

KANSAS

Wildlife & Parks

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On Point

by Mike Hayden

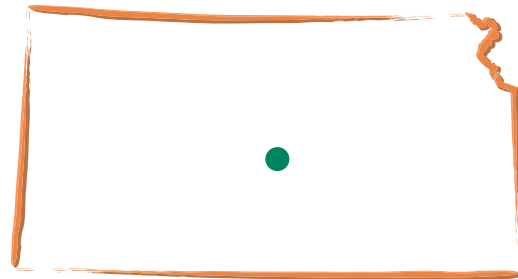


The Value Of Public Land

In this photo issue of Kansas Wildlife & Parks magazine, you'll see the variety, beauty and opportunity of public lands in Kansas. KDWP owns 132,973 acres of land. Staff manage 33 wildlife areas, 32 state fishing lakes, 22 federal reservoirs, 24 state parks, and 10 other public lands. Our biologists help manage fishing opportunities on more than 200 community-owned lakes. All totaled, the department manages nearly 350,000 acres of public land and water for recreation. There is other federal land in Kansas, including the Cimarron National Grasslands operated by the National Forest Service (Morton County -- 110,000 acres), Quivira National Wildlife Refuge (Stafford County -- 22,000 acres), Kirwin NWR (Phillips County -- 10,800 acres) and Marais des Cygnes NWR (Linn County -- 7,500 acres), Flint Hills NWR (Coffey County -- 18,500 acres), and the National Park Service operates the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve (Chase County, 11,000 acres).

So if you add those up, we have a little more than 500,000 acres of state or federally owned land in Kansas. The state of Kansas covers 82,282 square miles, which is 52,660,480 acres. The state- and federally-owned land open to recreation is represented by the red dot on the map above. It doesn't seem like much, but that public land is vitally important to our outdoor traditions, our state and local economies, and to our quality of life. The 1.2 million acres that KDWP leases from private landowners for the Walk-In Hunting Area (WIHA) program more than triples the land open to hunting, and has been an effective marketing tool attracting nonresident bird hunters to the state. The F.I.S.H. program, which leases ponds or streams from private landowners, provides more than 1,300 acres of ponds and 91 miles of stream access for angling.

WIHA and F.I.S.H are innovative programs department staff developed to increase access for recreation. The department also works to purchase property whenever budget and circumstances allow. However, it can be difficult for a state agency to purchase land in a strong private land/agricultural state such as Kansas.



Nevertheless, public land is important to our mission and our constituents, and KDWP staff are constantly on the lookout for acquisition opportunities. Outdoor recreation is a powerful economic force in Kansas, and adding to our coffers of public land will make the state and the nearby communities more attractive to visitors, as well as potential residents.

The fact is that Kansas ranks near the bottom among states when the percentage of public land is compared. Ninety-seven percent of Kansas is privately owned. Less than 2 percent of Kansas is open to public recreation. However, that should not be interpreted to mean that we don't have quality opportunities on our public land. In fact, we enjoy fantastic hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, biking, horse riding, and wildlife viewing opportunities on our public lands. State park and public lands staff work tirelessly to not only provide a wide variety of outdoor opportunities to users, but to also conserve the natural resources on those lands. It's a balancing act, but one our managers have become very good at.

As you enjoy the photos in this issue, I hope you discover a public area that you want to visit. In fact, I challenge you to visit as many public lands as you can in the coming year. I'll bet you'll be pleasantly surprised at the quality of both the land and the recreational opportunities you find. You can rest assured that our staff will keep striving to enhance your public lands, and that we'll keep our eye out for opportunities to increase our recreation opportunities.

2008 PHOTO ISSUE

This 2008 *Kansas Wildlife & Parks* photo issue features Mike Blair images of public lands across the state. While we aren't blessed with a great amount of public land, we do enjoy a wonderful variety. From west to east, there are unique public lands that beckon to anyone who loves to hunt, fish, hike, camp, watch wildlife and otherwise spend time outside. You can learn more about any of the KDWP-managed lands from our website, www.kdwp.state.ks.us. Each state fishing lake, state park, reservoir, and wildlife area is featured, including information and downloadable maps and brochures. The *Kansas Hunting Atlas* can also be handy because the maps show where all Walk-In Hunting Area, federal and state lands are located. It can be a great resource to help you find your special public place. These are your public lands, so discover them and enjoy them.

Mike Miller
editor



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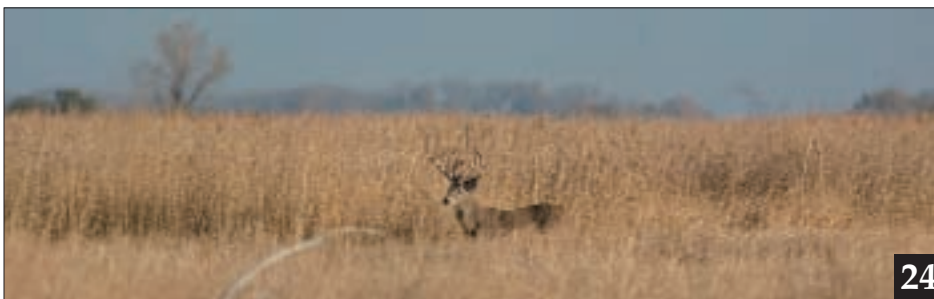
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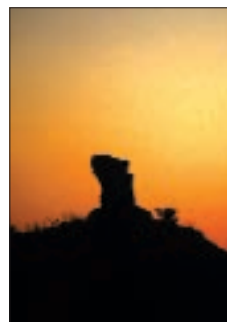


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Front Cover: A snowy egret hunts floodwaters at Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area. Mike Blair filmed the bird with a 600mm lens, f/11 @ 1/640th sec.

Back Cover: Sundown backlights a landmark at Big Basin Prairie Preserve in Clark County. Mike Blair used a 55mm lens, f/4 @ 1/125th sec. to film the scene.

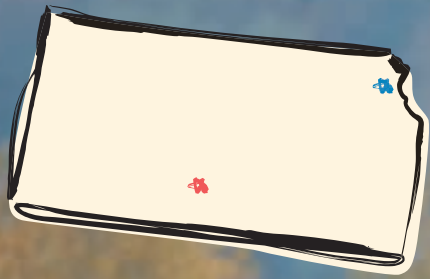


Editorial Creed: To promote the conservation and wise use of our natural resources, to instill an understanding of our responsibilities to the land.

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

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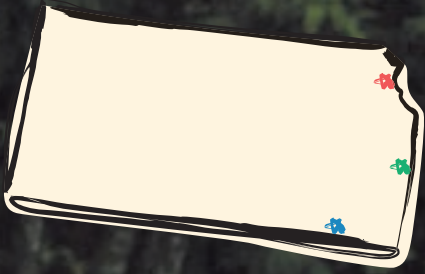


White-tailed deer, Benedictine Bottoms Wildlife Area



Sandhill cranes, Texas Lake Wildlife Area





Mountain Man Rendezvous, Elk City State Park



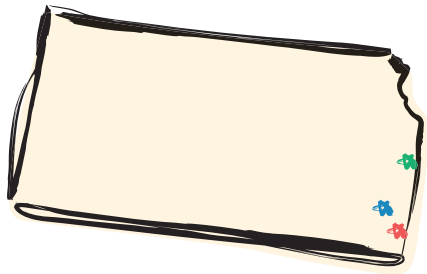


Atchison State Fishing Lake



RC Fly-In, Hillsdale State Park





Bourbon State Fishing Lake Falls





Mushrooms, Mined Land Wildlife Area



Fishermen, Hillsdale Reservoir





Duck hunter, Benedictine Bottoms Wildlife Area



Eastern turkey, Marais des Cygnes Wildlife Area



Sugar maple, Benedictine Bottoms Wildlife Area





Bison, Konza Prairie



Black Sampson, Flint Hills

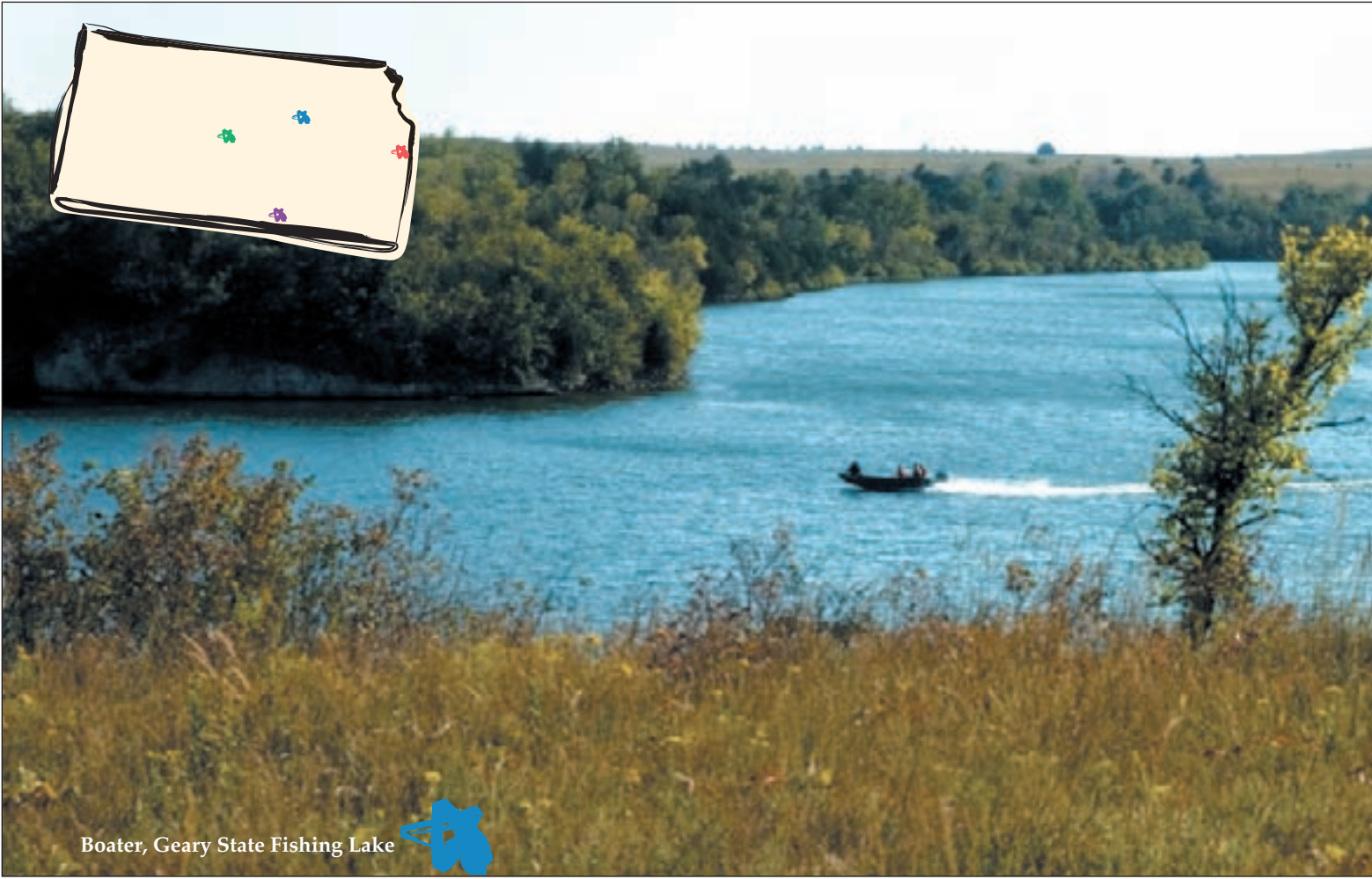


Autumn, Konza Prairie



Sailboats, Cheney Reservoir





Boater, Geary State Fishing Lake



Campsite, Hillsdale State Park





Black-crowned night heron,
Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area



Cone flower, Slate Creek Wildlife Area



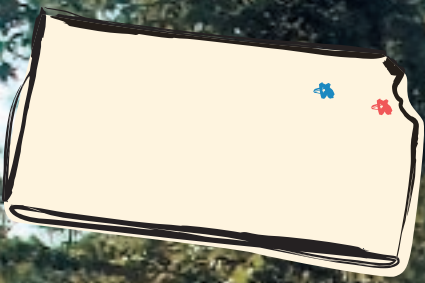


Gayfeather, Goodman State Fishing Lake



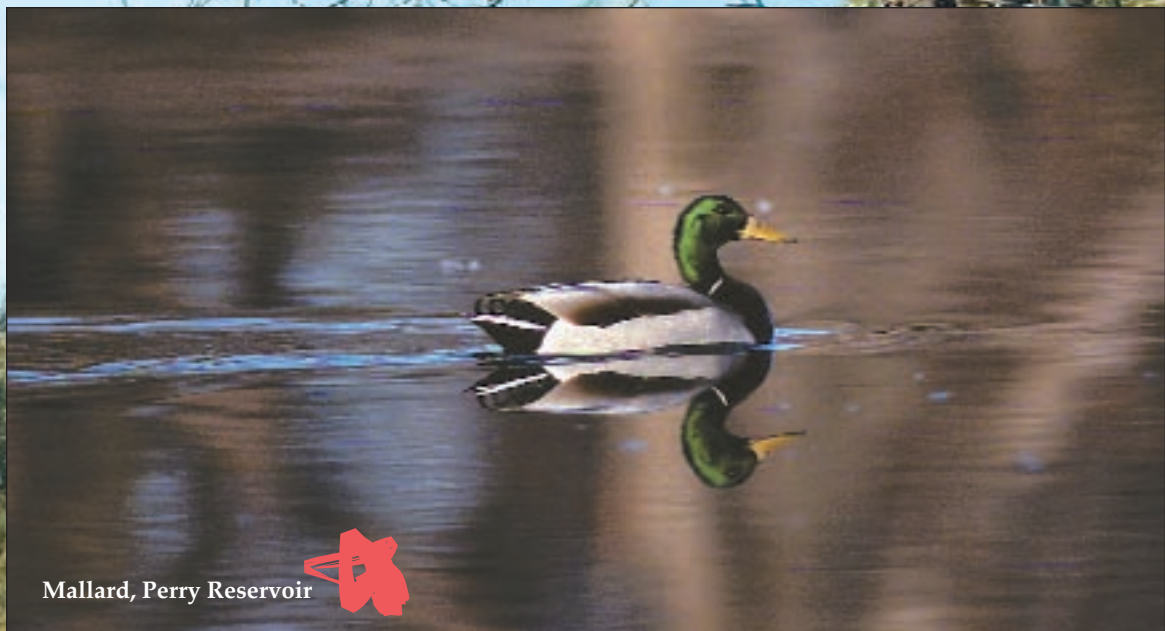
Floodwater, Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area





Falls, Konza Prairie





Mallard, Perry Reservoir





Marais des Cygnes Wildlife Area

Snail, Cross Timbers State Park



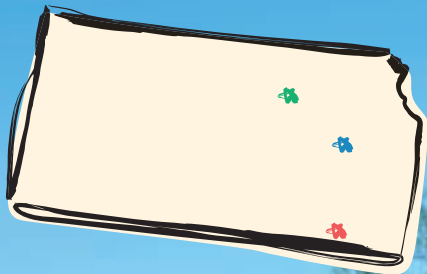


Pelicans, Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area



Mushroom Rock State Park





Riders, Eisenhower State Park



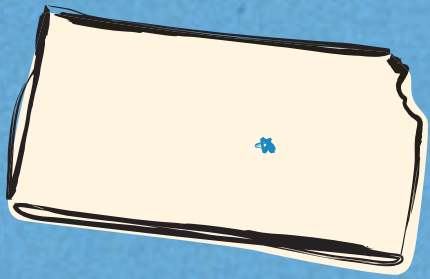
Bluff, Elk City State Park





Monarch on gayfeather, Pillsbury Crossing





Elk, Maxwell Wildlife Refuge







Milford Wildlife Area Wetlands



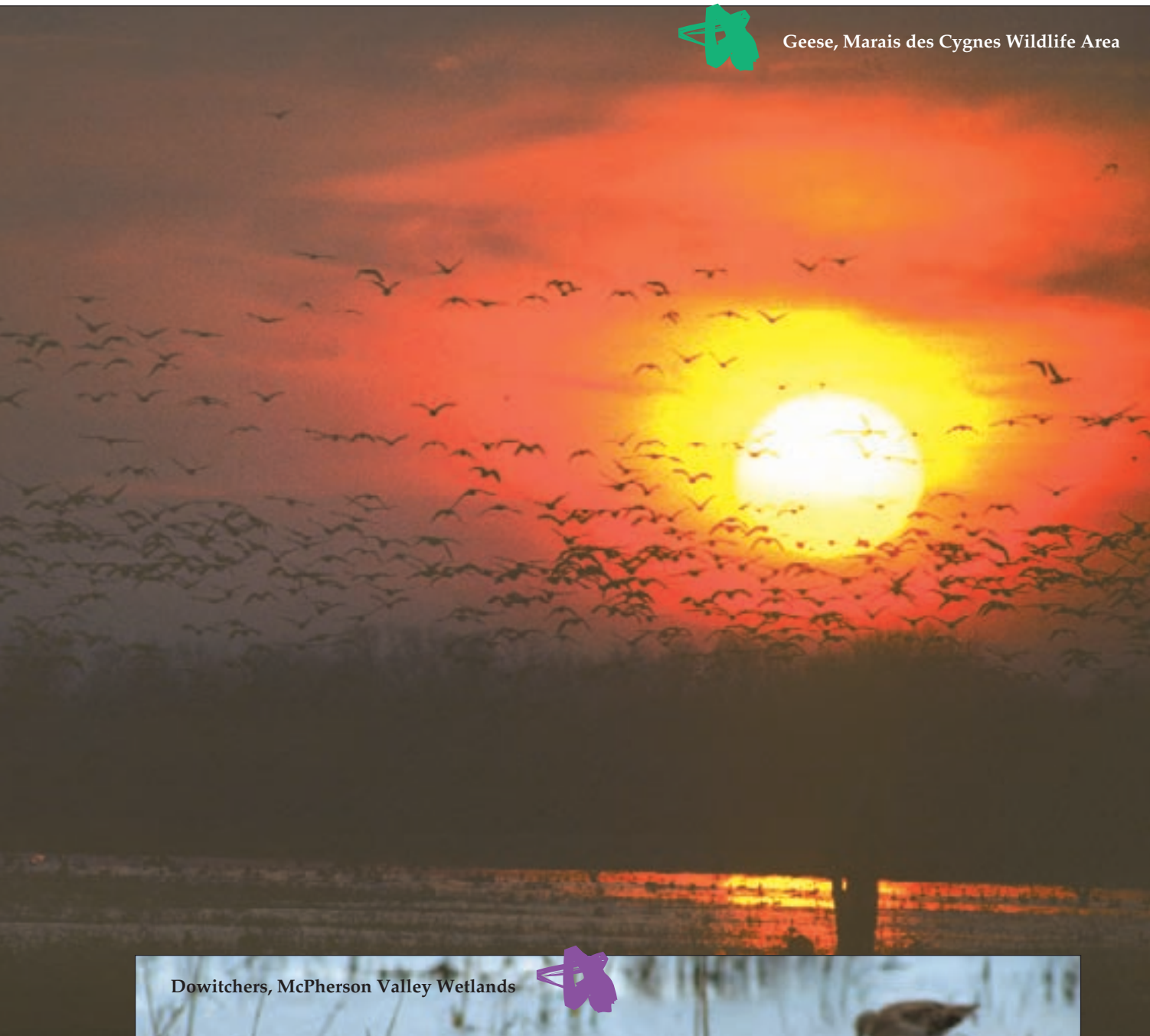




Eastern turkeys, Linn County Park

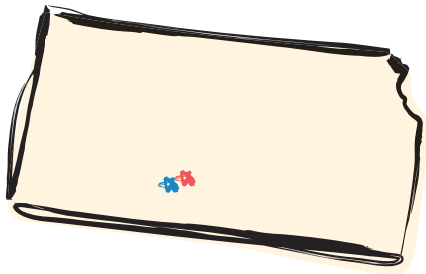


Duck hunter, Neosho Wildlife Area



Dowitchers, McPherson Valley Wetlands





Pintails, Isabel Wetland





Kayakers, Ninescah River

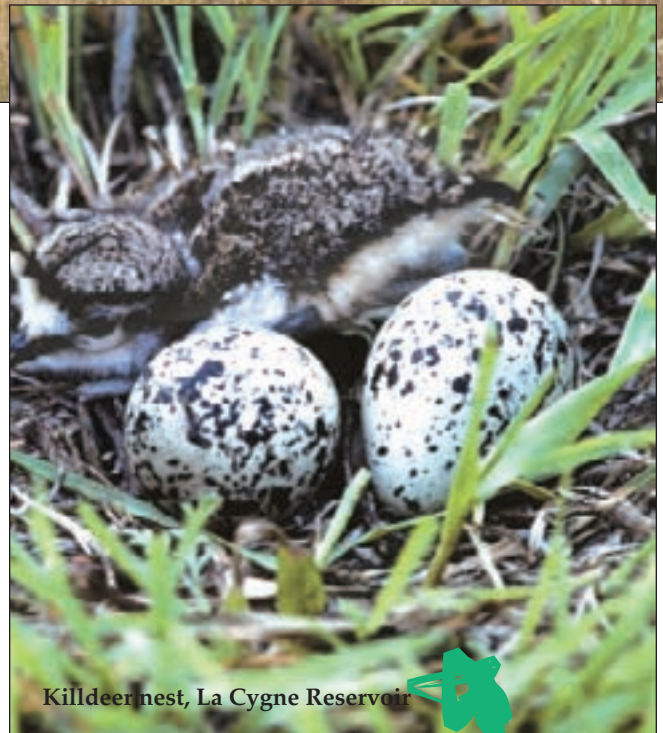




Goldfinch, Maxwell Wildlife Refuge



Hodgeman State Fishing Lake



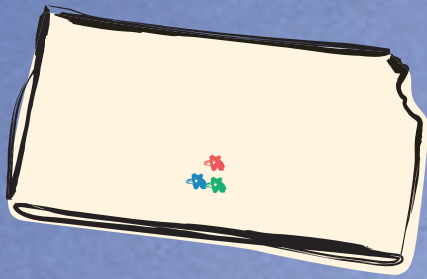
Killdeer nest, La Cygne Reservoir



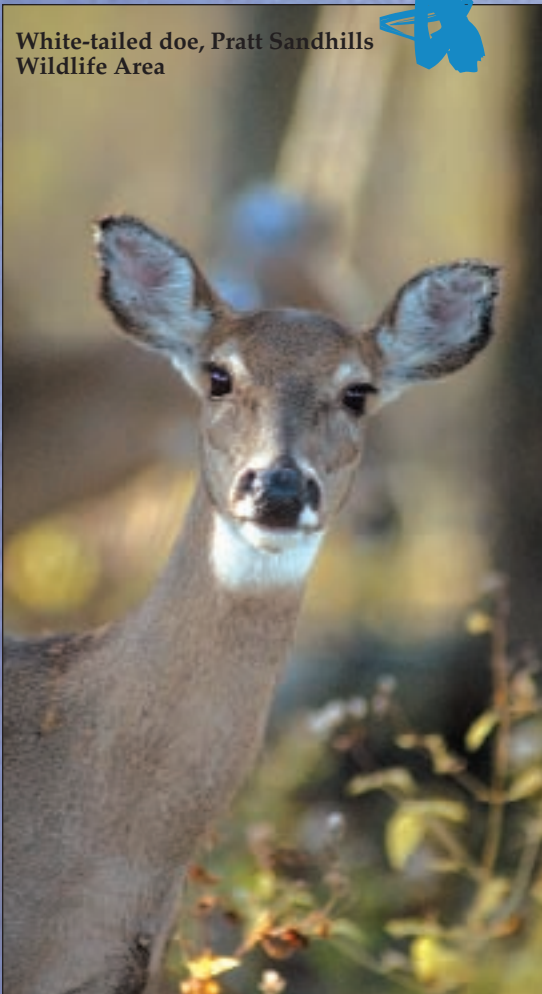


Campers, Ottawa State Fishing Lake





White-tailed doe, Pratt Sandhills Wildlife Area

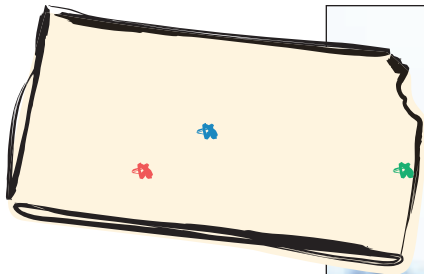


White-tailed buck, Quivira National Wildlife Refuge



Marsh Hawk, Texas Lake Wildlife Area





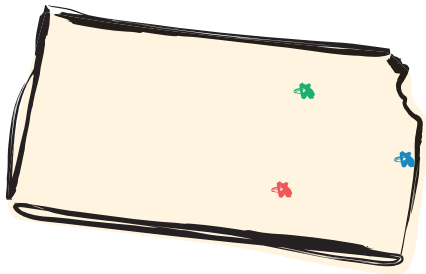
Students, Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area



Duck hunter, Stein Playa







Crappie fishermen, Louisburg-Middlecreek State Fishing Lake



RV campers, Tuttle Creek State Park



Water skier, El Dorado Reservoir



Teal and egrets, Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area





Woodson State Fishing Lake



Bobwhite quail, Stein Playa





Mined Land Wildlife Area



Sandhill cranes, Quivira National Wildlife Refuge



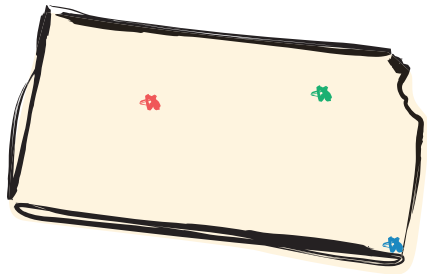


Bison , Big Basin Prairie Preserve



Swallow drinking, Texas Lake Wildlife Area





Luna moth, Spring River Wildlife Area



Boater, Cedar Bluff Reservoir





Echinacea, Flint Hills





Wilson State Park





Backlash

by Mike Miller

Finding Good Kids

I've been coordinating "Pass It On," the department's hunter recruitment and retention program now for about six years. What that really means is that I monitor the budget and try to help KDWP field staff get what they need to conduct youth events and special hunts around the state. The biologists, public land managers and park staff do all the work but on occasion, I've helped out with youth deer hunts and wingshooting clinics.

We started conducting wingshooting clinics because, we reasoned, with Kansas' strong bird hunting tradition teaching someone to shoot a shotgun was a natural first step toward hunting. Over the last three years, several part-time instructors, as well as agency personnel, have introduced thousands of youngsters to the fun of wingshooting. We hope that some of them will take the next step and try hunting, and we hope that those who had already hunted learned enough to help them become better hunters.

After a recent event, I was talking about how much I enjoyed the kids who participated, "Those were all great kids," I said. "Every one was polite and respectful." Then it occurred to me, it was *deja vu*. I realized that I had said that after every wingshooting clinic I had helped with.

I'm not so naïve as to think that all the kids I've worked are little angels, and I know I don't have any magical way with them. I know some of them get into trouble from time to time. But why do I come away each time believing that they were all good kids?

My theory is that kids respond positively to the direct attention we give them when we teach wingshooting. We are right there, loading a shell into a shotgun we've trusted them to hold and shoot. And we are looking them in the eye and talking directly to them about what they need to do. Then

we compliment them, and get excited when they do everything right and the target explodes into dust. We're outside, and wingshooting is a fun, exciting and new experience for them.

So I've concluded that teaching kids about the outdoors, hunting and fishing is more than just good for the future of our traditions. It's more than just doing something you enjoy with your children. It's providing them with direct, one-to-one attention that they need. Let's face it, there are many distractions today — television, the internet, video games, cell phones, MP3 players, year-round sports, school activities, homework, hanging out with friends, and more. Teaching young people about the outdoors, especially hunting and fishing, gets them away from the hustle and bustle of our too-busy lives. It exposes them to a natural world they'll come to value and appreciate, and it demands one-to-one attention.

I want to say that our kids today need it more than ever, but I think they only need it as much any of us did — as much as I needed it when I was a boy. I've never forgotten the family camping trips in Colorado when I was very young, or trout fishing with my granddad, or pheasant hunting with my dad. I don't know how my life might have been different without those relationships and the outdoors — I don't want to know. Those memories still guide me, and I still draw on the experiences. Every kid should be so fortunate.

I believe they're all good kids. They just need attention from people who care. And introducing them to hunting, fishing, camping and the outdoors provides the perfect opportunity to get them headed in the right direction. ♡

