

KANSAS

Wildlife & Parks

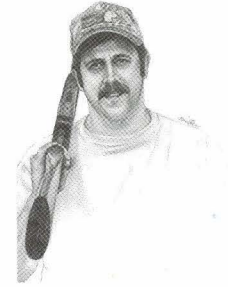
JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1999

\$2.75





The View From Here



by Steve Williams

Focus On The Future

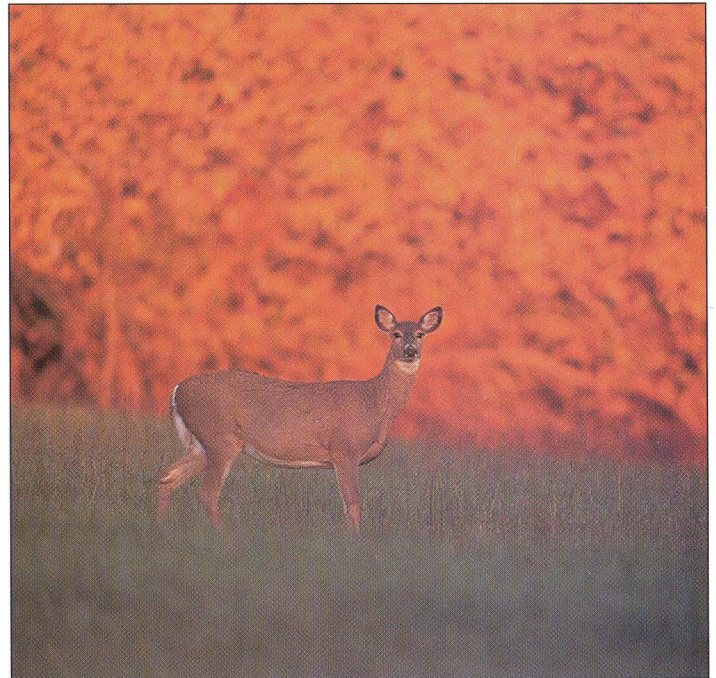
For some, it's a lone drake mallard, wings cupped over a decoy spread. For others, it's the explosion of color and sound as a ring-necked pheasant flushes underfoot. Still others peer through binoculars at long-legged shorebirds on a busy wetland. From the subtle beauty of a wildflower to the sheer strength and grace of a soaring bald eagle, we find precious moments in our natural world. They are gone in a flash and nearly impossible to describe, but they remain eternally etched in our minds.

Nothing can replace firsthand experiences, but the brilliant photos in this issue may come close. Someone said a picture is worth a thousand words, and for once, they may be right. Some of these images will undoubtedly spark fond memories of journeys afield and the family and friends who shared the experiences. Other photographs may take you to places you never dreamed existed on the plains of Kansas.

Whatever emotions these pictures evoke, we must remember that these wild places and creatures exist in a delicate balance. The slightest interruption can have enormous, and sometimes irreversible, consequences. Due to changing attitudes about the outdoors and the progression toward a more urban society, it's easy to lose sight of the critical needs of our natural world.

Keeping the needs of our natural resources in sight, as well as those of the Kansans who value them, is the charge of the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. "Focus 2002: A Plan For Kansas Wildlife and Parks" is a five-year plan that will help us do that. Reaching our goals will require the creativity and commitment of every department employee, as well as the help of the citizens we serve.

While "Focus: 2002" addresses the unique needs and challenges of all forms of outdoor recreation, the essence of the plan can be described in four simple words: conserve, enhance, provide and inform. Conservation programs ensure that outdoor resources will be here for future generations, and that everyone, present and future, has an equal chance to enjoy them. Enhancement projects cater to an ever-changing constituency and a dynamic natural world, ensuring healthy resources and quality experiences. Providing opportunities to enjoy our outdoor resources keeps the public involved and helps them



appreciate those critical needs. Keeping the public informed promotes understanding and support for the programs that are necessary to conserve, enhance and provide opportunities — reaching our goals in "A Plan For Kansas Wildlife and Parks."

The father of modern conservation, Aldo Leopold, wrote, "There are some who can live without wild things, and some who cannot." Those of us who cannot live without wild things must be careful not to take them for granted. It's easy to do when opportunities are so readily available. I believe that "Focus 2002" has laid the groundwork to ensure that future generations of Kansans also enjoy these opportunities. Through scientific natural resource management and the tireless work of conservation organizations and individuals, the treasures revealed on the pages of this issue will always be "just outside our backdoor."

Steve Williams

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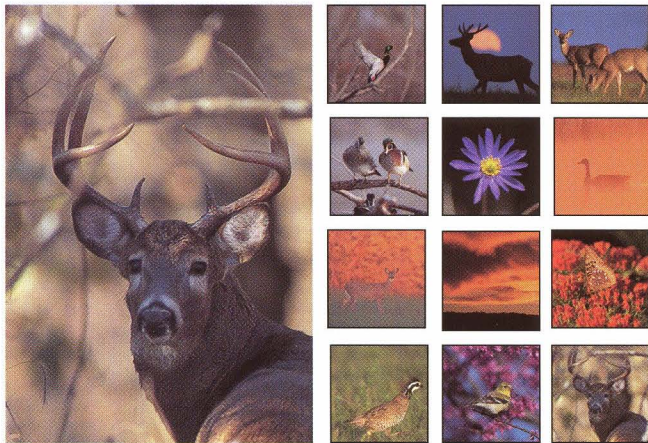
January/February 1999

Vol. 56, No. 1

1999 Photo Issue

Once again we are proud to bring you images of Kansas in our 1999 photo issue. Staff photographer Mike Blair has been traveling the state this past year with this issue in mind, saving some of the best and most unique photos. We hope you enjoy the photos, and by all means, don't keep them to yourself. Share this issue with friends and relatives who aren't fortunate enough to experience the beauty of Kansas.

From the open panoramas of the Great Plains to the vivid fall color of the eastern hardwoods, Kansas has great diversity in its wildlife and landscape beauty. Let's work together to ensure our grandchildren enjoy and take pride in these same resources.



Kansas Wildlife & Parks Photo Issue Screen Saver

Enjoy the wonderful images from this photo issue all year long. The Screen Saver package includes 12 beautiful photographs that will fit any PC, Windows running system. Just send \$5 to Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, Screen Saver, 900 SW Jackson, Suite 502, Topeka, KS 66612-2281, or you can receive the disk free with a new or renewal magazine subscription. Just write "Send me the 1999 Screen Saver disk" on your subscription card.

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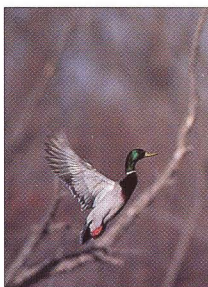
Kansas Department of Wildlife Parks Website

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

Send magazine e-mail to mikegm@wp.state.ks.us

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

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



About the covers
Front: A mallard drake flushes, momentarily painting the winter background with color. Mike Blair filmed the scene with a 600 mm lens, f/8 @ 1/500 sec.
Back: Spectacular lightning displays brighten the summer night sky. Blair caught this bolt using a 105 mm lens, an open shutter and time exposure.



Patience, truly a virtue in the wild, is rewarded with a glimpse, a rush, and a sense of discovery. In a breath, it's gone, and we are left with an image burned in memory and a feeling of wonder.



white-tailed deer



white-tailed deer





mule deer



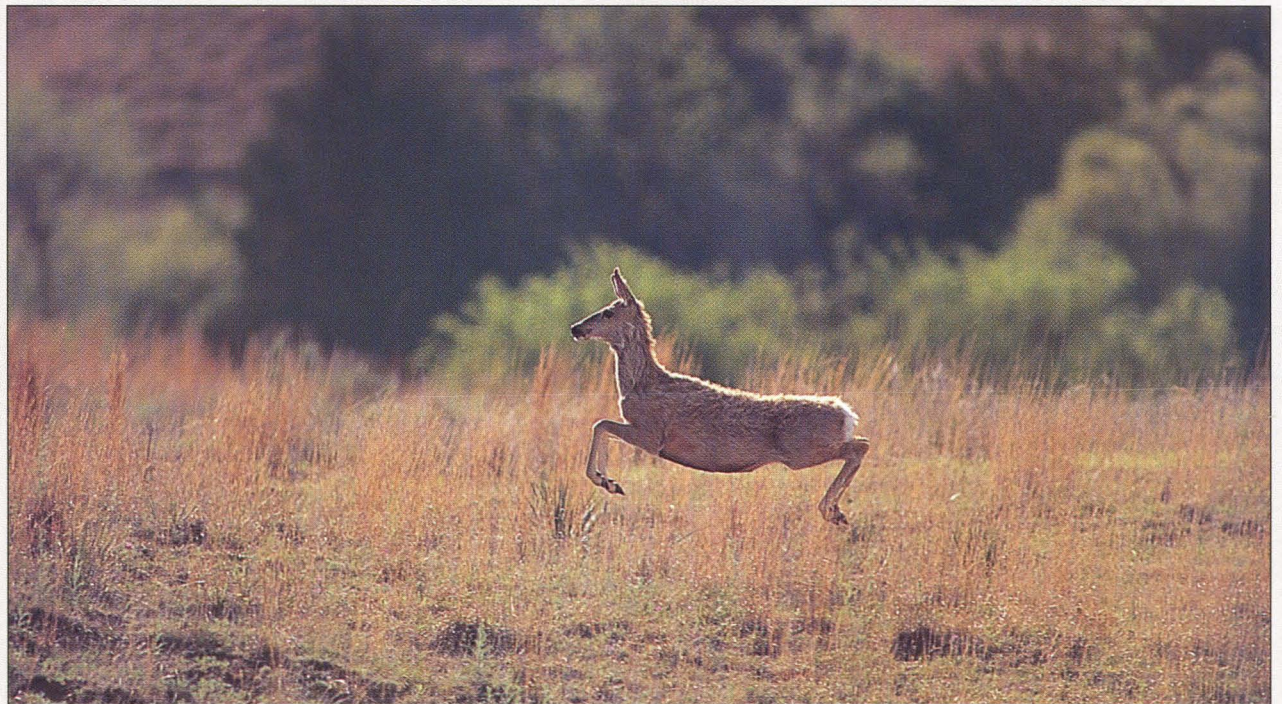
mule deer

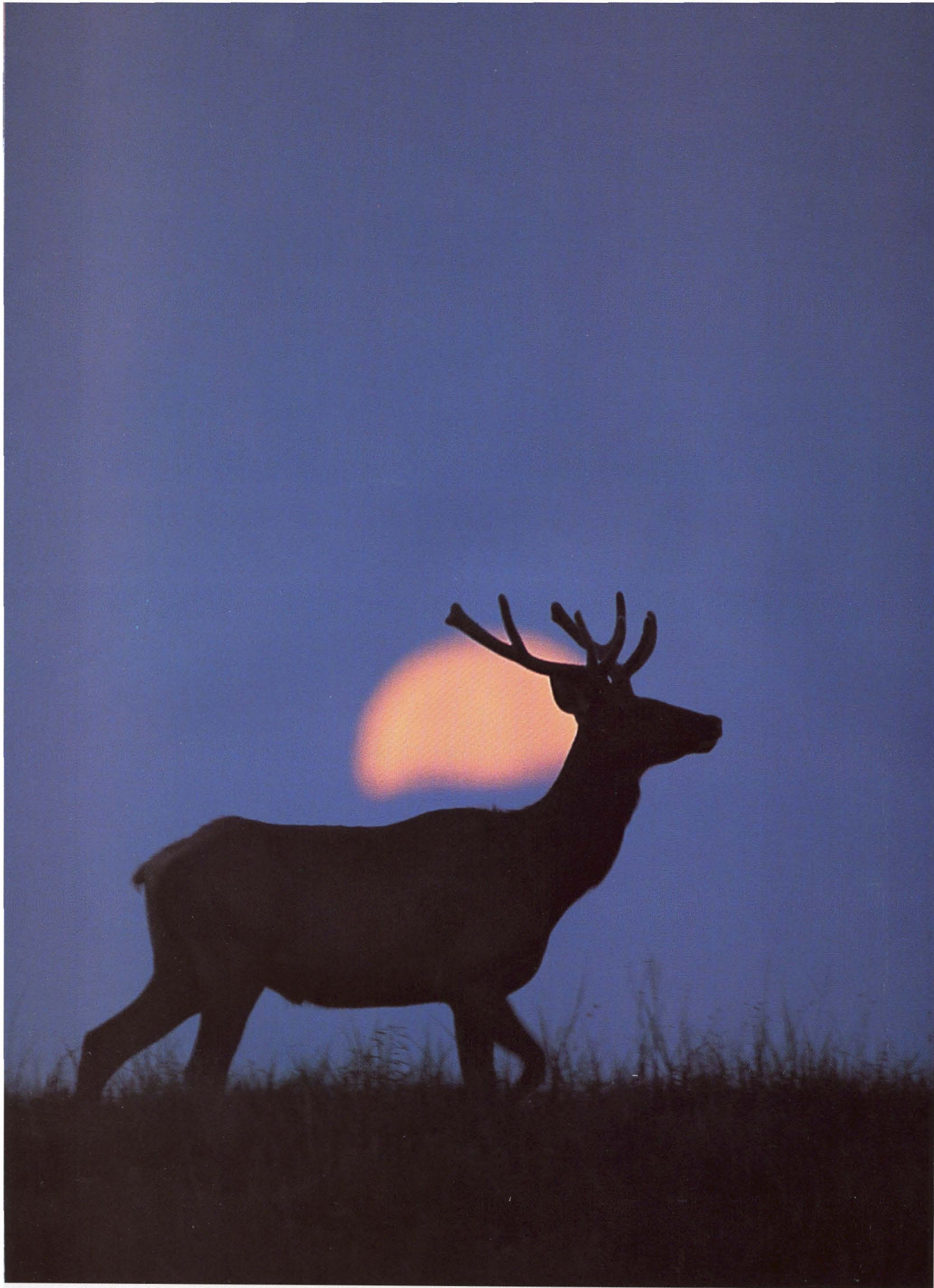
white-tailed deer





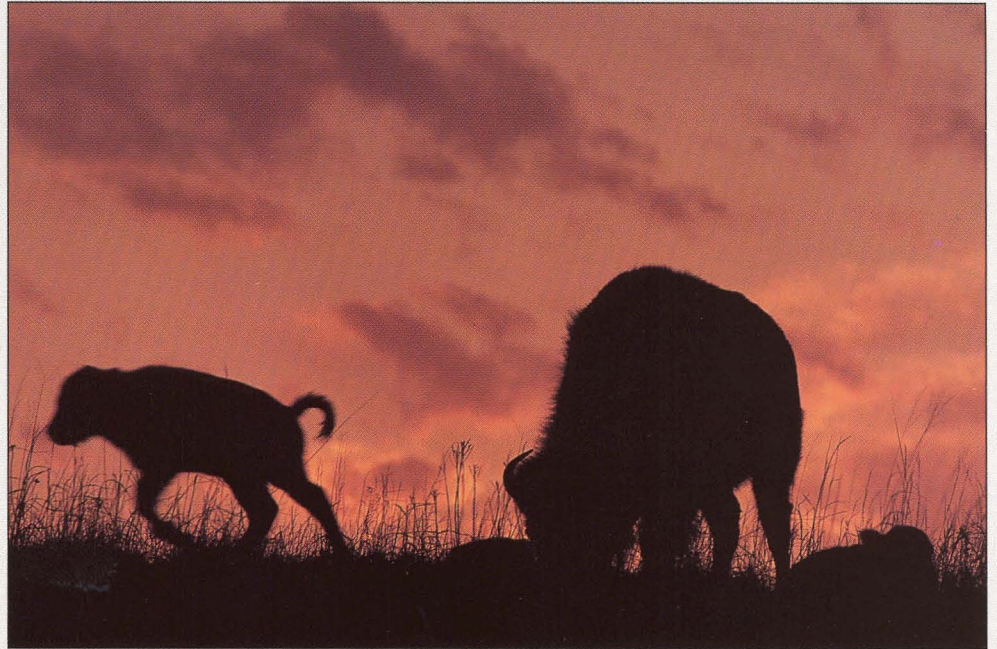
mule deer





elk at moonset

*The beauty of
wildlife is
matched only by
the backdrop of
land and sky.*



bison

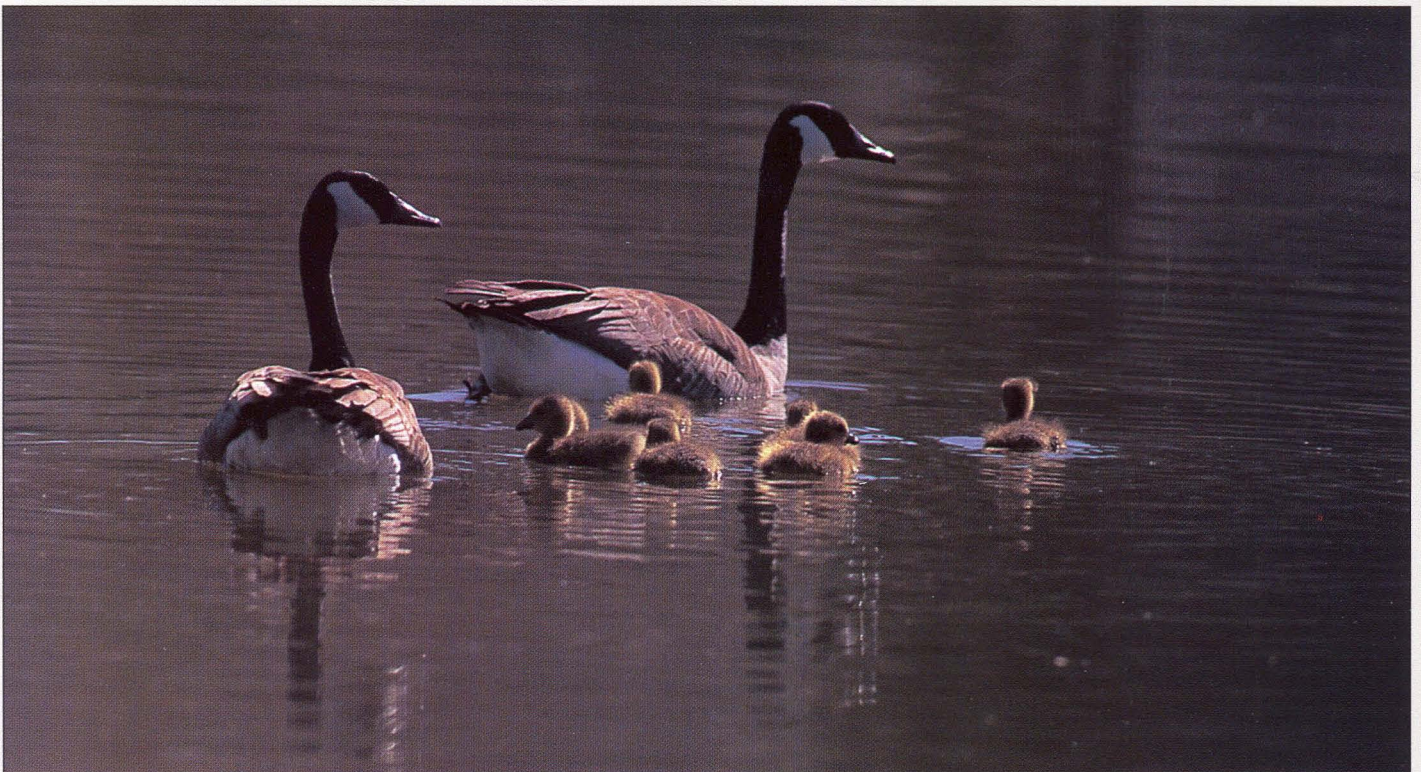
white-tailed deer



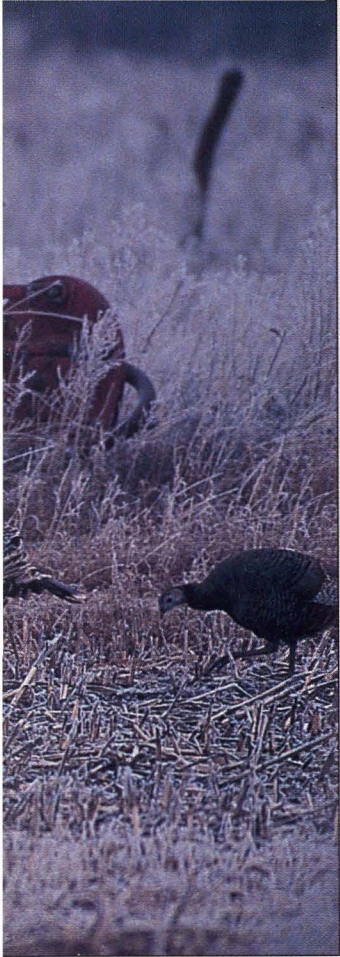


Rio Grande turkeys

Canada geese



Some species have adapted and prospered, sometimes because of our changes, sometimes in spite of them.



Canada goose



green-winged teal



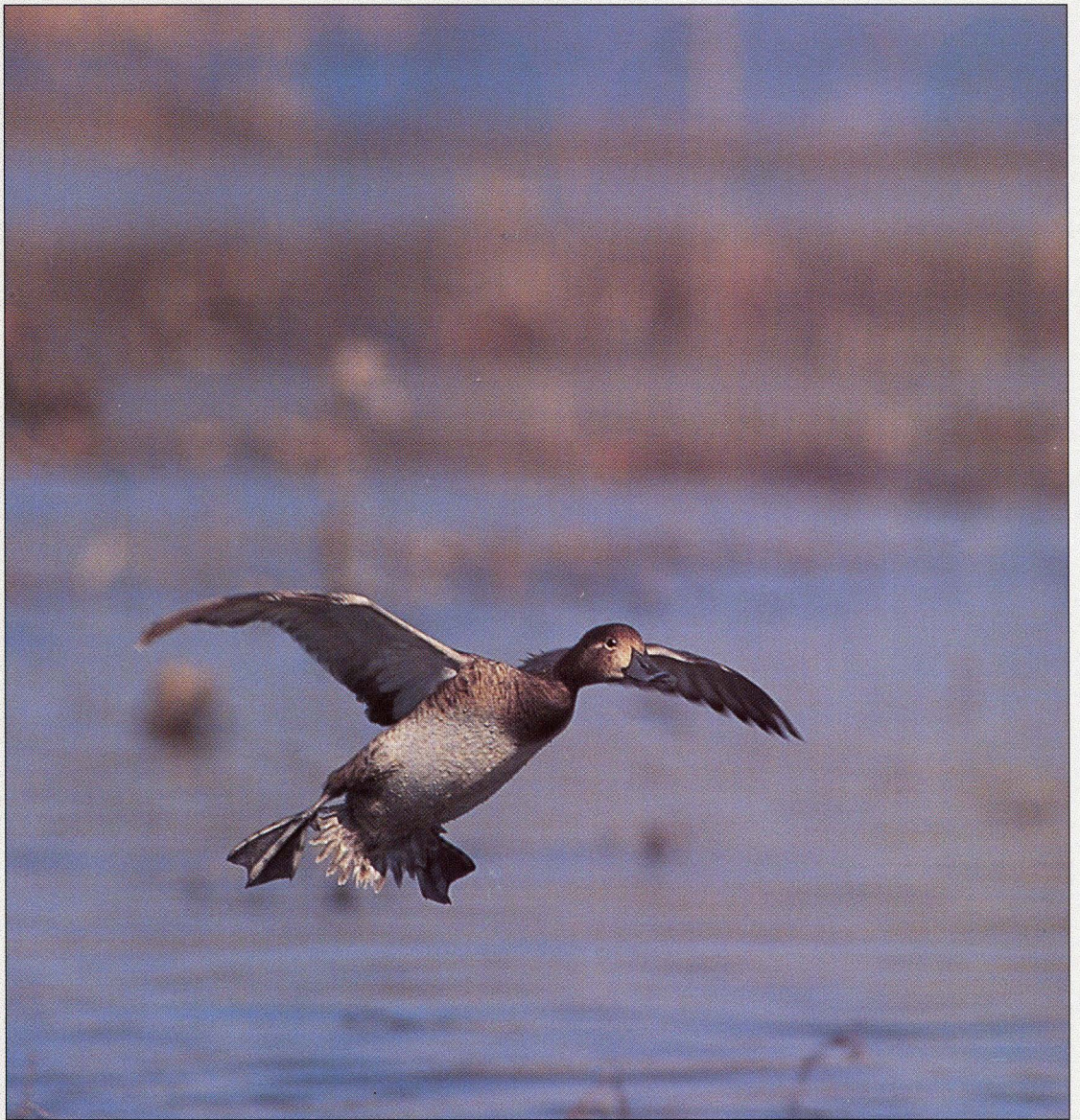
Wind hissing through wingtips, fancy colors and spectacular aerial maneuvers treat the wetland watcher. Waterfowl command attention like no other bird life.



wood ducks



northern shoveler



hen redhead







goldfinch

bobwhite quail





ring-billed gull

Kansas is blessed with a generous mixture of prairie, woodland and wetland, all in the heart of the Central Flyway. This rich variety is reflected in the wealth of bird life, making birding a challenging pleasure.



American white pelicans

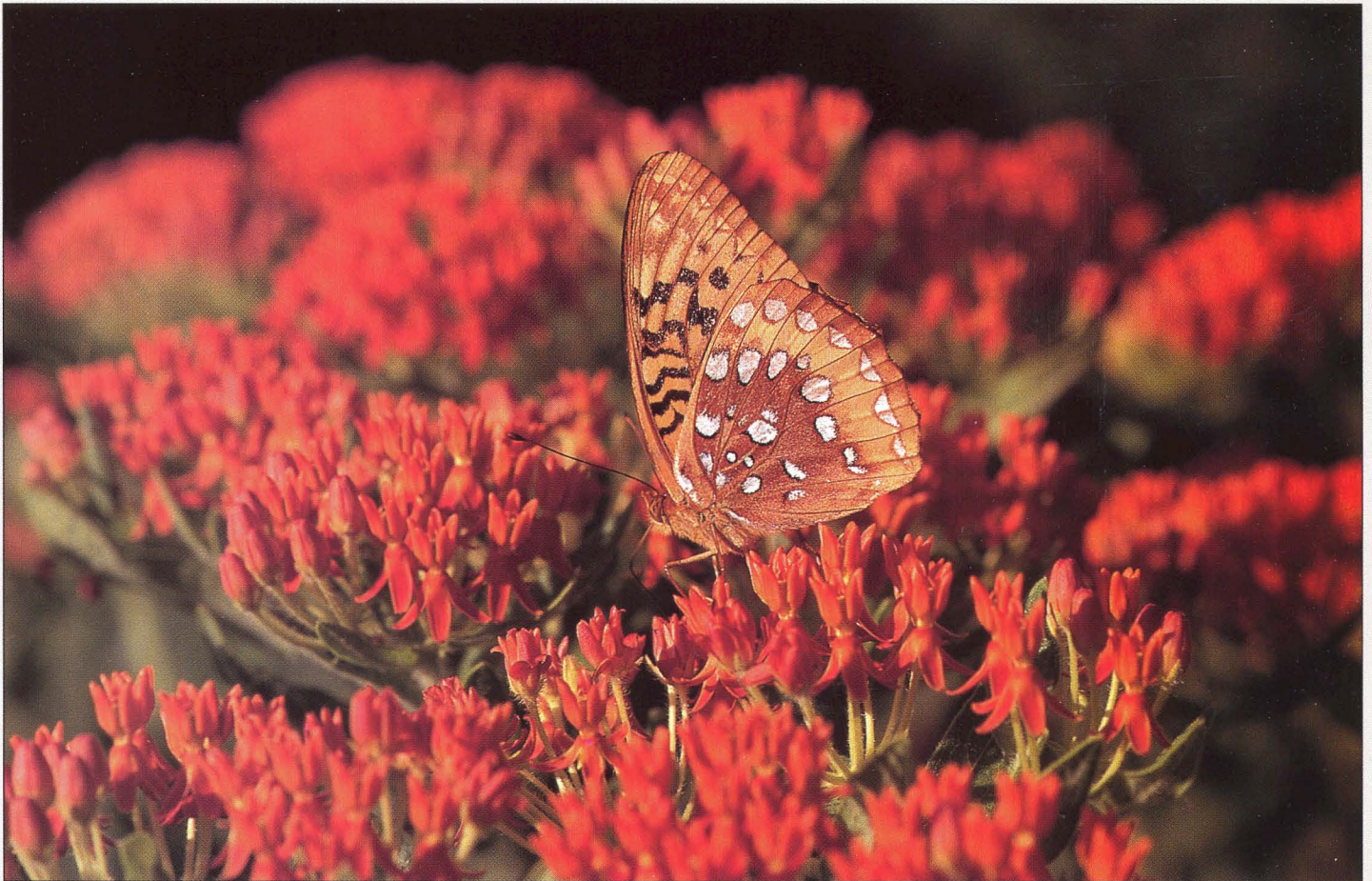


snowy egrets



foxtail

great spangled fritillary on butterfly milkweed





black-eyed susan



Texas bluebells (escape)





American water lily



Carolina anemone



aster



blue phlox



shelf fungus



moonvine



cottonwood in storm





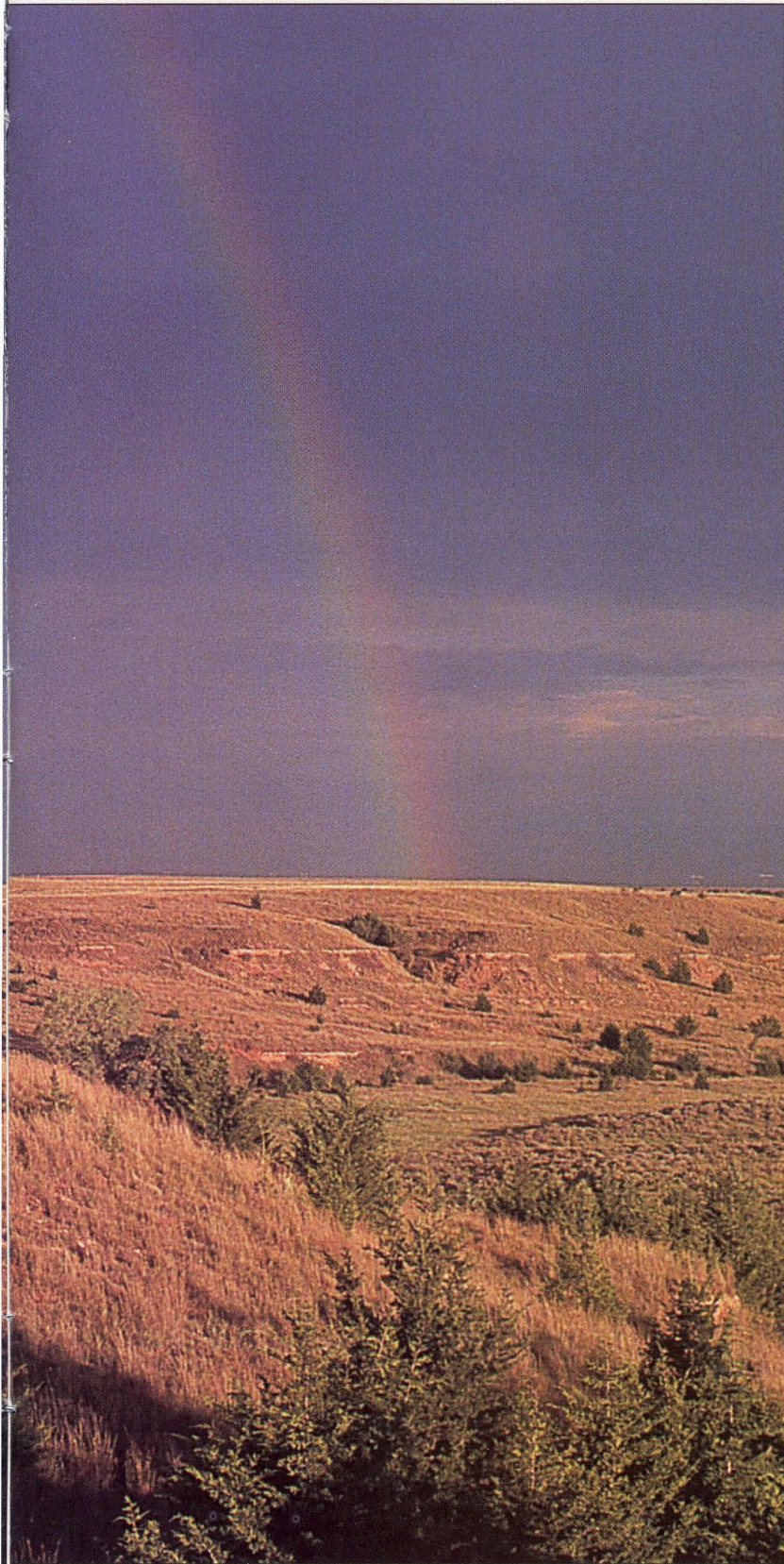
poison ivy



Little Sugar Creek

Barber County





See the pot of gold? It's the treasure of our land — the native prairie, the lifeblood of the meandering stream, the shelter of the sandhill plum, sumac and redcedar, and the wildlife we share this place with.

sunset, Osage Questas





Everyone needs a place like this. A place to cure all ills and to refuel our souls. This land is our life, and we are better when we are here.

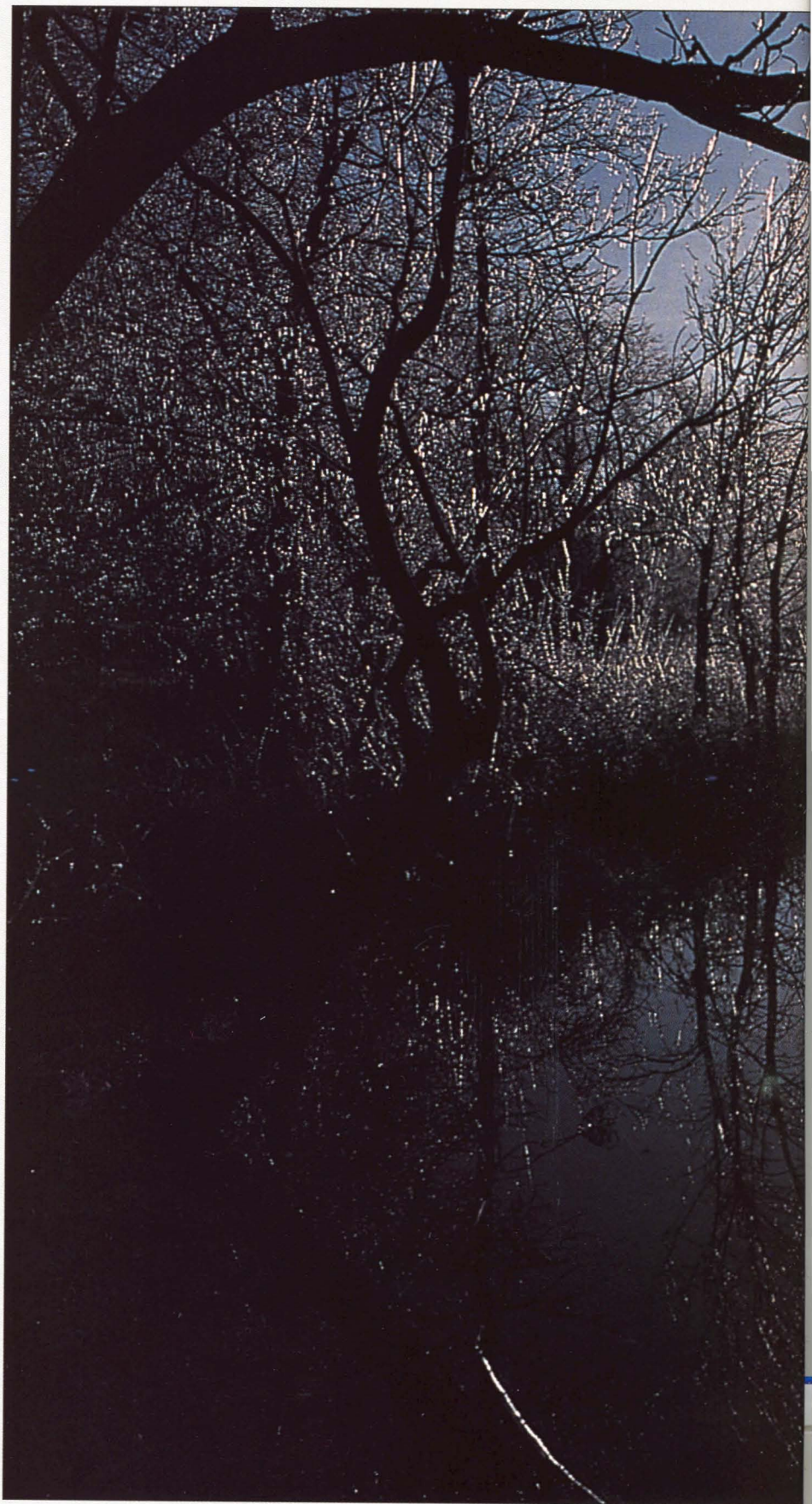


Marais des Cygnes Wildlife Area



*Frozen silence.
There is no quiet
like an icy winter
morning, save for
the sound of ice
melting, bowing to
the sun's welcome
rays.*

Ninnescah River







Start 'em young. It's hard not to share the thrill and excitement of a youngster catching a fish. Lessons learned go beyond fishing and for the lucky ones, create a lifelong passion that never loses its innocent joy.



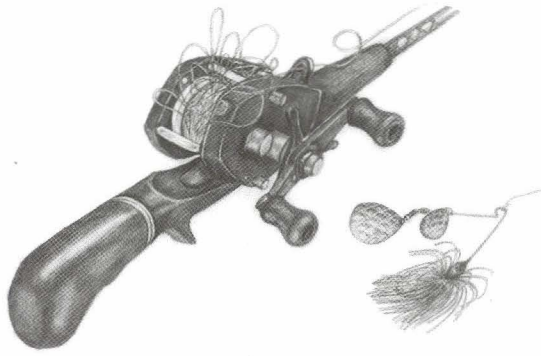


black-tailed jack rabbit

yellow Labrador Retriever



It may be the little things that make us truly happy — things we too often take for granted. We are fortunate to have such treasures so readily available.



Backlash

by Mike Miller

The Year Of El Leonardo

1998 is gone, and I am sorry to see it end. It wasn't that great of a year but no matter what went wrong in 1998, it wasn't our fault. We blamed everything on some Spanish dude called El Niño.

I kind of felt sorry for the guy, but Lennie didn't. Lennie blamed poor El Niño for everything. I, on the other hand, only blamed him for those mysterious, inexplicable things that had no other explanation. Like 65-degree weather last December, and the fact that I didn't get a turkey last spring. My setup and calling were flawless, and I had birds gobbling all around me, but an unseen force kept them outside of shotgun range. My theory is that El Niño's forces changed the atmosphere's ionization, preventing the turkeys from pinpointing my call's location. Lennie somehow called a turkey into range, but he missed.

"I don't know how I missed him," Lennie sobbed. "That tom was right in front of me. Things didn't look right as I sighted down the barrel, though. It had to be El Niño."

"How could El Niño cause you to miss a turkey, Lennie," I countered. "Are you sure you didn't just get excited — a bad case of tom fever — and miss?"

"Oh, and I suppose you're the only one who can use the El Niño excuse," Lennie fired back. "Sure, El Niño can keep turkeys from coming to your calls, make your bird dog act up, and your boat motor not start, but when something unusual happens to someone else, you suddenly have a logical explanation."

I'm not sure Lennie missing a turkey would be considered unusual, but I suppose a force as powerful as El Niño could hiccup and make Lennie miss his target.

It's all a moot point now. Last spring we learned that El Niño vamoosed. La Niña was supposed to take over, but she was wimpy in comparison. And she didn't get a whole lot of press — probably overshadowed by El Clinton. But as we start 1999, she's faded, and we're without anyone or anything to blame for our bad weather and mysterious mishaps.

I thought Lennie would be heartbroken, but he wasn't worried.

"Don't you know nothin'," Lennie said matter-of-factly the other day. "There's a new force influencing our lives. It's called El Leonardo, and we'll be able to blame

— I mean it will cause a lot of weird stuff this year."

"I don't know, Lennie. That doesn't sound like a name given to a phenomenon that will influence an entire hemisphere."

"How do you suppose we got El Niño?" Lennie argued. "Someone had to make him up. I've documented some strange things recently. Explain to me how I missed all those ducks last month. You know I'm not that bad of a shot. And how about you getting a deer? You think that happened because of your skill? HA! No, there's another mysterious phenomenon at work here, and I've given it a name."

"Okay, okay. But just what is this El Leonardo supposed to do? What can we expect for the last year of this century?"

"Hmmm. Well Old Leon, as I like to call him, will effect our lives in many ways but unlike El Niño, there will be some good stuff. Let's see, he'll probably cause cold weather in January — maybe even some snow."

I rolled my eyes, but Lennie was gaining momentum.

"Uhhhh, Saddam Hussein will be overthrown, move to Florida and host a top-rated daytime talk show called 'Poor White Imperialists Say The Darndest Things.' Clinton will resign and make millions doing infomercials selling golf clubs designed for hard-to-hit shots called 'Bad Lies.' A computer chip in all jet ski motors will malfunction on Dec. 31, 1999, making them permanently inoperable. I'll win the lottery . . ."

"Hold on there Kreskin, I think you've spent too much time reading in the supermarket checkout line. Won't there be hurricanes, mudslides and other terrible events?"

"Terrible for you," Lennie continued. "I didn't want to mention it, but El Leonardo will cause changes in our atmosphere that will prevent you from catching fish. It will only affect certain people, so I'll always outfish you in 1999."

"Stop right there. El Leonardo sounds pretty convenient for you, maybe even related, though I kind of liked him until that last prediction. It will never happen."

"Hide and watch," Lennie said, giggling as he tied a crappie jig on his spinning outfit.

I think Lennie and his imaginary friend El Leonardo are gearing up for a great 1999!

