KANSAS Wildlife & Parks

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On Point

by Mike Hayden

Tallgrass Treasure

The American tallgrass prairie once stretched from Canada to Texas and from Indiana to western Kansas. Today, less than 4 percent of the native tallgrass prairie is left and a significant portion of that is within the 11,000 acres of the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve. The National Park Service (NPS), in a unique partnership with the Kansas Park Trust and The Nature Conservancy (TNC), manages the Preserve, which is largely owned by the TNC. The NPS owns 32 acres, including the original ranch house and outbuilding. The Kansas Park Trust operates the bookstore and promotes tourism to the Flint Hills. However, the existing facilities at the Preserve are not conducive to reaching the public and sharing with them unique ecological, cultural, and historic stories of the Flint Hills.

The Spring Hill/Z-Bar Ranch house, built in 1881, and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, serves many purposes for which it simply is not suited. Offices are located on the second floor, while the bookstore takes up four rooms on the first floor. A theater area is housed in the unheated barn. Because it is a nationally listed historic house, there are limitations to how it can be used, such as not attaching anything to the walls. If a visitor's center was built the house could be fully restored.

Louise Carlin, Executive Director of the Kansas Park Trust, points out that there's not a room in the house large enough to accommodate even 20 people. Such limited space she says constrains how well the story of the Preserve, and the story of the Flint Hills, can be told. During busy times, the house becomes crowded and noisy, and it is difficult for the staff to provide interpretive services. From about May through October, visitor orientation is held in the barn. Only portable bathrooms are available.

The need for better public facilities was quite evident in June when the Preserve hosted the spectacular Symphony on the Prairie event. This unique performance by the Kansas City Symphony orchestra drew a sold-out crowd of more than 6,500 people, but the public facilities to handle such a crowd simply do not exist. The Symphony in the Flint Hills is actually a not-for-profit arts organization established to create a sustainable income source for the rural communities in the Flint Hills. The event is scheduled for Wabaunsee County in 2007 and will return to the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve every 3-5 years.

KANSAS FLINT HILLS
THE GRASSROOTS OF AMERICA

After the Kansas Park Trust formed in 2005, one of the priorities was to build a proper visitor's center on the property. The visitor center would be the initial stop for visitors to help them get oriented and plan their visit. The center would also serve as a staging area for tours, as well as housing the bookstore, theater, offices, and storage space.

A recent study by the NPS recommends that a visitor's center and administrative offices be located on 6 acres south of the ranch buildings, along the west side of State Highway 177. The center would include an information desk, exhibit space, small auditorium, bookstore, museum collections handling and storage area, and restrooms. Additionally, outdoor exhibit space, an amphitheater, and parking area are also planned.

The nature tourism-consulting group, Fermata, issued a study last year that cited several potential visitor access points within the Flint Hills but cited the development of a visitor's center at the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve as the most critical need.

The Kansas Park Trust is dedicated to enhancing visitor experiences at the Preserve. Building a visitor's center is a crucial step to fulfilling that mission. Governor Kathleen Sebelius, who has referred to the Flint Hills as a national treasure, has made preservation of the Flint Hills and development of the tourism potential there one of her priorities. Last year a group of tourism professionals from throughout the Flint Hills formed a Flint Hills Tourism Coalition, which is working to realize the tourism potential of the region. The Coalition is working closely with Fermata and the state Travel and Tourism Division. Providing a venue in which people can learn what the Tallgrass Prairie is all about is key to the region's success.

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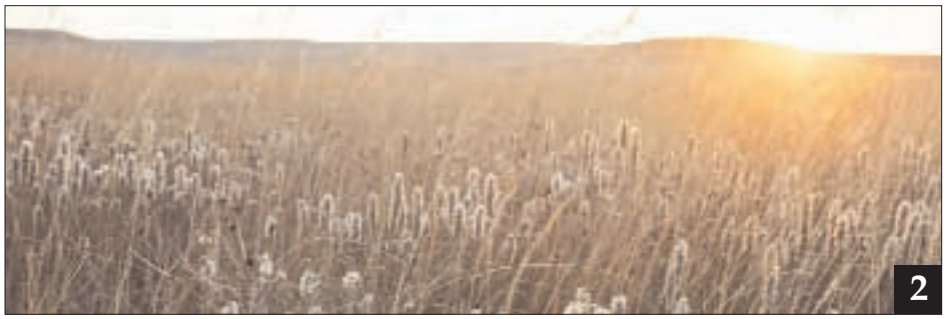

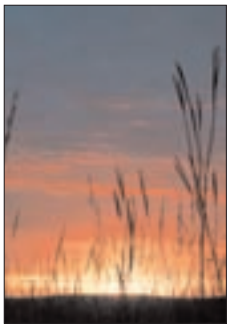

Front Cover: Grass and sky paint a beautiful fall scene in the flint hills. Mike Blair used a 40mm lens, f/6.3 @ 1/160th sec. **Back:** A velvet buck is captured at night on a trail camera as he heads for feed. Blair used a Cuddeback digital camera to capture the automatic image.

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

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Stalking The Season

by Marva L. Weigelt
Chase County

photos by Mike Blair
photographer/associate editor, Pratt

At first glance, autumn on the tallgrass prairie may seem a dull monochrome, but spend a little time in the prairie, walking, looking and listening and you'll see it much differently.

If spring on the Kansas prairies is an eye-catching announcement splashed across the hills in bright colors, then autumn is an understated invitation engraved in burnished gold and bronze. Spring is by far the showier affair, but for those who answer autumn's quiet overture, the grasslands open and unveil themselves in surprising ways. These subtle revelations are not visible at a distance; to witness them I must go out into the heart of the prairie and patiently stalk the season.

The shifting palette of colors is one of the earliest and most obvious signs of summer's departure. Although green becomes rarer and wildflowers cease their blooming, the prairie still stages a captivating performance. I occasionally lecture at some length to unfortunate souls who dismissively comment that the cool-season grasslands are "all one color." Nonsense! To perceive the nuance of hue in the cooler months requires an adjustment in focus and expectation. "What you see is what you get" is not an apology—it is a challenge.

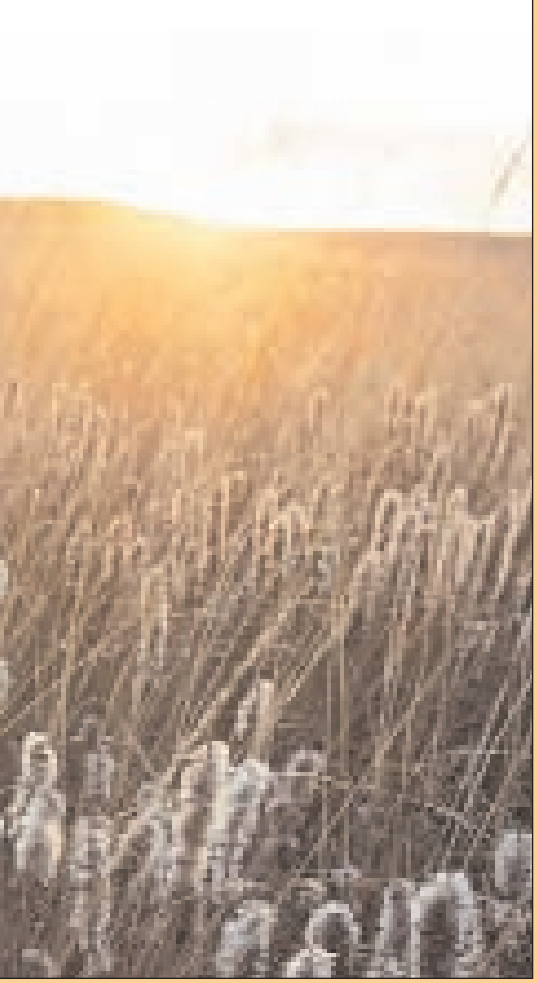
In response to autumn's beckoning, my dog and I go exploring in the crimson and amber native grasses: big and little bluestem, switchgrass, Indiangrass, tall dropseed, purple lovegrass and sideoats grama. When I stop to listen, I hear rustling and whispers, inklings of hidden villages and industries under the grass, of messengers running mysterious errands and reporting important news across thousands of acres through a lively network of invisible connections.

My dog uncovers clues I wish I could follow. With her excellent nose, she can read tiny memos scribbled in the shorthand of scent by badgers, coyotes, deer, jack rabbits and raccoons. On crisp, blue days, she is incapable of containing her enthusiasm; it expresses itself in huffs and snorts, bursts and bounds, leaps and lollops. She runs her figure eights and her big round Os, all trails leading to enchanting discoveries that largely escape my notice.

I soon fall far behind, inclined as I am toward gentle meandering punctuated by frequent commas and semi-colons. I stop and stoop, pick up a tiny volume for study, put it back in its proper place in the prairie reference library, or return it to whichever wind delivered it. To the north wind, I give back the stunning black husks of wild indigo and the footloose ticklegrass, preferably before it can get down my overalls and demonstrate the aptness of its name. Burrs and seeds hitch a ride with me in socks, cuffs, and pockets whether I like it or not. I am an inadvertent courier ferrying seed stock from here to there in my ramblings.

Other prairie treasures invariably make their way home with me. I cannot resist the beauty and intricacy of antlers, skulls, bones and teeth, not to mention turtle shells, snakeskins, feathers, seedpods and empty cocoons. These exhibits, on loan to me from the natural world, are pieces I study and sort, trying to discover how they interlock in the complex puzzle of a rare and enduring ecosystem.

The rocks I tend to leave where I find them, having carried home more than my share already and also having rubbed shoulders with a wise person who pointed out gently that rocks lose much of their ability to speak cogently when removed from their context, just as a page ripped from a book makes little sense without the rest of the story. On my walks, I often stop to rest on a slab of limestone for



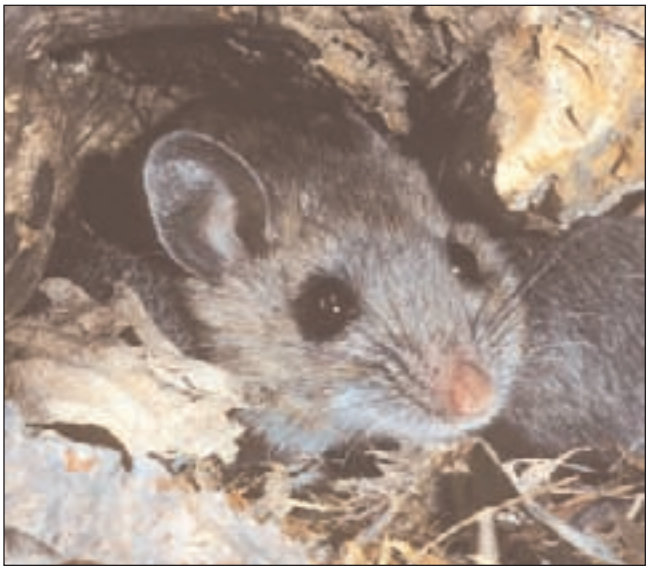
perspective. What is an hour or even a century to a 250-million-year-old, fossil-crammed rock from the bottom of the ancient Permian Sea?

The ever-so-educational scat of mouse, wild turkey, coyote, bobcat and deer I also leave in place for obvious reasons. Only the most elementary reckoning is necessary to reveal that these acres of autumn prairie are far busier than they appear at first glance.

Mice, by the way, may seem a tiny topic in the prairie library, but good grief, they are everywhere! Harvest and deer mice weigh less than an ounce, but compensate for their diminutive size by being clever and resourceful. These are the very qualities, of course, that also make them a bloody nuisance. Still, I cannot help admiring them and noting their passage here and there—a cache of seeds in the cleft of a rock, little nibble marks on the tips of cast-off deer antlers.

Futile as it may be, I also make a habit of chasing this season's marvelous light with my camera. Rarely does the lens capture the mysterious quality of light that my eye so readily apprehends, for a camera lacks the unique filter of accumulated memories from nearly half a century of Octobers spent wandering and interacting with nature in this flattering light.

What is it about the quality of light in autumn? The angle of the sun is more oblique and yet it suffuses the landscape with intense radiance. The sun is more a warm friend than a hot-tempered despot—it goes to bed earlier, gets up later and is apt to appear at the back door in time for my second cup of coffee instead of the first. Across the grass on afternoon rambles, I throw a dark and sturdy duplicate of myself. If I walk south, I catch an over-the-shoulder glimpse of my own shadow stalking me. That proportion of shadow to light sends a silent signal straight to my mammalian brain: gather and store, for winter is tripping on autumn's heels.



This arousal of an ancient seasonal instinct fills me with a sense of purpose. I methodically and enthusiastically attack the household tasks of inventorying, stocking and winterizing. As days grow shorter and cooler, my appetite changes as well. I find myself thumbing through recipes for hearty casseroles, sustaining stews and crusty bread. I realize, too, that the time has come to exchange lighter-weight clothing for long-sleeved shirts, warm sweaters and a flannel-lined jacket.

Here and there on the prairie, I begin to notice signs that other grassland residents are also responding to a clear inner command to prepare for the seasonal change. In mud bank, den and burrow, under leaves, rocks and water, a bustle of activity precedes winter's arrival. If I am patient and persistent, my explorations reward me with brief and thrilling glimpses into some of my wild neighbors' ingenious methods for survival.

The infamous pack rat—more properly known as an Eastern wood rat—is the architect of impressively snug and elaborate nests stockpiled with leaves, seeds, bark, nuts and dried mushrooms for sustenance, as well as stolen nuts and bolts, fragments of glass and strands of wire, presumably for winter entertainment. At this

time of year, the illusive prairie vole is diligently harvesting grasses, forbs, seeds, roots and rhizomes to store in its subterranean cupboards. The vole avoids its long list of predators by working the nightshift and hiding in its roomy underground residence by day. The only visible clue to the vole's whereabouts is a series of intricate grass tunnels fanning out in all directions from the nest's entrance. The pack rat and vole join many other grassland mammals in obeying the annual impulse to fortify nests, accumulate food and build up protective layers of fat and fur to guard against the coming cold.

Prairie king snakes, box turtles and Great Plains skinks find themselves in stiff competition with other reptile and amphibian residents searching for suitable underground real estate in which to hole up for winter naps of varying depth and duration. In the same frame of mind are mammalian hibernators such as woodchucks, thirteen-lined ground squirrels and skunks. When I spy the entrances to dens and burrows, I marvel at all the hidden habitation so close beneath my feet.

The grasses and forbs go underground in a slightly different way. They close their photosynthesis factories and allow diminishing stores of energy to drop down to their roots, safely stowed out of winter's icy

reach in wait for a more hospitable time.

Below the surface in ponds and creeks, dragonfly nymphs and bullfrog tadpoles keep uneasy company with fish, beavers and other aquatic residents, many of whom perceive the tender youngsters as snacks in their cold-season pantry. Winter is an annual game of chance that all prairie residents must play and that a fair number will lose.

For some, autumn heralds the passing of an entire generation. Lappet moths and most kinds of grasshoppers are among insects that die at this time of year, leaving behind a legacy of eggs to carry on the family traditions when they hatch in spring. If I take the time to focus my eyes and attention to the level of small details, the quantity of insect egg cases I find secured on twigs, hidden under rocks, or tucked away under the soil utterly amazes me.

Many birds outwit the cold by flying south for winter. That works, if you can swing it. In fact, a simple form of bird economics provides the basis for migratory decision-making, a calculation that factors in the availability of suitable food and the energy cost of a round-trip flight. Bottom line: the insect and fruit eaters tend to migrate south, while the seed and meat eaters overwinter on the prairie.

Barn swallows fly about 600 miles a day on their trip to warmer climes in Brazil, Bolivia, and Argentina. The round trip can be as much as 14,000 miles, an astonishing distance for a seven-inch bird of less than an ounce. Upland sandpipers winter in some of the same locations. I wonder if they ever run into a barn swallow down there and say, "Hey, you look familiar. Do you summer in Kansas?"

The dickcissel—a small, yellow-vested bird that incessantly repeats its own name—

travels only as far south as Venezuela. Like most songbirds, dickcissels migrate predominantly at night. Is there some kind of an air traffic-control system for migrating birds? Are there flight plans, flight numbers, estimated times of arrival? Each fall I watch for these departures and wonder at the superb engineering of instinct. Somewhere else, south of here, the air is teeming with birds, citizens of the world without need of a passport or map.

The natural world seems roomier when many of the prairie's wild residents vacate the visible part of the landscape. Even our already-spacious Kansas skies appear to expand—without birds and foliage to provide a sense of scale, there seems to be more distance between horizons. This inviting openness entices me, and each time I wander across the hills or down to the creeks and ponds, I notice more evidence of the season's passage.

One change I always sense, but am often surprisingly slow to identify, is that the prairie becomes progressively quieter as light and warmth diminish. The grassland congregation must do without a choir until spring, for the soprano meadowlarks, the alto bobwhites, the tenor prairie mole crickets and the bass bullfrogs have all ceased their chorus, leaving a profoundly receptive silence into which the hunting red-tailed hawk's cry pierces only occasionally—a more striking solo for its rarity.

The whetstone of the waning season gradually sharpens the edges of autumn days. Nights and mornings are serrated with cold and frost, an incremental introduction to the icy knife of winter to come. I anticipate this next turn in the wheel of the year, for winter is a time to rest, a time to slowly digest and be nourished by the ideas devoured in haste during the busy growing season, a time to balance accounts and make plans for next year.

For now, in the bright and bracing days of autumn, my prairie walks enable me to retune my brain to the pitch of the changing light so that I remain in harmony with the natural cycles of the earth. Deep in my body is a repository of accumulated instinct that woos me—always—back to the wisdom of the land, back to the prairie paths along which I patiently stalk the season.

Under The Bridge

text and photos by Dave Crook
Wichita

Learning what lives in the river can tell us about the health of that river. It's amazing what a seine and a little electricity can turn up in the Ark River just outside of Wichita.

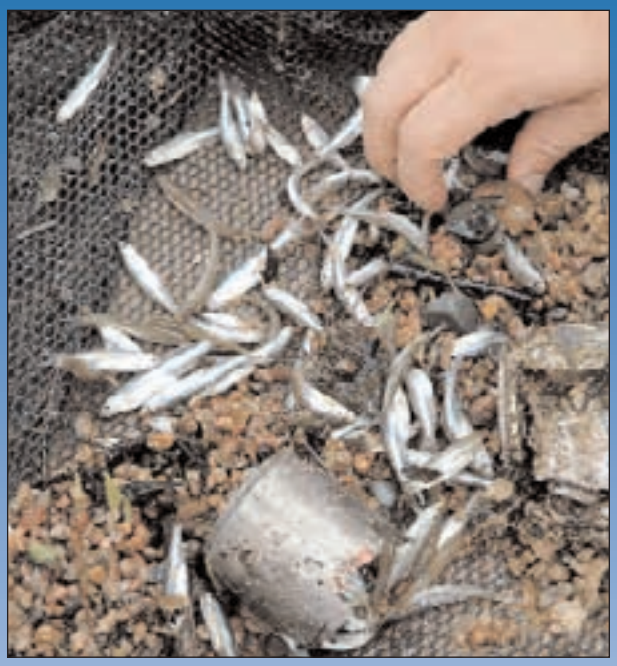
The quality of Kansas's rivers requires that we care for and about them. It requires an appreciation for the balance we strike with the living things in those rivers. Maybe that appreciation starts with an awareness of the life that exists right under a bridge near you.

Vaughn Weaver, environmental water quality specialist for the city of Wichita, introduces himself and shakes my hand, "I brought the waders, you need a size 13, right?" He digs in the gray-blue Wichita Water and Sewer Department van for a set of chest waders and hauls them out, "tried to patch these a little," he says, "you'll probably still get some water inside, but that's pretty much normal, everybody will end up wet." I have volunteered to help with a fish count, and the waders will keep me warm in the mid-spring water and offer protection from the variety of stuff on the bottom of the Arkansas River. Weaver explains that the waders are mainly electrical insulation. We will be towing a small rectangular boat holding a gas-powered generator, the boat has a large metal plate welded underneath it. Through long black lines attached to anode and cathode outlets inside the boat, the generator is linked to two long yellow poles with quick-release power cut-off switches, the poles ending in metal loops. Someone offers "a cat is a positive animal, so the cathode is the positive side, right?" The generator, these loop-ended poles, and the metal plate on the bottom of the boat conspire to create a fish stunning electric field.

The purpose of this outing is to temporarily stun fish, count them by species, measure and weigh them, and release them.

This is done to check the fish populations as indicators of the water and habitat quality of the river.

It is the "fishing" crew's job to net the stunned fish and deposit them into a container on the boat. Weaver tells me, "Safety is the most important thing, if you slip or dip your elbows into the water, give a shout and we'll cut the power so you don't get a shock" he adds, " remember, collecting small fish is just as important to me as the big ones."



Small fish captured in a seine are meticulously examined for identification.

I am introduced to Kansas Wildlife and Parks biologists Ryan Waters, Nate Davis, Jessica Mounts, and artist Dustin Teasley. We have the crew minimum of six, and lug the heavy generator burdened boat down a steep dirt slope strewn with broken concrete slabs.

We head for the first channel that will float our weighty boat. Weaver decides that we will work along the east bank of the Arkansas. The river is running with a stronger current than I had imagined, my boots fill with water immediately, and I'm plunging gracelessly, side-on to the current, headed for the opposite bank. The bottom naturally offers footing which is soft, firm, mushy and all grades in-between making remaining upright a challenge, and even more challenging when combined with rocks, gravel, limb snags, and all those items people threw in the river to see them make a splash.

We fan out, perpendicular to the east bank and push north against the current, the generator pitch lowers as the switches on the poles are turned on, and we're "fishing." Weaver is in harness, pulling the generator boat, holding a shocking wand, and manning a net; no one else has as much to horse up river. Shocked fish roll, jump, or swim spasmodically and we net and place them in the water-filled cooler on the boat. Today's "fishing" is sporadic, no fish, a few fish, and then lots of fish all at once. Weaver says we are probably driving them ahead of us until they reach a small inlet or curve in the bank that acts to corral them, and then we have plenty of netting to do. Davis, walking beside me, names the fish for me, explaining some of the identifiers which differentiate species.

Stream fisheries biologist Ryan Waters concentrates to identify the dozens of different species that may be collected from a Kansas stream.

"One identifier isn't enough, one characteristic won't usually get you very far, fish change color in a life-span or with the seasons, so you need several points to be sure."

He shows me various fin and lip structures, scales, whiskers, all positive indicators of fish types. Davis mentions that Waters, "who's seen and identified a million fish," still sees specimens he is uncertain about.

Vaughn shows me a fish and over the drone of the generator says, "If you get one of these, release it off to the side of our path or behind us, don't put it in the boat, this is a silver chub and has been suggested for the

endangered list."

The silver chub is endangered because its life cycle has been disrupted. Davis explains, "The big disruptors of fish population have historically been dams and impoundments, which cause the rhythms of fish, their spawning and their ability to move to more favorable habitats up and down rivers, to be blocked." I trudge, slip and wallow toward the bridge feeling like I have 20 pounds of water in each boot. I have a full net and depositing it in the boat I feel mild to moderate electrical shocks in my legs.

I learn to stay as far back from the boat as possible while dumping the net, and decide to find some dry chest-waders as soon as possible. We stop and off-load the full tub, transferring the big fish from the boat into wire baskets staked to the river bottom by steel rebar poles. We drop the smaller fish into a floating square of white plastic pipe lined with fine netting. After another pass against the current, this time up the middle of the river, it's time to seine.

The black seining net has lead weights along its bottom and cork floats on the top. Two blue poles on either end allow it to be dragged with the current. I thought we would go into the current, assuming that the current would deposit fish into the net.

Waters anticipates the question, " Most people wonder why we seine downstream, but think about it, have you ever poured minnows from one container into another, which way do they swim?"

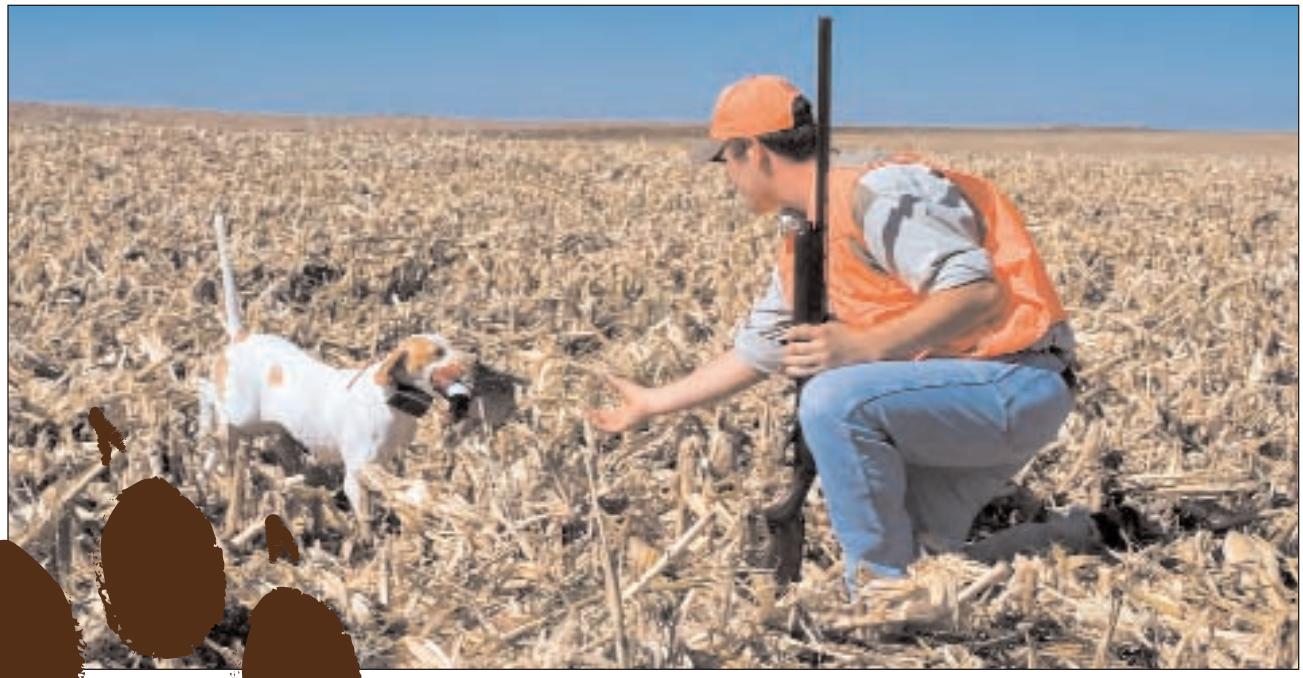
Seining produces dozens of small fish, minnows, and several ounces of gravel and flotsam from the bottom. Although it seems to me that we have collected a lot of fish, the biologists say that this is a day that has produced low collection numbers, and Weaver believes that seasonality is the cause, because it's spring, he is not concerned.

After lunch, which I find to be a very nice break from the hard river work, we trudge back into the river and out to the wire baskets and small fish holders. Time to begin to gather data. Weaver looks for volunteers to handle the fish, measure them, and weigh them. Waters will handle the identification of the smaller fish, and he moves off a few yards from the main group to concentrate on that task. He carries a glass jar of formalin solution, to preserve "voucher specimens" proving that we have collected these fish at this spot.

The count of the bigger fish is a combination of wrestling match and recapture. The big fish can be hard to hold, squirming and flapping, using all their survival instincts. Covering their eyes and bending them slightly, are methods of calming them down, sometimes these techniques actually work. As the fish species is identified and their measurement and weight relayed to Weaver, he fills out the data sheets, "carpsucker, flathead catfish, channel catfish, black buffalo, grass carp, longnose gar, shortnose gar, gizzard shad, wiper, drum, quillback." Each fish is released and another begins the process. We finish the report by measuring the salinity of the water and its oxygen content. We pack up the instruments, bottles, baskets, plastic floats, and steel poles, while Weaver takes a few pictures.

Wading in the water, moving toward the van, Vaughn says, " You know, it's just amazing, but lots of people don't think there is anything in this river…"

The silver chub is a species on the Threatened and Endangered list and all captured are immediately released. They are a good indicator of stream health.



Mike Blair photo

Dog's Best Friend

Nothing can make a hunt more satisfying than a good dog. However, most good dogs are the result of a good trainer.

by J. Mark Shoup
associate editor, Pratt

We've all heard the old saw that a dog is a man's best friend, and if you've got a good dog, this is no cliché. However, if you've got a "bad" dog, life can be miserable, particularly for the hunter. Hunts can be ruined, and a promising companionship can chill into a stalemate of distrust.

So how do you get a "good" dog? Much emphasis has been put on knowing how to pick the right pup from a litter, and there is some truth to this although it is much more art than science. Generally, if you buy a dog from a long line of well-bred field dogs, your odds of getting a good hunting dog go up. Another rule of thumb commonly used is to pick the pup in the "middle" of the litter regarding temperament.

None of these rules guarantee success. A dog from a litter with top pedigree may be a bust, and the runt in your neighbor's one-time breeding experiment may turn out to be the best dog you ever had. Much like people, it's hard to predict what pups will be like when they grow up.

So what's a hunter to do if he wants to maximize the odds of having a good dog? The answer may be found in a word — training. A dog well-trained can turn an average hunt into a transcendent experience.

And that brings us to the enigmatic title of this article; a dog's best friend is its trainer; or can be. The first question a new dog owner needs to ask is, "Do I train it myself, or do I hire a trainer?" It takes a great deal of time, patience, equipment, live birds, training

space, and knowledge to train a dog. Some people can pull this off. But for most of us, busy lives make the dream of training our own dog unrealistic.

I recommend giving any new pup the benefit of a good trainer. Licensed professional trainers have the grounds, live birds, knowledge, and equipment necessary to get your dog started and help you continue training correctly. Find a good trainer by visiting several. Look for a good rapport between trainer and dog. It's important that a trainer be even-tempered but firm, in command of both dogs and his own emotions, and understand and love dogs deeply.

Mike Blair photo

Every puppy holds promise, but the the fun and joy of a puppy can soon be replaced with the frustration of training for those who lack the time, skill or patience.

Following my own advice in July of 2005, I bought a golden retriever pup from a local litter. I tried the "middle pup" approach, and I think it worked fairly well. Fortunately, I found an experienced, talented dog trainer by the name of Tony Zimmerman, who owns Pheasant Farms Gun Dogs in Pratt. I called Zimmerman and told him about my purchase and asked if he would train her.

He asked that I bring her out when she was about three months old, so he could take a look at her. When we piled out of my pickup, Zimmerman quickly began sizing up my pup, Ruby, and I quickly began sizing up Zimmerman. He is a big man with a confident, deep voice and gentle, even manner. He stroked Ruby and rubbed her head between his big palms, roughhoused with her a little, and looked at her from every angle. She took to him immediately, and it was easy to see the natural rapport I was looking for. I was sold.

"Yeah," he said, "I think this will make a good little pup. Bring her back to me when her adult teeth come in, and we'll get started." In the meantime, he told me to play with her a lot, throw a ball or anything that she would retrieve. Mainly, he said to keep things light. If I wanted to work with her on a lead, I was to keep sessions short and quit when she began to lose interest. He did not, however, encourage me to try to train her myself at that point, so I kept our time together primarily playful, walking and throwing a ball.

Mark Shoup photo

Many dog owners choose professional trainers to get their dogs started right.

At about eight months, Ruby had all her adult teeth, and she was ready for two months boarding and training at Zimmerman's place in the country. Two months later, I picked up a well-trained young dog that would come, sit (stay), heel, and retrieve. She had retrieved birds over a shotgun, was not the slightest gun-shy, and was beginning to learn hand signals. This was December, and I was to bring her back to finish up in mid-summer of 2006. (Not done as of this writing.) I brought home a wonderful, obedient pet that responded to my commands as well as she did Zimmerman's, and my family has enjoyed her since.

A recent visit to Pheasant Farms Gun Dogs revealed the reasons for Zimmerman's suc-

cess. Perhaps the first factors that shouldn't be overlooked are equipment and facilities. Zimmerman currently has 30 modern kennels (although he is never training more than 15 dogs at any one time) mounted on concrete pads. Troughs line these pads, allowing him to wash the kennels easily, draining waste down the channels into a sewage lagoon. Zimmerman is a stickler for cleanliness, and his kennels are cleaned frequently, 24-7.

He buys and sells dogs, owning five to 15 dogs at any given time, and he boards 12 to 15 dogs year-round. He trains dogs from all over the United States, both pointers and retrievers. A licensed trainer and boarding kennel owner, he is also skilled in dealing with minor emergencies, such as cuts and other wounds that he can treat and stitch. Every day, he is out with his dogs at 7 a.m.

The sight of a dog locked on point quickens the hunter's heart. A well-trained dog puts more birds in the bag and makes every hunt more enjoyable.

On this particular morning, he had eight dogs, all black Labs in his mobile kennel. We drove to a pasture where he let them out two at a time just to run, so they would be calm before class began. He drove his ATV down a draw and up the other side, placing dummies at various intervals approximately 200 yards away in preparation for blind retrieves.

When he returned, class was in session for what Zimmerman calls his "almost finished" dogs. One at a time, he released a dog from its box, brought it to heel, pointed a line, and sent the dog to retrieve a specific dummy. Because the dogs had to run into the wind and downhill then uphill, their natural tendency was to angle away from the line. The instant this happened, a sharp whistle from Zimmerman stopped them in their tracks, and they sat and looked to him for direction. A left hand up meant they needed to angle away and to the left. A right had up meant the opposite. Each dog responded perfectly, some having to stop more often than others. It was a joy to watch.

Zimmerman is careful not to overwork his dogs, and on this exercise, each dog made only two or three retrieves, a process he repeats morning and evening three times a week at this stage of training. "How much I work them just depends on the temperament of the dog," he explains, "but I always like to end a session on a positive note. I never work a dog too long at one time. If a dog is giving me a hard time, sometimes I'll just end the session and start over later. As a rule, you're better off to stop early than to continue when that happens. And I try to never lose my temper. You lose your temper and you've lost the game."

With this philosophy in mind, Zimmerman released a three-month-old, very expensive pup and just played fetch with the her for a few minutes. Then he got out his shotgun, threw a frozen duck carcass, and shot in the air. The pup retrieved it, and he threw it two more times, shooting in the air each time. The session was over after three successful retrieves. Playful retrieving, just enough for a few successful

Mark Shoup photos

Professional trainer Tony Zimmerman puts a young Black Lab through a training exercise during one of his morning sessions.

retrieves, is an integral part of a dog's stay with Zimmerman (at least one month, usually more) from the beginning.

Not every session goes so smoothly, of course, especially early in the dog's training. But patience is the key. His dogs always wear shock collars, but he uses them sparingly and only in short taps to get their attention, never for punishment. "I never get onto a dog for making a mistake," Zimmerman says. "But I will get onto them if they don't try." Punishment, however, does not involve hitting or misusing a shock collar. If a dog is not trying or deliberately disobeying, Zimmerman will stop the dog, grab its neck with both hands, and shake it sternly, forcing the dog to look into his eyes and hold his gaze.

Dogs don't get to the level of performance described here in just a few days, however. In fact, Zimmerman often starts working with dogs at the obedience level. The first thing in this process involves breaking a dog to a lead, and Zimmerman uses the "chain gang" method. The chain gang is a 30-foot chain laid straight on the ground and anchored firmly at both ends. A intervals of about 6 feet, 2-foot chains with snaps on each end are attached to the longer chain. A few pups are chained to the shorter chains — just far enough away that they can't get to each other — and left to their own devices while Zimmerman works with other dogs and does chores around the nearby kennels, never out of sight of the chain gang. The pups naturally fight the chains and howl their disapproval as they jump at one another and tug against the restraint. Like magic, after about an hour a day for several days, the dogs learn to accept this restraint without associating the experience with the trainer. Walking to the trainer's lead then becomes an easy pill to swallow compared to the lonesome chain gang.

The "chain gang" is a method used to teach pups to take a lead without associating the trainer with the restraint. After a short time on the lead, a leash is easily accepted.

After a dog is trained to a lead, it is trained to heel. Then it learns to respond to the commands "here" and "sit" (with Zimmerman's technique also means "stay"), as well as to sit on a whistle and come on a whistle. Every few days, they get to retrieve birds. Hand signals and blind retrieves come later. (A blind retrieve is when the dog doesn't see where the bird lands and relies on the trainer's commands to find it.) No session lasts more than 15 minutes. Not all trainers use this exact method, but it works for him. "I use everybody's way of doing things," he explains. "There are a lot of styles out there, and I pull from them all."

Once the dog is trained to a lead, will sit and stay, and will heel, it is "force broke" — taught to fetch and hold a dummy until it is commanded to release it. To accomplish this, Zimmerman uses a table about 4 feet high, 30

Mark Shoup photos

When looking for a trainer, ask to see the kennels where your dog will be housed. They should be secure, provide shelter from rain and sun and they should be clean.

inches wide, and 6 feet long. A cable is attached to a post at each end, and a pulley on the cable is attached to a very short lead, allowing the trainer complete control of the dog. A dog is required to pick up and hold a dummy. If the dog drops the dummy before commanded, it receives a mild pinch on the ear. Force-breaking sessions last no longer than 10 or 15 minutes.

"This is the only part of training the dog just doesn't like," Zimmerman says, "but it's essential, and it usually doesn't take very long. The table is a great tool."

Learning hand signals takes some time, depending on the dog's temperament and intelligence. Zimmerman uses a game called "baseball" to begin this training. Dummies are placed at first base, second base and third base. Zimmerman sits the dog at the pitcher's mound, facing home plate. He then moves to home plate, faces the dog, and raises his left hand up and to the left and commands "over" for a third-base retrieve, his right hand up and to the right and commands "over" for a first-base retrieve, and his right hand straight up with the command "back" for a second-base retrieve. Dogs enjoy the game and learn quickly if they have the right stuff.


Mike Blair photo

The culmination of good training and time in the field.

Zimmerman will take a dog as far as his owner wishes through these training stages, but his philosophy is always patience and variety. "I don't make it a long grind for the dogs," he explains. "It only takes a few minutes a day, but the worst thing you can do is to do the same thing every day. Some guys don't have the time or patience to take their dogs very far, but if they want more than they can give their dogs, they should take them to someone who can."

I chose Zimmerman because I liked his attitude toward dogs and their owners. "I just love dogs," he said matter-of-factly. "And I enjoy it more than anything when guys call me and tell me how well their dogs did in the field. That is just awesome."

This is just an overview of dog training, but it should provide a glimpse of what is involved. Now go out and get that pup, but be sure to cross-examine yourself before deciding whether to train it or hire a professional. You've committed to a 10- to 14-year relationship. Good training will make your hunts a joy, and both you and your dog will have a new best friend.

Tips From Tony

At what age should I pick up my pup?

Trainers used to think that 49 days — seven weeks — was the magic number, but now many think 10 to 12 weeks is better. I think anywhere from seven to 10 weeks is fine.

Can you train an older dog?

"You can, but some of the training won't be as smooth or take as well because you have to change behavior that is already set. Some dogs really resent this, but some are better than others."

What breeds do you prefer?

"I like any breed of sporting dog that's talented, but my personal preference is for Labs and English pointers."

Is there a difference between training male and female dogs?

"Females can be easier to train. Males can be a little head-strong, but that's not an absolute either way. I personally always liked females. But the best companion if you're not going to breed is a neutered dog, whether it's male or female."

How much should I expect to invest in good training?

"Most professionals charge $350 to $700 a month for boarding, care, and training, so it just depends on how far you want to take the dog's talent, and how talented that dog is. The high end could be endless, but the low end would be $500 to $600. To train a good dog to hand signals will cost at least $1,200."

85 Million Years Ago!

Monster Wildlife of Kansas

by Ken Brunson
wildlife diversity coordinator, Pratt

photos by Mike Blair

Once covered by an immense ocean, parts of Kansas hold mysterious secrets in the form of ancient fossils.

There are fossil whisperers. For some rock hounds, the graveyard of the very distant past seems to call to them –. "I am here,. I am here." And the fossil whisperer hears. Whether following them around like a Lab puppy or reading about their exploits in old journals, I find them fascinating. Of course, one eventually realizes that the knack for fossil finding is mostly an acquired skill — refined by thousands of back-breaking hours scouring geologic formations for the slightest irregularities. Just like trying to find morels, points or sheds, you develop skill by doing.

George F. Sternberg was a fossil whisperer. So was his uncle and namesake, Dr. George M. Sternberg, his two brothers, and his dad, Charles H. Sternberg. The Sternbergs searched much of the western United States and Canada for many kinds of fossils, including dinosaur bones. The Sternberg Museum of Natural History at Hays stands as testament to George's lifelong "hobby job." It houses many of the fossils of ancient fish, reptiles, pteranodons, birds, and invertebrates that George and his family uncovered in the world famous Niobrara Chalk of Western Kansas.

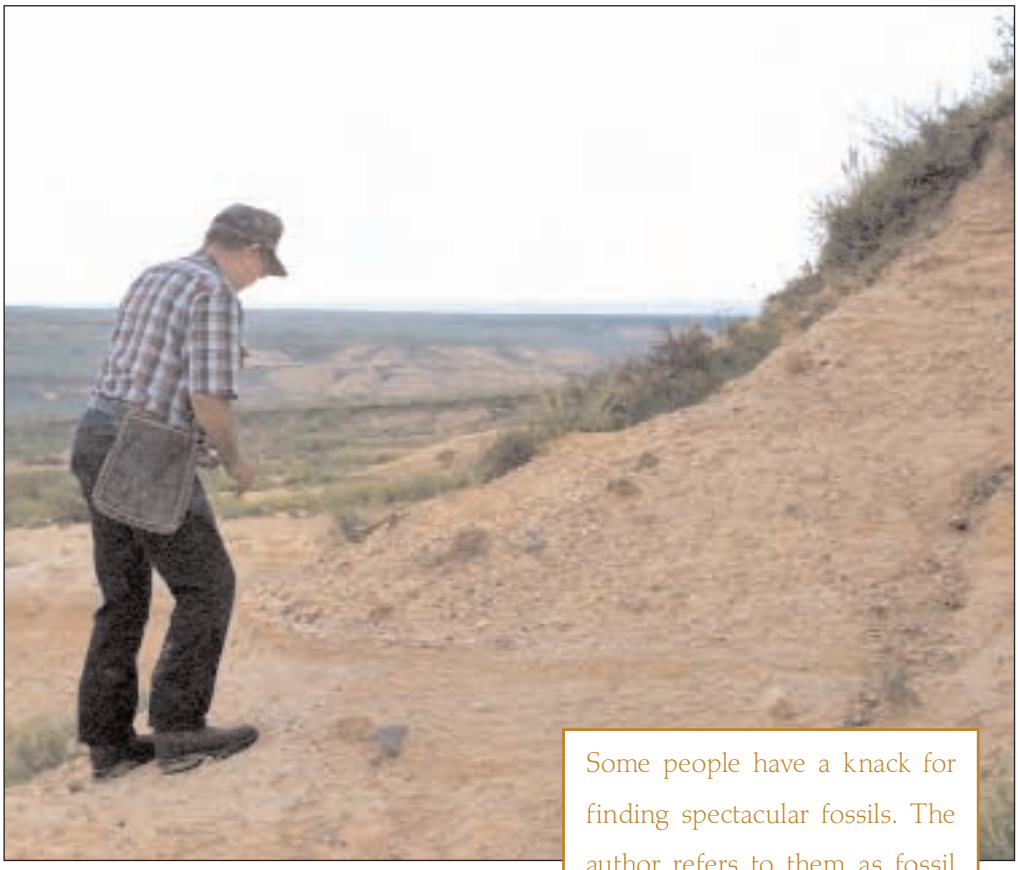
The Chalk is a paleontological heaven for fossil whisperers. Specifically, the Chalk is made up of the calcium carbonate shells of trillions of single-celled algae that were deposited from the Cretaceous ocean 82-87 million years ago.

After the Civil War and while Plains Indians still threatened isolated settlers and railroad workers, some explorers were looking for fossils while constantly checking horizons for unwanted visitors. One of the first major discoveries of a large vertebrate in the Chalk

was by Dr. Theophilus Turner, a military surgeon at Fort Wallace. He discovered an Elasmosaurus, one of the long-necked plesiosaurs, in 1867, and later shipped it to Edward Cope of The Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia.

At the time, it was the largest and most complete plesiosaur skeleton found on the continent and the first Cretaceous vertebrate from Kansas. It was a big deal. Cope had originally mis-positioned the skull on the end of the tail, being somewhat misled by the original location lie of the skull bones near the tail of the fossil. This led to some quite normal scientific correcting as his mentor, Dr. J. Leidy, pointed out the mistake along with one of his own related to another fossil. (see http://www.oceansofkansas.com/tale-tail.html) But, this was the opening act to an incredible Chalk fossil race. It commenced with a mad dash to the Niobrara Chalk by early-day paleontologists with names such as O. C. Marsh, B. F. Mudge, and including Edward Cope. Charles H. Sternberg, George's father, was employed by some of these paleontologists to find fossils.

Although other western states such as Utah and Wyoming would become the focus for dinosaur hunts, the Kansas Chalk was THE place to find giant sea monster fossils. These included the long and short-necked plesiosaurs, horrific mosasaurs, and huge sharks. In the later Mesozoic Era, while much of the rest of the Americas harbored giant land dinosaurs, Kansas's surface (and most of the Midwest) was indeed "flatter than a pancake." It was as flat as an ocean gets and it harbored the most fierce sea monsters imaginable. Perhaps the most formidable was the toothy Tylosaurus prorniger, a 30-foot reptile-like mosasaur. Another was Cretoxyrhina, an 18-foot shark and a terror of the Cretaceous seas. It and many other shark species left evidence all over western Kansas.You can't go to any small town in western Kansas near the Chalk without running into a local shark tooth enthusiast. Their collections range from the classic coffee table discussion pieces to the amazing museum displays of the Fick Fossil and History Museum in Oakley



Some people have a knack for finding spectacular fossils. The author refers to them as fossil whisperers – the fossils talk to them and they hear.

Ancient oysters congest a layer of Smoky Hills chalk in this typical Kansas fossil.

Mike Everhart and Leeann Brunson check a piece of fossilized mud near Belvidere.

(http://www.kansastravel.org/fickmuseum.htm) , a must-see for any tourist looking for the unusual. Another interesting stop is the Keystone Gallery (http://www.keystonegallery.com/) halfway between Oakley and Scott City. Many interesting fossils and sharks' teeth there will enthrall the visitor. The realization that all these teeth once scoured the Western Interior Sea for prey is enough to make your toes a little tingly walking the ancient sea beds.

While not as common as rocks, multitudes of sharks' teeth in the Chalk are enough to give ample testimony to some very different ancient times on the Kansas plains. Finding an 85 million- year-old shark's tooth, one cannot help but wonder about its presence on the prairie. Mike Everhart, a retired Boeing environmental manager and fossil expert, picked up an even older tooth recently in the black Kiowa shale in Kiowa County. To me, this was absolute evidence that some gifted observers have fossil radar. Everhart immediately knew the tooth. He casually stated, "It's from a Leptostyrax.. See how long it is, and angular. It sat in the jaw like this." He holds the tooth in a forward, jutting position as if he played the shark's maw in pursuit of the hapless prey. The tooth glistens as the simmering sun bakes us, reminding us of the austere lack of surface water compared to eons past. This old sea bed, predating the Chalk by 25 million years, yields fewer shark's teeth and other vertebrate fossils but is similar in the extensive amount of oysters, snails, clams and other invertebrate shells protected in its Cretaceous vault.

The Kansas Chalk is more extensive though, 600 feet thick in some places. It's a faithful record of five million years of deposition that's really hard to conceive for humans with average life spans of around 80 years. Occasionally, a giant Xiphactinus fish or some other creature would die, and end up on the bottom sediment, get covered and be "lucky" enough to have its bones preserved where a modern day fossil whisperer would hear it calling. Thusly, the fate of one of the world's most famous fossils came to be and was collected by George F. Sternberg.

Sternberg recovered the incredible "Fish-within-a-fish" fossil in 1952. There was a bonus to this 14-foot Xiphactinus. A pint-sized 6 six-foot Gillicus was quite perfectly oriented head-first into the gut of the larger predator. While fossils found by the Sternbergs ended up in over 50 museums and universities around the world, Sternberg wanted this special one to stay at his namesake museum. All Kansans should see this incred-

ible display, as well as other amazing fossil finds of the Niobrara Chalk. Gazing at the giant mosasaur or Fish-Within-a-Fish fossils at the Sternberg Museum can yield spine-tingling imaginations.

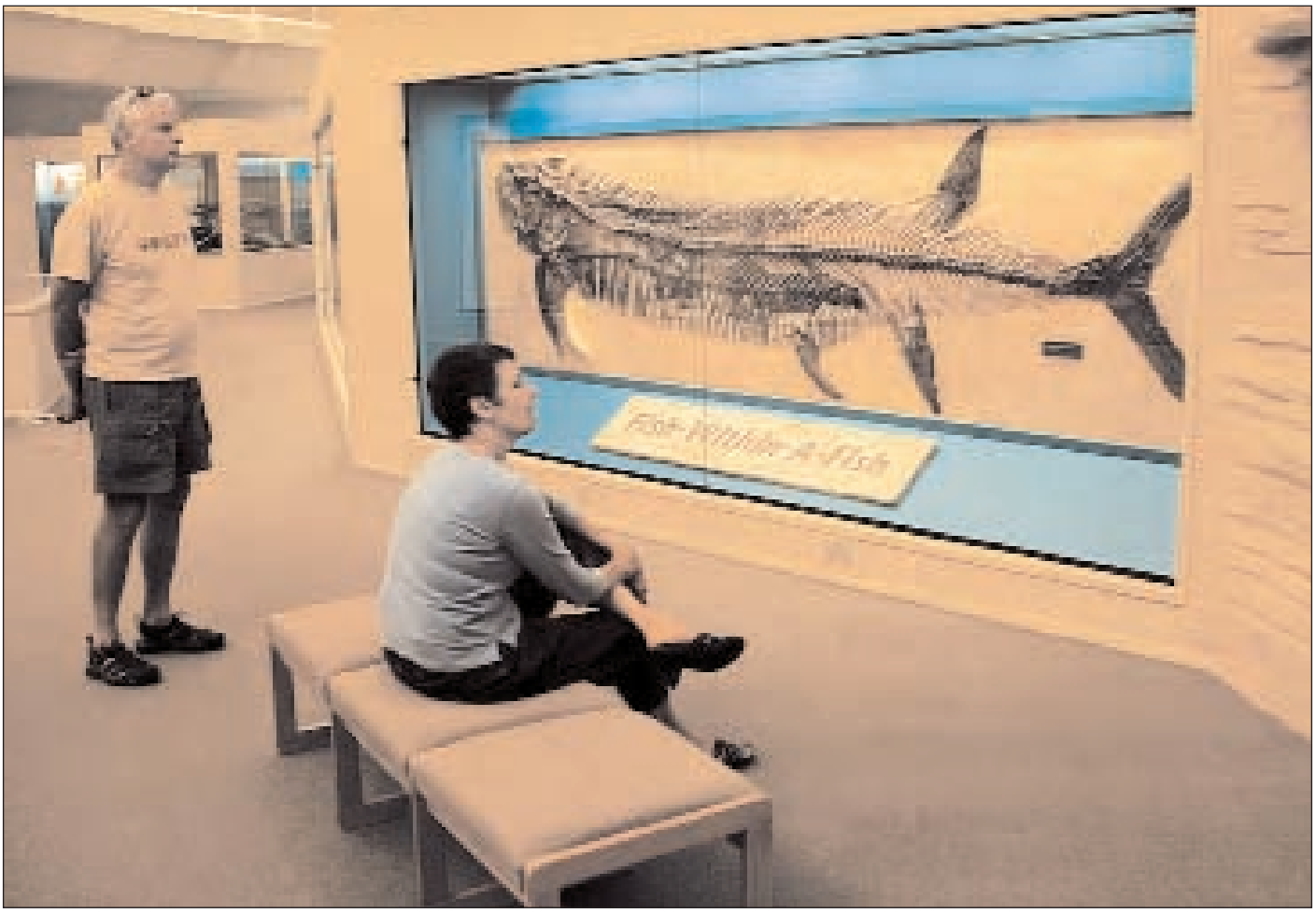
There were other giants of the Cretaceous seas of Kansas. The giant turtle, Protostega gigas, had a shell that was seven feet long. Large clams, squids, and plesiosaurs lived in the Western Interior Sea. There are billions of smaller creatures, whispering their fate in their chalky mausoleum.

Since Cope, Marsh, and the Sternbergs, there certainly have been other fossil hunters. Current day whisperers include Robert Scott who wrote of the invertebrates of the Cretaceous in 1970. Before him, Bruce Latta published on some of the interesting paleontology of the very early Cretaceous sea. The

most recent, notable fossil whisperer is Everhart, who has moseyed around the Chalk, finding cool stuff for over three decades. Currently Past-President of the Kansas Academy of Science, and co-editor of the KAS Transactions, he has recently published an amazing work, *Oceans of Kansas – A Natural History of the Western Interior Sea* (see http://www.oceansofkansas.com). This is a marvelous account of the sea monsters that once roamed Kansas. I followed Everhart around last summer in deposits of what is considered the near shoreline of that old sea, where some rocks are solidly packed with fossil oyster and clam shells. We were looking for gastroliths or "stomach stones" similar to gizzard stones of some modern day birds. I'd occasionally seen them before, regarding them as polished river stone washed from the Rocky Mountains from some of the extensive Pleistocene deposits of eons ago. Coming across dark polished chert rocks of about an inch and a half in diameter, Everhart said: "Look at the conchoidal fractures in those rocks. They are an indication of these rocks at one time being crushed together in the stomach of plesiosaurs of the Western Interior Sea."

Plesiosaurs are the giant fish-eating beasts upon which tales such as the Loch Ness Monster are based. Some were short necked, and some had long necks with relatively small heads compared to a bulbous body adorned with four flipper appendages. Everhart writes with a kid-like enthusiasm as he starts his book with a vivid account of life and death encounters between prey and a menacing mosasaur. When he discusses gastroliths, he unveils that scientists disagree over the purpose of these fascinating rocks. Most recent evidence indicates that whether used as ballast, taken in through accidental feeding, or for purposes of grinding food, a 1992 fossil find in Logan County

Cretoxyrhina, an 18-foot shark and a terror of the Cretaceous seas and many other shark species left evidence of their presence all over western Kansas – shark teeth.



strongly suggests that plesiosaurs used them to help demolish harder prey parts in their gut.

I stare at the piece of polished chert in my palm, as it whispers to me through its telltale, curved cracks. My mind wanders to an incredibly distant past, when true sea monsters hunted here. Closing my eyes, I envision a relatively calm day on the flat water of Kansas. A few schooling Gillicus scatter, portending the arrival of a huge plesiosaur. A colossal shark erupts from the shadowy depths, chomping down on the hapless "Nessie." Razor sharp teeth from the giant Cretoxyrhina dislodge in the struggle, flittering to the sea bottom. The teeth settle in the soft substrate, to be covered by sediment and ultimately "saved" for the modern day CSI (Chalk Scene Investigator). What a continual, dramatic wild theater of life and death it was. All of that life died regularly, including the giant monsters, leaving fossils of different ancient ages to whisper to us on this very different landscape. While later Pleistocene mammoths and saber-toothed tigers may have seemed impressive, nothing in and of Kansas ever compared to the spectacular monsters of the deep Cretaceous Sea. That legacy is an incredible and internationally famous resource for Kansans to more fully realize and appreciate. What wildlife! What a time!

For additional reading about the amazing ancient history of Kansas, try *Kansas Geology* edited by Rex Buchanan (1984) and *Roadside Kansas* by R. C. Buchanan and J. R. McCauley (1987). For more information on interesting places to see current and ancient wildlife of western Kansas, go to NaturalKansas.org.

Fair Impression

by Mike Miller
editor, Pratt

John Dykes, Fairway, says farewell to the Kansas Wildlife and Parks Commission after serving as its chairman for 11 years.

After 12 years, John Dykes, Fairway, is stepping down from the Kansas Wildlife and Parks Commission. Serving on a commission that advises an agency such as the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks can only be described as a thankless job. Commissioners set public policy on emotional issues, travel to far ends of the state to attend public meetings, receive public comment at all times of the day and night, and do it without pay – making Dykes' tenure all the more amazing.

Dykes was appointed to the seven-member, bipartisan commission in 1994 by Governor Finney. A year later, he was appointed chairman, and he filled that role admirably for the next 11 years.

Dykes grew up in Tennessee, and ended up in Kansas for graduate school. He is an avid outdoorsman who started hunting with an uncle when he was 9 years old. Today, he spends most of his time outdoors bowhunting deer in the fall and turkey hunting in the spring.

His passion for the outdoors led him to follow the Wildlife and Parks Commission's activities through the 1980s.

"In 1990, I moved into a neighborhood near Bill Anderson, who was a commissioner and fellow hunter. I spoke with Mary Holliday, Gov. Finney's Appointments Secretary (and daughter), at the Governor's One Shot Turkey Hunt about my interest in the commission."

When Anderson's term ended, Dykes was appointed his replacement. The rest is history, and it is historical to be sure. Since the commission was established in 1925, Dykes is only the third commissioner to serve more than 10 years. Under the current structure, commissioners are appointed to four-year terms. Dykes completed his third term July 1, 2006.

As a new commissioner, Dykes didn't have much grace time to get the hang of the job. He was appointed Chairman in 1995, and his first meeting as chairman was one he'll likely never forget. It was an unscheduled meeting during the summer of 1995.

"The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service had been petitioned to have the Topeka shiner listed as a threatened species," Dykes recounted. "The department was working to list the shiner on the state's Species in Need of Conservation (SINC) list and keep it off the federal list. All the publicity about a potential Threatened and Endangered Species created an uproar among the ranching community in the Flint Hills, where the Topeka shiner is found. Acting Secretary John Strickler scheduled a commission meeting in Emporia. People were angry and there were threats. Fortunately, we survived the meeting without bloodshed," he added only half joking.

Dykes has seen lots of changes, within the commission, the department and its constituency through his tenure, but he has been a solid constant as commission chairman.

"One of the really neat things about being a commissioner has been the opportunity to learn about the complexities of the interrelationships between various species and their habitats, including humans," he said thoughtfully. "I learned far more than I would have through my narrow experience as a hunter and fisherman. I've learned enough to appreciate the knowledge, training and experience of Wildlife and Parks professionals.

"Being a commissioner is a balancing act that's made difficult by

competing interests and limited resources. The commission's main task is to find the balance that serves the needs of Kansans in general. A case in point is the decline of hunting and fishing access, which is very real. It is also a national phenomenon. This has led to an escalating conflict between residents, non-residents and landowners that will likely never be resolved to everyone's satisfaction. To complicate matters, access (or lack thereof) is closely tied to hunter recruitment," Dykes continued. "The commission is at the center of this debate and will be tasked with steering the regulatory process to provide as much opportunity as possible while recognizing nonresident demands and landowners' rights."

Other issues Dykes sees on the horizon include the legislature's involvement in agency and commission matters, which he feels can be problematic due to its political nature and its important role in providing financial support and statutory authority.

"For instance, the state parks have been habitually and severely underfunded and yet they are the most popular tourist attractions in the state. This year we finally received legislative attention that focused on state parks and the need for sustained support. I'm hopeful that the legislature will provide some permanent funding relief next session."

Dykes speaks of his time on the commission with fondness and says he will miss the people he worked with.

"I'll always remember some of the early waterfowl regulations hearings that would draw passionate hunters such as Rodney Ringer and Flip Phillips. In those days, Marvin Kraft (waterfowl biologist) was like the Rock of Gibraltar surrounded by a sea of controversy over restrictive bag limits, season dates and zones," had said, reminiscing. "Others who added a lot of color to our meetings over the years include Spencer Tomb, Ed Augustine, Bob Robel, and Steve Sorensen - all are well-informed and very familiar with the issues. They kept us on our toes."

As commission chairman, Dykes interacted with staff and the public through nearly 100 public meetings. Whether they agreed with his position or not, colleagues, staff and constituents consider Dykes to be fair. He developed a meeting style that was efficient yet informal and most of all gave everyone a chance to be heard. And that's one legacy he hopes to leave.

"I hope I'm remembered as being fair to the public and to the agency. I think there has been a tendency for some in the public to view the commission as an advocate for the agency when in reality it's the opposite. However, I've always believed that I should support agency initiatives unless I had a good reason not to. A recent example has been the criticism leveled at the commission for approving the agency's request to open pheasant season earlier. It was hotly debated both in the agency and commission (passed 4-3), but I couldn't see the downside to giving the average hunter a week's more opportunity and a holiday (Veterans Day) when the bird numbers are their highest."

"John was always open to discussion on any issue," said Keith Sexson, assistant secretary for Operations. "He showed great concern for the resource and the public, and he always strived to do what was right."

As for the future, Dykes is confident he's leaving the Wildlife and Parks Commission in good hands. He perceives the current commission to be a great group with diverse interests and the temperaments to be very effective. Dykes recently started a new business and his youngest son is a senior in high school this fall, so he has plenty on his plate. While he's not currently pursuing future public service, he is open to other venues.

"I want to recognize the support I received from my wife Anne and my children, who encouraged me to serve in spite of the late nights and sometimes irate phone calls. One thing I quickly learned is that few people call to compliment the commission. But though it all, I wouldn't trade a minute. It was a great experience."

John Dykes, center, presides as chairman of his last official commission meeting on June 29, 2006 in Scott City. Other commissioners are from left, Shari Wilson, Kansas City; Kelly Johnston, Wichita; Dr. James Harrington, Liberal; Dykes, Gerald Lauber, Topeka; Doug Sebelius, Norton; and Frank Meyer, Herington.

The Coleman Story

by Marc Murrell
manager, Great Plains Nature Center, Wichita

Coleman is a name not only familiar to Kansans, but this homegrown company is well-known around the world as a maker of fine outdoor and camping gear.

The Coleman name is synonymous with camping and the Coleman Company logo is likely one of the most recognized symbols in the outdoor industry. Any person who spends time fishing, hiking, backpacking, hunting or camping likely has a stove, lantern, cooler, sleeping bag, tent or other item manufactured by Coleman tucked away in their "essential" outdoor gear cache. In fact, in George Strait's hit song, "The Best Day," an essential piece of camping gear, the lantern, is referred to simply as "a Coleman."

The Coleman Company, Inc. has its headquarters and production facilities for several of its major products in Wichita. They employ 973 full-time staff in the Wichita area and add to this total during peak production times, generally during the first half of the year. Globally, they employ 2,054 people. These employees are responsible for approximately 1,200 different products that sell in more than 200 countries around the world. Coleman's annual sales average more than $800 million.

The Coleman Company has a rich and storied history. It was founded by W.C. Coleman in 1900 in Kingfisher, Okla., as he established a lighting service known as Hydro-Carbon Light Company. He moved his company to Wichita a year later and bought the patent for the Efficient Lamp which he set out to improve. In 1903 he began to manufacturer his own lamp and changed the name to the Coleman Arc Lamp.

In 1912 W.C. Coleman enjoyed continued success with his lamp and changed the name of his company to the Coleman

Lamp Company. Three years later his lantern proved so popular that the U.S. Government declared it an "essential item" of World War I. More than 70,000 lanterns were distributed, allowing farmers and workers to extend their hours producing items critical to the war effort.

Another signature product of the Coleman name was added in 1923. The Coleman Camp Stove made its debut and quickly became a hit.

During the 1930s, The Coleman Company was forced to diversify due to competition and the Great Depression. This diversification was instrumental to the growth and success of the company. Coleman products even made it to the Big Screen of the day when a Coleman Camp Stove appeared with Rin Tin Tin in a 1933 feature film, "Night Cry." Celebrities, including the kids from "Our Gang," helped market Coleman products.

At the request of the government, Coleman manufactured a G.I. Pocket Stove in 1942 to be used by soldiers during World War II. A post-war sales brochure proudly noted, "It proved itself all through the war. It was used by our fighters for cooking food, heating drinks, purifying water and even keeping warm in foxholes."

W.C. Coleman brought his Hydro-Carbon Light company to Wichita in 1903. In 1912, the name was changed to the Coleman Lamp Company.

The 1950s and the post-war era found American's extremely interested in the outdoors. Campgrounds and parks were developed across the country. The Coleman Company continued to expand its line and manufactured its first cooler, tents and sleeping bags. Sheldon Coleman, W.C.'s son who joined the company in 1925, took over as president. W. C. Coleman passed away in 1957.

In 1986 The Coleman Company introduced electric and battery-powered lights. The company celebrated the production of its 40 millionth lantern. Sheldon Coleman, a respected outdoorsman, conservationist and businessmen, died at the age of 86 in 1988. By the end of this decade, Coleman was producing 15 million products per year.

During the 1990s, Coleman's line of products expanded rapidly to include many of the items available today. The 50 millionth lantern was sold in 1995. The Coleman Company

In the 1930s, the "Our Gang" television show helped sell Coleman products. During World War II, Coleman produced the GI Pocket Stove that allowed American soldiers to heat food, purify water and keep warm. Photos courtesy of The Coleman Company.

To celebrate its centennial, Coleman made the largest s'more in 2001. The giant traditional camping treat consisted of 4,514 chocolate bars, 10,800 marshmallows, and 21,600 graham crackers. (photos courtesy of The Coleman Company)

was purchased by Sunbeam Corporation in 1998.

In 2001 Coleman celebrated its centennial by creating the world's largest s'more at its company headquarters in Wichita. The 2002 Olympic torches that carried the flame across the world and across America to Salt Lake City were manufactured by Coleman and assembled in Wichita.

Additional outdoor products were added in recent years, including those used for tailgate barbeques and backyard use. Convenience items like the Hot Water on Demand Portable Water Heater, which produces hot water anywhere outside in just 5 seconds, and the world's first automatic drip coffee maker made especially for camping were introduced.

In 2005, The Coleman Company was purchased by its parent company, Jarden Corporation. Today, Coleman continues to develop products that make being outdoors more enjoyable, and much of that is accomplished in the Sunflower State. Coleman's new president and CEO, Gary Kiedaisch, has promised to renew and strengthen the company's commitment to the outdoors and inspiring people to get outside. An outdoor enthusiast, Kiedaisch recognizes the value of outdoor experiences in people's lives.

"He's got a genuine passion for the outdoors and the consumers who use it," Pat Barnett, Vice President, Product Management-Softlines, said of Kiedaisch. "He connects Wichita and Coleman to what he's trying to get done with the outdoor company, and Kansas plays a big part in that. He knows that to be truly in touch with your products, you need to be close to the outdoors, and we have that here in Kansas."

Sheldon Coleman, W.C.'s son, took over the company in 1955.

Barnett has been with The Coleman Company for 20 years and speaks passionately about its involvement in the outdoors and connections to Kansas.

"Wichita is a great place to live and raise a family," Barnett admits.

The Wichita area also provides a great resource from which to recruit production employees according to Ann Walden, Associate Director of Public Relations.

"I don't think we've ever had much problem finding good, qualified people to fill those positions," she said.

Occasionally, it's difficult to recruit management level positions to Wichita, but it may be partially due to a negative stereotype about Kansas.

"There's a great quality of life in Wichita and Kansas," said Jim Reid, Senior Manager of Public Relations who has lived in Wichita for several decades. "A lot of people recognize that and are attracted to it, but others may be looking for something else that's very metropolitan."

The Coleman Company plans to continue building on its traditional camping products, while at the same time diversifying to

Marc Murrell photo

The Coleman Company employs more than 900 people in the Wichita area, producing several company products. Globally, Coleman has more than 2,000 employees.

include other products used in outdoor activities. These products, as customers have come to expect, will make being outdoors more comfortable and convenient. Some examples include integrated lighting in tents and MP 3 players in air beds with built-in radios and alarm clocks. Personal flotation devices (life jackets) are being developed with integrated two-way radios. Coleman plans to expand its line even further this year by introducing more than 100 new products and 200 more that have been revised and improved.

Many of the new and revised items focus on comfort and convenience. The items people need with them today to have a more enjoyable time in the outdoors has changed.

"It used to be that when you went hiking, backpacking or camping you left all of your electronic stuff behind," Barnett said. "But now people want their iPods and cell phones with them when they're outside, so there's great opportunity to develop products where people can do that and still enjoy their time outdoors."

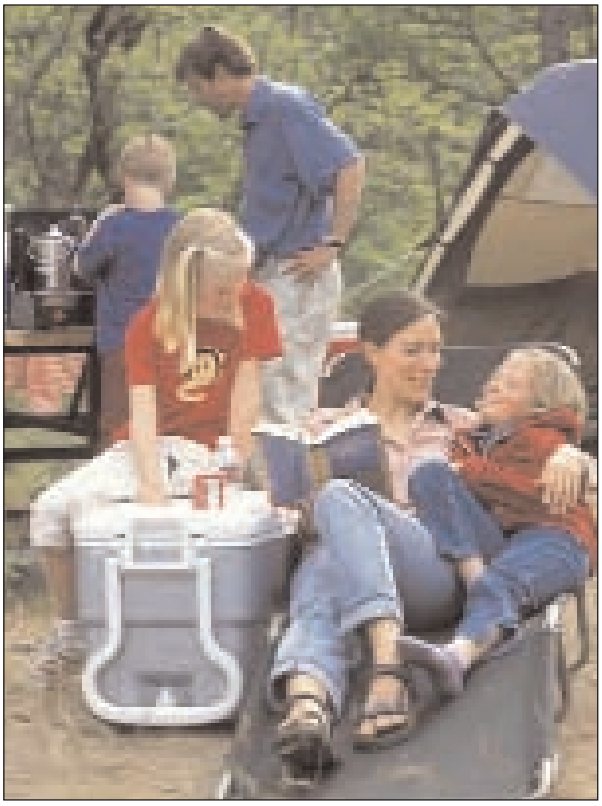
In addition to expanded product lines, Coleman has focused efforts on ensuring that outdoor adventures are environmentally friendly.

"Part of our overall mission is to advocate to get more people outside and do it correctly. We're increasing our support of programs such as Leave No Trace, Appalachian Mountain Club, the Continental Divide Trail Alliance and others that encourage young and old to go outside and do it properly, " Barnett added.

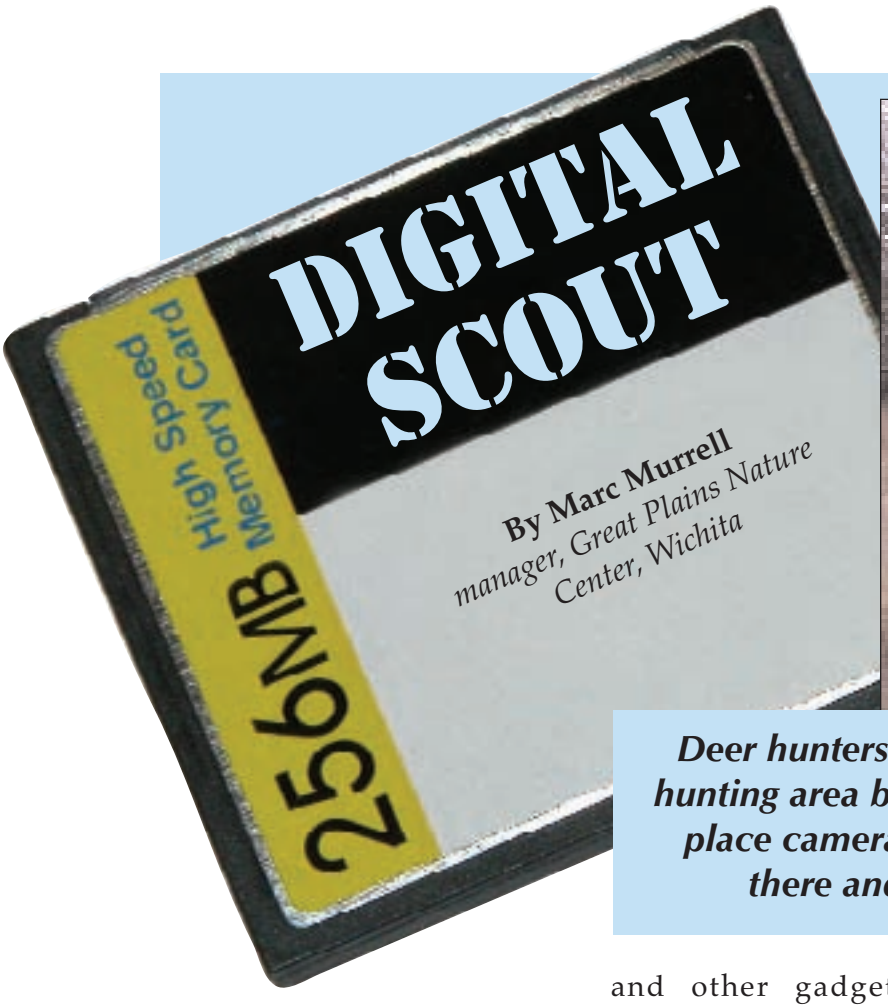
As Kansas, and the country for that matter, becomes more urbanized it presents a unique challenge and opportunity for The Coleman Company.

"We're competing with XBox, television, the couch and the indoors," Barnett summarized of Coleman's commitment to inspire people to go outside. "We're going to try to reverse the trend of people staying inside."

Based on the history of the company and their employees' commitment to excellence, Coleman will do just that. They continue to focus their efforts on some of the products Coleman is most famous for while at the same time developing others. They realize the outdoor world and people who use it are ever changing. It appears they're willing to change right along with it and the success of Coleman over the last century has proved it.



If you spend any time outdoors, you probably own several Coleman products. (Coleman Company photo)



Marc Murrell photo

Deer hunters are learning more about their hunting area by using remote cameras. A well-place camera can tell you what critters are there and when they pass through.

"Smile, you're on Candid Camera," might be an old slogan from one of the first reality shows, but it just might hold true in the deer woods today. The use of remote cameras to capture images of unsuspecting deer and other wildlife is a fun hobby and useful scouting tactic.

"I think it gives hunters another gadget to mess with, and they seem to really enjoy that," said Lloyd Fox, department big game program leader. "They can actually see what's out there and 'hunt' without even being there."

Fox points out that hunters love gadgets that are supposed to improve their success and deer hunters might be the most obsessed. Each year, equipment companies market new bows, rangefinders, scopes, treestands and other gadgets, giving hunters another excuse to spend more time doing what they enjoy and experiment with new technology. And that technology has advanced dramatically as far as trail cameras are concerned.

"Trail camera technology has really improved the products in recent years," said Eric Johnson, who keeps roughly a half-dozen cameras out year-round. "We started out with film cameras that weren't real efficient, and we've gone to digital cameras that can hold hundreds, if not thousands of images."

The first trail cameras consisted of basic automatic 35mm film cameras. Film wasn't cheap and the cost of processing a roll of 36 images was substantial according to Johnson, especially considering many images were too dark, too far or of the same animal over and over.

"They still charged you for processing no matter what was on the film," he added.

As digital technology advanced, digital trail cameras became available. But the new electronic equipment came at a hefty price.

"They used to be really expensive," Johnson said of the new digital cameras. "But after they've been on the market a while they start coming down in price and getting better features."

Features Johnson considers important include a good flash for night photos to capture images of bucks that may be mostly nocturnal. A fast trigger speed is also necessary.

"If you've got it set up on a trail and there's a big lag between the time it's tripped to the time it shoots a picture, you're not going to get the deer in the photo or you might just

get his tail-end," Johnson laughed. "The other option we've used was setting them up on a corn feeder where the deer tend to be stationary for a period of time."

Another feature Johnson considers important is plenty of photos per set of batteries. Most trail cameras operate on C- or D-cell batteries or a rechargeable 6- or 12-volt battery. Battery life depends on temperature, the number of photos taken and flash usage.


Marc Murrell photo

A flash feature is necessary so that nighttime images are possible. A well-place camera can tell a hunter what kind of deer are making all those tracks seen on the trail.

Trail cameras are available with 1 to 4 megapixel resolution. Generally, a camera with a larger megapixel number will produce a higher quality image, especially if you plan to enlarge prints. However, these larger files require more space on a memory card so fewer images can be stored. More megapixels also means more expense on the cost of the camera. Some cameras also have the capability of producing a short video clip.

"Another expense you'll have is some type of memory card which may cost just a few bucks or more than $100," Johnson said. "I keep several so I can swap them out when I check a camera."

Hunters aren't the only ones using trail cameras. Biologists have started using them in Nebraska to monitor some populations of wildlife.

"We use them in the biological field a lot," said Pat Molini, wildlife district manager for the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. "We're seeing what we can find as far as mammals, wild pigs and things like that, and our furbearer biologist also has a number of them out."

Molini said the wild pig issue warrants the use of trail cameras to determine if their eradication efforts are working.

"We're baiting them and trying to eradicate them on a couple of wildlife management areas," Molini said of one biologist's plan to remove this invasive, destructive species. "He's put together a collage (from trail camera photos) of all these different pigs and as he eradicates them he can check them off."

Prices for trail cameras range from less than $100 to more than $400 depending on features and type. Generally, you get what you pay for as far as quality but there are some less expensive models that do an adequate job. What you want from a camera can help determine your price range, but you also have to weigh the risk of theft.

"You wouldn't think you'd have to worry about someone stealing your cameras but it happens," Johnson said. "I can't believe another deer hunter would do that but there's no shortage of unscrupulous people in the world and I guess some of them apparently hunt deer."

Johnson locks his cameras with the cable and lock provided by the manufacturer on some models. He's quick to admit, though, if someone wants to


Mike Blair photo

Position of the camera relative to the trail is important for good images. And a fast trigger is necessary to get walking images such as the one above.

steal it bad enough, it really wouldn't be that hard to remove them.

"I usually try to keep them out of sight as much as possible," Johnson said of his best deterrent.

Cameras can be placed on feeder sights, trails, scrapes, rubs and anywhere else deer movement is noted. They can provide entertaining information beneficial to a hunter about the deer, including both quantity and quality, using the area. Trail cameras can tell a hunter specifically what deer live where he hunts. A good photo can help a hunter judge the age and trophy-potential of bucks. Because mature whitetails can move almost exclusively at night, trail cameras have alerted hunters to the presence of deer previously never seen. And perhaps most importantly, images have times recorded, so a series of photos can help a hunter determine the time a deer uses a particular trail.

Other species captured by trail cameras are bonuses. Lots of different animals will used the same trails deer use, including bobcats, coyotes, raccoons, armadillos and more.

"I've had a blast with it," Johnson concluded. "I can go get my memory cards every few weeks and it's like Christmas when you pop them in your computer because you never know what you're getting."

Trail cameras can help a hunter learn about his hunting area and perhaps be more successful. But the real excitement is seeing what new images are waiting.

TRAIL CAMERA TIPS – MIKE BLAIR

Trail cameras can be a tremendous advantage when scouting deer, but this is one place where you get what you pay for. I've used several brands, most with disappointing results. The Cuddeback digital 3.0 megapixel camera is an excellent choice and worth the asking price. Do some research; even some of the high-priced cameras among various brands don't perform well.

I use most of my cameras on trails to monitor movement patterns. Trigger speed is the single biggest factor here, since animals are moving. Deer walking quickly or a coyote trotting down a trail may yield nothing more than a blank habitat on cameras with slow trigger speeds. Try to buy cameras that trigger in less than one second – 1/2 second is even better, allowing the animal to be captured fully in frame.

Following are some tips for setup on trails:

- Position the camera about 10 feet from the trail, three feet high on a tree or post. I sometimes dig a hole and place my own post or log exactly where needed. It's better to be too far away than too close, to avoid losing part of the subject out of frame. Most trail cameras can easily sense passing animals 10 to 20 yards away.
- Aim the camera in a northward position where possible. Other aspects create pictures taken "into the sun" with resulting rainbow highlights and halos that can ruin otherwise great images of your daytime subjects.
- "Help" the camera's trigger speed by aiming the sensor toward oncoming traffic. This gives it longer to recognize an animal and catch it in frame.
- Passing deer may spook at the sound of a camera shutter (some models) or human odor on the camera. However, in my experience, they DO NOT spook from a silent flash. I've got numerous examples of predators, furbearers, and big whitetail bucks that stick around for several flashed images before moving on. Photos indicate that they remain unalarmed. So go ahead, use flash.
- When using digital cameras, carry a spare set of memory cards to swap quickly when checking the cameras. This leaves your setup basically undisturbed and ensures that continuous filming is always possible. You can check the images on the "used" cards back at home.
- Scent management is important. It's a good idea to handle and set up the camera with rubber gloves to avoid leaving human scent. At the very least, don't touch the camera with your hands after eating a greasy cheeseburger or splashing aftershave. By the same token, respect wind direction to avoid spooking deer when checking your cameras.
- Check the camera lens each time you change cards. I've had wild hogs rub mud, raccoons lick the lens – even deer have nosed the glass on occasion. This leaves a haze that affects all images taken. Clean the glass with a soft cloth, and make sure the infrared detector is clear.
- Watch out for fast-growing vegetation, especially if you can't check the camera for several weeks. Tall grass can obscure the desired image.
- Finally, consider wiping the lens with an anti-fog agent. Condensation occurs under certain weather conditions, resulting in blurry images. Anti-fog treatments help prevent this.

Avian Influenza and Wild Birds

Helen Hands
migratory bird biologist, Cheyenne Bottoms


Mike Blair photo

During the past few months, there have been many media reports about a possible flu pandemic arising from "bird flu." Many of these reports focus on migratory birds spreading the virus around the world. As a result, these reports may have generated more concern about the risk of wild birds to hunters and the public than is warranted at this time.

Experts in wildlife diseases have been studying avian influenza, commonly called bird flu, for 40 years. They have learned that avian influenza is a common disease that affects many species of wild birds, but occurs most frequently in waterfowl and shorebirds. As in humans, avian influenza occurs seasonally in birds; most frequently during late summer through fall in waterfowl and spring in shorebirds. In wild birds, avian influenza is usually a fairly mild viral infection of the upper respiratory and gastrointestinal tract. The virus can be spread among wild birds via nasal discharge, saliva, and/or feces.

Research has shown that avian influenza is typically spread only among wild birds. Occasionally, avian influenza is spread from wild birds to domestic birds, primarily chickens, ducks, and turkeys, sometimes resulting in high mortality in domestic flocks. In the three influenza pandemics involving humans in the 20th century, the virus strains have been shown to have been transmitted from wild birds to domestic birds, sometimes to mammals, and then to humans. However, only recently has it been shown that avian influenza viruses can pass directly from wild birds to humans.

There are 144 different subtypes of avian influenza in wild birds and H5N1, the strain in the news today, is just one of these. During 1997-June 2006, this strain caused high mortality in domestic birds, much lower mortality in wild birds, and sickened over 200 people, of which over 100 have died. H5N1 was originally detected in southeast Asia and has spread westward to Europe and Africa. So far, close contact with domestic birds has been the primary documented cause of H5N1 infection in humans. Recently, seven cases (4 deaths, 3 recovered) were documented to have been caused by close contact with wild birds. These individuals were infected while plucking feathers from dead swans in Azerbaijan, in southwestern Asia. If H5N1 develops the ability to easily spread from human to human and outbreaks in humans occur worldwide, then the H5N1 outbreak could then be classified as a pandemic.

Migratory birds have spread H5N1, via their annual migra-

The Department suggests that hunters follow the standard precautions provided by the U.S. Geological Survey National Wildlife Health Center. These are as follows:

- **Do not handle or eat sick game.**
- **Wear rubber or disposable latex gloves while handling and cleaning game.**
- **Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after handling game, and thoroughly clean knives, equipment and surfaces that come in contact with game.**
- **Do not eat, drink, or smoke while handling animals**
- **All game should be thoroughly cooked (well done or 160° F)**

tions, to areas where it was not present in domestic poultry. However, at a recent conference of avian influenza experts, it was concluded that legal and illegal trade of poultry products, and not migratory birds, may be the primary mode of spread.

When this issue went to press, H5N1 had not been detected in wild or domestic birds in North America. Since 1998, over 12,000 birds from Alaska have been tested for H5N1 and all tests have been negative. During this year's southward migration, wild birds will be tested for H5N1 throughout Canada and the U.S. Kansas Wildlife and Parks will be participating in this H5N1 surveillance effort by testing 750 ducks, geese, sandhill cranes, and shorebirds during July through December. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal Plant Health Inspection Service Wildlife Services Program will test another 800 birds, as well as, water and fecal samples in Kansas. State and federal agricultural departments will be testing domestic birds.

Media reports may have generated unnecessary fear of H5N1 avian influenza among hunters and the general public. Until the H5N1 virus has been detected in North America, the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks considers the risk to waterfowl hunters to be low. However, considering all the facts, the department suggests that hunters follow the standard precautions provided by the U.S. Geological Survey National Wildlife Health Center.

There is no need to panic if you find sick or dead wildlife. Not all sick or dead animals carry H5N1. Wild birds and animals have routinely died of accidents, predation, and disease long before fears of a flu pandemic. If you find a large number of dead or sick birds (at least 5-10), call your nearest Wildlife and Parks office and allow them to assess the situation.

If H5N1 is detected in North America, precautions for hunters and the general public could change. Check Kansas Wildlife and Parks' website (http://www.kdwp.state.ks.us/hunting/migratory_birds/bird_flu) or the USGS National Wildlife Health Center's website (http://www.nwhc.usgs.gov/disease_information/avian_influenza/index.jsp) for updated information on avian influenza.

The USGS National Wildlife Health Center provides the following common-sense precautions for the general public

- **Observe wildlife, including wild birds, from a distance.**
- **Avoid touching wildlife. If there is contact with wildlife do not rub eyes, eat, drink, or smoke before washing hands thoroughly with soap and water.**
- **Do not pick up diseased or dead wildlife**

Since 1998, over 12,000 birds from Alaska have been tested for H5N1 and all tests have been negative. During this year's southward migration, wild birds will be tested for H5N1 throughout Canada and the U.S.

Edited by Mark Shoup

ELK WANDERINGS

Editor:

I was wondering where elk have been harvested or spotted outside of Ft. Riley? What is the farthest from the Fort? What about the elk in Cimarron Nat Grasslands? Why is Morton County closed to elk hunting? Just some things I have been wondering.

Jeff Stines
Jackson Hole, Wyoming

Dear Mr. Stines,

Elk have been found, at least sporadically, in many counties in Kansas. The Morton County elk — those on the Cimarron National Grasslands — are the farthest from the Fort. There are approximately 50 or so on or around the Grasslands, but these animals spend most of their time in Colorado and Oklahoma. A few can usually be found in Kansas at any one time. The reason we excluded Morton County from the areas open to hunting was to protect these elk.

The reason we opened the rest of the state to hunting is that we have received complaints about elk at various locations outside the units that had previously been open to elk hunting (units 6, 8, 9, and 14). Most notably, there is a herd of 20 or more elk on the Arkansas River in Hamilton County (Unit 17), and we have recently documented elk in units 2, 4, 5, 7, and 15. There is a herd of a dozen or so near the Franklin/Miami County line (Unit 11), almost certainly the result of a captive release that occurred about five years ago.

In both instances, landowners have been looking for solutions to crop damage. Techniques that may displace elk from private land would simply move the problem, so herd reduction and the associated benefits of hunting (which may increase landowner tolerance) are the best solution. We have also had complaints of free-ranging elk trying to get into captive pens (which is considered a major disease threat to wild cervid populations) and road kills.

In cases where animals must be removed, we consider regulated hunting a much better solution than depredation killing. And rather than open a patchwork of units in response to damage, we decided it better to open the whole state and have the ability to respond to damage issues as they occur. We still issue permits based on the Fort Riley population (about 120 elk) and are not expecting many elk to be killed away from the Fort. But we now have the ability to refer damage issues to a hunter no matter where they occur (except Morton County, where no damage has occurred lately because the elk are on public lands). Landowners will have the ability to purchase Hunt-Own-Land antlerless elk permits to deal with damage themselves.

The decision to open the state to elk hunting was not an effort to get rid of elk or to allow for a great deal of hunting opportunity on private lands,but was intended to allow more leeway in dealing with damage problems as they occur. It is hoped that these measures will allow elk to be maintained at levels tolerable to landowners while also providing the recreational and aesthetic benefits it will take for some landowners to tolerate them on private lands in Kansas.

–Matt Peek,
elk project coordinator, Emporia

MOON WATCHING?

Editor:

In the May/June 2006 issue of ***Kansas Wildlife and Parks***, I read with interest the story "Moon Watching For Better Fishing" (Page 24). Mr. Scheffler states that his parents farmed by the signs and his dad's predictions about good fishing. Sorry to read that Bill went to all that trouble "researching" moon phases and fishing. Maybe as a small boy growing up he did not pay attention. I bet his Dad had the Old Farmer's Almanac, printed since 1818.

In the 2006 edition, Volume 189, see the Planting Guide on page 64, best days on Pages 72-73, and "Wright's Fishing Calendar" on Page 74. Page 70 even gives full moons in 2006. It was not necessary to re-invent the wheel on this. This was nice study for Bill and gives us old retirees something to do with our time, but he can't take credit for 189 years of information because its all been done and it works. I plant my garden by the almanac and wean calves. It even works to wean human babies.

For those who are non-believers, try this. Plant green beans by the sign. Plant two rows, leave one open, plant one more, leave one open, then plant two more. Plant the two rows, middle one row, and last two rows in the sign. Come back later and plant the two open rows (rows 2 and 4) out of the sign. The out-of-sign rows will be greener, larger bush size, and you will think, Aha! look at that! But the proof is in the picking. You will get three to four times more beans (by weight or count) than the out-of-sign plants. Plant this way so that when you water and fertilize you cannot be blamed for ignoring those out-of-sign plants with water and fertilizer. This will be the convincer. I have used this demonstration many times for those who don't believe.

Tell Bill to just use the almanac and fish more. Nice picture of the catch, though.

Rudy Pouch
Lyndon

Editor's Note: *Author Bill Scheffler wrote about solunar phases and fishing in the May/June 2006 issue, but he credited others for moon phase information. Scheffler's studies have focused on other conditions that, with the moon phases, affect fishing success. He specifically kept track of air quality and its affects.*

CANOEING & BLUEBIRDS

Editor:

You have an excellent magazine. I read it from cover to cover shortly after receiving it in the mail. I just turned 80 in May, and have been a sportsman all of my life. In the 1930s, the meat from rabbits, squirrel, fish, and frogs made many a meal for my family.

Two particular items from the July/August 2006 issue brought me to attention. The first was Mark Shoup's story of his adventures as a Boy Scout and the canoe trip to Charles L. Sommers canoe base in Minnesota (Page 39). I was an Explorer advisor in 1969, and with another adult, drove a bus from near Topeka to the base and home. The trip was a real-life adventure for all.

My son was the largest of our post and was quickly called upon to stand on the "bread compressor" to squeeze the slices very thin and allow us to pack more of it for the trip. Our boys did not have much previous canoe experience but quickly learned and did well getting us where we were to go.

We also had a stopover day where the other adults and I went fishing. I aimed a large minnow lure near a hummock, but it hit, then dropped off and was immediately seized by a very large muskie. It went round and round with one spectacular jump about 30 inches out of the water, and then suddenly the lure flew out of the water just past my ear. The fish was gone, and the hook was broken. To this day I tell folks that the fish bit the hook off.

The bus trip back was not so comfortable because the guide saved the beans for the last night out, and the bus bounced a lot.

The second story was on page 41, about Kansas bluebirds by Ken Brunson. I am interested in getting the plans for the houses and making it a Kiwanis project, and hope to have some to demonstrate at our district convention in Junction City Aug. 12 and 13. I was able to go to the local public library and found a book entitled "Building Birdhouses and Feeders," by Ortho Books. I think the plan shown there will be fine. Thanks for your inspiration on this project.

Carl Fisher
Augusta

CWD RISK?

Editor:

I would bring your attention to an article published in *Science* at www.sciencemag.org (*Science* Vol. 311, 24 Feb, 2006, Page 1117). The content of the article leads to the conclusion that humans consuming or handling meat from CWD-infected deer are at risk for prion exposure. Although the research was conducted by mice inoculations, and there is much additional research to be done, the risk and potential infectivity from CWD deer muscle tissue to humans is likely present.

Monty Menhusen
Iowa City, Iowa

Dear Professor Menhusen:

The article in *Science* points out that CWD prions occur in muscle tissue of mule deer with the disease, at least deer in the late stages of the disease. While this is the first published finding of CWD prions in muscle tissue, there had been similar findings of scrapie prions in the muscle tissue of sheep, and therefore this finding was not unexpected. This article does not change the risk assessment for humans.

I encourage you to review, Chronic Wasting Disease and the Potential Transmission to Humans, Belay et. al., at www.cdc.gov/ncidod/eid/vol10no6/03-1082.htm

The Centers for Disease Control also provides the following advice at www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/cwd/index.htm:

"To minimize their risk of exposure to CWD, hunters should consult with their state wildlife agencies to identify areas where CWD occurs and take appropriate precautions when hunting in such areas. Hunters and others should avoid eating meat from deer and elk that look sick or that test positive for CWD. Hunters who harvest deer or elk from known CWD-positive areas may wish to consider having the animal tested for CWD before consuming the meat. (Information about testing is available from most state wildlife agencies.) Persons involved in field-dressing carcasses should wear gloves, bone-out the meat from the animal, and minimize handling of the brain and spinal cord tissues."

As better diagnostic tools are developed, we should anticipate that prions will be detected elsewhere — not only in the body of infected animals, but in the environment. As more information is obtained, we will be able to make a more exact assessment of risk of exposure to various prions at various levels and what, if anything, that exposure may mean to human safety. At this time there is no connection between CWD prions and health problems for humans. Still, we should keep abreast of new findings in this field.

–Lloyd Fox, Ph.D, big game program coordinator, Emporia

YELLOW PERCH AGAIN

Editor:

I just noticed the email about yellow perch in the July/Aug issue of ***Kansas Wildlife & Parks*** magazine (Page 33) and thought it deserved a comment. I was a member of Lake Quivira (Kansas City, Kan.) for many years while growing up. They had a strong population of yellow perch. To my knowledge, the perch were never restocked in the 12 or more years I fished the lake. The yellow perch commonly weighed 3/4 to 2 pounds. The perch were neither a threat to other species or stunted. Yellow perch can do well in Kansas. Especially in lakes with deeper, clearer water.

By the way, we enjoy your magazine.

Steve Bonuchi
Kansas City

Dear Mr. Bonuchi:

We do not assist the private owners of Lake Quivira in the Kansas City area with fisheries management activities, so I was unaware of the yellow perch population there. It is nice to know that yellow perch have inhabited Lake Quivira with no apparent problems.

However, because of their great reproductive potential, voracious appetites, and effective feeding, yellow perch often become stunted, outgrowing their food supply and directly competing for food and space with other sportfish. For these reasons, yellow perch have never been a high priority for KDWP.

–Kyle Austin, fisheries management specialist, Pratt

NEW HUNT RULES

For 2006, several new regulations and state statutes will affect Kansas hunters. These rules, as well as all regulations affecting hunting may be found in the *2006 Kansas Hunting and Furharvesting Summary*, available wherever licenses are sold. The following is a list of new rules for 2006.

Big Game

- after Dec. 30, deer hunters may purchase Antlerless Only Deer game tags valid during the January season without having first purchased an antlered deer permit;
- there will be no deer check stations this year;
- unlimited archery antelope permits are now available to nonresidents (firearms and muzzleloader permits still restricted to residents only);
- applications for big game permit drawings may be made on the KDWP website;
- status of drawings may be viewed on the KDWP website;
- local license vendors are listed by county on the KDWP website; and
- the elk unit has been expanded to include the entire state of Kansas except Morton County.

Upland Birds

- pheasant season opens the first Saturday in November;
- quail season opens the second Saturday in November;
- quail units have been eliminated;
- quail season ends the third Saturday in January 2007; and
- prairie chicken season opens the third Saturday in November, as it did last year.

Sandhill Cranes

- all sandhill crane hunters must take an online crane identification test before obtaining a sandhill crane permit. The test may be found at online at https://secure.ksfishandwildlife.org/crane. (Don't forget the "s" in "https.")

Hogs

- a new Department of Animal Health statute states that “no person shall engage in, sponsor, instigate, assist, or profit from the release, killing, wounding, or attempted killing or wounding of feral swine for the purpose of sport, pleasure, amusement, or production of a trophy"; and
- "owners or legal occupants of land, the employees of such owners or legal occupants, or persons designated by such owners or legal occupants may kill any feral swine when found on their premises or when destroying property. Such designees shall have a permit issued by the livestock commissioner in their possession at the time of the killing of the feral swine."

—Shoup

GUIDE SENTENCED

A professional hunting guide was sentenced after pleading guilty to violating a federal law against taking game illegally and transporting it across state lines.

Last spring, the Colorado native was sentenced during a hearing before U.S. District Judge Sam A. Crow.

The man will lose his right to hunt and to engage in the hunting guide business for 3 years. He also will pay a $2,500 fine, as well as restitution of $7,500 to be paid to the KDWP Restitution Fee Fund.

The suspect pleaded guilty to one count of transporting illegally taken wildlife in interstate commerce, which is a misdemeanor. In his plea, he admitted that he was engaged in the business of brokering big-game hunts across the United States in 1999 and 2000. During the deer season of 2000, he arranged to hunt in western Kansas.

On or about Dec. 2, 2000, he shot and killed a buck deer in Kansas. He only had one buck deer tag issued to him, and he didn’t tag the deer because it was too small. A few days later, he killed a buck deer scoring 160 points in Kansas and illegally tagged it with the only tag he had. He then transported the deer first to Wyoming and then to Colorado, where it was discovered in his possession at his home.

U.S. District Attorney Eric F. Melgren commended U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, as well as Assistant U.S. Attorney Randy Hendershot for their work on the case.

—U.S. Department of Justice news release

4-HERS Clean Up River

What involves water, mud, bugs, fish, plants, and 4-H fellowship? Cleaning the Ninnescah River.

In 1990, Glendale Reapers 4-H Club of Pratt County began an exciting service project. Under the leadership of Ken Brunson, 4-H dad, community leader, and wildlife diversity coordinator for Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP), they began cleaning the South Fork of the Ninnescah River where it flows through Lemon Park in Pratt.

"We began the project to commemorate the 20th anniversary of Earth Day," says Brunson. "This project reflects the Glendale Reapers focus on conservation."

Several times a year, Glendale Reapers' 23 members don old clothes and "creeking" shoes, grab their pick-up sticks, and head for the river. Like most clubs, members range in age from seven to 18, but little brothers and sisters are welcome. Everyone looks out for each other, and all have learned to work together to accomplish the goal of cleaning the river. After a short meeting to update everyone on club activities, they hit the river. As much trash as possible is pulled out of the water with pick-up sticks.

Kids can learn a lot about ecology by cleaning a river. Just picking up the trash decreases pollution. During the cleanup, the inter-relationship of the organisms present in the river is demonstrated to the Glendale Reapers by KDWP fisheries biologists. The last lesson, given this year by Mark Van Scoyoc, showed a largemouth bass, several sunfish, a hellgrammite (the larval form of the Dobson fly), and various other small organisms. Participants also learned conservation of natural resources, fish species, and entomology.

"We always have an awesome time cleaning the river, and I feel that it is one of the best service projects that we do," said Judy Parsons, Glendale Reapers' president. "Each year, the club banner for the county fair is based on the 'reduce, reuse, and recycle' conservation theme."

The club applied for and received a Clean Water Neighbor grant in 1994 from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment. Glendale Reapers' grant application was titled "CLEANR" (Clean Lemon's Environment and Ninnescah River). It outlined a proposed budget for Earth Day workshops, field trips to Quivira National Wildlife Refuge, a club camera, water quality test kits, a first aid kit, and stencils to mark storm drains that drain directly into the Ninnescah.

In 1995, the club received the Stream Monitor of the Year Award, part of the conservation achievement program through the Kansas Wildlife Federation, for their efforts in cleaning this important Kansas tributary. They were recognized at an awards ceremony in Topeka for "demonstrating a long-term commitment to workable cooperative solutions to water pollution problems in the South Fork Ninnescah River."

Glendale Reapers are a growing and thriving club, with a mission for conservation projects. The river clean-up has given them continuing work accomplishing that mission.

—Hannah Brehm, Pratt

STREAM SURVEY CREWS

One of the lesser-known activities of KDWP is the work of its stream survey crews. The crews, part of KDWP's Environmental Services Section (ESS), were created in the mid-1990s to monitor aquatic life in streams throughout the state. In the ensuing 11 years, more than one million fish have been surveyed or collected. The crews have also created an extensive data base on the quality of habitat and density of insects, fish, mussels, and basic water chemistry in Kansas streams.

Under federal law, any publicly-funded development project or project needing another state or federal permit that will impact a threatened or endangered (T&E) species or its critical habitat requires a KDWP T&E Action Permit. When issued, such permits may, on rare occasion, include special conditions requiring mitigation or other corrective measures to reduce or eliminate adverse impacts to threatened or endangered species.

The information gleaned from stream surveys aids the ESS in this permitting process. ESS reviews between 1,500 and 2,000 projects each year, and of these, fewer than 30 may require Action Permits because of impacts to critical habitats. To date, no project in Kansas has been stopped by this review process although a few have been delayed.

"Actually, I like to measure success in this job as moving species off the T&E list," says Mark Van Scoyoc, KDWP Stream Program coordinator. "If we're doing our job well, species at risk may recover, and we also learn the places these species don't inhabit. This helps landowners and construction companies as well as the environment."

Last summer, two stream survey crews worked the rivers and streams in Kansas. A statewide crew, led by stream biologist Ryan Waters of Pratt, surveyed various locations throughout the state. Another crew, led by Ron Kegerries from the Clinton Wildlife Area office, surveyed in the eastern quarter of the state, primarily the Marais des Cygnes and Missouri river basins. In addition to the leaders, each team included four temporary fisheries technicians – college students working toward degrees in biology or environmental sciences.

Although the crews looked for rare or endangered species, common species were also recorded to provide timeline data that may be used to compare population trends. The surveys ran from the beginning of June through the end of August.

Information gleaned from stream monitoring is available to anyone, not just KDWP. Private consulting firms, other state agencies, landowners, and federal agencies such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service use this information. The information is also an invaluable student research tool.

"Our main goal is to increase public awareness of what we do and the information we have available," Van Scoyoc explains. "Eventually, I'd like to have our database on the agency's website."

For more information on KDWP's stream survey crews or the data they collect, contact Van Scoyoc at 620-672-5911.

–Shoup

GUNS, CRIME, & WILDLIFE

Through the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act, an 11 percent excise tax on all guns sales – including handguns – goes to wildlife conservation projects. Recent increases in gun sales is therefore good news for wildlife, but there may be added benefits.

New statistics show that firearm and ammunition sales are on the rise, coinciding with steady downward trends in gun crime, suicide, and accident rates in the U.S. Treasury Department figures indicate that 2005 retail sales of firearms and ammunition rose 2.6 percent, a total sales of $2.1 billion. For the year, approximately 4.7 million new guns were sold, bringing the estimated number of citizen-owned firearms in the U.S. to more than 290 million. The number of American households with at least one firearm is now estimated at nearly 110 million.

Of the various firearm types, the sharpest gains were seen in retail sales of handguns (pistols and revolvers). Handgun sales rose 3 percent while rifle and shotgun sales rose 1.8 percent. Ammunition sales rose 3.5 percent.

Combined 2005 sales of firearms and ammunition generated $224.3 million in excise taxes earmarked for wildlife and habitat conservation projects through the Wildlife Restoration Act. Since inception, the act has raised more than $5 billion for conservation.

The following chart reveals the trends in firearms sales, firearms crimes, suicides, and accidental firearms fatalities.

–National Shooting Sports Foundation

U.S. Statistics	Source	Last Year	Trend
Firearm & Ammunition Sales	U.S. Dept. of the Treasury	Up 2.6% to $2.1 billion	Up 27.7% since 1998
Firearms Produced for Retail Sale	Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF)	2,947,008	22.8 million total since 1998
Firearms Imported for Retail Sale	U.S. Census Bureau	1,845,366	10.7 million total since 1998
Right to Carry Laws	National Rifle Association (NRA)	Passed in 2 more states	Now in 40 states; 9 added since 1998
Firearm Crimes	Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)	Down 2.4% to 339,280	Down 7% since 1998
Firearm Suicides	Centers for Disease Control (CDC)	Down 1.1% to 16,907	Down 1.8% since 1998
Accidental Firearm Fatalities	National Safety Council	Tied previous year's all-time low of 700	Down 19.2% since 1998
Accidental Firearm Fatalities, Age 14 & Under	National Safety Council	Down to all-time low of 60	Down 50.4% since 1998

GRANTS FUNDING RESTORED

On June 27, the Senate Interior Appropriations Subcommittee voted to provide funding for State Wildlife Grants at $67.5 million in fiscal year 2007, the same as last year's level. While the amount was less than conservation groups had hoped for given that a majority of Senators supported an increase, this is still $17.5 million more than the $50 million proposal the House made after President Bush originally requested $74.7 million.

The nation's 50 state fish and wildlife agencies, including the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP), do not want more wildlife to be listed on the Endangered Species List. Conservation projects made possible by the state Wildlife Grants Program are the primary tools for moving species off the list and preventing others from being added.

The program's Five-Year Accomplishment Report highlights how these federal funds address pressing conservation needs in each state. In Kansas, State Wildlife Grants funds are helping cattle farmers determine which grazing techniques will protect nesting grassland birds while also optimizing beef production.

–Shoup

TEAL TIPS

September marks the traditional opening of hunting season when dove season opens Sept. 1. However, waterfowl hunters look to the early teal season for their first hunt. If you've never tried hunting these fast-flying, small ducks, it's worth your time to try. Teal are tasty ducks, and they're easier to hunt (although not necessarily easier to hit) than some of the larger late-migrating species.

The first thing, of course, is to find a good water hole. Teal are puddle ducks, so they prefer shallow water. Almost any standing water will do. Look for good-sized rainwater basins in crop fields or pastures. Shallow rivers can be good places, as well.

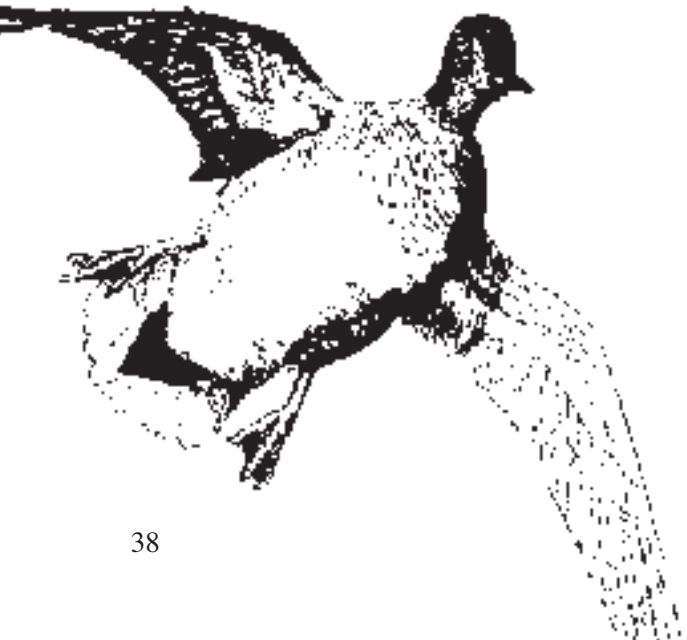
When you set up your decoys, factor in the sun more than the wind. Generally, ducks land flying into the wind, but they'll look for other ducks first. That's where your decoys come in. Because teal are not as wary as other ducks, being hidden is not crucial. Set up with the sun to your back, with your decoys out in front of you, no what matter what the wind direction is. Once teal have spotted your decoys from on high, the blinding sun will keep their focus on your decoys, not you, as they sail in for a landing.

Another tip is crucial for this warm-weather duck hunt: be sure to bring insect repellent.

Teal numbers look good this year in the Central Flyway. Blue-winged teal are up 28 percent from last year, with an estimated 5.9 million birds. Green-winged teal increased 20 percent to 2.6 million birds.

Teal generally visit the central portions of the state during migration. Depending on available water, some of the best spots in this area are Cheyenne Bottoms, Jamestown, Lovewell, McPherson, and Milford wildlife areas. Neosho Wildlife Area, in southeast Kansas, can also be very good.

—Shoup



Duck Outlook Bright

Kansas duck hunters can look for a good season if the Sunflower State gets timely rains this fall. Last summer, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) released a report that western breeding duck populations had increased 14 percent since last year. More ponds on the prairies should have translated to a good nesting season. If so, this will be reflected in the FWS Fall Flight Forecast, not available as of this writing.

The nesting numbers looked good as of mid-July, however. Nesting mallard populations increased 8 percent, with an estimated 7.3 million mallards on the prairies. The best news coming out of the survey was that pintail numbers were up 32 percent although still 18 percent below the long-term average.

Most other species increased as well. These include an estimated 2.8 million breeding gadwall, boosting their population by 30 percent from last year, 67 percent above the long-term average. Redheads increased 55 percent from 2005 with 916,000 birds, 47 percent above the long-term average. Canvasbacks increased 33 percent from last year, with an estimated 691,000 breeding birds, 23 percent above the long-term average. Northern shovelers multiplied to 3.7 million, 69 percent above the long-term average.

Only two species suffered setbacks. Wigeon numbers dropped 2 percent, to 2.2 million birds, 17 percent below the long-term average, and scaup dropped by 4 percent, continuing a long-term pattern that has persisted for the last 20 years. Scaup are now 37 percent below the long-term average.

—Shoup

Gaming The Hunt

Imagine a televised hunting tournament with a roster of professionals competing each week like NASCAR drivers. A cameraman accompanies each hunter as they shoot deer with dart guns, immobilizing prey long enough for scoring. At the end of the season, winners receive big cash and prizes.

It's all part of the vision of the new World Hunting Association (WHA), which last spring announced that hunting now has its own professional sports league, with a worldwide tour kicking off later this year.

The National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF) doesn't like the idea. NSSF doubts the concept's legal and public health viability. Moreover, in an interview with the Midland (Michigan) Daily News, an NSSF representative likened the whole thing to the ongoing debacle over remote Internet hunting: it's all merely the latest bad idea perverting a noble heritage into a huckster's sideshow and one more disservice to the tradition, purpose, and image of hunting.

Media attention to WHA is spreading fast. The WHA has secured prestigious hunting industry inaugural sponsors including G-5 Outdoors, Eastman Outdoors, Inc. (Carbon Express Arrows), Gorilla, Inc. (tree stands), Xtreme Scents, Pneu-Dart, and others.

Opposition is growing fast, too. In addition to NSSF, other groups and businesses publicly announcing their opposition to WHA are Cabela's, Bass Pro Shops, the International Black Powder Cartridge Rifle Hunting Association, Outdoor Life's Jim Zumbo, the National Rifle Association, Safari Club International, and many others.

—Bullet Points

The Good, The Bad, & The Ugly

by Mark Shoup

My old buddies Winthrop, Willard, and I camped on some private ground in the Red Hills last summer. We were there for no serious reason other than to shoot clay targets, convert tree stumps into firewood with our favorite sidearms, temporarily escape matrimonial civilization, and sit up late 'round a campfire engaged in intelligent masculine conversation. You know, lies.

As the evening fire crackled, the air filled with cicada song, and each of us poked the embers with specially-selected walking sticks. Willard casually mentioned how great tournament bass fishing was, soliciting an unexpectedly animated response from the normally mild-mannered, urbane Winthrop.

"Oh, contraire, mon ami! Flyfishing is true art!" he declared, raising the burning tip of his walking stick and cocking it from 10 o'clock to 2 o'clock as we ducked flying embers. "Unlike spinning and baitcast professional anglers – aka, 'meatgunners' – there is no 'NASCAR' equivalent for the flyfisher.

"Whilst the latter relies solely on a gentle stream, a pair of breathable, felt-bottomed waders; a box of AK Best dry flies, nymphs, and streamers to match the hatch; and $17,428 worth of precisely-tied and delicately-configured tackle, the former chews a tobacco plug while hurling plastic worms at the water from behind the command-post controls of a 300-horsepower fiberglass floating weapons platform!

"When the flyfisher catches a trout, he cradles it with hands extended and lovingly releases it. When the professional bass angler catches a fish, he French kisses it on national television, pops open a sponsored brew, and stuffs the fish in a dark hole in the hull!"

Willard cocked his head, and his complexion turned fiery red. He slammed the point of his walking stick into the fire as if he were firing a buzzbait past a stand of cattails. Sparks flew everywhere as Winthrop's chair seemed to jump back of its own accord.

"Why you soft-palmed, buggy-whip toting, elitist Orvis ogler!" Willard growled. "Waddaya mean 'true art'? How hard can it be to fling a string with a tuft of hair on it over a stream you're standing in? I think a river runs through your brain!

"I'll tell you what's art," he continued, as if enjoying himself. "Try pitching a watermelon-red Flippin' Tube rigged weedless with a 5/0 Gamakatsu hook and no weight on 20-pound fluorocarbon line from 20 feet away and making it SKIP the other 20 feet up under a dock that's only 4 inches clear of the water. Then you get the rush of battling a 3- or 4-pound spotted bass out from all those cedar posts without him breaking free.

"You do that, buddy, you've DONE something with your life!

"And furthermore, I'd never, ever French kiss a bass. You know what kind of uber-sandpaper crushers those things have in their throats? They can smash the meanest lobster-sized hardshell crawdads you ever saw. Even Jimmy Houston keeps his tongue in his head when he kisses a bass for TV, even though he's wagging it nonstop all the rest of the time.

"Flyfishing! A wussy sport. Just a notch above bait fishing, if you ask me."

Winthrop sat stunned, his neatly trimmed beard framing a gaping mouth that twitched as if trying to form words. The sweep second hand on his L.L. Bean wristwatch may have skipped a beat, but the avid limb-liner in me had been aroused.

"Well, who'd have thunk it?" I said, a touch of acid in my tone. "You're both full of horse hockey! You BOTH think it takes a small fortune to catch a fish! Well let me tell you something about art, and you might find out what a real challenge is.

"Wrap your little fishy minds around this: I give you a cane pole and a bobber to catch a passel of sunfish for bait. Now all you need is a handful of 1-ounce slip sinkers, 40 feet of 50-pound test braided nylon line, some heavy swivels, a box of 9/0 straight commercial hooks, and an old jon boat.

"Now imagine this: it's 1 a.m. and so dark you couldn't see a Kleenex to blow your nose. There's thunder and lightning in the distance but getting closer as you slip into the jon boat to check lines. As you round a bend in the creek, your flashlight reveals the line you have strategically hung from a willow limb over the middle of a deep log jamb. It is bobbing up and down so hard you think it might pull the whole tree over. You tie up the boat, stuff the flashlight in your mouth, slip into the water, and grab the line. Whatever's on the other end doesn't like that much and jerks your arm in up to your neck. You grab the line with your other hand and pull, hand over hand, until you feel a head 10 inches wide. Now you're bobbing up and down, too. What are you going to do?"

The two of them stared at me like I was an alien rather than an old friend.

"That's what I thought," I replied, savoring my stage presence. "Well you grab that flathead's steel-rasp lower lip and haul him over to the boat. It's a wrasslin' match, boys. A real man's fish fight!

"Trout and bass! Heck, that's nuthin'. And whaddya got to show for it? Some measly sissy fish with pink meat or something you end up throwing back. In one night, I can catch enough fish to feed all three of our families, all their kids' friends, and the Dallas Cowboys front line. And I don't have to go to my banker for financing.

"By the way, Willard, are you suggesting that the only reason you wouldn't French kiss a bass is because it has a sandpaper mouth? Makes me worry about you, boy." And then I threw my walking stick into the fire for emphasis.

We sat stunned. Winthrop feigned a yawn. Willard nonchalantly said, "Boys, I think we need some shut-eye."

As we unfurled our sleeping bags around the dying embers, Winthrop popped his head up and sighed contentedly. "It's been a great day, hasn't it guys?"

"The best," we replied in unison.

"If we have car trouble tomorrow," I mused, "maybe we'll have to stay another night."

The last thing heard was Winthrop mumble, "It's inevitable."

LADY AND THE BASS

The photo below was taken last May 20 by Steve Martin of Wichita. It is a picture of his daughter, Bailey, with a bass she had just taken with a grub on her Snoopy pole at a Cowley County watershed lake.

"I just thought it was such a beautiful picture of both my daughter and the bass that I wanted to submit it for inclusion in ***Kansas Wildlife & Parks*** magazine. I am a big fan of your magazine and a long-time subscriber."

It is a great picture, and Martin has done of a great job of "Passing It On."

— Shoup

KANSAS RIVER ACCESS

Four new access points with boat ramps have been added to the Kansas River. While the Kansas River (between high water marks) is open to the public for fishing and boating, permission must be obtained to cross private ground to gain access to the river. Therefore, access points are usually on public land or on private land opened to the public through programs such as KDWP's Fishing Impoundments and Stream Habitats (FISH) program.

KDWP built the Perry/Lecompton site and has provided some technical assistance, as well as $10,000 in grants to sites in De Soto and Edwardsville, as well as a $40,000 grant for a site in Manhattan. The Manhattan site is owned by Riley County, while the other sites are municipally-owned. Most of the technical assistance on these sites has been provided by the Friends of the Kaw, a nonprofit group dedicated to the river.

Locations of new access ramps to the Kansas River include the following:

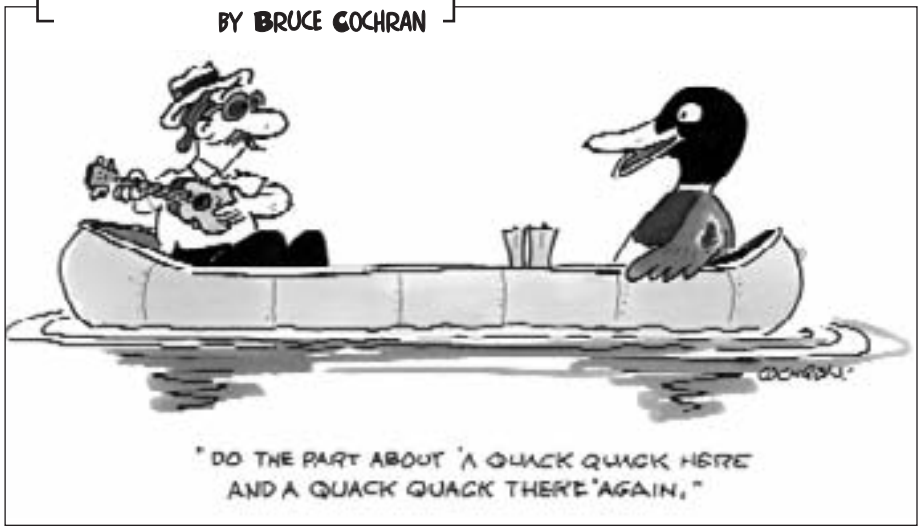
- Rising Sun (Perry/Lecompton) Access on the northwest side of the Lecompton Bridge over the Kansas River on Lecompton Road south of U.S. Highway 24. (This site is one year old.);
- De Soto Access located northwest of downtown De Soto. Take the Lexington Avenue exit from K-10 and go north. Turn north on Ottawa Street. Go over two railroad tracks to the city park entrance two blocks on the right. (At this time access is blocked because of additional construction. Phone Friends of the Kaw, 1-877-RIV-KEEP, for more information.);
- Edwardsville Access located southwest of the corner of Woodend Road and 9th St. in Edwardsville. Take the Woodend Road exit from I-435 north of the Kansas River and go west several miles to the access park; and
- Manhattan Access located under the Highway 177 Bridge on the southeast edge of Manhattan.

For more information on Kansas River access points, a map may be found on the Friends of the Kaw website, www.buildasitefactory.com/index.php?id=65.

—Shoup

WAY outside

BY BRUCE COCHRAN



How To Fish

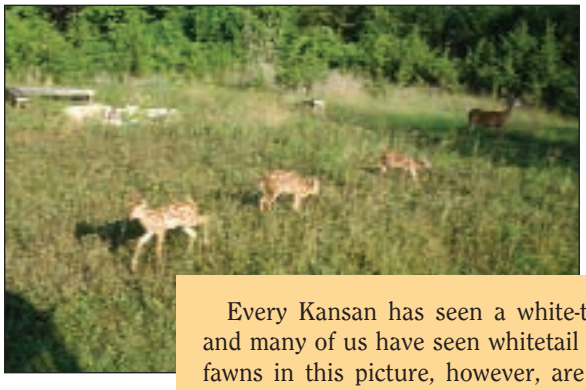
Many people assume they can't go fishing because they don't know how to fish or don't know much about fishing. But fishing is something everyone can do, and learning to fish is half the fun. Learning together — with family and friends — is fun, interesting, and easier than one might think. Browse the collection of articles at www.takemefishing.org, under "How To Fish." Just click the navigation links on the left side of the page or below to learn more. Here's some of the topics included.

- **Let's Catch Fish**
- **Fishing Safely**
- **Fishing from Shore**
- **Fishing from Boats**
- **Flyfishing**
- **Being a Responsible Angler**
- **Where Fish Live**

—Sport Fishing Curriculum Intermediate Edition

Whitetails Growing Up

In Kansas, the peak of the white-tailed deer mating season is in mid-November, but mating may occur earlier or later. The female will have one to three fawns about six months after mating. Fawns are reddish-brown at birth with white spots. They can walk at birth, forage within two days, and are weaned at about six weeks.



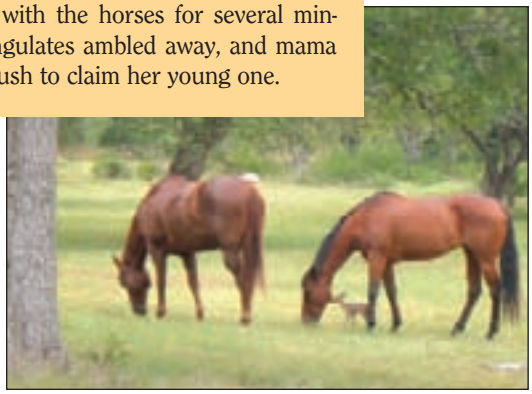
Every Kansan has seen a white-tailed deer, and many of us have seen whitetail fawns. The fawns in this picture, however, are somewhat rare. Whitetail does usually bear twins but – as the picture of fawn triplets by Mike Muson of Holton illustrates – triplets are not uncommon. Perhaps 10 to 15 percent of whitetail births are triplets.

A doe may leave her fawns well-hidden for hours while she feeds. (This is one reason KDWP urges people to leave fawns alone; the mother is always nearby.) If she has more than one fawn, she may hide them in separate places. The fawns lay on the ground with their heads and necks stretched flat, making it harder for predators to find them. Newborn fawns have no scent, and their dappled coat provides further camouflage.

Female fawns may stay with their mother for two years; males usually leave after a year.

Whitetail fawns grow rapidly, consuming wild herbs, fruits, nuts, and agricultural crops. However, they can survive on the leaves, buds, and twigs of woody trees and shrubs when other foods are scarce. I have observed them eating locust beans in a woodlot right next to a field of corn.

Even more unusual is the picture of the fawn and horses, taken by Mark Bird of Salina. Apparently this fawn had never heard the old saying that "birds of a feather flock together." One wonders if the fawn, smaller than the horse's head, thought the mare was its mother. Bird says that the fawn hung out with the horses for several minutes before the larger ungulates ambled away, and mama deer moved out of the brush to claim her young one.



Once nearly extirpated from the state, white-tailed deer numbers have increased dramatically in the last 20 years. They can be found virtually statewide wherever suitable habitat exists, but the highest whitetail densities are in the eastern one-third of Kansas. They have adapted to a variety of habitats, from natural woodlands, shelterbelts, and old homesteads to grasslands near crop fields.

Kansas opened its first modern-day deer season in 1965. A selective management program has created a healthy deer herd, with excellent potential for trophy-sized bucks in all regions while also offering ample antlerless permits to control the population.

Perhaps one of the most fascinating aspects of deer development is antler growth. Antlers are outgrowths of the skeletal system and are comprised primarily of calcium, phosphorus, and other minerals. Deer antlers grow from an area on top of the skull, known as the pedicel, which is attached to the burr, or base, of the antler.

But here's the fascinating part: bucks develop and shed new antlers each year. Antler growth may begin as early as mid-March. Increasing daylight in spring stimulates production of hormones such as testosterone, and antlers quickly emerge. The growing antler, which is the fastest growing form of true bone, is covered with a soft, fuzzy membrane known as velvet. The velvet is interlaced with blood vessels that carry and deposit minerals that build the antler. During this time, antlers are vulnerable to injury, which may cause deformed antlers. Antler growth usually continues into September, when the bone hardens and the velvet dries and falls away as the deer begin to rub their antlers on trees. This activity also strengthens the buck and prepares it for the battles he will have during the mating season, called the rut.

Pre-mating behavior may begin in late September or early October, when deer lay scent in scrapes -- pawed-out depressions in the ground that attract members of the opposite sex.

When the mating season is over -- usually by the end of December -- bucks begin to shed their antlers. Depending on the individual, this may happen from late December through March. Research suggests that individual bucks shed their antlers within a week of the same time each year. Once shed, antlers are often gnawed on by rats, squirrel, rabbits, and other animals for the calcium. Many people collect shed antlers in late winter and early spring, as well.

–Shoup

CASTLES IN THE SAND

Fourteen teams of families and friends participated in the 11th Annual Sandcastle/Sculpture Contest hosted by Lovewell State Park, near Webber on July 16.

Sand Castle plaques and team choice of prize packages were given for first, second, and third places for the best sand castle or sculpture. All participants shared in over $250 in donated prizes. Prizes included gate admission tickets to Worlds of Fun donated by KRFS Radio of Superior, Neb., and KREP Radio of Belleville.

The Kaundart family Team of Smith Center earned first place with their sculpture of a live mermaid,

Miller Driller's team from Nelson, Neb. and Morrowville captured second place with a Lovewell Survivor Island including a wishing well, and third place went to the Rayah's Troopers with a castle including courtyards and landscaping.

"The Sand Castle Contest is an excellent event for families, friends, and individuals," Cleveland said. "It encourages good sportsmanship, teamwork, and creativity. It's neat to see families with children as young as two and grandparents in their 70s all working together on their entries. However, we would not be able to host events such as this without generous sponsorship from area businesses."

—Lovewell State Park release

STEVE HARPER SCHOLARSHIP

Mitchell Keeley, a 2006 graduate of LaCrosse High School, was named this year's recipient of the Steve Harper Scholarship. Keeley plans to pursue a degree in wildlife biology at Fort Hays State University and will receive a $1,000 scholarship.

Steve Harper was a longtime outdoor writer and photographer for the Wichita Eagle. He died of cancer in 2000, and a scholarship was established in his name. Over $10,000 was raised from business, organizations and individuals for the program.

More than 20 students from across Kansas applied for the scholarship. Only students attending a Kansas college or university and majoring in natural resource management or photography are eligible. Applicants are judged by representatives from Harper's family, the Outdoor Writers of Kansas, and the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. Judging criteria includes past experience in their field of study, career plans, and academic accomplishments.

—Mathews

PLAYA VIDEO

In an effort to raise awareness and conservation of playa wetlands, the Playa Lakes Joint Venture (PLJV) – a partnership of conservation groups, landowners, and natural resource agencies – has produced a new video about the wetlands, *The Playas: Reflections of Life on the Plains*, now available on DVD or VHS.

The 28-minute video illustrates the values of playas to wildlife, water, and people; threats to the wetlands; and how people are working to conserve them. The video features sweeping aerial footage of playas captured by hot air balloon, as well as interviews with playa specialists, biologists, landowners, and community leaders throughout the six-state playa lakes region.

The video is available in either DVD or VHS format. Email Debbie.slobe@pljv.org. For more information about playas, visit the PLJV web site, http://www.pljv.org/video.html.

—PLJV release

AQUATIC NUISANCES

Aquatic nuisance species (ANS) are non-native species that threaten the stability of Kansas waters. There are several major pathways through which ANS are introduced, but most are the result of human activities. To prevent the spread of nuisance species follow these steps:

- empty bait buckets on dry land. Do not dump bait into the lake;
- never move live bait or fish caught from one body of water to another. It is illegal;
- inspect equipment (boat, trailer, anchor, duck decoys, waders) and remove any visible organisms, vegetation, and mud;
- wash equipment with 140-degree water, a 10-percent chlorine and water solution, or a hot saltwater solution if you have been in zebra mussel infested waters;
- drain all water from your boat and equipment before leaving a water body. ANS such as zebra mussels can be unknowingly transported with lake water; and
- do not release aquarium pets. If you cannot find a home for the plants and animals in your aquarium, bury them or freeze and dispose of them in the trash. Dump the water in a field or yard, far away from storm drains.

Contact the Emporia Research Office at (620) 342-0658 or your local KDWP office if you find any aquatic nuisance species.

—Jason Goeckler, aquatic nuisance specialist, Emporia

by Pat Silovsky

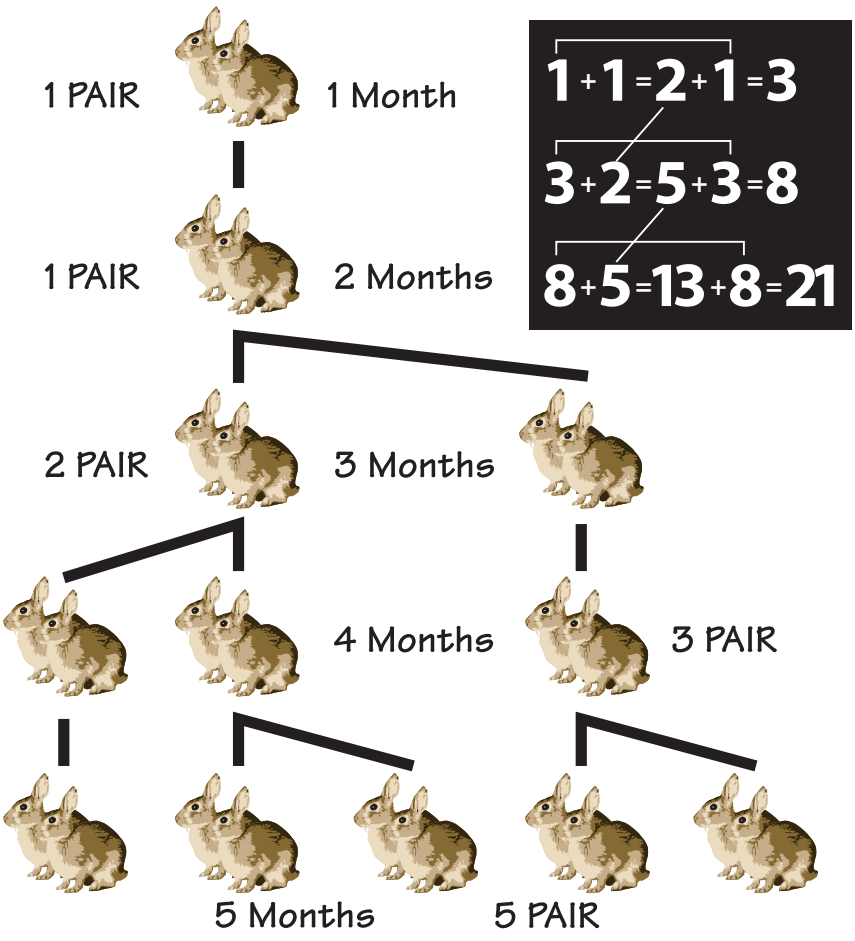
NATURE'S MATH

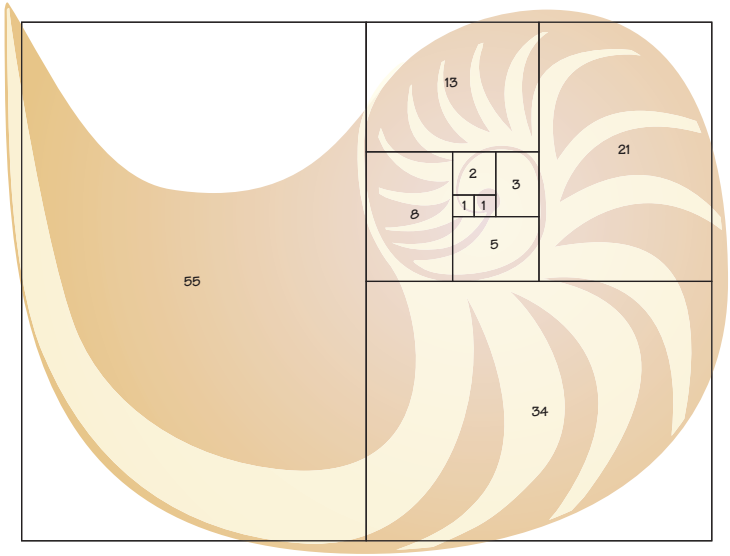
Leonardo Fibonacci was a 13th century Italian mathematician. He gave us the decimal numbering system and freed the world from the cumbersome system of Roman numerals. In Fibonacci's day, mathematical competitions and challenges were common. For example, in 1225 Fibonacci took part in a tournament at Pisa ordered by the emperor himself, Frederick II.

It was in competition that the following problem arose: "Beginning with a single pair of rabbits, if every month each productive pair bears a new pair, which becomes productive when they are one month old, how many rabbit pairs will there be after [any given number] of months? Fibonacci solved the problem.

It is easy to see that one pair will be produced the first month, and one pair also the second month (since the new pair produced in the first month is not yet mature), and in the third month, two pairs will be produced — one by the original pair and one by the pair which was produced in the first month. In the fourth month, three pairs will be produced, and in the fifth month, five pairs. After this, things expand rapidly and we get the following sequence of numbers: 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, 55, 89, 144, 233, and so on.

Do you see the pattern? To find the next number in the series, use this simple rule: add the last two numbers to





get the next. You have just discovered the Fibonacci Sequence, named for Leonardo Fibonacci.

This simple, seemingly unremarkable sequence has fascinated mathematicians for centuries. Its properties show up in an amazing array of objects, from the design of Greek buildings to growth patterns in plants and even the proportions of the human body.

So how can Fibonacci numbers can be seen in nature? Plants show many examples of the Fibonacci numbers. Some plants branch in such a way that they always have a Fibonacci number of growing points. Flowers often have a Fibonacci number of petals. Daisies may have 34, 55, or even as many as 89 petals. Fibonacci numbers can also be seen in the arrangement of seeds on flower heads, such as that of a sunflower. If you look closely, the seeds appear to be spiraling both to the left and to the right. Both directions display a Fibonacci number in each succeeding spiral.

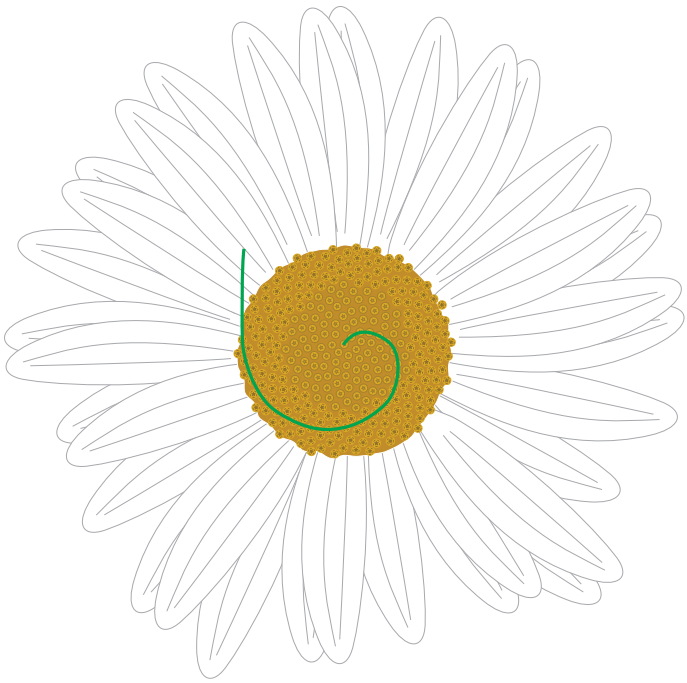
The reason that many seeds seem to form spirals is that this arrangement allows the most seeds to be packed into the space. They are uniformly packed at any stage of development, with no crowding in the center or spacing out at the edges.

We can show the Fibonacci numbers in another way. Start with two small squares of size #1 next to each other. On top of both of these, draw a square of size #2 (1 + 1). Next, draw a new square with one side touching the square of #2 and a square of #1, having sides three units long. Then draw another touching one #2-square and #3-square creating sides of #5. Continue adding squares around the picture, each new square having a side which is as long as the sum of the latest two square's sides. This set of rectangles comprising two successive Fibonacci numbers in length and which have squares with sides that are Fibonacci numbers is called the Fibonacci Rectangles.

While not a true mathematical spiral (like a spider's web), it is a good approximation of the kind of spirals that do appear often in nature. Such spirals are seen in the shape of shells of snails or sea shells, in the arrangement of seeds on flowering plants like the sunflower, and in the spirals of pinecones.

Leonardo Fibonacci did not himself discover all the occurrences in nature of this sequence that bears his name, but he was a remarkable mathematician nonetheless.

The Fibonacci sequence and its closely related number, the Golden Mean, appear in everything from the proportions of the human body to Greek architecture to music by Mozart and Bach. Maybe you can take a closer look around and find something in nature that uses the Fibonacci numbers. Start by taking a closer look at a pinecone or sunflower.



Backlash

by Mike Miller

Too Many Deer?

The other day I dropped by Lennie's to watch the K-State football game. At halftime, we were standing on his deck drinking a soda when his neighbor Roger Wirthlow hollered at us from his kitchen window.

"When are you Fish and Game boys going to do something about all these deer? It's getting to the point that I'm afraid to drive after dark."

I was waiting for Lennie to fire an insult, but he didn't.

"I'll bet Worthless hasn't seen a deer a month," I hissed.

Lennie waved me off and surprised me with his hospitality.

"Hey, Worthless. Come on over and have a soda with us. Too bad your Jayhawks are getting beat up ." (Okay, so Lennie couldn't be completely nice.)

Wirthlow eased out of his back door suspiciously – like he was expecting to get hit with a water balloon at any second. He stared cautiously at Lennie and me for several seconds. Then he mustered an attitude, hitched up his pants and made a beeline for Lennie's deck as fast as his stubby little legs would bring him.

Lennie tossed him a soda just as he cleared the last step, and this obviously pleased Wirthlow. He was "one of the guys."

"Have a seat, Worthless," Lennie said smiling. "The Cats are playing some pretty good football, aren't they?"

"Uh, I didn't have the K-State game on," Wirthlow said, still leery. "But KU, my team, is having an off day. This is nice," Wirthlow said, adjusting the lawn chair and looking around. "Thanks for inviting me over."

"So, what was that you were saying about all the deer?" Lennie cut to the chase.

"It's terrible about all the deer hit on the highways. It's scary to drive after dark. You guys really should do something about them," Wirthlow said in a much less confrontational tone than he had earlier.

"I know a guy at work who's hit three in the last six months. And the newspaper from the little town where my brother lives has five or six deer-car accidents listed every week. I think they're dangerous."

"For crying out loud," I cried. " That guy needs to slow dow . . . "

"Hold on, Miller," Lennie said, holding up his hand. "Let's be considerate of Worthless' feelings."

Both Wirthlow and I looked at Lennie like he had just grown a horn. This wasn't at all like him. Wirthlow's eyes darted, again looking for that incoming water balloon, and he was fidgeting in his chair.

"Look," Lennie continued. "All I'm saying is that Worthless may have a point. Driving in the evenings is getting dangerous. As a matter of fact, I even hit a deer six months ago. Just about had to haul my beloved old pickup to the salvage yard. It's fixed now, but it was nip and tuck there for a while."

This was getting interesting. Lennie had never agreed with Wirthlow, even when he knew Wirthlow was right. Wirthlow got up to leave. As much as he wanted to be one of the guys, he wasn't comfortable with Lennie agreeing with him.

"I – be, bet, better be going," Wirthlow stammered.

"Aw, c'mon," Lennie chuckled. "You just got here. And besides, we might make a Wildcat fan out of you if you watch the second half with us."

"That's alright. I really need to get home."

"Okay," Lennie said obligingly. "But be careful of those deer. I wouldn't even drive after 6 p.m. if I were you. It just isn't safe, especially along some of the sand roads north of town. And it's especially bad this time of year. See, bucks go through what we call the post-velvet rampage. As soon as they shed the velvet from their antlers, they start traveling, trying to show off for the pretty does. They're crazy right now. In fact I saw a news story about a Texas buck that attacked a man just walking down the road."

"Yeah – I saw that, too." Wirthlow said with fear in his voice. "I need to go. Geez, I'm almost afraid to walk through my own backyard. Heck, last winter, I saw three deer run through my garden. You guys need to do something," he finished, and as he reached the bottom of Lennie's deck steps, he cautiously looked around like he was stepping into traffic.

"We will, Worthless. We will," Lennie assured. "But in the meantime, don't drive at dawn and dusk."

"What's up with that," I said incredulously when Wirthlow was out of earshot. "Post-velvet rampage? You're full of you-know-what. I mean —"

"Don't waste your breath, Miller." Lennie said as he reached for another soda. "See, Ole' Worthless stumbled upon one of my secret dove hunting honey holes on the wildlife area northwest of town. I had no idea he hunted doves. He was up there shooting "my" doves night before last, so I had to figure out some way to keep him away. And the by look on Ole Worthless' face, this might work for while."