

KANSAS

Wildlife & Parks

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2001

\$2.75





The View From Here

Steve Williams



Meeting Park Funding Challenge

In 1998, the department began a \$10 million facelift of our park facilities. Crumbling buildings have been replaced, and campgrounds and utilities have been upgraded in our 24 state parks across the state. Soon, all of these infrastructure improvements will be complete. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the folks who made this renovation possible.

The Commission's Task Force on Outdoor Kansas, assembled by the Wildlife and Parks Commission in 1996, started the ball rolling. The group's hard work paid off when Governor Bill Graves recommended the \$10 million, one-time appropriation, and the 1998 Legislature concurred, approving the money over a three-year period. The department's engineering section and park staff that helped plan and implement the renovations also deserve recognition for ensuring that projects stayed on time and on budget.

Perhaps the best summation of this undertaking was offered by Governor Graves almost three years ago, "As Governor, I want our state park system to reflect the pride we have in our state," said Graves. "This year's \$10 million investment in our parks is a strong step toward improving our outdoor recreational opportunities for Kansans and for tourists who come to our state."

I am proud of the strides we have made; however, we certainly have a long way to go to fulfill our mission of being one of the premier producers of outdoor recreation opportunities in the country. This goal is certainly ambitious in a state that ranks near the bottom for state park funding, but we will continue to stretch our dollars.

Due to inadequate revenue to meet increased operation and maintenance expenses, the Wildlife and Parks Commission acted on the department's

recommendation and raised certain park fees, effective January 1, 2001. Unfortunately, we are forced to ask our users to contribute more toward upkeep for state parks, or reduce the current services offered.

Coupled with new legislation that requires persons over the age of 65 and persons with qualifying disabilities to pay half price for a park motor vehicle permits, the department estimates the fee increases will generate up to \$1 million in additional funding annually. The money will be used to improve operation and maintenance of the 24 state parks.

The new fee structure is diverse, allowing assessment of different fees for unique amenities, times of year, and user preferences, including in-season (April 1 - Sept. 30) and off-season (Oct. 1 - March 31) rates, as well as additional costs for prime campsites. While prices of a few issuances were simply raised, others, such as the annual vehicle and annual camping permits, will be available at the old price during the off-season.

In closing, the last people I have to thank are the most important, our constituents. Thank you for your continued support as we chip away at our conservation funding challenges. Studies have proven that Kansans are willing to adequately fund their state parks. As soon as a viable funding mechanism is identified, Kansas state parks will truly reflect the pride we have in our state. As you enjoy the beautiful pictures contained in this issue, please think about the importance of investing in our outdoor heritage.

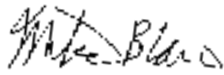
Kansas Wildlife & Parks 2001 Photo Issue

Dear Reader,

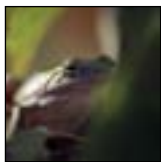
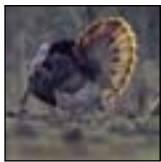
The Kansas outdoors is a place of endless fascination. We're fortunate to live where continental East meets West and North meets South. Here, one may see the arctic gyrfalcon or a southern ring-tailed cat. Pronghorns and muleys share the state with white-tails, and the eastern black bear occasionally wanders westward. Migrants from ice floe to equator pass overhead, affording rare viewing opportunities. Surprises abound.

It is my privilege to search for the beauties that define Kansas. No matter the season, they are plentiful. The sky, the land, and all its living things bless those who take the time to notice. I thank God for surrounding us with an infinite source of discovery, and hope you enjoy the images of photo issue 2001.

Mike Blair
Photographer/Associate Editor




2001 Kansas Wildlife & Parks Photo Issue Screen Saver



Enjoy this photo issue all year long. The 2001 Screen Saver package includes 12 memorable color photographs featured in this issue, that will fit any PC, Windows running system. Just send \$5 to Kansas Dept. of Wildlife and Parks, Screen Saver, 512 SE 25th Ave., Pratt, KS 67124, or receive the disk free with a new or renewal magazine subscription. Just write "Send me the 2001 Screen Saver disk" on your subscription card.

About the covers

Front: A white-tailed buck pauses as it looks for does on a frosty morning. Mike Blair photographed the deer with a 600mm lens, @ f/8, 1/250 sec.

Back: Hummingbirds are endlessly fascinating around a flower bed. Mike Blair photographed this ruby-throat with a 600mm lens, @ f/4, 1/1000 sec.



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

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.



Daybreak

Kansas comes alive as the day crew arises. Food is the first order of business, and those low on the chain seek plants and seeds for nourishment. Higher orders seek prey. There is drama in this work; some will be missing by nightfall. Others will live on, stronger, wiser.



Pheasant brood, Barber County



Fox squirrel, Linn County



Snowberry clearwing moth, Miami County



Great blue heron, Neosho County

Spider with moth, Reno County





Northern water snake eating crappie, Barber County



Red-tailed hawk with snake, Pratt County



White-tailed buck in velvet, Crawford County



White-tailed bucks, Barber County



Renewal

Life demands replacement. After food, the search for mates takes precedence. Every species has its season – a frantic time to fight, display and chase. Beauty and rhythm mark these rituals. Young are raised and taught, or left to learn alone. The cycle is satisfied.



Spotted chorus frog, Commanche County



Indigo bunting, Linn County

Eastern turkeys, Linn County





Rutting pronghorns, Wallace County



Nursing bison calf, McPherson County



White-tailed doe and fawn, Barber County



Emerging annual cicada, Linn County



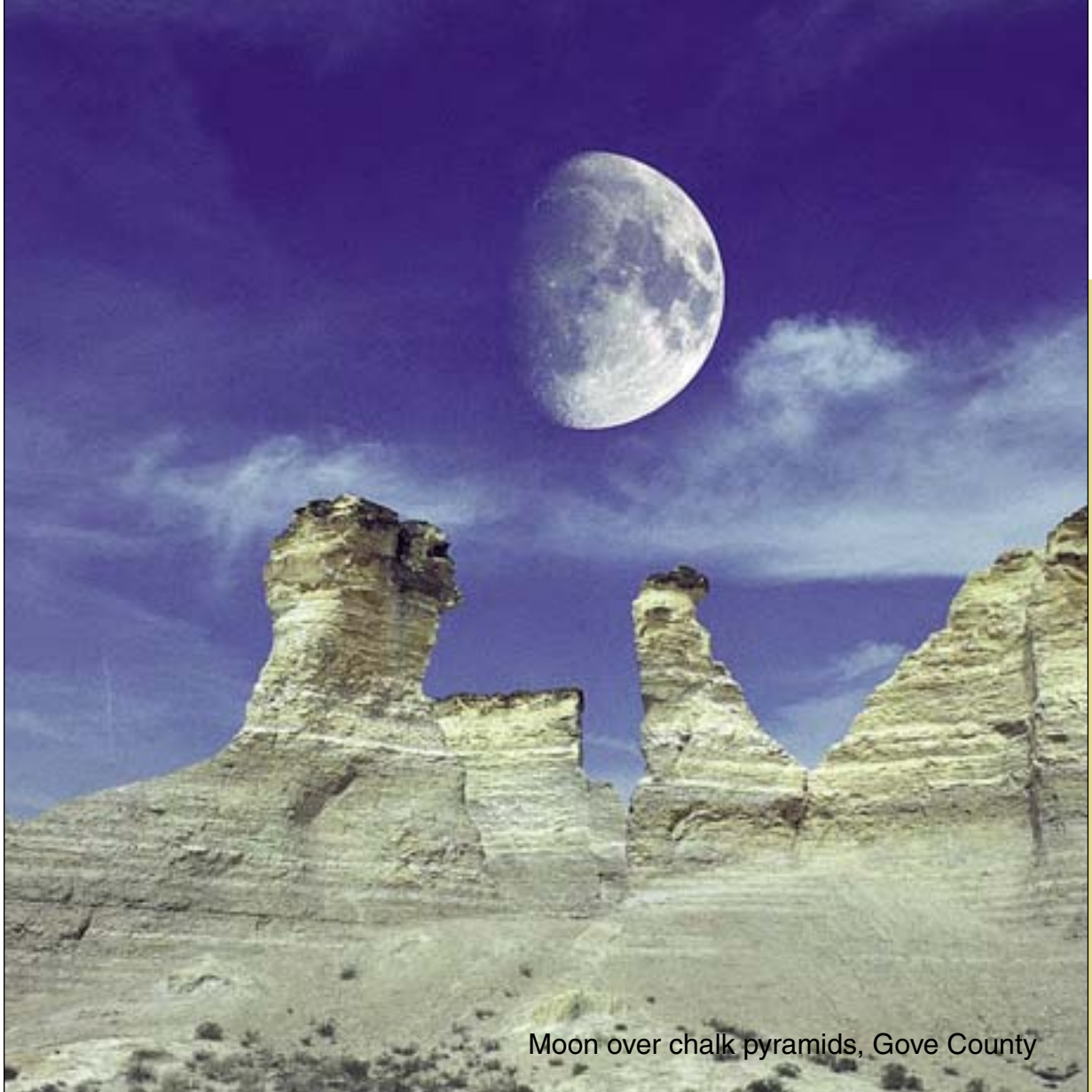
Cardinal feeding young, Pratt County

Earth

Life commences on a wonderful stage. Each act is unique – nourished by soil, blessed by water, enframed by sky, enriched by color. Every sense gathers the experience, until the fortunate observer is humbled and thankful for this marvelous world.



Sunset over CRP, Barber County

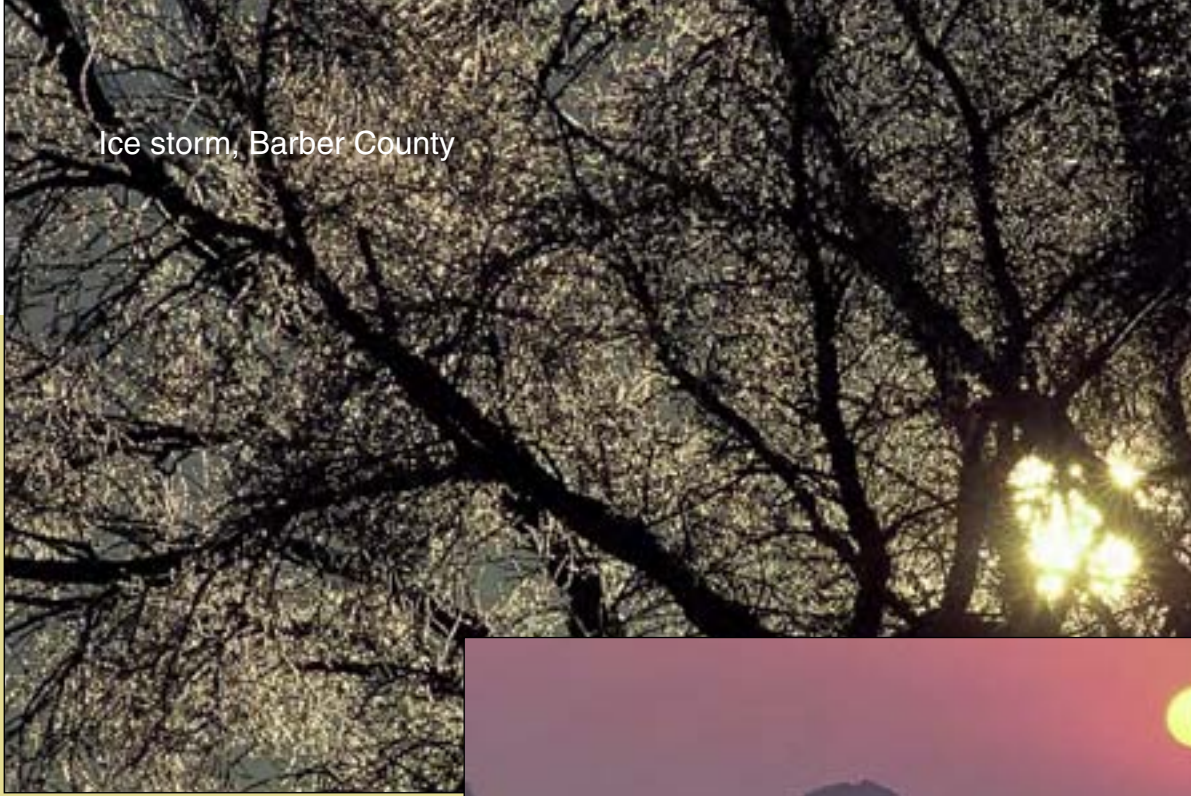


Moon over chalk pyramids, Gove County



Waves on sandstone, Wilson Reservoir, Russell County

Ice storm, Barber County



Sunrise over pool, Stafford County





Sun through greenbrier, Linn County

Flora

Green is the trademark of the growing season, everywhere expressed in the chlorophyll of leaves. Driven by sunlight, plants blend water and carbon dioxide to form the sugars that fuel the world. Plants paint the land with colorful flowers, then blaze in a glorious autumn finale. Earth is clothed by the hosts of their kingdom.



Milkweed seed on compassplant, Woodson County



Autumn poison-ivy, Miami County



Dutchman's breeches, Linn County



Summer elm leaf,
Franklin County



Greenbriar, Cherokee County



Gooseberries, Kingman County



Sunflower, Bourbon County



Plains beebalm and gallardia, Pratt County



Showy evening primrose, Bourbon County



Prickly pear cactus fruits, Pratt County



Blue-eyed Mary, Linn County



Rose hips, Linn County

Fauna

Animals are the outdoors' finest expression. They animate a stationary world, overwhelming its silence with language and covering its vistas with motion. The wildlife of Kansas is endlessly varied. It is a treasure for all who observe and understand.



Canada geese, Stafford County





Spider on stagnant water, Allen County



Cope's gray treefrog, Cherokee County

Common egret, Kingman County





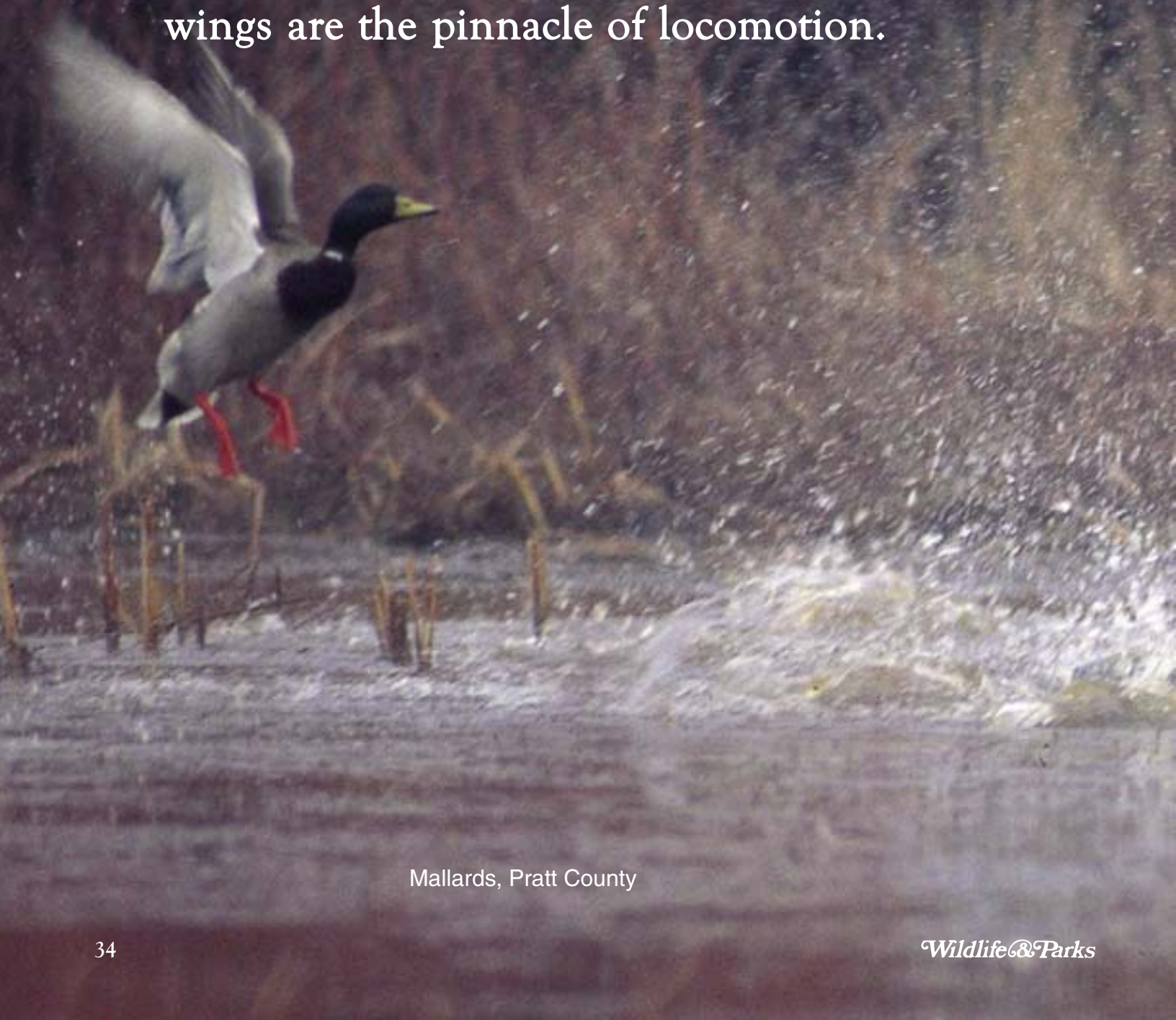
Spicebush swallowtail on thistle, Linn County



White-tailed doe, Linn County

Mobility.

There really is poetry in motion. Animals run or fly to find food, escape predators, or migrate to suitable climates. Each is equipped with its own mode of travel. Speed and agility are commonplace, but to envious man, wings are the pinnacle of locomotion.



Mallards, Pratt County





White-tailed doe, Leavenworth County

Ring-billed gull, Miami County





Northern shoveler, Barton County



Cottontail, Pratt County

Ornate box turtle, Reno County

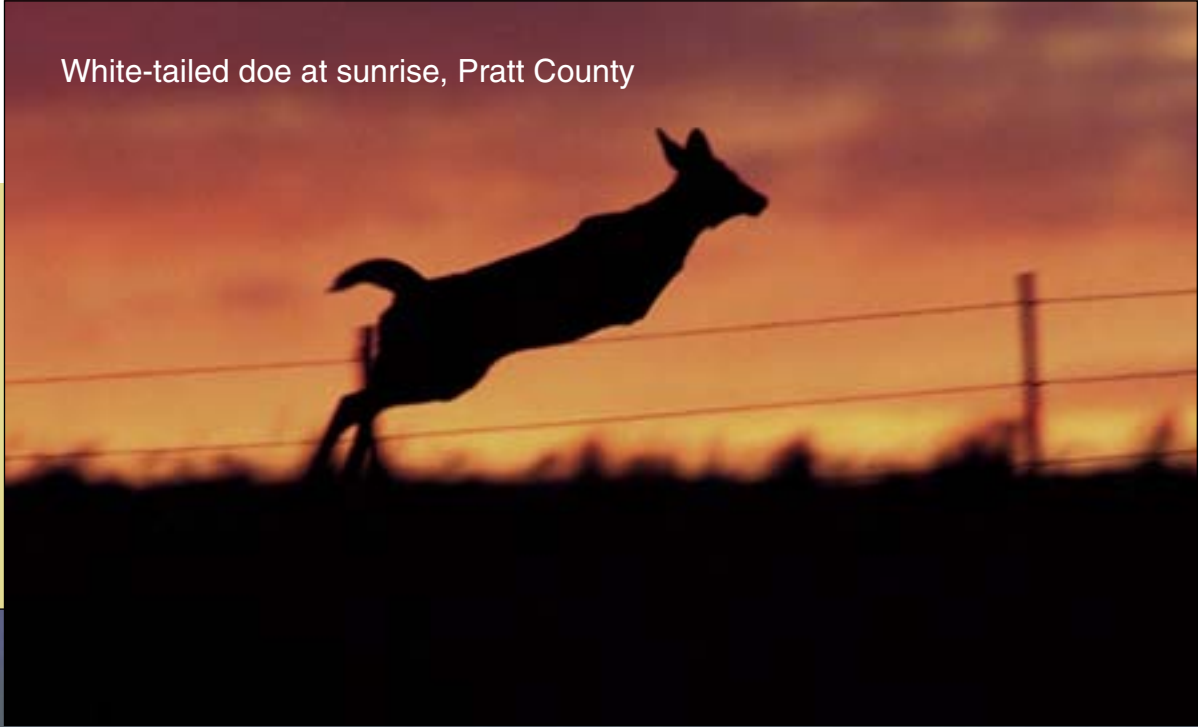


Pronghorns, Wallace County



Black rat snake climbing tree, Linn County

White-tailed doe at sunrise, Pratt County



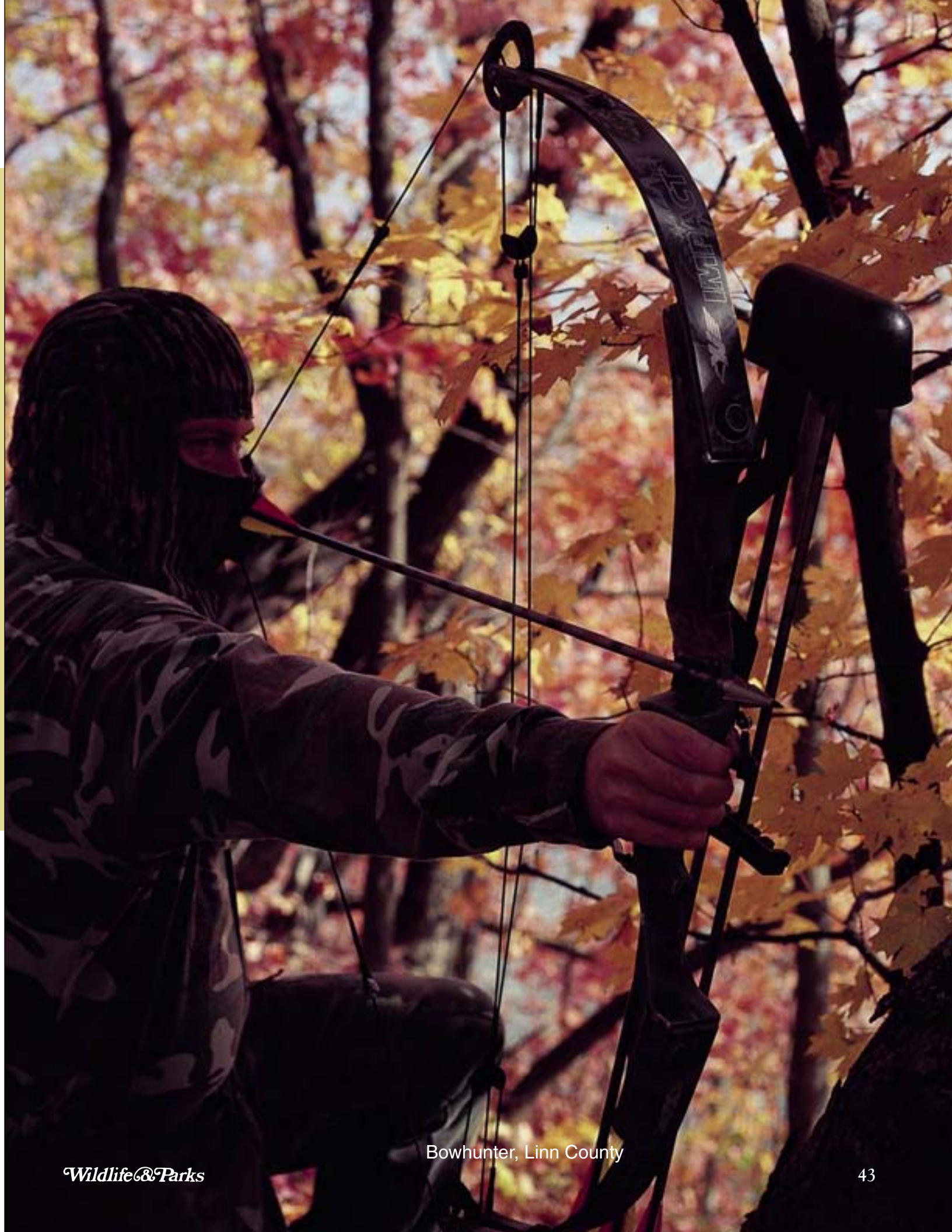
Rio Grande turkeys, Sedgwick County

Participation

The outdoors is a playground to refresh the soul. Beyond opportunities to observe nature, land, water and open air invite many forms of recreation. Hunting and fishing are an outdoor legacy. Boating, sailing, hiking and camping are also popular Kansas pursuits.



Farm pond fishing, Kingman County



Bowhunter, Linn County



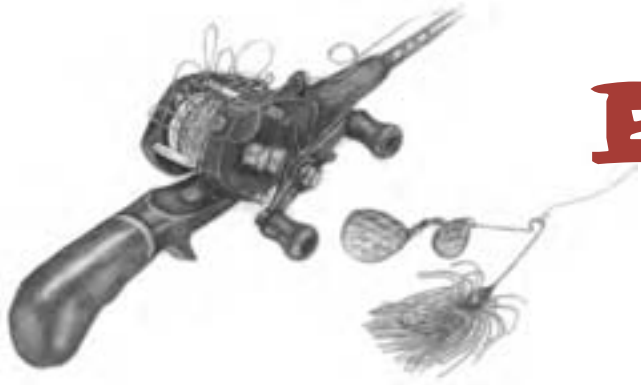
Fishing, Pratt County

Camp meal, Lovewell State Park, Jewell County



Water sports, Hillsdale Reservoir, Miami County





Backlash

by Mike Miller

Lennie's Lucky Year

At the end of a recent nickel-dime poker game, Lennie raked in the last pot and began to gloat. He chuckled obnoxiously as he made a scene of neatly stacking his coins.

"I must be starting a run of good luck," he belated, gleaming over his huge windfall of \$7.45. "2001 might be *my* year."

With that, Lennie leaned his chair back on two legs and gazed intently into the glass eyes of a mounted deer head that presides over our poker games. The old buck had the extreme misfortune of stepping in front of Lennie's arrow more than 10 years ago. Lennie was looking for inspiration to make predictions for the coming year. He pawed a handful of pretzels from the bowl, shoved about 10 of them in his mouth and began to reflect.

"You know, 1989, the year I killed that *yeeuuge* monster buck, was a good year. Since then, I've been on a down cycle, kind of like grouse populations. I wonder if it has to do with sunspots? Anyway, I'm feeling different now. Heck, this was the best year of duck hunting I've ever had. That's probably why I didn't get a deer – spent too much time duck hunting."

"Maybe it was because you kept sleeping in on mornings you planned to deer hunt," I jabbed.

"You never listen," he snorted. "I've told you that I see more deer in the evenings where I hunt. Besides, I woke up those mornings but knew the wind was wrong, so I went back to sleep. There's nothin' I hate more than to hunt a stand in the wrong wind and spook a big old buck. By the way, Mr. I-Get-Up-Early-To-Hunt-Deer, I don't remember you killing a buck last year."

"I think I need to keep better company. Some of your bad luck rubbed off," I said.

"Well, that's all going to change in 2001," he said happily. "This poker game is a sign. Heck, I've never won three pots in a row. Good things are on the horizon for ole Lennie."

Lennie stared again into the lifeless eyes of the deer head and went into a weird trance. I was afraid he had

a wad of pretzels caught in his throat, but then he began rattling off predictions for the coming year, as if possessed. Here are Lennie's highlights for 2001:

I'll invent the Fiddle Shad, a new lure that will make the Banjo Minnow obsolete and me a millionaire.

With my new wealth, I'll successfully lobby to make it illegal to televise infomercials on Saturday afternoons when a college sports event or a fishing and hunting show could be on.

A new sport will test middle-aged men on their television remote control skills. Called Channel Surf Challenge, contestants will sit in recliners and compete in channel changing quickness and the ability to return directly to channels carrying sports, hunting and fishing shows or Baywatch after the entire cycle has been surfed. Points will be deducted for each commercial or infomercial that appears on screen for more than 5 seconds.

Ducks will learn to avoid the robo decoys with moving wings. A decoy that projects a hologram of a duck bachelor party, guaranteed to attract drake mallards, will be the craze.

New camouflage patterns will be developed for the urban hunter. For deer hunting in outlying suburban areas, a new bowhunter pattern will feature ornamental bush, tulip and chain-link fence images instead of oak leaves and branches. For goose hunters, a new camo will help them blend in on golf courses. Three patterns will be available -- rough/sandtrap, Bermuda fairway, and bentgrass green.

Lennie's gaze with the deer head broke, and he fell backward in his chair. "Whew," he sputtered as he picked himself up off the floor and brushed pretzel crumbs off his chest. "I must have dozed off. Anyway, as I was saying, 1989, when I shot that *yeeuuge* monster buck, was a good year. You remember how I outsmarted that old buck? Well, see, I figured out his travel routes, but the wind was always wrong in the mornings . . ."

