

KANSAS

Wildlife & Parks

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2004

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On Point

by Mike Hayden



The Conservation Easement Alternative

In the September/October 2003 issue, I devoted this column to a discussion of donating property to the department. I noted then that in a future issue I would discuss conservation easements, which may be viewed as an alternative to outright donation. Conservation easements first appeared in the United States in the late 1880s and are legal agreements between landowners and land trusts or government agencies that restrict the uses of the land in order to protect its conservation value.

The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks is implementing a program to encourage people to donate conservation easements. Currently the department manages more than 80 conservation easements encompassing approximately 5,000 acres. Land with high wildlife habitat potential and land near existing department properties are priority, but certainly all lands deemed important for conservation purposes will be considered. To encourage the use of conservation easements, tax benefits for the donation of conservation easements were written into the Internal Revenue Code in the mid-1970s.

Although Kansas law does not require that a conservation easement be made in perpetuity, federal tax breaks require perpetuity. In Kansas, there are no state or local tax incentives for donating conservation easements, as there are in other states. However, conservation easements lower property values which in turn lower property taxes.

Land trusts are not-for-profit entities that hold easements for conservation purposes. Land trusts were first organized in New England in the late 1800s, and today there are more than 1,400 nationwide. In addition to the department, there are several private land trusts in Kansas including the Kansas Land Trust, the Sunflower Land Trust, and the Kansas Livestock Association's Ranchland Trust. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is currently working on a conservation easement initiative. And the U.S.

Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service has several programs in Kansas involved with conservation easements. These are the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP), the Grassland Reserve Program (GRP), and the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP). The FRPP provides matching funds to entities purchasing conservation easements. Through the GRP and WRP, permanent conservation easements are held to protect and restore range and pasture lands and wetlands, respectively.

Each land trust active in the state has an individual approach to protecting the land but all have the same basic intention of preserving the land and preventing commercial development. RoxAnne Miller, Executive Director of the Kansas Land Trust, said that having several different organizations active in the state makes it more likely that someone who wants to preserve their land can find their niche. Similarly, Jim Michael, Chief Executive Officer for the Sunflower Land Trust said, "People need to know they can contact any of us (the

department or private land trusts) and if our organization can't meet their needs, we'll refer them to one of the others."

Conservation easements may appeal to those who want their land to be preserved for ecological, historic, cultural, recreational, or scenic value, but still want to maintain ownership of the property. Preservation of land under an easement is intended to provide a significant public benefit and can even provide public access to the property. Easements can be designed to accommodate nearly any wish or concern a person may have about how they want the land to be used. There is much to be done in Kansas to preserve our natural heritage. Please contact the department or one of the organizations listed at left for more information about conservation easements.

KDWP

Jim Hays, Land Acquisition Coordinator
(620) 672-5911 ext. 157

Kansas Land Trust

RoxAnne Miller, Executive Director
(785) 749-3297

Sunflower Land Trust

Jim Michael, Chief Executive Officer
(316) 775-1554

Kansas Livestock Association Ranchland Trust

Mike Beam, Senior Vice President
(785) 273-5115

United States Fish and Wildlife Service (Manhattan, KS office)

Damien Miller, Program Coordinator
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KANSAS

Wildlife & Parks

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Things have changed since the old days.

Back then, a year or two ago, I went through film like an SUV goes through gasoline. Equipped with futuristic cameras and fast motor drives, I loaded and reloaded, shot and shot, packed up mailers and waited for weeks to see the results. Great opportunity in difficult light? I'd sweat for 10 days, hoping the mailed film wouldn't be destroyed in a carrier wreck (hey, I lost 40 rolls like that once); hope it wouldn't be scratched in some processing accident (not that uncommon); or hope it wouldn't simply be unusable due to shooting error. Fortunately, the vast majority of the time, things worked out fine. But it was still hard to wait.

Film had its peculiarities. Speed, color, and expense had to be balanced against expectations for the published images. The rule: pick a good film and shoot lots of it, just to make sure. Hit the exposure dead-on, or drop it in the trash can. There was little room for error, and constant need for duplication.

But that was before digital. Now, in the world of amazing new technology, I shoot a picture and evaluate it instantly. At the touch of a button on my Nikon D100, I can change film speed for a single shot, or live with a missed exposure, knowing it can be salvaged through a simple operation. My telephoto lenses are 50 percent longer when used on the digital single lens reflex camera. Color rendition is superb. An impressive array of corrections is instantly available. Unwanted pictures are deleted immediately. Storage of single originals is safe and secure.

It's been a year since I started shooting digital. Now, tiny memory cards, external hard drives and a laptop computer take the place of film. A powerful photo editing program develops images in minutes, allowing picture control undreamed of just a short time ago. We're learning as we go, tuning the process so that camera image and magazine picture look the same.

This 2004 photo issue marks the first all-digital edition of *Kansas Wildlife & Parks* magazine. The Kansas outdoors remains the same, beautiful and rich by God's design. The way we record it has changed. We hope you enjoy these images, and most of all, we encourage you to experience first-hand the wonderful natural resources Kansas offers.



Mike Blair, photographer & associate editor



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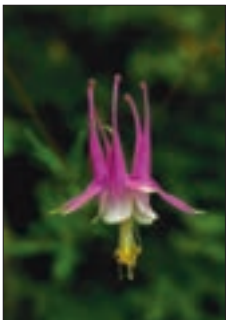
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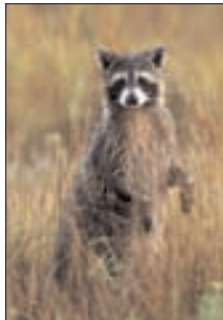
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Front Cover: A Columbine graces a spring trail at Elk City State Park. Mike Blair filmed the flower with a 55mm lens, f/4 @ 1/125th sec. **Back Cover:** Mike Blair filmed this raccoon in prairie grass with a 600mm lens, f/8 @ 1/500th sec.



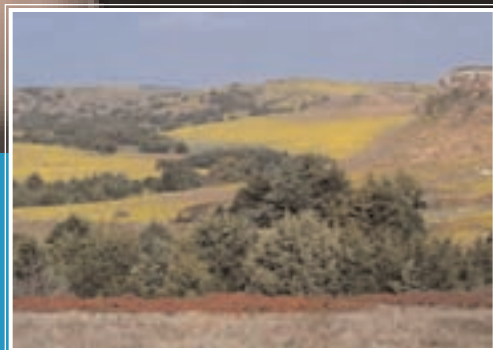
Editorial Creed: To promote the conservation and wise use of our natural resources, to instill an understanding of our responsibilities to the land.

Equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from programs described herein is available to all individuals without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age or handicap. Complaints of discrimination should be sent to Office of the Secretary, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, 1020 S Kansas Ave., Topeka, KS 66612.

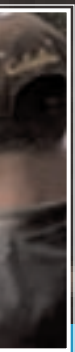
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THE
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THE WAY WE SEE IS THE SAME. HOW WE RECORD HAS
CHANGED. FILM, WITH ITS HARD EDGES AND
TANGIBLE IMAGES, WAS LONG THE MEDIUM OF
PHOTO COMMUNICATION. BUT PROGRESS
CHANGES EVERYTHING. NOW, LIGHT FUNNELS
THROUGH LENSES INTO CYBERSPACE, AND
IMAGES APPEAR LIKE GENIES FROM BOTTLES.
WE FOLLOW THIS NEW PATHWAY, AND
WITH GROWING CONFIDENCE,
ENTER THE DIGITAL AGE . . .

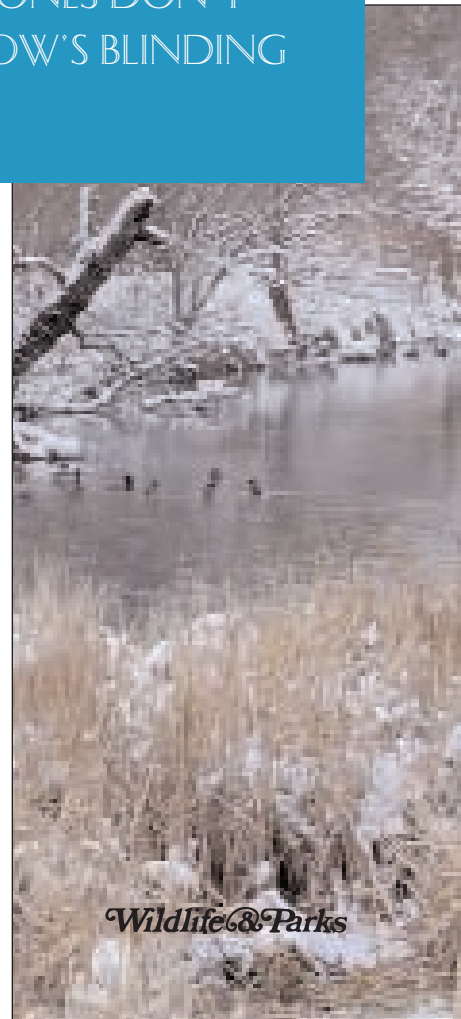




THE BRILLIANT HUES OF A DEEP-FROZEN SUNRISE LEAP TO LIFE IN A DIGITAL IMAGE. GONE ARE WORRIES THAT FILM MIGHT MUTE THE INTENSE COLOR OF A WINTER MORNING.

I'M QUICKLY LEARNING THAT COLOR RANGE AND DEPTH EXCEED THAT OF FILM, WHERE PREDOMINANT LIGHT OR DARK TONES CAN DIMINISH THE RICHNESS OF SUBTLE COLORS REGISTERED BY A HUMAN EYE.

CATTAILS HOLD THEIR TAWNY HUES, AND SKIN TONES DON'T WASH OUT IN SNOW'S BLINDING GLARE.





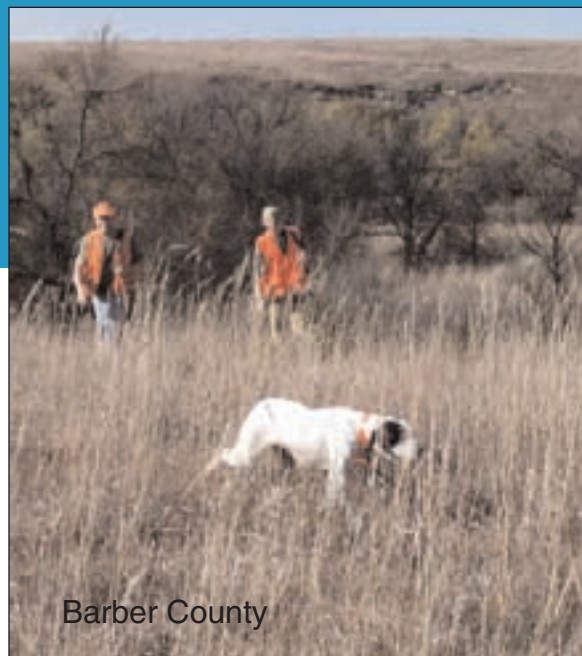
Kingman County





Pratt County

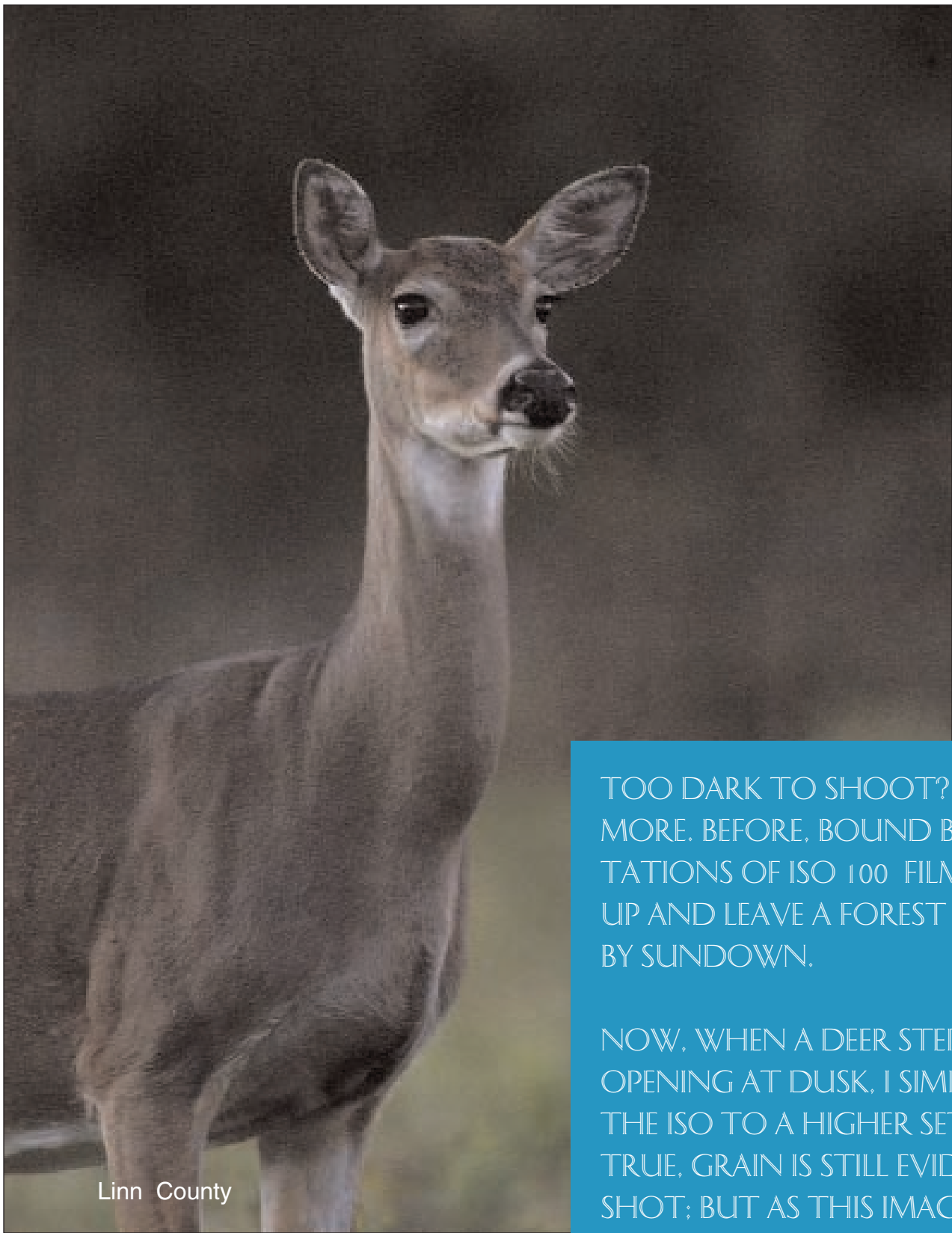
THIS MARCH PINTAIL SHOT IS ONE OF MY ALL-TIME BEST. DUE TO A DIFFERENCE IN CAMERA DESIGN, LENSES GAIN 50 PERCENT IN LENGTH ON A DIGITAL CAMERA BODY. MY F/4 600MM BECOMES A 900MM, BRINGING THIS FLOCK SUBSTANTIALLY CLOSER. DETAIL AND COLOR ARE SUPERB.



Barber County



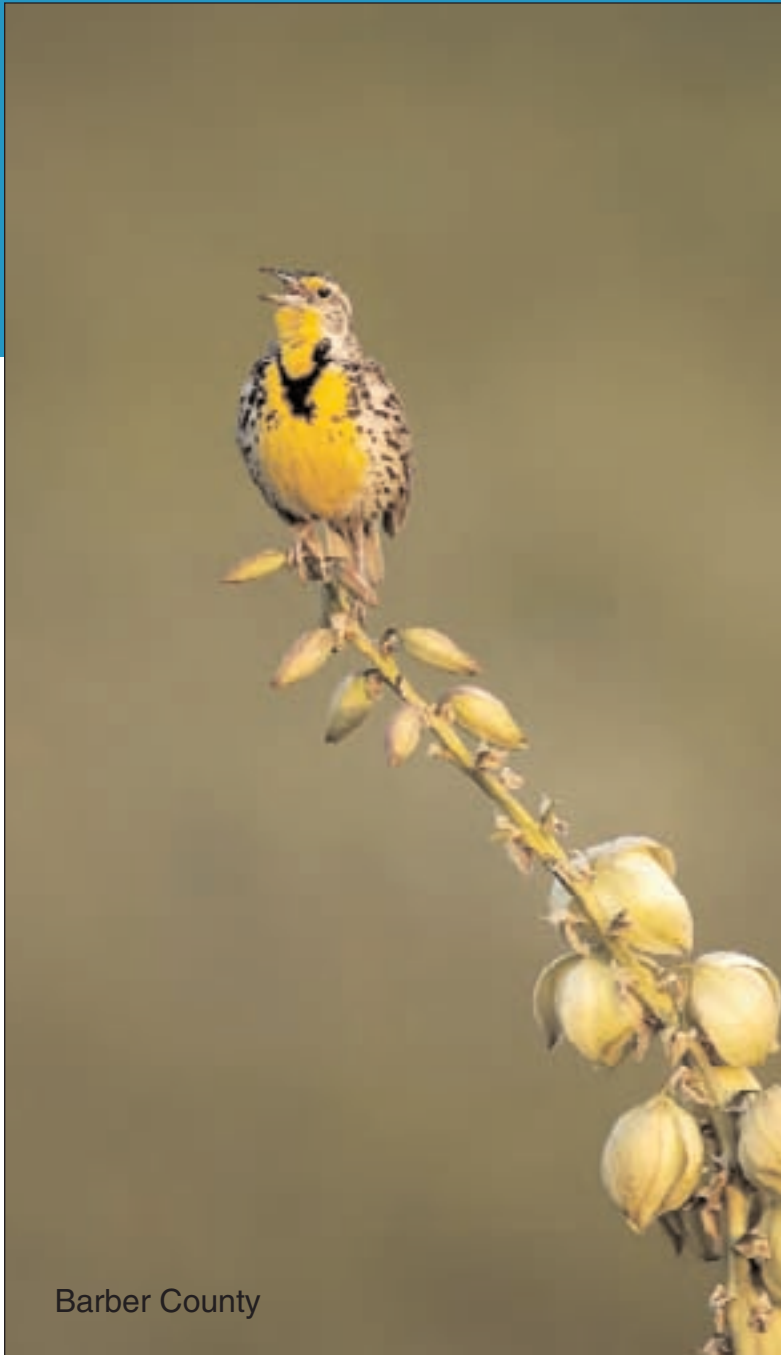
Kiowa County



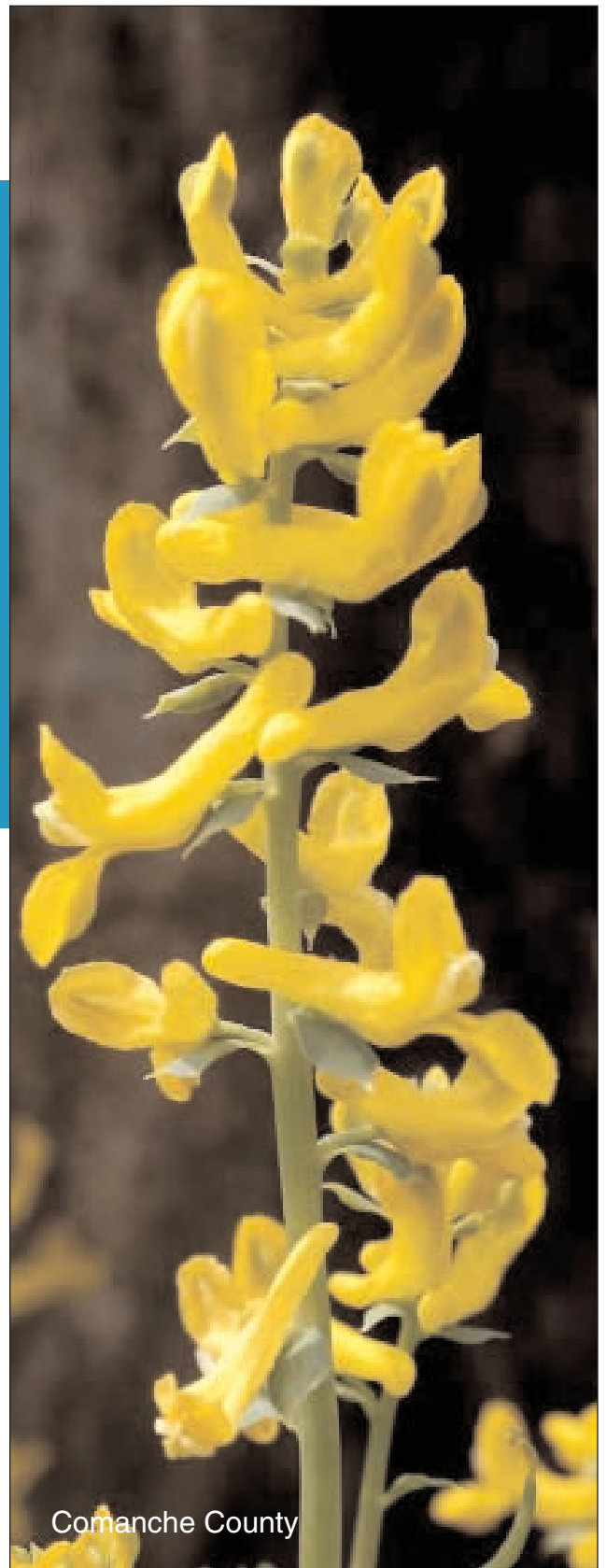
Linn County

TOO DARK TO SHOOT? NOT ANYMORE. BEFORE, BOUND BY THE LIMITATIONS OF ISO 100 FILM, I'D PACK UP AND LEAVE A FOREST CLEARING BY SUNDOWN.

NOW, WHEN A DEER STEPS INTO THE OPENING AT DUSK, I SIMPLY DIAL THE ISO TO A HIGHER SETTING. TRUE, GRAIN IS STILL EVIDENT IN THE SHOT; BUT AS THIS IMAGE AT ISO 1600 SHOWS, IT IS NOT OBJECTIONABLE. BEST, ADJUSTMENTS ARE FRAME-BY-FRAME, WITHOUT NEED FOR CHANGING AND WASTING FILM.



Barber County



Comanche County

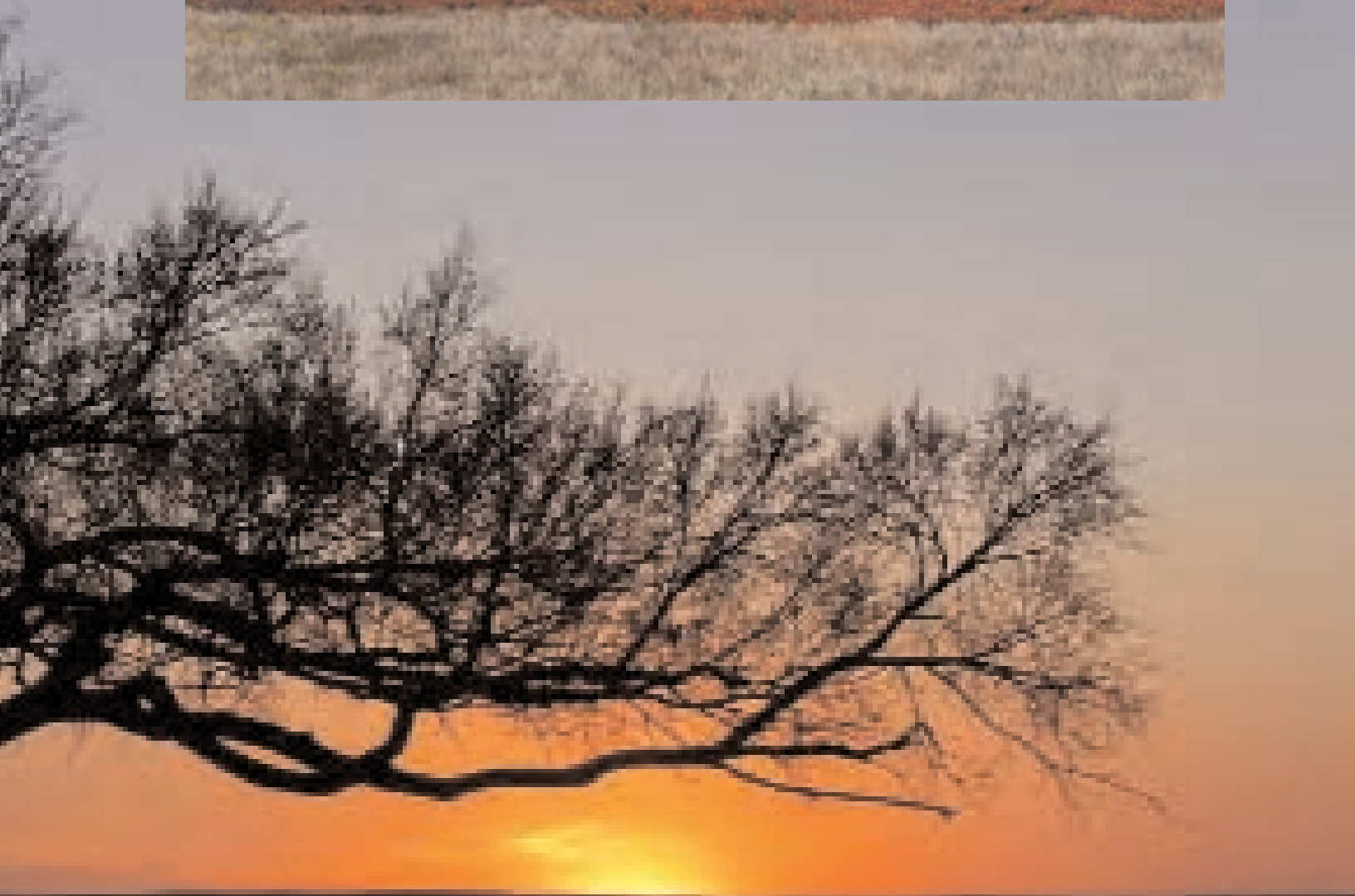


Riley County

Kiowa County



Barber County





Pratt County





Pratt County



Pratt County



Comanche County

Stafford County



DIGITAL HAS LIMITATIONS, ESPECIALLY WHEN SHOOTING ACTION. MY NIKON D100 CAPTURES 6 MILLION PIXELS OF LIGHT IN EVERY FRAME. CAMERA MEMORY MAKES IT POSSIBLE TO SHOOT FOUR QUICK PICTURES, BUT THEN THE IMAGES MUST BE “STORED” BEFORE SHOOTING RESUMES. I MISSED A WONDERFUL FLY-BY ON THESE TUNDRA SWANS WHEN THE SHUTTER PAUSED FOR HALF A MINUTE TO ALLOW THE DIGITAL IMAGES TO PROCESS.



Comanche County



Riley County





Kiowa County

Barber County





Barber County



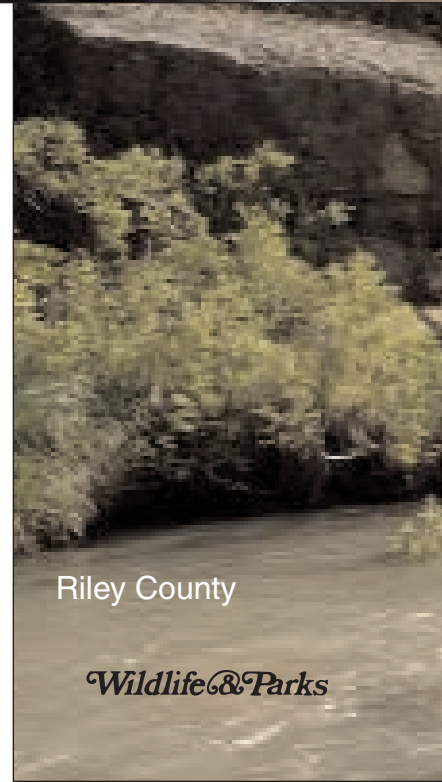
Pratt County



Pottawatomie County

HIGHLIGHTS AND SHADOWS MUST BE AVERAGED WITH FILM, OFTEN RESULTING IN LOSS OF COLOR AND UNSATISFACTORY EXPOSURES.

BALANCE CAN BE IMPROVED WITH DIGITALS BY TREATING EXPOSURE ELEMENTS SEPARATELY. ON A LAPTOP COMPUTER, I DODGED AND BURNED THIS SHOT OF THE PILLSBURY CROSSING FALLS TO PROVIDE GOOD DETAIL AGAINST SEVERE BACKLIGHT.



Riley County

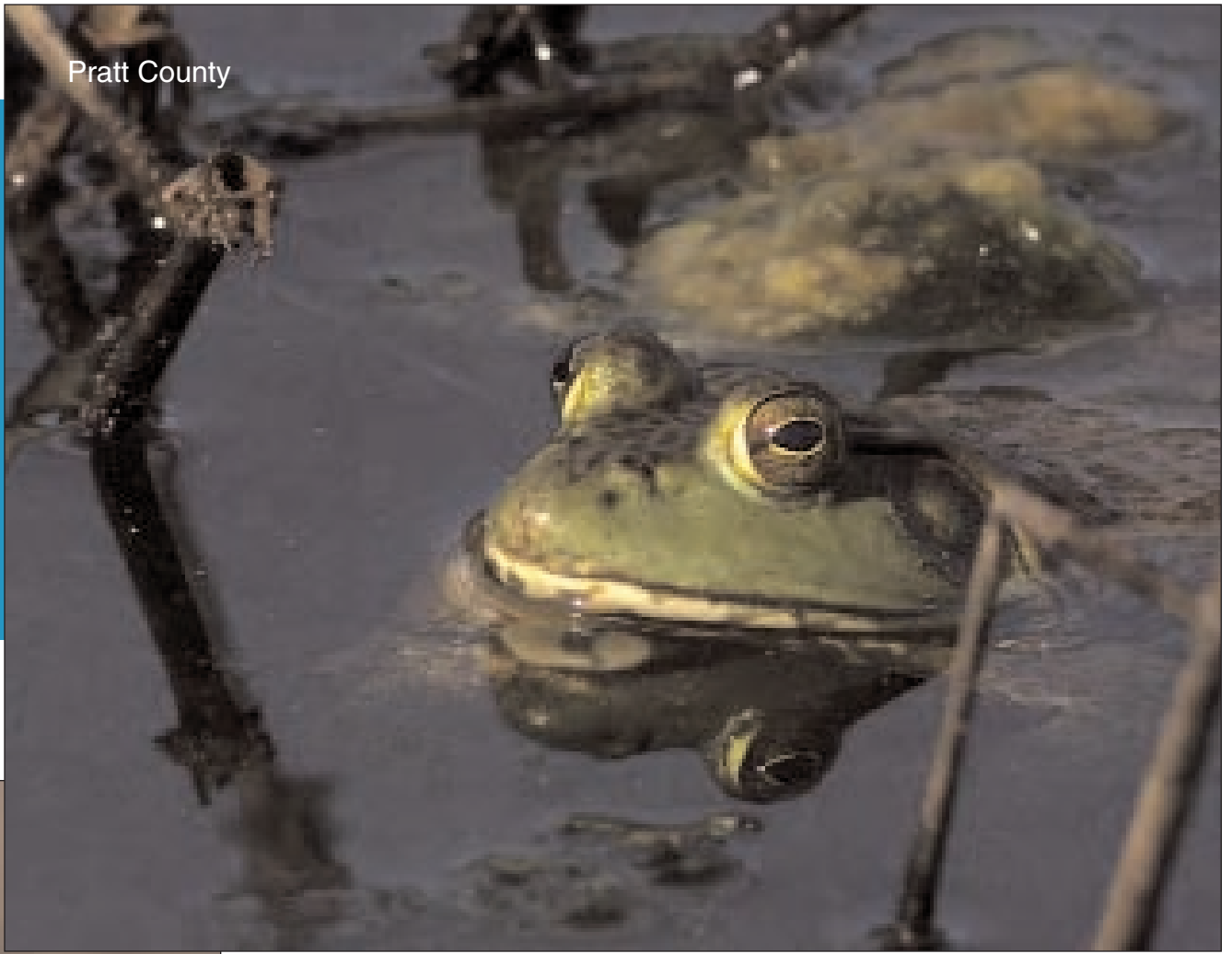


Pratt County

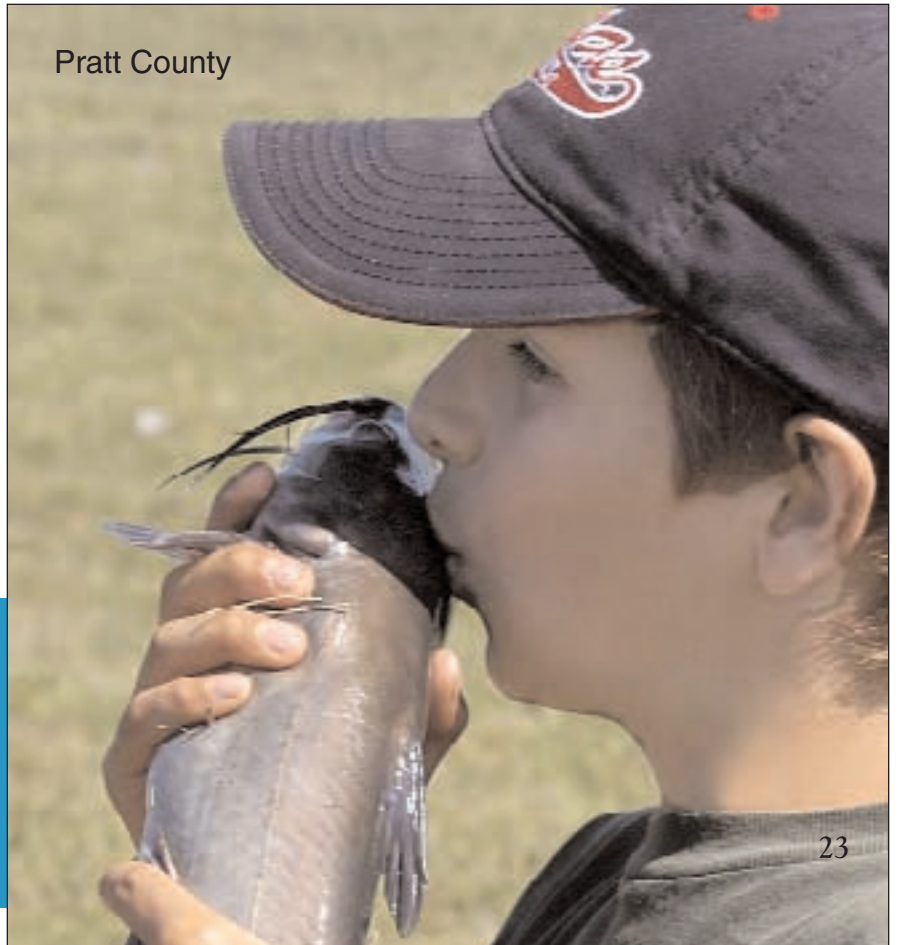


Barber County

Pratt County



Pratt County





Kingman County

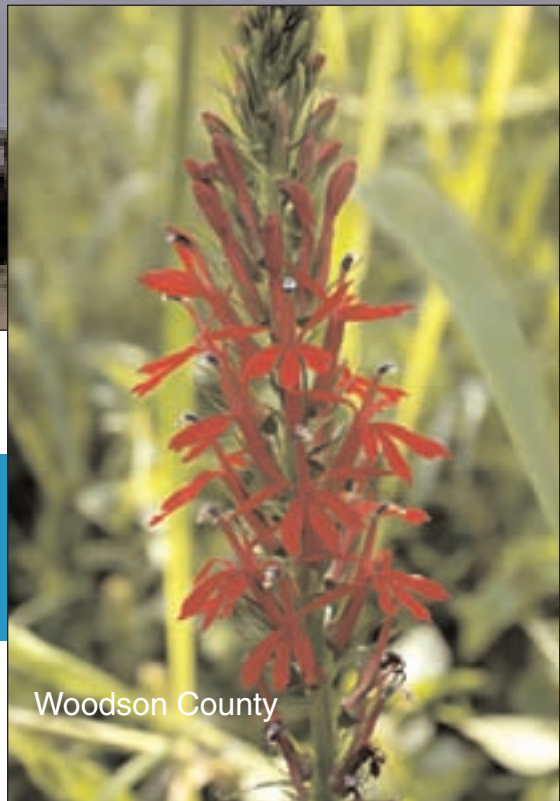
A DIGITAL SHUTTER IS QUIETER THAN THAT OF A CONVENTIONAL CAMERA. THIS OFTEN ALLOWS SEVERAL EXTRA SHOTS BEFORE ALARMING AN ANIMAL, AS IT DID WITH A BOBCAT THAT SNEAKED CLOSE WHILE I WAITED FOR DEER. AS ALWAYS, THE CAT WAS AN EXCITING DAYTIME SURPRISE.



Wallace County



Allen County



Woodson County

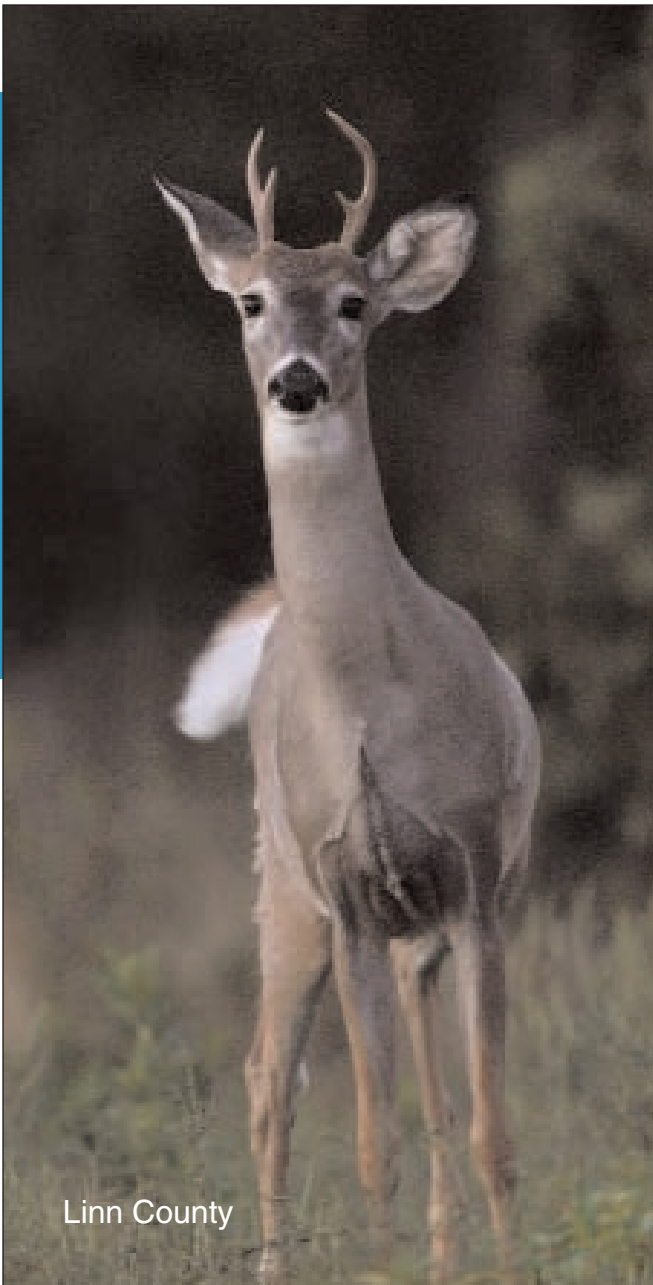
A GLORIOUS SUN
BURSTS THROUGH
A THUNDERSTORM
OVER THE
COMANCHE
COUNTY PRAIRE.
LIGHT REFLECTING
DOWN THE BARREL
OF A TELEPHOTO
LENS CAUSED A DIS-
TRACTING FLARE IN
THE LEFT-CENTER OF
THE IMAGE. I USED
PROCESSING SOFT-
WARE TO RESTORE
THE PICTURE TO
WHAT I ACTUALLY
SAW — A BREATH-
TAKING IMAGE
THAT LASTED ONLY
MOMENTS AND
BEGGED SHARING.







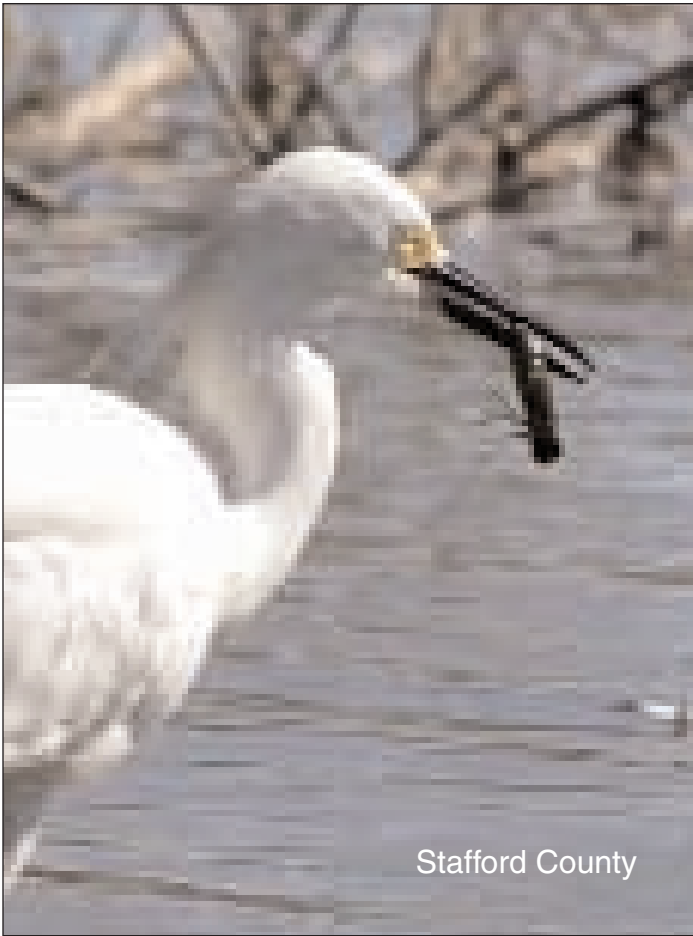
Pratt County



Linn County



Pratt County



Stafford County



Stafford County



Pratt County



Sedgwick County

Clark County





Barber County

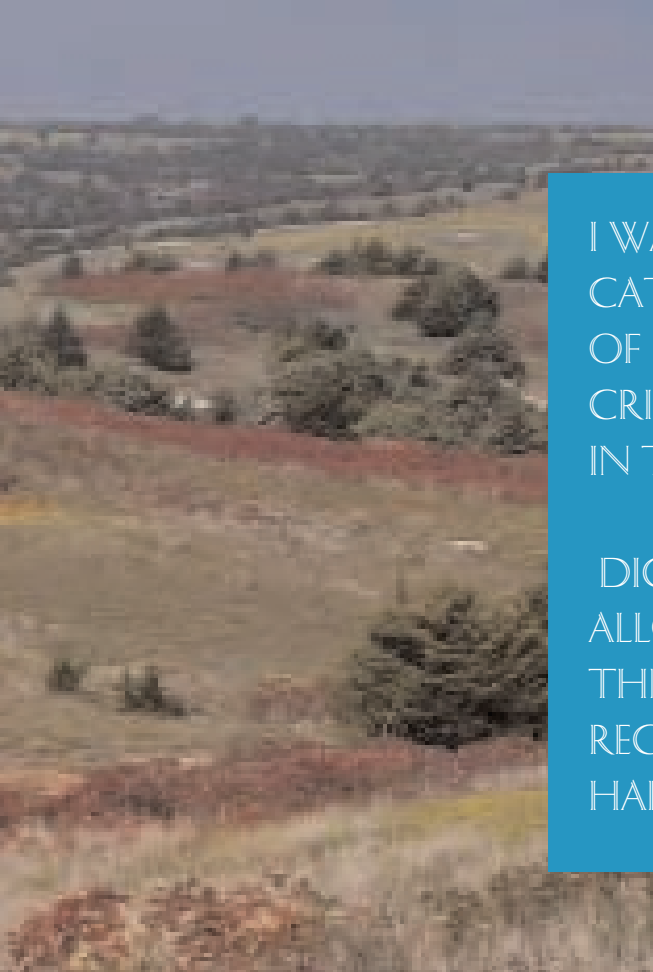




Barber County



Pratt County



I WAS TWO DAYS LATE TO CATCH THE ABSOLUTE PEAK OF SUMAC'S BRILLIANT CRIMSON NEAR MULE CREEK IN THE GYPSUM HILLS.

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY ALLOWED ME TO SATURATE THE COLOR SLIGHTLY, RECAPTURING WHAT TIME HAD TAKEN AWAY.



Barber County



Woodson County





Atchison County

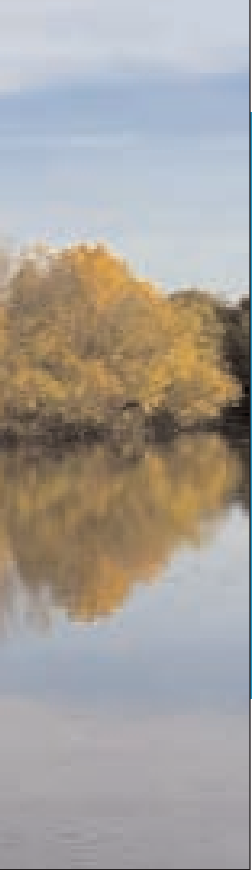


Kingman County

FOR LANDSCAPES AND SCENICS, A WIDE-ANGLE ZOOM LENS ON A DIGITAL CAMERA MAKES A COMPACT AND READY SYSTEM, EASY TO CARRY IN ANY SITUATION.

I WAS BASS FISHING A POND IN LATE EVENING WHEN THE WIND CALMED TO PERMIT A STUNNING OCTOBER REFLECTION. THE DIGITAL CAMERA PERMITTED A SPECIAL MEMORY OF THE GORGEOUS POND – EVEN THOUGH THE FISH WEREN'T HUNGRY.





Stafford County



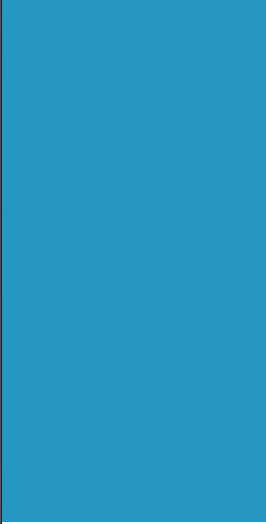
Doniphan County



Pratt County



Barber County



Linn County





Pratt County



Butler County

IMAGES?

THE DIGITAL AGE WILL HELP US MOVE FORWARD, CAPTURING THE BEST THAT KANSAS HAS TO OFFER. BUT THE FINEST REMAIN IN OUR MINDS AND HEARTS, SNAPSHOTS OF OUTDOOR EXPERIENCE IN EVERY SEASON.

WE AT KANSAS WILDLIFE & PARKS ENCOURAGE YOU TO LEARN FOR YOURSELF THE HIDDEN TREASURES OF OUR STATE. MAY YOUR YEAR BE RICH WITH DISCOVERIES.

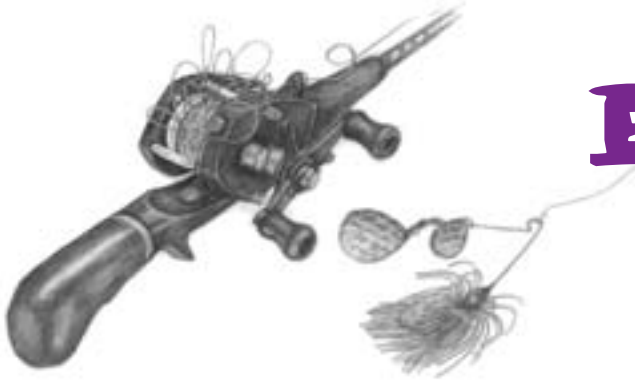
WE'LL DO OUR BEST TO HELP POINT THE WAY.



Woodson County



Barber County



Backlash

by Mike Miller

He Was Big When He Was Little

I can't believe it's been three years since my wife, Lisa, and I visited a litter of puppies, one of which was to become a member of our family. It seems much longer when I count the number of checks I've written for dog food.

Don't get me wrong, I love my lab. He retrieves the newspaper from the driveway each morning, as well as the few birds I manage to knock down each fall. But I didn't know labs got this big.

"Let's pick the biggest puppy," Lisa said. "A big lab would make a better watch dog."

The litter was sired by a good friend's dog, and I had pick. Our first visit was when the pups were four weeks old. One was a third bigger than the rest, and that's the one Lisa liked. Someone said that "Whiteout" would work to mark your pup, so I painted a white stripe on the back of his head.

Three weeks later, I couldn't find a Whiteout mark on any of the pups, but it didn't matter, one was a third bigger than the others. He also seemed the most interested in me. I put him on a blanket on the car seat beside me, and he slept contentedly without a single whimper on the two-hour drive home. Maybe he picked me.

In the next few days, we bonded, and I mean bonded. To this day, if I stop abruptly while walking through the house, a big back dog runs into the back of my knees. And there hasn't been one time I've walked out of the house since I first brought him home that he hasn't been sure he was going with me. It doesn't matter how many times I leave the house without him, he's always standing expectantly beside me at the door, knowing he's going this time. You have to like that attitude.

But he's my best friend at feeding time. He likes to eat three times a day – actually he'd every time I put food in his dish, but I limit him to breakfast, lunch, and supper. Lisa doesn't always follow the rules. He knows she'll feed him more if he stands by the dish with a forlorn look, and he does it often. I had to put a moratorium on supplemental feedings, but he's still plenty big.

I guess we got what we wished for. He was the biggest puppy and grew into his potential. Along the way, though,

I've learned some things that might help someone else who thinks they want a big lab.

First, a big dog eats like a big dog. I started feeding a quality food, thinking it would be healthier and more efficient, you know, less to clean up later. I don't know if it's either, but I do know it's more expensive, especially when you go through 30 pounds a month. I kind of hate to switch to a less expensive food at this point because I don't think my veterinarian has his new house paid for yet.

And be careful about the games and habits you start when your pup is little. One mistake I pay for now is making a game of drying off. When the big dog was a puppy, drying him off after a water training session was fun. He'd groan and lean into me while I wrestled him with a towel. He does the same thing now, and I usually have to rest afterward. And think twice before letting your cute puppy sit in your lap or sleep on the bed, unless you're willing to do the same 6 months and 75 pounds from now.

When you open a sliding screen door to let the big dog in or out, be sure to open it all the way on the first try. If for some reason, the door catches and only opens partway, the big dog will still go through. And believe me, an aluminum-frame screen door is no match for a big lab.

Other house pets will suffer, too. The big dog isn't mean. In fact, he likes the cat, and he shows his affection by putting her entire head in his mouth – gently. The cat, by the way, hates the big dog, and she especially hates it when he covers her head with slobber. Unfortunately, she can't do much about it. The old Brittany has learned to stay clear of the big dog but still gets bowled over from time to time, especially when they vie for my attention.

And finally, there is slobber – slimy, wet, drooling, saliva. Big labs are slobber factories. He shows affection by leaning against our legs, always swinging his head around, mouth open. It's been months since I've made it to work without a big chalky-white slobber smear on my pant legs.

Keep these tips in mind when you look at a litter of cute puppies and consider yourself warned. Be careful what you wish for, it might eat you out of house and home.

