KANSAS Wildlife & Parks

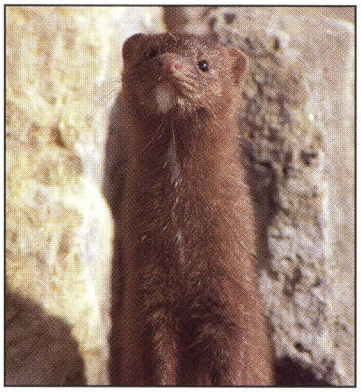
SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1995 $2.25

September/October 1995

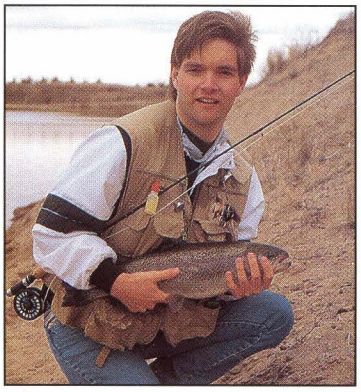
KANSAS Wildlife & Parks

Vol. 52, No. 5

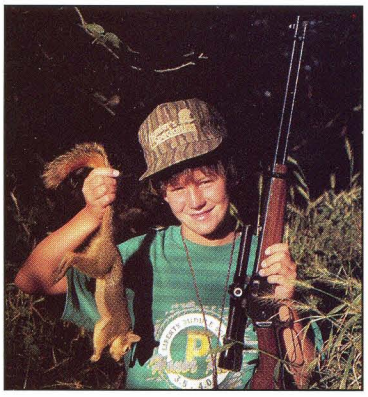
KANSAS WILDLIFE & PARKS (ISSN 0898-6975) is published by the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, 900 Jackson St., Suite 502, Topeka, KS 66612. Address editorial correspondence and subscription requests to Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, 512 SE 25th Ave., Pratt, KS 67124 (316) 672-5911. Subscription rate: one year $8; two years $15; and three years $21. Articles in the magazine may be reprinted with permission. Second class postage paid at Pratt, KS and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, 512 SE 25th Ave., Pratt, KS 67124.



2



12



22

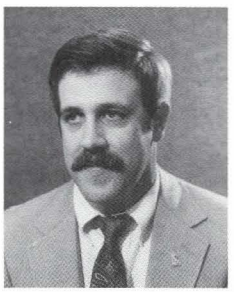
About the covers
Front: Falling leaves mark the end of a growing season. Mike Blair shot these sugar maple leaves on an eastern Kansas stream; 50mm lens, f/8 @ 1/60. **Back:** A curious mink peers from the rip-rap at El Dorado Reservoir. Mike Blair caught the action with a 600mm lens, f/8 @ 1/125.

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

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

The View From Here

Grass Roots Support For Outdoor Resources



Discussing the need for more money is never easy. In fact, discussing it in a magazine dedicated to conservation and outdoor recreation may seem like the preacher asking the congregation for more in the offering plate. I suppose I'm "preaching to the choir" when I appeal to readers to support an increased revenue base. However, it is you, the outdoor enthusiasts, who can help us secure adequate and stable funding.

Some will undoubtedly say, "What? We thought our increased license and park fees were enough." The recently increased user fees, effective Jan. 1, 1996, will play an important role in maintaining most existing programs and staff for the next few years. These fees will help provide the basic services you expect and deserve — clean restrooms, safe roads, parking lots, boat ramps, showers, trash removal, grounds maintenance, etc. There is nothing in that list that suggests expansion of programs or department facilities, and continually raising user fees isn't the answer. What we really need is a stable, long-term funding source to ensure that aging facilities will be brought up to safety and health standards, while also allowing exciting new programs that satisfy the changing and increasing demands of our outdoor recreationists.

As traditional outdoor enthusiasts' numbers remain stable at best, costs of providing services continue to rise. User-fees have served us well — those who participate pay for that privilege. However, this system does not guarantee that all who benefit pay their fair share. For example, state parks contribute significantly to the economies of surrounding communities. One only needs to look at property values, stores, gas stations, and the variety of other businesses found around these parks. Hunters provide the economic stimulus that some Kansas businesses depend on for survival, and hunting is an important tool in controlling wildlife damage to property. The list could go on. Outdoor recreation and the associated tourism are substantial factors in the economic well-being of our state.

To understand our dilemma, it is important to understand the restrictive nature of Wildlife and Parks' funding sources. The department operates on an annual budget of approximately $30 million, which comes from a variety of sources. The Legislature established restricted funds to administer the department's programs. The Wildlife Fee Fund is generated from hunter and angler license dollars and federal aid reimbursement money. Federal aid funds are reimbursed at the rate of 75 percent — if the department spends $1 on an approved project, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reimburses us 75 cents the next year. Federal monies, which can only be used for fish and wildlife programs, contribute about $5 million to the Wildlife Fee Fund each year.

The Park Fee Fund is made up of park entrance and camping fees and is restricted to state park management. This fund continues to be inadequate. Other restricted funds include the Boating Fee Fund, the Wildlife Conservation Fund, the Migratory Waterfowl Propagation and Protection Fund, and the Wildlife and Parks Gifts and Donations Fund. Our only general tax monies come through the State General Fund, which makes up only 15 percent of the department's budget. The State General Fund is used for a variety of purposes, including work on state parks.

Administration of these restricted funds (some of which are small) is difficult since they do not allow flexibility in responding to needs. It would be like having 10 different accounts at the bank, each for a specific purpose. One may only be used to pay the mortgage, another only groceries, another gas, and so on. Anyone who manages household finances can see the problem that arises when faced with a financial emergency. Our goal is to identify new and innovative ways to boost revenue and fund balances where we need them. One alternative would be to capture revenue from those who benefit from our services but do not pay. It will be a difficult but important task.

The Wildlife and Parks Commission has recently announced the formation of a public task force to study alternative funding sources. The recent fee increases will give us some breathing room, but timing is critical. The task force will examine existing funding sources as well as those tried in other states. Missouri conservation programs provide an excellent example of the quantity and quality of services that an agency can provide with adequate funding. Task force members will provide the Commission with suggestions that will have long-term implications for conservation and outdoor recreation. Some of these suggestions may become legislative initiatives for the department.

It is then that you can become part of an effective grass roots conservation movement by informing legislators of your concerns about the future of wildlife and parks resources. Sportsmen rallied more than 60 years ago to support fish and wildlife restoration through user fees. It is time for all outdoor recreationists to mount a similar campaign for wildlife and parks resources. The quality of life in Kansas is tied to these resources. Let us not become complacent and assume that this quality will not diminish. It will take effort and money to maintain our outdoor heritage. I hope that each of you will examine the importance of parks and wildlife as they relate to your quality of life. If you consider this and your children's future, I am confident that each of you will rise to meet challenge.

Steve Williams

Water Weasel

by Kevin Becker
fisheries technician, Pratt Fish Hatchery

photos by Mike Blair

Take unique characteristics from each member of the weasel family, stir them together and you'll get a mink. This seldom-seen animal is actually a common and fascinating inhabitant of Kansas waterways.

Since I was a young boy, I've had a keen interest in animals, especially those classified as furbearers. As teenagers, my brother and I spent many mornings checking our small trapline before school. After years of experience, learning animal behavioral patterns and reading lots of how-to books, we became pretty good at harvesting a variety of furbearers. However, there was one that usually avoided our traps: the mink, *Mustela vison letifera*. We did harvest a few, but the first time I saw one in the wild was the summer I worked at Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area.

While making early-morning rounds through the large wetland, I noticed dark, slender animals crossing the roads ahead of me. In the glow of the rising sun, their fur appeared silky — almost prismatic. But perhaps the most noticeable characteristic was the loping gait. A mink has a humped back and when moving, pulls its hump forward toward its front feet, resembling a Slinky toy.

Since those first encounters with mink, I've been lucky enough to see them sliding down riverbank trails, popping their heads out of crevices in rip-rap along reservoir dams, and more recently, rummaging about on pond dikes at the fish hatchery where I now work.

Mink are common along Kansas rivers, ponds, wetlands and reservoirs. This mink has found a large meal along the rip-rap at El Dorado Reservoir in Butler County.

Because of minks' reclusive nature, Kansans may not think of them as common inhabitants. Actually, the mink is common

throughout the waterways of Kansas, and it occurs over most of North America, except for arid portions of the Southwest and extreme northern Canada.

The male mink is about twice the size of the female, averaging 20-30 inches in length and weighing 2-4 pounds. It stands 3-4 inches tall at the shoulders. The body is long and slender with short, stout legs. The head is small with short, rounded ears and a pointed nose. The beady eyes always seem alert.

The mink is a mid-sized member of the weasel family, *Mustelidae*. Its behavior is similar to many of its cousins, but instead of featuring one particular characteristic, the mink is a conglomeration of many. It can swim nearly as well as an otter, climb like a marten, forage like a weasel and discharge a pungent odor like a skunk. The mink produces a foul secretion from its anal glands, although the odor isn't as disagreeable nor does it carry as far as the skunk's. Mink use this fetid discharge when aggravated or when marking territories. The scent is especially strong during the breeding season.

The small beady eyes are always alert. The mink is an opportunistic predator, hunting day and night. Diet items include muskrats, fish, small rodents, birds, crayfish, snakes, frogs and turtles.

Well suited for both land and water, mink are excellent swimmers on the surface and underwater. They are capable of outswimming many fish, especially slower species like sunfish and suckers. Mink have five partially webbed toes on each foot. A mink's track will show only four toes because the small inside toes rarely leave an imprint.

Mink are generalists, feeding on a variety of prey. Mink hunt day and night, searching for muskrats, fish, mice, rabbits, crayfish, snakes, birds, frogs and turtles. Mink have also been known to raid chicken houses. The mink kills its victim by biting through the skull, upper neck, or jugular vein with its piercing, sharp teeth. The prey is then devoured on the spot or carried off to the den where the surplus is stored. Mink have been known to kill more than they can eat, giving them a "blood thirsty" reputation. Mink have a keen sense of smell and are capable of trailing prey just like dog. Although it relies primarily on its nose to detect prey, the mink also has acute hearing and can easily detect the high-pitched squeaks of small rodents.

Mink are creatures of habit, often using the same trails repeatedly. They are constant wanderers, especially males, and may cover a circuit of several miles. Most of the travelling is along rivers, creeks, marshes, lakes and ponds. Curious by nature, the mink has a tendency to stop and investigate every nook and cranny it encounters. Brush piles, muskrat burrows, hollow logs, and rock piles are favored sites.

Several temporary dens are utilized by the male because of its large home range. The female con-

centrates her activities to a more restricted area, unless a shortage of food forces her to another locale. Dens normally have a four-inch-diameter opening and are constructed in a stream or pond bank. More often, mink prefer a ready-made den such as a muskrat burrow, hollow stump or abandoned beaver lodge. The den is lined with leaves, grass, feathers or fur.

Breeding season occurs in February or March. The courtship ritual is far from romantic. The pair will quarrel violently until the larger male seizes the female by the back of the neck with its teeth and drags her around. Finally the two will lay on their sides while the male coils around the female, and copulation occurs. During the entire time the male never releases his grip on the female's neck. Females remain in estrus throughout the breeding season and are receptive at seven- to 10-day intervals. Subsequent matings may result in additional ovulations and fertilizations, so a litter may have more than one father. Scabs and scars are often found on the necks of females that have recently bred. A male will mate with several females, eventually staying with the last one it mated with.

The mink, like most members of the weasel family, have a delay between egg fertilization and implantation on the uterine wall. This delayed implantation makes the exact gestation period confusing to pin-point, therefore it is estimated to be 40-75 days. The duration of the delay is less in females that breed later in the year. A litter of 1-8 hairless young are born in April or May. At two weeks the baby mink are covered with dark reddish-brown hair and at five weeks begin to walk and open their eyes. The young will remain with their mother until the family disperses in the fall.

For the most part, mink are good mothers but tend to be somewhat hyperactive. Like other weasels, mink are cannibalistic. If newborn are found by the male, it may attempt to eat them. The female will viciously attack the male to protect her young and despite her smaller size, she usually wins these battles. Females have also been known to eat their young if they are stressed shortly after giving birth.

All mink have an individualistic white patch on their chin and chest.

Mink are solitary, non-sociable animals. Confrontations between males are fierce and may occur year-round. Despite their ferocity, mink do have natural enemies, including great horned owls, foxes, bobcats and coyotes.

Popular for its short lustrous fur, the mink has a chocolate-brown coat, with a long, somewhat bushy tail. All mink have white patches beneath their chin. There may also be white markings of various shapes and sizes on the throat, chest and belly. These markings are as individualistic as fingerprints are to humans.

During the early 1900s, mink were avidly trapped for their luxurious fur. Because of their high value, mink coats became status symbols. By the 1920s, the demand for mink pelts had grown so high that mink ranching became com-

Mink have a unique gait. They hump their back and pull the hump forward much like a Slinky toy. Trapped for their luxurious fur, mink coats were once a symbol of wealth.

At home on land or water, mink can swim nearly as well as an otter and can outswim many slower fish species. River banks or lake shores with rock or rip-rap are good places to see mink.

mercially feasible.

Mutation mink, those of different coloration, were the highest in demand once ranching began. The first mutants were the platinum or silverblu mink from small mink farms in Wisconsin. Through genetic selection and manipulation, other colors became available in the 1930s. Since then colors such as pastel, jet-black and sapphire have evolved. The highest priced colors on record were the "vovalia pink" and "black willow" mutations. These sold for an average of $420 and $450 per pelt, respectively. An extremely good batch of "black willow" pelts sold for an astounding $1,100 apiece.

Mink ranchers had the ability to produce large quantities of fur with perfectly matched coloration. From the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s, ranch mink production increased dramatically. North American production increased from 1 million pelts to 11 million pelts, whereas world production increased from 2.5 million pelts to 22 million pelts. By the mid-1970s, mink fur was affordable to the middle class.

Like other weasel family species, mink are ferocious hunters, and have been known to kill more than they can eat.

Due to the increase in world supply of ranch mink and lower production costs in Europe, the North American ranching business decreased dramatically, while Russian and European production increased. Russia has since been tabbed the largest mink producer in the world.

The demand for furs and production of ranch mink are major factors affecting the price of wild mink pelts, as well as other furbearer pelts. The mink market primarily sets the stage for the entire international fur market. Mild winters throughout the world can also affect the price of furs. If weather is unseasonably mild, the retail sale of fur garments will tend to decrease.

Wild mink pelts comprise only a small portion of the total mink pelts sold. According to records from Kansas fur dealers since 1968, the highest number of mink harvested in Kansas and bought by Kansas fur dealers was 1,884 in the 1979-1980 season. Since not all mink harvested in Kansas are purchased by state fur dealers, a Furharvester's License Survey (FLS) is conducted by the department so the total state harvest can be monitored. The total state harvest of mink for 1979-

1980 was 3,378. During this season, the highest prices were also offered, averaging $22.65 per pelt. The harvest and pelt price has decreased significantly since then. During the 1993-1994 season only 129 mink were sold to Kansas dealers and the average price was $13.48. One reason for such a reduced harvest is the fewer numbers of furharvesters. In 1979 there were 14,283 licensed furharvesters, and in 1993 there were only 3,469.

Good mink management requires harvest regulations, harvest monitoring and habitat preservation. Habitat management is undoubtedly the most critical of these. Efforts by state and federal agencies and private groups geared toward enhancing wetlands benefit mink, as well as a host of other wildlife. However, in areas where wetland degradation and draining occurs, the mink will suffer accordingly. Thanks to wetland conservation and sound management practices, we can be assured that mink will thrive in Kansas.

Editor's note: *The author wishes to thank Lloyd Fox, big game specialist for the department, and Greg Linscombe, Fur and Refuge Programs Manager for the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, for their contributions to this article.*

Do The Ride Thing

by Olivia Huddleston and Duane Daily
Vermillion
photos by Mike Blair

Whether you're participating in a ride organized by one of the many equestrian groups or just out for fun, riding one of the horse trails on Kansas public lands is a great way to enjoy your horse and the outdoors.

Horseback riding is growing in popularity, and perhaps some of this growth is due to the trails provided on state park, U.S. Corps of Engineers, county or city managed property. The pleasure of riding is magnified by the beautiful natural surroundings provided on these trails. If you dream of getting away to the peace and quiet of nature, where you can enjoy fresh air, watch wildlife and listen to the birds, you should ride one of the public horse trails in Kansas.

Riding organizations have also contributed to the growth in trail riding popularity. The Kansas Horse Council represents Kansas horse owners and has a committee for trails. The Kansas Trail Council represents all non-motorized trail users within the state, and once or twice a year sponsors an all-member and friends outing where horseback riders can participate. You may also choose to belong to one of the many saddle clubs that have sprung up across the state. The Trail Committee of the Kansas Horse Council can provide contact names for saddle clubs in your area.

If competition is in your blood, there are organized groups that provide "structured competition" for horseback riders. The North American Trail Ride Conference (NATRC) sanctions different judged one-day or weekend competitions over varied terrain with minimum and maximum time windows. There are ribbons and prizes at the end, but the horse is the real winner because the riders are encouraged to ride properly and take care of their mounts. Horses are checked by veterinarians before, during and after each ride. For riders who have time to condition their horses, the American Endurance Ride Conference may be of interest. This group sanctions endurance races, which are also under the watchful eyes of veterinarians. These endurance races are just that — races — some up to 100 miles. The 1996 World Championship Endurance Ride will be held in Kansas next September. For those not ready for 100-mile rides, there is the Middle of the Trail Distance Riding Association (MOTDRA). At MOTDRA sponsored events you'll find competitive rides with minimum and maximum time limits as well as some full-fledged endurance rides.

Kansas also has historical equestrian groups like the Santa Fe Trail Ride or the Oregon Trail Reride, which take a much slower pace over trails that wagons and horses traveled 150 years ago. These more leisurely rides provide history, scenery and camaraderie around campfires at night. The Pony Express Reriders will cover the trails across Kansas where the horses carried mail long ago. Many breed organizations also sponsor

Getting involved with a saddle club or other horse owners' organization is a good way to get started or just have more fun riding. Riders are reminded that horseback riding is allowed only on designated equestrian trails on Kansas public lands.

Conventional saddles work great, but special trail riding saddles may be more comfortable. Some breeds of horses are better suited for trail riding but more important is the relationship between rider and mount.

trail rides and outdoor fellowship. Look around for a group geared to your interests. You'll likely find members of all ages from all walks of life.

If you don't already ride, getting started might be easier with the help and advice from members of a local saddle club or one of the organizations mentioned. The Kansas horse industry is big business, starting with the breeding and selling of horses. Not all horses are suited for trails, although most like the freedom of being out of the paddock or showring. You should choose a trail mount that is quiet, sure-footed, unafraid of water and one that has good conformation to ensure its comfort as it works for you. Some breeds are known for their ability to carry heavy weight over long distances, however, the breed is not as important as the relationship between the rider and the horse. There are places on many trails where you must trust your horse to get you through.

Equipment is another personal choice. Many riders have found conventional saddles are not as comfortable as specially designed trail saddles. Some prefer washable biothane tack and clothing that stretches with ease when you mount that tall horse. Riding helmets are becoming mandatory for junior riders and provide protection from head injury for all riders. Rain suits and waterproof boots will make long trail rides much more comfortable if the ever-changing Kansas weather turns for the worse.

Now you're ready, but you need a place to ride. Fortunately, there are many horse trails on Kansas public lands. Many of these trails take the riders through beautiful country, off the beaten path, so to speak. But these trails didn't just appear. They are the result of cooperation between equestrian groups and government agencies, and the hard work of ded-

Good riding gear will make all your trips more enjoyable, and if you're interested in taking some of the longer trail rides, rain gear and waterproof boots are necessities.

hard work of dedicated people. Some of the trails were built with the help of local saddle clubs, working with the public land managers. Many state parks and wildlife areas have "Friends Groups," who work on the areas to improve facilities and build trails. Contact your local state park or department regional office for more information about trail opportunities in your area, and how you and your group might help construct or maintain a trail.

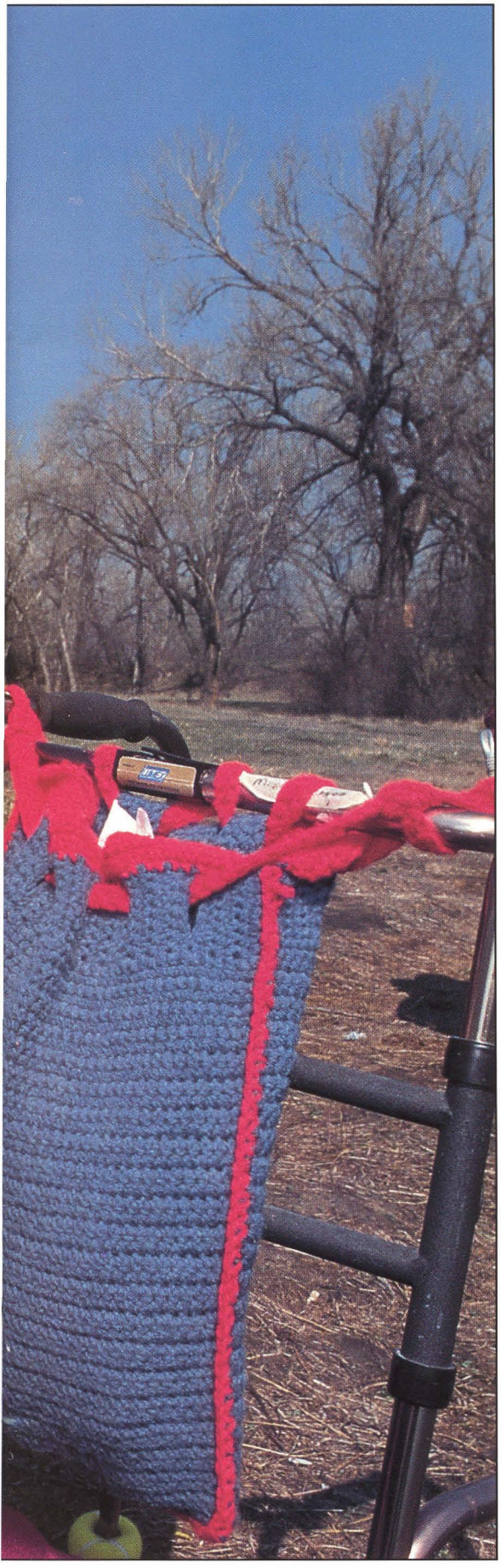
The design of horse trails in Kansas is not left to chance. Many of the trails follow natural wildlife paths, which often follow the contours of the land. Aside from being efficient and less prone to erosion, these trails also provide the riders with opportunities to see wildlife. There is also an excellent book by Melvin J. Baughman of the University of Minnesota titled *Recreational Trail Design and Construction*. The National Forest Service also has a trail manual. Trails should have little impact on the area, maintaining its natural integrity while keeping erosion to a minimum.

Trail riding is restricted to designated trails on all public lands, and horses must be kept on trails or within designated areas. Kansas public land trails include Kanopolis State Park, Perry State Park, Prairie Dog State Park (Keith Sebelius Reservoir), Hillsdale State Park, Clinton Wildlife Area, Lake Scott State Park, Sand Hills State Park, Cedar Bluff State Park, Eisenhower State Park (Melvern Reservoir), and a trail is under construction at Milford State Park. Trails maintained by other agencies include Linn County Park (La Cygne Lake), Pawnee Prairie Park (Sedgwick County), Cimarron National Grasslands (Morton County), Tomahawk Creek Greenway (Leawood City Park), Mill Creek Steamway (Shawnee Mission Park, South Lake Nature Trail (Shawnee Mission Park), Gateway to the West-Blue Trail, Gateway to the West-Orange Trail, Gateway to the West-Yellow Trail (Leavenworth-Fort Leavenworth), Dove Roost-Flint Hills National Wildlife Refuge (Lyon County), and Wyandotte County Park.

As horseback riders and trail users, we must never forget that we are privileged to enjoy these beautiful areas. It is sometimes difficult to dismount and pick up a dropped sandwich wrapper but if you don't, the next rider will have to look at it. Stay on the trails, leave only foot prints, and try to leave an area better than you found it.

As Roy Rogers and Dale Evans would sing, "Happy Trails To You."


Recycled
Teenager



WIZARD OF OZ TROUT

by Tommie Berger
district fisheries biologist, Sylvan Grove

photos by Mike Blair

Yes, Toto, we're still in Kansas. And, yes, those are rainbow trout. Kansas trout fishing provides anglers a fun wintertime option. The program has grown, and with a newly required trout stamp, it should be self-supporting

Ah, yes . . . trout fishing. To most that thought brings to mind clear mountain streams and the scent of pines in crisp mountain air. To others, trout fishing is Ozark rivers in Missouri. And to still others trout fishing is exotic places such as Yellowstone or Alaska. But don't count out Kansas.

Amazingly, the flat plains of Kansas can provide good trout fishing. In fact, Kansas anglers have the best of both worlds. We can fish for warm-water species like walleye, bass, crappie and catfish nearly year-round, sometimes even through the ice. And now we can fish for trout in the fall, winter and spring. Year-round fishing — what a novel idea.

Those poor anglers in the mountains. They have trout fishing from April through October. Then their fishing's over. However, in the Sunflower State, you fish for prairie barbed trout (channel catfish) in the summer and rainbow trout in the winter . . . in the same fishing hole and often using the same bait and methods.

The Kansas trout program has recently been expanded and has many anglers excited and more than willing to support the program with their

license dollars. Trout are stocked all across Kansas in specific locations — some by the department, some by city or county governments and some by private individuals and businesses. With its growing popularity, it looks like Kansas trout fishing is here to stay.

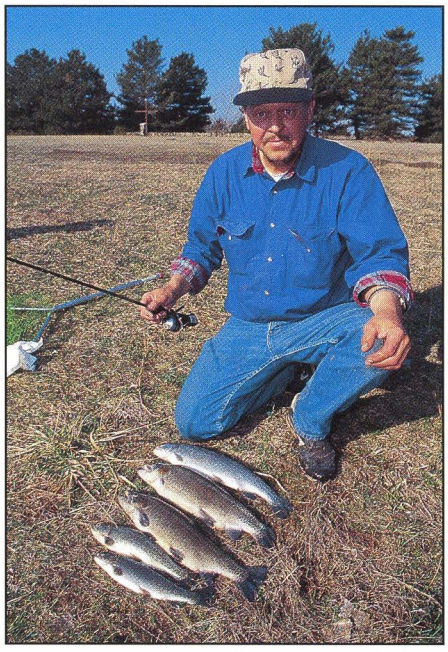
Except for a few private individuals and local governments, who have stocked trout for years, the statewide trout stocking program is fairly young, relatively speaking. The department, then the Forestry, Fish and Game Commission, first stocked trout in 1977. More than 20,000 rainbows were stocked in Cedar Bluff Reservoir. The federal hatchery was located below the dam at Cedar Bluff, and trout had been successfully held in the raceways for two summers, giving biologists some optimism that trout might survive in the reservoir itself.

Initially, biologists wanted to establish a year-round trout fishery, but trout won't survive the summer in the warm waters of Kansas reservoirs. Today's program is strictly put-and-take, except for two waters: the Tuttle Creek Reservoir seep streams and a lake in the Mined Land Wildlife Area.

There were high expectations for a year-round trout fishery in Cedar Bluff, and 20,000 trout were stocked annually for five years. A strain of rainbow trout from Montana that was adaptable to different waters and temperatures was experimented with. Brown trout were also stocked since they were even more temperature tolerant.

Fisheries biologists were interested in developing a fishery that would support year-round survival, and several intensive studies were conducted to evaluate the possibility. Summer water temperatures higher than 70 degrees and low oxygen levels in the deeper water were the biggest concerns. And, unfortunately, the stockings and follow-up surveys at Cedar Bluff showed no evidence of carryover.

Summer survival of trout in Webster Stilling Basin was evaluated in 1981 with the use of vertical gill nets, scuba observation and partial poisoning. Trout were documented though the first of July, but none were observed after that date. It was evident that summer carryover of trout in Kansas was not likely, at least not on a broad scale.



Simple fishing gear and warm clothes are all that are needed for Kansas trout.

There was some carryover in the seep stream below Tuttle Creek Reservoir, but summer harvest of trout there was minimal. Summer carryover of trout has since been documented at one of the strip pits in the Mined Land Wildlife Area and Scott State Fishing Lake.

As the trout program evolved, less emphasis was placed on establishing year-round fisheries and more effort was put into providing winter fishing opportunities. In 1978, the program was expanded to include Cedar Bluff Stilling Basin, Webster Stilling Basin, Rocky Ford Fishing Area and the River Pond below Tuttle Creek. It wasn't until 1982 that trout were stocked in Wichita lakes, and in 1986 the program was expanded to the Kanopolis Seep Stream and the Mined Land Wildlife Area in southeast Kansas.

In 1988, the Scott State Park Pond was first stocked and the following year, the Cimarron National Grasslands Pits were added. By the early 1990s, trout were being

stocked yearly at Dodge City, below El Dorado Reservoir, in some of the Kansas City lakes and a few other areas around the state.

Initially there was no creel limit on trout. Anglers only needed a regular fishing license, unless they were exempt, to fish for trout. In 1981, a creel limit of 8 was established to allow more anglers the opportunity to catch trout, as well as to spread the fishing out over a longer period. The daily creel limit was reduced to five in 1989. The fishery had evolved into a strict put and take, with fish being obtained from other states.

In 1994, a separate trout permit was established in an effort to expand the program and make it self-sustaining. The $8-permit is required of all anglers fishing for trout. In addition, a regular fishing license is still required for those anglers age 16-65.

Conventional Kansas fishing methods work great for trout. In fact, still fishing bait much the same way you fish for catfish will catch a lot of rainbows.

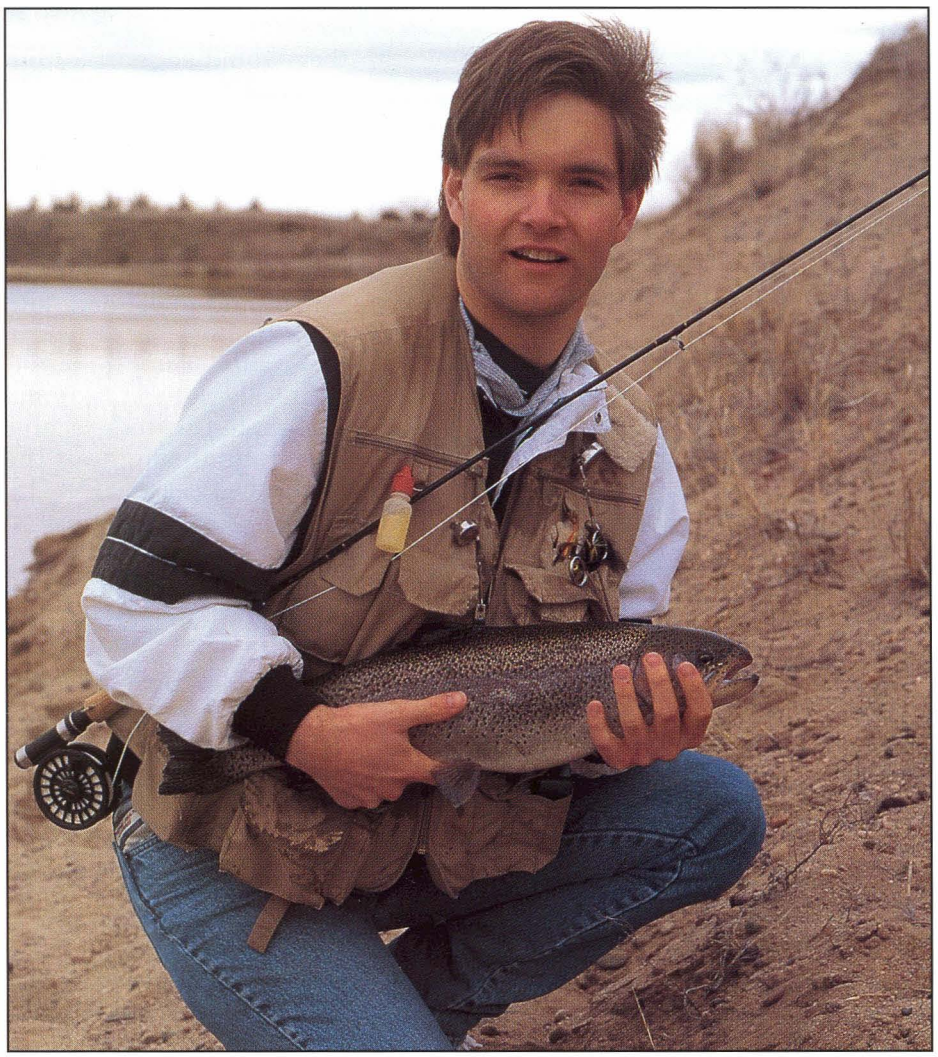
From its beginning, the trout program has been popular with anglers. A summary of a creel census on the Webster Stilling Basin in October and November of 1978 indicated that 1,180 of the 2,000 trout stocked were caught in the first two weeks. Anglers averaged more than five trout per trip. Anglers surveyed also said they would support a trout stamp. The goal of the program in its infancy was to provide anglers an opportunity to catch a fine game fish and to provide more use of our waters.

Today the program has grown and expanded, and trout fishing has grown in popularity. The program is essentially put and take, and designated waters receive stockings throughout the established season; Oct. 15-April 15. During the season anglers are required to have a trout permit to fish for and possess trout. After the season, a trout permit is not required, and anglers are encouraged to keep caught trout, since they will most likely die. The daily creel limit is in effect year-round. There are two areas where a trout permit is required all year; Tuttle Creek Seep Stream and the Mined Land Wildlife Area, since those waters will carryover trout.

Anglers have willingly

Subsurface flies such as the hare's ear nymph or wooly worm will catch winter trout. While baits such as salmon eggs or marshmallows may work better, catching a trout on fly gear is a real treat.

The trout program now operates on the $8 trout stamp, with the stamp fees paying for fish purchased from commercial hatcheries. Anglers have shown strong support of the winter fishery, and if 1994 is any indication, the program will be self-sustaining. While most fish stocked will weigh less than a pound, some lunkers are often thrown in such as the monster pictured below.



supported the trout program through purchasing the $8 trout permit. The key to the current expanded program's success is to sell enough permits to pay for the fish. A study was done at Webster Stilling Basin in 1994-1995 to evaluate the program. The department's share of the trout costs at Webster was $2,781. By Jan. 31, 1995, 391 trout permits, totalling $2,933, were sold by vendors within a 10-mile radius of Webster Reservoir. More permits were probably sold through the remainder of the trout season, so it appears that, at least at Webster, the program is paying for itself.

Most trout are purchased from other states, but occasionally we trade fish or wildlife such as catfish, walleye, turkeys or prairie chickens. The trout we receive from commercial dealers are to be at least 10 inches long, with at least 5 percent longer than 14 inches. Most of these will weigh 1/2 pound or more. Often a few lunkers are added in — some weighing 5 pounds or more.

Since all of the trout stocked in Kansas come from out-of-state hatcheries, there is concern about fish diseases. Diseases can be a problem in raceway hatcheries

where large numbers of fish are confined to small areas. The department's contract with these commercial fish dealers specifically requires "disease-free fish." States with wild trout populations are concerned with whirling disease and its effects on wild trout. Kansas has no wild trout populations, but the department is still taking every precaution to prevent any introduction of disease to native fish populations.

The hatchery trout are raised in raceways similar to the way we raise channel catfish. The trout are fed a diet of pellet fish food and grow rapidly under these conditions. Often, they are hungry and eager to bite just about any offering after they are stocked. Because of their hatchery diet, the trout may bite better on corn, brightly colored marshmallows, cheese balls and worms, instead of natural baits. Flies and artificials will catch fish, but the action may be faster with bait. The traditional catfish method of bottom fishing bait will often work well for trout.

Creel surveys are done to evaluate angler success. A survey at Webster from Nov. 12-Jan. 30, 1995 involved 16 spot checks on anglers at the stilling basin. Eighty-one anglers were surveyed and 140 trout were creeled. The catch rate for these anglers was calculated at 1.07 trout per hour. Most of the trout caught were between 10 and 14 inches long, and anglers rated their fishing success as good, very good or excellent 75 percent of the time. More than 70 percent of the anglers surveyed were from outside Rooks County.

It appears that the current trout program is meeting with similar approval across the state. I was stocking a load of channel catfish in Salina last May when an angler approached me, "What are you stocking, more trout?" I explained that it was too late for trout and that the next trout stocking wouldn't be until next October. He proceeded to tell me how many trout he and his family had caught and thanked me and the department for the "great" program. Those kinds of comments really make a biologist feel good!

The program is designed to please as many anglers as possible, from those who don't care where or how they catch trout to those who prefer a stream environment and flyfishing opportunities. More than 100,000 trout were stocked in 1994-1995 at more than 20 locations around Kansas.

Trout fishing is a reality in Kansas and although it may not be comparable to the high mountain lake or stream, it still provides fun fishing for Kansans close to home. The trout program allows anglers to catch a sporty gamefish, which is great table fare and lets us utilize our waters to their fullest potential — a successful program, indeed.

The trout program drew many enthusiastic anglers in 1994-1995, and more are expected this year. The rainbow trout is a hard-fighting fish and fishing success was generally high according to creel surveys. Trout are also wonderful table fare.

Outdoor Learning Fun

text and photos by Leonard Hopper
district wildlife biologist, Colby

Each September, lucky fifth graders from Monument and Oakley grade schools enjoy a two-day outdoor field trip. Organized by two enterprising teachers, the project teaches the youngsters about the land, the area's history and the importance of these resources.

Autumn brings cooler temperatures, beautiful colors, hunting, football, and for students, the beginning of another school year. They must trade summer's outdoor fun for textbooks and classrooms. But for the fifth grade classes in Oakley and Monument, students have two days of fun and outdoor learning to look forward to in September.

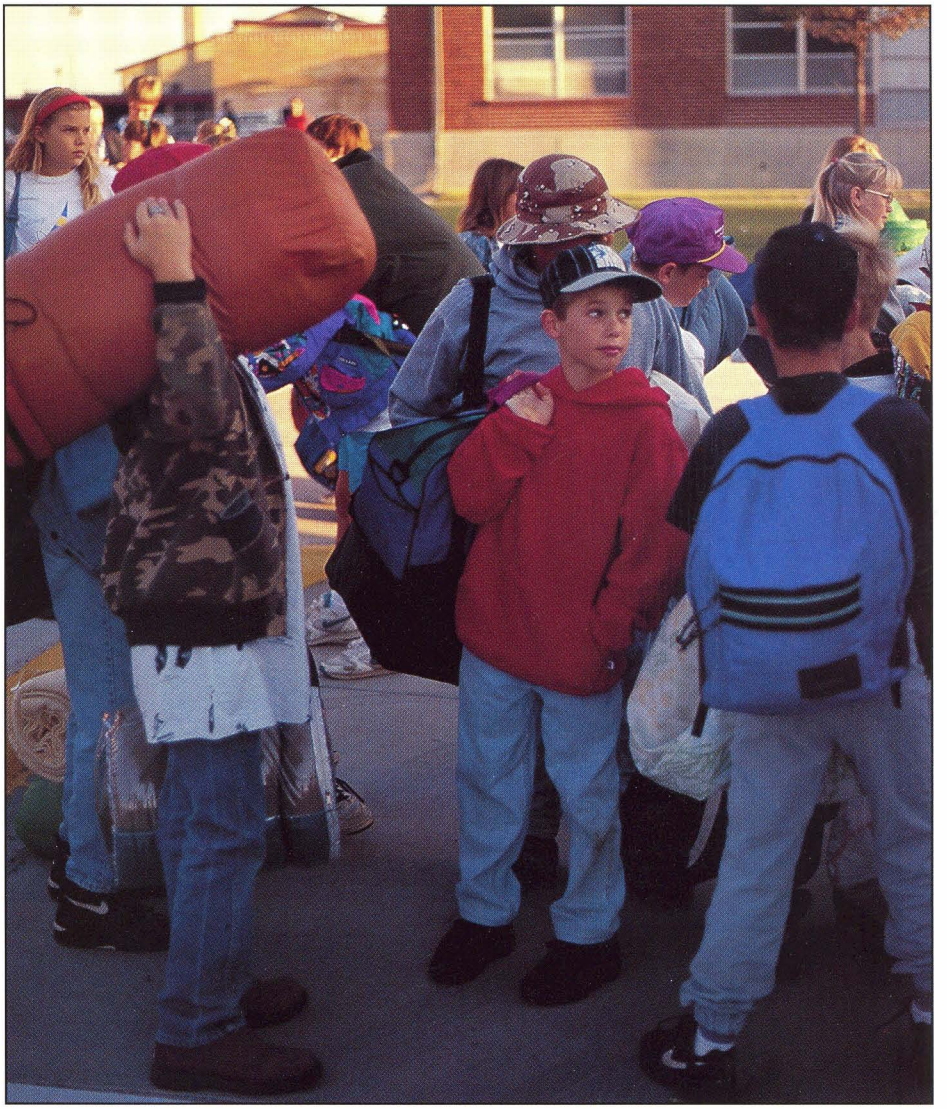
Instead of books, pencils and notebooks, students bring sleeping bags and overnight bags on this day. For two days, the fifth graders will tour Logan, Wallace and Scott counties, learning about the many interesting features of their home area. Topics they will learn about include local history, paleontology, grassland and soil conservation, wildlife and aquatic management and orienteering. Nearly every minute of the two days is designed to make learning fun — even the games are educational. Classroom subjects such as math, history, science, leadership and even music are incorporated into practical uses.

Two elementary school teachers, Peggy Tacha and Peggy Golden, have been involved in short programs of this type for several years. They participated in the department's Project Wild program and came away with ideas that could be used in an expanded outdoor education project. The two-day trip is an opportunity to put this training to use and create interest in learning for their students. The teachers get help from the Soil Conservation Service, Logan County Conservation District, Department of Wildlife and Parks and the Methodist Church Camp at Scott Lake. All those involved contribute a lot of time and effort to making this program a success. Over the last four years, people with any special knowledge or interest have volunteered to share their knowledge with the class.

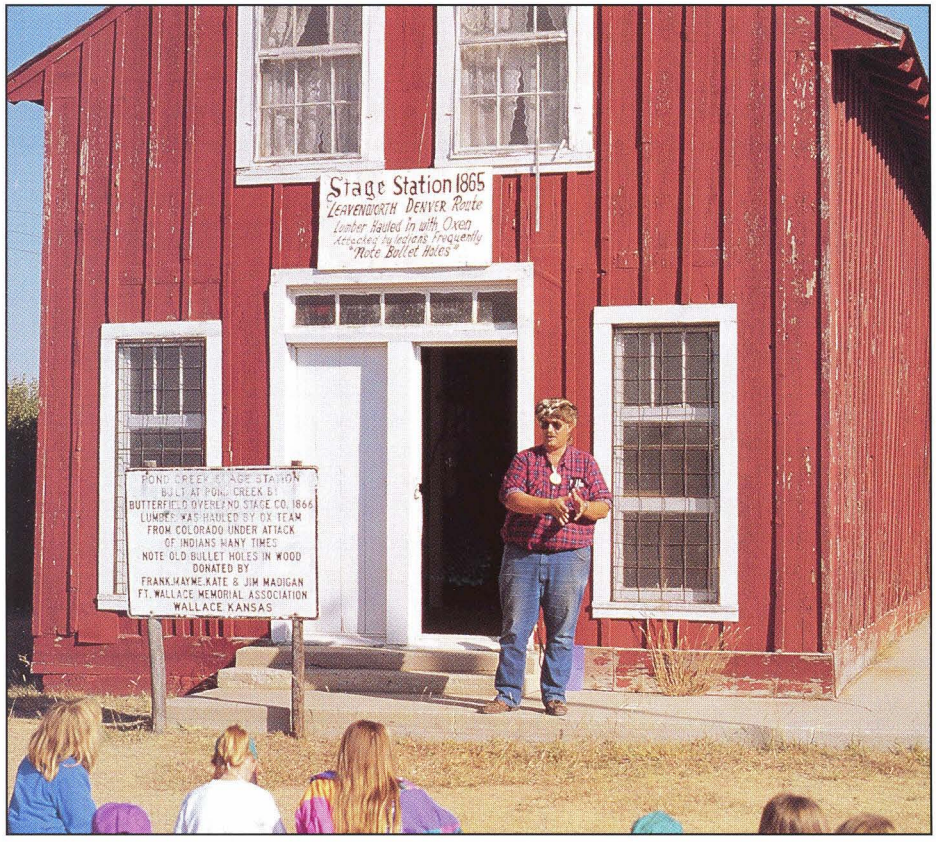
The tour begins with the loading of overnight gear into a carryall. But before getting on the bus, each participant receives a name tag, drinking cup and informational packet with questions about things they may see along the way. Even the name tags are educational. Each tag is made out of a slice of tree limb cut flat to show the growth rings and bark. The name of the tree the tag came from is written on the tag. Mine was from an ash tree.

One of the stories included in the informational packet is about the town of Sheridan, located on the Smoky Hill River in Logan County. This was a lawless town, filled with the riff-raff of society, but it only existed for 15 months before the railroad moved on west. The town of Sheridan and other points of interest are discussed on the way to the first stop, the Fort Wallace Museum and Cemetery. At this stop, each student is required to find answers to questions that can only be found in the museum. Questions like "Who designed General Custer's hat?" and "What military unit was stationed at Fort Wallace?" are examples. (In case you're wondering, General Custer designed his own hat and the 7th Cavalry was stationed at Fort Wallace.)

Before leaving the museum, Keith Shadel, story teller and history buff, discussed what life was like at Pond Creek Station, a relay station for the Butterfield Overland Dispatch. Everyone also learned that Buffalo Soldiers, who were freed slaves in the 9th Cavalry at Cheyenne Wells near Fort Wallace, came to the rescue of cavalry scouts



This morning started much different than most school days. Students arrive early with sleeping bags and overnight gear for the two-day field trip.



On the first leg of the trip, students stopped at the Fort Wallace Museum where Keith Shadel told the history of Pond Creek Station and Cavalry. The original Pond Creek Station building is in the background.

who were surrounded by Indians at Beecher Island in Colorado. Students got a glimpse of what life may have been like on the Kansas frontier with hostile Indians.

Next stop was Logan State Fishing Lake and Wildlife Area for lunch. Students learned about the lake and wildlife management area from a department biologist.

The afternoon was dedicated to present land use patterns, Kansas in pre-settlement time and in geological time. Roger Tacha, district conservationist with the Natural Resource Conservation Service, discussed soil and water conservation and managing native grass pastures today. A Conservation Reserve field helped students learn about Kansas' past, giving them an idea of what the prairie may have been like prior to white settlement. Prairie grazers like the buffalo and the role of fire in the development of the prairie ecosystem were discussed, and students learned that fire is not always bad. One of the best parts of this stop is when the students are asked to sit still and be very quiet so that all they hear is the wind blowing through the grass. This is refreshing to the soul.

The next stop was a sand dune where fossils such as sharks' teeth can be found. The fifth graders found evidence showing that in Kansas' distant past, it was covered by an ocean.

The next and final stop for this day was Camp Lakeside at Lake Scott State Park. Camp Lakeside is the Methodist Church camp and is host to the students for the evening and next morning. After some stretching and learning camp rules, it was my turn to provide a program on wildlife. I use this time for an activity that teaches the importance of habitat, how the food chain works in nature, and how nutrients are passed through the ecosystem. This activity is actually a game of tag. The students are divided evenly into three categories. They are given arm bands to identify them as mice, snakes or hawks. Each student must survive the day. The day, however, is only five minutes long. The mice survive their day by picking up popcorn that I had spread on the ground earlier. They must avoid being tagged (eaten) by a snake. The snakes survive by tagging (eating) a mouse. When the snake catches a mouse, the mouse must give the snake its popcorn. Snakes also have to avoid being tagged by hawks. The hawks survive by tagging snakes. Since in this game we have an equal number of mice, snakes and hawks and no area is designated as escape cover, the game lasts about two minutes with no one surviving. Then we discuss what happened.

Students soon learn that a safe haven, or habitat, is needed to survive. They also learn that a larger prey base, or more mice, is needed to support smaller populations of

Roger Tacha, district conservationist with the Soil Conservation Service, discusses the prairie ecosystem with the students.

snakes and hawks. We then play the game again with more students as mice, fewer snakes and fewer yet hawks. We also designate certain areas as safe havens or habitat. Usually, only a couple of each species survive the day. Students have a lot of fun in this activity, and they seem to learn a valuable lesson about the necessity of wildlife habitat.

After the wildlife program, it's time for supper and then on to Bull Canyon, near Scott Lake. There all enjoy a campfire, singing, stories and roasting marshmallows. The school's music teacher led the children in songs learned in class. One person, who closely resembles myself wearing an old hat, sang and played the guitar. Keith Shadel told stories like "How The Bear Lost Its Tail" and one about the blanket that separates day from night. Then it was bedtime.

The next morning, the class was introduced to orienteering, using a compass and actually going on a short compass course near the lake. The exercise teaches youngsters how to use a lensatic compass and to find things for themselves in the wild. They also are required to use math and deduction skills. The course wound up at the lake shore where Lynn Davignon, department fisheries biologist, presented a program on Kansas fish management. He demonstrated equipment used in sampling the fish population and provided hands-on fish identification and management information. This is always one of the highlights of the trip since we usually get to see and touch big fish. The equipment used in sampling is unusual in itself, since many people have never seen things like gill nets, electric shocker boats and fish traps.

Next was a nature hike at Scott State Park to learn about the Scott riffle beetle, an endangered species, and the diversity of plants in Kansas. Initiative games that require teamwork and use of the thought process were also played. The afternoon was spent visiting other historical and geological sites including the Squaw's Den (the site of a confrontation between the cavalry and Cheyenne Indians), and the Kansas Pyramids, a geological wonder in Logan County. Once the trip was over and the students returned to the classroom, lessons learned on these two days are expanded upon and referred to throughout the year.

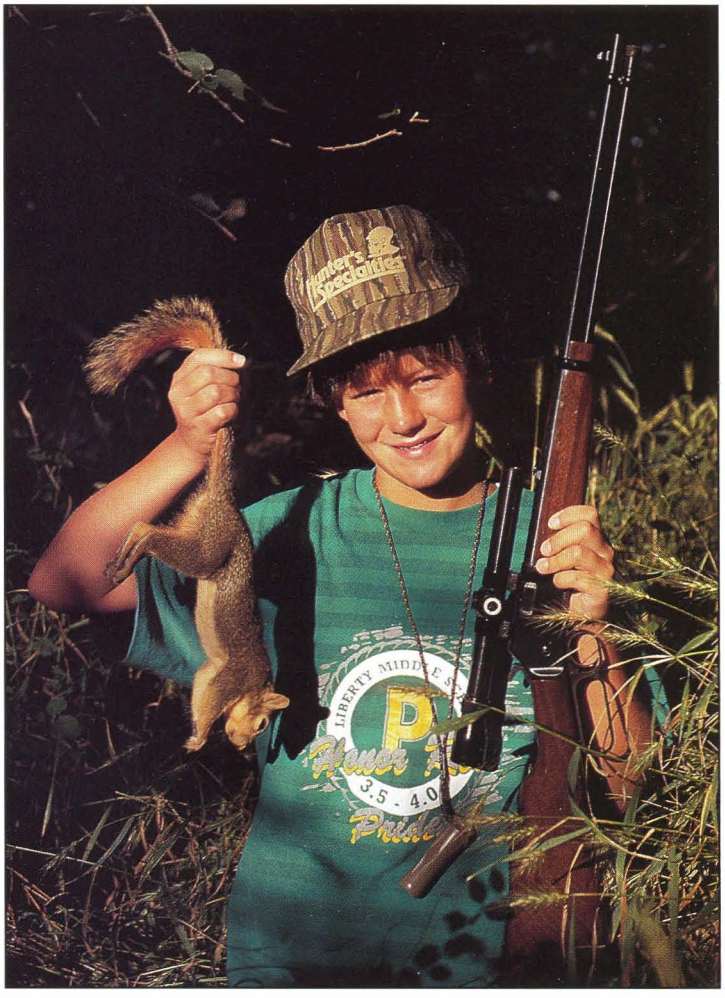
Kansas is blessed with a great diversity of land types and a rich history. Too often visitors and residents never learn about things in their own backyard. Travelers on Interstate 70 have told me that they hate this stretch of highway because there is nothing here. Sometimes when I tell them about the history and the diversity of Kansas they are amazed.

This class has learned that Kansas has a lot of hidden treasures if they'll just look. Did it sink in? I still remember a field trip my own third grade class took many years ago. We visited several factories and the fire and police stations in my hometown. Except for one girl in my class, I don't remember anything else about that school year. I'm certain that these students will remember these two days for many years and hopefully have a greater appreciation for where we came from, what we have and the need to keep it.

At Scott State Fishing Lake, district fisheries biologist Lynn Davignon demonstrated some of the tools he uses to survey fish populations at the lakes he manages. Here the students watch as an electric shocker boat is used to sample fish.

Starter Squirrels

by Kaycie Blair
sixth grader, Pratt
photos by Mike Blair



Kansas squirrel hunting might be the perfect way to introduce a youngster to hunting. The author reflects on some of her first hunting trips with her father.

The late-summer woods were quiet until my dad blew the whistle. Slapping a leafy branch on the ground, he made five squeals on his squirrel distress call. At once the trees came alive with sound.

Bok, bok, bok!" came the sharp reply of an excited fox squirrel. It kept barking as it ran through the treetops toward us, and several others barked, too. I hurried to a small tree and steadied my .22, waiting for a good shot.

In late summer and early fall, foliage makes it difficult to see squirrels, but it also hides the hunter. A squirrel distress call may help the hunter locate squirrels.

A minute later, the first squirrel appeared in a nearby cottonwood and hid behind a limb as it searched for the call. Then it jumped into the open and stopped again. The rifle cracked, and the squirrel dropped cleanly.

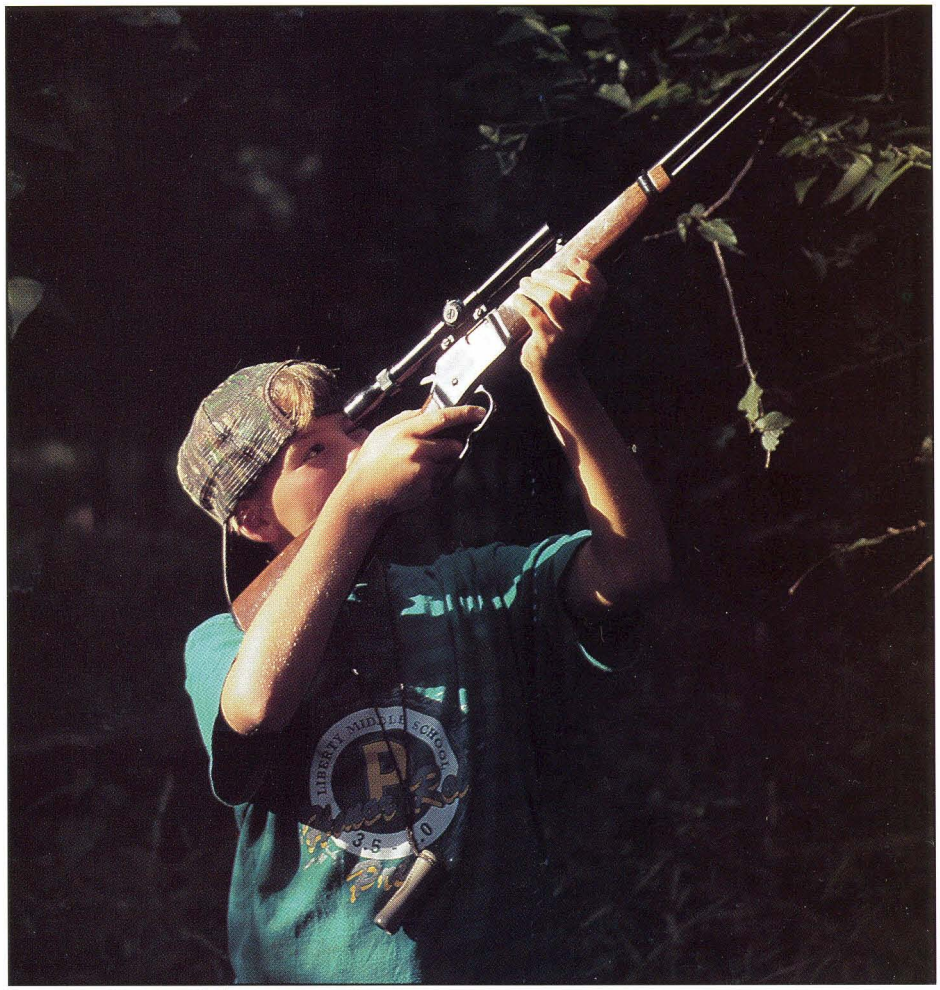
"Good shot!" Dad said, as I picked up my first squirrel of the season. I'd never hunted with a squirrel distress call, and I liked it. Before blowing the call, we had sneaked through the woods for 30 minutes without seeing a thing, but the call brought three squirrels from their hideouts, one giving me an easy shot. This was the easy way of hunting.

It sure was different from last fall's squirrel hunting trips. Those were my first times hunting, after completing the hunter education course in late summer when I was 10 years old.

Before hunting, I practiced for hours on squirrel targets with my dad's .22 rifle. When I was ready, we started hunting in the afternoons. Dad would pick me up from school, and we would sneak through the timber looking for fox squirrels. We went many times before the season closed, and I shot lots of squirrels for the freezer. But we didn't normally use a squirrel call for late fall hunting, and when we did, the calls were a different kind.

"Why didn't we use this call last year?" I asked. My dad explained that a whistle call makes the sound of young squirrel in distress, something heard only in the summer and early fall. He said that when a hawk or owl catches a young squirrel, it makes a high-pitched, whistling squeal. Adult squirrels bark loudly and come running to the commotion. But later in the year, when the squirrels are grown, this seldom happens. So the call doesn't work as well in autumn.

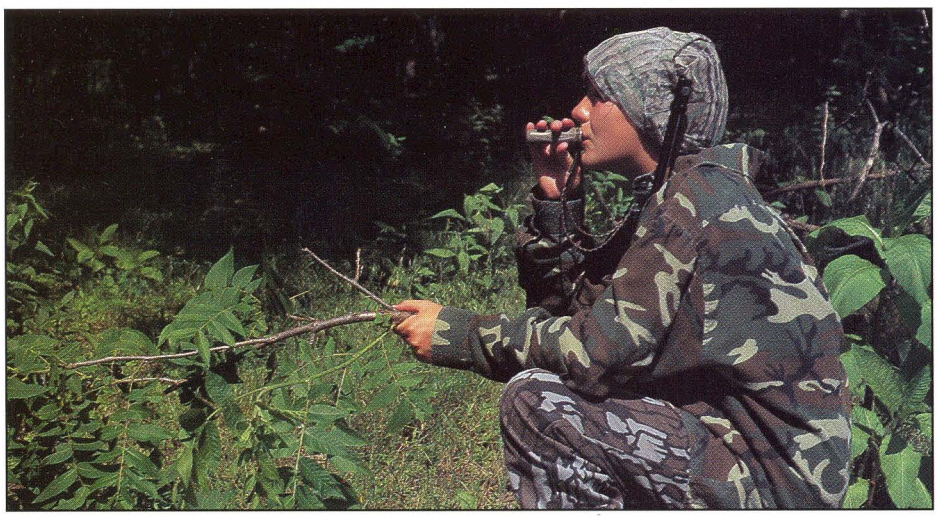
We moved on through the woods, entering a grove of walnut trees. At a likely spot, I waited while my dad blew the call again. It was strange, watching him beat the ground with a 4-foot leafy branch while blowing the whistle. But it did sound like a hawk's wings flapping through the branches in pursuit of a squirrel, and the trick worked again.



The author likes the lever-action, scoped rifle better than the open-sighted bolt-action she started hunting with. Never forgetting lessons learned in hunter education, she always considers what lies beyond her target before taking a shot.

At once, a barking squirrel sounded from the nearby timber, and it jumped from limb to limb until it stopped in the fork of a hedge tree. It was a close shot, but a farmhouse stood in the distance behind it. Remembering the safety rules from my hunter education class, I tried to move for a safe angle. The squirrel saw me and ran away.

I was disappointed but knew that plenty of squirrels lived in the trees along the creek. We sneaked on and suddenly heard the faint sounds of a squirrel cutting a walnut. The sounds were close by, but there were so many leaves that we couldn't find the squirrel. That's the bad thing about late-summer hunting, the leaves make it hard to see. But it also helps hide a hunter from the squirrels, especially if the right clothing is worn. Green camouflage is best, but any dark colors will work. Light colors don't blend



The distress call is used to simulate a young squirrel in trouble. Swishing a branch in the leaves adds a final touch, convincing squirrels to approach the ruckus.

Early-season squirrel hunting may be the perfect way to teach a young hunter how to still hunt and shoot accurately. And squirrels provide as fine eating as any small game.

in and are easy for squirrels to spot.

We sneaked toward the sound, still unable to find the feeding squirrel. Suddenly, a small piece of nut dropped through the treetops, making little splashing noises as it hit the leaves. That's another advantage of late-summer hunting; the noises squirrels make in the leaves. Branches swish together as squirrels move through the trees, and anything dropped while feeding can be heard easily. I looked closely and spotted several small particles dropping from a leafy clump. Then I saw the squirrel.

Before shooting, I stepped carefully to a small tree, a position that allowed a clear view of the target. I always try to use a tree to rest my gun while aiming because it's hard to steady a rifle on such a small target. But braced against a tree, the sights can be held exactly in place.

I thumb-cocked my lever-action .22 that I got last Christmas and looked through the 4-power scope. On my first squirrel hunts, I had used an open-sighted rifle, but the scope was much better. With it, the squirrel appeared four times closer, so it was easier to make an accurate shot. When I pulled the trigger, the long rifle .22 cracked loudly in the quiet woods, and my second squirrel came down like a rock. Dad gave me a quiet "thumbs-up."

Since we hadn't yet called at this spot, we sat down for a few minutes to allow things to settle down. The leaves absorb much of the sound of the shot, and feeding squirrels might not pay attention to the sudden noise. It was the right time of afternoon for squirrels to be active, so after a short time, Dad blew the distress call again. A squirrel started barking across the creek, but it seemed to stay in one spot. We waded the shallow water and headed toward the sounds.

Now Dad pulled a regular squirrel call from his pocket — one that sounded exactly like the barking squirrel. He tapped it fast and loud against his hand, and the real squirrel became even more excited. We sneaked toward it, and soon spotted it on a low branch. By moving very slowly, I got into position and added it to the other two in my game bag.

Dad and I were both hot and sweaty, and three squirrels would make a perfect meal for our family. Since he promised we could come back soon to hunt again, I decided to quit for the day. We cleaned the squirrels by the creek, placed them in a Zip-lock bag and headed for the car.

It was a good way to open the season. School would start soon but with the distress call to bring squirrels running, it promised to be a fun and exciting end-of-summer. Only one thing — next time I want to blow the whistle.

Kanopolis State Park's Faris Caves

text and photos by Marc Murrell
public information officer, Valley Center

More than 100 years ago, an industrious settler hand carved several caves in the sandstone bluffs along the Smoky Hill River in Ellsworth County. Now part of Kanopolis State Park, the caves are an interesting look back at pioneer life.

The Kansas prairie required that early inhabitants be creative when building shelters. Where trees were scarce, sod and mud houses were often structures of choice. However, one enterprising individual avoided the need for construction materials such as wood or even sod by digging a series of caves in a 60-foot sandstone bluff in Ellsworth County along the Smoky Hill River. The 100-year-old dwellings, known as the Faris Caves, can still be seen today, at the upper end of Kanopolis Reservoir.

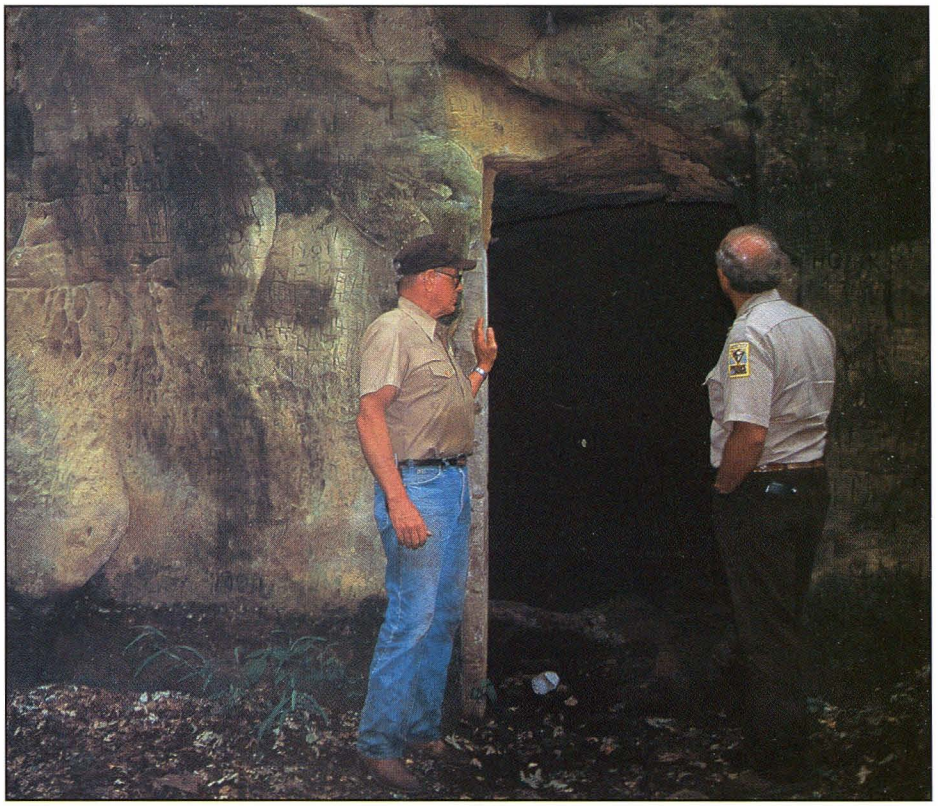
Early settler Charles Griffey bought the land in 1884 from G. A. Atwood, a sheep rancher credited with building the first fences in the area. Griffey realized the inherent protection offered by the towering Dakota sandstone bluff and using a few simple miner's tools, he dug

three caves by hand. Each cave's floor is approximately 12 feet square with a 10-foot ceiling.

In the 1860s, brothers Winfield and William Faris and members of their family, Amzi, Henry and Irwin settled in the area. In 1893 Winfield and William purchased the caves from Griffey. The Faris brothers, after whom the caves became named, occupied various tracts of land surrounding the caves and hunted buffalo and wolves, raised corn and cattle and cut prairie hay. They smoked the buffalo and wolf meat and cured the hides for sale.

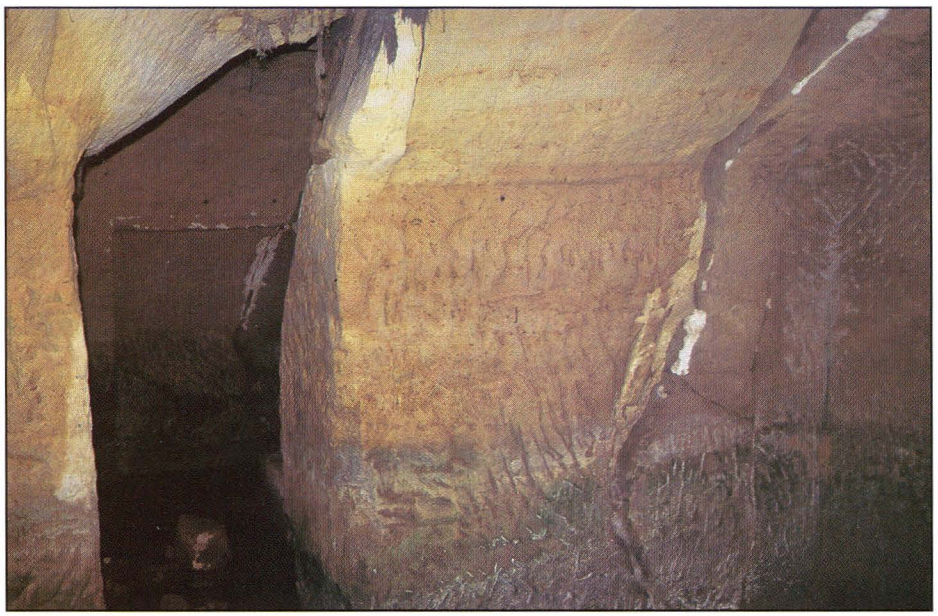
Life was sometimes difficult during settlement and at one point, Irwin was held prisoner by a band of Jayhawkers while they ransacked his house. They later released him. Irwin Faris died of hydrophobia (rabies) after a hunting trip in 1872 when he was bitten by a rabid skunk.

Winfield and William Faris built a Victorian-style house next to the caves for living quarters. In addition, extensive stockyards were situated nearby complete with a large outbuilding. The caves served as a blacksmith shop, generator room, living quarters for hired help and storage facilities for milk, butter and other perishable items. The temperature in the caves stays virtually unchanged year-round. A spring seep in one cave, which still flows today, provided a constant source of water.



State park seasonal worker, Bob Hudson, grew up near the caves and spent many hours playing in them as a young boy. Here he reminisces about growing up near the caves with Parks and Public Lands regional supervisor Ron Little.

In 1899 and 1900, one cave was used for a school classroom. Students who attended included the son of Winfield Faris, Robert, and Ella and Gertie Straley. Norma Faris, daughter of Amzi, was the teacher.



The caves were carved from the Dakota sandstone bluffs with only simple miner's tools. They were used as storage, a blacksmith shop and living quarters for hired help.

In 1886, Winfield Faris married Jessie Hudson. Winfield died in 1921 and Hudson family members continued to live in the house. Jessie's great nephew, Bob Hudson, was born there in 1940, and he remembers the caves well.

"It was a good place to hide when Mom or Dad was looking for me," said Hudson. "There was generally snakes in there, but there were times I wasn't afraid of the snakes when Dad was after me."

Hudson, a seasonal worker for the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks at Kanopolis State Park, now lives just a stone's throw away from where his life began. He remembers he didn't quite realize the uniqueness of the caves when he was growing up.

"When you was born there, it was just something that was there,"

he said. "You didn't know that it was a novelty at the time because it was just part of the place."

Hudson and his family lived on the property until September of 1947 when the federal government decided to impound the Smoky Hill River for flood control. As a result, all property below the flood plain was purchased by the government.

"Everybody that was below the flood level, they came out and numbered all the buildings and they came up for sealed bids," Hudson said. "They went by the alphabet and ours was "B," and then they numbered each building with "B" and whatever the number was. The stipulation was (for the highest bidder) to either move the building off or tear the building down."

The century-old house Hudson was born in was sold and moved to the town of Kanopolis. It still stands and is owned by the original successful bidder. The barn is also operational and located southeast of Kanopolis.

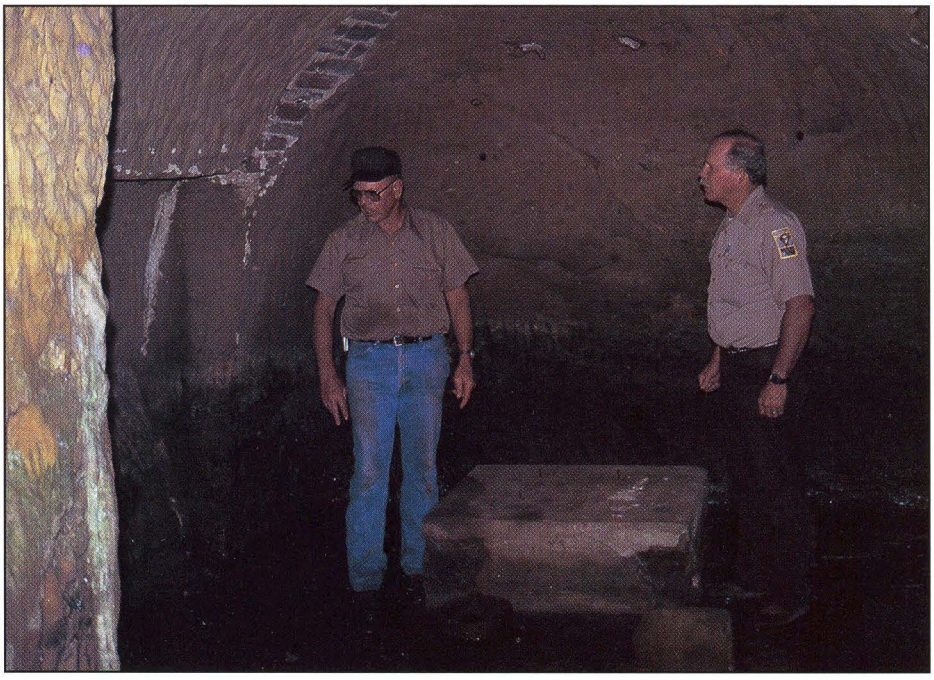
The cave structures have not been altered since their construction. Original sketches and carvings in the caves and on the sandstone exterior have been worn by the elements and floods that covered the caves in 1950, 1951 and 1993. Vandalism in the form of other carvings has also marred the original condition of the exterior of the caves.

A natural spring runs in one of the caves, providing fresh water for prior owners. The temperature in the caves remains fairly constant year-round

"I liked everything about the caves," Hudson explained. "I liked being close to the river. I liked the big ol' cottonwoods that shaded the place. The caves were a nice place to play in. You couldn't ask for better protection there. You had a natural windbreak.

"Even back then it was private land when we lived there," Hudson concluded. "I remember a lot of people coming and looking at the place. I often wondered what was so unique about them things that everybody wanted to come and look at."

The Faris Caves are now owned by the United States Army Corps of Engineers and leased to the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. Although the caves aren't maintained, they can be viewed by visitors as part of Kanopolis Reservoir's Legacy Trail. This self-guided automobile tour is an opportunity to experience the history of the area. The trail starts at the Kanopolis Reservoir Information Center and passes 27 interpretive sites. For more information about the Faris Caves and the Legacy Trail, contact Kanopolis State Park (913) 546-2565.



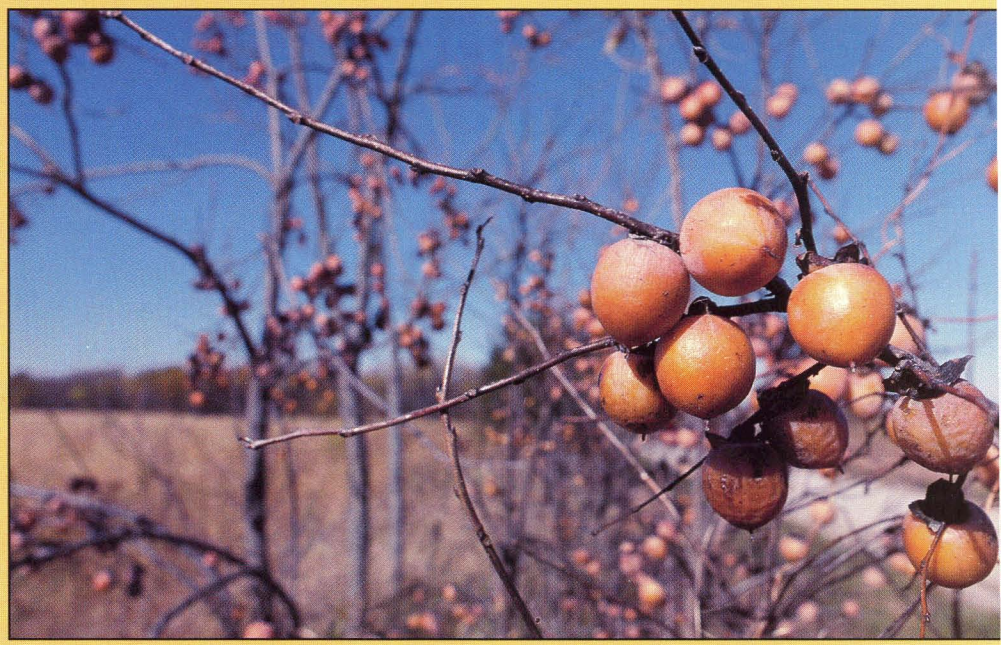
The caves can be seen by taking the Legacy Trail from Kanopolis State Park. While some vandalism has occurred, they remain much the same as they were 100 years ago.

Feels Like Fall

photos by Mike Blair

Fall is in the air, and soon the Kansas countryside will explode with color, signaling the change of seasons

Wildlife & Parks



Edited by Mark Shoup

EXTERMINATE ALL DEER

Editor:

I just want to say "Amen" to the conclusions of John W. Carwell regarding the deer population in northeast Kansas (***Kansas Wildlife and Parks***, May/June 1995, Page 34). One cannot pick up a Washington County newspaper without reading of at least one case of "hit a deer" type story. In November, there will be six or more each week.

And it is all the fault of the Department of Wildlife and Parks. Some place among my news clippings, I have a story about a farmer near Irving, Kansas, seeing a deer in 1943. Deer were so scarce that just seeing one rated a news story in a weekly paper. And you never heard of one being hit by a vehicle.

However, since "Fish and Game" started restocking and limiting hunting the deer, they have become intolerable nuisances.

I wish that I could see an accurate figure on how much money the automobile insurance companies pay out for wrecked cars in any one year. And every time another claim is paid, there is more justification for raise in my insurance rates. I do not receive one penny benefit from the deer even existing. Yet I doled out money for deer alert signals, replaced the hood, headlights, and front end chrome on one car, and still run the danger of doing the same thing every time I drive out of town.

I hereby advocate the following:

1. *wipe out, exterminate, and obliterate the Kansas deer population and somehow prevent the rascals from coming across the Nebraska border into Kansas, or*

2. *raise the deer license price enough to set up a fund to repair every vehicle damaged by deer, or*

3. *let us sue Wildlife and Parks for all damages to all vehicles damaged by deer.*

Keep in mind that Bambi is not quite as cute as he comes through the windshield of your car at 55 miles per hour. They will really devastate the front end of a car at those speeds. They serve absolutely no useful purpose than to sight in your defensive weapon, and you can do that on a tree stump.

Floyd Sorrick
Washington

Dear Mr. Sorrick:

Neither the old Fish and Game Commission nor the Department of Wildlife and Parks ever stocked deer in Kansas. The greatest growth in deer numbers came after we first allowed deer hunting in 1965. Beyond those clarifications, I think your letter merits little debate, unless our readers wish to respond.

--Shoup

KEEP IT COMING

Editor:

I am 63 years old, have hunted and fished this area for 50 years. Last winter I saw a bald eagle two miles east of Abilene on the river. That was a first. And there are woodchucks southwest of town, as well. I saw my first one two years ago and was very surprised.

If you can improve ***Kansas Wildlife and Parks*** magazine, I don't know how. Keep it coming.

Clayton D. Clark
Abilene

THANKS FOR THE TENTS

Editor:

Our Department of Wildlife and Parks deserves a pat on the back, an extra "thank you" for the services you offer at some of our area lakes. The providing and setting up of a basic campsite - tent, lanterns, and coolers -- at a minimal charge is an excellent such service. Camping comfortably for the weekend can be a phone call away.

This is a wonderful idea for schools, clubs, and less prepared folks. This act of kindness could inspire a person to finally go out and revisit Mother Nature.

I feel that not very many people are informed about this gratifying opportunity. Please print my comments. A lot of good people may not yet know what this great state has to offer.

Brad Cooper
Wichita

Dear Mr. Cooper:

Thanks for the "pat on the back." The Rent-A-Camp program is currently available in six state parks: Cheney, Clinton, El Dorado, Pomona, Tuttle Creek, and Wilson. Others may offer the service in the future.

For a daily rental fee of $10, campers are provided a reserved campsite, 10- x 11-foot tent set up on site, cots or foam pads, propane stove and lantern, fuel, water cooler, broom, picnic table, and fire ring. Park staff are also available to explain the use of the equipment. (Vehicle and overnight camping fees also apply.)

For more information, contact one of the parks mentioned above.

--Shoup

TREESTAND SANCTITY

Editor:

I married into a family of hunters and fishermen when I married my husband. I was resistant to the idea of becoming a hunter's widow and quickly decided I would rather go along. I learned to call turkeys and crawl through mud. I was given my own Hoyt bow for a Christmas present. I practiced sitting for long periods without the niceties of indoor plumbing after a morning of coffee. I trudged through stubble until my legs felt like they could not move another inch. I have come to love this part of our life together. To see nature in a way that few do has become our bond. It is

sacred.

Last winter, we went to sit and wait for the big buck and found that the $60 treestand that had been bolted up in the tree had been stolen. Our mood changed. It was like a dark cloud appeared over what had been a picturesque setting. We had driven one hour to this place and now did not have time to go anywhere else.

From this woman's point of view, there is nothing like being all dressed up with no place to go. It was infuriating. I would like to say that what bothers us the most is not the money or the time driving, it is the un-sacredness of this act.

Kathleen Knott
Buhler

Dear Ms. Knott:

I understand your feelings completely, both your joy in the outdoors and your frustration with this senseless theft. In my mind, there are only two types of people who would do something like this - a radical anti-hunter or a greedy coward who mistakenly calls himself "hunter." No matter which committed this act, the effect on the hunting community is the same.

--Shoup

KANSAS KITES

Editor:

While visiting my parents in El Dorado in May and June, I noticed several hawk-like birds of a type I had not seen before. They were constantly in the neighborhood, soaring at a moderate height or sitting either on a tall antenna at a neighbor's house or in the trees in my folks' front yard.

My *Birds of North America* clearly identified them as Mississippi kites, which migrate into Kansas. Interestingly, the book indicates that they prefer "brushlands and open water," neither of which describes my parents' urban neighborhood.

I viewed mating in both May and June, but only in June did I see the gathering of twigs for a nest, which was being built in a tree in the backyard of the house with the antenna. I wish I understood why mating occurred over a month's time. Could I have been seeing two pairs, each on a different mating cycle?

Brower R. Burchill
Lawrence

Dear Mr. Burchill:

Kansans are lucky to have growing numbers of Mississippi kites in recent years, not only because they provide wonderful wildlife viewing opportunities but also because they are prodigious insect eaters. That you saw them in town is not at all unusual. Kites can be seen in towns throughout Kansas in the spring. Here in Pratt, we had about two dozen in our neighborhood for awhile.

The mating behavior you witnessed is not unusual, either. Many bird species actually mate before nest building. However, it is possible that you saw more than one pair.

--Shoup

LEAVE BUCK BE

Editor:

When I saw the picture on the front cover of the July/August issue of Kansas Wildlife and Parks, I went right to the story. I agree, he was a magnificent buck, and I emphasize "was."

I was brokenhearted that the deer had been killed. I know some people take great pride in taking a big buck with a large rack, but why couldn't he have been left alone?

On a better note, I enjoy the magazine.

Mary Thornton
Eureka

Dear Ms. Thornton:

Just a few things to consider: Those who hunt big bucks usually hunt harder and kill fewer animals. They also give younger animals the chance to grow and live longer and give does the chance to reproduce more often. In addition, most truly big bucks are approaching the end of their natural lives, anyway.

On the other hand, it is valid to ask why an animal with huge antlers has any more inherent value than a doe or a buck with a small rack -- either in your mind or that of the hunter.

--Shoup

ARTICLE OVERSIGHT

Editor:

I was pleased to read the article I wrote for the March/April issue of ***Kansas Wildlife and Parks***, "New Concern For An Old Friend," (Page 26), but after doing so, I realized I forgot to acknowledge a major partner in the quail project. Because our study areas were on private land, our research would not have been possible without the cooperation of many landowners in southern Lyon County. The farmers and ranchers in this area generously allowed us access to their land and often showed a sincere interest in our project and its findings.

I would like to take this opportunity to genuinely thank all the landowners who helped make our project a success.

Scott Taylor
University of Wisconsin-Madison

THUMBS UP

Editor:

Last year was an outstanding one for me. I was blessed with a wonderful son and received my very first deer permit for firearms season. As a lifelong resident and safe hunter of the beautiful state of Kansas, I've grown to appreciate all aspects of wildlife. Even though I didn't fill my tag in 1994, the memory of being out there before dawn in freezing temperatures and the solitude of the hunt makes me feel that I can hardly wait for the 1995 season.

My six-year-old daughter, Lacey, subscribes to your magazine. I give the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks a "two thumbs up."

Michael O. Bostick
Louisburg

SNAKE POACHER POPPED

On May 26, conservation officers from the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, aided by Bourbon County police and sheriff's officers, arrested one of the most notorious reptile poachers in the country. Rudy Komareck – a 66-year-old native of New York – was taken into custody in Ft. Scott while waiting to board a bus headed for Pennsylvania. Komareck had been illegally hunting timber rattlesnakes.

For more than 40 years, Komareck – who has sometimes used the name "Cobra King" in snake charmer sideshows – has been in the "business" of snake poaching and has been arrested and convicted several times, on both federal and state charges. According to the Wall Street Journal, he has been instrumental in devastating the populations of timber rattlesnakes in New York and Massachusetts and has done major damage in Connecticut and New Jersey. Once, he was even convicted of using young rattlesnakes in an attempt on a woman's life.

Komareck's adventure in Kansas didn't turn out exactly as he might have planned, either, but he did get off relatively easy. He was charged with hunting without a license and two counts of dealing in wildlife, fined $250, and put on a bus back to Pennsylvania.

--Shoup

Smelly Evidence

In the summer of 1994, I got a tip that renters had vacated a house in rural Miami County and left a rotting, illegally taken deer in a freezer. I found the freezer unplugged in a garage. The odor of the badly decomposed deer inside was almost overpowering, but I took photos and removed a rib for later verification that the animal was a deer.

So began a long investigation that revealed that the deer had been killed in October almost two years earlier. I developed a suspect – who had no permanent address during the entire investigation – and discovered that he had been driving home one moonlit night when a deer crossed the road and stopped 100-125 yards away. The man fired repeatedly at the doe with a 9-millimeter handgun and was surprised when it dropped.

Working with Rick Meier, assistant Miami County attorney, a complaint was filed listing four violations. Conservation Officer David Ellis, Osawatomie, assisted me in finding the violator and taking him into custody. He pleaded "guilty" on two counts – taking a deer in closed season and hunting without a license. He was fined $250 on each count, assessed $70 in court costs, served five days in jail, placed on supervised probation for one year, and was prohibited from hunting or fishing for one year.

--Bruce Bertwell, conservation officer, Olathe

FLOOD RESCUE

Many areas of Kansas were flooded as heavy rains pounded the state almost every day throughout May, sometimes leaving motorists stranded and farmers unable to leave their homes. Such was the case in mid-May, when Kansas Wildlife and Parks Conservation Officer Dave Adams received a call from a local resident concerned about some family members who live adjacent to the Marais des Cygnes River northeast of Emporia.

"George Matrai and his eight-year-old son, Kenny, had been seen earlier at their farm next to the river," Adams explains, "but the caller was concerned when phone calls to them went unanswered. I had patrolled a mile south of their farm earlier in the day and assured the caller that I would try to make contact with them."

While en route to the Matrai farm, Adams found that the same county road he had travelled less than an hour before now had 6 to 24 inches of water flowing over it. The water was still rising as he noticed a smaller vehicle on the roadway near a bridge above the rising water.

Knowing that the water across the roadway on the other side of the bridge was deeper still and the people were stranded with water rising rapidly all around them, Adams put his department pickup in four-wheel drive and drove several hundred feet to the car.

The two men in the car, Dean and Benjamin Swisher, had been fishing near the bridge and had been surprised by the rapid rise of the river. They left their vehicle parked as high as possible near the bridge and agreed to ride back with Adams, and the water continued to rise. On the drive back, the current swept Adams' pickup from one side of the road to another.

"Fortunately, the added weight of the two men and our forward momentum allowed the front wheels to get traction and pull us up the other side," notes Adams. "Dean, who is 61, said he had never in his life seen the river come up that fast."

Adams' day as rescuer was not done yet, however. After dropping the grateful fishermen at their home, he drove several miles to approach the Matrai farm from another direction.

"I arrived within several hundred yards of the farm and found them safe," says Adams, "but their home was surrounded by the flood waters. George walked his son out to me by the hand, but he was determined to stay as long as he could to keep his property from floating away. He asked me to take Kenny to his grandparents."

Fortunately, Adams' story had a happy ending for all. The Swishers recovered their car the next day, and the Matrai's property received only minor damage. Adams notes that such floods can be particularly dangerous to motorists.

"Flooded roadways can cause engines to stall, obscure roads and markers, and wash debris into travel lanes," he says. "Tires can act as flotation aids when driving, and water can move more rapidly and be deeper than it appears."

--Shoup

STATES REJECT "TAKINGS"

In July of last year, the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) -- which represents the legislators and staffs of the nation's 50 states - adopted the following official policy on "takings" bills:

"The National Conference of State Legislatures strongly opposes any section of legislation or regulation at the national level that would 1) attempt to define or categorize compensable "takings" under the Fifth Amendment to the United States Constitution or 2) interfere with a state's ability to define and categorize regulatory takings requiring state compensation. Such question of constitutional dimension should remain a matter for case-by-case determination in line with Fifth Amendment jurisprudence."

On June 27, 1995, the NCSL issued an official position statement concerning private property rights and "takings" legislation pending in Congress, specifically Senate Bill 605. In the introductory comments, Chairman Richard L. Russman writes,

"At the outset, it should be understood that NCSL is prepared to work with Congress to restrict overreaching government actions while respecting measures that are necessary to protect the public health, safety, environment, and welfare. However, takings legislation that seeks to create **an expensive new entitlement program** [document emphasis] is not the proper approach."

The document goes on to state that "compensation takings bills represent expensive 'budget busters.' Their purpose is to give taxpayer subsidies to those who have to comply with requirements designed to protect **all** [document emphasis] property values, and the health and safety of average Americans." Other comments include the following:

"Most troubling of all is that there are no studies nor evidence to support the notion that our nation's institution of private property is under siege or that the judicial branch of government has abdicated its role in protecting private property owners from overreaching government regulations. To many observers, takings legislation represents an expensive solution in search of a non-existent problem.

"Beyond the creation of a larger federal bureaucracy, increased processing and transaction costs, litigation fees, expert witness fees, and the actual costs of awards under the entitlement program, legislation like S. 605 does not even adopt a fiscally responsible approach to quantifying the amount of compensation that would be paid pursuant to a claim."

--Shoup

Swift Fox NOT LISTED

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has announced that after reviewing all available data, the swift fox -- a jackrabbit-sized fox commonly found in western Kansas - will not be added to the federal List of Threatened and Endangered Species. However, the Service also made a "warranted, but precluded" finding, which essentially means the agency believes the species should be on the list, but other species have higher priority for listing. Therefore, in one year, the Service will review any new information and reassess the status of the swift fox.

The historical range of the swift fox included the Canadian Prairie Provinces and the United States from Montana to eastern Minnesota and Iowa south to the Texas Panhandle. Its present range in the United States includes portions of 10 states -- Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, and Wyoming. Fish and Wildlife Service biologists believe that there has been some reoccupation of former habitat in Colorado, Wyoming, and Kansas.

In response to the Service's consideration of the swift fox, these states' conservation agencies -- including the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks -- developed a long-range conservation strategy plan that, when implemented, will further help reduce threats to the fox. This document apparently helped convince the Service to delay any decision to list the swift fox.

The swift fox is the smallest member of North American wild canines and weighs only 4 to 6 pounds. An adult swift fox stands about 11-12 inches tall at the shoulder and is approximately 30 inches long. The Service was petitioned to list the swift fox by Jon Sharps, a private biologist in South Dakota.

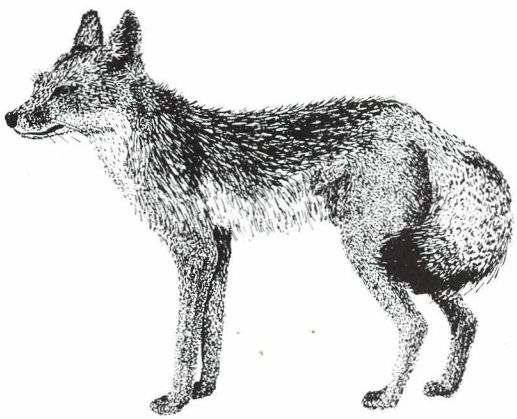
--Shoup

Peregrine TO DELIST

The American peregrine falcon, speed king of the sky, may soon fly off the endangered species list, according to Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt. "After a narrow brush with extinction, the peregrine falcon is coming back," said Babbit.

However, Babbitt added that efforts to slash funding for the National Biological Service and to weaken the Endangered Species Act undermine the very programs that brought the falcon back.

"The original research that linked DDT to declining numbers of peregrine falcons and other birds was conducted by scientists of the agency now known as



the National Biological Service," Babbitt explained. "The recovery programs and legal protection that helped bring the falcon back were carried out under the Endangered Species Act. If efforts to gut these essential conservation programs continue, future endangered species may not be as lucky as the peregrine falcon."

One of nature's most beautiful and exciting birds of prey, the peregrine narrowly escaped extinction from the effects of the pesticide DDT. The falcon has been listed as endangered since 1970 and has been brought back thanks to the ban on DDT, protection and recovery programs under the Endangered Species Act, and the determined efforts of a dedicated cadre of falcon enthusiasts.

Falconers, whose sport has made them experts in breeding and raising falcons, have played a key role in the comeback of the peregrine. Falconers pioneered early captive breeding efforts to produce young falcons for release into the wild and provided at least half of the peregrines used to establish the first captive-breeding programs.

Populations of the American peregrine are now estimated at nearly 1,000 nesting pairs in the lower 48 states and more than 300 in Alaska, with additional nesting pairs in Canada and Mexico. Numbers have been steadily climbing even though the American peregrine was eliminated in parts of its range. In some areas, it is now more numerous than before the DDT ban.

--Department of Interior release

Cimarron NO MORE?

Like the smell of smoke on the wind, ominous rumors about the Cimarron National Grasslands have been drifting into Elkhart. Rumor has it that the scenic, 108,000-acre grassland in Morton County is being taken away from the U.S. Forest Service [by Congress] and given to the U.S. Bureau of Land Management. Wildlife, conservation, recreation, and tourism programs nurtured for decades by the Forest Service would fall by the wayside as cattle grazing would become the mandated priority on the grasslands.

--Hutchinson News

Topeka Shiner MAY LIST

At a July 13 meeting in Emporia, the Kansas Wildlife and Parks Commission heard discussion about listing the Topeka shiner on the Kansas state list of threatened species. Area ranchers and representatives of watershed districts -- primarily in the Flint Hills region, where almost all remaining Topeka shiners live -- expressed their concerns about the listing. Most indicated that while they didn't want the shiner to become extinct, they were concerned about the affects of its listing on their ability to construct publicly-funded watershed dams on their property.

The Topeka shiner is a small minnow, no longer than 3 inches, that occurs in the calm pool portions of clean-water tributary streams draining upland prairie. It is usually found in headwater areas maintained by spring or seep flows. Once found throughout most of the state, it currently exists only in the northern Flint Hills region and in Willow Creek in Wallace County. In other states, the small fish has not fared well, either. In Iowa, for example, of 61 historic locations, the species is known to currently exist in only three. In Nebraska, it may have been eliminated.

Sedimentation of streams due primarily to agricultural activities since the turn of the century is suspected as the main reason for the fish's decline. Because the Flint Hills have remained primarily rangeland, the fish has been able to survive in some of the area's more pristine waters. However, scientific data collected over the past several years shows that construction of dams on small streams in the area can have a negative impact on the Topeka shiner.

Listing the Topeka shiner as a threatened species will not give the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks power to shut down watershed projects throughout the Flint Hills. However, it will allow the agency to require project sponsors to mitigate impacts on the fish by using alternative sites or other options that make allowances for shiner habitat.

No action was taken to list the shiner at this meeting. It's primary purpose was to allow all interested parties to present their points of view. After all concerns were heard, the commission directed the Department of Wildlife and Parks to prepare a regulation for listing. This regulation will then be voted on at the commission's November meeting, at the earliest.

In the meantime, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has classified the Topeka shiner as a Category 1 candidate species. This means that the Service has given the shiner the highest ranking priority possible in consideration for threatened or endangered listing, among animals that have more than one species in its genus. The Service is now in the process of preparing a listing proposal for the Topeka shiner. If it is listed federally, Kansas law requires that the fish be automatically listed on the state list, and no commission action would be required.

Congress, however, is in the process of reviewing the Endangered Species Act, and no new listings will made until the law is revised, possibly later this year.

--Shoup

RELIGIOUS ENVIRONMENT

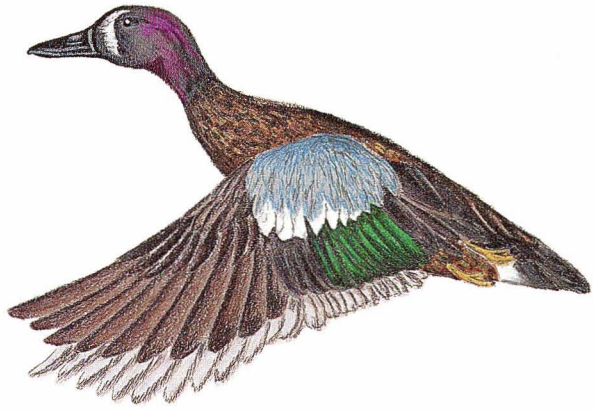
According to an article in the March/April issue of the *Utne Reader*, environmental concern is growing among some elements of the religious right, including conservative Catholics and evangelicals.

In 1990, a group of 34 prominent scientists, including Carl Sagan, Freeman Dyson, and Stephan J. Gould, issued an "Open Letter to the Religious Community" declaring that the Earth's problems were so grave they must be recognized from the outset as having a religious as well as a scientific dimension.

Religious leaders responded and formed the National Religious Partnership for the Environment (NRPE). Last year, the NRPE -- which brings together the U.S. Catholic Conference, the Evangelical Environmental Network, the National Council of Churches of Christ, and the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life -- distributed 53,000 environmental starter kits to congregations throughout the United States.

--River Crossings

TEAL ARE COMING



Teal hunting during the early season isn't the typical duck hunt. Instead of frigid conditions and snow, temperatures often soar. Early teal hunters are more concerned with sweating and trying to remain still while swatting annoying mosquitos than frostbite. Despite the mosquitos, an early teal hunt is tough to beat for action and enjoyment.

"Along with dove season, it's one of the first seasons," says Marvin Kraft, waterfowl program coordinator for the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, explaining its popularity with Kansas hunters. "And we usually have good numbers of teal."

In recent years, Kansas hunters have harvested more of the darting and dipping speedsters than nearly any other state, behind only Texas and Louisiana. Population estimates for 1995 indicate this fall should be good, too. Blue-wing teal numbers are up 11 percent from 1994, and the highest recorded since 1975. Green-wing teal population estimates were similar to last year, one of the best since 1959.

Unlike other types of waterfowl hunting, teal don't require much equipment. Huge decoy spreads are left in the garage in favor of smaller, more personal groups used to simulate small feeding flocks. Decoys aren't even necessary if you happen to find remote water sources frequented by teal. With hip boots, fabulous teal hunting can be found in shallow areas easily accessible by foot at Cheyenne Bottoms and Marais des Cygne wildlife areas, McPherson Wetlands, and Quivira National Wildlife Refuge.

"The early season isn't a harsh-weather hunt," explains Kraft. "It's the perfect way to introduce someone to waterfowl hunting. It's also the perfect time to get your dog out and run him through the routine and work out any problems."

Kansas' early teal season opens September 16 and runs through September 24. Shooting hours are one-half hour before sunrise to sunset. The bag limit is four teal (single species or in combination), and the possession limit is eight. Steel shot is required for all waterfowl hunting and shotguns must be plugged. Teal hunters must have current federal and state waterfowl stamps and Kansas hunting licenses (unless exempt).

--Murrell

DUCKS UP AGAIN

With plentiful precipitation in northern wetlands, continental duck production is up for the second consecutive year. The water, plus more than a decade of intensive wetland conservation efforts in the U.S. and Canada, resulted in the largest breeding duck population in 15 years, according to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Mollie Beattie.

This year's survey of breeding populations recorded an estimated 35.9 million ducks, more than 10 percent higher than last year. Breeding mallards increased 18 percent to 8.3 million, the highest since 1972. Three species reached historical highs: canvasback up 47 percent to 771,000, redheads up 36 percent to 888,000, and gadwall up 22 percent to 2.8 million.

Beattie gave special recognition to sportsmen for supporting wetland restoration efforts. "Many conservationists had a hand in bringing about this success, but I especially congratulate the nation's hunters for their vital role," she said. "They were the vanguard who opened the way for this recovery, who continued to buy licenses and Duck Stamps even when seasons were shortened and bag limits lowered, and who contributed time and money to protect and restore waterfowl habitat."

--Wildlife Management Institute

CHICKEN INDICES

In the spring of 1994, observers surveyed all but one of the 28 greater prairie chicken routes in Kansas and satisfactorily completed 23. Routes not completed included those in Allen, Anderson, Pottawatomie, Washington, and Waubunsee counties. All 10 of the lesser prairie chicken survey routes were completed. The survey dates for the 1994 counts were March 21- April 24.

Lesser Prairie Chicken

The rangewide index of 2.9 birds per square mile is an all-time low since this survey was begun in 1964; however, it did not differ significantly from the 1993 index. The Morton County and Pratt Sandhills routes reached all-time lows in 1994. For routes completed in both 1994 and 1993, the rangewide index declined by 17 percent with declines on 5 of those 9 routes.

Greater Prairie Chicken

The rangewide index of 5.1 birds per square mile did not differ significantly from the 1993 index. No greater prairie chickens were reported on the survey routes in Elk, Lincoln, Montgomery, and Wilson counties. For 20 routes completed in both 1994 and 1993, the rangewide index increased 4 percent, with declines on 9 routes and no change on two.

--Randy Rodgers, wildlife research biologist, Hays

Haunted Waters

by Mark Shoup

When I was a boy – blue jeans rolled at the cuff, iron-on knee patches forever curling at the edges – I spent a great deal of time with my Grandmother Shoup in Cimarron. Like my hometown of Larned, Cimarron was a place where you could run free, collect snakes and tadpoles, and walk to the pool by yourself. In two minutes, you could be out of town on your bike, swimming or fishing in the nearby Arkansas River, which also flowed through Larned.

I was fascinated with Cimarron. My ancestors had settled this area in the 1870s, and my grandmother's recollections made the place larger than life. My great-grandfather, Jacob Quincy Shoup, was enough of a legend in the area that folks from Dodge City had hired a train to his funeral in 1894. He was, according to my grandmother, "mortal enemies" with Bat Masterson. Jake once led the people of Cimarron in a successful defense of the county seat against none other than Masterson and a group of raiders from Ingalls, an event known as the Cimarron Gunfight.

Grandma's best friends were the Luthers, who owned what is now called the Cimarron Hotel. She took me there often for supper on the hotel's back lawn. On one occasion, I remember perusing the old hotel register, where I found the entry, "Bat Masterson and Whore." The entry looked genuine, but who knows. Maybe my great-grandfather put it there.

Another reason Cimarron fascinated me was the Arkansas River. The Ark connected my life as surely as did my family history. It flowed through my hometown and the towns where my father, grandfather, and mother had grown up. It was never out of sight on the 80-mile trip from Larned to Cimarron – a vein from some mysterious heart, flowing through generations.

The heart, of course, was the Rocky Mountains, and as if through some natural extension of my family heritage, Grandma had built a Rocky Mountain cabin in 1948, the year I was born. We would travel there in summer along Highway 50, following the endless Arkansas, which appeared magically near every town along the way. The names are imbedded in memory: Syracuse, Holly (where my parents had eloped), Lamar, Las Animas, La Junta, and Rocky Ford.

On other trips, I had visited my mother's parents in Rocky Ford – rich melon and sugar beet country nursed by the Arkansas. Here, on my Grandfather Hoffman's lush bluegrass lawn, I played "bears" with my cousins. In the evenings, we devoured backyard picnics of fried chicken, sweet corn, and cantelope while just outside town, dark canals bled into melon fields.

Although Grandma Shoup's cabin wasn't near the headwaters of the Ark, it always seemed so. All the streams and rivers seemed to flow toward home, toward the Arkansas. I remember stumbling out of bed at night – the cabin rich with the aroma of pine and woodsmoke – to use the appliance my grandmother affectionately referred to as a "thundermug." Duties complete, I would listen through the screen door for the crash of water against stone, only a muffled sigh by the time it reached our cabin door through pine and aspen groves. I was amazed that these waters – clear, cold, fierce – were the source of a gentle, sand-bottom playground where I fished, frogged, and floated for days each summer in the hot Kansas sun.

That was many years ago, of course. While the Ark of the Rockies still feeds the Eastern Slope, it is swallowed up in the Great Plains. The river that fed my imagination, my generational memory, has been mostly dry from Larned to Cimarron for 20 years or more, except on rare occasions when Mother Nature force feeds the earth. Such an event occurred last summer when heavy mountain rain and snow allowed boys and girls near Cimarron and Dodge to float the river once again. Most had never seen her flow. Most will never see her again.

The Arkansas River is a victim of progress, the same progression that has absorbed small family farms into corporations and drained the economies of towns like Cimarron and Larned, just as it has dried the river.

In *A River Runs Through It*, Norman McLean laments of his past, "I am haunted by waters." The waters that course my memory are themselves haunted.

FLOATING PIER

It's been almost three years in the making, but finally Cedar Bluff Reservoir has a new addition that will allow virtually anyone to venture onto the water. A new floating fishing dock - handicapped-accessible and covered - was installed in June.

"The theory behind the project was to build a fishing slip similar to the one that was located at Cedar Bluff many years ago," fisheries biologist Lynn Davignon told the *Western Kansas World.*

The pier is located south of the fish cleaning station in Cedar Bluff State Park on the north shore of what is known as the Christmas Tree Cove or Crappie Cove. Cost of the project was nearly $7,500, but much of the materials and labor were donated. The Cedar Bluff Lake Association made a cash donation.

Because the dock is covered, it will provide shade for both fishermen and fish. Crappie like the shade, and there is also a brush pile under the dock to help attract the fish. The water is about 18 feet deep under the pier, which measures 20 feet square and is connected to the shore by a 60-foot walkway.

--Western Kansas World

MILITARY FISH

Alabama, which boasts the largest artificial reef program in the United States, has deployed 100 surplus Army combat tanks to the Gulf of Mexico for conversion to artificial reefs. The program, REEF EX, places obsolete combat tanks within designated areas for artificial reef construction off the coast of Alabama.

A Navy reserve captain came up with the idea because tanks sold for scrap have to be cut into lengths shorter than 18 inches, and 9-inch armor plating is difficult to cut. Because the government was making only $100 per tank, the reserve captain thought the tanks might be better used as fish habitat. Alabama was approached first because many of the tanks were stored in Anniston Army Depot. After inspection to ensure that they were environmentally safe and met all Environmental Protection Agency requirements, barges carried the tanks to designated areas in 70 to 100 feet of water.

Amberjack, red snapper, gray snapper, and lane snapper are among the species already spotted near the sunken tanks. One hundred more tanks are being considered for the reef program in 1995 and 1996.

--Fisheries, Vol. 20, No. 1

PREDACEOUS FINGERLINGS

The spring of 1995 may have been unusually wet, but that didn't stop the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks from successfully completing the first segment of its annual predaceous fingerling stockings.

"Although it was a difficult year for fingerling fish production, good numbers of walleye and saugeye were stocked last spring," says Jim Beam, Wildlife and Parks' fisheries management chief. "The rain and cool weather kept water temperatures below normal for much of the growing season."

According to Beam, plankton -- the microscopic plants and animals that constitute the principle food for newly hatched fish - also had a difficult spring, which in turn affected the fish. As a result, fish normally held in production ponds for 30-40 days required 50-60 days to reach stockable sizes.

"As fish have to stay in crowded ponds longer, their chances of survival lessen," explains Beam. "Cannibalism, predation by birds, insects, and other animals, disease, and parasite infestation all hamper harvest."

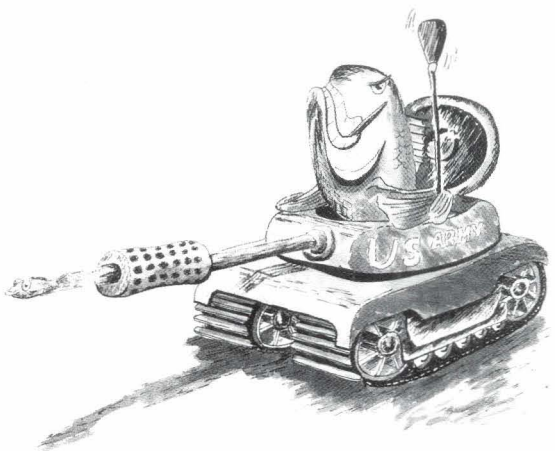
Still, early results show that good numbers of predaceous fingerlings (1- to 1 1/2-inch fish) have already been stocked. By early June, 770,000 walleye and sauger made their way from Wildlife and Parks hatcheries at Pratt and Farlington to Kansas waters, including large reservoirs and city lakes. In addition, about 5,000 wipers (white bass, striped bass hybrid) have been stocked.

By the end of June, striped bass fingerlings had been stocked, and in July, largemouth and smallmouth bass fingerlings were added to the list. For more information about fish stocking in your area, contact the fisheries biologist at any local office of the Department of Wildlife and Parks, or the Pratt Operations Office, (316) 672-5911.

--Shoup

SALINE RENOVATION

Creel and size limits have been temporarily removed at Saline State Fishing Lake as the first step in the renovation of the lake's fisheries. Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks fisheries managers plan to remove existing fish populations from the lake by December, and prepare for restocking of the lake in the spring of 1996.



The 38-acre lake, located northwest of Salina, was contaminated with a large number of undesirable fish in the 1993 flood. Effective July 1 through Aug. 31, Saline State Fishing Lake anglers were not subject to the usual creel and size limits although they had to use only legal fishing methods. From Sept. 1-30, anglers will be allowed to remove remaining fish by hand, dip net, and seines, in addition to normal fishing methods.

--Shoup

WHERE BUFFALO ROAM

We all know the words to the Kansas State Song: "Oh, give me a home/Where the buffalo roam . . ." It's ironic, then, that buffalo don't roam too much in Kansas these days. In fact, the history of the buffalo – or American bison, as it is properly known – is a sad one, indeed.

According to an article in National Geographic, the slaughter of millions of buffalo in the Great Plains had "outraged" the U.S. Congress as early as 1874 when they voted to end the slaughter. However, President Ulysses S. Grant vetoed the measure because his army was losing 25 soldiers for every Native American they killed while attempting to confine them to reservations. The bill was debated again in 1876 but was soundly defeated because it was felt that "it would be a great step forward in the civilization of the Indians and the preservation of peace on the border if there was not a buffalo in existence."

What had become official policy nearly became a reality. In 1800, 30 million bison roamed freely; by 1870, the herd still boasted 20 million strong. By 1889, however, only 1,000 remained. One thousand, in zoos and private herds.

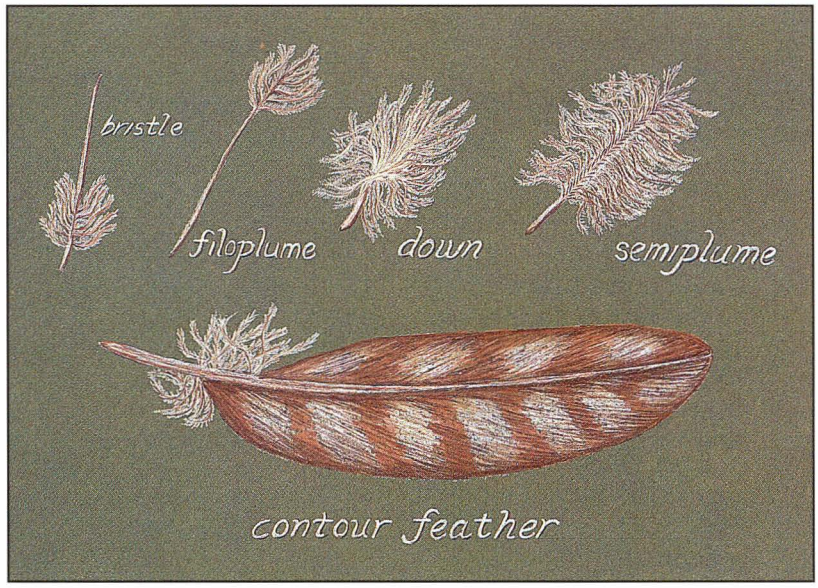
Today, the buffalo is making something of a comeback with about 200,000 animals in private and wild herds. Many ranchers are raising them as a lean alternative to beef, and free-ranging herds – wild animals – are managed on a few public areas in the West. Two thousand roam freely in South Dakota's Black Hills, and another 4,000 range over Yellowstone National Park. In Kansas, private herds periodically graze Big Basin Prairie Preserve, in Clark County, and the Department of Wildlife and Parks maintains approximately 500 animals at Byron Walker (Kingman County) and Mined Land (Crawford County) wildlife areas and at Finney Game Refuge (Finney County) and Maxwell Wildlife Refuge (McPherson County).

--Shoup

FEATHER FACTS

Unique to birds, feathers serve many purposes. Feathers are made of a protein called keratin, the same material found in our fingernails. Once a feather is formed, it does not have any living cells. Feathers provide warmth, aid in flight, and help announce a bird's presence, which is useful in attracting a mate or defending a territory.

Birds may shed their feathers once or more a year in a process called molting. Some birds have thousands of feathers. A hummingbird may have 1,000 or more, and a swan may have more than 25,000.



Feathers come in six major types: vane or contour, down, semiplume, filoplume, powder down, and bristles. Contour, or vane, feathers have barbs that come off the shaft in parallel rows. Barbules grow off each of the barbs and they lock together as hooks and catches. This helps form a flat, singular surface that is especially important in flight. A single barb in a crane feather has about 600 barbules, more than 1 million per feather. A bird needs contour feathers for flight and to provide a streamlined body.

Down feathers are familiar because they are found in pillows, comforters, sleeping bags, and jackets. Their barbules lack hooks, which makes them very soft and fluffy. These short, fluffy feathers are hidden under the contour feathers. Here they trap air and provide insulation. Down helps to conserve heat in a bird's body.

Semiplume feathers look like a cross between a contour and a down feather. They have barbs arranged in two rows like a contour feather, but they lack hooks and therefore appear loose and fluffy. Semiplumes insulate the body, provide flexibility for movement of the large contour feathers, and increase buoyancy in water birds.

Filoplumes resemble hair-like growths with sparse barbs and barbules at the tips. They are found between the feathers on a bird's body. These feathers help a bird to detect the position of its feathers.

Powder down feathers are unique because they never stop growing and are never molted. The barbs at the tips disintegrate into a fine, talc-like powder. This down gives birds a metallic luster. Egrets, herons, and some other birds use powder down to help waterproof and preserve their feathers.

Bristles are modified, vaneless contour feathers. On some birds, they occur around the eyes as protective eyelashes. They also keep out dust around the nostrils. They aid some birds by forming an "insect net" around their beaks, which helps them funnel prey into their mouths.

--On T.R.A.C.K.S.

NEW COMMISSIONERS

Governor Bill Graves has appointed three new members to the Wildlife and Parks Commission. The three include Will Carpenter, Towanda; John Mickey, Atwood; and Tom Warner, Manhattan. Graves also named sitting commissioners John Dykes as chairman and Al Ward as vice-chairman.

Carpenter is owner and manager of three businesses in Butler County. He belongs to a number of outdoor-related organizations, including the Flint Hills Gun Club and the National Wild Turkey Federation.

Mickey is a line supervisor for Midwest Energy. He is a member of the Atwood School Board and a former Rawlins County Commissioner. He also served as chairman of the Atwood Lake Committee.

Warner is director of the Department of Horticulture, Forestry, and Recreation Resources at Kansas State University. He is also a visiting professional with the W.K. Kellogg Foundation in Battle Creek, Mich.

"I am very pleased that these three Kansans have agreed to serve on the Wildlife and Parks Commission," says Graves. "They bring strength and diversity to our efforts to make the most of our state park system while managing our natural resources."

The three will serve four-year terms on the commission. They replace outgoing Commission Chairman James Holderman, and commissioners J. Jean Brungardt, and George L. Hinch.

The Kansas Wildlife and Parks Commission advises the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks in the formulation of policy and planning. The commission also has final approval on proposed rules and regulations.

--from the office of the governor

KANSAS FISH GUIDE

The newly published *Fishes In Kansas*, by Frank B. Cross and Joseph T. Collins, is now available from the University Press of Kansas. Published by the University of Kansas Natural History Museum in cooperation with Western Resources, the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, and the Kansas Biological Survey, this comprehensive guide features the color artwork of Joseph R. Tomelleri, one of the foremost fish illustrators in the country. Color photographs, black-and-white illustrations by other artists, and anatomical drawings compliment the color illustrations and help make this the definitive Kansas fish ID book.

The book is available for $20 from select offices of the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks; the Pratt Operations Office, 512 SE 25th Ave., Pratt, KS 67124; and from the University Press of Kansas, Lawrence, KS 66049.

T & E, Too

Also coming from the University Press of Kansas is a similar book, with full-color photographs, entitled *An Illustrated Guide to Endangered or Threatened Species in Kansas*. This book will be available in October, also from Wildlife and Parks and the University Press of Kansas.

--Shoup

SEASON DATES

Bullfrog, July 1 - Oct. 31; **rabbit**, open year around; **squirrel**, June 1 - Dec. 31; **early prairie chicken** (east of US 281) Sept. 15 - Oct. 15; **prairie chicken** (east of US 281 and north of K-96) Nov. 4 - Jan. 31; **prairie chicken** (south of K-96 and west of US 281), Dec. 1 - Jan. 31; **pheasant**, Nov. 11 - Jan. 31; **quail (eastern zone)**, Nov. 11 - Jan. 31; **quail (western zone)**, Nov. 18 - Jan. 31; **dove**, Sept. 1 - Oct. 30; **rail**, Sept. 1 - Nov. 9; **snipe**, Sept. 1 - Dec. 16; **woodcock**, Oct. 7 - Dec. 10; **teal** (early), Sept. 16 - Sept. 24; **sandhill crane**, Nov. 4 - Dec. 31; **crows**, Nov. 10 - March 10; **deer (firearms)**, Nov. 29 -- Dec. 10; **deer (archery)**, Oct. 1 - Nov. 28 & Dec. 11 - Dec. 31; **deer (muzzleloader)**, Sept. 16 - Sept. 24 & Nov. 29 - Dec. 10; **antelope (archery)** Sept. 23 - Oct. 1; **antelope (firearms)**, Oct. 6 - Oct. 9; **turkey, fall (archery)**, Oct. 1 - Nov. 28 & Dec. 11- Dec. 31; **turkey, fall (firearms)**, Oct. 11 - Oct. 22; **elk, Cimarron Unit, (archery)**, Oct. 1 - Nov. 28 & Dec. 11-31; **elk, Cimarron & Liberal units (firearms)**, Sept. 23 - Oct. 1; **elk, Ft. Riley Unit (arch. & mzldr.)** Sept. 16 - Sept. 24.

For information on late migratory birds and trapping, consult the *1995 Kansas Hunting and Furharvesting Regulations Summary*, available wherever licenses are sold.

--Shoup

NEW DUCK STAMP

The new federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp (duck stamp), which became available for purchase July 1, features an appropriate subject: a pair of mallards. Mallard numbers are up sharply for the second consecutive year.

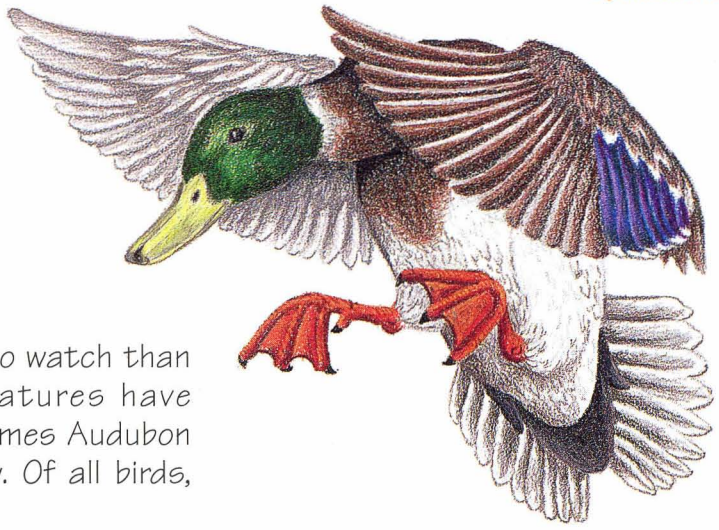
The new duck stamp went on sale for $15 July 1 at most U. S. post offices, national wildlife refuges, sporting goods stores, and various K-Mart and Wal-Mart stores. The new stamp features a pair of mallards by artist Jim Hautman of Plymouth, Minnesota. Hautman won the 1995 federal duck stamp contest last November when his painting was chosen over 584 other art entries. Hautman also won the 1989 contest and his brother, Joe, won in 1991.

While waterfowl hunters age 16 and older are required to purchase a federal duck stamp each year, more and more conservationists, stamp collectors, and wildlife art enthusiasts also are buying duck stamps. Of the $15 purchase, $14.70 goes directly into a fund used for wetlands acquisition for the National Wildlife Refuge System. Since the program began in 1934, duck stamps have raised nearly $500 million, which has been used to acquire more than 4 million acres of wetlands.

--Mathews

by Mark Shoup

Ducks



Probably no group of birds is more fun to watch than ducks. These playful, sociable creatures have inspired great naturalists like John James Audubon as well as cartoonists such as Walt Disney. Of all birds, ducks are perhaps the most "cuddly."

But it is duck behavior that is most fascinating. Just the fact that they congregate in large groups makes them fun to watch. Anyone who has ever hidden in a marsh at dawn knows what it is like to be surrounded by mallard cackles, wigeon whistles, gadwall quacks, the busy splashing of wings, and the constant rush of wingbeats overhead.

Perhaps the most amazing duck behavior, however, is migration. Each fall and spring, ducks migrate thousands of miles. In winter, they spend their time in the warmer climates of Central America. As the weather warms, they head north for breeding grounds in the northern United States and Canada. It is during this time of migration that duck habitat -- places with food, water, and cover -- may be most important. Migration takes an incredible amount of energy. If food supplies are not plentiful during these journeys, ducks may die or lack the strength to breed.

Kansas is very important for migrating ducks in the Central Flyway. Our state is the halfway point on their journey. Kansas also has many temporary wetlands, called playa lakes, that provide necessary food and resting places, especially in wet years.

In late summer, just before they "stage" in groups to fly south, ducks molt. They lose their primary flight feathers and actually go through a short period when they cannot fly. While this is a dangerous

Puddle Ducks

time for them, it also gives them stronger new feathers for the flight south and the return flight in spring. For several weeks after the molt, the male and female of a species will look very much alike.

Another thing that makes ducks so cool is their variety of species. In the Central Flyway, there are two basic kinds of ducks -- puddle ducks and diving ducks. Like their names suggest, puddle ducks like shallow water and diving ducks prefer deeper ponds. Puddle ducks tip their bottoms up to feed and rarely dive. Diving ducks, on the other hand, will disappear beneath the surface for several seconds before reappearing, perhaps several yards away.

Puddle ducks include mallards, wigeon, pintails, and teal. Diving ducks include redheads, canvasbacks, and buffleheads.

In the late 1800s, hunting was not controlled, and ducks were slaughtered for large markets in the eastern U.S. and Europe. Because of this, some hunters helped pass conservation laws in the 1920s and 1930s that helped protect ducks from over-hunting. However, destruction of wetlands proved to be just as great an enemy of ducks, and in the 1970s and 1980s, their numbers dropped again.

In the past two years, however, duck populations have skyrocketed. The reason? Heavy rains in their northern breeding grounds combined with new habitat. Most of this habitat was created by a government program called the Conservation Reserve Program. However, this program has not guaranteed that duck populations will remain strong. This year, the U.S. Congress will decide whether to continue this important program.

Diving Ducks

HIGH GROUND

Flatlanders In The Rockies

by Mike Miller

My friend Rocky is part mountain man. Though his roots are set deeply in Kansas farmland, he's traveled west to the mountains each fall since he had hair. He returns from each trip revitalized, spinning tales about monster bull elk and wild places such as Sleepy Cat Mountain, Beaver Flattops and Pagoda Peak.

Each July Rocky enters his pre-elk-hunt phase. He begins carrying rumpled national forest and topographical maps with him wherever he goes. Without provocation, he'll stop one of us in the hall, point to a squiggly line and say he's sure a bull elk lives there. He'll demonstrate his "Big Bull" diaphragm call or the "Lonesome Cow" call with the slightest encouragement. He is obsessed with getting into shape and getting his arrows to fly "just right." Rocky is consumed with the coming September hunt.

After listening to the stories and seeing the transformation for years, Lennie and I found ourselves wanting to tag along. In the true tradition of mountain men, Rocky agreed to show us greenhorns the ropes west. This wouldn't be just a hunting trip, it would be an adventure.

Lennie and I followed Rocky's example, jogging and shooting our bows. We even tried to make sense of topo maps. On the 12-hour drive to Colorado, Lennie asked Rocky a question a mile: "Are the mountains real steep? How big is a *big* bull? Will it be cold? Will it snow? Are there bears? How far will we have to walk? How hard is it to get lost?" We would be ready.

We weren't ready. The mountains are *yeeuge*, as Lennie would say, and they swallowed Lennie and me up in one gulp. As soon as we set foot out of the pickup, Lennie and I were looking for a landmark to help us get our bearings. Being true flatlanders, we like Kansas where you can spot the nearest town's white grain elevator to tell you which way is which . . . even if you're 10 miles from town. We didn't see one grain elevator on the way to camp.

Lennie and I followed Rocky around like lost pups for a day and a half, until he finally ditched us to do some real elk hunting. We did our best imitations of elk hunters, but that nagging feeling of being a long way from camp and not being sure where it was kept us on edge.

"Which way is camp?" Lennie asked nonchalantly. "I mean, I know, but I just want to see if you think it's the same way I do."

"It's that way," I said pointing confidently. "Why, which way do you think it is?"

"That's pretty much what I was thinking." Relieved we weren't pointing in opposite directions, I said "Look, we know the pack trail we came in on crosses that ridge. And when we get to the trail, there's that sheep herder's camp with the white wall tent. We'll be able to see that from a half mile away. We'll be fine . . . don't you think?"

"Yeah, yeah. I was just checking."

After stumbling around on the mountainside, posing no threat to any nearby elk, Lennie's borrowed boots had given him a plum-sized blister. We started for camp following the ridge to where we thought the pack trail was. "LOOK! There's the pack trail . . . I mean, that's where I figured the pack trail would be," I said, muffling my surprise.

" OK, Dan'l Boone," Lennie said. "Where's the sheep herder's tent?"

Suddenly, a tinge of panic went through me. He was right. We couldn't see the tent that had been there yesterday . . . we were lost!

We stayed on the trail anyway and were relieved to find that the sheep herder had just moved camp. "Wheh, we're not lost. I knew this was the way," I said, my voice still quivering.

We made it to camp four hours before dark. Rocky drifted in about an hour after dark. His eyes were wild, and he told us of the dozen or so elk he'd seen -- one pretty nice bull. He'd covered about 10 miles. Lennie and I had covered maybe three miles, but Lennie limped pretty bad the last two. We excitedly told Rocky about the porcupine we'd sneaked up on. Ahh . . . It was good to be in the mountains hunting elk.

The mountains answered most of Lennie's questions. They were really steep. It got freezing cold at night. It didn't snow, but it hailed real hard. We didn't see any bears. And while we didn't get lost, it was easy to convince ourselves we were.

We proudly continued the elk hunters' tradition when returned to good old flat Kansas, telling wild stories of Snell Rock Creek, Wilson Mesa and long, hard treks over mountains. Lennie and I haven't been back, but Rocky returns every year and somehow, he's been much more successful without us. I guess we're just better suited to flatter "wilderness." We did learn the art of telling good hunting stories, though, and I can't wait to hear Lennie's stories this fall. He's planning a bowhunt for black bear in Canada. Pretty exotic stuff for a flatlander like him.

09
0 74470 17153 9