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On Point

by Mike Hayden



Governor's One-Shot Turkey Hunt Wants Young Hunters

When I proposed the Kansas Governor's One-Shot Turkey Hunt in 1987, I wanted to showcase Kansas' outstanding hunting opportunities, as well as our great hospitality. With the help of Marv McCown, then El Dorado's Chamber of Commerce Executive Vice President, and a few thousand local volunteers and landowners, the event has grown beyond our expectations over the last 20 years. My successors as governor have supported and participated in the event. Gov. Sebelius took her first turkey two years ago and was successful last spring, as well.

Today, 80 celebrity hunters are invited each spring. Annually, more than 600 volunteers, 85 hunting guides, and 250 landowners help make the hunt a success. The public banquet, which drew 200 people that first year, now attracts more than 700. The event is nationally recognized and has put Kansas and El Dorado on the map.

And while I'm proud of how the event has evolved, I'm particularly fond of the youth program that was started in 2002. Each spring six lucky young hunters are selected to participate. Applicants must be 12-18 years old and have completed a hunter education course. A parent or guardian must accompany each youngster during the weekend, except while they are hunting with their guide.

Each of the six young hunters will be provided with a personal hunting guide, tickets to all the events, hotel accommodations, turkey permits, lifetime hunting licenses (sponsored by Cabela's), as well as gifts from Gus Bader and Tristar Sporting Arms. The six hunters will be introduced to turkey hunting by experienced guides in some of Kansas' best turkey hunting woods. The

youth and their sponsors will meet Gov. Sebelius and will be involved in nearly all the weekend events. Exposing youngsters to hunting and the positive side of such an event is vital in recruiting these young people into the hunting tradition.

This year the Governor's One-Shot Turkey Hunt will take place April 12-14. Eligible youth should contact John Moore at jmoore72@cox.net or Gene White, P.O. Box 308, El Dorado, KS 67042 for an application. Applications must be submitted by January 15, 2007. Moore and White co-chair the selection committee and will help select the lucky recipients from the pool of applicants.

"This is a great opportunity for any youngster who has an interest hunting," White said. "We look for young people who might not normally get an opportunity to hunt turkeys, and we surround them with quality people to ensure they enjoy an outstanding outdoor experience. We'd like to think that some of these young hunters will discover that hunting is something they want to do the rest of their lives. Young people are the future of hunting and wildlife conservation."

Another important part of the Governor's One-Shot Turkey Hunt event is the scholarship program. Each year college students who are studying wildlife management or natural resource conservation are eligible for scholarships. The annual One-Shot Banquet Auction raises money that is added to donations provided by generous supporters such as Slim Flinchum, Mark Elliot, Koch Industries, and Jeanette Rudy. For information about the Willis Scholarship Foundation, Inc. call (316) 321-3835.

2007 Photo Issue

Outdoor Kansas is full of hidden treasures. The calls of passing geese or the sight of a cardinal in a snowy tree may be familiar to all, but deeper secrets can be found by looking closer - even in a city backyard. In Kansas' wild places, the unusual is often the norm. Observing new things is part of the never-ending thrill of visiting the natural world. I feel lucky to do this on a daily basis.

This photo issue is dedicated to the secret things we seldom see, or in some cases, things we simply don't take time to look at; the vast sky at night, a cicada emerging from its shell, a baby killdeer with its mother, or a bob-white singing in prairie flowers.

Some of my rarest photos from 20 years are included on these pages. They involve animal behavior, things in unexpected places, color aberrations or magnificent skies. I wish I could tell you what it was like to be there - the smells, the sounds, the touch of the wind at each moment. But if you're captivated by such imagery, chances are you already know.

I hope you enjoy this issue and help keep our state clean and beautiful. As always, I thank God for the beauty and experience of the outdoors. I'll keep searching for Kansas' hidden treasures and hope you do, too.

Mike Blair



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Front Cover: A burrowing owl attacks a swift fox that passes through its nesting territory. Mike Blair used a 600mm lens, f/5.6 @ 1/500th sec. **Back:** Kansas skies are a kaleidoscope of changing color. Mike Blair shot this Barber County sunset with a 600mm lens, f/16 @ 1/500th sec.



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Sagittarius Region, summer sky, Pratt County

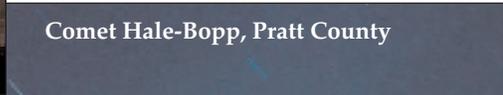
The atmosphere is a wondrous complement to terra firma. Day and night, its ever-changing conditions set the stage for the way we view the world. In a lifetime, few skies appear the same.

Lightning, Stafford County





Northern lights, Pratt County



Comet Hale-Bopp, Pratt County

Storms, lightning, haloes,
stars, fiery sunsets - all
are unusual in their own
way. Many skies are
unforgettable.

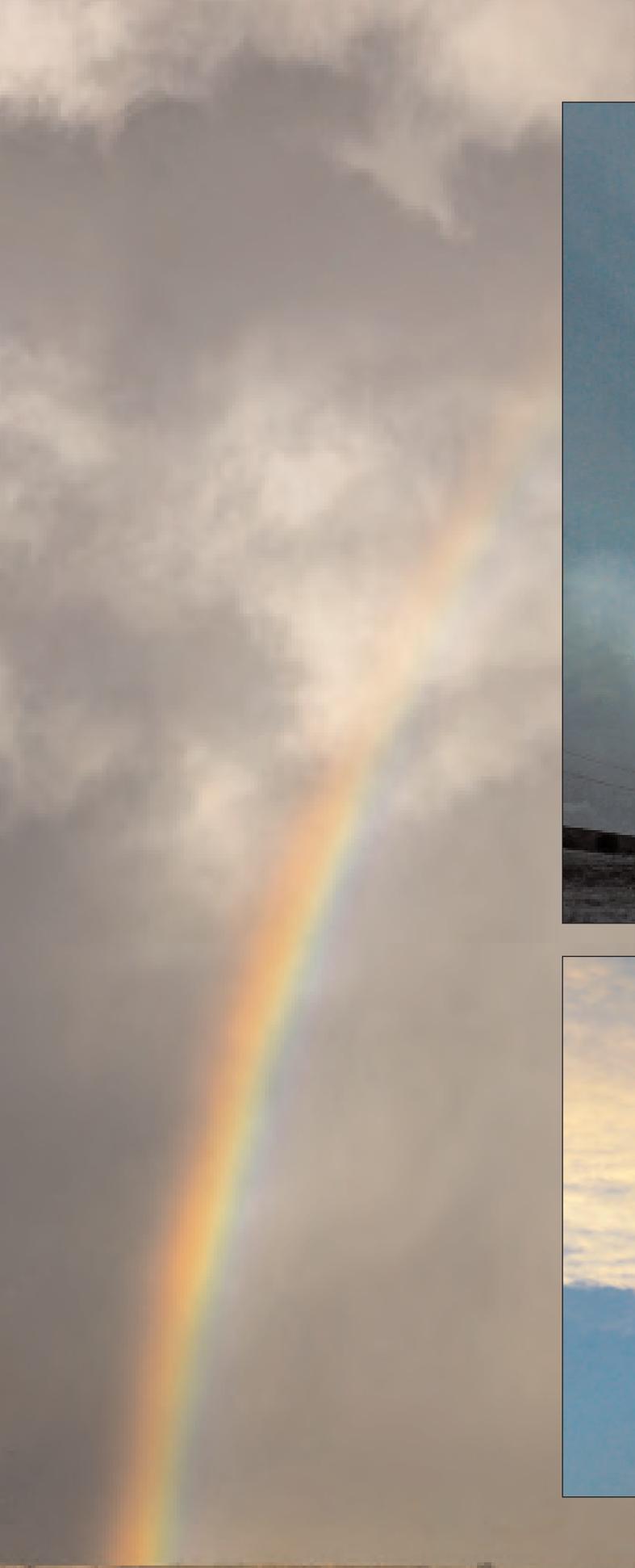


Cirrus halo, Comanche County

Thunderstorm, Stafford County



Sunrise, Atchison County



Storm clouds, Kingman County



Shadows on cirrus, Pratt County

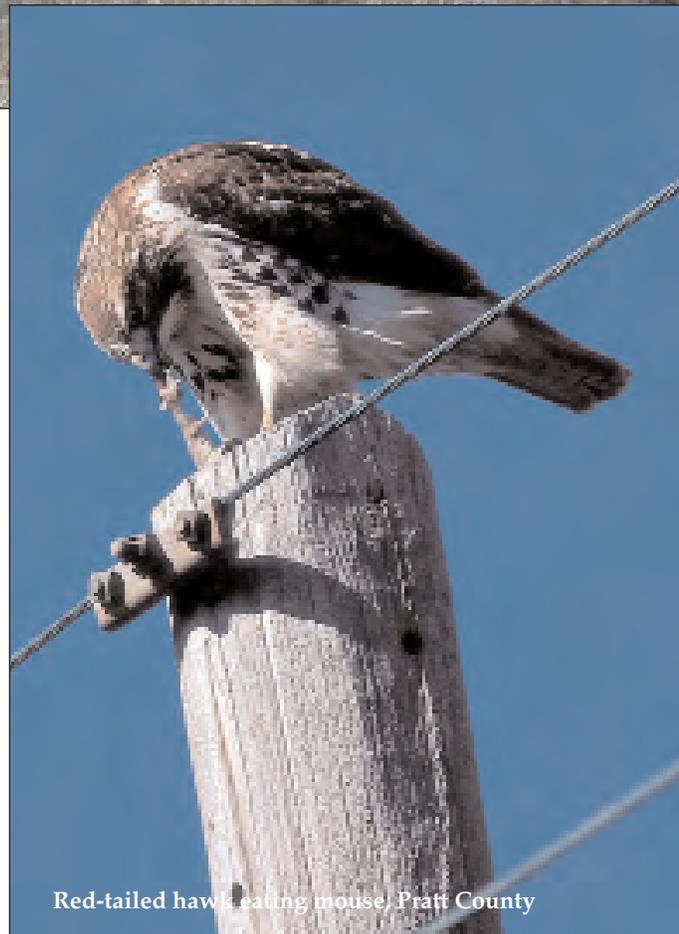


Rainbow, Pratt County



Swift fox with ground squirrel, Wallace County

Predation, seldom observed, is the basis of life for many animals. Fascinating and dramatic, it's the simple give-and-take of natural order.



Red-tailed hawk eating mouse, Pratt County



Barn owl at nest, Barber County

A barn owl arrives at its nest with a fledgling red-winged blackbird. Photographed at 1:30 a.m., this night hunter no doubt raided pond cattails as the victim slept. In a month of observation, this was the only bird I saw returned to the owlets, which normally ate a diet of rodents.



Osprey with goldfish, Pratt County



Crows stealing food, Reno County

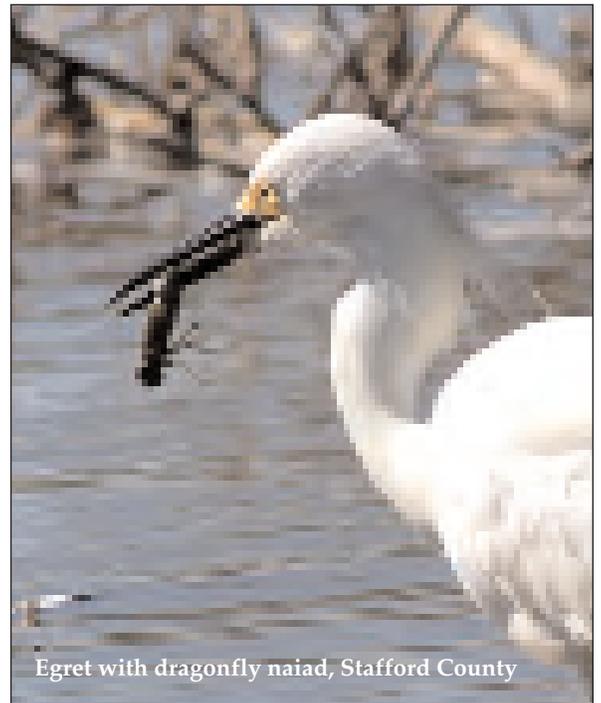


Bluebird, Reno County



Swift fox, Wallace County

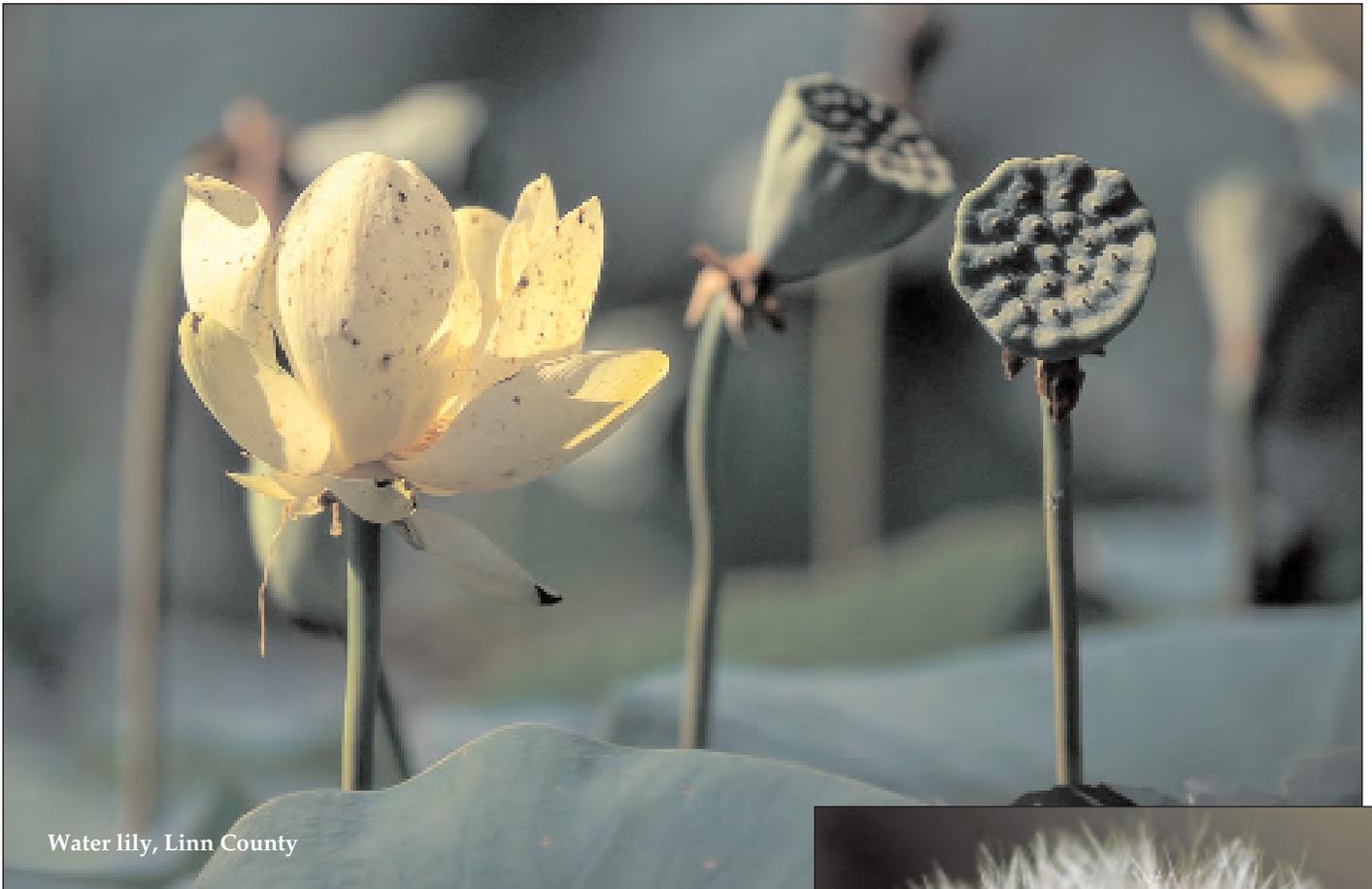
Look carefully at the female bluebird. Her broken leg healed naturally in a misshapen position. Despite this handicap, she raised three broods the same year in a hollow apple tree. Such an injury can cause suffering and difficulty, yet the bird overcame it.



Egret with dragonfly naiad, Stafford County



Nighthawk chick, McPherson County



Water lily, Linn County

Look closely at the details. You'll often find surprises missed in a casual glance. Color, camouflage, and symmetry tell stories that lead to greater knowledge of the outdoors.



Dandelion seed head, Pratt County



Columbine, Elk County

Dragonfly mating wheel, Neosho County



Emerging annual cicada, Linn County



Crawdad, Pratt County



Dark phase tiger swallowtail, Cherokee County



Mule deer buck in cave, Wallace County



Hornworm caterpillar, Pratt County



Tent caterpillars, Comanche County



Tenpetal mentzelia, Barber County

Wildlife deals with life as it is.
Heat, cold, enemies, diseases and
parasites are met in direct fashion.

Pronghorns and coyote, Wallace County



Killdeer with chick, Linn County

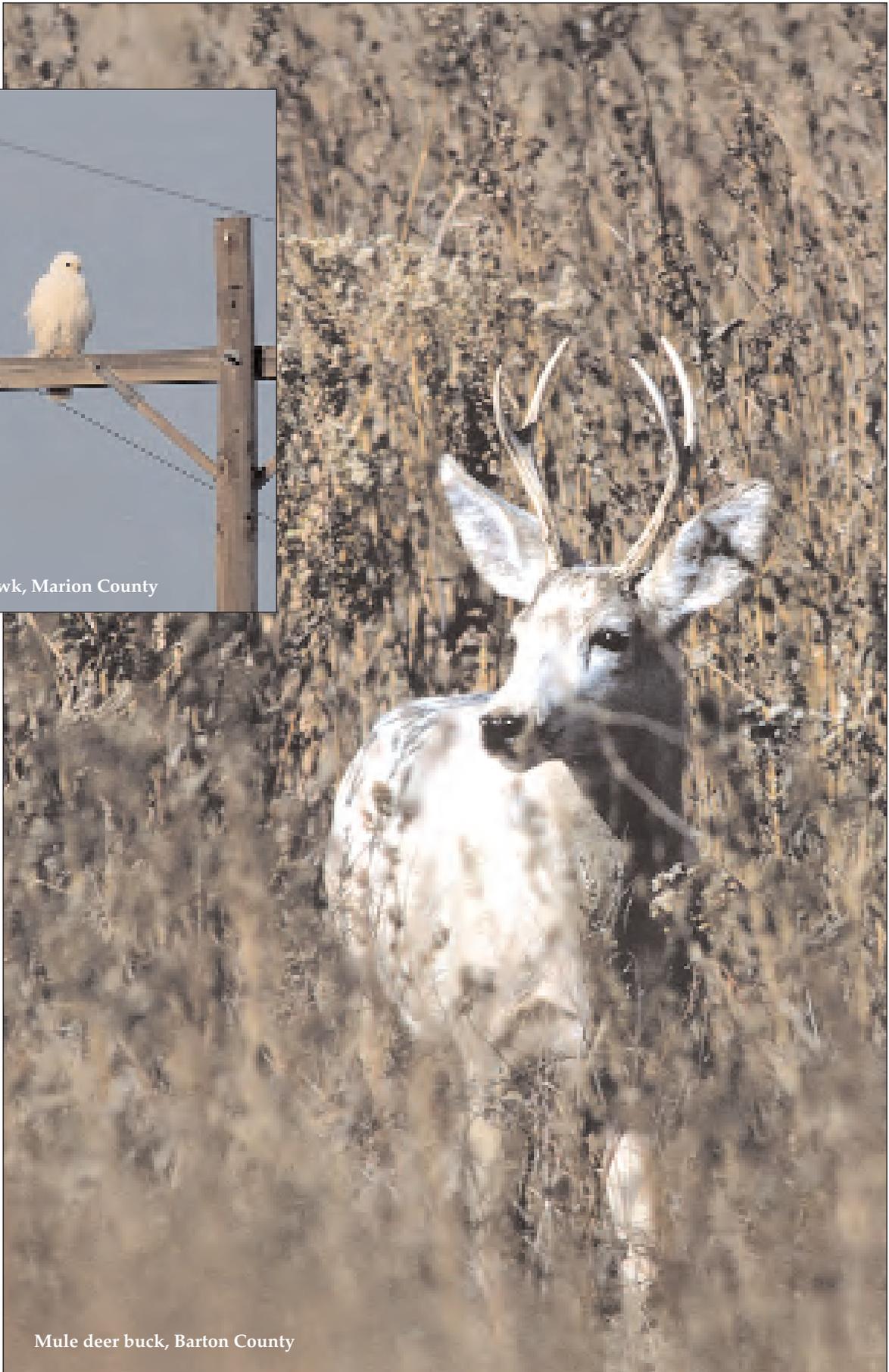


Scissor-tailed flycatcher harassing prairie falcon, Kiowa County

Prey may turn on predators when young are at stake. When a coyote got close to a pronghorn fawn, two does gave chase, overtaking and hooking the dodging hunter several times before it reached the distant fenceline and safety. The coyote literally ran for its life in this seldom-seen encounter.



Red-tailed hawk, Marion County



Mule deer buck, Barton County



Rio Grande hen, Barber County

Rare color phases mark some animals and provide surprising observations. Here, a hawk, a young mule deer, and a hen turkey show the unnatural white coloration that makes them unique and handicaps them throughout their lives in the natural world.



Rio Grande hen, Pratt County

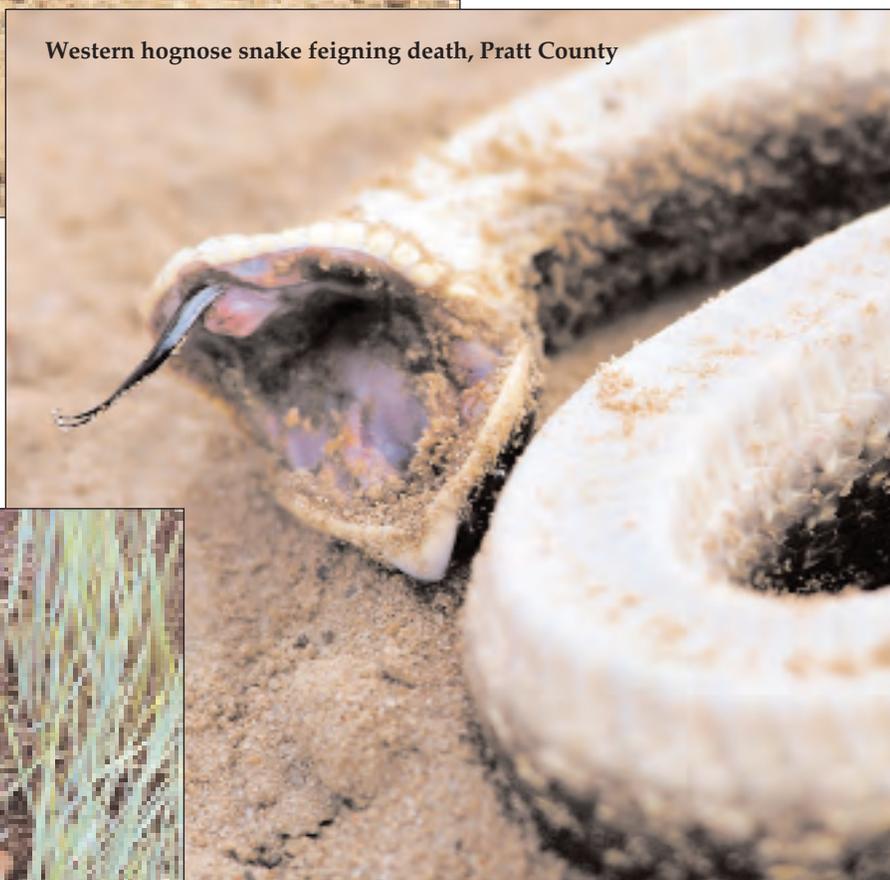


Lesser Prairie Chickens, Kiowa County

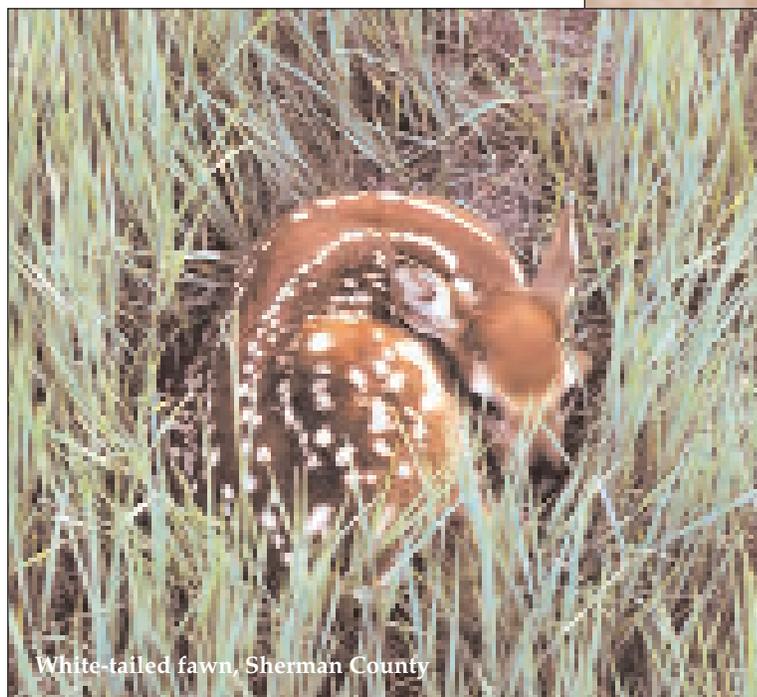
Defense is fight or flight. Dominance for mating rights and protection from enemies are daily rituals seldom witnessed by man.



Bull snake, Pratt County



Western hognose snake feigning death, Pratt County



White-tailed fawn, Sherman County



Coyotes, Stafford County



Animal interaction creates drama and raises questions. Wild societies exist with unwritten rules and social etiquettes. Understanding wildlife behavior leads to greater appreciation of the world around us.



Elk, Cowley County



Moose, Rush County

A captive cow elk strips and eats velvet from a late-summer bull. The drying skin of hard antlers provides high protein for the normally herbivorous cow, and while such behavior is not normal, it is recorded in literature.

Moose in Kansas? This animal, far from its normal home in the mountainous west, traveled through Wyoming, Nebraska, and Kansas in an odd departure from expected behavior.



Blue-winged teal, Pratt County



Pintails, Pratt County



Bald eagles, Riley County



Rio Grande turkeys, Stafford County



White-fronted geese, Russell County



Prairie dogs, Ellsworth County



Avocets, Pratt County



White-tailed buck, Brown County



Migrations or mating urges allow unexpected sightings. Seldom is a big white-tailed buck caught in the magnificence of full sunlight, but it happens in November while he searches for does.

A rare view of a wood stork in Kansas is made more dramatic by the incidental rendezvous with a white pelican.



Wood stork and white pelican, Stafford County



Black snake, Linn County



Red fox kits, Pratt County



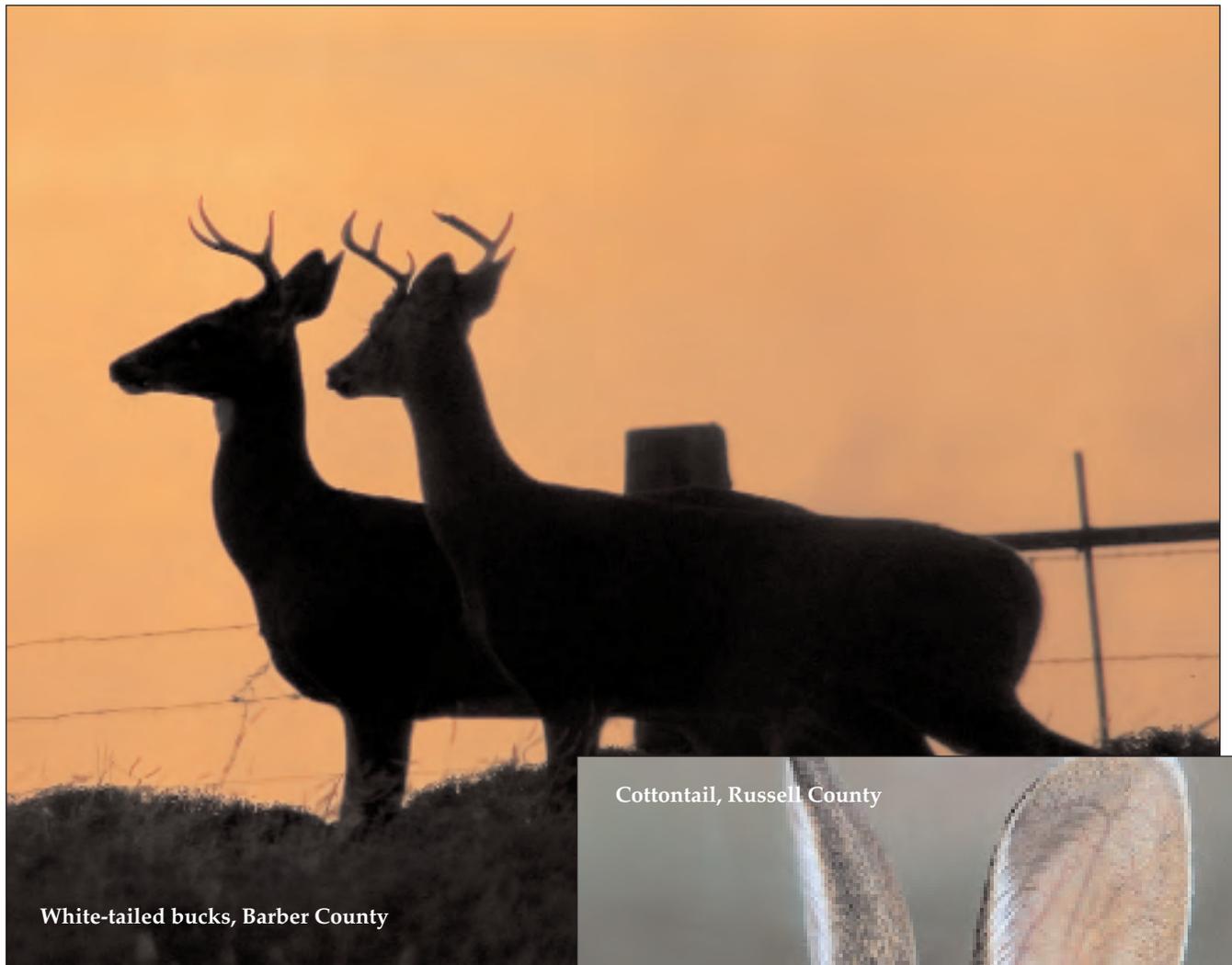
Bobwhite, Pratt County



White-tailed fawns, Pratt County

Young and old, animals may travel together for companionship or mutual protection. Such pairings make unusual outdoor moments.

Other unforgettable images are found in the action of a fight or the simplicity of a quiet moment spent grooming.



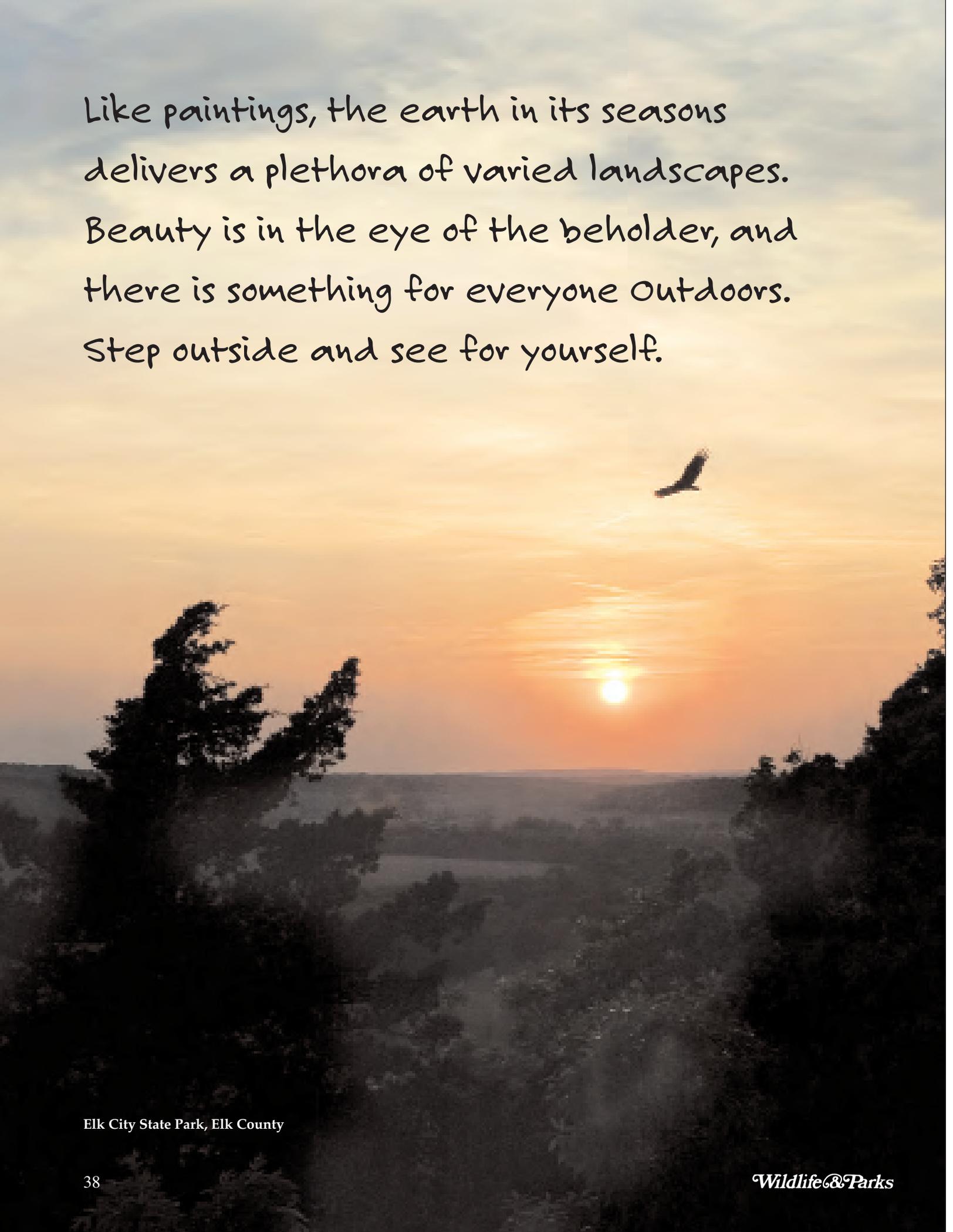
White-tailed bucks, Barber County

Cottontail, Russell County

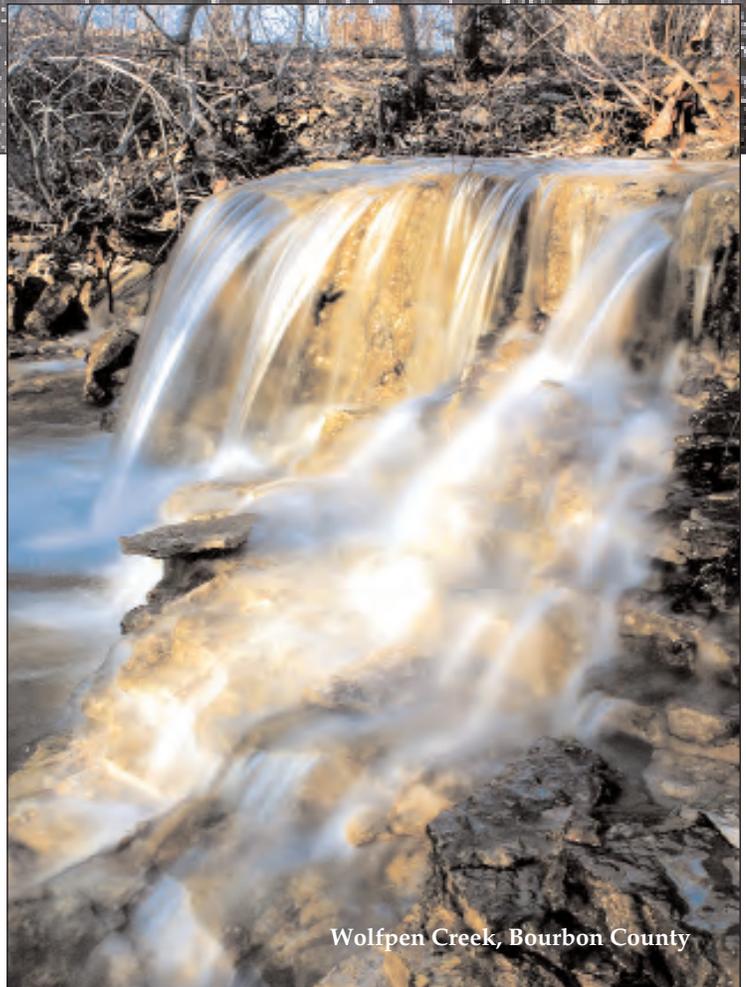
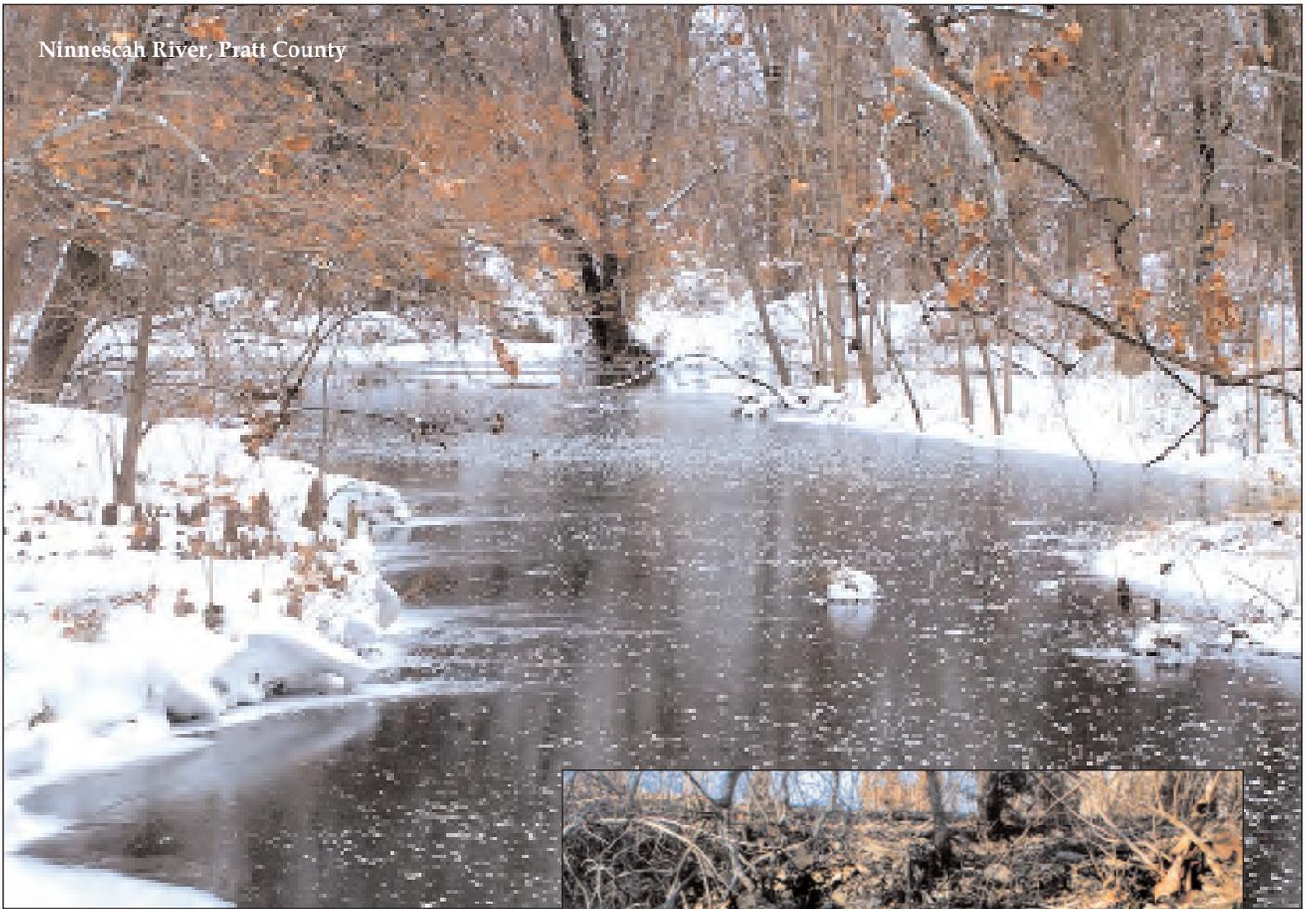


Bald eagles, Riley County

Like paintings, the earth in its seasons delivers a plethora of varied landscapes. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and there is something for everyone outdoors. Step outside and see for yourself.



Ninnescah River, Pratt County



Wolfpen Creek, Bourbon County





Penstemons, Konza Prairie, Riley County



Upper La Cygne Reservoir, Miami County





Rainbow through 600mm lens, Barber County



Backlash

by Mike Miller

The Weather's Fine

We Kansans enjoyed some beautiful weather this past fall. If you only visited Kansas once and it was one of many days in early November, you have a favorable impression of our fair state. However, there was one day that I'm sure convinced many visitors never to return. It was cold and the wind howled more than 50 mph – with gusts even higher! As usual, I complained bitterly, but I've decided that we need those days, just like we need 105-degree summer days with the wind blowing blast furnace-like at 40 mph. Weather makes Kansas what it is and one of those things is lightly populated.

Besides, I can't imagine what we Kansans would do without the weather to worry about? What would our newscasters do for half of their show? And how would we make small talk without our weather to discuss? We need weather extremes. They keep us busy and the riffraff out. I'm not sure what riffraff is, but it sounds like something we don't want.

It's easy, though, to fall into the trap of thinking life would be better if the weather was always pleasant. I remember one fine spring day when Lennie and I were pond fishing with Lennie's visiting cousin Wishbone, who was from a little town in central Kansas. I don't think Wishbone is the brightest bulb on Lennie's family tree.

"One of these days, I'm going to move to a state where the weather is like this year-round," he vowed as he warmed his face in the April sun. "Like — Nebraska!"

"Nebraska!" Lennie hooted. "You think the weather is like this year-round in Nebraska? Just where do you think Nebraska is?"

"Uh, I don't know, but I thought I'd read something about vacationing in Nebraska and how great the weather was. Isn't it near California?"

"Yeah," Lennie snorted. "Just a hop, skip and a jump. Wishbone, you grew up 80 miles from Nebraska. It's colder up there in the winter than it is here. Didn't they teach geography in your high school?"

Wishbone had clammed up. He knew that anything he said could and would be used against him. Lennie never forgets.

"Ah yes. Sunny, tropical Nebraska," Lennie rolled on. "Come to Nebraska where the weather's always warm and the beaches are lined with white sand. And if you buy that, I've got some ocean-front property in Iowa I'd like to sell you," he chuckled.

Wishbone hung his head even lower, knowing that this

was only the beginning. Lennie was warming up for when he and Wishbone would be around the rest of the brothers and cousins at the family dinner later that evening.

But Wishbone's comment got me thinking about how people migrate to places with consistently pleasant weather. Just look at how populations have soared in California and Florida. One of the things I like best about Kansas is the population density, or lack thereof. No crowds, no lines, no traffic.

Low population density is just one of the good things about Kansas. A quick glance through this issue will give you many more reasons to like Kansas. Good things include: unparalleled, four-species upland bird hunting; one of the longest turkey seasons in the U.S.; top-notch white-tailed deer and mule deer hunting; undiscovered small game hunting; excellent waterfowl hunting and world renowned wetlands (Cheyenne Bottoms WA and Quivira NWR); uncrowded fishing for bass, catfish, walleye, wipers, stripers, crappie, and white bass; 24 state parks with hiking, biking, and riding trails, as well as water access; there's wide-open spaces for just about any other outdoor activity you can think of; and the friendly people — by and large, Kansas folks are some of the nicest you'll encounter anywhere.

But this ain't your Wishbone's Nebraska. If you live in Kansas for any length of time, you'll endure: heat — many days over 100 degrees each summer and in the eastern third of the state, it's humid, too. Wind — you can count on many days each season with sustained winds of 30 mph. And you can count of a few days each year when the wind will blow 50 mph or even 60 mph. Cold — we'll have our share of single-digit temperatures, and that's before you figure in wind chill. Snow — we don't have lots of snow, but since the wind usually blows, we'll have deep drifts. Tornadoes — thanks to Dorothy, Kansas tornadoes are no secret. Did I mention wind? And finally drought — many parts of the state are still in the grips of our latest drought.

But I'm not complaining, at this moment, anyway. Right now I'm counting my blessings. I can't imagine living in a state with 40 million other people. The 2.5 million who call Kansas home are plenty. So come visit us and enjoy what Kansas has to offer. But if you let one of our wonderful fall or spring days lull you into thinking that Kansas would be a nice place to live because of the weather, Lennie has a quaint cottage on the beach he'd sell real cheap.

