

KANSAS

Wildlife & Parks

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On Point

by Mike Hayden



No Lines, No Waiting

The Internet has brought about an enormous change in the way we live, work, and interact with others. For many sportsmen and women, going online is the quickest and easiest way to plan outdoor trips, allowing them to reach their outdoor destinations faster, cheaper, and better informed.

The department's website (www.kdwp.state.ks.us) is an important tool in our continuing effort to provide quality customer service. Below is a sampling of the information and services currently available on the site, as well as what is planned in the near future:

Online License Sales

Kansas hunting, fishing, and furharvesting licenses, boat registration renewals, and various stamps are available for direct electronic purchase. This popular feature accounted for nearly \$750,000 in transactions last year.

The department will soon add hunter education duplicate cards and is developing plans for online big game permits and park permits, as well as online park reservations.

Fishing, Waterfowl, and Park Reports

Fishing reports are updated weekly, listing by species the chance for success, the average size of fish being caught, and the most successful baits and methods at most lakes the department manages.

Waterfowl reports are also updated weekly from early September through March. These reports cover the major marshes, waterfowl areas, and reservoirs throughout the state, with information on the number of waterfowl present, water conditions, expected hunting success, and general comments about the area.

State park managers help keep you informed through the Park Managers' Forum. These reports detail special events and other items of interest at each of our 24 state parks.

News Releases

The department's weekly news release is updated every Thursday. Previous releases are archived for one month. We will soon add a new news item every day, and make the archived copies available for up to one year.

Brochures

Hunting and fishing regulation summaries, the Walk-In Hunting Area (WIHA) and FISH atlases, as well as a selection of other publications can be downloaded. More than 150 brochures on hunting, fishing, state parks, wildlife areas, and nongame animals can also be ordered over the internet. The department will continue to update and improve the quality of available maps and brochures.

Education

Here you will find class listings for all scheduled hunter education courses, as well as information on bowhunting, boating, and furharvesting education. You can also learn more about the Wildlife Education Service, Outdoor Wildlife Learning (OWLs) sites in the state, and the Becoming an Outdoors-Woman program.

Legislative Update

During the legislative session, the website can keep you informed on issues that affect the natural resources of Kansas. This page is updated every Friday, providing a summary of proposed legislation, as well as the department's position on each bill.

While the website is an excellent information resource, not all facets are truly interactive. Traffic to our site is increasing (over 750,000 page requests in April), and the department intends to improve the site to make your visit as efficient as possible. As we develop the internet services, getting licenses, permits, maps, brochures, and information about Kansas outdoor recreation will be easier and quicker than ever before. Let us know what you want by sending suggestions to feedback@wp.state.ks.us.

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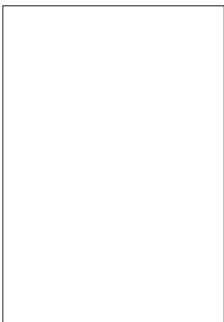
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Front Cover: A Kansas hiker pauses to enjoy the view from Table Mound hiking trail at Elk City State Park. Mike Blair filmed the scene with a 55mm lens, f/11 @ 1/125 sec. **Back Cover:** Nursery bats encrust the ceiling of a Kansas cave. Mike Blair captured the colony with a 24mm lens, f/16 @ 1/250th sec.



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

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Golly Guano, Batman!

by Ken Brunson
biodiversity coordinator, Pratt

photos by Mike Blair

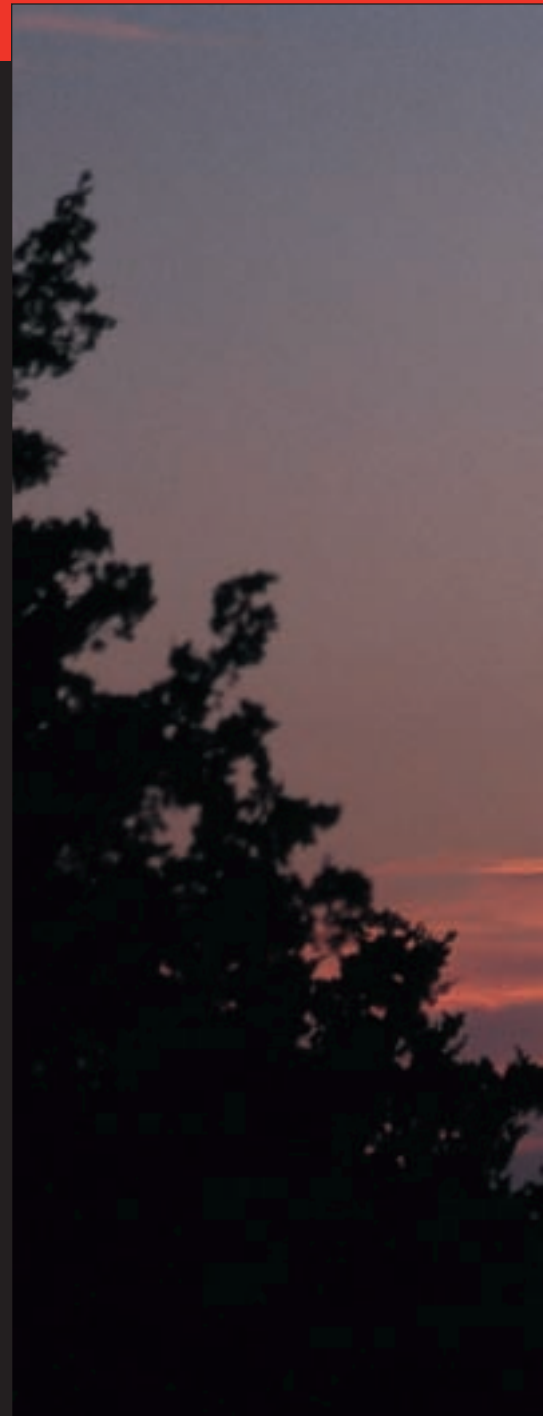
A maternity colony of cave myotis provides a fascinating study of Kansas bats. But crawling into caves to count bats is not for the faint of heart!

I sized up the earthly orifice as just bigger than what my half-century frame would fill. It was a Kansas cave, but it looked more like a burrow. A slight wave of anxiety swept over me as I thought about squeezing under a menacing rock the size of a '65 Volkswagen. Trying to hide my concern, I asked, "how far is that

tight crawl?" With a chastising glance, Stan Roth quipped, "You can make it." I knew what that meant.

Spending the last decade following this human mole into places ill-designed for human habitation, I knew there would be no luxury of *easy* access. It's simply whether there is enough

room to force your body through the tight, dark crevices. For those of claustrophobic persuasion, it's a nightmare come alive. To Roth, Lawrence High School Biology teacher and researcher who's led hundreds of students into such places, it's just whether the hole is large enough to get into and obtain data for the biological





record.

The unknown of the dark has always tweaked our curiosities. Add furry little animals silently swooping on membranous wings, and it's the perfect environment for superstitious mystery. I've never felt more intrusive than when visiting Kansas cave bats. At the same time, hardly anything

is more fascinating.

The bats we were visiting this hot, summer day were cave myotis, *Myotis velifer*. Rather homely as bats go, the cave myotis is about the size of a house mouse with wings. Of the 15 bat species known to inhabit Kansas, this one is most common, occurring in caves and in man-made structures

such as barns. Maternity colonies of mostly females with their single babies (pups) can number in the several thousands. Returning from southern wintering areas by mid-April, cave myotis females find their traditional barns or caves for producing and raising young. Our search in mid-July, a month after birthing, would hope-



The author peers apprehensively at the entrance to a cave in southcentral Kansas. Summer maternity colonies of cave myotis may hold several thousand bats.

fully confirm yet another maternity colony.

The cave, like many other eroded gypsum sinkholes and caves Roth has shown me, harbored cliff break ferns, poison-ivy, porcupine quills, wood rat scat, and complementary ticks near the entrance. Our above-ground photographer, Mike Blair, who has probably spent more time in the outdoors under a wide range of threatening circumstances than he has in his own bed, looked at both

of us with that *you must be crazy* expression. But down we went into that little crack in the earth.

Perhaps our adventure would find the bones of the poor soul from which this wild tract of drainage owed its name: Deadman Creek. It was a short belly-crawl under that keystone rock, the length of which I sweated dislodging it. Whew! Inside, my headlamp lit a slightly widening passage. I could see Roth's light ahead as we made the

relatively short crawl over gypsum stones that unmercifully scrape the knees of unnatural visitors. Light sparkled off of small, crystalline gyp stalactites. Dew droplets accentuated the fascinating ceiling art of creative erosion. And there was a distinctive ammonia smell. That meant there were definitely more than a few bats present! We could hear them squeaking and fluttering about their black domain. A slight turn to the left and through another tight squeeze, and we saw a few bats swirling in the dark cavern. It was a relatively large room, about the size of two Volkswagen buses, with a slight gleam of light coming from its dome through a narrow chimney. I clunked my hard hat against the rock ceiling, reminding me of the awkwardness I felt in the sunken sanctuary. Roth pulled his bandanna up over his nose as our disturbance began to arouse additional bats from their upside-down perches. I mimicked my mentor.

It was not necessarily because of the nasty smell, although the huge pile of bat guano in the room was repulsive. Instead, we breathed through bandannas to help prevent histoplasmosis, a fungus-related lung infection that can be contracted in this kind of close quarters. While usually not fatal, the disease can usually be avoided by simple precautions. Rabies, which comes to mind when bats are mentioned, is another matter. It is highly fatal, but very few bats have it. In fact, the incidence of rabies in wild bats is less than 1 percent, much lower than that for raccoons, skunks and coyotes. Roth has crawled these



Ken Brunson Photo

The mountain behind Stan Roth is actually a pile of bat droppings, or guano. This small cave held an estimated 3,000 bats, mostly cave myotis. The photo below shows a cave myotis with a days-old nursing pup.

small caves for nearly four decades, dragging willing, wide-eyed high school students along for the best in experiential field biology. The probability of rabies is low enough to make hardly a blip on the concern radar.

So we were in the belly of a Gyp Hills cave with thousands of cave myotis mothers and young. Bats always expend waste as they take flight. This explained the two-foot deep mound of guano in the middle of the maternity cavern. Unfortunately, Roth and I prevented a significant amount of new bat urine and droppings from reaching the guano pile,

much to our displeasure. As the maddening fury of the myotis colony was unleashed on us, we quickened our counting. Such



guano piles are very high in phosphorus because of the bats' principal diet of insects. Large bat colonies, especially those of the Mexican free-tailed bat that inhabit larger caves in Oklahoma and southward, historically yielded enough guano for regular mining of fertilizer. But not Gentry Cave, the one we visited. It could barely hold two old hardheads with hardhats.

According to one of the most prominent bat biologists in North America, Dr. Jerry Choate of Fort Hays State University, *Myotis velifer* was always found in these small caves. However, they have

adapted to buildings as well. That's why many large barns with interior graineries or lofts are often homes to maternity colonies of this species. Several such barns occur in southcentral Kansas. Most of these barn owners have come to appreciate the absence of mosquitoes in their farmyards and have left these natural predators alone. This mutually-beneficial arrangement has served the cave myotis well. While I'd rather visit myotis in their natural cave habitat, they are truly fun to watch swarming out of old barns at dusk. Like all North American bats, cave myotis have small eyes

and depend mostly on their built-in sonar for detecting prey.

In spite of their ability to echolocate prey and obstacles, a number of bats clumsily crashed into us as they fought for air space. Pelted with bat urine and surrounded by frantic fliers, we exited Gentry Cave. We estimated about 3,000 bats in the cave — a typical colony for this species. In other small caves of the Red Hills, we often find a few big brown, some smaller Eastern pippistrelle, and occasional Townsend's big-eared bats, along with cave myotis.

Return to the surface was a

shock. The air in Gentry Cave was strong but cool. Above ground, we were tortured by the hot summer wind. I felt tiny lice and mites crawling on me, but they would later yield to a long shower. Like other wild animals, bats have to tolerate a variety of pesky parasites.

Just like the bats in my neighbor's barn, the young myotis of Gentry Cave would soon be flying. Once the entire colony was airborne, the bats might fly to transitional caves or they might continue to use the maternity roost. Around the middle of September, they migrate to



The teeth of bats look menacing, but bats do not bite unless handled carelessly. Bats feed on insects such as moths, where such teeth are useful in capturing and eating prey. While bats can see, they rely on echo-location to find and catch prey in darkness.



Bats also roost in old barns and graneries. While it may seem a little creepy to have bats in your barn, each of these bats can eat up to half its weight in insects each night. A good-size colony could eat a lot of mosquitoes.

southern winter hibernacula. Until then, they spend every night eating up to half of their own body weight in flying insects. Snakes and hawks lurk outside cave entrances, hoping to catch slower bats or those that become temporarily grounded.

A colony of these small cave bats is yet another great attraction of the sometimes subtle but always fascinating Kansas outback. Just like other great concentrations of wildlife species, a bat colony is an efficient ecosystem – a working mass of predators, prey, parasites, scavenging beetles, inputs and outputs, important habitats, diverse ecological systems and just plain amazement.

Sometimes, the most interesting Kansas places are out-of-the-way secrets. Often, they are right under our noses — or feet — in discrete little portals to grand Kansas adventure. As I scrubbed off the last of the Red Hills mud, I smiled with sheer delight for yet one more privileged day with Stan Roth and the little cave bats of Kansas. 🦇

Natural History of the Cave Myotis

- Occurs from Central America to southwestern U.S. into Kansas.
- Inhabits caves and buildings.
- Winter roosts (hibernacula) include caves, but it is unknown exactly where particular colonies migrate.
- Males follow females during spring migrations to maternity colonies.
- Females give birth to one pup in last half of June, and males have left by that time.
- Females forage nightly and return to nurse young.
- Young can fly in about three weeks.
- Mothers and young will leave maternity roosts and use transitional sites such as barns, mines, and caves before leaving for their winter hibernacula in mid-September.
- They normally leave roosts at dusk to feed and may conduct another foraging trip before dawn.
- A variety of flying insects such as beetles and moths make up a large portion of their diet.
- Lifespan may be as long as six years.

Go Take A Hike!

by Kathy Pritchett (and park staff)
Parks Division, Pratt

photo by Mike blair

A variety of trails cross our state parks and public lands, and they offer outstanding opportunities to see the state's outdoor wonders.



Horsethief Trail, Kanopolis

Americans have always been a people on the move. Native Americans were nomads, roaming to find game or more productive crop fields or to avoid pressure from neighboring tribes. European settlers likewise kept moving, away from crowds, structure, and restriction. They moved toward dreams and hopes of a better tomorrow. Americans today move as well, but often the motivation is fitness – physical and mental – and hiking trails provide both.

Kansas state parks boast a wide variety of trails. Many are handicapped-accessible, and some are designed to enhance wildlife viewing. Other trails are primarily educational, with signs and displays that explain the surrounding habitat or history. Many are multi-use trails, shared by hikers, bikers, horse riders, roller-bladers, snow-shoers and skiers. A very few even put motorized vehicles, such as ATVs or snowmobiles, into the mix.

Trails in Kansas state parks are definitely “of the people, by the people, and for the people,” as volunteers and their contributions play a major role in construction, maintenance, and promotion. Trail user groups and friends groups contribute money and labor for trail work. Their contributions often make the 20 percent match required to secure Recreational Trails grants. This program alone is responsible for many of the trails in Kansas, both in state parks and communities.

This article will highlight only the designated hiking trails in Kansas state parks. Motor vehicle permits are required to drive a vehicle into Kansas state parks. Visitors may purchase daily or annual vehicle permits. Two parks, Sand Hills State Park and the Prairie Spirit Trail, do not require motor vehicle permits, but do require a daily or annual pass.



Oakridge Trail, Cross Timbers

Cedar Bluff

The Threshing Machine Canyon Nature Trail takes visitors on a mile-long hike, just north and west of the Bluffton area. This canyon was a station site for the historic Butterfield Overland Dispatch Trail during the mid-1800s. Originally named Bluffton Station, its name comes from an event that took place in 1867. A group of freighters transporting a threshing machine to Salt Lake City for Brigham Young's farmers decided to camp at the base of a rock bluff. Indians attacked and killed everyone in the party and set fire to the threshing machine. To this day, the names and dates of many travelers from this era are still visible in the limestone bluffs in Threshing Machine Canyon. (This is within the wildlife refuge and is closed to all traffic from September 1 through March 10.)

Cheney

Giefer Nature Trail is a 1/8-mile trail through the two major habitats of the park: riparian woodlands and mixed-grass prairie. The trail markers explain the benefits of the mix, and describe the various plants along the trail. Built with the assistance of the Young Adult Conservation Corps (YACC) in 1978, the trail is named after the family who originally owned the land on which the trail now winds.

Along the shoreline at Cheney Reservoir, near the outlet of Spring Creek, is a swampy area abundant with wildlife. Park staff understood the educational value of the area, but weren't sure how to make it accessible without destroying the habitat. The answer was an elevated boardwalk, built in 1998 and financed by a Recreational Trail Fund grant. Inmate crews assisted during the two-year construction

period, and an AmeriCorps team designed and built the signs. The Spring Creek Wildlife Observation Trail is now a half-mile, handicapped-accessible, self-guided nature trail. Visitors are confined to the boardwalk to minimize disturbance to wildlife. In 2000, the trail received the designation as a Millennium Trail.

Clinton

The 8.1-mile Blue Trail and the 12.8-mile White Trail are single track, dirt trails, featuring rocks, tree roots, creek crossings, rolling hills, and mile markers. Each trail is blazed in its corresponding color and connecting trails are blazed in both. The two trails are roughly parallel and the easier Blue Trail is nearer the water while the White Trail follows various ravines and limestone outcroppings. Many short trails connect the Blue and White trails so that round trips can be made

by taking either the Blue or White trail one direction, then connecting to the other trail to return. Both trails wind through the shoreline forest of hickory, oak, Osage orange and redbud. Wildlife is abundant along the trails.

The Cross Country Ski Trail is a mowed, 10-foot-wide ski and bike trail on the north side of the park. It includes a bridge and a rocky creek crossing, as well as spectacular lake views from the crest of Bunker Hill.

These trails were developed and are maintained by area volunteers under the supervision of the Kansas Trails Council and with the cooperation of the Corps of Engineers and Clinton State Park. Volunteer workdays are usually held on the first Saturday of each month.

Crawford

The Spiderleg Bridge Trail is an interpretive trail one-half mile long. There was a military outpost on the branch of Drywood Creek that is located within the park ground. The trail features the remains of a two-room cabin, a well that soldiers used to get drinking water from, and the Spiderleg Bridge which was built in such a manner that it resembles a spider's legs. The trail winds through riparian wetland along Drywood Creek. Deer Run Nature Trail is an interpretive trail designed to inform hikers about the importance of habitat and plant life. Lengthened this past winter, this trail winds



Perry Horse Trail, Perry

between the dam and fish hatchery, allowing hikers to experience creek crossings, wooded paths, and open grassland. This trail is 1/2-mile long and great for kids.

Cross Timbers

Trails at Cross Timbers State Park are found in two areas. The trailhead for the Blackjack Multi-Use Trail is located at Holiday Hill. Difficulty level is moderate for this 1-mile trail. Grade school children should not find this trail too difficult. Blackjack Trail's open canopy allows sunshine to filter through, and the observant hiker may see a deer or a three-toed box turtle. The Oak Ridge Trail is located behind the Holiday Hill shower house. This half-mile trail is connected with a spur trail (marked in white) to the Blackjack Trail for those who want a longer hike. The area

offers a variety of tree species, including American elm, red cedar, post oak, red bud, and rough-leaved dogwood. This trail is an excellent choice for beginning hikers and smaller children. The Overlook Trail can be accessed from either the Overlook Point Area or the Woodson Cove Area. The trail is 1.25 miles long and has a moderate difficulty level, with many sandstone rock outcroppings. The trail requires hiking up and down the hills, but the views from various points of the trail are well worth the hike.

The most prominent feature of the Overlook trail is the thick carpet of lichens and fungi.

Other trails are located at Toronto Point. The Chautauqua Hills Trail offers the hiker yet another unique type of landscape to explore. The trail is rated as moderate. The Blue loop is a 1.5-mile hike over rocky hills and takes the average hiker 45 to 60 minutes to walk through both prairie and forest habitat. The Yellow loop is 4 miles long and has three primitive camping sites available. A few small feeder creeks are encountered as the trail borders Toronto Lake. The Red loop, 8 miles through tall grass prairie and woodland, offers the mountain biker a wide range of terrain to negotiate. An interpretive brochure is available at the park office for this trail.

The Ancient Trees trailhead is south of the parking lot accessed from the first right turn at the

Toronto Point Permit Station. This 1-mile trail features post oaks that date to early 1700 in a part of the Cross Timbers region the Osage Indians claimed as hunting territory. The interpretive signs along this trail tie the age of each tree to a historic local or national event. The terrain is moderately difficult and is for hiking only. A small overhang cave is a favorite stop for younger hikers. Historic remnants of the first settlers in this area are found in the rock fence that borders part of the trail.

Eisenhower

Crooked Knee Horse Trail was named after the knee injury that Ike received during his time at West Point Academy. Crooked Knee has approximately 18 miles of continuous trails around the park. The trail passes through wooded areas, along the edge of Melvern Lake, and crosses creeks that feed the lake. Hikers can see turkey, quail, and other wildlife on the trail.

A 1.5-mile, self-guided interpretive trail is located near Doud Camp

El Dorado

The Horse Trail is an 11-mile multi-purpose trail that takes the user through several different types of terrain. The trail winds its way through open prairies, along shorelines, over hills, and through wooded areas.

The Mountain Bike Trail is 1.5 miles long and gives mountain bikers and hikers, of all levels, a place to escape and enjoy the outdoors. The varied terrain tests users skills and knowledge.

The City Trail is roughly one mile in length and connects to the City of El Dorado's Linear Trail. This part of the trail runs through

the park and allows hikers and bikers a different entrance into El Dorado State Park. This is a concrete trail with lighting throughout.

The Walnut River Handicapped-accessible Trail, slated for completion in September 2003, will be 2.5 miles long and will wind through the Walnut River Camping Area. This trail will connect to the Linear Trail, allowing hikers and bikers to make a loop through the campground, then tie back into the City Trail. This trail will also be handicapped-accessible.

The Shady Creek Wildlife Trail will be 1.5 miles in length when completed in September 2003, providing hikers with a variety of wildlife and wildflower viewing opportunities. It will wind its way through tall grass prairie and a wetland.

Elk City

The Table Mound Hiking Trail, 2.75 miles long, has trailheads at the Scenic Overlook near the dam and at Squaw Creek Cove Campground, northwest of the

State Park office. Hikers may see many different and picturesque scenes on this long trail. Starting at the Scenic Overlook, hikers go north .2 miles atop the Table Mound along the edge of a 20-foot bluff. After dropping through a crack in a rock and going down to the foot of the bluff, the trail turns sharply south. The trail passes along vertical rock walls, boulder fields and cave-like formations, then drops down through a ravine and crosses the county road. For the next 1.9 miles, the trail winds through forested hills and crosses three small creeks. This particular trail is blazed with blue paint markings and is considered a moderately strenuous hike. This trail has been designated as a National Recreation Trail under the U.S Department of the Interior's National Trail System.

The .66-mile Green Thumb Nature Trail is an interpretive nature loop trail with its trailhead in the Squaw Creek Campground. Features of the trail include two wooden footpaths, which are about 30-40 feet in length, and



Oakridge Trail, Cross Timbers



Horsethief Trail, Kanopolis

interpretive signing informing hikers of the native plants and animals. The trail is described as moderately strenuous. At the top of the hill, the surrounding trees frame a spectacular view of Elk City Reservoir.

The Post Oak Self-Guiding Nature Trail, also .66 mile, located on the top of Table Mound, is a relatively easy hike. The trailhead is located at the Scenic Overlook near the dam. The old-growth forest setting is indicative of the region. A wide variety of tree species can be found here with many trees being over 200 years old. A self-guiding brochure helps visitors learn along the hike. This trail has been designated as a National Recreation Trail under the U.S Department of the Interior's National Trail System.

Fall River

Two new trails have recently opened in the park. Casner Creek is found at the Fredonia Bay area of the park, and it is an easy trail to

hike or mountain bike, traversing pristine native grasslands. Turkey Run Trail takes the hiker and mountain biker through both prairie and woodland. These two trails round out the other three trails offered at Fall River State Park.

Glen Elder

The Waconda Nature Trails are currently being developed. Chautauqua Trail, at a half-mile, is a walking trail near a campground. Sandy Point Trail, 6.5 miles, is a hiking/mountain biking, multi-use trail. The Waconda Nature Trail is a mile-long hiking trail.

Hillsdale

Hillsdale has a 24-mile trail system.

Kanopolis

The Buffalo Tracks Canyon Nature Trail is part of the National Trails System. This nature trail is 1.5 miles long, round-trip. The trail wanders along Bison Creek where buffalo once watered. Numbered yellow signs correspond to a brochure that gives information about the plants, wildlife, history and geology of the trail.

The Kanopolis Multi-Use Trails consist of four trails that are interconnected to make up approximately 25 miles of trail open to horse riders, mountain bikers and hikers. There are three trailheads; Trailhead A is in Rockin' K Campground and is the starting point for horse riders who are camped. Trailhead B is located in Horsethief Canyon near the boat ramp and vault toilet. It is for horse riders who are riding for the day, and Trailhead C is also in Horsethief Canyon. It is for hikers and mountain bikers. The trails are a series of loops that come together at either gates or trailheads. There are numerous creek crossing throughout the trails, some of which could be impassable during high water. The length of each trail depends on the route chosen. The four trails are as follows:

Rockin' K Trails connect the Rockin' K Campground to the rest of the trails. They consists of an orange route and a blue route, each of which are approximately 2 miles long.

Horsethief Trails start at trailheads B and C. There is a blue route that is 1.4 miles long and an orange route that is 4.1 miles long. These trails wander through small

Nothing can ruin a scenic hike faster than trash, vandalism, or graffiti along a trail. Damage such as that shown here is senseless and remains visible for decades. Always respect our precious Kansas resources and leave them undisturbed for others to enjoy.



wooded canyons and along canyon rims.

Prairie Trails start at Gate 1 and run through Red Rocks Canyon and along the lakeshore. A 1.9-mile orange trail stays high on the prairie. The 4.1-mile blue route runs along the shore.

Alum Creek Trails are the longest trails in the system. The orange route is 3.8 miles and the blue route is 4.5 miles. This is a continuous loop totaling 8.3 miles. There are two short cuts that reduce the distance to 5.5 miles. These trails go through pastures, wooded creek bottoms and by some interesting rock formations.

A 2- to 3-mile mountain bike trail south of Eagle Point Campground at Kanopolis is under development. This trail will be primarily for mountain bikers, open to hikers, but closed to horse riders. It is being developed by Team LATRR out of Lindsborg for a race in July 2003 and will be ideal for beginning mountain bikers or those who like to stay in shape.

Meade

For hikers who like to identify various trees, grasses, flowers and birds, a nature trail has been marked at the northwestern corner of the lake. The trail takes hikers around the park.

Milford

The Pipeline Trail is the beginning of a segmented trail system that links all of the park's campgrounds together and acts as a shortcut between areas.

The Waterfall Trail is a .6-mile walk that leads through woodland and prairie habitats. A man-made waterfall and pond are featured at the trailhead.

The Crystal Trail is 2.2 miles

long and passes by an old quarry. Deer are often seen along open fields and near food plots. Bald eagle watching is excellent from November through March, along the water's edge.

Eagle Ridge Equestrian Trail has more than 8 miles of trails on some of the most scenic and diverse areas Milford has to offer. This multi-use trail is also open to hiking.

The wildlife viewing tower is accessed from a wrap-around staircase, which rises 21 feet to the top platform. Food plots attract a variety of wildlife, and best viewing is at dusk and dawn.

The 1.5-mile Old River Bluff Trail joins Milford State Park's Eagle Ridge Trail with Junction City's Riverwalk Trail. The trail allows for a one-way trail ride, trail walk or bike ride of 17.5 miles.

Perry

Park staff are working on hiking trails for the park and currently have only biking and equestrian trails open. The Perry State Park Bike Trail is 15 miles of single track trail. The volunteers of the Kansas Trail Council designed, constructed, and maintain the trail. Mountain bikers, from beginners to experts, will enjoy the trail.

Perry State Park Horse Trails and Camp are located northwest of the park office. The trails total approximately 25 miles, some within the state park and some on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers public use land. The trails are suitable for the average rider. The trails pass through a blend of woods and open fields.

Pomona

The 1-mile West Trail is open to



Oakridge Trail, Cross Timbers

hiking and biking. It passes through a wooded stream bottom, crossing the stream in two places. The lower stream crossing is a large bridge and deck in a scenic wooded setting. The trail starts in the picnic area near the beach. There is also a trail head in Burning Heart Campground.

The East Trail starts at the park entrance and passes 1.5 miles through tallgrass prairie and wooded areas. It is open to hiking and biking. The trail comes out at Cedar Wind Campground and returns unless the loop that provides a shortened route is taken. The trail crosses several streams.

The half-mile Nature Trail is open to hiking and biking. It has an interesting rock bridge over a stream and passes through woody areas and a meadow with prairie wildflowers.

Prairie Dog

The Prairie Dog State Park Nature Trail consists of a scenic 1.4-mile hiking trail. The trail was funded by the National Recreational Trails Funding Act of 1991, and the department. Hikers often see white-tailed deer, ring-necked pheasants, bobwhite quail, coyotes, meadowlarks, robins, and bluebirds. Informational signs along the trail help identify species.

Prairie Spirit Trail

The trail is 32 miles of converted railbed, beginning in Ottawa and running through Princeton, Richmond, Garnett, and Welda. The trail has a hard-packed, crushed limestone surface through the rural areas and an asphalt surface through Garnett and Ottawa. The trail has moderate grades and numerous access points, allowing visitors to choose the length and difficulty level they prefer. Eventually, the trail should hook up with the City of Iola. Access is available at trailheads in each city. The trail crosses many streams and passes through a variety of wooded and grassland habitats.

Sand Hills

The Cottonwood Trail is a half-mile, self-guided interpretive trail on the north side of the park. Winding through woodlands of giant cottonwood trees and streams, it is a prime walk for bird-watching. A vault toilet and picnic tables are available at this trail.

The Dune Trail takes a one-mile trip to the top of a 40-foot sand dune, back through a wetland, then connecting to another trail loop. The 1.9-mile Prairie Trail winds through relatively level woods, prairie, and sand dunes.

The rest of the trails at Sand Hills



Table Mound Trail, Elk City

State Park are multi-use trails, meaning that hikers and horse riders share them. The Pond Trail starts on the north park boundary and leads for 1.5 miles around several large ponds in the center of the park. Wildlife observation blinds along the trail provide excellent viewing. The Rolling Hills Trail is the park's longest at 3.8 miles. In spring, the wildflowers along this trail are spectacular. The Bluestem Trail veers off from the Rolling Hills trail to wind 1.2 miles through waves of bluestem grass and over sand dunes. The Tallgrass Trail connects the Pond Trail for a 2.2 mile walk through the grasslands. It also connects with Rolling Hills Trail to make a 6-mile trek. The Woodland Trail winds for 2.2 miles through cottonwood trees and dogwood bushes.

Scott

Nature trails have been designed to accommodate hikers, horseback riders and naturalists. These trails provide excellent opportunities to observe wildlife such as turkey, deer, beaver, and bobcat. Big Spring Nature Trail is .3 of a mile, while the Lake Scott Bridle Trail, a

hiking/biking/equestrian trail, is 7 miles long.

Tuttle Creek

Fancy Creek offers 4 miles of mountain bike and hiking trail for advanced outdoor enthusiasts. This trail includes varying and rugged terrain and beautiful Kansas vistas. Winding through 4 miles of dense cedar forest into open native grassland, the trail also features rocky ridges and scenic overlooks.

Located across the lake at the Randolph State Park are more than 12 miles of equestrian trails that can also be enjoyed by hikers. The horse trails are accessible year-round; however, the south entrance of the park is closed during the winter.

The Spillway Area provides park users with a brand new handicapped-accessible hiking trail. Scenic views and interesting landscapes make up this half-mile trail. It also provides great opportunities to view wildlife. The parking area is located east of the boat ramp and now features handicapped-accessible restrooms. This short trail is great for all ages. The Cedar Ridge Trail in the Spillway Area is

the Coalition for Recreational Trails National ADA Trails Award winner for 2001.

The River Pond Area provides users with a short, attractive nature trail, featuring information stations. Adjacent to the Riverpond Campground, this trail is convenient for campers, and at just a quarter of a mile long, it is inviting for children and elderly hikers.

Webster

The Coyote Trail is a hiking trail featuring three loops. The first is a half-mile nature stroll. The second loop adds another half mile and for those wanting a longer hike, the third loop is 2 miles. Walking all three loops without backtracking takes the hiker just more than 3 miles. Hikers can experience the native grasses, trees and shrubs, cliffs, and bluffs. Wildlife watchers won't be disappointed on this trail.

Wilson

The Dakota Trail is a mile-long hiking/interpretive trail, located on a large hill in the center of the Hell Creek area. It has 12 interpretive stops that correspond with a self-guiding brochure. The trail surface is limestone screenings contained by landscape timbers. The hike is rigorous with some steep grades, and it provides a great overlook of the east and south portions of the lake. There is a 1/2-mile short-cut portion for those wanting a less stressful hike.

The Cedar Trail, located in the Otoe area of the park, is a new handicapped-accessible trail that is nearly complete. It is approximately 2/3 of a mile long, with an asphalt millings surface. It winds through an Eastern redcedar glen and open native grass. Food plots and tree plantings attract wildlife to the area. ♡

Trail Impressions

Three miles, the map said, four if I took the trail extension that dropped to lake level. I probably would; the description sounded interesting, mentioning rocky ledges and steep terrain. I wanted the exertion of a climb, and besides, the forest's young foliage would still permit glimpses of the lake.

The hike was solitary. Monday afternoon, April, and even though it was past 5 o'clock, city fitness buffs weren't likely to choose this remote location for an evening workout. I left alone with a camera and walking stick. Already this day, I had walked the open prairie trail of Horsethief Canyon at Kanopolis Reservoir, some 150 miles to the west. Now, I was in timber country, home country, the kind of place that occupied endless hours of my youth. It was good to be back.

There was no need to hurry. I settled into an easy pace, studying the umbrella leaves of Mayflowers and enjoying the timid beauty of violets along the path. It was a good trail, hard-packed but not imposing among the oaks and hickories. It was made for mountain bikes, and briefly I wished for one, to feel the rush of breeze on the downhill glides and the quiet sound of rolling wheels on rock. But the silent walk was just as good, and I continued.

Deer tracks etched in the fresh mud of the trail reminded me to watch for woodland creatures. Gray squirrels provided entertainment, dashing behind tree trunks in smug satisfaction that they had fooled me, while I felt the same because they hadn't. Cardinals and woodpeckers criss-crossed the canopy, splashing color against the green. A late sun probed the shadows, painting the forest gold.

I stopped at a wild lilac, surprised that it existed in such a place. The lavender flowers, pale in the understory's filtered light, held a wondrous scent. I leaned to a cluster, closed my eyes and drew a deep breath, instantly caught in an ageless moment. How can light and earth and time be wrapped in sweet aroma? Yet there they were, along with new understanding of things beyond sight. I knew the world in a greater way.

A trill began, and then another. Strangely in the light of day, a chorus of American toads gave voice. The 10-second bursts tempted me to find them, but I've played that woodland game before. In tiny pools formed at the apex of fallen trees, the males are as difficult to find as needles in haystacks. Their voices, beautiful – even haunting – play deceptively through the thick timber. So I stayed on the trail, content to listen to the half-dozen callers accompanied by the distant lapping of Perry's waves.

Now the trail led upward. I climbed steadily on a south-facing slope and entered the chinkapin oaks that always dominate such harsh sites. Short statures were balanced by their twisted and gnarled growth, adding a peculiar beauty to the scene. Among the chinkapins, it was lighter in the gathering dusk, since oak leaves are among the last to emerge. Wildflowers were more abundant than in the shadowy north coves of the taller forest. I stopped to photograph and then resumed my course.

A small sign said, "trailhead=>," and I found myself hoping I wasn't near the journey's end. I wished, too, that darkness wouldn't fall, that this time of solitude and reflection on Nature's grand stage would last awhile longer. It was spring and the air was warm. The trail was a source of discovery.

But you can't change things like that. Darkness always comes, sooner or later. That's why it's important to walk and learn while we can.

Mike Blair





What's New At The Pratt Fish Hatchery?

by Mark Kumberg
Pratt Fish Hatchery manager

photos by Mike Blair

At nearly 100 years old, the state's first hatchery is still producing millions of channel catfish, as well as a variety of other sport fish that all Kansas anglers enjoy.

The mission of the Fish Culture Section of the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks is to produce or acquire the species, sizes and number of fish requested by department personnel for stocking in Kansas public fishing waters, while maintaining adequate numbers of forage and brood fish. Fish hatcheries are the

backbone of this effort. The goal is to provide adequate fish for stocking to enhance fishing opportunities for the Kansas public. The culture section operates three extensive (earthen ponds) fish hatcheries located near Farlington, Meade, and Pratt. An intensive (concrete raceways) fish hatchery is located below the Milford Reservoir dam

near Junction City. Two satellite fish rearing ponds are located below the dams at Shawnee and Woodson state fishing lakes.

The Pratt Fish Hatchery is located two miles east and one mile south of Pratt on grounds shared with the department's Operations Office and the Education Center/Aquariums. Initial construction of the Pratt

hatchery began in 1905 with major construction following in 1911. There are presently 87 culture ponds and 2 concrete raceways with 70.48 surface acres of water.

The primary water supply for the Pratt hatchery is a 5-acre shallow reservoir located 1.5 miles west of the hatchery on the South Fork of the Ninescah River. The water distribution system is gravity flow from the river to the hatchery and all the way through the hatchery system.

The hatchery is staffed by a hatchery manager, two fisheries biologists, one hatchery assistant, and a fisheries technician. Temporary employees are utilized during the labor-intensive production seasons as needed.

In 1986, Wallop-Breaux legislation provided funding for the first major maintenance work to the facility. Four new drain lines were added, allowing many ponds to be harvested at the same time. Before this project, only one pond could be harvested per day.

In 1988, replacement of 40- to 50-year-old fish harvest structures began. These old concrete structures were badly deteriorated, cracked, and crumbling. So far, 65 of these structures have been replaced with modern "kettles." The top of the kettle structure is level with the pond bottom, so that fish must swim into it as the pond drains. The kettle base is 2 feet deeper than

the pond bottom, which creates a small pool to hold the fish. Each kettle has a 4-inch freshwater line to it, so the fish can be kept alive indefinitely after they are in the basin. Each is equipped with steps leading to the kettle, allowing personnel to remove the fish safely.

Harvest equipment includes buckets or nets for smaller fish, which are manually carried up to delivery trucks. A backhoe is utilized when harvesting ponds

containing larger fish. A net attached to the backhoe is filled with fish and then lifted and dumped into a hauling box.

Expansion of the fish house began in 1997. The original building was built in 1952 and was becoming too small for increasing demands. The 1,600-square-foot addition increased the useable space by 50 percent. New hatching apparatus for channel cat and walleye were fabricated and set up perma-



In addition to spawning channel catfish, biologists at the hatchery raise a variety of sport fish to fingerling, short and intermediate sizes, according to requests from fisheries managers.

nently. A driveway leading to the new building facilitates loading and unloading fish.

Fish species cultured at Pratt include walleye, palmetto bass (striped bass/white bass hybrid), sauger, saugeye, largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, channel catfish, bluegill sunfish, white amur, hybrid sunfish, and minnows. Adult brood fish are held year-round. The brood fish are rotated out of the system as they become too old for efficient spawning.

The production season normally kicks off in mid-March with the start of walleye hatching. Biologists across the state set nets in reservoirs to capture male and female walleyes. The females are stripped of their eggs at the lake site. Milt is



These tiny saugeye, a hybrid of a walleye and sauger, were hatched at the Pratt Hatchery. Some will be stocked at this size while others will be grown to a larger size before stocking

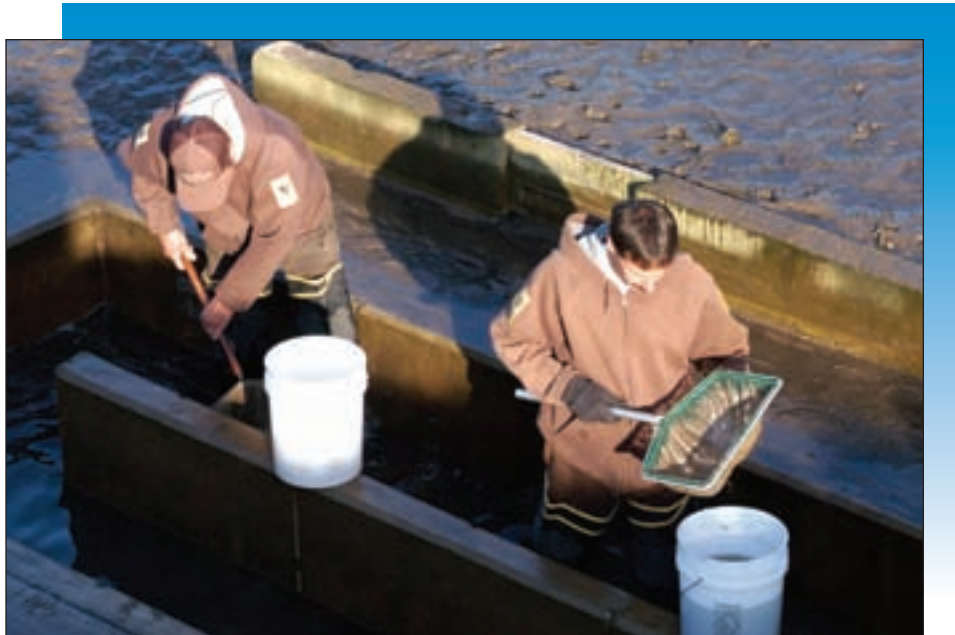
stripped from males and gently stirred in to fertilize the eggs. The eggs are then treated with a clay solution to reduce their natural adhesiveness. In the wild where walleye release their eggs along a rocky shoreline, this adhesiveness causes eggs to stick to the rocks until they hatch. In an artificial system, it can cause the eggs to clump together and die.

When the hatcheries receive walleye eggs, they are placed in special hatching jars that provide flow and keep them gently rolling. After about 10 days, the eggs hatch and the larval fish swim out of the jars and into holding tanks where they are kept for another two to six days before being stocked into state waters or hatchery grow-out ponds. Grow-out

ponds are fertilized with organic material to help promote zooplankton, the tiny organisms young fish eat.

Water quality parameters are checked frequently to ensure suitable conditions for the newly-hatched larval fish. The Pratt Hatchery normally hatches 10-20 million walleye eggs a year. In addition to walleye, saugeye (a hybrid between the female walleye and the male sauger) and sauger are hatched. These larval fish are either stocked directly into reservoirs or placed into hatchery grow-out ponds for an additional 40 days to increase their size up to about 2 inches. At this time, the larger fingerlings are distributed into waters across the state.

Palmetto bass, or wipers, are the next species to be cultured. This fish is the hybrid of the striped bass female and the white bass male. These newly-hatched fish normally arrive the first part of May. The tiny fry are held in hatchery tanks and fed brine shrimp for 3-5 days before being stocked into ponds for grow-out. After the month-long growing



More than 80 earthen ponds are used for fish production at the Pratt Hatchery. Recent improvements include the construction of concrete kettles in the ponds, pictured above. The kettles allow fish to be removed more efficiently.

period, the fingerlings are either stocked into lakes and reservoirs or trained to eat fish food and fed through the summer to intermediate size. These fish attain a size of 5-6 inches by October and are harvested and placed into state waters.

Channel Catfish spawning begins the middle of June. The males and females are placed into ponds with ratios of females being a little higher than males. When the water temperature reaches 75 degrees, spawning begins. Hatchery personnel place old-style 10-gallon cream cans into the ponds for spawning habitat. The male fish cleans out the can and then finds a receptive female. Both fish enter the cream can, and the female deposits eggs while the male fertilizes them. When spawning is completed, the male chases the female away and stays to guard the eggs. In the wild, the male would stay with the eggs and fan them with his tail to clean and oxygenate them. At the hatchery, workers remove the eggs from the can and place them into hatching batteries in the fish hatchery. The eggs are put into troughs containing metal paddles that gently move the eggs throughout the hatching process. After seven days, the eggs hatch, and fry are moved into feeding tanks for about a week of high protein feeding. Then they are stocked into hatchery grow-out ponds. Many



Each year, anglers catch millions of channel catfish like this one from small state and community lakes. Most of those fish originated at the Pratt hatchery.

of these larval channel catfish are treated with a vaccine before they leave the hatchery tank to protect them from a bacterial disease called enteric septicemia. They are stocked at around 75,000 fry per acre and fed through the summer. By October, the fish are normally 4-6 inches long. These fish are held over the winter to be fed another summer for intermediate production. Intermediate-sized channel catfish attain a length of 10-12 inches by the fall of their second year and are placed into state lakes, community lakes, and city lakes across the state.

After the channel catfish hatching season is finished,

hatchery personnel stay busy feeding channel catfish fingerlings, bluegill for urban stockings, largemouth bass fingerlings, and smallmouth bass. White amur are grown for aquatic weed control on the hatchery. Fathead minnows and goldfish are cultured and utilized as food for brood fish. Hatchery workers are also involved with fishing clinics and tours throughout the summer.

The fall season on the hatchery involves harvesting and distributing many pounds of fish. Channel catfish brood fish must be moved to overwintering ponds, and fingerlings are taken to other hatcheries to be held through the winter. Bluegill fingerlings are harvested and taken to

lakes across the state. Adult bluegills are released in lakes to provide fishing opportunities in urban areas. Hatchery personnel also assist in the harvest of satellite rearing ponds in other areas of the state. Culturists handle up to 100,000 pounds of fish each fall when distributing them into state waters.

Fish culture is constantly changing with demand in an upward spiral. Still, fishing in Kansas is improving thanks in part to the work of hatchery personnel across the state. With innovation and hard work, the hatcheries will strive to continue producing fish for anglers' enjoyment. ♡



More Than Just A Hook

by Dustin Teasley
graphic designer, Pratt
photos by Mike Blair

Photos courtesy of Eagle Claw

Anglers spend hundreds of dollars on rods, reels, waders, and other equipment but many pay little attention to their hooks. While hooks may be one of the least expensive items in the tackle box, they are critical links between angler and fish.

“Fish on!” shouted a young voice from down the riverbank. All eyes turned to a small girl no more than 10 or 12 years old. Lines were quickly reeled in, and everyone stepped back to give her room. Her father rushed to provide assistance, but she confidently waved him off. Determined to catch this one

alone, she leaned back and put more pressure on the fish. It made a run downstream. The girl, weighing scarcely 70 pounds, skidded on the gravel bank toward the water. As she neared the rolling river edge, her father reached to catch her. She took a quick side step, planted a foot against a big rock and leaned way back. “I got him, Dad,” she said.

Ten minutes later, a 60- pound paddlefish surfaced near shore. I was the closest fisherman and reached to retrieve the big spoon-bill.

“Nice job,” I told her.

She beamed with pride. Her father turned and thanked me for the help.

“No problem,” I said. “Her luck is better than mine. I keep

snagging up, and lost two fish when the hooks pulled out.”

He reached into an old coffee can, retrieved a couple of treble hooks, and set them in my tackle box. “Try these”, he said. “They’ve already been sharpened.”

I stopped fishing to take a look.

“The ones you are using are too big. They snag up easily, and I noticed you haven’t sharpened your hooks. Nothing beats a sharp hook,” he added.

Grateful for the advice, I ended the afternoon with a limit of paddlefish.

That was four years ago this April. And after that trip, I decided to brush up on my knowledge of terminal tackle. Philosophers say that luck favors the prepared mind and since fishing is about 80 percent luck, I figured I should prepare my mind. I made it a point to learn as much as I could, especially about hooks.

No one knows exactly how

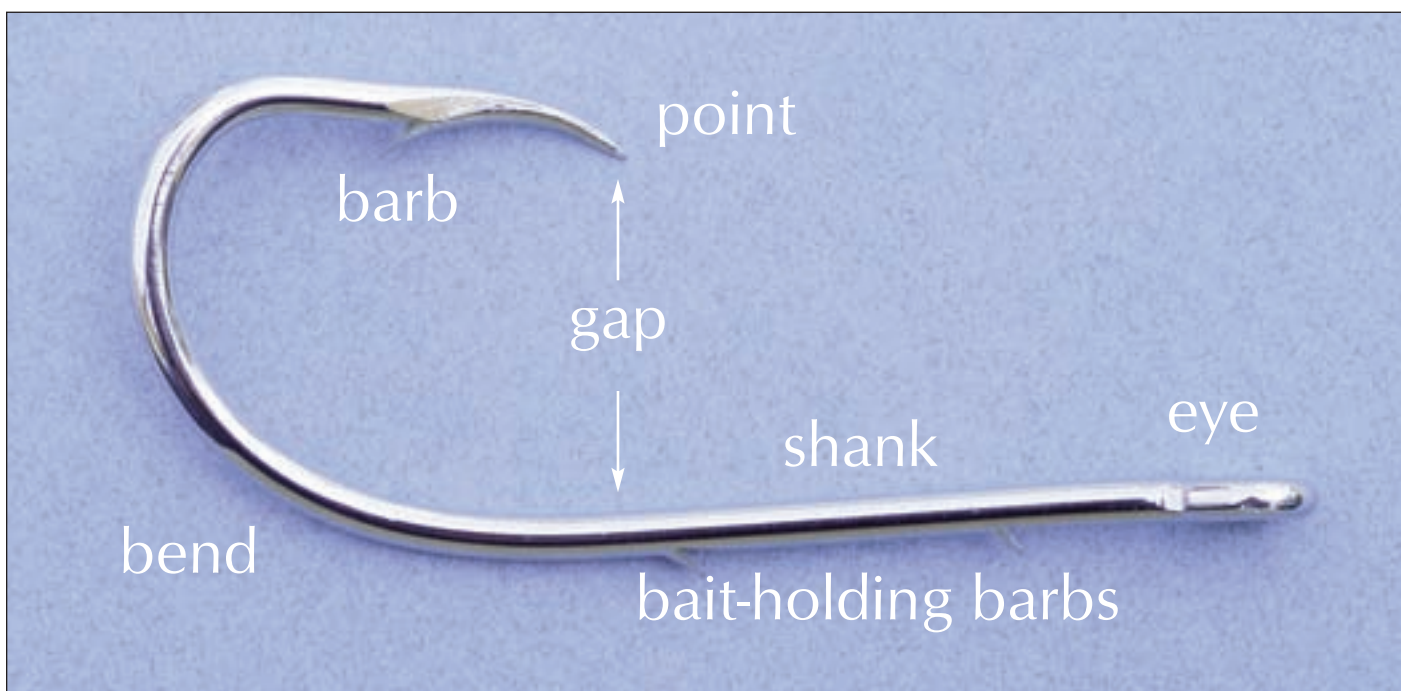
long fish hooks have been around. But one can guess that as long as man has needed food and found that creatures live in water, some form of hooks for catching them has existed. Ancient hooks were made from wood, mussel shells, and animal bone or horn. Native Americans used beaks and claws of raptors like redtails and eagles to make fishing hooks. The earliest metal hooks were made of copper about 4,000 B.C. Later, metal hooks were made of bronze, and then of iron and steel. The transition from bone and wood to metal made it possible for manufacturers to produce stronger, bigger hooks capable of catching larger fish. This made a profitable market for skilled craftsmen and blacksmiths who were highly sought after for their hook-making skills. Today, hook manufacturers mass produce many types, styles, and sizes of hooks at an inexpensive price.

There is a lot to learn when one considers hooks. It’s impor-

tant to match them properly to the kind of fish sought. Hooks come in an endless variety of sizes, shapes, colors, and materials, which can be confusing to experts and novices alike. For instance, an expert largemouth bass fisherman doesn’t necessarily know what tackle works best for channel catfish.

There is room for interpretation. If you ask 10 flathead anglers what they use for a bait setup, you might get 10 different answers. There is no real absolute in terms of rigging methods. Even so, hook sizes and shapes are made with special purposes in mind.

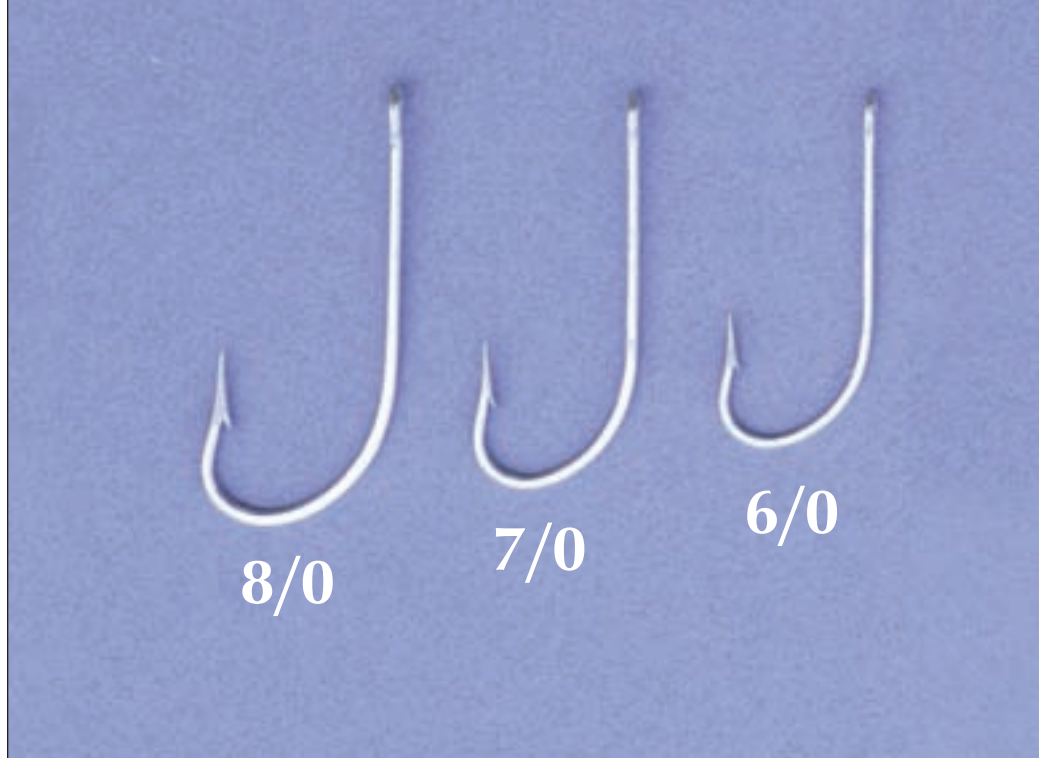
Standard single hooks and treble hooks are the types most commonly used for Kansas fishing. Treble hooks are best known for their use on fishing lures. These hooks are sized to accommodate the targeted fish species and lure size. But treble hooks are also used for bait fishing. Their design helps hold baits like liver that may easily fall



apart. Treble hooks also hold paste-type baits and are sometimes wrapped with spring wire for this purpose. Treble hooks are often used to keep catfish from swallowing hooks. And large treble hooks are used to snag paddlefish.

The standard single hook is the most widely-used type of hook. It is used by bait, jig, and fly-fishermen. Therefore, single hooks account for most of the diversity of fish hook styles, shapes, and colors.

Six identifiable characteristics make up a hook. Each has an eye, shank, bend, point, barb, and gap. The hook eye is a point of attachment for leader, lure body, swivel, or line. The eye can be straight



Photos courtesy of Eagle Claw



Hooks come in a variety of specialty styles. The top hook has a straight eye. The second hook is for snelled leaders. The third hook will hold a lead jig head, and the bottom hook is designed for plastic baits.

(ringed), bent down to hold a specific bait in position (such as a crappie jig) or bent up to hold a snell (a pre-manufactured leader attached to a hook.)

The shank determines length of the hook and is usually straight. Fly fishermen tie animal hair, feathers, and other materials to the shank of a hook to form a fly. The fly pattern determines how long the hook shank must be. Jig fishermen pour lead onto a hook's shank to give the jig its shape and weight. Bait fishermen consider bait type, size and hooking method to determine needed shank length.

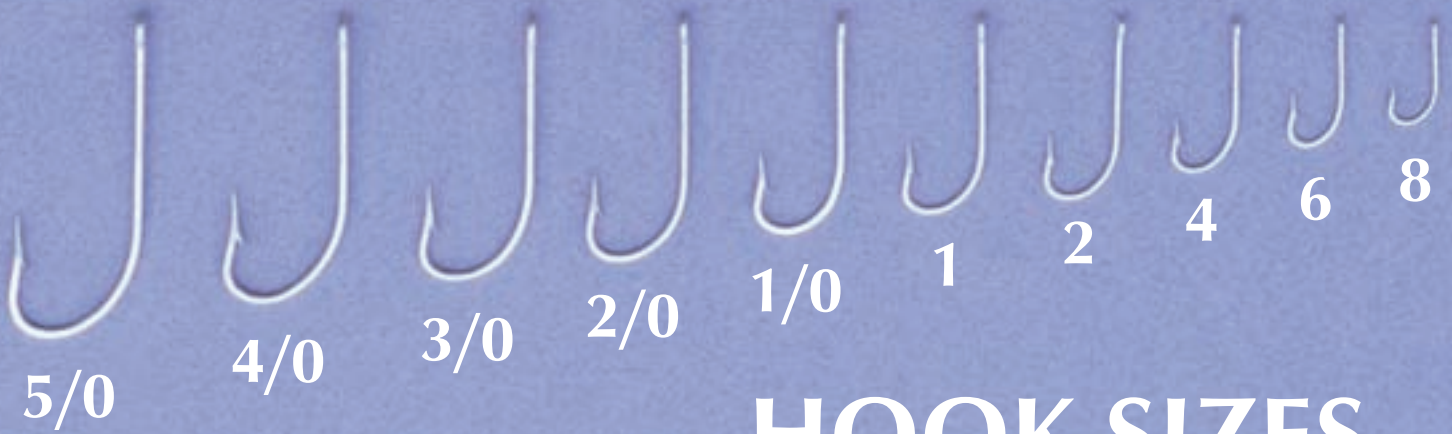
A hook's bend is also important and depends on what type of fishing is done. Circle hooks have a bend that is designed to catch fish without setting a hook. They work like this: A fish eats the bait and swims away. As the line tightens, the hook moves back toward the mouth of the fish. The circle hook's eye and shank pass outside the mouth, and the shape of the bend causes the hook to turn and penetrate the jaw of the fish.

Hook bend determines the distance between the hook point and

the shank, which defines the gap of the hook. Gap distance often varies between manufacturers and can even vary from the same manufacturer. The gap is important because it relates directly to the size of fish you are catching. You would not want to fish for bluegills with a hook gap wider than the fish's mouth.

The most important part of a hook is its point. Fish hooks can have many kinds of points. Short points penetrate more easily than longer points, but long points tend to hold better. Hollow points are thin and penetrate well, while spear points are typically the strongest. Most hooks come pre-sharpened, but with time are dulled from use, rust, or jostling around in a tackle box. A hook sharpener is a good, cheap investment for serious anglers. A couple of passes on a sharpener makes even an old hook as good as new.

Associated with the hook point is its barb. Not all hooks have barbs, but most do. Barbs are used to seat a hook and to keep it from working loose from fish's mouth. Some hooks even support barbs on the shank to help secure baits.



HOOK SIZES

Shown actual size
sizes 8/0 to 8

Barbed hooks can cause a couple of problems, especially with fish that are to be released. If a fish takes a barbed hook deep, it is almost impossible to remove the hook without mortally wounding the fish. Barbed hooks are also hard to free from a fish's bony jaw. The result is excess handling and a less-than-speedy return to the water. The remedy? Buy barbless hooks, or else pinch the barbs flat with a pair of pliers. Barbless hooks penetrate more deeply and are easier to remove from fish, and seldom does the lack of a barb result in a lost fish.

Hook diameter also plays a role in determining which hook to use. A light wire hook may straighten while fighting a heavy fish, resulting in loss. Then again, heavy hooks may spook smaller fish species and keep them from biting.

Most modern hooks are made from carbon steel, but some are made of stainless steel or aluminum. Some hooks have bright finishes believed to aid in catching

fish. Others are coated to make them less obvious underwater. Most hooks have a bronze coating but still rust quickly when wet. Those coated with nickel, cadmium, or Perma Plate, or constructed of stainless steel or aluminum, are corrosion-resistant but are more expensive.

Many sizes of hooks exist in many styles. The choice can be overwhelming. Hooks are sized by a number scale. On one end of the scale, the bigger the number, the smaller the hook. On the other end, the bigger the number,

the bigger the hook. Confused?

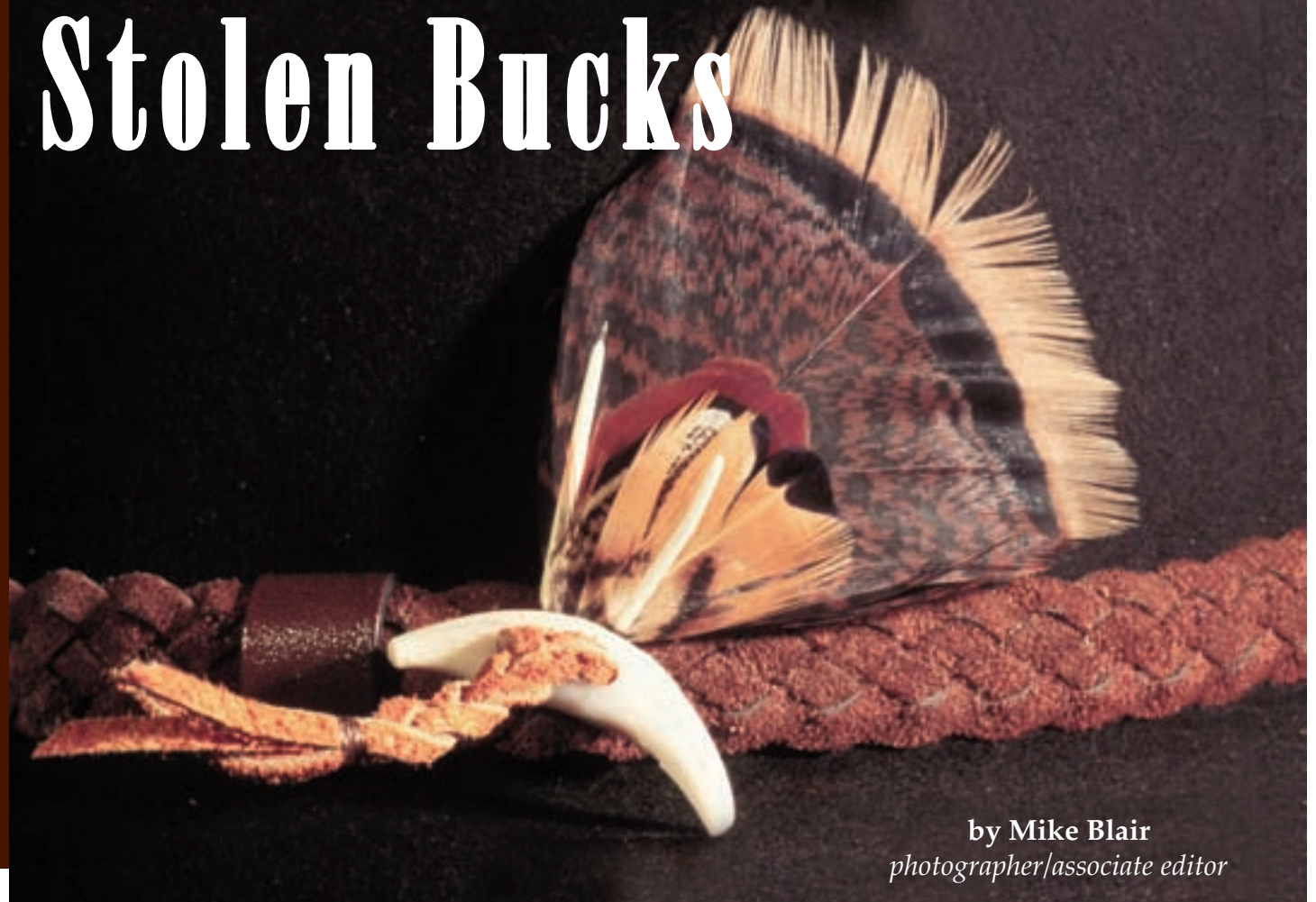
A hook with a whole number such as a 1 is bigger than a hook that has a number of 6. A size 8 hook is bigger than a size 12 hook. On the other hand, a hook that has a number such as 1/0 (pronounced one-ought) is smaller than a 2/0 hook. A 6/0 hook is bigger than a 4/0 hook. The same scale is also used in determining treble hook sizes.

When choosing hooks, contact some of the hook manufacturers for catalogs. Many times, a catalog guide or chart will help. When planning a fishing trip to an area reservoir, stream, or even the neighbors pond, first determine what you will be fishing for. Then go from there.

Next time you take to the water geared to the hilt with a \$100 fly rod or \$75 bait-caster, remember that one of the most important items used in catching fish is the least expensive and probably lies in bottom of your tackle box. ♡



Stolen Bucks

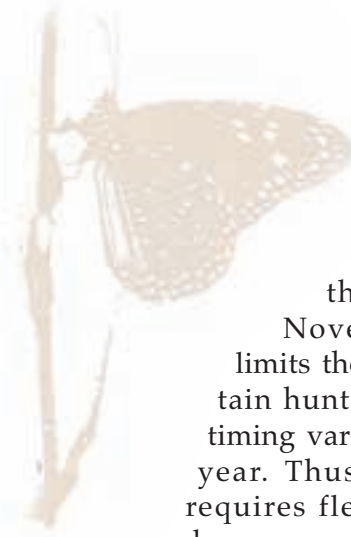


by Mike Blair
photographer/associate editor

Some believe to the extreme that all earthly things are interconnected. They ponder the cause and effect of the smallest incidents: that a flying butterfly in China affects the weather in North America, or that a drop of oil spilled in a creek pollutes the ocean. To me, this seems far-fetched. But in the off chance that energies *do* transfer, I admit to keeping an upper canine tooth from a coyote I called and shot. Further, I drilled and wove it into my fishing hatband. Broad in front and narrow behind, the two-inch crescent suggested in abstract a leaping fish. More so, it reminded me of a thief who helped to steal my deer.

You hope for rewards. When bow season started that fall, I decided to hold out for a Boone & Crockett whitetail. I'd been fortunate over the years to hang half a dozen trophies that qualified for the Pope & Young archery records, three of them impressive. Not that I'd listed the heads, or ever would, but taking them did represent a measure of difficulty for the sport. On the other hand, the really *big* bucks that Kansas is famous for had always managed to step right, when they could have gone left into a decent shooting lane. These close calls, company to a pounding heart and growing desire to wrap fingers around antler bases thick as a man's wrist, had come frequently enough in recent years to convince me to try for a buster. So the bar was raised: 170 inches of horn or better, to be taken by bow.

You need two things on such a quest, unless a favorite of Lady Luck. First and foremost, a hunting area that holds a giant deer, and that not limited to his occasional sortie. It must include the living area and receive so little hunting pressure that the buck keeps civil hours. I had such a place on a Red Hills ranch covering eight sections where few others bowhunted. At least one Booner lived there, and several others passed through.



The second element, time to hunt, was mine as well. Bow season spanned 82 days with the rut straddling November. Wind direction limits the best stand sites to certain hunting days, and the rut's timing varies slightly from year to year. Thus, meeting a big buck requires flexibility. I would hunt whenever work allowed in October and December, and take a month of hunting vacation during the rut. Expectations ran high as the eleventh month rolled around.

Its beginning was explosive. Heavy snow fell as I set up my buck decoy in the pre-dawn darkness of November 3. The surprise cold front was a radical change from the sunny, 75-degree weather that often marks November's first week along the Oklahoma border. Deer would move on days like this. Half an hour after sunrise, a fine 10-pointer emerged from a nearby beaver swamp and spotted the decoy with the indignation of a class bully sizing up a new kid in school. Posturing as it came, the buck looped into a perfect trap, 10 yards from my treestand and quartering away. Hard-staring the decoy adorned with antlers larger than its own, the buck spent a nervous, vulnerable minute before trotting away. The snowy scene was something from a deer hunter's dream, and I've wished ever since that I'd taken the 140s-class animal, if just to finish a storybook hunt. But I didn't, and the episode dissolved into a blank landscape.

Later that same day and half a mile upstream, I sat in another place and watched two mature bucks approach a doe decoy within easy bow range. Circling into its scentstream, they sniffed the plastic animal doused with lure, stretching to investigate the cloth tail that waved slightly in the breeze. One-twenties, 130s, they were several years from making Book Buck, if ever they would. I passed the shots, excited about a remarkable first day.

Normal weather returned, and it was a week of hard hunting before I saw another large animal. This time it was *him*, exiting a wheat field with a pair of lesser companions. As usual, the smaller deer came first, marching into bow range without concern. But the giant hung up at 75 yards, evi-

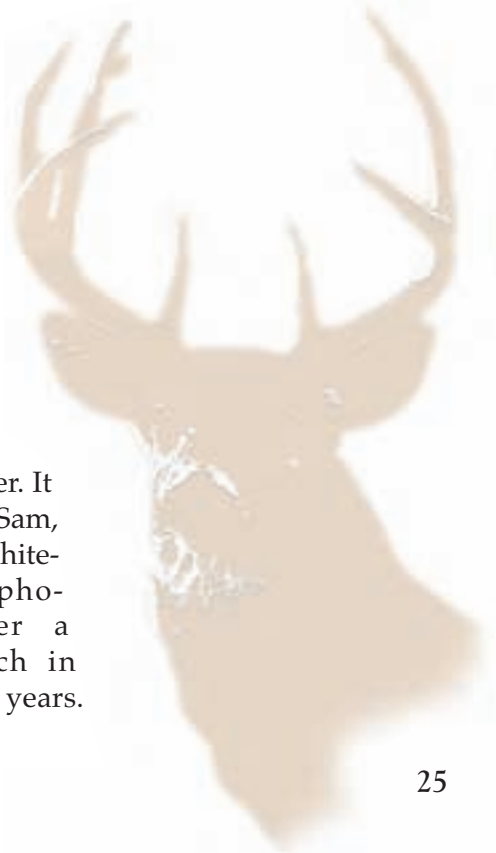
dently smelling me on the tricky wind. The big buck split from the group and ran across open pasture, and I never saw him again.

By mid-November, small and intermediate bucks were common on the runways, scraping, rubbing and chasing does throughout the autumn woods. Exciting as it was, the weeks of non-stop effort began to tell. I'd never hunted harder, and by the time 11 Pope & Young bucks were allowed to walk away, there were second thoughts about holding out. Late November saw the rut in full bloom, and treestands suddenly went dead as big bucks pushed their does into isolated thickets to avoid competitors.

My chance finally came while stillhunting these pockets. I'd spotted a cruising buck late one morning while sneaking along a small creek, and for fun, had pulled out my rattling horns to attract its attention. The buck charged into the brushy hideout, and three times allowed me to draw an arrow from a kneeling position at close range. The deer finally spooked without snorting and ran down the creek. I checked a nearby crossing, and then quietly proceeded in the direction it had taken.

That's when I saw the big buck. I spotted him before he saw me, but my earlier antics were costly. The deer was across the creek, standing in the manner of a tending buck, while watching to see what had pushed the younger deer down the sparse corridor some 10 minutes earlier. I crawled to a fenceline, but could get neither over nor under it with out attracting attention. So I slowly raised to my knees and strung an arrow, hoping for some kind of shot.

I knew this deer. It was Sand Creek Sam, a massive 5 x 6 white-tail that I'd photographed over a two-mile stretch in four consecutive years.

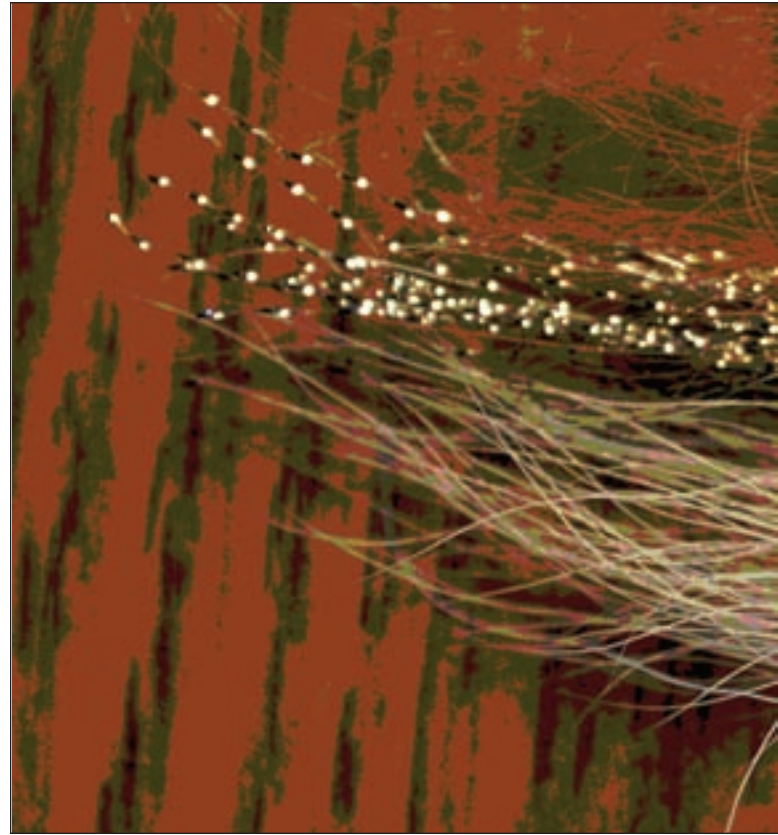
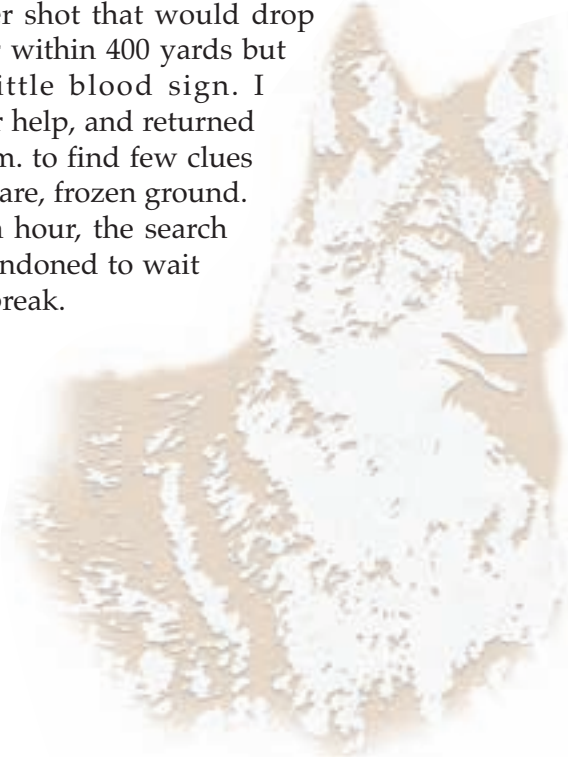


He was a 3-year-old 8-pointer the first time I saw him, now an aging seven. His antlers carried tremendous mass with main beams long enough to overcome the deduction for an extra tine. There was no question his rack would score the Boone & Crockett minimum. My heart was in my throat as I waited.

Finally, the buck stepped from the saplings and turned broadside, 50 yards away. I drew and held the 40-yard pin that marked my maximum shooting limit ten inches above his backline, imagining the arrow to drop into the kill zone as I'd practiced so many times.

This was the trophy bowhunter's dilemma – a deer just out of range. In essence the quest was over, and the target was in my sights. I knew no better chance would come this late in the season, but it wasn't a sure shot. If the aim was slightly off, or if the deer moved during release, there was a good chance of wounding and losing a marvelous animal. Against an overpowering urge to try, I let down and hoped for something closer. Half an hour later, a doe got up and the pair disappeared. Trying to follow quietly, I never caught up.

Time ran out. Through December, I continued to hunt sporadically. But gun season and the post-rut lull made the big bucks even harder to find. With two days of bow season left, and the wish for a freezer animal to salvage the season, I shot a small 8-pointer from a ground blind just at dusk. The hit was high, a lung-and-liver shot that would drop the deer within 400 yards but leave little blood sign. I went for help, and returned at 10 p.m. to find few clues on the bare, frozen ground. After an hour, the search was abandoned to wait for daybreak.



Coyotes found the deer. Early next morning, my daughter and I spotted the ravaged carcass just 200 yards from where I shot it. The buck had circled into thick brush, leaving an almost invisible trail that couldn't be followed the night before. Darkness had permitted prairie wolves to devour all but a few pounds of neck meat. The stark skeleton was unbelievable, raising questions about how many coyotes had visited during the few hours between midnight and daybreak.

Tempted to leave the wasted buck and try for another, I instead tagged the deer as the law required. It was a good object lesson on ethics as my daughter read my disappointment. Yearling antlers were no reward for a season devoted first to trophy hunting, and finally, to a last-bid wish for venison. But that's what it came down to. In three months of hunting, I'd passed scores of bucks, a dozen of them mature animals with impressive racks. Now, coyotes had taken it all.

I returned the next week with a gun and a predator call. Four coyotes later, I was ready to call it even. The pelts were prime and glossy. I kept the tooth from a big male, just in case. Oh, and I tied a few Clouser minnow flies winged with coyote hair.



April. The Slaughter pond lay gleaming in late afternoon, slick and silver under brooding skies. Rain maybe, maybe not. The fishing hat would shed it. I launched my float tube and quickly adjusted to the water's chill. The nine-foot fly rod began to wave.

I'd always wanted a wall-hanger largemouth, especially one taken on a fly. Around these parts, a 4-pounder was a decent fish, and a five was considered a trophy. But you wouldn't get serious about keeping a bass until it weighed seven. Such a fish, a 23-incher, could hang anywhere without apology. In most ponds, it would be king.

Not in this one, however. The Slaughter pond spanned 20 acres, broad in front and narrow behind, a 400-yard crescent bordered by limestone hills. Few fished it, and even fewer, properly. The rocky, washed-out jeep trail made it impossible to reach with a trailered boat, and heavy timber grew to the edges on every side. The best water was inaccessible from shore.

A float tube was the best way. Well out into the channel of the pond, ancient hedge and cedar trees protruded as cover for big fish. Nine-pound

bass had been taken by those fortunate enough to lead their captives out of the limby jungles. But they were always – *always* – taken on live bait or hardware. Fly fishing here was something foreign, only because so few local anglers practiced it.

There are similarities between fly fishing and bowhunting. Both are a finer subset of their respective families. Both require a greater knowledge of game, and are more limiting in range and approach. The forms, requiring motion, are artistic. Both are also lethal. They can, and do, blend together as the seasons relieve one another. The quest becomes the same.

So I fly-fished the Slaughter pond in search of a trophy. I'd been here often, catching bass and bluegills on pleasant evenings when deer waded the shallows for aquatic weeds. This day it was gloomy, a strange afternoon when dead, naked cedars were mirrored in glassy water. It was seldom indeed when the wind didn't blow, scattering the images.

My black-and-yellow Woolley Bugger pulsed in the water. Its color imitated nothing here, but it always caught bass, and its large body was attractive to big fish. This day, several small fish



took it, but slow progress along the rocky shoreline was largely a casting exercise. The occasional nips of sunfish piqued my interest, since some of them here were big bulls. It was time to try something else.

Avoiding the nuisance of small sunfish while keeping bass interested required a size 6 hook. Looking in my fly box, I spotted the small coyote Clousers tied a few months earlier and wondered how they'd work. Lead eyes would sink them quickly in deep water, and the color was good. I tied one on.


Bluegills liked it. On the second cast, a large male hammered the tawny fly and ran briskly against the five-weight rod. It was fun, and a dozen more fell in short order. Clearly, bluegills were hungry for coyote minnows. I cast again. Suddenly the rod tip doubled, pulling hard toward deep water. I struck the fish, and struck it again, burying the barbless hook as deeply as possible. This one was a good bass.

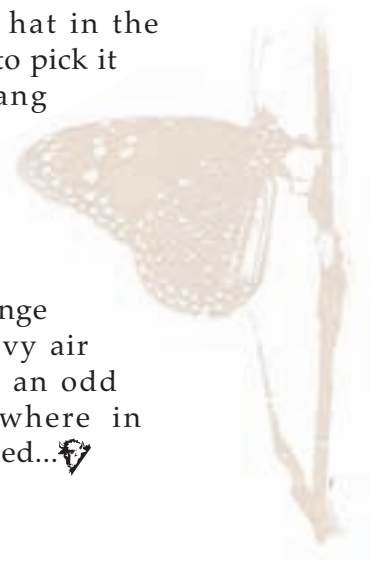
The fish surfaced and shot into the air with surprising vigor for the early season, splashing back with the "tchunk!!" of a dropping brick. It surged away against the light tippet, and I gave line, praying that the mono would hold. The largemouth dashed back and forth, turning to run toward me. Six feet away, it blasted clear of the surface and porpoised, showing every detail of its body in the moment it was airborne. This

was a fine fish – deep green from the clear water of its home, and fully 2 feet long. It was the bass I'd always hoped for, if only I could land it.

The fish surged once more, jumping a final time before running in circles around my float tube. I spun, applying pressure to encourage it, and reeled line on three passes until the fish began to tire. On its side, the bass was now disoriented from the quick laps, and I seized its lip as it slipped close by. Shaking with excitement, I admired the trophy and paddled for shore.

It was dusk now, with pastel redbuds softly painting the surface near the flat rock that marked my exit. I clambered out of the tube, losing my hat in the process. As I reached to pick it up, the coyote fang caught my eye, suggesting in abstract a leaping fish.

I turned from the pond, elated at the outcome of a strange afternoon whose heavy air calmed the water in an odd sort of way. Somewhere in China, a butterfly landed...



K-9 Wardens

by J. Mark Shoup
associate editor, Pratt

photos by Mike Blair

The American Kennel Club calls the Labrador retriever the most popular dog in America. But after four new K-9 pooches begin making cases this year, Kansas poachers might disagree.



They're not called man's best friend without reason. Dogs are not only loyal and loving companions, but their dedication to humans often reaches heroic proportions. In both war and peace, dogs have valiantly risked their lives to save people. In WWI, a German shepherd named Chips captured 12 enemy prisoners. A shepherd named Caesar carried messages back and forth between U.S. positions during WWII, protecting the soldiers from certain detection if they had used radio contact. Combat dogs have done everything from warning of ambushes to mine detection.

Perhaps the most famous case

of dogs saving human lives was during the 1925 diphtheria epidemic that hit Nome, Alaska. The nearest serum was 674 miles away, but 20 dog sled teams brought the life-saving serum through deadly snowstorms to Nome in just 27.5 hours. This act of bravery led to the now-famous dog sled race, the Iditarod.

Canines have performed yeoman's work in law enforcement for decades, as well, so it would only make sense that dogs would fit in wildlife law enforcement. At least that was the thinking of Jason Barker, a KDWP conservation officer in Sedgwick County.

Barker worked as a policeman for seven years in Arkansas City and in Wichita before his dream of being a game warden came true. He has been a conservation officer (CO) since November of 2000. In February of 2002, Barker was exploring other state wildlife agency websites when he came across the idea of conservation officers using dogs.

"Indiana's was the first K-9 program I came across, so I started looking for others," Barker explains. "I discovered programs in New York, Florida, and Kentucky, as well, and really thought this would be a good idea for Kansas."

Barker then contacted those

three states' law enforcement staff and wrote a proposal, which he presented to KDWP Law Enforcement Division Director Kevin Jones. Jones liked the idea and changed Barker's proposal from three dogs to five — one for each region. (Region 1, northwest Kansas, has not yet found a suitable dog.)

"I was very encouraged by Jason's proposal," Jones notes. "I've seen it work successfully in other states, and I thought it would be an excellent tool for our officers — one that will greatly enhance their ability to do their jobs. I think it will also be an excellent way to show our constituents, through public demonstrations, what we do in wildlife law enforcement."

In his proposal, Barker had been careful to address a common concern regarding law enforcement dogs — that they are vicious.

"Most people think of attack dogs when they see K-9 units," he says. "This is one reason wildlife agencies didn't use them for years or used them only for man tracking. It's also one reason we chose Labs for our program. They are generally even-tempered and accepted by the public.

"The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission really changed the perception of the K-9 unit by focusing on dog training that would create law enforcement tools, not law enforcement weapons. The dogs are trained in man tracking, wildlife detection, and evidence recovery, and I've heard nothing but positive statements from the agencies that have them."

The enthusiastic reception to



Hoisington conservation officer Brian Hanzlick works with Alley, his K-9 dog and work partner. Hanzlick and Alley made a case last September during the early teal season.

the proposal soon led to funding (see sidebar), and dogs were procured. Although formal training didn't begin until February of 2003, a few officers had dogs riding with them daily by last summer. In fact, CO Brian Hanzlick's dog, Alley, made the

first case at Cheyenne Bottoms last teal season when she found a big duck hidden in the weeds. Another case was made by a Kansas K-9 team in January, when CO Dan Melson's Lab helped nab poachers in a case that netted fines and court costs of nearly \$7,000. (See "Law" on Page 35.)

Hanzlick is as enthusiastic as anyone involved in the program. "I think this is going to be a great tool for us," he says. "I think we'll make a lot better cases." By better, Hanzlick is talking in terms of better evidence and more cases against hard-core poachers, the type who poach for a living and are involved in all kinds of black market activity.

But making cases is not the limit of Hanzlick's vision. "I've already done several public programs with Alley, and people just love it," he explains. "It



Trainers work daily with their K-9 partners, training them to find evidence such as spent cartridges and firearms.

encourages them to support the department, and I've had people ask me after a program what they can do to help.

"Another situation I can see happening is finding a lost kid," he continues. "It may be a backup part of our mission, but if we find one lost kid with one of these dogs, it would be worth every penny and every hour of work we've put into it."

With both donors and COs behind the program and dogs procured, the next step was training. The Indiana Department of Natural Resources agreed to train four dogs and their handlers for free. (Indiana's K-9 teams have 362 arrests credited to them since 1998.) The training involved two weeks in Indiana and two weeks home until the eight-weeks of training was complete. Conservation officers Hanzlick, Hoisington; Melson, Eureka; Jason Sawyers, Topeka; and Barker made the trip.

Barker's dog is named Scout; Hanzlick's is Alley; Melson's is Chase; and Sawyers' is Rex. Not only are these dogs family pets and constant companions, they literally lived together during their training. Working night and day, the officers and dogs learned to work as teams.

Man tracking was the first course. The dogs not only learned to track humans but to discriminate the scent of one human from another. This talent is not only valuable in finding poachers but can be life-saving when lost persons are the quarry. (Kentucky's dogs have been credited with saving two lives.)

Wildlife detection was the next subject. The Indiana academy helped the handlers

train their dogs to find waterfowl, turkey, and deer. Upon completion of the training, the officers were prepared to add additional scents for detection, including fish. This will be left up to the officer, depending on the area he works.

Of course, one of the most critical elements of any crime scene is evidence, and evidence recovery rounded out the teams' training. The dogs were trained to detect firearms and spent cartridges, as well as personal items such as gloves, hats, money, and credit cards.

So exactly what are the uses of K-9 units, as they are called, for conservation officers? Barker offers a few examples:

"Public relations is really a big plus that most people don't associate with K-9 programs," says Barker. "Kids love dogs, and

these animals are great for giving public programs and demonstrations. Whether in the classroom or a hunter education course, it gets their attention and helps us get the conservation message across.

"They're also a deterrent to crime. Even though we don't train them to be aggressive, some people are just naturally leery of dogs, especially when they're being handled by a person in uniform."

Actual field scenarios might look like this:

1. A conservation officer gets a call in the night about poachers spotlighting deer. Approaching the area, he notices a truck spin its wheels in flight. Pursuing the vehicle, the officer notices a gun being thrown out. Finally, the truck stops, and the driver runs off into the woods. Using his



The dogs are trained to track humans, find hidden fish and wildlife, and locate evidence. Officers also have found the dogs are great for public programs.



The officers trained the K-9 pups to locate specific scents such as deer, turkey, and waterfowl, and they will continue training to add scents such as upland birds and fish.

trusty K-9 partner, the officer soon apprehends the suspect and returns to the approximate area where he thinks the gun was thrown out. It doesn't take the dog long to find the gun, but his job is not over yet. Back at the spot where the truck was parked, the dogs searches the area and soon finds the deer. Cased closed; huge savings in man-hours.

2. A conservation officer and K-9 check a fisherman at a local lake. His license is in order and stringer empty. They walk back to the angler's car, and the dog excitedly sniffs the trunk, a sure sign that fish might be present. At the CO's request, the angler opens the trunk and reveals a cooler full of fish, more than the

limit.

3. A conservation officer and K-9 see a pickup parked near a bridge over a river on a country road. There is some fishing equipment in the back of the pickup, but no one in sight. Which way did the angler go? The dog will know.

4. A hunter is suspected of shooting another hunter in a turkey hunting accident, but he denies having shot at all. In a 10-minute search of the area, the K-9 recovers a spent shotgun shell of the same type carried by the suspect, leading to his confession and saving untold investigative man-hours.

The fledgling Kansas K-9 program shows great promise. Whether tracking suspects or

Kansas K-9 Program

While Barker's proposal included a clear outline of purposes and objectives, perhaps the most important element in times of budget restraint was funding. Barker modeled his funding proposal on Kentucky's. All startup costs would be from private donations. Approximately \$10,000 was needed, after which the agency would fund the program at approximately \$3,000 per year for five dogs, with costs reduced through ongoing contributions.

Barker put advertisements for the program in the Wichita Eagle and the Eureka Herald, and soon offers were coming in. The initial dogs were donated, all registered Labs screened from some 50 offers. One of the better dogs, Rex, was donated by the Wichita Humane Society.

Science Diet agreed to provide all of the dog food. A \$5,000 donation came from the Hansen Foundation. Safari Club International and Papa John's Pizza gave \$5,000 and \$1,500 cash donations, respectively. Dr. Dan Witt gave a personal cash donation of \$1,000, and Wal-Mart contributed \$700. Quail unlimited donated \$250.

Other donations came in the form of equipment. Lowe's provided a discount on dog houses. Quality Emergency Vehicles provided custom vehicle kennels. More than 50 donors made contributions large and small to make this program happen.

missing persons; locating hidden wildlife or shell casings; searching vehicles and watercraft; recovering lost, stolen, or thrown firearms; or promoting conservation issues through canine demonstrations, man's best friend has found a new niche. 🐾

Edited by Mark Shoup

WHITE BASS RECIPE

Editor:

Most Kansas anglers I know don't keep white bass when they catch them and would never consider eating them because of the red-meat taste. However, I have found a way to get rid of the strong taste associated with the red meat and urge fishermen to try this method on at least one or two batches of fish. Believe it or not, they can be almost as good as walleye and crappie.

The secret is in the way they are filleted and cooked. Fillet the fish the same as other game fish but lay the fillets on the cutting board with the outside up and use a trim knife to cut the red center line completely from end to end, removing a 1/4- to 3/8-inch strip of meat and discarding this piece. The remaining two pieces will be without the red meat taste when cooked. Soak them overnight in salt water and cook in your favorite fish batter and virgin olive oil, and I guarantee your friends will not know they are eating white bass.

I am writing this because I would like to see white bass and the fishermen who catch and save them get the respect deserved.

*Ray Ikenberry
Lawrence*

APPRECIATES EMAIL

Editor's note: In addition to my duties as associate editor of Kansas Wildlife and Parks magazine, I answer all email inquiries through the department's website, kdwp.state.ks.us. The following is from a Wisconsin hunter who loves Kansas and appreciates this service.

—Shoup

Mr. Shoup:

Just checking in with you. You were very helpful to me with information on hunting licenses and turkey permits back in early March. Just wanted to

thank you again for all your help.

I went down to Manhattan and hunted turkeys with my son-in-law and had a great time. We didn't get any turkeys, but we saw lots of them and thoroughly enjoyed the hunting. I'll be back next year.

*Craig Berkoben
Wild Rose, Wisconsin*

BACK TO BASICS

Editor:

Thank you for taking time for a couple of the basics in the Sept./Oct. 2002 issue of *Kansas Wildlife and Parks* magazine. "Listen Up" (Page 19) and "Safe At Home" (Page 25) are two excellent articles.

Gosh, what I'd give to have known about hearing loss when I was a kid shooting clay targets. We never wore any type of hearing protection. Today, I lay my head down every evening to the din of tinnitus. I can't blame it all on shooting sports; a Ted Nugent concert did a number on me one evening, but that's another story.

Gun safety is not just for hunters and shooters. We must teach our children gun safety. However, we must never lose sight of the fact that they are children, and thus, we must lock up our guns. It's our responsibility to protect our children and their friends.

*Bob Foreman
Kansas City, Missouri*

LOVE THE PICTURES

Editor:

I have subscribed to *Kansas Wildlife and Parks* magazine and its predecessors for many, many years. I am writing to tell you that the Jan./Feb. 2003 issue was one of the most enjoyable to wonder over. The many pictures and enriching notes depicting them gave me real pleasure. It is wonderful to every once in awhile be reminded of the beauty surrounding us in the state of Kansas.

This issue is a keeper to read and enjoy many days to come. Thank you so much.

*Dorothy Helferstay
Council Grove*

DECOY TIP WORKS

Editor:

I read Mike Blair's article on using deer decoys a couple of years ago (*Kansas Wildlife and Parks* magazine, Nov./Dec. 2001, Page 2). I mentally ran through the list of my hunting areas, trying to find a good opportunity to try this technique. I decided on a harvested cornfield bordered by a river and a woodlot in back of the landowner's house.

There was unfarmed land that separated the cornfield and ran down to the river. One afternoon about four, I set a doe decoy (actually just my practice target) on the southeast edge of the cornfield. I had sprayed the target deer with scent-killer and poured several drops of doe in-heat on it. I cut a small shooting lane through the weeds on the border of the cornfield and eased back into a ditch, roughly 15 yards from the decoy. I sat facing north on a bucket with the wind blowing from the west, away from the woodlot on my left and the river cover to my front. I hoped a nice buck was bedding in one or both of the two areas.

About 5:25 p.m., I cautiously stood to look around and saw antlers across the field near the river but heading back to the woodlot on my left. I eased back down and blew a couple of doe bleats on my call, then waited a few minutes and looked again. I couldn't see the buck, but I saw a doe directly north and east of me, staring back to my left.

I sat down again, but within 30 seconds, I heard the cornstalks crunch as a deer approached along the edge of the field to my left. I looked through the weeds, and there he was — a nice buck. I was too excited to count points, but I

knew he was a mature animal. I bent forward and drew my bow, pointing to the ground to avoid detection. Then I raised it toward the decoy and waited.

The buck stopped about 7 or 8 yards from the decoy, sniffing and looking it over. The only problem was that I had cut the shooting lane where he needed to be only 4 or 5 yards from the decoy, so I waited at full draw while he stood just on the other side of the weeds. I hoped that he would take just a couple of steps forward, but he took a couple of steps back toward the timber, and my heart sank, thinking he was going to walk away.

Then he turned and walked across the ditch right in front of me. I put the 20-yard pin on his should and released. He ran about 50 yards into the cornfield and disappeared. Not sure where I hit him or whether he had gone down or just run below my line of vision over a field terrace or ditch, I waited about 20 minutes.

Finally, I quit shaking enough to get my flashlight and look for the arrow. I didn't find it, but I found good pink blood with bubbles, so I knew I had made a good lung shot. I trailed the blood right to him. He had fallen within 50 yards, right where he disappeared. The arrow had penetrated both lungs.

He was a fat, corn-fed buck with a swollen neck and 10 points. I had his full head and shoulders mounted to help me remember the first deer I ever took with a bow.

David Bolz
Emporia

CORRECTION

The May/June issue of *Kansas Wildlife & Parks* magazine contained a question and answer section (Page 36) that indicated prairie dog hunting is allowed only on private land. This was somewhat misleading. There are no prairie dogs towns to be hunted on department managed lands. However, the Cimarron National Grasslands has prairie dog towns that may be hunted. For more information on them, phone (620) 697-4621.

—Shoup

BANDED CHICKEN MYSTERY

Editor:

I live west of Mound City, in Linn County. I am the assistant to the principal at Jayhawk Linn Junior/Senior High School. Last January, a student brought in a band that came off a prairie chicken that he hit with his truck while driving. It is an aluminum band 2 inches long and 3/16-inch wide. The band reads "MDC 52102." I was wondering where, if this is indeed a chicken from Missouri, it was released. I will be surprised if it came from Missouri.

Kris Kehl
Mound City

Dear Mr. Kehl:

There would be no banded prairie chickens that we know of in Linn County. However, the possibility does exist that the bird could be from Missouri. I will contact the prairie chicken specialist in Missouri and find out.

Roger D. Applegate
small game biologist, Emporia

Dear Mr. Kehl:

I am a research biologist with the Missouri Department of Conservation and have been in charge of prairie chicken research projects and translocations for Missouri. We released birds near El Dorado Springs, Mo., in the spring of 1995, but all our translocated birds were banded with a three-digit number. The message on our bands is "Notify

Mo. Dept. Cons. Columbia, Mo. XXX."

We also conducted a research study near Prairie State Park and Bushwacker Conservation Area from 1990-1992, but again, the same type of bands were used. I spoke with our pheasant biologist here to see if the bird could possibly have been mistaken for a pheasant. The last pheasant bands were put on in 1991 and not near that area. I guess this remains a mystery.

Larry Mechlin
Missouri Department of Conservation

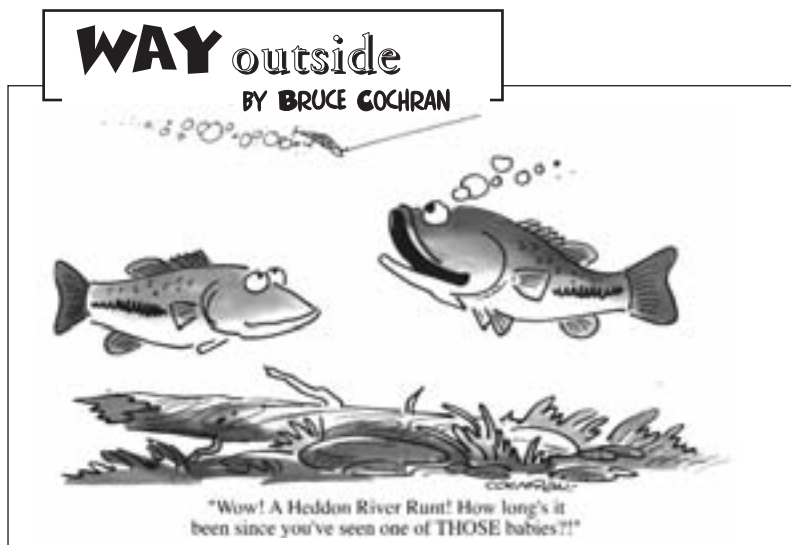
HATCHERY CORRECTION

Editor:

The article in the last *Kansas Wildlife & Parks* magazine on "Feeding the Fish" (Page 28) was interesting, but two things need to be corrected. First, Seth Way developed the method to spawn and hatch channel catfish in 1926. For this accomplishment and several more, he was inducted into the National Fish Culture Hall of Fame in Spearfish, South Dakota. Seth Way, W. E. (Bus) Hartley, and Vernon Kaehbiel were pioneers in the development of commercial fish farming.

Second, Dr. Otto Tiemeir, with the help of Dr. Charles Deyoe, experimented to determine the proper diet for channel catfish.

—Don Patton, former
Pratt Fish Hatchery manager



BORDER BUCK

On March 3, 2003, two Nebraska residents experienced first hand the costliness of poaching deer in another state. Jason B. Allington of Wymore, Neb., and Curtis N. James of Omaha began a deer hunt in Nebraska that ended in Kansas. Unfortunately, neither had hunting licenses or permits to hunt deer in Kansas.

Allington was charged with and found guilty in Kansas for hunting deer during the closed season, having no valid Kansas hunting license, hunting deer without a valid permit or tag, and failure to affix a game tag to a carcass before moving from the kill site. Total fines and costs were \$959.

James was charged with and found guilty in Kansas for hunting deer during closed season, having no valid Kansas hunting license, and hunting deer without a valid permit or tag. Total fines and costs were \$709. Additionally, each hunter faced charges for violations that occurred in Nebraska.

It is a common practice for hunters who live along state boundaries to infringe upon neighboring jurisdictions when not licensed or permitted to do so.

—Michael C. Little,
conservation officer, Frankfort

K-9 OFFICER MAKES CASE

I could barely make out the voices, but it was clear the hunters on the radio were using dogs and radios to chase deer. I reached behind the passenger seat, took out my tape recorder, and turned it on.

It was the second to last day of the January antlerless deer season, and the more I listened, the more names and voices I recognized. I called conservation officer, Dan Melson, and asked if he could help. He said he would bring CO Chris Hammerschmidt.

North of Fredonia, I stopped and listened to the radio while waiting for Melson and Hammerschmidt. It sounded like they had a deer surrounded, but it had broken through and headed east. They already had several deer down. The big one was headed east and was limping badly.

When Melson and Hammerschmidt arrived, we went found four of the guys standing around two pickups in the middle of a wheat field. We checked licenses and deer tags. Three had

deer tags but said they were just hunting coyotes. The only one wearing the required orange hat and vest, didn't have a deer permit. Two of them had blood on the front of their pants, which one claimed was from a cut on his hand. He then changed his story and said it was from a coyote he had shot earlier.

Melson put the tracking lead on his K-9 partner, Chase, a year-old female chocolate lab and, she was ready to go. Chase picked up a trail and Officer Melson followed her about 150 yards to a 10-point buck that had been field dressed and dragged into the trees.

When asked about the deer, the man with blood on his pants said it was running through the timber when he shot it and he could not tell if it was a buck or a doe. Then the suspect changed his story and said that the buck was running next to a doe, and he had been shooting at the doe and accidentally hit the buck, twice.

The four denied knowledge of any other deer being shot, even after listening to the radio conversation I had recorded. We wrote tickets

for several violations.

We then went looking for the other deer I'd heard about on the radio. In the radio conversation, a south-east corner, a hedgerow and a gate were mentioned. We located the field easily, where we found a six-point buck and an eight-point buck. Both were fresh kills. We collected bullet fragments from the six-point.

After further questioning, the man who shot the ten-pointer admitted to shooting the 8-point and the 6-point. Another of the men told me about a fourth buck that he

had shot. Additional tickets were written to the four men, for 22 charges.

Three other men were charged with illegal use of radios to hunt deer.

All seven pled guilty or no contest to the 25 charges. Six marine band radios and four guns were seized. The guns were sold back to the owners with a payment to the restitution fund equal to their value. They also paid \$200 for each deer. A total of \$6,804 in fines, court costs, and restitution was paid.

—Bob Funke, conservation officer, Fredonia

CORRECTION

In the May/June 2003 issue of *Kansas Wildlife & Parks* magazine, a story, "Trapped In Own Snare," on Page 35 contained some errors. The article outlined a variety of big game hunting-related charges brought against David K. Trent, of Strong City.

Evidence against the defendant included recovery of bullet fragments, not a small-caliber bullet as listed in the article. The article also stated that the defendant did not attempt to look for the coyote or deer he was accused of shooting at. In court, the defendant testified that he did attempt to look for the animal.

Also at issue is the reason listed for Trent's attorney withdrawing from the case. Court records show that the attorney withdrew under Rule 117.

Kansas Wildlife & Parks magazine regrets these errors.

— Miller

ALL ABOUT DEER PERMITS

—KDWP Licensing Section

What's new for 2003?

- Unit 19 – A new deer management unit has been created, comprising an area along the urban/suburban corridor from Kansas City west to Topeka. An additional firearms season for the newly-created Unit 19 has been established from Oct. 18 – 26. In addition, an extended archery season for Unit 19 for antlerless-only white-tailed deer will be Jan. 5 – 31, 2004.
- The extended firearms season has been shortened to 4 days (Jan. 1 – 4, 2004) for the 2003-2004 season.
- The extended firearms season will NOT be open in 7 western Kansas deer management units (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 17, and 18).
- Only one white-tailed antlerless-only game tag may be used in units 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 14, 17 and 18. Four game tags may be used in units 3, 7, 8, 12, 13, 15, 16 and 19.
- The boundary separating Deer Management Units 8 and 9 was realigned so that all of Fort Riley is now contained in Unit 8. Formerly, the military base was split between units 8 and 9.
- A preference point system is now in effect for all limited availability deer permits.

SEASONS**Muzzleloader-only season:**

Sept. 13 – 26, 2003

Youth and disabled persons season:

Sept. 27 – 28, 2003

Statewide archery season:

Oct. 1 – Dec. 2 and Dec. 15 – 31, 2003

Firearms season: Dec. 3 – 14, 2003**Extended firearms white-tailed antlerless-only season:** Jan. 1 – 4, 2004**Urban unit (Unit 19) additional firearms season:** Oct. 18 – 26, 2003**Urban unit (Unit 19) extended white-tailed antlerless-only archery season:** Jan. 5 – 31, 2004.**PERMITS
AVAILABLE**

The following permits may be purchased over the counter at KDWP offices and/or various license vendors through Jan. 3, 2004:

- Resident Statewide Archery Permit**
- Resident White-tailed Either Sex Permit**
- White-tailed Antlerless-Only Permit**
(resident and nonresident)
- White-tailed Antlerless-Only Game Tags**
(resident and nonresident)
- Hunt-Own Land Permit**
(available at KDWP offices only)

**Nonresident
Transferrable permits**

Resident landowners and all tenants/managers who successfully draw a nonresident transferrable deer permit after submitting a nonresident deer permit application no later than May 31. They may apply for a nonresident permit only in the unit(s) in which they qualify as a landowner, tenant or manager. They are limited to a single application and are required to submit the full nonresident permit fee.

A qualifying landowner, tenant, or manager can apply for and receive only one nonresident permit. However, a family member who also independently qualifies as a landowner, tenant, or manager (not just because they're living with the landowner, tenant, or manager) may also apply if they own or operate 80 acres or more in Kansas.

If they draw a nonresident permit, they may transfer the permit once to anyone, with or without compensation. The permit must be transferred before the first day of the season for which the permit is issued (i.e. – firearms permits must be transferred prior to Sept. 13; archery permits prior to Oct. 1). Nonresident landowners may not receive transferrable permits

PERMIT FEES**Residents****By draw:**

• Any Deer (white-tailed or mule deer buck, doe or fawn) – \$31 (\$16 for landowner/tenant/manager); Muzzleloader Any Deer (white-tailed or mule deer buck, doe or fawn) – \$31 (\$16 for landowner/tenant/manager); Antlerless-Only (any white-tailed or mule deer without a visible antler) – \$31 (\$16 for landowner/tenant/manager); Leftover Antlerless-Only (any white-tailed or mule deer without a visible antler) – \$31 (\$16 for landowner/tenant/manager).

Unlimited availability:

• White-tailed Either Sex (white-tailed buck, doe or fawn) – \$31 (\$16 for landowner/tenant/manager); Statewide Archery (white-tailed or mule deer buck, doe or fawn) – \$31 (\$16 for landowner/tenant/manager); Hunt-Own-Land (white-tailed or mule deer buck, doe or fawn) – \$11; White-tailed Antler-less-Only (any white-tailed deer without a visible antler) – \$31 (\$16 for landowner/tenant/manager); White-tailed Antler-less-Only Game Tags (any white-tailed deer without a visible antler) – \$11.

Nonresidents

Permits available after the May 31 deadline for limited permit application:

- White-tailed Antlerless-Only (any white-tailed deer without a visible antler) – \$51; White-tailed Antler-less-Only Game Tags (any white-tailed deer without a visible antler) – \$11; Nonresident Hunt-Own-Land (white-tailed or mule deer buck, doe or fawn) (\$51)

Application deadlines

• Nonresident Antlered Deer (archery, muzzleloader and firearms) – May 31, 2003; Resident Any Deer – July 11, 2003.

Transferring permits

The transfer application will be available at all department offices. Both landowner and recipient must sign the transfer application, then mail the completed application AND the actual nonresident permit to the Pratt office. The Licensing Section will process the application, print a new permit, and send it to the address specified on the transfer application. This process will take about 5 business days. Permits may be transferred only once – by the landowner, tenant or manager who initially drew the permit.

Antlered permits

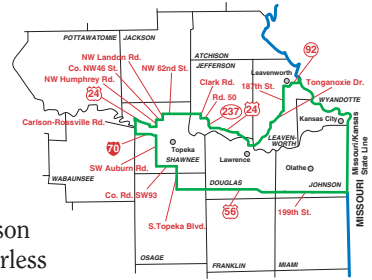
No hunter may receive more than one antlered deer permit.

Deer Management Unit 19

The boundaries of adjacent units 9, 10, 11, and 14 were realigned to create the new urban unit. In addition to regular seasons (early muzzleloader, archery, regular firearms, and extended antlerless-only), Unit 19 will host a pre-rut firearms season (Oct. 18 - 26), as well as an antlerless-only white-tailed archery season (Jan. 5 - 31, 2004).

Who may hunt in Unit 19?

- Unit 9, 10, 11, and 14 Whitetail Either-Sex permit holders during the muzzleloader season (with muzzleloading equipment only), the regular firearms season, the Jan. 1-4 whitetail antlerless season, and the special Oct. 18-26 firearms season; Statewide Archery permit holders during the regular archery season, the Jan. 1-4 whitetail antlerless season, as well as the special Jan. 5 - 31, 2004 archery season; holders of Hunt-Own-Land permits valid in Unit 19, during any season with legal equipment; holders of Whitetail Antlerless-Only permits, during any season with legal equipment; and holders of Whitetail Antlerless-Only Game Tags, during any season with legal equipment.



Important note on nonresident transferrable permits:

Before purchasing an antlered deer permit (Hunt-Own-Land, White-tailed Either Sex, Statewide Archery, or Any Deer permit obtained through the draw), landowners who have drawn a nonresident transferrable permit must transfer that permit prior to its first opportunity for use. For example, a nonresident Whitetail Either Sex permit must be transferred prior to opening of the muzzleloader season (Sept. 13). If it is not transferred before that date, the nonresident transferrable permit becomes the landowner's antlered permit for this year.

Antlerless permits

Residents and nonresidents may purchase a White-tailed Antlerless Only permit over the counter through Jan. 3, 2004. They also may purchase White-tailed Antlerless-Only Game Tags over the counter through Jan. 3, 2004. White-tailed Antlerless-Only permits are valid on department-managed land; White-tailed Antlerless-Only Game Tags are not. (Game tags are valid on WIHA land.)

Game tags

Each hunter may purchase up to four White-tailed Antlerless-Only Game Tags. However, a maximum of one game tag per hunter may be used in Deer Management Units 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 14, 17 and 18. Up to four game tags per hunter may be used in units 3, 7, 8, 12, 13, 15, 16 and 19. Game tags may be purchased by any hunter, resident or nonresident. Game tags may be used during archery season with legal archery equipment, during muzzleloader season with legal muzzleloading equipment, and during firearms and antlerless-only seasons with equipment legal for use during a firearms season.

Hunt Own Land Permits

Hunt-Own-Land permits will be allocated as in the past. Hunt-Own-Land permits may NOT be resold. They can still be transferred (except by nonresident landowners) to lineal and collateral relatives, but not for a fee.

The permit, even after it has been transferred, retains the unit designation, as well as equipment restriction, listed on the original permit.

Youth and persons with disabilities

Season dates are Sept. 27 - 28, 2003. Persons 12 through 16 years of age, who possess a valid deer permit or game tag, may hunt during this season only while under supervision of an adult who is 21 years of age or older. The adult may NOT hunt. The accompanying adult must possess a hunting license (unless exempt), but is not required to possess a deer permit.

Any person with a permit to hunt from a vehicle, or with a disability assistance permit, may also hunt during this season. Resident and nonresident archery, firearms, and muzzleloader

permits may be used during this season; the unit and equipment restrictions on the permit apply. All hunters must wear hunter orange.

Resident leftover permits

Residents may apply for one leftover permit through the Pratt office. Applications will be accepted immediately after the primary drawing, and leftover permits will be drawn and issued on a daily basis from August through Jan. 3, 2004, or until all leftovers have been sold. Leftover permits of all types revert to antlerless-only permits.

Extended season

This year's extended season (Jan. 1 - 4, 2004) is open only in units 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 19. Unfilled deer permits valid in those units, as well as game tags, may be used during the extended season but are valid only for antlerless white-tailed deer. Any equipment legal for use during a firearms season may be used during the January season. Blaze orange is required of all hunters, even those using a bow, during this season.

DEFINITIONS – landowner, tenant, manager

- Landowner - A resident owner of farm or ranch land of 80 acres or more located in the state of Kansas.

- Tenant/Manager - An individual who is actively engaged in the agricultural production of 80 acres or more of Kansas farm or ranch land for the purpose of producing agricultural commodities or livestock and who:

(A) Has a substantial financial investment in the production of agricultural commodities or livestock on such farm or ranch land and the potential to realize substantial financial benefit from such production; or (B) is a bona fide manager having an overall responsibility to direct, supervise and conduct such agricultural operations and has the

potential to realize substantial benefit from such production in the form of salary, shares of such production or some other economic incentive based upon such production.

- Nonresident Landowner - A nonresident of the state of Kansas who owns farm or ranch land of 80 acres or more which is located in the state of Kansas.

DOVE BANDING STUDY

Mourning doves are one of the most widely distributed and abundant birds in North America. Mourning doves are also popular game birds and are hunted in 36 of the lower 48 states. More mourning doves are harvested than all other migratory bird species combined. In Kansas, about 36,000 hunters harvest approximately 800,000 mourning doves per year.

Because of the importance of the mourning dove as a migratory game bird, wildlife managers require certain information from which to guide harvest management decisions. Information on dove survival and harvest rates are keys to understanding the effects of annual hunting regulations on mourning dove populations. Banding is the primary tool used to obtain this information.

This summer, Kansas – along with 25 other states – is participating in a nation-

wide mourning dove banding study. The objectives of this three-year study are to determine mourning dove harvest rates, estimate annual survival, provide information on the geographical distribution of the harvest, and develop and refine techniques for a future operational dove banding program. Doves will be marked with metal leg bands containing a unique number and a toll-free telephone number that hunters can use to report the band.

Hunters cooperating in this effort will help wildlife managers collect important information on the number of banded doves harvested and the location and date of harvest. More than 85,000 doves will be trapped and banded during the next three years in the 26 states involved in the study.

In Kansas, mourning doves are captured in wire ground traps baited with millet or sunflower seed. Doves enter the trap through the funnels in search of grain but cannot get out because of the trap's design. Traps are checked regu-

larly, and trapped doves are removed and carefully examined to determine their age and sex based upon feather color and patterns of feather replacement and wear. Doves are then banded with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service numbered bands, then immediately released.

Hunters are critical to this study. By checking all harvested doves and reporting bands, hunters help biologists manage this important migratory game bird resource. Because dove bands are very small, hunters should carefully check all doves harvested.

If you harvest a banded mourning dove, phone 1-800-327-BAND (2263) and report it. Banded birds may also be reported on the internet at www.pwrc.usgs.gov. Select "Bird Banding Lab." Hunters can keep the bands and will be provided a certificate identifying the age, sex, date, and location the bird was banded.

—Helen Hands, wildlife biologist,
Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area

Special Turkey Hunt

Last spring, two special spring turkey hunts were conducted on the Council Grove Wildlife Area – one for persons with disabilities and one for women. These events were designed to pair hunters with knowledgeable and experienced volunteers to kindle interest in wild turkey hunting. Six handicapped hunters and 10 women were guided to area locations on private and public land, where all participants got to see turkeys.

The handicapped hunters enjoyed outstanding weather conditions on April 12, and four participants took turkeys. For two of these hunters, this was the first turkey that they had ever taken.

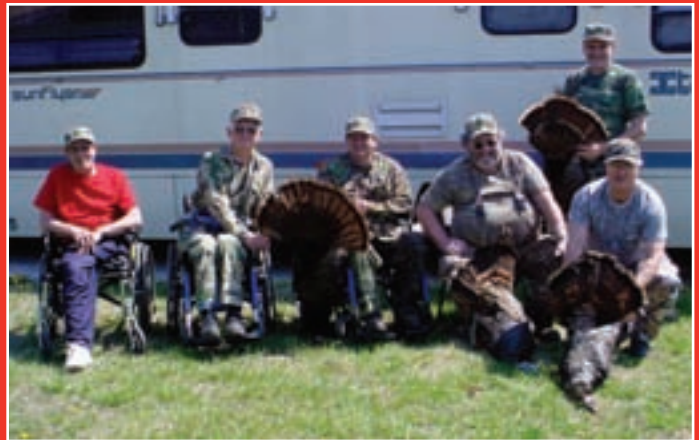
Unfortunately, much-needed rain hampered the women's hunt on April 19. Despite the rainy conditions, several women and their guides tried to entice birds to within range, but no one was able to take a bird. Participants were happy with the opportunity to participate, however, and with instruction, gear, and meals that were provided, they were inspired and prepared for next season.

The following organizations provided assistance: the Kansas Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation, the Neosho Valley Quail Unlimited, Munker's Creek Limbhangar's Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation, the Kansas Department of Wildlife & Parks "Pass It On" Program, Morris County Ducks Unlimited, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the Morris County Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Individuals included Randy Benteman, Marvin Peterson, Marc Murrell, Spencer Tomb, Frank and Trent Siegle, Allan Cashman, Cliff Carroll, Tyson and Tony Powell, Mike and Dara Lowry, Steve Crichton, Jason Heath, Neil Whitaker, Melinda Harder, Dave Gentry, Mike Williams, Tom Baugher, Vance Ralstin, and Tim Lindskog.

Volunteers interested in helping with next year's hunts may phone (620) 767-5900.

—Brent Konen, Council Grove Wildlife Area manager



Mysterious Feline Testifies



by Mark Shoup

Unassociated Press

TOPEKA – In a special session of the Kansas Legislature’s Un-Kansan Activities Committee, testimony was taken from a mysterious plaintiff whose name was given as Calvin Hobbes Painter, of “rural Scott County, Kansas.”

Rep. Rowdy Yates (R-Dog Holler) called the special session to resolve controversy regarding the existence of Painter, who claims that he not only exists but resides in western Kansas and has family members throughout the state. Painter believes that proving his existence will make him eligible for state benefits under the Extirpated Animals Rehabilitation Act.

When asked by Rep. Cadi Weehogan (D-Freckled Rock) why officials have been unable to locate any of the many “relatives” he claimed throughout the state, Painter argued that officials had the family identity mistaken.

“I just don’t see where ya’ll come up with names like John Cougar when everyone from North Carolina to Arkansas knows we are Painters to the core!” he growled. Then he lapsed into a rambling discourse that began with allusions to royal ancestry, claiming direct descendance from Richard the Lionhearted, and ended with an attack on committee chairman Donald “Dagnab” Corkscrew (I-Bent Neck), calling him a “puss ‘n boots.”

At this point, Chairman Corkscrew slammed his gavel on the table and told Painter to go lie down in the corner. “Are there any other witnesses!” he demanded.

Quietly rising from a seat in the back of the room, a man dressed as a medieval Franciscan monk slowly shuffled to the podium and stood at rigid attention.

“State your name,” Corkscrew blubbered, clearly shaken that another witness had actually shown up.

“Tuck Friar, sir, but most folks just call me Iggy,” Friar barked.

“Well, at ease Ig..., er Mr. Friar. What have you got to say for yourself.”

Friar then related how he had seen an individual fitting Painter’s description prowling around his residence in Douglas County. As he described the sightings – mostly fleeting glimpses on darkened roads or in tall weeds in a nearby field, he became more agitated. “It all came to a head when I came home from work one day and found this cat sitting in my lounge drinking a beer and watching Oprah. When I told him I was going to call the cops, he leaped out of the chair,

crushed my skull in his mouth, and literally tore my head off!”

At this point, the entire room became quiet. Some representatives who had appeared to be sleeping popped their heads up, and everyone stared incredulously at Friar. Friar looked around nervously, then stuttered, “Well, I got better.”

Chairman Corkscrew, obviously running short on patience, once again slammed his gavel down, with such force that the head broke off and flew across the room, hitting the witness directly between the eyes. Unable to continue testimony, Friar was carried from the room.

Having gathered himself, Chairman Corkscrew sighed audibly and meekly asked if there were any other witnesses.

“You gall dern right there is!” came a booming voice from the hallway outside. Making his way through a now growing crowd of reporters and janitorial staff who had caught wind of the proceedings, a bearded, bull-chested man in period buckskins with a pink scarf around his neck came forward.

“State your name,” Chairman Corkscrew mumbled resignedly.

“Vincent Van Gogh,” the pink-scarfed mule skinner replied. Ignoring the second dead silence of the day’s proceedings, Van Gogh continued. “And I’m here to tell you I know a thing or two about Painters. Now, I ain’t a sayin’ this feller on the floor over there is or ain’t a Painter, but I can tell you one thing: the state’s a wantin’ to clear our deer out, and it seems like every time I hear about one of these here Painter fellers, there’s a black helicopter showed up.”

At this point, Chairman Corkscrew pulled a cord next to his chair, and Van Gogh disappeared through a trapdoor in the floor.

Pandemonium broke out all around. Everyone was shouting at once, and Chairman Corkscrew, lacking a gavel, began pounding his shoe on the table and screaming, “We will bury you!” The sergeant-at-arms grabbed Corkscrew by the neck and began choking him as fists flew everywhere.

Suddenly, there was a piercing scream that silenced the room one last time. Someone thought they saw Painter slipping through the crowd of bystanders on all fours, but others said it must have been the Committee mascot, Beavis, a long-tailed basset hound that usually avoided the more raucous Committee sessions.

Chairman Corkscrew and the Sergeant at Arms now stood in an apparent embrace, looking in the direction of the departed Painter – or Beavis, as the case may have been. When they released each other, Corkscrew straightened his tie, cleared his throat, and declared, “Well, without further evidence to the contrary, I move that we send a bill to the full House recognizing the Painter family as legal residents of Kansas. Any objections?” The sudden change in the room’s tenor apparently had left everyone speechless, so the Chairman slapped his shoe on the table and declared, “Then I reckon this here session is adjourned.”

New Channel Catfish Record



Venturing out to the Mined Land Wildlife Area south of Pittsburg on May 3, Humbolt resident Rick Barnow, accompanied by three of his fishing buddies, broke a Kansas state record by landing a channel catfish of a size never before witnessed in the state.

"Honestly, I don't want to tell you where I caught that fish in the Mined Land Area, especially because one of my friends with me, Mike Gillespie from Yates Center, caught a 29 pounder that night too," Barnow said. "He caught his fish about 9 p.m., and myself, Mike, Chuck Shults, and Larry Culp decided to go ahead and stay the night. My friends and I work together, and when one guy hooks a fish, the others help out with flashlights and the net. The fish were biting well, and we had a nice fire going, fishing from the bank."

Large fish and relaxing conditions are not unusual for the Mined Land Area, located in rural Cherokee County. In 1981, almost 8,200 acres were given to the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks for use by Kansas sportsmen and women. Donated by the P&M Coal Company, the area, full of strip pit ponds and lakes created by coal mining in the early 20th century, has slowly grown in size to the 14,500 acres that it encompasses today.

"About 1:30 a.m. Saturday morning, my bait alarm [attached to his fishing line] sounded off," Barnow said of his catch. "When I rushed over to pick up the rod, the line was still coming off the reel. I immediately set the hook. It probably only took about five minutes to get the fish in. He didn't fight that

much until we netted him. That's when he started going bananas."

But it was too late for the unlucky channel cat by then. With the fish safely tucked away in the net, Barnow and Shults weighed the fish right there and then and discovered that it might break the existing channel cat record of 34 pounds, 11 ounces. That fish was caught in Douglas County in 1993.

"Chuck told me, 'You need to find a certified scale. That fish is a state record!'" Barnow said.

Barnow immediately drove to Chetopa to get it weighed. By this time, it was the middle of the night, and finding a scale would prove to be another challenge.

"We went to Chetopa thinking that KDWP would have a scale down there due to the paddlefish season," he said. "Unfortunately, all they do down there is measure fish, not weigh them. So I ended up just driving back to the pits, but not before stopping down at the river to revive the fish to keep him alive."

The sun came up that morning to find Barnow and his friends ending their record-setting trip to Cherokee County with the fish still alive, after having been tied to a tree and in the water during the night.

With the huge channel cat in hand, Barnow and his group headed toward their homes in the Chanute/Yates Center area. Determined to find the true size and weight of the fish, Barnow went to Bookover's Bait Shop in Chanute.

"I walked in the shop and told them I needed to weigh a big fish and to call the game warden because I thought it was a state record," Barnow said.

The fish, verified by Leonard Jirak, the district fisheries biologist for KDWP, topped the scales at 36 1/2 pounds and 38 inches in length, easily besting the previous record.

"I was quite impressed by it," Jirak said. "I'm guessing that the channel cat was about 15 years old, give or take three years. Thanks to our fish feeding operations, we have bigger channel cats in the smaller bodies of water than the reservoirs have now. We've seen several undocumented 30-pound channel cats show up in the last few years."

And now for the best part of the story: the fish is still alive.

"We kept the fish in a stock tank with an aerator for about three days to keep him alive. That's when a representative from Cabela's in Kansas City came down and took the fish back to the store, which is good," Jirak said. "We kinda wanted to leave the fish in Kansas, so he will be on display in the Cabela's aquarium in Kansas City for everyone to see."

Fishing on public ground and working as a team, Barnow and his friends combined their efforts to make their mark in Kansas fishing history – and for all to see.

—story written by Jeff Glines as a special to the Pittsburg Morning Sun

Questions & Answers

Q: Is there a repellent or toxicant for bats?

A: There are no toxicants registered for bats. Some repellents are available, but have not been found to be effective in very many situations. The best control is exclusion.

However, bats are excellent at controlling mosquitoes. A single little brown bat can catch 1,200 mosquito-sized insects per hour.

Q: What is the biggest threat to native wildlife?

A: Although I don't know if it is the biggest threat, invasions by exotic plant species are threatening. Exotic species – also called alien, nonindigenous, or non-native species – are forms that occur in a region because of human activities that aided their dispersal across a geographical barrier.

Some of the more well-known threats to Kansas include sericea lespedeza, smooth-brome, cheat grass, and fescue.

Q: Did federal agencies ever agree on a definition of a wetland?

A: This has been a controversial issue for years. There are reference definitions and program definitions but generally no widespread concurrence. Three major factors characterize a wetland: water, substrate (hydric soils), and biota (vegetation), but all do not have to be present to indicate the site is a wetland.

Q: What is a good repellent to keep a cat from using my flower bed as a litter box?

A: A mean dog works well in some situations. Products that contain the active ingredients methyl nonyl ketone or capsaicin pepper and oil of mustard seed seem to be effective. A motion activated water sprinkler also keeps cats out of some areas.

—Charlie Lee, K-State
Extension specialist, Manhattan

STUDENT STUDY WATER

On April 9, students and educators from Emporia High School, John Dewey Learning Academy (Lecompton), Shawnee Mission Northwest High School, Tonganoxie High School, and Wamego High School attended the 3rd Annual Kansas StreamLink Student Gathering: Confluence in Wamego. Kansas StreamLink (www.streamlink.org) is a statewide water study program that provides support for groups interested in local water resources.

Students made presentations about their stream research and took questions from the audience. They also discussed several of their community outreach endeavors. A special teacher session was held to discuss the importance of education in water quality improvement, to draw attention to available watershed specific information and resources, and to discuss school-level challenges to continuing field-based learning activities.

Throughout the day, water resource professionals led activities and presentations regarding Kansas' past, present, and future water needs and surface/groundwater management techniques. A career-mentor luncheon gave students a chance to talk one-on-one with a broad array of public and private sector water-related specialists.

A tree planting project along the Kansas River at the newly-installed St. George access point gave students a hands-on opportunity to give back to the community. To conclude the event, students reviewed the activities of the day, reflected on what it means to have a high quality of life, and considered how quality of life ties back to water quality.

—Alison L. Reber,
Kansas StreamLink

OF BIRDS AND PLAYAS

When you think of wetlands, most people think of waterfowl, shorebirds, and other wetland-dependent species. USDA Earth Team volunteers found that Kansas playa lakes are about much more than wetland birds. Earth Team volunteers working for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service in Kansas conducted spring migration surveys on 86 playa lakes in 1997, 1998, 1999, and 2000. Volunteers documented 142 species of birds using the playa wetlands during spring migration. The birds included not only typical wetland species but also a wide variety of upland species.

Playas in normally dry regions and provide resources for a wide variety of birds and other wildlife.

The survey will be published later this year in the Kansas Ornithological Society Bulletin.

—Thomas Flowers, *Playa Post*



HUNTER EDUCATION HALL OF FAMER

On April 28, the International Hunter Education Association (IHEA) inducted Ed Augustine, Junction City, to the group's Hall of Fame. Augustine was nominated by Wayne Doyle, statewide hunter education coordinator for KDWP. In making the nomination, Doyle cited Augustine's 40 years of volunteer work in the state.

"Ed has been involved in the training and certification of more than 25,000 students," Doyle said. "He introduced the Explanation-Demonstration-Observation-Congratulations (EDOC) training method in Kansas. This has been presented at workshops and written about in the program newsletter and Kansas Wildlife and Parks magazine. He introduced and designed training for the use of safety trails and developed the first safety trail used in Kansas. And he's provided training to other states who have added this type training to their programs.

"Ed also pioneered teaching a method used in shotgun live fire that gets students breaking clay targets within just five shots. Again, he provided training to other states in this method. He also established the first Kansas in-school hunter education program, in the Junction City school system."

Prior to 1972, Kansas had no requirement for hunter education. Augustine was a key player in the effort to make hunter education mandatory in Kansas and worked with the Kansas Legislature to pass a law requiring the course for anyone born on or after July 1, 1957. Once the law was passed, he helped train instructors and design



course content.

Doyle continues: "Ed has helped to establish and design instructor re-certification programs that are used statewide. As a National Rifle Association (NRA) Training Counselor, he's tailored shooting skills training to hundreds of hunter education instructors. They, in turn,

He has been instrumental in the design of the Laser Shot programs. In 2002, this effort reached more than 23,000 people.

Augustine has served or is serving as the Geary County 4H shooting sports chairman, a shotgun instructor for Women On Target events, a National Muzzleloading Rifle Association instructor, and a Kansas bowhunter education instructor.

Augustine has authored several publications, including EDOC Teaching Methods for the Wisconsin Hunter Education Program, Accidents as Teaching Tools for Kansas

measure of what he has meant to this program, hunting, and outdoor efforts of all kinds," Doyle says. "His achievements in all these areas are legendary. He is recognized in all areas of hunting, hunter education, and conservation activities in this state, and he is well known in other states, as well. Would the Kansas Hunter Education Program exist without Ed's efforts? Certainly. Would the program be as effective as it is without him? Certainly not.

"Ed's dedication, drive, and enthusiasm are unparalleled. Every coordinator of this program has come to rely on him as a de facto assistant coordinator. His willingness to take on tasks, raise funds, train instructors, and assist in public relations has benefitted this program to a degree unequalled by anyone else. If I need an event organized, Ed's there. If we need a new test, Ed's there. If the student manual needs revision, Ed's there. If any youth shooting or hunting program needs something, Ed's there. If any of these youth programs needs an advocate, Ed's there. He is a remarkable man who has done more than his share to improve the world around him."

—Shoup

To emphasize the magnitude of Augustine's efforts, Doyle lists the following activities:

- 1950-present – Kansas Wildlife Federation club delegate, director, vice president, state president, leadership development chairman.
- 1993-present – Becoming an Outdoors Woman instructor in Kansas and New Mexico. Introduced and instructed alternative delivery of hunter education to the Kansas program.
- 1988-present – Introduced environmental education enhancement to all 5th-grade students in Geary County and aboard Ft. Riley military reservation.
- 1960s-present – Associated with Boy Scouts of America as district committee member, district camping chairman, merit badge council, and shooting instructor at summer camps.
- 1997-2000 – on the IHEA Instructor Board representing the western United States.

have used this training to teach shooting skills to thousands of students."

Augustine was instrumental in bringing Laser Shot computer simulation to the Kansas Hunter Education Program. Once they were purchased, he volunteered significant time to transport and operate the systems statewide.

For the past two years, Augustine has been a part-time KDWP employee responsible for training and organization of four teams of Laser Shot opera-

Hunter Education Program, Teaching Shotgun Shooting, and Basic Wingshooting. He has also been named the the Kansas State Rifle Association Outstanding Person in Shooting Sports, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation Conservation Educator of the Year, the Kansas Wildscape Instructor of the Year, and twice earned the Kansas Hunter Education Order of the Buffalo.

"To list all of Ed Augustine's accomplishments in hunter education still does not give a true

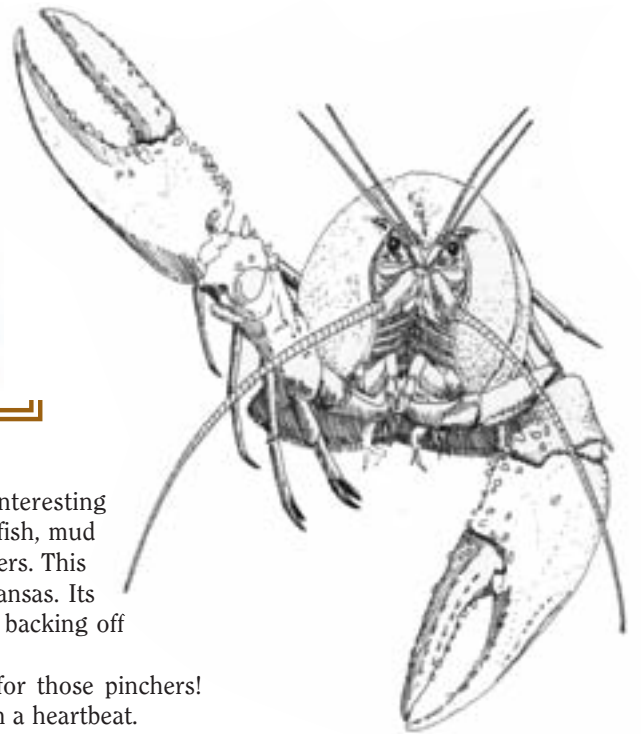
Kansas Bowhunters Association Annual Rendezvous

August 16-17

Ninnescah Valley Archers Club
Pratt, Kansas

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BIG DADDY CRAYFISH



Most Kansans call them crawdads, but the most common and interesting crustacean in the state is also known in some parts as crayfish, crawfish, mud bug, and Spanish lobster. In fact, they look just like a miniature lobsters. This fascinating animal can be found in all kinds of waters throughout Kansas. Its habit of moving backward is the origin of the term “crawfishing,” or backing off from your word or position on a subject.

Every kid is fascinated by this freshwater critter, but watch out for those pinchers! While they can't really hurt you, they'll snap you out of a daydream in a heartbeat.

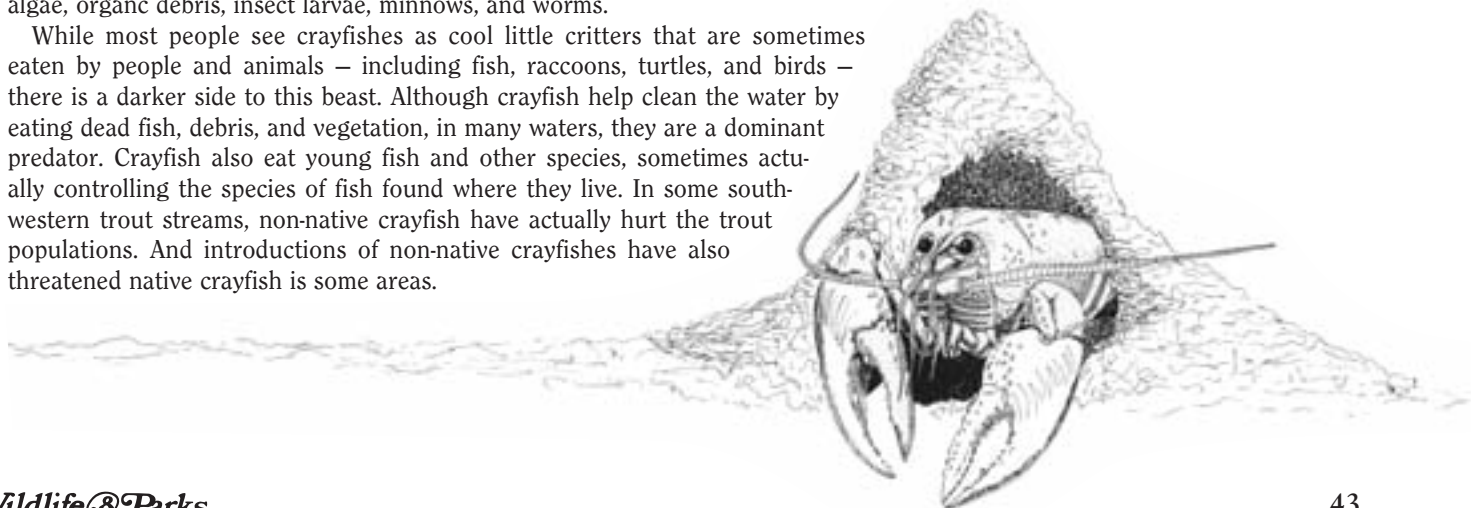
Related to lobsters and crabs, crayfishes are members of the family Cambaridae. In this family, there are 450 species of crayfishes, and about 390 of these are found in North America. Of these, about a dozen species

can be found in Kansas. They can live in streams, ponds, lakes, and marshes, just about anywhere there is a permanent source of water. They are also produced commercially for human food, a delicacy tasting very much like their much larger marine cousin. Wire mesh baskets filled with chicken parts or other bait can be used to catch crayfish.

Usually only about 3 or 4 inches long, some crayfishes can grow to 16 inches, with an average life span of about two years. In their watery homes, they lurk beneath sticks or rocks, hide in caves, and even burrow in the mud. They are most active at night when feeding on snails,

algae, organic debris, insect larvae, minnows, and worms.

While most people see crayfishes as cool little critters that are sometimes eaten by people and animals – including fish, raccoons, turtles, and birds – there is a darker side to this beast. Although crayfish help clean the water by eating dead fish, debris, and vegetation, in many waters, they are a dominant predator. Crayfish also eat young fish and other species, sometimes actually controlling the species of fish found where they live. In some southwestern trout streams, non-native crayfish have actually hurt the trout populations. And introductions of non-native crayfishes have also threatened native crayfish in some areas.

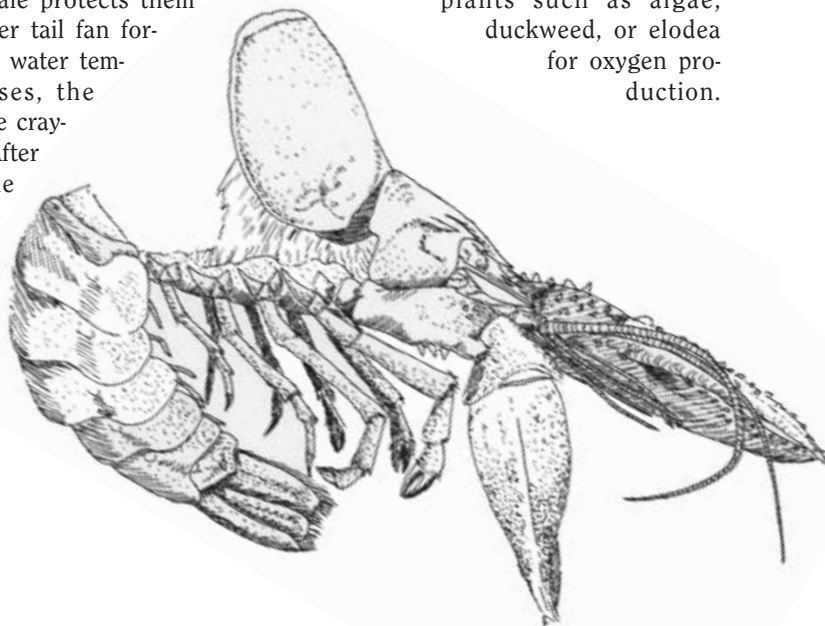




Being cold-blooded animals, crayfish don't emerge from burrows or other hiding places until the water temperature reaches 50 degrees or more. They are among the first prey species to emerge in the spring, making them an important source of food for bass and other species just coming off a long winter.

The life cycle of the crayfish begins in summer. In the mating process, males place a sperm packet (resembling a cotton ball) on the underside of the female's belly. She curls her tail and lays the eggs, passing them through the sperm down on to her tail fan, where they attach to her small swimming appendages, called swimmerets.

Eggs stay on the tail for at least four weeks or more, depending on water temperature and other variables, such as food and water quality. The female protects them by curling her tail fan forward. As the water temperature rises, the small juvenile crayfish hatch. After hatching, the young crayfish stay



attached to the female through two molts – shedding of their “skins,” called exoskeletons. Then they swim away to eat (or be eaten). However, they may stay close to the female for some time, returning to the safety of her abdomen when they are threatened. Some species may grow enough to mate that season, and others may not mate until their second year.

As they feed and grow larger, they molt repeatedly every few weeks during the warmer months of the year. After shedding, the exoskeleton is quite soft, rendering the crayfish more vulnerable to predation and forcing it under rocks or other hiding places until its shell hardens again.

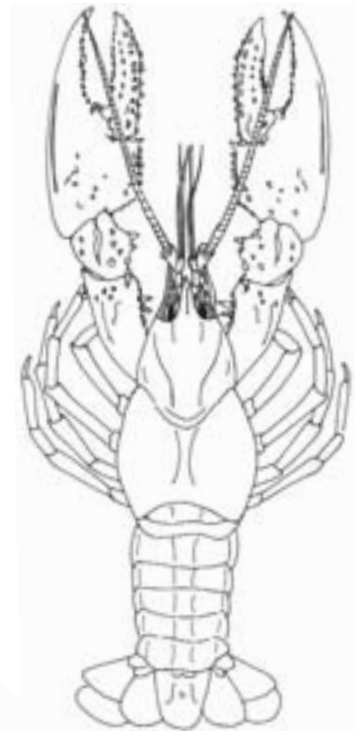
Crayfish are fun to keep and very easy to take care of. Place 1 to 2 inches of mud in the bottom of a 10-gallon aquarium. Pond or stream mud works perfectly. Fill the aquarium with 3 to 4 inches of water, more if you like. The same water you take them from would be best, but if you want clearer water, use well water or drinking water. Chlorine from tap water may harm them, so if you use tap water, let it set for 24 hours before putting the crayfish in. The chlorine will evaporate.

Place rocks or bricks in such a way that they can crawl under and hide. A clay pot or two lain on its side will work well. Add some pond plants such as algae, duckweed, or elodea for oxygen production.

Otherwise, an aerator will be necessary. Place the aquarium in an area of the room that receives plenty of sunlight.

Feed your crayfish chopped meat, earthworms, frozen fish, hamburger, pieces of hot dogs, or commercial crayfish food. Small minnows may work, as well. You may want to keep an extra aquarium for feeding so that the main home remains clean. You can also use forceps to hold food for crayfish to eat, if the critter is not too shy. Feed small amounts at a time until you get an idea of how much your crayfish eat. If they eat one day but not the next, feed every other day until you know their eating patterns.

A number of internet websites provide information about this interesting animal. This summer, try keeping a few crayfish. Find out more about them. They may even mate in your aquarium.





Backlash

by Mike Miller

How Big's Big, Big?

When Lennie and I were younger, we had two requirements for a reservoir fishing trip: a believable fishing report and calm winds. The 16-foot flat-bottom we fished out of back then wasn't a big-wave boat.

Unfortunately, you can't depend on weather forecasts and we weren't discerning about the fishing reports we believed. But we were avid, or ignorant, however you might look at it, and it didn't take much to get us excited.

Co-worker Chester Bigsby works in accounting and while he isn't much of a fisherman, he has relatives who live near Glen Elder. Chester is a huge man, and we usually call him Big, which he likes. But when he's being a pain about the budget, we call him Chet the Beancounter, which he hates.

Big walked into my office one July day and announced that his half-brother's stepson had caught some big walleyes at Glen. He glared when I asked if the lad would be his quarter-stepnephew. Big had a lot of relatives in northcentral Kansas, and he was sensitive to remarks about his ancestry. I was merely trying to lighten the mood before I started squeezing details from ole Big.

"How big's big, Big?" I asked, not realizing what I'd said until it came out. Chester's glare morphed into a look of puzzlement.

"Whatter you calling big walleyes?" I rephrased.

"I don't know," he said, as he rubbed his chin. "Wally wouldn't even mention catching a mess of little walleyes. I suppose he's talking about 4 or 5-pounders."

Most of Big's relatives didn't work regular jobs, or any jobs for that matter, so they fished a lot. Normally, even I would be leary of a good walleye fishing report in July, but since Big's relatives were involved, I was making plans to call Lennie and watch the weather.

"Do you know exactly where on the lake they were fishing?" I asked, then quickly followed up with, "And how deep the fish were and maybe what . . . ?"

Big cut me off. "Those boys are serious about their hunting and fishing. They'd never tell you about their walleye holes — unless of course — I was along," he said, as a revelation came to him. "If you guys take me, I'll get a map with all the hotspots marked. It'll be fun."

A map with secret fishing spots marked by Big's hill-billy relatives would be worth its weight in gold.

"You invited who? Lennie gasped when I told him of the big walleye and our trip. "Just how big is big to Big?"

"Big big," I said, somewhat disturbed that I knew

exactly what Lennie meant. "Big is bringing a Glen Elder map with walleye hotspots marked by his relatives, Lennie."

"Oh . . ." Lennie said softly, pausing while it soaked in. "Big has kin who've thrown back more walleye than you and I will catch in our lifetimes. They knew that land before the lake was built and they know where every road bed, bridge, house foundation, and hedge row is!" Lennie blurted, his voice quivering.

"It'll be fun."

"That's the spirit, Lennie. It's supposed to be calm Friday. Let's take the day off and leave early. If we got away by 4:30, we could be on the water by 7:30."

"Four-thirty?" Lennie growled. "That's almost ludicrous — but it would be better to fish early."

You might guess the rest of this story. When we arrived at the boat ramp, Lennie and I excitedly asked Big to unfold the secret map on the hood of the truck. Big reached into his back pocket and pulled out a small, folded piece of tattered paper.

"Here she is, boys," Big announced proudly.

Lennie and I bumped heads as we leaned over at the same time to squint at the tiny map. It was hand-drawn and had little Xs marked randomly.

"That's just a bunch of chicken scratches," Lennie grumbled.

"Wally told me how to find these spots," Big assured us. "He didn't want a detailed map of his hotspots falling into the wrong hands — and he mentioned you two by name. It's all in my head."

At least the wind was calm. After three hours, all we had to show for our effort was a sunburn, a mild case of heat stroke, and stiff necks. It was 105 degrees and there wasn't a breath of breeze. And Big wouldn't sit in the middle of the boat. Even with Lennie and I both as counter weights, the boat tilted dangerously low on Big's side. So, we sat crooked in a leaning flat-bottom praying for a breeze. Big was oblivious.

"This is great!" he babbled. "It's just too bad the fisheys won't bite."

"Astroph, mistrjimp sheelug, pftts!" Lennie barked at him.

I knew it was time to go home. Lennie had been in the hot sun so long, he couldn't talk, and I guess I was succumbing, too. I understood every word Lennie said about Big's relatives and ancestry.

Fortunately, Big didn't.

