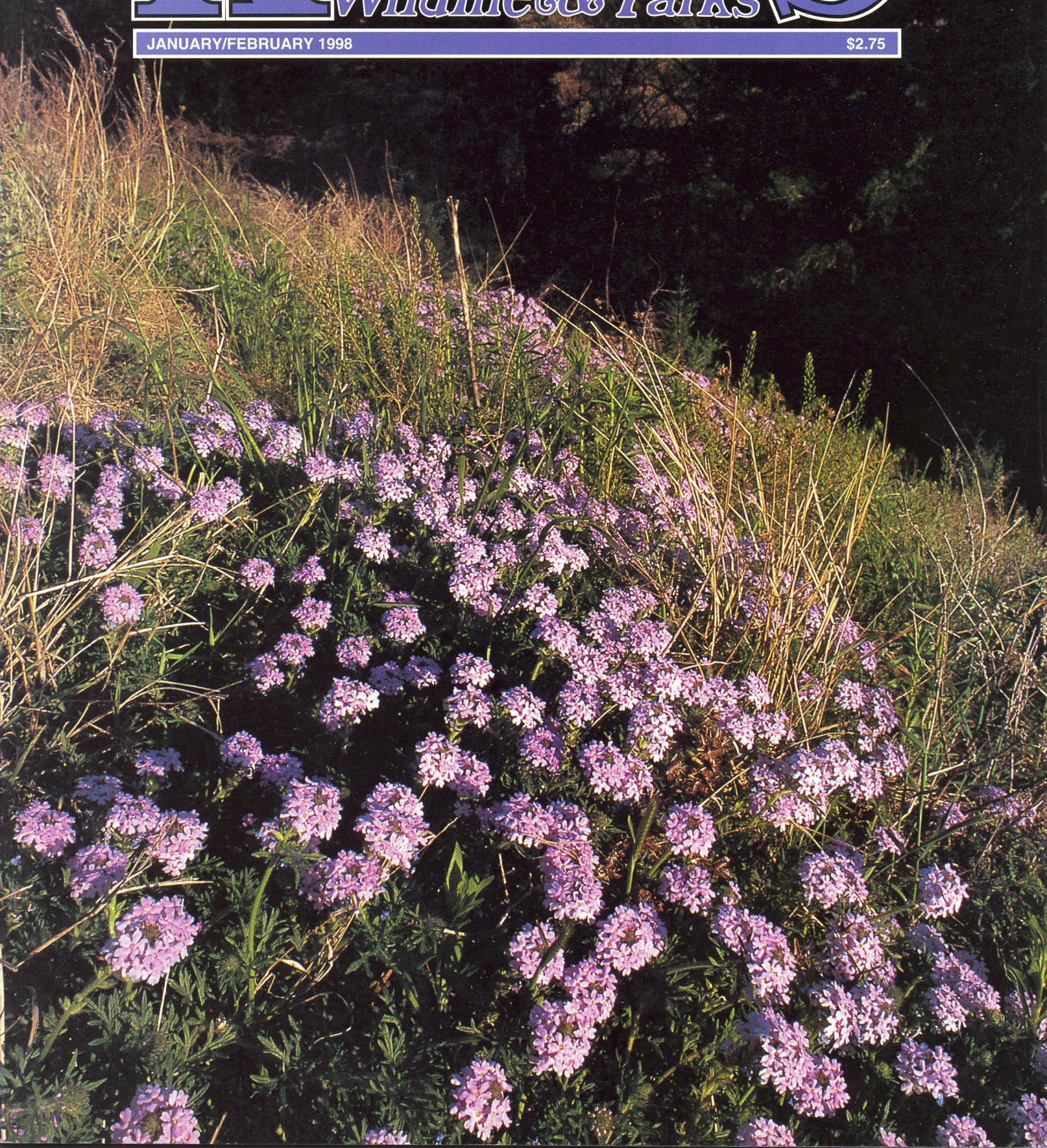


# KANSAS

*Wildlife & Parks*

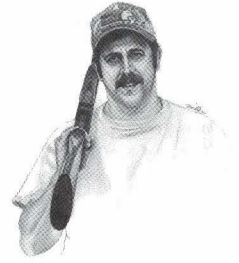
JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1998

\$2.75





## The View From Here



by Steve Williams

### State Parks: A Resource In Need

Over the last year, you may have heard or read about the need for funds to repair our state park infrastructure, as well as the critical need to establish a long-term funding source to keep our parks running. In a supportive move last summer, Gov. Bill Graves proposed a \$10 million appropriation from the State General Fund for park repairs. This General Fund money is available because of large, one-time tax receipts. The proposal will go before the Kansas Legislature this session, and department staff have been working hard to provide legislators with the information they need to make a decision.

The state park funding issue didn't just pop up. It's been around for a long time. State parks have never taken in enough money through fees and permits to adequately maintain facilities and provide services. General Fund money has always been provided to help operate our parks. Since 1987, however, when the Kansas Parks and Resources Authority and Kansas Fish and Game Commission were merged, the money state parks receive from the State General Fund has been reduced. Park managers have been creative, keeping aging facilities and equipment operating on an inadequate budget. But at the same time, the demands from state park constituents have grown and diversified. Facilities have deteriorated, and improvements to provide access to the handicapped have been postponed. We've reached a crossroads.

Last year, the Kansas Wildlife and Parks Commission appointed commissioners, legislators, and business leaders to the Task Force on Outdoor Kansas. The Task Force was asked to explore solutions to the state parks funding dilemma. The Task Force recognized that a large infusion of money would be needed initially just to bring our parks up to standards. The initial plan was to request a \$10 million bond issue for the infrastructure repairs, which the department would repay over the next 10 years. Gov. Graves' proposal would make the bond issue unnecessary.

If approved, the appropriation would be spread over a two- to four-year period and would address a prioritized list of the most urgently needed improvements in all of our state parks. The appropriation would be in addition to the Parks Division's annual operating budget of \$6 million, \$3 million of which comes from the State General Fund and the rest from fees paid by park users.

The problems caused by long-term, inadequate funding

have been aggravated by rising costs, aging facilities, flood damage, and ever-increasing demands for services and facilities. Some examples of the most critically-needed improvements include replacing a shower house at Cedar Bluff State Park, providing adequate utility service to Lovewell State Park campgrounds, replacing toilets at Tuttle Creek State Park, providing a handicapped-accessible office at Glen Elder State Park, replacing collapsing water lines at Clinton State Park, repairing the sewage lagoon at Cheney State Park, renovating the beach at Milford State Park, and similar projects at every other state park in Kansas.

These are projects that can't be put off any longer. Their completion is vital to maintaining the basic services state park users demand. The renovation plan calls for \$1,500,000 to be spent on new buildings, \$650,000 for utilities, \$4,180,000 for toilets and showers, \$3,530,000 for campgrounds and beaches, and \$140,000 for parking lots.

The value of state parks to campers, hikers, anglers, hunters, and outdoor lovers is obvious. State parks provide wholesome family fun. A recent survey indicated that nearly half of all Kansans had visited a state park in the past year. But the real value of our state parks goes much further. While they improve the quality of life for all those Kansans who enjoy them, they also provide an important economic boost to the state. State parks bring millions of dollars into neighboring communities and at the same time make those communities more attractive to prospective residents and businesses, increasing property values.

This appropriation should rightly be considered an investment in the future of our outdoor heritage. We can ensure that future generations will enjoy the same outdoor recreation opportunities we have taken for granted. The department and the Task Force will continue to search for long-term funding mechanisms, so that improvements made today will be maintained. The future of our 24 state parks and the outdoor resources we enjoy is in the balance. If you value, enjoy, and believe in these resources, let the department and your legislators know how you feel. Steps taken today will have impact far into the future.

*Steve Williams*

## Kansas Wildlife & Parks Third Annual Photo Issue

Blink and 1997 is gone. It doesn't seem possible that we're standing on the brink of the next century.

Kansas outdoor resources have seen many changes over the last 100 years. Land has been developed, land use has changed, there have been droughts, floods, pollution and urban sprawl. But we've also seen hunters and anglers provide millions of dollars for wildlife conservation, reclaiming wetlands, protecting critical habitat, restoring native wildlife species, and other "progress" that gives us reason to be optimistic.

We're on the heels of a great upland bird season, the best in many years. We've seen unmatched duck numbers migrate through Kansas this winter. And in a state that had few deer just 50 years ago, we're making an effort to *reduce* deer numbers in some regions.

The opportunities for outdoor recreation in Kansas are getting better. Let's make a New Year's resolution that we don't take them for granted. Please enjoy Mike Blair's images in this third annual photo issue, and remember that the natural resources we love will only be around for the next generation through dedication, conservation, understanding, and cooperation.

Mike Miller



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

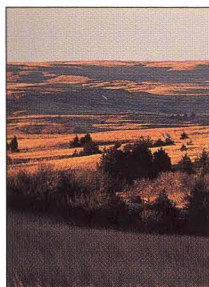
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### About the covers

**Front:** Dakota verbena on Barber County pond bank. Mike Blair photographed the scene with a 24mm lens, @ f/16, 1/250 sec.

**Back:** Southern Comanche County landscape. Mike Blair photographed this early-morning scene with a 400mm lens, @ f/11, 1/125 sec.



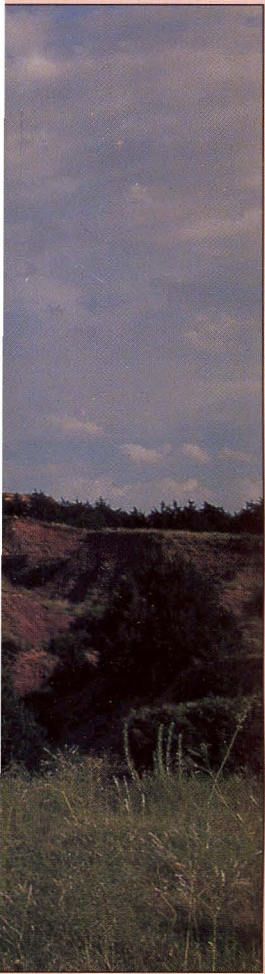
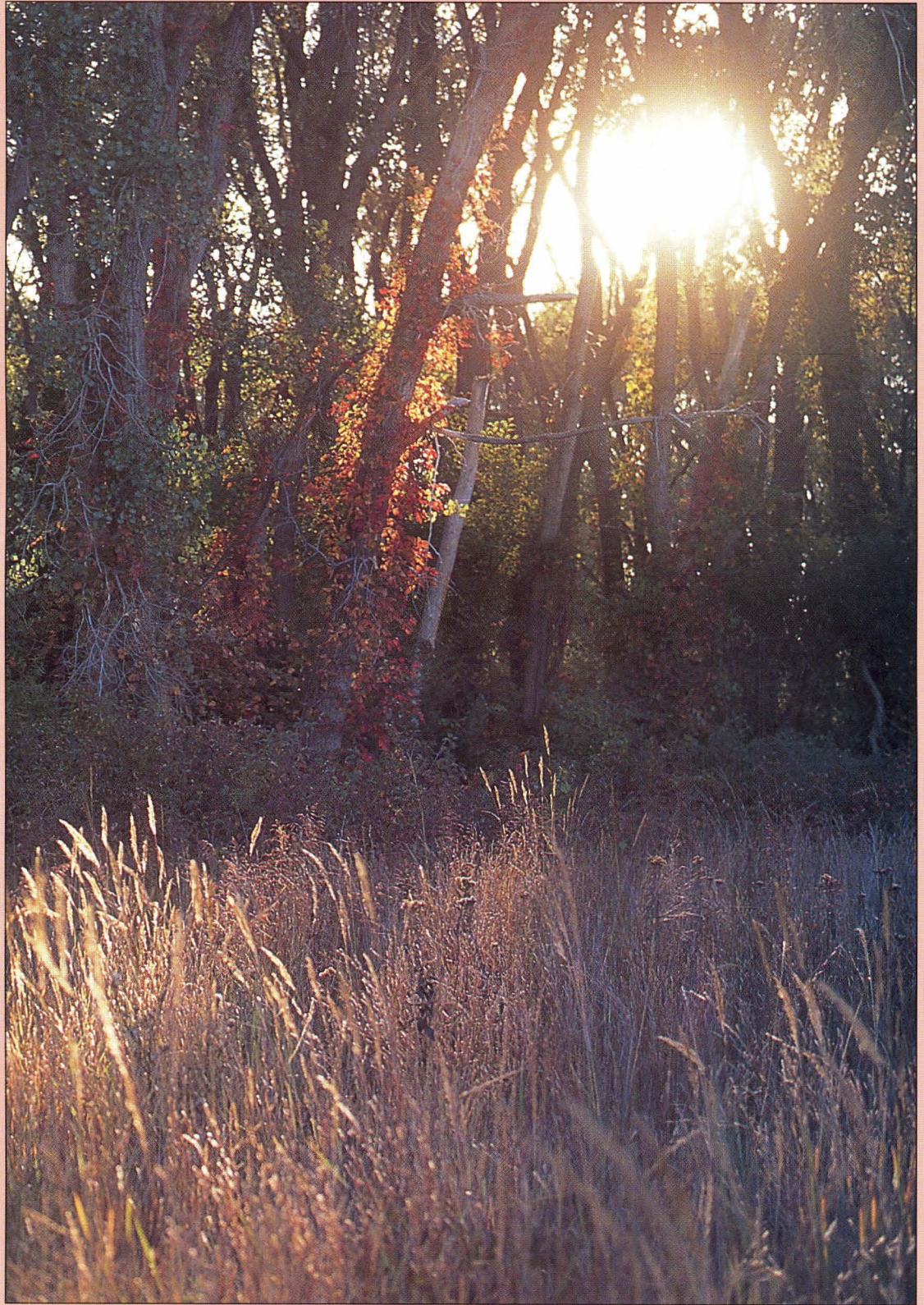


Red Hills, Barber County



Sandstone formations, Kiowa County

Sunlight filtering through cottonwoods, Pratt County





Turkey Creek sunset, Barber County



Red Hills, Barber County

Indian blanket and plains beebalm, Barber County





*A country backroad leads to some little-known piece of Kansas that most likely holds an important place in someone's heart -- a secret farmpond, a hedgerow with a covey, or merely a place to get away from it all.*





Country road, Linn County



Fox squirrel eating hawthorne berries, Pratt County



Jackrabbit, Wallace County

Cottontail rabbit, Russell County



*Once so numerous it was considered a pest, the jackrabbit now exists in a fraction of past numbers. Those who remember the jack's glory days wonder why, and those who see one today smile, relieved the hare still bounds across our land.*



Lightening strike, McPherson County





Ninnescah River, Pratt County

Hale-Bopp comet



Bald eagle, Marais des Cygnes Wildlife Area





Northern harrier, Phillips County

Tufted titmouse, Linn County





Cedar waxwings, Bourbon County





Ruby throated hummingbird, Linn County

*A day outdoors would be incomplete without the presence of birds. Their song soothes the mind, and the grace of flight stimulates the imagination.*



Fall color at Marais des Cygnes Wildlife Area



*Fall is conspicuous in its arrival with cool nights and vivid colors. But those who yearn for the change don't need blatant signals — they can smell it in the air and feel it in their core. Excitement mounts as the season approaches.*



Fall color, La Cygne Reservoir

White-tailed buck, Linn County





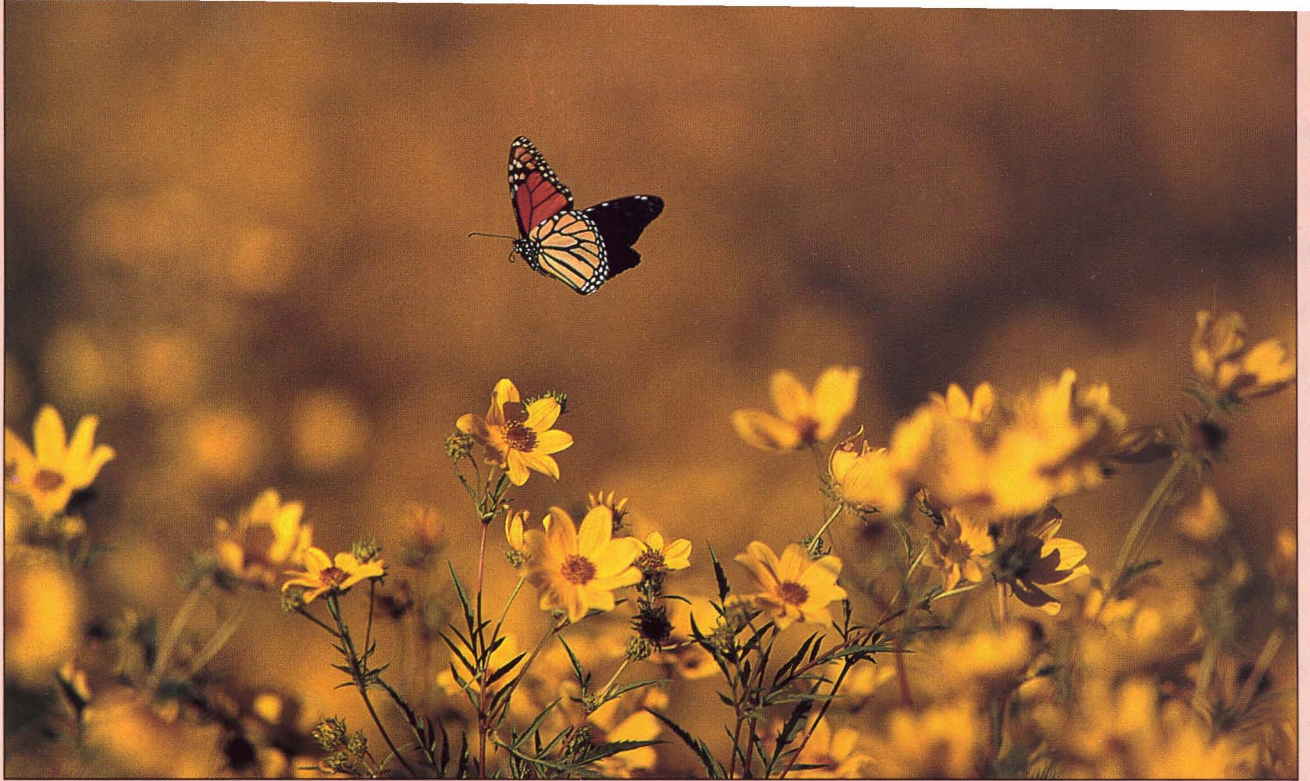
Sugar maples, Miami County





Maple and oak trees, Linn County





Monarch over bur marigolds

Indian blanket and plains beebalm





*Splashing color on our landscape with the randomness of a mad painter, wildflowers bring variety to our eyes and pleasure to our hearts.*





*Bugs — so fascinating in study — never fail to evoke emotion. While not always popular, insects are the base of our food chain, making our ecosystem healthy and complete.*



Lubber grasshopper, Barber County

Mayfly, Perry Reservoir, Jefferson County





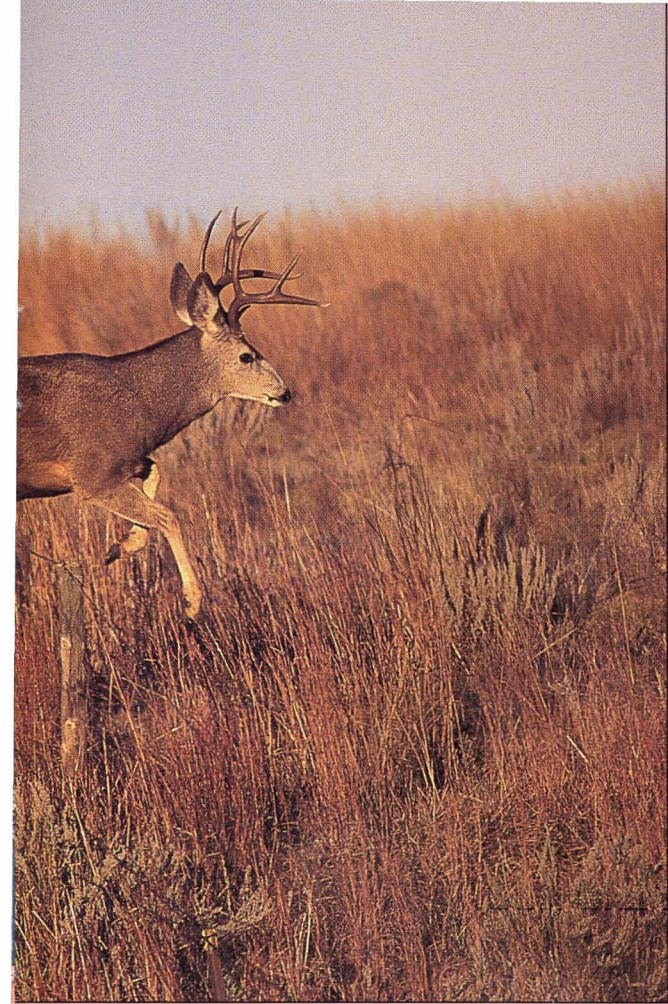
Mule deer, Barber County



*Once so rare, deer sightings made front-page news. Common across the state today, deer evoke a variety of emotions. Regardless of opinion, few of us are not taken by the beauty and thrill of wild deer.*

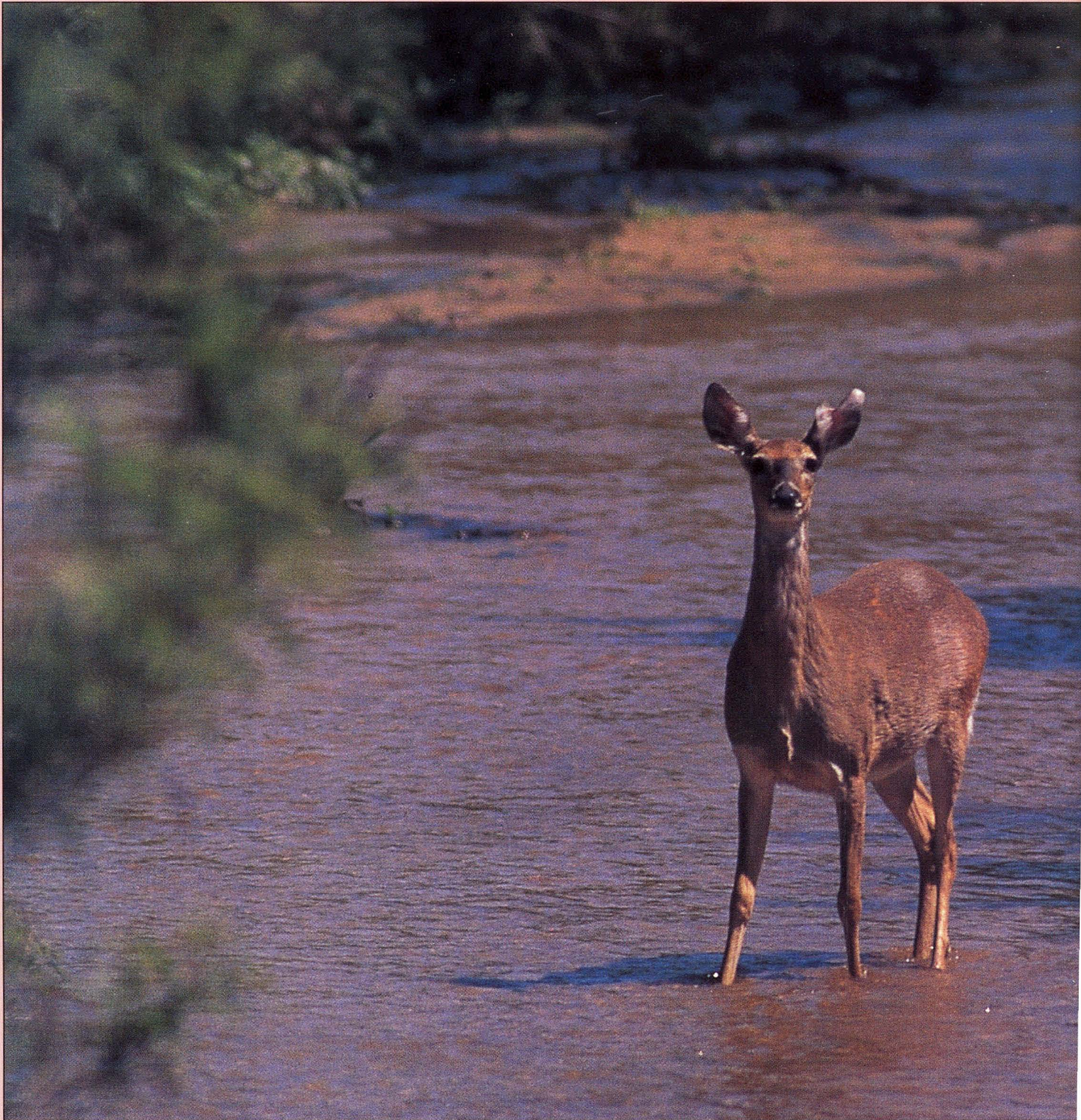
White-tailed buck and doe, Stafford County





White-tailed doe and twin fawns, Pratt County





White-tailed doe in Medicine River





White-tailed buck, Stafford County

Mule deer buck in velvet, Pratt County





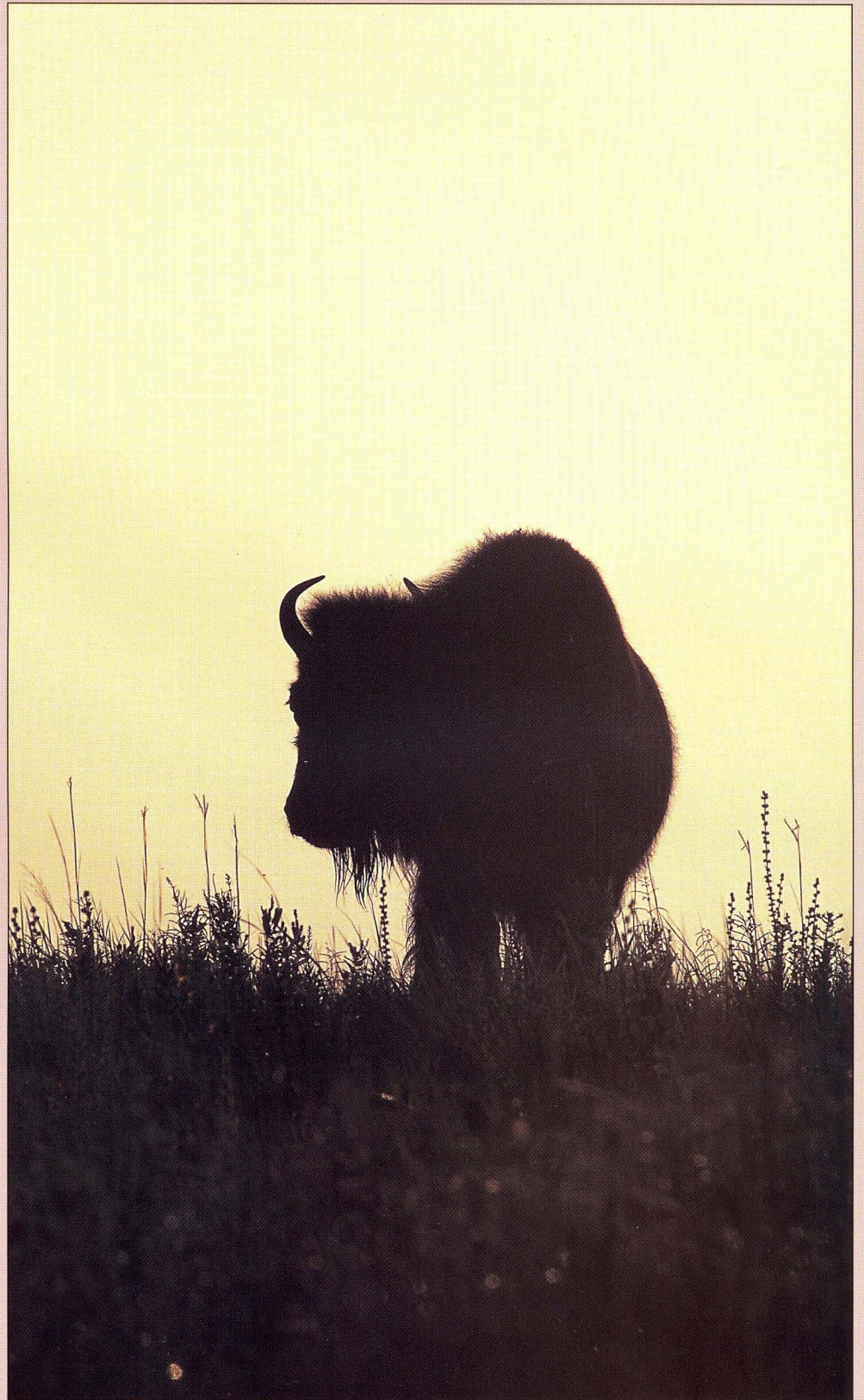


Coyote, Barber County

*Brothers of the prairie, the coyote and bison have traveled different paths. Intelligent and adaptive, the coyote has prospered as the land has changed. A relic of the past's endless grasslands, the bison survives as a token of the land's history.*



Bison, Maxwell Wildlife Area, McPherson County





*Dammed and diked, mighty rivers appear tame, but within that seemingly serene flow of water lies an awesome power that regularly reminds us of our place.*



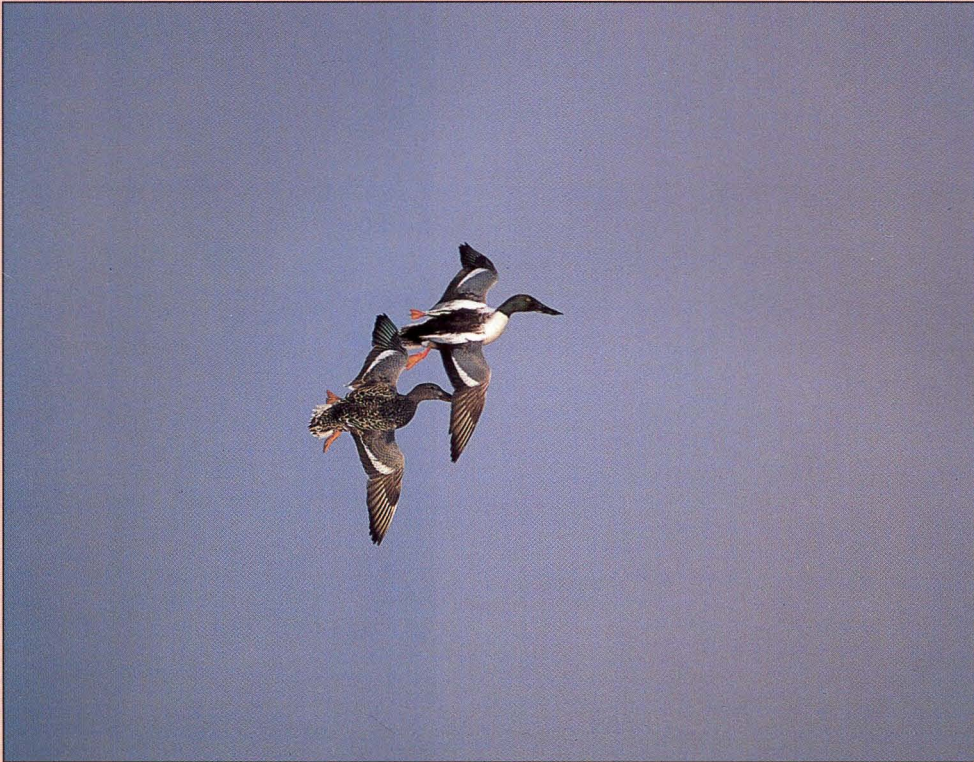
Missouri River, Wyandotte County



Mallard pair, Texas Lake Wildlife Area

Mallard hen, Marais des Cygnes Wildlife Area





Northern shovelers, Rice County

Great blue heron, Stafford County





Bobwhite quail, Kiowa County

*There is perhaps no sweeter sound than the bobwhite's whistle —  
aural tonic that soothes the soul.*



Barred owl, Linn County





Wigeon, Kingman County

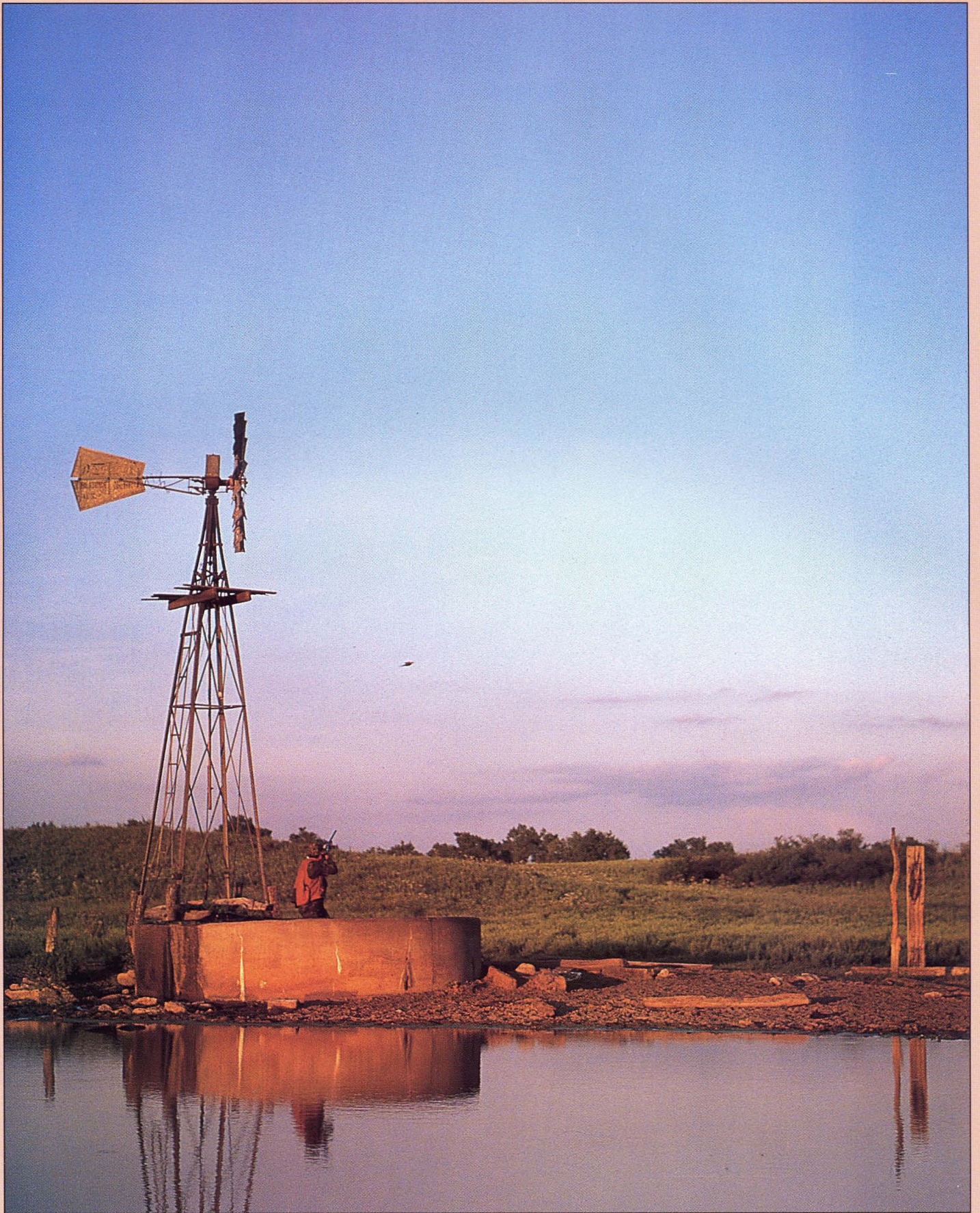


Canada goslings, Pratt Fish Hatchery



Avocet, Quivira National Wildlife Refuge







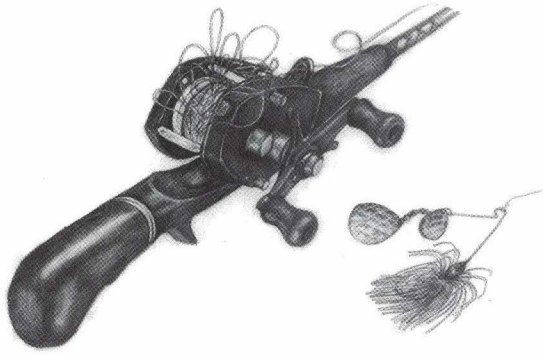
*It is a comfort to know that wild places still exist, but participation makes true believers. To take part in, become part of, and truly escape into the natural world develops respect and understanding of our natural resources.*



Farmpond, Barber County

Canoeing, Tuttle Creek River Pond, Riley County





# Backlash

by Mike Miller

## Building The Perfect Icefishing Sled

"Did ja get your ice sled built yet?" Lennie asked the other day. It was getting cold, and like other slightly off-center fishermen, we were dreaming of icefishing.

"You know I've been too busy to build it," I said defensively. "What with deer, duck and pheasant hunting this fall, and other things like my job, I haven't had time to do much else. I've got a great design, though, if I can just find time to work it into my busy schedule."

"Oh yeah," Lennie said unsympathetically. "I suppose you'll want to throw all your stuff in my sled again this winter."

"Look," I said. "You would've never built that sled if I hadn't talked you into going icefishing years ago. Besides, I practically gave you the idea to build it. Let me stow my gear in your sled one more year. When I finally build mine, you'll be glad you're my friend."

"Yeah right. Your sled gonna pay me that \$20 bucks you owe me?" Lennie huffed.

Good designs take time. I've been using Lennie's sled the last few years to test my ideas.

To build the perfect icefishing sled, you need some wood — preferably somebody else's wood. Those sheets of 1/2-inch exterior plywood gathering dust against the wall in a friend's garage are perfect. And the 2-by-2s your wife uses to keep your Brittany out of the flower bed are perfect for framing. Now you've got all you need to build the box, which is the simplest part.

The most important parts of the sled are the runners. I've learned this and other valuable lessons while using other people's sleds. A couple of years ago we were pulling a short train of sleds behind our borrowed three-wheel ATV. I was testing Stub's sled, which had two-by-four runners. As we sailed along to a "better" fishing spot, Stub's sled hit a little snow drift. Instead of gliding over the snow, the two-by-four runners stopped cold, causing a terrible wreck. Sleds overturned and bodies slid across the ice emitting curses. Fishing rods, tackle and various food items were scattered for 100 yards. And worst of all, it happened in front of a cluster of other fishermen, who laughed hysterically, grateful for the diversion since the fish weren't biting. I never put my gear in Stub's sled again.

Two five-foot pieces of 1-inch steel pipe, like the ones holding your neighbor's wood pile up will make perfect runners. You'll need to borrow a welder to attach the braces, which should raise the sled about 7 inches off the ground. You need enough clearance for snow, but not so much that you can't use the sled for a seat while fishing. I gave Lennie the great idea of attaching a swivel chair on his sled. It takes about 15 minutes for Lennie to get the sled positioned just the right distance from his hole, but it looks kind of comfortable. It can be dangerous on smooth ice though. I once saw Lennie's sled slip quietly out from under him when he stood up to set the hook. He sat back down hard on the ice, and he missed the fish — boy was he mad. Of course we laughed until our bellies hurt, thankful for the entertainment since the fish weren't biting.

Lennie has a neat pole holder screwed in his sled box, which was a great idea. But by the time Rocky and I get our lunches, tackle boxes, augers, extra gloves and buckets stuffed in, we just sort of set the rods on top, out of harm's way.

And last is the tongue. I've seen sleds pulled with rope, but they get kind of squirrely at 30 mph behind a three-wheeler. After several tries and some insightful input from me, Lennie has a nearly perfect tongue on his sled -- a one-inch steel pipe tongue welded to a sleeve that swivels up and down at the point where it attaches to the sled. This allows you to easily hitch to whichever three-wheeler you've borrowed that day, or simply pull the sled behind you if you have to walk.

Some glue, wood screws and a little paint, and you're set for the icefishing season. You'll be amazed at how popular you are when you have your own ice sled and are getting ready to embark on the long trek out to where the fish are suppose to be biting. Everyone will want to walk along with you and compliment you on your fine sled.

My ice sled design is functional, durable, and it will only cost pennies. One of these days, I'm going to get around to building it. Until then, I need to convince Lennie he owes me for something, so he can pay me back by stowing my gear in his sled — just one more season.

