

# KANSAS

*Wildlife & Parks*

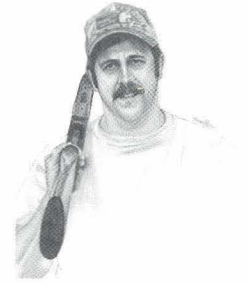
NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1998

\$2.75





## The View From Here



by Steve Williams

# Great Expectations

As a bird hunter, I'm looking forward to November. According to our surveys, the prospects for the 1998 pheasant and quail seasons are very good. Last year was phenomenal — perhaps the best this decade. We didn't harvest a record number of either pheasants or quail, but the improvement in pheasant numbers and harvest over 1996 was nothing short of amazing. The 1997 pheasant harvest improved nearly 30 percent over 1996! Some of the more promising news came from the southwest, where pheasant numbers had plummeted in recent years. With near perfect nesting and brood-rearing conditions in 1997, the birds rebounded tremendously. It appears they've at least held their own through 1998, which, weatherwise, offered a little of everything (See page 32 for a regional breakdown).

The spring and summer of 1998 brought us a warm, dry spring — generally good for upland bird nesting. However, there was concern that an early-maturing wheat crop would remove this popular nesting cover before many nests were completed. A 4-day cold spell in early June also may have caused some chick mortality, but since it was dry, damage was most likely minimal. Through the rest of June, we were treated to extreme heat and drought. Then July came, bringing rain and relief from the heat. September may have been the warmest and driest on record, but young birds were probably old enough to survive, and the timely summer rains will provide good cover conditions.

In a nutshell, pheasant numbers should be at least as good as last year in most regions with some local exceptions. Portions of the northwest that were hit hard by an October blizzard last year will see lower pheasant numbers than areas the storm missed. And a massive June hail storm that pummeled an area along the Smoky Hill River Valley from the Colorado border to Kanopolis Reservoir in Ellsworth County reduced bird numbers in its path. Heavy summer rains may have also reduced reproductive success in the northeast.

Quail harvest also increased substantially in 1997, and it looks like we could see a moderate harvest increase in 1998. Breeding populations were up statewide, and nesting conditions were generally good with dry weather and few storms. The northeast was the exception, where heavy spring rains may have reduced nesting success. Good quail numbers, similar to those of 1997, will be found in most regions. The real bright spot is in the south-

east, where quail numbers hadn't recovered much in recent years. This year, quail numbers in the southern Flint Hills and counties east of there have increased substantially, and this area should provide some of the best quail hunting found anywhere.

Along with excellent bird numbers, there is another reason to be optimistic this fall. Our Walk-in Hunting Area (WIHA) program continued to grow. District wildlife biologists had a busy summer, trying to best last summer's total of 330,000 acres. When the dust cleared, even some of the biologists were surprised. More than 1,600 separate tracts in 95 counties, totalling more than 490,000 acres, were enrolled in the WIHA program! This more than doubles the amount of public land open to hunters in Kansas. And surveys from hunters who visited WIHA tracts last year indicated they were very pleased with the program and enjoyed good hunting on the areas. Visit your nearest department office for a WIHA atlas, call the Pratt office to have one sent to you, or you can look it up on our website ([www.kdwp.state.ks.us](http://www.kdwp.state.ks.us)).

It's going to be a great fall, but we're not sitting on our laurels. Even with increasing numbers, there is still concern about the plight of the pheasant in southwest Kansas. Changes in the way the land is farmed has made the Great Plains landscape much less attractive to pheasants. To preserve the pheasant hunting tradition and the economic boost it brings to this rural area, the department created the Pheasant Recovery Initiative. This program has researched reasons for the pheasant's decline, as well as explored alternative farming practices that yield benefits to both farmers and wildlife. In addition to research, brochures and videos have been produced to aid landowners who want more pheasants on their land. More research and test farms are planned, as well as continued education efforts.

This will be a great fall for Kansas hunters. Good bird numbers and the unprecedented hunting opportunities of WIHA make this year a good one to take a youngster or new hunter hunting. Not only can you introduce a person to a wholesome outdoor activity that will last a lifetime, but by adding hunters to our ranks, you strengthen the core of our wildlife conservation programs. I'll see you in the field. As always, respect landowners' property, and hunt safely and ethically.

*Steve Williams*

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KANSAS WILDLIFE & PARKS (ISSN 0898-6975) is published by the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, 900 Jackson St., Suite 502, Topeka, KS 66612. Address editorial correspondence and subscription requests to Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, 512 SE 25th Ave., Pratt, KS 67124 (316) 672-5911. Subscription rate: one year \$10; two years \$18; and three years \$27. Articles in the magazine may be reprinted with permission. Periodical postage paid at Pratt, KS and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Kansas Department of Wildlife - 512 SE 25th Ave., Pratt KS 67124.

Kansas Department of Wildlife Parks Website

<http://www.kdwp.state.ks.us>

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### About the covers

**Front:** A red fox suns near its den on a snowy Kansas day. Mike Blair photographed the animal with a 400mm lens, @ f/16, 1/250 sec.

**Back:** A white-tailed buck cruises the marsh in search of does. November is the prime breeding period for whitetails in Kansas. Blair filmed the deer with a 400mm lens, @f/11, 1/125 sec.





Our first impression of many wild animals comes from fairy tales, nursery rhymes and cartoons. And leading villain parts are often played by the crafty red fox, if the big bad wolf isn't available. We are taught that the fox is sly and cunning. In the Thornton W. Burgess novel, Reddy Fox constantly attempts to outwit Peter Rabbit, who survives thanks to the shelter of the ol' briar patch.

From a different era when most farmers kept chicken houses, the red fox was despised for its reputation for raiding those chicken houses. Today, waterfowl area managers may not appreciate the fox for its efficient predation on nesting waterfowl. And some small game hunters blame the fox for dropping numbers of their favorite upland birds.

Most of these raps against the fox are undeserved. The fox may be intelligent, but it's wrong to attach human attributes such as cleverness

or evil to animals. Foxes probably did prey on domestic chickens. Like any predator, they must take advantage of any opportunities to survive. And foxes aren't the limiting factors in waterfowl and small game populations. It's true that without coyotes to limit their numbers, red foxes have moved into prairie areas previously outside of their range, and these foxes do prey heavily on nesting waterfowl. However, the primary limiting factor here is habitat. Red fox predation is much more prevalent when upland nesting habitat is reduced to narrow strips around wetlands. In areas with large tracts of grass surrounding prairie potholes, predation by foxes is much less of a factor. The same is true in small game populations. The red fox will eat whatever is most numerous and easily caught.

# Fox Tale

by Kevin Becker

*fisheries technician, Pratt Fish Hatchery*

photos by Mike Blair

***Although often portrayed as the crafty or sly villain in fairy tales, the red fox is really just a predator. The fox occupies a narrow niche within our Kansas ecosystem, usually near the outskirts of towns and cities.***

Even with a much undeserved bad rap, the red fox has its admirers. The furharvester seeks the red fox for its valuable, deep crimson pelt. Houndsmen and red-coated horsemen worship the fox as challenging quarry for their dogs. And nature watchers love the red fox for its glamour and aesthetic appeal — the red fox adapts readily to urban life, providing suburbanites rare viewing treats.

Taxonomists once believed there were two species of red fox indigenous to the states — the European red fox and the native North American red fox. Today they are generally accepted as the same species and given the the Latin name *Vulpes vulpes*.

The history of the red fox in North America is a subject of controversy. It's believed that prior to American settlement, the red fox was native throughout Canada and parts of New England but absent in regions south of New York. Around the year 1650, red foxes were imported from England and released in Maryland by plantation owners for hunting. After a couple of decades, the red fox spread into Virginia and in the mid-18th century, more were imported and released in New Jersey and Long Island. Fox populations expanded as settlers cleared solid stands of timber in eastern North America and eliminated other large predators such as the coyote and wolf, creating favorable conditions for the fox.

Fox hunting with horses and hounds was of English origin and considered a prestigious affair. Protocol was of the utmost importance where men and hounds both obeyed strict rules. The clothing worn by the hunters was exacting and indicated group rank.

Red-coated aristocrats would ride their horses across the countryside blasting on their English horns while hurdling fences and stone walls following the hounds in pursuit of a red fox. These were social events conducted only for the sport of the chase, rarely harming the fox. Hunting clubs held the fox in the highest regard.

Today the tradition lives on in the United States. Kansas even has some dedicated redcoats who still ride to the baying of the hounds. Hunts are conducted annually at two military posts in the state: Fort Leavenworth and Fort Riley. Fox hunting on horseback with hounds

is more popular in the East and Southeast.

Foxes are also run with hounds in Kansas, as well as parts of the south. Running is another social activity as houndsmen will sit around a campfire through the night and listen to the hounds bay during the chase.

With all the evil the fairy tale fox is reputed to have caused, you might think the beast is quite large. Actually, the red fox isn't much bigger than your ordinary house cat. The smallest member of the dog family, Canidae, the red fox weighs an average of 8 to 14 pounds and measures 35-40 inches from nose to



The red fox is believed to have been native only to Canada and New England prior to settlement. In 1650, Maryland plantation owners released foxes imported from England for hunting purposes. Subsequent releases and changes in the land allowed the red fox to expand its range even more.



Fleet on long legs, the red fox stands about 14-16 inches tall, although it weighs only 8-14 pounds. Known for its flame-red color, the red fox actually has several different color phases.

tail. Red foxes have long legs for the body size, standing 14-16 inches tall at the shoulders.

Like most wild canids, foxes have ears that are triangular and erect, and the snout is long and narrow. Its coat radiates hues of yellowish-orange on the sides and changes to a fiery red on the back. The chin, throat and belly are dull white. The tail is long and full with a white tip. Other fox species lack the conspicuous white tip. The back of the red fox's ears are black as are the lower legs and feet.

The color of the red fox varies greatly within its range. In the South its pelage is sandy blonde, while in the North, it's a deep, cherry red. Variations of these shades may be apparent among litters regardless of location.

While tones of red are the norm, other colorations occur primarily in the North. These phases of the red fox include black, silver

and cross. A black fox is as simple as it sounds — black. The silver is also black, but has frost-tipped guard hairs which give it a silvery appearance. A cross fox is reddish-brown with a dark band of guard hairs on its shoulders shaped like a cross. Among the mutations, the



Family groups stay together until fall, when they will usually disperse and remain solitary until the next breeding season.

pelt of the silver fox is the most sought by the fur industry.

Of all fox species, the red fox is the most widespread. It's found throughout North America except for parts of Canada and the southwest U.S. In Kansas, the red fox was originally restricted to the eastern third of the state but expanded its range westward due to modern agriculture.

A variety of areas are inhabited by the red fox today. These include mixed woodlands, farmlands, grasslands and areas that border river bottoms and rocky hillsides. The red fox has learned to live in close proximity with man, abiding near towns and cities.

The red fox's adaptation to living near humans may have come from necessity, in

an attempt to avoid coyotes, which generally avoid suburbs and cities. It is common for coyotes to kill red foxes within their territory, and they may be a limiting factor in red fox numbers. Relatively high coyote numbers in Kansas may explain low red fox numbers, compared to prairie states to the north. As might be expected, red foxes are most common in Kansas at the fringes of cities and small towns.

Disease and parasites also take their toll on the red fox. When foxes become too numerous, they become vulnerable to epidemics, including rabies, distemper, hepatitis, encephalitis and mange. Sarcoptic mange is caused by an external parasite called a mite and is nearly always fatal to the red fox. It can deplete fox numbers from entire regions. Red foxes are also plagued with heartworms, tapeworms and can be effected by introduced diseases and parasites from domestic canines.

A recent problem involving epidemics exists in the southeast U.S. Enclosed running pens are constructed on large tracts of land, sometimes as large as a section. Foxes are introduced to provide races for hounds. A concern among wildlife biologists is that these pens and the resulting interstate translocation of live foxes presents an unnatural spread of disease and parasites among fox populations.

Red foxes are omnivores, dining on anything from mice to wild berries. Birds and mammals top the menu but other foods are consumed when available. During the summer, foxes often feed on grasses, grapes, apples, insects, corn and other grains. In the winter, cotton rats, mice, rabbits, squirrels, and even carrion fulfill its appetite.

A highly effective predator, the red fox employs an intriguing hunting style called mousing. With its exceptional hearing, a fox can detect the slightest sound made by a mouse moving under grass or snow. Once it pinpoints the sound, the fox leaps upward in a bowed posture and pounces on the prey, pinning it to the ground with its front feet. In a flash, the fox will chomp on the mouse, flip it into the air and catch it in its jaws for a



An effective predator, the red fox is uniquely adapted to catching rodents, one of its favorite meals. With acute hearing, the fox pinpoints a mouse's location by sound, then pounces on the spot, pinning the mouse to the ground before eating it.

quick meal. A fox will sometimes release prey to catch it again, in a cat-like maneuver. Foxes have also been known to kill more than they can eat at a given time, caching the surplus to eat later.

Not only is the fox's hearing acute but like other canids, it has a keen sense of smell and good eyesight. The fox uses its nose to deter-

mine identity, sex and territory of neighboring foxes. Scent glands are located on top of the fox's tail and on the pads of its feet. Foxes urinate on clumps of grass, fence posts, brush and rocks, creating scent posts that mark territory, similar to domestic dogs urinating on car tires or fire hydrants. In addition to scent communication, red foxes will com-



Litters average 6 pups, which are usually born in March or April. Both parents tend to the young, bringing in small rodents and other prey. At five weeks, the pups venture out of the den, and at 10 weeks they are weaned and accompany the parents on hunts.

municate with other foxes vocally, sounding out squeals, yaps, barks, growls and screams.

Red fox courtship begins in late December. Males may fight over the affection of a vixen, and the winner will bond with the female. By January or February, the pair is inseparable. The breeding season occurs from late December through early March.

After breeding, the vixen prepares one or more dens within the pair's home range. Foxes may build dens or modify abandoned dens of other animals such as badgers or woodchucks. Dens, which can be identified by freshly excavated dirt and scattered animal parts left from meals, may have more than one entrance.

After a 51- to 53-day gestation period, one to 15 pups are born with their eyes closed. Average litters consist of four to eight young. Pups are 6-8 inches long and weigh 3-4 ounces at birth. Most litters are



Easy to spot on a snowy, winter day, the red fox will often lie curled on a sunny hillside to soak in the sun.

born in March and April. For the first week after birth, the female remains with the young and is catered to by the male. Both parents attend to the pups. Prey is brought to the den and torn into tiny morsels. Large prey items may be eaten, pre-digested and regurgitated for the pups to eat.

When the pups are five weeks old, they begin to venture outside the den. At ten weeks, the pups are weaned and begin to accompany the parents on hunting trips. Young fox pups must be alert for predators such as the great horned owl, eagle, bobcat and coyote. Later in the summer, the pups learn to hunt for themselves. The foxes abandon their dens in the fall and disperse out on their own, usually remaining solitary until the next breeding season.

The anatomy of the fox is well suited for what it does best — run. Without its sleek fur coat, the fox resembles a petite greyhound. The fox survives by running to elude its enemies. The pond dikes at the Pratt Hatchery where I work host a family of red foxes during most winters. "Amazing" is an understatement when describing how fast they can vanish when disturbed. I've seen them dash into old drain pipes, instantly disappear into the



Foxes in Kansas are common near the outskirts of towns and cities, an adaptation necessary to avoid coyotes, which won't tolerate foxes within their territory. Because of the relatively high coyote population in rural Kansas, foxes may never be widespread.



brush of the river bottom and leap over a 5-foot fence on a dead run.

Although the red fox is primarily nocturnal, it can be observed during dusk, dawn and occasionally mid-day. On cold winter days, the fox will seek sunny, sheltered areas where it curls into a ball and warms in the sun's rays. The fluffy tail wraps around the nose, serving as a muff against the harsh conditions. If snow blankets the ground, the red fur ball is easily spotted.

Two other fox species inhabit Kansas. The gray fox is limited to the brushy woodlands of the eastern part of the state. Its size is comparable to the red fox, but its appearance is not. The gray fox is grizzled gray on its back and reddish yellow low on its side and back of its head. The throat, chest, and belly are white. A black streak extends down the back along the top of the tail, tipping the tail in black.

The swift fox is the smallest species of fox in Kansas, weighing only 3-6 pounds. It has a buff-yellow color with a black-tipped tail. Swift foxes live on the open, short-grass prairie in western Kansas.

The red fox is the most valuable fox to the furharvester. Each year regulated seasons are established for hunting and trapping red foxes, along with other furbearers. Kansas is separated into two furbearer units — the Eastern Unit and Western Unit. A running season usually opens two weeks after the furharvesting seasons and lasts until November, before the furharvesting seasons open. During the running season, it is illegal to harvest any furbearers.

Furharvesters are surveyed annually, providing information regarding number of days spent trapping, number of traps set and average success for each species. During the 1995-1996 seasons, 750 red foxes were harvested in Kansas, compared to 1,000 the previous year. In the last 20 years, 1983-1984 had the highest estimated harvest with 1,190, and 1990-1991 had the lowest with 240.



Trappers provide biologists with information about population trends. Once worth as much as \$50 each, fox pelts brought only an average of \$11 in 1996.


Additional harvest information is acquired from fur dealers, who must provide records of furs purchased. In 1995-1996, red fox pelts were worth an average of \$11.17. Over the last 20 years, the highest average price occurred in 1978-1979 when pelts brought an average of \$50.84 each. The lowest price on record was \$6.47 in 1990-1991.

While foxes harvested today are sought for their luxurious fur, this hasn't always been the case. During the 1930s and 1940s, red fox populations increased in many parts of the northern midwest, and there was little demand for long-haired fur within the fashion industry. However, the red fox, along with the coyote, was viewed as a threat to livestock and desirable game species. The general attitude was that these predators should be controlled by any reasonable means. Since trapping and hunting weren't controlling fox numbers due to the low fur prices, a bounty system was employed in many states.

Foxes were not a bounty animal in Kansas during this time because they had been added to the state's furbearer list in 1931, making their harvest governed by game regula-

tions. Bounties were paid for foxes in some Kansas counties from 1877 to 1899. The coyote was a bounty animal until 1970, when all provisions for bounty payment were repealed.

Eventually the bounty system was recognized as an expensive program that was ineffective in controlling predator numbers. Conservation agencies have strongly opposed bounties since the 1960s. The red fox in Kansas poses little threat to livestock or game bird populations, and numbers are controlled by trappers and coyotes.

Whatever character the fox plays in fairy tales, it's rarely the villain in real life. With a healthy coyote population in Kansas, the red fox will probably never become widespread, so keep your eyes peeled on the outskirts of town. You might get a glimpse of one of our most striking predators. 

*Author's note: I would like to thank Christiane Roy, department furbearer biologist, and Lloyd Fox, big game coordinator for the department, for the help and information they provided.*



# Frost Flowers

text and photos by Mike Blair  
*staff photographer, Pratt*

*On frosty mornings in southeast Kansas woodlots, you might be treated to a unique phenomenon known as frost flowers. The mysterious ice crystals are as beautiful as they are short-lived and will melt quickly as the mid-morning sun reaches them.*



There's a time in November when autumn finally surrenders. Tired from bearing its weight of glory, fall calls the last stubborn leaves from above. Pale undergrowth lies down to embrace and thank the earth. There is an audible, closing sigh in the woodlands. If you're there, you can hear it.

The air grows still at dusk and earnest cold attends the wake. Stars twinkle with unusual brightness while the temperature dips to twenty. And in the morning, should you find yourself in a proper place, the earth will sparkle with white rosettes. These are the blooms of an arctic high, delicate crystals of winter condolence. These are the strange and fleeting frost flowers.

Frost flowers are icy, crystalline structures which result from sap diffusion through stems and roots of certain plants. In Kansas, several species produce this beautiful phenomenon at year's end. The most common producer is white crownbeard, a member of the sunflower family which grows in the southeastern quarter of the state. It is also known as "frost weed." The other plant is dittany, a member of the mint family which is found only in a corner of Cherokee County.

Frost flowers are formed each time a hard freeze





accompanies calm atmospheric conditions. Plant stems are dead, but their living roots continue to push sap upward. The dry stems break open in elongated slits, allowing water to escape in gaseous form. As temperatures drop, the vapor freezes into delicate, ribbon-like crystals. The process continues throughout the night, "growing" the structures into twisted, icy sculptures.

Frost flowers are showiest during the first several cold snaps, when copious amounts of sap are still present in the dying tissues. They may be a foot tall on upright stems. Later, as stalks weather and break off, the frost formations are produced directly from root crowns. Late frost flowers are globe-like and about the size of a large apple. In mild winters, they may be found through mid-December.

Each sculpture is unique. The ice crystals are fragile, breaking easily when touched. Because of their delicate nature, frost flowers melt quickly in sunlight, usually disappearing by mid-morning.

Regrettably, not all Kansans can observe this natural occurrence close to home. Frost weed grows only in southeastern woodlands, where it is common. In its summer form, crown beard is four to five feet tall, and has a distinctly four-sided, thick stem. Due to this unique





characteristic, locals sometimes call it “carpenter’s square.” It blooms in August, bearing heads of white flowers. Broken stems are resinous. The plants often form colonies, which create a spectacular assembly of frost flowers late in the year.

Look for these icy growths at sunrise on fall mornings. They are conspicuous, and sometimes spread across acres of hillside or stream-side soil. Go close, to observe an intricate handiwork straight from God’s imagination. Should cold and cloudy conditions follow their formation, they may last a day or two before dwindling away. Most mornings, however, they are gone within hours — gifts only to those who experience firsthand the passing of autumn. ❖

# Hogwild In Kansas?

By Tommie Berger  
*district fisheries biologist, Sylvan Grove*

***Domestic hogs easily turn wild, and have viable populations in many southern states. Recently, several populations have been documented in Kansas.***

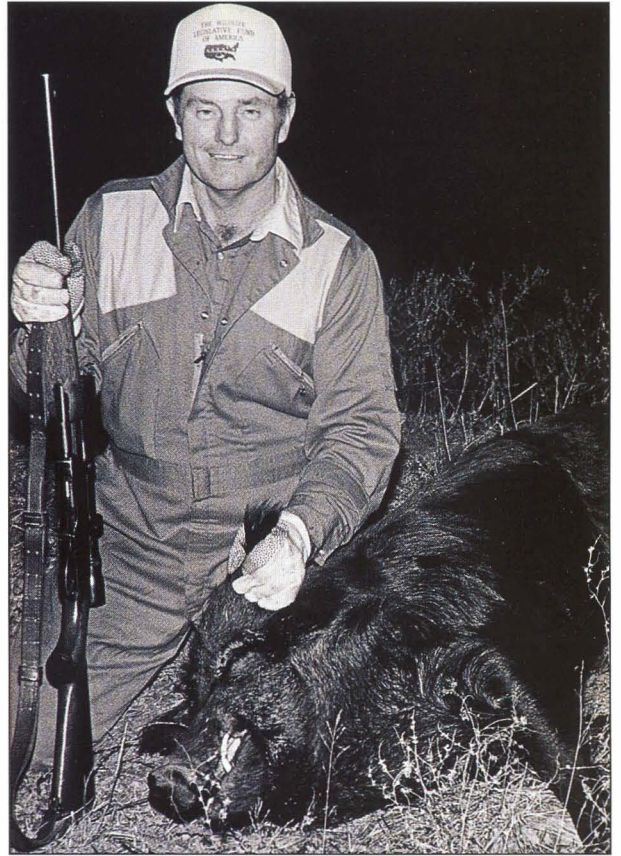


photo courtesy Phil Gipson

**M**ention hogs to Kansans and several things are likely to come to mind. First, most would likely think of bacon on the breakfast table or ham on the dinner table. And with the current controversy over corporate hog farms, mere mention of the word hog might stir up some strong emotions.

I'm sure that if you asked the general Kansas population if there are wild hogs in Kansas, most would answer no. Unknown to most, there are at least three established populations of feral (domestic pigs that have been wild for several generations) hogs in Kansas, two populations that have been eliminated, and there have been wild hog sightings in 17 counties across the state. In the past several years, several hogs have been killed by hunters on Kansas' wide-open prairie.

Recently, the Kansas Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit at Kansas State University and the Department of Wildlife and Parks have been working on a project to

document wild hogs in Kansas, as the animals have expanded throughout the central U.S. This study found that since 1988, wild hogs have expanded their range dramatically into the central states, from Colorado and Kansas to Indiana and Ohio. Reports of wild hogs in Kansas continue to increase, and some wildlife biologists are concerned.

To find out where wild hogs came from, we started near the beginning, at least for our country. Reviewing the historical literature on the introduction of swine to the New World and eventually to Kansas was very interesting reading. Columbus is credited with introducing hogs to the New World in 1493 when he brought 8 head from Spain. These hogs were turned loose on the Canary Islands and scattered throughout all the islands of the South Atlantic.

Coronado subsequently took hogs to Mexico, and De Soto had hogs with him when he landed in what is now Florida. They both had hogs with them as they traveled

into the heart of the New World in 1540 and 1541. Coronado traveled northeast to a Native American town called Quivira, near present Wichita, and De Soto traveled up the Mississippi and then west into southern Missouri, Arkansas, and east Texas. Some hogs escaped and became wild, others were stolen by Native Americans and released to establish free-ranging populations.

So, wild hogs were probably here when the first settlers arrived with their domestic stock. There are numerous accounts of large herds of wild hogs being rounded up and slaughtered in Kansas and Missouri during the 1800s. Hogs were so numerous that they were often not mentioned when livestock censuses were taken in the territories.

It is thought that hogs did not survive in the wild in Kansas through the late 1800s and early 1900s. This was a time when many forms of wildlife were decimated by market hunting and uncontrolled harvest. Most of the wild hogs in Kansas today are likely the result of hogs trapped elsewhere and

released here in an attempt to establish a huntable population or from domestic hogs that have escaped.

Where are wild hogs in Kansas? Although there have been periodic reports of feral hogs being sighted or killed in the recent past, little attention was paid to them until a well-established population was discovered on the Fort Riley Military Reservation in 1993. When the Coop Unit got involved with the Fort Riley hog investigation and control project, several other individuals became interested and the statewide hog project was born.

Questionnaires seeking information about distribution, numbers, and history of wild hogs were sent to all Kansas offices of Kansas Wildlife and Parks, Extension Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and to individuals listed in the Directory of Kansas Systematists, Ecologists, and Field Biologists. Two hundred and twenty-eight individuals responded. Field surveys were made on three sites where wild hogs had been recently killed and confirmed

established populations at all three sites.

Tracks, made by adults and piglets, wallows, rootings, and rubs on trees were found, and skulls of species killed earlier were located at all three sites. The variety of habitats in which these populations occur reflects the adaptability of these critters.

In southeastern Kansas, wild hogs exist in second-growth oak and hickory dominated forests, brushlands, and big bluestem and broomsedge dominated prairies. These habitats are in various stages of recovery from strip mining activities. Apparently, about 50 hogs were introduced during the late 1980s and early 1990s for hunting on a 198-acre island in a large strip pit, as well as on other mined areas west of Pittsburg. Hogs have since been killed and sign has been documented as far as 3 miles from the island.

The Fort Riley population was discovered in 1993. The reservation is on the northern edge of the Flint Hills and is characterized by tall-

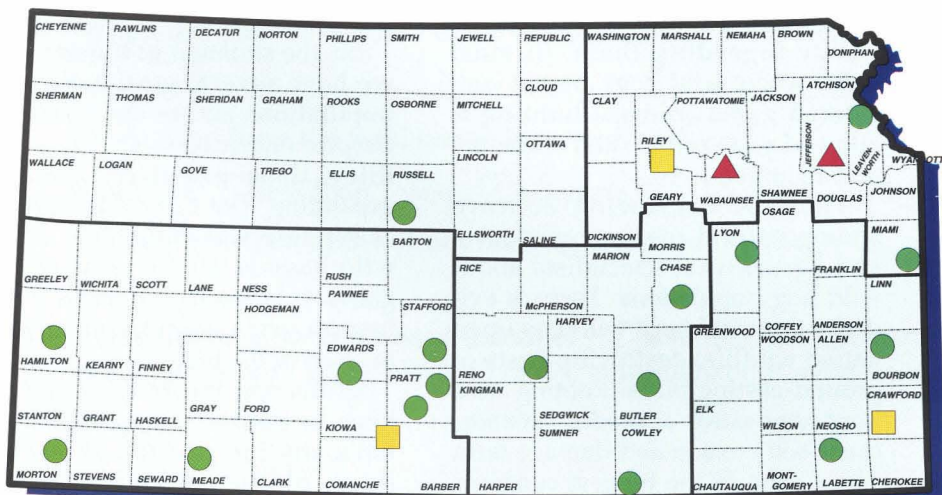
grass prairie on the hilltops, bands of mixed hardwood forests and wetlands along the streams. More than 150 hogs were killed on Fort Riley from November 1992 through March 1997 through eradication efforts and normal hunting activities. Fort Riley contains an Impact Target Area with no human access for safety reasons, and the hogs have found this undisturbed area to their liking. Eradicating hogs from the post is nearly impossible

The third population occurs in southcentral Kansas along the tributaries of the Medicine Lodge River. Between 1994 and 1996, at least 7 wild hogs have been killed in this region by law enforcement officials and hunters. This area is dominated by mid- to shortgrass prairie with narrow strips of cottonwoods and red cedars, with some agricultural crops along the streams. Both adult and piglet hog tracks have been found in this area, as well as the wallows, rubs and occasional sightings.

Nineteen reports of wild hogs were received from other areas of Kansas, some of which were near human populations and may be hogs dispersed from these communities. Two extirpated populations were also reported — one near Miami State Fishing Lake in Miami County and another just south of Perry Reservoir in Jefferson County.

The study documented several situations where wild hogs were released in Kansas by unknown individuals primarily for sport hunting. The hogs along the Medicine Lodge River are likely the remnants of two known releases in that area. The hogs in the strip mined area near Pittsburg came from releases, and department conservation officers killed 19 hogs in 1996 near the Cimarron National Grasslands in Morton county after an apparent release there. There have since been additional sightings reported

## Past and Present Distribution of Wild Hogs in Kansas



■ Populations of wild hogs verified by our study team

▲ Populations of wild hogs that have been extirpated

● Sightings of wild hogs, but populations not confirmed

from that area.

Recently, there have been reports of wild hogs along our southern border, along the Cimarron River in Clark County south of Ashland and east into Comanche County. These hogs may have moved into Kansas from established populations in Oklahoma. This could also happen along the Missouri-Kansas border, and it is likely that numbers of wild hogs in Kansas will increase, although a dramatic expansion in range is not expected.

Would you know a wild hog if you saw one? It is likely that all of the wild hogs in Kansas are simply feral pigs — pigs that have come from domestic stock. It is unlikely that we have any pure Eurasian wild boars or Russian boars, which have been imported to hunting preserves on the east coast and in the south. Therefore, most wild hogs in Kansas will have a variable coat color. Common patterns include all black, all red/brown, all white, spotted — various combinations of black, white and red/brown —, and belted —black or red/brown with a white band across the shoulder and forelimbs.

Wild hogs are leaner than their domestic counterparts and, therefore, look taller. Depending on how many generations they have been in the wild, some wild hogs may be heavily muscled in the chest and front shoulders, making the front portion of their body look much larger than the rear portion. Most wild hogs have straight tails rather than the curly tails common in domestics. Wild hogs will also have extended canine teeth or tusks protruding from the upper and lower jaws.

Hog tracks can easily be mistaken for deer tracks. However, hog hooves tend to be more rounded at the tips, especially in larger adults. Hog rooting, where hogs dig for food, can also be mistaken for deer scrapes in the fall but are easily distinguished other times of the year. Hog droppings are generally short and fat and are of a less dense vegetative nature. Wallows are often the best indication of hog activity. Wild



This feral hog, photographed at Fort Riley with a remote-triggered camera, exhibits a common all-black color pattern. Feral hogs are leaner than domestic hogs and are more heavily muscled on the chest and shoulders. Feral hogs also have a straight tail.

hogs, like domestic pigs, take daily mud baths during warm weather, creating flattened areas along the edges of creeks, ponds or wetlands.

Controversy surrounds wild hogs in many of the other states they inhabit. Some states such as Florida and West Virginia have elevated the wild hog to game animal status. Other states consider them varmints, requiring only a hunting license to hunt them. Some states consider wild hogs to belong to the landowner, and some states have no policy regarding them. In most states where wild hogs are not considered game animals, hunting is allowed year-round, and there are no bag limits.


There is a growing concern among natural resource managers and agricultural specialists about wild hog populations. There is evidence that wild hogs will prey upon native wildlife, destroying nests of ground-nesting birds. Rooting wild hogs can destroy or modify habitats, cause soil erosion and damage farm crops. One of the biggest concerns in Kansas is the potential for the spread of disease from wild hogs to domestic stock.

Our current law, KSA 47-1809, prohibits the importation or possession of feral swine in Kansas. KSA

47-1809(g) gives the livestock commissioner or the authorized representative of the livestock commissioner the authority to destroy any feral swine discovered in Kansas.

Obviously, there are some hunters who feel that wild hogs would be a positive asset to the hunting scene in Kansas. Many travel to other states each year to hunt wild hogs, which are challenging quarry and excellent table fare.

So, the situation in Kansas is that we have several established wild populations across the state. And despite eradication efforts at Fort Riley, these populations may be expanding. The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks does not list wild hogs as either game or non-game. It is legal to harvest a wild hog on private land with the permission of the landowner.

Collecting information on wild hogs in Kansas is ongoing. If you have any information about wild hogs, please contact your local department office, conservation officer, wildlife biologist, or the Kansas Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit at Kansas State University. 



The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks and the Kansas Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit at Kansas State University would like know more about wild hogs in Kansas. If you have any information you'd like to share, please fill out the following survey and mail it to Dr. Phil Gipson, Kansas Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, Division of Biology, 205 Leasure Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506-3501

1. Name \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ Town \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

2. Do you wish to remain anonymous?  Yes  No If you check yes, information, without names will be transferred to a computer record, and your questionnaire will be destroyed.

3. Do you believe the swine that you know about are:  
 really wild  
 simply free-ranging domestic swine that are owned and periodically rounded up  
 status unknown

4. Where are these swine? Try to provide the county and exact location. Give the distance and direction from the nearest town. For example: Riley County, 6.5 miles north of Manhattan, along west side of Tuttle Creek Reservoir.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. Tell us what you have seen. Give the numbers and approximate sizes of feral hogs that you have seen. Describe signs such as tracks, rootings, wallows, and rubs that you have seen.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. When did you make these observations? \_\_\_\_\_

7. How long have the feral swine been present?  
 Unknown  less than 1 year  1-3 years  3-5 years  5-10 years  more than 10 years

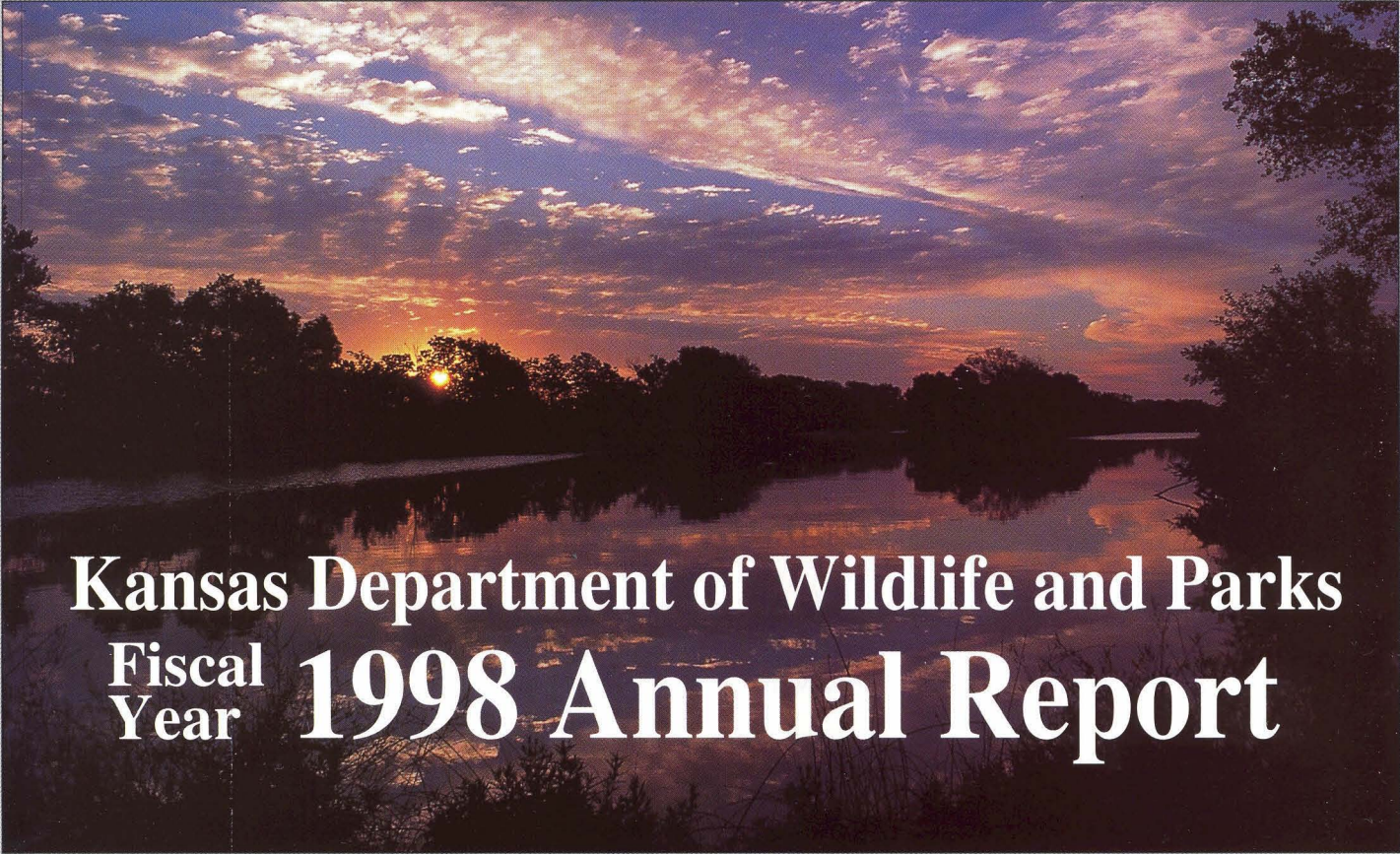
8. Tell us what you know about the origin of these swine \_\_\_\_\_

9. Have the feral swine caused damage?  No  Yes  Unknown If yes, please describe damage that you know about to crops, wildlife habitat, wild animals, domestic animals, or other.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

10. Please provide any additional information that you feel may help us better understand feral swine in Kansas.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



# Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks

## Fiscal Year 1998 Annual Report

### *Our Mission*

*To conserve and enhance Kansas' natural heritage, its wildlife and its habitats to ensure future generations the benefits of the state's diverse, living resources;*

*To provide the public with opportunities for use and appreciation of the natural resources of Kansas, consistent with the conservation of those resources;*

*To inform the public of the status of the natural resources of Kansas to promote understanding and gain assistance in achieving this mission.*

The Kansas Department of Wildlife & Parks is charged with the primary responsibility of overseeing the state's rich blend of outdoor-related opportunities. Fishing, hunting, camping, hiking, sailing, water skiing, canoeing, sailboarding, and nature photography are just a few of the outdoor pursuits available in the Sunflower State. KDWP's job is to maintain and improve these opportunities, while also exploring and providing new ones.

The department is a cabinet-level agency with a secretary appointed by the governor. A seven-member, bipartisan commission — also appointed by the governor — advises the secretary and approves regulations governing outdoor

recreation and wildlife resources in Kansas. The commission conducts business in regular sessions that are open to the public.

The department employs a staff of 392 full-time employees in five divisions: Executive Services, Administrative Services, Fisheries and Wildlife, Law Enforcement, and Parks. Following is a summary of the functions of these divisions and the programs they administer:

#### **Administrative Services**

This division oversees business management, accounting, and data processing efforts of the department. Administrative Services staff develop and manage the licenses and permits purchased by hunters, anglers, trappers, boaters, and park

visitors.

#### **Executive Services**

This division includes Personnel Services, Engineering, Environmental Services, Planning, and Information and Education sections. Engineering provides technical assistance for construction and maintenance on department-owned lands and recreational facilities. Environmental Services reviews publicly-funded and government-sponsored development projects across the state, advising developers of state and federal regulations and minimizing impacts on wildlife habitats. Personnel administers recruitment, training, and employee management services. Information and Education informs the public

through a variety of print and broadcast media, including the department website on the Internet. This section also administers the hunter, furharvester, and boater education programs; provides environmental education materials to Kansas schools; and maintains the Pratt Conservation Education Center, Milford Nature Center, Great Plains Nature Center, and Prairie Center facilities.

### **Fisheries and Wildlife**

This division provides the technical expertise to manage fish, wildlife, and public lands resources in the state. The Investigations, Inventory, and Management sections evaluate fish and wildlife populations, conduct research, monitor environmental conditions, improve wildlife habitats, survey recreationists, and recommend adjustments in fish and wildlife regulations. The Fish Culture Section produces and stocks millions of sportfish in waters across the state each year, from state hatcheries located at

Pratt, Milford, Farlington, and Meade. The Public Lands Section manages department lands for optimum wildlife habitat, as well as recreational opportunities for hunters, anglers, birdwatchers, and hikers.

The division's fisheries biologists improve fish habitat at lakes and reservoirs, develop management plans for individual waters, conduct research, teach fishing clinics, and provide assistance to private pond owners. Wildlife biologists in this division ensure the future of Kansas wildlife through research, reintroduction programs, habitat development on public lands, habitat improvement assistance to private landowners, and public education programs. They also work with private landowners in administering the state's Walk-In Hunting Areas program.

### **Law Enforcement**

Conservation officers are among the most visible department

employees. This division is responsible for enforcing the state's wildlife and natural resource laws and regulations. Division staff also inspect and license game breeders, controlled shooting areas, and guiding and outfitting operations. Conservation officers are also active in a variety of conservation and education programs statewide.

### **Parks**

This division operates and maintains 24 state parks, hosting more than 6 million visits annually. In addition to building and maintaining facilities, parks staff develop wildlife habitat, offer entertainment and education programs, host major events such as concerts or jamborees, and improve access to lands and waters around our parks. Park managers and staff maintain and improve park facilities, organize a variety of activities for park visitors to enjoy, develop trails on park lands, and provide for public security and safety.

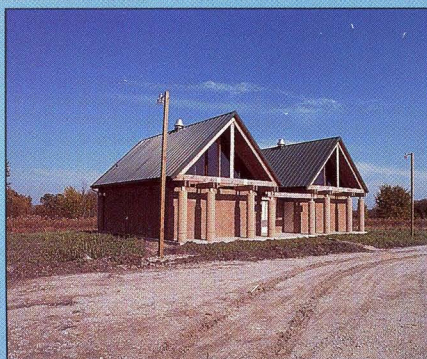
## Recent Highlights

### **State Park Capital Improvements**

The 1998 Kansas Legislature approved Gov. Bill Graves' proposal for a one-time appropriation of \$10 million to address critical infrastructure improvements at each of Kansas' 24 state parks. These funds are being used over a three-year period to renovate or replace deteriorating shower houses, bathrooms, campsites, electrical and water supply services, roads, and beaches.

### **Public Hunting/Fishing Access**

In 1997, the department's popular Walk-In Hunting Area (WIHA) program grew to 330,000 acres. For the 1998-99 hunting season, the total has grown to about 490,000 acres. Under the program, the department leases privately-owned land in return for general public hunting access. Also in 1997, the department initiated the Fishing Impoundment and Stream Habitats (FISH) program to increase public



fishing opportunities. Patterned after the WIHA program, there are currently 16 lake and stream fishing sites leased from Kansas landowners for public fishing.

### **Outdoor Wildlife Learning Sites**

KDWP continues to develop the popular Outdoor Wildlife Learning Sites (OWLS) at Kansas schools. Twenty-four new sites were added in fiscal year 1998, bringing the total number of OWLS in the state to 164. The department provides financial assistance to qualifying

schools for development of natural areas which assist environmental education activities of students.

### **Hunter Education Milestone**

The Kansas Hunter Education Program turned 25 in 1998. More than 365,000 students have completed the mandatory course since the program was implemented in 1973. The course is taught by certified volunteer instructors, who generously share their time and expertise. About 140 of the 1,300 volunteer instructors active in the program have been instructors since the program began.

### **Deer Management Strategies**

Kansas' deer herd has come a long way since the first modern deer hunting season was conducted in 1965. The department has increased the number of deer permits for the 1998 season by 32 percent. Since 1995, deer permit numbers have increased 77 percent. Kansas is nationally-recognized as

one of the nation's top trophy-producing states. KDWP wildlife managers are striving to maintain that quality, while working closely with landowner and agricultural organizations to manage deer populations at levels appropriate for habitat availability, landowner tolerance, highway safety, and recreational use.

### Partnerships With Government

KDWP's Fisheries & Wildlife Division distributed a total of about \$320,000 in Community Lakes Assistance grants to local governments. The community lakes program provides funding and technical assistance to local governments for management of their public fishing waters. Assistance projects range from construction of boat ramps to stocking of catchable-sized fish.



Jon Blumb photo

### Shooting Range Development

KDWP implemented a local shooting range development assistance program, in which local government or organizational entities may apply for funding assistance. A total of \$200,000 was allocated for the program, in which existing ranges may be renovated or new ranges built with combined state and local resources.

### Law Enforcement Activity

In 1997, KDWP conservation officers conducted a total of 75,817 license checks of hunters and anglers, and issued a total of 3,269 citations as a result of those checks (95.7 percent compliance rate). A total of 13,554 boat inspections were conducted, resulting in issuance of 2,251 citations (83 percent compliance rate).



### Fish Stocking

The department's Fish Culture Section produced and stocked approximately 48 million fry, fingerlings, and intermediate fish from hatcheries at Milford, Pratt, Farlington, and Meade. Fish stocked included 32 million walleye; 7.1 million saugeye; 5.2 million channel catfish; 1 million wiper; 1.1 million sauger; 242,300 largemouth bass; 224,100 bluegill; 802,400 fathead minnow; 111,200 grass carp; 47,000 paddlefish; 156,500 redear sunfish; 46,500 striped bass; and 18,000 black crappie. Fish obtained through trades with other states and stocked in Kansas waters included the following: 1 million sauger; 1 million striped bass; 3 million wiper; 216,000 grass carp; 50,000 paddlefish; and 15,000 smallmouth bass.

### Boating Accidents

A total of 57 boating accidents were investigated by KDWP officers in 1997, including nine fatalities. Those accidents resulted in a total of \$85,655 in property damage. Fifty-six percent of all boating accidents involved personal watercraft.

### Urban Fishing

In addition to fish stocked from state hatchery ponds, KDWP focused substantial effort in improving fishing opportunities in urban areas. The Urban Fishing Program resulted in stocking of 114,000 catchable-sized channel catfish at 57 urban lakes from April through September.

### Trout Program

KDWP's trout stocking program continued in 1997, as more than 140,000 rainbow trout were pur-

chased and stocked at selected waters in Kansas. A total of 7,005 anglers purchased trout permits in 1997. The program is funded by the sale of trout permits, which are required of all anglers fishing for trout in specially stocked waters.

### Local Park Improvements

The 1998 Kansas Legislature approved creation of a local Government Outdoor Recreation Grant program to be administered by the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. These grants will be matched by local governments to fund capital improvement projects for outdoor recreation facilities around the state.

### Pheasant Initiative

The department's Pheasant Recovery Initiative addresses the decline of pheasant numbers in western Kansas. Working in cooperation with farm service organizations and Kansas State University researchers, the initiative is investigating land use practices that enhance pheasant habitat without inhibiting farm profits. Results show promising alternative land management practices which, in many cases, actually assist farm income.

### Milford Wetlands Development

Upon approval of a \$361,512 state appropriation, KDWP began work on a project with the Corps of Engineers to develop 2,100 acres of wetlands at Milford Reservoir. The legislature approved a measure to name a portion of the developed area the "Steve Lloyd Wetlands" in honor of the state representative from Clay Center who succumbed to cancer before the end of the 1998 legislative session.



## Fiscal Year 1998

### Income

The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks relies on fees paid by the people it serves for most of its income. The sale of hunting and fishing licenses and associated permits accounts for about 43 percent of the department's annual income. Another 21 percent is derived from excise taxes paid on hunting and fishing gear and other outdoor equipment, which is distributed back to the state by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Park permits, boat registrations, and other license and permit sources account for another 21 percent. About 15 percent of the agency's funding comes from state general fund revenues. The tables on this page summarize calendar year 1997 license and permit sales.

### FISHING/HUNTING/FURHARVESTING

License/permit	Number sold	Revenue
Resident Fish (\$15.00)	195,693	\$2,935,395
Combination Fish/Hunt (\$30.00)	41,240	\$1,237,200
Nonresident Fish (\$35.00)	7,649	\$267,715
Five-Day Trip Fish (\$15.00)	4,519	\$67,785
24-Hour Fish (\$3.00)	80,647	\$241,941
Trout Stamp (\$7.50)	7,005	\$52,538
Fish/Trout Stamp (\$22.50)	3,648	\$82,080
Lifetime Fish (\$240.00)	230	\$55,200
Lifetime Comb. Fish/Hunt (\$440.00)	880	\$353,760
Lifetime Fish (payments) (\$35.00)	46	\$1,610
Lifetime Comb. (payments) (\$30.00)	223	\$6,690
Lifetime Hunt (payments) (\$35.00)	123	\$4,305
Lifetime Hunt (\$240.00)	823	\$197,520
Resident Hunt (\$15.00)	95,760	\$1,436,400
Nonresident Hunt (\$65.00)	38,038	\$2,472,470
Nonresident Junior Hunt (\$30.00)	1,192	\$35,760
Controlled Shooting Area (\$13.00)	5,143	\$66,859
48-Hour Waterfowl (\$20.00)	251	\$5,020
Deer Permit (variable)	108,291	\$2,779,550
Turkey Permit (variable)	85,595	\$1,196,265
Adult Furharvester (\$15.00)	5,148	\$77,220
Junior Furharvester (\$7.50)	177	\$1,327
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>682,245</b>	<b>\$13,574,340</b>

### STATE PARKS

Permit Type	Number Sold	Revenue
Annual Vehicle (\$29.50)	27,261	\$804,200
Second Vehicle (\$14.50)	8,929	\$129,470
Duplicate Vehicle (\$5.00)	639	\$3,195
Exempt/Handicap Vehicle (\$0)	26,953	\$0
Daily Vehicle (\$3.50)	247,460	\$866,110
Daily Handicap Vehicle (\$0)	215	\$0
Daily Camp (\$4.50)	113,554	\$510,993
14-Day Camp (\$50.00)	3,577	\$178,850
Utility (1) (\$5.00)	12,503	\$62,515
Utility (2) (\$6.00)	64,780	\$388,680
Utility (3) (\$7.00)	12,117	\$84,819
Youth Group Camping (\$2.50)	24	\$60
30-Day Camp (\$90.00)	17	\$1,530
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>518,029</b>	<b>\$3,030,422</b>

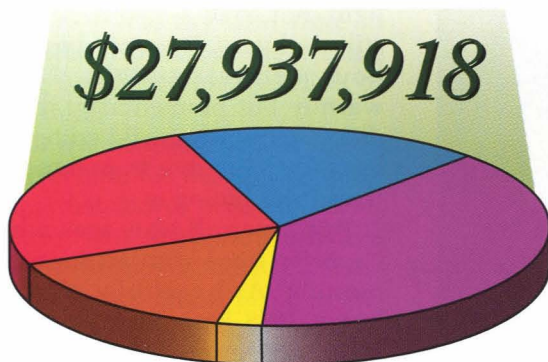
### BOAT REGISTRATIONS

Boats under 16 feet (\$15.00)	19,262	\$288,930
Boats over 16 feet (\$18.00)	18,459	\$332,262
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>37,721</b>	<b>\$621,192</b>

### FEDERAL AID

Dingell-Johnson (fish)	\$3,229,329
Pittman-Robertson (wildlife)	\$3,130,331
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$6,359,660</b>

## Expenditures by Program



<b>Fish</b>	<b>\$7,168,836</b>	<b>26 %</b>
<b>Wildlife</b>	<b>\$10,432,213</b>	<b>37 %</b>
<b>Parks</b>	<b>\$6,552,245</b>	<b>23 %</b>
<b>Administration</b>	<b>\$2,995,032</b>	<b>11 %</b>
<b>Boating</b>	<b>\$789,592</b>	<b>3 %</b>
<b>Totals</b>	<b>27,937,918</b>	

# I Finally Got My Deer

by Nancy Drybread  
*office assistant, retired, Chanute*

*Hunting just wasn't something many women did years ago. But why not? Why not learn about the outdoors and spend time with family and friends? When the author asked those questions and decided to go hunting with her husband, she learned as much about herself as she did about hunting.*



First deer — first day — first shot? Well, not exactly. There is a lot more to it than that. But I enjoy hearing my husband, Lloyd, telling it to our friends that way. You see, it really was my first deer. And although it was the fourth day of the 1995 deer season, it was my first day to hunt, making it my first shot of the year. I got my first deer, but first I had to learn how to hunt. My story went something like this:

On a cold December morning, I was standing there thinking, "Dear Lord! What am I doing here?" I was alone, out in the country and surrounded by timber. It was much too early to be called day — no moonlight, not even a visible star in the still darkness. It would be another hour before daylight. Dressed warmly but momentarily frozen, I didn't know what wild critter might be ready to pounce from these cedar trees I was hiding in.

But, after all, this was where I chose to be. I wanted to go deer hunting. As I carefully placed my heavy, 1938, 8mm Mauser under the gate on the ground, then, even more carefully, fitted my same vintage, large frame between the gate bars, I

wondered if any wild things had noticed, and what they thought of this slow-moving creature invading their space. Just the same, I stood for some time before deciding to sit at my deer stand, which was just a folding chair hidden in the cedar trees.

I'd never hunted in my life until three years before, when Lloyd asked me if I'd like to apply for a deer permit and go hunting with him. Thinking about it now, it was only the second time I remember him asking me to go hunting with him. The first was when we were in our teens, before we were married. He invited me to accompany him dove hunting at a local rock quarry. I remember him saying "It's better to field dress the birds out here," and he showed me how and wrapped one in a newspaper and placed it in his backpack. I held his shotgun while he washed his hands. Then he said that if I would field dress the birds, he wouldn't have to take time to clean his hands after each bird, and we'd finish hunting sooner. So, I followed him around, picking up each dove he shot, field dressing it and placing it in his backpack. I never went hunting with him again, except as a spectator. We've laughed about it a lot over the years.

That was when I was 15 years old. Now, when I'm 51, he's asking me go hunting with him again? I thought, "Why not? This is something we could do together." Or so I thought. There I sat alone on that cold December morning because Lloyd was working out of town. This was actually my third year to hunt, but it was my first time to hunt without him. So, there I sat, waiting for daybreak with lots of time to think.

Until my husband asked me to hunt with him, the thought of going hunting just didn't occur to me. It was our son who had always hunted with Lloyd and my father-in-law. The girls and I stayed home. As I was growing up, hunting wasn't something many girls or women did, and the women in our families didn't hunt. My only recol-

lection of women hunting was in the movies, or Osa Johnson, the wife of African safari film maker Martin Johnson, who was from my hometown of Chanute. But, I thought, why not? I could shoot a gun. Lloyd had taken me and our family out to shoot targets before, and we knew something about gun safety.

I started working in the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks Region 5 office in Chanute just before my third deer season. I remember getting excited about the upcoming deer season as customers came to the office to purchase permits and licenses. I heard lots of interesting hunting stories, and learned that a lot of women enjoy deer hunting. I was encouraged to take the department's hunter education course, and I'm glad I did. It reinforced many of the things Lloyd had taught me, and my growing interest in deer hunting was as much a surprise to Lloyd as it was to me.

The real learning, though, came from experience. The first season, I wore my ski pants and jacket. Lloyd asked me if I had anything else because the nylon was so noisy, but I didn't have any hunting clothes then. Maybe that is why he took me to my designated area that first year, told me where to expect the deer, where I could safely shoot, and then left me. Needless to say, I wasn't happy. I expected him to stand by me. I needed all the help I could get that first year, and this wasn't the togetherness I had in mind when I decided to take up hunting. Lloyd got his deer that day. I didn't.


Lloyd stayed with me the next day and every day after that, and even though we hunted every day possible, I didn't get a deer. However, I was getting hunting experience and enjoying being outdoors with my husband. I'll always remember the first time I saw the beautiful white ribbons of frost.

I hunted again the following year, and on the last day of my second season, Lloyd left me in an excellent spot. After the usual, long,

quiet wait, I realized it would soon be over for another year. Then, all of a sudden, a doe walked out, not 10 feet in front of me. I wasn't ready. The deer was looking at me while I was looking at it and trying to get my gun up. The doe ran into the field, and I shot and missed. We spent more than an hour looking for any sign of a hit to make sure it was a clean miss.

Now with two seasons of experience and a hunter education course under my belt, I was confident as I sat waiting for daylight on that cold December morning. After what seemed like forever, a doe appeared 100 yards away. I realized this wouldn't be like shooting targets. I was going to have to be quick. The clearing was about 20 feet wide, and there was no time to waste. I shot and missed. Then I realized that I only had one cartridge in my gun. During all of my instructions from Lloyd, I had mistakenly assumed that one was all I needed because after I shot, the deer would either be mine or long gone. However, this deer was running directly at me. I stood and began frantically searching for a bullet, then realized there wasn't time to get one from my pocket. I felt like Barney Fife.

It took me three more years to finally harvest a deer. From the very same location, a doe again appeared 100 yards away. I calmly rose to the occasion. As she moved through the 20-foot clearing, I took careful aim through the scope and shot. Three more deer flashed across my view, but I was already walking up to see if I really did get my deer.

It was just as Lloyd had told me it would be. I looked at the beautiful doe and felt sorrow. But that feeling passed. I understand that hunting is natural and important part of wildlife management. I felt like part of the natural world. As these thoughts were going through my head, I realized Lloyd was standing beside me, smiling. We were both thankful. I finally got my deer, and I'm ready to go hunting again. 

# Big Buck Bulletin Board



Mike Blair photo

This monster whitetail was found dead by a Kingman County landowner. It has an awesome inside spread of 28 7/8, and the palmated beams have incredible mass. It scored 221 6/8 nontypical points.

Armand Hillier of Augusta took this monster buck during the 1996 firearms season. The rack measures 188 2/8 Boone and Crockett points, which ranks it among the top 10 bucks ever taken with a firearm in Kansas.



Marc Murrell photo





The number-one archery typical whitetail was taken by Stephen Weilert of Humboldt in 1994. The Woodson County buck scored 193 2/8 Pope and Young points.

Bruce Snelling of Newton took this tremendous eight-point during the 1996 bow season.



Gretchen Schrag of Wichita stands by her magnificent whitetail taken during the 1997 firearms season. The non-typical Barber County buck scored 217 3/8 Boone and Crockett points.



Marc Murrell photos



Dustin Teasley cartoon

# The Wild Life Of A Wildlife Photographer

by Mike Blair  
staff photographer, Pratt

*Do you think being a wildlife photographer is a dream job? Think again. In his years chasing unique outdoor photos, the author has had some close calls and been in some pretty interesting predicaments.*

“Spread ‘em and place your hands on the car!” the sheriff’s officer ordered as he jumped from the vehicle. I dropped my NEED HELP - CALL POLICE windshield shade and quickly complied. You don’t argue when surrounded by two cruisers at 2:00 a.m., and the lead officer barks a command with his hand on his holster.

Across the highway a farm house rested peacefully, oblivious to the tense situation by the mail box. Actually, for an hour I had planned to awaken its occupants for help, but had hesitated out of courtesy and also fear of being eaten by a giant farm dog that no doubt lurked beneath the front porch. So I had waited and waved my sign at four lonely motorists passing in the darkness, all of whom had gunned their engines and blown by like

cyclones, evidently spooked by the likes of me dancing in the highway after midnight in the boonies.

Finally I'd given up and entered the driveway to rouse the occupants when another car bearing New Jersey license plates slowed and turned around. The driver cracked a window and forced me to explain my predicament at a dogtrot. My car, I said, was stalled 3 miles away with a dead battery, and I needed a jump. He refused, visibly shuddering at the thought of dark backroads in the state famous for *In Cold Blood*. But at least he promised to call for help. Relieved, I sat down by the driveway and waited.

His story must have been a good one. Fifteen minutes later, two squad cars came flying with flashing lights. I stepped onto the roadway and held up my windshield sign. That's when things got strange and the officer shook me down.

Eyeball-to-eye-ball with a hood ornament, I did some fast talking and convinced him that I wasn't a threat. He called to cancel additional units enroute, and shook his head. "You wouldn't believe the report we just got. Some guy claimed that you'd killed all the people in this farmhouse — we didn't know what to expect." He helped me start my car, gave me a final once-over, and I headed home from badger country, ending another somewhat typical day of wildlife photography.

Actually, it was a good way to meet another local law officer, some of whom I'd already had the pleasure: one policeman who suspected me as a psycho based on reports from joggers that a weirdo dressed in camouflage was peering through binoculars in the park before sunrise (I was looking for a hairy woodpecker nest); another at a state park beach where I was reported as a pervert watching near-naked ladies through a huge lens (Hey, I was on assignment for swimming pictures, okay.); and finally, another to whom I had to explain how I as the driver could fall out of a moving truck while wrestling with gear,

resulting in the low-speed demolition of two other vehicles.

So the job had its brushes with the law.

But there were other misadventures with people as well. A common type was familiar to any outdoor photographer who's been at it awhile — the "Oh No, Not Now!" syndrome. These are always innocent acts of curiosity by an outsider, but can destroy hours or even months of waiting for a photo opportunity. I've had dozens of experiences, but the most memorable involved a fox den and a peregrine falcon.

I was set up on a red fox burrow one early April to film young kits at play. Their daily emergence was

## **“You wouldn't expect to be trampled by a moose in Kansas, but that nearly happened to me in one bizarre incident when a lost bull showed up in our state.”**

sporadic because of the youngsters' age. The den was visible but separated from a busy highway by a wide right-of-way and double railroad tracks, a distance of several hundred feet. I'd sat uncomfortably under a tarp for four hours when an ear finally flickered at the rim of the hole. A miniature fox appeared and stretched. Eager for the payoff of a long wait, I held off shooting momentarily for fear that camera noise might startle the cautious kit. A few minutes more, and it would lead its siblings outside to romp.

A car traveling 60 mph suddenly braked in the distance. "What the ...," I thought, as it slowed and came to a stop behind me. Its door slammed, and the kit instantly disappeared. A man made his way

across the distance to my blind.

"What are you doing?" he asked in a friendly sort of way. "I saw you taking pictures, and wondered what was in that hole."

At least that den could be photographed another day. Sometimes the trouble occurs in once-in-a-lifetime situations. While shooting a peregrine falcon story, I chanced upon an incredible event — a wild female peregrine plucking a Mississippi kite along a curb in town. To my amazement, the bird allowed me to turn my car around, move into decent camera range and begin filming out the window. I changed film and moved closer, edging forward until the light angle was perfect. Just as I was ready to shoot spectacular closeups, a pedestrian with an instamatic camera hurried into view. The falcon bobbed nervously.

"Stay back!" I yelled. "That's a rare bird! Let me get the pictures, and I'll give you some!"

"Really? What kind of bird is it?" the newcomer said, moving steadily closer while looking through an impossibly short lens. The falcon one-hopped with its heavy load, and still the photographer pushed forward. When less than 20 feet separated the two, the bird struggled into the air with its prey, flying into the distance. Neither of us got the photos we wanted. It was enough to bring tears.

Fortunately, for each incident like these, there are others where wildlife observers provide excellent help in obtaining photos. I'm always grateful when someone reports unusual birds or animals, and often interrupt current plans to take immediate advantage of these sightings. Sometimes, however, mistaken identities can lead to long and fruitless expeditions. One such experience involved four "river otters" eating fish in an eastern Kansas pond.

The report came from a fairly reliable source, but I questioned the observer carefully. Were the animals as big as dogs? Were their tails furred? Were they observed from close-up or far away? Had they

**“Then there are snakes. Gene Brehm, KDWP agency videographer, once came out of a Quivira marsh to find a massassauga rattlesnake hanging by its fangs from his pants cuff.”**

been seen more than once?

All the right answers were given, so I contacted the KDWP furbearer biologist for an opinion. He was skeptical, but admitted that otters had once been released on a nearby creek and thought that it was possible. So I called the pond's owner, secured permission to film, loaded up and headed across state with high hopes.

Four hours later, I entered the property and immediately saw a large pond literally churning with muskrats. I stopped at the house, and the occupant told me I was in luck: there were now 12 otters in the pond. I walked to the dam and studied the small animals, barely bigger than squirrels. Their black, naked tails rippled well out of the water as they ruddered through the shallows. There wasn't an otter in sight. Oh well, it was a good muskrat shoot. . .

Natural hazards often add to the adventure of nature photography. While some cases are amusing, others are not. Once, while filming a ferruginous hawk nest in western Kansas, I climbed a chalk tower for closeup nest pictures. The nest was about 30 feet high atop a rocky spire. The climb was easy except for a smooth, nine-foot face near the top. Over several days I visited the nest twice without incident and decided for a final climb before heading home. That's when a crucial foothold broke off the smooth face on the way up.

I made it to the top, but the trip down was now dangerous. Choices were a seat-first slide ending in a 15-foot jump (nearly unthinkable on a previously broken ankle), or a belly-down slide of three feet that might catch a small toehold. After worrying for half an hour, I opted for the second choice and thanked the good Lord when I jolted to a stop. Next time, I'll know to carry a rope.

Then there are snakes. Gene Brehm, KDWP agency videographer, once came out of a Quivira marsh to find a massassauga rattlesnake hanging by its fangs from his pants cuff. That can add excitement to one's photography. I've never been bitten, but was once struck at by a large and angry timber rattler while filming.

Less dangerous, I had another odd experience with a big bullsnake on a Stafford County backroad. Wanting close-ups of a strike sequence, I laid down three feet from the snake with a 200mm lens, and teased it with a stick to make it fight. After several minutes, the snake turned and slithered for my nearby Blazer. Without hesitating, it dove through a slot in a hubcap and instantly disappeared into the engine compartment. I thought this was fun, and opened the hood, where the snake continued fighting and striking from convenient cranies surrounding the motor. Then it found a hole in the firewall and disappeared into the area under the

dash.

“No problem,” I thought. Then I considered that the big snake could just as easily end up inside the car as out. It could hide for days in the vehicle's paraphernalia, and while I'm not squeamish about bullsnakes, a large reptile suddenly emerging from under a seat while traveling at high speed could be startling. So I set out to remove the critter. It took an hour of sweating and hassling with the aid of tree-limbs, barbed wire and tire tools to wrench the snake from its lair, and when done, both of us wished I'd just left it alone in the first place.

You wouldn't expect to be trampled by a moose in Kansas, but that nearly happened to me in one bizarre incident where a lost bull showed up in our state. After learning of the unusual sighting, I drove a hundred miles to document the visit. A local farmer told me its approximate whereabouts, and I found the animal in a large watershed impoundment surrounded by lush vegetation.

I approached the moose cautiously at first, but soon relaxed when it ignored me as it waded and fed in the shallows. Using a 105mm lens, I was able to film it from a distance of 10 yards. After some time, the animal waded out of the water and bedded in dense willows along the edge, where its head was obscured by vegetation. Looking around in the weeds, I found an old gallon can, and lobbed it at the

**“... I had no way of knowing that she missed the sting by a good two inches. For the next several days, I had a giant hickey next to a swollen sting site.”**

moose. Instantly the animal, 8 feet tall at the shoulder, jumped to its feet, laid back its ears, pawed the ground and thrashed its antlers until about 100 square feet of saplings were cleared to the mud. I decided to be on my way.

Heat, cold and insects always add spice to nature photography. I've worked all day in windchills of -70 degrees, and sat in stifling summer blinds whose temperatures climbed well above 100. If good shooting opportunities exist, weather conditions aren't that troublesome. If the action is slow, however, even nice weather can't overcome boredom. I once sat a blind for 17 hours before getting a needed shot. Then, the opportunity came and went so suddenly that I nearly missed it.

Biting insects can make for memorable trips, and include deer and black flies, mosquitoes, chiggers and ticks. Once while filming swift foxes in western Kansas, I ran out of repellent and paid for it with hundreds of fly bites. The bites were painful, but at least they didn't itch afterward. Too bad it's not that way with chiggers, which are the worst of the lot. Several years ago, I sat during late October on an eastern Kansas pond where deer frequently watered. The late afternoon was gorgeous as a flock of wild turkeys surprised me along the edge. My blind was a natural opening among thick willows, and I sat on the ground surrounded by leafy camouflage. I would never have dared this during summer, but chigger season was over, or so I thought. I ended up with more than 300 bites, and could hardly sleep for several nights

because of the intense itching.

Ants should not be overlooked as a source of trouble. Brehm and I once filmed a coyote den by lying under tarps near the burrow. We arrived in late afternoon, and hadn't been in place for long when red ants



attacked. Unfortunately, the pups emerged at the same time, so we photographed while the ants carried tiny chunks of us back to their tunnels. Not knowing English, the pups ignored the strange expletives issuing from the squirming lumps of vegetation nearby.

Then there's poison-ivy. Filming in river bottoms, you can expect a few minor doses of the itching rash each year. But sometimes, photographic work can yield a full-blown case. Not long ago, I found a cottonwood in the perfect location to build an elevated platform for deer. The tree trunk was covered with huge ivy vines which had to be removed. Knowing the cost for this, I waded in with ladder and saw, removing arm-thick sections of vine for a height of 25 feet. When finished, the trunk was cleared to provide an

easy climb to a platform that I would build later. Three days afterward, my arms and neck were covered with itching blisters, but at least I'd have an excellent blind. Then a windstorm blew the tree down.

Because insects, snakes and ivy are somewhat expected, most nature photographers carry first-aid kits. I have a small kit containing a high-tech syringe which applies suction directly to any venomous wound. Its powerful suction can draw skin from the bite area more than an inch into its wide tube, theoretically removing up to 90 percent of venom if applied within a short time of the bite. The sucking action is powerful enough to bruise healthy tissue.

After I returned from work one day, a wasp on my porch stung me on the neck, resulting in a fiery swelling of the affected area. Knowing this would be a good time to test the kit, I had my wife apply the suction system to the sting. Since the entire region was burning, I had no way of knowing that she missed the sting by a good two inches. For the next several days, I had a giant hickey next to a swollen sting site. Oh, well...

Nature photography is truly an adventure. There's nothing like experiencing the outdoors every day, and seeing wildlife close-up. Ripping clothes, getting soaked, falling from trees, and all the rest are just part of it. You kind of get used to it after awhile - heck, you might even look forward to it. But don't forget your first-aid kit, tools, back-up handgun and cell phone. You'll probably need them. ♡



# Symbols or Trophies?

by Lloyd Fox

*big game project leader, Emporia*

photos by Mike Blair

***The comeback story of the white-tailed deer is one of wildlife management success. However, our attitudes toward these wild animals have changed, especially in Kansas, where deer have gone from virtually nonexistent to common in just 30 years.***

**A**s we enter the 21st century, we should look again at the conditions that sparked the conservation movement in North America 100 years ago. The deer was a symbol that propelled that movement. We faced those challenges and turned the situation around. Today we face new ones. Recently a premier conservation organization, The Wildlife Society, devoted a complete issue, 383 pages, to the problem of the over-

abundance of deer. Deer populations changed from near extinction to overabundance in a century. Today deer are seen by many as the symbol of problem wildlife. As you drive the highways you see signs with a bounding buck, a symbol of a road hazard.

Deer are also a symbol of hunting, which in turn is a target of resentment. One of the aspects in that debate is the symbol of trophies. How trivial it seems to set the size

of their antlers as trophies. What is a trophy? Is it the bony remains of a noble beast? Is it statistics cataloged in books with a corresponding list of dates, locations and names of hunters? Is it a special honor we give to a rare occurrence? It may be any or all of these, and I think it is much more. What we call a trophy deer is our desire for excellence in the environment coupled with our memorable experiences along the way.

Recently I woke at 4:30 with an unusual spring in my step and enthusiasm in all my thoughts. As I prepared for the day, I knew what caused these feelings. I was a trophy hunter. The 45-minute drive through the darkness was a breeze, no traffic jams. I didn't even turn on the radio as a distraction. The walk through the woods to my tree stand was incredibly easy. It should have been — I had been over the ground a couple of times but rehearsed it in my mind a hundred times. By this time, I even knew where the spider webs would be.

The morning went perfectly. I managed to get in to my tree stand without snapping a twig. The first half hour was uneventful. I watched the shades of light intensify and saw new forms materialize in the distant parts of the woodlot. I searched for an eye, an ear, or antler point shining in the sun. None of the forms were deer. The river channel carried the sound of raccoons in an apparent squabble over sleeping accommodations for the day. They were easily a hundred yards away, but I could hear their toenails on the tree bark. It is amazing how far you can hear things when the conditions are right. However, these were not the sounds I sought.

Suddenly, it was there. Directly behind me came the faint sound of a leaf being stepped upon. Then silence again. The wind was mild and coming in from the right direction for this stand. Although I was in a tree and camouflaged, I made no movement. My intention was to let the animal continue down the trail until it came into my field of view. I had chosen an area and moved branches to ensure a clear path between the tree stand and the trail.

The silence continued, and so did the adrenaline. Thousands of questions, concerns and doubts flashed through my mind. Maybe this animal had detected me and slipped away. I'd been in similar situations before only to have something unexpected happen at the last minute. Another leaf cracked and

the animal started moving. As the rhythm of the steps floated up from the forest floor, a flood of disappointment filled my ears. The sounds weren't from the hooves that made tracks I'd seen while scouting the area. The sounds coming from the trail were being made by a flat foot.

The adrenaline was still pumping as an opossum came into view. New questions started. How had the opossum gotten that close

**“The prey must have the predator, just as the predator needs the prey. One without the other eventually becomes something less . . .”**

without being detected? Possibly he had been there ever since I came into the woods. As opossums go, this one was a dandy. I enjoyed watching him for the next 15 minutes until he traveled out of sight. By that time four squirrels had arrived. One got extra curious. He came down an adjacent tree until he was at eye level with me and 10 feet away. On each side of his mouth was a burr oak acorn. He stopped and gave me a once-over, accompanied with numerous flicks of the tail.

I stayed in the treestand longer than normal that day. I could justify it in many ways, although I never saw a deer. The autumn morning was spectacular. Bird watching alone made the day a success. Sights, sounds, and smells were sharp. Life seemed to be in focus. I thought back to my days in graduate school when I trailed bobcats in the Adirondack Mountains. That location is one of the few places where the 20-pound predator tackles white-tailed deer. I thought

of a particular bobcat and a snow trail she provided. She killed an 80-pound fawn and cached the carcass. She then made a short trek through the spruce forest and returned to the kill site. As she approached for the second time, she made another stalk, charge, and pounce, but this time it was on her own cached item. She relived her hunting experience. The flesh of the deer made the difference between life and death for that bobcat. However, food alone does not explain her behavior.

If we are to make deer a symbol of problem wildlife, then it might be that they are also a symbol of our lack of connection with our environment. Hunting is a solo act. We may hunt with companions and share our tales as best we can. However, hunting is an experience between a person and the environment. Larry Marchington, a noted wildlife biologist and deer enthusiast, tried to capture a feel for man's drive to hunt with the following: “The prey must have the predator, just as the predator needs the prey. One without the other eventually becomes something less. The wolf becomes the dog. The deer becomes the cow. And what does man become?” Hunting fulfills a need in many humans. My quality deer this year may be antlerless — and also a trophy. But, thoughts of seeing that huge buck will cause me, and many hunters to continue the traditions of hunting, while experiencing a little of the natural world along the way. Is it necessary for us to score and display our results? Probably not, but it would be unforgivable of us to fail to honor our prey.

On my wall is a primitive drawing with three curved lines. I know not who the artist was but could imagine it in a cave somewhere. It is the symbol of a running deer and one of man's first trophies. With three curved lines the artist captured speed, strength, grace, and hope. It is also a symbol of harmony. What do deer mean to people today? I hope no less than they meant to the bobcat or the artist.



# Christmas Gifts From



**Buffalo T-shirt**

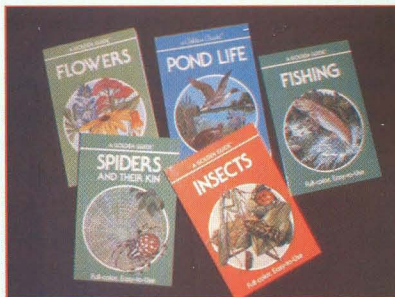
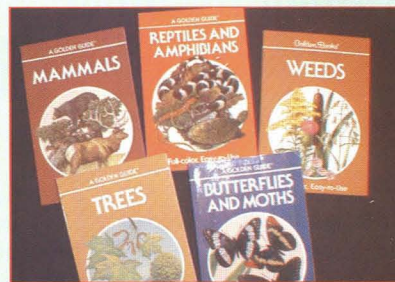
**Duck T-shirt**



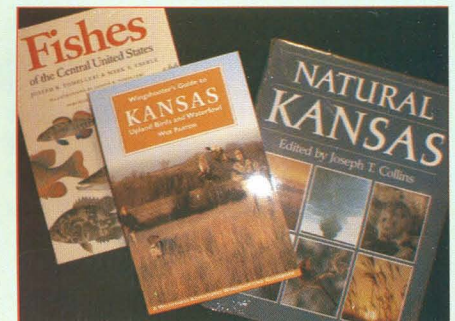
**Eagle T-shirt**



**Turkey T-shirt**



**Golden Books**

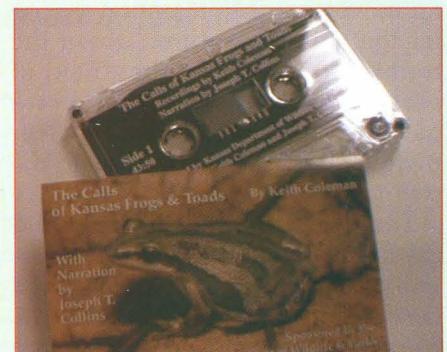
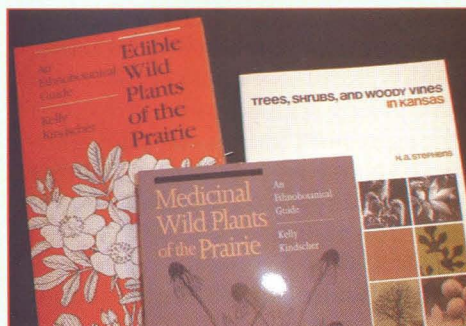


**Kansas Books**



**Videos**

**Prairie Books**

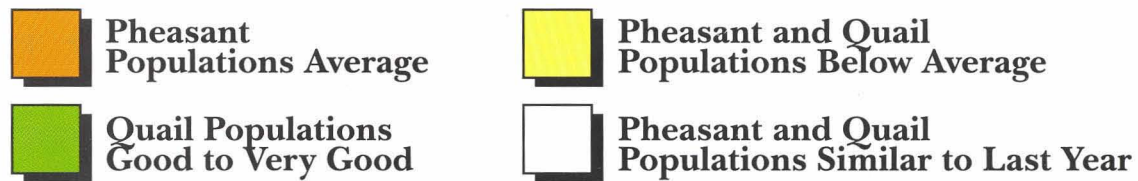
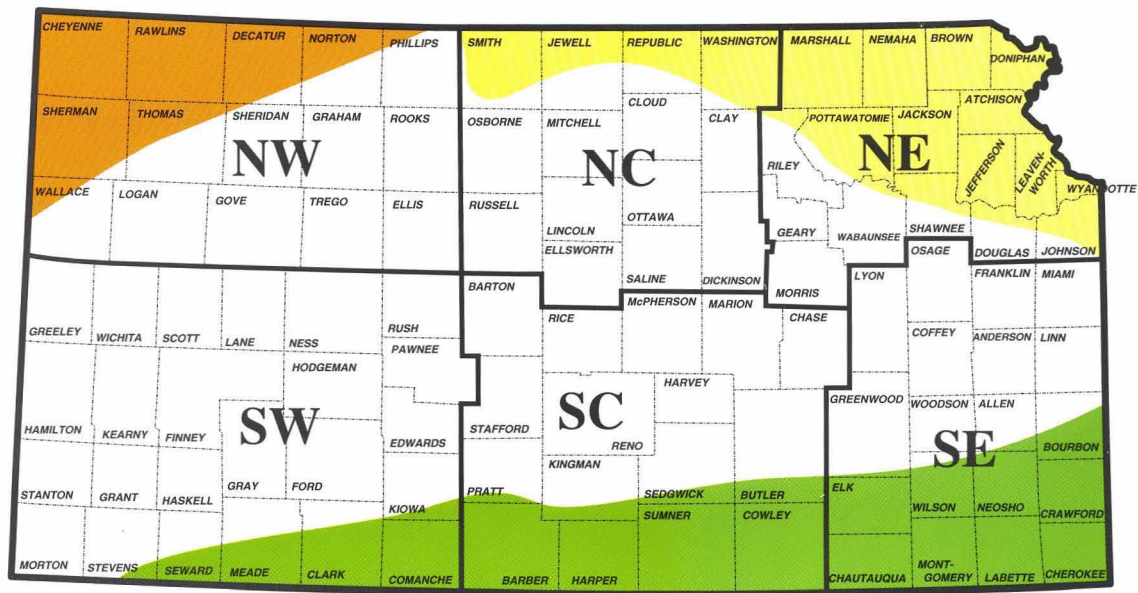


**Amphibian Cassette**





# 1998 Pheasant and Quail Forecast



## REGIONAL SUMMARIES

**Northwest - Pheasant** populations appear to be similar to the good numbers of 1997 east of a line from roughly southwestern Wallace County to east-central Phillips County. West of this line, pheasant numbers will be lower due to the 1997 October blizzard and populations are probably just average. A severe hail storm hurt production in a 5- to 14-mile-wide swath along the Smoky Hill River. **Quail** populations are not traditionally high in the northwest, but numbers are much higher than the long-term average and appear to be about as good as last year. The best quail populations in this region are in Phillips, Rooks, Norton, and Graham counties. Cover is generally good.

**Northcentral - Pheasant** hunting prospects appear to be similar to last year, which was very good. Areas that do not share these good prospects include northwestern Smith County where the October blizzard was severe and Republic and Washington counties. **Quail** numbers appear to be similar or perhaps a bit lower than last year, and prospects remain quite good. Cover is good to heavy.

**Northeast - Pheasant** populations appear to be down again due to low breeding populations and spring weather extremes. Pheasant prospects appear below average for this region. **Quail** populations were only able to hold their own this spring, and hunting prospects also appear below average. Cover is rated as heavy.

**Southwest - Pheasant** numbers appear to be good in the southwest with many areas maintaining the high levels seen in 1997. Numbers may be down modestly in some counties. **Quail** numbers are similar to the good populations of 1997. The best quail populations occur in the southern and eastern tiers of counties, especially in the Red Hills. Cover is rate as good.

**Southcentral - Pockets** of good **pheasant** numbers occur in the western and north tiers of counties, and overall pheasant numbers appear similar to last year. **Quail** populations appear to be good and have apparently increased substantially in the southern Flint Hills. Cover is good.

**Southeast - Quail** populations have increased substantially in the southeast, and hunting prospects look much better than they have for several years. Best areas include the southern Flint Hills and counties east. Cover is good.

Edited by Mark Shoup

## MODERN MUZZLELOADER MIFF

Editor:

Muzzleloader hunting started out as an adventure into the past, and there are still some hunters who hunt in period dress, plus the required hunter orange. But note some of the items on modern muzzleloaders that I see advertised: accurized barrel, fiber optic sights, 150 grains of black powder, and a .30 cal. sabot bullet that, with a 1 in 28-inch twist, will almost give you the capability of a .30-30. I'm sure Davy Crockett and Daniel Boone would have loved to have one of these.

But this is as far from muzzleloading as you can get. I believe the state of Colorado is proper with their decision to outlaw the inline muzzleloader except during the regular rifle season. I would hope the state of Kansas would follow suit.

These are fine rifles in their proper element but not in the woods during early muzzleloader season where caplock, flintlock, and matchlock and patch and round ball require a close shot to ensure a clean harvest.

*Bob Steele  
Elk City*

## WHY NOT PIKE?

Editor:

I recently returned from a trip to Canada. It was my second. I love to fish for northern pike. They are such strong, aggressive fighters. There are several fishermen in our area who take trips to Canada to fish for pike. For some, it's an annual trek.

I know that at one time, Kansas had a strong northern pike fishery, but I've been told that it is very costly to raise pike to a size that would survive in Kansas waters, and because of the lack of weed beds, pike may not reproduce naturally in our lakes. However, there are several species of fish that do not reproduce naturally in Kansas waters; stripers and trout come to mind. To keep these species viable, annual stock-

ings are made, and in the case of trout, adults are released.

I think it would be a good idea to begin stocking northern pike in a couple of our Kansas lakes. Council Grove and Tuttle Creek come to mind. These two lakes produced record pike in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Fishermen could pay for the additional cost of raising the fish by purchasing a northern pike permit, similar to the trout permit.

In addition, you could make the fishing a catch and release proposition only. I fished in a Canadian lake last summer where we could not possess a northern pike. All fish had to be released. This would save on the number of restocked fish.

Many of those Kansas dollars that are taken out of the state and country could be spent in Kansas.

*Lyle Pounds  
Concordia*

Dear Mr. Pounds

We are not stocking northern pike anymore although they were stocked at Kingman State Fishing Lake a couple of years ago when the lake was renovated. Apparently, that particular lake has problems with large influxes of carp, and the northerns were stocked to control the carp. There are good numbers of 15- to 20-inch fish in the lake, which would make for fun fishing.

Reasons for not stocking northerns? One given is that it is feared that they would compete heavily with native fish downstream of reservoirs. Another is that when we had our previous stocking program, we had three complaints to every positive comment. Apparently, many Kansas anglers consider them trash fish. Perhaps for both of these reasons, area fisheries biologists have quit requesting northerns from our Fish Culture Section.

As far as dollars lost to Canada is concerned, most of the folks I know who travel to Canada are as interested in catching large numbers of smallmouth bass and walleye as they are northerns.

*-Shoup*

## CROW WASTE?

Editor:

I have a question relating to crow hunting in the state of Kansas. As you are probably already aware, not too many crows are hunted for their palatableness. In Kansas, is it considered wanton waste to shoot crows and not use the bird? If it is not considered wanton waste, could you explain why or where in the Kansas Hunting Regulations is this explained.

Most other states use a bag limit approach for determining wanton waste. If the animal you are pursuing doesn't have a bag limit, then wanton waste does not apply. How does this work in Kansas? I have only hunted crows a couple of times and am interested in how this works.

*Marty Yost  
Topeka, Kansas*

Dear Mr. Yost:

Because crows were classified as migratory birds by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, states were responsible for enacting regulations in order to hunt them. In about 1990, the Kansas Wildlife and Parks Commission adopted regulations that set seasons and methods of take for crows. Wanton waste regulations (K.A.R. 115-18-8) require a hunter to make a reasonable effort to retrieve wounded or dead game animals or migratory game birds and retain them for consumption. But the crow is unique in that it is not classified as either game or migratory game, exempting it from wanton waste laws.

Regulation 115-20-1 states that legally taken crows may be possessed without limit in time, in unlimited numbers, and disposed of in any manner. (But like other wildlife, you cannot buy or sell crows or their parts.) Because there is no expectation that hunters harvest crows for consumption, a lengthy explanation is not included in the hunting summary about what to do with them. The Hunting Regulation Summary cannot be a complete list of all regulations; rather, we offer more detailed legal information through such requests as yours.

A word of caution I would like to make: please take every opportunity to explain to other crow hunters that while there is no wanton waste regulation, unsightly, disrespectful, or unsanitary displays of crow carcasses could spark public sentiment against all hunting. This is an ideal situation to practice hunter ethics and respect for wildlife.

-Steve Stackhouse, Law Enforcement  
Division director, Pratt

## WHERE ARE JACKS?

Editor:

My wife, Darlene, and I grew up in Rush County during the "Dirty Thirties," and while we had few cottontails in that area, there was an abundance of jackrabbits. They held jackrabbit drives to control their numbers and killed them by clubbing them to death. I went on one drive and was so sickened by the wanton slaughter that I never participated again.

In the heat of the summer, it seemed there was a jackrabbit resting in the shade of every stone post. In the winter, there was one under every tumbleweed seeking shelter from the blizzards. To be sure, we hunted jackrabbits with .22 rifles for our cats and dogs, but we took only what we needed. Jackrabbits were so plentiful you could hardly drive a country mile without coming across at least one jack that had been run over.

There was very little wildlife management in those days, but there were at least a few of most things: badger, coyote, beaver, antelope, deer, pheasant, prairie dogs. We always enjoyed seeing them in the flesh and now deplore the fact that some species are at risk without protection provided by law. We also realize that deer numbers need to be controlled, but that does not deplete the compassion we have for wildlife.

In 1959, we had to move out of state. I don't remember when we first noticed on our visits back that we didn't see jackrabbits anymore. What happened to them?

*Darlene and Carl Schlegel  
Aurora, Colorado*

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Schlegel:

We can only speculate that the decline in jackrabbit numbers in large part has

been due to habitat changes brought about by intensified agriculture. We have noted that jackrabbits tend to make their forms - or resting places - in areas with higher wheat stubble as opposed to the stubble from dwarf and semi-dwarf varieties.

Another issue is that Kansas has not experienced a long-term drought cycle for many years. Jacks actually do better in droughy periods, perhaps because it influences the level of farming. Extensive irrigation in some areas is mitigating the few short drought periods we experience and has also eliminated much of the shortgrass prairie habitat the jackrabbit needs.

Some observers also believe that the lack of fallow land in modern farming has contributed to jackrabbit habitat decline.

-Roger Applegate,  
small game coordinator, Emporia

## NONRESIDENT LANDOWNERS

Editor:

When I received my March April 1998 issue of *Kansas Wildlife and Parks* magazine, I immediately read it from cover to cover. I am a real fan of your magazine and have been a long-term subscriber.

I noted with interest the article on Page 31, "Deer Seasons At Issue," by Lloyd Fox. I have a suggestion that might help increase the harvest of deer and bring a little money to Kansas businesses. My suggestion involves clarifying the deer hunting regulations as they relate to nonresident landowners and expanding the availability of deer permits to the nonresident landowner.

I obviously have a personal interest in this request because it would apply to me. I was raised in Kansas, own a house in Larned, own 360 acres of farm land in Pawnee County, but only spend periods of time during the summer in Kansas, so I am a nonresident landowner. Encouraging nonresident landowners to return to Kansas for deer hunting not only causes them to return and spend money in Kansas at a time they would probably be somewhere else, but it also makes the opportunity to hunt deer available to a group of people who have ties to Kansas and pay taxes in Kansas.

My suggestion is to make the regulations as they relate to nonresident landowners simple and direct: allow nonresident landowners to procure deer hunt permits for the permit area in which their farm is located, not limited to just their farm land. Antlerless-only might be appropriate if that is what is needed to reduce herd size. I believe the plan would encourage landowners to return to Kansas for deer season, spending money in Kansas during the process and secondarily educating and involving them in wildlife management issues.

County treasurers would be able to provide listings and addresses of out-of-state owners of agricultural property who receive tax bills. (Mine always find their way to California.) I would think that contacting nonresident landowners and making deer permits available would be the proverbial win-win situation. Landowner/taxpayers would appreciate the offer, whether or not they accept it. If they accept, they will return to Kansas and spend money while in the state. Getting landowners involved in the deer hunt will certainly educate them as to wildlife issues in Kansas, and it stands to reason that a certain percent will become more involved in wildlife programs within Kansas. Most significantly, nonresident landowners would provide another means of thinning any over-abundant deer population in Kansas.

*Daniel W. Fox  
San Diego, California*

Dear Mr. Fox:

Thanks for your suggestion, which has merit. In fact, what you suggest is available this year in deer management units 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 16. In these units, anyone with a primary permit, including those who have nonresident hunt-own-land permits, may purchase as many as two \$10.50 whitetail antlerless-only deer game tags, valid in any of these units. While deer game tags are not valid in Pawnee County, which is in Unit 5, you may still purchase the tags and hunt in units where they are valid, if you have the hunt-own-land permit for your land.

Note that these tags are not valid on department-managed lands. (See Page 38.)

-Shoup

## Tangled TEXAS Tango

Last December, a disgruntled Texan called Wildlife and Parks' Special Operations Chief Richard Harrold in Pratt. The man and two other hunters, all from San Antonio, were upset because they felt they had been cheated on a deer guiding scam.

The men had met another man from San Antonio who originally was from Cedarvale, Kan. This man told them of fantastic deer hunting in Kansas, where they could take large trophy bucks. He also told them that he could arrange a Kansas hunt because his father lived in Cedarvale. He said he could secure 1,200 acres for them to hunt, for a sum of money. The Texans paid their money and thought life was good.

But when they arrived in Kansas, they found that the father had only secured 400 acres. The Texans confronted the man whom they had paid because he was also hunting in the same area. The "guide" said that he had sent the money to his father and assured them that he would get it back and return it. Instead, he skipped town.

The Texans then went to the father, who swore that he had given the money back to his son. The father also told them that his son had taken a deer back to a San Antonio man who had a permit but couldn't come to hunt, but he only knew his first name.

All this information was forwarded to Conservation Officer Brain Hanzlick, who covers the Chautauqua County area where the incident occurred. In turn, Hanzlick sent the information to Texas Game Warden John Brooks, whom he personally knew. Brooks forwarded the info to Danny Villalobos, the game warden for San Antonio.

Being a new officer, Hanzlick was scheduled to attend the Kansas Law Enforcement Training Academy, so he turned the case over to me. I contacted U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service special agent Mark Johnson, and Johnson and Villalobos contacted the man who had been paid to arrange the hunt.

They were also able to contact the man who had allegedly had a deer brought to Texas by transferring his deer tag. The two officers obtained written statements from both men.

The man who received the money said that he had sent some of it to his father in Cedarvale, thus implicating his father. The "guide" also admitted that he had brought back a buck for his friend and put his friend's tag on it. But he said that it was a friend of his father who had shot the deer. The man who received the deer also admitted to transferring his tag and receiving the deer.

Johnson then faxed the statements to me, and I talked to the father in Cedarvale. The father told me that he had received the money and still had it, even though he had told the Texans he had given it to his son. He said his son had left too quickly to give it back. The father then cooperated by giving the name of the man who shot the deer, and was charged with guiding without a permit.

The man who was paid the money to arrange the hunt was charged with guiding without a permit, illegal possession of a deer, unlawful shipment of an illegally-taken deer, and aiding and abetting the illegal transfer of a deer permit.

The man who received the deer was charged with illegal transfer of a permit.

In the meantime, Officer Hanzlick graduated from the training academy, and he and I went to Wichita to interview the man who allegedly shot the deer that went to Texas. The man admitted that he had shot the deer and gave it, untagged, to the man from Texas. The Wichita man was charged with failure to tag a deer. He said that he didn't know that what he had done was illegal until he talked with a conservation officer at a boat show.

When all was said and done, all four men pled no-contest to their charges and were fined. The man from San Antonio who took the deer back to Texas paid \$945. His friend who received the deer paid \$295. The man from Wichita who shot the deer also paid \$295, and the father paid \$95.

We in the state of Kansas appreciate the efforts of the Texas Department of Parks and Wildlife and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service in resolving this complicated case.

—Dennis Knuth, conservation officer,  
Independence

## HIS OWN TRAP

For several years, I received complaints of road hunters shooting at deer in the central portion of Miami County. The complaints seemed to center on a dark-colored truck cruising up and down the roads.

With the much-appreciated assistance of Hillsdale State Park Ranger Deve Thompson, I made contact with people living in the area of the complaints. One of our contacts was a tenant of some property who also happened to run a deer camp. He said he would help in locating this described road hunter in the dark-colored truck.

On the morning of the last day of the 1997 firearms deer season, we set up our decoy deer in the area. Just at day-break, a dark-colored truck stopped in the road across from our deer. Seconds later, a shot rang out from the truck. As it turned out, the shooter was the operator of the deer camp who had agreed to help us.

Thanking him for his assistance, we transported him to the Miami County Jail and charged him with criminal hunting and shooting wildlife from a motor vehicle. Bond was set at \$750.

In March, the defendant went to court and pled guilty to the criminal hunting charge. The judge, himself a sportsman, set aside a \$400 plea agreement and assessed a \$545 fine, suspended hunting privileges for one year, and imposed 90 days probation.

—David Ellis, conservation officer,  
Osawatomie

## Clay Center No. 3 In U.S.

Four Kansas youth have proved they're among the best at knowing and encouraging wildlife. The Clay Center team earned the right to represent Kansas last April at the national 4-H Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Contest in Clemson, South Carolina, where they became No. 3 in the nation.

"That's the best a Kansas team has ever done in national competition," said Charles Lee, K-State Extension wildlife specialist who coordinates the Kansas program. "They studied hard and put in a solid team effort."

The Clay Center team included Quincie Hammond, Lucas Shivers, Rusty Thompson, Travis Vathauer, and coach Elby Adamson. As winners in the state's senior division contest, they received an expense-paid trip to the five-day national title meet. Kansas Quail Unlimited chapters and the Wolf Creek Nuclear Operating Center donated the trip funding.

To place in Clemson, the Clay Center High School students had to score high on five activities:

- **identifying wildlife foods and the species that eat them;**
- **judging wildlife habitat from aerial photographs;**
- **developing individual wildlife management plans;**
- **developing a team wildlife management plan that meets a specific landowner's objectives; and**
- **writing a home or urban wildlife management plan.**

"The contest emphasizes habitat because it's key to maintaining wildlife populations," said Lee.

While in South Carolina, team members also got to tour an experimental forest, see forested wetland areas, visit Clemson University's Death Valley Stadium, and enjoy the beaches at a mountain lake and on the Atlantic Ocean at Charleston.

For more information about next year's state contest, contact you local county extension office or phone Lee at (785) 532-5734.

*-Clay Center Dispatch*

## NEWSWEEK FOR PETA

If you think the animals rights movement is dead or has gone to sleep, think again. Snuggled right between two related articles on health care in the Sept. 28 issue of *Newsweek* was a full page advertisement for the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA). The ad featured TV personality Jennie Garth huddled on the ground with a chicken under her arm and the slogan "Live and Let Live! Go Vegetarian."

Hunters have long been aware of PETA's campaign to end hunting, but the animal rights group targets other areas of animal use just as dogmatically. This excerpt from the group's website is a typical example:

"The Crete-Monee school district in Illinois, near Chicago, is accepting blood money! School superintendent Steve Humphrey has agreed to allow a fundraising event that will end with a calf being slaughtered. A local farmer bought the year-old calf at auction with the idea of raffling off the meat from the slaughtered animal and giving the proceeds to the school district. This sends a dangerous message to the students in the Crete-Monee schools that animals are nothing more than commodities, to be bought, killed, chopped up, and sold. Raising funds for education should never involve lessons in disrespect. It was learned after each of the recent school shootings that the children who shot and killed their friends, teachers,

and even families had histories of abusing and killing animals."

*-Shoup*

## RETURN OF THE ARK?

The Arkansas River flowed continuously across Kansas from Colorado to the Oklahoma border for 331 of 365 days in the 1997 water year (Oct. 1, 1996, through Sept. 30, 1997) -- the most since the early 1970s.

The Ark River gaging station at Garden City, which was dry the entire year in 1992, flowed 331 days in 1997. For the second year in a row, the mean annual stream flow at this gaging station for 1997 was 196 cubic feet per second (cfs), higher than the mean annual stream flow for any year since records began in 1923. Above normal rainfall in northwest Kansas and releases from Colorado reservoirs probably account for the continuous and increased flow.

Two gaging stations in western Kansas that are normally dry October through May -- Beaver Creek at Cedar Bluff and the Smoky Hill River at Elkador -- flowed the entire period. Above normal precipitation during the last part of the 1996 water year may explain this flow pattern.

*-River Crossings, from a U.S. Geological Survey Water-Data Report*

## REPUBLICAN RIVER SUIT

On May 26 of this year, the state of Kansas sued the state of Nebraska in the U.S. Supreme Court over water rights to the Republican River. In 1943, Nebraska, Colorado, and Kansas signed a pact dictating how much water each state could use from the river. But Kansas claims Nebraska has been annually siphoning off nearly 10 billion more gallons than allowed under the compact.

The depletion, Kansas contends, was caused by indiscriminate drilling of water wells in Nebraska. Kansas Attorney General Carla Stovall says the practice has escalated because many Nebraska farmers hope to be grandfathered in under a settlement between the states.

*-River Crossings*

## NATIONAL GUARD TO THE RESCUE

From Aug. 1-15, a Kansas Army National Guard engineering unit conducted its annual two-week training exercises at Tuttle Creek State Park. The annual exercise gives the unit experience with heavy equipment operation and construction tasks, but in this case the exercises benefitted Tuttle Creek State Park and its visitors, as well.

The National Guard's position statement summed up the situation perfectly: "Support the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks' Tuttle Creek State Park in recovery from 1993 flood destruction." The unit's goal was "to restore and beautify parks by means of building restoration or removal, selective equipment removal, and general landscape improvements."

To accomplish this mission, the Guard brought in 63 soldiers, 15 five-ton dump trucks, four backhoes, three loaders, four bulldozers, one road grader, and enough small equipment to support a small army.

Upon arrival, the unit was given 30 individual projects to improve the state

park in the Fancy Creek and Randolph areas, those hit hardest by the 1993 flooding. The first priority of the unit was to remove safety hazards by removing out-dated buildings that were no longer usable, replacing portions of structures that jeopardized their integrity, and removing roads that were significantly eroded.

A second priority of the unit was to remove the many tree stumps strewn about by the flooding and pile the tons of driftwood that had been deposited throughout the areas. Also removed were the walls of an unusable shower building and broken waterplant equipment.

But not all activity involved removing things. Flood-damaged roads were replaced, improving angler access. A shelterhouse and group shelters were built, and a safe, usable parking lot was designed.

The cost of this effort to Tuttle Creek State Park involved only fuel and material, which totalled less than \$7,500. The project would have cost more than \$100,000 if contracted out.

*-Todd Lovin, park manager,  
Tuttle Creek State Park*

## EUROPEAN TRAP FIGHT

U.S. and Canadian conservation agencies, private organizations, and trapping groups have joined forces with the United States Trade Office to fight a European Union (EU) ban on imports of 13 species of wildlife from the U.S. and Canada to Europe. The EU has banned the import of these species from countries that allow the use of leghold traps.

However, Canada and the U.S. have entered into an agreement with the EU that exempts them from the ban. The new understanding allows the trade of wild furs to continue uninterrupted and recognizes trapping as an integral part of furbearer management under the jurisdiction of individual states. It also supports continued efforts to improve trapping methods.

Individual states, including Kansas, are taking steps to develop and implement "best management" practices for traps. This is an accelerated trap research program designed to identify the most humane and effective traps available.

*-Shoup*

## COYOTES GOOD FOR DUCKS?

Opinions are plentiful concerning the value of coyotes, but perspectives may differ among sheep ranchers and duck hunters. A recent study conducted by the Northern Prairie Science Center in Jamestown, N.D., says that although coyotes kill some ducks, many more live because of them.

Low nest success is an important factor affecting duck recruitment in the Prairie Pothole Region (northcentral U.S. and southcentral Canada). The red fox is a particularly effective predator of nesting ducks and duck clutches in these uplands. Coyotes and red foxes are territorial but sometimes inhabit the same area. Duck nest success is higher in the areas where the coyote is the dominant predator.

The most probable reason for this increased nest success is that coyotes tend to exclude red foxes from their territory and will sometimes kill the fox. A red fox has a smaller territory than a coyote; thus, a given area will normally support more foxes than coyotes. Foxes generally find more nests and take more eggs over the nesting season than coyotes. Foxes are also more likely to hunt and kill nesting hens.

The Jamestown study showed that nest success was 17 percent on areas dominated by foxes and 32 percent on areas dominated by coyotes. Generally, upland nesting ducks like mallards, pintails, and teal need a 15 to 20 percent nest success to maintain a stable population. This study showed that duck populations could increase if coyotes dominate the nesting area.

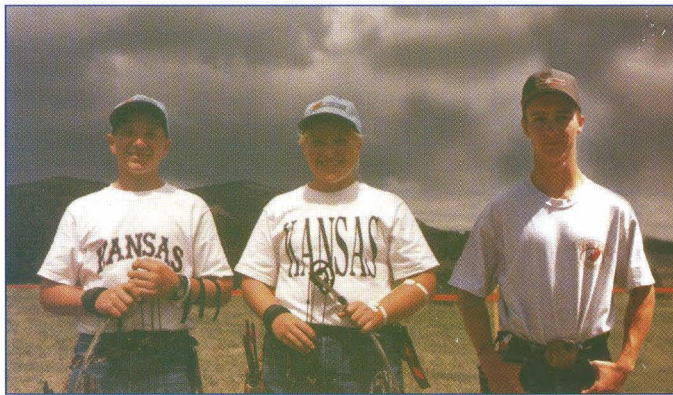
*- Farmers and Wildlife*



## NATIONAL YOUTH COMPETITION

On July 27-31, three Kansas youth joined 300 others from 20 states to participate in the National Rifle Association's International Youth Hunter Education Challenge (YHEC) in New Mexico. Zeke Garison, a 16-year-old from Dexter; Heather Kerl, 15, Hiawatha; and Wyatt Kerl, 13, Hiawatha, took part in eight events simulating the most true-to-life hunting conditions possible, including testing their rifle, shotgun, muzzleloading, and archery skills. In addition, they were tested on their ability to identify wildlife, navigate using map and compass skills, and remember hunter safety skills.

The trio won the honor of competing nationally by placing high at state competitions in Kansas. Garison qualified by participating in a Kansas YHEC event in Cowley County on June 13, where he placed first in the senior division. The Kerls qualified for the nationals by competing in the state YHEC held June 6-7 at Pine Ridge Sporting Clays near Alma. At that event Heather placed fifth overall, and Wyatt was the junior division state champion.



Pictured from left to right: Wyatt Kerl, Heather Kerl, Zeke Garison

At the national event, top scorers in both junior and senior age divisions were awarded on an individual basis for each of the eight events, as well as for the best total scores. Awards also went to the highest-scoring five-person teams in individual events, as well as overall scores.

The small but enthusiastic Kansas team made a good showing for themselves at the national YHEC, conducting themselves with dignity and respect and having a good time. For icing on the cake, Wyatt Kerl received one of two junior division sportsmanship awards and placed second on the hunter responsibility test.

Conducted by the NRA's Hunter Services Department, the event took place at the 33,000-acre NRA Whittington Center in the heart of north-

east New Mexico's rugged mountains. This is the Super Bowl of youth hunter education challenges. Each year, thousands of young hunters train with volunteer instructors across North America to compete in state and Canadian provincial competitions, with top finishers advancing to the international event.

Requirements for participation in the YHEC program include completion of a certified hunter education course in North America and involvement in a home state or Canadian provincial challenge. Although the program is competitive in nature, its real challenge for participants is in personal improvement and further development of skills learned in basic hunter education courses.

While developing a personal code of safety and

ethics, participants also learn to shoot safely and hone their skills, including proper sight picture, shot placement, shooting positions, trigger and breath control, and follow through.

In Kansas, the YHEC program is sponsored by the Kansas Wildlife Officers Association (KWOA) and the Department of Wildlife and Parks. This year, 230 Kansas youngsters participated in state competition. While the trip to New Mexico may be expensive, the Wildlife Officers Association offers a few \$500 scholarships to help participants make the national competition.

Next year will be the fifth for the Kansas YHEC, and the Wildlife Officers Association is looking for kids and sponsors.

"We need volunteers to help coach and money to help support this effort," says state coordinator Rick Campbell, a conservation officer from Wamego. "The KWOA can afford to sponsor the program and events here at home, but we can't afford to send a top team to the international event."

To volunteer or for more information on this program, contact Rick Campbell, 1202 16th St., Wamego, KS 66547, (785) 456-7097.

-Shoup

## DEER TAG RESTRICTIONS

Any Kansas hunter with a deer permit may purchase as many as two antlerless-only deer game tags for units 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 16 this year. The tags, which cost \$10.50, may be purchased over the counter through the end of the season, and they may be used with legal equipment in the firearms, muzzleloader, or archery seasons.

The tags may only be used for antlerless white-tailed deer in the above units. No hunter may purchase more than two deer game tags, and tags may not be used on department-managed lands such as wildlife areas.

However, they may be used on Walk-In Hunter Area lands, if those lands have been approved for deer hunting by the landowner. These areas have signs showing any restrictions the landowner may

have placed on hunting. In addition, this information is outlined in Wildlife and Parks' Walk-In Hunter Area atlas.

Deer game tags may be purchased from offices of the Department of Wildlife and Parks, license vendors, and county clerks. For more information, phone (316) 672-5911.

-Shoup



# STRENGTH

## Born of FEAR



by Mark Shoup

I've come to the conclusion that once your kids start hunting, it's time to leave your gun at home for awhile. Gun handling is serious business that requires a teacher's full attention to the young hunter, not the quarry. I learned this the hard way during dove season when my oldest son accidentally discharged his 20-gauge while unloading it. It was my fault, not his, for I was busy unloading my gun and not watching him, a first-year hunter who is only 10 years old.

But this was a wakeup call for both of us and, luckily, a profound gun-safety experience that we will never forget. Although he had shot a rabbit in late August and a dove before the mishap, when teal season rolled around, he was reluctant to go out. I didn't push it. We did, however, practice loading and unloading his pump shotgun with dummy shells.

Then came regular duck season, and Logan -- having gathered his emotions -- was eager to have his first opportunity at a duck. On the second day of the season, I asked if he wanted to go check a few nearby ponds for ducks, and his answer was an emphatic "yes."

I didn't take a gun because I had learned that it would be much easier to watch him, to make sure that he was following all the rules, and just as importantly, to enjoy the experience with him. And I also wanted to take my other son Will, who is seven

and too young to hunt. Watching both boys and trying to hunt myself would just not be practical or safe.

The first two ponds had no ducks, so we found ourselves parking in the middle of a section in the exact spot where Logan's 20-gauge had accidentally discharged, shocking both of us and bringing him to tears. As we walked to the pond, Logan said, "This place kind of scares me."

I said, "Don't worry, Bud. I'm right behind you and watching everything you do."

This seemed to reassure him, and we walked to the pond on the lower side of a ridge where we couldn't see the water until we were about three-quarters down the pond's length. Then I had Logan walk slowly up the ridge through the weeds, shotgun ready, me following and Will bringing up the rear. When we got to the top, nothing appeared on the water. Then from the far left end, a wigeon flew, moving from left to right and away from us toward the setting sun.

I saw it first and said, "There he is, Logan. Get him." He shouldered the gun well, but I wondered if he would get a shot off because the bird was picking up steam. It was across the pond about 35-40 yards away when Logan fired, and the bird folded cleanly. Unbelievable. I would have felt happy about making that shot. He had handled the gun perfectly and held it muzzle-up as he

grinned from ear to ear. His eyes sparkled, and his breath was short, but he didn't forget where that muzzle was pointed.

Logan's excitement was infectious. After ample praise from father and brother, he said, "There were a million things going through my head, Dad. Is he too far out? Should I shoot? Then I thought I had lost him!" As we walked around the pond to pick up the bird, he kept repeating that last statement, which puzzled me. At first, I thought that he had lost sight of the bird in the setting sun, but he said no, that he just thought he had lost it.

What had happened, I gathered after further inquiry, was that he was swinging on the bird and fired just as his muzzle blotted out the target. In that split-second that he squeezed the trigger, he had lost sight of the bird -- classic swing-through technique.

*Way cool*, it was, sun setting in the west, temperature about 65 degrees. A beautiful evening. The shot itself was a real surprise for me, but it was a rite of passage for Logan, like any accomplishment that has previously been a mysterious, seemingly unattainable goal. But more than anything, it was a moment for reflection. Logan had conquered his fear without forgetting the important lessons of a frightening experience.

We discussed the evening's experience in the context of our previous trip to this spot. Things had turned out well. God was watching over us, I believe, as we drove slowly back to the house, the wind blowing gently over the boys' faces, their smiles and contentment apparent.

Someday, I will hunt with my sons, but it will be a time when they have become finely tutored, and a locked safety will be as second nature as a clean shot. As we go afield together in the next few years, I will teach, observe, enjoy. Then one day, our lives will come full circle, and they will be watching over my shoulder.

## CHRISTMAS CRAPPIE?

Crappie will never replace turkey or ham as a traditional Christmas dinner entree, but fresh fried crappie fillets would make a nice side dish, wouldn't they? If you agree, you're in luck. There may not be a better month than December for catching limits of big Kansas crappie.

For anglers willing to brave the cold weather and water, December might provide even better fishing than spring. Crappie will generally congregate in huge schools as fall temperatures cool the water. These huge schools feed on gizzard shad, which are often slowed and even killed by sudden and drastic water temperature drops. For the boat angler who can find these schools, the fishing can be as easy as dropping a jig over the side of the boat and hanging on.

Crappie may suspend over deep river channels, or they may orientate to subtle changes in lake bottom structure. Finding suspended fish requires having good sonar equipment and knowing how to use it. As a rule of thumb, start looking for winter crappie in the lower half of the lake, concentrating on main river and creek channels, especially those with some kind of wood structure. Spend most of your time graphing in water that is 15 feet deep or deeper. December crappie may be as deep as 30 feet, but they'll usually hang out in water 15-25 feet deep.

In lakes with man-made brushpiles, finding winter crappie can be as easy as pulling your boat up to the buoy marked FISH ATTRAC-

TOR. In December, when the water temperature drops below 50 degrees, brushpiles in water 20 feet deep or deeper can hold literally tens of thousands of crappie.

Traditional soft-plastic jig bodies work great for winter crappie. Many experienced anglers prefer the larger shad-imitation bodies because they closely match the shape and size of the gizzard shad. Jigging spoons also work well for winter crappie although treble hooks on spoons will snag up more frequently in brush.

Fish vertically, paying particular attention to the depth fish are holding. Keeping your jig at the proper depth is more important than lure color or jigging action. These cold-water crappie are sluggish and won't move a great distance to hit a lure. Watch the graph, and position your jig just at or just above the depth where most fish are holding. Jig the lure sparingly, holding it steady much of the time. Most strikes will come as the jig is being held still, and you'll need to be paying attention and set the hook quickly.

Insulated boots and warm clothes are also important equipment. Always wear several layers of warm clothing while winter fishing. And remember that cold water is deadly. Wear your life jacket. Keep a close eye on weather forecasts, and stay home if high winds or storms are possible.

Best bets for great winter crappie fishing include Kirwin, Webster, Cedar Bluff, Kanopolis, Council Grove, Marion, Hillsdale, Perry, and Pomona reservoirs.

-Miller

## B.A.S.S. for "MAKE-A-WISH"

On September 19, the Kansas Bass Anglers Sportsmen's Society (BASS) Federation held a benefit tournament for the Make-A-Wish Foundation at Wilson Reservoir. More than 80 boats registered, and the event generated \$5,000 for the foundation, which helps terminally ill children make a wish come true.

One of the big draws for this tournament is that many biologists and anglers believe that the next state record smallmouth bass will be taken from Wilson Reservoir. In fact, a \$10,000 cash prize was offered to anyone lucky enough to catch a state record smallmouth during the tournament. The Kansas BASS Federation even purchased an insurance policy to cover the cost of such a large prize.

Although no one cashed in that grand prize, the big fish of the day - a 6.15-pound largemouth - was good for a \$2,000 prize.

"The tournament format was well conceived in that weigh-ins were conducted each hour, with cash prizes for the three largest fish caught each hour," said Doug Nygren, Fisheries Section chief for the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. "The fish were quickly weighed and release, making it easy on the bass, which suffered little or no tournament-related mortality."

Despite some windy conditions, the fish cooperated for most anglers. Water temperatures were in the mid 70s, and good numbers of fish were caught, mostly in shallow water.

"The Kansas BASS Federation has come up with a tremendous tournament format," Nygren adds. "Hopefully, this will become an annual event that benefits the Make-A-Wish Foundation and tournament participants, promotes fishing, and makes wishes come true for some special children."

-Shoup



**HABITAT CORNER**

Cottontail rabbits don't need a lot of management to keep their numbers up, but there are a few things you can do to improve rabbit habitat. Perhaps the easiest is to build brush piles. Grass and weeds will grow in and around them, providing food and more cover. The piles should be 10-15 feet in diameter and 4-6 feet high. This is an immediate step to improve rabbit habitat, but permanent strips of food and cover should be developed and maintained for continuous good rabbit populations.

Diversity is the key. Several small patches of food and brush are much more valuable than one large area of each. Strips are perhaps the easiest to provide and are just as valuable to rabbits. Strips left along fence rows, drainage ditches, pond edges, streams, along wood lots and orchards, field roads, or any area that can be allowed to revert to weeds, briars, sumac, and other brush will greatly benefit rabbits.

Strips of food planted beside the strips of cover make life easier for rabbits and also help control erosion. Lespedezas provide good food during the spring and summer, and oats, wheat, and other small grains furnish good winter food. Clovers of all types are excellent rabbit food. Recommended agricultural practices, such as planting times, amount of fertilizer, and other necessary information may be obtained from your local county extension agent.

*-How To Have Small Game On Your Land*

**TURTLE ON ICE**

Adult painted turtles will spend winter lying on the bottom of a pond or buried in the mud. If the temperature falls too low, they will move to a deeper pool and may bury themselves. Here, they slow their body temperatures to save fuel, but how do they breath?

Like frogs, aquatic turtles can get oxygen without breathing by direct exchange from the water through their skin membranes.

*-Ed Miller, nongame biologist, Independence*

**WOOD DENSITIES**

Most Kansas trees can supply firewood because any wood will burn. But dense, air-dried hardwoods provide the greatest amount of heat. Dense hardwoods are best because they burn slower and produce more BTU's of heat per volume than lighter, less-dense hardwoods. Dry wood delivers more usable heat because less energy is needed to drive off the wood's moisture while burning.

Hardwood density is determined by measuring the approximate number of pounds per cubic foot of wood. Did you know that beech, loblolly pine, and yellow birch are all denser woods than walnut? The following chart may surprise some who are not familiar with wood densities:

*-from Bob Vila's Home Site, <http://www.bobvila.com>*

Wood Type	Density (lbs./cf)	Wood Type	Density (lbs./cf)
Indian ebony	61	Black cherry	33
Virginia live oak	61	Silver maple	32
Hickory	51	Douglas fir	30
African ebony	48	Chestnut	28
Apple	47	Cottonwood	27
White oak	44	Yellow poplar	27
Yellow birch	42	Redwood	27
African mahogany	42	White spruce	27
Sugar maple	42	Basswood	25
Beech	41	Butternut	25
Green ash	38	Eastern white pine	23
Western larch	37	Northern white pine	23
Loblolly pine	37	Southern white cedar	22
American elm	35	Western red cedar	21
Walnut	35	Northern white cedar	20
Indian mahogany	34		

**WAY outside**

BY BRUCE COCHRAN



"I'LL BET THERE'S QUITE A STORY BEHIND THAT."

**CRAWFORD  
NEEDS INFO**

In an effort to preserve the history of the lake construction, the staff of Crawford State Park is trying to contact the members of the Civilian Conservation Corps, relatives, or anyone with information about the construction of Crawford State Fishing Lake.

All who are interested or happen to have pictures, information on, or copies of the CCC Company 788 newspaper the Fire Devil should contact Crawford State Park, #1 Lake Road, Farlington, KS 66723, (316) 362-3671.

—Columbus Daily Advocate

**NEW WILDLIFE AREA**

The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks has good news for outdoorsmen and women in the northeastern portion of the state. The Benedictine Bottoms Wildlife Area, near Atchison, was officially signed over to Wildlife and Parks on Sept. 4 by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The area is 3 miles northeast of Atchison and contains more than 2,100 acres of wetlands and other excellent wildlife habitat.

Located along the Missouri River, the area will offer hunting opportunities for waterfowl, upland and small game, and deer through a limited number of access permits. Non toxic shot will be required to hunt upland and small game, as well as waterfowl.

Although the application period closed Sept. 28, access permits to hunt on Benedictine Bottoms Wildlife Area will be offered again next

year. Next spring, the area will be open to wildlife watchers, photographers, and hikers. For more information, phone Atchison State Fishing Lake, (913) 367-7811.

—Kirk Thompson, conservation officer, Lancaster

**VOGEL WA OPEN**

In 1988, Vernon and Leno Vogel donated 200 acres to the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks through a living trust to be managed for wildlife. The area is 8 miles west and 1 mile south of Phillipsburg.

Special upland hunts will be conducted on the Vogel Wildlife Area this year in order to provide a high-quality hunting experience. Access to the area will be limited to only persons in possession of an access permit during the months of November and December.

Applications are available by phoning (785) 425-6775.

—Phillips County Review

**PRAIRIE SPIRIT UPDATE**

The addition of culverts and farm crossings kept construction crews busy on the Prairie Spirit Rail Trail this summer. The addition of bicycle racks and benches is also planned for of the trail. However, trail officials are looking for residents to volunteer to help with the installation. Persons interested in trail work may call Ken Weide at 448-5560.

—Ottawa Herald

**NEW NAT'L REFUGE**

Hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, and berry picking are some of the new activities that are available at Marais des

Cygnés National Wildlife Refuge. The new refuge, managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, is located along U.S. Highway 69 north of Pleasanton. It is adjacent to Marais des Cygnés Wildlife Area, which is managed by Wildlife and Parks.

About 5,000 acres of the 7,500-acre refuge is available to the public. Regulations are generally in accordance with state guidelines with a few exceptions, especially for deer and spring turkey hunting, which will be conducted with limited access permit drawings.

Anyone interested should phone (913) 352-8941.

—Osawatomie Graphic

**FT. RILEY REC**

The Fort Riley Outdoor Recreation Center is a service that offers a number of recreational opportunities and products. Boat and outdoor equipment services are used most often. Mountain bikes are very popular, and there are a lot of trails to ride on the fort. Archery is another service open to the public 365 days a year, and it is free if you have your own bows and targets. Four new pop-up campers with air conditioning and 25 stocked ponds are also available.

—K-State Intern

**PWC SAFETY TRENDS**

The tragic death of a 19-year-old Olathe jet-skier underscores a disturbing trend. In Kansas and elsewhere in the United States, watercraft accidents more and more often involve the powerful personal watercraft.

In Kansas in 1996, 26 per-

cent of watercraft accidents involved personal watercraft; last year, the number had grown to 51 percent.

Also disturbing is the number of children involved in those accidents. In 1997, 35 percent of personal watercraft accidents involved children ages 12 to 19.

Last year, there were 32 personal watercraft accidents reported in Kansas. Two of those resulted in fatalities.

—Olathe Daily News

**KID BOOK ON HUNT**

Ten-year-old Samantha likes the idea of a world without hunting but is astonished to discover that hunters are friends of wildlife. She struggles with this seeming paradox as heroine in Robert Warren's *How Could You, Danny?—Samantha Challenges Hunting*.

"Wy do people want to hurt harmless animals for fun?" she asks, warming to her role as animal rights protagonist. "How can killing wild animals be a good thing? Can't we just let nature take care of them?"

Through her relatives' answers, the author presents a compelling case against emotional prejudice about animals and hunting in this exciting illustrated adventure story. Copies of *Danny How Could You?* can be ordered directly from the publisher, Natural Highs, P.O. Box 781292, San Antonio, TX 78278. Prices vary depending on the number of copies ordered. One copy is \$8.95, 2 are \$6.95 each, and 3-5 copies are \$4.95 each. Add 7.75 percent Texas sales tax and \$3.50 shipping and handling.

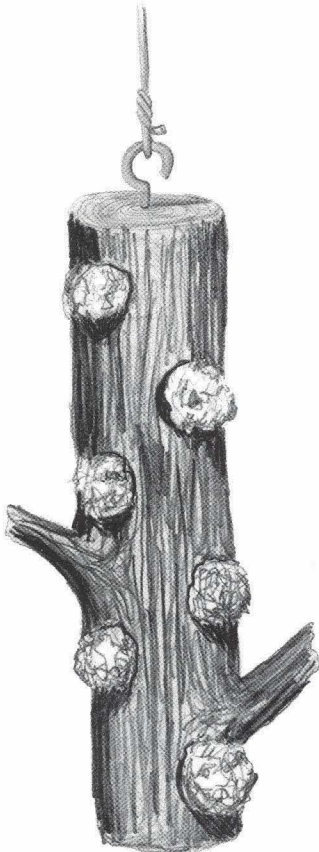
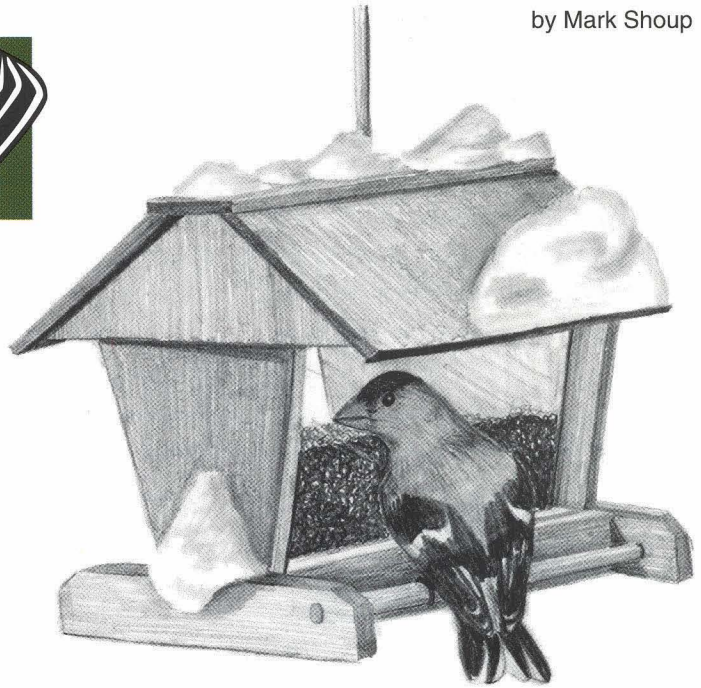
—Fair Chase

by Mark Shoup

FEED  
me

Ever wonder what to do with yourself in winter? Whether you live in a small town or a big city, you might like to spend some time behind a cozy window pane watching the antics of house finches, cardinals, bluejays, woodpeckers, and many other wild birds -- right in your own backyard.

Most people know that the easiest way to attract birds is to feed them. So this fall, put up a few bird feeders to pass the time in winter. A few seeds and a little suet is all you need to start, and if you live near woods or brushy fields, you might lure a few birds the first day.



What you feed and how you feed it are important. Birds that feed on the ground -- such as finches, towhees, mourning doves, and juncoes -- like to pick through seed scattered on a bare spot in your lawn. You can scatter seed or let the birds do it when you put out a feeder.

Swinging feeders are okay for tree-feeding birds, but most prefer a sturdy feeding station. A gravity-fed feeder on a heavy metal "T-post" will work fine, but you might need Dad or Mom's help for this. Place the feeder within a few feet of trees or shrubs, especially evergreens, but not so close that cats and other predators can lie in ambush.

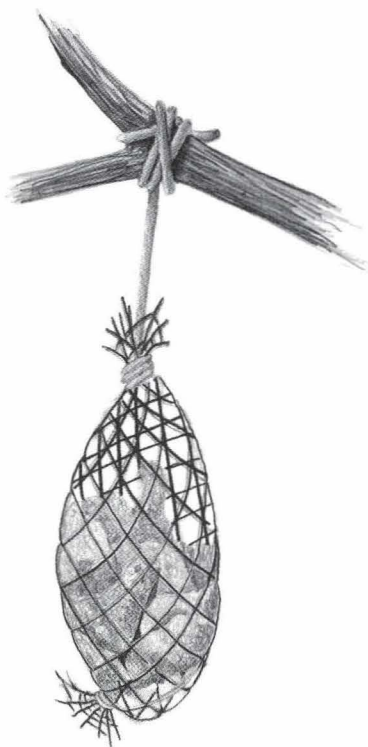
You can make one of the simplest bird feeders with a plastic

milk jug. Cut openings on each side and put a wooden perch through one corner. To make sure rainwater won't collect in the jug, you may have to poke small drain holes in the bottom. Fill this feeder with wild bird seed and hang it from a tree.

For smaller birds, coffee-can feeders work well. They keep the bigger birds and squirrels from hogging all the grub. Cut the bottom of the can out so that it's a hollow tube. Take two plastic coffee can lids, trace a 50-cent coin on each lid, and cut out the holes. Put the lids on the can and hang the feeder with a piece of coat hanger. Add a perch if you want.

Suet, or animal fat, is an important winter food for insect-

eating birds such as woodpeckers. Get beef suet from your local grocer. One of the simplest suet feeders is a plastic mesh bag from your grocery store. Just fill it with suet and hang it from a tree limb. You can also put suet in pine cones or in holes on a log. Or you can melt the suet and mix it with bird seed and oatmeal to make little cakes. For this, use the bottom



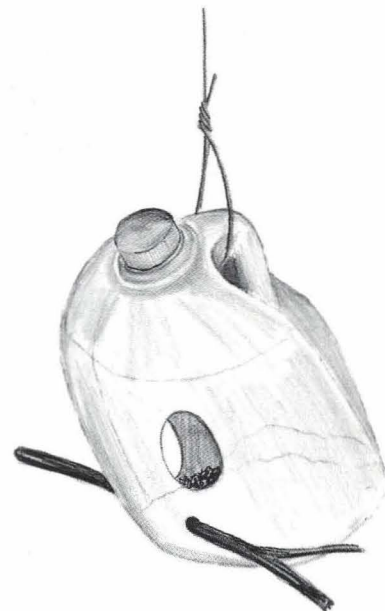
of a two-liter pop bottle for a mold.

When it comes to bird seed, it's hard to beat black-oil sunflowers. They're inexpensive, packed with protein, and loved by most songbirds. Combined with millet, another inexpensive grain, you have a near-perfect mix. Both can be bought at most local grain elevators in 40- or 50-pound bags. This is the cheapest way to buy seed.

Although not necessary, occasional raisins, apples, and other fruits will enhance your feeding operation.

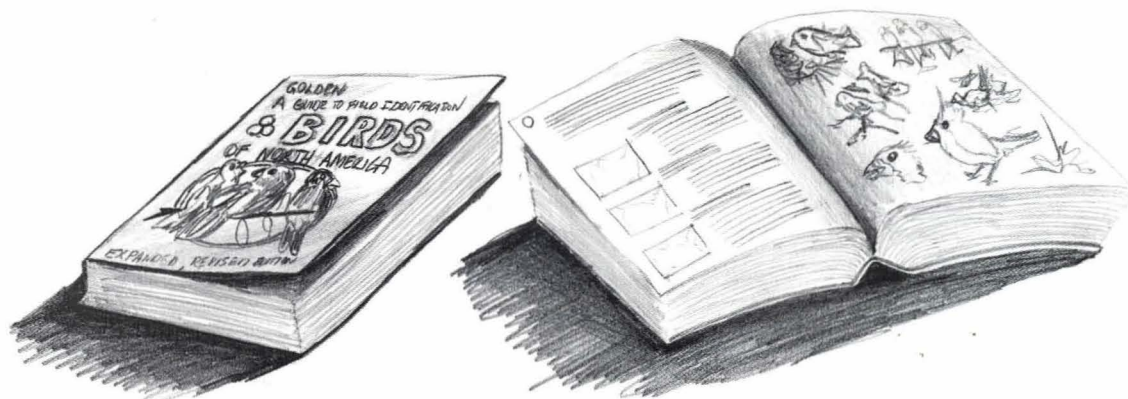
Whether you use store-bought or home-made feeders, keep the operation clean. Clear feeders and feeding areas of droppings every week or so. This will help keep the feeding area from spreading disease.

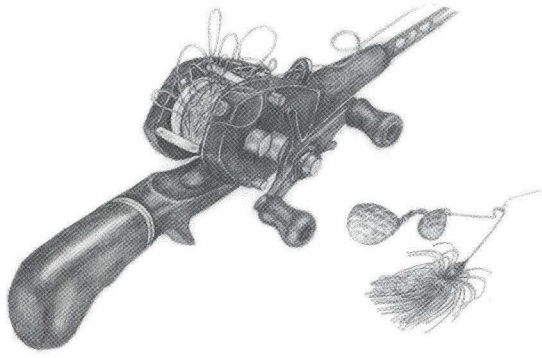
Birds were in Kansas long before humans, and they don't really need feeders to get them through the winter although feeding can help during really bad snowstorms. Mainly, we feed birds because it's fun and it gives us a great opportunity to learn



wild bird identification. The more wildlife species we can name, the more we appreciate them.

So put a few feeders out this spring and get yourself a bird identification book. Two good ones are Peterson's Field Guides: Eastern Birds and Golden Books' Birds of North America. Won't it be great next spring when you can amaze your friends by naming all those little birds that most people can't tell apart? And if you keep feeding through summer, you'll have year round entertainment.





# Backlash

by Mike Miller

## Learning To Slow Down

It's a universal phenomenon — the older you get the faster time goes by. I'm not old yet, mind you, but I have noticed that each passing year goes by just a little faster. I remember when I was in grade school, the last week of school went by so slowly, it felt like a year. Now I just start to look forward to a date in the future, and it's come and gone.

The funny thing about this is that as you get older and time goes faster, you slow down. Maybe it's just a product of maturity. You realize that being in a hurry doesn't do you any good. Or maybe your body and brain just don't move as fast as they used to — nah, I think it's maturity.

When I was young, I mean . . . younger, I was always in a hurry and wanting time to go faster. I wished September 1 would hurry up and arrive so I could dove hunt. Then I couldn't wait for October and the bowhunting opener. I hurried home many fall evenings so I could get in a deer hunt after work. I drove fast to my hunting area, and I walked as fast as I could to my deer stand. Then I waited, hoping a deer would hurry up and walk past. And then there was the second Saturday in November, which seemed forever in coming. After January, I waited for April and May to bring turkey season, warmer temperatures and better fishing.

Now, as I approach my 40th birthday, I'm slowing down. I still look forward to each changing season and opening day, but they're here before I know it. And instead of rushing around to cram as much field time in as possible, I take my time. I'll start preparing for a trip a little sooner, and so what if I'm not in the deer stand 20 minutes after I leave work.

Slowing down has helped me enjoy these experiences more. For one, I'm usually better prepared. When I was in a hurry, I usually managed to forget something (I once forgot my shotgun in a rush to an early-morning duck hunt.)


There's another reason I don't feel the same urgency I did 10 years ago. I'm not nearly as desperate for success as I was. I still yearn for the opportunity to catch a fish, shoot a deer or stand in the middle of a covey rise, but I'm not desperate for it anymore. I don't have to have a limit of quail for my hunting to have been a success. If

the dog worked well, pointed a time or two and found a dead bird, it has been a good day. If a flock of mallards turns to my call and sets their wings over my decoys, I'm already happy. If I manage to knock one or two down, that's icing on the cake.

I've read about the evolution of a hunter — or the so-called stages of a hunter — and I guess most of it rings pretty true. When I started, I wanted action — lots of it. Then I wanted success — limits of birds, a big buck or a livewell full of fish. Gradually those things became less important. HOW I hunt and fish has become more important than how much or how many. I'm no longer disappointed if the fishing's poor or the ducks don't fly. Sure I'd have rather had some success, but enjoyment doesn't hinge upon it.

I've slowed down and enjoyed the whole experience of the outdoors much more thoroughly. I enjoy being on the water and in the company of my fishing partners, whether the fish bite or not. I get a kick out of watching my Brittany follow his nose to a covey of quail, whether I get shots or not. And I no longer judge my bowhunting success by the size of buck I kill or don't kill. Just watching a mature white-tailed buck follow a doe during the rut, or seeing a Cooper's hawk glide silently through the trees is a thrill.

Read no air of superiority in this. I'm not better than the hunter who wants lots of birds or a Pope and Young buck, but I'm probably enjoying myself more. I've been there. I can remember being so disappointed when I didn't get a bow shot at a particular buck, I almost cried. I felt like I'd ruined the whole season by not being ready the instant that buck appeared. Looking back, it was just a learning experience. I've learned to stay ready in the stand, what to listen for and where to look so that I'm less likely to be surprised by a deer. But I still am — still caught totally by surprise with no chance to raise a bow and draw an arrow. Instead of crying, now I marvel at a buck's silent foot-falls and laugh at my panic when I realize the buck is standing less than 15 yards from my stand, and I never heard or saw it coming. That thrill and rush alone is worth the hour or two spent in the stand, shot or no shot.

Slowing down with age is a blessing. 



[Redacted area]

