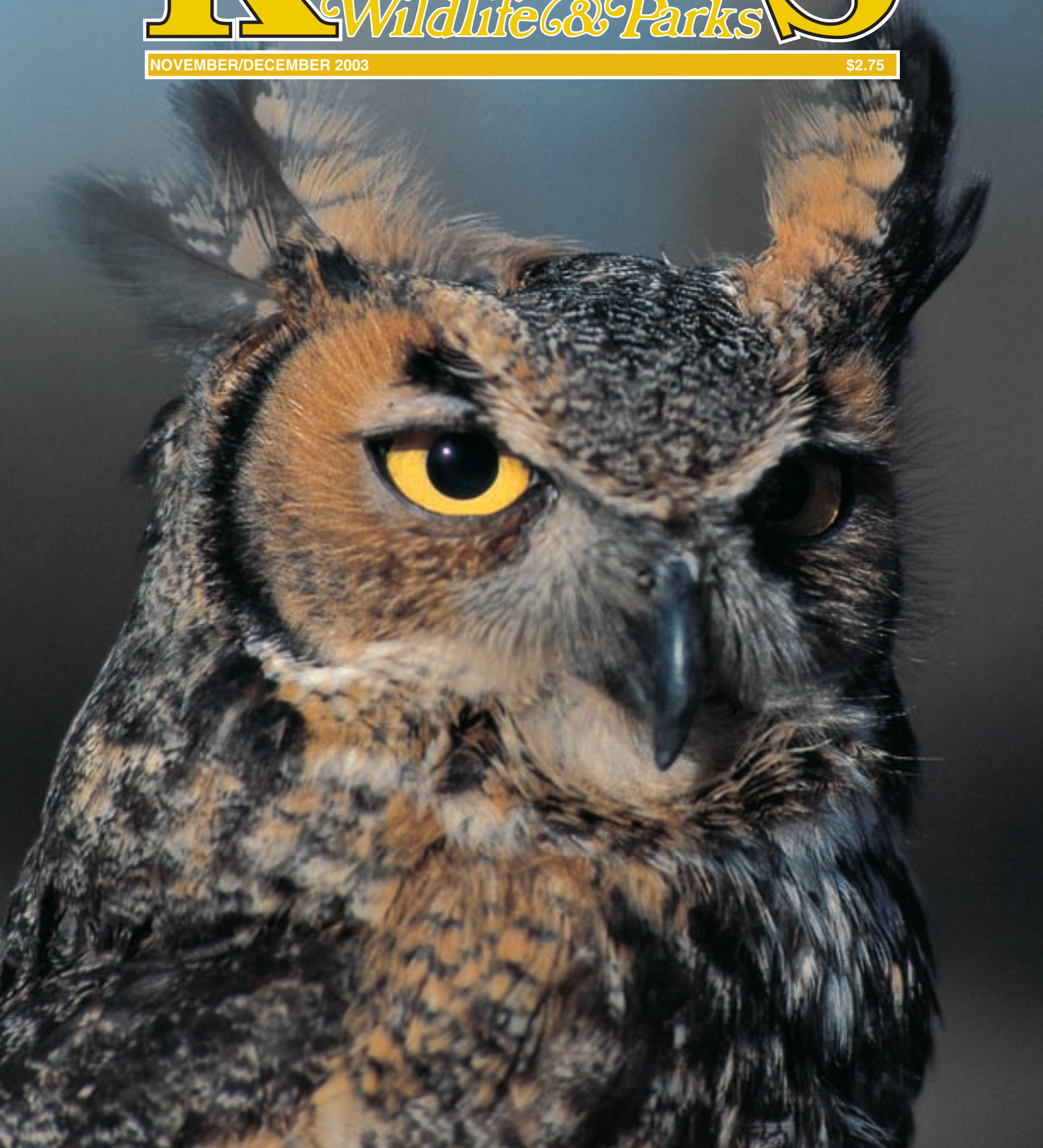


KANSAS

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On Point

by Mike Hayden



Quail Quest

This should be one of the best pheasant and quail seasons in several years. And while quail numbers appear to be near the five-year average in southeast Kansas, they remain below densities present just 20 years ago. In fact nationwide, bobwhite numbers have plummeted 66 percent across their historic range since 1980. The Northern Bobwhite Conservation Initiative (NBCI) was created to reverse this decline.

With contributions from more than 50 biologists and 22 state agencies, as well as federal agencies, universities, and private organizations, the NBCI is a true team effort. In summary, the plan calls for increasing nesting and brood-rearing habitat through native grass and forb plantings, reducing invasive woody vegetation, and improving grazing practices. The NBCI has the full endorsement of our department, Quail Unlimited (QU), and is even specifically supported in the new federal Farm Bill.

The goals are ambitious — return nationwide bobwhite densities to those found in 1980, which would require restoring 2.7 million coveys. Here in Kansas, approximately 125,000 additional coveys are needed statewide, the majority in the southeastern quarter of the state. To reach this goal, habitat restoration and improved management practices must be applied to more than 1.5 million acres of land.

“It will not be easy, but we’re going to do it,” says Roger Wells, QU National Habitat Coordinator and contributor to NBCI. “In my 30 years as a small game biologist, there has never been a greater opportunity presented to sportsmen and wildlife professionals as the combination of the NBCI plan and the wildlife-friendly Farm Bill.”

KDWP’s Southeast Kansas Quail Initiative, utilizing the NBCI principles, is starting to make a difference in the four-county pilot area (Allen, Bourbon, Crawford, and Neosho). In two years, 118 habitat plans have been written. The average cost-share payment to cooperators has been \$1,722, primarily to establish warm-season native grass — including replacing fescue and marginal cropland (similar efforts to manipulate brome are occurring

in other areas of Kansas).

Lance Hedges, district wildlife biologist and co-administrator of the Southeast Initiative, is excited about the program’s progress. “While we have a relatively small budget, we have been successful leveraging state money with Farm Bill funds,” says Hedges. “We are starting to see results in our Bourbon County demonstration area, where bobwhite whistle counts were up 45 percent this year.”

Through an agreement with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) signed in August, KDWP wildlife biologists will be available to assist in developing and implementing wildlife conservation plans on private lands. Producers who apply for a Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) grant at their local NRCS office can get assistance from a KDWP biologist, who will develop a conservation plan. This agreement has tremendous potential for quail and other wildlife.

Applications for WHIP grants exceed available funds. In 2003, approximately \$457,000 in WHIP grants were issued, while landowners applied for nearly \$630,000. However, according to Kansas NRCS WHIP Coordinator Rod Egbarts, more WHIP funds may be available in subsequent years. Landowners are encouraged to re-apply if they have been denied in the past, or to contact a KDWP biologist to apply for a state-sponsored incentive program.

I commend the NBCI and all of the other partners for creating a comprehensive plan critical to the future of bobwhite quail. A special thanks goes out to landowners who are improving their lands to benefit this tremendous wildlife resource. With the funds from the Farm Bill, NRCS cooperation, and the full backing of Quail Unlimited, this is truly an historic opportunity to reverse the downward spiral.

For more information on how you can contribute to the quail recovery efforts, contact:

| | |
|-----------------------|----------------|
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Front Cover: The great-horned owl is one of Kansas' fiercest birds of prey. Mike Blair filmed this captive bird with a 55mm lens, f/11 @ 1/125 sec. **Back:** State and national initiatives strive to improve habitat and reverse the declining trend in bobwhite populations. Blair photographed this bird with a 600mm lens, f/5.6 @ 1/500 sec.



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Night Hunters

by J. Mark Shoup
associate editor, Pratt

photos by Mike Blair

We've all heard the hoot of a great-horned owl, but how many of us know about the other species that live in Kansas? Owls are both mysterious and fascinating.





Owls have fascinated mankind throughout history. This fascination is reflected wherever these mysterious creatures appear in popular media. From the whimsical “Owl” of the *Winnie the Pooh* series (the voice of Hal Smith, who played the loveable drunk, Otis Campbell, on *The Andy Griffith Show*) to the all-knowing but terrifying cannibal, Great Owl, in *The Secret of Nimh* or the harbinger of death in Margaret Craven’s classic, *I Heard the Owl Call My Name*, owls have gripped our imagination.

Silent, secretive, nocturnal: it is no wonder the owl’s call is commonly heard as a haunting question from the dark — Who? Who? But a closer look at these fascinating creatures reveals a far more interesting picture than the mysterious tales in which we shroud them. From the diminutive burrowing owl, which lives underground in abandoned dens of prairie dogs and other burrowing animals, to the ominous great-horned owl, these birds display a striking diversity of skills and behaviors.

The eight most common owls in Kansas share several characteristics. They are primarily nocturnal, hunting by night and sleeping by day. All belong to the family Strigidae except the barn owl, which is classified in the family Tytonidae.

Among birds, owls have the most distinctive heads. They are large and round with huge, hypnotic eyes that face forward, looking you straight on. (Perhaps it is this feature that gave rise to the owl’s reputation for wisdom.) The large beak hooks sharply downward.

Owls have remarkable vision and hearing. Combine this with the bird’s powerful talons and ability to fly in complete silence, and you have a deadly hunting machine unparalleled in the avian world.

Owls regurgitate pellets, which are the indigestible remains of their prey, such as bones, fur, and feathers. Unlike other birds, owls have no crop for storing food. Therefore, they must digest their prey and regurgitate the pellet before eating again. This process can take 10 hours or longer.

As mentioned above, an owl’s eyes may



be its most striking feature. But it's more than just looks. Owl eyes comprise 1 percent to 5 percent of the bird's weight. The forward placement of the eyes allows three-dimensional vision and the ability to judge distance much the way humans do. Although an owl's eyes look round, they are actually long tubes extending back into the skull. This unique development means the owl can't move its eyes. But the owl doesn't have to spend its life staring only forward. Fourteen vertebrae in its neck (humans have seven) provide amazing dexterity, allowing the owl to turn its head through a 270-degree range and almost upside down.

The owl's eyes include a very large pupil and a large and extremely light-sensitive cornea, allowing night vision that would be the envy of any soldier equipped with the latest infrared night goggles. The owl's eyes are so important to its survival, they have special protective equipment, comprised of three eyelids. An upper eyelid closes when the owl blinks, and a lower one closes when the bird sleeps. The third eyelid — called a nictitating membrane — closes diagonally and cleans and pro-



Barn owls inhabit barns, abandoned buildings and graineries. Efficient predators, a pair of barn owls and their young may consume 1,000 rodents during the nesting season.

TECTS the eye.

Located on the sides of the head and covered by a tuft of feathers, an owl's ears are no less impressive. Its hearing is so acute that it can detect and precisely locate the slightest movement of prey in leaves or undergrowth.

Once prey is located, the owl's final unique ability — soundless flight — comes into play. When most birds fly, wind rushing over the wingtips creates a "whooshing" noise, but the owl

has a comb-like leading edge on its primary wing feathers. These feathers muffle the sound of the air rushing over the wings and allow the owl to fly in complete silence — a deadly stealth fighter, indeed. Owl wings are also rounded, with a large surface area that allows the bird to fly with minimum effort for long periods.

Barn Owl

Part of this owl's appeal is its striking white face. We don't ordinarily think of birds as

having faces, but to many observers, the barn owl has the most distinguishable face of all owls. In fact, one of its nicknames is the “monkey-faced owl.” Another endearing quality of the barn owl is its habit of lowering its head and swaying from side to side, an almost pensive gesture.

As the name suggests, barn owls nest in barns and other farm outbuildings, as well as natural tree cavities, rock outcroppings, or abandoned burrows along riverbanks.

Barn owls have one ear higher on the head than the other, which helps them pinpoint the source of a sound. Strictly a nocturnal hunter, it can catch prey in total darkness. It preys primarily on small rodents, with small birds comprising a portion of its diet. According to a study of barn owls published by the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection’s Wildlife Division, a single family of two adults and six young can consume more than 1,000 rodents during a typical three-month nesting period.

Barn owls can be found in most of Kansas although their numbers have declined, largely due to habitat losses caused by development and the Dutch elm epidemic of the mid-20th century.

Average size: 14 inches long, 44-inch wingspan.

Barred Owl

The barred owl is a cousin of the infamous spotted owl of the Pacific Northwest. The two look remarkably alike except that the Kansas native has a horizontally-banded “bib” on its neck and vertical barring on its breast. (The

spotted owl, of course, has spotted feathers on its breast and no separate bib of feathering on the neck.)

Found primarily in the eastern half of the state, the barred owl also inhabits timbered areas of some westcentral counties. It is dependent on densely wooded areas for nesting.

Known for its distinctive “who-cooks-for-you, who-cooks-for-you-all” call, the barred owl is often imitated by hunters

trying to locate roosting turkeys in the pre-dawn darkness. Turkeys startled by the owl’s call will often gobble. Several barred owls in one area at night may conduct a stirring chorus for campers.

The barred owl’s main prey is mice, but small birds, large insects, fish, frogs, and crayfish are also included in their diet.

Average size: 17 inches long, 44-inch wingspan.



Although barred owls are rarely seen, they are easily identified by their call, which is raucous and follows a cadence of “who cooks for you, who cooks for you all.”

The little burrowing owl lives in abandoned prairie dog burrows and often hunts grasshoppers in the daylight.



Burrowing Owl

This interesting little owl is found statewide and is often flushed from a dusty country road at night. Usually present in Kansas from early March to late October, it nests in burrows of other animals — badgers, foxes, prairie dogs — but occasionally digs its own burrow. It is thought that the disappearance of prairie dog towns has decreased the numbers of burrowing owls.

Although they are most active at dawn and dusk, burrowing owls may be seen loafing on the ground or on low perches during the day. When threatened, young burrowing owls may mimic the



sound of a rattlesnake.

Insects and spiders make up the bulk of the burrowing owl's diet. Locusts are a favorite prey, but the diet may also include small snakes, rodents, frogs, and even birds.

Average size: 8 inches long, 22-inch wingspan.

Great-horned Owl

With the exception of the bald eagle, the great-horned owl may be the most ferocious avian predator in Kansas. Large and powerful, this owl may have a wingspan greater than 5 feet and long, deadly talons. This would be the prototypical imposing owl



The great-horned owl is a formidable night predator. It is perhaps the best-known owl because of its haunting *who, who* call. Great-horned owls are also common around towns and suburbs and will nest just about anywhere a suitable platform can be found.

The long-eared owl is not common in Kansas and is rarely seen. A small number do live here year-round.

of myth. With its sinister-looking “horns” (actually tufts of feathers covering the ears), the great-horned owl could be called the Darth Vader of the bird world.

The great-horned is also the most common Kansas owl, found statewide year-round. It will build a nest just about anywhere — from a tree cavity to a water tower. At home in town or country, the great-horned owl may also hunt in daylight hours although it is a more common night hunter. Ironically, the great-horned owl is often the victim of attacks from smaller, more agile birds such as crows, blackbirds, and falcons, which will harass the owl unmercifully. This may be the reason the great-horned owl hunts primarily at night.

Because of its size, the great-horned owl can eat about whatever it wants, from rabbits and large rodents to snakes, fish, and frogs.

Average size: 20 inches long, 55-inch wingspan.

Long-eared Owl

Although considerably smaller than the great-horned, the long-eared owl has even longer ear tufts. This owl has been found in several counties in



Kansas but is not common. Small numbers may be found in the state year-round.

One of the most interesting characteristics of this owl is its mating ritual. It displays aerial acrobatics during courtship and may clap its wings and even coo like a dove.

Nocturnal and secretive, this

owl is seldom seen. It hunts at night and nests in dense woods, especially preferring evergreen trees. Its diet consists almost entirely of mice, but like other owls, it is an opportunist that will take small snakes, frogs, insects, and birds.

Average size: 13 inches long, 39-inch wingspan.



The short-eared owl is another species that is not common in Kansas. It is unique in that it inhabits open areas such as fields, marshes, and pastures.

Short-eared Owl

The short-eared owl is probably less common than the long-eared, and its numbers have declined in areas of the state where it was previously known. It has been rare in Kansas since the 1930s.

Aptly-named because its ear tufts are barely visible, the short-eared owl nests in open areas, such as fields, marshes, pastures, and even grain fields. The nest is simply a scratched-out bowl in the earth, lined with feathers and grass.

The short-eared owl often leads predators away from the nest by distraction display — flying away as if it has a broken wing to lead the intruder astray. The short-eared owl is the most diurnal owl in Kansas, hunting comfortably night or day for small mammals, mainly mice, and large insects. Pheasant hunters often flush short-eared owls from weedy stubble fields.

Average size: 13 inches long, 41-inch wingspan.

Screech Owl

More eerie than the great-horned owl's questioning hoots in the dark, the screech owl's long, trilling "whinny" has brought a rich flavor to many campfire ghost stories. Birdwatchers often use a recording of a screech owl call to attract these owls, and other birds as well, around dawn or dusk.

Common throughout Kansas, the eastern screech owl is small and nests in natural cavities in trees or occasionally in a crevice of a cliff or riverbank. It may appear tame when roosting, allowing a person to approach very closely.

The screech owl eats large insects and spiders in summer and mice and small birds in winter.

Average size: 8 inches long, 22-inch wingspan.

Snowy Owl

From November through mid-April, it is possible to see the most beautiful of all owls — the snowy owl. Although not



The tiny screech owl has two color phases – the gray phase, pictured left, and a red phase, above. Its haunting, trilling call, has probably been blamed on ghosts more than once. The snowy owl’s white appearance is most striking. It is only an occasional visitor in Kansas, normally living in the Arctic.

common, snowy owls have been spotted in about half the counties in Kansas, mostly in the northeast.

According to *Birds In Kansas*, by Max C. Thompson and Charles Ely, “Snowy owls invade the United States at approximately four-year intervals, in response to fluctuations in the lemming population at their Arctic breeding grounds.” Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area, near Great Bend, and open areas around reservoirs are the most common places to find them, usually on a low perch.

The snowy owl is active during the day. Lemmings and ptarmigans — its common prey in the Arctic — cannot be found in Kansas, so when here, the snowy owl eats mostly small rodents and other small mammals.

Average size: 20 inches long, 55-inch wingspan. ♡





From Field To Table

by Dustin Teasley
illustrator, Pratt

photos by Mike Blair

Hunting provides many rewards, not the least of which is a feeling of self-reliance gained by eating what you kill. Wild game meat is also healthy and delicious but requires proper care and preparation.

Many hunters find it difficult to describe the emotion that drives us to hunt. Some believe it is instinct – a drive from deep within that takes us back to ancestors who hunted to feed their families. And though each of us takes our own rewards from hunting, a common thread is the satisfaction gained from

preparing and eating what we have hunted.

Kansas hunters are fortunate to have a seasonal smorgasbord of wild game to feast on. Spring turns us on to wild turkeys and springtime fishing. Summer provides bullfrogs, squirrel hunting, and night fishing for flathead catfish. Fall explodes with hunting seasons — doves, ducks,

upland birds, and deer, as well as some great fishing. Things slow down in winter, but the avid sportsman finds refuge in late season duck and goose hunting, deer hunting and ice-fishing. To get the most of this delicious table fare, hunters must understand that seasonal weather and temperature changes dictate what type of

field and processing care ensures the best-tasting game.

Knowing how to take care of harvested animals helps to avoid spoilage and unpleasant tastes, while increasing the shelf-life of the meat. Proper care from field to freezer is necessary to maintain quality. Most sportsmen have cleaned game and fish, but often a lack of adequate preparation and equipment results in a less than satisfactory job.

Let me paint an all-too-familiar scenario. Let's say you are pond fishing for channel catfish on a hot July evening. At your feet is a stringer with two channel cats on it. The fish are not doing well in the shallow, warm water. A couple of hours later, you call it a day and throw the fish in the back of the truck. Two miles of dusty dirt roads and 15 miles of highway later,

you grab your fish, garden hose, fillet knife, and cleaning board.

The fish are already dead, dry and filthy. You fillet and refrigerate the fish in salt water. The next evening you decide to eat them, but halfway through cooking, a distasteful aroma permeates the kitchen, making you opt for a pizza. A good meal was wasted because of poor care.

Proper handling of your fish from the minute you catch them will make all the difference. You'll need a bucket or cooler of ice, fillet knife, and some plastic bags. Fish that are kept cool and cleaned soon after they are caught will taste better. In cool weather, fish can be easily kept alive in boat livewells until you're ready to clean them. Fish hooked deeply or bleeding from the gills will likely die, so clean them immediately. Put the

bagged fillets on ice and wash thoroughly when you get home.

Where there are facilities, clean your fish at the lake. Electric fillet knives are inexpensive and even available in 12-volt units that will plug into cigarette lighter outlets. At private ponds, bury or dispose of fish entrails properly.

Hunters should also prepare for meat care, depending on the season and weather conditions. Hot dove hunts and freezing cold goose hunts illustrate the broad range of conditions. A game-cleaning kit should include a pair of game shears, sharp knife, plastic bags, paper towels, and a cooler filled with ice.

In recent years, upland bird hunters have experienced warmer than desired season openers, and many hunters



All wild game meat should be processed and cooled quickly. Taking time to mark packages with identification and dates will also allow you to make the most of your meat. Many commercial freezer bags have a label area just for this purpose.

Hauling undressed game in a pickup during warm temperatures is a recipe for bad taste. Field dressing birds in the field is a good way to cool them quickly before they can be fully processed.

travel long distances to find birds. Hunting trips that may last from 4 to 8 hours make taking care of meat a special consideration. The longer harvested birds remain uncleared, the greater chance bacteria has to grow in the meat. This causes spoilage and bad taste. Field dressing birds cools the meat, which reduces bacterial growth. Meat should then be placed in a cooler with ice. If you have time to finish cleaning game after each field is hunted, do so. Hunters usually stop to visit after walking a field, and bird cleaning can be done then. This also eliminates a lot of work at the end of the day when everyone is tired from hunting. (Be sure to leave a leg or other means of sex identification on pheasants, and waterfowl must retain a wing while being transported.)

Turkeys are large and typi-



cally harvested during warm spring weather. Turkey meat is especially vulnerable to spoilage, and turkeys should be field dressed (removing the

internal organs) immediately after the kill. The bird will also be lighter to carry from the field once it is field dressed.

Dove hunting is usually best when it's hot, and care of the meat again takes special consideration. Doves are small enough that a small cooler will cool them, without field dressing, until you get home. When hunting windmill ponds or if water is available, a quick clean and rinse can be done if water conditions are satisfactory.

Ducks and geese are typically harvested when temperatures are cold. But the thick plumage of waterfowl may prevent meat from cooling. Late season harvests will usually be fine until



A deer quarter thrown in the back of the truck will get dirty and the meat will dry. Always keep wrapping paper or plastic bags in your field dressing kit.

the hunter gets home, but September teal and early-season duck hunters can ensure good-tasting meals by field dressing and cooling the meat quickly.

Rabbits and squirrels can be quickly cared for in the field. Field dressing rabbits and squirrels in winter and packing with clean snow is a great way to keep them fresh until you can finish processing at home. Animals taken near running water can be dressed and rinsed before taking home. Make sure to carry a pair of game shears and a couple of plastic bags along during the hunt.

Kansas deer hunters may harvest up to seven deer in a season. This poses special processing considerations. Many hunters process their own deer, but often time or weather prohibits a hunter from doing so. The alternative is to have the

deer commercially processed. Locker plants have regulations they must follow when handling meat, especially wild game, so it's best to contact meat lockers before your hunt and ask about procedures that should be followed.

Some hunters who do their own processing like to hang deer for several days before butchering. If the weather is warm, hang deer in a walk-in cooler to ensure that tempera-

tures stay below 40 degrees. If the meat is allowed to hang in warmer temperatures, it can spoil. Events that lead up to final processing may limit the time a carcass should hang, if at all. A properly placed arrow or bullet will kill quickly and allow the deer to bleed out, providing the best tasting meat. Deer killed with a poorly placed shot need to be processed quickly to prevent bacteria from spreading. Some hunters will rinse their



Fish should be kept cool and cleaned as soon as possible. During the heat of summer, it's a good idea to put fish directly on ice, rather than on a stringer in warm water. Many anglers prefer to soak fillets in cold salt water for several days before freezing.



deer before hanging, but water may act as a transfer medium for bacteria and can spread any contaminants throughout the carcass. If a carcass must be washed, always wipe it dry with a clean cloth.

Deer hunters also have different preferences when it comes to skinning. Some hunters leave the hides on until final processing, and although the carcass will be more difficult to skin after it has cooled, the skin keeps the carcass clean and the outer meat from drying. Other hunters skin deer soon after it is killed,

and this is sometimes necessary to cool the meat in warm weather. Skinning is much easier before the carcass has cooled, but special care must be taken to keep the meat clean once the hide is removed.

There are almost as many different meat care procedures as there are hunters. Some prefer to soak meat in cool salt water for several days before freezing, while others will freeze it immediately after processing. Soaking is a personal preference and is not nearly as important as keeping meat clean and cooling

it quickly.

Once meat is frozen, freezer burn is a concern. This is caused by air contacting the meat for prolonged periods of time and is the biggest limiting factor in the shelf-life of game meat. It's important to seal meat to keep air away. Squirrels, rabbits, doves, and quail may have bones exposed from cleaning, which may puncture plastic bags and create a mess when thawing. Put this type of game in a hard plastic container, fill the container with water to within an inch of the top, attach the lid and freeze. Overfilling could result in a broken container as the water freezes and expands. When freezing fish or game that has been de-boned, plastic bags work fine. Just add a little water to the bag and squeeze out the rest of the air. Deer meat can be wrapped in butcher paper, but wrap it tightly. Remove as many air voids as possible. These methods can double or even triple the freezer-life of wild game and fish.

A relatively new item available to the sportsman is the vacuum sealer. Although sound in theory, meat that is wet from rinsing or marinade often does not seal properly. If you plan to use a sealer, try freezing your game or patting it dry first and then use the sealer to bag and remove air for storage. Vacuum sealers are great for storing processed foods like sausage, jerky and smoked meats.

Responsible hunters and anglers learn to care for their game properly. A few simple steps in the field will make all your game taste better, reduce spoilage, and increase shelf-life. ♡



Care must be taken when bagging or wrapping small game such as squirrels, rabbits or birds. Small bones may puncture the wrapping or bag and allow air inside. Air contact on the frozen meat will cause freezer burn and ruin the meat.

2003 Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks Annual Report

Our department is charged with preserving and protecting the natural resources of Kansas and providing the public with opportunities to use and appreciate these resources. As secretary of the department, I am truly honored to lead our dedicated staff in carrying out this mission. I would like to thank our department staff and all of our partners who made the following achievements possible in the past year.

Visits to state parks again increased to approximately 8 million at the 24 state parks across the state. Seven new full-service cabins were opened at Cheney State Park, and plans are underway to place cabins at Fall River, Cross Timbers, Tuttle Creek, and Milford. Our parks again hosted numerous special events, highlighted by the third annual Outdoor Kansas for Kids Day, sponsored by Kansas Wildscape.

The Kansas Natural Resource Legacy Alliance, a diverse group tasked with studying the long-term needs of the state's natural resources, issued preliminary recommendations in May, 2003. The final Alliance recommendations and report will be delivered to the governor and the Legislature in December, 2003.

Access to our state's public rivers continued to be a priority of the department. A new Kansas River access site opened in St. George, and two new sites near Perry and LeCompton are on track to be completed next year. A third new site, and future state park, is also being proposed in Topeka, on the grounds of the former Menninger Hospital.

The Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area is recognized as a "Wetland of International Importance," and through a nearly \$2 million grant from the Kansas Department of Transportation, the Bottoms will feature a visitor's center in the near future. The center will have exhibits, classrooms, and numerous viewing opportunities for school children and all visitors to the area.

The Kansas Hunter Education Program reached an impressive 30-year milestone in 2003. More than 400,000 have completed the course since the program was implemented in 1973. Hunter Education volunteer instructors across Kansas spend thou-

sands of hours of their own time training young people in the safe handling of firearms, conservation ethics, wildlife management basics, and other topics. Their efforts have paid off over the years, nurturing not only safer hunters but hunters who are more aware of the needs of all wildlife and who are sensitive to outdoor ethics.

Now in its ninth year, the popular Walk-In Hunting Area (WIHA) program includes more than 975,000 acres of private land leased by the department to provide public hunting access. This year's atlas is new and improved, including a color-coded legend that marks not only WIHA land, but KDWP wildlife areas, state parks, national wildlife refuges, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers areas, U.S. Forest Service areas, and lakes and streams.

The Fishing Impoundments and Stream Habitat program – the angling counterpart to WIHA – also continued its growth. The program enrolled more than 1,200 acres of ponds and 87 miles of streams on private land for public fishing access.

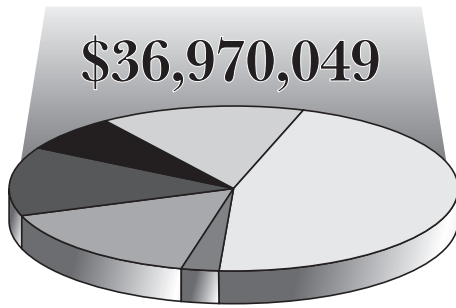
Pass It On, the department's hunter recruitment and retention program, continued to provide quality outdoor experiences to young hunters across the state. In addition to youth seasons for deer, turkey, upland bird, and waterfowl hunting, numerous special hunts were conducted for youth and disabled hunters alike.

Since the inception of online license sales in September, 1999, more than \$2 million of sales have been logged from the department's website (www.kdwp.state.ks.us). The department will soon add deer and turkey permits to the list of licenses and permits available online, as well as other web enhancements to improve interaction with our constituents.

These are just a few of the many achievements that have provided important benefits to outdoor recreation in the Sunflower State. On behalf of our agency, I thank you for your support as we continue to increase opportunities to enjoy the wild places of Kansas in the coming year.

Mike Hayden
Secretary

Revenue (Calendar Year 2002)



| | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------|--------------|
| Hunt/Fish License Sales | \$16,048,219 | 43 % |
| Hunt/Fish Federal Aid | \$8,243,931 | 22 % |
| Park Permits | \$4,644,295 | 13 % |
| Boat Registrations | \$823,250 | 2 % |
| Other Federal Aid | \$4,057,238 | 11 % |
| State General Fund | \$3,153,116 | 9 % |
| Totals | \$36,970,049 | 100 % |

FISHING/HUNTING/FURHARVESTING

| License/permit | Number sold | Revenue |
|----------------------------------|----------------|---------------------|
| Resident Fish (\$18.00) | 169,101 | \$3,043,818 |
| Combination Fish/Hunt (\$36) | 39,820 | \$1,433,520 |
| Nonresident Fish (\$40) | 8,846 | \$353,840 |
| Five-Day Trip Fish (\$20) | 4,740 | \$94,800 |
| 24-Hour Fish (\$5) | 73,928 | \$369,640 |
| Trout Stamp (\$10) | 8,627 | \$86,270 |
| Lifetime Fish (\$300) | 184 | \$55,200 |
| Lifetime Comb. Fish/Hunt (\$600) | 577 | \$346,200 |
| Lifetime Fish (payments) (\$45) | 34 | \$1,530 |
| Lifetime Comb. (payments) (\$90) | 85 | \$7,650 |
| Lifetime Hunt (payments) (\$45) | 75 | \$3,375 |
| Lifetime Hunt (\$300) | 667 | \$200,100 |
| Resident Hunt (\$18) | 81,802 | \$1,472,436 |
| Nonresident Hunt (\$70) | 42,281 | \$2,959,670 |
| Nonresident Junior Hunt (\$35) | 1,369 | \$47,915 |
| Controlled Shooting Area (\$15) | 8,307 | \$124,605 |
| 48-Hour Waterfowl (\$25) | 623 | \$15,575 |
| Deer Permit (variable) | 174,370 | \$4,294,915 |
| Turkey Permit (variable) | 63,904 | \$1,057,530 |
| Adult Furharvester (\$18) | 4,370 | \$78,660 |
| Junior Furharvester (\$10) | 97 | \$970 |
| TOTAL | 683,807 | \$16,048,219 |

THREE- YEAR BOAT REGISTRATIONS

| Registration Type | Number Sold | Revenue |
|----------------------------|---------------|------------------|
| Boats under 16 feet (\$20) | 17,375 | \$347,500 |
| Boats over 16 feet (\$25) | 19,030 | \$475,750 |
| TOTAL | 36,405 | \$823,250 |

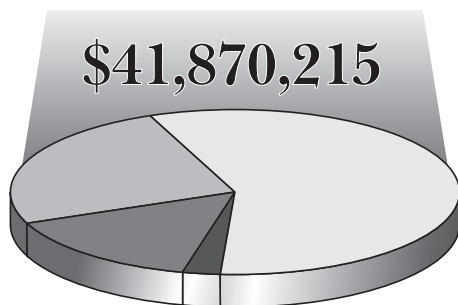
STATE PARKS

| Permit Type | Number Sold | Revenue |
|---------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| Annual Vehicle | 39,955 | \$1,176,140 |
| Annual Camp | 3,340 | \$398,240 |
| Second Vehicle | 15,174 | \$211,329 |
| Duplicate Vehicle | 1,133 | \$5,665 |
| Daily Vehicle | 256,390 | \$1,138,682 |
| Daily Camp | 106,583 | \$632,601 |
| 14-Day Camp | 1,167 | \$78,890 |
| Utility (1) | 14,057 | \$70,285 |
| Utility (2) | 120,405 | \$782,632 |
| Utility (3) | 18,634 | \$149,072 |
| Youth Group Camping | 303 | \$757 |
| TOTAL | 577,141 | \$4,644,293 |

FEDERAL AID

| | |
|------------------------------|---------------------|
| Coast Guard (boating safety) | \$ 3 7 9 , 4 7 2 |
| Dingell-Johnson (fish) | \$4,837,091 |
| Pittman-Robertson (wildlife) | \$3,406,840 |
| Other | \$3,677,766 |
| TOTAL | \$12,301,169 |

Expenditures (Fiscal Year 2003)



| | | |
|-----------------|---------------------|--------------|
| Fish & Wildlife | \$26,297,986 | 63 % |
| Parks | \$10,799,171 | 26 % |
| Administration | \$3,704,710 | 9 % |
| Boating | \$1,068,349 | 2 % |
| Totals | \$41,870,215 | 100 % |



WATERFOWL ON BIG WATER

text and photos by Marc Murrell
manager, Great Plains Nature Center, Wichita

Many Kansas reservoirs will hold outstanding numbers of ducks and geese during the late season when shallow-water marshes freeze. But be warned, big water waterfowling isn't for the faint of heart. There will be wind, cold, waves, and lots of ducks and geese.

Die-hard waterfowlers spend as much time as possible in a duck blind throughout the fall. Many start at the first chance in early October and don't quit until their favorite shallow-water marsh freezes. But to those with knowledge of big-water hunt-

ing, the late-season freeze may be the best time to experience decoying ducks. Mix in a few Canada geese, and you've got the makings of a perfect day in the field when a plan comes together.

A consummate waterfowler always in search of waterfowl

utopia is Wichitan Jim Reid.

"Almost everything!" was Reid's reply, when asked what he liked about waterfowl hunting. He boils his 30 years of experience down to three words, "It's a passion!"

Reid, public relations director for The Coleman Company,



Depending on wind direction and weather conditions, areas where ducks and geese prefer to land can change daily. A small boat lets hunters set up where the ducks want to be, and that's 80 percent of being a successful duck hunter.

often schedules vacation during the fall. His fascination with waterfowl hunting goes beyond being a simple pastime. Reid loves everything — decoy placement strategies, blowing a duck call, and taking the shot only after ducks are fully committed.

"The dog work, the sunrise, the camaraderie of the people you hunt with — the gear, drinking coffee, and talking with your buddies during those periods when the ducks aren't coming all adds to it," Reid reflected. "It seems to intensify with time, and the more you do

something, the better you get at it, so the success ratio has gone up over time. It's always nice to be successful. Season to season you know when to go and what to do."

Reid cherishes the early teal season, and he looks forward to the early portions of the big duck seasons. But the late season and bigger water looms on his mind as fall turns to winter.

"During the start of the big duck season you can have the mix of blue-winged and green-winged teal, gadwall, wigeon, maybe a few mallards, some

woodies and the divers around," Reid said. "I wouldn't want to sacrifice that part of the season because the temperatures are moderate. Then you get into that wonderful overlap in late November when you've still got some of the early migrants like the pintails around and some of the early mallards are down, so you can have mixed-bag hunts if you want to."

But hold on to your hat when the last page on the calendar flips into view.

"In December, you might have 150, 200, or 250 mallards in

A boat is handy to get hunters to prime hunting spots. However, it's often a good idea to hide the boat and build a blind with natural materials on the shore. Late-season waterfowl are usually wary and difficult to decoy.

one flock, tornadoing down into your decoys all, trying to land in that area you've chosen. It's an awe-inspiring feeling you can't get at any other time of the year," Reid said.

Reservoirs are hotspots for this late-season bonanza.

Migrating ducks often use a reservoir as their Motel 6, spending the night and mid-day on the water, and venturing out during the morning and evening to feed. Reid calls the mid-morning period prime time.

"It seems they'll decoy better when they're coming back during that 9 o'clock to noon time-frame — after they're full of corn or milo and they're ready to loaf or join a flock," Reid said.

Nearly any reservoir can provide fantastic waterfowl shooting, providing Mother Nature and the natural migration has smiled on the region. Reid suggests scouting the birds to find out which way they leave the reservoir and then trying to set up strategically to encourage their visitation when they return.

"Main lake points are good for visibility when the wind is light to moderate," Reid related. "But if you catch a big, howling wind, you want to get on the back side, out of the wind side, or in the upper end where there's some protection. Birds will look for a break from the wind."

Decoys are a necessity for duck hunting, and Reid feels that "bigger is better" when it comes to spreads on public reservoirs. The hunter believes both bigger spreads and bigger decoys will pay divi-



dends when competition for ducks is keen.

"I think you're better off with 30 super magnum duck decoys than you'd be with maybe twice or three times that many standard-size duck decoys," he said

As an added attraction, Reid mixes in a few Canada goose decoys.

"I have those out, maybe a dozen goose floaters, to allow ducks to see my spread from a distance, as much as I do to decoy geese as a bonus situation," Reid said. "Geese are spectacular, and you might bring in a pair or a big flock of 15 or 30, which adds to the action. We get

a lot of big geese here in the 10-pound-plus weight class."

Reid admits a boat isn't a necessity, but the one he owns increases his choices for hunting locations. It also keeps him from carrying decoys over long distances. Reid can hunt from his boat blind, but he usually gets out of the boat and builds a shoreline blind for better concealment. He uses on-site materials and mixes those with man-made camouflage netting and grass mats to bring waterfowl as close as possible before calling the shot.

"I'll use a 12 gauge and shoot 3-inch number ones, maybe

backed up by BBs, and I keep a few triple Bs in a side pocket just in case we get some geese," Reid admits.

If the duck numbers are good and conditions are prime, I mean when small waters freeze and a big cold front rolls through, there's not a better way to pursue ducks and geese than on big water. But the beauty of big-water hunting is that you can adapt to weather and bird movement patterns by simply motoring around the point or slipping into the back of a cove. It's why us afflicted waterfowl hunters can't wait for December. ♡



On big water, big decoy spreads are preferred – another reason why a boat is a big advantage to the the late-season waterfowler. Carrying four dozen decoys a mile into a prime hunting spot will wear out even the most fit hunter.

WIHA:

Birdhunter's Goldmine

text and photos by Jeff Carmichael
Spencer, IN

Pheasant hunting in Kansas is a powerful draw for this Indianan, and with more than 970,000 acres enrolled in the Walk-In Hunting Area program this year, bird hunting in the Sunflower State is even more attractive.



It was a familiar position, one that I had been in many times before. I was working some of the finest cover that I had ever seen, and was asking myself, "Where are the birds?"

Without notice, the still morning air was broken by a gaudy, raucous, and very upset immigrant rooster. As so often is the case, the bird seemed to take minutes to top out. Against the background of an azure sky, it could not have made a more beautiful picture. This is my very favorite time in this world, and every flush seems as special as the one before it. After admiring the scene, I swung my Weatherby out in front of the bird and squeezed the trigger.

The load of copper-plated No. 5s found their mark, and our first Kansas rooster of the season was soon retrieved by Jordan, my German shorthair.

My question had been quickly answered. As usual, the pheasants were not hanging close to the parking areas but had moved away from the road and away from trouble. I was relieved; my instincts were once again correct about this Walk-In area, and this first rooster had proved it.

For those of you who are accustomed to great upland cover and pheasants galore, you may not understand when a guy from back east finds this hunting so exhilarating. For

those who, like myself, come from a region without the King of Gamebirds, this goldmine located in the center of the country is just what the doctor ordered. Pheasant hunting in Kansas may actually be as good as it gets. If you don't think so, join me on an Indiana hunt, and you'll quickly realize how blessed the avid bird hunter is to hunt in Kansas.

Nearly 1 million acres (977,000 enrolled in 2003 WIHA) of private land open to hunters and one of the best pheasant populations in the U.S. is enough for me to load up the family and head my Suburban west to Kansas. I love the game, and better yet, the challenge of

finding Walk-In Hunting areas that are loaded with great cover and birds. All that's left is to cast out my shorthairs in search of a great pheasant dinner.

I took some time to closely admire my bird and counted more than 30 bars on the longest tail feather. This and the length of the spur told me it was at least a two-year-old, maybe even a three-year-old. It was three weeks into the Kansas season, and by now most young birds were either included in someone's bag or had increased their IQs dramatically. This fuels my theory that if you're going to hunt public land or WIHA after the opening weekend, you'd better be willing to pick 'em up and put 'em down to get to the far reaches of an area.

Just ahead of me lay a sand-hill plum thicket, and very few pieces of habitat mean more to me. My German shorthairs have also learned that good things come to those who check out thickets. I watched the body language of all three dogs change and knew we were trailing birds. All roads were leading to the plum thicket. On cue, Shickley snapped to a point and my urgent approach flushed a big rooster from its comfortable hide in the grass. This shot called for quicker action; no pause for admiration of the scene. The bird was 30 yards out and quartering away. I snapped off a shot and the bird folded, landing some 40 yards away in thick grass.

I could tell Jordan had a good mark on the bird but as usual, I would not take my eyes from the spot until I

knew the bird was on its way back to me. What happened next would test my resolve because I heard, and in my peripheral vision, saw several more birds flush and fly over me, cackling at me for breaking up their party. I stayed true and moved to the spot where the first bird had dropped. A few more steps and more birds flushed. Then it was silent. Finally, Jordan stepped from the tall grass with my prize.

As crazy as it may sound, through the years I have learned to never take my eyes from the spot where a bird has fallen. Pheasants are not average game birds. Quail or sharptails may burrow into cover when hit, and sage grouse rarely move from the spot where they fall. But the pheasant is as tough they come, and if you're going to put one in your game bag, you better hit it hard and get the mark as quickly as possible. And it's impossible to overstate the value of a well-

trained bird dog. My shorthairs have found countless birds that I'm sure would have been otherwise lost.

My second bird was also a mature rooster. I felt the crop and couldn't feel any grain, which told me the birds hadn't fed yet this morning. This was important because the other birds that flushed landed several hundred yards away, in the direction of an adjacent milo field. It didn't appear that they had flown to the end of the grass, and I decided to try to cut them off before they reached the open milo stubble.

The far eastern edge of the grass was mowed, and this made a perfect edge to hunt along. I worked the dogs into the wind, and we began moving birds. After two intense points, Madison snapped rigid to my left, between me and the mowed edge. Jordan and Shickley moved in to honor and made for a beautiful image I'll never



With a statewide atlas in hand, the author searches for WIHA tracts with good habitat that are off the beaten path. Then it's a matter of putting in the leg work to find birds.

forget. I gave the trio one solid “whoa” and moved in for the flush. (I really wished I could freeze the moment to savor on one of those days when everything is going wrong and I need an escape.) Then, as I was several steps short of Madison, a large rooster vaulted into the air and flew directly into the southwest breeze. Expecting the bird to bank downwind, I prepared for what is usually a tough shot. But this rooster continued to climb and struggled into the wind, appearing to stall out for an instant. I pointed through the bird and squeezed the trigger, then watched as it pitched back to the chest-high grass. Seconds later, Shickley trotted up with the bird in his mouth. If dogs can feel pride, Shickley appeared to be proud of this bird and retrieved it with his head held high.

Realizing I was only one bird away from my limit, I held the dogs and took time to soak in the moment. I noticed there wasn't a sound – nothing — just the wind rustling gently through the native grass. Even the dogs, who usually act indignant about being held up, appeared to enjoy the respite. It was then I knew why I come so far to hunt this land. Nothing could have taken away the peace I found in this patch of grass in the middle of Pawnee County.

Back to our quest, I released the dogs, and they immediately went to work. Shickley was soon trailing a bird, and the other two noticed and joined him. I whoaed the three dogs, moved closer, then released them. After two controlled points, Shickley locked up hard, telling me that

our bird had stopped running. Madison and Jordan honored and once again, I moved in for the flush. Not one, but two birds sprang from the cover just feet in front of the dogs. This time, both birds banked and turned downwind. I caught up to and overtook the rear bird and he folded on the report. Jordan easily marked and retrieved my fourth and final bird of the day.

I watched as the other bird set its wings and sailed about 300 yards downwind, settling into the spot where I had taken my first bird. I stowed the bird in my game bag and turned south to where Dad had parked the Suburban. I unloaded the remaining shell and called the dogs from the cover and we started back to the road. With my Weatherby notched on my shoulder, I walked and reflected on what an awesome day it had been.

I truly don't take these days for granted. I worry about the future and the sport that I love so much. I wonder what tomorrow will bring for my two sons and for the puppy left kenneled in the Suburban. I hope our wildlife managers will prevail and that our leaders will see

how important many of the conservation items are within the Farm Program. I wish, too, that other states would take some of the same initiatives Kansas has and implement programs as remarkably successful as WIHA.

While I may not know what will happen in the future, I do know that tomorrow I will be back to enjoy the goldmine that is located in the heart of Kansas. I will yet again turn loose a string of shorthairs, and we will comb a WIHA area in search of the king of gamebirds. My Pheasants Forever hat's off to a simply great program! 🦌



There's nothing easy about hunting large tracts of WIHA in CRP, as this tired German Shorthair will attest. But a brace of birds and a satisfying hunt make it worthwhile.

Ringneck

photo essay by Mike Blair



A photograph of a hunter in a field of tall, dry grass. The hunter is wearing an orange vest and cap, and is holding a shotgun. In the upper right corner, a quail is captured in flight against a clear blue sky. The word "Time" is written in a large, red, stylized font across the top left of the image, with a red horizontal bar above it and a red diagonal line below it.

Time









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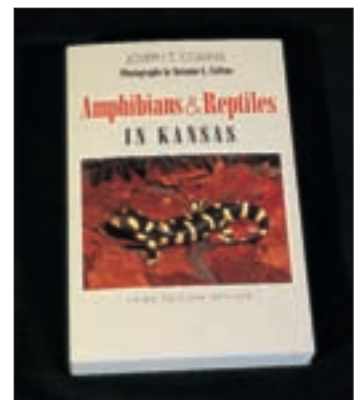
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Edited by Mark Shoup

WOULDA BEEN A RECORD!

Editor:

I am a member of the Wichita Boeing Bass Club, and I went fishing with a friend at Bulter County State Lake last summer. I had gone there a couple of weeks before with my nephew and caught some nice fish, including one about 5 pounds. My friend wanted to go fishing with me to learn how to bass fish.

In the Boeing Bass Club, we use the Golden Rule measuring board for our paper tournaments. My friend and I caught four longer than 16 inches (two of them Kentucky spotted bass), four longer than 17 inches (two of them Kentucky spotted bass), and two 18-inch black bass. I showed my friend the difference between the spotted and black bass – the spot on the tongue and color and girth size difference.

Then I caught a 21 1/2-inch Kentucky spotted bass. I was amazed at the size of the bass and showed my friend the spot on the tongue and compared it to the 18-inch black bass; it was without a doubt, a Kentucky spotted bass. It never even crossed my mind about being a record until another friend told me I should check the records. Boy did I mess up!

Just thought I would let you guys know that there are still big bass around in Kansas.

*Ralph Whiteman
Derby, Ks*

NO MORE CHENEY STRIPERS?

Editor:

In our recent trip to Cheney Reservoir, we learned that you are going to stop stocking stripers in the lake. We usually fish the lake at least three or five times a year for stripers, along with many of our friends, and we spend lots of money in your state.

Do you realize the loss of revenue you will experience by letting go of that

responsibility. In our last trip, my wife and I caught three that were 15 pounds and very nice fish, as well as some walleyes. But we can catch walleye in other lakes closer to home, so they really do not excite us like a hard-hitting striper. The big stripers would also help you control the white perch that everyone is so concerned about.

Better think twice about your best fish in the lake and stock them.

*Dean Loeffelbein
Amarillo, Texas*

Dear Mr. Loeffelbein:

I love the fact that you come here to fish, and if you'll just give the wipers a couple more years, they should be large enough to stretch even a Texas angler's tackle.

Yes, stripers are fat and healthy now, and yes, they are terrific sport fish. Trouble is, when water temperatures get above 77 for an extended period of time, they won't eat; their blood chemistry gets messed up; and they get very skinny and die.

It doesn't make much sense to invest in striper stocking for a few years only to have a hot summer come along and destroy everything over 10 pounds. This has happened on three occasions, beginning in 1988, and it has been documented nationwide – everywhere from Keystone in Oklahoma to Watts Barr in Tennessee. Lakes with thermal refuges, such as Wilson, can support large stripers because they can escape the warm temperatures. Cheney is so shallow and exposed to the wind that no thermal refuges exist.

Wipers, on the other hand, have a much higher tolerance to heat, are just as powerful (in my opinion), may have a higher stocking survival rate, and are probably easier to catch. The down side is that they have a maximum size of about 25 pounds, instead of 50 pounds like stripers.

*–Gordon Schneider,
fisheries biologist, Haven*

NONRESIDENT YOUNGSTERS

Editor:

Below is an email I received from a friend in North Dakota who happens to be one of their state legislators. I emailed him to see if my 11-year-old son Andrew would have to pay for a full non-resident hunting license (\$85) when I take him up to hunt for pheasant with me [when the season opens on] Oct. 11. Please consider signing the reciprocal youth agreement soon.

E-Mail from North Dakota:

“The news I have for you about Andrew's license is this: you will have to purchase the full \$85 license because Kansas is one of 20 states that have not signed a youth reciprocal agreement with North Dakota. The deputy of Game and Fish told me to tell you to urge [the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks] to provide reciprocal youth hunting because North Dakota does not want to charge kids but has to if no reciprocal agreement has been signed. North Dakota honors all states that honor ours, and 30 states do. He was shocked that Kansas doesn't provide this because he feels Kansas does a lot for kids.”

*Bill Waswick
Wichita*

Dear Mr. Waswick

I appreciate your desire to provide your son with every possible hunting opportunity. To my knowledge, this idea has never been presented to our commission. I will pass your letter on to its chairman.

In Kansas, nonresidents younger than 16 pay \$36, half the price of a regular nonresident license, regardless of what their home state charges non-residents.

According to the North Dakota Game and Fish Department's website, nonresidents younger than 16 may purchase a resident hunting license if they are from nine states that have a reciprocal agreement with North

Dakota. This means that a nonresident youth from one of these states would pay \$20 in fees to hunt in North Dakota.

—Shoup

WHY IOWA BILLING SERVICE?

Editor:

My former husband and I took *Kansas Wildlife & Parks* magazine for many years. After his death, I married Thomas Smith, and we have continued our subscription.

A month or two ago, I noticed that the billing is now coming from out of state. I think it is a shame that you chose not to patronize a Kansas business. If the state of Kansas doesn't do business with a local firm, how do you expect others to do so?

That pretty well sums it up; when *Kansas Wildlife & Parks* comes back home, I will too.

Mrs. Tommy Smith
Holton

Dear Mrs. Smith,

Unfortunately, there isn't a Kansas-based business that does what the company in Iowa does for us. CDS handles subscriber lists and renewals for many much larger publications, including *Reader's Digest*. However, the main reason we do business with them is because we have entered into a contract/cooperative agreement with another company to handle all the magazine's subscription business.

This company subcontracts with CDS in Iowa. There are 14 other various state magazines in this co-op, and we all save money using similar promotions, market tests, and mailings. Again, there are no Kansas businesses I know of that provide this type of publication service. We would have much rather done business locally because it would have been more convenient for us, but it wasn't possible. With a limited budget, we must look for costs savings in every aspect of our business.

—Miller

COLOR WIHA KUDOS

Editor:

The new Kansas Hunting Atlas format (2003) is very helpful and a great improvement over previous years. I do most of my hunting in Reno, Rice, Stafford, Kingman, Ellsworth, McPherson, and Labette counties. For many years, I have hunted a mix of WIHA, Corps, state, and private land and have noted a much improved distribution of hunters as the WIHA program has matured. This lower hunter-per-acre ratio has made Kansas hunting more relaxed and our success rate higher.

Being in the agricultural equipment manufacturing industry, I can relay the satisfaction of the participating landowners I know who are enrolled in the WIHA program.

Thank all the KDWP team members who work to improve Kansas outdoors.

Brad L. Stephenson
South Hutchinson

POINT WELL TAKEN

Editor:

I would like to correct conservation officer Michael C. Little in his article "Border Buck" in the Law section of "Wild Currents" in the July/August issue of *Kansas Wildlife & Parks* magazine (Page 35).

He stated that it is "a common prac-

tice for hunters who live along state boundaries to infringe upon neighboring jurisdictions when not licensed or permitted to do so."

I believe that should be: "It is a common practice for poachers..."

Hunters have enough problems in today's society without our own choice of words making us look bad.

Chad Holt
Uniontown

Dear Mr. Holt:

Your point is well-taken. Thanks for drawing our attention to this important distinction.

—Shoup

KUDOS TO STAFF

Editor:

I've hunted in a few other states besides Texas (Indiana, South Carolina, Georgia, Missouri), and I have to say that out of all of them, Kansas has been the most courteous, informative, and helpful state when it comes to the department of wildlife. I really appreciate that. It helps with the reputation of your state and more importantly, helps keep the hunting tradition going.

Thank you.

John Rush
San Antonio, Texas



BIG CRIME, BIG TIME

An Iowa farmer faces 15 years in federal prison and more than \$500,000 in fines after pleading guilty to an 11-year poaching spree stretching from Colorado's Uncompahgre Plateau to Iowa. George Allen Waters, 53, of West Branch, Iowa, admitted his guilt in U.S. District Court to illegally killing 45 trophy elk and mule deer in Colorado and Iowa from 1992 to 2002. The animals are valued at \$270,000, with 14 of them being killed on the Uncompahgre Plateau and 24 in Iowa.

Waters also pleaded guilty to two felony violations of the Lacey Act, a federal law that prohibits interstate transport of illegally killed animals, and one felony charge of illegally possessing a machine gun.

Court papers said Waters would use a rifle during the archery season, often camouflaging the animals' heads before stashing them in trees. He later would return for the heads, claiming he found them. Some of the antlers Waters obtained had been scored by the Boone & Crockett Club, which can increase the value of trophy antlers.

A federal attorney said a plea bargain will require Waters to serve five years in federal prison without parole, pay a \$10,000 fine plus a \$300 assessment, and serve three years of supervised probation. Additionally, Waters will pay \$30,000 in restitution to Colorado and Iowa and forfeit numerous trophy mounts, skulls, and hunting-related items. He also faces suspension of hunting privileges in Colorado, Iowa, and the states comprising the Interstate Wildlife Violator Compact.

The two Lacey Act violations could have Waters facing additional fines of \$500,000 along with \$250,000 for having a machine gun. The firearm violation could bring Waters another 10 years in prison.

The case was broken by a call to the Colorado Division of Wildlife's Operation Game Thief number. The case also was helped when Waters later sold three sets of illegally obtained antlers to an undercover officer from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in March.

Cooperating in the Division of Wildlife investigation were the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, and the U.S. Attorney's offices in Davenport and Des Moines, Iowa.

—Grand Junction Daily Sentinel

COMMON CONCERNS

Like most agencies that deal in law enforcement, the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks has numerous laws and regulations, all designed to protect wildlife resources and the hunters and fishermen who enjoy them. Sometimes, these rules can get confusing. The following is a list of common concerns that hunters have inquired about over the years. These also appear on Page 5 of the *2003 Kansas Hunting and Furharvesting Regulations Summary*, available wherever licenses are sold.

If you have a question or concern about wildlife law, or any other department-related issue, feel free to email feedbacks@wp.state.ks.us. Your feedback will help us address these issues and other areas of confusion that we might not be aware of.

Conservation officers

- Conservation officers have authority to enter private land and check hunters, anglers, and trappers and inspect facilities for processing or storing wildlife.

Deer

- Hunters may purchase only one antlered deer permit.
- It is legal to bait deer, turkey, and other game animals, except migratory game birds.
- Harvested big game must be properly tagged before it is moved.

Equipment

- Except by special permit, a crossbow is legal equipment only for rabbit, squirrel, coyote, and furbearers.
- Shotguns must be plugged – maximum two shells in the magazine – when hunting doves, ducks, geese, and other migratory game birds.

Furharvesting

- Trapping, as well as hunting and fishing, is allowed and occurs on all public wildlife areas, unless otherwise posted.
- If you plan to sell furs taken this calendar year in the next calendar year, be sure to keep your old furharvester license. It is required for sales records.
- All traps and snares must be tagged.
- Except for pelts, coyote carcasses may not be displayed.

Game transport

- A foot, plumage, or some part attached that identifies the bird as a male must remain attached to pheasants while they are transported.
- Migratory game birds (except doves) must have one fully-feathered wing or head attached, readily identifying the bird's sex and species, while they are transported.

Hunter education

- Anyone born on or after July 1, 1957, must pass a hunter education course, and anyone under 27 years old must carry proof of hunter education training while hunting.
- Approved hunter education cards from all states and Canada are valid in Kansas.

Target practice

- Target practice on public land is allowed only in designated areas.

Miscellaneous

- Migratory nongame birds, feathers, nests, or eggs may not be legally possessed.
- Railroad rights-of-way are not open to public hunting. Permission from landowners is required to hunt road ditches.
- Game meat may not be legally sold, but furbearer meat may.

—Shoup



FEDERAL FISHING, BOATING BILL

U.S. Congressman Clay Shaw (R-FL), introduced legislation July 23 to restore motorboat fuel excise taxes to the Aquatic Resources Trust Fund, otherwise known as Wallop Breaux.

The Sportfishing and Boating Equity Act of 2003, H.R. 2839, would amend the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) code, making all motor fuel excise taxes attributable to motorboat and small engine fuels available for the program. This change would recapture 4.8 cents per gallon that currently goes to the federal government's General Fund from boat fuel taxes and place it in the Wallop-Breaux Fund, translating to an additional \$110 million per year for boating safety and fish restoration projects.

"The National Marine Manufacturers Association is extremely pleased with the introduction of the Sportfishing and Boating Equity Act," said Monita W. Fontaine, vice president of government relations. "The Wallop-Breaux trust fund is important to boaters and anglers, and I applaud Congressman Shaw for taking the initiative to provide more services for those who enjoy our nation's waterways."

Shaw, who is co-chairman of the Congressional Boating Caucus and chairman of the House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Social Security, hopes to add many cosponsors.

"I'm pleased to be able to offer this legislation on behalf of all people who love the water and water sports," said Shaw. "This bill will ensure that all of the tax money spent by boaters and anglers on fuel costs will flow back to the preservation and restoration of the

waterways they treasure."

The Aquatic Resources Trust Fund, or Wallop-Breaux, was created as a user-pay initiative in 1984 to enhance boating and fishing opportunities. The U.S. Congress allocates funds generated directly by boaters and anglers through taxes on motorboat fuel and fishing tackle, along with other fees to provide new and improved docks and piers, wetlands conservation, and boating safety programs, among many other boating and fishing initiatives.

More than 10 years ago, however, Congress required the U.S. Treasury to redirect about 25 percent of the excise taxes on motor boat and small engine fuels each year to the General Treasury Fund instead of channeling these revenues to the Aquatic Resources Trust Fund.

For more information, visit www.wallop-breaux.org.

—*The Fishwrapper*

DEER PHONE NUMBER

Kansas is blessed with one of the nation's finest deer herds, and more than 80,000 sportsmen and women enjoyed the thrill of deer hunting in the state in 2002. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimates that big game hunters in Kansas spend nearly \$65 million annually on equipment and trip-related purchases, while all hunters spend more than \$230 million a year in Kansas. Deer are also a popular species for wildlife watchers in the state, a group that contributes more than \$125 million dollars to the Kansas economy each year.

While deer and deer hunting are essential components to the Kansas economy, populations are above tolerance in some areas of the state. Hunting is the most effective tool to reduce these deer populations. More specifically, the harvest of female white-tailed

AMERICAN EXPRESS JOINS ANTI-HUNTERS

Last May, American Express credit card customers received a little something extra in their monthly billing — a brief, distasteful promotion for the nation's largest and most vocal anti-hunting organization.

An insert with the monthly billing highlighted firms and associations that are now accepting the American Express Card. They included the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), the nation's principal opponent of regulated hunting, fishing, trapping, and scientific wildlife management.

The insert identified the organization as "One of America's largest animal protection charity (sic). To join, make a donation, or monthly pledge, visit..." the HSUS website or call a phone number.

Other organizations and firms highlighted in the monthly mailing included The San Diego Zoo's Wild Animal Park and S&K Menswear. Promotional copy for these organizations failed to suggest making a donation or, in the case of S&K, making a purchase.

For weeks, the Masters of Foxhounds Association of America has been urging sportsmen to complain to American Express about its promotion of the anti-hunting organization. The U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance likewise believes that sportsmen should contact American Express to discourage the firm from such blatant promotion of, and encouragement of donations to, an organization dedicated to ending hunting in America.

Sportsmen can contact American Express Corporation Chairman and CEO Kenneth Chenault, World Financial Center, 200 Vessey St., New York, NY 10285. Phone: (212) 640 2000. Fax: (212) 619-9230.

— *U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance*

deer is essential. Deer are polygamous, meaning that a buck can breed many does. Thus, taking a buck does nothing to reduce the reproductive cycle because another buck will take its place in the breeding season. Taking a buck removes just one animal from the herd. Taking a doe removes not only that animal, but its offspring - commonly two fawns per year - and the reproductive potential of those offspring.

The ability to effectively control deer relies on sufficient hunter access to private land, a particular concern here in Kansas. If a landowner does not allow hunting, even if the areas around their property do allow hunting, a refuge is created. Deer quickly learn where these safe havens are located. Deer in these specific areas will continue to multiply, regardless of the number of permits issued.

Landowners concerned about high deer populations on their property have several options:

- allow hunting on their property;
- harvest antlerless deer;
- participate in the department's hunter referral program if finding hunters is a problem. Hunters are ready and willing to harvest antlerless deer on private property; and
- apply for a big game control permit. These permits allow the landowner to harvest a prescribed number of deer on his or her property outside of the normal season dates, free of charge. For more information on these programs, landowners may phone 1-888-497-8661 toll free. This line is for deer population control information only. For other inquiries, call (620) 672-5911.

—Shoup

Zebra Mussels Found

On Aug. 25, the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) confirmed that zebra mussels, invasive exotic clams, have been found at El Dorado Reservoir. While little can be done to eradicate the non-native zebra mussel from El Dorado, KDWP is asking all boaters in Kansas to help prevent the spread of zebra mussels to other lakes and waterways by taking the following measures when removing boats from one body of water and before putting into another:



- **drain the bilge water, live wells, and bait buckets;**
- **remove any attached vegetation;**
- **inspect the boat and trailer for attached zebra mussels;**
- **scrape off any zebra mussels; and**
- **if mussels are found, dry boat and trailer for five days before entering another waterway, or wash boat parts and trailer with 140-degree water, a 10-percent chlorine and water solution, or hot saltwater solution. Finish with a clean-water rinse.**

Boaters are also asked to inspect and clean their boats on dry land, away from the water.

"Public assistance in reporting zebra mussel sightings at new locations is essential to keep them from spreading to other inland lakes and rivers," says Tom Mosher, aquatic research biologist at the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks Research and Survey Office in Emporia. "Anyone who discovers zebra mussels should note the date and precise location where they were found and take one or more mussels and store them in rubbing alcohol. Do not throw them back in the water. Then contact Wildlife and Parks."

Over the Labor Day weekend, the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary will provide educational materials and assistance to all available boat ramps at El Dorado. El Dorado park staff will also be available to assist boaters.

The zebra mussel is a dime-sized clam that can both threaten aquatic ecosystems and damage industry. In recent years, this exotic southwest Asian mussel has invaded the Great Lakes and has slowly made its way west into Oklahoma and Arkansas.

Zebra mussels are small, yellow-brown clams, usually with dark- and light-colored stripes. Most are smaller than 1 inch long. The microscopic larvae can live in a teaspoon of water.

Zebra mussels usually grow in clusters and are generally found in shallow (6-30 feet), algae-rich water. Unlike other freshwater mussel larvae, zebra mussels do not attach to fish or other hosts prior to adulthood. Consequently, they can easily spread anywhere that water currents, wildlife, or human activities take them. One of the zebra mussel's most effective means of dispersion is the same one that got it to North America - traveling in bilge water of boats.

Adult zebra mussels can attach to anything firm, including water intakes of power generating plants and municipal water systems. They can accumulate 6 inches deep, severely reducing the flow of water and posing a threat to industry, agriculture, and municipal water supplies.

Because females can produce 100,000 eggs per season, zebra mussels can smother native freshwater mussel beds. Other wildlife are vulnerable, as well.

Zebra mussels are filter feeders, gleaning tiny particles of food from the water. Some biologists fear they will deplete the supply of food available to shad, paddlefish, young sport fish, and any native aquatic species that rely on zooplankton. Also at risk are boats, motors, docks, and other marine equipment.

For more information or to report a zebra mussel sighting, contact the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks' Research and Survey Office at (620) 342-0658.

—Shoup

Upland Bird Outlook

Kansas pheasant and quail hunters can look forward to the best overall hunting season in several years this fall. The same spring weather that produced an excellent wheat crop was also nearly ideal for nesting and initial phases of brood rearing.

Ample, timely rains and moderate spring temperatures not only were good for nesting success but provided habitat for broods to withstand the hot and dry conditions that prevailed over Kansas during July and August. And currently, the quality of Kansas' wheat-stubble habitat is above average.

PHEASANT

Kansas pheasant populations have experienced one of the best production seasons in many years. Pheasant production indices more than doubled compared to 2002, and hunters can expect the best populations since 1997.

While almost all regions of the state have experienced significant pheasant increases, these improvements are not uniform across the Kansas pheasant range. Parts of extreme western Kansas have suffered from severe drought, and while improved this year,

pheasant populations remain spotty in the west.

The greatest increases in pheasant numbers appear to have occurred in eastern sections of the northwest region and most of the northcentral region, but excellent production also occurred in the eastern half of the southwest region and several counties in the western part of the southcentral region. The high proportion of juveniles in the population should enhance hunter success.

BOBWHITE

Bobwhite quail experienced

good reproductive success last summer, and populations have continued a second year of recovery from the low levels of 2001.

The greatest improvement appears to have occurred in the southcentral region of the state, with more modest gains elsewhere. Bobwhite numbers have come close to doubling in southcentral Kansas compared to 2002, and better than average hunting can be expected in that region. Other parts of the Kansas bobwhite range, while increased, will generally offer average quail hunting.

The Flint Hills and southeast regions will offer the next best bobwhite populations. Quail in the northeast showed a significant increase this year, but still remain below the long-term average.

PRAIRIE CHICKEN

Greater prairie chicken populations were modestly higher this spring compared to 2002. Lesser prairie chicken num-

bers were significantly down following severe drought in western Kansas in 2002. Weather conditions suggest that both species may have increased this summer.

A more detailed forecast may be viewed on the KDWP website, www.kdwp.state.ks.us.

In addition to the more than 300,000 acres of state and federal public hunting lands, more than 977,000 acres of private land are enrolled this year in the Walk-In Hunting Area (WIHA) program. And this year, for the first time, an atlas is available that illustrates all public hunting lands, including WIHA.

The 115-page atlas includes detailed county maps with state, federal, and WIHA areas color coded. The new 2003 atlas is free and available at any department office, wherever licenses are sold, on the department's website, or by email request through feedbacks@wp.state.ks.us.

—Randy Rodgers, research biologist, Hays

PATTERN FOR WATERFOWL

Waterfowl seasons are well under way, but there's still much ahead, and many hunters may still be looking forward to their first hunt. So what's the best way to improve your success during waterfowl season? The answer is simple: pattern your shotgun and test the specific nontoxic shotshell loads you will use. Like big game hunters who must precisely sight in their rifles, shotgunners should pattern their shotguns to determine which shot size and shell load performs the best in their guns and for the style of waterfowl hunting they enjoy.

Because steel shot is the most common shot allowed for waterfowl hunting nationwide, it is best to test which steel shot pellets perform best in your shotgun. Generally speaking, hunters should use a steel load two sizes bigger than they use in lead. Research shows that No. 3 steel works best in most duck hunting situations, and BBBs work best for geese. Other common duck loads include No. 2 and No. 4. Other commonly-used goose loads include BB and T.

To pattern your shotgun thoroughly, use five shots for each load. Buy a roll of paper approximately 40 inches wide and

shoot at a 40-inch square section each shot. Mount your paper in a safe shooting area with a safe backdrop. Be sure to wear eye and ear protection.

Do not mark an aiming point at the center of the paper. Pace off a distance slightly longer than you plan to shoot — 20 to 40 yards. Select the choke and load combination to be tested and shoot five shots with each load. Use a different paper for each shot, and label each with the choke, shot size, distance, and other load information.

Next, draw a 30-inch circle around the densest area of pellet strikes on the paper and count the number of strikes. Use a lethality table to determine if the load, choke, and shot size are appropriate for your style of shooting. (A lethality table may be found in the *2003 Kansas Hunting and Furharvesting Regulations Summary*, available wherever license are sold.) Select the shell and choke combination that proves most effective for the species of waterfowl you plan to hunt.

For a denser pattern, three rules of thumb apply: choose a slightly smaller shot size, larger payload, or tighter choke. (Note: full chokes should not be used with steel shot.)

—Shoup

LEGENDS Of The Fair

by Mark Shoup



Even without wildlife, country projects can take wild detours. Last summer, preparation for the county fair got about as wild as any outdoor adventure I've ever had:

About two months before fair time, my sons Logan (just 15) and Will (almost 12) and I are sitting around the kitchen table plotting our 4-H Fair game plan – for the animal projects, that is. My wife, Rose, will make sure they complete their photography and educational projects.

I am just about to say that we need to get the boys' Angus heifer and her calf from the neighbor's pasture so we can be working with them, when the phone rings. Our neighbor informs me that our heifer has broken out of the pasture and is roaming the road trying to figure out how to get back to her calf. So the boys and I jump in the pickup and rush to the pasture.

Once the gate is open, it doesn't take long to herd the anguished first-time mother back into the pasture, and while we are at it, we herd cow and calf into the corral, crowd them into a corner and, after several misses, manage to get ropes around their necks. Because they're both somewhat halter-broke and foolish enough to believe that once roped they can't go anywhere, it's easy enough to slip on halters and walk them the half-mile back to our place and the corral next to our barn.

Having walked the cattle home, I consider the training session for day one complete. Not a bad start.

The next day, I come home from work expecting to chase the boys to the corral and begin training in earnest. Will is sitting at the kitchen table, head hanging. He looks as if he's just been caught robbing a bank.

I draw a glass of water and ask, "What's the matter, bud?"

"Oh, man, I broke a light globe in the bathroom, and I'm in trouble with Mom," he despairs.

"Accidents happen, Will." I try to console him. "Don't cry over spilt milk."

"Yeah, well, I also had a shaving cream beard and was wearing my underwear on my head and using the plunger for a sword."

You really shouldn't bust a gut laughing in a situation like this, but I can't contain myself. I choke on my water, spit in the sink, stumble out of the room stifling my laughter, and almost run into Rose. She is not amused.

Regaining my composure, I spin around and holler at the boys. "Okay! It's time to get out those cattle!"

From then until fair time, things go fairly smoothly. The cattle are well broken to a lead, and the boys have a minimum of bruised toes for their efforts. The day to move our animals – cows and fancy pigeons – comes quickly. Our good neighbor Phil loans us his pickup and trailer, so Logan and I will take care of the animals while Will and his mother round up everything for the indoor entries.

The back of the pickup is loaded with enough grooming and feeding materials to start a full-blown livestock operation. It must be about 120 degrees outside, and we've loaded the two best pigeons in a makeshift cage in the front seat of the pickup, air conditioning dialed to "freeze."

I back the trailer up to the corral, and we lead the heifer in just fine, but the calf wants no part of it. I tie the heifer in the front of the trailer and begin pulling on the calf's lead while Logan pushes. Finally, the calf relents, and Logan slams the trailer gate shut. I exit through the side door, and we're off to the fair.

I breathe a sigh of relief as we pull out the drive and turn the corner to U.S. 281. Almost to the highway, however, I look in the rearview mirror only to see heifer and calf one-half mile back in the middle of the road. I suddenly feel the urge to throw up. The gate is wide open, so I stop, jump out,

slam the gate shut, jump back in, and turn around as quickly as my inexperienced trailer backing skills allow.

By the time we reach the corner, the cattle are standing nonchalantly in our front yard. I drive slowly up to them, and they don't move. *Well, this looks good*, I think. But it ain't. The instant Logan and I step out of the truck, Mamma cow bolts full speed down the road toward the pasture, baby hot on her heels. We leap back in the truck and overtake them just as they bank into the neighbor's milo toward his woodlot.

"Dad!" Logan yells. "Should you let me out so I can try to keep them out of those trees?" Kid's thinking quickly, I'll give him that. Logan bails out, and I punch the gas and head for a driveway beyond the trees. As I fishtail into the drive, the lid to the pigeon's cage pops open, and birds are bouncing off the windows in the cab, beating me in the head with their wings. Somehow, I manage to shoo them to the passenger side of the cab and make a quick exit.

This is going to be a ruined day, I can tell. It will take hours to get those cattle back, and check-in time at the fair is an hour away.

Nonetheless, I grab leads from the back of the truck, run down the driveway, round the corner of trees, and stop dead in my tracks. If I were witnessing the parting of the Red Sea, I couldn't be more stunned. There stands Logan in the middle of the road – 150 yards away – holding the halters of both cattle.

He had run through the milo far enough to cut the cattle off from the trees. At that moment, the heifer bolted straight back to the road, and so did Logan. They reached the road about the same time, and because Logan was between the heifer and the pasture, she ran right toward him. He grabbed her halter, and the calf, of course, came right to Mamma.

We load the cattle, unscathed, back into the trailer, make *sure* it is properly latched, rustle the pigeons back into their cage, and are on our way. The whole episode takes about 10 minutes.

The rest of the fair goes without a hitch; the boys win lots of prizes, and every 4-H'er we meet is ready with a helping hand – the best group of folks on earth, and Lord knows we "gentlemen" farmers need them.

For The Beginner

Pole and Line

The simplest fishing tackle is a "cane" pole. You don't use a reel with a pole.

Cut a piece of fishing line at least as long as the pole. Tie the line to the tip of the pole and a hook to the other end of the line. Squeeze a small split-shot sinker onto the line about a foot above the hook. The sinker makes it easier to swing the bait into the water and keeps the bait under the surface. You may also want to use a bobber. By sliding the bobber up or down the line, you can change the depth of your bait in the water.

Spincasting

Spincasting tackle is ideal for beginning anglers because it is easy to use. A spincasting rod has small line guides and a pistol-grip handle. Spincasting tackle works best with light line, so it is often used while fishing for bluegill, crappie, and other panfish. The spincasting reel mounts on top of the rod's handle.

Learning how to use a spincasting rod and reel isn't hard, but it does take practice. Buy a practice casting plug and find a spot where you can practice safely, away from all power lines. Put a target on the ground about 25 feet away. Practice casting until you can consistently hit the target.

Spinning

Spinning rods have a straight handle with large line guides that are on the bottom of the rod. A spinning reel is often called an "open-face" reel because the spool of fishing line isn't covered. The reel mounts below the handle. Spinning rods and reels allow longer casting but may take more practice than spincasters.

Baitcasting

A baitcasting rod can have either a pistol-type grip or a straight handle. The casting reel and line guides are mounted on top of the rod, but the casting reel's line spool turns as you cast and can snarl the line if it is not controlled properly. Learning to control this spool makes casting tackle harder, so it is a skill for advanced anglers.

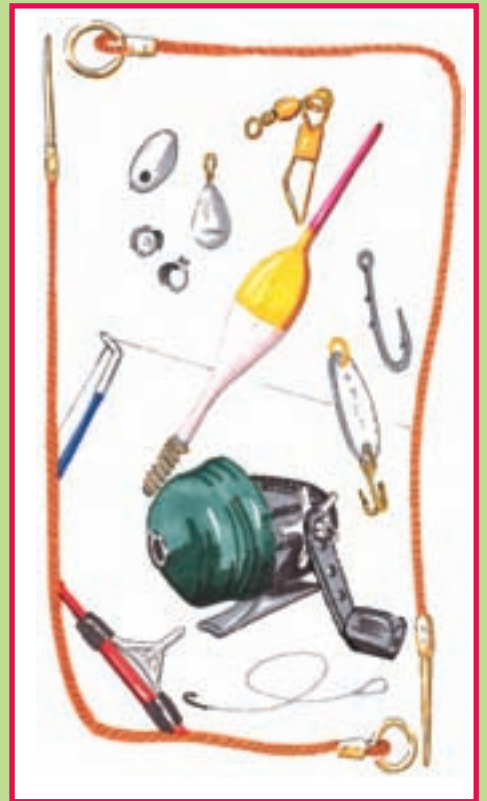
Drag

All reels have an a drag adjustment that controls how easily the line pulls off the reel. When set correctly, the drag lets a larger fish pull line from the reel until it becomes tired. Follow the directions that come with your reel to set the drag correctly.

Flyfishing

Flyfishing tackle is different from other fishing equipment. In flyfishing, the line's weight is all that carries the light bait to water. The rod is whipped back with one hand while the other manually bails line out until there is enough to reach the target area. Flycasting is usually the most difficult to learn. However, with proper instruction, anyone can become proficient.

—Future Fisherman Foundation



STATE FISHING LAKE RENOVATED

Dam and spillway repairs at Rooks State Fishing Lake, southwest of Stockton, were completed last summer. The upstream slope of the dam was reshaped, and rip-rap was placed along the face of the dam. The spillway has a new concrete front wall and cap that extends 8 inches higher than the previous cap. Concrete was pumped into voids under the apron of the spillway, and a new spillway cap and apron drains were installed. A new concrete low-water crossing was installed for access below the dam to the west side of the lake.

While the lake is drained, angler access and in-basin fish habitat are also undergoing improvements. Local KDWP personnel, working with Rooks County staff, realized the chance to help each other for the benefit of all. Rooks County landfill needed to dispose of concrete rubble and acquire additional topsoil for the county landfill; KDWP needed concrete rip-rap for a fishing pier and soil removed from the lake basin. As a result, anglers now have better access and fish habitat, and county residents saved landfill space and soil expense.

Additional improvements have been completed, and more are planned. In addition to the 150-foot fishing pier, the

shelter house above the pier has a new enameled tin roof. The fireplace, chimney, and other stonework will also be repaired. A new courtesy dock will be placed at the boat ramp, and the old dock will be made into a fishing dock and moved to the south end of the lake when sufficient water levels return. Area fisheries biologists and public land managers plan to place numerous fish attractors in the basin and further improve shoreline angling access by developing sections of shoreline around the lake.

For more information, contact Mark Shaw or Michael Zajic at the Webster Area Office, (785) 425-6775.

—Shoup

Quivira Watch

People come from all over the world to birdwatch in Kansas, and much of this attention is rightfully focused on Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area. But if you're looking for another great place to watch birds and other wildlife in Kansas, Quivira National Wildlife Refuge is just 20 miles south of the Bottoms. Birdwatching and wildlife viewing opportunities abound at Quivira.

What you see depends largely on the time of year, as well as the time of day, you visit. For optimum viewing, area staff recommend early morning or late afternoon. Bobcats, coyotes, and other mammals are often seen lurking about during the heat of the afternoon. At the extreme north end of the refuge, a thriving prairie dog community can be found.

Quivira NWR has two large salt marshes, one located at the south end of the refuge and the other at the far north end on the wildlife drive. Both are excellent places to look for mallards, wood ducks, pintails, white pelicans, and more, and fall is an excellent time to see large numbers of these birds.

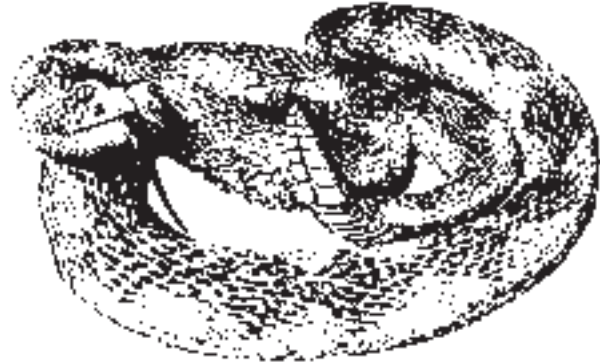
If you are more interested in shorebirds and water birds, spring and early summer are the best times to visit. It is not uncommon to see large numbers of great blue herons, American avocets, sandpipers, and snowy plovers. The beautiful white-faced ibis may be seen, and phalaropes spin circles in the water, stirring insect larvae from the mud.

As you travel through the refuge, keep your eyes open for white-tailed deer, beaver, raccoons, wild turkeys, and other wildlife. There are many parking areas that afford visitors a chance to stop and walk around or take photographs.

No matter what time of year you choose to come, a sharp-eyed visitor will certainly see something worth remembering. November, in particular, is a great time for waterfowl.

—Quivira National Wildlife Refuge

DANGEROUS DIAMONDBACKS



Fortunately, native venomous snakes in Kansas have caused relatively few problems. Fewer than 50 bites on humans are reported each year in Kansas, and of those bitten, few retain any debilitating effects from the bite. Death from snakebite in Kansas is almost unheard of, with only one death reported in the last half century. However, venomous snakes should not be taken lightly. They should be left alone, and any bite should be examined by a qualified physician as soon as possible.

Kansas has recently developed a snake problem. Since 1991, eight western diamondback rattlesnakes – non-native venomous snakes – have been collected and removed from Kanopolis State Park, in Ellsworth County. The latest snake was discovered last summer by hikers in the Horsethief Canyon area of the park.

The discovery of non-native venomous snakes in Kansas is not without precedent. Single specimens of released or escaped western diamondbacks have turned up in Cherokee, Cowley, Crawford, Ellis, Lyon, and Sumner counties, and a Mojave rattlesnake was collected from a quarry in Leavenworth County in 1980.

The release of non-native wildlife such as the western diamondback rattlesnake in Kansas poses needless threats to both the environment of the state and to outdoor enthusiasts alike. It is also illegal.

The western diamondback rattlesnake is large. Average specimens are between 3 and 4 feet long, with

exceptional specimens reaching 7 feet. They are native to the North American southwest and range from northern Mexico into westcentral Arkansas and west into southeast California. The specimens discovered at Kanopolis State Park are approximately 150 miles north of their natural range.

Western diamondbacks are often quick to crawl away when approached but will immediately coil and stand their ground if threatened. Their relatively large size means they also have proportionately longer fangs, a considerable quantity of venom, and an increased striking distance.

These factors contribute to the western diamondback rattlesnake being responsible for more serious snakebites and fatalities than any other North American reptile. In Texas alone, this species is responsible for the majority of the more than 1,400 snakebites reported each year.

Fortunately, despite the fact that western diamondback rattlesnakes have been found at Kanopolis State Park since 1991, there is no evidence that a breeding population has become established. Future monitoring of the area could reveal more information. Tissues taken from the recently discovered snake may ultimately determine its source. DNA extracted from such tissue can be compared to DNA from western diamondbacks throughout their range and tested for genetic similarities.

—Travis W. Taggart, Center for North American Herpetology, Lawrence

NRCS & KDWP AGREEMENT

The first Contribution Agreement for Technical Service Providers was signed on Tuesday, August 12, by Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Conservationist Harold L. Klaege and Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) Secretary Mike Hayden. Through this contribution agreement, KDWP biologists will provide technical assistance to landowners who want to develop and improve wildlife habitat on private lands.

"This is the first contribution agreement signed in Kansas," said Klaege. "This partnership will provide much needed assistance for landowners who need technical assistance to meet their wildlife habitat goals.

"With the contribution agreement, we join forces in meeting common goals: providing benefits for wildlife and/or improving wildlife habitat and assisting more landowners," he said.

"In a state where over 97-percent of the land is in private ownership, quality technical assistance to landowners is truly essential," says Hayden. "Our biologists are looking forward to building new relationships with landowners for the long-term benefit of our state's diverse natural resources."

Through this arrangement, 12 biologists will be made available to assist in developing and implementing wildlife conservation plans on their lands.

Klaege explained that producers wanting to improve or develop wildlife habitat

would make application for the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) at their local NRCS or conservation district office. The NRCS then provides the application to a KDWP biologist who would then work with the landowner in developing a conservation plan as a Technical Service Provider. Technical assistance includes conservation planning and/or design, layout, installation, and checkout of approved conservation practices.

The WHIP is a voluntary program for people who want to develop and improve wildlife habitat primarily on private land. Through WHIP, NRCS provides both technical assistance and up to 75 percent cost-share assistance to establish and improve fish and wildlife habitat. WHIP agreements between NRCS and the participant generally last from 5 to 10 years from the date the agreement is signed.

WHIP has proven to be a highly effective and widely accepted program across the state. By targeting wildlife habitat projects on all lands and aquatic areas, WHIP provides assistance to conservation-minded landowners who are unable to meet the specific eligibility requirements of other USDA conservation programs.

Additional information on technical service provider assistance is available at techreg.usda.gov. Information on the 2002 Farm Bill can be found at www.usda.gov/farmbill

—Mary D. Shaffer, NRCS
Public Affairs Specialist, Salina

BYRON WALKER RULES

Hunters visiting Byron Walker Wildlife Area, west of Kingman, have seen some changes this fall. Hunters are now required to pick up and possess a free permit while hunting on Byron Walker. This project is an effort to collect accurate use and harvest data from sportsmen on the area. The information will be evaluated and used in future management decisions.

Eighteen permit stations have been installed around major access points at Byron Walker. Hunters need to stop by one of these stations prior to hunting to pick up a permit. The permit is a two-part card similar to those seen at McPherson Valley Wetlands and Cheyenne Bottoms wildlife areas. The top portion of the card is filled out prior to hunting and deposited in a drop box attached to the permit station. The lower portion is the actual permit and survey card. Hunters are required to keep this half in their possession while hunting and, upon completing their hunt, fill out the survey card and drop it in the drop box.

"Cards can be filled out in just a few seconds, and the information received will be extremely valuable to future management on the area," says area manager Troy Smith. "The permit stations are painted hunter orange, so they should be easy to locate, and they'll have directions and pencils."

Anyone having questions concerning the new permit system should phone (620) 532-3242.

—Shoup

TALLGRASS & WIND POWER

A group of ranchers in the Flint Hills have organized to prevent the installation of utility-scale wind turbine complexes in this scenic area. The turbines would stand 350 to 425 feet tall. "Tallgrass Ranchers" is the name of the activist group, and more than 50 members participated in a organizational meeting in Emporia on Sept. 14. Members own or operate ranches in 12 Flint Hills and associated tallgrass prairie counties.

A policy statement approved at the meeting outlines the primary concerns of the Tallgrass Ranchers. According to the statement, industrial-scale windpower developments 1) are incompatible with the pastoral and cultural character of the tallgrass prairie; 2) would damage the scenic beauty, wildlife value, and unique ecological nature of the area; 3) would reduce the enjoyment of life and property values of neighboring landowners; and 4) would change the character of the tallgrass prairie from agricultural to industrial.

The Flint Hills area is the last significant expanse of tallgrass prairie rangeland and one of the few remaining strongholds for the greater prairie chicken in the world. Only about 3 percent of the nation's tallgrass prairie remains, and 70 percent of that is within or directly adjacent to the Flint Hills.

—Ron Klataske,
Audubon Of Kansas



DRILL



FIREBOARD

Everyone who has started a campfire has probably wondered about our ancient ancestors who didn't have lighters or matches. Primitive tribes used many fire-starting methods, but two of the most common were hand drill and bow drill. Here's the basics for starting your fire the old-fashioned way.

Every fire needs fuel. The fuel for primitive fire-making is called "tinder." Tinder is made of dead, dry material, such as old hemp rope, fine threads of inner tree bark, or fine grasses. The material must be rolled between your fingers or palms until it can be worked into a fine ball, like a very loose ball of hair. If no fine material is available, dead bark or other material can be beat with a rock until fine fibers break loose.

The drill is a straight shaft of seasoned wood that is spun, creating friction (and hopefully a spark) between it and the fireboard. Drill wood should have been dead a year or two. It should be

about 18 to 20 inches long and 1/4- to 1/2-inch in diameter. Look for good drill wood near downed trees or around old campfires. Slightly burnt wood can make a good drill.

The drill must be smooth, straight, hard wood. Cut or sand off bumps. Maple, oak, willow, box elder, and currant are good woods. Kansas has plenty of osage orange, which is ideal.

The fireboard, or hearth, is a piece of wood about 1/2-inch thick, 2 inches wide, and at least 10 inches long. A variety of fairly soft woods split from stumps or logs may be used for this, but eastern redcedar or cottonwood should work well. About 1/8-inch from the end or along the edges of the fireboard, carve a slight depression about the same diameter as the drill tip. This is the drill seat. Use the thicker end of the drill in the drill seat.

To start drilling with the hand-drill method, rub the drill between your hands — much like you do when you're trying to warm them up. Spin the drill, moving your hands from the top to the bottom of the drill — keeping steady downward pressure on the drill — then quickly shift your hands back to the top of the drill one at a time. The drill should not come off the board.

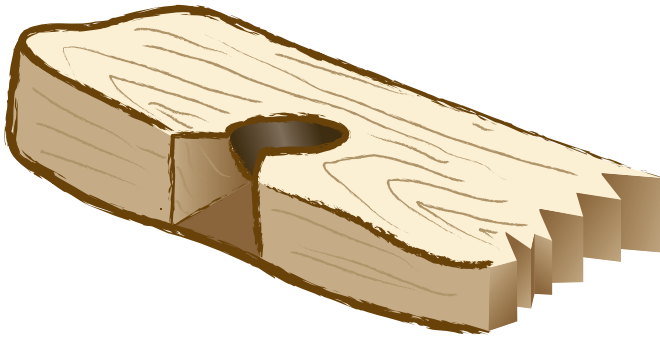
If you hear a squeak, add a little dust or just a few grains of sand to the drill seat. When the drill seat is burned a little, and the drill is spinning in

TINDER



TINDER

FIREBOARD WITH V-NOTCH



place, it's well-seated. Now cut a narrow V-shaped notch just to the edge of the drill seat.

Now you're ready to make fire, but before you begin drilling, place a dry leaf or small chip of bark under the notch to catch the coal. Place a cottony ball of tinder partially under the V-notch in your fireboard, press one foot on the end of the fireboard opposite the drill seat, and begin drilling. If you tire, give yourself quick breaks. It takes practice, and you're using muscles you haven't used much. You may get blisters at first, too, but don't give up. Practice makes perfect — and calluses.

Try to keep the drill straight up and down. The friction between the drill and the fireboard will soon create a charred powder that, hopefully, will become a fire-starting ember. Once smoke comes from the fireboard, continue drilling until the smoke is constant. You should see a lot of smoke before you have created a coal. Still, drill a few more strokes for good measure.

Now stop drilling. If the powder continues to smoke, you've got a coal. Take a deep breath and relax, then gently blow gently on the coal for 15 or 20 seconds before you move your foot. Be careful not to jiggle the fireboard.

Carefully removing your foot, tip the fireboard so the coal drops gently into the tinder. You don't want the coal to break during this process.

Immediately but gently, fold the bundle around the coal, blowing softly all the while. The coal should start to spread and burn the center of the bundle. Keep pushing the bundle in, but not too tightly. Fire needs heat, fuel, and oxygen, and if you pinch the bundle too tightly, you'll shut off the oxygen.

Ideally, the bundle will flame before your fingertips get burned by the crumbling tinder. Put the tinder in a fire pit if it gets too hot and manipulate it with small sticks.

Once the tinder flames, quickly place small sticks over the little fire. Having a pre-made tepee-shaped

stack of tiny kindling will speed the fire starting.

The process is pretty much the same with a bow drill except for the method of spinning the drill. The bow has to be springy, so it should be somewhat green, about 30 inches long and 1/2 to 3/4 inches in diameter. Osage works well, as would most nut-producing trees. A leather bootlace will complete the bow. The last piece of equipment needed is the hand block — a smooth, dimpled rock or palm-sized chunk of hard wood with a depression to fit the drill.

Tie the lace to either end of the bow — just long enough that you have what looks like an archer's bow — and wrap the lace around the drill one turn. Place the sharp end of the drill (the top) in the hand block. Use one hand to press downward on the hand block while using the other to move the bow. Work the bow back and forth in a sawing motion. Slowly increase your speed while keeping a steady rhythm. As with the hand drill, try to keep the drill straight up and down.

Now follow the same steps used with the hand drill.

Other primitive firemaking methods are described in detail in two fine outdoor survival books: Tom Brown's *Field Guide to Wilderness Survival* and Larry Dean Olson's *Outdoor Survival Skills*. Many internet sites also specialize in firemaking and other primitive outdoor skills.

A Note of Caution: Always get adult supervision. Never use lighter fluid, gasoline, or any other substance as a shortcut to getting your fire started.

USING BOW DURING FIRESTARTING





Backlash

by Mike Miller

Stranger Than Fiction

I was driving by Lennie's the other day and noticed he and his neighbor Roger Wirthlow standing toe to toe in a heated discussion. Lennie's conversations with Wirthlow are always entertaining, so I had to stop.

I sneaked in behind Lennie, staying on friendly ground and hoping neither would notice me. I sidled closer.

"Hold on, hold on, Worthless," Lennie almost shouted, "exactly what did this track your uncle's friend claims to have seen look like?"

"I don't have a picture, but this guy is a real woodsman. If he says he saw a mountain lion track, Uncle Leon says he believes him," Wirthlow expounded. "The tracks were over 6 inches wide. Uncle Leon's friend said they had to have been made by a 150- to 175-pound puma. He said the hair on the back of his neck stood out while he was studying the tracks — like some creature might have been watching him."

This was better than I'd expected. I listened intently, trying not to attract any attention.

"Good grief," Lennie chuckled. "Sounds like he needed a hair cut. I'm not saying there hasn't been a wandering lion or two pass through on occasion, but I don't think we have nearly as many lions as we have sightings. Shoot, we have more sightings here in Kansas than they do in Idaho."

Lennie had challenged the credibility of Wirthlow's Uncle Leon.

"You state guys are in a cover-up. There is a conspiracy to deny the existence of mountain lions in Kansas. You refuse to admit we have lions," Wirthlow hissed, his face reddening.

"For crying out loud, Worthless, why would we deny mountain lions exist? All we're saying is that there has never been documented proof of lions living in Kansas — no photos, no positive I.D. on tracks, no roadkills, no nothing," Lennie retorted.

Like watching a tennis match, my head followed the points and counterpoints between the two. I couldn't wait for Wirthlow's reply.

"You won't admit it because you stocked them. Brought them here to thin the deer population. They've become so numerous you're afraid they'll start attacking people. That's why," Wirthlow added with a triumphant crossing of his arms.

Lennie threw his head back and rolled his eyes so hard, he nearly fell over backwards. Lennie and I both work for the wildlife department, and this was getting personal.

"Alright smart guy," Lennie fired. "Just what makes you so sure we stocked mountain lions?"

"A friend of my Uncle Leon's wife knows this guy who shot a mountain lion. He figured he'd get in trouble, so he skinned the cat at night and hid the hide in his freezer. Couple days later, two game wardens showed up at his door demanding to see the lion hide. A tiny transmitter was planted in the hide and the wardens followed the signal straight to this guy's front porch. It's the honest truth!"

Lennie rolled his eyes again, and spun clear around to keep from falling backward. "You must think our biologists are super heroes — catching mountain lions alive and planting tiny transmitters in them — then we bring them to Kansas and release them. You watched too much *Daktari*. Besides, why would we want lions to reduce the deer herd? We sell permits to hunters for that — helps pay our salaries."

Lennie had him, so he went for the throat.

"Look, Worthless, the only covert stocking operation we've ever conducted was a few years back when we dropped in wolverines to help thin a problem bobcat population. It didn't work since they all skedaddled back to the mountains as soon as we let them go. It was for the best, though. We were afraid we'd have to bring in grizzly bears if the wolverines got out of hand."

Wirthlow looked up as he mulled this over, actually considering the possibility. But Lennie cracked and started laughing. Wirthlow knew he'd been had and whirled around and stomped into the house.

"Reminds me of an old nursery rhyme," Lennie chuckled. "I know an old lady who swallowed a fly. I don't know why she swallowed a fly. Perhaps she'll die."

"I know an old lady who swallowed a spider that wiggled and jiggled and tickled inside her. She swallowed the spider to catch the fly. I don't know why she swallowed the fly. Perhaps she'll die," I recited the second verse for him.

Then in unison, laughing; "I know an old lady who swallowed a bird to catch the spider that wiggled and jiggled and tickled inside her. She swallowed the spider to catch the fly. I don't know why she swallowed the fly. Perhaps she'll die. . ."

"Better stop," Lennie warned. "There's no telling how many rumors would start if we finish that rhyme."

We both laughed, but I couldn't shake a nagging worry caused by the fact that Lennie and I both remembered the words to that strange nursery rhyme. Some truths are stranger than fiction. ♡

