

# KANSAS

*Wildlife & Parks*

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# The View From Here

Steve Williams



## Moving On

Life is full of unexpected opportunities and challenges. On July 18, President Bush announced his intention to nominate me as the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Should the confirmation process in the U.S. Senate proceed favorably, I will soon leave Kansas, but not without a wealth of memories and a heavy heart.

I vividly remember traveling throughout Kansas with my family shortly after accepting the job as Secretary of Wildlife and Parks in 1995. With the trusty Kansas Travel Guide in hand, we made our way across the state, noting the wide open spaces, the friendly folks we encountered and, compared to my home in Pennsylvania, the lack of trees. It did not take long to become assimilated with, and truly enjoy, our new surroundings.

My first year with the agency was an anxious period of new faces and the very large matter of resolving issues associated with the diversion of federal aid funds. With the tremendous support of KDWP staff and Governor Bill Graves, the problem was corrected and procedures were put in place to ensure the department remained in compliance in the future. This exercise was trying, but it was gratifying to learn that I was surrounded by competent individuals who were eager to correct past errors and move the department forward.

I feel compelled to touch on one other contentious issue: deer management. With the help of qualified biologists and the Wildlife and Parks Commission, the department has been able to develop an excellent strategy to reduce deer numbers, while maintaining an excellent trophy buck population. No system is perfect, but I firmly believe that the department has done a tremendous job of balancing the needs of the resource with the concerns of hunters, landowners, and citizens. I am confident that all of these groups can continue to work together to maintain deer populations at levels compatible to their habitat and acceptable to the public.

A few of the many successful department programs deserve special recognition. The Walk-In Hunting Areas (WIHA) program, which provides public hunter access to private property, is perhaps the most popular endeavor ever undertaken by the agency. An astonishing 830,000 acres are leased for the 2001-2002 hunting seasons, including land in northeast Kansas that will be available

for spring turkey. WIHA has not only provided more areas for hunters to enjoy the outdoors, but the program has also helped alleviate hunting pressure on the small amount of public land in the state. The companion walk-in fishing program is also growing and appears to have a bright future.

A big victory for the parks division occurred in 1998. Thanks to the support of Governor Bill Graves and the Legislature, KDWP received a one-time appropriation of \$10 million to address critical infrastructure improvements at each of Kansas' state parks. These funds were used to renovate/replace deteriorating shower houses, bathrooms, campsites, electrical outlets, roads, and beaches.

Finally, the department's hunter recruitment and retention program, "Pass It On", was developed to reverse the decline in participation rates of hunters in Kansas. Fewer hunter numbers jeopardize family traditions, our outdoor heritage and the future of fish and wildlife conservation by reducing social, political, and financial support. Although still relatively new, I am very pleased with the progress we have made so far and am excited about the future of the program. A sincere thank you goes out to all of the department staff and conservation groups who have helped make this important program a reality.

Kansas is known nationally by many tired phrases and stereotypes, mostly uttered by individuals who have not had the privilege to spend much time here, especially afield. Our state is literally a sportsmen's paradise. The diversity of hunting and fishing opportunities is almost unprecedented. While our state parks lag behind in funding, our park managers and staff do an amazing job of providing quality recreation areas on a small budget. I am proud to say that I have had the chance to spend time in each of the 24 state parks during my tenure.

I would like to think that the department is better off than it was six years ago, but I will leave those opinions up to my peers and the agency's constituents. I do know that I would not trade my years in Kansas for anything. Thank you for the wonderful memories.

## Kansas Wildlife & Parks 2001 Photo Issue

Dear Reader,

On the day of the Trade Center bombing, I spent a peaceful afternoon on a hidden creek in eastern Kansas. It was a beautiful day – calm and clear, with birdsong to soften the day’s sorrow. Water mirrored a gorgeous landscape tinged with the first autumn colors. They say you never forget where you are in moments of catastrophe. I will never forget that place, either way.

The Kansas Outdoors is a stage of endless learning. Sometimes, it’s a place of recreation; sometimes, a place of refuge. It’s a place of unique beauty awaiting you and me. Pursue wild secrets, and join me in thanking God for a beautiful Kansas. I hope you enjoy the words and pictures of photo issue 2002.

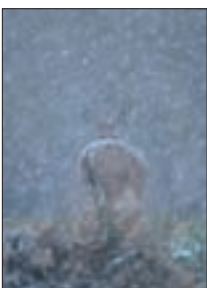
Mike Blair  
Photographer/Associate Editor




### About the covers

**Front:** A white-tailed dove pauses in a heavy snow storm. Mike Blair photographed the scene with a 400mm lens, @ f/3.5, 1/60 sec.

**Back:** A male cardinal waits near a bird feeder on a winter evening. Photographed by Blair with a 400mm lens, @ f/3.5, 1/125 sec.



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*Sparse are the gifts of January.*

*Earth is gray and naked, the mood somber. Life is serious business now, and the rules are simple. Eat. Don't be eaten. Stay warm. Hang on.*

*The sun treks weakly through a southern sky, unable to thwart the cold. Mercury plummets, penetrating life until wild populations reach their baselines. Winter wears a hood and sickle.*

*But sometimes, magic visits: a new-fallen snow, a sky on fire...*



sunset, Atchison County



white-tailed bucks, Barber County



winter woods, Barber County



Harris' sparrow, Reno County



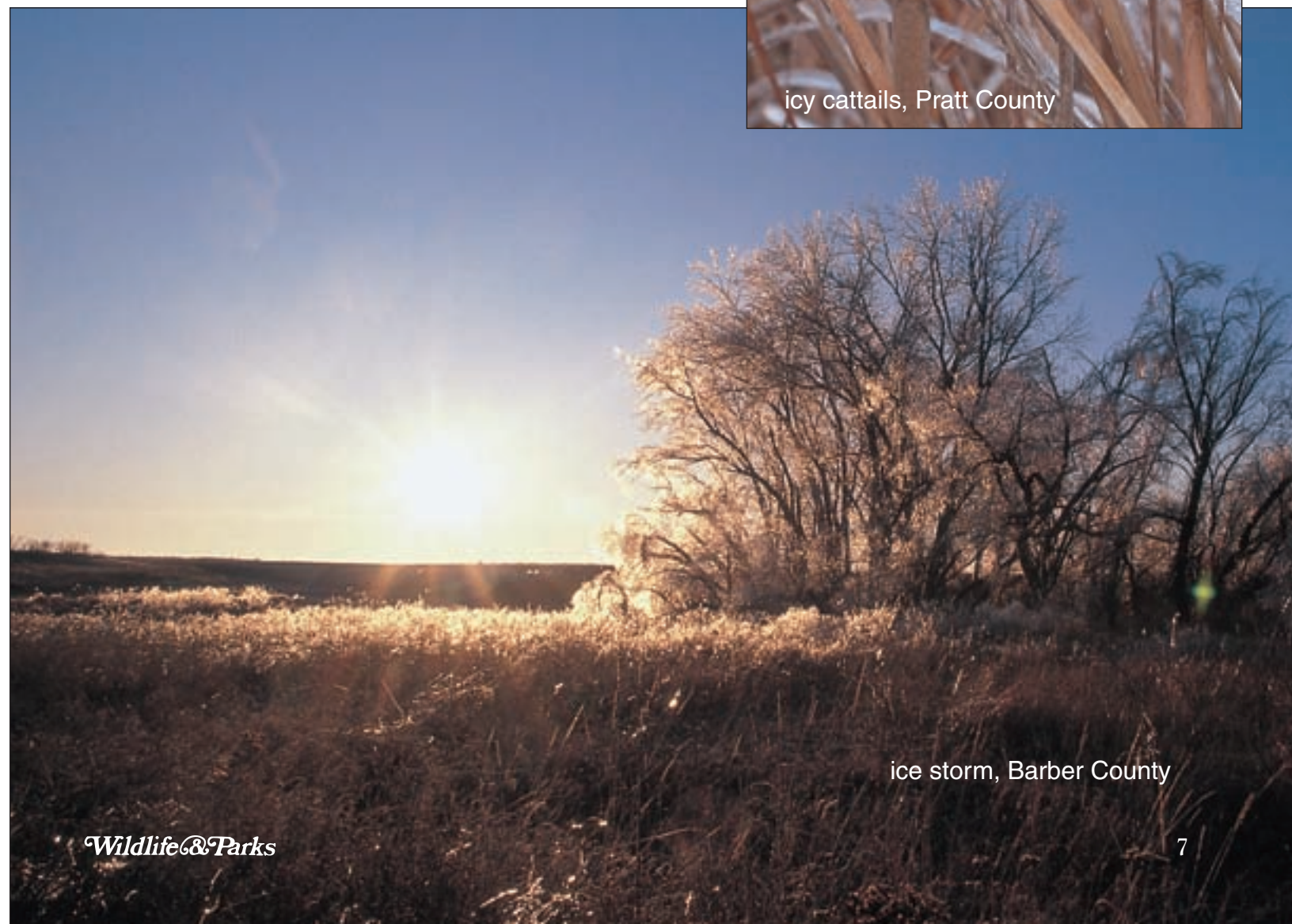




*Dead plants bow to north-west winds, sighing their complaints. How to attend the Winter Dance in such drab clothing? Nature responds with jewels. The costumes are unforgettable.*



icy cattails, Pratt County



ice storm, Barber County



shelf fungi, Linn County





icy leaves, Pratt County



sun through fog, Pratt County



frozen bullfrog, Kingman County

*Despite the season, life goes on. The strong survive; the weak sleep.*

*Winter's books are balanced.*



mallards, Rice County



*Pintails drive north with spring in tow. Buds swell and birds sing – but wait: Winter is no easy quitter.*

*Courtship commences, storms or not. Weather softens, and there is rain; skies blush; foliage appears.*



spring snow storm, Bourbon County



bluejay in redbud, Miami County

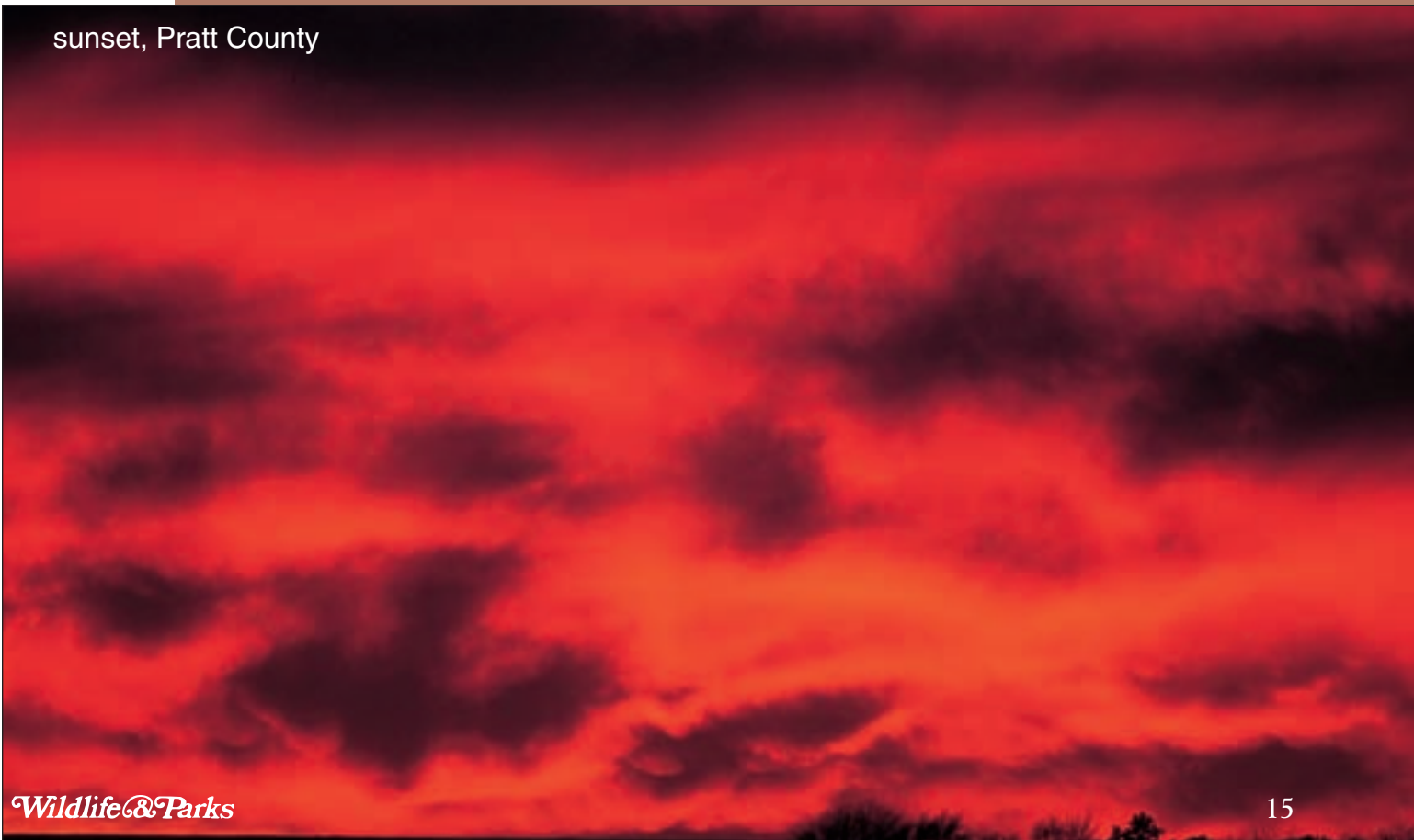


Eastern turkey, Johnson County





avocets fighting, Stafford County



sunset, Pratt County



white Rio Grande hen, Barber County



spring woodland, Linn County





mallards, Stafford County



blue-winged teal , Pratt County



*The air is awash with nature's  
perfume. Flowers emerge to brush  
the land with color.*

*Young are born, reviving play.*

*And all at once, life is a blur.*



swift fox kits, Wallace County



blue wildindigo, Anderson County





monarch on beeplant, Pawnee County

*Spring produces more and more. Then, like a rocket whose fuel is gone, the season coasts. Apogee is reached, and descent begins through summer.*



violets, Crawford County



robin nest, Reno County





purple locoweed and primrose,  
Comanche County



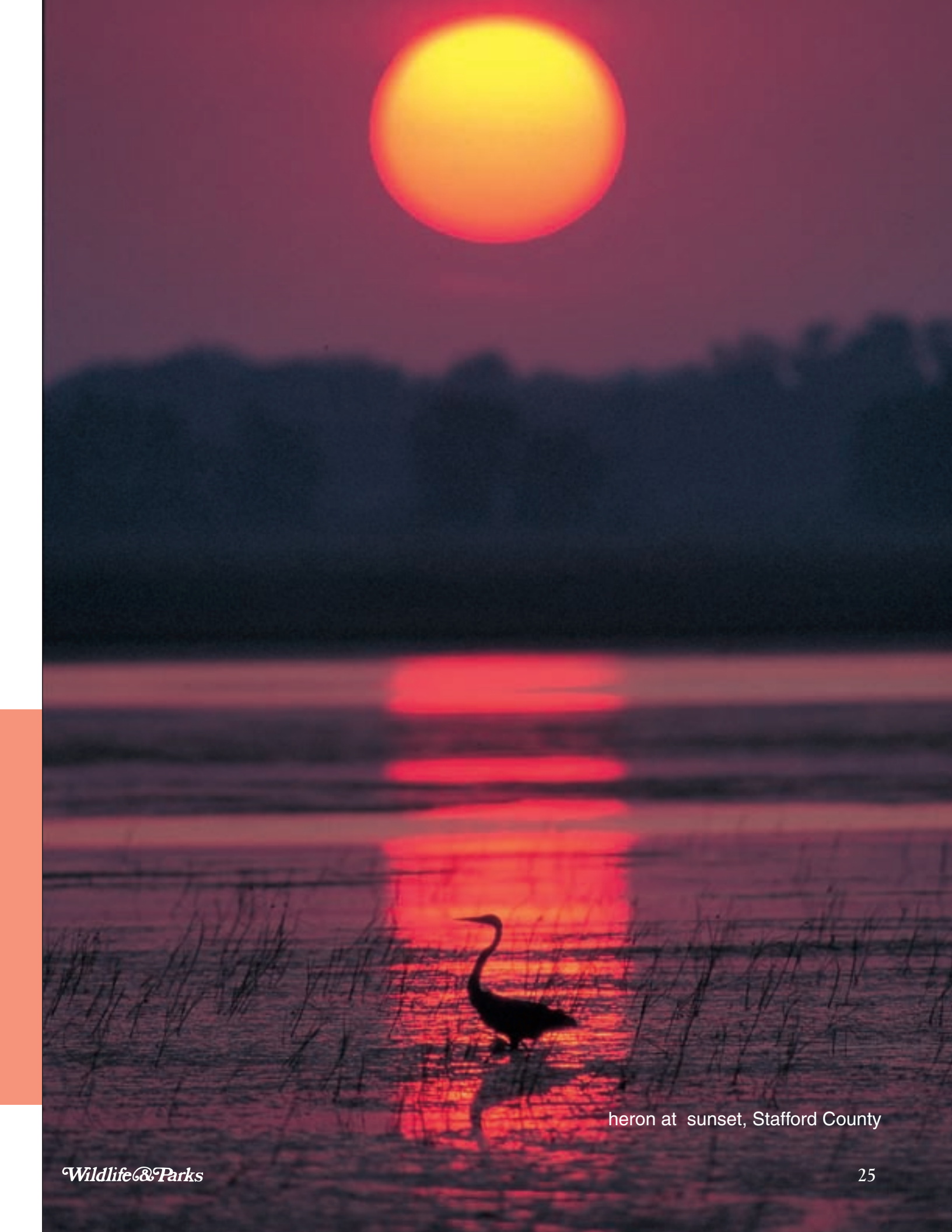
bluebird with grasshopper, Reno County



## *Heat.*

*A fireball blazes the sky, and warmth gets out of hand. Soil is baked and leaves are withered.*

*Wildlife seek water and don't stray. Days are a siesta, but summer nights are a serenade.*



heron at sunset, Stafford County



wood ducks and great egrets, Neosho County



Cope's gray treefrog, Crawford County

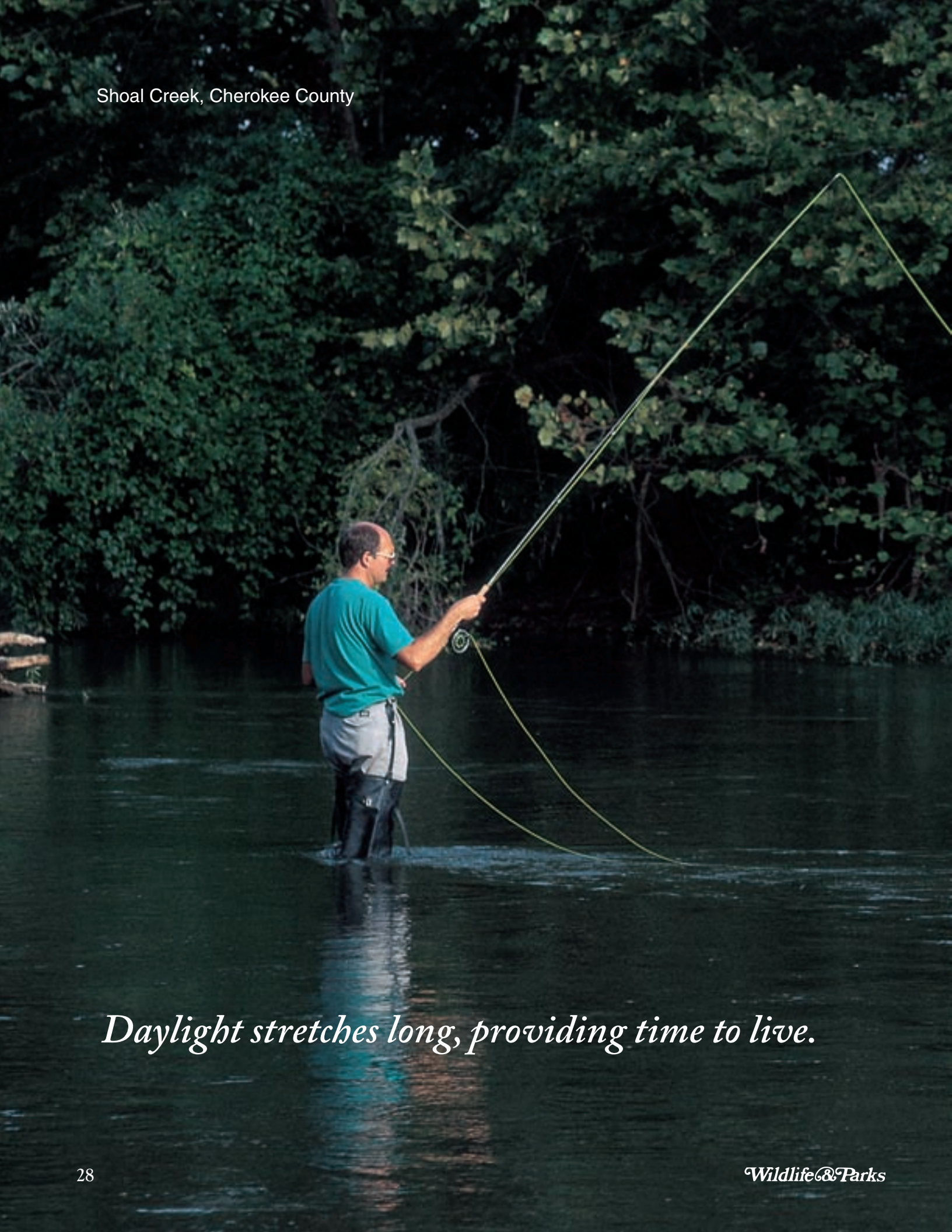


cliff swallow drinking, Pratt County

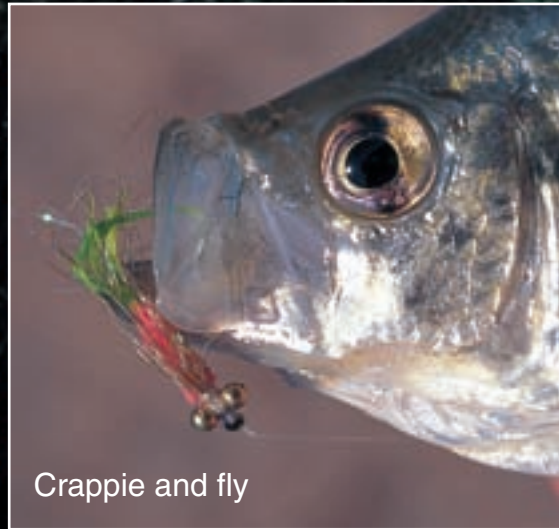


robber fly, Sedgwick County

Shoal Creek, Cherokee County



*Daylight stretches long, providing time to live.*



Crappie and fly



fly box

bullfrogs, Pratt County



American elm, Miami County







farm pond, Comanche County



sailboats, Douglas County

coneflowers, Linn County





white-tailed fawns, Barber County

*Young grow, plants  
mature, and life is at a  
zenith.*

*Then comes change.  
Shadows slant, the air  
cools. Breezes whisper  
from the north.*



Rio Grande brood, Pratt County

*Autumn arrives.*

*Migrants join residents, and Kansas wildlife  
abounds. Marsh and field hum with activity.*

*Dew falls, and tawny grasses ripen.*



sandhill cranes at sunrise, Stafford County

*Color builds to crescendo. Plants shut down, trapping sugars and igniting chemical changes that result in red and gold and orange.*

*Fall is a season of glory.*





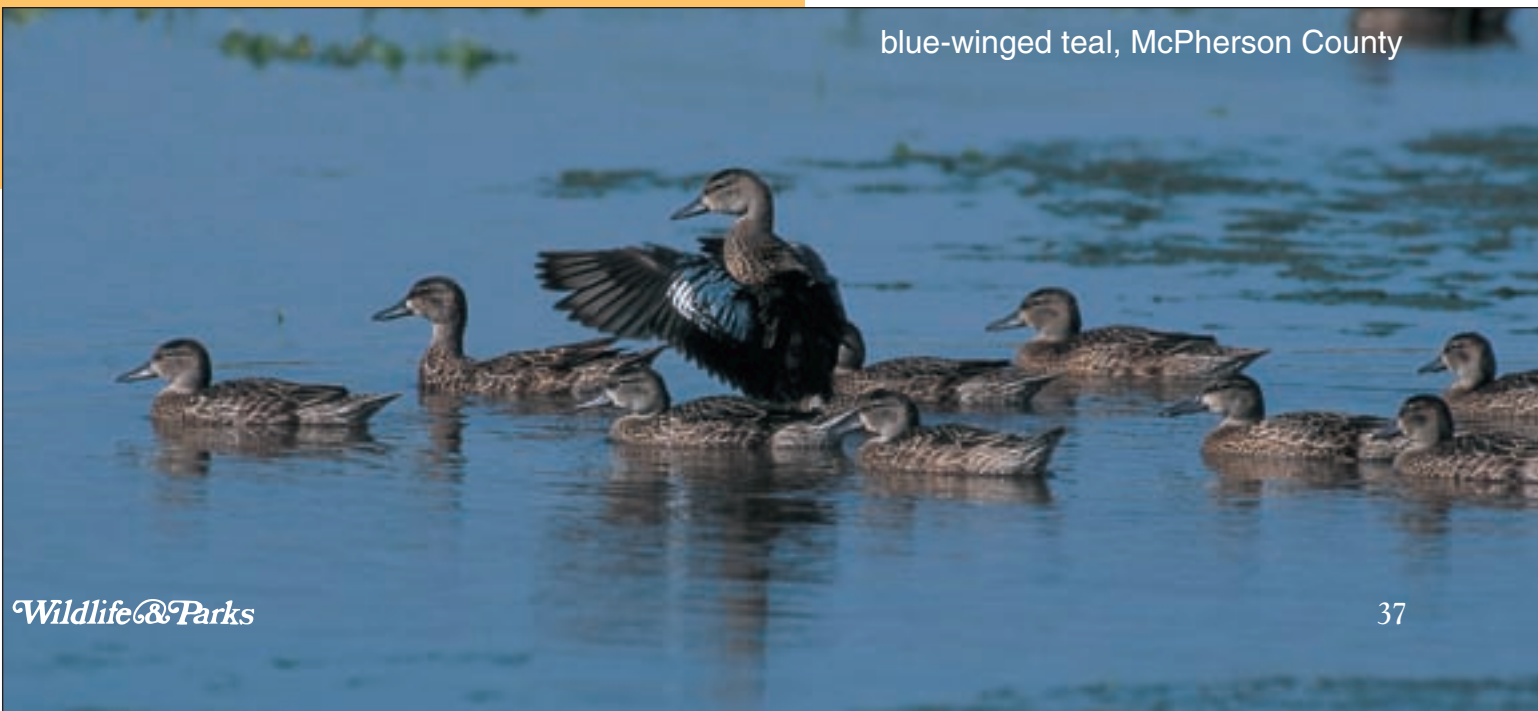
prairie, Pratt County





great blue heron, Pratt County

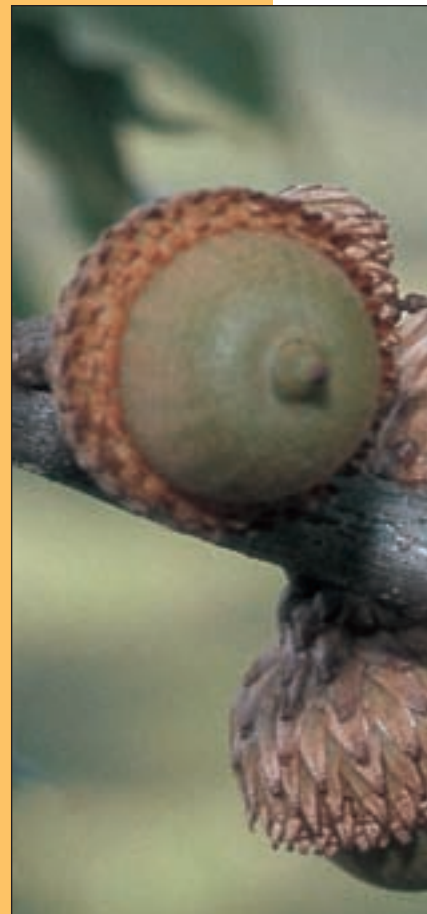
blue-winged teal, McPherson County



*Mast fills the woodlands, and the storehouse is complete. Even so, there is seldom enough to feed a wild surplus through winter.*

*Difficulties come later.*

*But for now, life revels in a wondrous kaleidoscope of beauty and easy living.*



fall color, Linn County







acorns, Leavenworth County



sugar maple, Linn County

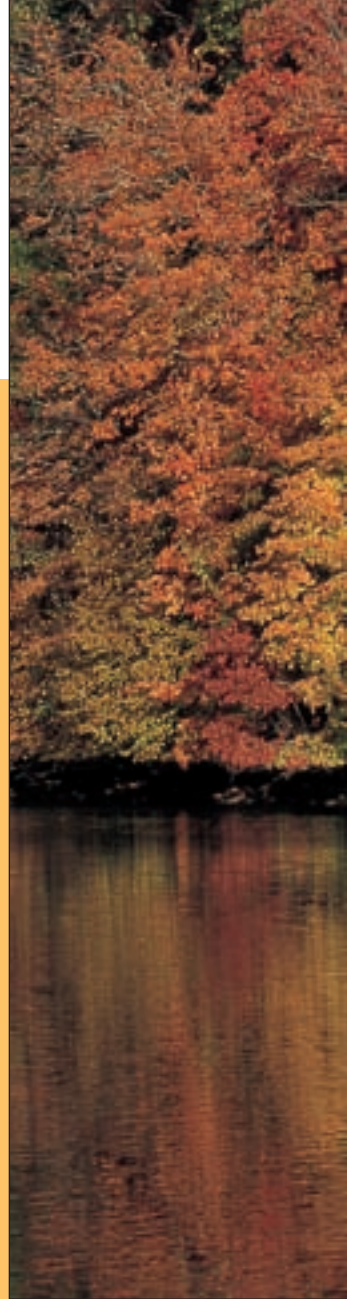


bittersweet berries, Linn County





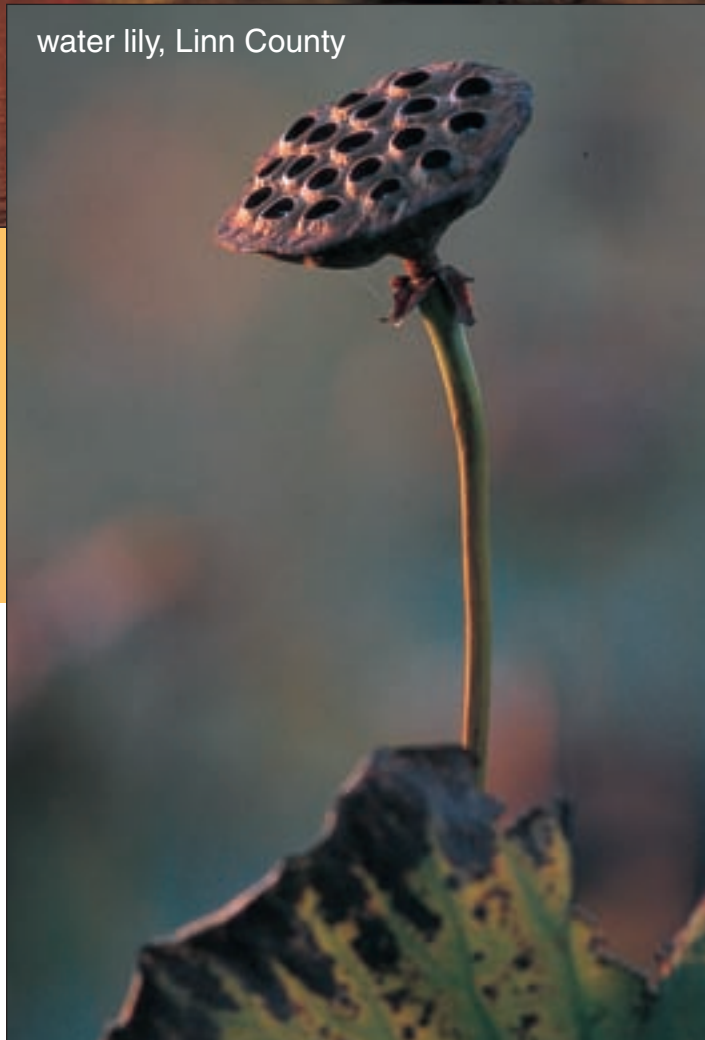
gray squirrel, Jefferson County





LaCygne Reservoir, Linn County

water lily, Linn County



*Too soon, another year passes. Leaves  
turn loose, cold settles, and the hemi-  
sphere stands by.*

*The living face their greatest test, and  
some will prevail.*

*And as always, the cycle continues...*

winter sky, Doniphan County



# Backlash

by Mike Miller

## The Wonders Of Modern Technology

I'm a little bit old school – that is I like older things that are time-tested and reliable. Okay, okay, I like new stuff, but I like it in the old-style design. Casting reels are a good example. I've never warmed up to the modern reels shaped like race cars. Why a casting reel should be aerodynamic, I'll never know. I prefer the form of the old Ambassador 5000s. I'll accept magnetic spool control, added ball bearings and smoother drags, in fact, I really like those features, but I prefer the old design.

My fishing boat is eight years old, and while I'll admit gazing lustfully at some of the new models, my old Ranger is all I need. Alright, it's probably not as much my old school attitude as it is my paycheck not increasing as quickly as boat prices.

I'll admit I'm weak and not immune to the temptation of new stuff. Take pickups, for instance. I loved my former pickup. In fact, when I had owned it for several years, I remember saying that I would drive it for a long, long time. It was all the truck I needed. But after five years and 80,000 miles, Chevy came out with a model I couldn't ignore. It was bigger, more comfortable, and of course, more expensive. I gave in and bought the new truck. Now *it's* all the truck I'll ever need.

Until recently, I'd remained loyal to my old fish finders. I have a simple flasher at the bow and an in-dash flasher and paper graph on the console. I'd considered an LCG (liquid crystal graph) for the console, and I guess it wasn't so much that I'm old school but that I couldn't find an LCG with enough resolution to replace the paper graph, until last year. After studying the new models for several months, I ordered a new LCG.

As I opened the box covered with color pictures of the unit and its amazing resolution, I marveled at the technology. The graph was what I was looking for – dense pixels for detailed display, zoom functions, temperature readout, and I can upgrade it to include map GPS when I save some more money. To heck with old school, this is modern technology at its finest.

I was happy with my new purchase until I started to install it. My old units were installed by the dealer, but I'd put fish finders on other boats, so I wasn't intimidated. I should have been. My graph was old enough that none of the screw holes matched the new brackets, so I drilled new holes in the console and on the transom. The transducer cable had to be threaded through a channel in the gunnel. I thought I'd just tie a string to the old transducer cable

before I removed it and pull the new cable back down the channel. Yeah, right.

The string broke when the old cable was about half way down the channel, which was jammed full of steering cables, motor wires and other necessary equipment. Thinking I could push the new cable through the channel lasted about 20 frustrating minutes. Then I had an idea. If I could get a small hose threaded through the channel, I could tape the end of the transducer cable onto it and pull the hose back through.

Two and a half hours later it worked. My new LCG worked great in the garage and for about two hours on its maiden voyage. Then it went haywire, reading 246 feet of water in a lake I know has no water deeper than 40 feet. Ahh, modern technology.

I called the company for help and experienced another wonder of modern technology – automated phone systems. While I listened to how important my call was and that all of the representatives were helping other customers, I began to worry that everyone who had purchased one of these new LCGs was calling with the same problems.

When a real person answered, he told me they were upgrading the software and that I could download the new version from a chip they'd send me. I could wait a week, but the walleye fishing was going to break loose any day, so I pleaded with my new friend in customer service to hurry.

A week later I still hadn't received my chip, so I called again. I nearly had the recorded messages and advertisements memorized before a living person came on the line. This representative told me they had not mailed the chips because they were upgrading the upgrade. The newest version of the software would be sent within the week.

To make a long story not as long, the first chip didn't work. The second chip upgraded my software, but the unit still wouldn't work. Then I was assured that a new transducer would fix my problems. I believed them and went through the torture of installing the new transducer cable through the wire channel. It wasn't any easier the second time, and the unit still didn't work.

Finally, I sent the whole mess back to the company, and within a week I had a new LCG and transducer. I reinstalled everything just before leaving for a fishing trip to Canada. It worked! I really like the new unit now, regardless what I called it on those long hours in the garage installing, uninstalling and reinstalling it. I swear, this is all the LCG I'll ever need.

