

# KANSAS

*Wildlife & Parks*

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2000

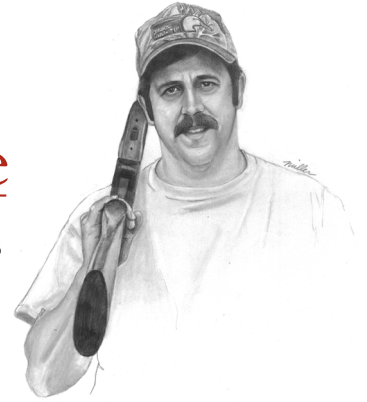
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# The View From Here

by Steve Williams



## Time To Get Busy

Full is upon us and the hunting seasons are in full swing. I have used this column in the past to tout the tremendous outdoor recreation opportunities Kansans enjoy, and I intend to do more of the same in this article, with a twist. Sharpen those No. 2 pencils sportsmen and women, girls and boys, it is time for a quiz.

How many days can you legally hunt deer in Kansas? Before you answer, think about all of the legal equipment that can be used and the corresponding seasons (muzzle-loader, archery, firearms). If you said 119, you were correct. However, if you are 12 to 16 years of age or had a disability hunting permit, you were able to participate in the inaugural Youth/Disabled Deer Season on September 30 and October 1. Therefore, your answer is 121 days. Believe it or not, nearly one-third of the year is open to deer hunting in Kansas.

How many days can you legally hunt waterfowl? You may need your calculator for this one. The envelope please — 235 days! No, this is not some kind of “new” math. Here’s a quick breakdown of the seasons: early Canada goose; teal; ducks; light geese; dark geese; and light goose conservation order. One or more of these seasons are open, uninterrupted, from September 30 through April 30. Granted, a hunter would have to log a lot of miles to take advantage of the separate season dates in the state’s three duck zones, but the opportunity is available. While counted in the final 235 day total, the Youth Waterfowl Season was expanded to two days this year in each duck zone.

When does pheasant and quail season begin? This may appear like an easy question, but if you said the second Saturday in November, you were incorrect. This year, the Youth Upland Bird Season is slated for November 4 and 5. Youth 16 years of age and younger may hunt under the supervision of an adult 21 or older. One supervising adult for each youth may also hunt. Daily bag limits are one-half of the regular season limits.

How many acres are enrolled in the Walk-In Hunting Area (WIHA) program? You deserve extra credit if you know this one. For the 2000-2001 seasons, approximately 680,000 acres of WIHA are available. An additional 30,000 acres have been enrolled in a pilot project in northeast Kansas for spring turkey hunting opportunities. Combining federal and state wildlife areas, over a million acres of WIHA and public land is open to hunting in Kansas.

Think that’s all of the hunting opportunities in Kansas? Wrong, venison breath. You can hunt rabbits, squirrels, snipe, woodcock, rails, sandhill cranes, lesser and greater prairie chickens, morning doves, turkeys (both fall and spring), coyotes and furbearers, pronghorn, and even elk. If you took advantage of only half the opportunities available, you’d be in the field for a good part of the year.

Don’t worry if you didn’t score well. The point of the exercise was to illustrate just a few of the spectacular opportunities we enjoy here in Kansas. Of course, great fishing can also be found year-round, and it is always open season on wildlife watching, camping, and other enjoyable outdoor activities.

Whether this fall and winter finds you in a duck blind, a tree stand, a boat, or out birdwatching, make sure you invite a friend or youngster to join you. Not everyone has had the chance to discover the beauty of outdoor Kansas. I believe they’ll thank you for it later.

Finally, please do your part by hunting responsibly and ethically. Respect landowner property and rights, always ask permission, and be sure to express your appreciation to your hosts. Hunt safely and enjoy your time afield.

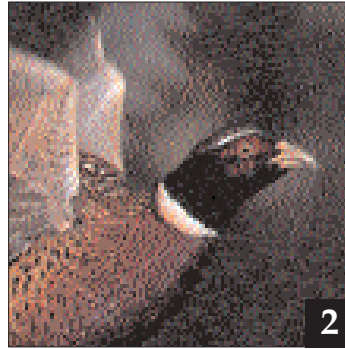
*Steve Williams*

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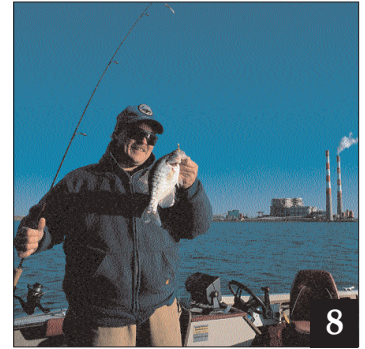
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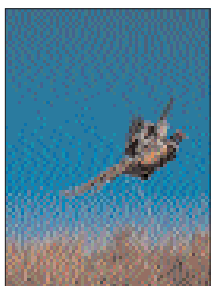


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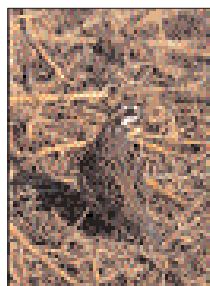
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**About the covers**  
**Front:** A rooster pheasant flushes to enliven a November morning. Mike Blair captured the bird with a 105mm lens, set at f/5.6, 1/500th sec. **Back:** The bobwhite quail is widely sought by hunters in thickets and fencelines throughout Kansas. Blair filmed this male as it sunned in a hayfield. 600Mm lens, set at f/8, 1/500th sec.



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**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.**





# Birdhunter's Autumn

by Shannon Swafford  
*secretary, Environmental Services Section, Pratt*

photos by Mike Blair

*The second Saturday in November — it's magic if you're a birdhunter. Each opening day, the sights, sounds, and smells, can take you back to your first bird hunt. It's a treasured heritage, made of family, friends and good times.*



The November sun was rising as we prepared to enter the frost-covered grass. Two hundred yards away, a pair of pheasants pecked at the roadside gravel. Quietly, we crossed the ditch and entered the cover, commanding our dog to “Hunt ‘em up!” The dog took off, and we worked our way to where I marked the pheasants. Prince, our golden retriever, quartered ahead of us in windshield-wiper fashion. It was opening day of pheasant season, and while I was excited, it was hard to forget the warm bed I left behind.

Prince was getting birdy. His motions became intense and deliberate; he was on a mission. Then the morning silence was broken by the

sounds of rapidly beating wings. “Hen!” we shouted. Another hen erupted from the grass and we held our fire. “Rooster!” The third bird up was gorgeous with long tail feathers and vibrant colors. Startled, I fought to regain my composure. The pheasant was 30 yards out and quartering slightly when I swung through the white neck ring and pulled the trigger. By the time floating feathers had fallen to the ground, Prince had located the bird and was on his way back. The pheasant’s colorful palette glistened in the morning sun as the dog returned to heel. Prince’s big brown eyes and wagging tail begged for affirmation of a job well done. As the dog placed the bird in my hand,

I rubbed his ears and told him how much he meant to me. Filled with many emotions, I took a few moments to absorb the beauty of this bird.

After releasing the dog again, we continued to hunt our way toward a draw in the middle of the quarter. Fighting the dense grass and weeds was difficult and tiring, but the cover had pheasants written all over it. The golden was out of sight in the tall vegetation, but the gentle ringing of his collar bell said that he was doing his job. After working the draw for about 20 minutes, we wondered if any birds were around. Not long after, the bell on Prince’s collar began picking up tempo as he worked to unravel a newly-discov-

ered scent trail. We followed until the sound of several cackling roosters rang out. A volley of gunshots echoed across the prairie, and Prince was back at work again.

Admiring the pheasants, my mind drifted back to my first upland game bird. The small bobwhite quail was scarcely larger than my outstretched hand, but was a trophy in my eyes nonetheless. The day had been discouraging up to that point, with few birds seen and even fewer getting up in range. We had approached an old homestead surrounded by rows of Osage-orange trees. It had been vacant for many years, a fading reminder of a bygone era. At the trees, a small covey of quail had scattered in all directions. I remembered to pick out a single and pulled the trigger. Moments later, as I retrieved and admired the handsome bird, I understood why the bobwhite is affectionately referred to as "Gentleman Bob" by many upland hunters. The day was etched in my memory.

Prince broke the spell as he bounded past, and I returned to the hunt at hand. It held possibilities for pheasants and quail alike, and we were eager to continue. The day promised to be a memorable opener.

Although hunts like these are a tradition in Kansas each fall, the hunting experience is relatively new to me. I am a female hunter. I did not grow up in a hunting family, but married into one. Since I had never spent much time outdoors and had not been exposed to firearms, I was intimidated at first. But I quickly discovered that my reservations were unfounded. With a growing confidence and love for the outdoors, I ventured into waterfowl and deer hunting as well.

Many women are reluctant to participate in what has traditionally been a male-dominated pastime. While this is understandable, preparation and forethought will help ensure success. Having knowledge of the game you hunt, obtaining the proper equipment, and knowing how to use firearms safely and effectively are vital steps for every successful sportsman, regardless of gender.

Every hunter should attend a hunter education course. In addition to being mandatory for hunters



Each year, more women are discovering the magic of November bird seasons and our hunting heritage.

born after 1957, it teaches safe gun handling, hunter ethics and responsibility and wildlife conservation. Another new and highly successful program in many states, including Kansas, is the Becoming an Outdoor Woman program. This program is geared exclusively toward women and teaches boating, archery, shooting, and many other outdoor activities. It is taught entirely by



Quail harvest in Kansas generally ranks among the top two or three states in the nation each year. However, it is overshadowed by Kansas pheasant hunting, also ranking in top three nationally, which draws hunters from across the U.S. each fall.

volunteers who are willing to share what they have learned with others. The program puts the student in a positive learning environment with qualified instructors. According to Ross Robins of the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, this program typically attracts approximately 100 women each year in Kansas.

Researching the game you intend to hunt is also very important. How well one understands wildlife will ultimately determine the success of finding game. Public libraries and the Internet are great places to find such information. However, many people develop insatiable appetites for sporting literature and build their own outdoor libraries. This is an enjoyable way to extend one's love of the outdoors beyond the hunting season. Although reading is very beneficial, it cannot substitute for time spent in the field. Finding an experienced hunter who is willing to show you the ropes is the

best way to learn about hunting and wildlife.

Thinking back over my few years of hunting, I can honestly say that having the proper gear made my experience more enjoyable and successful. It is not necessary to have the latest and most expensive gear, and lack of money should not discourage anyone from enjoying the outdoors. There are, however, a few essentials. These are proper clothing and the right shotgun.

Finding women's hunting clothes can be like finding the proverbial needle in a haystack. Until recently, most manufacturers assumed that women could make do with men's clothing. In theory, it sounded reasonable, but it just didn't work. As more women began to participate in outdoor activities, their needs were addressed. This year, Cabela's published an entire catalog for sporting women, and other outfitters have added specialty items to their catalogs, making it easy to find clothing

and gear that are comfortable and tailor-made.

Since upland hunting requires a lot of walking, a comfortable pair of boots is a must. Boots should be tall enough to keep out weeds and should be waterproof or treated with a water-repelling product. It pays to buy the best boots one can afford. Cheap, ill-fitting boots cause blisters and do not last. A quality pair of boots will last for many seasons, if given proper care.

One item I consider mandatory is a pair of brush pants or chaps. These protect your legs from brush, damp grass, and snow. In addition to the pants or chaps, a game vest is handy for carrying shells and game. Although vests come in several colors, hunter orange is the safest option. Hunter orange has been proven to save lives. An orange hat should also be worn for extra visibility.

The final piece of equipment is the shotgun. Any 12, 16, or 20 gauge



Conservation Reserve grassland provides ideal winter cover for pheasants, but tough walking for hunters. Bird hunting is often a family affair, providing one of the social events of the year each November.

will work fine for upland hunting. Many beginning hunters shy away from the 12 gauge due to fear of the recoil. This does not have to be the case. Field loads which hold 1 1/8 ounce of shot and a reduced powder charge are available from several manufacturers. These are great upland loads and have plenty of power for pheasants and quail. When loaded with hard shot, the patterns are excellent, and the recoil is much milder than the high velocity 1 1/4 ounce loads often chosen. If the recoil of the 12 gauge is not a problem, the gun's extra weight might be. A heavy upland shotgun can wear on the hunter by day's end. If a 12 gauge is too heavy, a 16 or 20 gauge is a better choice. Smaller guns like the 28 gauge and .410 are too small for all-around upland hunting.

The best way to choose a shotgun is to handle several different models and shoot them if possible. Certain models are bound to feel more comfortable than others. I prefer an

over/under since it has a shorter overall length and nice handling qualities. The downside to this design is its high cost. Other hunters prefer side-by-sides for their balance, semi-automatics for their quick shots and recoil reduction, or pumps for their dependability and value. Each design has its advantages and disadvantages. The key is to find one which feels right to you and your pocketbook.

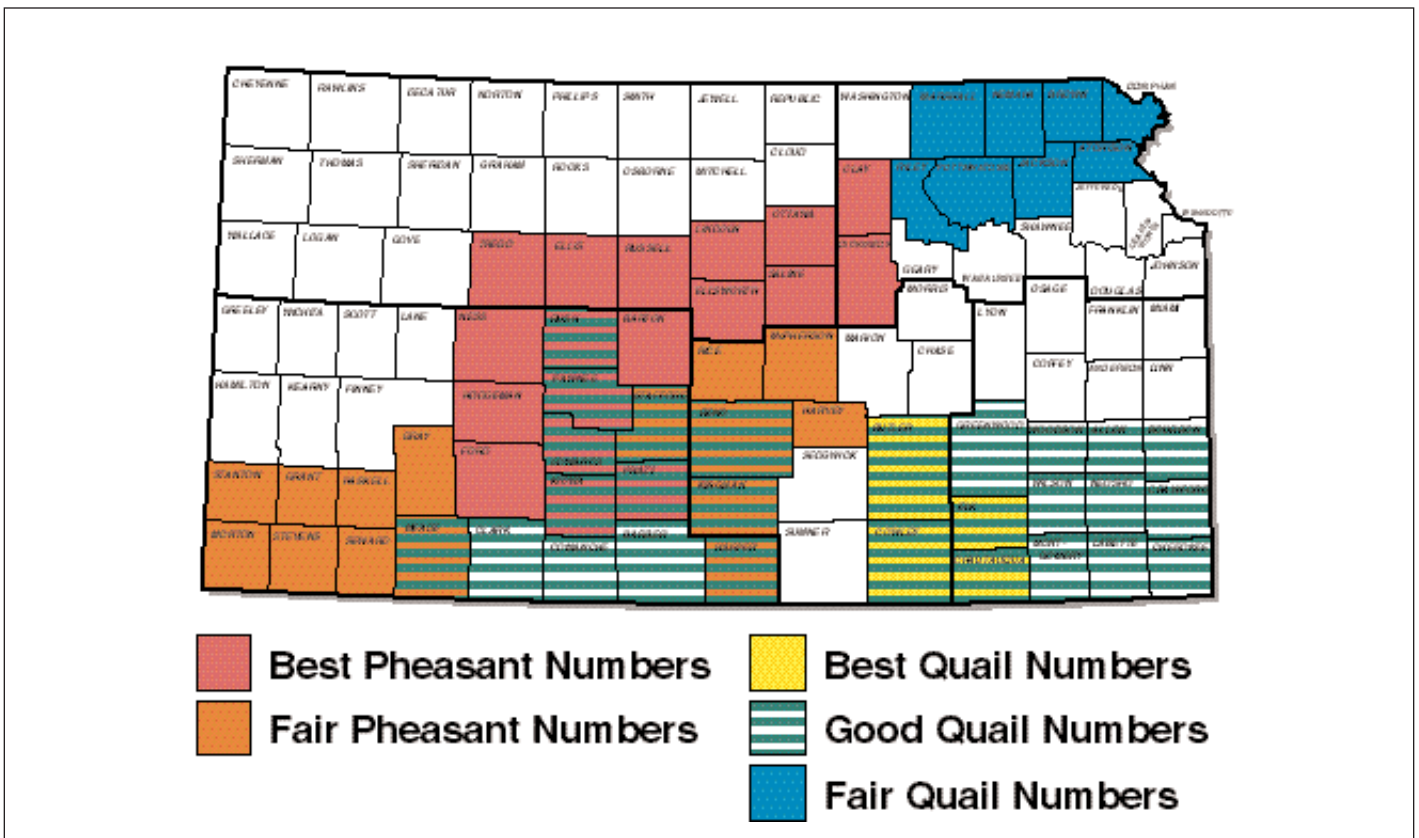
When hunting upland birds, shot size selection is important. Some hunters prefer to use 7 1/2 shot on both pheasant and quail. But 7 1/2 size shot leaves a lot to be desired for pheasants at anything but close range. Pheasants are tough birds that are hard to bring down. Sixes, fives or fours are probably better choices for pheasants. It's a good idea to pattern your shotgun with different loads and shot sizes to determine which gives you the best pattern densities at desired ranges. And some preseason practice shooting clay targets at the local

sporting clays range is also recommended.

Once properly equipped, Kansas hunters often experience some of the finest upland hunting in the nation. With summer coming to a close, I was anxious to find out what the 2000 upland bird season had to offer Kansas hunters.

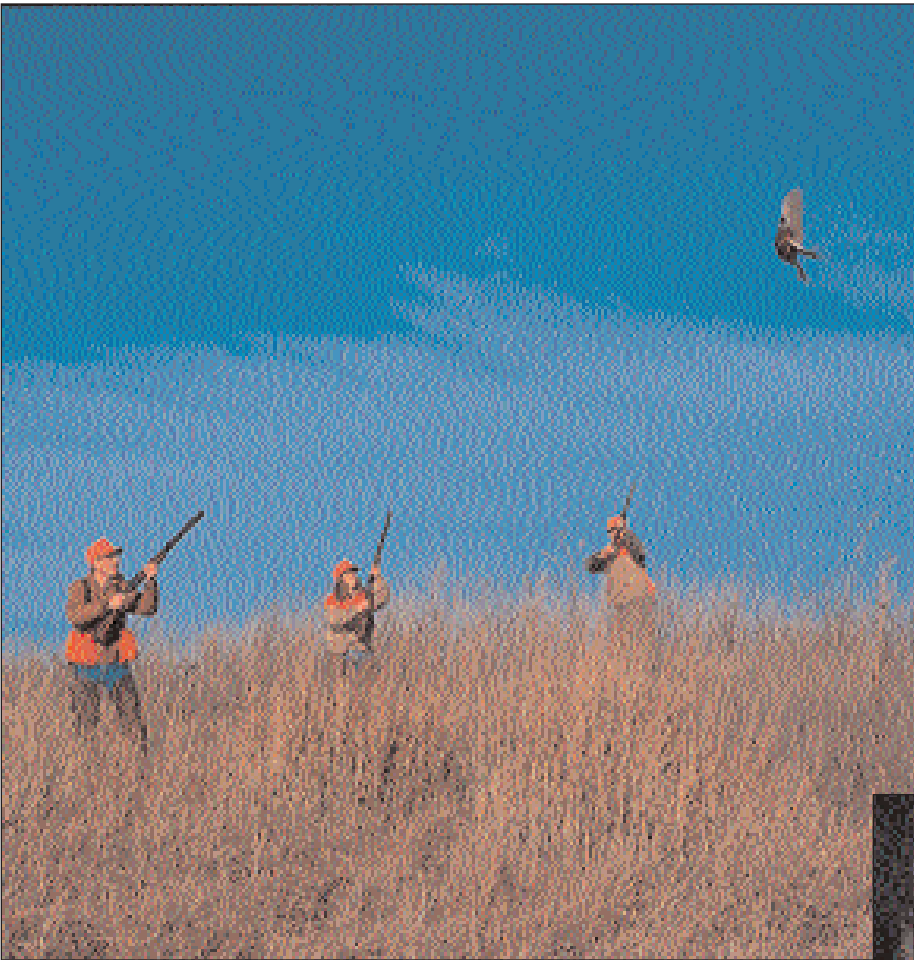
Randy Rodgers, KDWP upland game biologist, spends his time working to improve Kansas' upland game bird populations. The 1999 pheasant season was the best in a decade, and a good breeding population was present this past spring. Unfortunately, drought conditions and a very early wheat harvest in 2000 appear to have substantially reduced pheasant production in many areas, and Randy was much less optimistic about current pheasant hunting prospects than those of 1999. He expected the pheasant distribution to be very spotty this fall.

With a mild winter and average quail populations last year, bob-



Pheasant and quail hunting prospects for 2000 may best be described as spotty. An early wheat harvest and prolonged drought in much of the west hurt bird production. Areas that received timely rains will provide best hunting. (See Page 42 for detailed forecast.)





Conspicuous by its gaudy colors, the ring-necked pheasant is still a master of deception. Known for running instead of flushing as hunters approach, pheasants quickly learn to go undetected in thick CRP. Successful hunters have learned to approach fields quietly and use close-working dogs to move the birds out of the heavy grass. Dogs are also invaluable for retrieving downed birds, which can be easily lost in heavy cover.

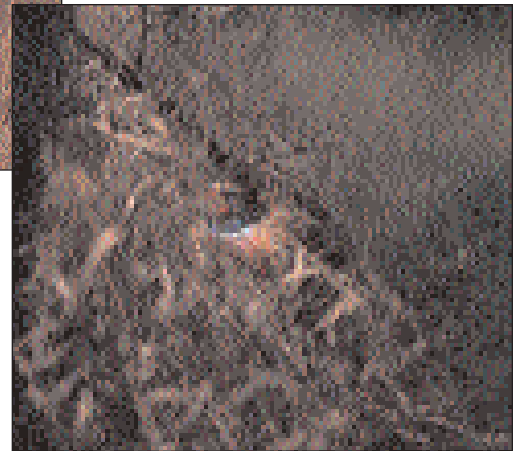
white quail breeding populations were relatively good this spring. Randy indicated bobwhite numbers in much of western Kansas appear to have reached long-term highs, largely due to the Conservation Reserve Program. "I'm much more hopeful about the prospects for bobwhite production this year than I am for pheasants," Randy said. (See Page 42 for detailed 2000 forecast.)

The good news is that Kansas regularly ranks among the top three states in both pheasant and quail harvests. A more complete forecast of fall upland hunting prospects is normally available by mid-September. For up-to-date information, contact Kansas Wildlife and Parks at 316-672-5911 or visit our website at [www.kdwp.state.ks.us](http://www.kdwp.state.ks.us).

The Kansas upland bird season has become an important part of my life. It has allowed me to spend quality time with my husband, par-

ticipating in what he enjoys most. Whether hunting pheasants in CRP or flushing quail from a plum thicket, we share a special bond and connection which is important to us. We especially look forward to sharing this with our young son when he is older. If we should have a daughter, we would also love to share these special hunting experiences with her, should she show an interest. If not, there are many other ways we can enjoy the magic of the Kansas outdoors.

Something I absolutely love about hunting is the wonderful meals our family can enjoy. Even though the hunting seasons don't seem to last very long, we can enjoy our harvest all year. It is nice to fix a meal of chicken-fried pheasant breasts or a slow cooked venison roast and then reminisce about the hunt while we are



savoring our meal.

Hunting is a recreation which can be enjoyed by men and women of all ages. It bridges generation gaps and brings people together. In the outdoors, you are always successful whether or not a limit is taken. If we as hunters would judge our outdoor experiences based on sunrises, sunsets, good friends, and family, we would never be disappointed. As someone once said, "I don't hunt to kill, but kill to have hunted." The Kansas upland bird season brings it all together. ♡



# Winter Crappie

## Just Add Hot Water

text and photos by Mike Blair  
associate editor/staff photographer, Pratt

*While the winter air may be frigid, the fish are warm and cozy and biting like it was spring. Powerplant cooling lakes can provide great winter fishing opportunities.*

It was clear and still and 15 degrees as the sun climbed into the eastern sky. Down at the coffee shop, the regulars were sipping hot drinks and talking about the cold snap. Nearby on the highway, commuters were basking in the warmth of their car heaters and watching the last traces of frost disappear from their windshields.

Late risers hurried in bathrobes and slippers to get their morning newspapers. It was a crisp winter day.

Against the trend, Bruce Holt backed his boat into La Cygne Reservoir. I parked his boat trailer beside several others on the parking lot, climbed in, and we roared into the biting air. Double wrapped in insulated clothing, we braced

against the windchill for a fast ride across the lake. Twin towers belched smoke into a clear blue sky as we slowed near the hotwater outlet of the huge generating station. Here, where the current boiled out of a long outlet channel, the water temperature was 65 degrees - 30 degrees warmer than natural lakes in the state. Crappies fed



beneath the surface, oblivious to the cold temperatures that gripped the lake. Like most humans in another world, they functioned comfortably in an artificial environment.

The La Cygne and Wolf Creek generating stations provide Kansas' only opportunities to fish warm water when the weather is cold. These power plants produce electrical energy for the state. La Cygne is powered by a coal-burning process, while Wolf Creek is nuclear. Both stations generate tremendous heat during power production, which is cooled by drawing water from the reservoir through the system. Discharged water is "hot," mixing with normal lake water to warm the whole impoundment (some areas are much warmer than others). Fish neither know nor care about this unique process, but behave as they normally would much later in spring. This provides winter angling opportunities for Kansas

fishermen.

As Holt cut the throttle, it was obvious we were too late for our first choice of sites. Six anglers had already walked half a mile to reach the short bluff overlooking the outlet's far side, and all were catching fish. We anchored and tried the deeper side of the fast current for 10 minutes without a hit. Then, not wanting to encroach upon the bankfishers' rightful claim, we turned westward to another area that substantially benefitted from the outlet's warm water. Due to the pump-and-discharge system of the generating station, a warm current more than a mile long circles through La Cygne lake. A series of shoreline points near this current, while considerably cooler than the outlet, had often provided good fishing action. Holt headed for the points to fish in water 3 to 12 feet deep.

Wave action was perfect, with gentle ripples blowing onto shore. Holt, who is manager of adjacent Linn County Park and a frequent fisherman on the lake, tied on a white tube jig and began to cast. Halfway back on the first attempt, the jig suddenly hesitated and a 12-inch crappie started the fun. Moments later, I connected and the live well began to fill.

The fish seemed to come and go during the first half-hour, apparently swimming in a school beneath the anchored boat. When present, they were hungry and aggressive. Strikes weren't like the subtle crappie bites normally felt during late winter months. Due to the warm water, these fish hit with authority. Averaging 11 to 14 inches long, they were fat and sassy. By the time things really slowed, 20 nice fish were in the cooler.

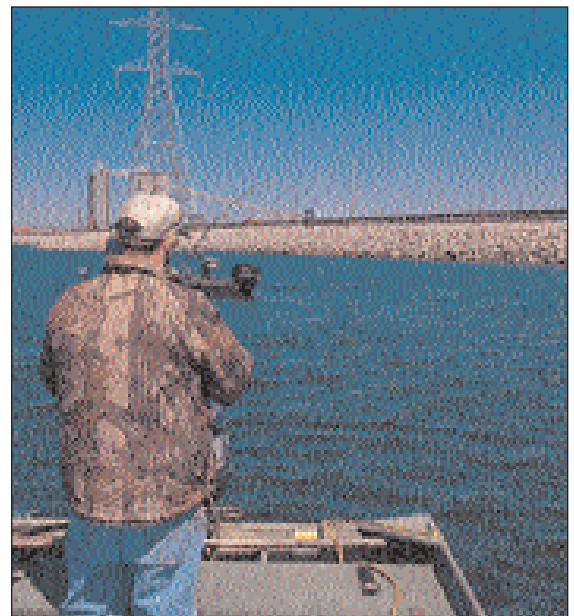
"Let's try over there," Holt said, pointing to a small cove containing flooded stumps. It looked shallow, but the warm water again made the difference as

we flipped our jigs to waiting fish. Twelve more crappies were quickly landed before we moved to yet another point.

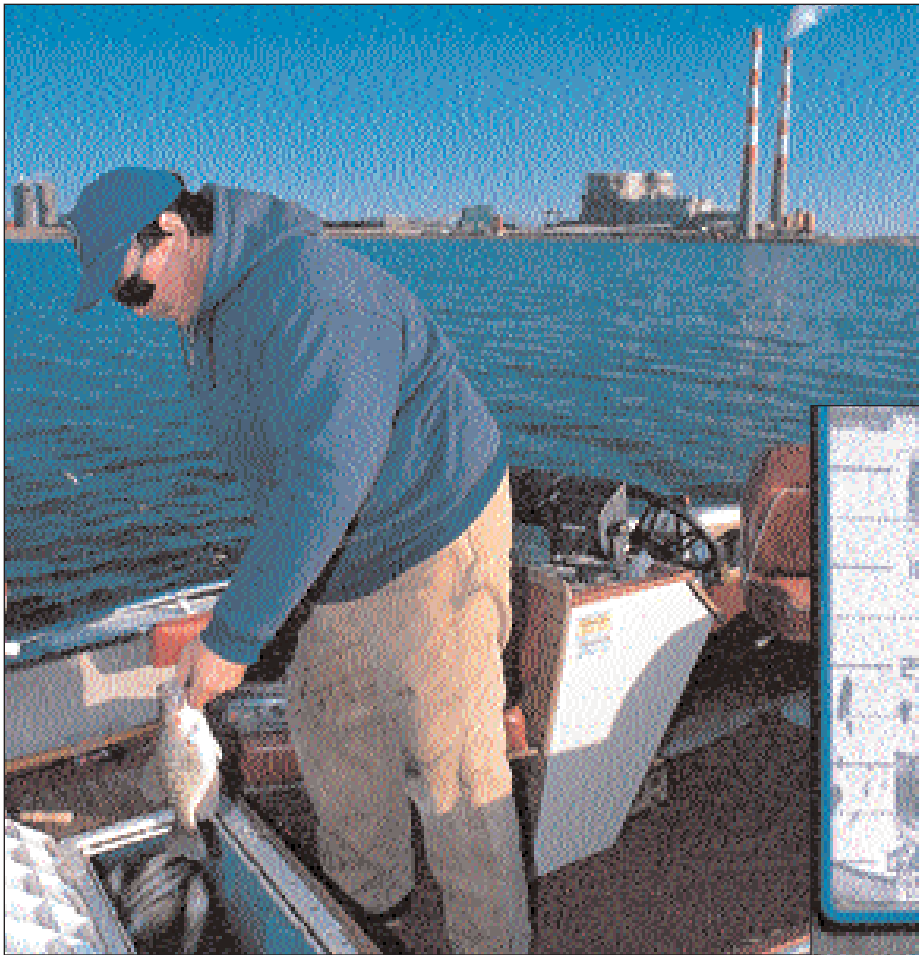
I couldn't believe the size of the crappies and rate of activity at an air temperature of only 20 degrees. Holt recalled many cold days when fishing had been this good or better. La Cygne Reservoir is known for top crappie fishing, particularly important due to its proximity to the Kansas City area. Nearby Hillsdale Reservoir also provides good accessible crappie fishing, but lacks La Cygne's warm winter water.

The February morning quickly warmed until temperatures were near the freezing mark. We shed our outer clothes as the action continued. Unfortunately, work schedules required us to leave after only several hours. The fishing trip ended too soon, and we had to hurry to clean more than 50 big fish before getting back to work. We decided to try it again at the first opportunity.

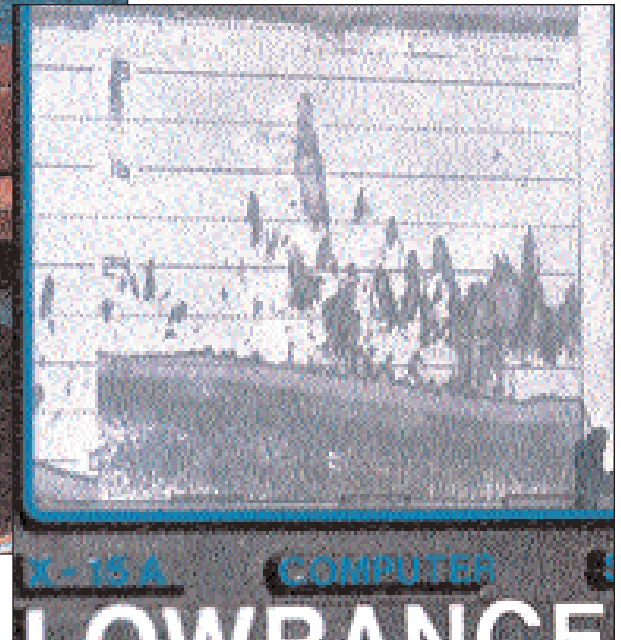
This turned out to be longer than expected. A few days later, the generating station closed down for repairs, shutting off the warm water supply to the lake. Repairs took two



Long rip-rapped dikes and powerlines give the location of this crappie hotspot away. Powerplant cooling lakes can provide excellent winter fishing.



Big crappie are the rule for winter fishing at La Cygne. Warm water flows through the lake in a circular fashion, producing 60 degree water in spite of bitter air temperatures. A graph recorder can help locate huge schools of crappie that congregate in the warmest currents.



weeks, and the lake quickly cooled to more seasonable water temperatures. Crappie stopped biting, and anglers quit fishing. After the power plant came back online, it took several more days for the water to warm again. Soon, it was back in the 60-degree range.

A month after the first trip, we tried again. This time it was early afternoon, the air temperature was 55 degrees, and the mid-March setting was more typical for crappie fishing. Even so, the lake's artificially warm water promised fast action. We headed to a spot near the dam in deep water where Holt often caught big fish. A single boat occupied the location, and Holt quickly recognized the angler as a local fishing buddy. We accepted an invitation to join him and lowered a trolling motor into the water. Holt searched methodically for a particular underwater landmark and noted on the LCD that fish seemed to be everywhere beneath us. "I'm

looking for a spot here that's 21 feet deep," he said. "If we get it right, we'll catch a lot of fish." Finally satisfied, he instructed me to drop anchors and tie off.

The strategy was different than before. "These fish are holding just above the bottom, about 20 feet down, so you'll need to tie on two jigs about a foot and a half apart. This will add weight and get your lures to the right depth much faster," he explained. "The two jigs also increase your chances that a fish will spot your jig. The light is pretty weak at that depth."

Holt demonstrated how to tie in a second jig by forming a 10-inch loop in the line several feet from the terminal end. The loop is wrapped around two fingers twice, then pulled through the resulting center and cinched tightly to form an in-line loop. This is crimped tightly and forced through the eye of the jig hook, then opened and looped over

the jig head to hold it fast. The bottom jig is tied to the line end with a clinch knot.

Rigged in this manner, Holt advised using black and chartreuse tube jigs on the hooks. "They'll see that color better down deep," he said.

As before, the first cast yielded a fish. It was short, requiring measurement in a plastic funnel. Like many lakes in Kansas, La Cygne reservoir has a 10-inch minimum crappie length limit to allow fish to reach maturity. The fish was just legal, and Holt tossed it into a Coleman cooler worn from use by such trips.

"Two of us caught close to a hundred nice ones here a couple of days ago," he said. "We didn't count them, but that cooler will hold about 85 12-inch crappies, and it was level full. We've filled it up a lot of times. But we didn't catch any



The cooling lake for the Wolf Creek Nuclear Generating Station, known as Coffey County Lake, is also known for big crappie. Restrictive length and creel limits maintain this trophy fishery.

small ones that day.”

It was a perfect afternoon for fishing. We steadily caught crappies, many of them thrown back due to small size. However, these contributed to the fast action and didn't hurt our feelings as the number of legal fish in the cooler rose. On average, our keepers measured 10 to 12 inches long. After several hours, Holt was ready to look for bigger fish.

Like before, time was limited. We

had to be off the water by 4:30 to allow time to clean fish and make an evening meeting. We motored along the dam to another of Holt's traditional hotspots. Here, the water was 11 feet deep, and we continued throwing the two-jig rigs as before. Immediately we began to catch large males already turning black with the approaching spawn. Though it seemed too early in the year for this, the warm water of the heated reservoir affected this part of



Jigs and slab spoons are the most effective winter crappie lures. While vertical fishing is the rule for sluggish fish in unheated lakes, the warmer waters of cooling lakes provide aggressive, active fish that can be caught casting in the dead of winter.

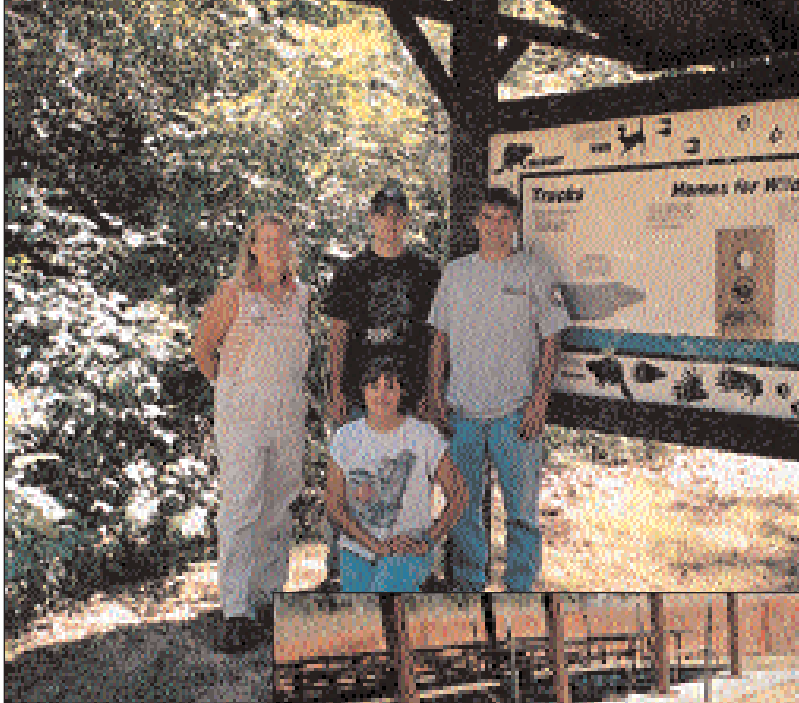
fish behavior, too. The males averaged about 13 inches long.

La Cygne's trademark smokestacks loomed beautifully in the background as we pulled up anchor to leave. Holt glanced at the cooler and judged that we'd caught about 75 crappies, along with a 7-pound channel cat that grabbed a jig in deep water. We took a few photos, reluctant to leave while the fish were still biting. Then we fired up the motor, hustled back to the marina, and finished cleaning the fish on schedule.

These two fishing trips illustrate the fantastic winter opportunity presented by warm water reservoirs. When one or more of the generator stacks are smoking, anglers usually line up to get in on La Cygne's excellent crappie fishing. Don George, fisheries biologist for the lake, keeps tabs on the crappie and other game fish in the reservoir. The lake has a good rating for white crappies, as well as good ratings for wipers and flathead catfish. Bluegill and largemouth bass fishing are rated excellent. Bass larger than 10 pounds have been taken from La Cygne, and 8-pounders are not uncommon. Many of the large fish are taken in late winter from the artificially warm water.

Likewise, Wolf Creek (now known as Coffee County Lake) provides terrific warmwater fishing during winter months. It rates excellent for smallmouth bass, walleyes, and channel catfish; good for white bass; and fair for white crappies and wipers.

With opportunities like these, there is no reason that fishing gear must be stowed during Kansas' coldest months. A drive to a generating station can pay off with exciting fishing when the air temperatures say otherwise. This winter, buck the trend and give La Cygne or Wolf Creek a try. You'll discover for yourself the fun of powerplant fishing. ♡



# AmeriCorps To The Rescue

by Kathy Pritchett  
secretary, Parks Division, Pratt

***The AmeriCorps service program is kind of like a domestic version of the Peace Corps. In return for service in Kansas state parks and wherever needed in times of disaster, participants receive a living stipend and money for education.***

**“O**n a cold morning in January, three strangers walked into the office of Milford State Park. They did not know exactly what they were doing or what to expect. They did not realize at this point the enriching experience that loomed on the horizon.” — Jason Soyland, AmeriCorps member, Milford State Park.

So began the AmeriCorps experi-

ence for a group of young people at Milford State Park. The scene repeated itself at 17 other department locations as the reborn AmeriCorps program began with the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. When floods devastated much of the Midwest in 1993 and again in 1995, the AmeriCorps program provided part of the labor force for recovery. AmeriCorps

members helped rebuild many Kansas state parks. When this task was done, many thought the AmeriCorps program was over.

When the possibility of a revived AmeriCorps program arose in 1998, Parks Central Region Supervisor Alan Stark applied for the grant. The Department of Wildlife and Parks was one of seven programs approved for the State of Kansas.

Parks Division assistant director Linda Lanterman was named site administrator of the program. Lanterman coordinated the details of recruiting and reporting as well as the successful application process for the following year's program.

AmeriCorps is a service program, similar to a domestic version of the Peace Corps, developed to strengthen communities and build its members. Members commit to providing 1,700 hours of service within a one-year period. In exchange for this service, members are supported with a \$9,000 living stipend, paid in bi-weekly increments. Upon completion of their service commitment, members also receive an educational grant of \$4,725 to cover education expenses or repay student loans. Most importantly, however, members receive

intangible benefits that serve them for a lifetime: job skills, work ethic, a sense of teamwork, pride in accomplishments, and the satisfaction of being part of something larger than themselves. Like the Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930s, the AmeriCorps program contributes to the foundation of American life, leaving a legacy that will be long remembered.

Under normal circumstances, AmeriCorps members perform various projects at state parks and headquarters offices. These range from planting trees to planning trails and conducting environmental presentations. At Lovewell State Park, for instance, members recently assisted in the park's sand castle/sculpture contest. Members at Cheney State Park, who also assist at nearby Sand Hills State Park, have been involved in developing and

building the trails systems at both parks. Not only have members laid wood chips and built trail bridges, they have produced signs and brochures. Members have converged on various parks to provide an all-out effort to complete special projects such as building an erosion control structure at Wilson State Park. All of these projects are in addition to the members' efforts alongside park staff to maintain facilities and provide services.

Completion of these projects meets the grant goals. Community goals include responding to disasters and restoring and upgrading state parks. Member goals include training for safety and environmental issues, public speaking, and job-related skills. Members often man booths at county fairs and regional festivals, providing information about state parks, fishing and hunting regulations, and more.



AmeriCorps members at 17 department locations across the state helped build nature trails, performed park maintenance, constructed interpretive signs and presented various park programs. After a spring tornado hit Parsons, 14 members traveled there to help with cleanup.

Members also sometimes assist with hunter education courses. At Milford State Park, team members served as eagle spotters during the 9th Annual Eagle Days weekend. Members of the statewide team at the Pratt Operations Headquarters Office assisted a Pratt school with design and installation of a playground. Later, the same team assisted in researching several Land and Water Conservation Fund grants that have been tentatively selected for funding.

Members are expected to assist in AmeriCorps recruiting and to coordinate with volunteers to strengthen communities and provide environmental education programs. At Cheney State Park, members have planted trees with the Future Farmers of America. Kanopolis team members have spent many hours on the park's trails alongside volunteers. Kanopolis members assisted in planning and hosting the Kanopolis Trail System's designation as a part of the Millennium Trails System. Thirty-eight of the members have presented over 100 programs to more than 6,000 people. These programs range from hunter education courses to "The Life of a Civil War Soldier." Members have also devised and distributed surveys at seven of the department's parks.

Members come to AmeriCorps with differing backgrounds. In fact, a major element of the program is promoting diversity among the workforce. One member at Lovewell was for many years a welder; he plans to use the program's skills and educational grant to

begin a new career. Others are "mature" individuals who simply want a chance to contribute to society while learning in the process.

Members have learned to use equipment they never heard of, much less expected to use. They use chain saws, wood chippers, backhoes, and computers. Some learn to handle cement or participate in fire school, preparing to assist with controlled burns or wildfires that often occur during hot, dry Kansas summers.

When disaster strikes, however, the real "service" begins. For instance, when an April tornado struck the city of Parsons, 14 AmeriCorps members reported for service. Over the course of eight days, members assisted where needed, cutting downed trees,

directing traffic, or providing meals. After finishing, they returned to their home parks to continue interrupted projects. Later that month, high winds struck Milford and Tuttle Creek State Parks. Again, a number of AmeriCorps members responded, cleaning up roads and campgrounds in advance of the Memorial Day weekend.

The Kansas Department of Wildlife & Parks has been awarded a second AmeriCorps grant for Federal Fiscal Year 2001. New member recruitment will begin in October for positions expected to start service in late 2000 or early 2001. Specific park sites have yet to be selected. For more information, contact Linda Lanterman at the Pratt Headquarters office, 316-672-5911, or watch the Department website for updates. ♡



AmeriCorps members get unique job experience and a living stipend of \$9,000 for completion of 1,700 hours of service within a year. After completion of service, members receive a \$4,725 education grant.





Mike Blair photo

# A Retriever's First Year

by Marc Murrell

*manager, Great Plains Nature Center, Wichita*

***Picking a puppy is an important decision if you're looking for a long-term hunting companion. But you can ensure many years of enjoyable hunting by doing some research and getting the puppy off to the right start.***

Watching a well-trained retriever is seeing poetry in motion. Whether it's in the marsh pursuing ducks and geese, or competing in field trials, a retriever that runs hard and obeys its handler is a pleasure to watch. Thousands of hours of training are required to get a dog to that level, but doing your homework before bringing a puppy home will increase the odds for success.

Owning a dog is a big responsibility. Potential dog owners should ask themselves, "Do I have the patience and knowledge to care for and train this dog?" If the

answer is yes, then it's time to get started in the search.

Labrador Retrievers are the most popular breed. Well known for their even temperament and willingness to please, Labs are a good family dogs and are readily available. Other popular retrieving breeds include Golden, Flatcoated and Chesapeake. Look for a breed with the traits you desire by talking to dog owners and breeders and watch dogs in the field, if possible.

Once the decision is made to purchase a puppy, you need to find a good source. We've all heard stories about incredible hunting dogs purchased for \$20 through a newspaper ad, but those are rare. If you want a dog that can be trained and is likely to succeed in the field, you need to find parents with the good traits.

Visit with individuals who have good retrievers and ask them where they found their puppy. Retriever club members make great contacts for puppies. And commercial breeders that specialize in the type of dog you're looking for should be contacted. Always ask for references.

It's a good idea to look at the parents' pedigree, and watch them work. If you're looking for a hunter, find a breeding where both parents hunt. If the parents perform well, the offspring have potential.

Puppies range in price from \$150-\$600. The more expensive puppies will likely come from parents who are titled as some type of competitive champion. However, paying more for a puppy doesn't guarantee success. A \$600 puppy can end up as a lap dog while a \$150 dog can be an awesome performer.

Once a litter is selected and prices negotiated, you should visit the litter several times. You won't learn much before the pups are at least a couple weeks old. But if you can observe their behavior at three or four



Once you've chosen a litter, visit the puppies several times before you choose one. Take the family and observe how the dogs interact with people. Take the puppy home when it's seven weeks old, and begin preliminary training basic commands, such as "sit," "come," and "heel.." Retrieving games can also begin now, but make all training sessions fun for the pup.

weeks, and then again at five or six weeks, you can learn personality and behavior traits of individual pups.

"That's always a good idea," said Tom Masella, a professional retriever trainer from Newton. "What you're going to see one day might differ from the next. Puppies tend to go through phases. You might pick a day when they're real lethargic and sleepy and you're not going to see much."

Don't pick the puppy that cowers in the corner, nor one that runs rampant all over the place. Middle of the road is a good choice.

"I look for a pup that readily comes when he's called when you kneel down and clap your hands," Masella has learned. "That shows a certain degree of trainability. I also look for one that's relatively bold and unafraid of his surroundings."

"And if you can get your hands on a pigeon, especially a live one, take it along," Masella added. "Look for a pup that shows a high degree of interest in birds and likes to retrieve with some natural inclination. You can't make a really nice dog out of a poor initial product."

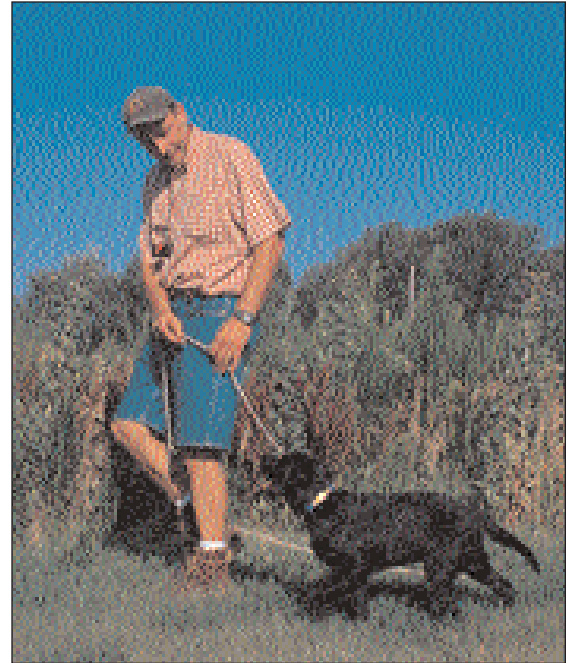
You should bring your puppy home when it's seven weeks old. Any sooner or later can lead to various problems. Be sure to "puppy-proof" your house. Puppies love to chew on everything. Also realize, just like human infants, puppies eat, sleep and go to the bathroom most of the day.

The old adage about spoiling a good hunting dog by keeping it inside was perpetuated by someone who didn't like dogs. Allowing the puppy, at least for a couple months or longer if you wish, to become part of the family and learn how to act inside, is recommended.

You now become the puppy's security blanket and mother. The pup will look to you for guidance and support in its big, new world. Now's the time to start the training and bonding process. Put a collar on the puppy, and let it get used to dragging a short leash.

In the first few weeks, the puppy can be taught to sit, and retrieving games can begin. A puppy-sized bumper (retrieving dummy) or a small, stuffed animal can be tossed. Play with the puppy in a hallway and toss the object a couple feet. The pup may simply want to play, but encourage it to bring the bumper back. The pup's natural inclination is to keep the bumper, but block the hallway so it can't run by you. It's important to limit this to a couple retrieves as a puppy's attention span resembles that of a 2-year-old child.

The puppy should know right from wrong. Chewing on tables and shoes or jumping on couches may not be allowed. Establish the ground rules up front and scold



Marc Murrell photos

with, "No!" That command will be used by all family members more often than any other during the first few weeks. Other commands can be added, and the puppy may learn "sit," "stay" and "heel" by the time it's 12 weeks old. Always keep sessions short and free of discipline. They should be fun for the pup. Whistle commands can also be introduced.

Other stimuli should be introduced at this time. The puppy should be carried in a kennel while in the vehicle. Gun fire, using a blank pistol, can be gradually introduced, and the puppy should be exposed to as many new situations as possible. Birds, both live and dead, can be used in retrieving games. Take the puppy around people, kids, dogs and other confusing situations. Blow a duck or goose call, let it get used to water

(only in warm months of course), scatter decoys around the yard during retrieving sessions with different sized bumpers and take the pup for a boat ride. Obedience and developing the pup's desire to please you are crucial building blocks for later.

After a few months of basics, you should decide on using a professional trainer. Ask around for recommendations, and visit with the professionals in your area about their programs and prices. Expect to pay in the neighborhood of \$400 per month of professional training.

If you plan on having the dog taught the force fetch (where they pick up an object on command and return it to you immediately), it's best to let a professional do this. The training can occur when the pup's adult teeth come in, usually at five to seven months.

"The force fetch ensures a delivery to hand," Masella says. "That's critical in a hunting situation. You want the dog to go out and make the retrieve and return immediately. You don't want it running around disturbing birds, or to

have one bird and then drop it for another which may result in a lost bird. It also helps the dog learn not to chomp on a bird, so it's fit for the table."

A professional trainer may also aid in incorporating the remote trainer (electric collar) in the training process.

"For years and years, people have trained conventionally with a leash and collar," says Masella. "That involved actually running out there and correcting the dog the moment it made a mistake. That could entail several runs and a lot of exercise, and there was a time lag involved between the mistake and the correction. Sometimes, the dog didn't understand why it was corrected."

"The advantage to a remote trainer, providing you know how to use it, is control at a distance," Masella has seen. "I believe it's the only way to go."

Masella has used remote training collars since he started. He advises those who use them to read the instructions and understand how and when to use the collar. The collars come with various strength settings and should be adjusted so that the dog stops whatever it's doing at the moment of correction but doesn't yelp. While some may think it's cruel, failure to properly train is far worse.

A puppy who has been trained can be introduced to field hunting situations at an early age. Old school hunters thought the dog had to be a year or two old to know enough to be beneficial. But at 8 or 9 months, dogs can perform well and start the best training of all — field work.

Provide a controlled setting with no big groups or barrages of gunfire for



Basic training equipment can include an electric remote trainer, dummies, starter pistol and leads.

Marc Murrell photo

the first field experiences. Try to make it easy for the dog to succeed by picking a location where retrieves aren't difficult. Anticipate problems and always use the remote trainer in hunting situations to correct problems before they become habits. Breaking (leaving before commanded), whining, barking, and fidgeting can all be expected from a young dog. Make it fun for the pup. Don't take a dog on its first hunt when it's 10 degrees below zero, and don't hunt it hard if it's 95 degrees during the early teal season.

The sky is the limit when training a retriever. The dog will be able to do whatever you're smart enough to teach it. Hand signals, blind and multiple retrieves are all possible if you invest the time and understand the process of how and why it works.

A well-trained retriever is a noble companion. Just watching a good dog will make your hunts more enjoyable, and you'll save game that might have been lost without a dog. If you do your homework and invest the time, you'll have a treasured hunting partner that will add a new dimension of pleasure to hunting. ♡



Mike Blair photo

The force fetch teaches the dog to pick up a bird on command and hold it until you take it away.



Mike Blair photo

# HUNTING SAFELY

by Wayne Doyle

*hunter education coordinator, Pratt*

***Hunting is statistically one of the safest outdoor recreational activities. However, one firearms-related accident is too many. All such accidents can be prevented if hunters will follow a simple list of rules.***

**H**unting is one of the safest outdoor activities. The accident rate is so small that it is statistically insignificant. There is more chance that you will be hurt playing badminton in your backyard, than being hurt in a firearm-related accident while hunting. The fact that hunting is so safe is a direct result of the 50-year educational effort by thousands of volunteer hunter education instructors across the country. In Kansas, almost 400,000 hunters have benefited from the expertise of the Kansas Hunter Education instructors since hunter education became mandatory in 1973.

Mistaken-for-game accidents have been virtually eliminated. Self-inflicted wounds are extraordinarily rare. Only one type of accident continues to be a source of frustration to the hunter education community. That accident happens when one hunter swings on an upland game bird, fires, and hits a hunter in the

line of fire.

In 1999, there were 32 hunting accidents in Kansas. Twenty-one of these accidents involved swinging on game. Every accident that happened while hunting upland birds was a swinging-on-game accident. Forty-seven percent of these accidents happened on opening weekend. Thirty-eight percent of the victims were blocking, and 66 percent of the victims were wearing blaze orange.

Statistics tell only part of the story. Many people think that this accident is not serious because they never hear of anyone being killed in a swinging-on-game accident. Not mentioned are the lost or damaged eyes, painful medical procedures, medical expenses, and the psychological damage of being shot.

This type of accident is one of the easiest to prevent. Statistics can't show the number of accidents that did not happen when hunters exercised proper gun handling skills.

Skilled gun handlers will not even begin to swing on a bird unless they are sure that the shot will be safe.

Hunter Education instructors teach the Rules of Safe Gun Handling. If every hunter practiced these rules until they became habits, there would never be any kind of firearms-related accidents. Practice these and never hunt with anyone who does not .

**Control the muzzle of your firearm.** Always, without exception, point the muzzle of your gun in a safe direction. Failure to control the muzzle is not only unsafe but also incredibly stupid.

**Keep your finger off the trigger until ready to fire.** Do not walk with your safety off and finger on the trigger. Do not take off the firearm's safety until ready to fire. Do not put your finger on the trigger until you are ready to fire. You are not ready to fire until you

have determined that the shot will be safe and that the target is legal and within your effective range.

**Treat every firearm like a loaded firearm.** Assume that every gun you touch is loaded until you determine that it is not. Treat every firearm as if it could load itself while you were not looking. Treat every firearm with the same respect and caution that you would give to a chain saw with the motor running.

**Be sure of your target and what is beyond your target.** You are responsible for every foot of distance that your shot charge or bullet travels. You must be absolutely certain that the area between you and your target is completely safe. You must be absolutely certain that the area behind your target is safe. You must know where that bullet or shot charge will land. A typical pheasant load can travel 500 yards. A rifle bullet can travel three miles or more. You must know where all of your hunting partners are at all

times. Be extraordinarily careful when using the push and block technique of pheasant hunting. Remember that more than one-third of the swinging-on-game victims were blockers.

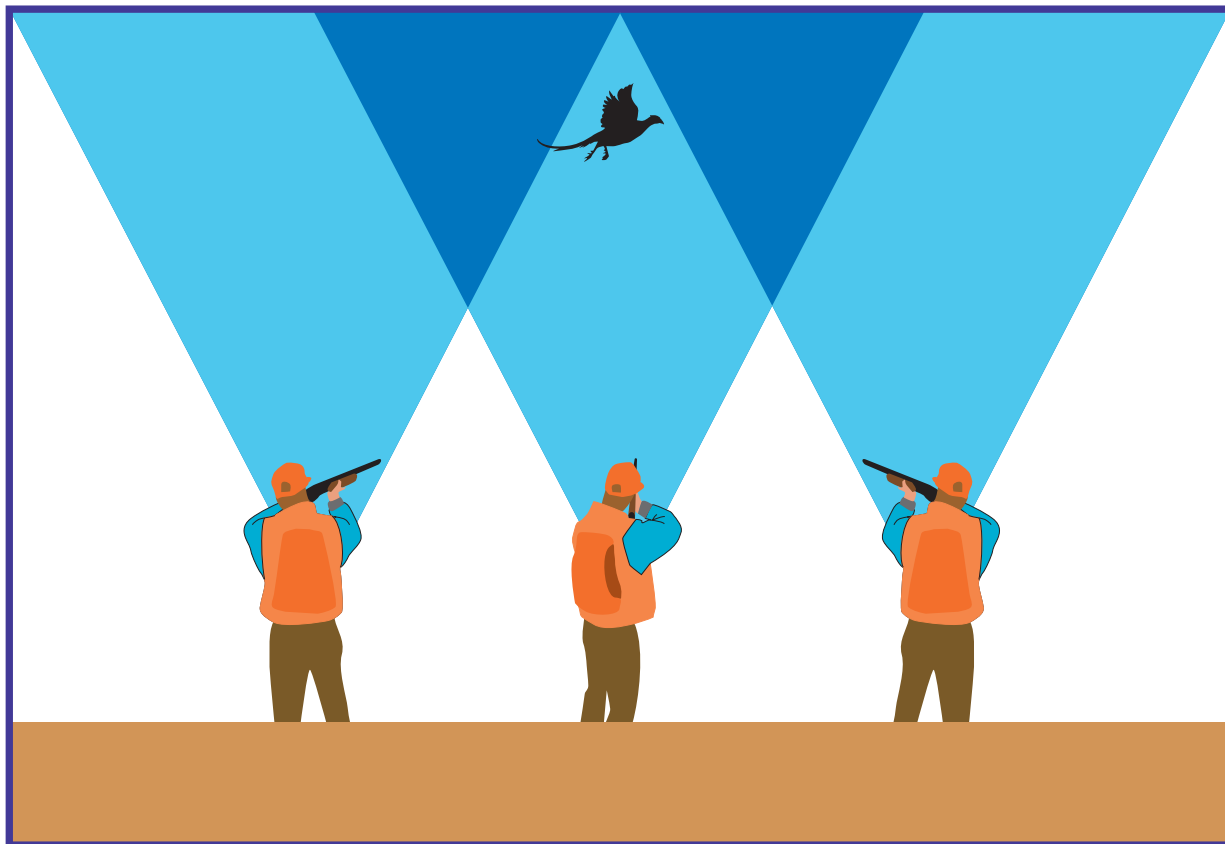
Not only do you need to make these rules habits, you need to protect yourself from those who are not handling firearms properly.

Wear blaze orange while bird hunting. Law does not require it but common sense does. While two thirds of the victims of swinging-on-game accidents were wearing blaze orange, think of the countless times that blaze orange has allowed a hunter to see another hunter before pulling the trigger.

Wear safety glasses. Many of the injuries received in this type accident are to the eyes. Wearing a pair of good quality, safety sunglasses will protect your eyes from brush, as well as shot. Good glasses also reduce eyestrain, making it easier for you to be sure of your target and what lies beyond.

Most importantly, do not hunt with anyone who is an unsafe gun handler. That means someone who does not handle their firearm in accordance with the four rules discussed. Three out of four is not good enough. You should never have to look down the muzzle of another hunter's gun — ever. You should never look down someone's muzzle without correcting that person the first time. If there is a second time, find another hunting partner. Do not treat safety violations as a joke or as something that has to be tolerated in order to hunt. Improper gun handling is never acceptable. Do not let stupid, careless people endanger you.

Hunting is an enjoyable, safe outdoor activity. By observing the Four Rules of Safe Gun Handling we can make hunting even safer. Spending a day afield with good dogs and good hunters is incomparable. Enjoy it. Be safe. And by all means, take a kid hunting. 🦋



Dustin Teasley illustration

Zones of fire are illustrated above. By adhering to safe zones of fire and keeping track of hunting partners at all times, swinging-on-game accidents can be avoided. A large group of hunters should set the ground rules before setting a foot in the field.

# Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks 1999-2000 Annual Report

This report briefly details department accomplishments in the year 2000. The Walk-In Hunting Area (WIHA) program continued to exceed expectations; the FISH program continued to grow; a record number of deer permits were offered; and the \$10 million facelift of our state parks' infrastructure neared completion. I am particularly proud of the progress the department has made with the "Pass It On" program, which was initiated to recruit new hunters and reverse the declining trend in hunter numbers. This fall, we will have unprecedented opportunities to get youth involved in hunting through special programs and special youth seasons, including a youth upland bird season, youth deer season and youth waterfowl seasons. As enthusiasm for this program grows, it will be expanded to fishing, camping and wildlife watching.

As we enter the 21st century, there are many challenges. We must ask ourselves, "Can we rise to the challenge of improving our outdoor recreation opportunities in Kansas?" The benefits to our economy and our quality of life are clear. It will take a concerted effort from all of us who love the Kansas outdoors to preserve what we enjoy and improve those resources for our children. Providing quality programs and customer service remain our top priorities. Through the efforts of dedicated staff, the support of Governor Bill Graves, and the backing of our diverse constituency, I believe the department moved forward in 2000 — a step closer to becoming the nation's premier producer of outdoor recreation opportunities.

*Steve Williams, Secretary, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks*



## Youth Programs

KDWP staff organized dozens of "special hunts," most of which are designed to accommodate quality hunting experiences for young hunters. Most special hunts are in areas not normally open to hunting,

such as state parks, refuge areas, or restricted access areas. In addition, the Kansas Wildlife and Parks Commission approved special two-day youth seasons for upland birds, deer, and waterfowl. The youth seasons allow young hunters, accompanied by adult hunters, to pursue game outside of normal season dates.

## Deer Hunting Opportunity

The department continued the trend in recent years of issuing an unprecedented number of deer permits. A total of about 180,000 deer hunting permits and extra tags were expected to be issued this deer hunting season, compared with about 170,000 in 1999. Most important for deer population control, the majority of increased permit num-

bers are targeted for does. The Kansas Wildlife and Parks Commission also approved lengthening of the extended January antlerless-only season from 10 days



in 1999 to 14 days this year. In addition, KDWP and the KWP Commission removed regulatory restrictions to provide increased hunting opportunity; leftover permits and deer game tags may be used in any season with equipment legal for that season.

### Law Enforcement

Conservation officers conducted a total of 78,757 license checks of hunters and anglers afield in 1999. In addition, they conducted 16,597 boat inspections. Those 95,354 encounters with hunters, anglers, and boaters resulted in 8,515 violations. Park law enforcement officers conducted a total of 148,904 park permit checks during the course of their duties in 1999, which resulted in the issuance of 3,642 summons. Their enforcement duties also resulted in more than 220 arrests, the majority of them for DUI, drug possession, or assault charges. Boating enforcement officers investigated a total of 50 reported boating accidents in 1999, down from 72 accidents the previous year. Boating accidents in 1999 resulted in five fatalities and \$51,800 in property damage.

### State Park Capital Improvements

Major improvements continued in 2000, the second year of a three-year renovation program in Kansas state parks. The final year of the renovation program is underway, enhancing parks in a variety of ways, from development of new campgrounds to construction of new shower houses and courtesy docks. Many of these improvements were made possible after the 1998



Kansas Legislature approved Gov. Bill Graves' proposal for a one-time appropriation of \$10 million to begin to address critical infrastructure improvements at each of Kansas' 24 state parks. State park visitation reached 6.6 million in 1999, the second highest year on record.

### Special Events

State parks hosted more than 100 special events, ranging from full-blown outdoor music concerts to fireworks displays. The Country Stampede country music event drew about 106,000 people to Tuttle Creek State Park. About 7,000 people attended the Battle of Mine Creek Reenactment at Eisenhower State Park. Crawford State Park gained national recognition from the 8th Annual Summer Sizzler Triathlon, and also hosted a reunion of the Civilian Conservation Corps members who built the lake during the 1930s. Equestrian events became more common; Milford, Perry, Eisenhower, Hillsdale, El Dorado, Tuttle Creek, Scott, Cedar Bluff, and Kanopolis state parks all have facilities for riders to camp with their horses.

### AmeriCorps

State park managers received some much-needed help with the addition of 54 individuals to serve on the Kansas Outdoor AmeriCorps Action Team. The additional help was provided courtesy of a federal grant which awards each AmeriCorps team member a living stipend and, at the end of their minimum 1700 hours of service, an education credit award of \$4,725. AmeriCorps members help with renovation and development of public recreation areas and facilities, presentation of educational programs to the public, and assistance at local natural disaster sites in the state.

### Volunteers

State parks benefitted from more than 42,000 hours of



assistance from a variety of volunteer workers in calendar year 1999. Inmates from the Kansas Department of Corrections provided about half of that total. Camp hosts contributed more than 8,500 hours. Individual volunteers, friends group members, and Green Thumb workers contributed more than 11,000 hours of labor. Volunteers perform a variety of maintenance and cleanup chores, allowing permanent and seasonal KDWP employees to devote more time to critical maintenance and repair projects.

### Outdoor Recreation Grants

KDWP's Parks Division distributed \$500,000 to 46 Kansas communities for development of local recreation facilities. The Kansas Legislature appropriated the funding to assist city and county governments in recreation development such as ballfield construction and renovation, acquisition of playground equipment, and disabled-access improvements.

### Recreational Trails Grants

Grant monies were distributed to a variety of worthy public trail project applicants throughout the state. In FY 2000, the Parks Division disbursed a total of \$753,500 in National Recreational Trails Fund grants. The program is an assistance program of the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration, and derives revenues from excises taxes on the sale of off-road recreational fuel.

### Hunting and Fishing Access

The popular Walk-In Hunting Areas (WIHA) program continued



to grow dramatically. About 680,000 acres were leased from Kansas landowners for the 2000 hunting season, compared with 630,000 acres in 1999, and 490,000 acres in 1998. The agency's Fishing Impoundments and Stream Habitats (FISH) program leased a total of 1,300 acres of ponds and 55 miles of stream reaches from private landowners for the 2000 season (March 1 through October 31).

#### **Fish Stocking**

The department's Fish Culture Section stocked a total of 42.5 million fish, comprising 14 species, in Kansas' public fishing waters. In addition, a total of 125,591 channel catfish were stocked in urban lakes and ponds for the department's Urban Fishing Program. The popular trout fishing program benefitted from stocking a total of 136,610 catchable-sized trout.

#### **Hunter Education**

A total of 1,263 volunteer hunter education instructors conducted more than 300 classes around the state, certifying just less than 12,000 students in 1999.



#### **Nature Center Completed**

Work was completed this year on the \$1.2 million exhibit hall at the Great Plains Nature Center in Wichita, and a dedication ceremony

was conducted in late August. The center, which also houses KDWP's Region 4 office, had been scheduled to open as a visitor's center more than two years ago when a natural disaster struck at the contractor's place of business in Washington and destroyed most of the displays and dioramas destined for the exhibit hall. Projected annual visitation at the Great Plains Nature Center is 150,000.

#### **The 'New' Cheyenne Bottoms**

A massive renovation project at Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area was completed last year. A dedication ceremony was held at the Bottoms in May to commemorate the project completion. The internationally-acclaimed wildlife area has undergone a massive transformation during the past ten years. Pools were subdivided to allow more efficient and timely water manipulation. Nesting islands were built. Excavation of pools created enhanced water storage capacity and helps inhibit cattail expansion. Water control structures and pump systems were installed, allowing area managers to efficiently manage this critical wetland habitat.

#### **Wildlife Education**

KDWP's Wildlife Education Section conducted 44 in-service environmental education workshops attended by 727 teachers and school administrators last year. The Section's wildlife reference center supplied a total of 21,958 environmental teaching aid resources to educators around the state, and certified 22 additional Outdoor Wildlife Learning Sites (OWLS) at schools. A total of 4,913 persons visited the Pratt Conservation Education Center; 7,806 visited the Milford Nature Center.

#### **Pass It On**

The department debuted its Hunter Recruitment and Retention Plan, designed to increase the state's hunting participation rate to 15 percent by 2005. The program, designed by department staff and constituent organization representatives, incorporates a variety of

strategies to enhance hunting participation by the state's residents. The program incorporates strategies such as development of a network of outdoor mentors to assist young hunters, continued development of public hunting access, and enhancement of sport shooting opportunities.



#### **Environmental Review**

In 1999, KDWP's Environmental Services Section reviewed 1,611 projects for potential environmental impacts to threatened or endangered species. Twenty-five projects required Action Permits because of impacts on critical habitats. The permits required on-site measures, such as avoidance of in-stream construction during peak spawning dates, or protection or replacement of critical habitats. Road and bridge projects represent the vast majority of projects reviewed, while other projects requiring action permits included stream channel alterations, utility projects, dam construction, mining, and industrial development.

#### **Internet Activity**

KDWP added online license sales at its Internet website in September, 1999. More than \$336,000 in sales was logged at the website from that date through June 30, 2000. Anyone with an Internet connection and a printer can purchase and print many department issuances 24 hours a day, seven days a week over a secure system. The website also offers detailed information on hunting, fishing, boating, and state parks outdoor recreation in Kansas.



# Income July 1999-June 2000

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 1999 license and permit sales.

## FISHING/HUNTING/FURHARVESTING

License/permit	Number sold	Revenue
Resident Fish (\$15.00)	190,481	\$2,857,215
Combination Fish/Hunt (\$30.00)	44,391	\$1,331,730
Nonresident Fish (\$35.00)	8,956	\$313,460
Five-Day Trip Fish (\$15.00)	4,918	\$73,770
24-Hour Fish (\$3.00)	89,411	\$268,233
Trout Stamp (\$7.50)	10,921	\$81,907
Lifetime Fish (\$240.00)	227	\$54,480
Lifetime Comb. Fish/Hunt (\$440.00)	899	\$395,560
Lifetime Fish (payments) (\$35.00)	46	\$1,610
Lifetime Comb. (payments) (\$35.00)	244	\$8,540
Lifetime Hunt (payments) (\$35.00)	126	\$4,410
Lifetime Hunt (\$240.00)	993	\$238,320
Resident Hunt (\$15.00)	94,161	\$1,412,415
Nonresident Hunt (\$65.00)	48,897	\$3,178,305
Nonresident Junior Hunt (\$30.00)	1,739	\$52,170
Controlled Shooting Area (\$13.00)	6,044	\$78,572
48-Hour Waterfowl (\$20.00)	528	\$10,560
Deer Permit (variable)	157,608	\$3,624,730
Turkey Permit (variable)	38,565	\$629,200
Adult Furharvester (\$15.00)	4,114	\$61,710
Junior Furharvester (\$7.50)	120	\$900
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>703,389</b>	<b>\$14,677,798</b>

## STATE PARKS

Permit Type	Number Sold	Revenue
Annual Vehicle (\$29.50)	28,524	\$841,458
Annual Camp ( \$100)	2,343	\$234,300
Second Vehicle (\$14.50)	9,622	\$139,519
Duplicate Vehicle (\$5.00)	765	\$3,825
Exempt/Handicap Vehicle (\$0)	28,447	\$0
Daily Vehicle (\$3.50)	265,333	\$928,665
Daily Handicap Vehicle (\$0)	199	\$0
Daily Camp (\$4.50)	112,216	\$504,972
14-Day Camp (\$50.00)	1,407	\$70,350
Utility (1) (\$5.00)	17,062	\$85,310
Utility (2) (\$6.00)	90,990	\$545,940
Utility (3) (\$7.00)	17,914	\$125,328
Youth Group Camping (\$2.50)	3	\$7.50
30-Day Camp (\$90.00)	14	\$1,260
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>570,839</b>	<b>\$3,480,935</b>

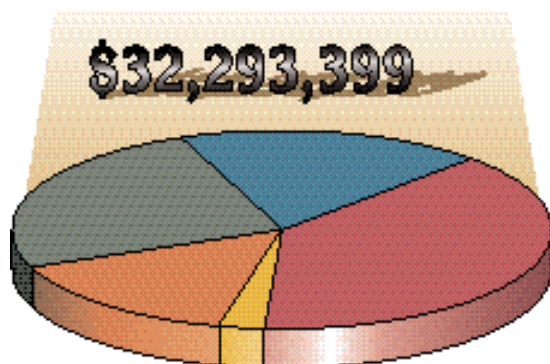
## THREE- YEAR BOAT REGISTRATIONS

Boats under 16 feet (\$15.00)	18,606	\$279,090
Boats over 16 feet (\$18.00)	18,663	\$335,934
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>37,810</b>	<b>\$622,767</b>

## FEDERAL AID

Coast Guard (boating safety)	\$ 313,364
Dingell-Johnson (fish)	\$3,044,685
Pittman-Robertson (wildlife)	\$2,446,181
Other	\$1,912,989
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$7,717,219</b>

# Expenditures (7/99 - 6/00)



Fish	\$7,894,499	25 %
Wildlife	\$12,398,728	37 %
Parks	\$7,999,879	25 %
Administration	\$3,105,026	10 %
Boating	\$895,267	3 %
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$32,293,399</b>	



# A Place To Hunt

by Mark Shoup  
*associate editor, Pratt*

photos by Mike Blair

***The Walk-In Hunting Area program might be the most successful and popular initiative the department has undertaken. With more than 680,000 acres enrolled in 2000, the biggest problem for hunters is deciding where to go.***

As any hunter would acknowledge, there's nothing more valuable than a good place to hunt. Increasingly, however, such places come in short supply. Larger farms mean fewer landowners to grant permission. In some areas, changing land-use practices have reduced the amount of wildlife habitat. Not only is lack of places to hunt a hardship for hunters, it is an impediment to those who might otherwise take up the sport and those who once hunted and might want to rediscover an old love. This is of particular concern to the Department of Wildlife and Parks because hunter numbers are on the decline.

To address this issue, the department has developed one of the most innovative and successful programs in agency history — the Walk-In Hunting Area program, commonly

known as WIHA. And while the WIHA program is good news for hunters today, it may prove invaluable to the future of hunting.

"Not having a place to hunt is a common reason given by former hunters who no longer hunt," says Mike Miller, who is coordinating Pass It On, the department's hunter recruitment and retention program. "While Kansas landowners are still generous in allowing access to those who ask, people are so busy, they often don't have time to do the leg-work necessary to gain permission. WIHA more than triples the amount of land formerly open to public hunting, and with almost 2,000 tracts scattered across the state, the program provides convenient access to all hunters. The WIHA program plays a critical role in saving our hunting heritage."

Based on a similar program in

South Dakota, WIHA began as a pilot project for the 1995-96 hunting season. Only seven counties in southcentral Kansas were targeted, and landowners were paid to allow public hunting access. Payment was based on the number of acres enrolled. The advantage to the landowner was reduced liability for injury and no responsibility for posting or patrolling the areas, which Wildlife and Parks staff would handle. Landowners also would be relieved of hunters knocking on their doors asking for permission during the season.

For the hunter, the benefits were obvious: more land to hunt without having to ask permission and a free atlas to help locate those areas.

That first year, some 10,300 acres were enrolled in the program by 46 cooperators, and 3,000 WIHA atlases were produced. Thirteen

landowners actually signed multi-year contracts even though the program was completely new. And the next year, 43 of those 46 landowners continued with the program, and several added additional acreage.

From there, the program grew by leaps and bounds. The 1996-97 season saw 181,800 acres enrolled statewide in WIHA — an increase of 1,765 percent — and the department produced 70,000 atlases. In the 1997-98 season, the program nearly doubled, to 331,000 acres, and in the 1998-99 season, another 163,000 acres were added, bringing the total to 494,000 acres. In the 1999-2000 season, the acreage expanded again to include 635,000, and the agency produced 80,000 WIHA atlases.

The program now boasts 680,000 acres of land — more than 65 times the number when the program began just six short years ago.

Steve Sorensen, Region 4 Fisheries and Wildlife supervisor for the Department of Wildlife and Parks, is the program's original coordinator. He says that the idea was first brought up in 1989 under then-secretary Bob Meinen. The inspiration was South Dakota's program which boasted 200,000 acres of walk-in land, a prodigious number at the time. Sorensen drew up a proposal for a similar pilot program

that included a five-county area in his region (southcentral Kansas). Unfortunately, the money was lacking, and like all good ideas, nothing came of it at first.

In 1995, however, Sorensen re-submitted the proposal, and then-secretary Ted Ensley put it in the budget. The brainchild had taken its first baby step. With three-quarters federal cost-share from excise taxes on hunting equipment under the Wildlife Restoration Act, the department was able to fund WIHA tracts in seven counties that first year.

"I think this is a great program, both for the landowner and the sportsman," says Sorensen. "It's a win-win situation."

"But what about problems?" you might ask. "Surely such a large program would have problems, such as littering and trespass."

"We've had minimal problems for such a diverse program," Sorensen explains. "Sportsmen have been great about it. They've been very respectful to the landowners and property. I'm just tickled pink with it. I've had more positive comments on this than any program I've been involved with in 27 years with the agency."

Sorensen adds that the program is not through growing, either. "Our goal is to have one million acres by

2004, and it doesn't appear to me that we will have any problem reaching that level."

The program's future may include more than growth in acreage. In 2001, a goal has been set to enroll 40,000 acres in Region 2 (northeast Kansas) and Region 5 (southeast Kansas), just for the spring turkey season. The landowner reception for this idea has been "very good so far," according to Sorensen. Not only will this effort help turkey hunters, it is a way to get landowners in eastern Kansas interested in the program. This area of the state has not been nearly as involved as those in the west. A separate atlas will be produced for this season.

As the WIHA program has grown, so has its scope. Not content with a program that just enrolls potentially good hunting ground, the agency is now offering incentives for habitat development on WIHA ground. Landowners receive extra money on their contracts for such practices as leaving tall wheat stubble, discing travel lanes in Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) land, planting food plots, and using controlled burning in some areas.

While the program is highly successful, it hasn't been easy. One particular group of Wildlife and Parks staff has been invaluable, according to Sorensen.

"We couldn't do any of this without the cooperation of our field people. They've just worked extra hard to get this rolling. They've had to contact landowners, check land, patrol land, and put up signs. They've done it all, and their effort is well-appreciated."

One such "field person" is Mike Mitchener, a wildlife biologist who covers a 10-county district in southwestern Kansas. This year, Mitchener signed up an astounding 109,000 acres in his district, tops in the state. When I asked how he was able to cover so much ground, so to speak, he laughed and said, "Out here, they come looking for me." While this may sound like hyperbole, it's the truth. And it didn't



Depending on the hunting opportunities, leases are either Sept. 1-Jan. 31 or Nov. 1-Jan. 31. . And this year, several tracts limit hunting to youth 16 or younger.

take him long to get the ball rolling in the big country out west.

"When this thing started, I hit conservation district meetings in January and February and told them about the program," says Mitchener. "I also left applications in the NRCS [Natural Resources Conservation Service] offices and placed articles in NRCS newsletters. Signs on property that first year were good advertising, too. From there, it pretty much took on a life of its own. This year, I had to write letters to 57 people telling them I had run out of money. One guy even told me he just wanted in the program even if I couldn't pay him!"

Of course, there is much to do once interest in the program has been generated. When Mitchener gets an application, he studies aerial photographs of the property and then drives out to look at it and assess its value as wildlife habitat. He also looks to see if there is easy access from the road and the property is not isolated in the middle of a large parcel of other land.

On a county-by-county basis, Mitchener then tours property on all the applications and assesses it for habitat, access, and safety issues, such as proximity to towns or homes. Once applications have been selected, he contacts the landowner and sends the contract. (Payments may be split among family members.) The contract then goes through the Region 3 Office in Dodge City and on to the Pratt Operations Office for final processing and map production.

Mitchener begins signing contracts in mid-June when he has summer aides to help with posting WIHA signs on enrolled property. Once the signing process is complete, it's a matter of maintenance. "We check everything every year," says Mitchener. "We replace about 25 percent of the signs." Patrolling is another "maintenance" activity, a duty that falls to both biologists and conservation officers.

While the Walk-In program may have increased Mitchener's workload, he's not complaining, and nei-

ther are his constituents.

"Everybody likes the program," he says. "The only complaints I have had are from those landowners who can't get in the program, and the hunters just give it rave reviews. I think it's a great deal for me, too. It gets me in touch with the landowners and provides some money for habitat work like burning and food plots. And the folks at the NRCS offices like it because it helps them with CRP contracts.

"The biggest thing is that even though we may not be having a gangbuster year for birds, we've got plenty of places to hunt, and we've got birds. Hunters are going to find them on WIHA."

**C o o p e r a t i n g** landowners, of course, are what make the WIHA program possible. To get an idea of how landowners feel about the program, I talked with Jim Haas, a landowner in Comanche County, wildlife biologist Charlie Swank's territory. Haas has participated in the program since the first year it was open to him and now has some 6,500 acres enrolled. He found out about the program through Kansas Wildlife and Parks magazine.

"I've known Charlie for a long time, and when I saw the article in the magazine, I gave him a call," says Haas. "We visited a little, and I got in. It's worked out real good although I was skeptical at first about finding trash lying around my place, but we've not seen anything."

In fact, Haas says that hunters often go out of their way to avoid conflict with landowners. "A couple of years ago, we were cutting milo on one of our fields enrolled in the



The majority of WIHA acres are in the western half of the state, and much of it provides excellent pheasant hunting.

program when some hunters pulled up. They sat around their vehicles eating and talking and waited for us to finish before they entered the field. After they left, I checked that spot for trash, and it was clean."

Haas believes that his attitude is the norm, at least in that part of the state. "The folks I know who've enrolled in WIHA have a lot of good to say about it. They seem to feel like I do about it. A lot of the older fellas were skeptical at first, but they are coming around. It's worked out for the hunters and us.

"I'm just really satisfied," Haas continues. "Wildlife and Parks patrols the place, and it keeps the vehicles out. I know all the hunters are appreciative."

All this may sound too good to be true, but when I wondered if Haas couldn't come up with some negative comment about the program, he just said, "Not really. We're out on horseback that time of year, and I see no problems. I talk to

a lot of them, and they're always polite. They are often curious about the work we do."

If the cooperators and the biologists are happy with the Walk-In program, the hunters are delighted. It's been good for residents as well as nonresidents. Jim Damm is an avid hunter from Larned who took advantage of this program as soon as it hit Pawnee County, and his enthusiasm has grown as the program has matured.

"I like it because you don't have to ask permission," Damm explains. "The only problem I've had is opening-weekend competition, but that's to be expected. Pheasant and quail are my thing, and I use a dog, so I don't have any problem finding birds on this land. I just think it's a real good program."

Like Haas and many resident hunters, Damm discovered the program through this magazine. He and his circle of hunting buddies took immediate advantage of the program and still use it frequently. Besides providing more land open to the public, Damm believes the program helps him when he's hunting private ground not enrolled in the program.

"When you're out hunting, you see a lot of nonresidents," Damm explains. "I think the WIHA land takes some pressure off us who like

to hunt on private ground because nonresidents don't have to ask to hunt WIHA. Most folks would rather not bother a landowner, and because WIHA is so well posted and you've got the atlas, it's easy to find."

Damm also has a system for using Walk-In ground that is particularly suited to resident hunters: "I like to get the atlas as soon as I can and go out ahead of the season to check out habitat. I especially like to find CRP fields next to crops. Sometimes, my friends and I just go out to other counties exploring new WIHA plots. By the time the season opens, I'm ready to get in a lot of bird hunting."

Lest one think Jim Damm is among a minority of hunters in his praise of WIHA, consider a survey of 1,600 hunters conducted in 1998. Ninety percent of respondents said that they hunted Walk-In land, with an average of five different areas being hunted seven different days. Everything from upland birds to doves, deer, squirrels, and furbearers were hunted. (It should be noted that access rights for other outdoor activities, such as trapping, camping, and hiking, have not been leased from the landowner under the WIHA program and are not allowed on these tracts.)

Most hunters ranked the hunting

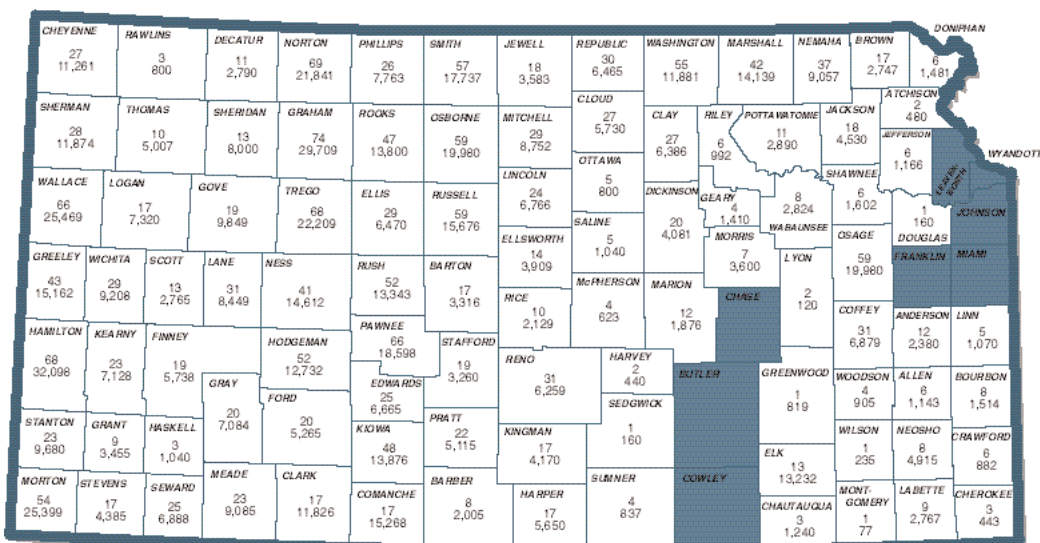
on Walk-In land as equal to private land and equal to or better than most public land. Most rated overcrowding as moderate to light, and 69 percent felt the areas were large enough to accommodate the other hunting parties they encountered. While habitat on Walk-In land was rated slightly better than that on private ground, game populations were rated slightly below. Almost everyone found the areas easy to find and landowner problems nonexistent.

And the bottom line: 68 percent of hunters said they would PAY to have the program expanded, and 95 percent of all hunters responding to the survey believe the program should be continued. Eighty-two percent of the respondents were resident hunters.

This year and for the foreseeable future, finding a place to hunt in Kansas should not be a problem. Just pick up a copy of the Walk In Hunting Area atlas at your local county clerk's office, license vendor, or Wildlife and Parks office, and you're on your way to a great season.

A million acres by 2004? Even if we fall short of that mark, it's safe to say that the Kansas Walk-In program has been a winner for all. ♡

**2000 WIHA Leases**  
 Tracts: 2,134  
 Acres 680,870  
 Costs: \$1.5 million  
 (75 % Federally reimbursed)





# Native Basketry

text and photos by Mike Blair  
*associate editor/staff photographer, Pratt*

***Keeping a primitive art alive, using native plants to weave baskets is an enjoyable outdoor hobby and can provide decorative and useful results.***

The scent of fermenting hedge apples took me through a lifetime of deer hunts as the pungent odor triggered memories of the winter woods. This didn't distract my February search through a stand of buckbrush. I looked for the plant's cream-colored runners that ran like miniature hoses beneath the fallen leaves. The best were scarce but worth the concentration. They would make a beautiful element in a native basket.

Basket-weaving was my new outdoor interest, thanks to a day of instruction by Toronto resident Gary Weisenberger and Kansas' natural abundance of suitable

plants. For years, I'd watched in fascination as late-winter willows turned flaming orange, and wondered how to bring that color home. Now, armed with a new skill that created beautiful and functional art, I was on the lookout for woody plants whose twigs were colorful and supple.

Earlier in the day, I'd been lucky to collect swamp dogwood, a scarce species whose brilliant red twigs are unexcelled for use in native baskets. Now, buckbrush whips would provide additional material for a beautiful, two-tone design. After collecting and grading the runners to size, it would be simple to spend

several evening hours to create a basket that would last for years.

I'd been teased for several weeks that "real men don't weave baskets," but I was happy to learn this new way to utilize and enjoy the outdoors. My mentor had learned basket-weaving and other Native American skills at outdoor rendezvous', and the modern mountain men that frequent these outings embrace the arts of pottery and weaving. Using earth's materials to freely manufacture functional, everyday tools is an ability disappearing from modern life. Weisenberger teaches group classes on outdoor skills and enthusiasti-

cally shared his weaving knowledge at our first visit.

Now, with a month of experience, I watched for new weaving materials wherever I went. Most Kansas woody plants proved too brittle for the tight twists necessary in basket-making. So far, the best were willows, dogwoods, elms, and certain forms of vining plants such as greenbriar, buckbrush, and honeysuckle. Other suitable materials included reeds, sedges, divided cat-tail leaves, and prairie cordgrass.

Initially, the process of weaving with twigs seemed difficult and cumbersome. Gary guided me through it the first time, taking extra care with the start-up and splicing procedures. Hands-on help eventually produced a grapefruit-sized basket better than I expected. Knowing that repetition would be the key to really learning and improving the technique, I made a new basket each day for a week. Things got easier with practice. The baskets became tighter and better proportioned. Confidence grew, and the process became fun.

Baskets began to accumulate, but this wasn't a problem. After the appropriate niches at home were

filled, the leftovers served as unique gifts. It was fun to deliver them, arranged with naturally-dried winter wildflowers, to landowners who let me hunt, fish, and photograph on their properties. The baskets were most appreciated when woven from materials gathered near the recipients' homes.

Learning to make baskets is easiest with a teacher, but the process is not really complicated and is possible to understand from an illustrated guide. References are useful. Weisenberger recommends two books: *Baskets From Nature's Bounty* by Elizabeth Jensen, Interweave Press, 1991; and *Woodsmoke - Collected Writings on Ancient Living Skills* [see the chapter on whole-shoot willow baskets], by Jamison and Jamison, Menasha Ridge Press, 1994. These books can be borrowed on inter-library loan. Other materials may also be available at local libraries.

For the beginner, it's important to keep things simple. An easy starting project is a willow basket. This type is generally made from willow twigs collected during the dormant season. Willow baskets

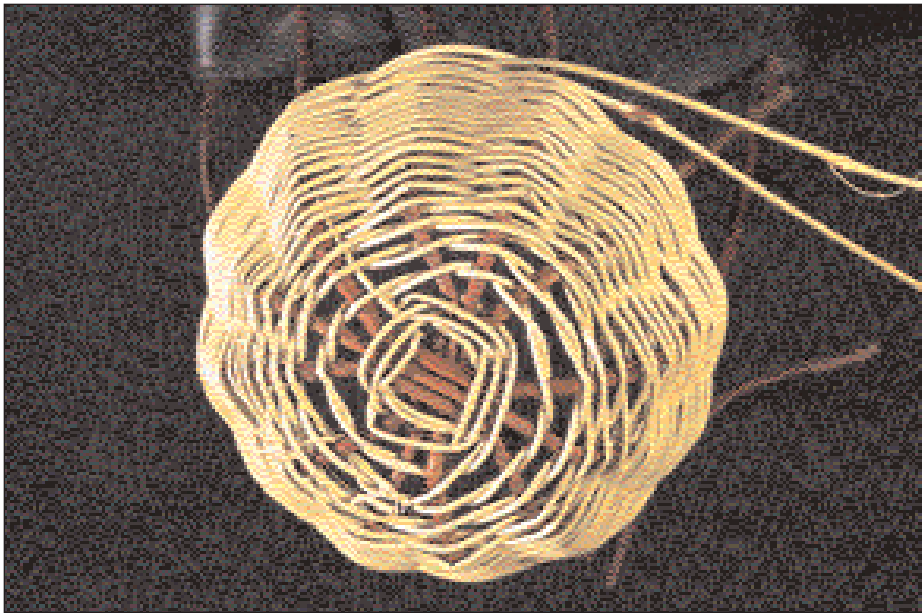
also work well for other woody species having skinny, supple twigs. Since these baskets are small, they don't lend themselves to large-diameter materials that can't bend sharply. Generally, twigs about 1/8 inch diameter are best to produce small or medium-sized baskets. Large baskets (up to trashcan size) can be constructed with the same technique by using a looser weave and larger materials. Twigs and vines measuring up to 1/2 inch diameter provide the rigid support needed for these larger designs. Large baskets may be free-standing or may be hung with cords.

The basic shape of a willow basket is formed by two sets of three stout twigs, set at right angles to one another. These will be referred to as "spokes." Spokes should be about half-again as thick as the twigs used to form the bottom and sides of the basket. The thinner twigs will be referred to as "weavers" and are spliced together in a spiral, running fashion to construct the basket.

To begin, three spokes about 18 inches long are aligned side-by-side. A slender weaver is wrapped at a



Attractive native baskets can be made from (l-r)cattails, dogwood and buckbrush, honeysuckle, and greenbriar, as shown opposite page. Materials are gathered and graded to size before weaving begins, above. Willow baskets are made by weaving slender twigs through a spoke-like framework while bending the spokes to create the basket shape.



A basket viewed from its bottom side illustrates how the weave technique gradually forms the basket shape. The red spokes (swamp dogwood) are stouter than the honeysuckle weavers, helping create a strong and durable basket.

right angle around the middle of these, twisted, and then wrapped around the second group of spokes in like fashion and twisted again. Holding tension on the weaver, the second group of spokes is turned in a clockwise direction until perpendicular to the first, forming a cross (see figure 1).

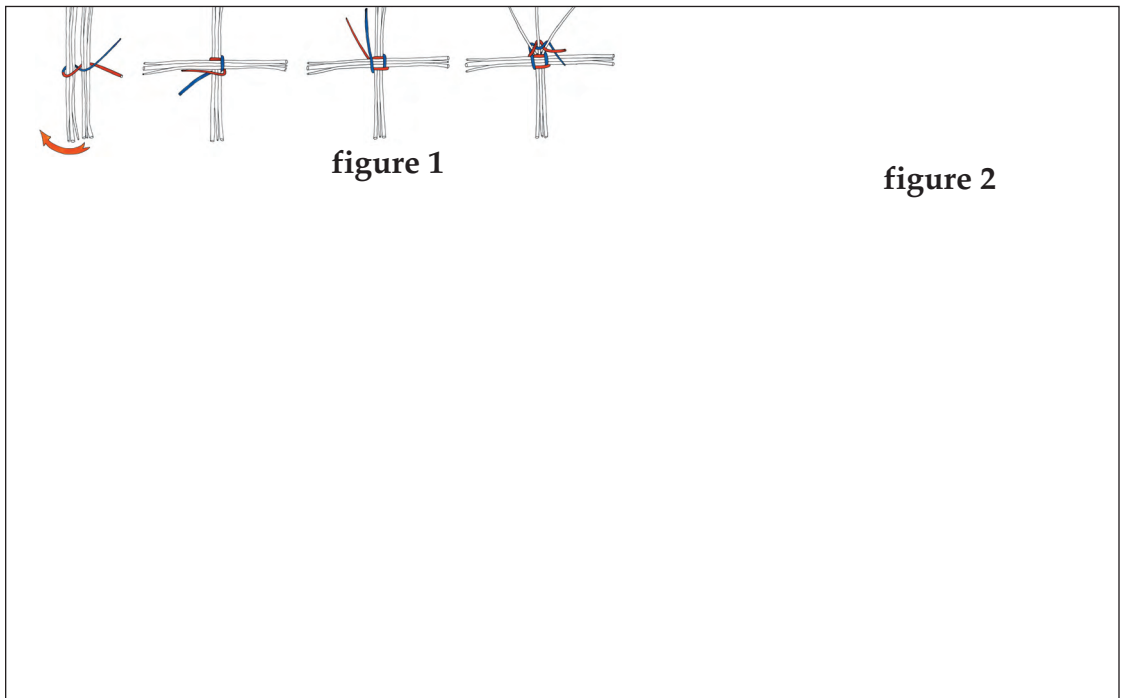
At this point, the weaver outlines two sides of the center section of crossed spokes and has two free

ends to continue around the remaining sides. The loose ends are pulled taut around the next span of three spokes, and the end that arises from beneath the spokes is twisted beneath the overlying weaver end (see figure 2). Both ends are wrapped around the final three spokes. Again they are pulled taut and twisted in the same fashion. Now they encircle the center section of the crossed spokes, and the basket is ready to

begin (see figure 3).

Firmly joined in the middle, each set of three spokes must now be spread apart to allow the weavers to crisscross through them. If "green" and supple, they can be bent apart to resemble the spokes of a wheel. Between each spoke, the weaver ends are intertwined by tucking the end that comes from below the spoke under the end that lies above it to form a clockwise twist. The weavers are tucked and wrapped around each spoke in turn, gradually spiralling outward from the base to form the basket's bottom (see figure 4). The spiral is continued in a tight fashion, forming a flat, rigid bottom with a tight weave. When finished, the bottom should be about three inches across.

Now the spokes are bent sharply away to form the sides. They should bend without breaking. When the woven bottom is held correctly, the spokes extend away from the body so they don't interfere with the continuing handwork. The weaving process remains the same as before. It helps to turn the basket slightly in a counter-clockwise direction as work continues through each spoke. If different materials are used to create a multi-colored effect, they are tied in wherever desired at a splice point.



The illustrations detail the weaving methods described in the text above.



Splices are frequently necessary, depending on the length of the weavers. Long weavers such as honeysuckle vines or the long, cord-like twigs of weeping willow may be easiest for beginners, since they require fewer splices. Splices may seem at first the hardest part about basket-making, but they are easy to master.

A basket splice is always made on the inside of a basket wall, where a weaver passes “under” a spoke. As the weaver shortens so that only several inches of free end is left, a new weaver (**colored green in figure 5a**) is inserted parallel to the weave, so that it continues where the other left off. The new weaver is placed butt-first between the spoke and the short weaver end (**colored red in figure 5a**), and the old end is wrapped to tie it to the spoke (**figure 5b**). Compression against the inside wall helps hold the new weaver in place, and it is continued in the normal weaving pattern.

Once the basket nears its completed size, the weavers are bent sharply and inserted vertically into the basket wall along a convenient spoke. This secures them and leads to the final step of finishing the spokes. At this point, the spokes protrude unevenly from the finished basket. There are several ways to deal with these. They may be

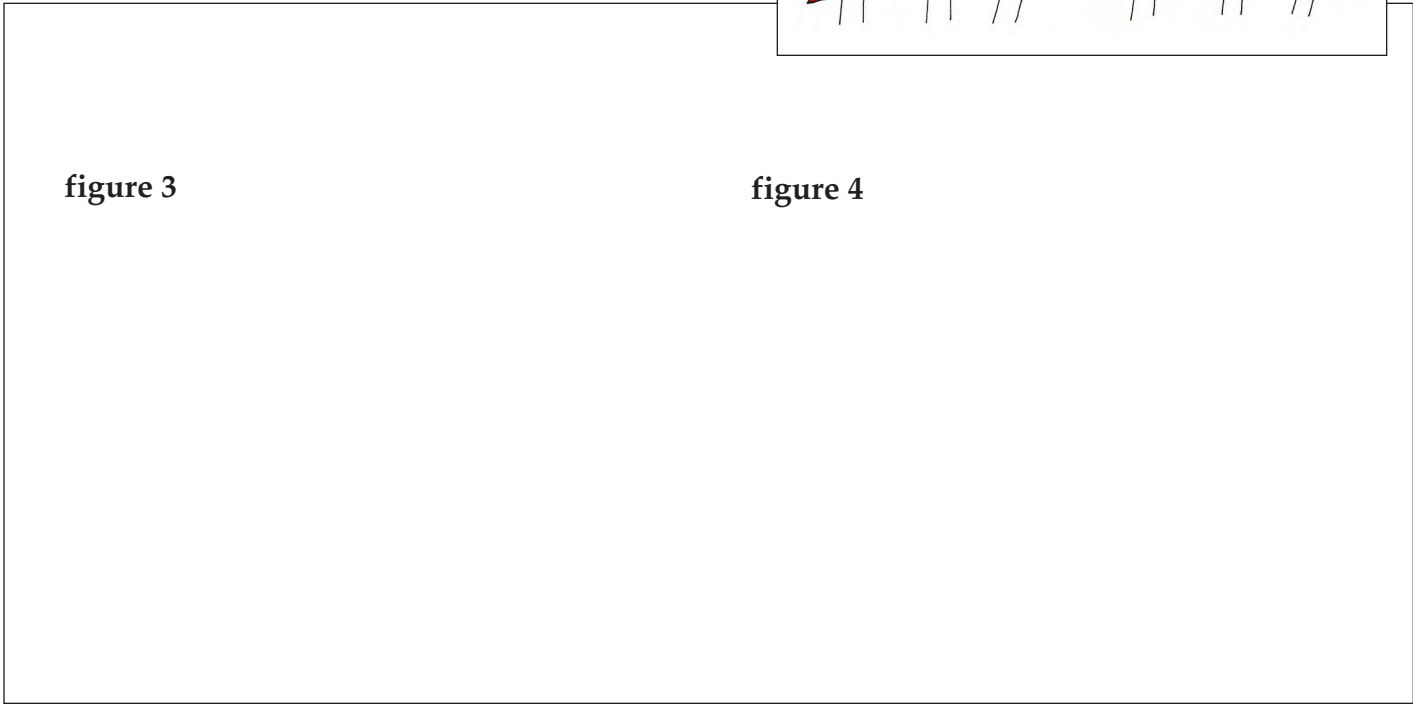
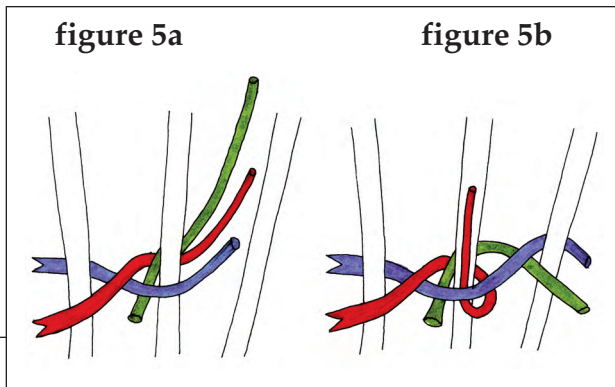
clipped off flush with the top weave, but this is undesirable since it leaves a stubby appearance and may allow the top of the basket to loosen. An easy and attractive solution is to bend each spoke into a loop, skipping an adjacent spoke to insert the doubled end vertically into the basket wall two spokes over. When this pattern is repeated around the basket top, it forms a scalloped appearance that secures and finishes the creation.

An alternate finish is to bend the spokes at right angles, so that they lie directly along the top weave until clipped and reinserted at convenient locations. This method allows several types of handles: double handles that arise from either side of the basket, or a single handle that loops over its center. Basket handles are also inserted along spokes in the basket walls.

The shape of a basket is controlled by how the spokes are bent and how tightly they are woven. Spokes can be bent inward to create a narrow-mouthed basket, or outward to create an open horn.

Dried grasses, sedges, or cattails make good weaving materials and create the tightest baskets. However, they tend to break when dry. Before weaving, they should be soaked in water for 30 minutes until saturated. This eliminates breakage.

Basket-making can be simple or elaborate, providing homemade art or a profitable business. Fortunately, the baskets illustrated are easy to create, and materials are as close as the nearest creek or fence-line. Gathering native plants is part of the fun, leading to many enjoyable winter hours. Basket-making is a hands-on connection with the earth, and results in products that long remind one of the outings that produced them. I look forward to nights by the winter fireplace, fashioning baskets from the Kansas outdoors. ♡



# Conservation Officer

by Matt Stucker  
*conservation officer, Larned*

***Continuing series profiling the men and women who enforce our wildlife-related laws.***



Although Greg Salisbury grew up in the city, he feels at home outdoors. He spent a lot of time in his youth visiting his grandparent's farm. This gave him the necessary desire for an outdoor career. The background came with learning about hunting and fishing. Greg's father took him hunting, fishing and camping almost every weekend while he was growing up. This fatherly attention during his youth helped Greg form his opinions of the importance of teaching the children and young adults of today.

Greg has been a conservation officer for the past 14 years. He has spent his entire career pretty much centered geographically in the state at Salina. His lifestyle has also been pretty well centered. Greg feels that one of the most satisfying aspects of the job is working with young people. He is active in a variety of programs that are in place to teach our youth. The departmental programs of Hunter and Boater education along with programs of other departments such as DARE, Safekids and career days are an important and rewarding aspect of Greg's activities.

Even though this may be a rewarding part of being a Conservation Officer, there is plenty of other job duties to keep Greg interested. His district includes Saline and Ottawa counties. This gives him an area of just under 1500 square miles with an approximate

population of 55,000 people. With this kind of area and population, Greg tends to be busy year round but the spring and early summer months bring the busiest times. With the eight federal reservoirs in Region 1, working boaters and fishermen is a major thrust at that time of year. Greg will usually travel to one of these reservoirs during the boating season on weekends. This gives him limited time with his family during this time. With two young kids, and his attitude toward the youth of the state, the missing of family time could be a downside of the job. Because Greg feels that it is important to teach and mentor our youth, he has found ways to balance the public and private family life so that neither is neglected.

One of the necessary job duties during the summer is checking boaters. Since it is against the law and a major safety violation to have intoxicated boat operators on the water, part of the patrol duties is to recognize any such individual and safely deal with them. Training in this area is very vital to the success of an officer. Greg enjoys setting up training for conservation officers and personnel from other agencies in detecting intoxicated individuals as well as other pertinent training.

Even in the larger community areas, such as Salina, Conservation Officers tend to find themselves helping other agencies. This could come about because the other department is shorthanded or just

because the Conservation Officer happens upon a situation that normally is handled by another agency. Greg has come across illegal drug operations as well as a homicide during his normal course of activity. This could be inherently dangerous for the Conservation Officer. This is why Greg is active in helping other officer's receive the proper training necessary to complete the job safely. Greg takes his job, especially this part, very seriously.

At times other agencies and Conservation Officers work together. Greg remembers such a time when an officer from another agency sent a drug dog through a van at a game check station. The shepherd went in one side and came out the passenger door munching on something. A quick inventory of the contents of the van showed that a bag of Oreo cookies was missing some of its contents.

Greg will tell you that he has the greatest job in the world for him. Ninety percent of the contacts he has with the sportsmen in his district are positive. He enjoys visiting with them and feels that this is one of the best things about the job. He feels that most of the rest of the people are what he calls "opportunists." They didn't wake up in the morning thinking about breaking the law. With this kind of attitude, Greg keeps his job in perspective. Or maybe it could be said that he keeps himself "centered." ♡

Edited by Mark Shoup

### LION PHOTOGRAPHER

Editor:

I currently don't received *Kansas Wildlife and Parks* magazine; however, a friend of mine does and showed me an article in the Sept./Oct. issue ["Cougars In Kansas?," Page 14]. In the article, you show a picture of a cougar. You say the picture was taken by someone around Edna. That's okay, but I took that picture, and it was taken by Liberty.

I sent the picture first to the Fish and Game, and they called it a "critter," but Bob Henderson [former] wildlife specialist for Kansas State University whom you spoke of, believed it was a cougar. He wanted it confirmed by another specialist in this field and sent it to Jay W. Tischendorf in Fort Collins, Colo., and he agreed with Mr. Henderson. They took this photo on a tour of seminars.

I realize the picture is out of focus, but as I looked at him face to face, I was hurrying to get the picture before he took off. I just thought you might like the extra information.

*Rick Lee  
Liberty*

Mr. Lee:

**Thanks for the additional information, and for setting the record straight on where the photograph was taken. It's good to know who the photographer is.**

*-Shoup*

### BIG BITE

Editor:

I recently found a dead frog and bird near our backyard fish pond. The bird's head was in the frog's mouth. This is the type of pond that is sold in stores and has become fairly popular.

Apparently, the frog was in the pond (which is not unusual). Perhaps the bird came to the edge for a drink of water (also, not unusual). Then we have to guess the rest. We think the frog mis-

took the bird's beak for a bug. He then lurched at it and was able to catch it. He found that he had bitten off more than he could chew, but he wouldn't give up. The end result was that he drowned the bird and then was himself choked to death.

Can you come up with another scenario that could have created this mess? Have you ever seen anything like this before?

*Steve and Laura Constance  
Arkansas City*

Steve and Laura,

**That is unusual although I have seen photographs of one fish trying to eat another close to its size.**

*-Shoup*

### WHY NOT MONGOOSE?

Editor:

Why don't you let mongoose be pets for humans? Why are they so illegal? If it is because they kill other animals, then no offense, but that is a dumb reason because it's only nature taking its toll.

*Aaron Perez  
Dodge City*

Dear Mr. Perez:

**Thank you for your inquiry on keeping mongoose as pets. After checking with the Department of Animal Health and a law enforcement supervisor with our agency, I found that the state of Kansas has no laws against keeping mongoose as pets.**

**"Nature taking its toll" - or the natural balance of nature, as it is more commonly referred to - involves the interaction of all the native species in a given region. When non-native species are introduced, we have an unnatural situation that has been very destructive in many situations.**

**An example of this happened when mongoose were released in Hawaii to kill rats. Instead of killing rats, however, the mongoose preferred eating many of the native bird species and destroying their nests, therefore creat-**

**ing a hardship for native wildlife species.**

**For this reason, the department normally is against keeping exotic pets. Many times, these pets cause problems for the owner, the owner loses interest and turns the animal loose, or the animal escapes. As you can see, when these non-native animals are free in the wild, they can create significant problems for native wildlife.**

*-Cindy Konda, office manager,  
Dodge City*

### WHERE ARE DOVES?

Editor:

Historically, the population of pheasant and quail are monitored quite closely. However, one does not hear too much about the dove population.

My brother-in-law and I like to hunt dove on his property in the Flint Hills, just north of Alta Vista. It seems to us that the dove population is becoming more scarce with every year, and we got to wondering if there is any truth to our perception. Seemingly, nothing has changed much in terms of the ability of the land to sustain adequate populations of dove. Indeed, there is plenty of water, ample grass and weeds, and there is always some row crop. Nevertheless, we have to search hard to roust up a few birds.

About five years ago, we experienced fly-bys of dove. Now, we see the odd dove flying past. [In early September], we saw probably no more than 50 total, and that involved a lot of walking. So, we are interested in getting your opinion on the topic.

*Clive A. Halder  
Kansas City*

Mr. Halder:

**Mourning dove populations are monitored annually with the nationwide Call Count Survey conducted in late May. According to this survey, statewide dove populations have been stable during the past 10 years and 35 years. Typically, more doves are recorded on**

this survey in Kansas than in any other state.

However, in response to indications that dove populations may be declining in some parts of the state, a few years ago I took a closer look at these data within three regions of the state: west, central, and east. I found that dove populations had declined on 16 of 19 routes in central and eastern Kansas during 1971-1997.

Increases in dove populations in the western third of the state seem to have compensated for these declines in the eastern and central regions.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Central Flyway Webless Migratory Game Bird Technical Committee, and many states are concerned about the declines in mourning dove populations in some regions. Unfortunately, doves are such generalists in their selection of habitat that it is difficult to pinpoint why they are declining in some areas while increasing or stable in others.

Despite these declines, doves are still one of the most numerous birds in North America and have the ability to rebound very quickly due to their high reproductive potential. Thus, it is unlikely that dove numbers will decline to such a low level that they will become threatened if action is not taken.

*-Helen Hands, wildlife biologist,  
Cheyenne Bottoms*

## PREHISTORIC SYMBOL

Editor:

We are asking for the state Board of Education's endorsement of the Xiphactinus fish (X fish) as the official Kansas state fossil. The X-fish is a perfect choice because it exemplifies the fact that we need to protect our clean air and water or we will become "X-tinct" ourselves.

We believe now is the time in Kansas history to establish an official Kansas State Fossil. It would provide a positive image of our state and help promote our great hunting, fishing, tourism, and economic development.

It is interesting to note that the world-famous Xiphactinus fish fossil, the "fish within-a-fish" specimen at the Sternberg

Museum in Hays, draws attention to the fact that giant sea creatures lived in a vast inland seas that once covered Kansas.

The current fifth-grade students at Jefferson Elementary in Great Bend will submit the official Kansas state fossil petition after the November elections. About the same time that the state Board of Education meets in January, we hope to have introduced the X fish for legislative approval as the official Kansas state fossil.

The state Board of Education and the Kansas Legislature have a rare opportunity to work together for the common good of Kansas. With the school children's petition, the state board's endorsement, and the Kansas Legislature's approval, Kansas history can be made.

*-Alan Detrich, Great Bend*

Dear Mr. Detrich:

As you probably know, Lincoln Elementary School in Hays attempted this last spring with the pteranodon. Their argument was that "the first North American find of pteranodon was in Kansas near the Smoky Hill River. The largest of the pteranodon species

recovered from Kansas is the Pteranodon Sternbergi, on exhibit at the Sternberg Museum.

"The pteranodon makes an excellent choice for the Kansas State fossil because, like the American Bald Eagle, the powerful wings of the pteranodon represent strength and endurance. A flying reptile also would represent Kansas' rich aviation history.

"The second graders feel that having a state fossil would not only promote tourism to Kansas but would also provide teachers with a creative and interesting tool to motivate students."

Although they made a good case, this effort failed, but perhaps yours will not.

*-Shoup*

## KUDOS

Editor:

Just got my issue of the magazine and once again was impressed with the quality of writing and photography. I wanted to drop this note in with my application to let you know how much I appreciate your efforts.

*Dan Dennis  
Manhattan*



## AVOID THAT MISTAKE

Fish and game laws are important to follow, as are all laws, when enjoying the outdoors. It is expected that we be familiar with them.

Okay, so maybe I should wear a tattoo on my forehead that says “stupid.”

I enjoy boating, fishing, and hunting and just about anything outdoors, and like most people, I try to do things they way I am supposed to – abiding by the laws. Aside from the obvious ones, there are some that may be overlooked. These might be common knowledge for some, but I’d bet that a few of them aren’t, even though they should be.

Maybe I’d better disclose my acts of brainlessness first; then we can investigate some of the most commonly-violated laws in the outdoors.

I received a ticket years ago while doing the one thing I enjoy most – fishing. In my wallet were wads of combination hunting and fishing licenses for every consecutive year that I needed, with one exception. That January, I didn’t have the money to buy the combination license, so I skimmed and purchased only the license I needed at the time – hunting.

The fact had slipped my mind but quickly returned that spring when a conservation officer checked my license while I was fishing. I confessed immediately and explained what I had done even before the first words were uttered from his mouth.

I was busted and ticked off at myself for forgetting.

One weekend last summer, I cleaned my catch of 12 crappie on the boat. Busted again; it didn’t dawn on me that this was wrong. I’d cleaned hundreds of crappie on a boat in my youth, when there was no law against it.

In conversations with a conservation officer friend and other friends in the Department of Wildlife and Parks, I’ve been reminded of a few laws, in the following categories.

### BOATING

- When boating, the required throw-cushion and all wearable life jackets must be out and accessible. They cannot be stowed. The necessary fire extinguisher

must be out and visible, too.

- When motoring through a no-wake zone, your boat cannot make a wave of any size
- Registration numbers must be contrasting to the boat hull and spaced properly.
- All boats have a maximum occupancy allowed. Make sure you read your boat’s capacity plate for these figures.
- You cannot be under the influence of alcohol or drugs while operating a boat.

### FISHING

- When measuring fish, the mouth must first be completely closed.
- You must have your license with you at all times.
- You cannot fish with more than two poles at a time.
- Fishing poles with lines in the water must be attended immediately at all times, unless tagged with the fisherman’s name and address. Trotlines, limblines, and banklines also must be tagged.
- Length and creel limits can differ from place to place. Public waters in Kansas may have posted length and creel limits. Otherwise, statewide length limits on all sportfish apply.

### HUNTING

- Having over your possession limit of birds occurs as soon as you pick up the bird that breaks the limit. It is also illegal to use a bird you shoot toward a hunting companion’s limit.
- When hunting, set your watch accurately. Firing even minutes before the legal shooting time is not negotiable when the conservation officer knows the correct time.
- County roads and their rights-of-way adjoining private land are not open to public hunting unless you have the permission of the landowners on both sides of the road.
- When hunting migratory birds, including doves, your shotgun must be plugged and cannot hold more than three shells, including those in magazine and chamber.
- It is illegal for anyone to shoot a deer without a deer permit.
- All pheasants and migratory birds,

except doves, must be identifiable by sex and species during transport.

- Anyone born on or after July 1, 1957, must have passed a certified hunter education course before they can hunt in Kansas.
- A furharvester license is required to hunt or trap furbearers in Kansas.

### OTHER

- It is illegal to refuse a conservation officer asking to check your license or inspect any game or fish in your possession.
- The annual hunting and fishing brochures, issued by Wildlife and Parks, summarize all applicable laws.

–Steve Hausler,  
from the Hays Daily News

## DRUG BUST

Last July, a Garden City man entered a plea of guilty to an attempt to manufacture methamphetamine. This had occurred the previous November on the Finney Game Refuge, near Garden City, one of two state areas where buffalo are kept.

I had been on patrol in the area when I discovered the man starting to cook the drug. I held the man until officers of the Finney County Sheriff’s Office arrived and secured the vehicle and lab.

The man received a 48-month prison sentence. He was also ordered to pay court costs of \$146 and lab fee costs of \$150.

I credit KBI training of conservation officers in helping me detect the meth lab.

– Dennis Sharp, conservation officer, Holcomb

**CONGRESS MAY  
PROTECT HUNTING**

Landmark Federal legislation was introduced in late June to protect hunting on the nation's federal public lands. The Hunting Heritage Protection Act - sponsored by Reps. Randy "Duke" Cunningham (R-CA), Saxby Chambliss (R-GA), Collin Peterson (D-MN), Chip Pickering (R-MS), Mark Green

(R-WI), and Don Young (R-AK) - would establish federal recognition of the intrinsic value of hunting as recreation and as a wildlife management tool.

A coalition of nearly 70 state and national conservation organizations worked for introduction of this legislation.

Specifically, the Act establishes in law Congress' recognition of the significant role that hunters play in conservation. The law will direct federal

agencies to support, promote, and enhance recreational hunting opportunities.

A key element of the Hunting Heritage Protection Act is a stipulation for "No Net Loss of Hunting" opportunities. Under this provision, the government is directed to maintain, at the minimum, current levels of federal hunting lands to be open for sportsmen's use.

If Congress or future

administrations attempt to establish federal lands that would close out hunters, the same amount of land would be re-designated or newly established to provide equal hunting opportunities.

A hearing on the bill was scheduled before the House Resources Committee on July 20, 2000. [Results unavailable at this writing.]

-Wildlife Legislative  
Fund of America

**LGORP Aids Town**

"The whole idea was to build a community while we were building a playground," said Pat Tubbs, one of the concerned mothers who started the ball rolling for the new playground equipment in Colby's Fike Park. This philosophy helped various groups in the city raise \$63,000 toward the equipment.

Fike Park is central to community life in Colby. Tennis, volleyball, and basketball courts; horseshoe pits; and two gazebos are available in the shady park, which is adjacent to the fire station, city hall, senior citizens center, city auditorium, scout hut, and swimming pool. Many public events occur in the park, such as the Picnic In the Park - a brown-bag local with entertainment at lunch every Thursday during the summer - and the Colby High School alumni picnic. Easter egg hunts and Santa City are other special holidays in Fike Park.

However, 50-year-old playground equipment has concerned a group of mothers. As they began to voice these concerns, a movement to replace the playground equipment was born. The local chapter of Beta Sigma Phi sorority approached the city council for permission to raise funds for the project. The council not only granted permission, it pledged \$18,000 of city funds toward the goal.

On behalf of the city, the sorority applied for funding through the Department of Wildlife and Parks' Local Government Outdoor Recreation Grant Program (LGORP). This program, first authorized by the Kansas Legislature in 1998, awards 50/50 matching grants to communities and counties for outdoor recreation projects.

In the first year of the program, more than 300 communities competed for a share of \$500,000 in grant money. Fewer than 100 communities were successful. Colby, however, was one of the chosen communities, receiving \$42,000. The community raised an additional \$63,000 to purchase playground equipment from Miracle Recreation Equipment Company. Miracle, which uses the ideas of local kids in designing each project, said that



this was the largest playground they had ever built. Volunteers did all of the equipment installation, a value of approximately \$75,000.

The value of the volunteer work, however, cannot be measured in dollars. In building a playground, Colby has also built a community of friendships begun or strengthened. New leaders have emerged, and a spirit of involvement has spread throughout the community. Businesses that donated to the project found that their contributions paid for more positive public relations than expected. Kids who helped design and build the playground have a sense of ownership in it. Local fire fighters watch over the playground while they are on shift and have been known to tell kids they will call their parents if they don't behave.

The playground built by the City of Colby with the Local Government Outdoor Recreation Grant helps realize the goals of the legislature in sponsoring this grant.

Although the state budget was tighter in 1999, legislators still approved \$500,000 for LGORP. Forty-six communities received grants last year. However, funding for the grant is uncertain for fiscal year 2001. But the need is there. The money for this program, sent to and spent directly in Kansas cities, serves as an investment in the future of the quality of Kansas life.

-Kathy Pritchett, Parks  
Division secretary, Pratt

## AUDUBON BREAKS RANKS

In a move seemingly calculated to antagonize the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and alienate itself from much of the rest of the conservation community, the National Audubon Society (NAS) has proposed separation of the National Wildlife Refuge System from the Service.

In a surprise move in late February, NAS began lobbying Congress to derail Service initiatives to reorganize its D.C. headquarters, including leadership of the refuge system. This divisive move could undermine orderly implementation of the 1997 Refuge Improvement Act and interfere with ongoing, coordinated efforts to improve refuge funding. And it certainly is likely to confuse volunteers who work on behalf of refuges through a formal part-

nership between the Service and Audubon.

Audubon seems to be looking for a forum to advance its proposal for a separate agency, but frontline conservationists see very little to be gained. Refuges have received extensive, positive attention in recent years. The 1997 Refuge Improvement Act clarified the primary mission of refuges as caring for wildlife. The Act also identified wildlife-dependent recreation as a clear purpose.

Unprecedented, bipartisan support for improving refuges led to the Act passing Congress with only one dissenting vote. Policies to implement the Act currently are being reviewed by stakeholders; public review processes are handling individual refuge plans; and long-standing issues of compatible uses for non-wildlife related purposes are being addressed and solved.

## Morality Play

According to the Aug. 11 edition of the Wichita Eagle, the band, The Dixie Chicks, will appear, if not play, in the buff this fall:

"The dress-free trio will appear in an anti-fur ad for People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals," according to the article. "It'll be headlined, 'We'd Rather Play Naked Than Wear Fur,' with private parts obscured by fiddles and banjos."

Interesting how some folks attempt to claim the moral high ground these days.

*--Shoup*

Much of the success with Congress on behalf of refuges is the product of extensive work by a wide array of stakeholders. The Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement (CARE) is comprised of 17 organizations that cross the spectrum of wildlife

and fisheries interests. The work of CARE and its members elevated the profile of refuges in the Interior and Administration departments and Congress. Congressional leaders have provided more than \$140 million of new money for refuge maintenance and operation. The Service has been praised by Congress for good accountability for these expenditures.

For too long, refuges had been short-shrifted in terms of budgets, equipment, and personnel. However, the 1997 Act, the bipartisan political support, the unprecedented collaboration by diverse conservation interests, the new dollars, Director Jamie Clark's "Fulfilling The Promise" refuge vision for the future - endorsed by refuge staff and stakeholders - all suggest that the National Audubon Society end run is ill-conceived.

For more information on Audubon's proposal and the refuge issue, contact Dan Ashe, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at 202-208-5333, or Bob Byrne, Wildlife Management Institute at 202-371-1808.

*--Wildlife Management  
Institute*

## JUST A CLICK AWAY

Since Sept. 1, 1999, Kansas hunting and fishing licenses have been available for purchase directly from the Department of Wildlife and Parks' internet web site ([www.kdwp.state.ks.us](http://www.kdwp.state.ks.us)). Through software developed by the Information Network of Kansas, anyone with an internet connection, a credit card, and a printer can purchase and print a valid license from anywhere in the world, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

By clicking on the "Online License Sales" icon from the department's web site, users are prompted to enter their name, address, and other information, then the type of licenses and permits they wish to purchase. After entering these choices, the user types in his or her credit card number, then prints the valid license and/or permit directly from the home printer. Each license is encoded with a unique number that verifies its authenticity.

The following issuances can be purchased directly from the department's web site: hunting license (resident and nonresident), fishing license (resident and nonresident), hunt/fish combination license (resident), 24-hour fishing license (resident and nonresident), 5-day fishing (nonresident), 48-hour waterfowl (nonresident), resident furharvester, sandhill crane permit, state waterfowl stamp, trout stamp, Harvest Information Program (HIP) stamp, boat registration renewals, and Kansas Wildlife & Parks magazine (one to three year subscription).

While the online license system is still relatively new, it has been extremely popular with hunters and anglers. More than 3,000 hunting and fishing licenses have been purchased directly from the KDWP web site so far this year, with that number expected to more than double prior to this year's upland bird seasons.

There are additional charges associated with using this system, depending on the license or permit purchased. These additional fees do not constitute a license or permit fee increase. The additional charges are necessary to cover the cost of the online credit card validation. For more information, contact KDWP at (785) 296-2281.

*--Chad Luce, public  
information officer, Topeka*

## Upland Bird Outlook

General information: Hot and dry conditions have been the driving forces affecting upland game bird production in Kansas this year. In much of the western and northern portions of the state, prolonged drought and related effects have severely curtailed game bird production leaving hunting prospects sharply diminished from those of only a year ago. However, some areas that received either significant snows last winter or timely rains this summer have experienced relatively good production. A point of concern is the fact that cover conditions continue to deteriorate in much of the state as of mid-September. Cover conditions are well below average in the northern two tiers of counties and the western three tiers of counties in the northcentral, northwest, and southwest part of the state. Southcentral and southeast Kansas have fair to relatively good cover conditions, depending on locality. Should dry conditions persist into the hunting seasons, hunters must use extreme caution regarding

smoking or driving vehicles into cover where catalytic converters or hot exhaust can easily start fires.

**Pheasant:** Pheasant breeding populations were generally good this spring. However, dry conditions that began a year ago in much of westcentral, northwest, and northcentral Kansas stunted wheat growth this spring, limiting pheasant nesting opportunity in this critical habitat. That wheat harvest occurred up to two weeks earlier than normal further limited nesting success.

**Quail:** Kansas bobwhite populations seem to have fared better than pheasants this summer. While bobwhite populations are not expected to be outstanding this year, some areas in the state appear to have registered modest gains over 1999 and hunting prospects are relatively good.

**Prairie chicken:** Kansas' greater prairie chicken and lesser prairie chicken populations appeared to have increased slightly this spring in comparison to 1999. It is difficult to monitor these species during summer. Dry pasture conditions throughout the state may affect prairie chicken hunting opportunities. Both species' population levels, despite modest gains, are likely to be lower than the long-term average this fall.

## Regional Summaries

**Northwest:** Pheasant populations will be sharply lower in most of the northwest this year and, in much of the region, hunting prospects look poor. Conditions are better in the eastern tiers of counties of the region, but pheasant numbers are expected to be relatively good only in the southeasternmost counties, particularly in southern Trego County where heavy July rains fostered good cover growth. Quail populations are generally thinly distributed in the northwest, but numbers remain higher than the long-term average. Quail numbers appear to remain comparatively high, for this region, in Rooks, Phillips, Graham, and Norton counties. Cover conditions are very poor in the western three tiers of counties where CRP growth was minimal.

**Northcentral:** Drought has sharply diminished prospects for pheasant hunting compared to 1999 in the northern two tiers of counties of this region, except possibly Clay County. In sharp contrast, counties along I-70 received significant, timely rains that resulted in relatively good pheasant production. Hunting prospects in some of these southern counties appear good. Although somewhat lower than in 1999, quail populations appear to have maintained reasonably good levels, for this

region, especially in the southern counties. Cover conditions range from well below average in the northern half of the region to good in southern counties.

**Northeast:** Pheasant numbers appear to remain below average for this region where, even in good years, numbers do not generally compare to the better pheasant areas in the state. Quail populations appear to be modestly improved over 1999 in northern sections of the region, but extremely dry conditions in southern counties suggest poor production. Overall, quail remain below the long term average for this region. Cover conditions are generally fair in the region, diminishing further south, but pasture habitat is particularly short.

**Southwest:** Pheasant populations in this region have suffered due to the drought, but not as seriously as observed in much of northwest Kansas. Pheasant numbers are poorest in the northwestern counties, moderate in the southwestern counties, and appear to have maintained good levels in the northeastern five or six counties of the region. The best quail populations occur in the southern and eastern tiers of counties, especially in the Red Hills. Quail numbers may have increased modestly in the eastern tier of counties, offering

good potential, and are similar to 1999 further southwest. Except where spotty rains have occurred, cover conditions range from poor to fair in the western four tiers of counties and improve to good in the east.

**Southcentral:** Although this region is not among Kansas' better pheasant regions, good areas do occur, especially in the western and northern tiers of counties. Pheasant numbers generally appear to be improved over 1999. Quail populations also appear to be improved in the region and should provide good hunting opportunities. The highest quail numbers in the state this year appear to be in the southern Flint Hills. Spring rains provided relatively good cover quality over the region, but conditions were very dry by August.

**Southeast:** Quail populations generally appear to have improved in the southeast, with modest increases in most counties and better increases in the southern Flint Hills. The northernmost counties in this region have been exceptionally dry and quail reproduction in those counties does not appear to have been good. Cover conditions range from fair in northern counties to relatively good in southern counties, but pastures are short throughout the region.

*-Randy Rodgers,  
research biologist, Hays*



# Once a Man, Twice a Boy



by Mark Shoup

**M**y first shotgun was a 28-gauge, a Stevens single-shot break-action. I was eight years old. Dad and I rode in his '51 Studebaker pickup to a lonely country road, where he set a large dirt clod 15 or 20 yards away. I was quite familiar with the .22, so after he had drilled me on the basics of shotgunning, I confidently took aim at my first shotgun "quarry." The blast was such a surprise that the muzzle kicked straight up, but I powdered that clod.

It took my breath away.

Later that year, I shot my first duck with that little shotgun. Dad and I were hunting from a makeshift blind on the Arkansas River, and when the duck went down, I shoved my gun to him and charged through the weeds into the water like a bull-chested Lab.

The 28 served me well for the next four years, until I moved up to a 20-gauge, then to a 12-gauge Winchester Model 12 at age 16. I would use this shotgun exclusively for more than 30 years.

It was with these memories that earlier this year, I urged my father to buy a 28-gauge for himself.

At 80 now, Dad's the geriatric bionic man, having had three heart attacks, by-pass surgery, three knee replacements, cancer, and a detached retina. These health problems have prevented him from hunting and, more recently,

from pursuing his favorite pastime — shooting trap. The 12-gauges he has used all his life have just become too heavy to handle.

Still, I have felt that a 28-gauge, especially an autoloader, would be ideal for him. Living in the country, I knew we'd have good places to hunt doves in September.

After months of grouching about just being "too damn old," Dad surprised me a couple of weeks before dove season when he showed up at the house with a fancy new Remington 1100 Sporting 28.

"I got it from our friend over in Kinsley," he said.

"What'd it run?" I asked.

"Let's just say he was mighty proud of it," he hedged.

"Well, let's try it out."

So I took him out in the golf cart to shoot some clay pigeons. He didn't fare too well on the clays, but when a real pigeon flew by at 35 yards, he dropped it like a rock. (Pigeon has long been a delicacy to the Shoup palate.) Dad would later shoot his new toy at the local trap range in Larned, so when the season rolled round, he was ready for his first hunt in four years.

Two weeks later, Dad arrived at our house, and he and my nine-year-old son, Will, piled into the pickup. Will had taken hunter education in August, and although he was not quite ready for shotgun hunting, he assured me he'd

make a great retriever.

In the field, I positioned Dad on a fence line not far from a tailwater pit while I walked a couple hundred yards to the south. Will stayed with Dad.

Just a few days earlier, a friend and I had filled limits on this sunflower field, and it was my fervent wish that Dad, who had introduced me to hunting so many years ago, would have birds all around him. Unfortunately, doves are fickle. A mild cool spell in the intervening days had pushed most birds out. Still, there were a few. *If only Dad can take just one, it will be a success*, I thought.

I was as anxious for him to take a bird as he must have been for me that day on the Ark River.

In the distance, I watched Dad on his stool and Will on the ground, drawing circles in the dirt as he talked to Dad, no doubt regaling in his latest Pokemon adventure or the books he had been reading, Dad nodding patiently. Whatever the content of this exchange, the rapport was obvious. When he bored of his earth art, Will hovered carefully behind Dad. Occasionally, Dad would shoot and miss, but Will was on alert. Like a good bird dog, he would look up at Dad as if to say, "Well, how'd you miss that one?"

After two or three misses, my wish was granted: Dad dropped a bird.

"Alright!" I cheered.

Will was scrambling out for the bird almost before it hit the ground. With the help of Dad's hand signals, Will soon walked proudly back to his grandfather, bird in hand. It was a snapshot outside time, and although I was some distance away, I was with them, connected by blood, memory,

hope. It was a serenely perfect vantage point, despite the distance.

Our bag was lean that day; I took three or four birds for the one Dad had (although his percentage was considerably better than mine). When the sun hit the horizon, I walked back to Dad's position. Will was full of curiosity about the 28-gauge. "Can I shoot it, Dad?" he asked.

"Well, why not?" I answered. "It's about time you fired a shotgun."

While Dad looked on, I retrieved an empty plastic bottle from the back of the truck and set it out about 15 yards. Dad handed me the gun, and I drilled Will on the basics of shotgunning: "Keep your head up, cheek to the stock, both eyes open. Square up to the target. And be sure to pull the butt firmly into your shoulder. This isn't a .22." After explaining the physics of this last coaching tip, I took my hands off his arms and let him go for it.

I don't know whether Will was more surprised by the shotgun's punch or the fact that his target performed a perfect back flip with a half twist, landing upright in the dirt. And I don't know who was more pleased — Will, me, or Dad.

"Ho, ho!" Dad exclaimed, beaming. "We've got a shooter on our hands!"

This, I suddenly realized, meant much more to him than the bird he had taken. He had come full circle — teacher, student, proud observer. And I stood comfortably between them, blessed, listening to the poignant song of the future echoing out of the past.

As we drove out of the field, Will held the riddled plastic bottle in his small hands, smiling all the way home.

## FISHIN' BIG, FISHIN' PARTNER

Carolina rigged worms are great for fishing points, gravel bottoms and to get your worm up where the bass can see it!

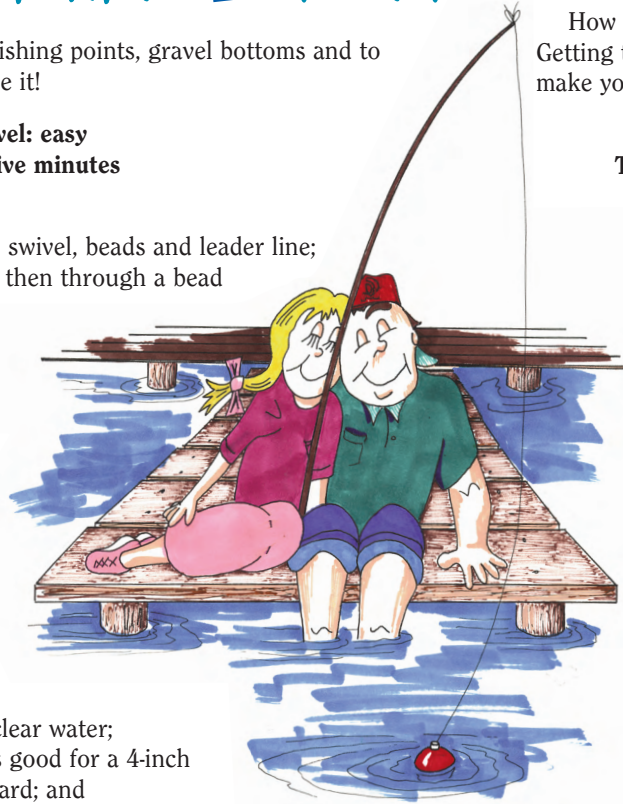
**Difficulty Level:** easy  
**Time Required:** five minutes

### Here's How:

1. get rod and reel, worm, hook, lead, swivel, beads and leader line;
2. thread line from reel through lead, then through a bead
3. tie line to swivel using palomar, Trilene, or improved clinch knot;
4. cut a 30-inch piece of leader line and tie to swivel;
5. tie hook to other end of leader line;
6. insert hook into worm Texas style or exposed; and
7. for exposed, thread hook into head of worm and down worm until shaft is buried, then turn hook and leave point sticking out.

### Tips:

1. use a lighter and longer leader in clear water;
2. match hook size to worm - a 1/0 is good for a 4-inch worm, a 5/0 may be needed for a big lizard; and
3. vary lead size to depth of water; in shallow water, use 1/2 ounce; use up to 1 ounce for deep water.



**How to Pick A Fishing Partner**  
Getting the right fishing partner can make your fishing trips more enjoyable.

**Difficulty Level:** hard  
**Time Required:** a lifetime

### Here's How:

1. get a blind date in college and like her;
2. ask her to go water skiing the next weekend;
3. after some skiing, tell her you are going to see if the fish are biting;
4. give her a fishing pole;
5. if she seems interested and tries to fish, she is a keeper; and
6. if she does not seem interested or just doesn't like fishing, release her.

- About.com,  
"Freshwater Fishing"

## Kansas CRAPPIE

Crappie are one of the state's most popular sportfish. They are abundant in many reservoirs, grow big enough for a good fight, offer generous creel limits, and have delicious white meat.

There two kinds of crappie in Kansas waters. Most common is the white crappie, identified by a bar pattern on its side with a spiny dorsal fin having six or fewer spines. Whites are prolific, tend to concentrate in large schools, and are well-suited for life in turbid water. The black crappie is distinguished by a uniform speckling on its sides and a spiny dorsal fin bearing seven to eight spines. Black crappie are more suited to small, clear impoundments, and they are often stocked in farm ponds and small lakes.

The state record white crappie was caught by Frank Miller of Eureka in 1964. This monster slab was taken from a Greenwood County farm pond and

weighed 4 pounds, 1/4 ounce. The state record black crappie is Kansas' oldest fish record, taken by Hazel Fey of Toronto in 1957. The big black crappie weighed 4 pounds, 10 ounces and was caught from Woodson State Fishing Lake.

Kansas reservoirs, especially those in the northeast, are known for fantastic crappie fishing. Among the best are Perry Reservoir, near Topeka; Council Grove Reservoir, near Council Grove; Pomona Reservoir, near Ottawa; and Clinton Reservoir, near Lawrence. Other good crappie reservoirs include Cheney, near Wichita; Kanopolis, just west of Salina; Kirwin, near Phillipsburg; and Cedar Bluff, just south of Hays.

Crappie populations rise and fall in response to conditions and fishing pressure, so the department produces the "Fishing Forecast" each year. This brochure lists top fishing spots across the state, broken down by species, density and size of fish, and lunker potential.

With a quick glance, an angler can easily determine which lakes have the kind of fishing he or she desires.

Although crappie anglers anticipate the spawning months of April and May, when crappie concentrate along shorelines, coves, and feeder creeks, winter is also a great time to catch crappie. In fact, winter crappie fishing is growing in popularity. When water temperatures dip below 50 in November or December, large schools of crappie can be located over main-lake river channels, on points, in deep brushpiles, or under causeway bridges. At this time, anglers jig vertically to crappie holding in 17 to 25 feet of water, and success can be phenomenal.

The daily creel limit for crappie is 50, and some lakes have a 10-inch minimum length limit. The Kansas Fishing Regulations Summary, available wherever licenses are sold, provides further information.

-Shoup

## HOW MANY SPECIES

Taxonomists estimate the number of Earth's species from 3 million to 100 million. With 1.7 million being named so far and about 13,000 added to the list annually, we are very unsure of the grand total.

Most of the new species that turn up each year are the small microscopic organisms that live in the most inaccessible habitats on earth, such as beneath the ground, deep in the sea, in tropical forests, and inside other animals. It is thought that a very large portion of the world's mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and flowering plants are named. However, within the past four years, new species of whales, monkeys, and deer have been discovered.

In North America, it is thought that the majority of mammals (482), birds (900 plus), and flowering plants (19,000 plus) have been found and named.

With the concern of species extinctions in mind, several scientists over the past decade have tried to advocate a complete biological survey. Now, a new U.S. program called Discover Life in America, comprised of some 60 government and other groups, is making a significant start by launching an "all taxa biodiversity inventory" of the species in Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Projects like these educate people about the environment and may help scientists find the next cure for a fatal disease.

*-Farmers and Wildlife*

## BURYING BEETLE

Once, the burying beetle occurred throughout most of the U.S. Its distribution has declined dramatically, and it may now be extinct in many areas.

Including Kansas, the American burying beetle currently is known to live in only six states: Rhode Island, South Dakota, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Arkansas. Because of its rarity, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service protects it as an endangered species.

The common name "burying beetle," which is applied to this species and other members of the genus *Nicrophorus*, is readily explained by exploring their fascinating life cycle. When a pair of beetles locate a recently dead small animal, they

excavate the soil beneath it until they are buried in an underground chamber. They then remove the skin, chew the carcass, and inject it with bodily secretions that prevent its decay. The female lays eggs, and both parents feed and protect the developing young in the underground chamber.

Burying beetles have a symbiotic association with a species of phoretic mite found on their bodies. When the beetles arrive at a carcass, the mites disperse, kill and consume fly eggs and larvae, and then lay eggs. Their actions prevent the carcass from becoming infested with maggots that would make it unsuitable for the beetles. The beetles, in turn, provide transportation for the mites.

A combination of factors may have contributed to the decline of the American burying beetle, including habitat fragmentation, increased competition from other scavengers, or the scarcity of carcasses needed for reproduction.

Efforts to save the beetle from extinction include captive breeding programs and locating and studying wild populations. The University of Oklahoma and the Roger Williams Park Zoo in Rhode Island maintain captive colonies of the beetle with the goal of reintroduction into parts of its former range. In Kansas, only 20 beetles have been found at eight sites in Montgomery, Elk, Chautauqua, and Wilson counties since 1996.

*-Hank Guarisco, Biota*

## Galloping Gadwall

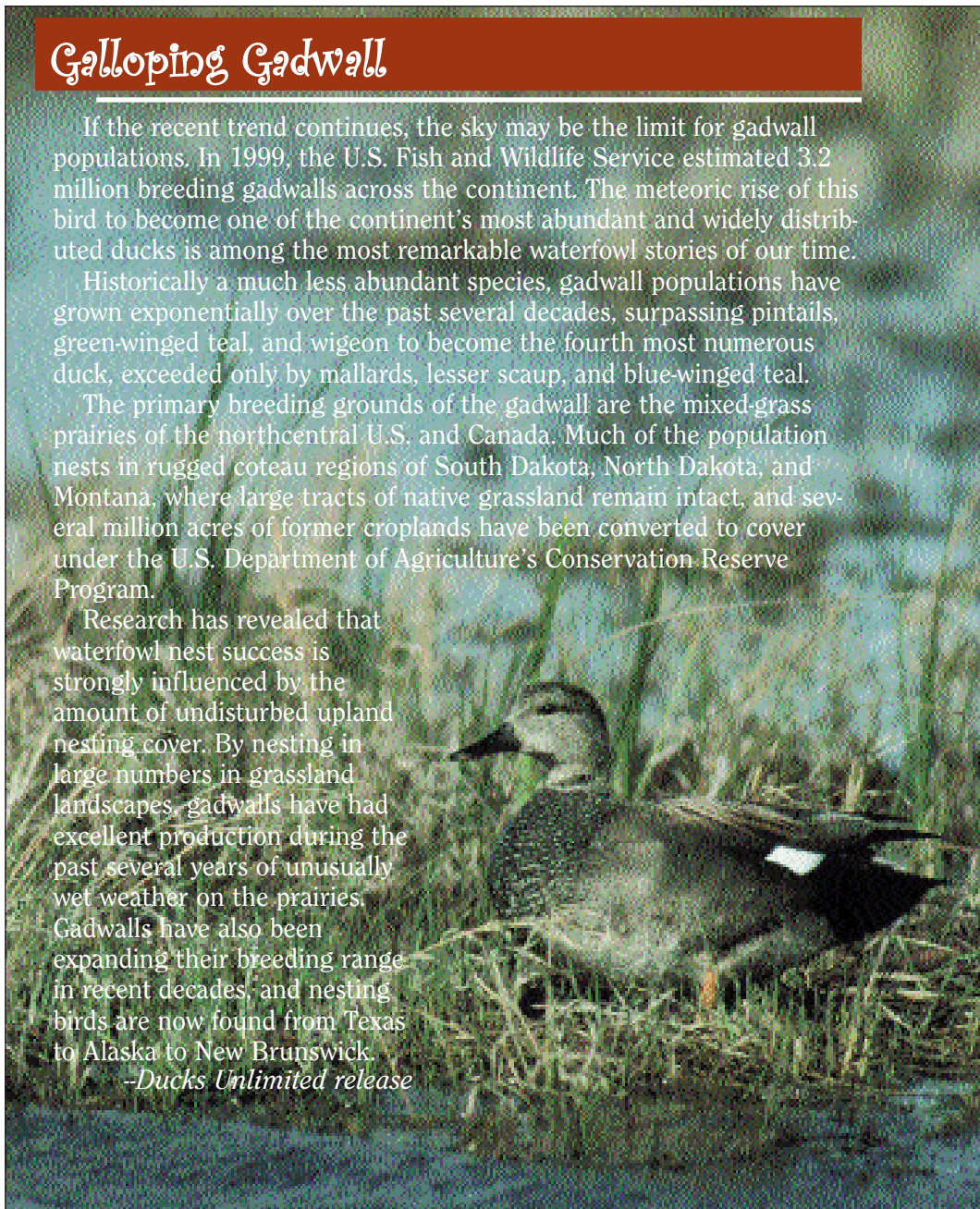
If the recent trend continues, the sky may be the limit for gadwall populations. In 1999, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimated 3.2 million breeding gadwalls across the continent. The meteoric rise of this bird to become one of the continent's most abundant and widely distributed ducks is among the most remarkable waterfowl stories of our time.

Historically a much less abundant species, gadwall populations have grown exponentially over the past several decades, surpassing pintails, green-winged teal, and wigeon to become the fourth most numerous duck, exceeded only by mallards, lesser scaup, and blue-winged teal.

The primary breeding grounds of the gadwall are the mixed-grass prairies of the northcentral U.S. and Canada. Much of the population nests in rugged coteau regions of South Dakota, North Dakota, and Montana, where large tracts of native grassland remain intact, and several million acres of former croplands have been converted to cover under the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Conservation Reserve Program.

Research has revealed that waterfowl nest success is strongly influenced by the amount of undisturbed upland nesting cover. By nesting in large numbers in grassland landscapes, gadwalls have had excellent production during the past several years of unusually wet weather on the prairies. Gadwalls have also been expanding their breeding range in recent decades, and nesting birds are now found from Texas to Alaska to New Brunswick.

*-Ducks Unlimited release*



## LOCAL NRA WORK

Representatives of the Friends of the NRA have given \$1,000 to the Tonganoxie Junior High School to help fund hunter education classes. Tom Bowen, a Friends of the NRA member and owner of Hodgdon Powder Company, Shawnee, presented the check to Richard Erickson, school superintendent.

Richard Reidel, coordinator of Tonganoxie's hunter safety program, said the classes help teach gun safety, wildlife identification, and hunter responsibility and ethics. Steve Woolf, junior high principal, agreed that these classes are valuable to students.

"We can work with them at home to keep them away from guns," Woolf said. "But they're going to be out of our homes someday, and we want them to know how to behave responsibly and safely around guns."

Jeff Dickinson, chairman of the Leavenworth County Friends of the NRA, said this is the second year that the area group has raised money through charitable donations, banquets, and auctions.

Half of the money raised stays in Kansas, and the other half goes to the Don't Be a Victim women's safety program and to other education projects.

To assist in teaching, Fred Wenig of Custom Gunstock, Lincoln, Mo., donated six gunstocks to be made into simulated firearms for instruction and teaching.

*-Lisa Stevens John, Tonganoxie Mirror*

## NWTF SPENT \$300,000+

Since 1987, the National Wild Turkey Foundation's (NWTF) 18 Kansas chapters and 3,048 members have spent \$302,920 in the Sunflower State. Together they have completed 125 projects ranging from wild turkey restoration and habitat improvements to protecting our wildlife resources from poachers.

This year alone, NWTF volunteers in Kansas have spent nearly \$58,800. NWTF has spent \$5 million on nation-

wide projects and \$226,125 on 13 nationally-funded research projects to help better understand the wild turkey and its habitat.

NWTF is looking forward to another great year and expects to have about \$81,244 to spend on partnership projects in Kansas. NWTF will work closely with Department of Wildlife and Parks staff to decide how to spend these funds for maximum benefit to the wild turkey.

*-Rob Keck, CEO, National Wild Turkey Federation*

## KANSAS QUAIL UNLIMITED IS UNMATCHED

During last summer's Quail Unlimited (QU) National Convention in St. Louis, Mo., several Kansas QU chapters received top awards. Winning the Top Gun award in Division A was the Kaw Valley Chapter of Topeka. The Top Gun award is calculated on a number of criteria, including funds raised, fund-raising efficiency, members, youth programs, and habitat programs. Winning third place in the Top Gun competition was the Ark Valley Chapter in Wichita.

The Division 1 National Habitat award went to the Ark Valley Chapter, as well. The National Habitat Award is given based upon the number and diversity of habitat projects by a chapter. Ark Valley QU also won the Great Plains Regional Youth in Conservation award.

President's Club awards were earned by Ron Whitney, Emporia Area QU; Steve Damron, Kaw Valley QU; Mike Christensen, Ark Valley QU; Doyle Angleton, Neosho Valley QU, Chanute; and Larry Adams, Upper Neosho Valley QU, Council Grove.

Kaw Valley was recognized for recruiting more than 50 sponsor members with a total of 89, and the Ark Valley Chapter made the top 10 in the Net Income For a Banquet category.

In addition, the Kaw Valley Chapter was awarded the Chevy Truck award for the most dependable, longest-lasting Quail Unlimited chapter.

Dan "Boone" Vidricksen, of the Tri

Rivers Chapter in Salina, won the Golden Quail award for individual commitment to Quail Unlimited and long-standing service to a chapter.

All in all, it was a very good year for Kansas Quail Unlimited chapters.

*-Quail Unlimited news release*

## BOATING AWARD

The department just received an award from the National Transportation Safety Board in Washington, D.C., for efforts toward boating safety. Kansas is one of the few states that has the combination of a BUI law, mandatory education, and mandatory use of personal flotation devices for children. The award was presented to Cheri Swayne, boating law administrator, at the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators conference on Mackinaw Island, Mich., in September.

*-Cheri Swayne, Topeka*

## MILFORD WETLANDS RESTORATION MOVES FORWARD

The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the Kansas Wildscape Foundation are pleased to announce the signing of a Project Cooperative Agreement for the 2,300-acre wetlands restoration project at Milford Reservoir, near Junction City.

When completed, the cost of the restoration project is estimated to be \$5 million, with the Corps providing 75 percent of the funds. The remaining 25 percent is being provided through fund-raising efforts of the Kansas Wildscape Foundation. Funding sources include private and corporate donations. In 1998, the Kansas Legislature also dedicated funds in the name of the late Representative Steve Lloyd, who spearheaded the project during his tenure as state representative in the area of the wetlands project.

*-Chad Luce, public information officer, Topeka*

by Jim Mason, Great Plains Nature Center



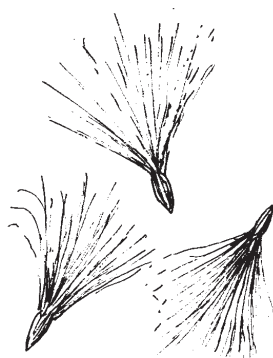
# Cool Cottonwood



When the pioneers crossed the Great Plains on the Santa Fe or the Oregon Trail, they often went for a long time without seeing any trees. The prairie was frequently seen as a very foreign and hostile environment to people from the Ohio valley, the Appalachian mountains, or New England because they were used to forested surroundings. No trees meant no wood for cooking. Dried bison dung was used for cooking fuel instead. No trees also meant no shade, which can be very precious on a hot day in summer. This and other factors led explorer Zebulon Pike to misname the area as the "Great American Desert."

There is a tree that is well-adapted to life on the prairie, however. You can recognize it from afar during the growing season by the

shiny leaves that shimmer and shake in the wind. The pioneers were always glad to spot one of these trees in the distance because it offered the possibility of



wood and shade. It also represented the chance of finding water because this species likes to keep its feet wet, so to speak. This species is the cottonwood tree.

Cottonwoods are either male or female. It is the fluffy white seeds produced

by the females during early summer that give the tree its name. The seeds are very small -- 1 millimeter wide by 4 millimeters long -- which is quite remarkable considering that they can become one of the largest trees in North America, more than 100 feet high with massive trunks more than 5 feet in diameter.

Trees had to survive prairie fires in order to live on the Great Plains. Cottonwoods did this by typically growing on the





edges of rivers and streams and by developing a very thick, corky bark upon maturity. As their seeds are dispersed by the wind, many end up landing on the surface of water and are then stranded along the waterline on sandbars, islands, and river banks.

If the river level does not fluctuate too much, allowing the seed to establish itself, a new monarch of the plains will begin its life. As the water level drops with late summer droughts, one can often walk along a sandbar and see a row of these newly-sprouted cottonwoods at the former waterline.

Cottonwoods can live to be more than 100 years old. There are cottonwoods on the Great Plains today that were living when the great herds of bison still roamed the prairie.

Cottonwoods are related to poplars and aspens, with which they share the same shaking, shimmering leaves.

The heartwood typically rots from the larger limbs and trunk of a cottonwood. If a windstorm breaks one of these hollow branches off, providing access to the interior, they can provide homes for squirrels, raccoons, and opossums or even a hive of honeybees.

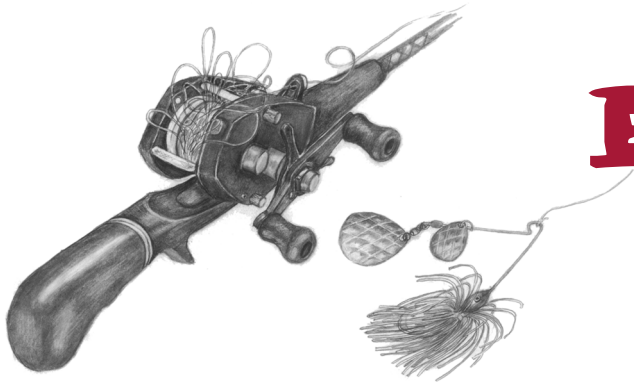
After pioneer settlement, other kinds of trees became established across the Great Plains due to the control of wildfires and intentional planting of shelterbelts and woodlots. Ribbons of forest followed the water courses across the prairie where for-

merly only a few solitary cottonwoods could be seen. These so-called "gallery forests" are a significant part of the habitat mix on the Great Plains today, giving forest-adapted animals places to live they never had before.

As summer changes to fall, the leaves of the cottonwood turn a bright yellow, a vivid contrast to the clear blue skies of autumn. At this time, they stand out from the other trees that share their habitat nowadays, allowing one to easily pick out the cottonwoods -- true pioneers among the latecomers on the modern prairie.

In cottonwoods, this change in leaf color and dropping of leaves is triggered by cooling soil temperatures. As soil temperature drops below 50 degrees, the bacteria that "fix" nitrogen and other nutrients die. This causes the cottonwood to lose much of the water (in the form of sap) in its trunk and branches, causing the tree to go dormant through the winter. Without this dormant period, winter temperatures could freeze sap in the tree and kill it.





# Backlash

by Mike Miller

## Elksa Clinchknot's Style Review

Contrary to popular opinion, hunters are not completely devoid of fashion. An experienced hunter has worked for years developing his or her own unique "look." However, most hunter "looks" probably evolve in response to outside influences, personal finances, and age rather than the hunter's need for style. I have observed several fashion phases hunters go through.

The first phase of hunting fashion is ground zero, or complete lack of concern for how one looks. When I was eleven, all that mattered was that I was going hunting. I didn't think two seconds about how I looked. Other than my brown canvas hunting cap and vest, clothing was something to cover me so I didn't freeze. With no older siblings, I didn't have hand-me-downs. Wearing something old meant wearing something too small, even if it was only a year old. I usually grabbed the blue jeans, legs too short, at the top of the pile in my closet and a flannel shirt with sleeves too short to button. Last year's winter parka came on next. I finished the ensemble with a pair of lace-up boots, the toe seams already worn white from walking through the first field of fireweed.

When I became a teenager, how I looked became more important. You never knew when you might run into that cute girl from geography class. I had outgrown the short-billed canvas hunting cap, graduating to a more hip ball cap with a farm implement company's logo. This was my country phase. Faded jeans looked cool, even if they didn't stop plum thicket thorns. I still wore the vest because it had a place to carry my shells, and maybe even a pheasant if I got lucky. My hunting boots were relatively new (all my shoes were new because I outgrew them before they were old), but they looked the same -- toe seams worn white by fireweed.

In college, I had priorities, which means I was too poor to worry about field fashion. Any spare change was spent on girls, food, and shotgun shells. This I call my Bubba phase. Everything I wore was old and worn, and I didn't really want anything that looked new because I didn't want someone to think I was some kind of big city hunter.

When I went to work for the department, I figured the clothes I wore said something about my outdoor experi-

ence. And besides, there was often a magazine photographer along taking pictures. How I looked in the field was suddenly more important. I was still relatively short of spending money, so I made due with what I could afford — no Filson chaps, or Browning kangaroo upland boots. But I did wear the proper orange hat, a new vest, and I even splurged for field pants with reinforced panels on the front of the legs to break the brush. Kind of a poor man's Eddie Bauer.

As my spendable income increased, I began to fall for all the new hunting clothing lines that hit the market each fall. This I call my fickle phase. Perusing the hunter's *Vogue*, Cabela's Outdoor Catalog, I've purchased a dozen different camouflage patterns in the last 10 years. I don't think any of them helped me kill more deer, but I did, by accident, find some wonderful new products that made life in the field more enjoyable -- Gortex, Thinsulate, polypropylene and fleece. I was warmer, drier and more comfortable than ever, and sometimes I even looked good.

The irony is that now when I have enough money to buy fashionable hunting duds, I don't care anymore. I'm into my functional phase. I don't care how something looks as long it makes my hunting more comfortable or me more invisible. The more functional a clothing item is, the more I like it. My pride and joy is a waterfowl coat, double insulated with Thinsulate, a hood, a dozen pockets and so many velcro tabs and zippers that I haven't even opened some of them. It also has a zip-out inner jacket that is quite stylish, I mean functional, by itself. The coat was a Christmas gift from my mother-in-law, and even though I thought it was the essence of hunting chic, she laughed embarrassedly when I modeled it along with my neoprene waders in front of the Christmas tree. I think you have to see the outfit in its element — dead cattails — to really appreciate its style.

I went duck hunting on the last day of the season, in 30-mph winds and below zero windchill just to wear the jacket. The ducks weren't flying, but I was toasty and dry, which kind of felt like cheating. I giggled as I latched the Velcro hood strap, laughing at the elements that had foiled so many hunts. And I never felt more in style. 