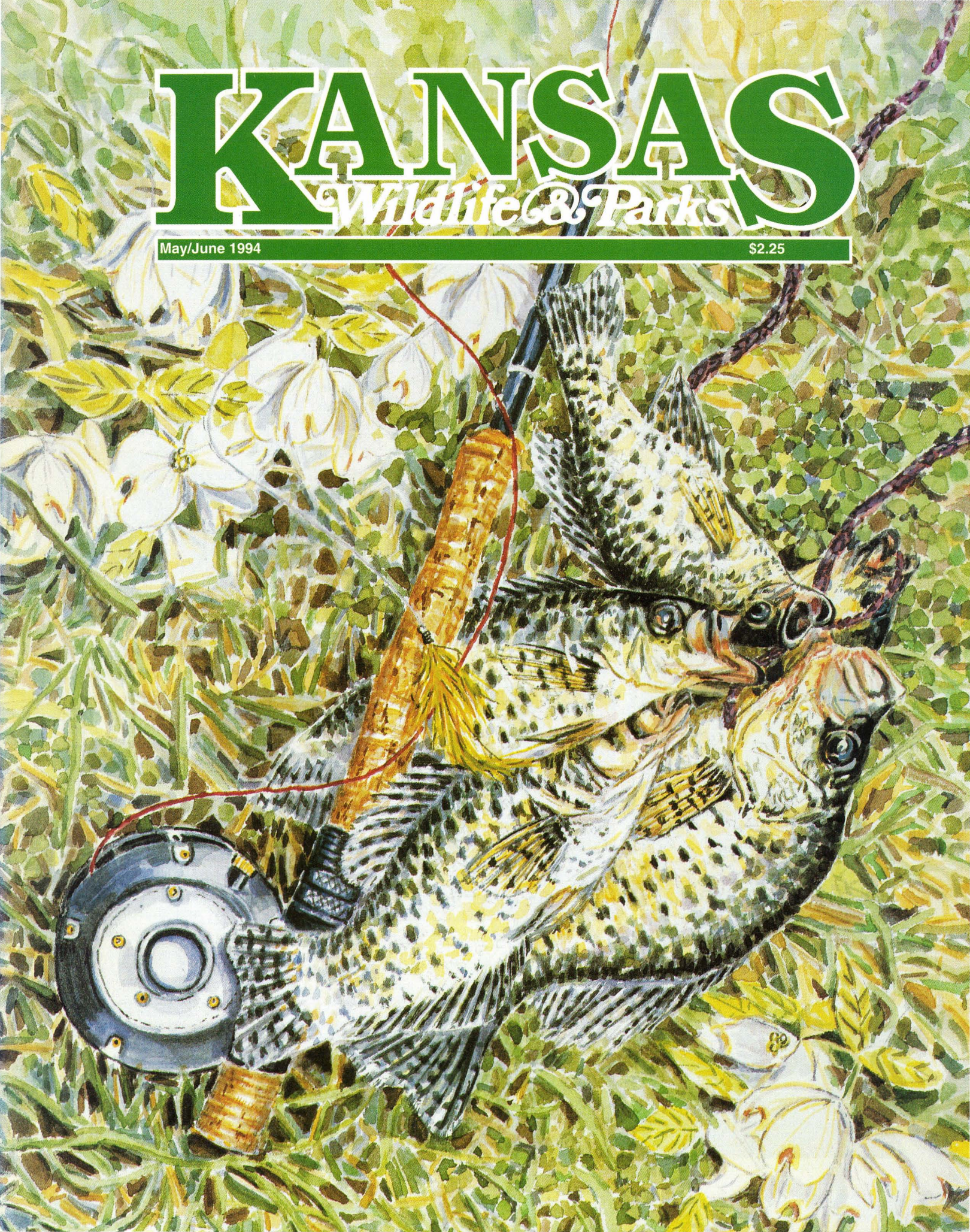
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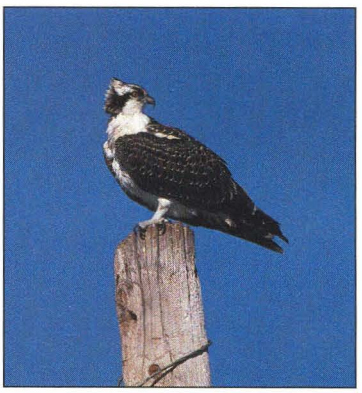

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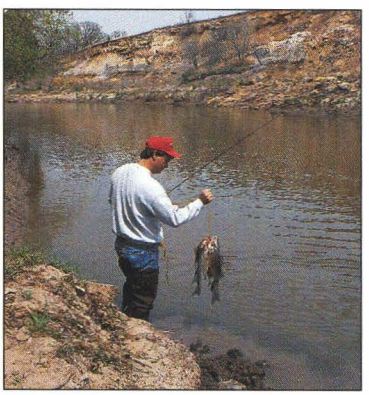

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Front cover: Staff illustrator Dana Eastes created this watercolor showing the fruits of a fly rod on a Kansas farm pond. **Back cover:** Mike Blair took this osprey portrait near a department hatchery. He used a 600mm lens, f/11 @ 1/125. The bird stayed a few days before continuing south.

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

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Let's Go Fishing

Things don't seem to hold their value these days; except for those things which are tough to put a price tag on. It would be hard for me to say how much a day fishing or visiting a park is worth. One thing is certain though, for a weekend in June, these experiences will be available during "Free Fishing and Park Entrance Weekend," June 11 and 12. Why go fishing or visit a state park? The enjoyment of being outdoors, wondering what's around the next bend on a nature trail, feeling a tap on your fishing line on a lazy afternoon — I suppose everyone has their own reasons. I can really only call on my own experience. I simply must spend time surrounded by nature to make the rest of what I do make some sense. I would not be able to do this job if I didn't regularly remind myself what it is we are working toward.

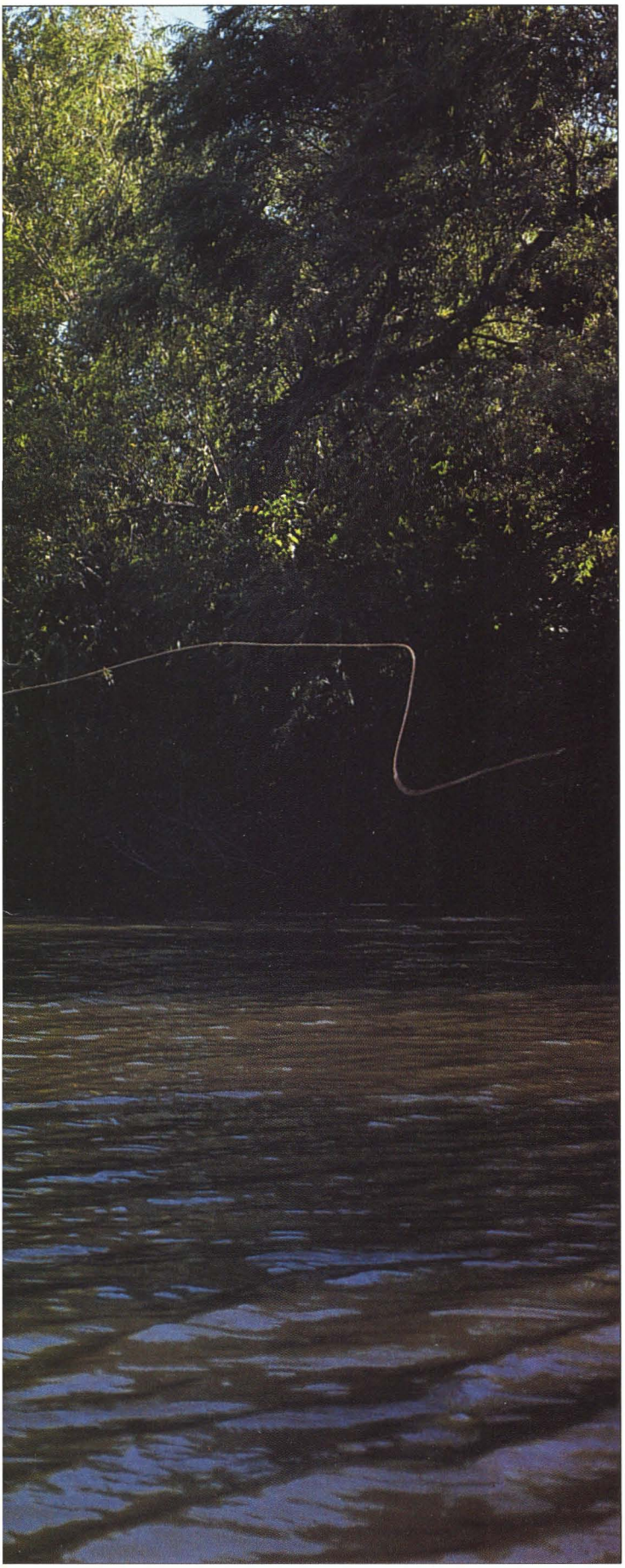
As Secretary of Wildlife and Parks, I designate one weekend each year to allow people to fish and visit a Kansas state park without a fishing license or park entry permit. This year, the weekend of June 11 and 12 has been set aside for this purpose. We would like visitors and the citizens of our state to enjoy the quality of our sport fishing and park resources. The free weekend is just the opportunity to get out and try something new.

Free Fishing and Park Entrance Weekend is also about value. For less than the cost of dinner and a movie, a fishing license or park permit opens up a year's worth of outdoor fun. I have to admit, there is a little marketing strategy in this. Once people give it a try, I believe many will purchase a fishing license or park permit. Compared to the cost of most entertainment, camping and fishing are hard to beat — and the benefits range from fitness and a healthy lifestyle to sharing your outdoor experience with family and youngsters.

As a reader of Kansas Wildlife & Parks magazine, chances are you already understand and appreciate our outdoor recreation resources. I encourage you to use the free weekend to take a friend fishing or camping. Our natural and outdoor recreational resources are maintained by those who use and enjoy them. The future of these activities depend on maintaining and increasing levels of participation.

To have value, something must be understood and appreciated. Let someone you know in on the value of Kansas outdoor recreation.

Ted Ensley



Flatlander's Fly-fishing Guide

text and photos by Mike Blair
staff photographer, Pratt

Take out a fly rod in Kansas and you might draw some funny looks, but you'll also discover a whole new world of fishing. Many who try the fly-weight equipment become avid fly rod fanatics and claim that catching any fish on a fly rod is more fun.

I visited another world that afternoon. The pond, screened from all surroundings by a thick wall of willows, was clear-black and glassy smooth. Protected by wooded hills, it was innocent of the sounds of civilization. Reflections were golden against deep shadows in the evening sunlight. Alone in a float tube, I was completely enveloped. There seemed no other place besides the pond.

I lifted my rod, and cast to a spot where tree leaves touched the water. There was no ker-plunk to shatter the calm; just a momentary sighing of air on line and the gentle landing of a deer-hair bug. There was no hurry to reel, no worry of fouled hooks. Ripples died, and the bug lay lifeless as a fallen leaf.

But a 3-pound bass knew food when it saw it. At the first twitch of the counterfeit insect, the water exploded. Waves raced across the surface, disturbing the tranquility. The bass ran deep, tugging and testing the fragile tippet. For a minute it stayed submerged. Then it blasted free in a spectacular leap that took it above eye level and showered silver droplets like a miniature storm.

That picture will stay forever in my mind. I caught a dozen bass that day and broke off another I guessed at 8 pounds. But the backlit fighter in high flight, on the reins of a two-handed battle, remains my favorite memory of the season.

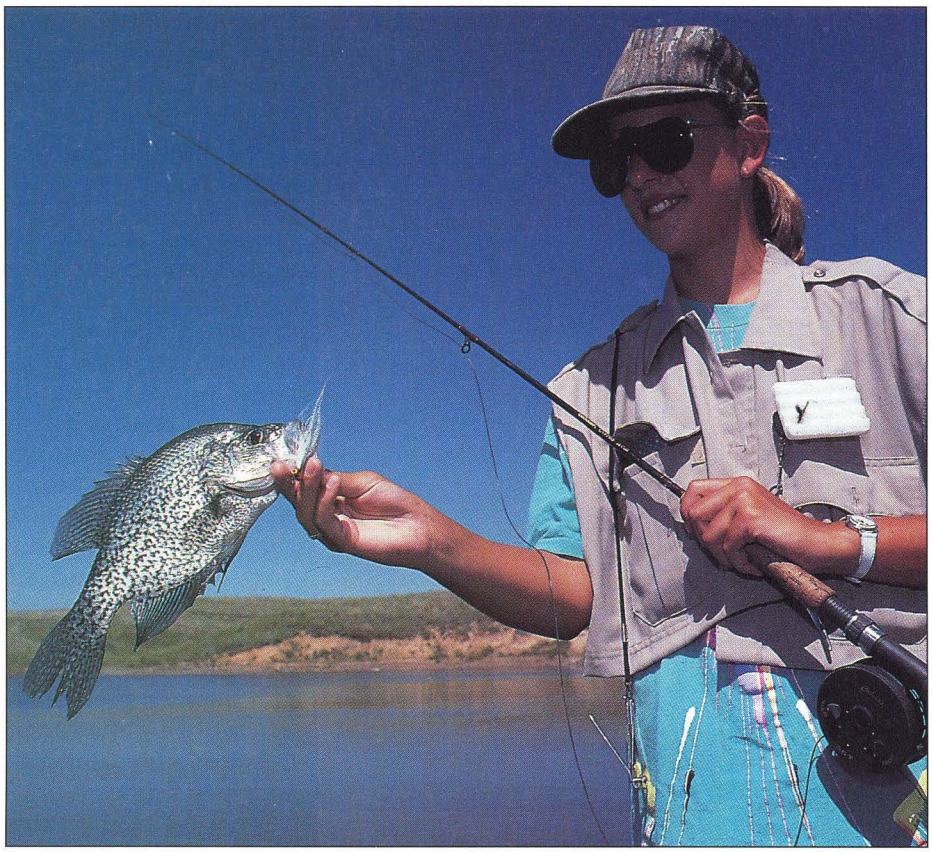
Such is the thrill of fly-fishing.

Once considered a method only for trout, fly-fishing is gaining acceptance in the Sunflower state. The long rod, simple reel and heavy line elevate casting to an artform. Even when fish aren't biting, there is pleasure in the sound and rhythm of a shooting line. But beyond this, fly-fishing does what other angling can't; deliver weightless offerings to distant targets with precision and finesse. Since lures are lighter, retrieves can be slowed while maintaining lure action. Fly lures are easily tied by the angler from natural materials. And the thrill of a fight is magnified to new heights on fly tackle; the outcome is never assured.

The most likely candidate for Kansas fly-rodding is the common bluegill. Many flies will catch bluegills including surface poppers, but the author prefers nymphs.

Fly rods come in a variety of sizes and weights for virtually every kind of fishing. One-weight rods weighing just an ounce are designed for the smallest panfish, though with care and luck, large fish can be taken on them. Conversely, magnum gear like 13-weight fly rods can take the large ocean-going sportfish, but their stiffness makes them unsuitable for smaller game. For Kansas fishing, a 6-weight rod may be best all-around. This size is also ideal for western or eastern trout fishing, should the angler travel.

Thus armed, let's consider the



This black crappie fell to a Clouser Deep Minnow. Crappie are more accessible to the fly rod angler in a farm pond, and April and May, when the fish are shallow, are the best months. Crappie in deep water are difficult to catch on fly equipment.

joys of Kansas fly-fishing, beginning with the small but noble bluegill. This bull of the shallows is the ideal fly angler's target: an aggressive feeder, scrappy fighter and socialite that prefers hanging out in large groups. It is common in eastern Kansas streams, and in ponds and reservoirs throughout the state. The bluegill spawning period provides some of the surest and fastest angling to be found. And best of all, bluegills are excellent table fare and prolific enough to allow ample harvest.

Bluegill fly-fishing is generally assumed to be a topwater sport. Small cork or deer-hair popping bugs with No. 8 hooks are excellent choices during summer months, especially at dawn or dusk. Laboratory experiments show that bluegills feed most heavily in 81-degree water, making them catchable through the heat of summer. At such times, black floating cricket patterns work especially well, though tiny, mosquito-sized flies will take them, too. But small bluegills become an annoyance on small hooks, so where large fish are present, hooks of at least size No. 10 are best. Little animation is required for topwater bluegill fishing; simply cast the fly where fish are schooling and hang on.

Most fly anglers haven't tried nymphing for bluegills, but this by far is the most productive fly-fishing technique. When the water is too cool for decent topwater feeding, sunfish feed heavily below. Switching from popping bugs to subsurface aquatic insect patterns can be deadly on bluegills, especially monster slabs. My favorite patterns include McGinty Wet Flies, Gold-Ribbed Hare's Ear Nymphs and Zugbugs. Generally, size No. 10 hooks work best, but if fish are especially finicky, smaller flies such as No. 14 are better.

Though full-sinking and sink-tip fly lines are available for nymph fishing, I prefer the normal floating line with a long leader and weighted fly. This works well when fish are less than six feet deep, as they are in many spring and fall feeding situations, or on spawning beds. Wrapping the hook shank with wire before tying a nymph will give it adequate weight, or split shot can be added to the leader. Fish holding deeper than 6 feet will probably require the specialized fly lines.

Bluegills have several close relatives that also provide tasty meals and fast fly-fishing action — green sunfish and redears. Green sunfish are the most common sunfish in Kansas, residing even in the smallest creeks and ponds. They are the easiest of all fish to catch and readily take flies. Since they have bigger mouths than bluegills, they can be hooked on much larger flies. Green sunfish especially like floating grasshopper patterns and leech imitations, such as the Wooley Bugger. Like bluegills, they are hard fighters.

Redear sunfish provide a true fly-fishing challenge, since they are finicky subsurface feeders and have a habit of biting very gently. They aren't native to Kansas, but have been introduced into various ponds and reservoirs across the state. Sometimes known as "shell-crackers", they feed primarily on snails, but will also take imitation worms and nymphs. My best redear

Many fly-fishermen also learn to create their own lures, tying them with natural hair and feathers.

The successful Kansas fly-fisherman carries a wide variety of fly-weight imitations. This display includes tiny bluegill bugs as well as largemouth bass-size lures. It's possible to catch just about any Kansas fish.

success has been with McGinty wet flies. Redears are most easily caught when they move in shallow to spawn; usually May or early June when water temperatures reach 68 degrees.

The difficulty with catching redears is detecting their strikes, which cannot be felt unless a tight line is maintained. As with all Kansas fly-fishing, it's best to keep the fly rod tip at water level, aimed at the lure with a straight line. Also, stretching the line to remove kinks is a good idea before fishing for redears, as even a single four-inch bend in the line or leader can absorb a strike.

Other sunfish opportunities in Kansas include warmouth, orangespotted and longear sunfish, and rock bass. These colorful fish may be taken with the same techniques as their larger cousins, but due to small size, they are generally passed over.

Panfish such as crappies and white bass are also excellent sport for Kansas fly anglers. Since these fish primarily feed on minnows and shad, flies such as the Black Ghost, Wooley Bugger, Prismatic Shad or Clouser Deep Minnow work well. Around dense weed-beds or submerged brush, weedless flies are the best choices.

Farm ponds lend themselves to crappie fly-fishing, since water is usually shallow and more easily fished than reservoirs. Lightweight flies tend to be neutrally buoyant, allowing a "stop and go" stripping action that is irresistible to hungry crappies. Last spring, I fished a large, clear pond with good weedbeds, using a No. 8 yellow-chartreuse Wooley Bugger. After allowing the fly to sink 3 feet, the fly was stripped in quick, 18-inch jerks, resting several seconds between each. This retrieve yielded a crappie nearly every cast, with the hits occurring while the lure slowly fell between jerks. Steady retrieves gave poor results, proving that presentation is important.

In murky farm ponds, crappies bite well on a white Prismatic Shad. The reflective mylar tape helps fish see this lure in turbid water. The Prismatic Shad is a large but light fly with a slow sink rate, allowing the preferred retrieve.

White bass also eagerly take the Prismatic Shad, though weight must usually be added to fish the lure deep enough for most reservoir fishing. At certain times of the year, chest waders provide access to reservoir fish in shallow water off rocky points or along rip-rap, and white bass can provide some of the best of this kind of fishing. However, wind can be a problem when casting on open water, and heavier gear, such as an 8-weight system, is better suited for big-water fly-fishing.

Because of the extra depth needed for most reservoir fishing, the Clouser Deep Minnow is an excellent fly lure. Tied with lead eyes, it has a fast sink rate and stays down during the retrieve. It resembles a shad, the preferred forage in most of Kansas' reservoirs. Extra weight makes it difficult to cast smoothly, but it catches fish — all kinds.

The large Clouser Deep Minnow is an excellent lure for stripers. These extremely hard fighters are a joy to catch on a fly rod, but their power requires heavy equipment. Select an 8- or 9-weight fly rod and a sturdy reel with at least 100 yards of backing. Fifteen-pound test leaders and tippets are necessary to hold the heavy fish, which can weigh more than 40 pounds.

Stripers may be caught on flies from a boat, float tube, or by wading or bank-fishing. A friend of mine regularly catches stripers at Wilson Reservoir, using only a fly-rod and float tube. Since these fish get big (he's caught some weighing 20 pounds) and fight hard, a 15-pound tippet and 100 yards of backing are absolutely necessary.

Even a small striper will take more than 50 feet of line in a single run. The time to catch stripers is usually short-lived — usually just after the ice is off until April — since they move deep in early summer. But when stripers are in less than 20 feet of water, the Clouser Deep Minnow and an 8- or 9-weight fly-rod can be an excellent combination.

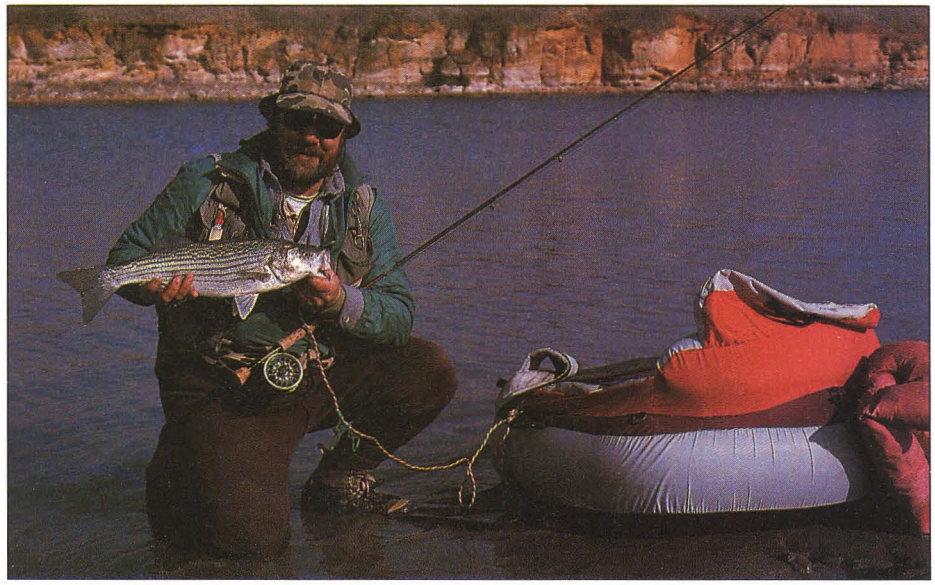
And then there are largemouth bass. Widespread and abundant, they are the favorite of many fly anglers. At home in stream or pond, bass are usually within easy reach. They're strong, acrobatic, and will eat almost anything. Slow, methodical fly presentations are perfect for probing their ambush sites.

For topwater fly-fishing, deer-hair frogs are good choices for bass. Bigger is better, since small fly lures tend to catch small and medium sized bass. Due to the light weight of feather and hair, large lures strike the water naturally and avoid scaring fish. This is a major advantage of fly-fishing.

Other good topwater bass patterns include grasshoppers, Gerbubble Bugs, sliders and divers. Sizes should range from No. 6 to 2/0. Weedless flies provide an advantage in most bass waters.

As with bluegills, however, the best assortment of bass flies are subsurface patterns. Hare Grubs and eels, imitation crayfish, large nymphs such as dragonflies, minnow imitations, Wooley Buggers, leeches and spinners are some of the many fly patterns effective for largemouth, smallmouth and spotted bass. Weedless flies move tantalizingly through flooded treetops and stump fields to entice bass. And when they take a fly, all heck breaks loose.

Channel catfish are usually considered scavengers and bottom feeders - not likely candidates for fly-fishing. But many times I've hooked them in ponds and lakes while fishing for other species. Usually, it's a very slow nymph presentation that catches them, mimicking an aquatic insect passing before their eyes.



With proper equipment and lures, striped bass can be taken on a fly rod. Although this tackle is fairly specialized, simple fly tackle is easy to understand and use. Read the side bar below for information on how to get started.

There is probably no Kansas fish that cannot be taken by fly-fishing. In addition to more common sport fish, I've caught carp, shad and shiners on small nymphs. Gar fall to nylon flies and walleye to Hare Grubs. Where stocked, trout succumb to mayfly imitations. It's as simple as casting a preferred food imitation for a given fish, and having patience.

Why not give fly-fishing a try? You might get a funny stare or two when whipping a fly rod on public waters, but they'll soon turn to looks of admiration. Especially when your fly rod bends double to any of Kansas' flatwater sport fish.

Getting Rigged For Kansas Fly-rodding

Rigging up for Kansas fly-fishing can be a confusing, if enjoyable, venture. There are many combinations of rod weights and lengths, reels, line types, and leaders. Much of this is settled by the type of fishing one intends to do.

For the best compromise between bluegill and bass, I'd recommend a 6-weight outfit. Nothing beats a trip to your local sporting goods store for a demonstration of various components, but unfortunately, there isn't a great deal of fly-fishing merchandise in the state. So if you can't purchase over the counter, you can buy through catalogs.

Start with a 6-weight rod between 7-1/2 and 8-1/2 feet long. Fishing from a float tube, the extra length is an advantage. But if you bank-fish around tree-lined ponds, the shorter rod may be better. Add an inexpensive, single-action reel. Buy 100 yards of dacron backing to attach the fly line to the reel spindle (this rolls the fly line onto a greater diameter, helping avoid a line "memory" with tight coils; it also helps control a large fish that takes out all the fly line). For a fly line, choose a weight-forward 6-weight floating line, designated WF6F. Leader size will vary by species, but for average fishing, choose a 3X tapered knotless leader, 7-1/2 feet long.

This basic gear will get you started.

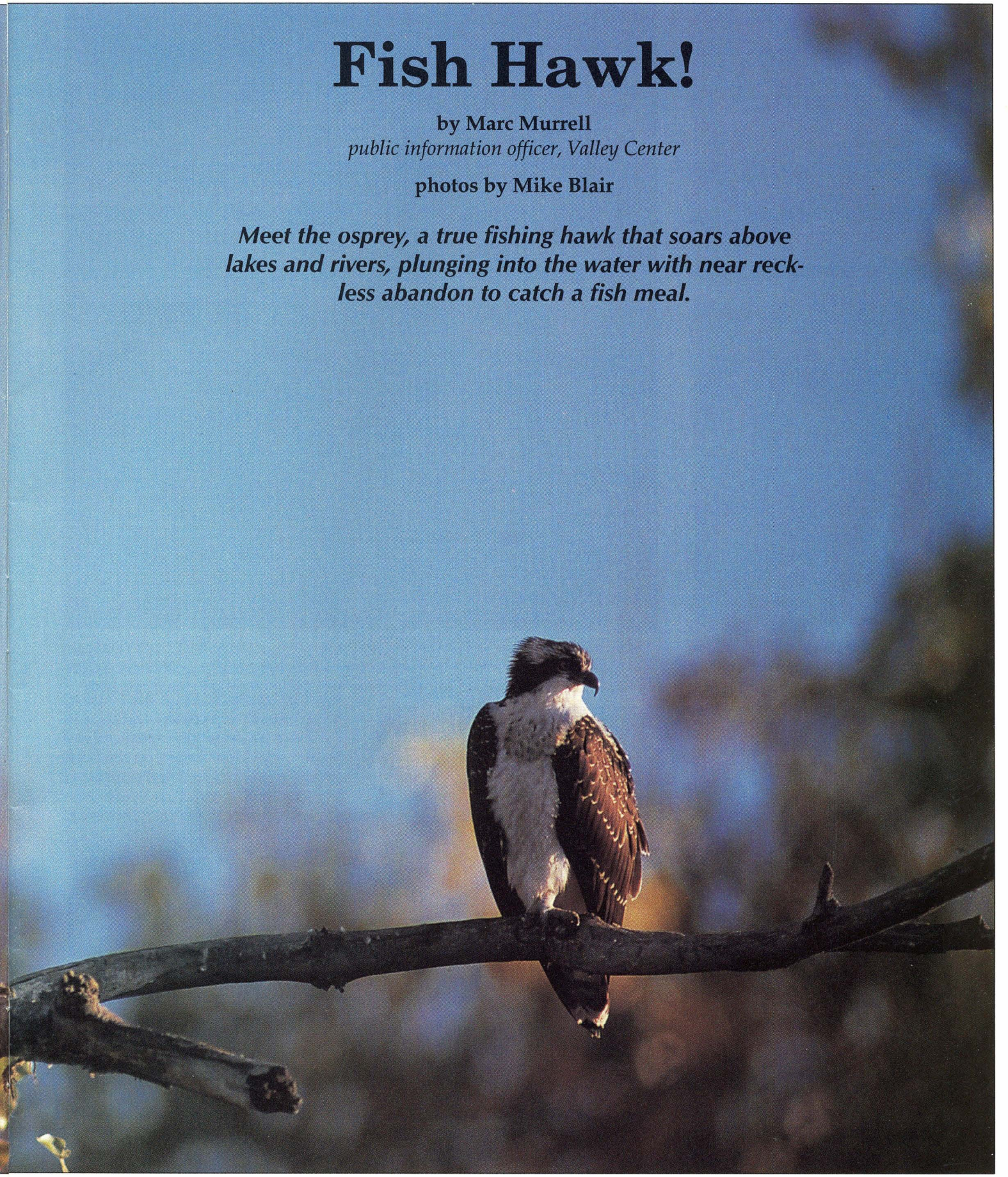
Fortunately, most mail-order outfitters now have matched combination outfits including backing, line, leaders and even flies. Simply order the combo by line weight. These can cost under $100, and open a whole new world of Kansas angling adventure.

Fish Hawk!

by Marc Murrell
public information officer, Valley Center

photos by Mike Blair

Meet the osprey, a true fishing hawk that soars above lakes and rivers, plunging into the water with near reckless abandon to catch a fish meal.



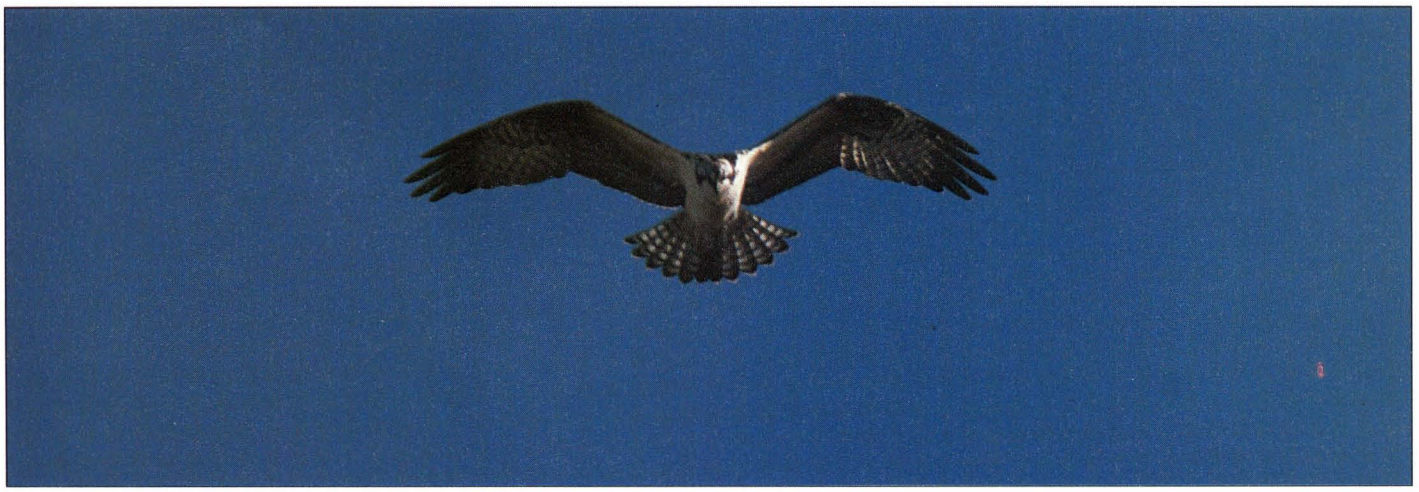
In action it's a sight to behold. Gliding effortlessly over water until penetrating eyes spot the unsuspecting quarry, swimming just beneath the surface. Wings are folded into the body and a warp-speed dive begins; talons outstretch micro-seconds ahead of impact with the water — splash! The osprey flops its wings out of the water, lifting itself and its fish meal into the air. Landing on a perch to eat in leisure, the fish hawk repeats a scenario common in the world of this truly unique raptor.

The osprey, *Pandion haliaetus*, like many birds of prey, intrigue and fascinate even casual observers. The genus portion of their scientific name makes reference to the name of two mythical kings of Athens and the species connotation translates to sea eagle. They were once quite common in North America, but their numbers began to decline at the turn of the century. During the 1950s and 1960s, osprey populations plummeted because of widespread use of the insecticide DDT (dichloro-diphenyl-trichloroethane). The chemical concentrated in the fish osprey ate, but rather than kill the birds, it hampered reproduction. Eggs produced by contaminated birds had shells so thin that the weight of the incubating female would crush them.

Since the ban of DDT in the early 1970s, ospreys and other fish-eating raptors, such as bald eagles, have made remarkable comebacks. Today ospreys are found on all continents except Antarctica. In North America, they are most common along the eastern coast.

Once rare due the use of DDT, the osprey has made a welcome comeback. Although the fishing birds don't nest in Kansas, they are found on every continent except Antarctica. Kansans need to keep a sharp eye each fall and spring for migrating birds.

The osprey is characterized by brown/black coloration on the back and white on the belly. The head is



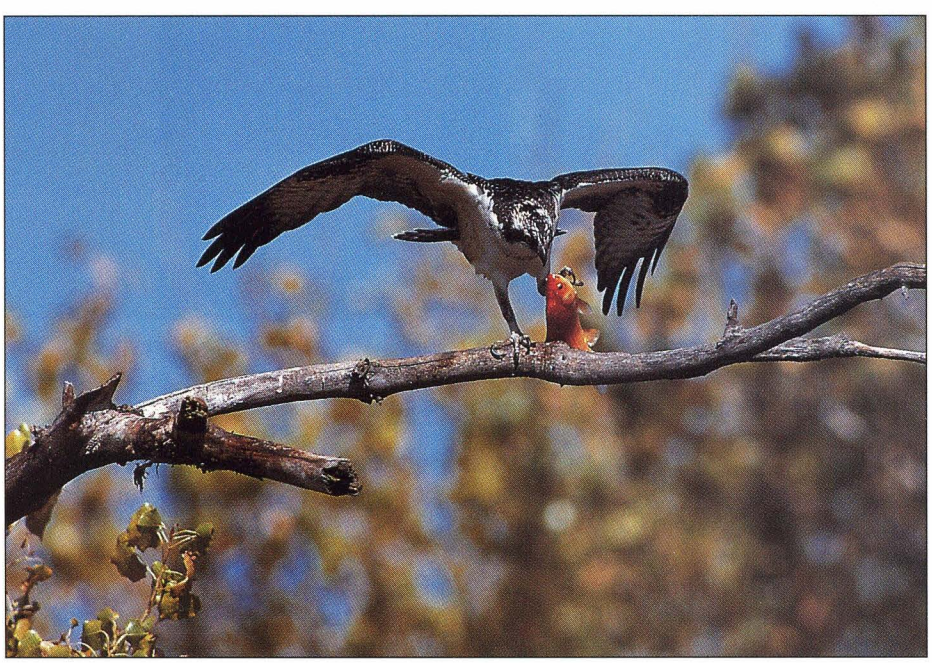
The distinct bend in the wings and the dark patches seen at the wings' "wrists" are key characteristics to identify an osprey in flight. Of course seeing one dive into the water after a fish would be another good hint.

Unlike eagles, which usually snatch fish from just below the surface with only their talons, osprey commonly plunge into the water with a loud splash. Often, most of the osprey's body is submerged, sometimes the entire bird goes under.

white with a black streak through the yellow-irised eye. The hooked beak is black. Ospreys can be recognized in flight by their long, pointed, slightly bent wings and a prominent dark patch at the wings' "wrists." Coloration is similar on the sexes, except that females often have a short, dark band of feathers around the neck, resembling an incomplete necklace. Females are typically slightly larger. Wingspans average nearly 6 feet and birds will weigh about 4-6 pounds.

Ospreys can adapt to fresh or salt water, inhabiting areas along sea coasts or inland rivers and lakes. The preferred food is fish, and they generally stay near productive fishing waters, however, they have been known to eat birds, turtles, small mammals, snakes, frogs and even young ducks.

Ospreys are excellent fish



This osprey has taken its catch, a goldfish from a nearby hatchery pond, to a perch for a leisurely supper. Specialized nubs on their feet enable them to grip slippery prey.

Although these two predators have entirely different food preferences, this red-tailed hawk fiercely defended its territory against this migrating osprey. The osprey moved on after about a week, continuing its southward migration, perhaps to Central or South America.Their spring northward migration takes them to nesting grounds along the Atlantic coast and the northern U.S. and Canada.

catchers and are widely called fish hawks as a result. Most of the diet consists of slow-moving rough fish. The birds glide over the water, staring intently for a glimpse of their prey. In the blink of an eye, they dive from heights of 30-100 feet and hit the water with a resounding splash. Young birds may miss their intended targets many times before success. As a result of impact, the birds often partially or totally submerge. Flapping their wings on the water's surface, they can lift vertically out of the water. After gaining altitude, they commonly shake vigorously, ridding their waterproof feathers of any water.

Observers have noted that ospreys always carry fish head first, which probably reduces wind resistance. The outer toes are reversible, meaning they can use them to grasp in front or behind an object. Tiny, sharp protrusions called spicules on the underside of the toes give the birds a good grip on their slippery

catch. After feeding, ospreys have been observed flying low over the water, dragging their feet as if to wash them.

The North American populations of ospreys migrate south to the Caribbean, Central America and northern South America for the winter. Birds hatched the previous year don't make the return journey north in their first spring but remain on the wintering grounds until their second summer. Two-year-olds usually migrate north, sometimes to the area where they fledged, but they don't actually nest until their third year.

Courtship rituals of ospreys involve male birds flying in a series of undulating dives and climbs. For added stimulus, these feats are usually performed while carrying a fish and calling in a loud, high-pitched kyew, kyew, kyew. Their primary breeding range in the U.S. is Florida, Atlantic coastal areas such as Chesapeake Bay and the Great Lakes.

The feet of the osprey look similar to other hawks' feet, but they have a special adaptation which allows the outer toe on each foot to grip either in front or behind an object, aiding in catching fish.

Nests are the largest of any North American bird, and they often use the same nest year after year, adding to it each time. The bulky structure may be 6 1/2 feet across and is composed of haphazardly arranged sticks, seaweed, bones and driftwood. Osprey nests may be in tall trees, at ground level on small islands or on ledges and cliffs, and they may be isolated or in small colonies. Nests have also been observed on duck blinds and channel markers along the Eastern coast, where the birds have also readily adapted to artificial nest structures consisting of platforms on utility poles.

Two to four boldly-marked cinnamon and dark brown eggs are laid in April or May, and incubation lasts about five weeks. The downy young are fed by both parents and fledge in six to eight weeks. The parents defend the nest ferociously against intruders but will seldom strike humans that venture too close.

Ospreys often fish the same waters as bald eagles, and eagles have been known to harass and rob ospreys of their catch.

The osprey is a rare transient that passes through Kansas during migration; usually April through mid-May and mid-September through October. Some have been observed for several days, usually fishing and resting around a major water body before moving on. Osprey sightings have been reported in counties all across the state, with most in the central and eastern portions.

If you're ever lucky enough to spot an osprey, take some time to watch it. A patient observer will be rewarded with the sight of this graceful bird splashing into the water with precision accuracy to snag a fish in its talons. Few outdoor sights will compare.

wi◆per \wip ə r\ *n* 1: A hybrid fish produced by fertilizing striped bass eggs with white bass milt. The resulting progeny grow fast, are aggressive and fight against a fisherman's line like no other known fish. Although new to most waters, the wiper's sporting reputation has already reached legendary proportions.

Gene Brehm photo

by Oliver Gasswint, *Pratt*
photos by Mike Blair

The wiper's popularity has grown steadily since it was first stocked in 1977. Catch just one and you'll understand. If you've never caught one, however, you might want to give the following live-bait method a try.

The wiper has been swimming Kansas waters since 1977. The fish is an attractive addition from a fisheries biologist's point of view because it fits a particular niche in many lakes and reservoirs around the state: it's a fast growing, voracious, open-water predator capable of feeding on large gizzard shad. It's popular with the fishermen because it's aggressive and easy to catch — and it fights like crazy, which is probably a trait called hybrid vigor. Those old enough to remember when horses and mules were common draft animals will remember the hybrid vigor displayed in strength and stamina by the mule. Some might even say a wiper pulls like a mule.

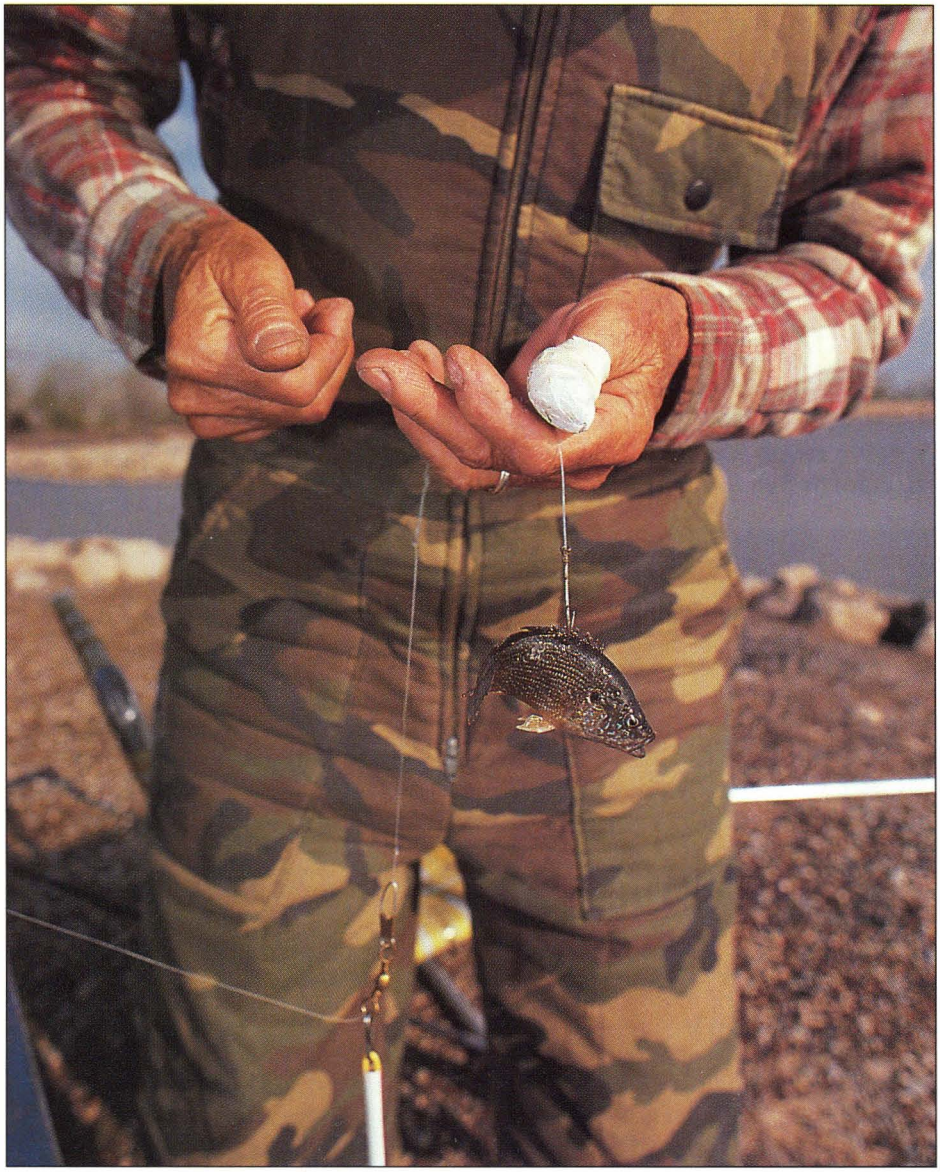
The hybrid does not reproduce, so the populations are dependent upon stocking programs. Wiper fry are obtained from other states through trades, and some are produced in our hatcheries. The problem with producing wipers from Kansas brood fish is the timing of the two species' spawning. White bass reach spawning condition in April, and although they won't spawn naturally in Kansas, striped bass females are ready to spawn in mid-May. Because of weather conditions and water temperature, this timing can vary, and when conditions have allowed, Kansas fish culturists have produced wipers.

Wipers are present in catchable populations all across the state but one of the best lakes is probably the first to receive them 16 years ago: Sebelius Reservoir in Norton County. Other good wiper fisheries include: Milford, Cheney, Marion, John Redmond, La Cyne, Pomona and Webster reservoirs, Coldwater City Lake, Logan State Fishing Lake, Woodson State Fishing Lake, Melvern River Pond and Pratt County Lake.

Most wipers are taken incidently while fishermen fish for other, more familiar species. White bass fishermen often tell of having their ultralight outfits torn apart by a big wiper. Wipers often move upriver when the whites spawn. And walleye fishermen trolling along dams and creek channels will catch occasional wipers. Jigs and shad-type crankbaits, especially those with rattles, have emerged as top wiper lures, but to really be successful, live bait may be the best choice.

A number of years ago, I pondered about the feeding behavior of wipers. Do they roam about in schools like white bass? Apparently so, because one can usually catch several in a given location. I also wondered if they were pelagic, or open-water, feeders like the striped bass. For the most part, this also seems to be true. However, they can be caught near shore and around panfish and largemouth bass cover. So, to catch these mobile, largely unknown fish, I have refined a versatile live-bait technique, and it has been quite successful.

For bait, I use 3- or 4-inch green sunfish, easily caught along the shoreline. I hook the baitfish just below and behind the dorsal fin, allowing it to survive and remain active for a long time. From the 1/0 or 2/0 hook, I tie 18 to 24 inches of leader and attach it to a snap swivel. My favorite rig is a 6 1/2- to 7-foot, medium-action, graphite rod



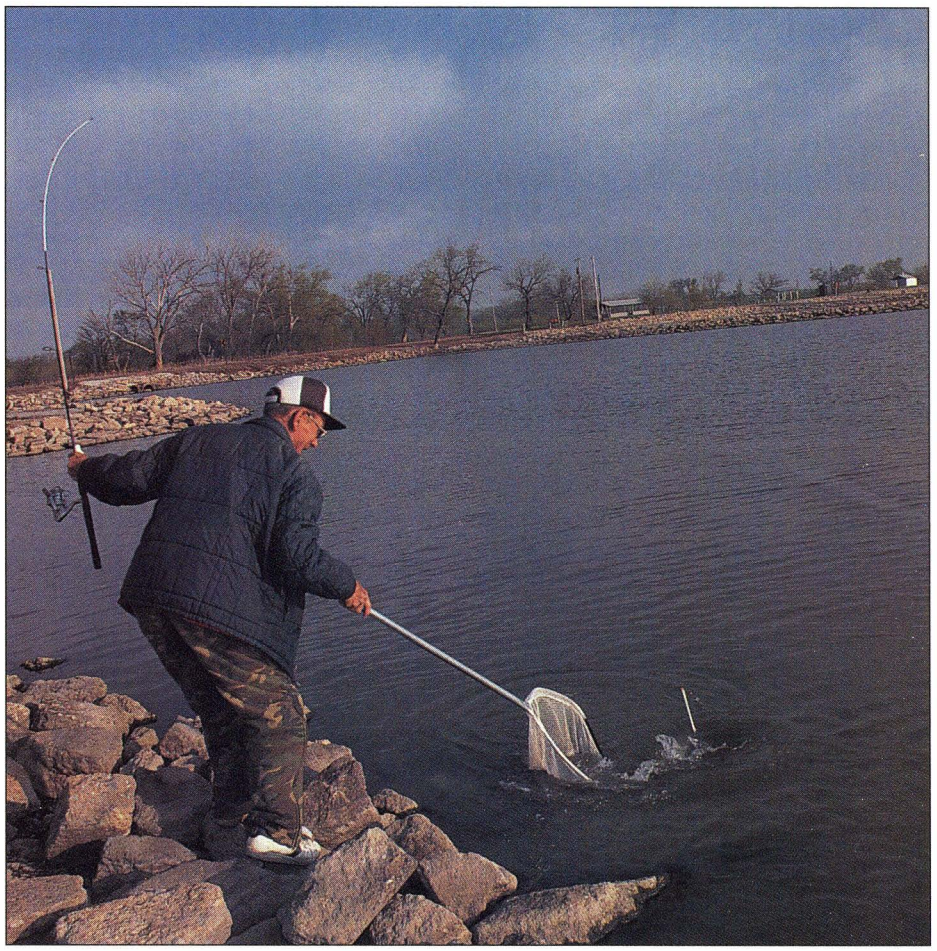
The author prefers small green sunfish for wiper bait. Green sunfish are plentiful, easy to catch with a small hook and worm and they make a hardy bait. An active bait is necessary, since this is an open-water technique, meant to cover a large area.

with a spinning reel and 8-pound line. I hook a small bobber onto the snap swivel and use no weight. The bobber lets me cast the rig easily and while keeping the bait near the surface, lets it swim freely.

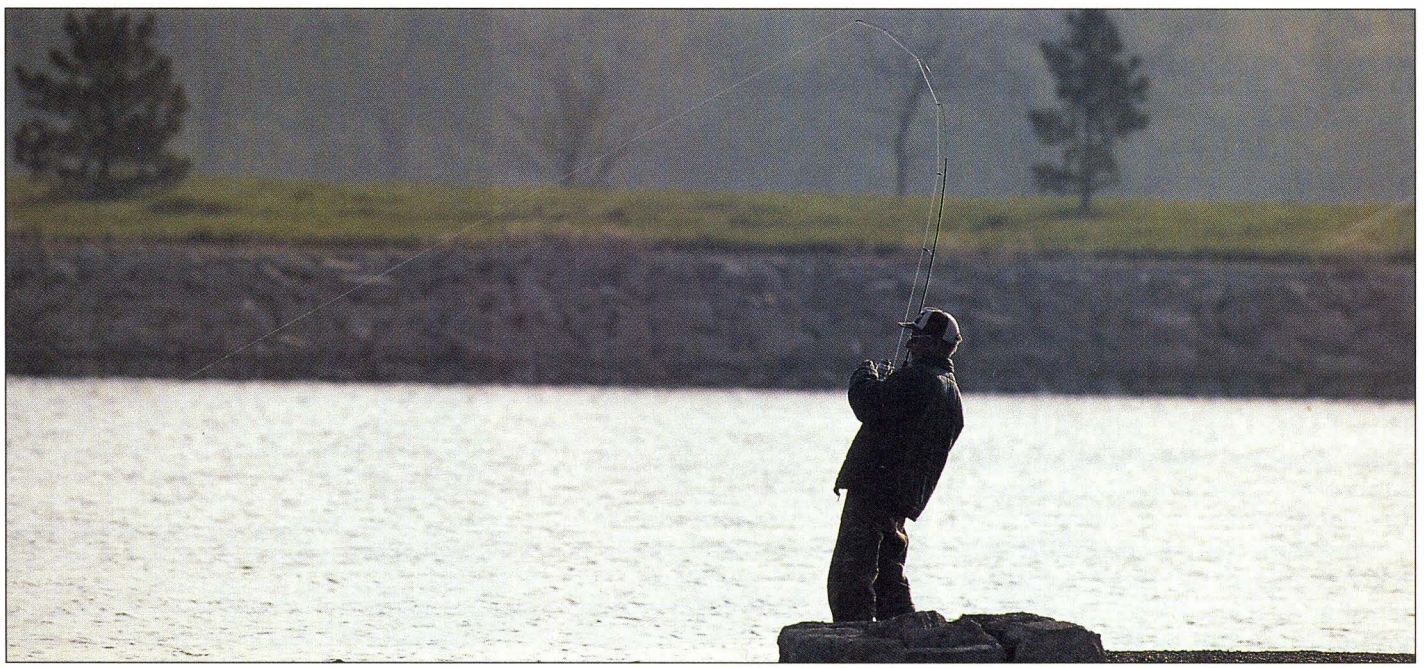
Adjust your drag so that a powerful wiper can run without breaking the line. Never put the rod down unless you place it in a good rod holder. Wipers weighing 3 pounds or more usually strike and run so hard that they will steal an entire rod and reel outfit before you can react in time to grab it.

One trick I've learned is to have a second rod and reel handy for when you've just landed a wiper. I have a shallow-diving crankbait tied on (my favorite is a medium-sized Rapala), and as soon as I unhook the fish caught on bait, I cast the plug into the general area where the first fish hit. Frequently, I get an immediate strike.

I strongly recommend practicing catch and release since wipers are stocked and a limited resource. I release any fish under 4 pounds, but keep occasional larger fish and those hooked deeply. Release wipers immediately, as they don't survive rough handling, being on a stringer or in a fish basket.



Never, ever leave a rod laying unattended when wiper fishing. More than one outfit has been lost to hard-hitting wipers. Keep a second rod ready. As soon as the first fish is landed, cast the lure to the same spot. Immediate strikes are common.



The author prefers a long rod with a spinning reel filled with 8-pound test line. To fish with light line, you must make certain the drag on your reel works smoothly. Wipers will take line, or break it. And they can get big; 6- to 10-pounders aren't uncommon.

Keep a few of the larger fish if you're hungry and release all the others. Since wipers don't reproduce, a fishery could be depleted by heavy fishing. The daily limit is two. Best months to catch wipers are April and May, and the author notes that he catches most of his fish from sunup until 9 a.m.

Even though wipers don't spawn, they go through the reproductive cycles. I assume the energy demands of this cycle cause the females to go on spring feeding frenzy, and I catch most of my fish in April and May. As for time of day, I see the most activity from sunup to 9 a.m.

So if you can force yourself out of bed, enjoy the sunrise, and hang on tightly to your rod. If a wiper takes the bait, you're in for the fight of your life. See you at the lake!

The author is a former federal aid coordinator for the department, retiring in 1985. He began working for the department in 1949 as a wildlife biologist. He now spends most of his free time in research, trying to answer questions about when and how to catch channel catfish, wipers, bass and just about any other fish that swims.

The Battle With Cattail At Cheyenne Bottoms

by Helen Hands
wildlife biologist, Cheyenne Bottoms
photos by Mike Blair

Spreading cattail is a concern to Cheyenne Bottoms managers, and they are in a constant battle to control it. Control of heavy vegetation is necessary to maintain good waterbird habitat.

Everyone knows that cattail is a common wetland plant, and Cheyenne Bottoms is no exception. In fact, if you've hunted or birdwatched at the Bottoms recently, the dense stands of cattailsmay have been a problem. From the dikes, it appears that all of Pools 3, 4, 5 and much of Pool 2 are covered in cattail. If you fly over the Bottoms, however, you can still see quite a bit of open water in all pools, but not nearly as much as 10 years ago.

Cattail cover has increased substantially over the years. Vegetation surveys conducted at the Bottoms in 1929, 1960 and 1969 reported little, if

any cattail. By 1986 cattail cover ranged from 5 percent to 50 percent of the area in the interior portions of the four perimeter pools.

Some cattail is needed in a marsh. Cattail and other plants provide nesting, escape and winter cover for a variety of animals. Studies have shown that the highest populations of waterbirds are found when the ratio of open water to robust plants, like cattail and bulrush, is approximately 50:50. However, plant distribution is very important, and an area with clumps of vegetation scattered throughout is more attractive than a combination of dense vegetation and open water.

Amount and distribution of robust plant cover and open water in wetlands changes constantly, due to water fluctuations and marsh succession (aging process). In addition, muskrats feeding on cattail can open up cattail stands. The phase in the marsh cycle when there is a 50:50 ratio of robust plant cover to open water is called the hemi-marsh stage. Because the highest waterbird populations usually occur during the hemi-marsh stage, wetland managers attempt to lengthen this stage by manipulating water levels and/or controlling vegetation directly. At wetlands where direct cattail control measures can be completed in a short time, perhaps less than a week, the key to successful cattail management is to quickly reflood the treated area and slow recovery of the cattail.

Since the 1960s, department personnel have attempted to manage cattail at Cheyenne Bottoms with water manipulations and burning. Mowing and disking of cattail began in the 1970s. Cattail, however, did not begin expanding dramatically at the Bottoms until the 1970s. Cheyenne Bottoms is not the only wetland with a cattail problem. Cattail has also been increasing at other wetlands in the Great Plains. Unfortunately, while cattail has expanded at the Bottoms, bulrushes have decreased. Although both cattail and bulrushes provide cover, bulrushes provide seeds that ducks eat. Cattail does not.

Some of the reasons for the expansion of cattail at the Bottoms include a decrease in the water available from the Arkansas River and Wet Walnut Creek, which is needed for management; an increase in the amount of silt in water from the river and creek; and establishment of a different species or hybrid form of cattail that is adapted to deeper water. These factors probably work together to make cattail management at the Bottoms extremely difficult.

Some heavy cattail growth provides nest and escape cover for birds such as this young red-winged blackbird.

Today, cattail management at the Bottoms consists of monitoring cattail cover, the actual control effort, and the evaluation of the control methods. We monitor the distribution and amount of cattail with aerial photographs. Since 1976, we have used the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) color aerial photographs to monitor cattail cover. In 1991 and 1992, we also

Too much heavy cattail growth isn't good for wildlife, and managers at Cheyenne Bottoms work constantly to control the plants. The ongoing effort includes not only several control methods, but also trying new methods and evaluation of all efforts.

For optimum waterbird habitat, a wetland should have a 50:50 mix of vegetation and open water, but the vegetation should be spread out in small clumps like that above.

used aerial color infrared (IR) photos. Because the IR photos are taken at lower altitudes than the USDA photos, each frame covers a smaller area so we can see vegetation in more detail. The IR film also allows us to distinguish between different plant species or groups, rather than just plants and water like standard color film. Only with IR photos can we distinguish between cattail and bulrush.

From IR photos of Cheyenne Bottoms, we found there were approximately 6,000 acres of cattail in 1991 and 6,700 acres in 1992. Nearly all of the cattail grows in that portion of the wildlife area inside the disked fireguards, which surround the wetted portions of the pools when at typical water depths. Percent of cover of cattail in each pool within the fireguard ranged from 22 percent in Pool 1 to 58 percent in Pool 5. In contrast, percent of cover of bulrush within the fireguards was only 2 percent in 1991 and 5 percent in 1992.

Cattail area expanded by 12 percent from 1991 to 1992, which was disappointing because Pools 2 and 5 were mowed, burned and disked in 1991, while the Bottoms was completely dry. While these pools were dry, they were revegetated by plants adapted to dry conditions, primarily kochia, or firebush. Unfortunately, when the Bottoms began refilling with water in June 1992, the dryland plants were replaced by cattail. Perhaps if the treated areas had remained dry for several more months, cattail control would have been more successful. Flooding areas after these mechanical control practices is not successful at Cheyenne Bottoms because the pools are so large — 1,200 to 2,900 acres. By the time a pool can be reflooded with enough water to inhibit growth, cattail has already started to recover.

Our lack of success through 1991 and 1992, as well as past experience, lead us to conclude that mowing, burning and disking only provide temporary control, perhaps only for the fall and spring following a summer treatment. As a result, we have been experimenting with other longer-lasting methods of cattail control.

The herbicides Rodeo and Roundup have been used in the cattail control effort at Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area. These herbicides are similar chemically and are approved by the Environmental Protection Agency for use in wetlands. However, Roundup cannot be used over water. Rodeo has provided up to three years of cattail control in other marshes. Rodeo and Roundup were applied to 110 acres of cattail in 1989. Although this

One of the methods used to control cattails includes burning, but burning requires specific weather and water conditions. Mowed cattail stalks must also be burned.

treatment was not evaluated with ground surveys, from standard color aerial photos we concluded that the application rate of Rodeo needed to be increased to achieve a more consistent kill. The area sprayed with Roundup was fairly clear of cattail for two years after treatment.

In July 1990, we aerially sprayed Rodeo on approximately 37 acres of flooded cattail in Pool 3. The following July, we evaluated this effort by measuring the density of cattail stems in and adjacent to the sprayed area. Unfortunately, we found cattail density much denser in the sprayed area than in the unsprayed area. We assume that an abnormally high number of seeds in the soil germinated after spraying because water depths remained less than one foot. Since spraying these chemicals is extremely expensive and so far has yielded disappointing results, and because we want to minimize chemical use at the Bottoms, we probably will not use Rodeo and Roundup on a large scale in the future.

The level ditches provide deep water canals and have remained cattail free. Other benefits include boat access to interior pools and travel lanes for ducklings.

We have also tried using the amphibious backhoe to control cattail at Cheyenne Bottoms. The advantage of the backhoe is that an area can be treated while flooded, while normally, a site must be drained, treated, then reflooded. The backhoe has been used to control cattail in two ways: shearing the plants off with a blade attached to the bucket and digging the cattail up. Results of using the backhoe have been mixed. In one area where cattail were sheared with the blade, they regrew so quickly that the site was indistinguishable from uncut sites within six months. At another site that was sheared in April 1991, cattail didn't appear damaged for very long. However, when water levels rose 4 feet two years after the treatment, the sheared areas became apparent again. These results indicate further experimenting is needed.

The backhoe has proven to be an effective cattail control tool, but it's slow compared to other methods. In addition to digging up the plants, a tool on the bucket can be used to cut cattail in flooded areas.

Digging has been the most extensively used control method involving the backhoe. The backhoe removed cattail while restoring the borrow ditches that parallel the dikes and while digging level ditches. The borrow ditches are 30 feet wide and are dug to about 2 feet below the pool bottom. Work began on these ditches in the fall of 1988, and they are still clear of cattails. So far, the backhoe has provided the most effective long-term cattail control.

While the backhoe was digging the borrow ditches, we noticed that cattail density was reduced in

Chemical application is expensive and won't be used much in the future. Familiar control methods will continue, including fire, mowing and disking. And new methods will be experimented with.

areas crushed by the backhoe tracks. The reduction lasted up to two years, however, it lasted longest at sites that had been flooded the longest prior to the crushing. The backhoe made deep ruts in the flooded areas and held more water over the crushed cattail. In addition, control was most effective if the backhoe remained stationary for several hours. Cattail density reduction lasted only a few months at sites crushed while the backhoe was moving. Although cattail crushing is a slow process if it is to be effective, it could become a viable technique with more appropriate equipment.

There are several factors in addition to effectiveness that we consider when deciding which control method to use. These factors include initial cost, cost per-acre, per-year of control, personnel requirements, water conditions and size of area needing treatment. Mowing and burning is the least expensive method on a cost per-acre basis, while digging with the backhoe is the most expensive. Although cost per-acre, per-year of control for digging is still the highest, five-year-old borrow ditches are still free of cattail, and the cost per-acre, per- year of control will continue to decrease as long as the ditches remain relatively cattail free.

Personnel requirements are an important consideration since only three full-time employees are assigned to the Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area. When a treatment is used requiring three or more of the Cheyenne Bottoms staff, other operations such as research, public programs/tours and facility maintenance are not accomplished. Mowing, burning and disking are labor-intensive compared to other treatments listed. To make a dent in the cattail, at least two people are required to mow for several weeks to a few months. All treatments with the backhoe require just one person. Aerial application of Rodeo does not require any department personnel.

Water conditions are also an important factor in determining which treatment to utilize. Mowing, burning and disking cannot be done if the ground is not dry enough to support tractors and four-wheel drive pick-ups. Treatments with Rodeo and the backhoe are most effective when standing water is present. Roundup can be substituted for Rodeo if the area is dry.

Acres treated per day also varies with different methods. Burning can cover 1,000-2,000 acres per day. If money was no object, herbicides could be applied to 1,000 acres per day. Sixty to 80 acres can be mowed, disked or sheared with the backhoe in a day. In contrast, less than one acre of ditches can be excavated in a day. Clearly, we cannot open up a large area in a short period of time by excavating.

Another factor that is considered when selecting a management method is any positive or negative side effects that could occur. A negative side effect of mowing is that serious problems with water management could occur if it is too wet to burn after the plants are mowed.

If not burned, the mowed cattail can block water control gates and pump intakes, hampering our ability to move water from pool to pool. Crushing and shearing cattail with water present has the disadvantage of making it difficult to walk through these newly-created, open-water areas because a large portion of the plant is left standing. Digging ditches creates very uneven marsh bottoms, which makes walking difficult. In some areas of the marsh or in periods of high water, the ditches may be too deep to wade across. On the positive side, digging increases boat access to the interior of portions of the pools and provides travel lanes for ducklings hatched in the perimeter uplands. Most importantly, the ditches provide increased opportunity for muskrat populations to expand and overwinter due to the deeper water. Muskrats can contribute to cattail control by feeding and house construction.

Because we have not found a single suitable cattail control treatment, we will continue to use a variety of techniques. We will also continue to experiment with and evaluate new control methods.

Cattail management at Cheyenne Bottoms in the future should be more successful after the entire renovation project is completed. Completion of the new deep-water storage pool in the next few years should allow us to maintain deep water over treated cattail. The new pump stations, which should be completed in 1994, will improve our ability to transfer water among pools. This means that we'll be able to drain a pool for mowing and burning of cattail. Finally, subdivision of Pools 3, 4 and 1B will allow these pools to be drained faster because the size of these pools will be reduced. Faster draining will improve the success of cattail management by making control practices more timely. And subdivision of these pools will reduce the impact of cattail management on wildlife and human visitors. For example, if effective cattail control requires keeping a pool dry for a year or more, less habitat would be affected if a portion of a subdivided pool is drained rather than the whole pool.

Cattail management at Cheyenne Bottoms is the most important management activity that occurs. Because the Bottoms is one of the most important wetlands in the U.S. for waterfowl, shorebirds and several threatened and endangered species, the department must do everything it can, within its limited financial resources, to slow the spread of cattail. The renovation project as well as ongoing work to manage cattail are steps in the right direction. However, more equipment, such as tractors that operate in water and mud, may be necessary if we are to win our battle with cattail.

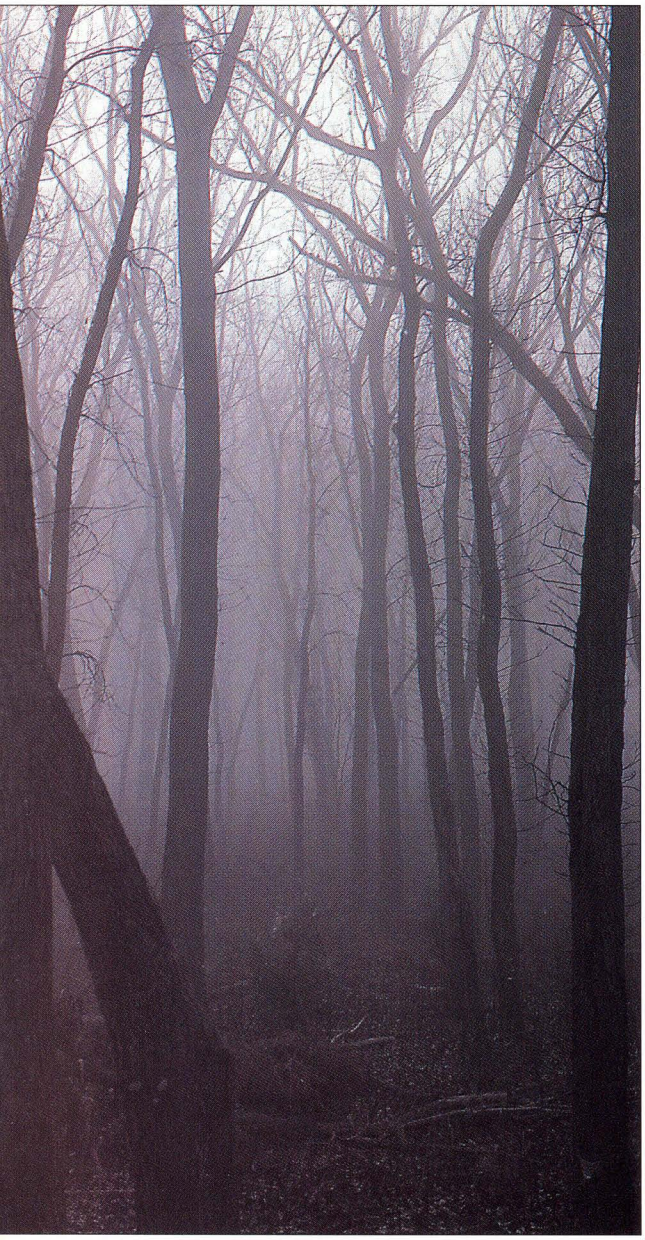
Completion of the renovation project will aid in cattail control efforts by allowing better water moving capabilities. However, it may be necessary to find more effective control methods and purchase new equipment to ensure the future of the wetland. Cheyenne Bottoms is much to important to migrating birds such as this long-billed dowitcher to lose this battle.

Gallery

Foggy Images

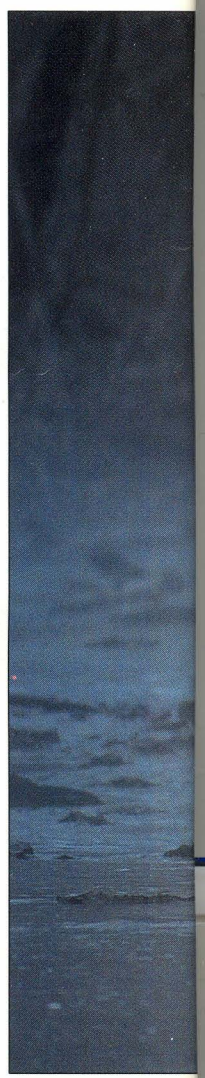
by Mike Blair

55mm lens, f/11 @ 1/60



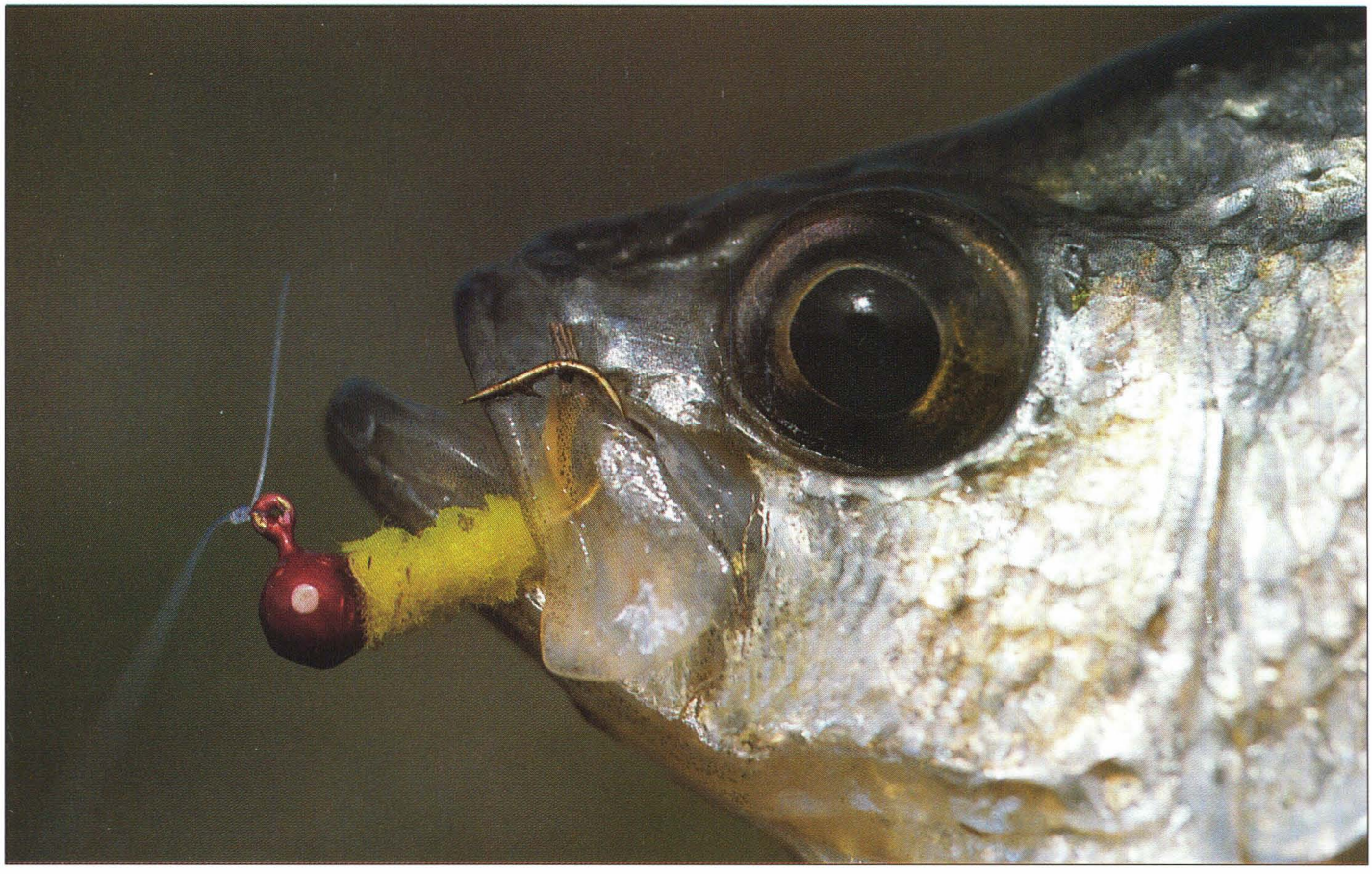
55mm lens, f/2.8 @ 1/

600mm lens, f/4 @ 1/125



600mm lens, f/4 @ 1/125

400mm lens, f/3.5 @ 1/60



The Jig Attraction

by Mike Miller
editor, Pratt
photos by Mike Blair

Although the jig is a simple and easy to use lure, it finds it's way onto fishermen's lines more than any other lure. From catfish to trout, the jig will catch just about any fish.

You can only have one fishing lure from now on. C'mon make up your mind . . . what's it going to be?

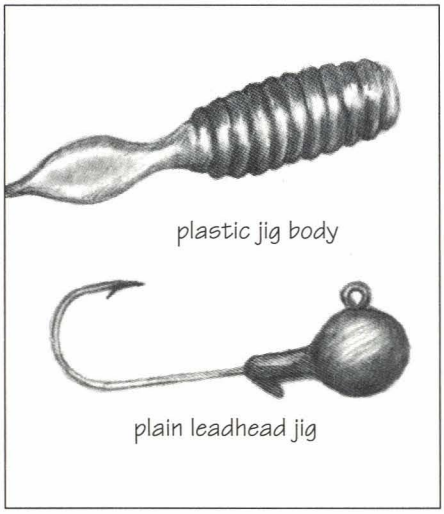
No, it's not the end of the world, or even fishing as you know it. Not as far as I'm concerned. Even though I've always subscribed to the philosophy that you can never have too many fishing lures, I could pick one kind of lure and stay with it the rest of my fishing life (if for some catastrophic reason I absolutely had to). I wouldn't have to even think about it.

I'd pick the jig. The lead-head jig is the most fishable, universally effective and versatile lure made. Whether covered with marabou, bucktail, plastic, rubber skirt or live bait, jigs flat catch fish — any fish. I've got boxes full of different kinds of lures for various conditions, species, water and seasons, but I still use some kind of jig about two-thirds of the time I fish.

Jigs are effective because they can emulate just about any fish food — from leeches, to nymphs to minnows to crawdads. Jigs can be used in deep water, shallow water, in weeds and timber and in just about any amount of current. And

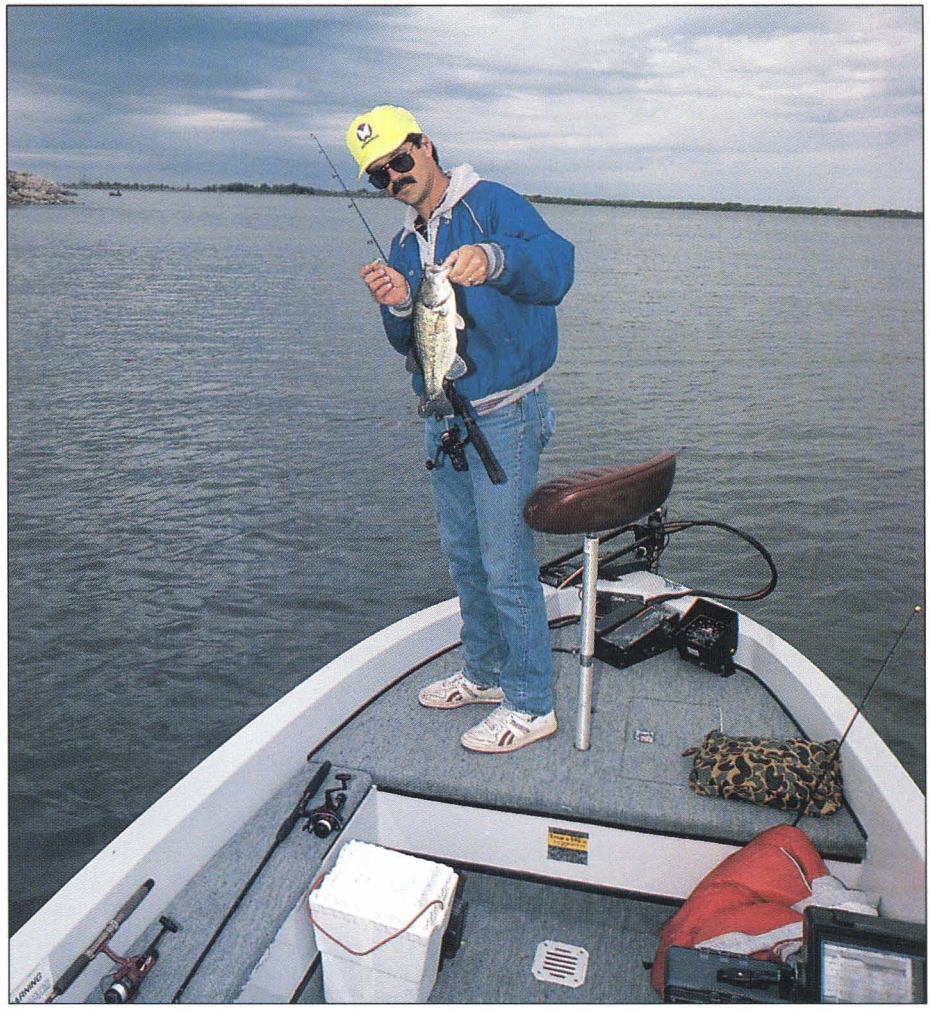
depending upon how you work the jig, it can be fished throughout the water column, within any one retrieve. Most people would agree that jigs are good for bass and panfish, but I've caught just about every species that swims in Kansas water on jigs, including channel catfish, flathead catfish, carp and gar. In other waters, I've had a ball catching trout on crappie jigs and northern pike on bass jigs.

The basic jig is a simple lure. It starts with a hook and a lead head. From there, you can vary the shape of the lead head, and length of the hook shank and the material you



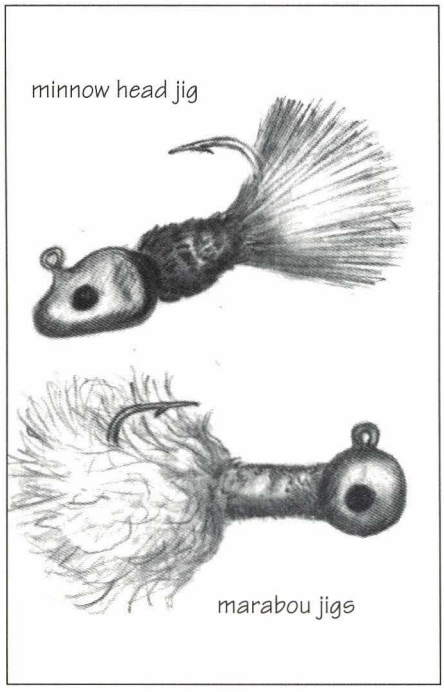
cover the hook with to an infinite number of designs and applications. Head weights alone range from tiny 1/80 ounce to the heavy weights needed for big water. Generally, most fishing is done with 1/16-, 1/8-, 1/4-, 3/8- and 1/2-ounce jigs.

So how do you decided which jig is for which fish? Of course size is the number one factor. The very small jigs are best for trout and panfish, and the larger jigs for larger predators like bass, walleye and northerns. But more importantly, the size of jig should be chosen for the kind of fishing you're going to be doing. For example, bass jigs come in many different weighted heads, from 1/4-ounce to 1/2-ounce, so you have to consider the water and mood of fish when selecting one. If you're fishing early in the spring and the fish are sluggish, you'll want a light jig so that it



Marc Murrell photo

Largemouth bass can be caught on just about any kind of jig, from large rubber-skirted bass jigs to tiny crappie jigs, like the one pictured above. A jig is one of the best lures for all black bass as well as the true bass such as the white and striped.

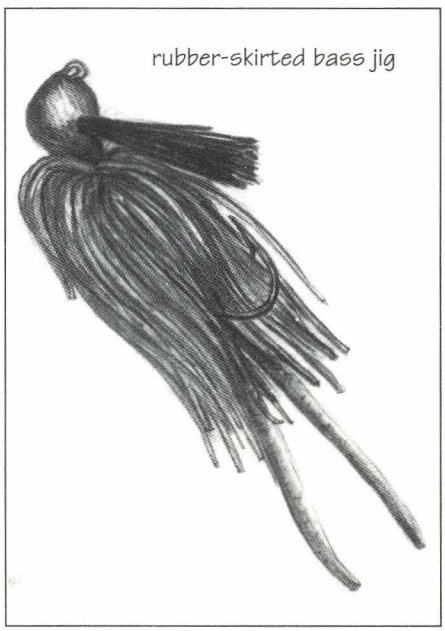


sinks slowly, giving a cold-blooded bass time to inhale it. You might even add a big chunk of pork rind or a plastic trailer to make the jig more buoyant, making it sink even slower. The lighter jig would also be a good choice later in the summer if you were fishing a shallow pond with thick weeds. The heavier jig would quickly sink into the vegetation and out of sight, whereas the lighter jig can be worked over the weeds at a relatively slow speed. The heavier bass jigs are good choices when fishing deep water or when flipping into submerged timber.

The weight of the jig head, along with its shape, can also be applied to different species of fish and different conditions. Most crappie are caught on 1/8-ounce jigs, but on

days when the fish are finicky, a tiny 1/32-ounce jig worked slowly around the brush will catch more fish. In current, the weight and shape of the lead head can be varied for a variety of conditions, allowing the fisherman to drift the lure at a certain speed and depth.

The different body types can also be applied to the conditions, some providing more buoyancy or drag. But body styles have more impact on the look and action of the lure. Marabou, for example, comes in many popular colors, but the action of the marabou feathers in the water is why it's used. The marabou undulates tantalizingly with just the slightest of twitches. Some

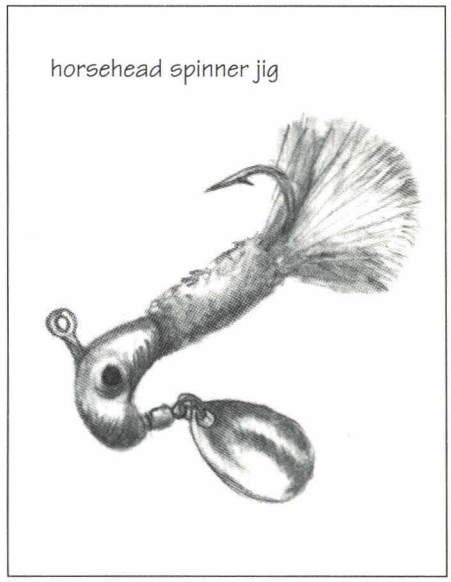


plastic bodies have curly tails that appear to actually swim when retrieved, and the plastic comes in an unbelievable variety of colors and styles.

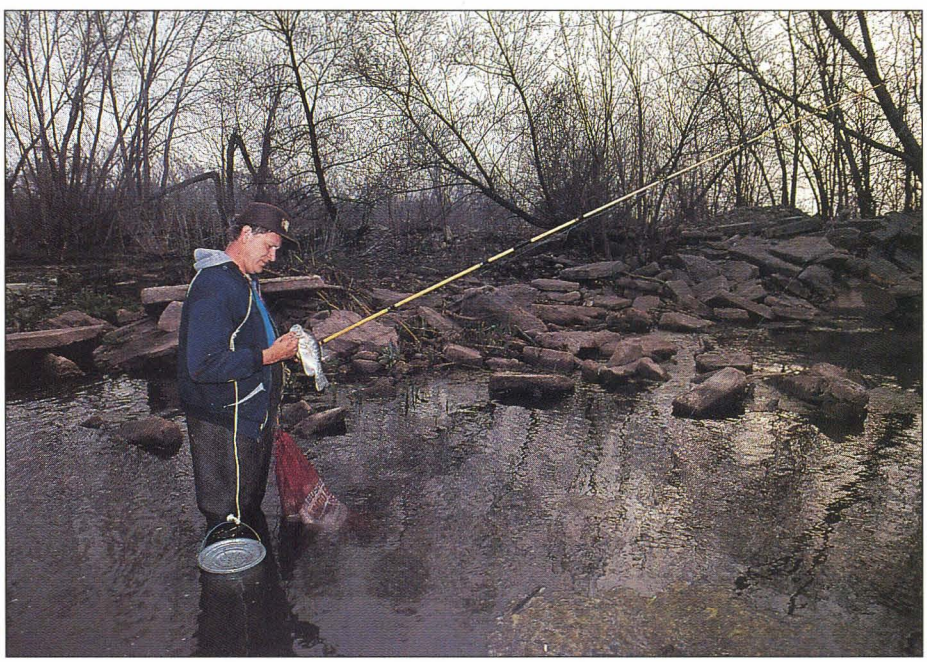
While jigs come in a wide variety of lead-head types, weights, styles and colors, they can be worked or fished in an even wider variety of methods. And perhaps this flexibility is what makes jigs so effective. The most common method, and possibly where the lure got its name (or where the method got its name), is to "jig" the lure. This is merely a pumping motion with the rod tip, raising it to swim the lure up, then slowly dropping the rod tip, letting the lure fall. Theoretically, this imitates a wounded or dying bait fish, and fish nearly always take the lure as it falls. It takes some practice, learning to keep the line tight as possible while letting the lure sink and to detect strikes, which are usually light "ticks." But it is also a satisfying way to fish because the angler imparts all of the lure's action and must detect the strike, then set the hook. It's challenging and effective.

When fish, particularly crappie, are deep, another method often works. It is one of the simplest and involves letting the jig settle to a desired depth, then just retrieving it slowly. Because the jig will continue to sink, this is really just a long slow sinking retrieve. It's important to keep the jig near the bottom but not dragging, so adjust your retrieve speed accordingly.

Vertical jigging is effective in very cold water, when fish won't chase a lure. Vertical jigging works great in winter on open water and through the ice. You simply drop the jig straight down to the desired depth, hold it at that depth and jig it straight up and down every so often. This puts the bait right in front of fish and keeps it there for unaggressive strikes. If you're fishing a pond from the bank, and you want this same slow technique, use a slip bobber. Set the depth to just above the bottom, then just cast it out and let the wind move the lure around.



Jigs are also the lure of choice for many bait fishing situations. Walleye fishermen are especially fond of using jigs to present their bait to walleye. Jigs are effective for this because of their versatility. You vary the head weight, body buoy-



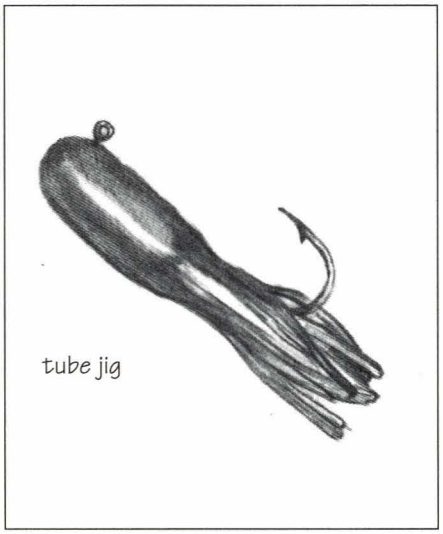
Don't go crappie fishing without jigs. The simple, inexpensive marabou jig has probably accounted for more crappie caught than any other bait, except maybe minnows.

The jig is the perfect lure for catching river-run white bass. With so many different styles, weights, shapes and color combinations, a jig can be matched to just about any water depth, current speed and clarity condition. And since jigs are inexpensive, you can afford to carry a box-full and cast them fearlessly into the brushy places white bass prefer to hide in.

ancy, head shape and style to fit the water depth and/or wind speed for a variety of drifting conditions. Nightcrawlers, minnows and leeches are hooked to the jig hooks. Plain lead heads are often used, but if the added attraction of color is desired, a painted head or even a painted head and colored body can be tipped with bait. Many crappie fishermen will tip jigs with small minnows to catch finicky crappies.

In moving water, jigs are great because they can be worked with the current to look as natural as possible. And jigs can imitate a variety of aquatic insects and stream baitfish. I've thrown tiny jigs in Colorado streams and caught rainbows much like fly-fishermen fishing nymph flies. Jigs are also one of the best lures to catch river-run white bass with. For a minimal investment, you can carry dozens of different sizes, colors and body styles of jigs. This is important for river fishing because the current may vary, calling for a specific weight jig, and much of the fishing will be concentrated around overhanging brush and underwater snags — you will lose some lures. The jig's versatility and simplicity, along with its effectiveness on white bass, make it the best choice for most white bass fishing.

For added flash the horsehead jig with a spinner attached is a great fish catcher. The flash and vibration of the spinner often make it a better choice than a plain jig, especially for crappie and white bass. And I've had great fun casting an 1/8-ounce spinner jig for largemouth bass, very early in the spring before the larger, more traditional bass lures are effective.



There are really more styles of jigs than can be illustrated or mentioned in this article, and they'll all catch fish, but it's really the jig's simplicity that makes it appealing. A lead head hook with a bunch of colored feathers tied on the shank will catch lots of fish in a skilled angler's hand. And a tiny jig with a silver metal flake and red plastic body under a bobber will catch crappies in the hand of a child. Always carry some jigs and learn to use them in a variety of water conditions, and there's no doubt, you'll catch more fish.

Chart A Course For Safe Boating

by Cheri Miller
boating education coordinator, Topeka

Don't go on the water unprepared. Take a boating safety course and not only will you enjoy your boating more, but you and your family will be safer.

Kansas' natural resources are a surprise to nonresidents for many reasons, but one of the biggest eye-openers may be the amount of recreational water we have. With 24 federal reservoirs, countless state, city and community lakes and three navigable rivers, Kansas boasts 800,000 acres of publicly accessible boating water. There are also a large number of privately owned ponds and miles of private streams that provide boating opportunities. The variety of water accommodates boating anglers, skiers, pleasure boaters, racers, canoers, sailors and more. With these opportunities at our doorstep, boating in Kansas has grown into a popular pastime.

The number of recreational boaters has grown dramatically in the past few years. The technology for small, lower cost, easily trailerable boats has allowed more people to afford and own boats. Since boating is a relatively new and growing activity, many new boatowners have little or no experience on the water. And, unfortunately,

many don't take the time to learn how to operate their boat safely or learn rules of the water.

Water is an unfamiliar environment to most people, and driving a boat is much different than driving a car. Speed and distance are difficult to judge on the water, and traffic rules that are second nature on the highway don't apply on the lake. Fortunately the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks offers several ways for the new, and even the experienced, boater to learn more about safe boating.

The department's original safe boating course was handled through correspondence, and this is still offered. The department provides a manual and educational materials free of charge. Students read the text at home, then complete and mail the test. The course concentrates on necessary equipment, laws and rules that boaters need for safe water fun. Successful participants are issued a safe boating card.

There are also safe boating classes offered by the department, the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary and the U.S. Power Squadron. Not only can one of the classes help you enjoy boating more safely, but some insurance companies will offer a discount for those who've completed a course.

Boating enforcement officers often use personal watercraft to check boaters on the water. Watch for courtesy marine checks at the ramp, where officers will check your boat and required equipment before you get on the water.

To make boating education courses available year-round and statewide, the department has developed a volunteer boating instructor program. Instructors are certified by the department, which requires completion of 16 hours of training, screening by the Kansas Bureau of Investigation and evaluation in a teaching situation. To remain on the active list, instructors must complete eight hours of training every two years and teach one class every two years. The goal of the program is to have 100-150 instructors. Training for instructors is available all year, so anyone interested is encouraged to apply anytime.

Cheri Miller photo

Training seminars are held at various lakes to teach people how to operate the increasingly popular watercraft. For basic boating skills, enroll in one the boating classes.

The course manual takes the student through a detailed curriculum that includes basic boat information, such as hull and motor types and where the different combinations might apply. There is information about state laws and regulation requirements and how to make your boat safe and legal. How-to information includes navigation tips, safety material concerning use of alcohol, winter boating and how to survive if you're involved in a boating mishap. The third section of the program provides useful information about trailering your boat, common sense weather rules, and hints on anchoring, handling wind and waves and other boating tips. The variety of information makes the course ideal for a new boater but because of the detail and thor-

ough coverage, it's also good information for someone who's been boating for years.

Another boater service offered by the department and Coast Guard are courtesy marine examinations (CMEs). This free service is conducted at the ramp and involves a thorough inspection of the boat for minimum equipment requirements. The most common problems found during these examinations include improper or inadequate personal flotation devices (PFDs), invalid boat registration and lack of or improper fire extinguishers.

National Safe Boating Week will be June 5-12. Last year the department and the Coast Guard hosted courtesy examinations at lakes across the state. This year, look for safe boating activities at a lake near you. The department and Coast Guard will again provide marine examinations, there will be a Blessing of the Fleet at Perry Reservoir and Tuttle Creek Reservoir will host the fourth annual Water Wise Expoon June 11.

Water Wise Expo will include the U.S. Corps of Engineers, the department, rescue personnel, boat clubs and boating enthusiasts. Mock rescues will be demonstrated using the Civil Air Patrol, the MAST helicopter and scuba divers. There will be sailboard, personal watercraft, canoe and kayak demonstrations. The event is scheduled in conjunction with Free Fishing and Park Entrance weekend so admission is free.

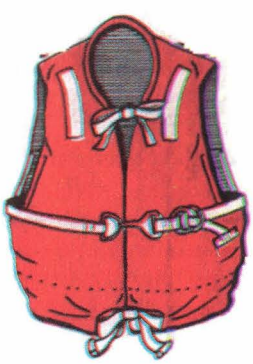
On Kansas public waters, Wildlife and Parks conservation officers patrol and enforce boating laws. Two boating enforcement specialists devote all of their time to enforcing boating laws, investigating marine theft, marine fraud and boating accidents. They along with other conservation officers also spend time educating the public about safe boating through classes, exhibits, programs and courtesy inspections.

Through 1993, officers issued 1,908 citations and 1,033 warnings for boating violations. The most common violations were for improper registration, lights, fire extinguishers and PFDs. There were 56 boating accidents and six boating related fatalities.

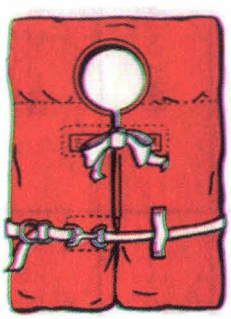
In recent years, more emphasis has been placed on boating under the influence. It is illegal to operate a boat while under the influence of alcohol or drugs. This year, officers will concentrate on this growing problem. Last year the BUI law was revised, reducing the maximum blood alcohol content level to 0.08 percent, adding implied consent and allowing provisions for fines, imprisonment and mandatory boating education for violators. Department officers are planning on setting BUI check lanes on the water this year to enforce these laws.

Alcohol is particularly dangerous on the water because it impairs the boater's sense of balance, judgement, coordination and perception of colors. Add this to the effects of the normally hot sun, wind and fatigue associated with a day at the lake, and you've got a deadly combination. A large percentage of fatal boating accidents involve alcohol.

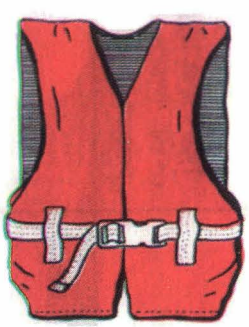
With more than 90,000 registered boats in Kansas, it's apparent that recreational boating is here to stay and that our waters are more crowded than ever. With this growing popularity comes the added responsibility of enforcing the laws and making our waters safe. Education is the most effective tool, and the boating education program will hopefully turn out a new generation of wiser, more conscientious boaters. Know the regulations and equipment requirements for your boat before you go to the lake. Learn the rules of navigation and safety on the water, and you and your family will enjoy safe boating trips. For more information about the Safe Boating Course or a copy of boating regulations, contact Cheri Miller, boating education coordinator, Office of the Secretary, 900 Jackson St., Suite 502, Topeka, KS 66606; (913) 296-2281; or contact the Education Section at the Pratt office, 512 S.E. 25th Ave., Pratt, KS, 67124-8174; (316) 672-5911.



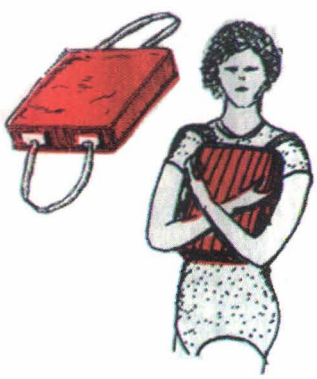
TYPE1
OFFSHORE
LIFE JACKET



TYPE II
NEAR-SHORE
BUOYANT VEST



TYPE III
FLOATATION AID



TYPE IV
THROWABLE
DEVICE

Edited by Mark Shoup

TRESPASS AND TROUT

Editor:

In the Jan./Feb. issue of KANSAS WILDLIFE AND PARKS (Page 34), you made a statement that threw me. You said in the last paragraph that "no one has the right to come on your property without your permission." Then you state that if I post my land, this gives you permission to enter upon my land at any time, unaccompanied by me. My question is, "what gives you permission when the area is private and posted?"

My second question concerns trout fishing. We have a trout pit east and north of Oswego. In your *1994 Kansas Fishing Regulation Summary*, you have a paragraph at the bottom of Page 2 concerning a trout permit needed. I have not seen anything about a season posted at our trout pit. Is a trout permit needed there, and where are they available?

Donald Gullett
Parsons

Dear Mr. Gullett:

Perhaps I was unclear in my explanation of trespassing. Posted notices are just reminders. No one has the right to trespass on your property – posted or not – without your permission. However, Wildlife and Parks conservation officers (and other law enforcement officers), are the exception. They have the right to enter your property while performing their lawful duties, such as checking hunting licenses or permission.

If you read my response again, you'll notice I said that land should be posted with signs that say "Hunting By Written Permission Only." This gives COs the ability to check hunters to see if they do, indeed, have permission. Without the phrase "by written permission only," an officer has no way of knowing if the hunters have permission, unless you are immediately available. These signs are available at Wildlife and Parks offices.

Concerning the trout permits, the fishing regulations state that permits are needed if trout seasons have been established and that "seasons may be established at various locations in Kansas in 1994, depending on availability of trout." We had hoped to receive legislative funding to significantly expand our trout stocking program, but this funding has yet to come through. If the funds are made available this year, we will have a trout season – and permit – beginning in October. If the program were to continue, the trout "permit" would simply become another punch hole on your fishing license.

In the meantime, no trout permit is required to fish for trout where they have been stocked in Kansas. If this changes next fall, areas will be posted, and every newspaper in the state will be notified. –*Shoup*

HUMBUG?

Editor:

I have a question about a photograph in the Jan./Feb. issue of KANSAS WILDLIFE AND PARKS magazine. On Page 2 of the article "Refuge In the City," the bottom center photo, there is a creature I watched work a flower patch back and forth last fall while I stood close.

It looked like an insect, but if it was a "hummer," it was the strangest I'd ever seen. Please identify.

"Bell" Bellinger
Burlington, KS

Dear Mr. Bellinger:

The creature in the photograph reminds one of a hummingbird because of its size and flying technique. However, it is a sphinx moth, common throughout Kansas and a frequent visitor to flower beds. While there are many varieties, this one is a white-lined sphinx moth. –*Shoup*

SNAKE LAW OBJECTION

Editor:

According to the editorial creed in the front of KANSAS WILDLIFE AND PARKS magazine, you promote the conservation and wise use of our natural resources and wish to instill an understanding of our responsibilities to the land.

First of all, I would like to know why an article has not been written about the rattlesnake roundups that have been taking place in Wallace County since Sept. 1992. I feel that this is an issue that needs to be presented to the readers of your magazine.

Are we promoting the conservation and wise use of our natural resources by allowing this type of activity to take place? I would like to know if KDWP supports this activity and what exactly happens at one of these roundups. According to David Edds in the Kansas Herpetological Society Newsletter (#90, Page 11), "An announcer repeatedly cajoled the crowd on the failing of rattlesnakes. He proclaimed that the purpose of the roundup was the extermination of these vermin as he warned of the danger to humans and livestock. We were reminded that these were the biblical serpents, cursed throughout the ages."

Does KDWP support the extermination of all the rattlesnakes in Kansas? If so, I feel that I can no longer support the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks.

Another thing is the passing of Senate Bill 137, which allows the commercialization of wildlife, in particular, prairie rattlesnakes. According to the Wichita Eagle, "The bill was passed by the Legislature with minimal input from

the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, the agency whose primary job is to protect wildlife against commercial exploitation."

This bill was originated because of the rattlesnake roundups in Wallace County. I would like to ask that you thoroughly investigate the roundup and choose to promote or deny it. If the former is chosen, then you should seriously reconsider your editorial creed.

Dan Murrow
KU Freshman
Lawrence

Dear Mr. Murrow:

I appreciate your passion for this issue. As you correctly state, the commercial use and sale of prairie rattlesnakes has been made possible by the Kansas Legislature. When it comes to swaying the legislature on issues such as this, private, grassroots organizations have far more influence than a magazine published by a state conservation agency. The organizers of the Rattlesnake Roundup proved that.

Until this issue came before the legislature, we did not allow such activity. In addition, our agency provided legislative testimony against the roundups, testimony that was obviously ignored. Faced with a choice of regulating the roundups or having the process taken out of their hands completely, the Kansas Wildlife and Parks Commission wisely decided to maintain some control over the hunts.

You can make the illogical connection between a rattlesnake roundup showman's hype and wildlife management policy if you like, but the fact remains that this agency is in the business of protecting all wildlife species, including rattlesnakes.

Who knows, maybe these roundups and the attention they have brought to rattlesnakes will stimulate the formation of a conservation group dedicated to perpetuating the species. This often happens when a group has a vested interest in wildlife. –*Shoup*

TRUMPETER ADVOCATE

Editor:

I was glad to talk with you on the phone last winter about trumpeters. The Trumpeter Swan Society's (TTSS) primary concern is that no trumpeter population has inadequate winter habitat. The Rocky Mountain and Interior (restored) populations have lost their traditions of migrating to adequate wintering habitat in extreme conditions. Therefore, I have nominated Havasu National Wildlife Refuge in Arizona (for the Rocky Mountain trumpeters) and Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge in Oklahoma (for the restored trumpeters) as terminal trumpeter wintering refuges.

Kansas, Missouri, Illinois and Oklahoma could do a lot more for trumpeters if their people asked and their departments wanted to capitalize on a very popular action.

Harold Burgess
TTSS President Emeritus
Weslaco, Texas

FISH TRUCK ACCESS

Editor:

I enjoy reading KANSAS WILDLIFE AND PARKS magazine very much. I think it is a very good magazine, but what I can't see, why a disabled person can't have the same opportunity to get down to the water as nondisabled. A friend of mine went to Cedar Bluff to fish behind the fill. There is quite a steep bank to get to the water. There is a path.

So he drove his 4 x 4 down to the fishing hole. Then came a conservation officer and told him that he couldn't drive down there. My friend told him he was disabled. It didn't seem to matter, so he moved his 4 x 4.

I am also disabled. What I did observe when I was there was a ramp where the fish truck can drive to stock the hole with fish. My beef is that I know those men in that truck are not disabled. I didn't see them carry the fish to the hole in buckets. They made it handy for themselves, so why can't disabled have it handy for them? The way it is, I can't get to the water.

All it would take is a grader to smooth the road. What I mean by disabled is to fish there and have a disabled tag or card in the vehicle. Those that are not disabled should not get to go to the water with a vehicle. I understand that the warden was doing his job, but there should be some way the disabled could enjoy the lake too.

An unhappy subscriber is the way I feel.

Leroy H. Stieben
Bazine

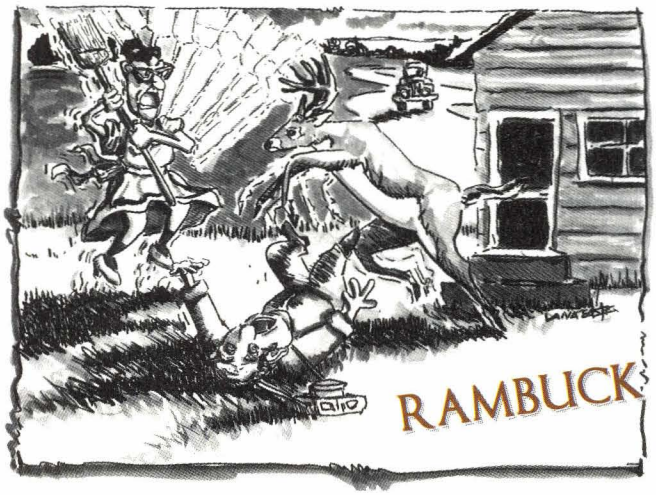
Dear Mr. Stieben:

We thank you for your concern about equal access to facilities. The department is concerned about handicapped accessibility, as well. In the last several years, the department has undertaken a thorough study of our facilities to see what alterations need to be made to make outdoor recreation opportunities available to all persons, regardless of mobility.

As a result, we have built or modified fishing piers at all of our state parks and many of our state fishing lakes and wildlife areas to make them more accessible. We have made modifications to many of our offices and buildings to improve access. All of the new facilities we build are designed with these special needs in mind.

At the Cedar Bluff area you mentioned, the slope is too steep to safely drive a vehicle down without thousands of dollars of dirt work. Creating a road in this area would contribute to erosion and would degrade the area to the point that it would no longer serve its purpose. The Bureau of Reclamation, which owns the area, will not sanction this type of work.

I urge you and your friends to try some of the areas we have made more accessible. If possible, stop by the area office to discuss your needs with the manager. We should be able to work out a compromise that is mutually acceptable. –*Theodore D. Ensley, secretary*



On the weekend of Feb. 4-5, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks conservation officer Harley McDaniel, Columbus, helped Cherokee County deputy Robert Thomas investigate one of the stranger nuisance deer reports in state history.

An elderly Weir, Kan., man had looked out the kitchen door window of his rural home in the morning to see a white-tailed spike buck looking in from the porch. Shocked, the man – whom authorities have not identified – opened the door only to be greeted by a crazed beast butting the screen door and pawing the porch like a mad bull.

After much yelling, the man chased the deer off the porch. Then he got his camera and followed the deer into the yard.

Apparently, the deer was in no mood to pose for pictures because it immediately knocked the man down and began stomping him. The distressed man called for help, and as he ducked and rolled to avoid the critter's sharp hooves, his wife came running out of the house with broom in hand. She beat the deer with the broom as it stomped her helpless husband, but it wasn't until after about 10 swats from the broom that the deer turned and headed down the driveway. Although the woman pursued the animal with her broom, the buck moseyed at a brazen, unconcerned pace.

While this may be a humorous story, it could have turned out much worse. A deer, especially a rutting buck, is a dangerous creature. It's possible that this deer was a tame deer picked up by some well-meaning person when it was a fawn. This could explain why it had no apparent fear of people. If its hormone cycle was out of sync, it could have been in rut, even in February. It would not be the first tame buck to attack a human while in rut – one more reason to leave wild creatures in the wild, even if you think they need help. *–Shoup*

HUNT INTERFERENCE

A man's encounter with a group of quail hunters at Cimarron National Grasslands has resulted in the state's first conviction for interfering with a lawful hunt.

Last December, a group of hunters were confronted by a man as they were getting ready to hunt quail in a public hunting area located on the Grasslands. He told the group their pickup truck would have four flat tires if they proceeded with their hunting. The group continued with their hunting after the individual left, but he returned a few minutes later and became increasingly irate and verbally abusive, shoved one member of the hunting party, and kicked the driver's side door of their vehicle.

The hunters reported the incident to B. J. Thurman, a Kansas Wildlife and Parks conservation officer based in Elkhart. After some investigation, Thurman located the individual involved. When questioned about the events, the suspect confessed to interfering with the hunt, contending that he did not feel it was right to hunt the covey of quail located at the site where the confrontation occurred. He was charged with interference with a lawful hunt. He pleaded guilty and was ordered to pay a $250 fine, $40 in court costs, and $220 for damaging the hunter's vehicle.

The applicable state law states: "No person shall willfully obstruct or impede the participation of any individual in the lawful activity of hunting, furharvesting or fishing." *–Mathews*

TWO TURKEYS

In two separate incidents last year, Kansas poachers discovered that it doesn't pay to poach turkeys. Last July, I was contacted by Fort Scott Police officers who said they had stopped a pickup, owned by a Pleasanton man, for a traffic violation. The officers had found the wings of a wild turkey in the man's trunk, and they turned them over to me to investigate.

I questioned the man, who later confessed to killing the hen turkey without a permit in Linn County on April 14, 1993. Since the man killed a hen turkey and had no permit, he was charged with illegal hunting, taking and possession of turkey and fined $540.

Late last November, I was again contacted by the Fort Scott Police when they arrested a Fort Scott man for armed robbery. When they served a search warrant on the man's house, they again found feathers and wings of a wild turkey.

I interviewed this man at the Bourbon County Jail, where he told me two conflicting stories in two interviews. After I pointed out the inconsistencies in his story, the man confessed to killing the turkey illegally in September while fishing near the Marmaton River.

In December, the Fort Scott man pleaded guilty to illegally taking and possessing a wild turkey. The judge fined him $290. *–Doug Whiteaker, conservation officer, Fort Scott*

PHONY FOCUS

Emotionalism opens the [animal rights] movement to criticism that it is ignoring one of the most vital issues for the long-term well-being of animals – the fierce and difficult fights over wild animal habitat.

A 234-page animal-rights book that PETA [People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals] produced for children devotes only three pages to habitat protection, and then only to tropical rain forests. It also devotes three pages to protecting insects by propping twigs into birdbaths so that trapped bugs can climb out.

Congress-watchers and environmental leaders say that animal-rights activists almost never join in the coalitions lobbying for habitat expansion. *–Los Angeles Times/Washington Post Service*

PARKS PLAN REPAIR

The summer of 1993 brought record rainfall to Kansas, and with it, widespread flood damage to state parks and wildlife areas. State park damage ranged from flooded campgrounds to outright destruction of bathhouses. In wildlife areas, flooding destroyed many woodlands and prime wildlife habitat. Even the quality of wetland habitat was reduced in many areas. The principle areas affected include Glen Elder, Kanopolis, Lovewell, Milford, Perry, Tuttle Creek, and Wilson state parks and wildlife areas.

Damage is estimated at nearly $5.4 million, and complete restoration may take several years. Governor Finney has recommended nearly $1.5 million for flood repairs over the next year and one-half. Using money from the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) and Wildlife and Parks' operating budget, cleanup and repair efforts have begun in many areas and plans have been made for others.

At Glen Elder, which received the most damage, the BOR made $175,000 available immediately and will provide another $175,000 in October. Redevelopment began in January with debris removal and design of new facilities. In February, workers began rebuilding facilities and roads in the Cheyenne, Kanza and Osage sites; dredging out boat ramps; and rebuilding vault toilets at the Marina and Carr Creek.

Throughout the spring and summer of 1994, work will continue at Glen Elder. Efforts will expand to include rebuilding of roads and facilities in the Beach, Kaw, South Center and Sioux areas. In addition to rebuilding vault toilets and other building repair, roads and campgrounds will be graded and packed with new rock. Work continued in each of these areas in April and expanded to include the Pawnee Overlook.

In May, the lower Marina roads will be graded and packed, rebuilding efforts will begin at the South Fork and Mill Creek areas, and the sewer lift station will be repaired. The vault toilet at Takota Campground will be rebuilt, and construction of a showerhouse and lift station at Kanza Campground will begin. All these efforts will continue through June and July.

Plans for 1994 rebuilding efforts at other areas include the following: Clinton – repair beach and boat ramp information center; Kanopolis – repair courtesy dock, beaches and gravel roads; Lovewell – repair gravel roads, parking areas and beach; Milford – repair picnic shelters, vault toilets, campground electrical systems and docks, and replace trees and shrubs; Perry – repair vault toilets, lift stations and beach, replace trees and shrubs, and construct a new dump station; Tuttle Creek – repair lift stations, courtesy docks, bathhouse and campground electrical systems, and remove debris and replace trees and shrubs.

Wilson State Park, which was second only to Glen Elder in damage, will work on the Otoe showerhouse and lift station, grass seeding, Otoe self-pay station, Big Bluestem Campground, Wheatgrass Campground, Lovegrass Campground, boat ramp pit toilets, gravel and base material for campsites, beaches, Otoe courtesy dock, Otoe water risers, and picnic tables.

For detailed information on flood damage restoration at state parks and wildlife areas, contact the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, Parks and Public Lands Division, 512 SE 25th Ave., Pratt, KS 67124-8174, or call (316) 672-5911.

For information on specific areas, call one of the following numbers: REGION 1 – Cedar Bluff, (913) 726-3212; Glen Elder, (913) 545-3345; Kanopolis, (913) 546-2565; Lovewell, (913) 753-4971; Norton, (913) 877-2953; Webster, (913) 425-6775; and Wilson, (913) 658-2465. REGION 2 – Clinton, (913) 842-8562; Hillsdale, (913) 783-4507; Milford, (913) 238-3014; Perry, (913) 246-3449; and Tuttle Creek, (913) 539-7941. *–Shoup*

KDWP, SCS POOL RESOURCES

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Soil Conservation Service (SCS) and the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) have signed a cooperative agreement that leaders of both agencies think will help provide better assistance to Kansas landowners and natural resources planners, benefitting both landowners and wildlife throughout the state.

The agreement provides specific natural resource action from both parties. The SCS will share natural resource data, promote ecosystem management, encourage landowners to use KDWP expertise and programs, and increase incorporation of wildlife, forest and natural history considerations in its planning. KDWP will also share natural resource data, as well as encourage landowners to use SCS expertise and programs, and provide training and technical assistance to SCS.

The cornerstone of the agreement is a wildlife biologist liaison program in which KDWP will provide a biolo-

gist for each of SCS's six regional offices, in Dodge City, Emporia, Hays, Hutchinson, Manhattan and Topeka. Although the biologists will come from KDWP ranks, SCS will provide office space, clerical support, equipment, and partial reimbursement for the biologists' salaries. Among other things, the liaison biologists will help with wetland concerns, riparian and wetland planning, wildlife habitat assessments and planning programs, windbreak planning, Wetland Reserve Program planning, watershed mitigation, and public information. Much of their work will help landowners make decisions about wildlife habitat conservation.

"This agreement is in the best interests of Kansans," says SCS state conservationist Jim Habiger, "and it will help us better serve our customers. It will allow us to provide a wider array of alternatives through our technical help. It just makes sense to combine our skills and expertise. We look forward to reaping many benefits and passing them on to those we serve."

Wildlife and Parks secretary Ted Ensley is equally enthusiastic about the plan.

"Through this cooperative agreement, both agencies will be better equipped to provide technical assistance in natural resource management – from plants and animals to soil, water and air," says Ensley. "Our fish and wildlife resources will benefit greatly from the joint effort, and the benefits will be felt for many years to come." *–Shoup*

BOOK BEAT BOOK BEAT BOOK BEAT BOOK BEAT

THE NEATNESS OF MORALITY

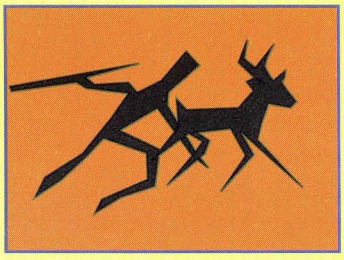
Ted Kerasote possesses a unique talent: he can look dispassionately at many sides of an issue without passing judgement on those who approach the issue (in this case, hunting) differently.

In *Bloodties: Nature, Culture, and the Hunt*, Kerasote examines hunting primarily from three different perspectives: subsistence hunting natives in Greenland, Safari Club International trophy hunters in Siberia, and his own experience hunting elk in northwestern Wyoming. He even devotes a chapter to time spent with Wayne Pacelle, executive director of the Fund For Animals, "the most well-organized and vocal anti-hunting organization in the United States." He gives all his subjects the benefit of the doubt, writing about them as a conscientious reporter, describing what he sees and hears and allowing the reader to draw conclusions. The result is a complex portrait of his subjects and a world view that is anything but black and white.

He is hardest on himself, however, describing his own personal self-examination almost to a fault. But this approach lends an honesty to the subject of hunting that I can imagine few other writers accomplishing. This is such a passionate issue that writers on both sides tend to taint their opinions with more emotion than objective analysis.

Not that Kerasote can't be emotional, and eloquent. In trying to reconcile the pain and death that every living being must inflict on the world in order to survive, he sums the irony of existence on planet earth:

"The elk in the forest, the tuna at sea, the myriad of small creatures lost as the combines turn the fields, even the Douglas fir hidden in the walls of our homes – every day we foreclose one life over another, a never-ending triage, a constant choice of who will suffer so that


Eastes

we may live, bending a blue note into the neatness of morality. It is this tender pain between species that is the plasma bearing us all along."

Obviously, Kerasote's focus is on hunting, but as he delves into his subject, he touches on the most important environmental issues of our time, from acid rain to overpopulation. He describes in detail the paradoxes of elk management in Jackson Hole, and he breaks down the impact of his own elk hunts in terms of animals lost and fossil fuels needed compared to being a vegetarian. He also details the devastating impact of Greenpeace's campaign against seal hunting on native Greenlanders, information that will never make the nightly news.

While Kerasote takes care not to judge the primary players in *Bloodties,* he carefully examines our relationship with animals. He does not condone "Bullfighting, cockfighting, dogfighting . . . shooting live pigeons and prairie dogs for 'sport' and money . . . dropping cosmetics into rabbits' eyes so humans can have nonirritating and frivolous products . . . keeping calves in stalls for tender veal, and chickens in crowded, filthy boxes to increase production . . . wounding elk through carelessness."

His portrait of Pacelle is also enlightening. Intelligent, articulate, likeable (and strangely detached from animals), Pacelle is a formidable opponent of hunters. His interaction with Kerasote provides thought-provoking insight into the anti-hunting campaign.

Perhaps the most difficult part of Bloodties comes at the beginning. Because of his desire to remain a detached observer, combined with the natives' reluctance to confide in an outsider, the opening chapters make slow reading in places. Have faith. It gets much, much better.

As the jacket cover commentary notes, *Bloodties* is a book for "every hunter and every anti-hunter who has more brains than bile." At times, it will make those on both sides of the issue uncomfortable, but thoughtful – perhaps the true test of any philosopher's wisdom.

Bloodties is published through Random House, Inc., New York, for $22, ISBN 0-394-57609-8, currently available at local bookstores. *–Shoup*

FLOODS AND FISHIN'

The floods of 1993 left many Kansas reservoirs overflowing and many Kansas anglers scratching their heads. What would this do to fishing, in both the short and long term?

The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) has finished test netting the major reservoirs affected by the floods, revealing a better than expected outlook. Comparison of fall testing netting results in 1992, before the floods, and in the fall of 1993 indicates that most lakes have maintained or increased game fish populations. Channel catfish numbers are up in nine lakes, down in six. Walleye are up in seven, down in six. White crappie are up in five and down in three, and wipers remained unchanged, being up in two and down in two. The exception is white bass, which are up in four lakes while being down in eight.

The KDWP Fisheries and Wildlife Division notes the following "best bet" reservoirs for the 1994 fishing season:

- Channel catfish – all reservoirs look good.
- Crappie – Sebelius, Perry, Clinton.
- Largemouth bass – Hillsdale, Big Hill, La Cygne.
- Saugeye – Sebelius.
- Walleye – Glen Elder, Kirwin, Webster, Lovewell, Wilson, Kanopolis.
- White bass – Wilson, Clinton, Melvern.
- Wipers – Sebelius.

Atchison and Woodson state fishing lakes should also be hot spots. Atchison State Fishing Lake, in Atchison County, opened April 9, and Woodson, in Woodson County, opens May 7. *–Shoup*

FARM POND FRENZY

May and June are perhaps the best two months to catch Kansas farm pond bass. The spring transition period is nearly over, which means less violent storms, less severe cold fronts, and weather stabilizing into a summer pattern. This translates into more consistent bass fishing. However, the water can still be on the cool side, and cool fronts can still make fish inactive, so you have to be able to adapt.

Three types of lures are most effective for late spring pond bass – the spinner bait, a bass jig with trailer and plastic baits such as the plastic worm. My all-time favorite bass lure is the spinner bait, and late spring may be the best time to throw one. It covers lots of water quickly, and its large size is perfect for big fish wanting an easy meal. The spinner bait is also tailor- made for pond fishing. The up-turned hook is nearly weedless, and you can cast it fearlessly into timber and thick weeds. In shallow farm ponds where aquatic weeds may grow in clumps, the spinner bait can be buzzed over weeds, then dropped slowly into deeper pockets. The flash and vibration of the blades will catch fish even in the murkiest pond waters. The spinner bait is a great bass catcher, but if a cool front has pushed the fish into heavy cover and off feeding, they may ignore the flashy blades.

When the fish are less aggressive, you'll want to use a jig and pork, or jig and plastic trailer combination. The jig-n-pig (as it's commonly called) is known for catching big bass. You'll rarely hook a small fish with this lure. The jig-n-pig can be flipped into heavy timber or slowly hopped along the bottom. Sluggish fish will often lightly inhale the big, bulky bait, giving just a telltale tic on the rod tip.

Favorite farm pond colors include blue, black and my favorite, black and chartreuse. I always fish the rubber-skirted jigs with a trailer of some kind, either pork rind or plastic craw. The jig-n-pig is tough to fish in heavy weeds and may be ignored if a cold front has really shut the bass down. Under these conditions, it's time to get out the plastics.

Of course, plastic worms probably account for more largemouth bass than any other lure, but plastic baits are best used when fish won't hit faster moving lures. The best plastic baits for slow, deep fishing include the plastic worm, the plastic lizard, the crawdad imitation, and the newer plastic stick baits like the Sluggo. These plastic baits will catch fish when others won't because you can fish them slow and deep. The versatility of these baits also comes in handy when fishing farm ponds. For weedy ponds, you can vary the size of the worm weight, or you can fish the bait without any weight. The Sluggo, in particular, can be fished weightless so that it sinks at a very slow rate and twitches like a wounded baitfish with the slightest movement of the rod tip.

The most severe cold fronts push bass into the heaviest of cover, and the plastics can be rigged virtually weedless, with the hook point buried in the lure's body. Don't be afraid to throw the plastic bait into the middle of thick weeds or heavy brush. Because big fish are often caught in this kind of cover, you will need a stout rod and some heavy line.

Kansas is blessed with more than 50,000 farm ponds. They're privately owned, so get permission first. And don't let heavy aquatic weeds scare you away. Those weedy ponds are where the biggest bass often lurk. Tie on a spinner bait, jig-n-pig or plastic, adapt your lure and retrieving speed to the pond and weather conditions, and . . . hang on! *Miller*

SOMETHING TO CROW ABOUT

by Mark Shoup

When I tell folks in the office I'm going crow hunting, the reaction is predictable.

"What are you going to do with them?" they ask.

"I'm going to eat them," I counter, as if the question is ludicrous. "If I get enough, I may even have a crow party."

This invokes a quick burst of insensitive commentary.

"Hope you don't mind eating alone."

"Better have plenty of refreshments."

"Yeah, maybe everyone could bring a side dish."

Of course, when I ask who among this group of cynics has eaten crow, things get even worse. Everyone is a comedian. Pressing the point, I find no one who can describe the taste of this much-maligned avian.

My son's reaction is quite different when I tell him that we are going crow hunting, a first for both of us.

"Yes!" comes the unprejudiced reply of a five-year-old. (A true optimist needs only one enthusiastic supporter.) It's the first week of March, a sunny, unseasonably warm day, almost the end of crow season. I don't know where a crow roost is, but I know crows are in the country.

We set up in a shelterbelt close to town and turn on the electronic call – a tape recording of a great horned owl and a crow in distress. Within seconds, a half dozen crows are looping, dipping, and raising Cain just above the treetops. I am so startled that I shoot quickly and miss, chasing the birds down the belt, where they fuss well out of sight and range. Okay, we'll try another spot.

In a belt five miles from town – bingo! – another small group is drawn to the call immediately. I'm ready this time and drop three. Again, the birds get wise quickly, but we've had success and don't mind moving on. Logan wants to carry the birds, so I head to the truck through a field of rusty little bluestem, followed by a little boy carrying three crows as black as night. The sky is a blinding robin's-egg blue.

At our next stop, Logan hides about five yards behind me. Not a crow in sight. Above the call's racket, I think I hear him yell, but it doesn't register – until I hear a growl. I twirl as my son yells, "Daddy, there's a raccoon!"

Not 10 feet from Logan is a growling raccoon about the size of a bird dog. Before I can react, the coon rounds a

bush within spitting distance, stops, starts toward the call, then turns back at me, still growling. This guy is after someone else's lunch, and he's ready to rumble. I leap to my feet and yell, "Get out of here!" As if he can understand English. Fortunately, the surprise is enough to send him packing. I turn to see if Logan is alright, and he's grinning from ear to ear. "Daddy, I never saw a raccoon before!"

We both sit down laughing, commenting on our marvelous turn of luck.

It will be a day to remember, but we're not done yet. It takes 20 minutes to reach the next shelterbelt, and Logan has almost exhausted his supply of coon and crow questions. Do crows have a gizzard? Yes. Why was that raccoon in that shelterbelt? It was his home. (What would you say?) As I hold up a barbed wire fence so Logan can crawl under, he asks, "How did they tie knots in that wire?"

"With a machine, Bud."

"What kind of machine?"

I don't skip a beat. "A wire-knot machine," I answer, and soon we're set up again.

Far to the east, crows fuss but come no closer until suddenly a real great-horned owl lands in a tree not 30 yards away, strafed by three angry crows. One crow overshoots its mark, and I shoot it. When I fire, the owl leaps from the tree and flys in front of us to a thick cedar tree. "Caw! Caw! Caw!" The crows circle the tree; the recorded crow squawks and flaps while the recorded owl hoots, and the owl in the cedar hoots back as if calling for reinforcements. It's a circus that we can only sit back and enjoy, another treasure in the day's collection of memories.

As I fillet the crow breasts at the kitchen sink, Logan is still excited.

"Daddy, I'm going to eat a whole crow."

"Well, maybe." I admit that I have reservations. "Some people don't like crow meat. If nobody eats these, we won't hunt them anymore."

To Logan, this is only more encouragement. "Maybe I'll get to eat them all!"

The following weekend, we cook the four birds at my parents' house. After marinading them six hours in Italian dressing, I wrap the breasts in bacon and slide them under the broiler. Cooked a bit too fast, they're slightly tough, but the meat is mild. My wife, mother, father, uncle, and even my uncle's girlfriend gamely nibble and make polite statements of surprise, mostly "A little tough, but not bad" kind of stuff. None of them asks for seconds.

But Logan and Will, my youngest boy – uninfected by the culinary prejudice of adults – devour the meat as if it were pheasant under glass. Someday, they will learn other connotations of eating crow, but for now, they nourish themselves with the wisdom of the innocent.

PRONGHORNS GET VOICE

Through the efforts of the North American Pronghorn Foundation (NAPF), the unique animal often referred to on the Great Plains as an "antelope" finally has the support that many other game species have enjoyed for decades.

Like many conservation organizations, NAPF has a newsletter, entitled The Prairie Press, which contains a variety of articles dealing with pronghorn issues and habitats. NAPF also conducts population surveys and is the repository for a compendium of biological and management principles and practices used to sustain pronghorn populations and their habitat from Canada to Mexico. The group also helps fund projects that directly affect pronghorns or their habitat.

In April, the Pronghorn Foundation sponsored the 16th Biennial Pronghorn Workshop in Emporia, Kan. The workshop hosted wildlife management personnel, researchers and others interested in pronghorns. Participants reviewed the latest research and held seminars on pronghorn management.

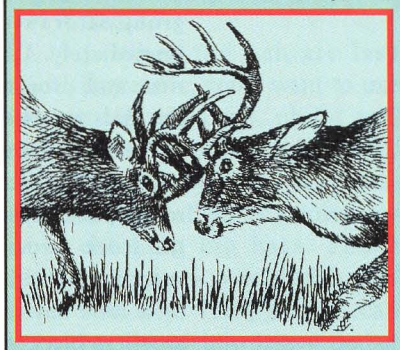
Unrelated to any other hoofed animal on Earth, the pronghorn comprises the family called *Antilocapridae*. Prior to European settlement, 30-40 million pronghorns roamed the plains from Canada to central Mexico. However, by the turn of the century, habitat destruction and market hunting had virtually eliminated pronghorns in Kansas and reduced their numbers to less than 25,000 in all of North America. Due to in large part to the modern wildlife management revolution of the 1930s, more than 500,000 pronghorns now roam the plains of Wyoming alone. The Kansas population is about 1,600.–*Shoup*

DATES AND DEADLINES

May and June are not traditional hunting months, but there are a few seasons to keep in mind. Squirrel season opens June 1 and runs through Dec. 31. Many hunters enjoy this time of year, when the mornings are mild and the mulberry trees are in full fruit. Although rabbit hunting is allowed year round, most hunters wait until fall to hunt them, when all the young are grown and the threat of tularemia is reduced.

Anyone wishing to hunt antelope this coming fall should be aware that the application period usually opens June 1 and runs for about 10 or 12 days. For more information, contact the Pratt Operations Office, Licensing Section, 512 SE 25th Ave., Pratt, KS 67124, (316) 672-5911. –*Shoup*

THE FEVER GOT HIM



It was Thanksgiving weekend of the 1993 whitetail archery season. An arctic blast was going full force here in southeast Kansas. A week before, Terry McQueen, Terry Croney, and I planned on camping and hunting over the holiday weekend. McQueen's son, Thad, age 14, really had his heart set on going.

We did not hunt Friday evening because of our late arrival at camp, so we had planned our strategy for the next morning. Having never hunted the property before, we decided that still-hunting would be the plan for the morning and stand placement for evening hunts. As we rolled out for the hunt, temperatures were in the low teens. We walked about a half mile to where we had planned to start hunting. Croney had taken a stand over a river crossing and trail while McQueen, Thad and I had set our plan in motion, with Thad toward the top part of the hill, which was approximately a half mile from top to bottom and rugged terrain. McQueen was between Thad and me. We were spaced approximately 75 to 100 yards apart, and I was about half way down the hill. After about an hour and one-half, I lost sight of both of them as we fanned out.

Shortly after, I heard two bucks fighting about 100 yards below and in front of me. After listening for about five minutes, I decided to see what was going on. As I started down the hill, Thad appeared. Obviously, he had heard the same commotion and made a beeline down the hill towards the sound. I told him to go on south along the side of the hill.

The shoving and fighting of two perfectly matched bucks was something most of us only dream about seeing. Slowly, I worked my way closer, but they kept fighting and moving away. Always taking advantage of the noise and fight, I finally got within bow range and then some. When they stopped fighting for a minute, I was at 17 yards and out of heavy cover. I took a half a step and knelt to the side of my cover with my bow at full draw just as they stopped fighting. I held for close to a minute, hoping to get the bigger buck, but deer tag stew raced through my mind, and after chasing them 15 minutes around the side of the hill, it was not time to be picky.

I let the arrow fly through the ribs of the smaller buck just as the other buck hit him and rolled him completely over, pushing and shoving him into trees as he chased him down the hill. Thirty seconds later, Thad appeared all smiles and excited. He had seen the whole thing.

Back at camp, Thad was full of excitement and enthusiasm as he told his side of the story. We all explained to him that what he had witnessed may have been a once-in-a-lifetime adventure. I knew the fever had gotten him when he said, "Only five more minutes, and I would have gotten the other one." I gave him the rack for a set of rattling antlers of his own, and for the memory every time he uses them. – *Terry Swart, bowhunter, Neodesha*

NEW WILDLIFE AREA

The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) recently received a 1,360-acre tract of land in Montgomery County. Named the Lynn Berentz-Max Dick Wildlife Area, it is known locally as the Buffalo Ranch.

Located in the cross-timber ecosystem (black-jack oak and hickory trees and bluestem grass) the property is a haven for deer, turkey, quail, rabbits and prairie chickens. Timber is dispersed around the property, providing plentiful "edge" for wildlife, especially upland game species. Several bodies of water are located on the property. The largest is a 17-acre pond.

The land and habitat are in excellent condition. The area is not developed or bisected by roads, preserving some spectacular vistas.

"One can almost envision covered wagons or a herd of buffalo on a nearby hillside," says Doug Blex, field supervisor for KDWP's Elk City Unit. "The people of Kansas got a real jewel with this area, and I'm really excited about it."

The donation was made possible by the Lynn Berentz estate. Berentz, a resident of Independence, died in October of 1991 and willed money to be used "for the benefit of wildlife in southeastern Kansas."

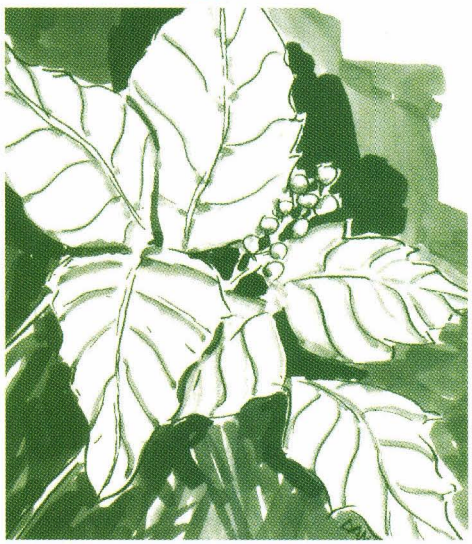
The State Bank of Fredonia, which handled the estate, considered a number of proposals before settling on Wildlife and Parks' idea of a wildlife area. The estate then provided money for the state to purchase the property, develop the wildlife area, and establish a foundation and trust to help manage the property and pay property taxes. In addition, $100,000 was provided to make improvements to the property.

Staff from Wildlife and Parks and the State Bank of Fredonia, which handles the trust, spent more than two and one-half years working on the project.

"We spent a great deal of time on this project," says KDWP chief of staff Tom Kirker. "We analyzed the problems affecting the agency, such as lack of revenue, and developed a plan to solve those problems. This will be an area for all to enjoy without cost to the taxpayer."

In addition to Berentz, the wildlife area was named in honor of Maxwell Dick, who owned and kept the property in pristine condition. Wildlife and Parks will conduct several public planning meetings in 1994 to develop management plans and goals for the Lynn Berentz-Max Dick Wildlife Area. Times and locations will be publicly announced. *–Shoup*

GONNA NEED AN



OCEAN [. . . Of calamine lotion.] Poison ivy is one of the plants on earth that remind us that nature is not paradise. It fits into the same category with ticks, chiggers, and mosquitos. Because I am highly allergic to poison ivy, I have always been repelled by this plant and keep a watchful eye for it at any season.

Recently, I saw a northern flicker – a white-rumped woodpecker with yellow feathers under its wings and tail – fly into a tree a few feet from where I was sitting. The tree had lost its leaves, and a vine was growing though the upper branches. The vine displayed clusters of waxy white berries. It was the plant that most people avoid, the infamous poison ivy. The flicker lit on the tree and zeroed in on the poison ivy berry clusters. The bird gobbled down eight or ten berries in a few seconds, then flew off.

I thought it a bit weird that a bird would feed so freely on the berries, fruits I never examined very closely for obvious reasons. I looked into some reference books regarding poison ivy as a wildlife food. More than two dozen bird species make use of poison ivy berries to supplement their fall and winter diets. None seem to relish the berries as much as the flicker.

Of course, birds have no reaction to the active chemical in poison ivy. They are after the fleshy part of the berry that covers a hard seed. The seed passes through the birds's digestive system unharmed and is deposited away from the parent plant with a wash of high-nitrogen starter fertilizer to boot. This is one of nature's trades – animal nutrition for plant dispersal. The poison ivy provides the flicker with nourishment while the flicker provides the poison ivy with a free ride.

On the whole, the flicker's favorite menu is a bit peculiar. In fall and winter, poison ivy berries make up a significant portion of the diet, from 10 percent to 20 percent. During the warmer months, the flicker's favorite food is ants. Nearly half of its entire diet is ants. One researcher documented more than 5,000 ants in one flicker's stomach. Evidently, the formic acid that cause the sharp sting when we get bitten by ants does not bother the flicker any more than poison ivy.

Observation is one of the best ways to learn about the habits and natural history of wildlife. Watching television specials on nature is fine, but it doesn't test patience or lock knowledge into the long-term memory like seeing live animals interact with their natural habitat. Observation followed by a little book research is an excellent technique for learning about the native wildlife of Kansas. *– Ed Miller, nongame biologist, Independence*

COMMISSION MEETINGS

Future meetings of the Kansas Wildlife and Parks Commission include the following: April 7, 1994 – Chanute, Sante Fe Grill; June 16, 1994 – Johnson County, Ernie Miller Nature Center; Aug. 18, 1994 – Emporia; Oct. 20, 1994 – Wichita; Nov. 17, 1994 – Dodge City. *–Shoup*

WETLANDS: ANOTHER LOOK

The Soil Conservation Service is beginning a statewide redetermination and recertification of wetlands. The KDWP is helping to develop procedures and criteria for these activities.

This is a major undertaking that will take at least three to five years to complete. One of the elements to make the system work is the assignment of a four-person wetland determination team in each of the six SCS areas. Team members will include a KDWP and/or U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist. Redeterminations were required after the initial efforts to classify wetlands were ruled inadequate. *–Mathews*

BECOME AN OUTDOORS WOMAN

The "Becoming An Outdoors-Woman" is the title of a new program designed to provide a non-threatening atmosphere for all women to learn outdoor skills. This three-day workshop includes a balanced curriculum of hunting, fishing, camping, wildlife watching and other activities. Volunteer instructors will offer hands-on instruction, with the emphasis towards the novice.

This outdoor skills clinic will be held Sept. 30 through October 2 at Rock Springs 4-H Camp, south of Junction City. The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks is trying to cultivate partnerships with various clubs, individuals, and industries to offer this program in Kansas and to break down barriers for women in outdoor sports.

Because the expertise of experienced outdoorsmen and women is needed, a search for instructors, equipment, program ideas and sponsorship has begun. Anyone interested in the program should contact Steve Stackhouse or Ross Robins in the Pratt Operations Office, (316) 672-5911, or Becky Johnson at (316) 342-0658. *–Mathews*

CENTER-PIVOT HABITAT FOCUS

Kansas Wildlife and Parks, in cooperation with Pheasants Forever clubs in Oakley and Colby, has developed a pilot project to provide wildlife habitat on the corners of center-pivot systems. Groundwater Management District 4 in Colby assisted in identifying heavily-developed irrigation areas in northwest Kansas. Every well owner in a selected six-square-mile area in western Sheridan County was contacted with the details of the project and invited to participate by enrolling the dryland corners of their center-pivot systems.

Since this is the first year of the project, results are not yet available. Anyone interested in the project should contact the Fisheries and Wildlife Division of the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, (316) 672-5911. *–Mathews*

WILDLIFE ART CONTEST

The Kansas Wildlife Art Council is inviting artists to submit entries for its annual competition, this year featuring the Kansas state mammal, the bison. Submissions must be made by Aug. 1, 1994. Coordinated through the Fort Hays State University Sternberg Museum, the competition produces a series of official wildlife paintings to promote awareness of Kansas wildlife.

Last year, 26 artists from 10 states submitted entries. The council awarded a sizeable cash prize to Jerry Thomas, Manhattan, for winning the 1993 contest (see above).

For a color brochure, submission guidelines, or to order prints, contact Greg Liggett, Sternberg Museum, FHSU, 600 Park Street, Hays, KS 67601, or call (913) 628-5684. *–Shoup*

GRASSLANDS FOR WILDLIFE

The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) has become a partner in a recently-implemented two-year project to assess pheasant ecology associated with the federal Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) lands in western Kansas, Nebraska and South Dakota. The CRP began in 1986 and helps farmers return highly-erodible land to grassland.

The research project will be the first administered by the new Kansas Cooperative Fisheries and Wildlife Research Unit – a coalition of Kansas State University, Kansas Wildlife and Parks and the National Biological Survey. The Research Unit, whose office is at K-State, is funded by the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Program and the International Game Conservancy. Kevin Church, of the KDWP's Wildlife Investigations and Inventory Office in Emporia, is in charge of the project. KDWP regional staff and students from Kansas State University will do the field research. *–Shoup*

by Dana Eastes

Springtime and Wildlife

Spring

The days grow longer; early morning frost gives way to sun-warmed dew and songbird symphonies.

Mother Nature delivers when it comes to springtime. Not only does she deliver the weather, she also delivers wild babies. More wild animals are born in spring or early summer than at any other time of year. Every species has its own unique adaptations that have allowed it to survive through the years. Kansas has its own share of unusual courtship, birthing, and survival adaptations of wildlife young. Here are just a few.

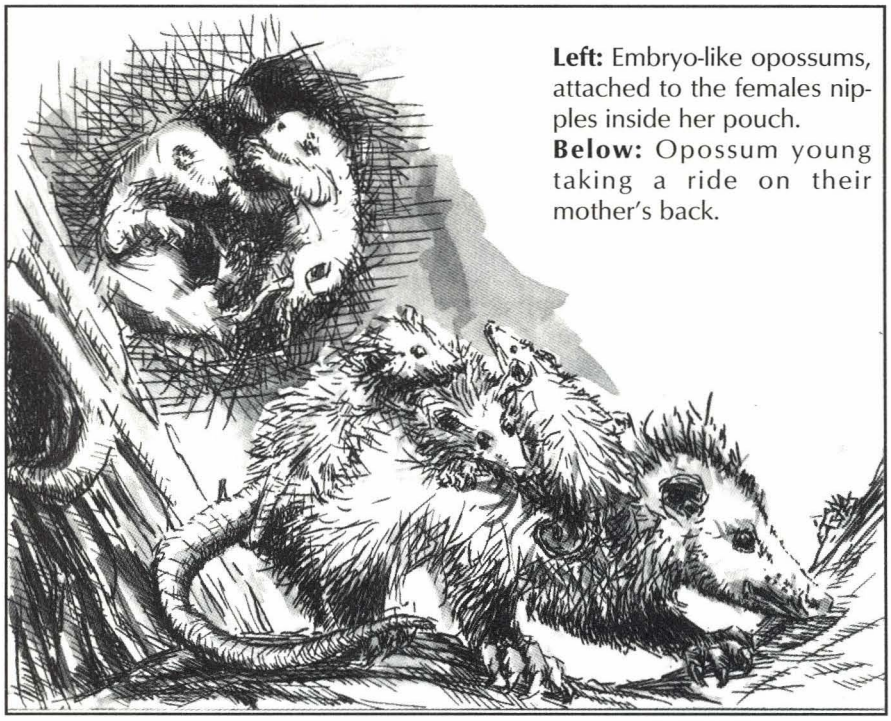
Courtship

During the mating season, the sandhill crane puts on a dance that would make MC Hammer jealous. Sandhill cranes have a unique ritual dance between pairs or among a group of mixed pairs. The sophisticated dance begins with the male bowing to the female and the female responding with a bow. As the excitement builds, the dance evolves into a series of synchronized leaps and bows, enhanced by loud croaking noises. The dance continues until both birds are exhausted.

Although mating takes place on the tundra of Alaska, Canada and Russia, sandhill cranes can be seen rehearsing their tundra-hopping tango while stopping to rest in Kansas. Sandhill cranes are generally monogamous, meaning they mate for life.

Birth

The opossum is a marsupial, the kangaroo of Kansas. A marsupial is a mammal that carries its young



Left: Embryo-like opossums, attached to the females nipples inside her pouch.
Below: Opossum young taking a ride on their mother's back.

in a pouch. Opossums breed from January to mid-February, and just 13 days later these tiny, naked critters (usually 13 to 17) crawl into the female's pouch, latching on to one of the 13 nipples. After a couple of months, they open their eyes but remain in the pouch, nursing. In 80 days, they crawl out of the pouch and are ready for solid foods. After leaving the pouch, they still cling to the female, grasping on to the fur and wrapping their tail around hers. Not until around 100 days are they fully independent from the female, just in time for the next litter to make the trek into mamma's pouch.

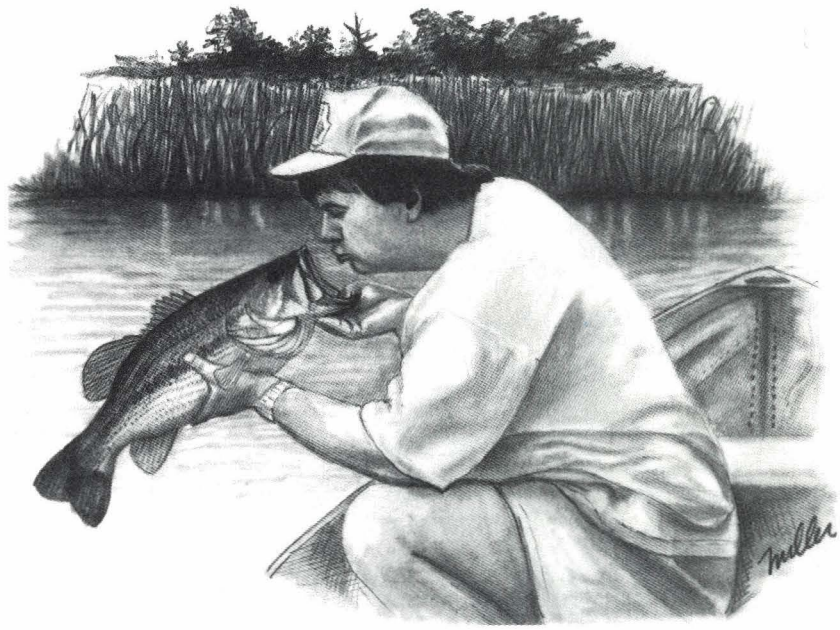
Young Adaptation

During the first week of a white-tailed deer fawn's life, it remains concealed while the doe feeds. During this time, the fawn is scentless. The doe returns to the fawn only to feed it. She calls to find the hidden fawn, making a sound called a "bleat" that the fawn responds to. Fawns are born with a spotted coat to help camouflage them against predators. They lose their spots after three months.

If you see wildlife young, don't pick them up. A parent is usually close by. Most wild babies will die in the hands of human care. Mother, not "human," Nature should take care of them.

by Marc Murrell

'Till We Meet Again



The black and green plastic worm quickly sank out of sight into the depths of my father's farm pond in northeast Kansas. I felt a thump as the 1/8-ounce worm weight hit bottom. I eased the rod tip to the 12-o'clock position and watched the line as I let the worm settle back down. The line jumped and I felt a tick, signalling the presence of a hungry fish. I quickly dropped the rod, reeled in the slack and set the hook. The fish took off for the middle of the pond like a run-away freight train.

I always manage to work in a few fishing trips to this pond during family visits and holidays. I have never been disappointed with the results, usually catching largemouths in the 1- to 4-pound range. But each trip without a truly big fish kept me wondering if "he" was alive.

"He" is Bubba, a big bass affectionately named by my mother. Two years ago, Bubba inhaled Mom's Roadrunner just as she unsnagged it from an overhanging limb. The battle was intense, but Mom won, finally pulling the flopping behemoth through the weeds and up the bank.

She marveled at its size and couldn't believe her luck. It was easily the biggest fish she had ever caught. After a few snapshots, she contemplated aloud the fish's fate.

"You're not going to keep that thing, Mom!" my sister Chari screeched.

After a pretty heavy guilt trip, Mom reluctantly returned the fish to the water, and christened him, or (more likely) her, Bubba.

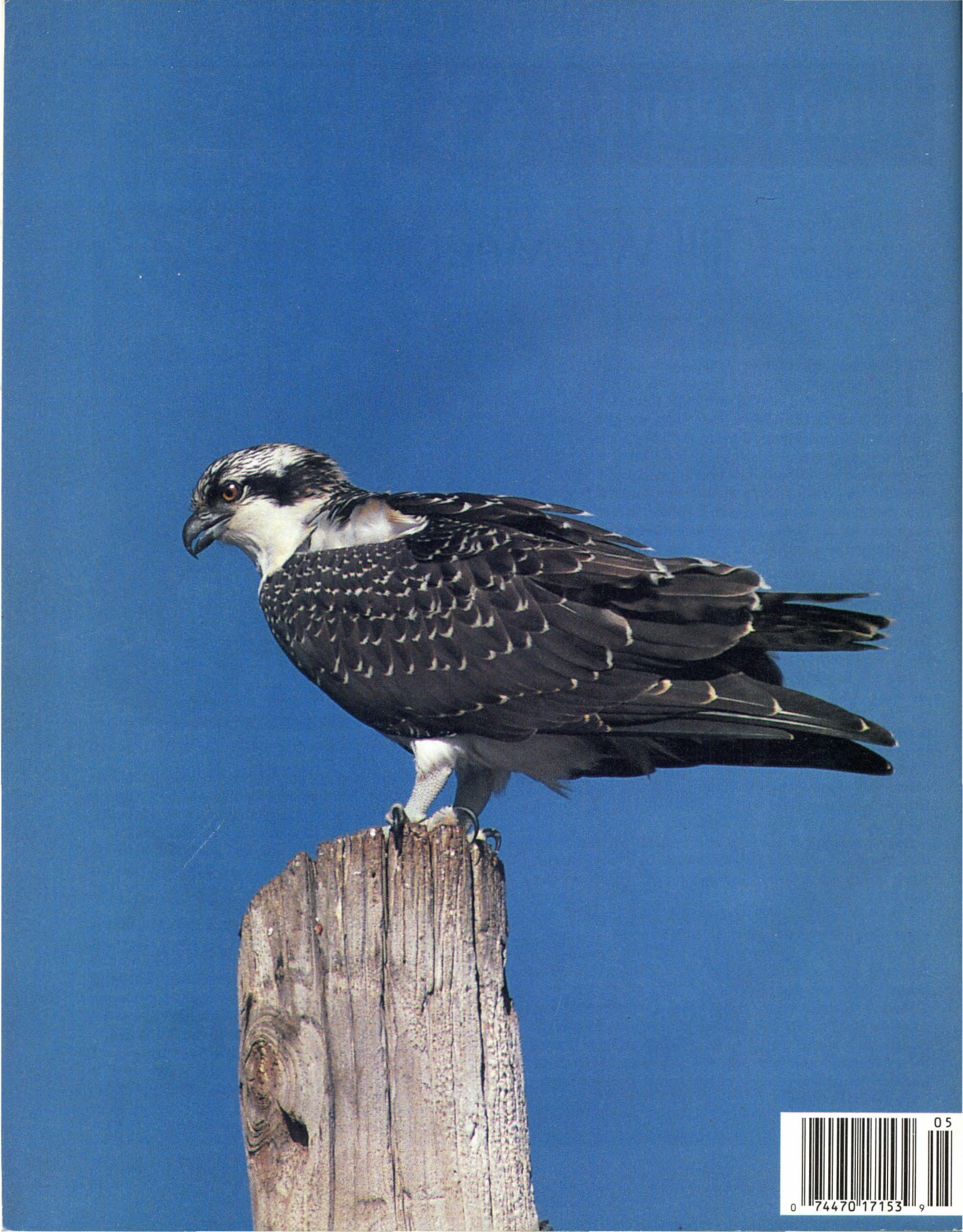
As my fish headed for deep water, I wondered if this could be Bubba. The fish tried to jump, but was quickly pulled back to the water by its massive weight. It was then I realized just how big this fish was. My fishing partner could only laugh at my panic-stricken, fish-frenzied excitement.

I worked the fish alongside the boat only to have it drench me with a flip of its tail as it headed back to the depths with the drag hissing. My buddy was again hysterically amused. After several frantic attempts, though I finally lipped the monster and swung it into the boat.

"This is the biggest largemouth I've ever caught," I howled. Nearly 2 feet long, the fish pushed my Deliar scales to almost 8 pounds. I had always said that I'd put a 7-pound-plus bass on the wall, and this was finally the one to do it.

But as we were taking pictures, I thought about future fishing trips. I thought about my Mom releasing the fish two years ago. If I mounted this bass, no one else would have the chance to catch it. If I released it, my daughter might catch it several years from now, and it might be a new state record. I couldn't stand the thought of robbing her of the chance to catch this fish.

I kissed the big fish and eased it over the side. I gently moved it back and forth in the water until it swam out of my hand and disappeared. Was it Bubba? I'll never know for sure, but I'm certain we'll meet again.



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