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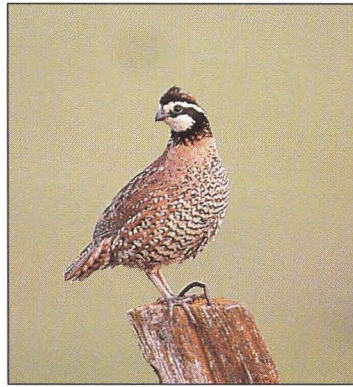
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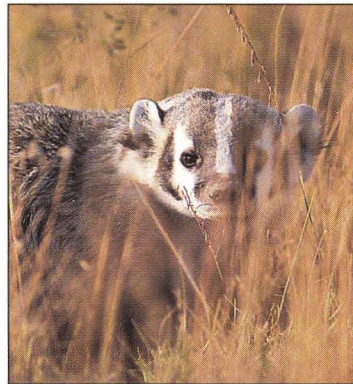
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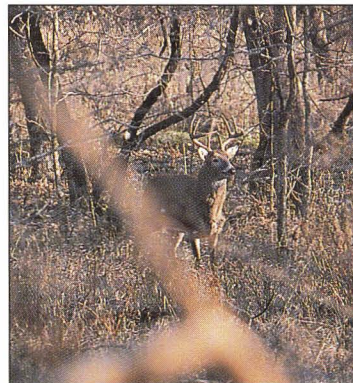
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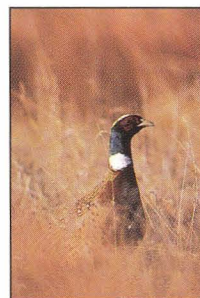
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Front: Few scenes stir hunting emotions like a pheasant in the winter grass. Mike Blair photographed the bird with a 600mm lens, f/4 @ 1/125. Back: November days put whitetail bucks on parade for the patient observer. Mike Blair shot the scene with a 400mm lens, f/4 @ 1/125.

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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A Time In The Field



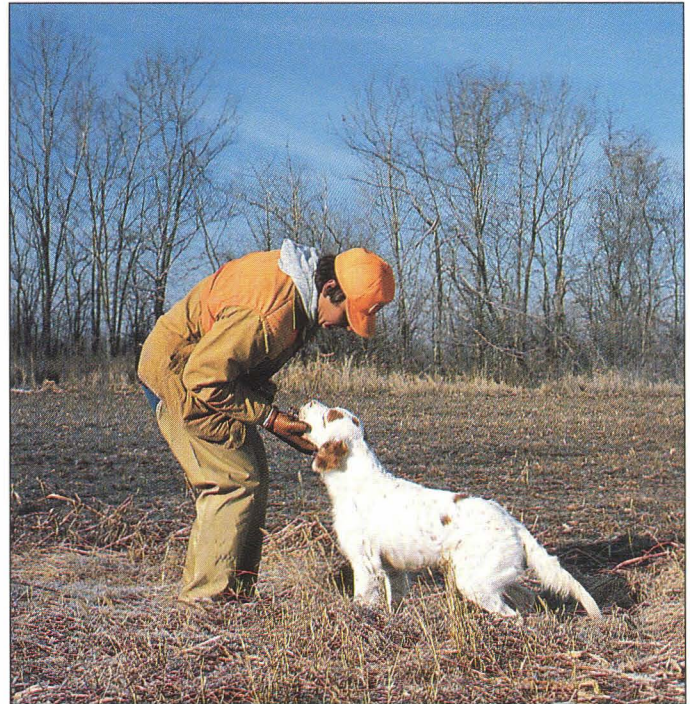
The months of November and December contain the most hunting seasons of any time of the year. Whether the quarry is waterfowl, upland birds, big game or furbearers, this is a special time. In fact, more hunters are in the field during November and December than the rest of the months combined.

This phenomenon may be viewed in a number of ways. For some, the pilgrimage to the field is a natural and familiar ritual — learned in childhood. For others, it is a struggle to find enough space and solitude to fully enjoy their leisure activity. Each person has their own reason to dust off their boots, unpack their shotgun or bow and head outdoors. One common thread which connects all these things, whether we recognize it or not, is a tie to the land; the natural environment which provides for our existence.

I would challenge anyone to witness the first glimmer of light creeping over a waterfowl marsh, the view from a tree stand as a white-tailed buck crunches through the leaves below or the explosion of a covey of bobwhites and not be moved by the wonder and bounty of nature. When I explain to those who choose not to hunt why the sport is important to me, it is these images that come to mind. It is that thing which ties me to nature and the land which drives me to the field each autumn.

Some of us have chosen to make it our career to manage and conserve our outdoor resources and heritage. For most others, days spent chasing a Brittany or crouching in a duck blind are sufficient to satisfy the need to be connected to the land. Regrettably, many have lost this vital link which has served so many generations. Nature and wildlife are reduced to television specials or photographs. I do not wish to downplay the importance of these media, this magazine itself is an example. Still, nothing can come close to time spent in the field to keep use connected to our outdoor legacy.

In addition to the personal experience, I believe that there is a kinship shared by those who venture outdoors. Even as pressures on the land increase, the great majority of those who hunt generously share the



Gene Brehm photo

resource. Conflicts do occur, and some recreational activities may require adjustments to allow for other preferences. Still, Kansans do an admirable job of coexisting in the field. As always, bad news travels faster than good, but I am convinced through my own personal experience that Kansas' sportsmen and women can and do get along just fine in the field.

If all this sounds familiar, then I'm preaching to the choir again. If it is something new or perhaps forgotten, maybe it's time to put on those boots. Load up the dog and a few youngsters and get out in the field. I think it will remind you that we are still connected to the land, and a passion may be rekindled that will revitalize you. I know it works for me each fall.

Ted Ensley

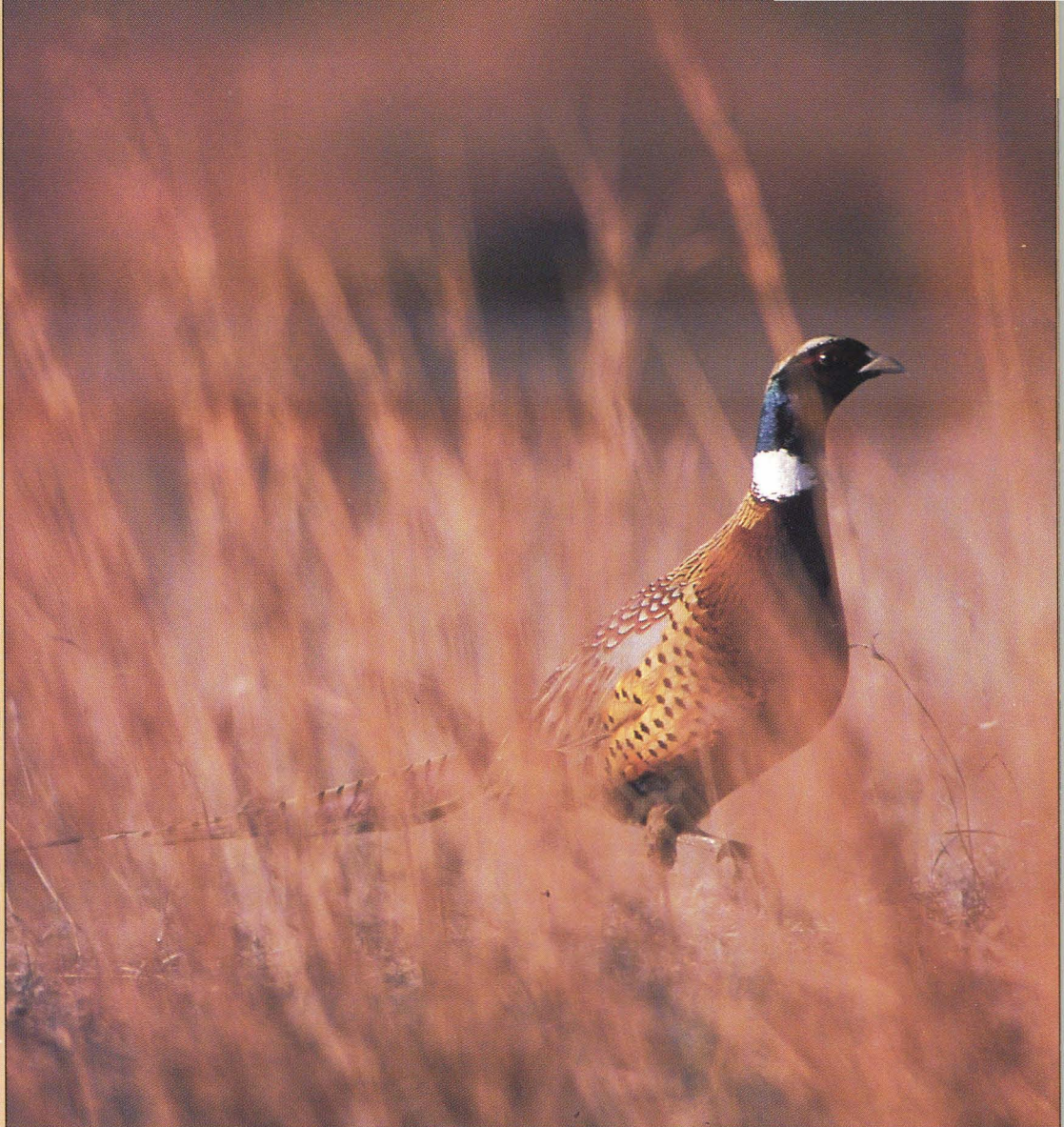
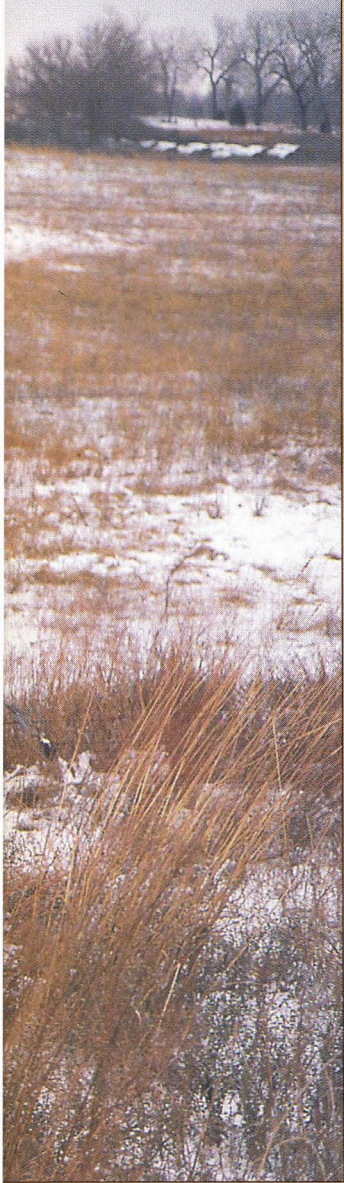


In A Birdhunter's Dream

photo essay by Mike Blair
staff photographer, Pratt

text by Mike Miller

As the second Saturday of November approaches, dedicated birdhunters' thoughts wander to the fields, creek bottoms and pastures of the Kansas countryside. Images of birds, dogs, friends and the promise of November in Kansas fill their heads and make the wait for opening day seem endless.



A hunter's image of November in Kansas isn't complete without the vivid colors of a cock pheasant. Neon ruby and amber glow from the breast feathers as the morning sun floods over the horizon. It's tough to hide decked out in vibrant color, but the pheasant relies upon the ample cover of native grasses, the dead, brown weeds of summer and the fall stubble of wheat and milor fields. And, of course, the bird survives by outsmarting its pursuers more often than not.

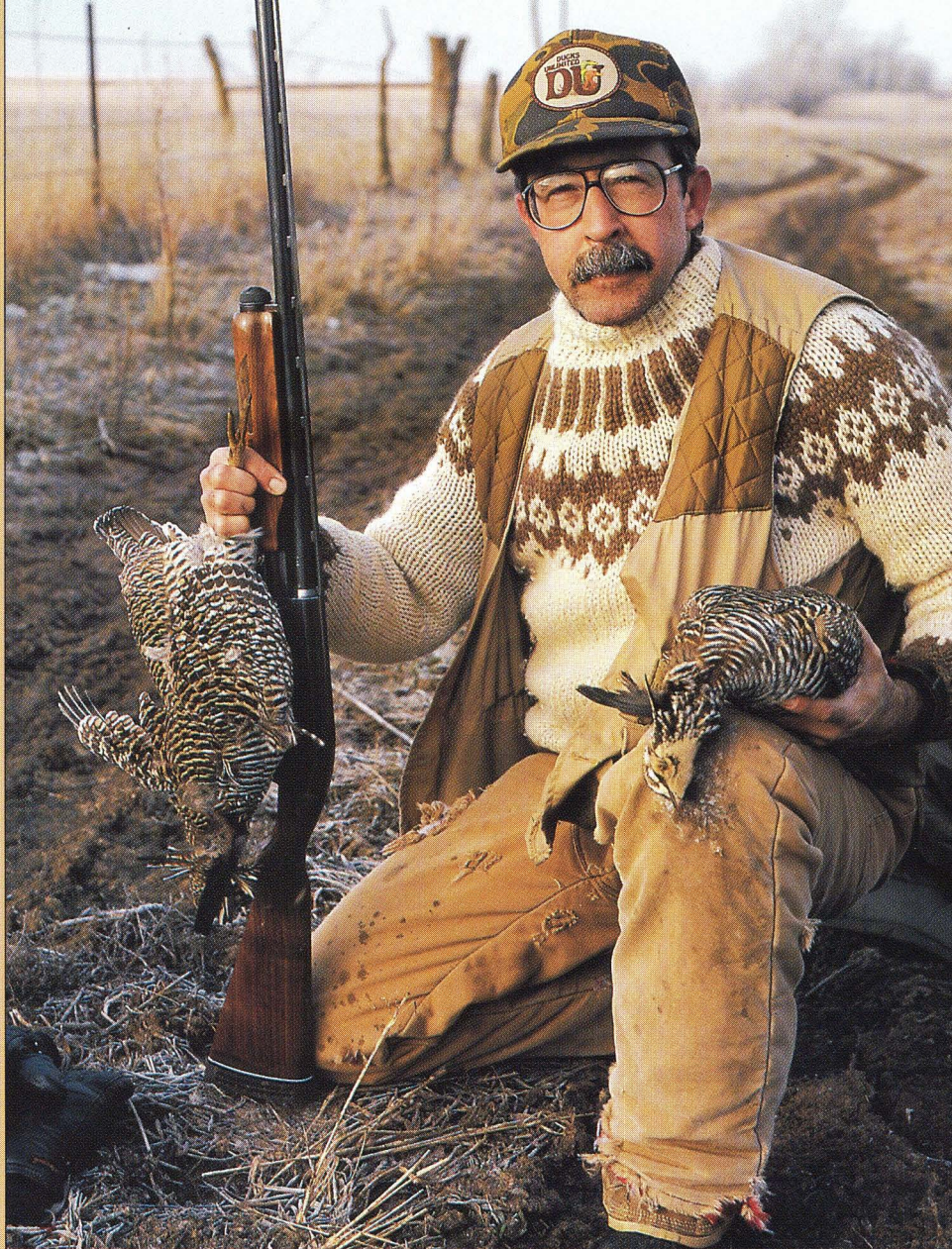


There are few sounds sweeter than the bobwhite's whistle. On a crisp November morning, the whistle carries from the tangled thicket straight to the hunter's heart. It's the hunt that quickens the pulse and revives the primal drive, but the whistle also says the birds are there, and often that's enough.





The Brittany is a fine companion, offering complete acceptance of its human partner, regardless of mistakes or character flaws. But it's on a hunt when the bond is strongest; when man and dog work apart yet together. The dog's instincts and the hunter's knowledge are the perfect compliment. Each depends on the other and that's success, with or without birds in the bag.



They come from seemingly empty grasslands, like winged rockets launched from the rising sun. The prairie chicken is one of the few remaining symbols of the Kansas prairie. Perhaps the hunt ties us to pioneer ancestors, or more likely, it ties us to the land we cherish. Opening day is tradition; it's friends and relatives and it's the prairie grouse that survives in spite of our intrusive presence.





You can actually hear a good dog inhale deeply as it searches for the downed bird. Nose to the ground, swinging downwind of the marked spot, the dog suddenly whips directly into the wind and beelines straight to the spot where the still-warm scent is rising. A flash point, then a pounce — the bird is found. It's satisfying when it all comes together. A limit isn't important now; success is already in the bag. ♡

As nerve-frazzling as a quail covey explosion is, it pales in comparison to a cock pheasant flushing at your feet. The big bird launches from cover as if propelled by rockets, air rushing from short, broad wings doing exactly what they were designed to do. And to make matters worse, the cock often crows defiantly as it makes its escape. A bird that size shouldn't be hard to hit, but many a hunter has hurriedly snapped off a shot nowhere near the intended target, as the bird sails out of range.





1994 Upland Bird Hunting Forecast

by Marc Murrell

public information officer, Valley Center

and Randy Rodgers

research biologist, Hays

photos by Mike Blair

The data is in, and the results are compiled for the upcoming seasons. The forecast uses rural mail carrier counts, brood count surveys and other information to provide hunters with a general outlook for quail, pheasant and prairie chicken populations across the state.

Predict the future. No problem; thousands of anxious bird hunters ask biologists Randy Rodgers and Kevin Church to do it each year when they ask "What will the bird hunting be like this year in Kansas." So that their answer isn't just a shot-in-the-dark prediction, the biologists rely on survey data compiled through the spring and summer.

The two main surveys are the rural mail carrier's survey and the brood count survey. The state's rural mail carriers travel thousands of miles each year, and during the

spring and summer many of them keep track of the upland birds they see. Many of these routes have been involved in the survey for years and offer good comparison for local population trends.

The summer brood count is a survey conducted by department biologists and gives the researchers an idea on how successful the spring's production has been. Surveyors note numbers of broods of young birds as well as the size of each brood.

"It's (the forecast) a tool for residents and nonresidents to make a

distinction within the state of where to go." said Kevin Church, small game project coordinator for the department. "Nonresidents use it to determine if they will come to Kansas to hunt pheasants or go to South Dakota or Iowa. Resident quail hunters might use it to determine if they will travel to western Kansas to hunt pheasants."

The survey information is compared to that from years past, and hunter success from last year is taken into consideration. It appears that 1994 might be one of the best seasons we've had in several years,

particularly in certain regions.

Overall, 1994 should be at least as good as last year, during which hunters enjoyed good success. Spring rains allowed vegetation growth that ranges from average to heavy across the state. Reservoirs that were affected by the floods of 1993 have extremely heavy cover on the associated public hunting lands.

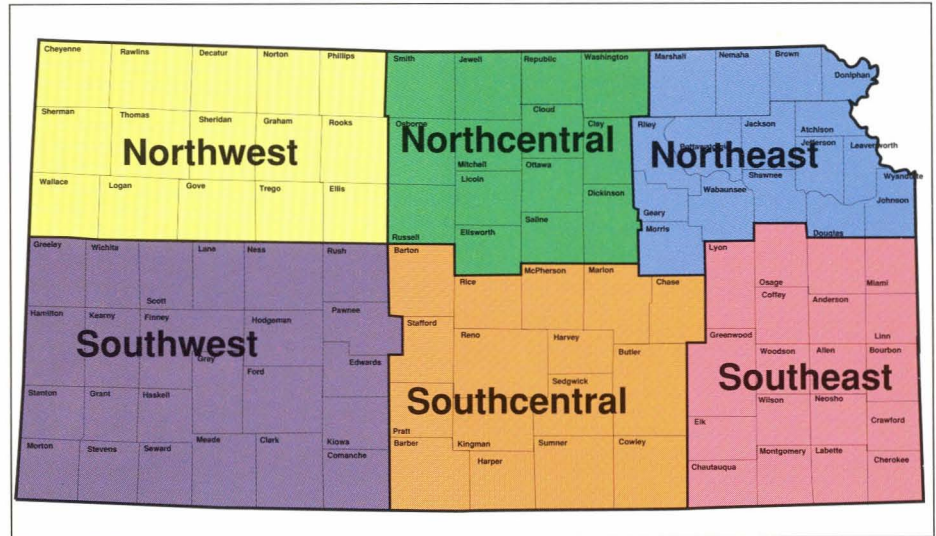
The pheasant stronghold has historically been the western half of the state, but good numbers of ring-necked quails can be found in other regions. In west and northcentral Kansas, pheasant populations are similar to 1993. However, the really good news lies in the northeast and southcentral regions of the state, where pheasant numbers have improved substantially this year. This season could be the best since 1987. Across the state, surveys show a higher percentage of adult birds than in previous years, which may mean warier birds and tougher hunting.

Quail hunting should be good to very good across the state. In the southeast, where the best quail hunting is traditionally found, the populations are fully recovered from the torrential rains of 1992. In the northeast, it appears that this year's production has made up for the losses suffered through last summer's flooding.

Prairie chickens are much more difficult to survey, but the data available indicates that the birds are still recovering nicely from low levels in 1992. Greater prairie chickens are found throughout the Flint Hills and the lesser chickens are found in the sand prairie of the southwest.

Regional summaries

NORTHWEST — The best pheasant hunting will likely be in the northeastern counties here with good hunting for most of the region. Localized areas of intense hail hurt populations in parts of Sherman, Thomas, and Logan counties. Quail numbers are low in most of this region but improved over last year. Fair to good quail populations may be found in Phillips, Rooks, Norton and Graham counties.



NORTHCENTRAL — Hunters in this region did well last year and 1994 should be no different. Eastern counties here showed a definite increase in pheasant numbers over last year. Quail populations should be very good as excellent production took place this year.

NORTHEAST — While western Kansas gets most of the attention from pheasant hunters, there is some good hunting in the northeast. The northern counties of this region have the highest numbers of pheasants, but the region has a lower overall density than western Kansas. Quail numbers are up from last year, recovering from last year's flooding.

SOUTHWEST — Pheasants have had a tough time in the western half of this region. Severe hail damaged previously spotty populations in a wide band from Syracuse to Liberal including parts of Hamilton, Stanton, Grant, Stevens, Seward, Haskell, Morton and Kearney counties. Portions of Greeley and Wichita counties were also hit by hail. Good news comes from the eastern portion of this region where pheasant populations may be higher than last year. Bobwhite quail populations are best in the southern counties, especially in the eastern portion of the region, where the hunting should be as good or better than last year.

SOUTHCENTRAL — A substantial increase in pheasant numbers was observed in the eastern part of this

region and the rest of the region will provide hunting at least as good or better than last year. Local populations may be very good but probably not as good as those found in the northern regions. Good to excellent quail hunting can be expected, especially in the southern counties and in the Flint Hills.

SOUTHEAST — Pheasants are virtually absent from this region. Quail numbers have increased again this year and hunting prospects look very good, particularly in the Flint Hills. Some local flooding in Cherokee and Crawford counties likely reduced quail numbers there.

Remember that this forecast is a general guideline for hunting this fall.

"The best process by which to make a decision about where to hunt is to remember that the forecast is looking at four to five, sometimes 10 counties in an area," Church advised. "Within that area there is a high degree of variability."

"As the opener gets closer, hunters can follow up and make contacts with regional or district staff, or area managers (of department lands), to define the area they want to hunt."

Many other factors can influence hunting success including the weather between now the opening day. However, regardless of the prediction, Kansas offers some of the finest upland bird hunting in the country.





Bad To The Bone

by J. Mark Shoup
associate editor

photos by Mike Blair

The badger embodies the spirit of the Western prairie: independent, solitary and tough. While known for its ferocity, the badger is perfectly happy left alone. Back it into a corner, however, and you'll likely have a story about the badger's toughness of your own to tell.

In the 16th century, according to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), a “badger” was a person who went about the countryside buying up corn, fish, butter, cheese, and other goods, which he would then sell in town. The laws of King Edward VI regulating this activity described these men as “obnoxious to the charge,” and they were regulated accordingly.

Today, many etymologists see a connection between the aggressiveness of those human badgers and the furry quadrupeds of the same name, but the OED disagrees. The English language’s foremost dictionary claims that the name “badger,” in reference to the ferocious mammal familiar to most Kansans, actually refers to the white mark borne like a badge on the animal’s forehead.

Still, the definition of the verb “badger” — “to harry persistently; pester” — suggests some connection to the animal, in temperament as well as in the badger’s historic fate at the hand of man.

The practice of “badger baiting” is one of the crueler legacies in man’s treatment of wildlife. Although banned by 1850, badger baiting was a popular “sport” in early 19th century England. In this activity, a barrel sunken in a pit served as the badger’s retreat from dogs, which were set upon the badger in an attempt to pull the animal from its hole. Such fights were also conducted in the United States well into this century. In a Texas incident, a trained badger was reported to have beaten 11 dogs in one day, including a male pit bull larger than the badger.

Of course there is much more to the badger’s story than abuse and defiance. The badger (*Taxidea taxus*) belongs to the mustelid, or weasel, family, which also

includes the fisher, marten, otter, mink, ermine, weasel, ferret, skunk and wolverine. In North America, it can be found from northern Alberta, to central Mexico and from the west coast to Ohio. Although it can be found statewide in Kansas, its primary habitat is the grasslands of central and western Kansas, particularly where the soil is sandy.

While badgers have been known to live 15 years or more in captivity, a 10-year-old wild badger is a geezer. Its power and toughness has led many schools to adopt the badger as a mascot. The University of Wisconsin is perhaps the most well-known example. The badger is the largest member of the weasel family in Kansas and does, in fact, look like its large and disreputable

cousin the wolverine. With short legs and wide, flat body, the badger’s movement is unlike any other mammal. Its skin is so loose and its silver-brown hair so coarse that the feet and legs are difficult to see. Lloyd Fox, furbearer project leader for the Department of Wildlife and Parks, says that badgers appear to “flow rather than walk.”

Certainly this is a clever illusion because the badger has extremely long front claws — excellent for digging but something of a hinderance in a footrace. For the amateur naturalist, the badger’s inward curved front claws leave an easily identifiable print in soft soil. The claws of the hind feet rarely leave an imprint.



While badgers are common in the western two-thirds of Kansas, they are nocturnal and seldom seen. It’s much more likely that you’ll see evidence of their presence, shown above.



The badger's diet consists mostly of gophers, ground squirrels and prairie dogs. Locating underground prey with their sensitive nose, the badger then digs them up with power front legs, equipped with long sharp claws.

While intimidating to look at and brutal in a fight, the badger's oversized claws are handiest when digging up a meal. Gophers, ground squirrels, prairie dogs and other burrowing rodents comprise the primary diet although deer mice, rats, rabbits, snakes, and insects are commonly preyed upon by this opportunistic hunter. And yes, even corn has been known to round out the badger's diet. Overall, the badger's value as a consumer of insects and grain-eating rodents offsets the occasional damage to livestock and machinery that results from their prodigious hole-digging.

More interesting than diet, however, is how the badger hunts. Largely a nocturnal hunter, the badger has the advantage of an extremely sensitive nose and is able to sniff out its prey far under ground. In some cases, the badger has been known to uncover a family

of ground squirrels, leaving a burrow with a single squirrel undisturbed. In the March/April 1987 issue of *Kansas Wildlife*, author Lloyd Fox describes an example of



Badgers lead solitary lives except during the breeding season, when couples stay together for a short period, then go their separate ways. Young are born in the spring.

extraordinary badger hunting skills: "Digging out the entire burrow system of a gopher would be an energy-expensive operation. Badgers tackle this problem by making a series of exploratory digs. They then run between the exploratory points and determine, probably with their sense of smell, which site is closest to the gopher. After this has been determined, they make their final assault . . . [In some cases], badgers also plug the exit holes before making their assault."

When the attack begins, the badger may appear to bore spirally downward with all four feet, sometimes drilling into the earth so fast that its 10- to 16-pound body disappears in little more than a minute. (Some adult males may weigh close to 25 pounds.) About 70 percent of the time, the badger successfully captures its prey.

While the European badger is a gregarious critter, its American counterpart — true to the spirit of the old West — is a solitary animal. Although hawks and coyotes have often been seen hunting "with" badgers, this is no indication of badger friendliness. Simply put, the badger is so efficient at rousting out its prey that other predators often hang around in hopes of an easy meal.

Only during mating season (late July and August in Kansas) does the badger exhibit behavior that could remotely be considered gregarious.

When it comes to love, they are truly the traveling salesmen of the animal kingdom. These late summer liaisons last only a short period of time, after which the male and female go their separate ways. Like other members of the weasel family, badgers have delayed implantation, which means the embryo does not grow for some time after conception. This allows the female all fall and winter to prepare for the birth of her young. During that time, she will dig or appropriate a number of burrows within a home range of one square mile or much larger, depending on prey density.

However, one of these burrows will be much more elaborate than the others. This natal burrow may run 6 feet deep and 30 feet long. It will have a main tunnel that splits, then rejoins to allow entering and exiting badgers to pass without running into each other. Dead-end side tunnels will project from the main tunnel, and the nest will be built in a large chamber at the end of the main tunnel. While the badger does not truly hibernate in winter, it avoids food scarcity and


cold and conserves body fat and energy by remaining in the den, slowing its heart rate (called bradycardia), and lowering its body temperature (called diurnal hypothermia).

In March or April, one to five cubs are born in a nest of dried grass. In the following weeks, the cubs grow rapidly. Their relationship with the mother is remarkably short-lived. At five weeks, the cubs emerge from the den, and by 10-12 weeks, they are completely independent. The young seek out their own territories, sometimes traveling as far as 30 miles. Some young females may even breed that first summer.

If you've ever found a badger skull, you'll understand its pugnacious reputation. Broad and thick with an arsenal of heavy, sharp teeth, it resembles the skull of a bear. Although the badger's solitary nature generally keeps it out of scrapes with its own kind, pound for pound the badger is one of the most fearsome fighters in North America. Other creatures seem to understand this and for the most part steer clear of this nocturnal

little "bear," even during accidental daytime encounters.

There are, of course, exceptions. A few years ago, I was pheasant hunting in Pawnee County when a badger jumped from cover 50 yards ahead of a pointer. The badger took off running with remarkable speed, and the pointer took chase, oblivious to the screams of its master and everyone else in the group. After a short chase, the pointer had closed the gap and was about to make his move when the badger wheeled and stood its ground, crouched and snarling, as if daring the dog to take its best shot. Luckily, the bird dog backed away cautiously. Perhaps he had more brains than I assumed, or perhaps some primal memory reminded the bird dog what critter he was dealing with. In either case, the "master" was one relieved dog owner.

Although the badger is common in Kansas, the nocturnal habits of this spirited little creature make sightings somewhat rare. If you see one, count yourself lucky, but give it a wide berth. This solitary prairie hunter probably won't appreciate uninvited company. 



Supreme digging skills allow badgers to catch their intended prey about three out of every four attempts. In soft soil, the badger can dig so fast that the entire animal may disappear in a cloud of flying dirt.

The Conservation Reserve Program and Wildlife

by John Brooks and Philip Cook
Kansas State University

photos by Mike Blair



Have you seen more wildlife in Kansas recently? If so, the increase is probably due in part to the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). The CRP has been the biggest boon to overall wildlife production and habitat since we started managing game and setting aside habitat. There has never been a program that put aside so much land over a large area in such a short period of time. If you've never

heard of CRP, you may be wondering what it is and why it's been so beneficial to Kansas wildlife.

CRP was established in 1985 by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) as a voluntary, long-term program designed to take highly erodible or environmentally sensitive land out of crop production. Some of the secondary goals were to protect long-run food and fiber production capability, curb

surplus production and improve environmental quality related to water and wildlife habitat. The land enrolled in the CRP has permanent cover, either grass or trees, planted on it. The cost to cover the land was split between the landowner and the government. Over the duration of the program, the landowner receives an annual rent for each acre enrolled, which is taken out of production for a period of 10 years.

From 1986 through 1990, more than 2.9 million acres of Kansas cropland were enrolled, more than 60 percent of which is in western Kansas (west of Russell). The total area enrolled represents 9.9 percent of the tillable cropland in Kansas or an area of approximately 4,300 square miles. That's a lot of land!

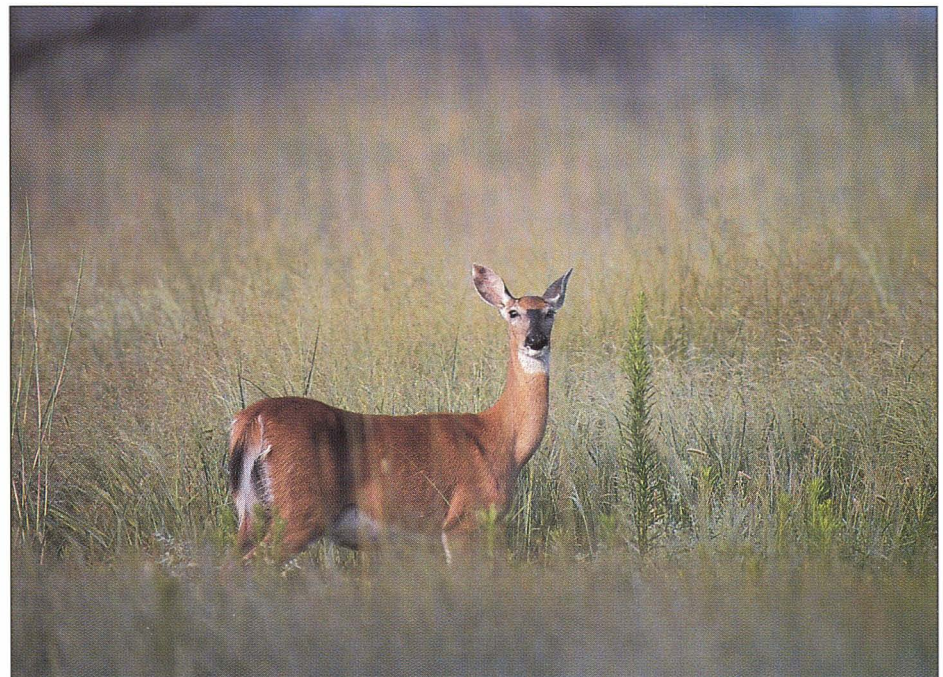
Last winter, Kansas State University, in cooperation with the Department of Wildlife and Parks, conducted a study of about 3,000 CRP contract holders in the state — about 10 percent of the total Kansas contract holders. This study was conducted to determine their feelings about the program and the benefits it provides to wildlife. The contract holders that were sampled were chosen so that they would represent all Kansas contract holders. Some of the statistics produced from the study may surprise you.

More than 67 percent of the respondents to the survey said that wildlife was an important consideration in their choice of farming practices, and 45.8 percent said providing habitat for wildlife was an important reason they participated in the CRP program. Almost 65 percent of those responding said CRP had increased wildlife diversity on their farm. As far as what species increased, deer appear to have benefitted the most with 68 percent of the respondents reporting an increase. However, pheasant and quail were only slightly behind with 67.8 percent and 60.8 percent respectively. Other species benefitting were turkey, prairie chicken, dove, squirrel, rabbits, songbirds and coyotes.

Since Kansas is not a state where waterfowl typically nest, no mention of them was made in this particular survey. However, surveys in the northern Plains States have shown a tremendous increase in nesting success rates for waterfowl. Waterfowl nesting in CRP lands adjacent to wetlands show a nesting success rate of almost 23 percent versus only 8 percent success on other nesting areas. So, if you've seen an increase in migrating



It was expected that CRP would benefit grassland species like pheasants, quail and prairie chickens, but songbirds like this dickcissel also benefitted.



More than half of the respondents said that wildlife was a concern in their farming practices. Most said they were seeing more deer as a result of CRP.



The most profound impact of CRP on wildlife may be witnessed in the northern prairie states, where flooded CRP has created the best nesting conditions waterfowl have had in many years.

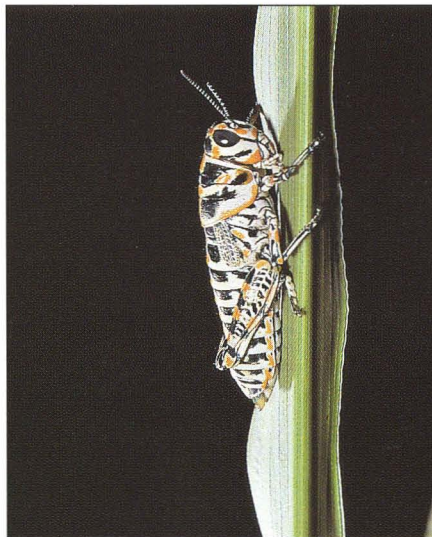
waterfowl recently (which we have 1994), some credit is due to the CRP.

The overall increase in wildlife populations is a result of more than just the amount of land enrolled in the program. A host of factors have contributed to the increase.

One of the most important factors is the way in which the land was set aside. The land is not one large piece but many small parcels of land scattered throughout the state. The amount of land enrolled by each farmer varies from a mere five acres to more than 500. With more than 30,000 individual contracts across the state, it's easy to see that we indirectly created thousands of small habitat oases for wildlife. This allowed wildlife species throughout the state to benefit, rather than those in a specific area.

The type of cover also played a significant role in increasing

wildlife. The majority of CRP land in Kansas was planted in native grasses. These grasses provide wildlife with multiple benefits (see "Native Grass: Lifeblood Of The



There's more to the ecosystem of CRP than meets the eye . . . initially.

Prairie" July/August 1994). Some varieties provide food, some provide necessary nesting, brood-rearing and roosting cover. Native grasses are much better for wildlife than other cover options.

Large areas of natural grass also provide wildlife shelter from predators. Land that is intensively farmed may only provide narrow corridors of cover, which allow predators easy access to prey species.

Hunters in Kansas are very familiar with CRP lands. The survey showed more than 75 percent of the respondents allowed recreational activities, including hunting, on their land. While the majority of those landowners allow access to family members, more than 40 percent of the respondents said they allowed recreational access to anyone who asked permission.

It's obvious that the benefits to wildlife and sportsmen as a result of the CRP have been numerous. Unfortunately, the program is due to terminate beginning in 1995 unless Congress reauthorizes the CRP or creates a similar program in the 1995 Farm Bill. One of the most successful government programs for stopping soil erosion, enhancing wildlife and reducing surplus crops is at risk of being drastically reduced or eliminated altogether.

The majority of the CRP land in Kansas was enrolled in 1986 and 1987. This means that unless the program is renewed, almost 2 million acres will be available for tillage in 1996 and 1997. Whether or not this land returns to production depends on several factors.

According to the Kansas State University survey, if Congress were to reauthorize the CRP in a form similar to its current one, a majority of landowners would leave their land in the program. Specifically, if

given the opportunity to re-enroll in the CRP, 88 percent of the respondents would keep their land in the program for an additional five years, and 84 percent said they would re-enroll for another 10 years.

If congress doesn't reauthorize the CRP or create a similar program, the magnitude of the changes in land currently in the program are less clear. Almost 37 percent of the survey respondents said they had no plans or were uncertain about what they would do with land now enrolled when contracts expire. Almost as many respondents (36.2 percent) said they planned to use their CRP for livestock grazing, and 28.5 percent said they would return their CRP land to crop production. However, plans are likely to change once the end of the CRP gets closer.

The survey asked program par-

ticipants what might influence their decisions. As you might expect, crop and livestock prices were rated as the most important factor in the decision, followed by the availability of government cost sharing for fencing and livestock water development. Many farmers who are thinking about grazing their CRP land may not currently have a livestock grazing operation. Constructing fences will be a major cost to them.

Many factors that will affect the fate of the CRP are far beyond the control of farmers. One such example is trade negotiations, such as NAFTA and GATT, that may affect the federal government's ability to control farm product prices.

In the end, the fate of the CRP program lies in the hands of Congress and indirectly in each of

our hands. Since we are trying to reduce the federal deficit, it seems unlikely that CRP will exist in a similar form after 1995. However, with enough pressure from conservationists, recreationists and wildlife enthusiasts, Congress may see fit to continue the program or create a similar program that will hopefully maintain CRP's benefits of decreased soil erosion, increased water quality and increased wildlife numbers.

Note: More complete results of Kansas State University's CRP participants study can be found in The Future of Conservation Reserve Program Land in Kansas: The Landowner's View by Penelope L. Diebel, Ted T. Cable and Philip S. Cook, Agricultural Experiment Station, Kansas State University, Manhattan, Report of Progress 690.





Bowhunting Mindgames

by Mike Miller
editor, Pratt

photos by Mike Blair

Bowhunting deer can be an emotional roller coaster, producing incredible highs when things go right, or tremendous lows when mistakes are made. You can improve your success and enjoyment of bowhunting through advanced preparation.

Standing rock-still in my tree stand, I cocked my head to better hear the faintest crunching of leaves just 30 yards away. I strained to pinpoint the sound's location. Then my eyes caught movement — light brown and dark brown visible through the screen of branches and leaves — a deer! My body's first reaction to this stimulus was butterflies shooting through my stomach. I'd waited many hours to see a deer, and it was finally about to happen. I was surprised at how I felt. My pulse quickened, my hands began to sweat and my breaths came fast and shallow. And this was before I'd actually seen the whole animal. Seconds later my eyes confirmed my hopes when a small buck stepped into the open 30 yards away. Completely unaware of my presence, the buck walked slowly on a trail that led past my tree stand. At this realization, my heart began pumping almost audibly. I could feel each beat in my neck, and it grew faster. As I readied my bow, I realized that my left knee was visibly quivering.

However, the little buck turned off the trail before getting close enough for a bow shot. When I finally decided the deer was gone, I had an adrenaline crash. I was both excited and shaken and suddenly felt the chill of the cool October air. I was disappointed that I hadn't had a shot opportunity but also a little relieved. This was the first deer I'd

seen while bowhunting, and I was surprised at how it affected me.

Bowhunting is an intense activity. Few experiences affect a hunter emotionally like a close encounter while bowhunting, which is probably why so many who try bowhunting become so devoted. There seems little room for casual bowhunters. Either you love it, breathe it and live it, or you don't bowhunt.

Many hunters simply don't have time for the advanced preparation bowhunting requires. A dedicated bowhunter spends many hours preparing equipment — setting up, tuning and shooting his bow, choosing the right size and length arrows, selecting broadheads — all of which can be a little overwhelming. In addition, you must find a good hunting area, scout for suitable stand sites and put up tree stands. Scouting is critical to bowhunting

success since most bow shots on deer will be less than 20 yards. Being in the right place at the right time is absolutely necessary.

This kind of commitment either immediately or eventually weeds out those with little time, other commitments or lack of desire. Bowhunting surely requires a solid devotion, initially.

After a hunter has some years of bowhunting experience under his or her belt, the annual preparation



Tuning your bow and honing your shooting skills are both keys to developing confidence you'll need to bowhunt.

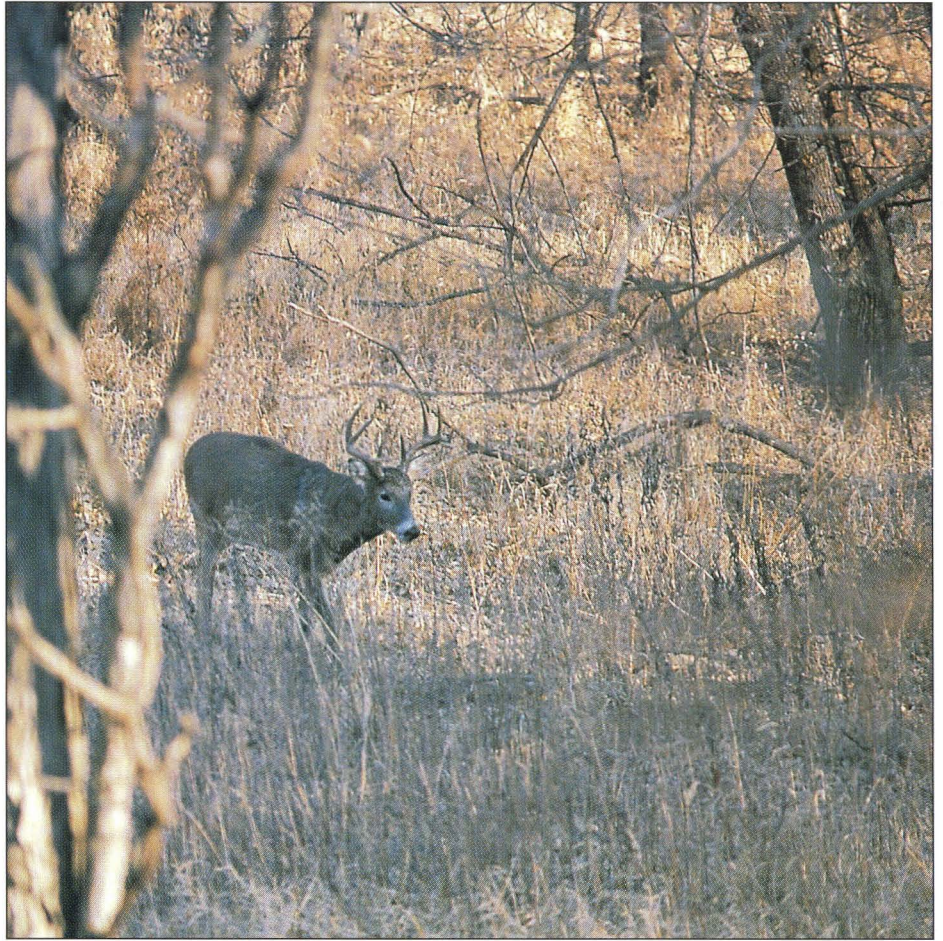
becomes less intense, or maybe it's just more routine. Expectations may not be as lofty, or the goals of the hunt are more clearly defined. How you measure bowhunting success will mold your approach.

One thing bowhunting never becomes is easy. You may take a much more relaxed approach, spend fewer hours in the stand and put less emphasis on taking a deer, but when the adrenaline-rushing, knee-knocking, up-close opportunity arises, you must be prepared. There's nothing casual about killing a deer with a bow, and if you don't have the proper attitude through preparation, you'll most likely end up disappointed, perhaps even demoralized. I'd like to think most hunters would feel committed to this preparation, as much for the animal's sake as their own.

An important first step in preparation is shooting your bow. After the fundamentals of shooting a bow are mastered, and after the hours practice make shooting second nature, there's a large piece of the preparation puzzle still left: mental attitude. It will mean the difference between a satisfying hunt you're proud of and an embarrassing incident you'd rather forget. Many activities require similar mental preparation, but because of the emotional aspect of bowhunting, the mental phase is critical.

One basic element of this attitude is controlled by ethics. Laws and regulations are in place to help ensure that hunters behave in a manner that will protect the resource and the hunting privilege. However, a solitary hunter has only his or her own ethics to follow in the field. Defining these ethics and maintaining a standard of behavior accordingly is a perfect start in your mental preparation.

Aside from regulations, ethics will vary from hunter to hunter. For example, one bowhunter may be proficient shooting to 30 yards, so his ethical distance limit is 30 yards. If that hunter maintains those ethics, a large buck at 40 yards will be passed up. If the hunter breaks his own ethics and tries the shot, the



Seeing a deer while bowhunting can have a profound effect on a hunter. It's easy to get excited and forget personal limits, ethics and other considerations. Before you hunt, establish your ethics and decide what your personal goals are, then abide by them.

pressure of bowhunting is suddenly magnified. A wounded deer could result. When the pressure to kill a deer overrides personal ethics or even laws, the hunter has failed in his responsibility to himself and to the animal. If the hunter's motivation to be successful is driven by ego, money or fame, the hunter can be detrimental to the sport of bowhunting.

Pressure to kill a big buck, inadequate preparation and unrealistic expectations will usually lead to negative experiences. And these negatives can affect the bowhunter for years. Because mental attitude is such a critical aspect of preparation, it's imperative that a bowhunter understand his own limitations, then set his personal ethics and hunt by them.

The next aspect of a proper attitude is confidence, and this can be

gained several ways. The most important confidence builder is shooting practice. You have to be sure of where your arrow is going. Any doubts in your shooting ability will be magnified when you draw on a deer. NEVER chance it and hope you get lucky. Luck is only involved in getting within bowrange, not making a good shot. If you have any conscience, making a poor shot under these circumstances will crush your mental attitude. Shoot until you have several physical routines to go through as well as several mental routines. For example, know exactly how your hand should fit on the bow's grip and where your release hand should touch your neck. In addition, mentally note a phrase that helps you shoot accurately, such as "pick a spot" or "smooth release."

It never ceases to amaze me how

practice can affect your mental attitude/confidence, both positively and negatively. In one case, a faulty bow rest caused a hunter to shoot erratically in practice. His confidence was shattered since just days before he'd been shooting excellent groups. However, when the rest moved and the arrows began to miss their mark, his confidence was shaken and he began to make physical shooting form errors. His shooting deteriorated and he even developed some symptoms of target fright — all because of a faulty rest and, of course, the resulting lack of confidence. On the other hand, a tuned bow that's shooting perfect arrows can boost a shooter's confidence immeasurably.

There's only one way for these confidence builders to help when you're drawn on a real deer, and that's if you practice them. Shoot throughout the season to maintain form and muscle strength. And a quick practice arrow from the tree stand before your hunt might spook a nearby deer, but it can also swell your shooting confidence.

Another confidence builder is much less tangible, but no less crit-

ical. Your overall mental outlook about the hunt will affect your confidence. This does not mean telling yourself over and over that you can do it. This means putting yourself in the right frame of mind to do what's right when an opportunity presents itself. If you're too hesitant, you'll lose opportunities; on the other hand, if you're too eager, you'll make costly mistakes. If you put too much emphasis on taking a trophy-sized buck, you may also make mistakes. Remember this: A hunter can do everything in his or her power to make a good, clean shot, and something can still go wrong. It won't be pleasant, but personally I can live with knowing I did everything I could. However, I won't accept a mistake that occurs because I took a chance or ignored one of my own ethical standards. You may know bowhunters who get away with taking these chances, and you may even do it yourself, but sooner or later it will catch up to you. It's not worth it.

I've taken a much more relaxed attitude to my bowhunting in recent years. I'm not in such a big hurry any more, and I make sure to enjoy

each outing. I learned a valuable lesson during my third bowhunting season. I'd taken two small bucks in previous seasons, and I thought I needed to kill a large buck that year. I was hunting an area with only a modest population of deer, but there was plenty of sign left by a mature buck. After many trips and a only a few smaller bucks that I passed up to show for my efforts, I was losing hope. I hadn't seen a deer in the last four or five trips, and my optimism was low. On this cold December morning, I hung my bow on a branch and snuggled up to the tree I was perched in to keep warm. Seconds later, I heard a faint crunch and leaned out to see the deer trail — there the buck was. But I wasn't ready, and as I'd leaned out to see the trail, my coveralls had made a slight noise sliding against the tree bark. The buck stopped and looked directly at me, then moved around my stand out of range. I was devastated. Not just disappointed, but totally devastated. The only thing that could have made the situation worse was if I'd taken a shot at the deer as it walked out of sight. All I could do was think of "what ifs" — What if I'd been ready. What if I hadn't hung my bow. . .

The point is that I'd put so much importance on killing a large buck that I'd forgotten to enjoy the hunting experience. I'd sat in that stand more than 40 times that season and finally got a glimpse of the buck. That alone is an accomplishment. With several more years of experience, I learned to be a better hunter, set up better stands and be more aware of my surroundings. And I also learned that it's no fun to put such heavy expectations on the success of my bowhunting. I'd had some good outings that year, but I trashed them all because



Gene Brehm photo

When done right, there are few hunting challenges as rewarding as bowhunting. But taking a deer's life with a bow is never easy and should not be taken lightly. The hunter must accept this responsibility and behave accordingly, both for the deer and for the future of bowhunting.


I missed the one opportunity. If the truth were known, I'd have been thrilled if I'd cleanly taken a smaller buck that walked down the trail earlier in the season.

Before you hunt, decide what your true goals are. Establish your ethical standards, then stick to both, regardless of what other bowhunters are doing. I'm not saying that waiting for a big buck is wrong, as long as you do it for the right reasons and you don't base your hunting success on the Pope and Young score of its antlers. There are few outdoor challenges more difficult than bowhunting a mature white-tailed buck. The score of the antlers should only be a way to compare deer, not a measure of success. Getting caught up in the

"record-book syndrome" is often a disappointing mistake that can put unnecessary pressure on your hunting.

To avoid this pitfall make up your mind that you'll take the opportunity that comes your way. If things don't work out tonight, then they will tomorrow morning, or the next day. Appreciate being in the field and having the privilege to hunt. Never base your expectations for success on the killing of a deer or the size of its rack. Nothing is more fruitless than to hunt for weeks, do everything legal and ethical, make a good clean shot, then be disappointed in the size or score of the buck's rack.

Remember also that bowhunting is a recreation, a release, that you

should enjoy. Do whatever brings you the most pleasure. Don't let peer pressure convince you of anything else. A successful bowhunt lets you to forget about your job and any worries that are adding stress to your life. Seeing a sharp-shinned hawk glide through the branches of the tree you're sitting in or a bobcat slinking silently down the trail are elements of a truly successful hunt. And deer, well, deer are icing on the cake. And while the adrenalin rush and emotional roller coaster that leads up to killing a deer with your bow is an unforgettable experience, it does have its downside. Once your tag is on the deer, your bowhunting is over for the year. 





Everybody Here is Hunting Mad

by David Schafer
Kansas City, Missouri

photos by Mike Blair

Historical Fort Scott was on the western frontier in the 1800s. Soldiers stationed there soon discovered a hunting mecca.

On crisp autumn mornings when I had a day off from my park ranger job at Fort Scott National Historic Site, I would drive in the predawn darkness to my favorite duck pond south of town. While peering through the Indian grass that surrounded my blind, I waited for legal shooting

time and wondered what hunting was like for the military officers at Fort Scott 150 years ago. What sweeping vistas greeted them as they rode out to their favorite hunting spots?

In the years before Kansas became a state, the scenery and plentiful game must have been

spectacular. Second Lieutenant David A. Russell, stationed at Fort Scott in December 1845, summed it up in a letter to his brother in Ohio: "The opportunities for fishing and hunting cannot be surpassed at any other post in the army."

Established in 1842, Fort Scott was situated in the midst of rolling

tallgrass prairie on a limestone bluff overlooking the heavily timbered Marmaton River. Just a half-dozen miles from the Missouri line, it was indeed the place "where the sky began." Easterners were struck by the immenseness of the open land. Even Lieutenant Russell's initial reaction to Fort Scott was not favorable. He complained, "It is the most lonely, dreary and manforsaken place you ever saw."

The Fort Scott area was ideally suited for the endless variety of wildlife it supported. The fort was built in a biological "edge" area with thousands of acres of virgin prairies, natural lakes and densely wooded streams nearby. The prairie grasses burned often, killing any small tress trying to sprout. Near creeks and rivers, moisture and dense vegetation provided an impenetrable barrier against the raging fires.

Captain George A. McCall described the Garden of Eden-like variety of wildlife to be found in the vicinity of Fort Scott. In season, "we have the deer, turkey, grouse, partridge, woodcock, snipe, plover of half a dozen or more species; and on the lakes near the river, swans, geese, of two or three species; and ducks without number; pelicans, sand-hill cranes, etc. Altogether, including its fine climate, it is a glorious country for the sportsman."

The garrison at Fort Scott usually consisted of eight officers and 150 enlisted men. Most officers came from well-to-do families and were educated at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, while the men they commanded were often illiterate. Soldiers under the rank of lieutenant were not of the proper social station and did not enjoy the opportunities for pleasure hunting like their commanders. During non-duty hours, officers donned their buckskin hunting outfits and hunted migrating ducks with black powder guns or searched for coyotes and deer with hunting dogs.

The lone authorized civilian on post, the sutler Hiero T. Wilson, provided hunting supplies the officers could not have received or



Muzzleloading rifles and shotguns were the weapons of Fort Scott's first soldiers. Ducks, deer and coyotes were the most commonly sought after game, and records indicate that hunting dogs were used whenever they were available.

bought from the government. In September 1844, Fort Scott officers purchased from Wilson such items as a box of percussion caps for 12 1/2 cents, 3 pounds of shot for 25 cents, a powder flask for \$1.50 and a pound of black powder for 50 cents.

Captain Thomas Swords, designer and stern post-quartermaster of Fort Scott, wrote numerous letters to fellow dragoon officer Abraham Johnston, who was stationed elsewhere on the frontier. Swords frequently inserted references to hunting in his correspondence. In a December 1842 letter, he remarked that Captain William Euis (stationed a few miles away at the post's saw mill) had plenty of "horses [,] guns [,] pointers and hounds, but never hunts, . . . I go out generally when the others do, that is once or twice a week if the weather permits — sometimes have fine sport — have a very fine country to run over and not the same chance as at L. (Fort

Leavenworth) for a body to get his neck broken."

The home of "Colonel" George Douglas, about 10 miles into Missouri, was a favorite hunting destination. Mr. Douglas was an early settler of Vernon County, Mo., who helped the military select the site of Fort Scott. In March 1843, Post Commander Benjamin Moore took advantage of the spring waterfowl migration and spent at least four days shooting ducks with Douglas. Captain Swords noted the arrival to the fort of a pack mule loaded down with ducks.

In December 1844, in a letter to Johnston, Swords asserted: "Every body here is hunting mad. Hunting and dogs constitute their thoughts by day and dreams by night — have caught two bucks, with the greyhounds, so that wolf chasing is thrown quite in the shade — there are many deer about and at least two hunters for every deer — the Delawares and Pottawattamies

camped in every direction — I go out occasionally but being very unsuccessful as usual [do] not make a business of it — “

Captain Swords noted that Native Americans competed with Fort Scott’s hunters for deer. The Delaware, Pottawatomie and other tribes were relocated from the East to present-day Kansas to join the native Kanza and Osage Indians. The mission of Fort Scott’s garrison was to keep peace along the “permanent Indian frontier” west of Missouri and Arkansas.

Several officers viewed hunting as a welcome diversion to the isolation, monotony and rigors of military life on the frontier. Swords said of Captain Burdett Terrett: “Duck-shooting and wolf chasing are the only things that at all reconcile him to the place.”

Captain Swords’ wife, Charlotte, was a vivacious busy-body, conscious of her proper role in society. Her keen sense of humor helped her cope with life at the edge of civiliza-

tion. In a letter to Captain Johnston she declared: “I hunt with my husband and in the hall stands my bow and arrow ready strung for the first unfortunate Buffalo that makes his appearance at Scott.” She would have waited a long time, since bison ranged at least 200 miles west of the fort.

Captain McCall, who was stationed at Fort Scott from 1843 to 1845, wrote at great length about his hunting trips in his book *Letters From the Frontiers*. Vivid descriptions of hunting escapades with his dogs and “negro boy Jordan” near Fort Scott were included in McCall’s letters. (In the antebellum army, many officers — even New Yorkers like Thomas Swords — were slave holders.) McCall’s favorite hunting dog was a setter and pointer cross named, of all things, Blue. According to McCall, Blue was bred from imported stock and had a massive head with a deep, broad chest. Although Blue had a wonderful nose for grouse, woodcock or

turkey, McCall bragged: “It was as a deer-dog he was destined to shine without a rival.”

In early November 1844, George McCall described killing a deer without firing a shot. Blue surprised a bedded down buck, eventually catching hold of a rear leg when the deer stumbled in the tall “horse-weeds” (probably big bluestem grass which can grow to a height of nearly nine feet). With his hunting knife, McCall slit the buck’s throat, but failed to kill the strong animal as the deer leaped away with Blue in hot pursuit. Blue and McCall caught up with the buck 25 yards away as it failed to cross a gully. Jordan and the Captain packed the animal back to the fort with a story to tell.

Hunting was a part of life on the frontier. Hunting not only provided spirited adventure and recreation, it put food on the table. The old army was famous for its redundant meals of salt pork, bread and beans. Vegetables from the post gardens and wild turkey or venison were welcome additions to the dining room table.

Westward movement after the Mexican and Civil wars brought railroads, farmers and cities to the prairie, shattering the world the Fort Scott hunters knew. Fortunately with modern conservation and the use of regulations, licensing and habitat preservation, we all can enjoy a day afield as much as Captain McCall or Lieutenant Russell did a century and a half ago.

Today, we are likely to see barbed wire and tractors rather than the panoramic scenes Captain McCall described. However, we can enjoy reading McCall’s descriptions, and we can relate to his sentiments after a hard day in the field: “On reaching my quarters, I found a turkey just ready to be dished; and by the time dinner was on the table, I had made my ablutions, dressed, and was ready to sit down to it, with a hunter’s appetite, which is next in degree, and only inferior to that of a soldier’s after a hard day’s march. Good-night.”



White-tailed deer were nearly eliminated from Kansas near the end of the 1800s. But today, thanks to wildlife law enforcement and modern wildlife management, we can enjoy deer hunting much the same as they did in the 1840s.



Dustin Teasley illustration

A Bowhunting Journal

text and photos by Mike Blair
staff photographer, Pratt

Many hunters keep daily journals of their hunting experiences. Previous journals may help a hunter decide when to hunt a particular stand or when the peak of the rut occurs in his region. It can also provide fun and interesting reading, reflecting on seasons past.

November is a destination for the hunting archer — not so much a time, as a place. Nestled between October's color and December's gloom, this is deer time — the season when big bucks materialize from seemingly empty thickets. Does and fawns travel freely now, while the last of the foliage blows from treetops. Temperatures are fickle, one day in the 80s and the next in the 30s. Bowhunters anxiously watch weather and wind, savoring the days and hoping for snow. Every spare moment is given to the autumn woods, waiting for the chance. Win or lose, the contest is exciting; hours afield are unforgettable, and the participant is enriched by November's magic days — days like these...

1989

Nov.13: Afternoon sunny, 58 degrees, NW wind 15 mph. Went to

Lear's to build new stand on creek crossing. While scouting area, walked into silo lot and jumped a big 10-point from tall weeds into a wooded draw. Looped around draw and tried horn rattling without success. Since it was 3:30 p.m., climbed into a nearby tree-stand and waited, hoping the buck would eventually return. At 4:36, saw a true monster whitetail walking down the trail from west. Deer was a clean 10-point, easily the biggest buck I've ever seen. Buck stopped 22 yards away, making a scrape and chewing overhead twigs. I drew and aimed, but one small limb was in the way, so I let off. Then the deer quartered away, and I took a 27-yard walking shot. Arrow passed just beneath the chest for a clean miss. Deer jumped twice, then stood for several minutes before spotting me in the stand and leaving. Then I got the shakes! I'd never seen the deer before, and haven't seen it since. It was a disappointing miss, but I wouldn't trade the experience; I'll never forget that magnificent gray deer walking down the backlit trail.

Nov.14: Sunny, 50 degrees, S wind 10 mph. Mid-afternoon, walked in to check stand where buck was missed the previous evening. Wind was funky, so decided against hunting there. While leaving, saw yearling 8-point cruising through area, so sat down in open understory and blew on grunt tube. Buck walked within 15 yards and studied me, growing nervous. Had leftover firearms buck permit and statewide tag, so decided to shoot the deer. The buck turned away, and I drew from a kneeling position. Perfect quartering away opportunity at 22 yards, but arrow missed wide!

Nov.16: Sunny, 30 degrees, N wind calm. Got into stand at noon. At 2:20 p.m., yearling buck crossed silo pasture 100 yards east. I rattled antlers, and buck immediately started my way. Walked on trail directly beneath treestand, forcing a straight-down shot. Bowstring caught on jacket pocket, and arrow



Bowhunting requires patience and determination. There will be many trips to the stand with nothing to show but cold feet, but when the buck finally appears, it's worth it.

corkscrewed off course with so little oomph that it didn't even stick in ground. Deer boogied. Having tough luck with shots.

Nov. 21: Daybreak, partly cloudy, 40 degrees, E wind 10 mph. Sat Penney stand. At 8:10 a.m., doe ran through woods with yearling buck in pursuit. The pair wound through the woods, running into bow range several times, but never stopping for a shot. Finally, doe seemed to lose buck. While he stood 100 yards distant, I rattled antlers to attract his attention. Immediately heard a stick break behind me and saw nice 2-yr-old 10-point trotting in. Picked up bow in full view of the deer, drew and shot perfectly at 12 yards. Buck went down in sight.

1990

Nov. 10: Daybreak, sunny, 40 degrees, calm. Pheasant opener. Sat Penney stand. At 7:45 a.m., rattled antlers and saw yearling 8-point

approaching from east. Buck walked into shooting lane and offered perfect broadside shot at 15 yards. Passed. Ten minutes later, 2-yr-old 10-point followed his trail, and presented second excellent shot. Passed him also. Then at 8:05, a mature 9-point I had watched and filmed during late summer came walking, but it took a different trail, which brought the deer past at 35 yards. I drew early and held the 30-yard pin high on shoulder, leading target 18 inches — perfect lung shot. Deer fell at base of steep hill, so I headed into the nearby pheasant cover and rounded up some friends to help drag the deer out.

Nov. 17: Daybreak, clear, 28 degrees, calm. Hunted Penney stand with oldest daughter, Jennie. At 8:00 p.m., Jennie spotted nice 3-year-old buck to north. I grunted and got deer's attention, and he walked into meadow 50 yards

away. Then he turned and trotted up hill. I picked up antlers and rattled vigorously, and the deer raced back into range, stopping 22 yards broadside. I shot, but arrow deflected from unseen twig. Especially disappointing miss. Saw several other deer running through timber to east, in rut chase. A doe and two fawns came under stand at 9:00 but passed them up.

Nov. 20: Sunny, 50 degrees, S wind 20 mph. Evening, hunted ground blind at Lear's, on small bluff overlooking creek crossing. Set up buck decoy in open, quartering to me at 20 yards. Then horn-rattled periodically. At 5:00 p.m., a yearling 7-point approached from west, exhibiting classic threat behavior; spent minutes posturing, with hair erect and ears back, as approached "new" deer. Still had leftover firearms "buck only" permit for the unit, and filled it with this deer. Took a perfect, 25 yard quartering away shot. Even after hit, buck continued aggression toward decoy, before collapsing. Exciting hunt!

1991

Nov. 7: Snow gone, partly cloudy, E wind 15 mph, high 27. Worked until noon, then headed to Cote's. No scrape activity. Walked into barn area, looked west and saw 4 big deer on fenceline 400 yards away. Wind wrong to make play, so headed to Lear's, talked with landowner until 4:00 p.m. Took ground stand in location never before hunted. Before sunset, a big 10-point approached and made scrapes just 35 yards away. Too brushy to shoot, so blew grunt tube as deer began to leave. Buck turned ears but continued walking away, so I rattled antlers. This time, deer paused momentarily and looked back, then walked out of sight. I immediately followed on soft ground, allowing good speed to

catch up. But suddenly a smaller 10-point met me, jumping a fence and pinning me at close range. I started to draw arrow, but buck saw me from 15 yards and ran away.

Nov. 18: Dad sat Loggy Bayou stand at daybreak, no action. Wind calm, 32 degrees, clear. I sat Penney stand, saw six does and two fawns, 40 yards away. On way out, saw big buck at west end of timber. Checked Cote's but no action. In afternoon, horn-rattled for Dad from north line to CRP. Heard leaves crunching after first sequence, and 2-year-old 10-point walked into perfect shooting lane for me. Deer stopped and stared, then looked away. Dad had only buck tag between us, and couldn't shoot due to tree. Deer walked away with no shots taken, even though it presented a perfect 20-yard target. Rattled along creek until dark, but saw nothing else.

Nov. 28: Winter storm, E wind 20 mph, 31 degrees, snowing heavily. At 2:00 p.m., walked into Geiger's in deepening snow, hoping to fill

unit doe permit. Saw single deer at half-mile line along windbreak, and headed into trees to stillhunt. Nearly at place where deer seen, caught movement in heavy snow, and beautiful 10-point buck worked slowly along treebelt into shooting range. Deer's face and back were covered with snow. No sound except the wind. Drew bow (no arrow, since buck tag already filled) on deer at 18 yards in wide open. Buck stood resting for a full minute, unaware of

danger. Drew three times at less than 30 yards as deer moved slowly away. When gone, I climbed mulberry and waited for does that never came. Snowfall continued as darkness fell. This was my last time to hunt in first segment, and so ended another magic November.

1992

Nov. 2: Clear, NW wind 15 mph, 55 degrees. Scouted all morning; found many sets of deer tracks crossing road. Drove to Simpson's area and found excellent trails as expected, but no sign of really big buck. Saw a 2-year-old buck run south out of windbreak. Good scrapes already



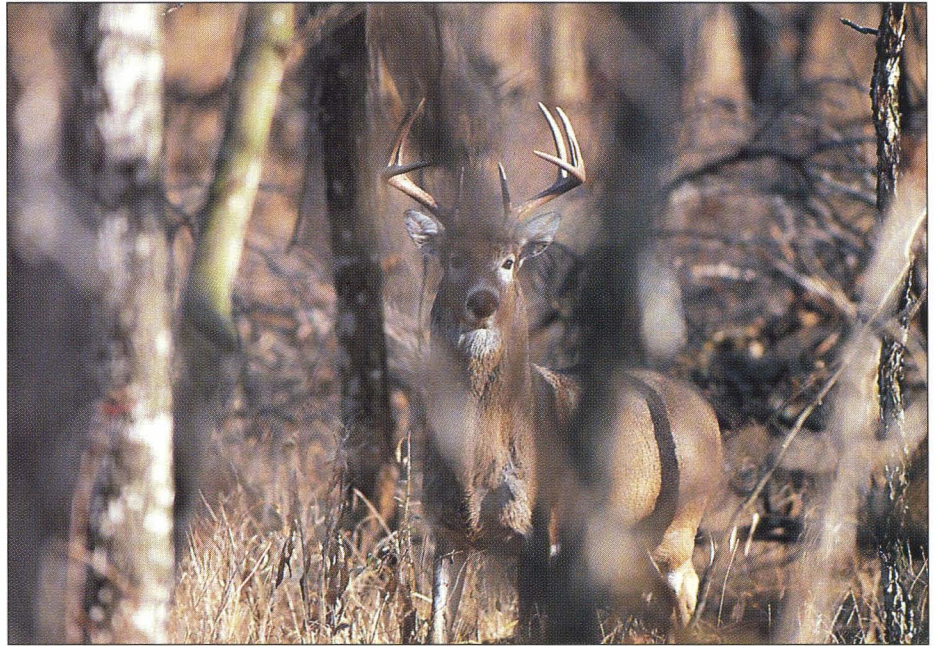
Keeping a journal of observations made each time in the field can provide the hunter with valuable information in future seasons. It can also be a fun way to relive hunts.

present. Drove south and checked trail timer on Lear's; five times were tripped —two at 10:30 p.m., one at 5:30 a.m., and two at 3:15 p.m. on previous day). Sat Geiger's in afternoon. Saw one buck running a mile away in corn across road, but got no shots and saw no other deer.

Nov. 3: Cold front moved through last night, cloudy, NW wind 25 mph, intermittent showers and sleet. Hunted afternoon only. Scouted Simpson's, then headed to Geiger's to break out tree blind. Saw no deer. As climbing down pine tree, handhold broke off, causing me to slide down trunk to ground. Sharp branch stub caused nasty cut on the inside of one leg (would take two months to heal). Fortunately, didn't prevent further hunting.

Nov. 5: Cloudy, 28 degrees, NW wind 10 mph, snowing. Hunting near Mound City, eastern Kansas. Climbed into hilltop stand in gray dawn. Conditions in woodland beautiful - could hear snowflakes hitting trees. Spooked doe and fawn going in, and deer separated. After 30 minutes, button buck approached treestand, offering 11-yard shot. Had two antlerless deer permits, so shot, made good hit and stayed in tree. Minutes later, an 8-point yearling buck came under stand and licked a mineral lick site 10 yards away, followed by a second small buck that started a sparring contest. Bucks finally moved on. At 8:39 a.m., a big doe and fawn worked along fenceline and crossed directly beneath me on way to mineral lick. Doe presented easy quartering shot at 14 yards. Got help, and carried both deer out of the difficult terrain on pole. My first "double" on deer.

Nov. 9: Full moon, S wind 20 mph, high humidity, 70 degrees, sunny. Hunted afternoon only, west end Lear's. Broken terrain, good muley country. Stillhunted for an hour, and spotted very big 10-point lying on grassy point, but deer saw me at same time. Tried to outguess his escape circle, but no luck.



You're caught! Either the wind shifted or you moved at just the wrong time. The jig is up and getting a shot at this buck is impossible. Oh well, there's always tomorrow.

Continued a short distance along creek, and saw coyote 100 yards away. Pulled out bleat deer call and started blowing loudly to attract his attention. Coyote circled into scentstream and boogered. Pocketed call, and turned to see dandy 10-point working treelims just 20 yards away. Deer had to have heard call, but didn't seem to be looking for its source. I drew arrow as buck stretched upward, offering ideal shot. Tempting as it was, passed opportunity and headed home.

Nov. 12: Clear, full moon setting at daybreak, NW wind 20 mph, 33 degrees. Heavy rain previous day, so trees were greasy wet. Climbed into hedgetree stand along creek. At 7:15 a.m., rattled antlers and hung them in tree, watching toward west. Heard sound behind me, and turned to see big 8-point only 10 yards away, already onto my scent trail and heading out. Deer crossed creek, and circled indifferently just out of bow range. Thirty minutes later, I rattled again and immediately saw large deer walking toward me in distant woods. Deer was 8-point, very big. Buck walked straight in to 10 yards, then suddenly became nervous. He turned,

and I made a faint noise on my portable stand. Deer looked at the base of tree, then turned and walked the other way. I started to draw, and the buck snapped its head upward to stare at me for two seconds. Then it resumed walking down a trail 12 yards away, and stepped behind a tree. I drew, and the deer lunged away as if shot from a canon. Frustrated, I watched the beautiful trophy disappear unharmed. Saw three other bucks in distance, but no shots.

Nov. 18: Cloudy, 40 degrees, NE wind 15 mph, steady rain; sat in stand from 3 p.m. until dark, and got soaked to skin. Saw nothing.

Nov. 19: Sat in drizzle half the morning, saw one doe feeding 100 yards away. Rain stopped, but day continued dreary. Walked into area with no treestands at 4:15 p.m., and climbed into low fork of tree to watch surrounding timber. Since woods were fairly open and could see well, hung bow on tree with arrow nocked. Just minutes later, turned head to see trophy 8-point only 15 yards away. How deer got there, I don't know. Though wind was to my advantage, deer was concerned about unnatural shape in

tree. Buck started circling, and unbelievably, I got the bow into my hands. After stopping to stare again, the buck again passed behind a tree just 10 yards away. I drew the arrow, and waited for him to clear the last limbs that prevented a shot. But at the last instant, he suddenly wheeled and ran for his life, preventing a shot. This was second time this deer had escaped me this season. Miffed, I had to admire his keen instincts.

Nov. 24: Heavy winter storm moved in; started snowing at 9:00 a.m. NE wind 30 mph, near-blizzard conditions. Headed for Lear's at 1:00 p.m., but roads drifted shut, so turned for Geiger area. Sneaked down windbreak and climbed tree, waiting in storm until an hour before dark. Got soaked, while clothing froze and arrows froze into quiver. Left without seeing a deer, afraid of getting stuck on way out. Barely made it.

Nov. 27: Clear, 32 degrees, deep snow and ice, woods noisy. Headed to Lear's with a mission: shoot deer today. Barely into tree at 4:00 p.m., when saw nice buck approaching. Deer jumped fence, came in behind. Shot was difficult, due to ice, but safety belt allowed me to turn just enough to make the 20-yard shot. Arrow passed through perfectly. Deer was very nice 10-point. Fine end to a great season.

1993

Nov. 4: Sunny, 62 degrees, NW wind 30 mph. Stillhunted Simpson windbreak, intent on scouting, but immediately got a yearling 7-point out of his bed. Wasn't interested in shooting deer, but for fun, stepped into open and drew arrow at 20 yards, expecting deer to run. Buck turned his head slightly, but stayed put. I walked five steps toward him, absolutely exposed, and still the deer stood. His eyes looked normal, but he couldn't seem to lock eye-to-eye, instead turning head and ears slightly at each crunch of my footsteps in the dry leaves. Got the impression that buck was blind. Drew an arrow 4 times over a sev-



Sometimes things all fall into place and the right buck is in the right place at the right time.

eral-minute period, in full view at less than 15 yards. The deer finally trotted off, but stayed within bow range for 10 minutes. Wierd! Later, jumped forky mule buck from same belt, but saw no big deer.

Nov. 6: Sunny, 42 degrees, NW wind 15 mph. Mid-afternoon, went to Lear's and placed tree steps at primary buck stand; this was first visit to site since treestand was placed in early September. Yearling 8-point was under stand when arrived. Also cleared downed treetop blown into a shooting lane by recent storm. Then headed to Geiger's hoping to fill a Unit Archery Permit (antlerless). Walked to end of windbreak in center of section, and climbed into natural mulberry stand. Five minutes later, saw doe approaching from CRP grass at 40 yards. Doe fed and milled around for 30 minutes, while a yearling buck with a downswept antler grunted and walked into view. I rattled, and the buck approached cautiously to within 30 yards. Presented nice shot before moving on, but passed. Just before sunset, the doe stepped onto a trail 10 yards away. Since I was only six feet off the ground and the wind was now calm, I waited for her to walk behind a tree before drawing the arrow. Deer heard me draw and

jumped three times before looking back. The 18-yard quartering shot was good, and she ran to the west. Went to town and got Mike Miller to help track in darkness, expecting rough go in CRP; but found deer in trees 150 yards down trail.

Nov. 8: Day dawned perfectly for deer hunting. Clear, calm, 20 degrees at sunrise; hard frost, barometer 30.10R, Solunar peak 30 minutes after sunrise, moon exactly last quarter. Climbed Lear stand and settled in before 7:00 a.m. At 7:15, 3-yr-old 10-point came from south and passed 70 yards away, walking steadily. No response to grunt

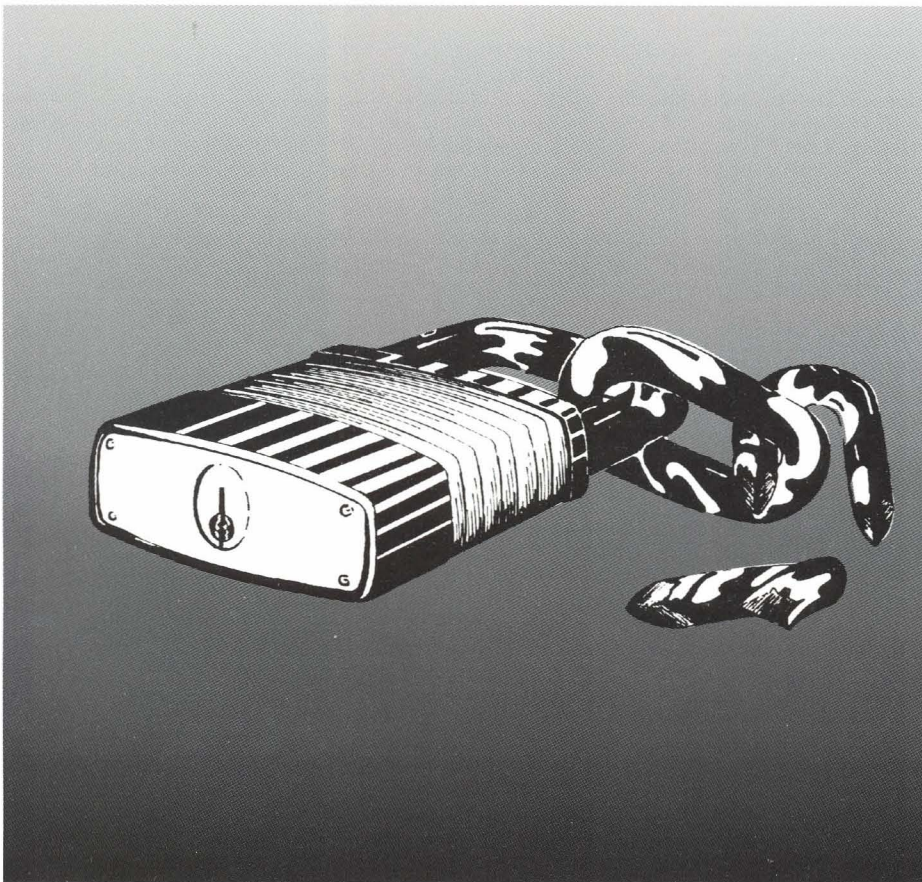
tube. Ten minutes later, a big 8-point appeared from south on same trail, making scrapes and rubs. Deer was vigorous, throwing soil 20 feet behind him as he pawed the dirt. I rattled antlers softly, but got no response. The buck continued to walk deliberately to selected spots, paying no attention to the increasingly urgent rattling and deer grunting from my stand. Finally, after I shook a massive grapevine in the treetop and rattled loudly, the buck looked my way before finishing one last scrape. Then he abruptly turned and started toward me. This was buck that had beaten me at close range twice before in earlier years, so I drew when it was still 40 yards away. Shot when deer was at 24 yards. Arrow hit shoulder blade, but penetrated 10 inches. Knew the shot was good, but decided to wait several hours before tracking. Started to climb down, when 2-year-old 10-point walked directly beneath me. Minutes later, trophy 9-point passed just at the edge of shooting range. In all, five bucks appeared during 45-minute wait — outstanding morning. Went to town, finished cutting up the doe taken several days earlier, and headed back with Miller and Brehm. Found the buck 200 yards from treestand.



Breaking The Code

by Marc Murrell
public information officer, Valley Center

It's hard to accept that thieves might infiltrate even our most sacred fraternities.



Dustin Teasley illustration

There are certain things that people just don't do. The lyrics of a Jim Croce song told of a few: "You don't tug on Superman's cape. You don't spit into the wind. You don't pull the mask of the ol' Lone Ranger, and you don't mess around with Jim." There are some others that come to mind, especially among hunters. One of the most aggravating happened to me during the 1993 archery season.

My hunting buddy Gary Church and I had permission to hunt a remote piece of property in Butler county. We scouted for suitable stand sites and put up several portable tree stands with hopes of seeing a big buck. Although I didn't get a shot from either of my stands, I did take a nice buck in early November on another piece of property. With several weeks of bow season left until the firearms opener, I left my stand for Gary to use.

Gary hunted the stand several times without much luck, and just before the firearms season opened, he

decided to take the stand down. However, when he and his 6-year-old son, Joshua, got to the tree, the stand was gone. Screw-in steps, stand and even the rope I used to haul my bow up had vanished.

What kind of a person would steal another hunter's stand? And what's worse, what kind of impression does this leave on young Josh's mind? Josh absolutely loves bowhunting and can't wait to bowhunt himself someday. Now he knows that nothing, not even the remote solitude of a bowhunting stand is safe from criminals.

Some low-life went to a lot of work to remove that stand. Although I have never had a stand stolen, I've read and heard about it happening and recently started locking some of my stands to the tree. I really didn't think it was necessary, but I hated the thought of losing one of my favorite stands. Apparently the lock and chain wasn't a deterrent.

Learning of the theft made me instantly angry. I wished aloud for the culprit to suffer a life-threatening injury the first time he climbed into

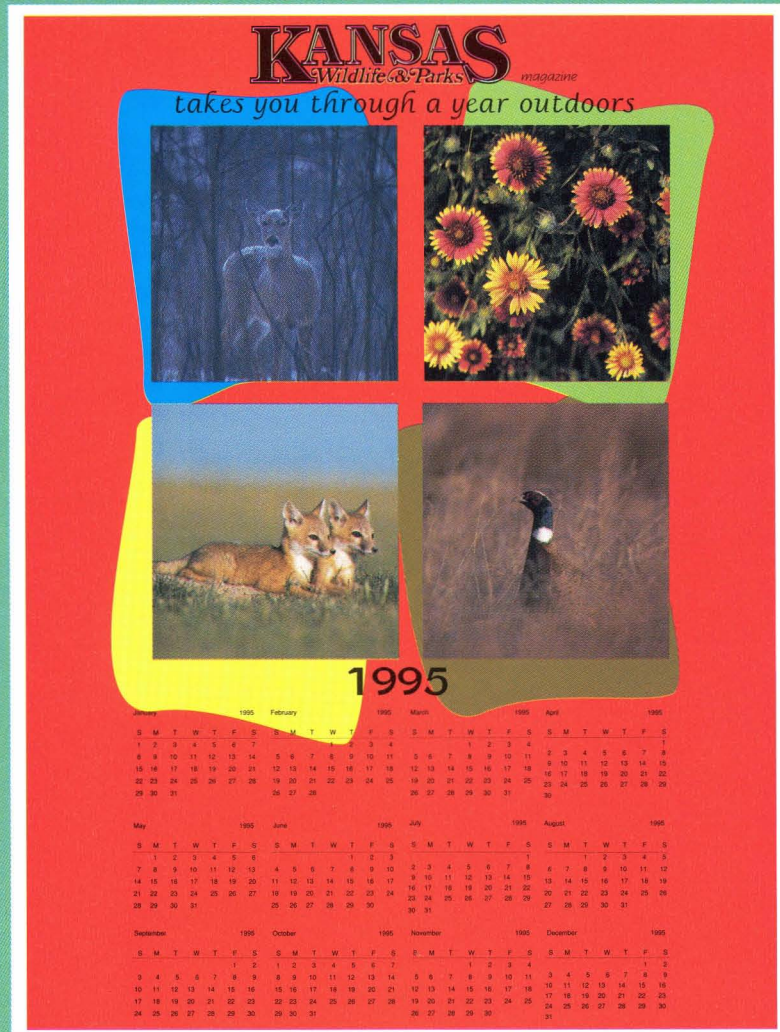
MY stand. I eventually got over the anger, but the thing that bothered me most was that the thief was likely someone who participated in the sport I dearly love — bowhunting.

Bowhunters are a unique bunch. No matter which walk of life they come from, true bowhunters have some very common interests and passions. There is a sense of connection with other bowhunters, even those you've never met, and all belong to a sort of brotherhood or family. I can't accept that another bowhunter would be shameless and deviant enough to steal from his own ranks, so I won't even consider the thief a bowhunter. Maybe he hunts with a bow, but he's still just a common thief — period!

All told I lost about \$100 worth of equipment. I can replace the stand, but I can't replace the sour taste left in my mouth by the theft. After all, there are some things you just don't do.



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Edited by Mark Shoup

AHH, KANSAS

Editor:

I have a deep affection for Kansas, having lived there seven years, a period in which I graduated from Kansas State University and acquired a lifelong penchant for hunting pheasants. After leaving Kansas in 1962, I continued to return each fall to seek out ringnecks and visit the wonderful people I had grown to know in Osborne County.

Numerous complications forced a nine-year absence beginning in 1985, but that absence ended last November when my son, a friend, and I returned to visit and hunt once again. It was the realization of every pheasant hunter's fantasy, with pheasant and quail numbers near an all-time high based on my experiences.

A phenomenally successful hunt was experienced again at the end of December. I keep a diary of my hunting trips, and in my season summary, the two high points are simply, "Kansas! Kansas!"

Richard E. Cooper
Lamar, Missouri

GAR CONCERN

Editor:

In the July/August issue of *Kansas Wildlife and Parks* (Page 9), an article about gar fishing appeared in my favorite outdoor magazine. I'm writing to express a concern I have regarding the way the writer killed his fish.

The U.S. District Court senior judge in Wichita wrote, "Catching a gar usually means killing it. I carry an 18-inch club or zapper on a thong, so I can hit the spent fish in its only vulnerable area — on its head, directly between its eyes." Is this legal? Can I hit any fish in the head with a club or zapper?

I wondered if a conservation officer

saw me hitting a fish in the head with a club if I would be issued a citation for illegal means of taking a fish and wanton waste. I believe according to the *1994 Kansas Fishing Regulations Summary*, the section under "Processing and Possession" lists ways to legally take fish. I couldn't find any method such as club or zapper listed as a legal means of taking fish.

Certain non-sport fish, such as gar and carp, can create problems for game fish in some waters. I would like to see a revision in the law to allow killing certain species of fish by club, zapper or just leaving on the bank to die. However, until the wanton waste law, taking methods, and processing of fish reflect the revision I hope to see, I will release unharmed any fish I do not want to take home to consume.

Richard Payton
Lawrence

Dear Mr. Payton:

"Wanton waste" and "methods of take" are two entirely different issues.

Regulations concerning methods of take are exactly that — methods of taking fish or game. Legal methods of take include rod and reel, trot line, bank or set lines and, for rough fish, bow and arrow, gigging and spear guns. As was evident in the gar fishing article, the method of take was rod and reel, more specifically, fly rod. Illegal means of taking a fish might include gigging or bow and arrow for sport fish and electrical current or hand fishing for all fish.

Wanton waste refers to what is done with the fish after they are caught, if they are not returned to the water unharmed. The author of the gar fishing article did not imply that he killed and left his fish on the river bank. I apologize if this was not clear. The author, in fact, gives the gar he catches to a person who cleans and

eats the fish.

The author maintains that because most fish become tangled in the nylon lure, killing them is necessary to remove them and to handle them safely while fishing from a float tube. There are no regulations concerning how you dispatch your fish after they are taken. Simply throwing the dead fish on the bank and leaving it would be a violation of the wanton waste regulation. The author does not do this.

—Miller

POKE REMINISCENCE

Editor:

Recently, we moved into an older two-story home, and in the process of cleaning up, I came across a *Kansas Wildlife and Parks* issue dated May/June 1989 with a story by Patricia Malony on pokeweed. I grew up in Kansas and Oklahoma, and we ate and canned poke salad. I was shocked to see the statement, "Poke is quite poisonous unless properly prepared."

My grandmother and mother taught me very young the various greens that were edible. We used poke the same as most people use spinach. We ate the leaves raw and still do in salads. We sometimes washed the poke and immersed it in boiling water just until it was limp and tender, then drained. Never did we put it in a pan and bring to a boil, and never was it boiled more than once. Once it was put in boiling water, we drained and cooked it in bacon fat and scrambled eggs in it.

The longer stalks were sliced thin, salt and peppered and tossed in cornmeal and fried like okra. We canned it in quart jars like you would spinach. Sometimes we mixed other greens, such as smooth- and curly-leaf dock, lamb's quarter, wild lettuce, and dandelion. (Did you know the dandelion is totally edible? The blossoms can be dipped in a batter and taste a lot like mushrooms. The leaves make salads and the roots

tea. The blossoms also make a mighty fine wine.)

The only part of poke we did not eat was the berries. However, the Indian women claimed to make pies with them, but since Grandma and Mom said "No, leave the berries for seed," I listened.

In Little Kansas, Okla., where I grew up, there was a canning factory. They canned for Allen Canning Factory out of Siloam Springs, Ark. People brought poke in by the sack full. It was placed on conveyors for the women and men to clean. It then went into a huge vat of boiling water for only a few minutes. Then they put it into tin cans. I worked there two years in 1956-57.

As one of 13 children, I helped Mom in the kitchen as soon as I could stand on a chair. We often canned 2,000 quarts of vegetables, fruits and berries. If it was edible, we canned it – poke, blackberry, huckleberry, green beans. We also ate wild onions and morel mushrooms. Rabbit, squirrel, fish, and pigeon were common sources of meat.

Faye Diekmann
Herington

Dear Ms. Diekmann:

You have a rich personal history. I hope you are passing some of this along to other generations. Too bad we don't learn some of this in school.

–Shoup

BOYHOOD WOODS

Editor:

I enjoyed reading the article from the gentleman in Sedan who made reference to the time and effort it takes to fill one's tags consistently (Kansas Wildlife and Parks, Nov./Dec. 1993, Page 24), and I agree wholeheartedly. I, too, live in Unit 12, but near Neodesha and enjoy the healthy deer herd we have and the opportunity you provide in allowing us a fun and rewarding challenge, both during the bow season and the firearms season.

Another perspective concerning this sport is the opportunity we had for the first time last year – the opportunity to

take my son afield bowhunting. He was able to not only share in prehunt scouting and learning, but actually enjoy the early morning sights and sounds and late evening happenings that we all cannot put into words, but enjoy thoroughly during a hunt. Your age limits are fine, and Andy will attest to the memories last spring when he harvested his first gobbler, too. I assure you his dad will also remember. Thanks for a great opportunity that I hope other fathers will not miss out on, and I know our kids will have a background that I wish all kids could experience.

Joe Gassaway
Neodesha

RATTLESNAKE BREAKS

Editor:

I am writing in response to Mr. Henry F. Barstow's letter regarding the Rattlesnake Roundup in Sharon Springs. Mr. Barstow states that he is not opposed to hunting of rattlesnakes for sport, and I too have no objections to sport hunting of rattlesnakes (or any other species). However, I do not feel that the activities associated with a rattlesnake roundup constitute sporting hunting. First of all, the event sponsors pay "hunters" for rattlesnakes. This is called bounty hunting. Secondly, a sport hunter takes an active interest in the functioning of the natural world and cares about the future well-being of his quarry. The roundup sponsors, by their own admission, subscribe to the "only good snake is a dead snake" mentality. Thirdly, a sport hunter kills his or her game immediately and with minimal suffering. Rattlesnake "hunters" crowd many live snakes into small containers for weeks or even months without food or water. The snakes are then used for reckless tricks and antics that have no place in true sport hunting.

KDWP has strict regulations regarding the handling of game. One cannot, for example, pack their limit of live rabbits into a box for a month, then kick them around a sideshow arena before processing them. Why should the case

be different for rattlesnakes? The roundup sponsors claim that sideshow to be educational. In truth, the show only degrades the animals and attempts to make the snake handlers look macho.

Mr. Barstow goes on to state that habitat destruction likely accounts for the loss of more snakes than the rattlesnake roundup. Undoubtedly, he is correct. However he cites this as evidence for allowing the roundup. On the contrary, it seems logical to protect species whose habitat is destroyed, not subject it to bounty hunting.

The roundup has, as Mr. Barstow indicated, modified the "slaughter on sight" behavior. Before the roundup, only snakes encountered by chance were killed. Now people actively seek out snakes to kill. This inevitably leads to more snakes being killed than were previously. Furthermore, a person would have to be incredibly naive to think that snakes seen out of season are not killed or, worse yet, stockpiled for next year's roundup.

Dr. Henry Fitch stated in his report to KDWP that the prairie rattlesnake should "continue to thrive unless the pressure on them increases." With the roundups, the take has doubled annually and will probably continue to do so. Long-standing roundups in the south take as many as 18,000 snakes. What happens when the Sharon Springs roundup reaches those proportions? What happens when Colby decides to host a roundup? Then Goodland?

An individual can purchase a commercial prairie rattlesnake harvest permit for only \$5, or a commercial dealer permit for \$75. Compared to the \$75.50 and \$200 fees for commercial mussel permits, it is no surprise that funds for rattlesnake research are limited.

The legislature mandated regulations for the roundup, and it is most unfortunate they were so short-sighted. However, KDWP has not provided adequate protection for the prairie rattlesnake in Kansas.

David Reber
Lawrence

PHONY LIFETIME

Last December, I got an anonymous call at the Wildlife and Parks Kansas City District Office. The caller told me that a St. Joseph, Mo., man got a 1993 firearms deer permit by obtaining a lifetime hunting license some years before. The problem was that the Missourian had obtained the license and permit by false use of a Kansas address.

Investigation revealed that the tip was accurate. The lifetime license dated back to 1989, and a string of deer permits and one turkey permit were also involved. After resolving an issue about the statute of limitations, I submitted my report of investigation.

In April, 1994, the defendant was charged with six counts of false representation regarding the license and permits. By agreement with Assistant Pratt County Attorney Thomas V. Black, the man paid a \$1,500 fine and \$150 in court costs. The lifetime license was declared void, and the fee forfeited. In addition, the man may not apply for a hunting license or hunt in Kansas for one year. —*Bruce Bertwell, conservation officer, Olathe*

WILDLIFE CORONER

Lots of Johna Veatch's patients are dead on arrival. Her job is to find out what killed them. As a veterinary pathologist at Kansas State University, Veatch's usual cases are livestock and pet deaths, but recently her caseload has expanded to include migratory waterfowl and endangered birds.

LAW BRIEFS

Runaway Boat

Conservation Officer Clyde Umscheid, Perry, had to round up a runaway boat at Clinton Reservoir last summer. Clyde was actually on "days off" when he received a call about a boat "running in circles" on the reservoir, without a driver.

Clyde rushed to the reservoir where he met the distraught boat owner. They hopped on Clyde's faithful "steed" patrol boat and powered up alongside the runaway, where the owner jumped from Clyde's boat into his and stopped the errant vessel. Straight from the old westerns. Good job, Clyde.

Rescue Scholarship

Boating Enforcement Officer Dan Heskett, Haven, has been awarded the 1994 North Central Personal Watercraft Industry Association's River Rescue Scholarship. Dan will be able to attend the Indiana River Rescue school with the scholarship, awarded for his efforts in boating enforcement, education, and training. Congratulations, Dan.

Boating and Booze

Last July, Region 1 law enforcement officers conducted a boating under the influence (BUI) check lane on Wilson Reservoir, one of many such check-lane activities on reservoirs throughout the state. Eleven conservation officers, two Parks and Public Division employees, two deputy sheriffs, and one highway patrolman conducted the operation.

Approximately 37 boats were contacted on the lake, and 13 were taken through the check lane. Seventeen non-BUI violations were detected. Two intoxilyzer tests were given, and one arrest was made for boating under the influence of alcohol.

BUI check lanes have been performed across Kansas, and the public has become aware of the importance of not operating watercraft under the influence. Department employees and other agency employees have done a great job. Enforcement efforts will continue to protect lives and property. —*Mark Johnson, chief of staff, Law Enforcement Division*

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has signed a contract with the KSU Diagnostic Laboratory to investigate the deaths of eagles, hawks, owls and other birds that fall under federal protection. The service operates a national diagnostic lab at Madison, Wis., where all such cases have been sent prior to the cooperative arrangement with KSU.

As the contract's principal investigator, Veatch will be looking for the cause of death of the protected birds. Specifically, she will search for signs of toxins that might be implicated, but she can determine if a protected bird was shot, diseased, infested with parasites, hit by a car, tangled in power lines, killed by a predator or somehow

poisoned.

During an animal autopsy, or necropsy, she also removes blood and tissue samples and examines the liver, kidney and stomach contents. Her data on toxic cause will enable the USFWS to check on possible environmental hazards. Federal fish and wildlife agents in Kansas, Nebraska and the Dakotas now send carcasses of endangered and protected birds to KSU for analysis. Other states may soon take advantage of this service.

Anyone finding dead raptors or other protected species should contact a local U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or Department of Wildlife and Parks office, and arrangements will be made to transfer the bird to KSU. For more

information, contact the USFWS at (913) 539-3474.

—*KSU release*

RADIO ROUNDER

A well-known outdoorsman and hunting guide has pleaded guilty to shooting nearly three times as many ducks as allowed under a daily limit. Fred Ramsey pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor after he and another hunter were caught with 28 dead ducks last year.

Ramsey hosted "Fred Ramsey's Outdoor Magazine" on KCMO radio in Kansas City, KQTV's "The American Outdoorsman" television show and KFEQ radio's "Midwest Outdoors" in St. Joseph. —*Manhattan Mercury, June 17*

AGENCY EFFECTIVENESS

The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks is scheduled for review and study under the Kansas Governmental Operations Accountability law. The study and review will be conducted by Legislative Post Audit and is expected to begin this fall and take four months to complete.

The purpose of the review is to determine if the department is achieving the efficiencies and effectiveness intended under the executive reorganization that formed it. The scope of the review will focus on potential means of improving operations and fiscal efficiency. When completed, it will answer the following basic questions:

- Has the department established adequate and appropriate financial management practices related to state parks and fish and game activities?

- Have potential savings and efficiencies from merging the former wildlife and park agencies been achieved, and can the agency be structured more efficiently?

- Are the primary mission, goals, and objectives of the state's parks, wildlife areas, and state fishing lakes being met? If not, how can those operations be improved?

- How many other states have combined parks and wildlife departments, and do their organizations suggest ways to make KDWP more efficient and effective? —*Mathews*

AMERICORPS TO AID SCS, WILDLIFE AND PARKS

In September of 1993, President Clinton signed into law a new "domestic Peace Corps," called Americorps. Under the program, young Americans will do public service in return for a stipend and scholarship money for education or a reduction in school loans.

In Kansas, one of several Americorps projects administered by the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) will involve

the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. Under this project, the SCS will hire participants to work directly for Wildlife and Parks personnel, repairing damage from the floods of 1993. Wildlife areas and state parks at Cedar Bluff, Clinton, Glen Elder, Kanopolis, Milford, Perry, Tuttle Creek, and Wilson will benefit from the program.

Eighteen workers, assigned directly to these areas, will pick up debris, paint signs and picnic tables, remove dead trees and limbs, prepare ground for reseeded, clean facilities, rebuild fences and other structures, cut grass, plant trees, repair roads and culverts, and restore aquatic habitat.

Two other workers will be assigned to Wildlife and Parks' Engineering Section. They will help with basic surveying, construction staking, computer drafting, and rebuilding of roads, dams, buildings, and other park facilities.

Applicants for these positions must be 17 years old or older, have a

high school diploma or GED, and be capable of lifting and carrying 30 pounds of equipment for short distances. Workers must also be able to use hand tools, power lawn mowers, and power tools, and possess a valid driver's license. Experience with tractors and other machinery is helpful.

Full-time participants will receive a stipend for living expenses during service (approximately \$7,500) plus \$4,725 for tuition or student loan forgiveness. Participants also receive a basic health care allowance and child care allowance, if necessary. —*Shoup*

LITTLE FISH, BIG RIVER

Environmentalists have drafted two small bottom-feeding fish species for their effort to change the way the Missouri River is controlled by the federal government. A coalition of environmental and tribal groups petitioned the U.S. Fish and wildlife Service to declare

NEIGHBORHOOD PROGRAM AIMS AT CLEAN WATER

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) is planning a new program aimed at developing grassroots support for cleaning up the state's waters. Called the Clean Water Neighbor Program, the new project will provide financial assistance up to \$5,000 to organizations initiating a Clean Water Neighbor project.

Local sponsors will apply for funds to implement projects that demonstrate "nonpoint source pollution" control practices and inform individuals and organizations of local water quality problems caused by nonpoint pollutant sources. The local sponsor will also host a workshop to report on the local project, provide KDHE's Nonpoint Source Section an opportunity to report on water quality problems in the sponsor's region, and encourage workshop participants to become Clean Water Neighbors. The local sponsor will be asked to contribute 40 percent of the total funding for the project, which may

be in the form of direct cash expenditures as well as the value of materials and services.

Eligible projects include bio-technical stream bank stabilization, construction or enhancement of small wetlands, conversion of bare soils to permanent vegetation, alternative on-site wastewater treatment systems, establishment of low-maintenance landscaping, stream cleanup, and establishment or enhancement of greenways within cities.

The project is being financed through a grant from the Environmental Protection Agency. Although the deadline has passed for participation in this particular project, other grassroots efforts are ongoing. For more details, contact the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, Bureau of Water – Nonpoint Source Section, Forbes Field, Building 283, Topeka, KS 66620, or phone (913) 296-8038.

—*Shoup*

the sicklefin chub and the sturgeon chub endangered species. If the federal government makes the declaration, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers might be forced to let the river rise and fall more naturally. —*Kansas City Star*, July 2

WHALE OF A TALE

Another success story for the Endangered Species Act is the June 15 announcement by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service of the removal of the gray whale from the list of endangered or threatened species. This marks only the 22nd time that an animal has been completely removed from the lists. The gray whale will retain protection under the Marine Mammal Protection Act, which prohibits taking or harassing of an animal, by an American, on the high seas. As well, all trade in the products is prohibited.

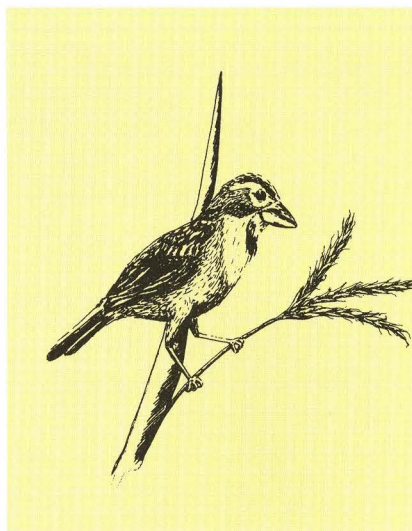
National Marine Fisheries statistics place the gray's population at approximately 21,000 animals, which are primarily found in the Pacific Ocean along the California Coast up to the Bering Strait. Their yearly 13,000-mile migration has long been an attraction for whale watchers throughout California, Oregon, Canada, and Alaska. —*The Conservation Digest*

PUBLIC PERCEPTION

A recent study by the Proactive Strategies Project of the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies revealed some interesting perspectives from the large public majority that takes no position on issues of hunting, fishing, and wildlife management.

According to the study, here's what most folks think about wildlife and wildlife management:

* A wildlife experience is any experience that involves wildlife, ranging from birdwatching and hunting to going to the zoo or feeding squirrels in a park. One participant said that watching nature shows on television was a wildlife experience.



FOR THE BIRDS

A Great Plains study is giving biologists a clearer indication of the degree to which cropland has affected birds in prairie states. Kansas State University biologist Dr. Robert Robel is comparing bird nesting success on Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) grassland planting with croplands. Robel's study shows that so far the CRP fields planted to grass support 21 times the number of grassland birds found on row crop ground. The most numerous encountered in CRP fields were songs sparrows, dickcissels, red-winged blackbirds, and grasshopper sparrows.

—*Scott County Record*

* When asked to categorize wildlife experiences, none of the participants used terms such as "game," "non-game," "consumptive," and "non-consumptive." These commonly used categories do not appear relevant to these people, and agency use of the terms may raise barriers that do not currently exist with significant segments of the public.

* Participants had an idea that someone in their state was doing a pretty good job of managing wildlife, but most people did not know who that was. Importantly, many people did not care who managed wildlife as long as it was being managed.

* People would like to see more done for wildlife in their state but do not want to pay more to do it.

* Focus group participants had two major concerns about hunting. First, it has to be done safely. Accidents leave lasting impressions. Second, animals shot should be used.

* If participants knew a good hunter, they had good impressions of hunters. If they knew a bad one, they had bad impressions. If they knew none, the image was media-driven of machismo, drinking, and irresponsibility.

* Participants think of fishing as peaceful, family-oriented, relaxing, enjoyable, and easier and cheaper than hunting.

* Participants at two sessions view fishing as better than hunting because in fishing "the fish makes the choice to

take the bait" as opposed to hunting where the hunter makes the choice.

* Trapping was viewed by most participants as cruel and painful.

* A number of messages promoted by the fish and wildlife profession have been successful in reaching this group of people: the connection of quality habitat to the health of fish and wildlife populations, the long-term commitment of hunters and anglers to wildlife and fish conservation, and hunting large animals to control populations.

—*Proactive Strategies Project Report*

NEW 'NAM CRITTERS

Two new species of animals have been discovered in Vietnam in recent months — the giant Muntjac deer and the Vu Quang ox. Both animals have been proposed for protection under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). The giant Muntjac has not yet been captured, but bones of the animal have been studied, and reports from local villagers have been recorded.

The Vu Quang ox has been captured and studied by scientists. Associated Press has reported that DNA samples studied in Denmark may indicate that not only is the ox a new species, but it may be a new genus, as well. It may have split with common cattle relatives 5-10 million years ago. —*The Conservation Digest*

YEAR OF THE DUCK

In the past two decades, there has been much debate about declining duck numbers. Some have blamed drought and predators, and others claim over-hunting. Only one word, however, describes the problem and the solution – habitat. Habitat destruction has caused the decline in waterfowl numbers, and habitat restoration – namely in the form of the federal Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and increased rainfall in the northern breeding grounds – has resulted in a dramatic increase in duck numbers this year. CRP has provided much-needed nesting cover in the form of grasslands that protect nesting hens and their broods. This, combined with good rainfall in the northcentral U.S. and southcentral Canada, has made conditions ideal for a duck comeback.

In fact, the Fish and Wildlife Service's fall flight forecast estimates duck numbers to be the highest in many years. The overall duck population is 20 percent above last year, and mallards are 36 percent higher. Shoveler and gadwall are at their highest levels since record-keeping began in 1955. Accordingly, the Service has liberalized its season frameworks, and Wildlife and Parks' regulations reflect this change.

The most significant of these changes will involve bag limits for ducks. In recent years, a point system has been used to determine duck bag limits, but this year the Service has allowed a conventional bag limit. Under this system, a hunter would be allowed three ducks per day, in any combination, with restrictions on the number of certain species.

The 1994-95 Kansas duck season will have three segments, running Oct. 22-31, Nov. 11-Dec. 11, and Dec. 26-Jan. 2 in the Low Plains (east of U.S. Highway 283). In the High Plains (west of U.S. 283), the segments will run Oct. 15-31, Nov. 11-Dec. 11, and Dec. 21-Jan. 2. The daily bag limit will be three ducks, including no more than one each of the following: hen mallard, mottled duck, pintail, redhead, or canvasback, and no more than two wood ducks. The daily bag limit for mergansers will be five, including no more than one hooded merganser.

The dark goose season (Canada and white-fronted) will run Nov. 5-Jan. 29 statewide. (Special dark goose management units have special permits and limits. Apply through the Pratt Operations Office.) Through Nov. 18, the dark geese bag will include no more than one Canada and one white-fronted goose. On and after Nov. 19, the bag may include one Canada and one white-fronted goose or two Canada geese.

The light goose season (snow and Ross') will run Nov. 11-Feb. 25 in Unit 1 (east of Highway K-99) and Oct. 22-Feb. 5 in Unit 2 (west of K-99). The daily bag limit is 10.

The possession limit for all waterfowl is twice the daily bag limit.



—Shoup

NEW FOR 1994

Leftover firearms deer permits are not valid in archery season –

Leftover firearms deer permits can only be used during the firearms deer season. Leftover muzzleloader permits can only be used during the early muzzleloader season and the firearms season.

Non-resident deer permit and non-resident hunter information –

Legislature approved a bill that will allow non-resident deer hunters into Kansas for the 1994 season. Non-resident deer hunters were offered 1,078 permits – 548 firearms and 530 archery – but only 711 were purchased.

They will be only for units that had specific-type permits – buck only, any deer, muzzleloader, etc. – leftover from the previous year's draw. The number of non-resident permits will always be in addition to the ones issued to Kansans.

There are new boundaries for antlerless-only deer game tags in Sub-Unit 12a, and there is new map for fall firearms turkey –

See the *1994 Kansas Hunting Regulations Summary*, available wherever licenses are sold, for details.

Special Hunt-Own-Land deer permits –

Special permits may be transferred to any member of

the immediate family, resident or non-resident, or may be retained for use by the Landowner or Tenant. Immediate family means lineal ascendant or descendants and their spouses (mother, father, grandmother, grandfather, kids & grandkids). To apply for a special hunt own land, applicant must qualify as a Landowner/Tenant.

New Definition for Tenant –

A tenant is a Kansas resident who is actively engaged in the agricultural operation of 80 acres or more of farm or ranch land for the purpose of producing agricultural commodities or livestock and who (a) has a substantial financial investment in the

production of agricultural commodities or livestock on such farm or ranch land and the potential to realize substantial financial benefit from such production or (b) is a bona fide manager having an overall responsibility to direct, supervise and conduct such agricultural operation and has the potential to realize substantial benefit from such production in the form of salary, shares of such production, or some other economic incentive based upon such production. Land must be located in unit applying for to qualify for landowner/tenant.

PLEASE NOTE: A regular Hunt-Own-Land permit cannot be transferred. —*Kansas Hunter Education News*

Reaffirmation



by *Mark Skoup*

I've been with the Department of Wildlife and Parks five and one-half years. Anyone who reads the newspapers these days knows that this agency has its problems, from floods to funding initiatives to federal audits. Our constituents have more personal concerns, as well, from unsuccessful deer applications and structuring of duck seasons to quality of park facilities.

In September, I worked the agency's State Fair booth and fielded about a zillion inquiries on these and other issues. Don't get me wrong; I enjoy working the fair, and I very much enjoy answering questions and working with people. Some are disgruntled, but most folks just want to talk, to see a human being behind the bureaucracy. Still, there are times when I have to retrace my footsteps, just to confirm that I have followed the right path.

Eight years ago, I was working at a thankless job in the defense industry, one that paid considerably more than the job I have now, but which required considerably less for the public buck that supported it. I worked in a room about the size of two football fields — no windows, no inside walls or partitions, just rows of desks with a telephone and a computer at each. Keyboards tapping, phones ringing above the drone of muffled conversation and the rat-a-tat-tat of dot-matrix printers. Shortly before Christmas, I had what English professors call an epiphany — a sudden intuitive realization that would change my life.

I sat at my desk, headphones over my ears, staring blankly at the perforation in the paper as its measured spasms scrolled from the IBM printer. Easy listening music blasted out every sensory perception except sight. Silently, the 500-some people at their desks picked up phones or fingered keyboards. It was like being drugged or under water. What was I doing here, I thought. Surely there is something I am more suited to. Perhaps I should open a pet cemetery or write books on subjects like "How To Raise and Train a Venus Flytrap."

As I ripped the last of my print job off the printer, feeling each silent pop of perforation beneath my fingers, I realized that I needed some air. I pulled off the headphones, and it seemed as if every phone in the place was ringing, like hearing the alarm clock in a dream.

I walked out of the building, located in the middle of the city next to what must have once passed for a stream. The banks now lacked any woody vegetation and were shored up with a scattering of concrete rubble. Still, minnows swam here and there, algae grew, and I could almost imagine myself a thousand miles away from the workstation I had just left. As I walked along the bank, I came upon four mallards — two drakes and two hens. I watched them for at least 10 minutes. The two hens swam and dipped peacefully, but one of the drakes — a larger, older duck — was mainly occupied with keeping the younger male away from the females. He would just get the young male chased away and attend one hen when the pretender would try to slip back in on the other female.

The sensation was exhilarating, as if I had had my directions confused, then suddenly found a familiar landmark. This is my element, I thought, where ducks cling to life, making use of whatever habitat is available, even this degraded stream. The scene was a microcosm of my most passionate interests — wildlife, the outdoors, and the future of our environment.

Back and forth the group went, a comic ballet moving slowly away from me as my break time ran short. I decided to see how close I could get and moved right up beside them before they flew. Up and east they went, over the busy street and into the morning sun, when suddenly a fighter jet rocketed low across their path, and they disappeared.

The ducks, I am sure, were not literally obliterated by the jet, but my reverie certainly was. It was on that day in 1986 that I decided to pursue a job with the "Fish and Game." It took two and a half years of personal contacts, phone calls, extra school work, and interviews before I was finally hired, but I made it, and I don't regret the decision for a minute. I am still proud to work for this outfit. As I said in my first "For What It's Worth" column in the July/August 1989 issue of this magazine, "*At Kansas Wildlife and Parks*, there is a legacy of quality and professionalism I must live up to. The people I work with are friendly, helpful, talented, and hardworking. Their knowledge of outdoor activities is thorough and level-headed."

Nothing I have experienced in the past five years has changed my opinion of the folks who have made a career of working for the Department of Wildlife and Parks. Never have I been around so many dedicated and talented people in one workplace.

In that same column, I also wrote, "I expect that you will be writing me with your questions, your ideas, your advice, and your criticism. I will consider them all respectfully."

You, our readers and other constituents of the department, have lived up to this prediction. I hope that I have, too. There have, indeed, been about a zillion inquiries.

My six-year-old son, Logan, asked the other day how many is a zillion.

"More than anyone can count," I answered with my usual authority.

"Yeah, but an angel could count them," he assured me. That angel, I'm sure, sits on my shoulder right now.

**STRIPER
CORRECTION**

The Sept./Oct. issue of *Kansas Wildlife and Parks* magazine (Page 38) contained an article entitled "Stockin' the Ball Park," which listed fish stockings in Kansas. In error, we listed Lovewell, Sebelius, and Webster as being lakes in which striped bass have been stocked. No striped bass have been stocked in these reservoirs. Sorry for the error.

—Shoup

**MINED LAND
ROTATION**

As of Sept. 1, Mined Land Wildlife Area #9 is closed to fishing for two years. The closing is part of the department's "rotational closing plan," implemented in 1983. Under this plan, one of Mined Land's 45 wildlife areas that had previously been closed will open to fishing and another may close. No more than two areas will be closed to fishing at any one time.

According to the plan, Area #11 — which is currently closed — will reopen on April 1, 1995, and Area #9 will reopen in April of 1996. Projects to be completed on Area #9 during its closing include renovation of access roads and gravel boat ramps, replacement of vehicle barriers along closed portions of the area, sign placement, fisheries habitat development, and sport fish stockings of channel catfish and other species.

Mined Land Wildlife Area consists of numerous reclaimed mining areas in

TROUT SEASON

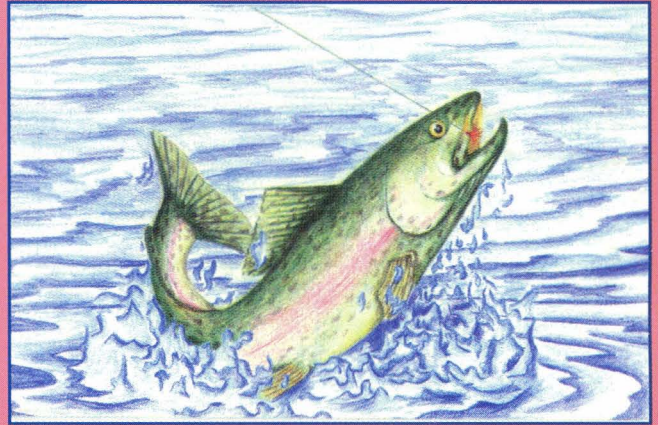
From Oct. 15, 1994, through April 15, 1995, Kansas will have its first-ever trout season, with stockings of more than 100,000 trout weighing one-half to three-quarter pounds each. Although the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks has conducted some annual trout stockings for several years, a new initiative by the agency will result in more widespread and consistent stockings, funded in part by an annual \$8 trout permit. (A valid Kansas fishing license is also required.)

During the first season, multiple stockings will take place in the following waters: Clinton State Park's Lake Henry, El Dorado State Park (Walnut River Outlet), Scott State Fishing Lake, Lake Scott State Park Pond (fly fishing only), Sedgwick County Park (Horseshoe Lake, Vicks Lake, and Moss Lake), Webster Stilling Basin, and KDOT East Lake in Wichita. Moss Lake, in Sedgwick County Park, will be open for fishing with artificial lures only.

Single stockings will occur in other waters, including Cedar Bluff Stilling Basin, Cimarron Grasslands Pits, Dodge City Golf Course Pond, Dodge City Lake Charles, Glen Elder Stilling Basin, and Kanopolis Seep Stream.

In addition, multiple year-round stockings — and a year-round season — will be conducted at Mined Land Wildlife Area Unit #30 and Tuttle Creek Reservoir Seep Stream.

All trout fishing on these areas will require the trout permit, but only during the season. Although few trout will remain by season's end, these waters may be fished for trout without a trout permit once the season ends. The Mined Land and Tuttle Creek areas will require a trout permit year-round. Permits will be available at some county clerks, vendors, and wildlife and Parks offices near the stocked waters. Phone the nearest office of the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks for details.



Some local governments in areas such as Topeka and Kansas City have their own trout stocking programs. Many of these require a fee, but the state permit is not required. Local city and county recreation departments should have details.

For more information, contact the department's Fisheries Division, 512 SE 25th Ave., Pratt, KS 67124, (316) 672-5911. —Shoup

Crawford, Cherokee, and Labette counties. At one time, the area had been stripped of most wildlife habitat and pocked with the trenches of strip mining. Today, those trenches have become long, deep, narrow pits filled with clear water and surrounded by native grassland, woody shrubs, and oak-hickory forest. The first area was donated to the department in 1926, and

today Mined Land contains more than 14,500 acres.

Approximately 1,500 acres of this is water, so the closed areas represent only two percent of the total fishable water on the area.

"Temporary closing of these areas to fishing has numerous benefits," according to the department's Parks and Public Lands Division Director Jerry Hover. "First, they intensify

habitat and facilities development work in one area. Second, they improve fishing in the area. And third, closings provide an excellent opportunity to rehabilitate lakes and have fish populations firmly established before angling is permitted."

Hunting, trapping and other public uses of Mined Land Wildlife Area #9 will remain open while it is closed for fishing. —Shoup

CHICKEN TRUCKIN'

A contract with the Illinois Natural History Survey (INHS) to translocate greater prairie chickens from Kansas during the spring of 1994 was very successful. In late March and early April, 46 males and 50 females were caught in funnel traps and flown from Wichita to St. Louis within 24 hours of capture. From there, they were transported to Jasper County, Illinois, for release. All birds shipped were received in Illinois in excellent condition.

This translocation effort is being evaluated by the INHS using radio telemetry with 29 birds (23 females, 6 males) fitted with radio transmitters. The birds were released using the slow release technique on an active booming ground consisting of Illinois and Minnesota males. The Kansas birds were able to hear the resident birds before leaving the box, and in most cases flew over or near the resident birds after being released.

Thirty-four percent of the Kansas females nested on the sanctuaries. All total, there were at least 25 prairie chicken nests in Jasper County this year. —*Scott A. Simpson, Terry Esker, Illinois Department of Conservation*

GENETIC MEMORY

If an animal has a hard winter, it may not have enough energy in the spring for breeding or feeding young. So how do Kansas

wildlife adapt to survive winter? There are three basic responses: avoiding winter altogether by travelling, staying and entering a sleep-like period of dormancy, staying active and toughing it out all winter.

Perhaps the most fascinating of these choices is travelling, or migration. Birds are most often associated with this behavior, but animals like bats and butterflies also migrate.

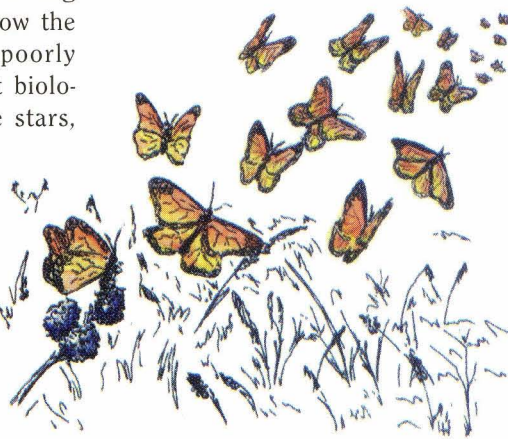
Although migrating south would seem to be the easy way to deal with winter, it is an event at least as stressful as staying in the north all winter. First, the migrants must be able to find their way south, and most animals return to the same wintering grounds each year. How the animals navigate is poorly understood, but most biologists believe that the stars, sun, and magnetic field of the earth are used in some combinations.

Animals must also find suitable feeding areas along the way. Many long-distance migrants may need to store large quantities of fat in their bodies to prepare for their journeys.

Some animals accomplish truly amazing feats of navigation. The arctic tern, a water bird, flies from its breeding range above the Arctic Circle to its wintering range just above the Antarctic Circle, a distance of 10,000 miles.

Perhaps even more amazing is the migration of the monarch butterflies, for none of the migrating individuals

were alive during the last migration. Somehow, adult monarchs transfer the necessary travel information to their young genetically. Kansas monarchs winter in the mountains of central Mexico. Most mate there, and the males die soon after. Females lay their eggs on milkweeds on their way back north in the spring. Most of these old females will only get as far as northern Mexico and the southern U.S. before they die. Their eggs hatch into larvae, pupate, and continue the migration north about a month after hatching. The individuals in this next generation mate, lay eggs, and travel as far north as they can before dying.



Generations of monarchs continue leap-frogging north until they reach their northern limit — Canada — around June. The following winter, the youngest monarchs head south to start the process all over again. —*On Tracks*

RENAISSANCE BIRD

Man has never had much of a love affair with crows, but

these large black birds are intelligent, wary, and familiar to nearly everyone.

Despite their bad reputation, crows are among our most fascinating birds. American crows occur throughout most of the continental U.S. They live in a variety of habitats, including farmlands, woodlands, and even urban areas. American crows live an omnivorous life, eating everything from spiders, snails, snakes, eggs, and worms to grain crops, fruit, and small mammals. Mussels may be carried high in the air then dropped on rocks to crack them open.

Crow voices are quite versatile, and there are many variations of their common notes. One study describes 23 calls of crows and their meanings. Young birds can be taught to mimic the human voice. However, the myth that splitting the tongue allows a crow to talk better is a cruel hoax.

Crows are beneficial consumers of grasshoppers, cutworms, and other harmful insects. They are also important scavengers, helping clean up road kills, dead fish, and other carrion. Unfortunately, crows are also destructive to crops like pecans and corn, and they relentlessly hunt for wild bird eggs and nestlings. In fact, they may seriously impact populations of gamebirds, songbirds, herons, and other species, making it necessary to control their numbers with a crow hunting season.

—*Arkansas Outdoors*

NEW COMMISSIONERS

The Kansas Wildlife and Parks Commission has two new members appointed by Governor Joan Finney: John R. Dykes of Fairway and Dan Brunetti of Frontenac. Dykes, an executive with a consulting firm, succeeds William A. Anderson, Jr., also of Fairway. He graduated from Rice University in Texas and received a master of business administration from the University of Kansas. He has a lifelong interest in hunting, fishing, and bird watching.

Brunetti is mid-way through his second four-year term as Crawford County Clerk and succeeds Carl Coonrod of Elk Falls. He graduated from Pittsburg State University in 1976 with a bachelor of science degree in business administration. —*Shoup*

YOUNGSTER PREFERENCE

For the second year in a row, the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission has given preference to hunters under 16 years old for antlerless deer game tags. Much like Sub-Unit 12a in Kansas, Arkansas has an area of the state in which deer complaints are heaviest, and extra antlerless tags are used to cull the herd.

The twist in the Arkansas permits is that youngsters are attracted to hunting by being given preference for the tags. The only requirement other than age is that they have taken hunter education. In

WILDLIFE TEAM

Four Hillsboro High School students – Todd Becker, Durham; Marc Schroeder, rural Hillsboro; Ian Weisbeck, rural Durham; and Bud Bolte, rural Tampa – spent the share of their summer vacation preparing for their participation in the National FFA Wildlife contest held last August in the Las Vegas area and the southwestern part of Utah.

The youth earned the right to represent Kansas in the national competition by winning the state wildlife championship in April. The team spent the summer studying for the event, which emphasizes wildlife in that part of the U.S. [Although the team finished 21st out of 30 teams, they had an unforgettable experience and learned a great deal about wildlife in the process.]

addition, persons may not apply for these permits if they have been convicted of a hunting or fishing violation in the past three years. —*Shoup*

DRILL DONATION

Jan and Richard Hilgers, Ogallah, have donated a grain drill to Wildtrust to assist the Department of Wildlife and Parks in planting food plots for wildlife at Cedar Bluff Wildlife Area. Wildtrust is a program for individuals and organizations that donate money, equipment, lands, or other tangible items to the department.

—*Wakeney Western World*

MORE BUCKS FOR OWLS

The Kansas WILDSCAPE Foundation has been awarded another \$10,000 grant to develop Outdoor Wildlife Learning Sites (OWLS) at Kansas schools. This latest in numerous OWLS grants

comes from the Dane G. Hansen Foundation of Logan, Kan., and will help develop 10 OWLS sites in northwest Kansas during the 1994-95 school year.

OWLS are outdoor learning laboratories established by students, teachers, and community volunteers at their local school with assistance from the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. The sites offer environmental and wildlife learning opportunities for kindergarten through college.

With the Hansen Foundation grant, WILDSCAPE has now received \$82,000 for OWLS development in Kansas. All funds raised for OWLS will be matched by Wildlife and Parks' Chickadee Checkoff nongame fund. To date, 58 OWLS have been funded throughout the state, with approximately 100 more applications in process.

For more information on Kansas WILDSCAPE, contact Rich Bailey, Kansas

Besides the contest activities, other highlights of the trip included round-trip air flights to Las Vegas; visits to national parks such as Grand Canyon, Bryce Canyon, Pipe Springs, Boulder Dam, Cedar Breaks, Glen Canyon, and Zion; a night at Las Vegas; and fly fishing for trout. Expenses for the trip were paid by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Kaw Valley Quail Unlimited (Kansas), Champion International, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and Unified School District 410.

The wildlife contest requires students to understand the association of foods with all kinds of wildlife, evaluate aerial photographs as they relate to wildlife, orally defend wildlife decisions, write wildlife management plans, and design and write urban wildlife plans.

—*Hillsboro Star Journal*

Wildscape Foundation, 1611 St. Andrews Dr., Lawrence, KS 66047, (913) 843-9453. For more information on OWLS, contact Ken Brunson at (316) 672-5911. —*Shoup*

ANIMAL DAMAGE DISK

A complete new Great Plains Prevention and Control of Wildlife Damage Handbook has been developed. This printed edition is actually two volumes and is also available on CD-ROM. The two-volume printed edition costs \$40 plus \$5 shipping and handling, as does the CD-ROM version. If you prefer both versions, the fee is \$60 plus \$5 shipping and handling.

This handbook should be purchased by everyone interested in wildlife damage control. For more information, contact Extension Vertebrate Specialist, 202 Natural Resources Hall, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE 68583. —*Farmers and Wildlife*

by Mark Shoup

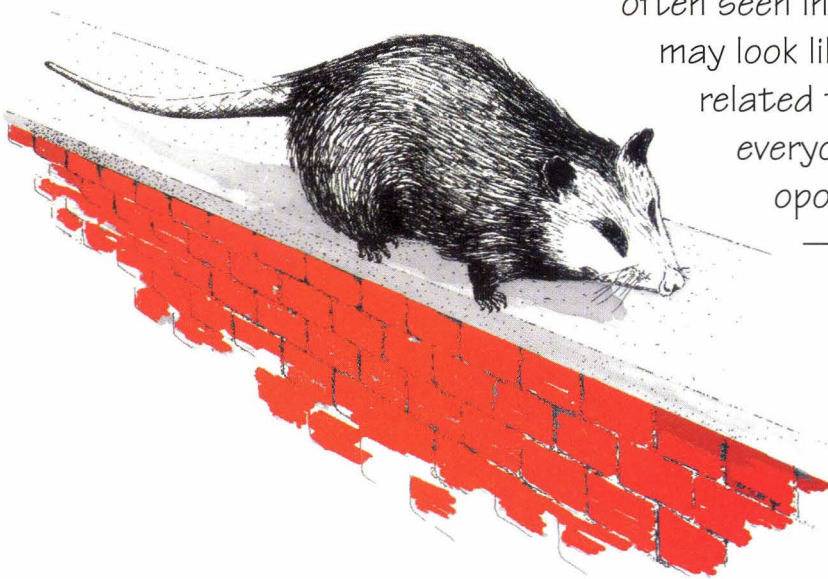
KANSAS MONKEY?

Everyone's heard of playing 'possum, but if you really got into it, you'd find that playing opossum requires much more than just pretending that you are dead. Imagine climbing trees like a monkey, hanging by your tail, running through alleys like a rat, or carrying a dozen babies on your back.



In the May/June issue of *Kansas Wildlife and Parks* (Page 43), you learned that the opossum (pronounced “uh-possum” or just “possum”) is a marsupial, meaning that the young are born hairless and quite undeveloped. Then they spend 80 days in the mother’s pouch before venturing out into the world. Still, for the next 20 days they cling to mamma’s back wherever she goes. The female usually has two litters each year.

The opossum is an adaptable critter that is often seen in both town and country. While it may look like a rat, it is not even remotely related to the common rodent that everyone loves to hate. The Virginia opossum — the one we see in Kansas — is from an ancient group of animals more than 75 million years old and is actually related to the kangaroo. It has 50 teeth — more than any other North American land mammal. Its long, naked tail is prehensile, meaning that it can be used for grasping things by wrapping around them.



Like most mammals, the opossum has five front toes with claws, but its back feet are really unusual. Instead of claws, they have flat nails, and one toe on each back foot is actually a thumb much like a human's.

The opossum can be found throughout the state, but it prefers more forested areas like those along rivers and in eastern Kansas. They will eat nearly anything, from frogs and crawfish to bird eggs, dead animals, and berries.



The opossum is a slow-moving animal, so it usually comes out only at night in order to avoid danger. Still, great-horned owls, coyotes, and other predators often eat opossums.

Of course, the most famous opossum of all was Pogo, created by the late cartoonist Walt Kelly.



SHARING THE WILD WEST

“YEEEEKK!!! YEEEEKK!!!” I grinned heartily, happy that my fancy mother-in-law was excited to see the Medicine Buck. I’d found it on a recent deer hunt, and was sure it would bring good luck in future seasons.

My youngest daughter brought it to the dinner table for inspection, a huge skull with cavernous eye sockets and massive antlers stained by months of weathering. It rattled when shaken, conjuring images of Indian medicine dances and huge bucks hanging from the meat pole.

City people don’t often understand such things, so I was pleased with her squeals of delight.

“Oh...Oh...,” she gasped, weakly holding her plate of half-eaten chicken with both hands, as if it might fall from the table.

Encouraged to explain the details of the find, I recounted how my pursuit of a deformed squirrel with large, crusty warts had led through the timber to a creek crossing, where the giant antler caught my eye. In no time I’d uncovered the partially buried skull, and headed straight for town to show the guys.

“Boy, they nearly went crazy when they saw it!” I beamed, recalling the admiration and envy of my fellow hunters. “So did I,” she said, teetering in her chair and breathing erratically. “I truly had to restrain myself.”

Pushing her chicken aside, she sat deep in thought, occasionally taking handfuls of pills with large gulps of water.

Just when you think there’s an infinite culture gap between city and country folk, you get a heartwarming episode of mutual understanding like this. Family bonds are strengthened. You know what I mean?

The gap is usually a problem. Take Terri, my sophisticated sister-in-law from Dallas, for instance. She’s a flight attendant and travels widely, someone you’d expect to be cultured. But sometimes she just doesn’t get it.

I don’t understand why she’s compelled to teach my daughters to wear makeup. At times I’m peeved, especially when she teases their hair into frightful mops with some sort of Moose she squirts out of a can, and calls it a hairdo. Shoot, she won’t even wear cowboy boots. Even so, I like her.

Anyway, she was here last fall while dad and I were bowhunting deer. One evening in the family room, as we hunters swapped stories and practiced blowing our buck grunt calls, she entered the room and sat down.

The low “Bl-a-a-t-ts” sounding from the deer calls idly echoed back and forth across the room, as we all watched television. After some time, she suddenly realized we were producing the impolite sounds on game calls, rather than naturally.

Only she knows what she thought for sure, but it must



Dana Eastes illustration

have been funny, judging from her fits of laughter:


“I... (har har)... thought it was some kind... (tee hee)... of deer hunter’s after-dinner ritual... (hoho-har-har har)... One of you would sound off, and the other would answer! (tee hee hee!!)”

Dad and I looked at each other and shrugged. Don’t they practice deer calling in Dallas?

Anyway, encouraged by my mother-in-law’s apparent new fascination with deer hunting, I told her I had signed her up on the waiting list for road-killed deer. She threw her arms and eyes skyward, a gesture I took to be a speechless thanks to the Maker.

She’ll really like the shed antler I sneaked into her suitcase for a surprise back in St. Louis.

Heck, I might even give her the pair of Tink’s Monster Scent Pads hanging on the mirror in my old hunting car. Their odor is growing faint - it no longer brings tears to your eyes - but I’ll throw in a bottle of fox pee cover scent, and she can recharge them to her satisfaction.

After all, it’s only fair to let city folks in on the fun of the wild west... 

Editor’s Note: Sharing the Wild West and other favorite stories can be found in Mike Blair’s new book on Kansas outdoor life, entitled *Prairie Chronicles*. It is available through bookstores or by direct order from Creator Publishing, 502 Haskell St., Pratt, KS 67124 (316)672-2621.

