to Hellwig, other team members included Sean Hudson, Parsons, and Darren and Dustin Wiley, Altamont. They won the right to compete in the national contest by winning the state competition in McPherson against the western Kansas champions from Hillsboro.

In wildlife habitat judging contests, contestants are judged on their knowledge of wildlife habitat preferences based on aerial photographs, wildlife foods, application of wildlife management practices, and their ability to chose various management techniques under landowner objectives and restrictions in both rural and urban settings. They must also support the logic of their choices, in writing, orally and in map form.

Anyone associated with a youth group — school, 4-H, FFA, scouting, church group or individual — that might be interested in competing in wildlife habitat judging contests should contact their local Wildlife and Parks biologist or their county extension agent. All contestants must be 18 years of age or younger. —*Tom Glick, wildlife biologist, Pittsburg*

OWLS FUNDED

The Kansas Wildscape Foundation has been awarded a \$10,000 matching grant from the Forrest C. Lattner Foundation, Inc., of Delray Beach, Fla. The grant will

help develop Outdoor Wildlife Learning Sites (OWLS) at schools in south-central Kansas. This is the second OWLS donation funneled through Wildscape this summer. Earlier, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) donated \$25,000 for development of OWLS sites in Kansas.

OWLS projects are developed by students at local schools with direction and assistance from the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. These sites provide important environmental and wildlife learning opportunities for elementary and secondary students throughout Kansas. To date, 25 sites have been developed under the program.

The Lattner Foundation and EPA grants will be matched by funds from Wildlife and Parks' Chickadee Checkoff program and will make possible development of as many as 25 OWLS sites in the next year.

The Kansas Wildscape Foundation works closely with the Department of Wildlife and Parks to raise funds for environmental education, wildlife conservation and the enhancement of outdoor recreation opportunities in Kansas. —*Shoup*

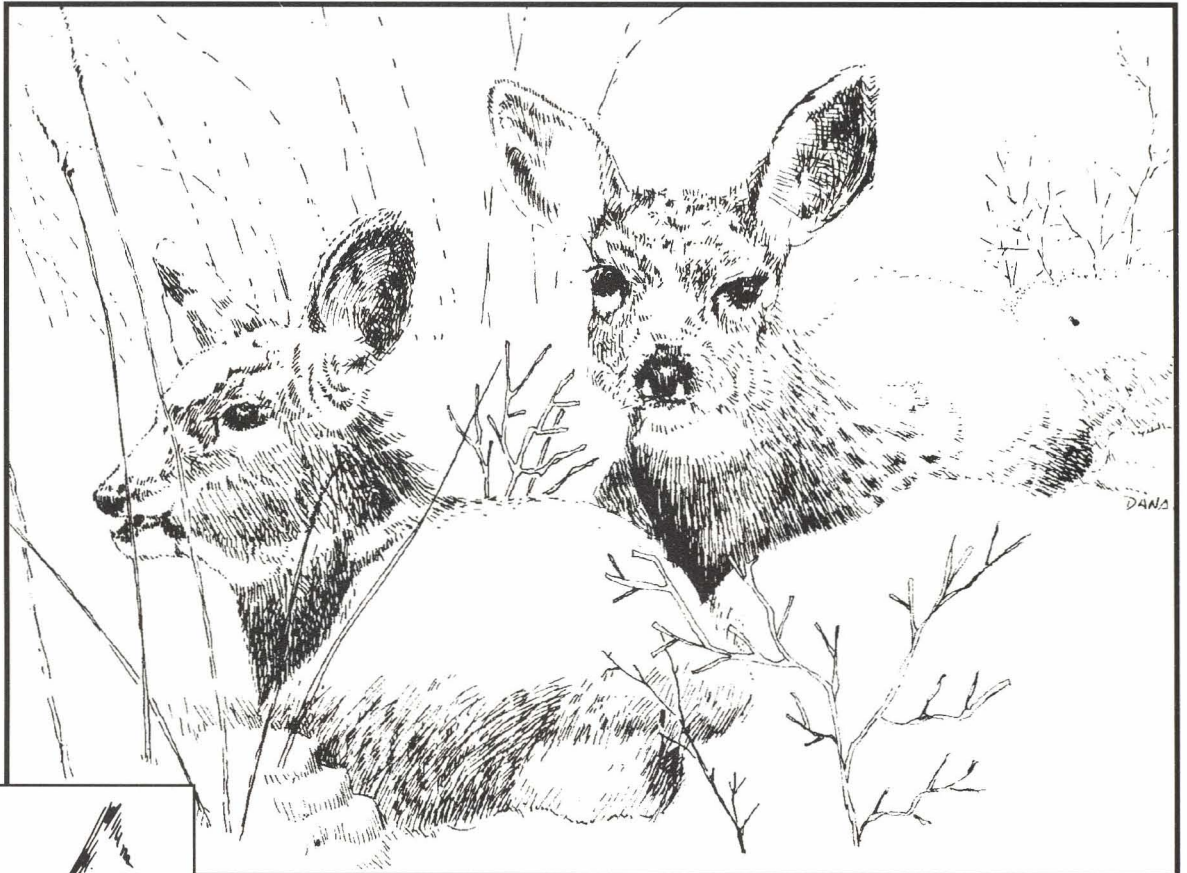
**WATERFOWL
REMINDER**

The duck Low Plains (east of U.S. 283) season runs in two segments, Oct. 23-31 and Nov. 13-Dec. 12. The High Plains season runs in three segments, Oct. 16-31, Nov. 13-Dec. 5 and Dec. 22-Jan. 2. The point system is in effect for bag limits. —*Shoup*

by Dana Eastes

Watching Winter Wildlife

Winter is the best time to watch wildlife. The easiest way to watch wildlife in the winter without leaving your house is to put up birdfeeders. Sunflower seeds are best for attracting songbirds. To keep the birds coming back, you should fill the feeder regularly. A water source



A simple pinecone rolled in peanut butter or suet can lure songbirds to your yard.

such as a bird bath or small pool or a pile of old firewood is good for wildlife. Other methods of attracting wildlife to your house begin in spring or fall. Plant trees and shrubs and designate areas for wildflowers and tall prairie grasses such as big bluestem. What you're doing is providing food and shelter, basic requirements for any animal, including you. Don't be surprised at the variety of songbirds and small animals you can attract to your home, even if you live in an urban area.

If you want to watch water birds, game birds or larger animals like deer, bobcat and coyote, here are some things to think about.

LAUGH AT COLD TEMPERATURES, WIND AND SNOW.

You gotta love being outdoors even in the cold!

Dress warm! Dress in layers. Know the warning signs of

hypothermia and frostbite. Most of the time you'll be sitting quietly. The cold can sneak up on you if you're not careful.

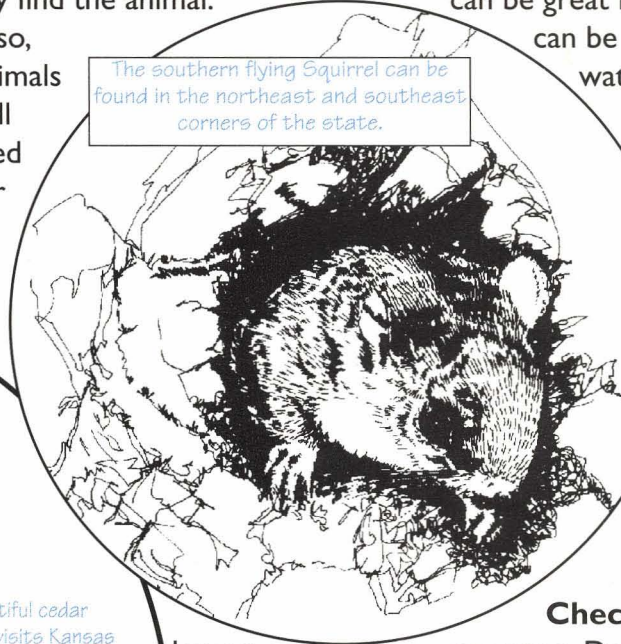
Bring a good pair of binoculars or a spotting scope.

Always, always ask permission

animal's food source, you'll usually find the animal.

Also, animals will feed for

The southern flying Squirrel can be found in the northeast and southeast corners of the state.



their normal everyday business can be great fun. A tree stand can be handy when watching wildlife.

Keep a diary of habitat, wildlife sightings, weather, etc. A diary will give you better insight into the behavior patterns of wild animals.

The beautiful cedar waxwing visits Kansas in the fall and spring. You may see this bird traveling in flocks. They prefer fruit (chopped apple, banana, raisins)



longer periods in the day, meaning they may be out in the late mornings or early evenings.

Look for the "edge," where woodland habitat meets cropland or water meets tall grasses.

Check the hunting seasons. Don't be mistaken for a turkey.

If you're a beginner or seasoned wildlife watcher, check out the book called "Watching Kansas Wildlife: A Guide to 101 Sites." This book gives you the where, when and how to watch wildlife at 101 different public sites around Kansas.

before you walk on someone's land.

Find an animal's food source, such as unharvested crops (milo, wheat, etc).

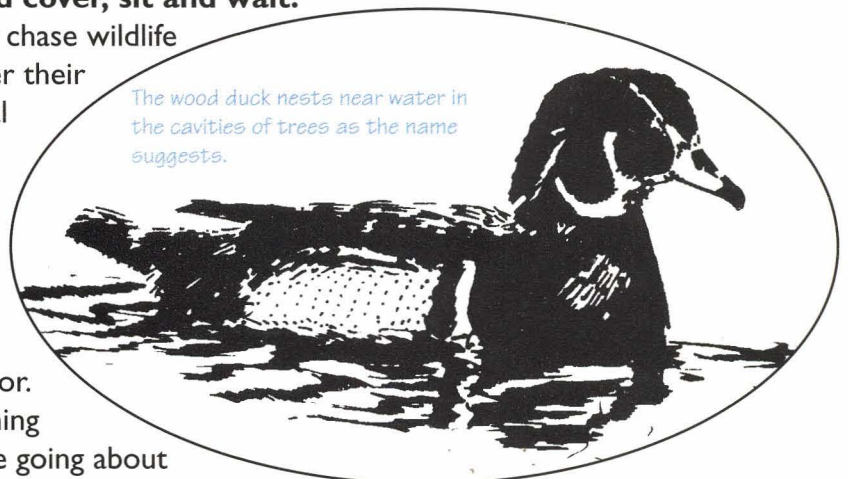
Animals use up more energy in the winter than at other times of the year. The more energy an animal uses, the more food it needs to maintain its body temperature, especially in the cold winter months. If you can find an

Find cover, sit and wait.

Never chase wildlife or alter their normal

behavior. Watching wildlife going about

The wood duck nests near water in the cavities of trees as the name suggests.



HIGH GROUND



by Mike Miller

When Everything Goes Wrong . . .

I've had my share of good hunting and fishing outings. I've also had my share of bad ones, but being a full-time optimist, I'm always looking for good omen that predict a successful trip. I use these to build enthusiasm among my less optimistic partners. For example, on our way to a bass pond: "I just watched the weather and saw that the barometer is rising, and the cold front's not supposed to move through until tomorrow morning. This should be a perfect night." I was, of course, ignoring the fact that it was 97 degrees, the wind was blowing 30 mph and the water was high. I still found my good omen.

Unfortunately I've noticed a disturbing trend. Even though it hasn't deterred me from finding good omen, it seems that when everything is just right, nothing turns out like it's supposed to. On the evening when all the sign pointed to good fishing, we caught only a few small ones. There was a crisp, calm November morning. A light fog filled the low areas, and sign said the rut was in full gear. I sat intently for three hours, expecting bucks to parade past my stand, but I didn't see a single deer.

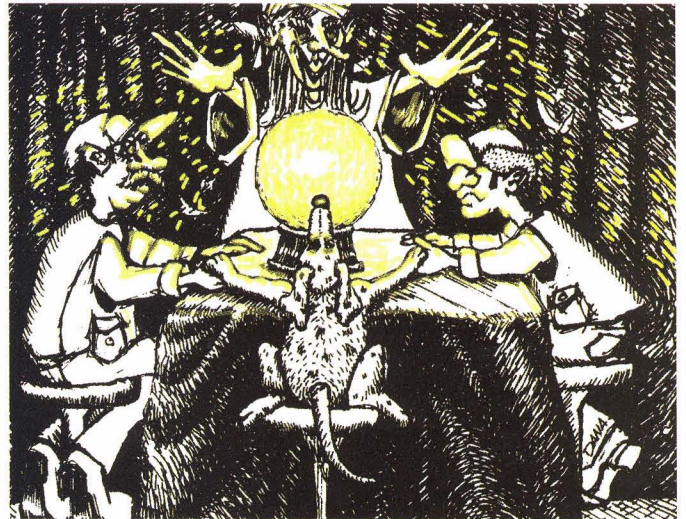
On the flip side to this trend is that when everything seems against you, things can magically turn out great. Just when you're ready to give up, something extraordinary happens, and an otherwise forgettable trip turns into the best ever.

The first time this happened was on a bowhunt in southeast Kansas. It rained and rained, then rained some more. The river near camp flooded much of the bottomland we like to hunt. Of course, the good omen we found was that the water would concentrate deer in high areas. However, does, fawns and a couple of coyotes were all any of us saw the first two days.

Then on my last morning, everything really went wrong. Water in the normally dry creek bed near my stand was rushing over what had been a good deer crossing. I waited through the peak hours just after sunup and saw nothing. Even I was beginning to get discouraged. Then, even though I rarely have allergy problems, I had a noisy sneezing fit complete with stopped up nose and watery eyes. By 8:30 I had all but given up. Finally I had to answer a call of nature. I climbed down, scrambled down the muddy creek bank, answered the call, then climbed back to the stand.

No sooner had I taken my bow of the hook when my mouth dropped wide open. There, standing 25 yards away, was a beautiful 9-point buck. A short time later, I was field dressing a buck that showed up on a day when everything went wrong — everything except the result.

A more recent deer hunt had a similar ring to it. The evening was windy and warm — poor bowhunting



Dana Eastes illustration

conditions — but I diligently climbed into my stand. When I drew to shoot a practice arrow, the nock popped off the string. I snapped it back on and it popped off again at full draw. I had recently waxed my bow string and the release cushion was sliding up and pinching the nock.

I tested several of my hunting arrows and naturally, they wouldn't stay on the string either. As I was trying to modify the string and nocks to make a better fit, I eventually dropped both arrows to the ground. I sneaked down the tree trunk, retrieved the arrows and went back to my task.

When I finally managed to get one hunting arrow to stay on the string, the evening was about over. Then I heard a crunch. I turned to see a doe coming down the trail and sure enough, a buck followed. Just as I was about to release the arrow, the buck stepped into some brush, then down the trail without offering a shot.

I was pleased to have seen a buck and had a near opportunity. It wouldn't be such a bad evening after all. Then I heard another leaf crunch — a second, bigger, buck was coming down the trail! This buck turned off the trail and came directly under my stand, where a shot was impossible. I held at full draw until my arms quivered before finally, painfully, letting off. I guess the wind prevented the noise from reaching the buck's sensitive ears, and it wandered out in front. I drew again when the buck stopped broadside at 15 yards. The shot was perfect, and the deer ran only 30 yards before piling up.

That night had started with everything going wrong and ended perfectly. I suppose I'll never quit looking for good omen, if only to keep myself and my partners enthused, but when everything goes wrong . . . get ready for things to go right. 