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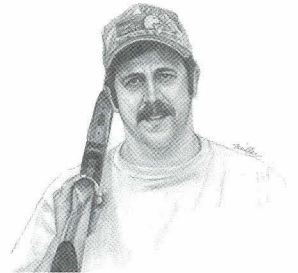
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The View From Here

by Steve Williams



Deer Management: A Fine Line

Although the rut is still four months away, I am already preparing for this fall's deer hunt. Deer hunting is sort of a religion for me. Kansas is known nationally for its trophy bucks, and hunting white-tailed deer in Kansas might be the closest thing to heaven on earth. Anyone who has felt their pulse race as a huge buck approaches knows what I'm talking about. Now, I'm enjoying this experience with my children. The look on a youngster's face when a whitetail appears in the early-morning light will be forever etched in your mind.

Not everyone, however, thinks that deer were sent from above. There is a delicate balance in the management of our deer resource and providing quality hunting and viewing opportunities — a balance that some folks take for granted. As much as deer hunting means to me, I realize there are those with very different emotions concerning deer. Deer can become a problem to farmers, and I have seen what too many deer can do to an orchard or a soybean field.

Hunting is our most important deer management tool. We can adjust hunting permit types and numbers within each of the 18 management units in response to harvest, population, and landowner surveys. When a unit shows high hunting success rates, a rise in deer vehicle accidents, and crop damage complaints, permit numbers can be increased.

But there is a fine line between too few and too many deer, and wildlife management is not an exact science. Local populations can outgrow landowner tolerance, and hunting may not solve the problem quickly enough. With this in mind, the department has established a program that deals directly with serious crop depredation problems.

The depredation policy allows the landowner or his agent to deal with specific damage areas. To document the crop damage, the landowner must contact the district wildlife biologist who, after surveying the site, can recommend a control effort. In many cases, non-lethal control methods will solve the damage problem and those will be preferred. When other control methods won't work, however, the biologist can recommend the issuance of depredation permits. Deer can then be harvested from the problem areas, and the landowner is allowed to utilize the meat. This policy can provide landowners immediate

relief.

The 1997 deer season will reflect growing deer numbers in some areas of the state. Over all, permit numbers are up nearly 20 percent this year, after 15 percent increases the previous two years. In units with more serious conflicts, the permit numbers were increased by as much as 50 percent. Many of the new permits will require hunters to harvest antlerless, or doe, deer, which is necessary to reduce the population.

Other changes for 1997 make it easier for deer hunters to take advantage of the additional permits. Firearms deer hunters will have to apply for a permit during the July 1-13 application period. After the drawing for these permits, the leftover permits will be made available. Everyone will have an equal chance to receive a left-over permit, and the leftovers can be used, with proper equipment, in the early muzzleloader season, the archery season and the regular firearms season. As in the past, a resident hunter has the opportunity to purchase at least three deer permits. In addition to one primary permit, either a statewide archery or a regular firearms permit, a hunter can purchase a left-over firearms permit and a unit archery permit. The unit archery permit allows the hunter to take an antlerless deer, and beginning this year, the permit is valid in all units for an antlerless white-tailed deer.

And the truly avid deer hunter could fill five tags, if he or she has landowner contacts in the southeast corner of the state. Any hunter who has purchased a primary permit, can also purchase up to two Sub-unit 12A antlerless tags. Sub-unit 12A is a portion of Unit 12 where high deer densities demand the issuance of additional permits.

To ensure that hunting is an effective management tool, the department encourages landowners experiencing problems to allow hunting access. And they can take it a step further by asking hunters to take at least one antlerless deer before taking a buck. The harvest of does is absolutely necessary to reduce deer numbers.

Good luck, and have a safe and enjoyable hunting season.

Steve Williams

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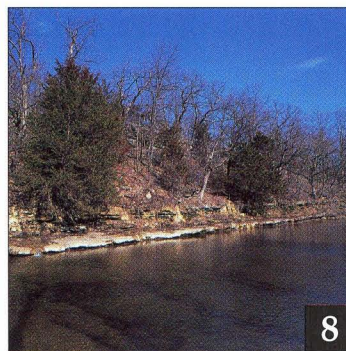
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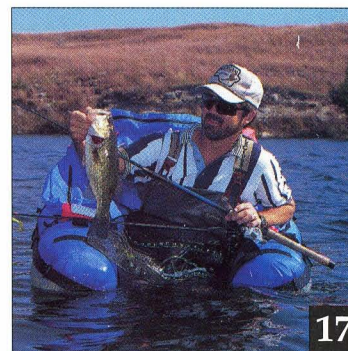
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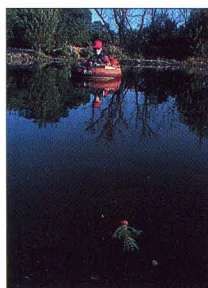
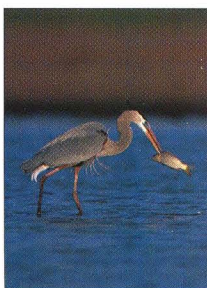
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About the covers

Front: A great blue heron spears a large meal from a Kansas pond. Mike Blair photographed the bird from a blind using a 600 mm lens, f/4 @ 1/500 sec.

Back: A bass bug sits motionless while the float tube angler waits for an explosive strike. Blair shot the scene with a from a tube using a 55 mm lens, f/9.5 @ 1/125 sec.





great blue heron

Nature's Master Anglers

text and photos by Mike Blair
staff photographer

In fine-feathered dress, herons and egrets fish with stealth and style. They put high-tech human anglers to shame, catching fish in the shallows of wetlands, river backwaters and small ponds. Keep an eye for one of these anglers, standing statue still, stalking prey — watch a master at work.



snowy egret

common egret



The fishers come each day at dawn, driven by a simple need to eat and feed their families. Forget the rules. They wade right in, wearing colors that blend with a brightening sky. They fight for the best spots. They fish with spears and take whatever they want, regardless of length or creel limits. And they get away with it. They're nature's own anglers - herons and egrets.

These birds are among the most efficient predators in Kansas wetlands. Handsome and graceful, they range in size from diminutive green herons and cattle egrets, to tall and stately great blue herons and common egrets. On wings spanning up to 6 feet, they glide from pond to



great blue heron

creek to marsh in search of food. During nesting season, hunting is a full-time job. At other times, they're most often seen during morning or evening hours when fish are active in shallow water.

The flying fishers are well-equipped for their work. All are stilt-legged and have acute vision, providing advantage when searching deeper water. Long, thin necks stretch to extend the range of strike, and their dagger-like bills easily thrust through large fish. The birds possess great patience, and often stand motionless for long periods.

Herons and egrets are not picky

snowy egret



eaters. Fish of all species comprise most of the diet, but snakes, frogs, crayfish and aquatic insects are also eaten. Other foods include marshland birds, eggs and small rodents encountered while resting in open fields or walking along shorelines. So fast and accurate are the birds' reflexes that they sometimes spear flying dragonflies.

To watch these waders is to learn a lesson in stealth. Two hunting techniques are commonly employed, depending on water conditions and the abundance of fish. Most common is still-hunting, in which the bird strikes a statuesque pose and simply waits for a fish to



common egret

great blue heron





green heron

pass within range. As it does so, the bird cocks its head and slowly extends its neck to avoid detection. Then it jabs its quarry behind the gills, either piercing it or grasping it with an open beak. If the fish is small, the angler simply tosses it skyward and swallows it in a single gulp. All fish are swallowed headfirst to avoid injuries from sharp fins. The largest wading birds may swallow fish weighing as much as several pounds.

A second hunting method is stalking. The bird walks through knee-deep water with scarcely a ripple, its neck outstretched to provide the best view. Its keen eyes scan the surface. When a fish is spotted, the bird crouches, leans forward and spears its victim. Where water is muddy and hard to see through, a trick is sometimes used to help flush quarry. Every few steps the bird will pause and "stir" the mud bottom with one foot. This disturbance causes fish or insects to dart upward into view.

Though wading birds usually hunt alone, they often gather when drying water holes expose easy pickings. Trapped fish become frenzied in the advance of herons and egrets, and the water sometimes "boils" with activity as fish try to escape. In such cases the birds are picky and ignore fish too big to swallow.

Nature's fishers often make their jobs look easy, but spearing a fish beneath the waves can be complicated. Since



great blue heron

green heron

light waves “bend” as they pass from air to water, a fish appears closer than it really is. The degree of bend increases with depth, and a striking bird must compensate to hit its target. For this reason, misses are not uncommon, particularly with young birds just learning to hunt.

Hérons and egrets are fascinating to watch. Fortunately, they’re common throughout the state, even where water exists in urban environments. But they’re also wary and difficult to approach. Binoculars or spotting scopes are helpful. For a close-up look, build a camouflaged blind at the edge of a favorite fishing hole. Then you’ll see first-hand the drama played out by nature’s anglers. ♡





Fine Kansas Bourbon

by J. Mark Shoup
associate editor, Pratt

photos by Mike Blair

Hidden away in the forested hills of southeast Kansas, Bourbon State Fishing Lake is a gem of a recreation area, featuring crystal waters and a 40-foot waterfall.

State fishing lakes may be the most uncelebrated gems of all Kansas public lands. Often overshadowed by the state's larger reservoirs and wildlife areas, these smaller impoundments and the public land surrounding them are nonetheless a primary source of recreation for many Kansans. And among these "lesser" gems, Bourbon State Fishing Lake is a diamond. Built in 1959, it's been around awhile, but many outdoor enthusiasts believe it is one of the prettiest lakes in the state.

I had heard about Bourbon from several co-workers, all of whom said something to the effect that "this is one truly unique Kansas resource." So when the area was

brought up as a possible subject for a magazine feature, I jumped at the chance to write about it.

Then late last April, my family and I caught a warm Saturday in an unseasonably cold spring and headed to Bourbon. It's a long trek from Pratt to Bourbon County, but the trip covers some of the most beautiful country in Kansas: the Flint Hills, the Chautauqua Hills, and the Osage Questas — a mixture of hills, plains, and hardwood forests graced by limestone bluffs, usually climbing the eastern face of a creek or river bottom. Bourbon State Fishing Lake boasts all these classic features of the Osage Questas at their best.

We turned off U.S. Highway 59 at Elsmore, which is actually in Allen County, and travelled the final 4 miles to Bourbon SFL, just across the county line, on a dirt road. My first impression as we drove down the gentle western slope and through the trees was that this 103-acre lake looked like a miniature Beaver Lake, before the Arkansas reservoir was over-developed. The water is clear and smooth, and the solid stand of oak-hickory forest covering the bluffs on the east side of the lake seemed almost exotic to a western Kansas native, even though I have travelled east many times. It reminded my wife, Rose, of the movie *On Golden Pond*, and she allowed that this is the kind of place she would like to retire.

I am never one to argue with my wife's impeccable taste.

My two boys saw something more in the area — a place to explore. And explore we did. After a



Bourbon State Fishing lake has primitive camping sites — no electrical, water or sewer hook-ups. Camping and vehicle permits are not required, but camping is restricted to designated areas.

few tips from local conservation officer Doug Whiteaker of Ft. Scott, we set off across the dam for a bird's-eye view of one the few

waterfalls in the state.

The stroll across the dam — about one-quarter mile — is a pleasure in itself. Covered with lush green grass, the dam is a high point above the lake and offers a panoramic view of most of the area. The lake is filled by Wolfpen Creek and eight small intermittent streams, and as the water leaves the lake, it flows over a smooth, rocky bottom to the north edge of the bluffs. There, it tumbles some 40 feet almost straight down across shale cliffs, roaring into a large pool below and further enhancing the impression of faraway travel guide destinations.



The 40-foot waterfall below Bourbon's dam is the highlight of the beautiful oak-hickory scenery that surrounds the lake.

The boys were eager to go to the bottom to fish and explore. Fisheries biologist Don George, Prescott, had told me that after heavy outflows from the lake, this pool is often a hotspot for large walleye and channel catfish. Although there was no indication of any recent



Boats are allowed for fishing only. The lake's clear waters provide good walleye and largemouth bass fishing and excellent channel cat, crappie and spotted bass fishing.

heavy outflow, I was willing to follow the boys' lead.

We walked back across the dam and drove north around the property on a dirt road that passes about 150 yards below the waterfall and parked. A path leads through the trees, and on this warm spring day, the sun and the sound of falling water made about as peaceful a scene as one could wish for. Rose relaxed on the rocks while Logan and I fished and Will explored the pools and riffles below the falls.

Although we didn't catch anything, it was hard to leave. I had seen what I took to be a hermit thrush on the way in, and a pair of bank swallows fussed and flew overhead, occasionally swooping past a softball-sized hole in a dirt wall that, along with shale and limestone, created the bowl that held waterfall and pool. These sights, combined with the rolling water and sunshine, entranced us.

Soon, however, it was time to go. We had only seen a small portion of the area, and I wanted to explore the south end where Wolfpen Creek reportedly flowed over limestone and was so clear you could see the

fish. (The creek's rocky bottom and the lake's clarity are two reasons that Bourbon harbors one of the state's best spotted bass populations.) The reports were true.

South of the lake, the road crosses through the creek, which flows crystal clear over a solid sheet of limestone. No danger of getting

stuck here. Once on the south side of the creek, we soon found a place to pull over and picnic. It was a spot in the river where a small fault in the rock bottom had apparently slipped, dropping the water depth from about 12 inches to three or four feet. But even in the deeper water, the clarity remained. Everywhere, spring water seeped from limestone outcrops.

And yes, we could see bass suspended in the water.

Unfortunately, recent cold weather must have made the fish somewhat inactive because they showed little interest in our lures. (That must have been the cause.) Still, it was once again a difficult place to leave. A chorus of unfamiliar birdsong filled the air above the bubbling brook. (If this reminds you of a Hallmark Card, that's how it felt.) However, the wildlife area east of the lake beckoned. Whiteaker had said that this was a good place to "herp," or search for reptiles.

Although the area had recently been burned and wouldn't offer great hiking for a week or two, area public land manager John Silovsky says that this is usually an excellent place for the amateur herpetologist.

"There are lots of snakes in the area," Silovsky explains, "and col-



Wolfpen Creek is the major stream filling Bourbon, and its clear waters and rocky bottom provide an ideal wading and fishing spot just above and below the lake.

lared lizards are thick. You can find skinks, too. I'd advise some caution, though, because copperheads are fairly common. There's also a chance of seeing a timber rattler."

Because of the burned landscape (part of the area's management plan), our herping trip didn't last long. However, many people comb the area throughout the summer. If you decide to join the ranks of intrepid herpers, there are a few tips to keep in mind.

While actual encounters with poisonous snakes are not common, care should be taken when searching for lizards or snakes. Be familiar with poisonous snakes, copperheads in particular. Always lift rocks facing away from you, watch where you step and sit, and

never reach into a crevice or hole you can't see into. To avoid disturbing reptile habitat, be sure to replace rocks just the way you found them.

Herping is not the only activity available on the 277-acre wildlife area. While this is not a large tract, an average yearly rainfall of 39 inches has created a diverse mosaic of bluestem prairie and oak-hickory woodlands.

Trees include blackjack oak, post oak, red oak, chinquapin oak, shagbark hickory, bitternut hickory, hackberry, Osage orange, elm, honey locust, walnut, and such woody shrubs as sumac and dogwood. Grassland species include big and little bluestem, Indian grass, switchgrass, sideoats grama, tall

dropseed, eastern gamagrass, prairie clover, and prairie rose.

"Prescribed burning is used to control invasion of woody plants in the grassland areas," says Silovsky. "We rotate spots so that each area gets burned about every three or four years."

This increases the amount of edge — areas where different habitat types converge — and, thus, the amount of wildlife habitat. As a result, wild turkey, woodcock, deer, rabbits, squirrels, and quail can be found even though the area is not large enough to support great numbers of hunters. Raccoon, muskrat, mink, coyote, and opossum are the primary furbearers on the area.

Birdwatchers may find a variety of interesting species, including the



The wildlife area surrounding the lake is small but provides quality opportunities. Quail, turkey, deer, woodcock, squirrel and rabbits can be hunted in the fall, and in the spring, the rocky hillsides are a perfect place to observe a wide variety of snakes and lizards.

Tennessee warbler, pileated woodpecker, kingfisher, ruby-throated hummingbird, whip-poor-will, ruby-crowned kinglet, tufted titmouse, woodcock, white-breasted nuthatch, blue-gray gnatcatcher, and many others.

Of course, fishing and camping are the primary attractions at Bourbon State Fishing Lake. This is reflected in the budget for the area. On average, 75 percent of federal funds used to maintain Bourbon come from the Federal Aid to Sport Fish Restoration Program (also known as the Dingell-Johnson Act) and 25 percent comes from the Federal Aid to Wildlife Restoration Program (known as the Pittman-Robertson Act).

Campsites are located along the south and west shorelines and include picnic tables and barbecue grills. Drinking water and restrooms are also available.

For the angler, Bourbon offers a special opportunity — the chance to catch spotted (Kentucky) bass. The spotted bass resembles the largemouth in color but has more pro-



Horses, as well as other vehicles, are restricted to maintained roads and parking areas. Other rules include a no trash policy — visitors must remove all trash when they leave.

nounced horizontal blotching and spots along the belly. The mouth extends to just below the eye. When caught, the spotted bass fights remarkably hard, much like a small-mouth bass.

Few Kansas lakes offer this species, and Bourbon is one of the best. In fact, the Kentucky population may be better than the largemouth. Other species include bluegill, redear sunfish, channel catfish, black and white crappie, and walleye.

The primary fisheries management tool at Bourbon is an annual drawdown of the lake level. Each fall, water is released from the lake, lowering it to about 9 feet below normal level.

“Our water-level management goal is to draw the lake down after Labor Day,” explains fisheries biologist Don George. “But we want to do it while fish are still active and feeding. This pushes prey species such as sunfish out of cover

and concentrates them, allowing predators such as black bass to eat better and grow faster.”

At this time, the predators feed heavily on small crappie, bluegill, and shad. Not only does this help the predators grow, it keeps the small fish from overpopulating. The lake is maintained at a low level until spring, when it is allowed to fill up again. Then predators can spawn in flooded vegetation that has grown in the mud flats created when the lake was lowered. This vegetation also provides protective cover for the young.

Ironically, this very effective management tool caused some controversy one summer in the early 1990s.

“We were in the middle of a semi-drought,” says George, “and someone cut the lock, opened the valve on the outlet structure, and released a lot of water. We were blamed for the low water, but it wasn’t us. Draining a lake during the summer can be disastrous to the fishery, and it makes the fish relocate, which causes them to be harder the catch.”

Another fisheries management technique used at Bourbon is feeding. This year, three feeders are in operation, and approximately 70



A visit in early spring or late fall will not only be less crowded than summer, but usually more colorful.

pounds of feed per surface acre are going into the lake from April into September. The primary beneficiary of this feed is channel catfish — and the anglers who fish for them. Channel catfish on feed may gain as much as 8/10 of a pound for every pound of feed they eat. But there are also secondary benefits. The feed increases nutrients in the water, helping plankton grow and improving the health of the lake's food pyramid from the bottom up.

These techniques benefit all anglers, from the bass tournament fishermen to the Sunday afternoon sunbather with a line cast out as an afterthought.

In addition to the regular statewide creel limits on fish, Bourbon has a few special restric-

tions that anglers must keep in mind. These include a 16-inch minimum length limit and a creel limit of two for channel catfish, a 15-inch minimum length limit on black bass, and an 18-inch minimum length limit and a creel limit of two on walleye.


My family's visit to Bourbon State Fishing Lake came on a very quiet day, especially for a Saturday. But it was early in the season and right after an unusually cold period. Things are not always so slow there. Approximately one million people live within 100 miles of Bourbon, 175,000 within 50 miles, and 90,000 within 30 miles. To western Kansans, this would seem a prescription for gross overcrowding. Fortunately, eastern Kansas is

blessed with many lakes, and while Bourbon's visitor list is active, it is not overburdened. Last year, the lake saw about 49,000 visitors, and most of these came in summer. Fall, winter, and spring visitors should experience few crowds.

For Silovsky, the off-season is the best time to visit Bourbon.

"It's a great place to be in early and late fall because of the trees," he explains. "It's just a pretty place to go. You can see a variety of waterfowl, even loons. And it's quiet. I've been to several state fishing lakes, and I'd put it up against any."

George echoes that sentiment with much the same words: "It's a beautiful lake in the fall. The public lands guys just take great care of it."

I'm sure the feeling is mutual. 





Trailer Your Boat

by Cheri Swayne

boating education coordinator, Topeka

photos by Mike Blair

A fishing or pleasure boat can represent a major investment, both in money and time. Spend some time getting familiar with proper trailering procedures, and your trips to the lake will be safer and more relaxing.

Boat trailers come in a variety of shapes and sizes. But regardless of the trailer type, it serves two basic purposes: to transport the boat to and from the launch site and to safely cradle the boat when it is not in use.

Generally there are two different kinds of trailers. Trailers with carpeted bunks are used for small, light boats. Trailers with rollers are designed for large, heavy boats. A good trailer provides the boat hull with nearly as much support as it gets in the water. Maximum trailer support requires sufficient rollers or pads that are arranged properly. Boat size, hull type, travel conditions and launch facilities will help

determine the type of trailer needed.

Trailers and tow vehicles are rated for towing capacity. Trailers have a gross load specification that is determined by the manufacturer. To match a boat with a trailer, a good rule of thumb is to get a trailer that is rated for 30 percent more than the weight of the boat. This will accommodate the weight of motor and other gear.

The tow vehicle will have a class rating for the weight it can tow. Look for a Gross Vehicle Weight Rating (GVWR), the Gross Axle Weight Rating System (GAWR), and the Gross Combination Weight Rating (GCWR) on your vehicle.

The ratings can be found on the inside of the driver's side door or in the manufacturer's manual.

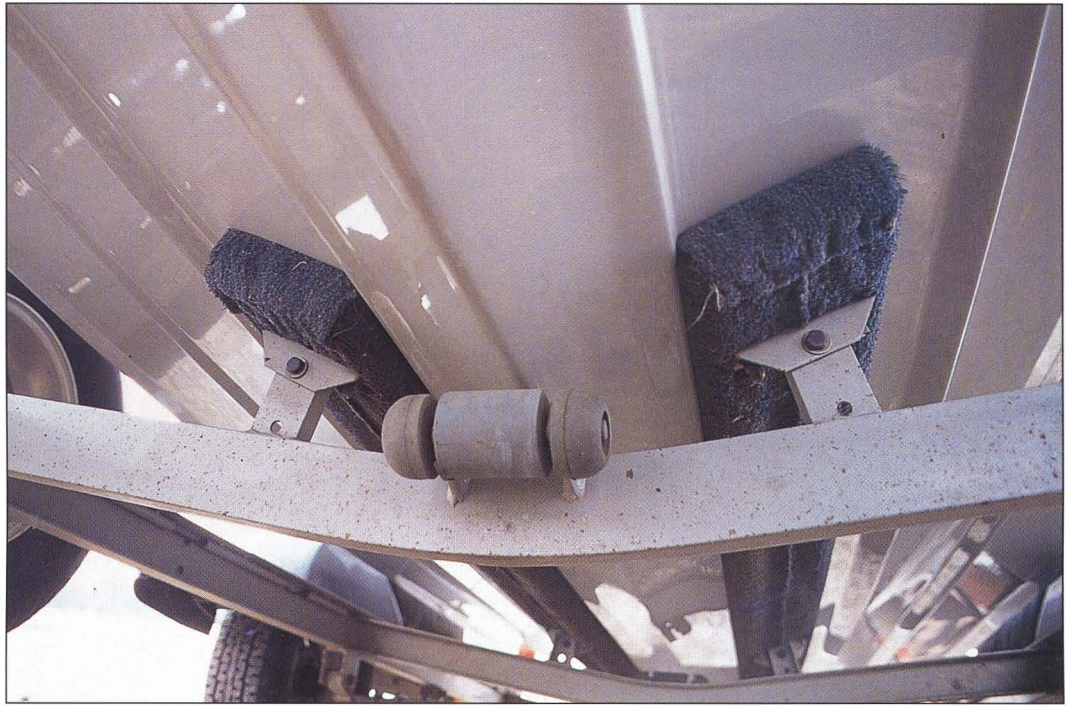
The GVWR is the total allowable weight for a fully-equipped vehicle with driver, passengers, cargo, fluids and accessories. The GAWR is the maximum allowable weight on each axle. The load on each axle should not exceed the GAWR specified on the safety compliance label, nor should the total load on both axles exceed the vehicle's GVWR. The GCWR is the combined weight of a fully loaded tow vehicle and camper, passengers, cargo, and loaded trailer, which would be important to someone pulling a boat with a pickup that had a slide-

in camper.

Many vehicles have a towing package option. This generally includes a different rear axle ratio, heavy duty flashers, a different cooling system and a variety of chassis components. Some tow packages may also include special shocks and struts.

The boat should sit on the trailer so that the unit is slightly tongue heavy. A perfectly balanced trailer will result in trailer and vehicle sway. Excessive tongue weight will place strain on the hitch and could also cause sway. Ideally, 7 percent of the gross weight of the boat/trailer combination should be distributed on the hitch ball, however, 5 percent to 10 percent is acceptable. Tongue weight can change when the boat is loaded, and particular attention should be paid to weight distribution to maintain proper tongue weight.

The hitch, ball coupler, safety chains, tires, lights, brakes, tie-



Properly placed pads and rollers prevent damage to the boat's hull during towing and storage, and they will also make the boat easier to load and unload at the ramp.

downs, winch, and mirrors are the most important equipment on your trailer. One option to consider is a trailer jack stand to help facilitate handling.

While pickups and utility vehicles may have bumper-mounted hitches, many small automobiles require frame-mounted hitches. As tow loads increase to 2,000 pounds or more, many manufacturers require weight distributing hitches. This distributes the weight and pulling power throughout the frame of the towing vehicle. Check with your dealer before putting a hitch on your vehicle since it may affect your warranty.

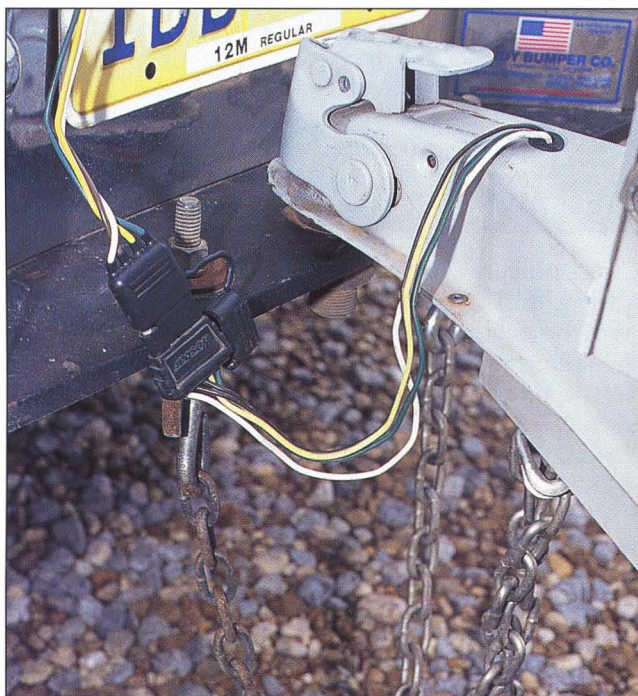
Hitches are rated by Gross Towing Weight (GTW) and Tongue Weight (TW). A Class I hitch has a GTW of 2,000 pounds and a TW of 200

pounds. A Class II hitch has a GTW of 3,500 pounds and a TW of 300 pounds. A Class III hitch is a weight distributing hitch designed to tow up to 5,000 pounds GTW. A Class IV hitch is also a weight distributing hitch that is designed to tow up to 10,000 pounds GTW. Match the class hitch you have installed on your vehicle with the vehicle's GAWR, GCWR, and GCWR. Do not try to tow more than your vehicle, trailer, and hitch are rated for.

Make sure that the ball coupler is the proper size and type to match the coupler on the trailer tongue. The ball should be lubricated, and the nut and lock washer checked periodically for tightness.

Always use safety chains. When hooking them to the hitch, cross them so they will catch and cradle the tongue if it should happen to come loose. If your trailer has surge brakes there will be an attachment from the hitch to the auxiliary brake handle mounted on the tongue.

Tires on a trailer should be of a size and load bearing capacity to handle the anticipated weight. As a rule, small tires are the best choice for light boats and short hauls. Larger tires or trailers with tandem



Check your trailer ball and hitch coupler regularly, along with the light connectors. Safety chains should be crossed.

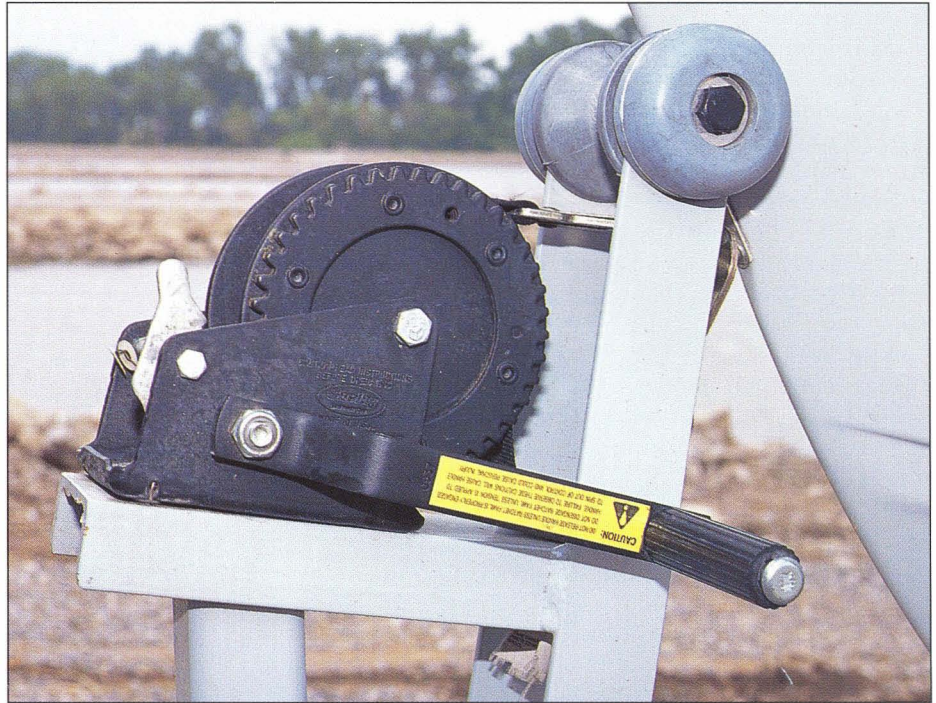
wheels are best for heavier rigs and long hauls. Larger tires provide a smoother ride, but also require greater water depth for launching. Be sure to check your owner's manual to find out the tire pressure required for the weight of the load.

Check wheel bearings frequently. As wheels are submerged at the ramp, water can seep into the hub and emulsify the grease. If you use a bearing protection system, be sure to continually add new grease. If you have sealed hubs, repack bearings every year, 10,000 miles or as recommended by the manufacturer.

Brake lights, running lights, turn signals, tail lights, and hazard lights should all be functional. The wiring harness is exposed, so it should be inspected regularly for wear. Reflectors can be added to the trailer for better visibility. Check all lights before you leave for the lake and again before you leave the boat ramp.

The boat should have a sufficient number of tie-downs to prevent it from shifting or bouncing on the rollers or pads. A tie-down or winch cable should be secured through the bow eye. Two tiedowns are needed to secure the transom. A second bow tie-down holding the bow down is recommended.

Winches with high gear ratios offer quick retrieval and work well on light boats. Lower geared



A quality winch is important for not only loading and unloading the boat at the lake, but also for keeping the boat firmly in place during towing.

winches with extra cranking power are best for heavy boats. Check the winch strap and hook frequently for weathering and wear. A winch should keep the boat solidly in place during trailering.

While a good trailer makes it easy for you to transport your boat, it also makes it easy for thieves to steal your boat. Approximately 600 boats are stolen each year. It can take less than a minute for a thief to hook your trailer to a vehicle and vanish, but there are some simple precautions you can take.

Store your boat in a place with adequate lighting and activity. Thieves will target dark, isolated areas. Making it difficult to hitch to the boat can also be a deterrent. Turn the trailer so that the tongue is pointed away from the drive or street. Invest in a hitch lock, and chain the trailer to a post or tree. You can also remove one of the tires and store it in another location.

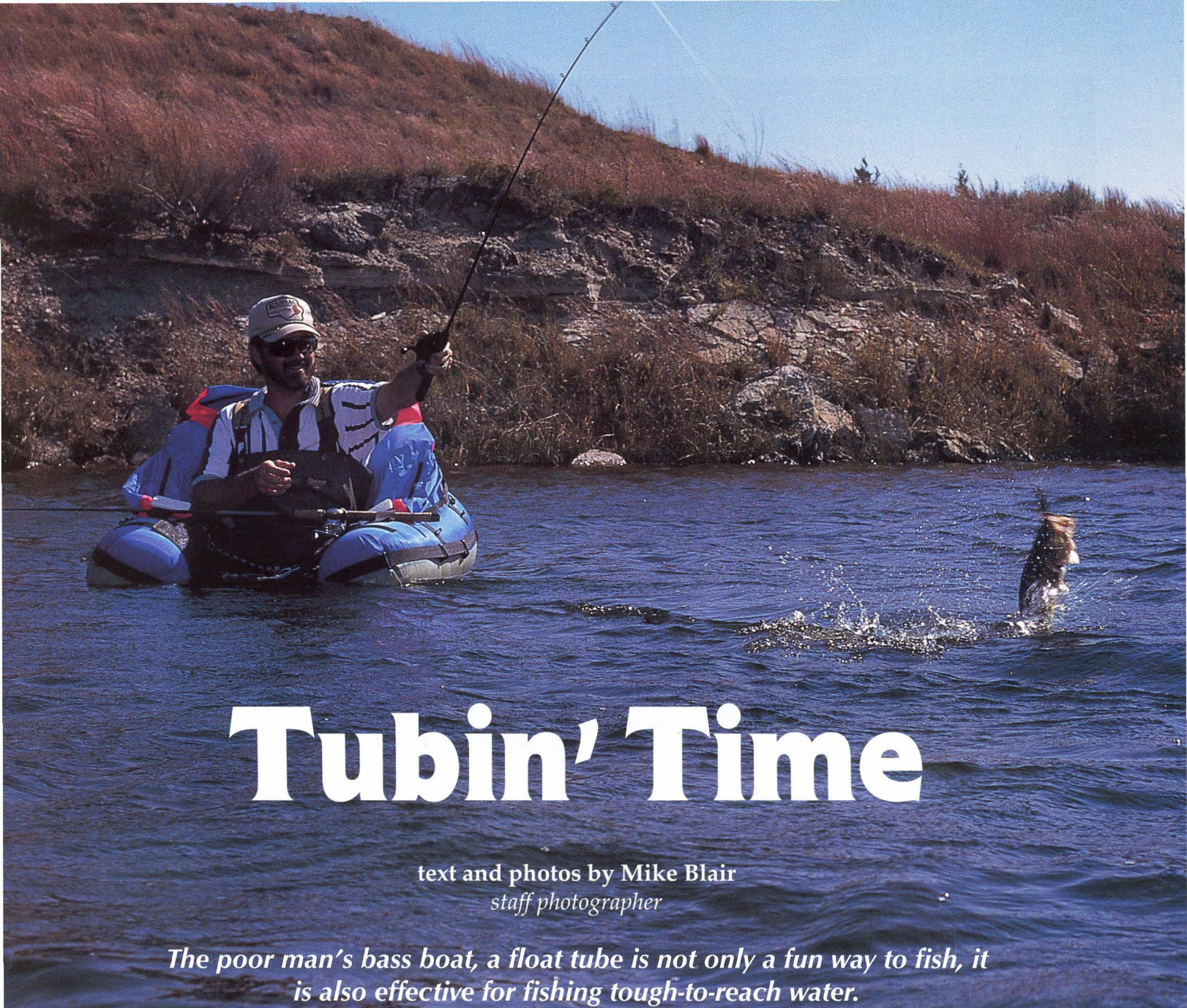
Record your serial and hull I.D. numbers for your boat, trailer, motor and electronic equipment. Photograph the

boat and trailer and note any unusual markings. If your boat is stolen, this information will help the investigation. If you use a rental storage facility, check on your boat regularly. A boat stolen soon after it is placed in storage for the winter is virtually unrecoverable if it is reported missing in the spring.

Keeping your boat and trailer in good operating condition and following safe trailering practices will make all your trips to the lake more enjoyable and relaxing. Here are a few safety tips: Slow down when pulling a boat and trailer. Allow twice the normal braking distance. Pass only when necessary and allow plenty of extra time to get around the vehicle being passed. Carry extra fuses, a jack and lug wrench that fits your trailer, as well other tools and spare parts in case of emergency. Get familiar with your vehicle/trailer combination before you take it into heavy traffic or congested boat ramps. Check your side mirrors for proper coverage and add larger mirrors if necessary. And finally, establish a maintenance and safety-check routine, and never travel without first completing your routine. ♣



Transom tiedowns are necessary to prevent the boat from bouncing during towing.



Tubin' Time

text and photos by Mike Blair
staff photographer

The poor man's bass boat, a float tube is not only a fun way to fish, it is also effective for fishing tough-to-reach water.

It was a hard place to fish. Drowned cedars formed a craggy barrier along the water's edge, and deep silt made wading the cove dangerous, if not impossible. There was no place to launch a boat, and even if there was, the massive profile would likely spook fish in the clear, shallow water. But there was a way.

I carried my float tube through the springtime woods, and launched it a short distance from the flooded habitat. Casting along the way, I landed several small fish before moving silently to where

twin stumps formed a triangle with the flooded edge of the cedars. Here the water was four feet deep - perfect for an April lunger. I dropped a yellow wooley bugger into the hole and let it settle. Two seconds later, the line jerked taut and a large-mouth somersaulted into the air, splashing back with the sound of a dropping cinder block.

At once I kicked for deep water, pulling the big fish into the open. It ran underneath, bumping my leg and doubling the 9-foot rod before jumping again on the other side. Somehow the tippet held, and for a

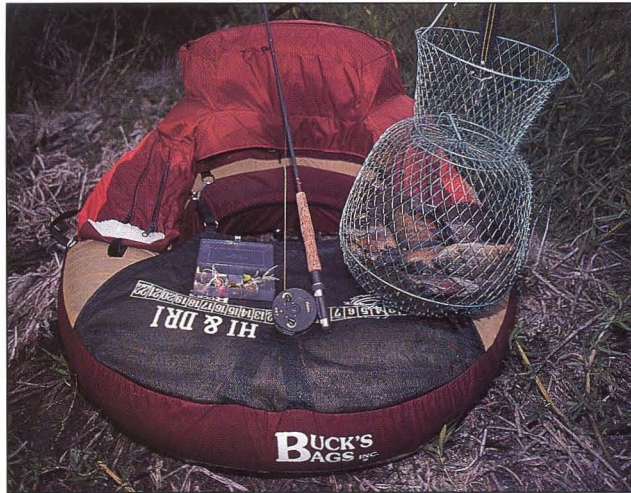
third time, the fish went skyward in a spectacular shower of spray. The bass circled and I spun in sync, applying pressure to wear down the fish before it could regroup for a line-testing surge. As it slid by on the third pass, I seized the lip of the 23-inch trophy. It was my biggest ever fly-rod bass.

Credit the float tube, since I couldn't have reached the spot another way. In waters everywhere, large fish wait in predictable places difficult to fish. Float tubes offer a quiet, affordable way to access water without a boat. They are

stable and safe when correctly used, adding the unique pleasure of direct contact with water. A tube angler presents a low profile and helps avoid spooking fish. Finally, since float tubes are not registered watercraft, they are permissible in many impoundments that don't allow boats (always check regulations.)

Float tubes, or "belly boats" as they're sometimes called, come in several shapes and sizes. The standard design encircles the angler and looks like a large donut. This design uses inner tubes for floatation, in various sizes from 16-22 inches. An advantage of this style is easy tube replacement. Should an inner tube be damaged, leaks are easily repaired at the nearest service station or tire store. If required, new tubes are always readily accessible.

A second design is the "U" tube, which wraps around the angler but is open at the front for easier access. Here, a special air bladder is necessary for the proper configuration. The bladder, while very tough, is not puncture-proof, and is not



A tube and flyrod can be the perfect combination for catching a mess of big bluegill on a small pond or lake.

easily replaced. This design is lighter to carry and faster in the water, though perhaps less maneuverable than standard tubes.

Regardless of design, a float tube's outer skin (called the bag) is composed of tough Denier nylon sewn into a form-fitting glove that zippers into place. Modern tubes have several compartments, including one for the main floatation chamber, and a second smaller compartment that houses a backup

safety tube. This chamber conveniently serves as a backrest, while providing enough floatation to aid an angler if the main tube is suddenly ruptured. The type of seat varies with tube design, but all allow the angler to sit comfortably in the water while fishing. Most donut tubes have adjustable seats that fasten to the tube's front with a strap and quick-release plastic buckle. The buckle can be unsnapped to allow easy entry from above or below. The open-front design of "U" tubes does not require a buckle release.

Most float tubes are well-equipped with large, zippered pockets to store food, tackle and other items. Additionally, they may include adjustable casting aprons that stretch across the angler's lap while fishing. These mesh coverings shed water while keeping line and tackle from fouling and provide a flat surface on which to hold a fish. Most are marked with an inch-scale. Bags are amply supplied with D-rings to provide attachment for fish



Under the right conditions, an experienced angler can use a tube to fish larger waters -- even reservoirs. Quality tubes have a backup safety tube to keep the angler afloat if the main tube springs a leak, and the author recommends towing a life vest on big waters.

baskets, stringers, or other paraphernalia. These rings or float tube handles can also be used to rig the inflated tube in backpack fashion for easy carrying. Float tubes come in a variety of colors, including camouflage. However, for safety reasons, bright colors with blaze orange panels are recommended where other boat traffic is expected. Reservoir tubers sometimes rig colorful flags to further increase their visibility.

Float tubes range in price from \$65 to more than \$200. Some accessories are required. Swim fins or foot paddles are a must for propulsion. Fins are the best choice, since they allow better movement and maneuverability. Lace-up models are preferred, since they don't slip off when wading through mud. Though fins necessitate "backing" toward a destination, they offer a great advantage under breezy conditions. Float tubes drift badly in wind unless power is applied. Fins allow the angler to kick against the wind, effortlessly holding position while casting in the preferred downwind direction.

Plastic foot paddles are easy to use, since they are designed to propel by "walking" through the water in a normal forward manner. However, they are not efficient for traversing large ponds or lakes. They are also nearly useless under windy conditions, since the angler must overcome drift by constantly turning and paddling into position.

Another practical float tube accessory is waders. During summer months when water is warm, "wet" tubing is often enjoyable. But cool water is a different story. Waders make it possible to fish comfortably even during winter, if proper clothing is worn. Usually for cold-weather float tubing, insulated neoprene waders



Tubes are perfect for small, hard-to-fish ponds and lakes. They can be carried to ponds with no vehicle access, and give the angler quiet access to fish otherwise spooked by boats or bank traffic.

are best. For summer tubing, lightweight and inexpensive nylon waders are better, since they are easier to walk in.

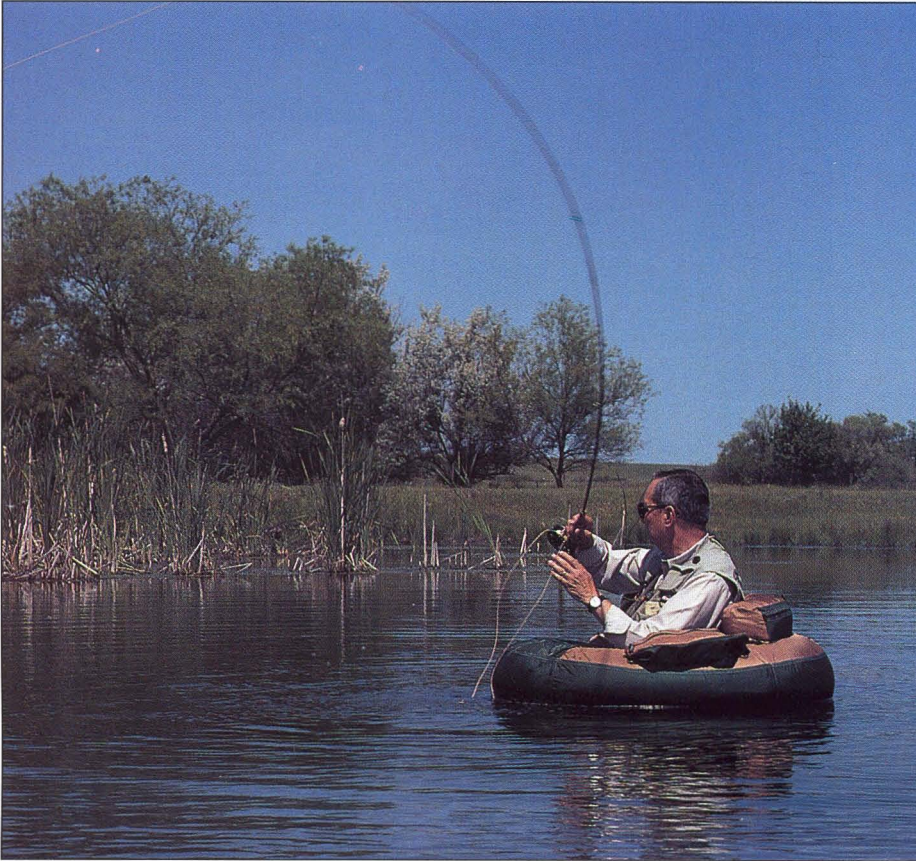
How safe are float tubes? The question is valid when dealing with a craft that would appear able to pop like a balloon. Float tubes are entirely safe when properly used. I've fished them worry-free for years, in ponds, rivers, and the big, open waters of major reservoirs.

Like anything though, good judgment and certain precautions are necessary. Proper inflation is important. When drum tight, an inflated float tube contains only about 3-4 pounds of air pressure. Manufacturers

suggest using special, low-pressure air gauges to measure this (normal tire gauges won't work at low pressures.) Overinflation damages the bag by stretching and ripping zippers and seams. Underinflation lessens buoyancy and allows water to leak between the tube and nylon



Two common belly boats include the tube on the left and the U-boat on the right. The author prefers swim fins for locomotion, but foot paddles allow for forward motion.



Flyfishermen have long recognized the advantages of belly boats because of the need to get away from the shoreline vegetation for back casting room.

bag, increasing weight and seating the angler low in the water. Proper inflation is a must for safe tubing. Keep in mind that increased temperature and higher elevation will increase the pressure in a float tube, while cool temperatures and lower elevations decrease the pressure.

The tough nylon bag provides tremendous support for the inflated tube, so there is little concern about bumping and rupturing the tube on brush. However, small sharp objects like fish hooks or fish spines commonly cause pinhole leaks. Depending on severity, fishing may continue for several hours before the tube deflates noticeably. In shallow ponds, I don't usually exit immediately when a tiny leak appears. If far out in deep water, though, I head for shore. Never take chances with a leaking tube, and always repair it before the next trip.

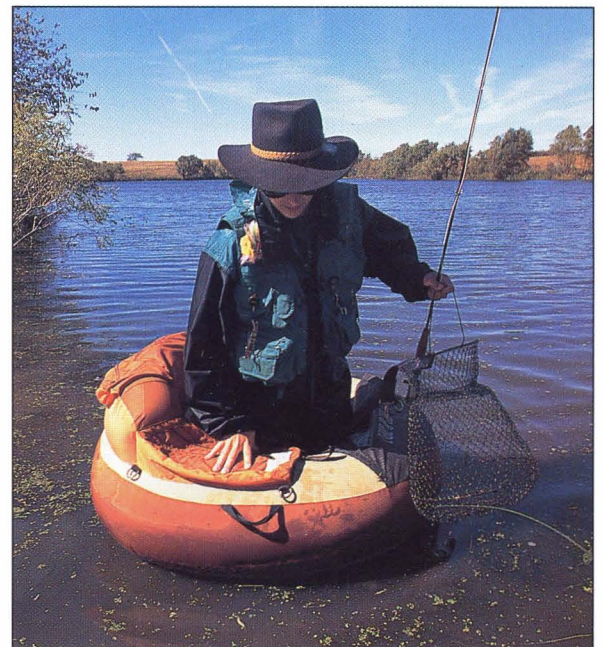
At the start of each new season, remove and inspect the inner tube. If it has been patched many times, replace it with a new one. This

lesson was learned the hard way by a friend as we fished together in the deep water of a state fishing lake. He'd used the same inner tube for 10 years, patching it as necessary during that time. We fished far across the lake to a favorite spot, and were fishing close together when his lure became entangled in a tree overhanging the water. As he tugged the line, the lure suddenly pulled free and shot like a bullet into his tube, puncturing it severely. Escaping air was audible for some distance. He placed his thumb over the air hole, and started back across the lake. In 40 feet of water, he momentarily removed his thumb and then reapplied it. The inner tube exploded like a bomb, instantly dropping him chin deep. I paddled over quickly as he disen-

tangled himself from the tube, and we slowly made our way back to safety. His backrest air chamber provided enough floatation to float the tube and serve as a life preserver. When we reached shore, we unzipped his bag to reveal a six-inch tear in the old rubber. The lesson was clear: replace inner tubes periodically.

The greatest float tube peril is flipping upside-down. Anglers have drowned in this way. However, given the stability of a properly-inflated tube and low center of gravity, a tube cannot overturn unless outside force is applied. The danger exists when an angler leans far out over the tube, or exerts force by hand on a nearby limb, or reaches deep over the side of the tube to retrieve a snagged lure. These mistakes cause the center of balance to shift, forcing the tube to suddenly flip. Stay normally seated in a tube, and it is impossible to overturn. If a lure hangs up on deep brush, don't try to free it by reaching down - cut it loose. If a hook catches in your swim fin, simply slack the line and go to shore to remove it. Use common sense, and there is no more danger than with any boat.

A final word of caution involves



A firm bottom or sharply sloping bank are necessary for launching with fins or foot paddles attached.

wind and current. Though float tubes ride waves as handily as a duck and are safe to use in moderate wind, heavy blows should be avoided. Big waves can capsize a tube, just as they can capsize larger watercraft. Especially on large impoundments, don't get caught in open water when the wind rises dramatically. River currents can also be treacherous. Nearly all Kansas rivers are safe during normal flows, but be careful about tubing high-water situations where fast currents can lead to trouble.

Though it's not required by law, many recommend wearing a life jacket while tubing. I don't do it. If for some reason a tube should overturn, I believe the jacket would hamper efforts to dive down and out of the capsized tube. Generally, I rely on the backrest chamber for emergency floatation, but on big waters, I tie a life jacket onto the

tube's back D-ring where it is handy if needed.


Float tubes work best where water is more than three feet deep. More shallow than this, the angler tends to kick up bottom sediment to alert fish. On hard bottoms, it's easy to simply stand and wade to more shallow fishing. Unfortunately, siltation often makes for difficult wading while wearing fins.

For this reason, launching and landing can be troublesome in shallow waters with soft bottoms. Look for banks with moderate slopes. Rocks, sand or fallen logs often provide useful footing. Sometimes it's necessary to circle a pond for the best access point. Generally it will be near the dam.

Fish pay little attention to a float tube, as long as movements are slow and quiet. I've often caught them in clear water only a rod length from the tube. Tube fishing is

relaxing and peaceful, and sometimes offers surprising glimpses of other wildlife. I've had raccoons and deer drink unconcerned as I drifted just a few feet away.

There are no special tricks to float-tubing. Usually it requires only a few minutes to learn how to turn and move in the water, and after that navigation is automatic. Keep in mind that fighting fish often interpret dangling legs as cover. Use your rod to steer them clear of potential entanglements.

Float-tubing can offer real fishing advantages, as well as a serene way to enjoy the sport. Deflated tubes are easily transported and inflated on-site by foot, hand or battery-powered tire pumps. Float tubes are an aesthetic way to explore good waters with a minimum of hassle. And best of all, they may be your ticket to a hawk-in-waiting that no one else can reach. 





The Great Pretender

by J. Mark Shoup
associate editor, Pratt

photos by Mike Blair

The killdeer is a shorebird with a distinctive look and familiar call, but its claim to fame is its masterful skill of acting injured to draw predators away from its nest.



No American shorebird is as widely distributed and well-known as the killdeer. In fact, of all shorebirds, it is probably the only one that most people can recognize and name. I know this was true for me as a boy. It wasn't hard to count the number of nongame species I could identify: the red-winged blackbird, the cardinal, the robin, the house sparrow, the pigeon, the wren (was there more than one?), a few hawks and owls, and, of course, the killdeer.

The vision is clear to me and as

intrinsically tied to the Arkansas River as the music of cottonwood leaves in the wind:

I approach the river through a nest of currant bush and willow. The river purls quietly over its sandy bottom, and there is the familiar, almost plaintive cry as I approach — a slow, high-pitched KEE-eee, KEE-eee, KEE-ee, fading on the second note of each phrase. I don't see the bird until it scurries across the sandbar, then stands at the water's edge, looking, listening. Its head bobs up and down two or

three times. Then suddenly it dabs the ground for food and runs down the bank 10 feet to repeat itself.

Then I am seen, and the real show begins. The sad, pleading voice turns to a rapid, agitated scolding: kick-a-DEE, kick-a-DEE, kick-a-DEE, rising on the third note of each phrase. Then it flits off and lands just a few feet away, one wing held to the ground, feigning injury. I take the bait and follow as it leads me away from a nest I cannot see, flitting up and almost falling back down with outstretched wing. After I have followed for a good distance, the bird jumps and flies away, bobbing and weaving, suddenly healed. For the killdeer, all the world's a stage.

This behavior is one of the mostly commonly observed "distraction displays" in nature. It is a ruse used by many species to lure would-be predators away from a nest, but the killdeer is a master. Its tactics, however, are not always the same. Apparently the killdeer is capable of discerning intruder threats. When a fox, coyote, or bobcat approaches, the action is much the same as with man. But if a cow, deer, or other large ungulate comes near, the killdeer seems to recognize a different type of danger. "Knowing" that the hoofed creature has no interest in the nest and cannot be lured away, the killdeer flies into the face of the intruder and turns it away.

If the intruder is another bird, the killdeer really gets serious. It has been known to attack other shorebirds, including killdeer, as well as songbirds. Needless to say, they give it a wide berth.

The killdeer, *Charadrius vociferus*, is a member of the plover family of which there are seven species that visit Kansas. These include the black-bellied, lesser golden, snowy, semi-palmated, piping, and mountain plovers. Plovers are distinguished from the sandpipers by a bill that is slightly swollen near the tip and is always shorter than the head. (Ornithologists now classify what many Kansans call the "upland plover" in the much larger

sandpiper family.)

It's easy to understand how this bird came by its scientific name. *Charadrius* is a Greek word used by Aristotle, referring to "an inconspicuous waterbird that lives in ravines." *Vociferus* is Latin (and now English, spelled "vociferous") meaning "making an outcry" or "characterized by loudness and vehemence." Its common name refers to its cry, but "killdeer" doesn't really sound right. Of course, the written word always fails in describing animal sounds.

Describing the look is somewhat easier. The killdeer is quite striking among a family of birds that often tend to look alike. It is 9 to 11 inches long with a wingspan of 19 to 21 inches. It is snowy white on the belly and breast with two distinct black bands toward the neck, and white under the bill and around the neck. It has white above the bill and



The killdeer is one of seven plover family species that visit Kansas.

under the eye and a short white streak behind the eye. The rest of the head, back, and wings are a gray-brown, except that the lower back and upper tail is a bright rufous or tawny color and the tip of its rounded tail is black. Its long

legs are flesh-colored and the bill black. Both sexes look alike.

The killdeer is well-known not only because of its looks but because it inhabits most of the U.S. from coast to coast and into southern Canada. Nor is it confined to watery habitat as most shorebirds are. It has been known to live in meadows, pastures, and other dry areas perhaps miles from the nearest stream or pond. I've seen them on Kansas pastures and the beaches of the Florida keys.

Courtship of the killdeer is no less interesting than its distraction display. In his 1927 book, *Life Histories of American Shorebirds*, Arthur Cleveland Bent recounts an observation of the killdeer mating ritual:

"As they fed about the margin of a small pond, one invariably following the other, suddenly the bird in lead would spring into the air and mount upwards by a succession of wide, sweeping spirals with its mate in pursuit, constantly uttering its notes in a short and hurried manner. Higher and higher was the flight, but restricted over the certain area of the pond, until both disappeared from one's vision although the note continued to be faintly heard. As I continued to watch, the birds' cries ceased, and down from the sky I first noted a speck falling. Then both came into plain sight, one following the other, and then both alighted. This descent was as quickly made as if the birds fell out of the ether."

Mating killdeer have also been known to spread their wings and strut like a turkey while, at intervals, whirling about rapidly and calling.

Come nesting time,



Many birds use a distraction display to protect their nest, but the killdeer may be the most convincing. And the display is matched to the type of threat; the parent killdeer feigns injury to lead a cat or coyote away from the nest but flies into the face of a deer or cow to divert it away from the nest.

the killdeer is an opportunist, making a nest in the open that is a mere depression lined with pebbles, grass, or whatever material is at hand. (Accounts have reported killdeer nests lined with everything from broken glass to melon seeds.) And a sandbar is not the only place a killdeer nests. A grazed pasture, a golf course, a driveway, a railroad track, or even a baseball diamond is suitable nesting ground for this adaptable bird. A few years ago, a killdeer pair nested atop Wildlife and Parks' chat-covered Pratt Office building some 25 feet off the ground. This is not uncommon. The young are apparently able to drop from substantial heights — as far as 50 feet — without injury.

Before the usual clutch of four eggs is laid, sometime from March through July, several "practice" nests are often made. (Some accounts suggest that these might be decoys.) The eggs are dull grey and spotted or scrawled with brown or black — perfect camouflage for the parents' bold nesting habits. Eggs hatch in about 24 days, and the precocious young leave the nest quite early. They may fly 25 days after hatching. Some



Nest sites include gravelly streamsides, as well as chat parking lots. The killdeer parents rely on good camouflage and their own tenacity to protect the pebble- or grass-lined depression.

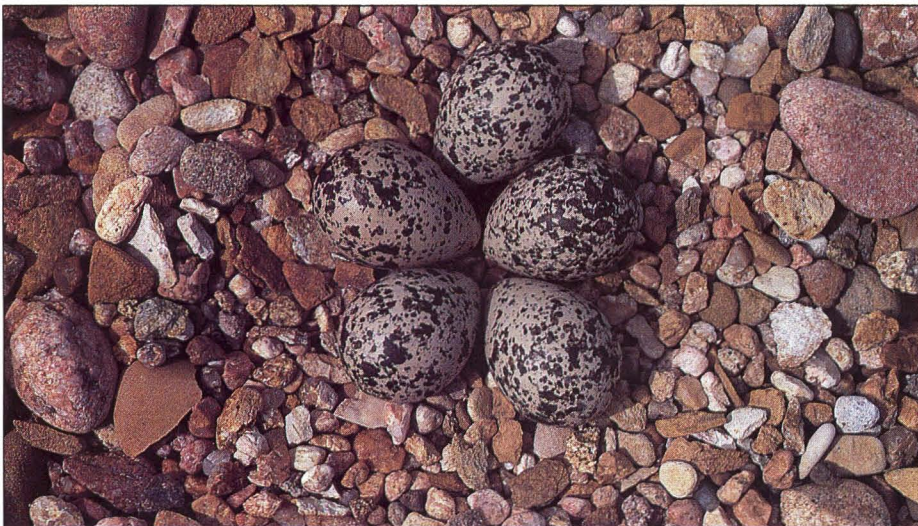
pairs raise two broods a year.

Killdeer are good parents, and both adults attend the young. Another Bent account:

"Both killdeer at times would

pretend to brood anywhere on the foundation, evidently to lead me to think that was where their nest was. On one occasion, I found an adult with one young about four days old. The youngster ran under the old one and into its feathers. Then the old bird squatted down, covering it. Just then, I saw the other bird come running and exchange with the first parent, nestling down over the youngster."

After raising its young, killdeer often winter where they nest. Others, however, choose to leave "home" for the winter. This migration usually happens in November or December when flocks as large as 50 birds will gather for their erratic, wavering flight south. These are no "snowbirds," however. The southern stay only lasts two or three months before the birds return to nesting grounds in February or March.



The spotted or scrawled eggs, which will hatch in about 24 days, blend in perfectly with their surroundings. This nest has five eggs, but usually a clutch includes only four.

In addition to the entertainment these birds provide the patient observer, the killdeer is beneficial to man. Insects comprise more than 98 percent of its diet, which includes beetles, weevils, grasshoppers, caterpillars, and ants. It will also eat centipedes, spiders, ticks, and worms. Not very appetizing, but helpful to humans.

One study found that the killdeer diet is 37 percent beetles, 40 percent other insects, 21 percent other invertebrates, and 2 percent vegetable matter. Of course, this depends upon what's available. A California study found that one killdeer had 100 percent grasshoppers in its stomach during an outbreak of the insects. It was estimated that each killdeer ate an average of 33 grasshoppers daily. In yet another study, the stomach of a killdeer taken from an alfalfa field contained 316 weevils. Another bird had 383 weevils in its stomach. (See Page 43 for facts about bird anatomy.)

In addition to this direct benefit to mankind, the killdeer indirectly helps humans by eating horseflies, ticks, and mosquitoes that pester domestic livestock (and humans) and spread disease.

Other than humans, the killdeer has few real threats except from the



The killdeer takes the broken-wing act to a new level. The bird may keep this up for many yards, allowing an intruder to approach quite close before finally taking wing.

larger hawks and owls. But anything can happen in nature. In one curious case, an ornithologist found a killdeer caught by the leg at a crawdad hole with one toe chewed off.

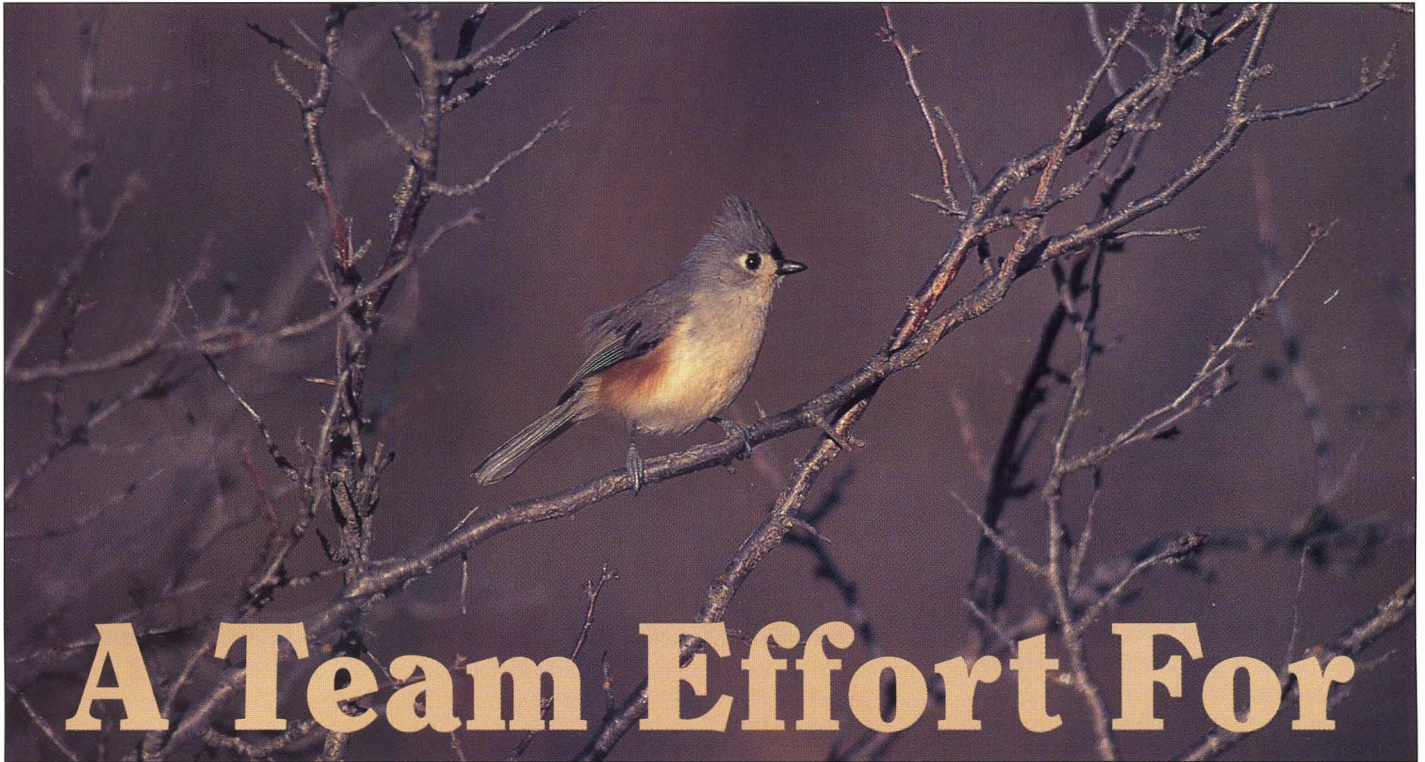
During the latter part of the 19th century, killdeer were hunted along with other shorebirds without

restriction, making them rare in certain parts of the country. However, with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 came protection, and its numbers are now stable throughout its range. Now, its only threat from man is habitat destruction, but as adaptable is the killdeer is, it may always find a niche.

Kansas is blessed with a wide variety of birds, in both woodland and prairie. Many are more brightly-colored, but none are more interesting than the killdeer. None are more diversely animated than this born actor and relentless defender of territory and young. Certainly none are more adaptable. Still, although the killdeer can be found in almost any open habitat, I always expect to see one along the banks of a sandy-bottomed prairie stream. This is the landscape I associate with them, and to me, something would be eerily missing from these streams without the occasional plaintive cry of a killdeer on the wind. ♡



Both killdeer parents attend the young, which will begin flying about 25 days after hatching. The killdeer's diet consists mostly of insects, including beetles, weevils, grasshoppers, and ants.



A Team Effort For

Wildlife

by Ken Brunson

Chickadee Checkoff Coordinator, Pratt

photos by Mike Blair

Modeled after the remarkably successful Pittman/Robertson legislation from the 1930s, Teaming With Wildlife is a program that will benefit countless wildlife species and the people who enjoy them.

Gestapo troops were doing their menacing goose-stepping to the ranting of a madman as millions of people were about to be sent to concentration camps. Hitler's army prepared to invade Poland and Russia. Hell was being created on earth. The year was 1937.

Meanwhile the U.S. had been preoccupied waging a war with nature. The drought of the Dirty Thirties had just taught a hard lesson to farmers in the Midwest. Those who survived dust pneumonia and financial ruin soon faced food rationing, the draft, and more years of fear and despair. After

decades of massive habitat losses, market shooting, and increased hunting pressure through the 1920s, the future for wildlife in the U.S. was bleak. But treading in this sea of human misery were some opportunists ironically, although very fortunately, thinking of the needs of wildlife.

Some key conservationists, including Aldo Leopold, M. Hartley Dodge, Carl Shoemaker, and Ding Darling rode the wave of other emergency legislation and secured the most important wildlife conservation law ever. And without deafening fanfare, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Pittman-

Robertson Act (PR) that year.

Incredibly visionary, the PR act ushered into each state major funding to create and restore wildlife habitat. While emphasizing improvement of game populations, the rules of PR allowed for the purchase and management of land to benefit many other resident species as well. In 1950, a companion sport fish program called the Dingell-Johnson Act (DJ) enhanced angling opportunities. Both PR and DJ utilize user fees in the form of excise taxes on fishing tackle, shotguns, ammunition, and fishing boats to supply the funding base. This money is collected through the

National Treasury, then distributed to state wildlife agencies for research, management, and restoration projects.

Kansas receives about \$6 million per year from PR and DJ. Success stories are not hard to find — white-tailed deer, wild turkeys, striped bass, wood ducks, pronghorns, and giant Canada geese have made remarkable comebacks as a result of PR/DJ. But as rewarding as the PR/DJ programs have been, as equally sobering is the realization that most wildlife are still not dealt with directly by state wildlife agencies. Federal and state endangered species acts address needs of wildlife in most jeopardy. However, this “emergency room” management does little for the thousands of other species getting little direct support through PR.

These animals, such as Baltimore orioles and ornate box turtles, receive some direct support through the Chickadee Checkoff Program. The Kansas income tax form



Kansas nongame wildlife programs, including observation facilities, could receive up to \$3 million each year.



An excise tax on outdoor gear such as binoculars, bird seed, and camping and hiking gear, the Teaming program would help build nature centers in urban areas of Kansas.

checkoff brings in about \$170,000 annually, which is inadequate for anything but surface conservation. The unfortunate reality is that the fascinating mysteries and management for nongame species — species whose utility to humans remains to be discovered — are pretty much ignored.

Efforts to protect critical habitats by the department's Environmental Services Section, as well as related efforts by fish and wildlife biologists, benefit many nongame species but are supported by hunter and angler dollars. And while it's rare for hunters and anglers to complain about paying for conservation, they do feel like the “non-consumptive” crowd should pay for the programs they demand. These non-consumptive, non-traditional department con-

stituents such as birders, canoers, hikers, and nature watchers want to contribute directly to wildlife programs they are interested in.

Wildlife and Parks commissioner Gordon Stockemer puts it succinctly, “Birders and the like already have a place at the table, and I am an example with my strong Audubon background. The obvious need is for major funding support for programs that birders and other recreationists want.”

Will the non-traditional constituents gain more influence in wildlife issues with increased funding?

“I would guess there would be a much better forum for all wildlife interests by having such major funding support. And why shouldn't there be? The department, by state law and its own Mission Statement, is directed to look out for all wildlife interests and their users,” Stockemer said addressing the concern.

While most would agree the additional funding is necessary, where the money comes from has been a more difficult question. Several years ago the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies appointed a national team to explore the possibilities. While

many different funding mechanisms were looked at, a proposal that would mimic the very successful PR/DJ programs was the most popular. The Association unveiled "Teaming With Wildlife," a program that would impose a modest 1/2 to 5 percent excise tax on outdoor goods such as binoculars, bird seed, bird field guides, hiking boots, backpacks and tents. Like its predecessor programs, Teaming With Wildlife would require a 25 percent match from states for wildlife project funding.

If it becomes reality, Teaming With Wildlife could mean an additional \$3 million coming to Kansas. Eligible projects include major nature centers for cities and on public lands, canoeing put-in and take-out sites on public streams, long-term planning for sensitive species conservation in order to avoid eventual listing as threatened or endangered, and hiking and biking trails on public lands.

According to Wildlife and Parks Secretary Steve Williams, "We already have a long list of candidate

projects — projects currently in the mill that sportsmen's dollars aren't available for. Teaming With Wildlife will be the greatest legacy for wildlife in our generation, rivaling the tremendous success we've had over the past 60 years through Pittman/Robertson. It's a natural third leg of the triad of federal aid wildlife programs — PR, DJ and Teaming."

There is much to do, however, to gain implementation. The national legislation has probably already been introduced in Congress or soon will be. Our Congressional delegation has been alerted to the fact that this is a user-pay concept. They've also been informed that more than 2,000 companies and organizations — the largest conservation coalition ever assembled — endorse Teaming With Wildlife (See sidebar for list of Kansas sponsors).

Teaming With Wildlife supporters hope that we exhibit insight at least equal to that of those pioneering individuals 60 years ago. Few could have realized what a tremendous impact the Pittman/

Robertson and Dingell/Johnson legislation would have on our fish and wildlife management efforts, or how far-reaching those bills would be. But in an economic era much more difficult than today's, decisions were made that we can all be thankful for each time we venture outdoors.

Teaming With Wildlife could follow in those same footsteps, creating a user-pay system that capitalizes on the broad wildlife interests of most outdoor recreationists. As we approach the joys of the September dove season and warbler migration, spend a moment reflecting on the value of wildlife to the quality of your life. All it will take to ensure these treasures are enjoyed by our grandchildren is a simple and brief expression of support for Teaming With Wildlife to your Congressman. Our modern coalition army is on alert — hunters and birdwatchers shooting toward the same goal. The bell is tolling, and it is time to roll out! ♡



Teaming With Wildlife would provide all those who enjoy wildlife a way to contribute at the same level as hunters and anglers.

Kansas Teaming With Wildlife Sponsors

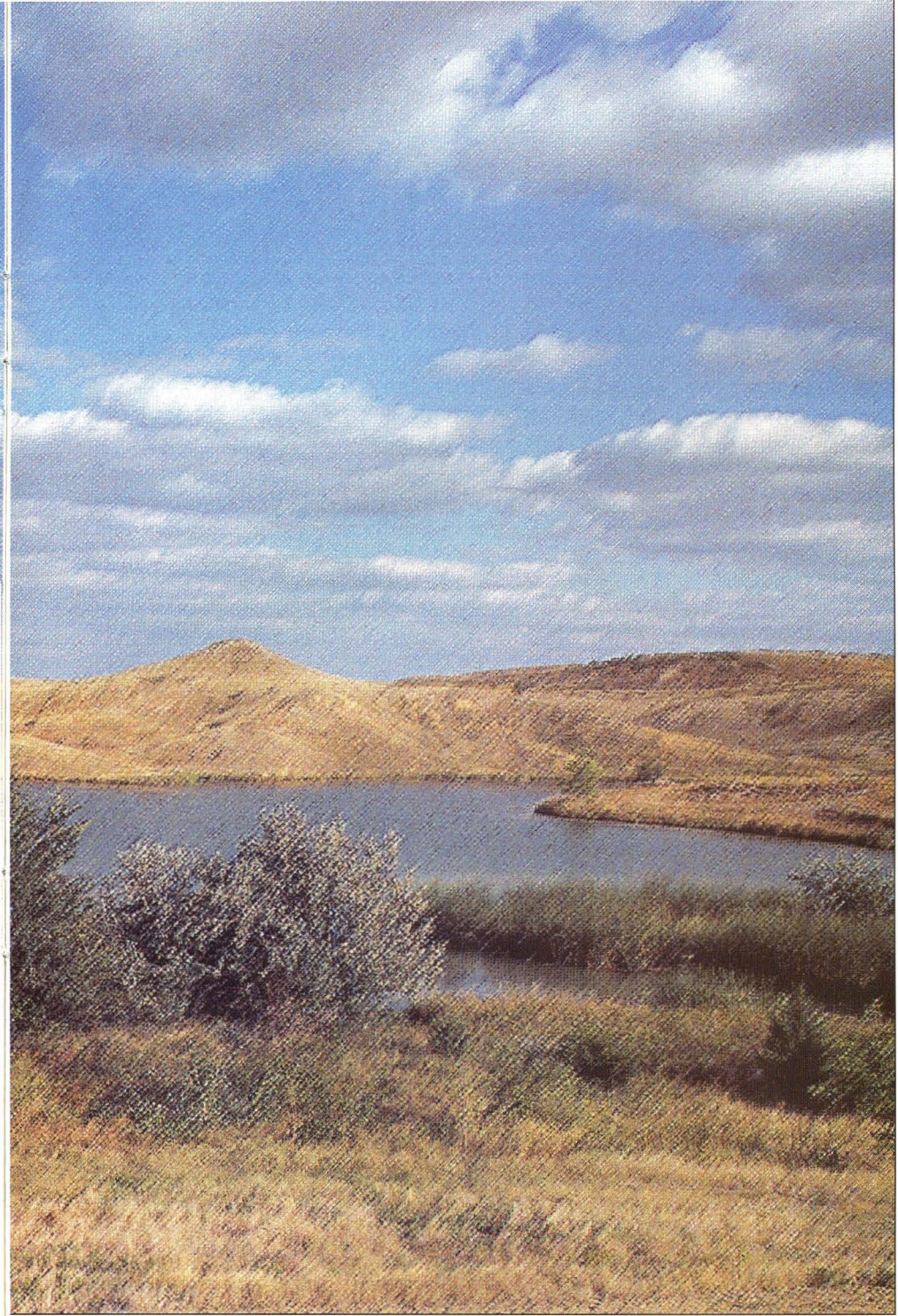
Kansas Wildlife Federation
 Northern Flint Hills Audubon Society
 Kansas Chapter of the American Fisheries Society
 Geary Co. Fish & Game Assn.
 Kansas Audubon Council
 Kansas Canoe Association
 Kansas Herpetological Society
 Friends of Smoots Creek
 Jayhawk Audubon Society
 Kansas Ornithological Society
 Topeka Audubon Society
 Kansas Chapter of the Wildlife Society
 Organization of F&W Information Managers
 Burroughs Audubon Society
 Kansas Chapter of the Sierra Club
 Kanza Audubon Society
 Southeast Kansas Chapter of the Audubon Society
 Pure Water for Kansas
 American Fisheries Society, Introduced Fishes



The South Pond

by Robert Welliever
Phoenix, Ariz.

A farm pond in the rolling grasslands of the Smoky Hills is more than a fishing hole -- it has touched five generations of a family and connects them still today.



Gene Brehm photo

I still recall a hot July afternoon in 1951 when my grandfather bounced across the field in his battered Ford pickup and waved me to a stop. I stepped hard on the clutch of the old McCormick-Deering W-40 and hauled back on the long, notched throttle lever.

"Okay kid, shut her down, and let's go build a pond."

"A WHAT?"

"A pond, damn it. You know, one of those things that holds water

and has fish, an' ducks, an' frogs, an' such."

Well, if the old man wanted a pond, who was I to argue? In those days in northcentral Kansas, any body of water larger than a steel stock tank was an uncommon commodity. I climbed in the pickup, and we headed south, past the home place and down to the farthest end of the big south pasture. We stopped on the hill where an outcropping of dark Dakota sand-

stone stood sentinel over a steep-sided wash. Reaching behind the seat, Granddad came up with a large roll of blueprints, which seemed to inspire a powerful oration. He would have put Preacher Nelson to shame, even on one of his best hellfire and brimstone days.

"The dam's gonna be right across there, and the spillway right here," he said, pointing straight below. "The boys from the Soil Conservation Service were out here yesterday and did all the surveying. Bulldozer's gonna be here tomorrow. Should take 'em about four or five days. Now we're gonna do this up right. There's plenty of water in this pasture for the livestock, so we're gonna fence them out of this pond. That way the water will stay nice and clean. Surveyor said it should be about 8 1/2 acres when it's full and about 25 foot deep here at the dam."

Except for some field work, we mostly spent the rest of that summer working on the pond. We built a dandy four-strand, barbed wire fence around it and planted cottonwoods, willows, wild plums and mulberries, just above the high-water line.

The spillway was a work of art. Pulling a wooden sled behind an ancient F-20 Farmall tractor, we must have turned over or dug out about a million pieces of that rust-colored sandstone. We collected only the ones that were flat on top and bottom and uniform in thickness. Using only a claw hammer and a sharpened railroad spike for a chisel, my granddad began laying up the spillway wall. I was his gofer. When he pointed to a rock, I would lay it down and squat beside him, watching as he chipped away a little here and a little there until he finally had a perfect fit. There are 1,132 rocks in that spillway wall and today, after almost half a century, not a single one of them has moved so much as an inch. In that same time, office buildings, apartments, shopping centers and factories have been built, only to decay and disintegrate, but my granddad's spillway wall still stands there like a

Midwestern Gibraltar.

Anyone living in the Midwest that year will remember the great floods of August. It was a disastrous year for everything and everyone except our new South Pond. It would ordinarily have taken at least two or three years to fill a pond that size, but on Labor Day weekend, our new pond ran over the spillway, and the Fish and Game Commission planted fingerling bass, crappie, sunfish and channel catfish.

Granddad built another pond in the north pasture, and of course we always referred to them as the "North pond" and "South pond," but by the time he built the North Pond, I had fledged from the nest and gone off to college.

The next two years were so filled with study, romance and work that I hardly thought of fishing. In the spring of 1953, I came home after final exams and fell into the summer routine of field work, mending fence and nurturing live-

stock. It was sometime in late June of that summer that a blustery rain drove us from the field and ordained that there would be no more field work until things dried out. The following day dawned clear as only a Kansas summer sky can be, and a gentle south wind caressed the Smoky Hills we called home. Sitting in the house held no attraction to me, so I decided it was time to see if any fish had survived in the South Pond. In those days, my tackle consisted of an old split bamboo, 8 1/2-foot Montague rod, which I had been fortunate enough to find after the local doctor had broken off 10 inches of the tip and discarded it. The origin of the reel I simply cannot recall. After slogging through what seemed like 50 miles of wet, knee-high grass, I arrived only to find that I had forgotten my meager collection of flies and poppers. All I had was a gold, long-shank Aberdeen hook that was tied to the leader. After cursing myself, I was about to head back when some-

thing moved near my foot — a frog — a little fellow, not much removed from a tadpole. Why not?

Sparing the details, in the next hour or so, I caught three nice channel cats, a half-dozen decent crappie, and several pound-and-a-half bass. Thus began our family legend of the South Pond.

My grandparents are gone now, but they spent many summer evenings together in quiet solitude, sharing the magic of the South Pond. My father is gone, too, and at his request, his ashes were scattered about the sandstone bluff overlooking the pond.

For more than 40 years now I have fished the South Pond, along with all of my children. Then, this spring, together with my daughter, I took my three-year-old grandson to the South Pond. As anyone who's tried knows, fishing with a three-year-old is the very essence of chaos, but in due time, we landed his first fish — a "huge" 4-inch bluegill.

I stepped back and watched as Momma took a picture of the new nimrod and his 4-inch trophy. Only then did it occur to me that this modest body of water on the Kansas High Plains has provided a placid and soothing balm for the souls of five generations of my family. We have wandered far, along different paths, but we always seem to return to that land in the Smoky Hills and to the shady banks of the South Pond. There is magic here that defies understanding. In the evening when the soft south wind whispers through the quivering cottonwoods, I hear my grandfather's laughter echoing down the long halls of eternity to mingle with the exuberant giggles of a little boy proudly holding a 4-inch bluegill. ♡

A K-State grad, Bob Welliever grew up in northcentral Kansas. He now lives in Phoenix.



Gene Brehm photo

Edited by Mark Shoup

HOME ON THE WEB

Editor:

I am a resident of Kansas and am currently in the Navy stationed in Hawaii. I brought my son home to Topeka in May to visit family and friends and wanted to introduce him to crappie and bass fishing. We hadn't been home in five years. Your web site was really informative and helped me orientate myself to which lakes to visit. Thanks for the ease of obtaining the free brochures so I could update myself on fishing regs. Thanks for a great web site. (See Page 36.)

*David Marshall
Hawaii*

WHY NO FIELD MASTERS?

Editor:

Why aren't the state parks' ranger stations equipped to verify Master Angler and state record fish? Reasons why they should have the equipment:

1. Catch & Release. It is almost impossible to keep the fish alive while trying to get somewhere for a certified scales and camera then returning to release the fish. When traveling to a lake far away from home, one must decide to have the fish die for certification or release the fish without certification.

2. Conservation. When the fish dies, its gene pool is lost forever. A record fish should be allowed to propagate itself.

3. The cost of a scales and tape measuring device should not be that expensive for the Wildlife and Parks Department. Actually, the Department could reduce costs of paper work and verification by photos because the ranger would be the verifier. If required, even a small one-time charge to fishing licenses would be agreeable to most anglers for the establishment of the equipment.

4. The Wildlife and Parks Department would receive more information on just how many Master Angler fish are being caught each year if the process was conve-

nient to the angler.

5. The present method of verification could still be used for the people who want to keep the fish or are unable to get to the ranger's station. The Wildlife and Parks Department should continue insisting that all anglers release any small and large game fish

I have been teaching my son how to fish for several years. I teach him catch and release except for what one can eat for one fresh fish meal and never kill small or large or record fish. I have caught many Master Angler fish in my lifetime and never got them verified. The fish were more important, and they were just released. This spring, my son caught a Master Angler crappie, and I wanted him to be recognized for catching the fish. The award would help instill pride in his fishing skills and hopefully keep him angling for his life.

We went to several marinas on the lake and could not get the fish certified. We then went to the state park ranger station and still could not get the fish verified. My son wanted to release the fish and forget about the Master Angler award because the well being of the fish was more important to him. This made it very difficult for me to rule on the issue. If the ranger had the certification equipment, we would have no problem.

I believe it is important for our youth to be awarded for being expert anglers and conservationists, and we should all assist in making the certification process and awards easier.

*Clarence Williams
Overland Park*

Dear Mr. Williams:

I applaud your attitude about catch and release and your desire to instill a good conservation ethic in your son. However, most staff in this agency have had to take on extra duties the past few years, and we try to avoid adding more unnecessarily. Also, to scatter applications all across the state instead of handling them through one single contact could lead to lost applications and a less efficient process, not a better one. Some species of fish are difficult to identify,

even by a trained biologist.

However, we do have a program that I think fits your needs. It's called the Catch and Release program, and applications can be found on Page 19 of the *Kansas Fishing Regulations Summary*, available wherever licenses are sold. If you catch a lunker you want to turn back, simply snap a picture, measure its length, and let it go. No other verification is necessary.

Send in the application, and we'll send you a four-color embroidered patch, as pictured with the application. In addition, the largest entry for each species each year will receive a free one-year subscription to *Kansas Wildlife and Parks* magazine.

-Shoup

KEEP IT CLEAN

Editor:

After reading "Cents, Not 'Sense'" in the Nov./Dec. 1996 issue of *Kansas Wildlife and Parks* magazine (Page 34), I had to reply. No one can blame a landowner for posting ground or refusing access. The landowners usually have a good reason. Poor sportsmanship, litter, and destruction of property are the main reasons.

It's their land; it's our privilege.

Last year, my kids and I spent a lot of time on WIHA land just picking up trash. How long will this program last if we, as hunters, don't take care of the ground we're permitted to be on? Is it really that hard to clean out your vehicle when you get home? How would you like it if someone littered up your backyard?

Let's protect our privilege. Let's keep it clean and show some respect.

*Tim Tracy
Sylvia*

Dear Mr. Tracy:

Thanks for your comments. I couldn't agree more that the habits of slob, whether they are actually hunting or are perceived to be hunting, can hurt all hunters, the majority of which I believe are responsible. WIHA is one of the best

things that has happened to Kansas hunters in years and, as you say, we must take care of the land for the program to continue.

Thanks from all of us for cleaning up.
-Shoup

QUIET KANSAS

Editor:

I am a Kansan by birth. Born in Topeka, I now live in Ohio. I have many fond hunting and fishing memories of growing up in eastern Kansas. My dad grew up around Oskaloosa, and we have family still in the area. My dad still makes his yearly trek to his home stomping grounds to hunt pheasant and quail with my uncles.

I write to compliment you on such an excellent publication as *Kansas Wildlife and Parks* magazine. The professional appearance, the informative articles, and the world-class photographs add up to a magazine that is worth keeping.

In Ohio, there is such a demand on hunting and fishing sites from sportsmen that I don't find it enjoyable to be afield anymore. Walking shoulder to shoulder with scores of other hunters down a field to blast at one flushed pheasant seems to defeat the purpose of the outdoor experience. There are too many people and not enough public lands to go around. Be thankful that in Kansas the reverse is the case. Keep up the good work.

Chris McKay
Ludlow Falls, Ohio

BLUEBIRD SUCCESS

Editor:

About three years ago, my wife built two or three bluebird houses, and she, our friend Noel Gnagy, and I put them up on our small farm north of Waterville. We noted bluebirds the first year, and we were very excited about this. Since then, we have built 70 houses, and Noel has built 40. We have placed them on steel fence posts along township roads in a 4- to 6-mile radius of Waterville.

We are very happy with the results. We drive by them during nesting season and have observed many bluebirds. We have

had friends tell us that they have seen more bluebirds recently than they have during their lifetimes. Recently, we cleaned all of the houses out, and noted at least 80 percent had what appeared to be bluebird nests.

Wrens build in some of them, which is okay. On one occasion last spring, we had seen bluebirds around one house, and then we didn't see them for awhile. So one day we stopped, and I lifted the roof to look, and mother bluebird did not move.

Being retired, this gives us entertainment.

Earl V. Dewyke
Waterville

LIONS, LIARS, AND SWANS

Editor:

I have seen a cougar twice: once a few years ago while hunting mushrooms, I had stood still and looked around for some. The dew was on, and the sun was just becoming bright. I saw something walking along a fencerow to my right. I stood and watched it, trying to figure out what it was.

When it got closer, I could see its question-mark tail. Its fur really glistened in the sun. It got about 50 yards from me on a rise, stopped, and looked around. I knew at once what it was by its face and ears. When it saw me, it took off on high. Didn't run, just glided like oil going downhill. A wonderful sight!

I saw another, a young one, late one evening a mile north of where I live about 4 years ago. About the same week, a neighbor had a calf mauled across the section from where I saw it. The vet said it had to be a large animal.

[On another topic], I had several people wanting to shoot ducks off my pond [last winter]. Finally put a sign on my front and back doors. I gave one permission for one day, then he came back while I was gone and went in the mud out in my pasture without my permission. I called his mom! All who ask seem to have known my husband really well, but one didn't know he'd been gone for almost two years. I hadn't seen the others until the ducks came.

I have two sons and nephews who like to come hunt when they can. We all enjoy the wildlife. My husband always fed the quail as he fed cattle in bad weather. Since

he's gone, have left my small pastures empty for quail cover. We did have prairie chickens, but very few anymore.

We had swans land on our pond a few years ago, the first week of December. When my husband saw them while feeding, he didn't know what they were. He came after me and the glasses, and we drove down the road. They looked like large white garbage bags floating. We watched for a bit, and one took its head from under its wing, then the others did the same. We checked with our bird books and knew how many were the young ones. Later in the evening, they were gone.

Pelicans have landed a few times.

Alta Mae Merrill
Galesburg

Dear Ms. Merrill:

Thanks for sharing your experiences in this interesting letter. It really shows how connected to the land you and your family have been and what a privilege it must be for you to live in the country.

-Shoup

LONG-TIME READER

Editor:

I have taken *Kansas Wildlife and Parks* magazine for many years, and the May/June 1973 issue [then called *Kansas Fish and Game*] has a very interesting article entitled "When Fish Grew Big in Kansas." I have always liked setting limb lines and trotlines, and am always real proud to catch a 10-pound fish. I wonder how proud these men must have been to catch these big fish.

Can I order three copies of this magazine or at least three copies of the article? I have enclosed a personal check for \$35, and even if I can't get these copies, please keep the check. I know every dime you get is used for a good cause.

Ken McClintick
Eureka

Dear Mr. McClintick:

As you know by now, the copies are in the mail. Thank you for the generous donation. It was unnecessary but certainly welcome.

-Shoup

Ten Years, NO HUNT

In a case that may be precedent-setting in terms of sentences for wildlife crime, a former Wichita man has recently been barred from all hunting for 10 years.

The case began in May of 1996 when Sedgwick County deputies Terry Litton and Charles Lee were moving cattle off the roadway southwest of Wichita. While attempting to move the livestock across the road and back on the owner's property, they walked by an open shed with three deer heads hanging from the rafters. From the smell, they could tell that the deer had been dead for some time.

Deputy Lee called Department of Wildlife and

Parks Conservation Officer (CO) Alan Hulbert at the Region 4 Office in Wichita with the name and address of the shed owner, Robert Fyfe, formerly of rural Wichita. Hulbert had remembered the name from a 1993 deer poaching case in Comanche County. Hulbert asked CO Dan Heskett, Haven, to assist in obtaining a warrant and, accompanied by Sedgwick County Deputy Bradley McCaffree, they went to the Fyfe residence to serve the warrant.

"I recognized Fyfe when he came out of the garage," says Hulbert. "I told him we had information about three deer heads in a shed on the back of his property and wanted to take a look at them, but he said he knew nothing about them. He refused to let us go back until we gave him the

search warrant. When we found the deer heads, he told us someone must have set him up, and when we said we were going to search the rest of the area, he said he didn't even have any guns to shoot deer."

When the officers searched the house, however, they found boxes of rifle shells, shotgun buckshot, and slug ammunition, as well as several photos of the suspect posing with two deer with antlers that appeared to match those in the shed.

A more thorough search uncovered several empty gun cases and, finally, a false door in the back of a closet that concealed a hidden gun safe. At the officers' request, Fyfe opened the safe, revealing three rifles, one shotgun two sets of night vision goggles, and spotlights.

At this point, Fyfe told the officers where and how he had shot the deer, two of which were taken in Chase County about Thanksgiving of 1995.

Fyfe pleaded guilty to eight counts of violation of wildlife law: hunting with the aid of a motor vehicle, hunting deer without a permit, hunting out of season, failure to tag deer, criminal hunting (trespass), unlawful discharge of a firearm, commercialization of wildlife, and illegal method of taking game. He was ordered to pay \$2,217 in fines, court costs, and fees, and his hunting privileges were revoked for 10 years. He was granted two years supervised probation in lieu of jail time.

At press time, Fyfe's case on the third deer was still pending in Gove County.

-Shoup

MUSSEL DREGS

In the summer of 1996, Missouri conservation agents, Arkansas game wardens, and Kansas conservation officers compared notes about the activities of two Russelville, Ark., men and discovered that they had come to Kansas.

On July 11, Missouri agents intercepted a pickup loaded with protected washboard mussels northwest of St. Louis. The load was headed to Illinois for sale. The agents immediately called Conservation Officer Dennis Knuth, Independence. Knuth's information helped determine that the man had illegally taken 186 freshwater mussels from a stretch of the Neosho River east of Parsons.

In a seemingly unrelated incident one week later, COs Knuth and Bill Ramshaw, Sedan, recovered more shells in a shed in Independence. They learned that these shells were taken by the same man the Missouri agents had stopped, and a second man. Informants in southeast Kansas provided sketchy details of the men's activities in that region and the second man's comment that "there's a lot of money to be made here."

During the investigation, the men were tipped off that the Kansas officers were looking for them, so the second man disappeared.

In the meantime, the COs uncovered more information on other dates and locations. Interviews of landowners, other mussel harvesters, and other law enforcement agencies

helped define the movements of the pair. The second man had been arrested earlier (in the company of the first man) for unlicensed shelling at John Redmond reservoir. He was later found to be the subject of a felony warrant from Missouri.

Finally, the two were caught and arrested. The second man was jailed for 90 days for harvesting without a non-resident commercial permit and unlawful commercialization of wildlife. He also had to pay \$600 in fines, fees, and restitution.

The other man paid \$770 for commercialization and unlawful taking of protected freshwater mussels in Labette County and was barred from obtaining a permit or harvesting mussels in Kansas for one year.

The unique and varied nature of similar wildlife populations in different states requires different approaches to a well-managed harvest. What may be permissible and appropriate in one state may be unjustifiable in another. Subjecting these populations to the pressures of distant markets presents unique challenges to effective regulation of these resources. The poaching of wildlife in an area where protections are in force can be masked by transporting the animals to areas where possession is lawful. But the law-abiding users of wildlife suffer the consequences wrought by those who are not. Hence, the loss of access to private lands, additional regulations, or diminished resources.

-Larry Dawson, conservation officer, Parsons

DON'T DUMP IN LAKES

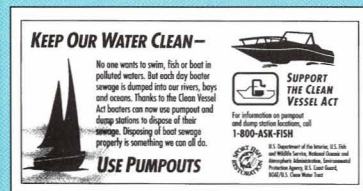
Since the Clean Vessel Act was passed in 1992, it has allowed federal, state, and local governments, as well as the marine community, to help keep our waters clean. The act provides funding for marina owners and operators to install pumpout and dump station facilities for proper disposal of recreational boater sewage.

Prior to the act, boaters often dumped their sewage overboard, creating a significant health risk for members of every community. Sewage contaminates the water with bacteria, affecting marine life, humans, and the quality of the water we use for drinking, bathing, and recreation. Boaters can now use pumpout and dump stations nationwide to dispose of sewage in a healthy and environmentally-safe manner.

Since 1992, the act has funded nearly 3,000 pumpout stations and more than 1,600 dump stations at marinas across the country -- more than twice as many as before the act.

By calling 1-800-ASK-FISH, boaters can locate pumpout and dump stations anywhere in the country. Stations that need repair can also be reported using this number.

-U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



CABINS AT EL DORADO

Through a partnership with the Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative and the Friends of El Dorado State Park, five log cabins have been placed at the Bluestem Point area of El Dorado State Park. The REC made a loan, targeted at local economic development, available to the Friends group to purchase the cabin kits. Park staff, assisted by inmates from the nearby El Dorado Honor Camp, assembled the cabins. The Friends group will use the proceeds from the cabin rentals to repay the loan, maintain upkeep on the cabins, or fund more cabins or other park developments in the future.

Each cabin is 10 feet by 13 feet and has a 6-foot porch complete with swing. They are fully enclosed, with a wood door and glass windows. Heating and air conditioning mitigate the unpredictable Kansas weather, while a full-sized bed and bunk beds provide sleeping accommodations. The beds have mattresses, but no sheets, blankets, or pillows are furnished. A water hydrant, picnic table and barbecue grill are available outside the cabin. Guests need to bring their own linens or sleeping bags and cooking and serving utensils.

Rental is \$35 per cabin on Fridays, Saturdays, and holidays or \$30 any other day. Minimum stay for a holiday weekend is two

days. A \$5 non-refundable reservation fee and a \$35 refundable damage deposit is also required. Call El Dorado State Park (316-321-7180) to make a reservation. The cabins are reservable year-round; however, shower facilities will only be available from April through October. Dates may vary with weather conditions.

*-Kathy Pritchett,
secretary, Parks Division*

TABS ON THE INTERNET

The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks home page has been online for about nine months, and the interest in it has grown dramatically. Close monitoring has helped us determine what people are wanting to see from the department's pages:

(<http://www.ink.org/public/kdwp>)

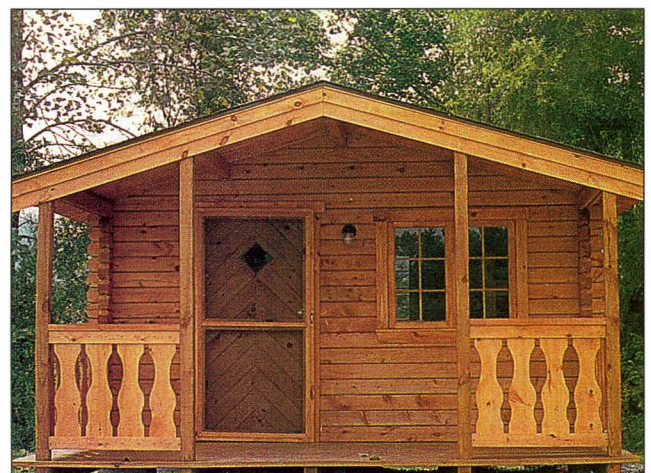
Using monthly statistics as a guide, we determined areas that need the most timely updates. New information and updates are performed on Wednesday and Thursday of every week and are seasonal.

The current updates include a weekly fishing report, news release, and information about education courses around the state. We just finished our legislative session, which we followed weekly on our pages. The last report is still up and will start again next spring.

When the department's home page first came online in September of 1996, our pages received about 1,500 hits (number of times a page is visited), most of them reflecting an interest in brochures, hunting, and the Outdoor Store. Although we had only been online for three weeks, the response was encouraging.

As of May 1, 1997, our total number of hits had climbed close to 12,000 with a shift of interest to fishing and parks. Seeing this increase in the popularity of our pages requires us to take a more responsive approach to them. The ability to provide the public with information that is less than 24 hours old has opened doors for us that were closed before.

Since manpower is a



limiting factor but demand for information continues to increase, one can only guess how much of the department's information will go online. Requests and suggestions will be the key to determining what information the public receives.

-Dustin Teasley,
illustrator, Pratt

FISH RESTORATION EXPIRATION

The Wallop/Breaux Amendment to the Federal Aid in Sportfish Restoration Act provides \$3-\$4 million annually to Kansas for fishing and motor boating programs. This year, Congress will consider re-authorization of the act.

Re-authorization would continue the transfer of motorboat and small engine fuel taxes from the Highways Trust Fund to the National Aquatic Resources Trust Fund for an additional 10-year period. Both transfers are set to expire Oct. 1, 1997. Failure to re-authorize these transfers would result in a 58 percent reduction in the annual allocation to Kansas.

These funds currently support fisheries research, fish hatchery operation and management, urban fishing programs, motorboat access on public lands, repair of state fishing lakes, public/private partnerships such as the Wolf Creek Fishing Access Project, and many other important programs and activities.

"Loss of this revenue could eliminate half of these programs and impact the state's economy due to reduced recreational opportunities," says Doug Nygren, Fisheries Section chief for the Kansas Department of

WILDLIFE TERRACES

As part of the new Farm Bill, a number of practices have been approved for "continuous signup." Among other things, this means that there is no deadline to sign up land, eligible acreage is automatically accepted, and there are no competitive bids or rankings.

Among the practices accepted for continuous signup is the establishment of grass/forb terraces, or "contour grass strips." Such strips not only increase a field's desirability to wildlife, they catch snow and store moisture, reduce wind-caused evaporation, and function as a safe harbor for beneficial predatory insects.

Grass terraces generally result in no loss of crop production, even though slightly less acreage is farmed. In addition, installing such strip vegetation virtually eliminates the need for terrace rebuilding and will also prevent snow from drifting onto roads. These strips also provide limited intermittent hay production.

This type of CRP installation provides outstanding potential environmental benefits with minimal withdrawal of croplands from production (2-6 percent). Farmers must already farm along existing terraces (if done properly), so vegetating terraces only slightly increases the difficulty of handling equipment.

For more information on contour grass strips and other wildlife-friendly farming practices eligible for CRP continuous signup - such as grass waterways and riparian buffers - contact your local NRCS office.

-Shoup



Wildlife and Parks. "Failure to re-authorize Wallop/Breaux would result in loss of \$1.75 million annually to Kansas' fishing and boating programs."

Congress is expected to act on re-authorization of Wallop-Breaux this summer.

- Mathews

CONSERVATION FINANCE

As appropriations for parks and open space are cut, new finance techniques are emerging to fill the gap in conservation funding. States and municipalities are funding critical purchases through many programs, including the following:

- Park Excise Tax - Six neighborhood parks are being financed in the city of Olathe through a \$200 fee on new homes and a square foot tax for industrial and commercial development.

- "Bed, Board, and Booze" Tax - In Flagstaff, Ariz., a hotel stay, dinner, and visit to the local bar is taxed 2 percent to spur economic development, park and recreation, tourism marketing, and arts projects. More than \$800,000 is helping to blaze a 33-mile pedestrian, biking, and commuting trail in this city.

- Jackpot for Open Space Program - Colorado's Great Outdoors Legacy Trust Fund has "won" more than \$86

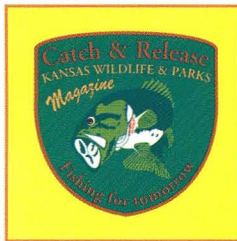
million from the state's lottery for open space projects since 1990. A Grow Smart planning initiative and a growth boom have fueled local land conservation efforts in Colorado.

- Real Estate Transfer Tax - Since 1965, Maryland's Program Open Space has built the foundation for increased public spending for parks and recreation through a real estate transfer tax - a 0.5 percent tax on real estate sales. While nurturing a strong land-trust movement in Maryland, Program Open Space has saved 180,000 acres of land.

- The Trust
For Public Land

RECORD RECOGNITION

The state small-mouth bass record was broken twice in April. The first was a 5.85-pound lunger caught from Wilson Reservoir by Darin Bradstreet of Garden City on April 19 (besting the old record of 5.69 pounds caught in 1996). Just seven days later, Jimmy Gilreath of Milford beat Bradstreet's record with a 6.37-pound monster pulled from Milford Reservoir.



Yet few anglers ever hook and land a state record fish, no matter what their skill level. In fact, many of the most skilled anglers never hook a record fish, but when they catch a truly big fish, most want some way to record their trophy.

For these lucky fishermen, Wildlife and Parks sponsors the Master Angler Awards program. These awards are simple certificates noting the size and date of the fish caught along with the angler's name. To be eligible, the fish must meet certain weight criteria and be weighed on certified scales used for legal trade. An application form, found on Page 16 of the *1997 Kansas Fishing Regulations Summary* (available wherever licenses are sold), must also be filled out and sent in to the department.

While Master Angler Awards recognize fishermen who bring home the big ones, a newer program gives a special pat on the back to those anglers who catch the big ones and let them go. Called the Catch & Release Program, this is somewhat easier to get – that is, once the fish is caught. When an angler catches a big fish, he or she simply snaps a picture of it, measures its length, and sends in the photo with the application form found on Page 19 of the Regulations Summary.

In return for this conservation-minded approach, the catch-and-release angler will receive an embroidered color patch featuring a largemouth bass and the catch-and-release message, "Fishing for Tomorrow." In addition, the largest entry of each species each year receives a free one-year subscription to Kansas Wildlife and Parks magazine.

And when the catch is released, the angler will have the satisfaction of knowing that the fish itself is the reward, and that it may be caught again.

–Shoup

Lights, Whites, ACTION!

One-hundred degrees in the shade. Too hot to fish? Maybe. But there is an alternative. When the sun goes down, the wind dies and the temperature becomes tolerable, even pleasant. That's the time to be on the lake, and while you're soaking up the cool temperature, you might also enjoy some exciting fishing.

Night fishermen on Kansas reservoirs usually focus on white bass, which are plentiful and fat from gorging on young gizzard shad. The idea is simple – put a light in the water after the sun goes down. The light attracts micro-organisms, which attract shad. The bright light disorients the shad, and they end up swimming in confused circles around the light – easy pickings for the hungry whites. Fishermen simply drop their baits into the feeding frenzy and reel in fish. Well, not exactly.

Finding shad is the easy part, but catching whites can be a little more complicated. Remember these three words: location, location, location. Your boat needs to be positioned over a ledge, creek channel, underwater hump, or any other kind of structure white bass frequent. The whites rely on this structure as underwater "highway signs" as they travel the lake, and if you're not fishing near it, you'll never get a bump.

If you're not familiar with any of these spots, you can simply look for fish with an electronic fish finder. Arrive at the lake about an hour before sunset. Spend the last minutes of daylight cruising along main-lake points or over the river channel looking for fish on your locator. White bass will generally be 15-25 feet deep. The shad will be suspended closer to the surface. If the water is calm, you might even see schools of whites chasing shad on the surface. Areas with good surface activity can also be productive after the sun goes down.

Many night fishermen prefer the halogen submersible light, and they may have a fluorescent black light in the boat to allow them to see their monofilament line. Others use floating lights, but either type will work. Small rubber-bodied grubs in dark colors on eighth-ounce jigs are the most popular lures, but on some nights, more fish will be caught if the jig is baited with a minnow or live shad.

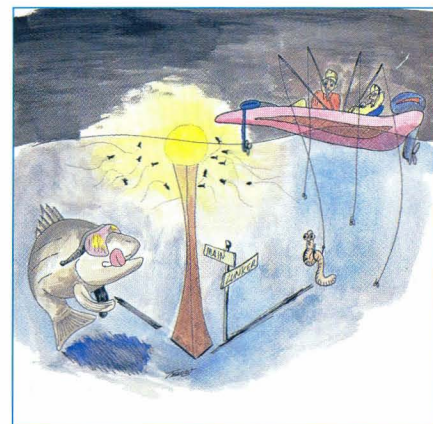
Nightfishing for white bass can be productive as early as the first part of June, when the year's first gizzard shad are getting big enough to tempt white bass. One of Kansas' top nightfishing spots is Glen Elder Reservoir, where whites as large as three pounds are commonly taken under the lights. Wilson Reservoir, near Russell, is also a good bet for mid-summer nightfishing.

In early summer, whites are often caught in 20 feet of water on jiggging spoons or trolling crankbaits. But as soon as the shad get a little larger, there is sure to be some great surface fishing. Look for commotion on the water's surface on calm days or keep an eye on the sky for feeding gulls. As they dive and pick up the scraps of shad left from the feeding frenzy, flocks of gulls often indicate the presence of feeding fish.

If you go, remember that the law requires a boat under power after sunset to display a white light at the stern, a green light off the starboard (right) bow, and a red light off the port (left) bow. At anchor, the boat must display the white light. Familiarize yourself with the area you plan to fish, take it slow in the dark, and always keep a Q-beam type light handy while under power.

With a little attention to detail and safety, nightfishing is a great way to beat the Kansas summer heat.

–Miller



Bullfrogs & Quail-eating Turkeys

by Mark Shoup



There was a lot of talk last spring about declines in the Kansas quail population. Perhaps the most interesting theory on this decline was that turkeys are eating quail. A lot of folks got laughs out of this debate, but others took it seriously.

Never mind that turkeys are not raptors, that their primary foods are insects, nuts, and seeds. The logic is simple: the quail population is down in some parts of the state where the turkey population is up; therefore, turkeys must be eating quail.

I told a friend this story, and he got a good chuckle out of it himself. However, he had to tell me a story he has heard for years that turns the chuckles on the "Fish and Game." The logic of quail-eating turkeys sparked his memory of the story, which he told something like this:

"The boys at the Fish and Game decided they needed a study to find out how far a bullfrog can jump. So, they got a bullfrog, sat him on the ground, and commanded 'Jump, frog!' And the frog jumped 3 feet.

"Well, the Fish and Game boys wrote all this stuff down carefully in their books. Then they cut one of the frog's back legs off, sat it down on the ground again, and said 'Jump, frog!' And the frog jumped a foot and a half. The Fish and Game boys wrote this stuff down, too. Then they cut the frog's other leg off and sat him on the ground. But when they said 'Jump, frog!', the frog didn't budge.

"The Fish and Game boys wrote all this stuff down very carefully, and

wrote a report with this logical conclusion: a frog with no back legs can't hear."

My friend holds no animosity toward wildlife management agencies. He was simply illustrating a point, and he knew I'd appreciate the humor without taking offense, even though I work for the "Fish and Game." And I did take it in good humor. After all, he is a good friend and an avid outdoorsman. And he lets me hunt on his ground.

Mostly, I hunt turkeys on my friend's land, and in the few short days I was able to hunt last spring, I had action each day. The first day out, I snuggled up to a cedar tree and began calling. It wasn't long until I heard a bird some 100 yards to my left. I turned, took aim at a spot where the bird might appear, and waited. Nothing. Twenty minutes later, I called again, and the bird gobbled not 30 yards in front of me. I could hear its wings flap, but it was hidden by the trees.

With shotgun in position and no backrest, I sat for what seem like another 20 minutes, but the bird did not appear. My back was killing me, so I lowered my gun to stretch. Just then, two jakes appeared 50 yards to my right. They spotted me immediately and ran through the trees behind the other bird, putting all the way.

It's over now, I thought, so I put my gun in my lap and relaxed for a few minutes. When the blood returned to my back muscles, I shouldered the shotgun and rested it on

my knees, still aiming in the direction of the bird I never saw, hoping against hope.

A short five minutes later, I looked to my left through the cedar and almost swallowed my heart. A tom was 8 feet away, staring me in the eye. Knowing I could not turn and shoot through the tree, I froze. Was I hoping he'd be curious, maybe walk around the tree and let me take my best shot? I don't know, but he didn't hang around. Still, it was a heart-pounder.

Something like that happened every day I was out. I saw two turkeys mating. I had hens within 5 or 10 yards almost every day. I saw songbirds and squirrels at close range, and even a bobcat.

The best experience, however, came at the end of the last day. I was walking through the pasture on the way to my pickup and came upon a washout. Directly below me was a hen turkey and eight or 10 poults. Some of the poults froze when they saw me. The hen and the other poults tried to hide, but there was no cover, so I just stood still. The hen couldn't stand it. She leaped out on the opposite side of the washout, wings spread, tail feathers cocked to one side, putting like crazy. Then she hopped across the washout and came toward me, pacing back and forth almost within reach, scolding me all the time.

I remember thinking that although the bird's posture was threatening, the look in its eye was one of sheer terror. Her action went against every instinct except one.

I wanted to stay and get a better look at the other poults, but I figured the hen was stressed enough. Indeed, she followed me a good 50 yards and never left off her relentless scolding.

This remarkable experience was the last of my spring turkey hunting. Although I didn't kill a bird, it was worth every penny of the permit. It's great to see these fascinating birds in the wild.

But come to think of it, I never did see a quail.

NIMROD TIPS

As summer comes to a close, hunters begin to anticipate the fall season. Permission from landowners is obtained, and guns are cleaned and patterned. However, there are always a few things we forget during the off season, both strategic and ethical. To refresh your memory, here's a few tips to remember when you go afield this autumn:

- When quail hunting in mild weather, concentrate on edges of cover types such as timber/grass, feed field/grass, or weed/grass. As the weather gets more severe, hunt feed field edges early in the day and work woody cover, such as timber or plum and sumac thickets, at midday.

- Never assume a downed pheasant is dead, no matter how it falls. Always mark the spot where it fell with a landmark such as a weed or feed stalk and get there quickly - or better yet, get a dog there quickly. Too many "dead" pheasants get up and run off.

- The same assumption must also be avoided when hunting deer with a rifle. Many a mortally-wounded deer has bounded out of sight as if it were uninjured, only to die a few seconds later. Always look for a blood trail and pursue your shots.

- When deer hunting from a tree stand, try not to be too much of a creature of habit. Deer may pattern your movements and avoid your stand if you park in the same spot, walk the same route, and hunt the same times day after day. Always use the

YOUNG HUNTERS DOWN

A survey by the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF) shows that the number of young hunters continues to decline. The foundation's "1996 Hunting Frequency and Attitude Survey" and another survey by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service entitled "The State of Hunting" reveal disturbing trends in the demographics of America's hunting community.

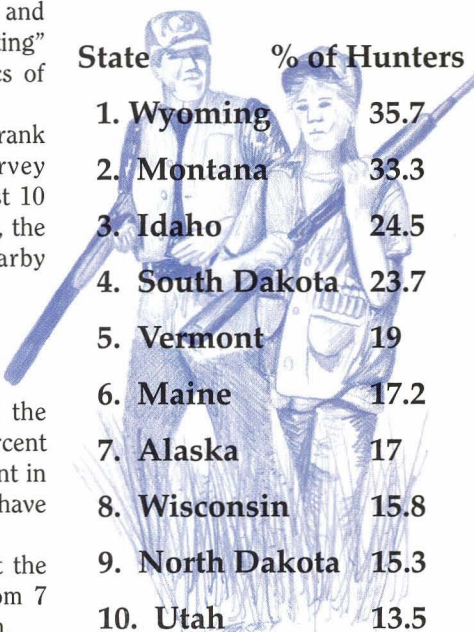
While Rocky Mountain states continue to rank high in hunter numbers, the USFWS survey found that only 19 states can say that at least 10 percent of their residents are hunters. In fact, the percentage of hunters is low in many nearby states: Colorado, 9.2 percent; Oklahoma, 8.8 percent; Kansas, 7.5 percent; Texas, 6.2 percent; New Mexico, 6.1 percent; and Arizona, 4.5 percent.

The NSSF survey found that hunters in the 18-24 age group have declined from 17 percent of the hunting population in 1986 to 8 percent in 1995. And hunters in the 25-34 age group have declined from 31 percent to 17 percent.

In one bright spot, the survey found that the number of female hunters has increased from 7 to 8 percent of the overall hunting population.

-Cody Beers,
Wyoming Wildlife News

The top ten states, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, are as follows:



State	% of Hunters
1. Wyoming	35.7
2. Montana	33.3
3. Idaho	24.5
4. South Dakota	23.7
5. Vermont	19
6. Maine	17.2
7. Alaska	17
8. Wisconsin	15.8
9. North Dakota	15.3
10. Utah	13.5

wind to your advantage and vary your routine.

- Spend some time shooting practice arrows from your tree stand before the season. Not only will this help you more accurately judge distances, but your confidence will be high when a big buck approaches a spot where you've consistently nailed leaves with practice shots.

- Miller

QUAIL WORMS

Last season, a Lyon County hunter shot a quail that had a number of white spots in its pectoral muscles, so he sent the bird to Roger

Applegate, Wildlife and Parks' small game coordinator, in Emporia. The hunter told Applegate that he had killed several other quail in the same area with similar lesions. Applegate chilled the quail and sent it to the Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study (SCWDS) in Athens, Ga., for examination.

Researchers at SCWDS found the bird to be in good condition despite the lesions, which were found throughout the breast. No lesions were found in the bird's internal organs.

Upon close examination, it was discovered that the affected muscles contained

nematodes - worms about 1-2 millimeters long. Cysts had formed around many of the parasites.

The researchers concluded that the worms were of the order Spiruridae, which are common parasites of wild animals and usually cause no permanent damage. They also concluded that there was no apparent risk to livestock or humans from the parasites. If properly cooked, the meat should be fine although they did add a final comment that "our general recommendation is to avoid consumption of any meat that contains parasites or other disease lesions."

-Shoup

MAGNUM WOODPECKER

Anyone who sees a pileated woodpecker for the first time is sure to be spellbound by the size and behavior of this great bird. Nearly the size of a crow and looking much like the possibly-extinct ivory-billed woodpecker, this giant woodpecker seems as if it must be a rarity of nature to anyone who lives outside its range.

Pronounced "pi'•lee•a•tid," the name means "crested." The pileated woodpecker is easy to identify and probably served as a model for the cartoon character Woody Woodpecker. A bright red crest on this mostly black bird is the distinguishing characteristic. The male sports a red mustache marking. A flash of white underwing lining is easy to spot when the bird flies overhead.

The problem, however, may be seeing one in the first place. As large as it is, the pileated woodpecker is one secretive bird. Some ardent birders have never seen one. Even the author-naturalist Henry David Thoreau wrote about their holes but never saw one.

The pileated woodpecker requires a tract of large timber in its territory. It feeds mainly on wood borers and ants. When the climax forests of North America were cut, the pileated's population dwindled. However, the bird returned as the second growth matured. The holes it excavates for nesting or roosting are large and triangular or oblong. These tree cavities also serve as valuable nesting spots for wood ducks, flying squirrels, and screech owls. The nest holes are typically near water and usually face east or south. Interestingly, it is the male that incubates the eggs and broods the young at night.

The pileated woodpecker's call is a brittle kik-kik-kik-kik-kik-kik-kik. If you pick up a stout stick when you hear the call and rap it on a tree to imitate this drumming, chances are you might attract one into viewing range.

This trick may aid the birdwatcher, but it once was used against the birds, which were commonly killed for food in the pioneer days. Not everyone appreciated the culinary aspects of pileated woodpecker meat, however. John James



Audubon, who was quite fond of bird meat, once wrote of the pileated woodpecker, "Its flesh is tough, of a bluish tint, and smells so strongly of worms and insects on which it generally feeds, as to be extremely unpalatable."

The pileated woodpecker can live 10 years or longer in the wild and can be found in southeastern Kansas, where its range is expanding. Don't be surprised to see one in town feeding on wood borers or carpenter ants in rotted trees or stumps. Look for it especially along river bottoms or in blocks of mature timber.

—Ed Miller, *nongame wildlife biologist, Independence*

HABITAT CORNER

Butterflies . . .

Sometimes people who live in towns and cities think there is little they can do to attract wildlife, but there is always room for butterflies. Whether you create a window box or have an expansive garden in your backyard, you may be able to attract a dozen or more species.

If your space and time are limited, you may be interested in planting some annual flowers such as zinnias, marigolds, and daisies in a window box or small flower garden near a patio. A pan of water will also help, as long as nectar

is nearby.

For the gardener, a variety of flowers and a few members of the parsley family provide food sources for butterfly caterpillars. Certain varieties of sedum and, of course, butterfly milkweed are excellent butterfly attractors. Hackberry and fruit trees will attract buckeyes, wood nymphs, and hackberry butterflies.

For the serious butterfly gardener, several small plots of various species of annual and perennial flowers will attract many different butterflies almost anywhere in Kansas. Incorporating wild prairie forbs and grasses and a pool or other water source will increase the variety of butterflies.

. . . and hummingbirds

Hummingbirds are another matter in Kansas. Of the 15 varieties found in the U.S., only the ruby-throated is common here although the rufous is seen occasionally in southcentral Kansas. The ruby-throated nests along streams and woodland parks and is more abundant in the eastern half of the state.

Hummers can be seen in Kansas from mid-April to October before they migrate nonstop some 500 miles across the Gulf of Mexico to winter. They prefer red and orange flowers and can be attracted to backyards with a variety of plants, including petunias, phlox, cannas, honeysuckle, mimosa, and especially trumpet vine.

Feeders can also be used in conjunction with flowers but will unlikely attract the birds on their own. They should be placed in a protected place where rain cannot dilute the nectar. Avoid direct sunlight. If ants are attracted, moisten the hanging wire with salad oil. Use bee guards to keep bees and wasps away. Use either instant nectar or a mixture of one part sugar to 4 parts boiled water. Do not make the mixture any sweeter because it may cause liver damage in the hummer.

For more information on attracting butterflies and hummingbirds to your backyard, write the KDWP, Nongame Coordinator, 512 SE 25th Ave., Pratt, KS 67124 and ask for the pamphlet, "Attracting Hummingbirds and Butterflies."

—Shoup

DEER REG CHANGES

Including archery, Hunt-Own-Land, and special permits, Kansas may have as many as 85,000 deer permit holders this year. Changes in law and regulation that may affect deer hunters include the following:

- Non-resident hunters may apply every year.
- Non-resident firearms permits remaining after the first drawing revert to resident firearms permits.
- Hunt-Own-Land permits may be transferred to relatives in direct lineage or anyone who shares a common ancestor with the holder. Hunt-Own-Land permits are for any deer except in units 17 and 18, where only mule deer bucks and any whitetail may be taken.
- Non-resident landowner permits cannot be transferred.
- Big game tags must remain with meat until consumed or given to another.
- Leftover resident permits are valid for use with appropriate equipment in muzzleloader, archery, or firearms season.
- Preference points for the leftover drawing no longer exist.
- Regular firearms appli-

cants who were unsuccessful in last year's drawing will be given priority in the initial drawing. Those applicants who had an archery, Hunt-Own-Land, or antlerless permit last year will be able to state on the application that they did not receive a permit last year.

- As many as four deer permit applicants may apply as buddies.
- Unit archery permits are valid in all units.
- Unit archery permits are valid only for white-tailed antlerless deer.
- Persons 12 and 13 years old may bowhunt for deer if they have completed a hunter education course and an International Bowhunter Education Program course or equivalent, but they must hunt with adult supervision.
- Anyone with a permanent physical disability that prevents them from hunting safely may apply for a Disability Assistance Permit. The permit allows a designated person to actually harvest game for the permit holder. (This law also applies to fishing.)
- It is legal to use lighted pin sights, dot sights, holographic sights, optical scopes, and range finders if

the systems do not project light toward the target and do not electrically amplify light. Laser scopes and night scopes are prohibited.

—Shoup

ELK CITY LIFESAVERS

Elk City State Park staff got more action than they wanted, and responded like true professionals one brisk day last March. As a result, three young men whose sailboat capsized that day are alive to tell the story.

The three were sailing the afternoon of March 24 when the boat's rudder broke, and the 15-foot sailboat capsized. Boat owner Matt Alexander's mother, Sammi Alexander, reported the incident to office assistant Diane Hight about 4:30 p.m., stating that the boys had been in the water 25 to 30 minutes by that time. Wind speed was 25 mph, with frequent gusts to 45 mph and a water temperature of 51 degrees, making rescue difficult and dangerous.

While fisheries biologist Sean Lynott prepared his boat for launch, park manager Randy Curtis drove to #1 Point and spotted the craft about 200 yards off-

shore. The young men were waving frantically and appeared to be attempting to hold onto a third individual. Curtis flashed his vehicle's lights to let the three know they had been sighted and help was on the way. Curtis and Lynott then launched their boat.

As they approached the disabled boat, Matt Alexander told them that one of his friends was having trouble breathing and needed immediate attention. While Lynott maintained the boat's position, Curtis pulled Scott Kammerer aboard the KDWP boat. After rescuing the other two young men, the crew headed back to shore, shielding Kammerer from the high wind and water spraying into the boat. By that time, the three young men had spent about 45 minutes in the water.

Upon reaching the boat dock, the men were placed in heated vehicles and covered with blankets and jackets, then taken to the park office. All three refused an ambulance or further medical care. They were cold, sore, and scared but otherwise unharmed, thanks to the efforts of Curtis, Lynott, and Hight.

—Mathews

FRONTIER & CIVIL WAR EVENT

On Aug. 2 and 3, Pomona State Park will host the 4th Annual Frontier Celebration, which showcases the times and ways of the Kansas frontier with living history re-enactor camps, evening entertainment, and a craft show. The camps will demonstrate living and traveling on the Kansas prairie, as well as clothing, cooking, and equipment of various periods of history on the frontier.

On Oct. 4 and 5, nearby Eisenhower State Park, at Melvern Reservoir, will host a re-enactment of the Battle of Mine Creek, the only true Civil War battle in Kansas.

For more information on these events, contact Eisenhower State Park, (913) 528 4102 or Pomona State Park, (913) 828-4933.

—Jeff Bender,
Pomona SP manager, and
Sally Wilk,
Eisenhower SP manager



by Mark Shoup

CROPS, STOMACHS, AND GIZZARDS



You probably haven't spent much time examining the innards of birds -- or any other critter, for that matter. But chances are you've learned a few things about them in school. For instance, everyone knows that birds have gizzards, right? But do they have stomachs?

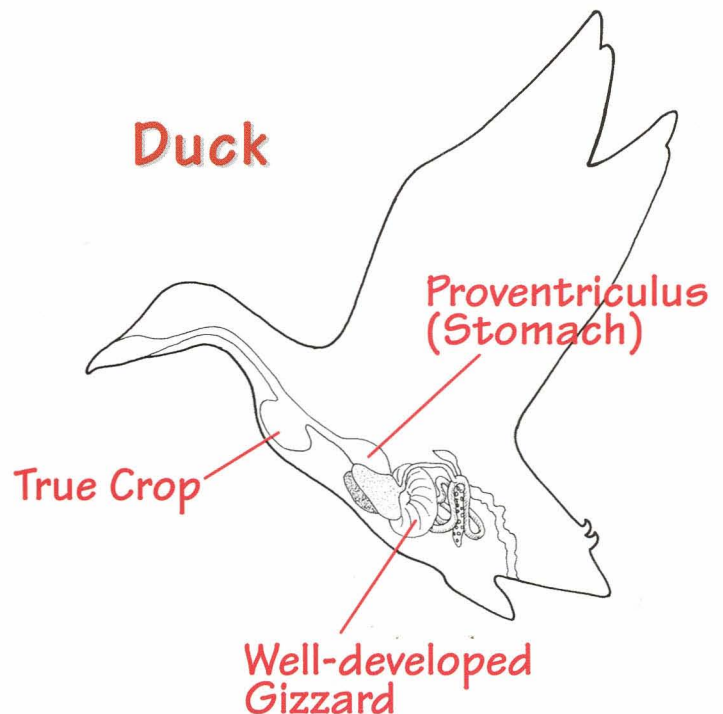
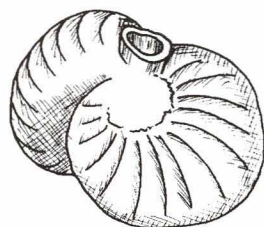
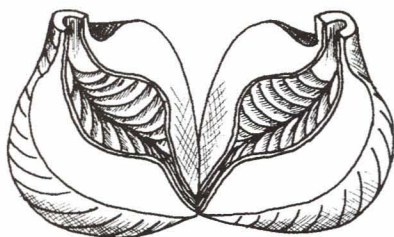
A gizzard is actually a kind of powerful muscular stomach that scientists have compared to the grinding teeth and strong jaws of mammals. In some birds, such as ducks, this "stomach" is so strong that it can grind acorns and even shellfish. Some birds swallow grit -- small pieces of sand or gravel -- which remains in the gizzard and helps with the grinding of food.

Many strange things have also been found in the gizzards of birds. In 1911, a small gold rush was started in western

Nebraska when gold nuggets were found in the gizzards of ducks. Ruby mines in Burma were discovered when a ruby was removed from a pheasant gizzard.

Ducks will also eat shot from shotgun shells. Because lead shot grinds up in the gizzard and causes lead poisoning, use of lead shot for waterfowl hunting has been made illegal throughout the United States.

In some birds, the gizzard is less developed. Meat-eating birds (called carnivores) have a gizzard that is like a thin-walled bag. This type of gizzard just holds



bones, feathers, scales, and other things the bird can't digest. This stuff is formed into a pellet that is later coughed up.

Some fruit-eating birds have no gizzard at all, which again leads us to the interesting question about birds having stomachs.

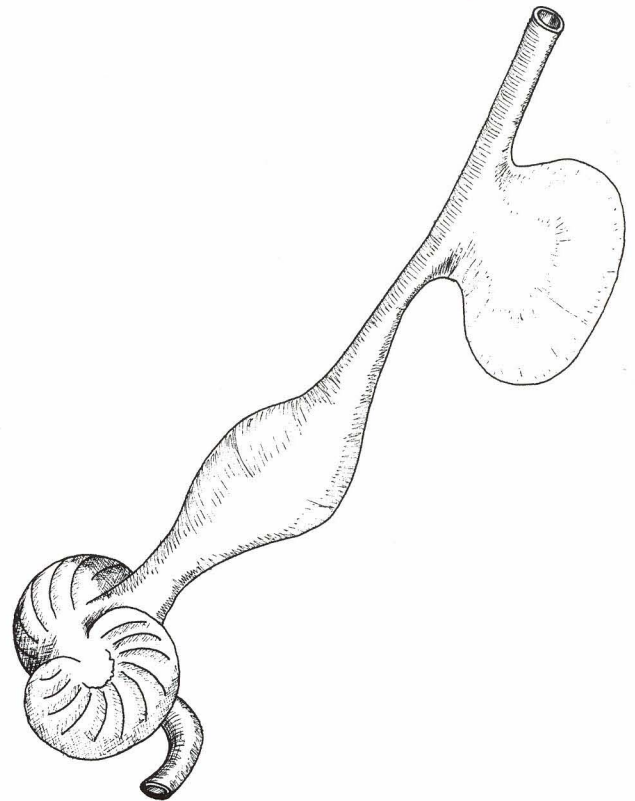
Surprisingly, the answer is "yes." Most birds have three stomach-like organs: a crop, a glandular stomach (called the proventriculus), and a gizzard. The crop is a place where food is stored temporarily before it moves on to the glandular stomach. But most insect-eating birds have no crop at all.

All birds, however, have a glandular stomach that

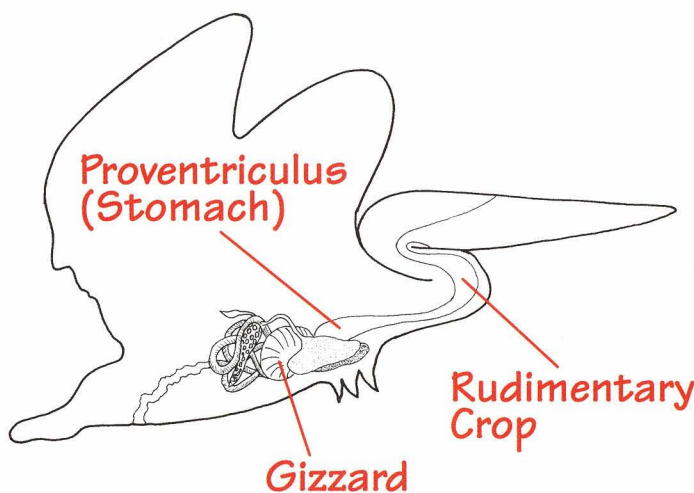
digests food chemically. This is where most food digestion begins in birds. If a bird has a gizzard, the food is passed from the glandular stomach to the gizzard and digested further. If the bird has no gizzard, most of the digestion occurs in the glandular stomach, and the food passes on to the intestines.

This is where most of the food's nutrition is absorbed by the bird's body.

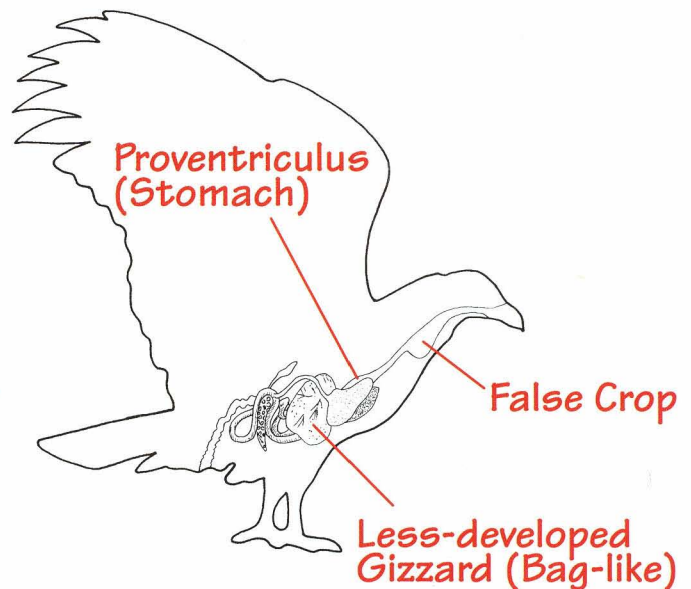
If you've ever heard someone being laughed at for



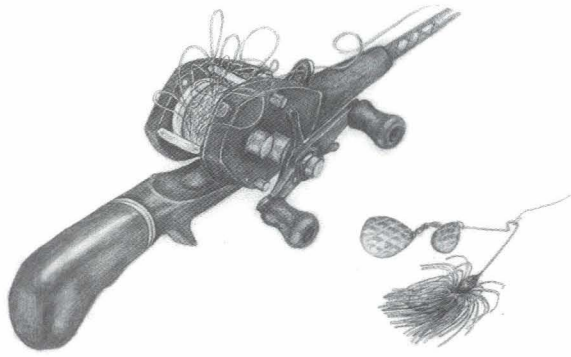
talking about bird stomachs, it's no joke. It may be hard to swallow, but birds really do have stomachs.



Pelican



Vulture



Backlash

by Mike Miller

Tips From An "Expert"

Even though my official title is editor, I end up answering plenty of phone inquiries. It's often a case where the qualified person isn't in, and the switchboard operator desperately needs a warm body to receive a call. Seriously, sometimes when you call with a question about fishing, I'm the "expert" you talk with.

I'm glad you're amused, but before you bust a vessel, check out my credentials. Okay, maybe I'm not a true fishing expert, but I have been fishing or dreaming about fishing for most of the last 35 or so years. (I started *very* young.) If I'm not an expert at catching fish, I am an expert on things that can go wrong. I've made mistakes most fishermen haven't even dreamed of yet. At the very least, I can tell you how not to do something — just a minute, the phone's ringing.

"Yes, I was wondering where I might go to catch some crappie this spring? And also if you could tell me how best to catch them?" asks a polite caller.

"Well, don't go to Rock Lake. I fished there last weekend and didn't catch a single fish. And I wouldn't recommend Fish Lake either — don't know why they call it that. Also, don't forget to put the drain plug in your boat. Boy, that really spoiled our, er, uh, could ruin your trip. Let's see, I've heard that Blue Lake has good crappie fishing, but don't use the south boat ramp after a rain. The road in is dirt, and we got, I mean, you might get stuck. I'd recommend eighth-ounce jigs,

but use a color other than yellow. We didn't catch any fish on . . . er, uhh, I've heard chartreuse and pink work best. And be sure to check the line on your spinning reel. If it gets twisted, you'll spend most of your time untangling bird nests. Good luck fishing!"

"Uhh, thanks . . . I think," says another satisfied caller.

Excuse me, but I have another call coming in.

"What's the best way to get to the old iron bridge above Opossum Flats Reservoir?" an excited white bass fishermen asks.

"The old iron bridge — one of my favorite white bass holes. I even drove straight to it once. I'll tell you how I like to get there, but remember to stop and ask directions once you get in the vicinity. I know it goes against every male instinct in your body to stop and ask, but the guy at the mini-mart won't laugh any harder than the farmer who brought us gas, uhh . . . I mean, the guy who helps you if you happen to get lost and run out of gas. You should choose a fishing buddy who can read a map better than Lennie. And never, ever, take a "shortcut" that sounds too good to be true, especially if the name Lennie is mentioned *anywhere* in the directions. Ok, first take Highway 60 north to the Barnett blacktop, then turn left. When you come to a little burg called Placidville, you've gone too far, so turn around and go back. Turn north on the fourth dirt road past an old elevator. Go north on this dirt road 'till it jogs west, but

instead of going back north after the jog, keep going west. Stay on this 'till you come to a big white farmhouse with green trim and a huge German Shepard lying on the porch. I hear the guy who lives there knows exactly how to get to the old iron bridge.

"Hello . . . is anyone there?" Hmmm, that guy must have had a hot tip about the white bass fishing — couldn't wait to get on the road. Oh well, I'm sure he appreciated the information. Even if he doesn't find the old iron bridge, a drive through that country is beautiful, and he'll thank me for that.

Helping fellow anglers like that makes my job rewarding. Whether I'm telling a caller how not to do something or how not to get somewhere, I get a warm feeling. If I can stop just one person from leaving his lights on before a long day of icefishing or prevent a boater from forgetting to remove one of the transom tie-downs before trying to back his boat off the trailer, I've had a good day. It's all a matter of helping people who love the outdoors as much as I do, but don't want to make the same mistakes. Gotta go — phone's ringing again.

"Hello . . . you say you called here last week to get directions and got lost? Hmmm. Do you remember the name of who you visited with? Good. I mean, where are you now? Still lost? That's bad. Describe the area around you, I'm sure I've been lost there, too . . . I mean I'm pretty familiar with that area, maybe I'll recognize a landmark . . . 