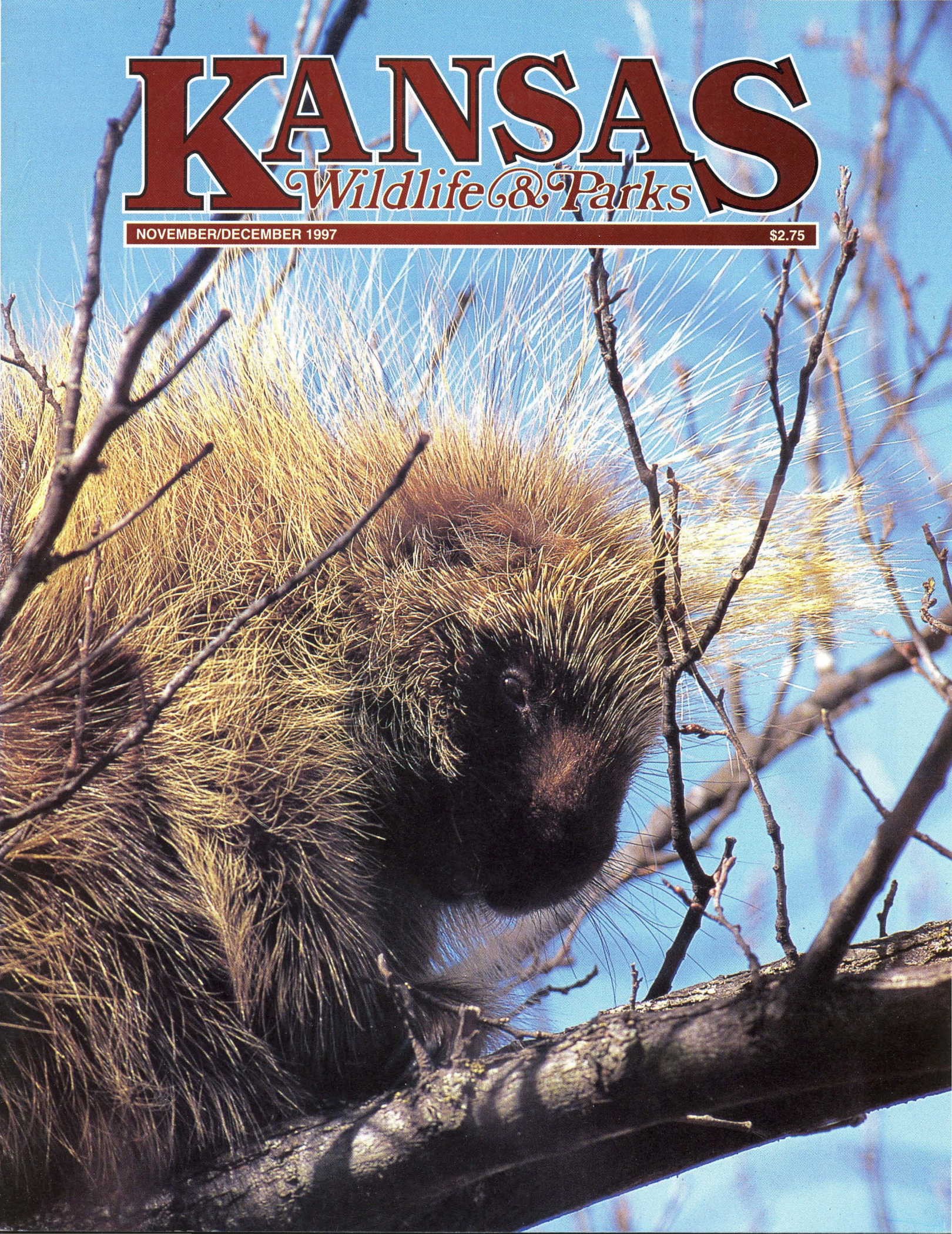


KANSAS

Wildlife & Parks

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1997

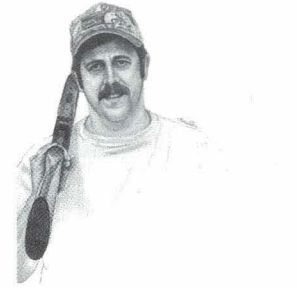
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The View From Here

by Steve Williams



Hunters Must Play A Role

In 1996, the Kansas Legislature considered many bills that dealt with deer and deer hunting. Many of these bills were not introduced nor supported by our department but were a direct result of publicity generated about deer numbers. Deer/vehicle accident rates and crop damage complaints in some areas of the state caused concern. Fortunately, with the help and testimony of dedicated sportsmen and state conservation groups, we were able to convince legislators that our management program could resolve these issues.

As the firearms deer season approaches, it's important to remember that promise and that our deer management program relies on hunters. Hunters must play a role in the management of their deer. Deer permit numbers were increased as much as 50 percent in some units. And because the only way to effectively reduce deer numbers is to harvest does, most of the additional permits require the hunter to take an antlerless deer.

Most hunters want the option of taking a buck, so the any-deer or buck-only permits are most desired. In the 1997 regular drawing, 90 percent of the available any-deer or buck-only permits were sold, while only 16 percent of the allotted antlerless-only permits were sold. As this issue went to press, approximately 4,000 permits were still left — all of which are for antlerless deer.

To make leftover permits more attractive, the department has made them valid in all seasons, with the appropriate equipment. This has allowed Kansas hunters a variety of hunting opportunities through a long season. All residents 14 years old and older may purchase a leftover permit, even those who received a permit in the regular drawing or those who have a statewide archery permit. A hunter with a leftover permit could have hunted with a muzzleloader during the early muzzleloader season in September, during the archery season with a bow and during the firearms season as well.

Hunters are our most important management tool, and we have encouraged them to fill these tags to ensure that harvest goals are met. Landowners who are experiencing crop damage are encouraged to allow hunters access to their property and might even want to consider requiring

hunters harvest a doe before they fill a buck permit. In some cases, the department can assist landowners with deer problems through non-lethal control methods or the issuance of depredation permits. The Walk-In Hunting Area program, which will open thousands of acres of private land to deer hunting this year, will give hunters better opportunities to harvest deer.

Traditionally, deer hunters have sought bucks with large antlers. Taking a mature buck is one of the greatest deer hunting challenges. However, taking a doe can be just as rewarding if the hunt is done right, especially for young or beginning hunters. And the harvest of does is necessary to maintain a healthy deer population — one that consistently produces mature bucks. Harvesting does maintains deer numbers at healthy and acceptable levels and reduces pressure on young bucks. Hunters should consider taking a doe this year to fill their freezer, rather than settling for a young buck late in the season.

This fall Kansas hunters will have more opportunity to hunt deer and enjoy the Kansas outdoors than ever before. When the legislature convenes in January, we want to be able to show them that our program works.

Kansas is known for its healthy deer herd and trophy-sized bucks, and our management program is the envy of every Midwest state. But to maintain control of this important resource, hunters have to be involved and access to private land must be available.

Enjoy the wonderful experience of the Kansas outdoors this fall, and do your part in deer management by harvesting a doe. Hunt ethically and safely, and pass on our hunting heritage to a youngster whenever possible.

Steve Williams

KANSAS

Wildlife & Parks

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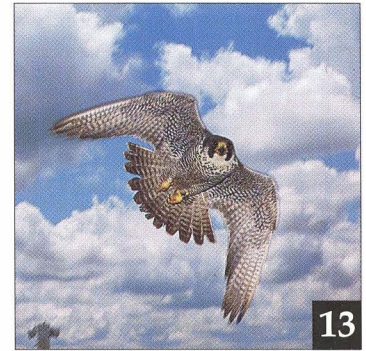
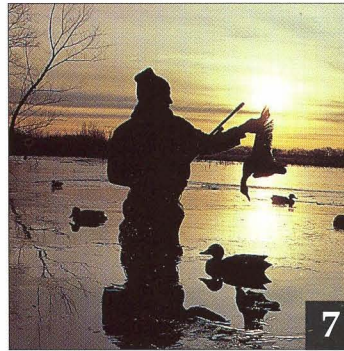
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About the covers

Front: Surprising many, porcupines live in the Sunflower State. Mike Blair filmed this animal in Barber County with a 600 mm lens, f/8 @ 1/250 sec.

Back: A captive peregrine provides a rare close-up. Blair filmed the bird at the Operation Wildlife rehab center near Linwood, directed by Diane Johnson - 400mm, f/11 @ 1/125



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Cute But Not Cuddly

by J. Mark Shoup
associate editor, Pratt

photos by Mike Blair



At first glance, the porcupine appears to be a slow, dim-witted creature you might want to pet. But when you get close, the situation can get sticky — and if you get too close, it's an encounter you won't soon forget.

My office mate, videographer Gene Brehm, tells a story about a porcupine encounter in Colorado. He and his brother Gary were bowhunting mule deer in the Rockies when they

spotted two large bucks grazing on the other side of a meadow. Their cover would have been excellent if they had gone around the meadow and approached the deer from the other side, but the wind was wrong,

so they decided to crawl toward their quarry through tall grass, using an occasional scrub pine for cover.

Within 80 yards, the deer were still grazing peacefully, unaware of the stalking hunters. And the Brothers Brehm were unaware of a large animal in their path. As they crept forward, the grayish brown creature moved. Both men jumped back, not knowing what it was but sensing danger. Their senses were accurate — it was a porcupine. Of course, the senses of the deer were keen, as well, and they vacated the meadow as the hunters backed away from this prickly situation.

For humans, such sudden, unexpected encounters are the only real danger from the porcupine. It's a generally passive, slow-moving creature that is easy to avoid. But just a few more feet, and the Brehm's might have been in big trouble. The porcupine's neck, back, sides, and tail are covered with quills that would make the worst patch of sand burs feel like a feather bed.

Loosely attached to the porcupine's body, the quills easily imbed in the flesh of any animal that comes in contact with them. If threatened, the porcupine can slap its enemy with its powerful tail — which has the largest quills — burying quills an inch deep. (Contrary to popular belief, the porcupine cannot throw its quills.) Each quill has hundreds of tiny barbs that cause the quill to work even deeper into the flesh. An animal that dares to attack the porcupine can end up with a snout-full of quills, which can lead to death from starvation or infection. The porcupine is no worse for the wear because new quills, which are actually modified hairs, grow in place of those lost.

According to *Mammals of Colorado*, quills should be removed quickly and carefully to avoid infection, using the following method: "Quills should be pulled with pliers with a straight, even motion, grip-

ping each quill as close to the skin as possible.”

There are four sizes of quills — some 30,000 of them — on the porcupine: the large, coarse quills from the tail; smaller quills from the back; fine quills from the neck; and the thinnest quills found near the belly. The head and belly are the only vulnerable parts of porcupine. If threatened, it may arch its back, stomp its feet, and gnash its teeth, hoping to scare the attacker away. If this doesn't work, it will often tuck its head under its body or poke it into a protected area under rocks or logs.

On rare occasion, a porcupine will get into a scrap with one of its own. Fortunately, it is adept at pulling quills from its own body with teeth and front feet.

Despite its great natural defense mechanism, the porcupine is not without enemies. *The Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Mammals* lists “porcupine kills” as the first sign left by a fisher, a large weasel of the northern states and



The porcupine has been found throughout Kansas except for the far southeast. They are not common but are generally found near forests, streams and rocky outcrop areas near them.

Canada. This speedy predator has mastered the art of flipping a porcupine on its back, exposing its vulnerable, quill-free underbelly. Even so, fishers are occasionally injured or killed by the quills.

Fishers are not the only predators that have figured out the porcupine. Mountain lions have been known to take them, leaving nothing but a hide laid out flat as if stretched by a trapper, even the fat licked away. In Kansas, bobcats are the primary porcu-

pine predator, but coyotes can kill them, as well. Still, the porcupine is generally safe from most predators, with one exception — humans.

The porcupine is so dependent on its quills for defense that it failed to develop other defenses. Although its hearing and sense of smell are good, it is a slow creature that cannot see well — a death sentence for most wild animals. Humans can easily approach and kill it with a sharp blow to the head from a stick. Of course, the porcupine is not exactly a favorite prey of humans, but because it is so easily killed, it is protected in some areas as an easy source of food for lost people.

One group of humans, Native Americans, has sought the porcupine for centuries — for food and their quills, which were prized dec-



Quills are loosely attached and easily imbed when contact is made. They are barbed and constantly work deeper into flesh.

orative items. Porcupine quillwork was a specialty of the Sioux. It adorned everything from breast-plates to pipe bags.

Native Americans didn't always kill the porcupine, either. Indian women would often throw a blanket over the unsuspecting animal. In defense, the porcupine would stand its quills on end, catching them in the blanket. The women could then remove the blanket and pick the quills out.

Porcupine quills, which are hollow, were softened by soaking them in water before they were cut to various lengths and dyed. Then they were folded, twisted, wrapped, plaited, sewn, or weaved into belts and other articles of clothing, as well as bags, knife sheaths, baskets, wooden handles, and pipe stems. The quills themselves were often



Although there are about 30,000 quills on a porcupine, much of the body is covered with long coarse hair. The head and belly are the only vulnerable parts of its body.

used as sewing needles. The larger quills were used for fringe. Beadwork, brought to the plains by European explorers, eventually

replaced the art of quillwork.

Second only to the beaver, the porcupine (*Erethizon dorsatum*) is one of the largest rodents in North

America. In fact, it looks a bit like a spine-covered beaver, with short legs, muscular tail, and large incisors characteristic of rodents. These teeth are quite strong and grow constantly. Its back is brown or black with light yellow guard hairs near the skin, and its teeth are reddish orange. It may grow more than 3 feet long and weigh as much as 35 pounds although most weigh less than 20. In the wild, the porcupine may live as long as 10 years.

The porcupine's range includes most of Canada, the western U.S., northern parts of New England, and the Great Lakes region. In Kansas, it has been found statewide except for the far southeast although not in great numbers. It is usually associated with forests and streams and rock outcroppings near them.

The porcupine is sometimes heard before it's seen. During breeding season, males grunt, whine, and emit shrill screeches that may be confused with the cries of various



The longest, coarsest quills are located on the porcupine's tail. When threatened, the porcupine may slap with its tail, burying quills an inch deep and possibly causing serious injury.



Porcupines are rodents, and their front incisors are constantly growing. They keep them short by gnawing on bark, their primary food source. The diet may also include berries, seeds and nuts.

wild cats.

The porcupine's preferred "prey" — trees — is perfectly suited to its lumbering gait. The inner bark and needles of evergreens are its favorite food, but it will eat hardwoods, as well. It will also eat aquatic plants, berries, seeds, flowers, nuts, and grasses. In some areas, porcupines have been known to cause considerable damage to alfalfa fields. Like other rodents, it also craves calcium, which it gets by gnawing bones and antlers.

It is the porcupine's fondness for trees, however, that has often gotten it crossways with humans. By feeding on the inner bark, it can kill an individual tree although this is

seldom a widespread problem. Bill Hlavachick, with Wildlife and Parks for 35 years before retiring as wildlife management supervisor, tells of a porcupine encounter in the early 1970s that illustrates the animal's ability to gnaw through wood:

"George Anderson, a game protector in Ellis, got a call from a farmer up near Schoenchen [south of Hays]," Hlavachick explains. "He had run across a creature he had never seen before, herded it into his garage, and locked the door. He told George, 'I got an awful looking creature down here. I think it's a wombat!' Well, when George got to the man's house, they opened the

garage door, and it was gone. It had chewed through a wooden door and gotten away. From the description, though, it was obviously a porcupine."

Largely nocturnal, the porcupine spends its days sleeping high in the crook of a tree, safe from predators and ready for a quick meal come evening. It can move from tree to tree and uses its heavily-muscled tail as a brace while climbing or perching. The soles of its feet are covered with black, scaly plates that provide traction. In winter, the porcupine uses trees to avoid deep snow. Dens in the ground or in rocky areas are also used in winter.

The porcupine is not a prolific breeder. It mates in late summer after what *Mammals in Kansas* describes as "an elaborate courtship ritual initiated by the females." A single young porcupine is born in a den some 30 weeks the later in spring. Twins are rare. The young are precocious. Again, from *Mammals in Kansas*:

"At birth, the large [a little more than one pound] young porcupine has long, thick black hair and short, soft spines. Its incisor teeth are already present at birth. In ten days, it is weaned and capable of climbing trees." The quills harden within one-half an hour after birth. In two years, the young porcupine is sexually mature.

Although porcupines are not common in Kansas, they are sighted from time to time. If you get lucky enough to see one, take your time. This is one wild creature you can approach (cautiously) and watch with ease. It simply can't get away quickly, so enjoy the experience. Just keep a collar on your dog. ♡



Addicted To Ducks

by Mike Miller
editor, Pratt

photos by Mike Blair

It's hard for a duck hunter to explain — what draws him or her to the marsh in the pre-dawn darkness, or why the sight of mallards with cupped wings makes the heart beat faster. The best, maybe only, way to understand is to see it, breath it, and soak it in for yourself.

It's magical. Fooling a flock of sharp-eyed mallards into close range with nothing more than a duck call and a few decoys is a magical experience. It has enchanted men for hundreds, perhaps thousands of years (One of the first known duck decoys was fashioned by American Indians in about 800 A.D.). If you've never experienced

the wonders of a morning in the duck marsh, this might be the year to give it a try. If you gave up duck hunting years ago when duck numbers declined, you may want to come out of retirement, or if you know someone who has never hunted waterfowl, introduce them to it this year. More ducks will fly south this winter than during any year over the last four decades.

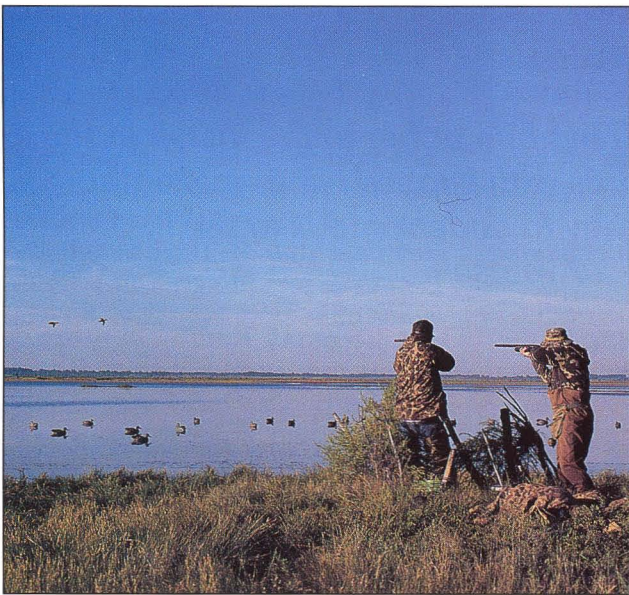
Like many Kansas hunters, I began my duck hunting career jumping ponds. Ducks were simply a bonus game bird, encountered by chance while we chased pheasants and quail. It was exciting creeping up the pond dam, but it was over quickly. I never really thought much about duck hunting unless we spotted birds on a pond.

When I was in college, a good

friend who'd grown up near Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area showed me what real duck hunting was about. He scavenged a handful of inflatable decoys from his father's supply, we bought inexpensive calls at the local Wal-Mart and headed for the marsh at Olsburg on Tuttle Creek Wildlife Area. As the first small flock of wigeon worked our meager spread on opening morning, I was hooked. We only killed a few ducks over the next two seasons, but we learned a lot, and I gained a new incentive to graduate and get a job. I suddenly had a critical need for some new outdoor equipment.

Since then I've acquired several dozen decoys, an assortment of calls, chest waders, a black lab that is more (much more) a pet than a retriever and a fine collection of state and federal duck stamps with my name signed across the faces. I've never forgotten the sight of those first wigeon with wings set nor lost the desire to see it again each fall.

Over the last 10 years, duck hunting has had its ups and downs — mostly downs. A prolonged drought in the northern U.S. and southern Canada, where most of our ducks are raised, devastated duck numbers. In the mid-1980s, duck stamp sales dropped to all-



Waterfowl hunters must shoot non-toxic shot, which includes steel, bismuth, and recently, tungsten.



For 1997, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is predicting the largest migrating flights of ducks in 40 years. Breeding mallard numbers were up 25 percent over last year.

time lows in Kansas. But when the drought broke in the 1990s, ducks responded, and with an abundant supply of water and new habitat — Conservation Reserve Program grassland — ducks are now nearing record numbers. With this duck recovery, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has allowed for a liberal season and bag limit for 1997. This year's 79-day season and six duck limit, is a far cry from the 39-day season, 3 duck limit of 1989.

Waterfowl hunting does require more equipment than other types of hunting, but you don't have to take out a loan to afford it. There are a few basic items, though, that are needed for a proper hunt. Of course a shotgun is required, but the gun you hunt pheasants and quail

will work fine, even if it has an open choke. Waterfowl hunters are required to use non-toxic shot. The most available and least expensive non-toxic shot is steel. It's more expensive than lead, but it will do the job with proper shot sizes and shooting techniques. Other non-toxic options recently available include bismuth and tungsten. Bismuth (bismuth/tin alloy) has a higher density than steel and is softer. Tungsten (actually 40 percent tungsten and 60 percent steel) has a higher density than bismuth, but the pellets are very hard. Bismuth and tungsten are relatively new, and costs for bismuth are as much as \$1.50 per cartridge.

Today's steel shotgun loads are safe in most shotguns, but you may not want to shoot steel in an older shotgun with a thin-walled barrel. Steel doesn't compress and deform like lead as it passes down the barrel, so it can cause cosmetic damage to older barrels (heavier, longer shot cups prevent most barrel scoring). Most newer shotguns will handle steel fine. This lack

of deformed pellets results in a tighter pattern and shorter shot string, so it's advised that you use a more open choke than is traditional for waterfowl hunting. For ducks over decoys, an improved cylinder choke is just right.

Steel is lighter than lead, so it travels faster and requires less lead. Steel shot loses down-range velocity quicker, though, so use larger shot sizes than you would have with lead. For example, if you were accustomed to shooting No. 4 lead for ducks, you'll want to try No. 2 or No. 1 steel.

It's also a good idea to pattern your shotgun with different steel loads to learn how your gun handles them. Match the brand, load and shot size that patterns well from your gun with the type of duck hunting you'll be doing.

Next you'll probably want to invest in some waders. You don't have to spend more than about \$50-\$75 for a decent pair of chest waders, but you could spend as much as \$200. If you can only afford one pair of waders, chest waders are the best choice since they'll allow you to set and retrieve decoys in deeper water, and they provided added warmth during late-winter hunts. I like to have both chest and hip waders, since hip waders are ideal for mild weather when I know the water depth is shallow.

You need a call. Calls are as much a part of duck hunting as are ducks. Becoming proficient with a duck call and learning when and how much to call is an integral part of successful duck hunting. It also enhances the hunt. I get a thrill whenever a flock of mallards turns in response to my call, or when a group turns and cups their wings after I've just blown a come-down call. Calls cost anywhere from less than \$10 to more than \$50 — all will do the job.



Calling is half the fun of duck hunting. Get a quality call and practice.

Don Dennis of Blue Springs, Missouri is a custom call maker and frequent duck call contest judge with 50 duck seasons under his belt. He recommends starting out with a quality call and learning how to use it properly before your first morning in the marsh.

"Good calling can make a big difference. If you've got two or three callers in the blind, you can really get ducks' attention. But you have to be careful not to call too much.

Most inexperienced hunters will call too much and too loud. You have to learn to read the ducks. Some ducks will tell you by their fast wing beat that its useless to call at all - they know where their going," Dennis explained.

"When you work ducks, use a hail call to get their attention, then slow down and soften your call. If the birds are setting their wings and coming toward you, stop calling all together. Wait until you see them turn away before you give a come-back call.

"The best way to learn calling is to hunt with an experienced caller and then practice. I've heard guys in the marsh who haven't picked up their call since last fall, and they sound terrible. Bad calling can easily spook wary mallards," Dennis concluded.

If you don't know someone who can help you learn calling techniques, get an instructional tape and learn the basic calls — the hail, greeting, feeding chatter, come-down, and contented quack. A great way to practice is to sit near a marsh at first light or just after sundown and listen to real ducks. After that,



A blind must hide hunters and blend in with the shoreline vegetation. Waterfowl have acute vision, and any movement in the blind will flair birds. Shadows on a sunny day make hiding easier.



No matter how good your decoy spread or how convincing your call, being where ducks want to be is critical. Some scouting will tell you which pools they prefer.

It's a matter of getting experience and learning how ducks respond. A call can do several things — it can get ducks' attention, it can convince them that your decoy spread is real, and it can scare them away.

Camouflage clothing is important, depending on the habitat surrounding your hunting spot and the extent of your blind. All waterfowl have sharp vision and can discern color. Mallards that have seen hunters through their trip south are wary and will require that you blend in well.

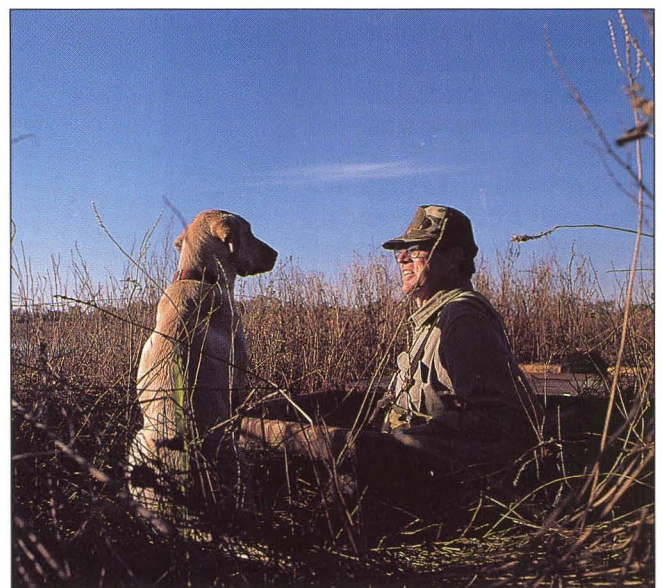
Decoys are an expensive and necessary part of your equipment. Depending on where you hunt, you could get by with a dozen mallard decoys. A dozen decoys will work well early in the season on small marshes or potholes. If you hunt larger marshes or public hunting areas, a bigger spread — as many as two or three dozen decoys — can be an advantage. Invest in a good decoy bag with shoulder straps. You'll be willing to walk farther and set up in better areas if you can easily carry your decoys.

A retriever is a big investment both in time and money. But a good dog is a joy to watch and will save many downed birds that may have been lost otherwise. It's also fun to hunt with a partner that loves the hunt as much or more than you do. Most large retrieving breeds make fine family pets, too. Mine probably has higher status in the house than I do.

All the best equipment in the world won't make you a good duck hunter, though. You have to be in the right spot to be successful. Be where the ducks want to be. Most of us have learned this the hard way. Just because a spot looks good to the hunter doesn't mean it will attract ducks. All the decoys and the best calling in the world won't bring ducks in

if they don't want to land there. Last winter I set up in an ideal looking spot on a public area. With no other hunters in the area and lots of mallards flying, I figured it would be a cinch to throw out a couple dozen decoys and shoot some ducks. I took great care to build a blind with shoreline vegetation and hid well, but I watched flock after flock fly over. The birds were landing on abundant potholes in CRP fields and flooded crop fields. Nothing I could do would convince them to change their minds.

Finding the right spot requires scouting. Watching ducks in the early morning or late evening can tell you where the birds are feeding and roosting. On a marsh complex, certain areas will attract more ducks. Be mobile, and move if birds are consistently passing your spread over and landing in another spot. Several seasons ago, I stubbornly waited near a pool that had been good in the past while several large flocks of mallards landed less than 100 yards away. I figured that a flock eventually would give my pool a look, and I was hesitant to leave because a sandhill plum thicket near the water's edge made a perfect blind. When I finally moved, the morning flight was nearly over, but I did have several good flocks dump right in on top of



A well-trained retriever is enjoyable to hunt with and will save many downed birds that may otherwise be lost.

me. I surmised that the plum thicket I was so attached to may have caused blind-shy mallards to avoid the first pool.

Once you've found a likely pool, you need to think about your set up. Ducks love marshy waterholes with lots of vegetation, but you need to find an area of the pool with some open water so your decoys will be visible. Set up with your back to the wind, since ducks will land into the wind, and shooting and identification will be easier if your back is to the sun, as well. If that won't work, set up with the wind coming from either side.

Dennis has put in countless days hunting on private leases in northwest Missouri and northeast Kansas, and he has some simple theories about decoys.

"If you're hunting close to a refuge or have other hunters in the area, more decoys is better. I know some guys who will put out as many as 1,000. But that's an awful lot of decoys to carry and set out. I think that on large areas, three dozen would be enough — to start with. If you're hunting in timber, a dozen is all you need," Dennis said. "Day in day out, for mallard hunting, the best decoy arrangement I've found is to set out two bunches of decoys on either side of your blind, leaving an open spot in the middle for the ducks to land. And don't set the decoys too far out. Mallards will often land just on the outside edge of your decoys, so don't set your farthest decoy any farther than 35 yards."

Build a good blind. Waterfowl have excellent vision. Wear camouflage and hold still when ducks are in the air above your blind. A face mask can be helpful, especially if you're calling and want to keep your eyes on the birds.

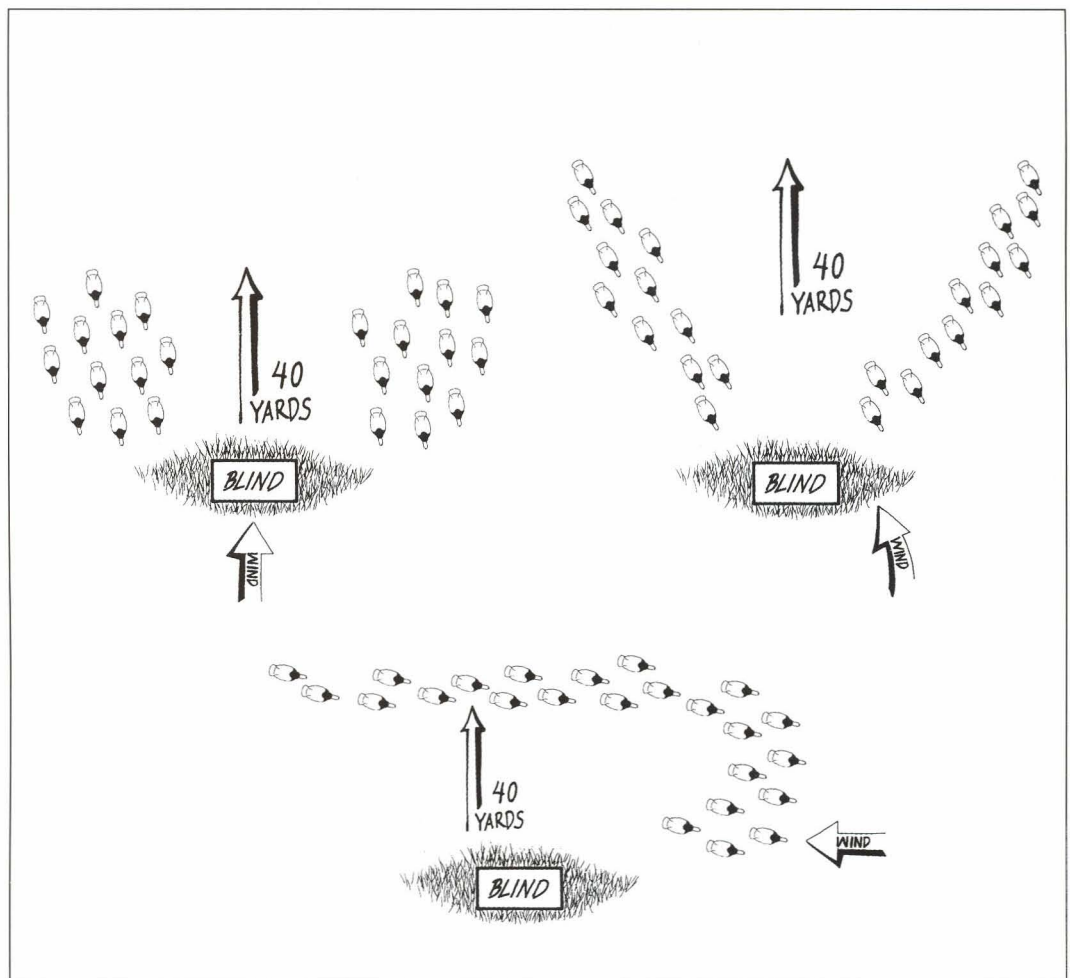
Turn your uncamouflaged face up to watch circling ducks, and they'll flair every time.

"Movement in the blind a mistake a lot of hunters make. Movement will flair ducks quicker than anything. And I've always had better hunting on windy, sunny days than on cloudy, rainy days. The sunshine creates shadows in the blind and allows you to hide better," Dennis emphasized.

The blind should blend in with the shoreline vegetation as much as possible. Get to your spot early, and spend some time building a blind. On public areas, the blind must be portable or made out of vegetation found on the area. Carry in some sort of seat, so you're comfortable. Kneeling or sitting on the ground will cause you to be uncomfortable and move around too much, and mostly likely you'll end up with an

awkward shooting position.

Public waterfowl management areas can offer fantastic duck hunting. These large wetland complexes will hold thousands of ducks during certain times of the fall, but there will be other hunters. This can be an advantage, since other hunters in an area can keep birds moving. But it can also be a problem if common sense isn't used. On some areas, such as Cheyenne Bottoms, hunters can check out man-made blind structures. The blinds are 300 yards apart, and hunters are required to hunt within 100 yards of those blinds. In open areas and the perimeters of pools, hunters are free to set up where they please. Common sense will tell you to give other hunting groups a wide berth — at least several hundred yards. There's nothing worse than to set



Decoys are usually set into the wind in a "V" or "J" shape, with open water near the blind for real ducks to land in. On a large marsh or on a public hunting area, more decoys is better.

up in a spot only to have another group set up just downwind from you. Tempers can flair, and it can be extremely unsafe. Another problem on public areas is hunters pass shooting at high-flying ducks — sky-busting. It's unlikely anyone will have a chance to work the birds after they've been sky-busted. Be considerate and cooperative, and everyone will enjoy the morning. Remember that on open public areas, hunting spots are available first-come, first serve — even if you've built a blind. Whoever gets there first has the right to hunt there.

Duck hunting also demands that a hunter be able to identify species. A good duck I.D. booklet can be helpful, but the best way is to spend time with an experienced waterfowler. With practice it is possible to discern species at long range by the size, silhouette and flight characteristics. While this is not as critical

with the liberal limit, it is still necessary with restrictions placed on the aggregate limit this year (which means you can only have certain numbers of some species within your six-duck limit).

Kansas is split into three duck hunting zones (see map) with two season segments in each: The High Plains Zone, Oct. 4-Jan. 4, 1998, and Jan. 15-18, 1998; The Low Plains Early Zone, Oct. 4-Dec. 7 and Dec. 20-28; and The Low Plains Late Zone, Oct. 25-Dec. 14 and Dec. 20-Jan. 11, 1998. The daily bag limit is six ducks, which can include no more than five mallards (only one of which can be a hen), one mottled duck, one canvasback, two red-heads, two wood ducks, or three pintails. The possession limit is twice the daily bag limit.

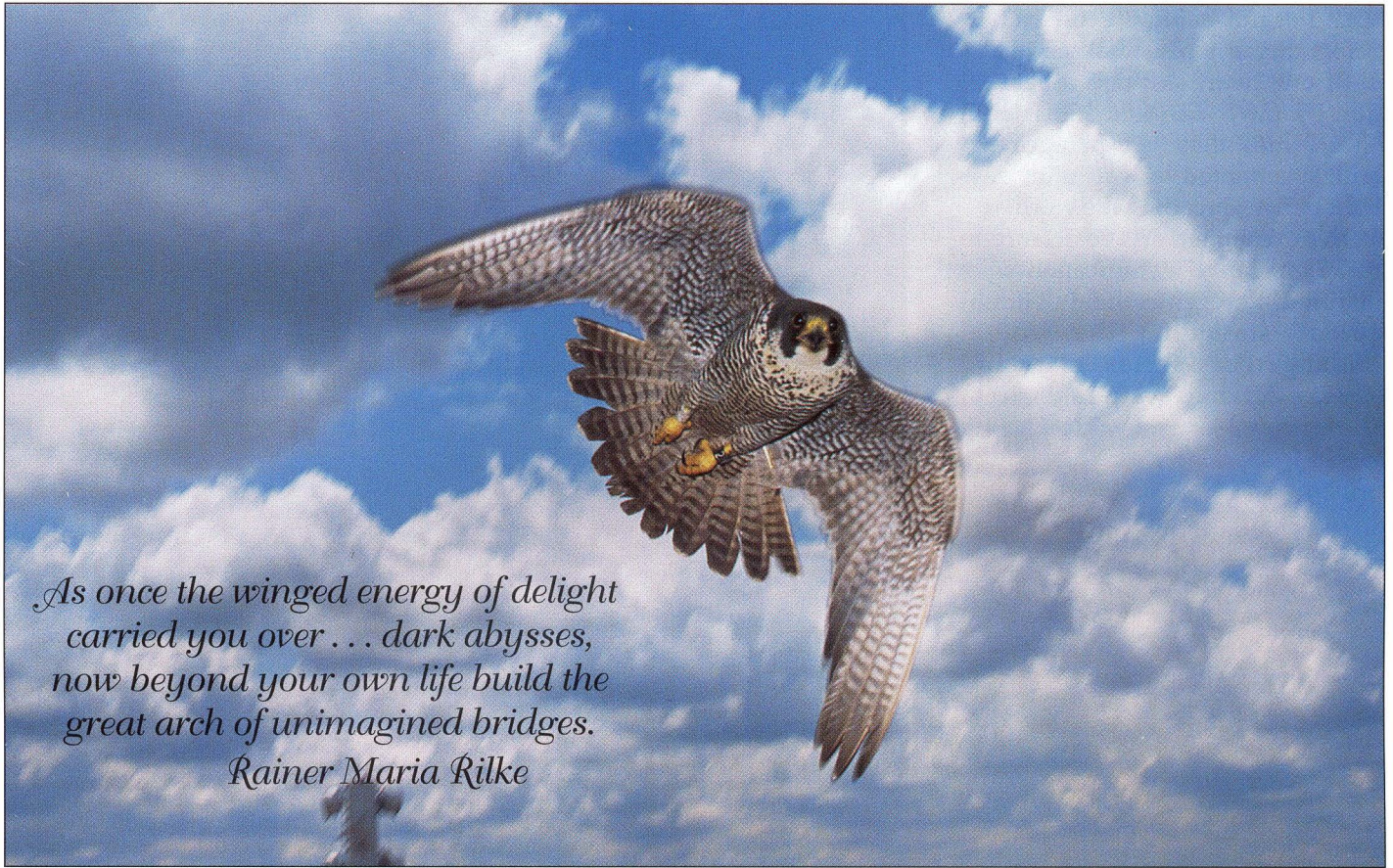
All waterfowl hunters 16 and older must possess a federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp and all those

required to purchase a hunting license must also possess a Kansas Waterfowl Habitat Stamp. It is illegal to possess toxic (lead) shot while hunting waterfowl or while hunting in a "Non-toxic Shot Only Zone." This means that a hunter cannot have lead shot in the gun, pockets or within reach. Lead shot left in a vehicle is not considered in possession.

If the early teal season is any indication, we are in for a banner waterfowl season. Good water conditions over most of the state should make Kansas an attractive stopover for migrating ducks. And goose populations are also expected to be strong. Lesser snow goose populations are too high, in fact, and biologists are concerned about the damage they are doing to their northern nesting grounds. These are the good old days for waterfowl hunting in Kansas. ♡



Gene Brehm photo



*As once the winged energy of delight
carried you over . . . dark abysses,
now beyond your own life build the
great arch of unimagined bridges.*

Rainer Maria Rilke

Pilgrim Of The Sky

by J. Mark Shoup
associate editor, Pratt

photos by Mike Blair

Once extremely rare, peregrine falcons were seen only during migration in Kansas, but several have taken up residence in recent years. A pair has even successfully nested on the buildings of downtown Topeka. With a little help from friends, peregrines may one day be a common sight in urban Kansas.

Joanne Brier, an avid birdwatcher for more than 20 years, has a friend named Walt Cole who used to work at the old Bank IV building, 6th and Kansas in Topeka. One early March day in 1993, Walt called on the telephone:

"We've got some sort of falcon coming around here every evening about 5 p.m.," he said. "I saw two of them the other day from the 16th floor, right there on the Jayhawk sign" (on the nearby Jayhawk Hotel, 7th and Jackson).

Never one to miss a close-up view and identify a bird for someone, Brier agreed to take a look. The next evening, she met with her friend and sure enough, the birds were there, perched atop the Jayhawk sign as if this were

their natural habitat, even mating before their astonished observers.

Brier's heart skipped a beat. "I don't know," she told her friend, "but I think those are peregrines." Still, she wanted to wait until daylight before spreading the word.

Her excitement and reluctance to make a positive identification were justified. Peregrines held "endangered" status on the federal Endangered Species List, and Kansas sightings were rare except in very rural areas associated with wetlands, such as Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area and Quivira National Wildlife Refuge. None had nested in the Sunflower State since the 1870s. However, the next morning Brier returned with a spotting scope, and a second look left little doubt — these were peregrine falcons, *Falco peregrinus* (in this case the American subspecies, *Falco peregrinus anatum*).

The effect on Brier was powerful and immediate: "That was when the fun began. I was hooked," she explains.

In the weeks to come, Brier kept careful watch over the birds. To her surprise and delight, they actually attempted to nest on a ledge of the abandoned 1st National Bank building (across the street from the Bank IV



The peregrine's natural habitat is generally remote regions with cliffs for nesting and hunting vantage points. The urban landscape seems to be an acceptable replacement.

building) but the eggs slipped off. That's when she called Jerry Horak, wildlife research biologist for the Department of Wildlife and Parks. Horak shared Brier's enthusiasm for the birds' presence and agreed to put a nest box on the 1st National

Bank building's 12th floor, in the very spot where they had tried to nest.

"Jerry and one of his students hauled that box full of river gravel — I think it weighed about 80 pounds — up 12 flights of stairs because the abandoned building's elevator didn't work," Brier explains. "I felt sorry for them." The hard work paid off, but not in 1993. The birds failed to attempt a second nesting.

In the meantime, biologists with the University of Minnesota's Midwest Peregrine Falcon Restoration Project had been contacted. They would come to Topeka and band young birds, if they were ever hatched, and would track any future fledglings. Brier would keep in close contact, taking extensive



The Topeka peregrine's first nesting attempt failed when the eggs rolled off a building ledge. In hopes that the birds would reneest, a nest box was attached to the same ledge that summer.

notes of peregrine comings and goings.

Following the near success in 1993, Brier and Horak looked forward to 1994 with a great deal of excitement. That spring, the birds returned as hoped, this time hatching three eggs — the first peregrines to be hatched in Kansas in more than a century. But as fate would have it, only one of these birds would survive. A disease called trichomoniasis (contracted from infected doves and pigeons, common in young falcons, and known as “frounce” to falconers) struck the other two, and they died. But the third young bird survived to fledge, becoming the first native Kansas peregrine in modern times.

Still, things did not look great for the young immigrants. Their second nesting attempt had almost failed, and their “cliff” — the old 1st National Bank building — was scheduled for demolition in June of 1995. With all the activity preceding the building’s destruction, it was unlikely that the birds would do well in the spring of 1995.

Not all was lost. The project had attracted the attention of Western Resources, the parent company of Kansas Power and Light (KPL), which had decided to aid the peregrines. After the birds’ unsuccessful nesting attempt in the spring of 1993, the company’s Employee Green Team built and installed a second box on the south rim of the KPL building. The birds had used this box for perching but not nesting.

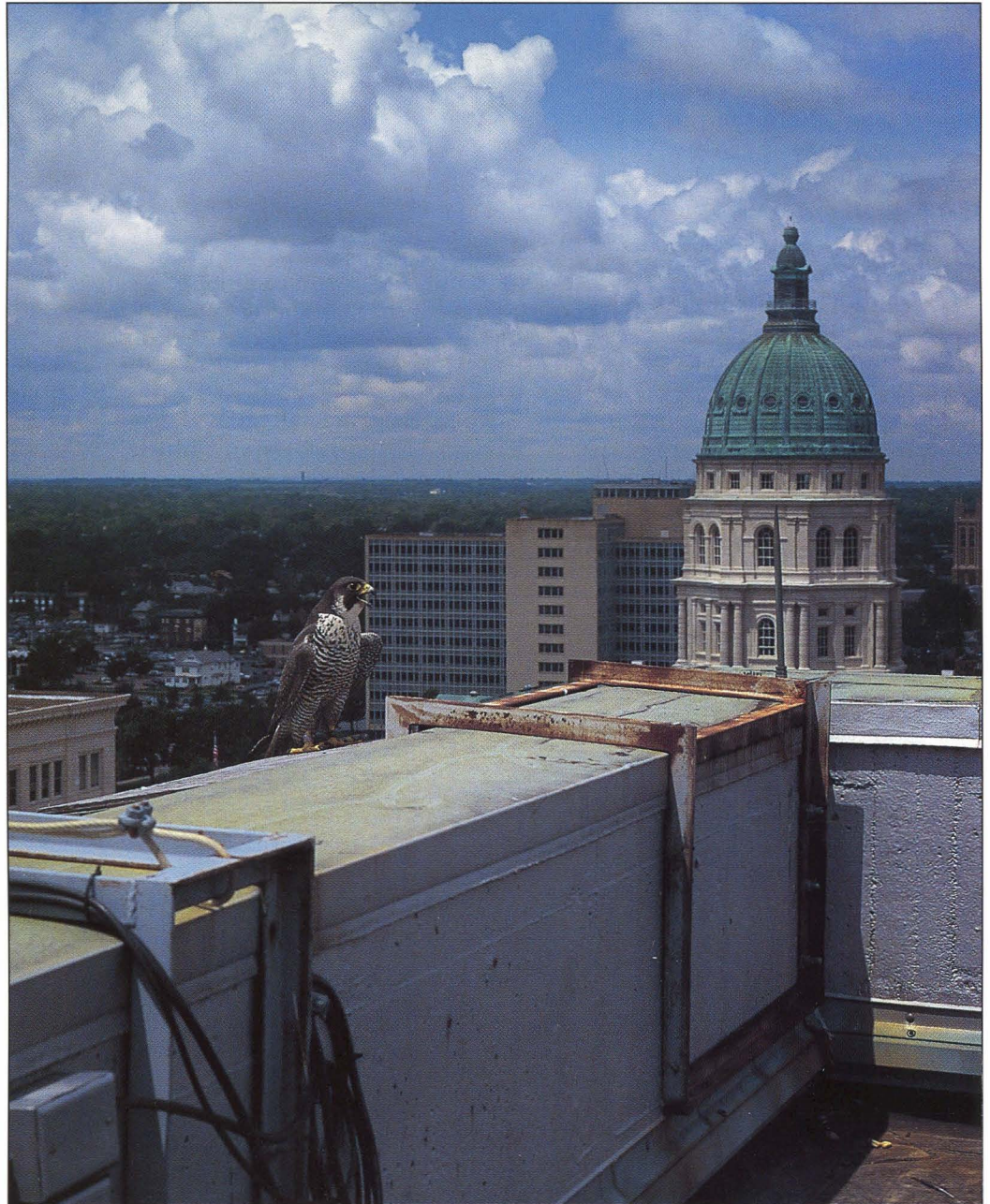
In 1995, the birds returned to Topeka and chose the structure atop the KPL building. Their old nest on

the 1st National Bank building had been removed, but they adapted readily to the new site and laid four eggs. All four hatched. Unfortunately, one fell to its death as banding staff — completely out of sight on the floor below — watched anxiously on a monitor. Luckily, the rest of the birds survived and would fledge. Peregrine falcons once again were being born and raised in Kansas.

And 1995 was no fluke. The fol-

lowing spring, another four eggs were laid in the KPL nest. Two hatched, but one of these young birds died. Although the other bird survived, it met a different fate than any of its siblings.

“Somehow, the female that fledged from the nest in 1996 broke her wing,” Brier explains. “Someone brought it to a veterinarian’s office, and we were called.” This bird, called Astra, is now at the Stone Nature Center in Topeka and is



Urban peregrines may seem to be a modern oddity, however, noted ornithologist Arthur Cleveland Bent recorded sightings of peregrines in Philadelphia as early as 1919.

used for educational programs at schools and special events.

In 1997, the birds failed to nest at the KPL site, possibly due to construction activity. Still, they seem to be attached to the area and should return next year, and other peregrines were sighted near the buildings in September. Under these circumstances, one might think it logical to put up another nest structure, but no such plans have been made. Horak explains:

"You've got to be careful not to place more than one nest structure per town unless you can put them more than 5 miles apart. That's how much territory they'll defend, and if you put two structures up, they'll spend so much time beating each other up, they won't have time to nest."

These recent sightings are not unique. In fact, the peregrines nesting in Topeka were urban birds before they came to Kansas. The female is from a program in Des Moines, Iowa, and the male is from a Kansas City, Missouri, program. Many more have been introduced in eastern cities in the past several years.

So why, you might ask, would a wild falcon find comfort in a big



While not a particularly large raptor, the peregrine is a fierce defender of the nest, and the Topeka female presented a real danger to workers trying to band the young peregrines.

city? Two reasons: food and habitat.

The peregrine falcon's natural habitat is along cliffs and bluffs, usually overlooking a river or the ocean. From this vantage point, the peregrine finds the best place to ply its trade — hunting birds from the air. Often called the "duck hawk," the peregrine is quite fond of waterfowl, so bluffs over water provide both food and shelter. While there are few wild ducks in urban downtown areas, there are plenty of

pigeons, another peregrine favorite. And except for the strange behavior of humans in the area, skyscrapers must seem like perfect cliffs to the peregrine.

Nor is peregrine visitation in cities a modern phenomenon. Long before the first skyscraper sprouted from the urban landscape, peregrine falcons were seen in cities. Arthur Cleveland Bent noted several instances in his 1937 book, *Life Histories of North American Birds of Prey*. One is a 1919 account of two birds "playing about the tower of Philadelphia City Hall." There are many other such sightings. As early as 1840, John James Audubon noted the peregrine's fondness for urban pigeons:

"For several days I watched one of them that had taken a particular fancy to some tame pigeons, to secure which it went so far as to enter their house at one of the holes, seize a bird, and issue by another hole in an instant, causing such terror among the rest as to render me fearful that they would abandon the place."

Pigeons, like all birds, have good



Western Resources got involved with the Topeka peregrine program, and in addition to helping with nest boxes, installed a video monitor so that birds could be observed.

reason to fear the peregrine. Not only are birds their primary prey, no other predator is so adept at catching them. According to many accounts, wild peregrines seldom miss their targets, and they seem to come out of nowhere. Bent notes the account of a pilot who for practice dived at a flock of ducks far below his plane, dropping at a speed of 175 m.p.h. When he looked out the side window to check the turbulence on his wingtips, a peregrine zipped past "two feet to his one," scattering the ducks below.

So how fast can a peregrine fly? On the level it has been clocked at 62 m.p.h. Diving speeds have been estimated from 150-200 m.p.h. Whatever the exact speed, it is fast. But it's not just speed that makes the peregrine so formidable; it's speed combined with agility and uncanny accuracy. Another Bent account:

"I have seen this falcon dash through closely massed flocks of flying sandpipers, striking out two or three with as many thrusts of its claws, allowing each bird to drop and then wheeling swiftly to seize



The young birds were banded so that they could be studied in the future.

the falling prey in mid-air before it reached the ground. Again, I have seen one in a stoop [dive], swift almost as light, knock a redhead duck to the ground, where it landed with a broken wing and other injuries."

These skills are also combined with great courage, according to many accounts, for while the pere-

grine falcon has few enemies, it must occasionally defend itself or its young. It has been known to attack a red-tailed hawk and split its skull wide open. Bent documents another Audubon account in which a snowy owl "snatched a young duck hawk from its rocky perch, but was followed by the avenging parent, which quickly struck the larger bird dead."

Speed and agility serve the peregrine during mating season, as well. During this time (usually early March), the male (called a tiercel) must display fantastic aerobatic talents to attract a female and coax her into mating. The reluctant female waits coyly while the male shows off for her. In addition, he must bring meals to her. In 1936, Massachusetts state ornithologist Joseph A. Hagar made this observation of peregrine mating ritual:

"Shortly after daylight, the falcons will be discovered perched on their favorite dead trees on the upper part of the cliff, watching closely for the passing of some smaller bird suitable for prey. If none appears near at hand, the male



The buildings of downtown Topeka provide nesting and roosting areas, but the real attraction to the urban environment may be the abundance of a favorite prey – pigeons. Topekans watching skyward may be treated to a dramatic predator-prey encounter.

will sally out at intervals and go far across the valley, returning perhaps at the end of 20 or 30 minutes with a blue jay hanging limp in his talons. He wails while still at a distance, and the female, wailing in return, flies to meet him. Then he drops the bird and she catches it in mid-air."

Between meals, the male doesn't rest, apparently taken in by the sheer joy of his own abilities. He moves from tree to cliff, stopping from time to time to call to his mate, a squeaky note described by ornithologists as *wichew, wichew*. This is interspersed with aerial displays including everything from figure-eights to long stoops. Hagar once witnessed this incredible display:

"Again and again the tiercel started well to leeward and came along the cliff against the wind, diving, plunging, saw-toothing, rolling over and over, darting hither and yon like an autumn leaf until finally he would swoop up into the full current of air and be borne off on the gale to do it all over again. At length, he tired of this and, soaring in narrow circles without any movement of his wing



Pigeons may be the most common prey, but peregrines are opportunists. Staff photographer Mike Blair caught this near-catch of a flicker over the busy streets of downtown Topeka.

other than a constant small adjustment of their planes, he rose to a position 500 or 600 feet above the mountain and north of the cliff. Nosing over suddenly, he flicked his wings rapidly 15 or 20 times and fell like a thunderbolt. Wings half closed now, he shot down past the north end of the cliff, described three successive vertical loop-the-loops across its face, turning completely upside down at the top of each loop, and roared out over our heads with the wind rushing through his wings like ripping canvas."

No wonder the peregrine falcon is the official mascot of the United States Air Force Academy.

After a successful courtship, the peregrine normally lays four cream or buff eggs covered with reddish-

brown markings. Nest sites are usually a small depression on a cliff, but abandoned nests of other birds or even holes in trees are also used. Peregrines will attempt several successive nestings if the previous ones have failed, and the same nest may be used for many years. Eggs incubate 28 or 29 days before hatching, and the young fledge 35 to 42 days later. They do not breed until the third year after birth, and they may live as long as 20 years, even in the wild.

Although an impressive predator, the peregrine is a small bird. The male may weigh as much as 1 pound, 9 ounces and the female 2 pounds, 1 ounce. Both may have a wingspan as long as 46 inches.

Some peregrines, especially those in northern ranges, migrate southward in winter, but others stay near the nesting area almost year round. While its diet is predominantly birds, it will take mammals and insects. Migrating monarch butterflies often provide a snack for the



This migrating peregrine was photographed eating a young Mississippi kite in the Pratt city limits.

opportunistic peregrine, whose eyesight is so sharp that it can spot the smallest of prey from 1,000 feet.

As we have seen, the peregrine is much more adaptable than we would think for an endangered species, particularly around humans. In fact, it was once one of the most widely distributed birds in the world. But from 1950 through 1965, the peregrine suffered a severe worldwide population drop. Like other raptors, it was a victim of the pesticide DDT, which had gained popularity during World War II. DDT is a persistent, or long-lasting, pesticide that builds up in the fatty tissues of animals that eat grain and plants treated with it. At the top of the food chain, peregrines and other raptors received heavy doses of DDT when they ate these animals. The effect was a shell that was too thin to hatch an egg.

Fortunately, DDT did not doom the peregrine. The pesticide was banned in the U.S. in 1972 (although U.S. companies still manufacture and export it), and most North American raptors have since recovered quite nicely. The peregrine seems to be the most recent success

story, thanks to the help of an aggressive reintroduction program, a joint effort of many private and public organizations, that has released about 4,000 captive-bred birds since the late 1970s.

The recent comeback of the peregrine in urban environments may help ensure the species' survival. In Kansas, birdwatchers and biologists are hopeful, and Topeka isn't the only place in the state where people are looking for peregrines. A nest box has been placed on the Kansas Gas & Electric Company building in Wichita. This was another cooperative effort between Western Resources and the Department of Wildlife and Parks. According to Bob Gress, director of the Great Plains Nature Center, a pair of peregrines occupied the rooftops in the area last winter but disappeared in spring. Another was sighted on the west side of town.

"We have had no breeding that we know of in Wichita," Gress adds, "But they could be nesting anywhere on tall buildings or grain elevators. If a person didn't know what they were looking for, they might never notice."

Gress believes that peregrine adaptability is evolving, making its chances for survival even brighter.

"As more and more peregrines are introduced to cities, what we're seeing are more birds identifying with the urban environment. I think we're slowly developing an urban falcon."

For some purists, this situation may not be ideal. The city is an "unnatural" environment, they might say. But mankind is also a part of the environment, no matter what structures we build, and many animals adapt or even thrive in our midst. For the birds, such debate is irrelevant. They are finding places to survive, and their population in general is making a comeback as a result, much to the delight of city-dwelling humans, many of whom have never seen a red-tailed hawk pounce on a mouse or a Cooper's hawk chase a starling.

This small raptor is not only making a place for itself, it's changing human perspective. As Brier says, "People are looking up now." Literally and figuratively. ♡





Windy Whitetails

text and photos by Mike Blair
staff photographer, Pratt

Don't let the Kansas wind ruin your plans for deer hunting. The wind can be a hunter's best friend. In fact, a windy day may be the best time to try stillhunting or stalking a wily whitetail buck.

The wind was a tyrant, gripping the woods with a fury bent on testing the strong and culling the weak. Fueled by a massive high pressure system arriving from Canada, it came in the night at 40 mph, a steady blow that would prune a winter's kindling before it passed.

A 5 a.m. radio alarm announced

the poor conditions, and I listened in frustration to the roar outside. There was little need to ride a tree stand with the kinetics of a bucking machine, but all was not lost. Later in the day a different hunting strategy might make the wind an ally. I turned over and went back to sleep.

It was Saturday, November 5, the

first day of a week long bowhunting vacation during the whitetail pre-rut in Kansas. Though breeding activity wouldn't begin for another week, eager bucks would be moving to prime their scrapes and ensure that everything was set. The pre-rut is considered by many the best time to hunt big bucks, since the deer are busy and more vulner-

able as they travel alone. I'd decided to gamble my hunting time on these facts, and hoped to intercept a big 10-point I'd been watching through the summer. But now came the wind — not good, but neither unexpected in a state like Kansas. Throughout the mid-west, wind is a constant factor in hunting. Deer have to live with it, and hunters do, too.

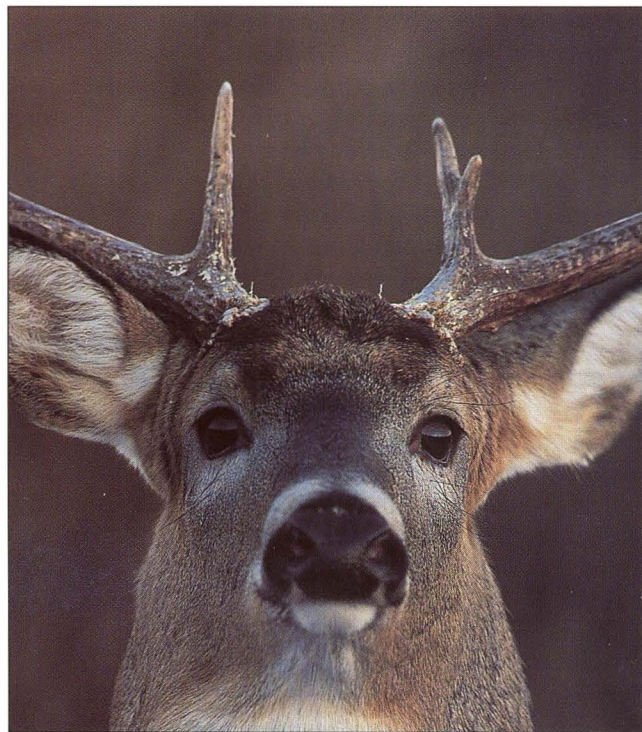
Even gentle wind affects deer hunting. Light to moderate breezes up to 15 mph can be an advantage, since they help keep scent away from passing animals and also hide sounds made while stillhunting or shooting. These breezes have little influence on bullet or arrow flight at normal hunting range. Fortunately, much of the hunting season is characterized by winds in this range.

But heavier breezes in the 20-30 mph bracket are more troublesome. These winds are ordinarily associated with weather fronts and may discourage normal deer movement along trails. Whitetails don't like windy conditions and often restrict their movements to heavier cover at such times. Higher windspeeds affect bullet and arrow flight, limiting the safe range of the shot. Winds that are moderately strong also create unpredictable, swirling air patterns that make both stand-

and still-hunting tricky. Many trophy hunters refuse to sit in tree stands in strong breezes, fearing an errant downdraft that might ruin a carefully chosen hunting site.

True windstorms — wind speeds exceeding 30 mph — strongly affect the senses of deer. Every tree and plant is in motion, so spotting danger becomes more difficult. High winds create unstable airflows, and even when scent streams scatter around cover breaks, they are so buffeted that their source is impossible to pinpoint. Wind noise also covers both the sounds of a walking hunter and the warning cries of alerted animals. Moving into a high wind virtually guarantees hunter concealment. In short, windstorms are ideal for a stalk.

So I left the house at noon, hoping to catch a buck in its bed. I knew a series of east-west draws that often held big deer, and by 1



A whitetail's first line of defense is its nose. Hunters must be aware of wind currents to be successful..

p.m., I was hunting the rims. It didn't take long to spot deer. With binoculars, I briefly watched a doe standing below in a sunlit thicket, then swept the glasses to a cedar deadfall nearby. Sure enough, three more does were spotted facing away from the blast.

Convinced that no bucks were near, I moved into thicker trees and walked up a side draw. At once a good rub line was discovered. The rubbed trees were several inches in diameter and the height of the rubs was over 3 feet, indicating a mature buck. Several fresh scrapes increased the excitement.

I topped a ridge and circled the head of a brushy spur. It was a mistake to walk skylined along the edge; I should have remained in the trees. Seventy yards below, a buck burst from the cedars and ran away. As the deer disappeared, I considered its escape route. Thinking it possible the animal would top the opposite ridge and then circle through the same draw I had just walked, I ran back over the hill and entered the end of the draw.

Disregarding the noisy crunch of



During high winds, whitetails often hole-up in heavy cover. A hunter who's familiar with the terrain and understands wind currents can often be successful stillhunting.

dry leaves, I found a place that afforded a good view and peered down the valley. The buck came running, then stopped only 30 yards away to watch its backtrail.

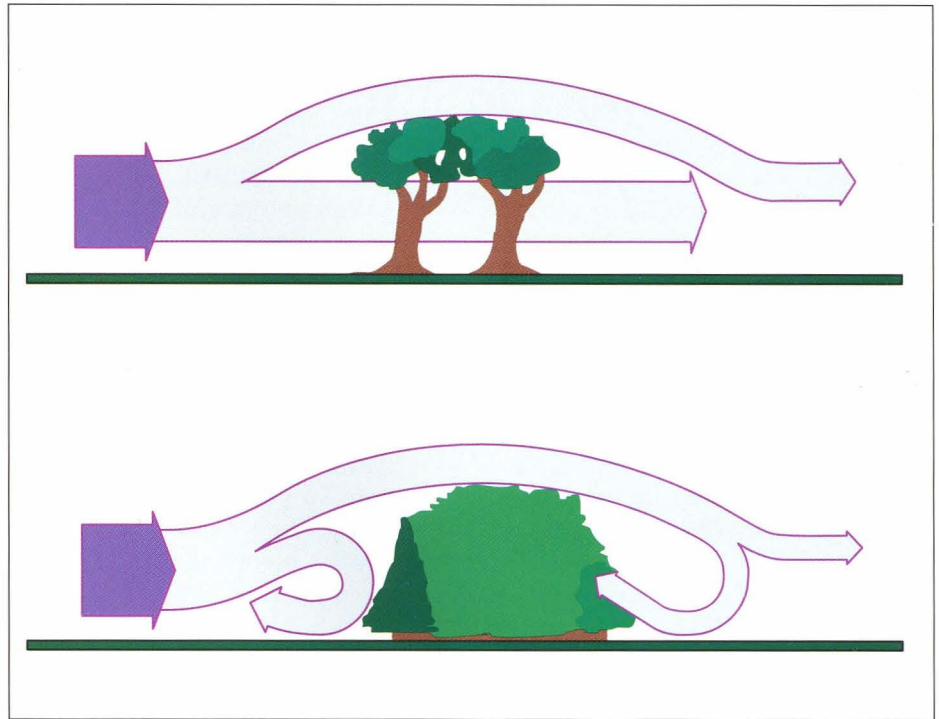
The deer was uncertain as it swept its head back and forth. Seldom is a trophy buck out of control in an escape situation, but this was such a time. The wind erased all sound and scent, and there was no way of knowing where the danger was. So on it came, stopping again at just 12 yards. Though looking toward me, the buck didn't notice as I drew the bow. The heart shot was easy, and the perfect 10-point rack scored 151 Pope & Young points.

Wind is always important to the hunter. The more it is understood, the more successful the hunt. Principally, wind carries human scent to deer. But it also affects deer behavior and may help to fool a buck as illustrated.

Experience teaches several important factors about wind. Starting with the basics of stand placement related to wind direction, there follows a realization of how wind speed affects hunting tactics. Finally, there comes an awareness of wind's vagaries around obstacles.

The last, hardest to learn and predict in hunting situations, can be illustrated with an experience I had some years back. A brisk, northwest wind had finally arrived to provide a chance at a large 8-point that stayed in a north-south shelterbelt. The deer had a habit of lying a short distance into the trees on the south end where a patch of grass offered comfort and protection. I crossed an open pasture to the south, walking north with the breeze in my face. Fully camouflaged, I slowed and entered the trees to begin still-hunting.

I hadn't sneaked 20 yards when a gust of wind suddenly hit the back of my neck. Seconds later the alarmed buck went crashing away to safety. Amazed at the wind shift, I walked back into the pasture



When wind encounters a dense barrier, swirls on both sides occur. Whitetails may travel and bed in these areas, using wind from opposing directions to avoid predators.

where the strong north wind continued steadily as before. Why had the wind changed course? I wish I could say it's never happened again, but many such experiences have proven that zones of swirling wind can be expected in certain situations. Considering the mechanics of airflow may help hunters prevent a tip-off when selecting stand sites or moving through the hunting area.

Wind tunnel studies show that flowing air forms zones of turbulence on both windward and lee sides of an obstacle. A dense barrier such as a thick forest or multi-row windbreak causes significant vertical air rotation. Permeable obstacles like narrow deciduous windbreaks or open woodlots allow some air to pass through, reducing the turbulence.

As surface wind crosses a row of trees, it rises and descends in a smooth, continuous flow like a river current passing a jutting rock. Directly next to the trees on either side, some moving air funnels into a vertical circle. On the lee side, this swirling causes a predictable wind

reversal for a short distance into the trees. So there is a small zone where wind direction unexpectedly changes. Deer rely heavily on their sense of smell for protection, often choosing bedding sites where swirling winds bring scent messages from opposing directions. This helps explain why they frequently bed just inside a forest edge or near a clearing, instead of deep in cover.

In the same manner, wind becomes turbulent blowing around forest corners, timbered fingers and in clearings within thick cover. Generally, wind flows vary near bluffs, woodland roads, rivers and steep topography.

Each year I spend a great deal of time photographing whitetails, much of this in small woodland clearings where light conditions are best. Though I always set up downwind of the trail, I'm sometimes caught by an unexpected swirl that circles the clearing and alerts deer. The interesting thing is, a deer alerted this way often looks downwind for trouble, rather than upwind where danger would nor-

mally be expected. It appears that deer are conscious of swirl, and capable of understanding wind vagaries. I suspect that big bucks tend to travel routes linking swirl zones, where scent information comes from several directions at once.

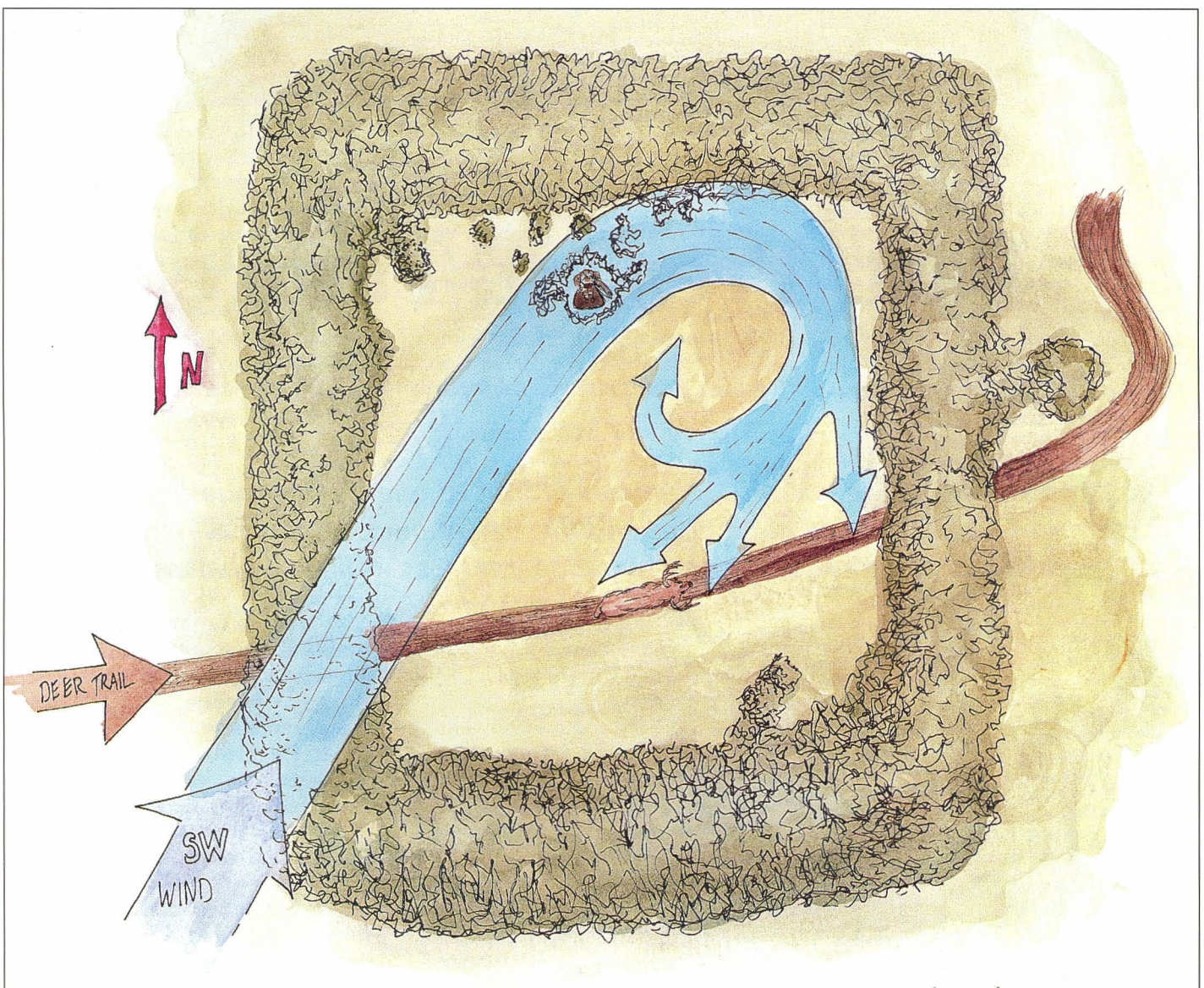
How can this information be used for better deer hunting? First, remember that the lee side of tall cover is always the most likely place to be caught in a wind reversal. Since the zone of turbulence is narrow (roughly twice the height of the trees,) staying away from woodland edges is a good means of pre-

venting detection.

Approach expected deer zones across the wind, rather than directly into it. When stillhunting along woodland edges, stay a hundred feet inside the woods. Though this is noisier, it helps defeat the turbulence that may betray you, and lessens the chance of a deer spotting you against an open background. When walking to and from deer stands through open fields, stay at least three times the tree height away from the forest edge.

Every deer hunter quickly learns to be conscious of wind. In Kansas, it's a way of life. Generally

speaking, staying downwind of expected quarry is the best way to ensure hunting success. But there are times and circumstances when that's not enough. Be conscious of wind shifts due to turbulence next to cover. Consider wind speed, remembering that high winds force deer into thick cover. When big winds blow, don't stay home — stillhunt. A careful stalk can put you within gun or bow range of bedded deer. Using the wind to your advantage on windy days can help break down a whitetail's first line of defense — its nose — and increase your odds of filling a tag. ♣



Trees can create a variety of wind turbulence that a hunter must consider when placing a stand. In the illustration above, the deer may scent the hunter even through the wind should be favorable. It is usually better to place a stand away from woodland edges.



Kansas Deer: Past, Present, Future

by Lloyd Fox

big game program leader, Emporia

photos by Mike Blair

The Kansas deer management program has produced quality deer hunting, both in terms of an uncrowded conditions and the size of bucks. But it has required restrictions on the number and type of permits, as well as the harvest of does from its beginning in 1965.

Think about two factors and ask a question as you look at the pictures with this article. First, Kansas is a minor contributor to the total harvest of deer in North America. Second, bigger individuals of a species are generally produced in the northern latitudes of their range. Now for the question, why do we consistently produce trophy deer? Don't skip to the end for the answer. People made the difference.

Deer were nearly eliminated from Kansas by the turn of the last century. The herd was devastated. Even with total protection for more

than 50 years, there were not enough deer in the state to allow a hunting season until 1965. After the era of uncontrolled over-exploitation, Kansas was the last state in the nation to develop a deer herd sufficient to allow public hunting.

Part of that slow recovery in Kansas may be due to our passive approach to deer management compared to aggressive steps taken in many states. Most state wildlife agencies focused on deer management during the 1930s to 1950s. They trapped deer in areas with established populations and stocked

them in areas with none. Donald Anderson, a research assistant at Kansas University, published a status report on deer in Kansas in 1964. He reported some minor releases of deer within the state, and reported that private citizens obtained deer outside the state and had several escapes. However, he was unable to locate records of any major project involving scores of deer, or projects conducted over numerous years. The deer we have in Kansas today are the results of individuals that survived the period of over-exploitation combined with

deer that dispersed from neighbor states and established here. That process took time.

Bergmann's rule is one of those basic generalizations frequently taught the first week of classes in introductory ecology. These rules are attempts to make sense of a complex world of environmental gradients (temperature, rainfall, etc.) and observed natural adaptations (size, length of limbs, color, etc.). In this case the rule is that animals at higher latitudes (north for us living on this side of the equator) will be larger than those at lower latitudes. The bigger you are, the more energy efficient you may be. Energy is the currency of natural resources and is essential to surviving the winter. Looking at the range of white-tailed deer, you would expect the big deer to come from northern places like Maine, Minnesota and Saskatchewan, and small deer to occur in the south, like the Key deer in Florida or the Coues' deer in Arizona and New Mexico. Indeed, that is the general case. However, the exceptions to the rules grab our attention. Kansas is an exception!

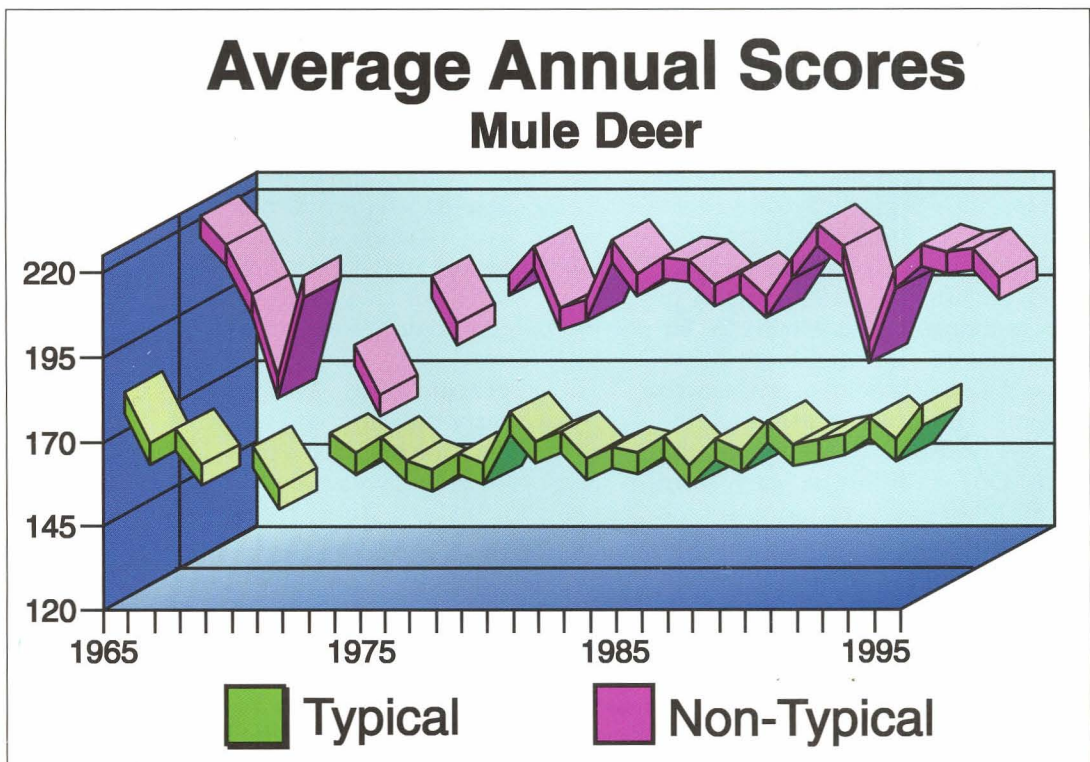
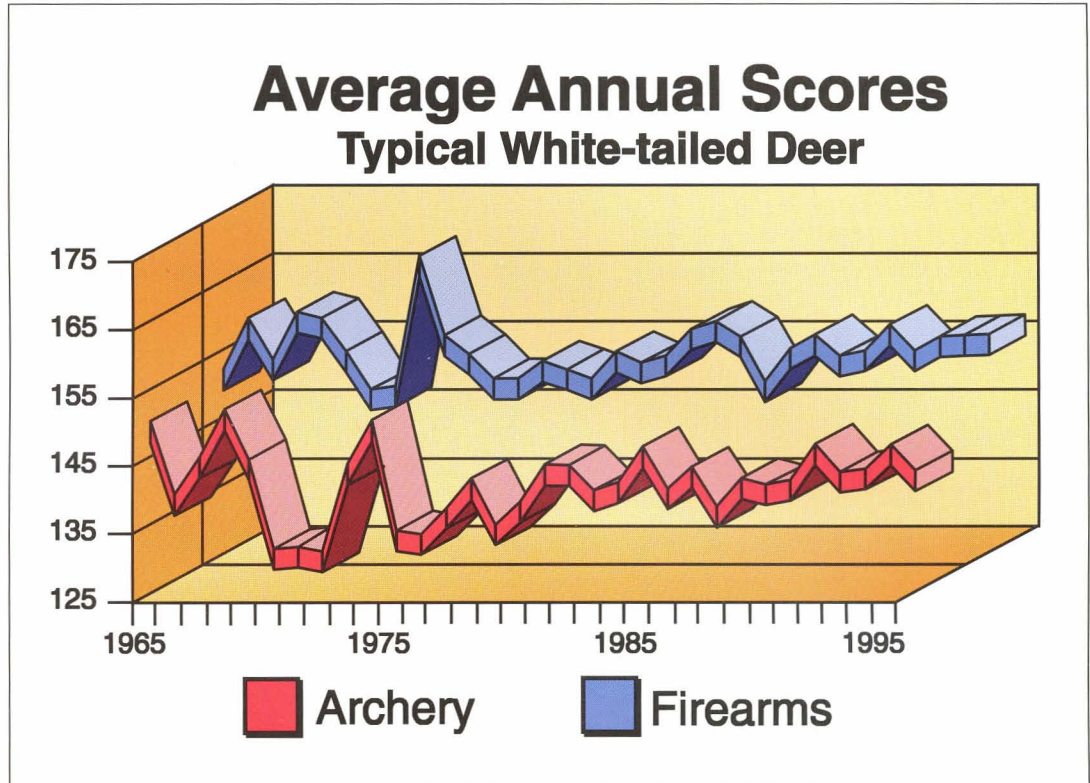
How exceptional is Kansas? The Boone and Crockett Club, and the Pope and Young Club maintain records of the trophy big game. From 1984 to 1993, Kansas had as many white-tailed deer entered into the Boone and Crockett records (89) as all of the states along the Atlantic coast plus the states of Vermont and West Virginia. Six of the top ten, and 24 of the top 100 non-typical white-tailed

deer, and 23 of the top 100 typicals ever taken by archers and honored by the Pope and Young Club came from Kansas.

There is great deer hunting in the states bordering Kansas, but you don't need to leave home to hunt for that trophy. A combined total of

only 11 white-tailed deer were taken by archers in Colorado, Nebraska, Missouri, and Oklahoma that made it into the top 100 typical and non-typical categories, compared to 47 from Kansas.

In the early 1960s it became apparent that Kansas had a deer



could not have quantity, why not manage for quality.

The key to quality in deer management is allocation of the resource and opportunity. In Europe and much of the world, allocation of wildlife resources is based on wealth or social class. That system had been rejected in North America. Most other states used the buck only hunting system because it was safe and easy to administer. Deer permits could be issued over the counter. Everybody had an equal opportunity, but there was no limit on the number of hunters in the field. This resulted in low success rates for hunters. The quality of the experience for the hunter decreases, and the antler quality of the deer they harvest also decreases under that system. Hunter density influences the quality of the hunters' experience. Hunter density in Pennsylvania can exceed 16 per square mile. The corresponding value in Kansas is 0.7.

We chose a different course in Kansas. We allocated the resource based on equal opportunity, and past participation. Random drawings, not buck only hunting, became our tool. This is all handled by computer today. The people in our licensing section have contributed as much to the quality of our deer resource as any group of people in the state. Without them it would not be possible.

One unique aspect of the Kansas experience is that we have thought in terms of big programs, not antlers. Today we hear about programs in other states called, "Earn a Buck." They are generally restricted to a small parcel of land. The idea is that a hunter must harvest an antlerless deer to qualify for a permit to take a buck later or the next year. It is a tool to control deer populations without exerting too much pressure on bucks. Access is tightly controlled. Our system gives preference to hunters who did not have a buck permit the previous year. The unique aspects of our system are that it requires all hunters across the state to share the responsibilities of controlling the



Kansas has gained a reputation for producing large-antlered bucks.

deer herd, and we have done this for years. Hunters in Kansas may not receive their permit of preference each year, in fact, in some units the odds are one in four of getting your first choice. The advantage is that we have great hunting potential throughout the state, not just in one region of the state or an isolated area.

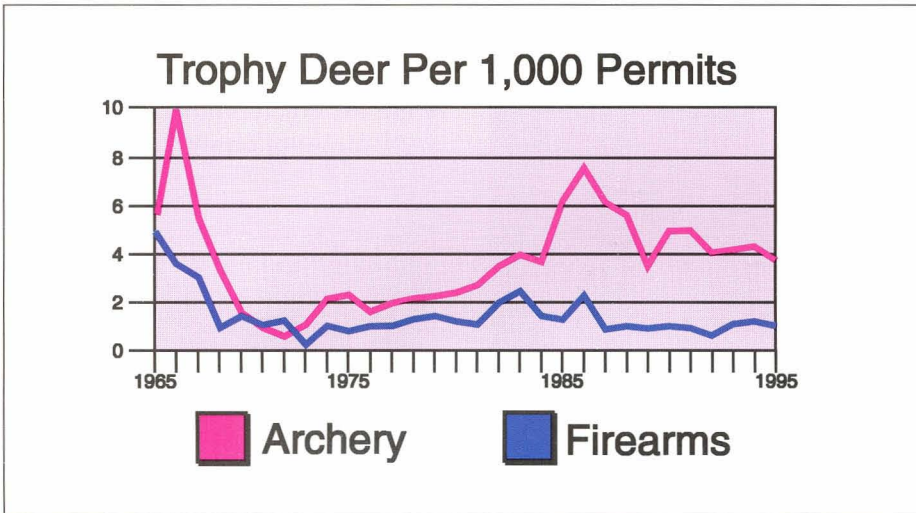
Our deer population, with its distribution and characteristics of

quality, took decades to develop. History showed us that deer populations in this part of the Midwest were extremely vulnerable to over-exploitation. We lack the natural refuges afforded by areas of dense swamps, remote mountains, and vast tracts of roadless woodland and rough terrain. We have ribbons of woodlands along our streams, which concentrate deer, and a one-mile network of roads that provide easy access for hunters. Even at low deer densities, our hunters have high success rates. A few years of intense hunting pressure could cause dramatic changes in the quality of the deer population, which in turn could take decades to recover.

Managing success rates of hunters is a delicate balance. It relates to distribution of hunters, length of seasons, timing, equipment, and habitat. This is not a subject we could call a precise science. Long seasons put more pressure on the deer resource than short seasons. The rut, or mating season for



With two species of deer in many western Kansas management units, permits are species specific – hunters can choose whitetail only or any deer permits.



deer, is a period when deer become very active and vulnerable during the day. Equipment that allows hunters to harvest a deer at greater distances increases the impact of hunters on deer populations. We have a relatively short firearm season that occurs after the peak of the mating season. Even with this restrictive system, Kansas hunters have one of the highest success rates in the country — greater than 65 percent for firearms hunters and greater than 30 percent for archers. Changes in factors such as the timing of the season, its length, or the allowable equipment and tech-

nique means that adjustments in permit numbers must occur. For example, longer seasons could result in fewer people being allowed to participate in hunting.

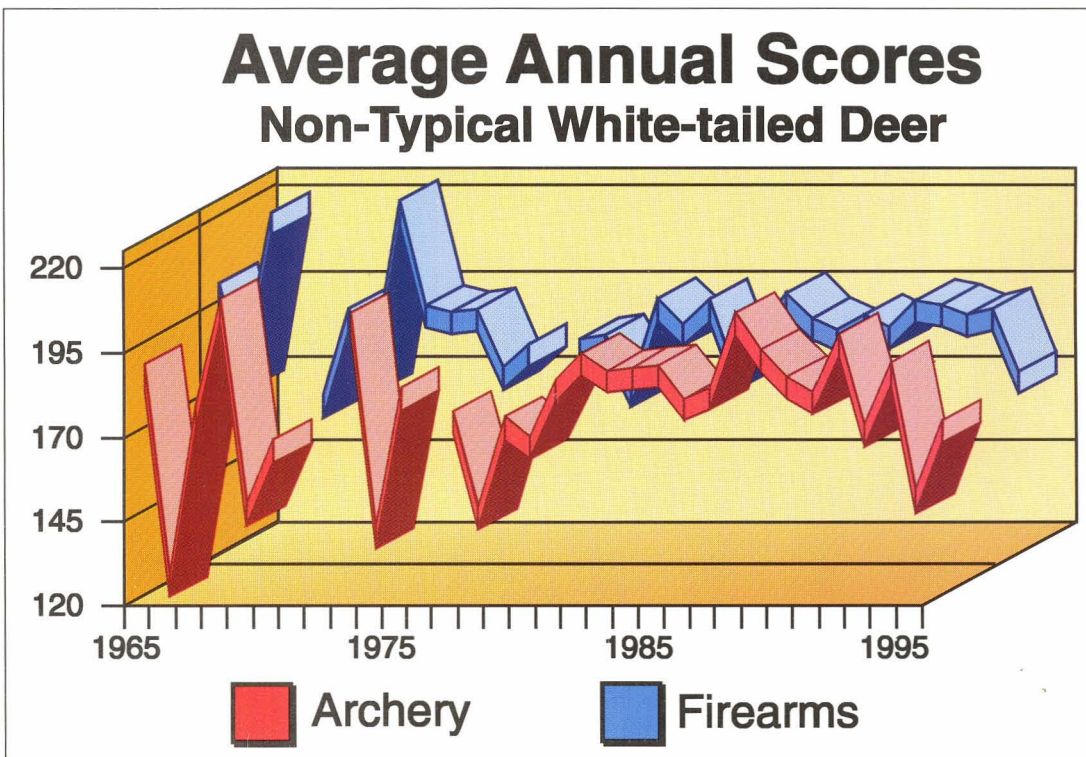
Management units are a tool that allows us to maintain quality throughout the state. The number and therefore the size of management units must balance the cost and complexity of administering the permit system and collecting the required biological data against their potential to produce results. You must also have a commitment to maintain those boundaries in order to develop long-term trend

information to predict the results of various alternatives. Not all of the state was open to hunting during the first few years, and there have been minor refinements in unit boundaries. However, the units we have today are basically the same as they were first created.

Most hunters would like a trophy deer each year in their hunting area. Is that realistic? Real trophies are rare by definition. We have used the unit system to ensure that some trophy animals occur in all units.

Kansas deer hunters are a key to the quality deer they pursue. Without support from hunters, it would be impossible to maintain this level. In other parts of the deer range, hunters have been unwilling to accept restrictions on a statewide basis. Occasionally groups of hunters would join together and promote self-imposed restrictions on small areas they manage intensively. But nowhere else in the nation do hunters support tighter restrictions on the harvest of antlered deer. Kansas deer hunters grew up with these restrictions and they support the concept. More than 70 percent of deer hunters in every license group stated that they were satisfied or extremely satisfied with their deer hunting experience in 1996.

Landowner tolerance for deer is another key to the management of quality deer. Historically the landowners of the state have accepted the level of damage and inconvenience that deer present. Landowners recognize that they benefit from the deer herd. Our quality of life in Kansas is increased by the things we enjoy, and most people like deer. In a survey conducted this summer, 75 percent of the landowners indicated they liked to have deer around their area. The result of the survey also indicated that nearly 60 percent of the





Hunters must be willing to pass up smaller bucks. A buck reaches trophy potential at 4-7 years of age.

landowners felt that deer were causing damage although less than 6 percent of them classified the damage as severe. Deer damage to crops is a concern of Kansas landowners, and should always be considered in deer management. Clearly we cannot solve all problems or satisfy all people, but we can incorporate responsive approaches that address most of the landowners.

Legislators deserve some credit for the success of deer management in Kansas. Deer are a public resource. There is a host of constituents with special demands. These interests are often confusing and conflicting. Legislative actions in some states have resulted in vacillating policies. Deer management in Kansas has been spared from erratic changes in directions. The oversight process, however, demands that management of this resource be responsive to the citizens. We can be sure that deer issues will be discussed in the state legislature most years.

Kansas is a leader in the production of quality deer. Environmental and genetic factors create the potential, but the people of the state

allowed this to flourish. We are the benefactors of past plans and practices. Our children, if they chose to maintain the commitment, will be the stewards of the resources for their children. Kansas may not continue to be a leader in this area. There is no secret in what we have done. Other parts of the country with greater potential may follow and then surpass us. That will not diminish the quality of what we can continue to enjoy and appreciate, only its relative position among other places.

There is something ironic about our history in deer management, the last becoming a leader. We should not underestimate the importance of ideas

and those first steps we took in the 1960s. However, the greater message in natural resource management may be the tactic of adopting the best practices available, and avoiding the pitfalls others have suffered. When we follow that with careful planning, strong commitments, and patience, we will be rewarded.

KANSAS TROPHY DEER AWARDS

The department maintains a database on trophy deer, turkey and pronghorn. We use it to monitor trends in the quality and quantity animals that hunters take in Kansas. The scoring procedures for deer and pronghorn are the same as those used by the Boone and Crockett Club and Pope and Young Club, although the minimum scores for a Kansas award are lower.

Scores are maintained by species (mule deer or white-tailed deer), antler characteristics (typical or nontypical), and type of equipment used by the hunter (archery or firearms). The average score for each of these eight groups of deer has remained relatively constant each year from 1965 to 1996. This

suggests that quality is remaining constant. The total number of deer submitted each year has increased since the early years of hunting. There were seven times more entries in 1994 as there was in 1965. This increase is occurring primarily because more white-tailed deer are being taken. In 1965, mule deer trophies made up 18 percent of the trophies. By 1994 the number of mule deer submitted for trophy awards had increased by a factor of 2 1/2, however they made up only 10 percent of the total deer awards.

There are numerous ways of looking at the distribution of trophies. One of the most frequently asked questions is, "what part of the state produces the biggest deer, or the most trophies?" There are probably trophy deer in every county of the state. Since 1965, Units 16 and 14 have had the overall highest density of trophies. Units 8, 9, and 10 have been very good. If we prorated trophies to acres of woodland, then Units 5, 6, and 15 start looking competitive. If you are after mule deer, Units 1, 2, and 17 look great.

Hunters frequently ask about the odds of taking a trophy deer, and are the odds as good today as they use to be. I looked at this by comparing trophies per 1,000 permits issued each year. When the season was opened in 1965, very few hunters had an opportunity to hunt (3,925 firearms hunters and 1,220 archers), but their success at taking a trophy was high. It was about 3 times higher than it was in 1994 for firearm hunters and 1 1/4 times higher than it was in 1994 for archers. After two or three seasons the success rate of taking trophies dropped. The rates have remained stable for firearms hunters since 1968. The odds of taking a trophy with archery equipment dropped after the first few years but then increased during the 1980s. Improvements in equipment and hunter techniques may be key factors in this increase.

Data bases are wonderful things. Our memories may change through time. We tend to accentuate the good or the bad. Data bases force us

back to reality. Frequently we hear about the good old days. The Kansas Trophy Deer Award data base clearly shows us that the good old days are today!

Kansas Trophy Deer Awards are available to any hunter who legally takes a deer, which meets minimum score standards. There is no charge for scoring or entry. Hunters may take trophies to any official Pope and Young or Boone and Crockett measurer. Measurers are also present at many department offices. This award system does not replace or duplicate the honor systems developed by the Pope and Young Club, the Boone and Crockett Club or any other organization.

PRODUCING QUALITY DEER ON YOUR PROPERTY

Three factors combine to produce a large buck deer. They are: genetics, nutrition, and age. We are blessed in Kansas to have deer that are the recipients of excellent genetic makeup. Our deer have high potential to produce large antlers. This is one area we should never interfere with. The potential to introduce a disease, or decrease the genetic robustness of our herd far exceeds the potential for us mere mortals to intelligently manipulate

genetics.


Nutrition is the second factor in producing big deer. It has been repeatedly shown that deer maintained at high densities for a particular habitat will selectively browse and decrease the quality of the forage for future generations of deer. The standard measure of this effect is the shift in antler beam diameter for yearling deer. When deer populations reach high densities, the yearling bucks will have smaller beam diameters. This habitat will seldom produce big bucks.

Supplemental feeding is suggested by some as a cure for poor habitats. It is not! It is a short-term tactic that may eventually make the problem worse. It is also a source for potential disasters. Recently I attended a workshop where big game biologists and managers met with wildlife veterinarians and pathologists. A common theme for problems with wildlife in general and deer in particular was artificial feeding. It was related to the spread of diseases that normally are not maintained in wild deer populations. Deer food needs to be produced throughout the range by means of habitat improvements, not supplied at feeders.

Controlling the age structure and sex ratio of deer herds are factors hunters and land managers can manipulate to increase the potential of an area to produce large bucks. Each hunter is able to choose between harvesting a particular deer and leaving that deer. In many parts of the country a tradition of harvesting only bucks was initiated when the first deer hunting seasons were authorized. This was the safest way for managers to maintain the deer population and yet allow the maximum number of people to hunt and harvest deer. The resulting deer herds were dominated each fall by antlerless deer and yearling bucks.

Most bucks reach their maximum size and conformation between age four and six. By heavily harvesting the young bucks in an area you will decrease the ability of the area to have individuals in those older age classes. The solution to this problem is within the prerogative of the hunters of that area. They may choose between taking the young bucks, or leaving them an additional year and taking an antlerless deer.

We have stressed the harvest of antlerless deer since our first season in 1965. If producing a big buck on your hunting area is important, then focus your harvest on antlerless deer, and refrain from taking the spike or basket-rack buck.

There are downsides to passing up a yearling buck. Some bucks you leave will disperse from your property. Some deer may succumb to predators, diseases or accidents although this is generally not a problem in this part of the range. Trophy deer on a property attract poachers, especially the new breed of poachers who specialize in the commercialization of illegally killed trophy deer. The advantage of passing up the young buck one year is the reward of personal involvement in deer management. Hunters who set additional restrictions on harvest of antlered deer and conduct habitat management generally have a higher satisfaction with their deer hunting. 

Gene Brehm photo



Producing deer of this size requires proper habitat, genetics, and careful management of harvest. Unlimited buck hunting prevents many bucks from reaching a mature age.



WIHA

OPPORTUNITIES TO HUNT

text and photo by Marc Murrell

public information officer, Great Plains Nature Center, Wichita

Riding enormous popularity, the Walk-In Hunting Area Program includes 330,000 acres for 1997, nearly double what was enrolled in 1996.

Although it sounds like something yelled in a frantic voice on the television series "Hee-Haw", the WIHA (short for Walk-In Hunting Area) program is opening unprecedented hunting opportunities in Kansas. Likely one of the most popular projects initiated by the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks in recent years, the WIHA program leases private land and opens it to public hunting. It was fashioned after a program in South Dakota, and it's growing by leaps and bounds, not to mention

acres.

"Our primary purpose was to stave off the decline in hunting license sales," said Steve Sorensen, Region 4 Fisheries and Wildlife Supervisor and statewide WIHA coordinator. "As our constituency becomes more urbanized, they have a tendency to find it more difficult to get access to private land. Because of some of those difficulties, they've indicated in surveys they've forgone hunting. This program was an opportunity to provide them with access to private

land with a minimum amount of effort."

Initiated as a pilot project during the 1995-1996 hunting season, the WIHA program had a modest beginning in southcentral Kansas. Forty-six landowners in seven counties enrolled 10,400 acres in that first year. Due to overwhelming positive response from both landowners and sportsmen, the program was expanded statewide prior to the 1996-1997 hunting seasons. That year 380 landowners enrolled 181,000 acres in 84 counties. And this year the program's growth has continued with 330,000 acres enrolled by 725 landowners in 89 counties.

"Surveys we conducted of last year's cooperators showed a high rating of the program and very few problems associated with the program," Sorensen said. "They were pleased with the actions of the hunters, and they were pleased with the amount of patrolling and contact they had with department personnel. There was very little indication of trash or any kind of illegal activities. I credit the sportsmen and their actions as being one the reasons the program is so successful and still popular with the landowners.

"The survey of the sportsmen showed a real high acceptance of the program," Sorensen said. "Even people who didn't use the program last year thought we should continue the program. Some people just didn't have an opportunity to use it but thought it was a good deal. Usage varied from hunting just one tract to one guy that hunted 56 different tracts."

Much of the land involved in the program is CRP [Conservation Reserve Program which returns highly erodible land to native grass). However, other habitat types including wetlands, riparian and crop areas are also included in the current program. The minimum amount of land that can be enrolled is 80 contiguous acres, and there are several landowners who have enrolled more than 1,000 acres.

Payments to landowners are

based on acreage enrolled and length of the contract (terms of the contract are September 1-January 31 or November 1-January 31). The average payment of the 1997-1998 season is \$1.23 per acre.

"It's funded through the Federal Aid program where the department is reimbursed \$3 for every \$4 it spends," Sorensen said of the funding mechanism. "Our money comes from the license sales in the state of Kansas. There is no special fee or permit required to hunt on it — all that's needed is a hunting license [unless exempt by law]."

Although much of the land offers upland bird hunting opportunities, any species of game can be hunted if that particular season is open during the term of the contract. The species listed in the atlas serve only as a guide to what is commonly found on the area. However, some of the tracts do not allow rifle deer hunting and are posted as such in the atlas and on site. While furbearers can be hunted on WIHA tracts, trapping is not allowed.

Birdwatching and other non-hunting activities are also prohibited.

Hunters can locate enrolled tracts of land by picking up a WIHA atlas from any regional, state park or department office. In addition to the index, listing each tract's size and hunting opportunities, the atlas includes a full county map for each county with WIHA tracts. Each tract is marked and numbered on the map. Access is by foot traffic only, and hunters are reminded to park only in designated parking areas or safely off county roads. Remember that farmers may be moving large implements along these roads. Each area is posted with signs designating its boundaries, the dates of its lease, and any restrictions that may apply. Use the signs as your guide. If you locate an area on the map but find that it isn't signed, don't hunt. Hunt only on areas clearly marked with the black and white WIHA signs.

"This year it's going to be a lot better than last year," Sorensen con-

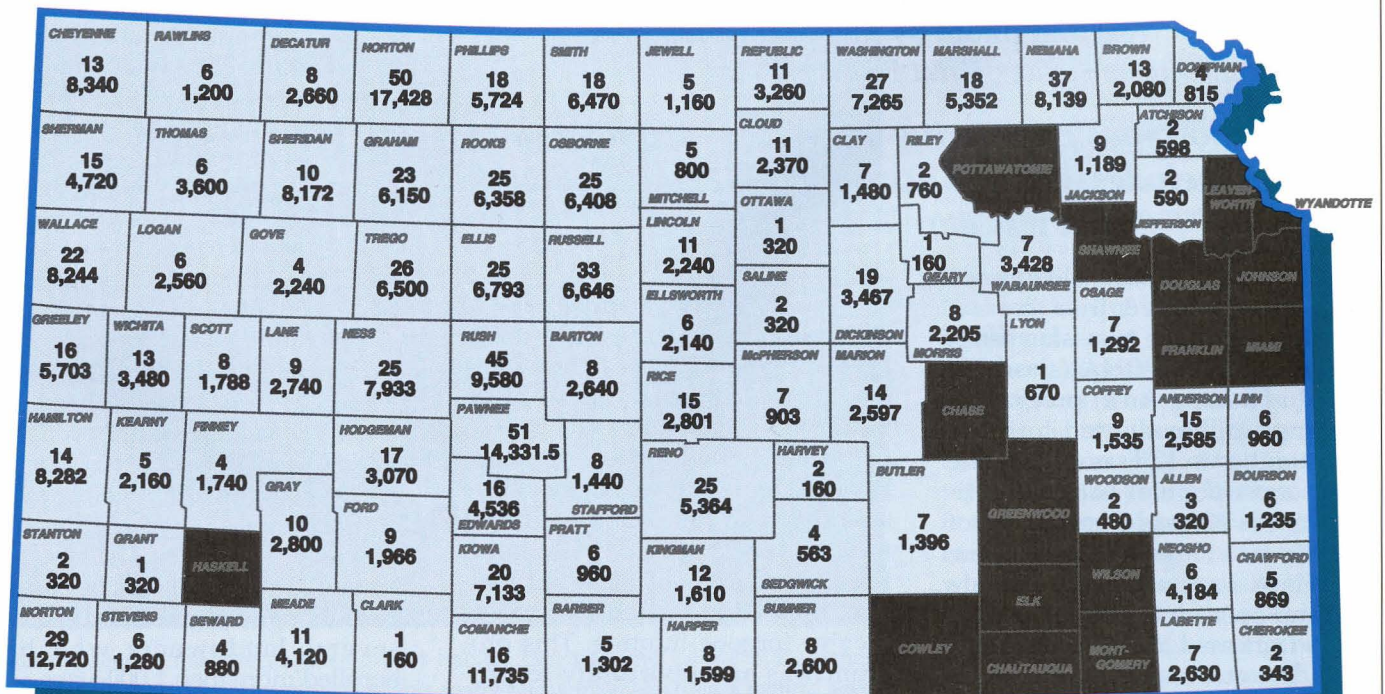
cludes. "Last year was a terrible year, from a game standpoint, to start a new statewide game program. The hunters ought to really enjoy it this year because they're going to be able to go out there and find birds, according to our surveys."

Each of the areas enrolled will be patrolled by conservation officers similar to activity seen on public hunting areas. Violators will be ticketed or arrested for vandalism, littering or failure to comply with Kansas hunting regulations. Anyone who observes illegal activity should report the incident through the Outdoor Alert Hotline at 1-800-2288-4263.

The WIHA program has been a success thus far, but hunters must remember that its future, as well as the future of hunting, depends on their behavior. Treat the land as if it were your own and respect the rights of landowners and others using the areas. Use common sense and act responsibly. Hunting is a privilege. ♡

1997 Walk-In Hunting Areas

WIHA tracts and total acres in each county



Edited by Mark Shoup

NRA DEFENDED

Editor's Note: *We received several letters in response the letter, "No More NRA," on Page 33 of the Sept./Oct. issue of Kansas Wildlife and Parks. All were long and ardently defended the NRA. Because space limitations prevent us from printing them all, we've chosen one letter that we believe states the case well. This letter follows.*

Editor:

Although Mr. Vopata did allude to the NRA as having one positive project, he apparently does not know how many other positive projects there are, several of which benefit the Department of Wildlife and Parks directly and indirectly.

The NRA actively supports the Becoming An Outdoors Woman (BOW) program in Kansas and 45 other states. It furnishes books and materials, and all of the BOW firearm instructors are NRA certified. While on that subject, it might interest Mr. Vopata to know that the NRA provides firearms training for the nation's police departments, all sizes, both directly and indirectly, at all levels of government, including Wildlife and Parks conservation officers.

The NRA has special law enforcement instructor courses along with "police-only" competitive shooting matches. The NRA also has a national program, called "Eddie Eagle," to teach children what to do when they encounter a firearm. This program has reached 9 million K through 6-grade children. Additionally, the NRA has provided firearms training to the military, especially in times of emergency. During World War II, it was the NRA who pushed the grassroots movement to collect small arms to send to the British when they were threatened with invasion by the Nazis.

The NRA was also a driving force for the passage of the Pittman-Robertson Act, which established an excise tax [to aid wildlife] on firearms, ammunition, and selected archery equipment. The

NRA is also [one of many groups] pushing for a new excise tax on all outdoor equipment to help fund outdoor activities excluded by Pittman-Robertson.

The NRA is a key proponent of tougher sentencing for criminals, especially for crimes committed with a firearm. The popular "three strikes" legislation (life sentence for three time offenders) was brought about because of NRA lobbying. So are many other sentencing requirements and guidelines. Additionally, the NRA assists victims and victims' survivors in their battles with parole boards to prevent the early release of violent criminals.

Lastly, the NRA has a national program directed toward women's safety called "Refuse to Be a Victim," which primarily instructs women (or anyone) how to avoid being "easy pickins" for a crime, rather than how to defend yourself, with or without a firearm.

The NRA's only agenda is to preserve our right to have, keep, and use firearms. This involves teaching safe and proper handling of firearms and punishing people who misuse firearms and commit crimes. Also, the NRA has a huge commitment to preserve our outdoor heritage, of which guns have always been a part. Somehow, I don't see this as un-American or bad.

There may be some controversial items within the NRA. Some may even be downright distasteful, but I've never found anyone with whom I could completely agree, especially if I didn't look at things from their point of view.

For the record, I'm 50 years old, a Missourian transplanted to Kansas some 18 years ago. I've fished since I was 3, hunted since I was 7, owned a gun since I was 8, camped and photographed since I was 9. I'm also a rockhound, amateur fossil collector, and gardener. I've lived in a major metropolitan area all my life. I didn't joint the NRA until less than two years ago when I finally got fed up with people trying to gradually take away all the things I love and love to do.

Randy Faerber
Lenexa

HUNTERS SUPPORT WILDLIFE

Editor:

The letter from Ms. Armstrong (*Kansas Wildlife and Parks*, Sept./Oct. 1997, Page 34) lamenting the "senseless slaughter" of wildlife and insinuating that hunters don't respect wildlife shows that maybe she doesn't understand something. Were she to check, she would find that through taxes and fees on firearms, ammunition, and licenses, sportsmen finance just about every conservation program in Kansas. She would find that through conservation efforts paid for and supported by hunters [such as the Pittman-Robertson Act], many species of wildlife that were once nearly decimated have been brought back to levels that allow everyone to enjoy them.

I really like your magazine. Mike Blair's photography is truly outstanding. I especially enjoy the nongame articles. My wife and I like to go for walks in the sandhills or along the Arkansas River and just watch the birds and animals. If you're quiet, it's amazing the number of different species you can see. Kansas is truly an outdoorsman's paradise.

John M. Clayton
Ellinwood

99 AND STILL GOING

Editor:

My grandfather, Oscar Rork, is in a wheelchair, the victim of another hunter not paying attention back in 1949 who was shooting through brush while walking parallel along a roadway. It ended up in the amputation of my grandfather's right leg above the knee.

He fished and hunted as a child and continues doing so. Last July, I had him on a farm pond in the Yates Center vicinity, and he still rowed the boat himself. It was the first opportunity he had to go since my grandmother died last fall. Someone has to lift him in and out of the chair and in and out of the small boat so he can fish, but he still goes. His pleasure is quite evident.

When I was a small child, I would

spend summers with him. He had a gun and tackle shop attached to his house where he made and sold lures throughout the state under the name Jayhawk Gun and Tackle. Once the overseas producers began production, however, he could not compete. He has been involved in the acquisition and trading of firearms for more than 50 years and just last July did not renew his Federal Firearms License.

He still makes and repairs fishing poles, cleans and repairs fishing reels, and has quite a collection of fishing reels, new in the box, from early after World War II until the present.

The last two years, he hasn't felt well enough to go out and look for deer even though he has been fortunate to have received a permit. About four years ago, while placed strategically in a farmer's field in the area of his choice, he did shoot a 10-point buck that had such a unique rack that he had it mounted.

As he says, "God willing and the creek don't rise," this fall he might feel better and again be placed strategically to enjoy something he has done for many, many years. He will be 99 years old.

*William K. Rork
Topeka*

SHOTGUN/.22 LEGAL?

Editor:

Here's a question. Is it legal to carry a .22 handgun and a shotgun while hunting small game? I have heard of one person who does this in Kansas. I am informed that it is illegal in California. I realize that it doesn't sound particularly safe.

Is it legal to hunt squirrels from a human powered boat?...if moored?

*Frederic J. Gutknecht IV
Lawrence*

Dear Mr. Gutknecht:

Yes, it is legal to carry a .22 and a shotgun when hunting upland or small game. A 22./shotgun over-and-under is also legal. You cannot, however, carry a firearm of any kind while archery hunting deer. It's also legal to hunt from a non-motorized boat, underway or not.

-Shoup

NOT HABITAT?

Editor:

I saw your reply to Tom Shoats (*Kansas Wildlife and Parks*, Sept./Oct. 1997, Page 43). You quoted any number of dates and numbers of birds harvested. Hey, this is the 90s. This is the longest period of low quail populations in my hunting experience. Should you wish history, I'll give you some.

I have hunted quail for 60 years from Cowley County east to Cherokee county, then north to Franklin County. We have had bad times before. In 1951, all of the real quail country in Kansas was flooded, but in about three years we were back to normal. I believe it was 1959, we had a terrible ice storm over about this same area that literally wiped the quail out. The next year, after one day the season was closed. Again in three years, we were back to normal.

At the time we were making these miracle recoveries, some of the time our daily bag limit was six, and our season was four days a week and ended Dec. 31. Some of the years, hunting was over at 4 p.m.

Look what we have done for the out-of-staters - daily bag limit of 8 and possession limit of 32, the largest anyplace. Ours is the longest.

Need we get the commission out of the pocket of the Hotel and Restaurant Association?

*William S. Davison
Williamsburg*

Dear Mr. Davison:

If attracting non-resident hunters were the reason for quail seasons, why would regulations be set that would deplete this resource? Even if your conspiracy theory were true, it wouldn't make sense to destroy the product that attracts the customer.

Fortunately, quail seasons and bag limits are not set to attract non-residents but to give all hunters the maximum opportunity possible without depleting the resource.

We can discuss forever what has happened in the past, but what matters is what happened after the bag and possession limits were raised in 1992 (the 90s, I believe): 13,000 fewer hunters showed up, and 800,000 fewer birds were taken.

The average annual harvest for the first four years of the higher limits was 500,000 fewer birds than before the limits were raised.

It can't be any clearer. If the birds aren't there, the hunters don't hunt. If they are, they do. The facts clearly show that it's habitat and weather. If you still don't believe it, check out the upland bird forecast on Page 38.

-Shoup

FALCON DIET DETRACTOR

Editor:

I have three things I would like to comment on: 1) I love your magazine and have been a continuous subscriber since 1958; 2) I hate to see the falcon be fed quail for a job well done [*Kansas Wildlife and Parks*, Sept./Oct. 1997, Page 9]; and 3) I wonder why there were so many landowners who participated in the Walk-In Hunter Area program who did not do it again in 1997?

We, the dedicated hunters, need to know. I think walk-in hunting is the best thing Wildlife and Parks has ever done for both landowner and hunter.

*Larry D. Barrand
Topeka*

Dear Mr. Barrand:

We appreciate your readership loyalty. Thanks for the nice comments.

As for your second comment, the quail Mr. Ried fed to his falcon are birds he pen raises specifically for that purpose. Captive birds of prey must be fed a diet that resembles what they would eat in the wild, and quail are ideal. The birds aren't alive when he gives them to the falcon.

The response to the Walk-In Hunter Area (WIHA) program this year was overwhelming. In many areas, landowners who enrolled last year re-enrolled this year. Overall, we nearly doubled the number of landowners participating, as well as the number of acres. In 1996, 380 landowners enrolled 181,000 acres. In 1997, 725 landowners enrolled 330,000 acres.

While there were a few isolated problems with WIHA last year, it has been highly successful, and we hope to continue the program.

-Miller

HUNT FIRM INDICTED

In early Sept., nearly half of the officers and directors of a major private hunting operation in eastern South Dakota were charged with an illegal hunting conspiracy. Seven officers and directors of Dakota Safaris were arraigned on conspiracy charges in U.S. District Court.

[One of those indicted] is vice president of Dakota Safaris and president of the South Dakota Farm Bureau. [Another] is the corporation's secretary/treasurer, and [two others] serve on the six-member Dakota Safaris board of directors.

According to the grand jury indictment, the seven conspired for at least the past 4 1/2 years to break state big game laws.

In June 1969, Dakota Safaris was incorporated as a hunting operation, using privately-owned land primarily along the Cheyenne River. For a fee of \$2,000, non-resident hunters were lodged, fed, and guided on a hunt for "trophy" (four points or larger) bucks on Dakota Safaris land.

Non-resident hunters booking hunts with Dakota Safaris first would apply for a mule deer buck hunting license. If the hunter was unsuccessful in drawing of the mule deer buck licenses, "he was directed by a (unnamed) co-conspirator to apply for other available (deer hunting) licenses, including doe mule deer and whitetail deer licenses," according to the indictment.

Investigators say the seven men and others conspired to obtain mule deer

buck licenses that were then given to out-of-state hunters booking hunts with Dakota Safaris. Essentially, the out-of-state hunter would shoot a buck mule deer then tag it with one of the Dakota Safaris mule deer buck licenses belonging to someone else.

The grand jury indictment included an example of how the operation worked:

On Nov. 17, 1996, a Kansas conservation officer working under cover went on a Dakota Safaris hunt guided by the vice president. The officer told him that he only had a license to hunt whitetail deer but was interested in shooting a mule deer.

The next day, [the Safaris VP] picked up the Kansas officer from the hunting camp. "[The Safaris VP] explained that the Dakota Safaris group lets hunters kill deer, and then they put ranchers' tags on the deer," according to the indictment. "[The Safaris VP] told the officer that if he wanted a mule deer, he – [the Safaris VP] – would tag it, and if the Kansas CO was checked, he was to say that the person whose name was on the tag shot the deer and gave it to the officer."

[The Safaris VP] told the undercover officer this had been the practice for years.

Later that day, [the Safaris VP] told the undercover officer to shoot a buck mule deer out of the window of their vehicle. When the deer was dragged back to the vehicle, [the Safaris VP] tagged it with a resident South Dakota deer tag belonging to [one of those indicted] and signed the tag with the other man's name.

The indictment also accuses [those indicted] of conducting similar illegal hunts for hunters from Nebraska, Michigan, and Tennessee. The federal conspiracy charge facing each of the seven men named carries a maximum sentence of five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

—*Rapid City Journal*

YOU WON'T BELIEVE IT

I work with a wide variety of recreational users, including anglers, hunters, trappers, boaters, and campers. My job is to protect natural resources and the public by enforcing Kansas wildlife laws and regulations. In the process, I hear many amusing excuses for people's actions, or they might have an interesting story to tell:

While checking licenses along the river, I asked an angler for his. He told me he didn't have one because he had fished for 20 years in Kansas and had never been checked. I wrote him a ticket and left. The next year, I found the same man fishing in the same place. I assumed he had learned his lesson and had bought a new license, but he said he didn't have one. When I asked, "Why," he said, "I fished for 20 years before I was caught the first time, so I figured I could go another 20 years before I was caught again." By the time he paid for both tickets, he could have bought a lifetime license.

The most common excuse for not having a license in possession is "I left it in my other tackle box" (or wallet or purse). Many times this

isn't true, but people make things worse by lying. They buy a license after I issue a ticket and often talk the clerk into back-dating the license. Or they simply change the date themselves. In most counties, the courts will dismiss the ticket if the license was purchased before the ticket was issued, but altering a license compounds the offense. The store clerk can be fired and also prosecuted. The courts make a copy of the license on arrival, and I check it to verify when it was purchased.

I have heard a lot of funny stories about conservation officers, and I always listen for new ones. The most common has this main theme: Everyone in town complains to the local conservation officer, Jim Wiseheart, that Rodney is the only one catching fish. Jim decides to watch Rodney and one day sees him at the boat ramp.

Jim asks Rodney if he can go fishing with him, and Rodney says, "Sure, hop in."

Rodney takes Jim out to the middle of the lake and drops anchor. Jim gets out his pole and baits it. Rodney reaches under the seat and grabs a stick of dynamite. He lights it and throws it in the lake. Jim gets upset and grabs his ticket book. The dynamite goes off and rocks the boat. Rodney dips the fish up while Jim explains that he can't use dynamite and starts writing the ticket.

Rodney lights another stick of dynamite. He hands it to Jim and says, "Are you gonna write the ticket, or are you gonna fish?"

—*Alan Hulbert, conservation officer, Valley Center*

ARCHERY WOUNDING STUDY

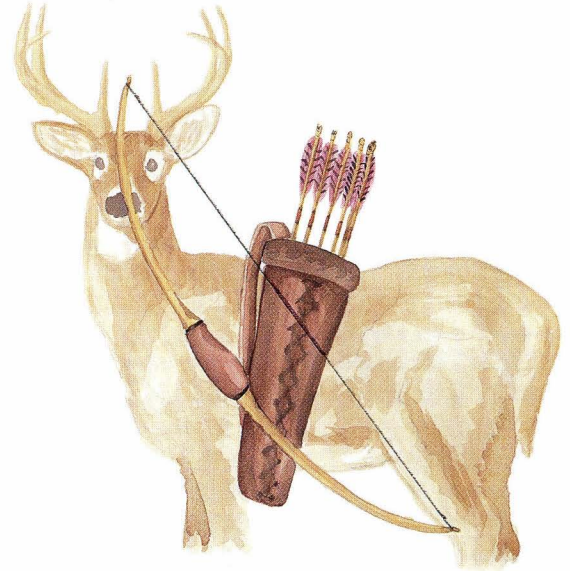
An intense study of bow wounding in Minnesota found an average of only 13 percent of deer reportedly hit by archers could not be accounted for. Whether these deer sustained a flesh wound and survived or were mortally wounded and couldn't be found will never be known. But this means about 87 percent of deer reportedly hit by archers eventually went home with a hunter.

The four-year study at Camp Ripley National Guard camp, site of an annual bowhunt, was conducted by deer researchers Jay McAnnich and Wendy Krueger of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. The study was sorely needed and was undoubtedly important for bowhunters, biologists, and wildlife managers nationwide. Never before has any study taken such an intense and thorough look at how archers hunt for deer and what role wounding plays in the kill.

Now, after working with the data and statistics from this landmark research for four years, McAnnich and Krueger are able to step back and draw conclusions about how this study fits into the deer-management picture.

"This study yielded three important conclusions," McAnnich says. "First, it provided a more detailed and clearer picture of the shots taken in the field. Second, the study showed recovery rates to be much higher than previously claimed. And third, we learned that bowhunting is an efficient method to control deer populations. The growing effort to use bowhunting to control urban deer suggests that others agree."

While the Ripley findings are important, McAnnich and Krueger warn they aren't the last word on the subject.



"Much research remains," says McAnnich. "As a result, in autumn of 1994, we began a second phase of this research that will give us a clearer look at the big picture. This will be a long-term study, but we should have some interesting material in another year or so."

"This study reinforced that the number of deer lost to bowhunting is not biologically significant. The loss rates are extremely low, and they show that archers are working hard to get those numbers as low as possible."

—from *"The Facts on Bow Wounding,"* printed and distributed by *Deer and Deer Hunting* magazine

PRAIRIE SPIRIT GRANT

Last summer, the Prairie Spirit Trail, a public rail-trail that runs from Ottawa to Iola, received a grant from the American Greenways DuPont Program, a project of the Arlington, Virginia-based Conservation Fund. The \$1,000 grant will help the Ottawa chapter of the Friends of the Prairie Spirit Trail with local match requirements for Phase 2 construction from Richmond to Ottawa.

The Greenways Program provides grants as large as \$2,500 to non-profit organizations and government agencies to help develop new action-oriented greenway projects. The grants are considered seed money to spark creativity in conservation, outdoor recreation, and greenway development.

According to the Conservation Fund, the Friends of the Prairie Spirit Trail received one of 43 grants it gave this year because of their "innovative efforts

to create a multi-use recreation trail and greenway that encourages involvement from the state of Kansas, local communities, and local citizens who take an active role in trail projects and trail operations."

"The friends group has been an important factor in creation of the trail," says Trent McCown, manager of the trail for the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. "They've gotten a diverse group of people involved, but they share the common goal of wanting to do something positive for the community they live in and to benefit people of all ages and abilities."

According to the Conservation Fund's president, Patrick F. Noonan, the projects selected this year "represent some of the best grassroots conservation and greenway development efforts in the United States. We support these local initiatives because they are thoughtful, action-oriented projects that serve as

models for other communities around the country."

In addition, the Conservation Fund cited the Friends of the Prairie Spirit Trail as a national model for its innovative efforts to develop a greenway through Franklin, Anderson, and Allen counties.

The American Greenways DuPont grants are made possible through donations of the DuPont Corporation. The grant awards committee was directed by the CEOs of DuPont, the Conservation Fund, and the National Geographic Society. Grants were selected from 260 applicants representing 42 states and the District of Columbia.

Since 1985, the Conservation Fund has protected more than 1.3 million acres of wildlife habitat, open space, and historic sites, including 26 Civil War battlefields.

—Shoup

WILDLIFE AS ORPHAN CHILD

The National Wildlife Refuge System now totals nearly 92 million acres, including 38 million acres of wetlands, in all fifty states and five U.S. territories. Fifty-eight refuges were established specifically to protect endangered and threatened species.

Yet the refuge system remains the federal government's orphan child, subsisting on crumbs. Americans spend more money on the country's military bands than they do to operate and maintain the refuges, which had a fiscal-year 1995 budget of \$168 million, about one dollar per taxpayer. And the National Wildlife Refuge System gets the short stick when compared with other federal land-management agencies. On a per-acre basis, operations funding for 1994 was \$13.23 for the National Park Service, \$6.83 for the U.S. Forest Service, \$2.54 for the Bureau of Land Management, and \$1.81 for the refuges.

That meager appropriation from the General Treasury has to pay for habitat management, population management, public-use management, resource protection, and refuge maintenance. (In addition to Duck Stamp sales, land acquisition money now comes from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, import duties, and refuge entrance fees; but in recent years, Congress has released only one-third of the funds collected for this purpose.)

—from "A System Under Siege," by Les Line, published in *Wilderness*

WETLAND DISAPPEARING ACT

More than 1 million acres of U.S. wetlands vanished from 1985 to 1995, a period when the government imposed tough new protections for the threatened ecosystems and set a national goal of ending the losses, according to a study by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

In the first comprehensive survey of the nation's wetlands to be published

since 1990, and the first to try to show the effects of those new policies, the USFWS estimated that during the decade, wetlands continued to disappear at an average rate of 117,000 acres a year. In the previous decade, from 1975 to 1985, wetland losses amounted to nearly 3 million acres [about 300,000 acres annually].

Even so, the persistent loss of wetlands from 1985 to 1995 amounted to about 1 percent of the wetlands that remain in the lower 48 states, which have now lost more than half the wetlands that existed in Colonial times.

The latest estimate disclosed some areas of particular concern, especially among the forested wetlands of the Southeast, where half the losses occurred. It also showed surprisingly large losses on agricultural lands, and suggested that the goal of ending wetland losses altogether remained elusive.

Aside from their use by fish, birds, and other wildlife, wetlands are considered essential because they filter contaminants from water and because they provide spongelike storage for heavy rains that otherwise would cause damaging floods. In 1985, federal agencies began to toughen enforcement of the Clean Water Act's wetlands protections, and Congress imposed new limits on agricultural conversion of wetlands to croplands.

The latest survey showed the loss of 2.5 million acres of forested wetlands, particularly valuable areas, compared with 4.8 million acres lost in the previous 10 years. The latest losses amounted to 5 percent of the 50 million acres of forested wetlands that now remain.

To some extent, the loss of forested wetlands was offset when acres were converted by logging to a less valuable type, where only shrubs remain, and this type of wetland actually increased. Other forested wetlands were drained altogether and converted to pine farms or to cropland.

To the surprise of conservation agencies and environmentalists, the latest data showed continuing heavy losses of wetlands on agricultural land. The agency estimated that during the

1985 to 1995 period, 965,000 acres of wetlands were lost on agricultural lands.

The latest report comes at a time when wetland protections are under assault in Congress and in the courts. In July, Sens. Christopher Bond (R-Mo.) and John Breaux (D-La.) introduced legislation that would change the way wetlands are defined and exempt many projects in agricultural, oil, and gas and timber industries from rules for wetlands protection.

Earlier this year, the American Mining Congress won a court case that would overturn a major wetland regulation that prohibits developers from draining swamps and then filling them. The case is on appeal before the District of Columbia U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, which has stayed the lower court's decision. A ruling is expected in a few months.

—Clean Water Network

THINGS THAT GO BUMP

"Because water, though, in Anchorage, Alaska, is already clean, the town has had to recruit local fish processors to purposely dump 5,000 pounds of fish guts into the sewer system each day, thus allowing the city to clean the water and satisfy EPA requirements."

"Do you know there are documented cases where a guy had a canoe — now think about this for a moment — got a canoe, left it right side up, got full of water, had a hole in it, drained under it, moved the canoe. Had a flower there that had sprouted. Didn't know what it was. He asked somebody to identify it, and they said this is a flower that only grows in wetlands. It was declared a wetlands."

Do these stories seem absurd? They're among a number of fabrications presented on the floor of the U.S. House of Representative in defense of anti-wetland legislation. The National Wildlife Federation has compiled a list of similar claims, complete with the facts. To receive a copy, call them at (907) 258-4800.

—Shoup

Upland Bird Count Looks Promising

This year's survey reveals one of the most productive breeding seasons for upland birds in several years. A dry and relatively moderate winter resulted in good carryover of both pheasant and quail populations. Exceptionally mild temperatures and moderate rains produced ideal nesting conditions this spring. And cover-growth around the state has generally been above average. The result has been good brood-rearing conditions.

The following is a general summary of the summer brood count survey by species, followed by a state regional wrap-up:

Pheasant: An unusually mild spring with no cold, wet weather produced ideal nesting and early brood-rearing conditions. Excellent insect populations were present early enough to provide abundant forage for just-hatched chicks. Above-average rainfall produced good cover conditions, further promoting chick survival. These factors combined to permit exceptional reproductive success by Kansas pheasants in most of the western two-thirds of the state. Northwest Kansas will offer the best pheasant hunting with most of the northcentral and southwestern regions also providing good opportunities. Pheasants have made a remarkable recovery in southwestern Kansas where populations were very low in 1996. Southcentral Kansas will also show significant improvement in pheasant numbers. In the northeast, where very dry conditions prevailed through much of the summer, pheasant populations will probably remain similar to last year. Overall, pheasant hunting prospects appear to be the best Kansas has seen in many years.

Quail: Bobwhites appear to have responded very positively to the ideal spring nesting conditions and to the abundance of insect forage. Early quail nesting attempts appear to have been unusually successful resulting in relatively large broods. Southcentral Kansas should provide the best bobwhite hunting this year with the northcentral and Flint Hills regions also looking good. Much of western Kansas is not considered good quail range; however, bobwhite numbers appear to be at exceptional highs for those parts of western Kansas where adequate quail habitat exists. The southeast region will see a significant increase in quail this year and a somewhat smaller increase can be expected in the northeast.

Prairie Chicken: Kansas greater prairie chicken populations showed some increase this past spring, but lesser prairie chickens in southwest Kansas remained very low. It is difficult to monitor these species during summer, but weather conditions that favored pheasant and quail production may have also benefitted prairie chickens.



Regional Summaries

Northwest – Pheasant populations have increased substantially in much of this region compared to 1996, and the northwest should provide the best overall pheasant hunting opportunities in the state this year. Quail populations are not traditionally high in the northwest; however, their numbers have sharply increased here, with bobwhites showing up in what appears to be unprecedented numbers in some areas. The best quail populations in this region are found in Phillips, Rooks, Norton, and Graham counties. Cover, where not tilled or sprayed, varies from relatively heavy in the southern counties to average in the northern counties.

Northcentral – After a disappointing season in 1996, pheasant numbers have rebounded nicely in much of northcentral Kansas with the possible exception of parts of Republic and Washington counties where conditions have been unusually dry. Quail have also increased significantly in most of the region and should provide good hunting opportunity. Cover condi-

tions are heavy in the southern part of the region but are only average in the north.

Northeast – This region does not appear to have shared in the increase in pheasant numbers, so it appears that pheasant populations here will be similar to those of 1996. Quail populations appear to have increased a little in the northeast, but numbers appear to be lower here than elsewhere in the Kansas quail range. Cover conditions are good in the southern counties and average in most northern counties.

Southwest – Pheasants have made a surprisingly strong comeback this year throughout the southwest after a poor season in 1996 and should provide some of the best pheasant hunting this region has seen in several years. The best quail populations in this region occur in the southern and eastern tiers of counties, especially in the Red Hills. Quail populations have increased sharply over what was considered a pretty good year in many areas in 1996. Significant numbers of quail are

being seen in non-traditional areas. Generous summer rains have produced good cover conditions where not tilled or sprayed.

Southcentral – While generally not among Kansas' top pheasant producers, the southcentral region has shown a moderate increase this year. Good numbers of pheasants are present this year in the western and northern tiers of counties in this region with some hot spots elsewhere. Quail populations look very good this year throughout the region. Cover conditions vary from good to heavy in southcentral Kansas.

Southeast – Quail populations appear to have increased in the southeast with the greatest improvement coming in the southwestern counties of the region, particularly in the Flint Hills. Quail numbers appear to be improved in the eastern counties, but reports suggest that this increase is moderate. Cover ratings range from good to heavy.

—Randy Rodgers, researcher, Hays

DOVE-DAY DELIGHT

On Sept. 1, kids in the Fall River area were treated to a very special dove hunt, thanks to Fall River Wildlife Area manager John Bills. That day was set aside for a special youth dove hunt. But it all began in April, when Bills set aside several areas and planted them to sunflowers to attract doves.

"Many people do not realize that a good dove field must start in April if you want to achieve sunflower maturity prior to the Sept. 1 opening," explains Doug

Blex, Bills' supervisor. "John had everything planned to perfection. The sunflower matured by Aug. 15, and he had all the areas mowed in strips. He put out news releases to local papers. Greenwood County hunter education instructors and conservation officer Dan Melson were on hand to help with pre-hunt instructions and provide a safe hunt. Local businesses even provided refreshments and ear plugs."

After the young hunters received the proper instruction, they headed to the field,

accompanied by instructors, parents, and retrieving dogs that Bills had lined up. To their amazement, thousands of doves rose from the field as they passed through on their way to designated shooting spots.

"This was really a sight for first-time hunters," says Blex. "They will remember this for many years. My nine-year-old grandson had just completed his hunter education course, and he came along for his first dove hunt. His .410 was hot from the 100-plus shells he fired to bag eleven doves. I would be

willing to bet that all these kids will be future hunters after this."

Blex adds that parents were equally enthusiastic, and he gives all the credit to Bills.

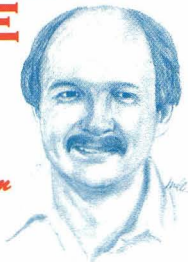
"It would have been easier to relax and spend the holiday weekend doing something else," Blex notes, "but John chose to unselfishly give up his weekend to benefit others." Just goes to show what happens when caring is combined with planning.

—Shoup

UNDER CURRENTS

THE ARROW AND THE APPLE

by Gene Brehm



Occasionally, I hear the question, "Are there any plans to initiate mandatory testing of hunter proficiency with bows and arrows?"

Many countries in Europe have such mandatory proficiency testing. Prospective hunters must pass standardized skill tests before a hunting permit can be obtained. But the only required proficiency test in Kansas is for archery deer hunters on land owned by the U.S. Army at Fort Leavenworth. Dan Butler helps administer the Fort Leavenworth proficiency test, which is in its third year. According to him, the test has had a positive effect on the hunters.

"During the first year, we had 20 percent to 30 percent of the archers fail the proficiency test," he explains, "but since that first year, we've only turned away two or three hunters a season. Once they knew what was demanded of them, they got out and practiced."

The Fort Leavenworth test demands that an archer place three out of five arrows in a 9-inch target at 20 yards. That's not exactly what you'd call a demanding test. When I asked Butler, a longbow shooter, what he expects of himself in the test, his response was unflinching: "Five arrows in the center of the target."

As the Bowhunter Education coordinator for the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, I like the idea of mandatory proficiency tests. Some would argue that such tests are not practical on a statewide basis, that the department does not have the resources or the manpower to administer such a test to everyone. If we were to do this for the 22,000 archery deer hunters, they might say, we would need to do it for the 180,000 licensed hunters (not to mention those not required to buy a license) who use shotguns and rifles to bag small game, waterfowl, turkey, and deer.

Well, yes. But perhaps the time has come to put our ethics on the line — archers in particular because we have been singled out by anti-hunters as the great wounding of deer. [See Page 36.] With or without mandatory proficiency testing, I do feel that each archer should impose the following test upon him or herself:

First, archers should choose the dis-

tance at which they feel that they can consistently make killing shots. That may be 15, 20, 25, or 30 yards. Then for five consecutive days, they should shoot one arrow, without warm-up shots, at a 9-inch target at their range. If the archers do not hit the target each of the five tries, they should choose not to hunt until they can.

Those who fail the self-test have the option to restrict themselves to closer ranges and to do something they should already have done more of — practice.

As humans, we can understand what is humane and what is not. When an arrow tipped with an ultra-sharp broadhead cuts through a deer's vital zone (the chest cavity containing the heart and lungs), a rapid death follows, usually within three to 15 seconds. As with any weapon, however, when the vital area is missed, death is not as quick or humane. That is why each bowhunter should determine his or her own proficiency and if consistent accuracy is not mastered, choose not to hunt until it is.

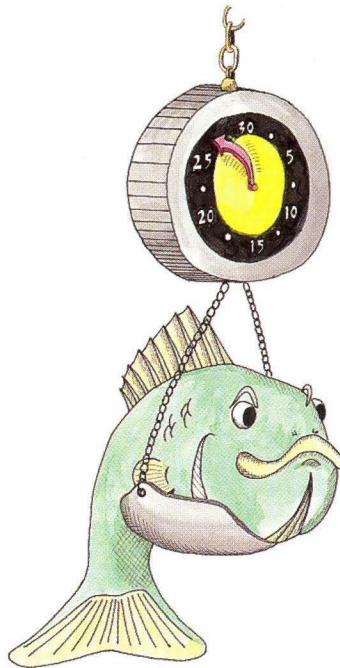
Bowhunting is not an activity to be taken lightly. Game animals deserve a 100-percent effort from each of us. A hobby is one thing, but when you go after a game animal and you know you can't hit the practice target consistently, that is absolutely nothing but poor sportsmanship.

BIGGER AND BIGGER

1997 was a good year for Kansas fishermen. In April, the smallmouth bass record fell twice. On April 19, Darin Bradstreet of Garden City pulled a 5.85-pound fish from Wilson Reservoir. That topped the existing record of 5.69 pounds. His fame was short-lived, however. Jimmy Gilreath of Milford took a 6.37-pound fish from Milford Reservoir on April 26 and established himself as the state recorder holder for that species.

The month of June produced another state record. This time it was a 47.10-pound carp taken from Carey Park in Hutchinson. About 9 p.m. on June 10, the large carp took the line of Phil McAmis of Hutchinson. The fish was 40 1/4 inches long and was taken on a rod and reel with corn for bait.

Even July, traditionally a slower month, yielded a new fish record. Larry Hawks of Almena landed a 8.58-pound saugeye from Sebelius Reservoir. The new record measured 27 1/2 inches. And finally, York Haines of Topeka landed a monster 57-pound white amur (grass carp) while fishing on a farm pond near Emmett on Aug. 9.



Other state records include the following:

Bass, largemouth black – 11.75 lbs.; March 20, 1977; Farm Pond, Jefferson Co.; Kenneth B., Topeka.
Bass, smallmouth – 6.37 lbs.; April 26, 1997; Milford Reservoir; Jimmy Gilreath, Milford.
Bass, spotted (Kentucky) – 4 lbs., 7 ozs.; April 16, 1977; Marion Co. Lake; Clarence E. McCarter, Wichita.
Bass, striped – 43.5 lbs.; May 18, 1988; Wilson Reservoir; Chester Nily, Sylvan Grove.
Bass, warmouth – 1 lb., 1.76 ozs.; April 30, 1988; Mined Land WA #7; Vivian A. Bradley, Pittsburg.
Bass, white – 5 lbs., 9 ozs.; March 7, 1992; Sand Pit, Clay County; Jeffery L. Clark, Clay Center.
Bluegill – 2 lbs., 5 ozs.; May 26, 1962; Farm Pond, Scott County; Robert Jefferies, Modoc.
Buffalo, largemouth – 54.25 lbs.; May 24, 1971; farm pond, Ottawa County; Randy Lee, Minneapolis.
Buffalo, smallmouth – 51 lbs.; May 2, 1979; Farm Pond, Douglas County; Scott Butler, Lawrence.
Carp – 47 lbs., 1.6 ozs.; June 10, 1997; Carey Park (Hutchinson); Phil McAmis, Hutchinson.
Catfish, blue – 82 lbs.; August 18, 1988; Kansas River; Preston Stubbs Jr., DeSoto.
Catfish, bullhead – 7 lbs., 5.4 ozs.; May 15, 1985; Farm Pond, Montgomery Co.; David T., Havana.
Catfish, channel – 34 lbs., 11 ozs.; June 3, 1993; Kansas River, Douglas Co.; Kenneth Bradford, Lansing.
Catfish, flathead – 90 lbs.; June 15, 1993; Pomona Reservoir; Wayne Medlen, Pomona.
Crappie, black – 4 lbs., 10 ozs.; October 21, 1957; Woodson State Fishing Lake; Hazel Fey, Toronto.
Crappie, white – 4 lbs., 1/4 oz.; March 30, 1964; Farm Pond, Greenwood County; Frank Miller, Eureka.
Drum – 31.25 lbs.; July 17, 1982; Verdigris River; Arthur C. Hyatt, Coffeyville.
Eel, American – 4.44 lbs.; June 23, 1987; Kansas River; Ralph B. Westerman, Manhattan.
Gar, longnose – 31.5 lbs.; May 21, 1974; Perry Reservoir outlet; Ray Schroeder, Topeka.
Gar, shortnose – 5 lbs., 15 ozs.; May 4, 1985; Milford Reservoir; Jack M. Frost, Manhattan.
Gar, spotted – 7.75 lbs.; May 13, 1983; Chetopa Dam; Charles Harbert, Arma.
Goldeye – 2.25 lbs.; June 19, 1980; Milford Reservoir; Mike Augustine, Junction City.
Paddlefish – 87.75 lbs.; May 18, 1996; Chetopa Dam; Lonnie Jaro, Humboldt.
Perch, yellow (ring) – 0.84 lbs.; July 18, 1995; Atwood Lake; Jacob Morton, Atwood.
Pike, northern – 24.75 lbs.; August 28, 1971; Council Grove Res.; Mr. & Mrs. H.A. Bowman, Manhattan.
Redear – 1.69 lbs.; July 4, 1995. Place: Finney Wildlife Area; Larry Fox, Scott City.
Sauger – 4.09 lbs.; June 6, 1996; Melvern Reservoir; Craig Athon, Topeka.
Saugeye – 8.58 lbs.; July 2, 1997; Sebelius Reservoir; Larry Hawks, Almena.
Sturgeon – 4.5 lbs.; May 16, 1989; Kansas River; Danny Freeman, DeSoto.
Sunfish, green – 2 lbs., 5.76 ozs.; September 26, 1982; Farm pond; Fae Vaupel, Russell.
Trout, rainbow – 9 lbs., 5 ozs.; November 14, 1982; Lake Shawnee; Raymond Deghand, Topeka.
Walleye – 13 lbs., 2.56 ozs.; April 17, 1996; Wilson Reservoir; Dustin Ritter, Hoisington.
White amur – 57 lbs.; Aug 9, 1997; Farm pond, Pottawatomie County; York Haines, Topeka.
Wiper – 22 lbs.; June 28, 1993; Pomona Reservoir; Kevin Carson, Osage City.

—Bev Aldrich, I&E secretary, Pratt

Fall Fishing Tips

It's hard to beat a crankbait for early fall fishing. Gizzard shad are the preferred prey of most sport fish in our larger lakes and reservoirs. In the fall, young-of-the-year shad are about 2-3 inches long, and a white or chrome, fat-bodied crankbait is a perfect imitation. Cast a deep- or medium-diving crankbait along rocky points and rip-rapped shorelines, and retrieve it quickly, so it gets near the bottom and bounces off the rocks.

A deep-diving crankbait may be the best choice even if your fishing relatively shallow. The lure's long lip will deflect off the rocks and other snags, and this action can often illicit strikes. If the lure does hang up, give it some slack and it will often float free.

Using light monofilament or a small-diameter braid line will allow your crankbait to get deeper.

When water temperatures cool to the low 50s or high 40s in late fall, it's time to catch Kansas crappie. Reservoir crappie will congregate in large schools over deep brushpiles and creek channel dropoffs. Jigs or jigging spoons fished vertically in 12-25 feet of water are most effective.

If you're catching too many small crappie this fall, tie on a larger jig with a 2- or 2 1/2-inch shad-type rubber body. The larger bait will more closely resemble the shad and may discourage smaller fish from biting.

Always wear one or two more layers of clothing than you think you need when fishing in late fall. No matter how warm it feels on land, it will be much cooler on the water, especially if the wind blows.

When you find concentrations of crappie and white bass this fall, take care to use landmarks or GPS to mark the spots. They will often be productive for icefishing just after freeze-up.

—Miller

TIMBERDOODLE

The American woodcock, sometimes called the bog borer, bogsucker, or timberdoodle, is a plump member of the shorebird family that prefers scrubby, moist hollows, bogs, or streambanks. Well-camouflaged, its brown and black feathers blend perfectly with the leaf litter on the forest floor. Its big eyes, long bill, and frenetic movement are almost comical.

When foraging, the woodcock probes the soil for earthworms with its long tubular bill. The upper bill is very sensitive to touch and is equipped with special muscles that allow it to open the very tip and grab a worm without opening the entire bill. This makes the woodcock a highly successful earthworm catcher. In fact, it has been known to eat its weight in earthworms in a day.

It would seem that a bird with its long bill stuck in the mud would end up an easy meal for a predator, but the rearward location of the woodcock's eyes allows the bird to evade such surprise attacks. In fact, the woodcock has better depth perception of objects coming from behind than head on.

The courtship flight of the male woodcock is a remarkable sight on spring evenings. In an open meadow near a woodland, the male flies in a spiral high over the courtship grounds. He falls like a leaf and air passing through the specially-modified flight feathers produces a high whistling trill. He lands within a few feet of where he started, and after some nasal peent calls, does it again.

The female lays four eggs in a ground nest and incubates them for three weeks. A female woodcock reportedly uses her legs to hold a young bird while flying from danger.

The American woodcock nests in eastern Kansas and is considered an uncommon transient during migration.



Most sightings occur from April through November. Although there is a season on woodcock in Kansas – from Oct. 17-Nov. 30 – they are not heavily hunted.

—Ed Miller,
nongame biologist,
Independence

HABITAT CORNER

A belt of streamside trees, also called a riparian woodland, is a special habitat for wildlife. Many Kansas birds – such as the barred owl, wood thrush, and various woodpeckers – prefer this habitat. Wild turkeys use the tall trees for roosts, and bobwhite quail will seek cover in streamside woods. A contiguous band of trees provides important migration and travel corridors for many kinds of wildlife.

The streamside is also vital to high-quality water. A streamside with all the trees removed is like a cut that won't heal. Left unprotected, the stream's health is in jeopardy. The culprits are sediments, fertilizers, and pesticides eroded from surrounding fields. The good news is that streamside woodlands

can alleviate these ailments.

When water slows, sediments drop out and accumulate. Streamside trees reduce the speed of water draining from adjacent fields. Streams remain clearer and fish can see their prey. The silt accumulation on the forest floor may be thick. Sometimes, loggers will dig through 3 feet of sediment to reach the base of a valuable tree located on a floodplain.

Excess nutrients, primarily nitrogen and phosphorus, from fertilizer and animals wastes can choke a stream with algal blooms. When the algae dies and begins to decay on the streambed, the amount of dissolved oxygen in the water drops severely, stressing all the life in the waterway. However, research has shown that nitrogen in runoff and shallow groundwater is reduced by as much as 80 percent after passing through a streamside woodland. Instead of fertilizers running into the stream,

they are trapped by the trees and used to produce wood. Valuable sawlog production is an economic incentive to save riparian woodlands.

Streamside woodlands also prevent pesticides from being flushed into creeks and rivers. These chemicals are converted to non-toxic substances as they break down in the soil and ground cover under the tree canopy.

Trees moderate the high midday summer temperatures that warm water, and shaded, cooler water holds more dissolved oxygen. Tree roots prevent bank erosion, and fallen trees or branches quickly become fish habitat.

The wise land manager leaves streamside trees to protect water quality. The added benefits can include better hunting, fishing, wildlife watching, timber production, and a healthier landscape to pass on to the next generation.

—Ed Miller, nongame biologist,
Independence

ADOBE HOUSE COMPLETE

Renovations on the adobe house at Prairie Dog State Park began April 28 and are now complete. Years of erosion had caused structural damage to the adobe house. With the help of the Norton community and the state of Kansas, enough money was raised to restore the house — \$73,000. The state Division of Travel and Tourism, the federal Bureau of Reclamation, and the Jack Kump Memorial Fund provided most of the money.

The land the house sits on was purchased Dec. 3, 1892, by John Spencer. It is believed that construction of the adobe house started shortly afterward. The goal in restoring the house was to preserve it in its original state. John Lee and Associates, Lawrence, was hired to do the architectural work. Midwest Contractors was hired to do most of the structural work, including the roof. The Norton-based business, owned by Kennis Mann, was provided photographs in an attempt to match the work.

One obstacle for Mann was reconstruction the north wall. Methods and supplies were a bit primitive compared to today's technology. The walls of the house were originally made of soil and straw, so the new wall had to be made of the same material.

John McElwee, Hays, a third-generation plasterer, got the job of finishing the exterior wall. Before applying the adobe mixture, metal lath was put over the exterior wall to help hold the adobe in place. Two coats of adobe were then applied. The finishing touch included texturizing the adobe.

—Mathews

COOPERATIVE EFFORT

The Kansas Association for Conservation and Environmental Education (KACEE) has completed a memorandum of understanding with the Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) to become a co-sponsor of Project WILD and WILD/Aquatic in Kansas. KDWP is the state sponsor for this nationally-recognized program. KACEE already has similar MOUs with the Kansas Forest Service for Project Learning Tree and with the Kansas Water Office for Project WET.

This brings all three complementary programs under the umbrella of KACEE for coordination and support. Roland Stein, wildlife education coordinator for KDWP, will continue to serve as state coordinator for WILD and WILD/Aquatic.

The state coordinators for the three programs are meeting periodically to improve coordination and cooperation. The possibilities for joint promotion and combined workshops are already being realized. Work is underway to develop a single set of evaluation and reporting forms for the three programs.

—Mathews

INSTRUCTORS HONORED

Three outstanding hunter education instructors were presented with Franchi 48 AL shotguns at the Kansas Wildlife and Parks Commission meeting on Aug. 13. These shotguns were awarded in recognition of outstanding performance and contributions to the hunter education program.

The recipients were Jim Thompson, Overland Park; Ed

Augustine, Junction City; and Ken Roy, Wakeeney.

The shotguns were provided by the board of directors of the Kansas Wildscape Foundation. They were purchased from Gus Bader of American Arms, Inc., of North Kansas City, Mo., at a generous discount.

All three of the distinguished award recipients have made extensive contributions to the hunter education program, the goal of which is to educate safe, responsible, and ethical hunters. These three instructors have helped lead the way and have set an example for others to follow.

—Ross Robins, hunter education coordinator, Pratt

SHOOTING RANGES TO BE DEVELOPED

The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) has announced that the agency will provide \$200,000 for construction, development, and improvement of shooting ranges throughout the state in fiscal year 1998 (July 1, 1997-June 30, 1998). The money will be available on a cost-share basis to cooperating organizations and KDWP public land managers.

Both existing and new ranges will be considered, and ranges may be on public or private land. Applications will be

accepted until all grant money is awarded.

In recent years, the demand for public shooting ranges has increased, but the number of ranges has not, and existing facilities have deteriorated. Through development of basic, no-frills ranges in areas of the state where the need for public shooting ranges is greatest, the agency hopes to help meet the demand for places to shoot.

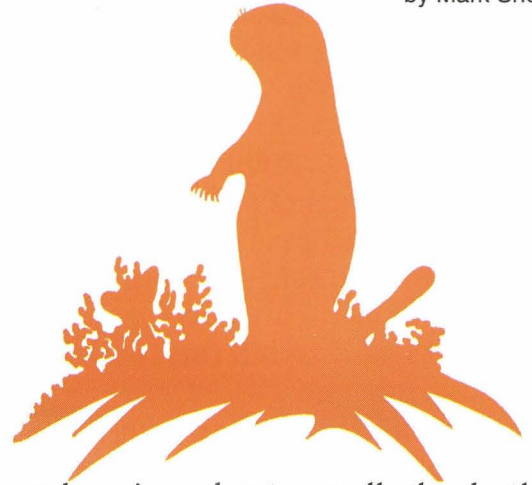
For each proposal, applicants are expected to finance at least 50 percent of the entire project with cash, donated materials, labor, or some other approved in-kind match. Using criteria such as population density, distance to existing ranges, public support, availability of the range to the public, and the amount of matching funds the applicants can provide, projects will be evaluated to determine which proposals best meet public need. Those proposals that rank highest during the evaluation process will be awarded development money.

Groups or organizations interested in developing a public shooting range should contact the Hunter Education Section, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, 512 SE 25th Ave., Pratt, KS 67124, (316) 672-5911. Applications and a procedure manual will be provided.

—Shoup



Prairie Pups



Most people who have spent time in the western half of Kansas have been lucky enough to see the little rodent we call the prairie dog. Although there aren't a lot of prairie dogs left in Kansas, many native pastures in the west still provide homes for this social animal.

The first signs of a prairie dog colony (called a town) are the tell-tale mounds of bare dirt in short grass. If you stop and watch quietly, the little animals, which are about the size of a squirrel, will soon appear from their burrows and scurry from one mound to the next. They'll stop and nibble grass, sit on their back legs and search for enemies, or bark a

warning as a hawk flies over.

If this happens, they will scamper into their burrows or bark together on top of the mound. When the danger has passed, they emerge from the burrows and give a "jump-yip" call to sound the all clear.

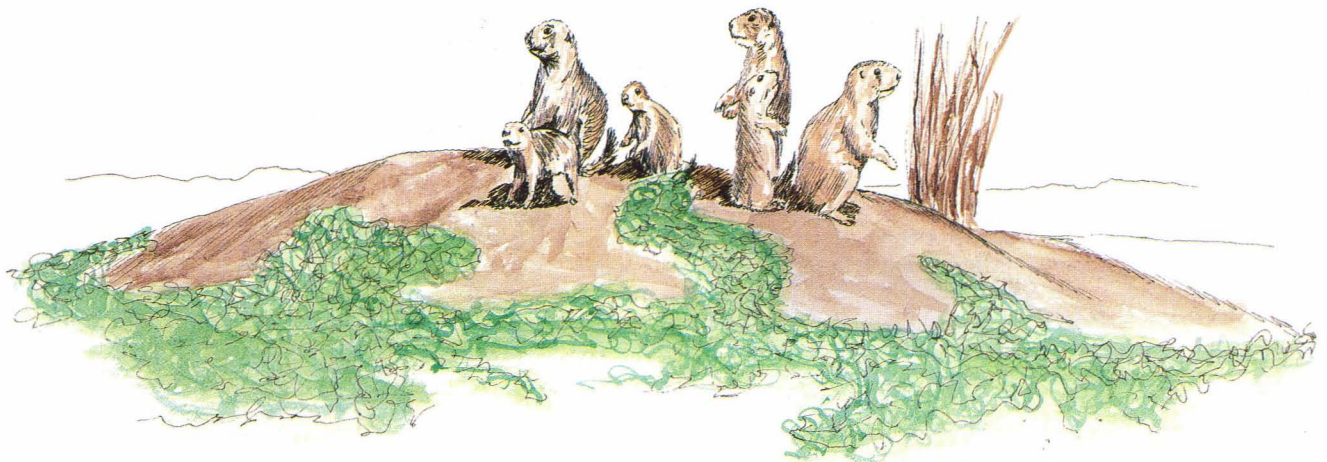
In Kansas, the black-tailed prairie dog is the only species found. Its scientific name, *Cynomys ludovicianus*, is Latin for "dog mouse." It grows to about 16 inches and may weigh 2-3 pounds.

Black-tailed prairie dogs love the company of other prairie dogs. They greet each other with "kisses" – actually touching each other's mouth parts

in order to smell glands that identify one individual from another. Young do this frequently. Dogs are also fond of grooming one another. This is not to say that prairie dogs can't get ornery. They will bare teeth and fight ferociously when an intruding prairie dog comes into the wrong territory.

The prairie dog's main diet is grass. It is estimated that 250 dogs can eat as much as a 1,000-pound cow. It will also eat insects, especially grasshoppers.

A prairie dog town is an

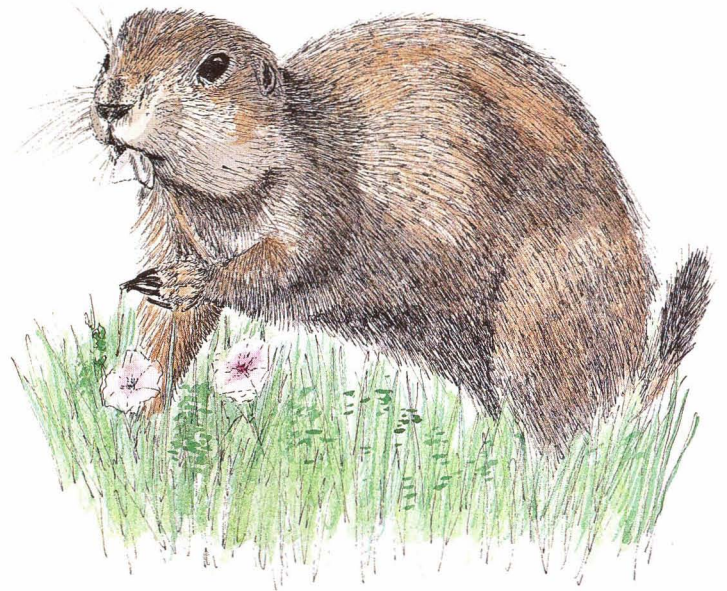


underground wonder. The burrow opening is about 6 inches wide and leads to a tunnel that goes from 3 to 16 feet deep before branching out. A guard room is located off this tunnel a few feet down. From here, wary prairie dogs can listen for danger before going out. Many loops and branches are dug off the main tunnel, as well, including 10-inch bedroom chambers and toilet rooms. Each burrow also has an exit mound in addition to the entrance.

Other animals, including burrowing owls, snakes, rabbits, and insects use old prairie dog holes as homes.

Many creatures eat prairie dogs. Hawks, badgers, and coyotes all prey on them and can usually be found near a town. Bobcats and foxes prey on them, too. Rattlesnakes and bullsnares will take the young. The prairie dog's worst predator, however, is the black-footed ferret. Or at least it used to be. This small weasel is now gone from Kansas and can only be found in Wyoming, so the remaining dogs in Kansas just contend with more commonplace predators.

Although prairie dogs are not rare, they are not nearly as common as they once were. In 1903, prairie dog towns covered about 2 1/2 million acres in Kansas. Today, only about 50,000-75,000 acres of prairie dog towns remain. Most of this is on private land, but dogs can be viewed on public land, as well. The Cimarron National



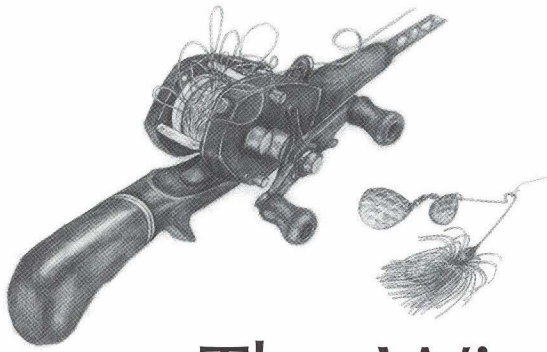
Grasslands, in Morton County, has prairie dog towns, and Quivira National Wildlife Refuge, west of Hutchinson, has a thriving native population.

A prairie dog town is being re-established at Kanopolis State Park. This town only has about 12 dogs, but the nearby wildlife area has a good town. And of course, there's Prairie Dog State Park. This park is on Sebelius Reservoir in

Norton County. It boasts a prairie dog town of 500-1,000 animals. State parks might be the best bet to watch dogs close up because they become somewhat used to people.

Prairie dogs are as much a part of Kansas natural history as the buffalo. Next time you visit a place where dogs are found, take time to sit and watch quietly. Imagine the town stretching as far as the eye can see.





Backlash

by Mike Miller

The Wind Always Wins

% #@\$% wind. It doesn't matter how long you live in Kansas, you never really appreciate a 40 mph southerly wind sandblasting your face with Oklahoma dirt. I do remember some foreigners — from the East Coast I think — who loved the Kansas wind. They were accustomed to summer heat with high humidity and no wind. To them, wind, no matter how stiff, was welcome in summer.

Wind interferes with any worthwhile outdoor activity, except sailing or wind surfing, neither of which interest me. A typical Kansas gale can make hunting and fishing, which interest me, impossible.

I've tried to rely on television weather forecasters but have come to the conclusion that with all the scientific equipment they use to predict the weather, they simply guess when it comes to wind. I think they have this little cardboard dial with a spinning arrow. The dial has four pie-shaped sections — a tiny sliver for 5-15 mph, a larger slice for 10-20 mph, a little larger slice for 25 mph and gusty, and a huge section for 15-25 mph. Before the weathercast, they simply flick the arrow, and wherever it stops is the wind forecast for the following day. It's about as accurate as the high-tech equipment.

Several springs ago, frustrated with local weather forecasts, I decided to be spontaneous. I called Lennie and told him I'd pick him up at 6 the next morning. We'd hit Wilson Reservoir and catch smallmouths. Lennie wasn't so positive, but I didn't let him back out. He answered the door the next morning none too chipper and rode the two-hour trip without saying a word. I let him snooze so he'd be ready to fish. We arrived to a nearly deserted lake, and there was a light chop on the water.

The first sign of our doom was when we removed the boat cover. Instead of folding neatly to the front of the boat, the cover rose like a hover craft as the last tie-downs were loosened. Lennie's attitude worsened as we wrestled the boat-shaped parachute into the back of the pickup. While we fished in the sheltered cove, I watched the small whitecaps on the main lake and told Lennie it didn't look too bad. He still wasn't talking, but he rolled his eyes at me unconvinced. I started the boat on a slow plane and turned into the waves to avoid too much spray — it worked. No spray came over the boat hull, but the first wave sent small bucket of 60-degree water that smacked Lennie square in the face — then he woke up.

"I ain't goin' for this," he hissed through clinched teeth, water dripping from his mustache. "I could be home sleeping

right now, if it wasn't for you and your spontaneous ideas."

At least he was talking.

"It won't be so bad once I get the nose of the boat into the waves and get her up on plane," I yelled above the gale. Lennie cinched the tie string on his sweatshirt hood so that only his nose was visible and hunkered down.

Just then another bucket of cold water smacked us both in the face. The wind was gaining force, and the waves were really rolling.

"Let's just fish a little longer back in the cove," I suggested.

Lennie merely grunted and settled deeper inside the hood of his sweatshirt, bracing himself as I turned back with the waves. With uncanny accuracy, another bucket of water shot over the gunnel and into our faces.

"Arraugggghh," Lennie growled. "Take me home!"

After we wrung out, I convinced him to fish for a while in the protection of the boat ramp cove, and we cast to the shoreline we'd already fished with the same poor results. I was stalling. I just couldn't accept that we'd driven two hours only to fish less than an hour, then drive two hours back home. We ended up fishing one-and-a-half hours and driving four — the wind won that day.

The wind always wins. I've tried to hunt quail in 40 mph gales, and I've found that quail are quite adept at flushing into the wind, turning on a

dime, and catching the wind to fly back over your head in a streak of blurred feathers. It's very nearly an impossible shot. And your bird dog will get even harder of hearing on a windy day. He simply looks at you as if to say, "I can't understand a thing you're yelling. By the way, your face is awful red, so I think I'll just chase this rabbit for few hours."

Deer hunters know that wind direction is important. But wind speed is also a concern, especially if you spit or answer a call of nature, neither of which are recommended when the wind's blowing 40 mph or more. Sitting in a treestand with a bow in your hand can require Dramamine on a typical windy day, and I haven't figured out how to draw my bow with both arms wrapped around the trunk of a tree.

I guess we should learn from the hardy trees that survive out here in the western half of Kansas. They bend with the wind or they break. Well, I'm bent but not broken. It'll blow this fall, and I'll cuss the wind, knowing that it's listening about as well as my bird dog.

