

KANSAS

Wildlife & Parks

JULY/AUGUST 2008

\$2.75





On Point

by Mike Hayden



Summer Vacation Value

With gas prices projected to be \$4 per gallon this summer, there have been lots of news stories recently about Americans driving less and foregoing summer vacations. In fact, I recently heard a new word coined: “staycation.” I guess that means enjoying recreation close to home rather than driving somewhere.

With that in mind, I thought about our recreation opportunities here in Kansas and what we get for our license and permit fees. We’ve all heard people say that hunting, fishing and camping are getting too expensive, but I think we need to keep things in perspective. Fee increases are inevitable as the cost of fuel, materials and utilities continue to increase, but we haven’t raised prices in more than five years. It hasn’t been easy to continue providing the services you expect, but department staff have done an admirable job, and I believe outdoor opportunities have never been better.

There are lots of outdoor activities to be enjoyed close to home, so let’s look what a typical family of four can do and compare costs to other recreation. The family could enjoy fishing, hiking, biking, swimming or just basking in the sun for a day at one of our state parks. Mom and Dad would need fishing licenses. An annual fishing license is \$20.50 or they could purchase 24-hour fishing licenses for \$5.50 each. Kids under 16 don’t need fishing licenses. You don’t have to drive a long way, either, regardless of where you live. Kansas has 24 state parks and most are located on the shores of a large reservoir, providing great fishing access, as well as a host of other outdoor recreation activities.

You’ll need a daily vehicle permit to enjoy a state park for a day. Last year, in a move that made state parks more accessible to Kansans, the Kansas Legislature agreed to reduce daily entrance fees by half and provided State General Fund money to make up for reduced income. It’s never been more affordable to enjoy our parks. Check out the Parks Events Calendar, and you’ll find that every park

holds “Free Entrance” days. On those days, which are different for each park, you can get in for free.

So let’s go back to that family of four. Mom and Dad bought 24-hour fishing licenses: (\$5.50 each) \$11; park entrance permit for the car, \$4.50; gas for the 60-mile round trip, \$12; some bait, \$5; sandwiches, snacks and drinks, \$20 = \$47.50. That’s for all day. A bargain any way you look at it. And you could spend less if you stay closer to home and visit one of our 40 state fishing lakes or more than 200 community lakes. There are no entrance fees to enjoy state fishing lakes, and the department’s Community Lake Assistance Program has “leased” the fishing access to most community lakes, so they don’t charge any additional fees to anglers.

So what else can a family of four do for \$47? Movies? Tickets, \$9 for adults, \$7 for children; popcorn and drinks, \$20; gas to and from, \$2 = \$54. And it only lasts a couple of hours. If the family goes out to eat, it will cost even more. And while movies are a great escape, you won’t get the same interaction with your family as you would helping them fish or discover the wonders of nature.

There are lots of outdoor activities close to home that won’t cost a lot of money. In addition to fishing, your family can hike or ride on one of our trails, go boating, swim in the lake or play on the beaches. And most parks have a long list of special events planned for the summer, including music concerts, races, sailing regattas, OK Kids Day events, and more. Try a “staycation” this summer and discover the many great outdoor recreation opportunities Kansas has to offer. This summer, Kansas state parks have initiated some exciting new programs including a statewide geocaching contest with lots of great prizes, as well as the Passport program. Contact a park or KDWP office near you for more information or go online at www.kdwp.state.ks.us. Then get outside and spend some high-quality, affordable time with your family. I guarantee you’ll get your money’s worth.

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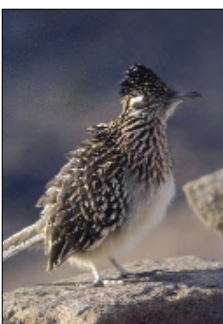
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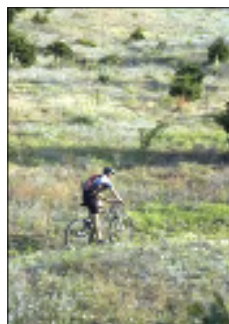
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Front Cover: This roadrunner was caught looking for a quick meal by Bob Gress, director and naturalist at the Great Plains Nature Center in Wichita. **Back Cover:** Wilson State Park's friends group helps establish and maintain hiking and biking trails. Mike Blair photographed this scene with a 200mm lens, f/11, 1/500th sec.



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

with Wayne Doyle



There has been some talk lately that we spend too much time trying to raise the ethical standards of hunters. The argument goes that since all hunters are ethical, raising the issue just gives ammunition to the other side.

This is an amazingly shortsighted view. While many studies have shown that the non-hunting public generally supports hunting, those same studies show a low opinion of the ethics displayed by hunters.

A despicable activity that contributes to this low opinion is road hunting. Actually, it is better stated as “road shooting” as there is no “hunting” involved. It does, however, almost always involve trespass. Anyone too lazy to get out of the truck is usually too lazy to get permission. Whether it’s shooting a deer or turkey from the road, shooting doves off the telephone lines, or trying to make a flock of geese fly, road hunting does nothing more than give all hunters a bad name. Landowners hate the practice.

The worst manifestation of road shooting is the incredibly unsafe, unethical, and just plain stupid practice of firing into

shelter belts, waterways or other cover to chase coyotes or deer into the open – landowners, their families, livestock or real hunters be damned.

In December 2007 a young man was killed while in a layout blind hunting geese when a road shooter fired a rifle shot that violated every rule of safe gun handling, trespass laws and the ethical conduct real hunters expect.

We don’t need to keep talking about ethics? Less than six months after the death of that young man, and less than one mile from where he died, another road shooter drew a bead on a party of mushroom hunters. He thought they were turkeys. Only the alertness of one of the mushroom hunters prevented another tragedy.

Talking about firearms safety has lowered the accident rate to statistical insignificance. Talking about ethics can do even more.

Letter . . .

Editor:

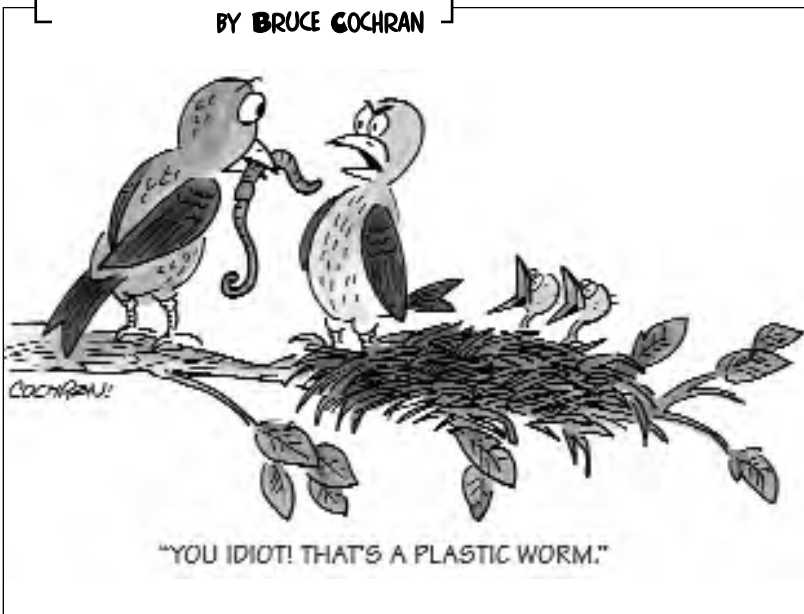
I read, with pleasure, the article *There’s a New Ferret In Town* (May/June 2008). I recently attended a Kansas Ornithological Society (KOS) meeting near Logan County where we had the privilege of touring one of the private ranches where the black-footed ferret has been reintroduced. The abundance of wildlife was evident: pronghorn antelope bounced along the ridge, ferruginous hawks nested on cliff edges, Swainson’s hawks soared high above, and black-tailed prairie dogs barked to each another.

I applaud and thank the private landowners participating in this and other conservation efforts. They are visionaries, taking concrete steps to preserve habitat, and giving threatened and endangered species a chance to survive in a human focused landscape.

*Lisa Weeks
Overland Park*

WAY outside

BY BRUCE COCHRAN



Letter . . .

Editor:

A night under the stars conjures up a family tent next to a campfire. It's an opportunity to escape life's hassles and let the kids experience the same sights and sounds their ancestors did. As the fire dies down, you lie back and peer into infinity, hoping to catch a shooting star as the Milky Way sheds its warm glow.

For many Kansas state parks, the Milky Way has been replaced with sky glow, a component of light pollution caused by artificial lights. Light pollution is increasing an average of 5 percent to 10 percent in the U.S. every year.

Terrel Gallaway, Missouri State economics professor, recently surveyed four national parks and found that almost half of the respondents said that dark skies in the park were an "important" or "very important" reason in making plans to travel to the park. More than two-thirds said that they had been bothered by sky glow in their home communities.

Light pollution is related to energy waste and environmental issues, but a simple measure taken today can help ensure sensitive areas are protected for future generations. The Kansas Night Sky Protection Act (ksnspa.googlepages.com) would require the state to monitor and maintain the natural sky above protected areas like state parks that allow camping.

So we are left with a simple question: do we implement good lighting practices now or wait until the last child forgets what a starry night really is?

For more information, check the following online sources:

1- mcrol.trianglealumni.org/ks.html

2- lightpollution.it/dmsp/predictions.html

3- nps.gov/grba/parknews/upload/winter2007big.pdf

4 - astrosociety.org/education/publications/tnl/74/uitc74.pdf

—Robert Wagner,
Kansas City, Missouri,
co-author of the Boy Scouts
Dark-Sky Camping

BIRD BRAIN

with Mike Rader



Invasion of the Doves

A recent invasion has occurred in Kansas. The Eurasian collared dove burst onto the avian scene here in 1997 when it was documented in Goodland. The next year, they were documented in Topeka, Wichita, and several communities in southwest Kansas. It has spread rapidly, and observations now come from practically all 105 Kansas counties.

This species, which originated in Asia, was introduced to the Bahamas in the early 1970s, and it quickly spread to Florida. Within a few years, collared doves expanded to neighboring states. Kansas was just another state in its path on the way to conquering the remainder of the U.S. It can now be found as far north as British Columbia and Alberta. The only areas not occupied in the contiguous U.S. are the New England states.

Eurasian collared doves are larger than native dove species, approaching the size of rock pigeons. They are pale, fawn-colored, with a distinctive black mark on the back of the neck. These birds give a loud, three-note "coo" song and also a weird, growl call when in flight. Eurasian collared doves first became abundant in smaller

Kansas towns that provide neighborhoods with pine trees for nesting, power poles to sing from, and grain elevators where spilled grain is a favorite food. They are now found in large urban communities and are also expanding into rural areas and farmsteads. They will nest in any month of the year, and pairs may nest up to three times in a year.

We don't know if this species will adversely affect native mourning doves or other bird species. Some experts believe that they are filling the void left decades ago by the extinction of the passenger pigeon and Carolina parakeet. However, they differ from those species by being non-migratory, establishing themselves as year-round residents. The passenger pigeon and Carolina parakeet were migratory and formed massive, mobile flocks that roamed the countryside in spring and fall.

Eurasian collared doves, like it or not, are here to stay. Their status in Kansas is one of continued expansion, and they were recently added to the list of huntable dove species for the state. It has been and will continue to be an interesting project charting this most recent and relatively quick avian invasion.

Letter . . .

Editor:

In the 2006, July/August issue of *Kansas Wildlife & Parks* magazine, I wrote a short story about my mother Marjorie Lithgow of Mokena, Illinois, who was 91 years young and still hunting. In that story, I had enclosed a picture of her with a large tom turkey she took on a nonguided hunt with Midwest Outfitters. Here it is two years later, and she is still hunting with her grandson, Tim, and me. The three-generation dynamic trio still loves hunting turkeys together in Kansas.

Her goal this year was to harvest a Rio Grande. As you can see she did just that, when the toms were not responding to calls. Now at 93, she is planning on next year when a Rio long-beard will be in her sights. I am sure she will be out in the crisp early morning air listening to the music of the toms and watching the deer in the fields. She

has said anytime she is out in the morning and watching the sun come up over the field, she sheds 20 years.

I challenge any older reader who can beat her age and is still hunting to write in and tell their story.

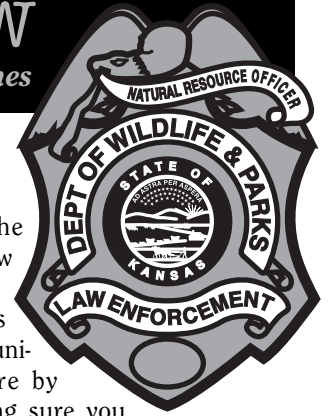
*Ken Ebbens,
St. Paul, Minnesota*



IT'S THE LAW

with Kevin Jones

Review Regulations



Now is the time to start preparing for the upcoming hunting seasons. Yes, in just a few short weeks hunters will be taking to the field in the pursuit of fur and fowl. Usually, this preparation focuses on equipment and ammunition, but it is equally important to prepare by reviewing the hunting regulations and making sure you have the proper licenses, permits, and stamps. Some significant changes have occurred in the statutes and regulations that will affect this fall's hunting seasons in Kansas. Now is the time to learn about these changes, so you will be ready for opening day.

Each year, wildlife agencies across the country review their hunting regulations to ensure the management objectives for each game species are being met. It is not uncommon for changes in season dates or bag limits to occur. Sometimes, other significant changes can occur, such as new hunt area boundaries or modifications in legal equipment. The best source of information on hunting regulations is the *2008 Kansas Hunting and Furharvesting Regulations Summary*, which will be in offices and at license vendors by early September. You can go online and find all set hunting regulations now. Just go to www.kdwp.state.ks.us and click on "Hunting" then "Hunting Regulations." For season dates, go to "Hunting" then "When To Hunt."

If you haven't already done so, this is also a good time to purchase your licenses, permits and stamps for the upcoming season. Here again, review the new regulation summary to be sure you have the proper licenses or permits for the game you want to hunt. Keep in mind, there is a difference between a license and a permit. Each gives different authorizations to hunt. As an example, in Kansas, a hunting license is required in addition to a deer or turkey permit. There are exemptions to the hunting license requirement for people meeting certain criteria. So be sure to read the hunting regulations, so you know what is required before you head to the field.

This is your opportunity to be sure you are not taken by surprise this fall. A little planning and preparation will go a long way toward having a safe, enjoyable hunting season.

Online Deer Details

What are deer permit options this year? How have deer seasons changed for 2008? How many deer permits may be purchased?

These and other questions are answered in the online "Deer Frequently Asked Questions" at the KDWP website, www.kdwp.state.ks.us. Enter "Deer FAQ" in the website's homepage search box to navigate to the information.

Deer permit and hunting options have changed significantly in 2008. A few of those changes, approved by the Kansas Wildlife and Parks Commission, include the following:

- resident deer hunters may purchase an "Any-Season White-tailed Deer Permit," which allows them to hunt statewide in archery, muzzleloader, or firearm seasons with equipment legal in each of

those seasons;

- reinstatement of resident either-species archery permits that are valid statewide, rather than in specific units; and
- creation of half-price youth permits for resident hunters.

For more details on the variety of changes in Kansas deer hunting in 2008, consult the online "Deer FAQ."

—KDWP news

Letter . . .

Dear Editor,

Just a quick note to thank all involved for another diverse and interesting issue of the magazine. I have to say that I did a double-take on Page 28 regarding the picture of the Blackfeet Nation welcome sign; nice sign, interesting sculpture to go with it, and trash all over the place. Not that some Kansans don't also subscribe to the "out the window means gone for good" philosophy. I hope members of the Nation, seeing the May/June issue, will have had similar thoughts and by now cleaned up the site!

Sincerely,
George Pisani
Laurence

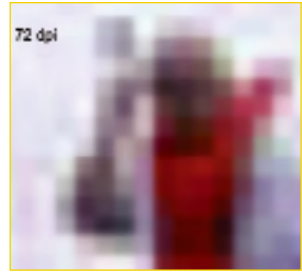
DIGITAL IMAGE with Mike Blair

Set Camera to Highest Resolution Settings

As digital photography evolves, even the smallest and least expensive point-and-shoot cameras have adequate resolutions for high-quality pictures. Though it may be tempting to shoot on "low" or "basic" jpeg settings in order to get more pictures on an SD or Compact Flash memory card, the camera should always be set to its highest resolution setting. This ensures that the pictures are usable for prints and enlargements. It also captures the best color and sharpness of the image.

The effects of resolution can be seen in the example at right. At different resolutions, a distant detail was cropped from an image to illustrate effects on enlargement. The high-resolution crop is 300 dpi (dots per inch.) The low-resolution version is 72 dpi.

High resolution provides noticeably better detail. You can never add detail back into low resolution shots, so it's best to set for highest resolution. Check your camera manual to learn how. When that unexpected great shot comes along, you'll never be sorry.



Mammals

One of the most useful books (and sorely in need of reprinting) on Kansas animal life is *Mammals In Kansas*, by James W. Bee, Gregory Glass, Robert S. Hoffman, and Robert R. Patterson. Copyrighted by the KU Museum of Natural History, this book was printed in 1981 and has been out of print for many years.

So until a new edition can be published, the internet comes to the rescue with its own guide called *Mammals of Kansas*. Just go to ksr.ku.edu/libres/Mammals_of_Kan

sas/list.html to find important details. The site includes biotic regions in Kansas, a key to Kansas mammal species, references, and links to pages that include descriptions and habits of each mammal in the Sunflower State, complete with photographs and footprints.

The site was prepared by faculty from Ft. Hays State, Kansas State, and Kansas universities.

Frogs 'n Toads

For naturalists more interested in amphibians, the Kansas Anuran Monitoring Program (KAMP) is a volunteer program coordinated by KDWP. KAMP was initiated in 1998 to help determine the status and population

trends of Kansas' 22 species of frogs and toads. Survey data are collected annually by cooperators who note the distinctive calls of each species along permanent roadside routes.

The results of this ongoing study will provide information on where species are located throughout the state, and in certain cases, how their populations change in abundance and distribution. Many frog and toad species are indicators of habitat quality. Their presence, absence, or disappearance from an area may provide information on the condition of Kansas' wetland habitats.

Detailed information and how to participate in surveys are included online at www.cnah.org/kamp.

On The Web Critter Guides with Mark Shoup



Unless you have been playing scrabble on Saturn, you have no doubt figured out that hunters and anglers not only still pay for most wildlife conservation but are being asked to do more. Always, when the state wildlife agency needs more resources, hunters and anglers have come to the table, either willingly or otherwise, to foot the bill. Sitting largely on the sidelines are a huge number of Kansans who enjoy wildlife but do not neces-

sarily buy any licenses to help support state wildlife programs. So just how many are there? Plenty, according to the *2006 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation* (www.census.gov/prod/2008pubs/fhw06-ks.pdf). For Kansas, the number of participants related to those who “take a special interest in wildlife around their homes or take a trip for the primary purpose of wildlife watching” far exceeds the number of anglers and hunters.

Kansas residents 16 and older

- Anglers** 319,000 participants
- Hunters**183,000 participants
- Total wildlife-watching participants** ... 787,000 participants

These three quarter of a million participants represent a huge block of potential financial supporters. Other states have found ways to tap into this resource. The question is how much longer can we support wildlife conservation before the same old well dries up?

100-YEAR-OLD TURTLE ON DISPLAY

An alligator snapping turtle weighing more than 120 pounds and estimated to be more than 100 years old is on display at the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks Pratt Education Center, 2 miles east and 1 mile south of Pratt. The massive reptile was given to the education center by Travis Taggart, associate curator of herpetology at the Sternberg Museum of Natural History in Hays.

Alligator snapping turtles are on the Kansas Species in Need of Conservation (SINC) list, with only 12 verifiable recordings in the state. These recordings were all from southeast Kansas and were confined to the Neosho, Verdigris, Walnut, and Arkansas River basins. Alligator snappers are not known to breed in Kansas, and individuals found in the state are considered transient. They favor river habitat with overhead, shaded canopy, lots of tree limb and leaf litter, a muddy bottom, and sub-

stantial pools.

Alligator snappers can grow to tremendous size; the largest known weighed 318 pounds and was caught in Georgia in 1978. There is a 236-pound alligator snapper in captivity at a Chicago zoo. The alligator snapping turtle on display at the Pratt Education Center is located in an

enclosure next to a large common snapping turtle, which is found throughout the state. The common snapper weighed 46 pounds when caught in 2006, making it the largest ever recorded in Kansas. Common snapping turtles can weigh as much as 75 pounds.

The Pratt Education Center is open to the public from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, with limited Saturday hours in summer.

—KDWP news





Taste of Mud

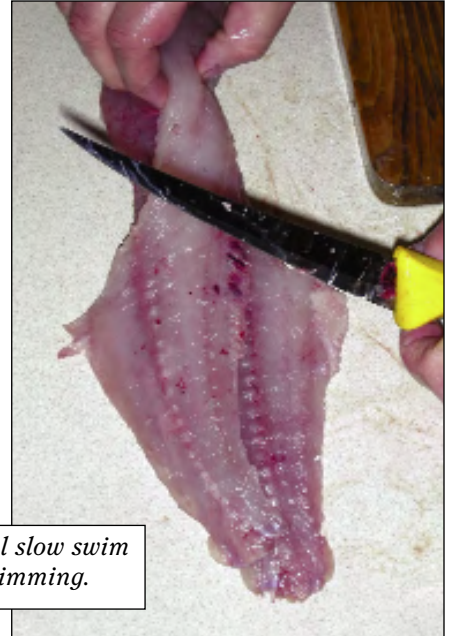
Have you ever sat down at dinner to enjoy the fruits of your fishing labor, only to find it just wasn't as tasty as you thought it should be? Well join the club. We have all done it. Clean a fish, bread the fillets, and slap those nice, thick chunks in the skillet. It looks good, but does it taste good? The culprit is the distasteful slow-swim muscle found in fish, often called the red meat or the mud line. This red meat moves large amounts of blood in fish. Large slow-swim muscles help fish like wiper and white bass that have to constantly cruise for food. Species like crappie and walleye generally have smaller slow-swim muscles because they are primarily ambush feeders.

What's the solution? Remove as much red meat from your fish as possible. After filleting your catch, locate the

red meat on the skin side of the fillet. Draw your fillet knife along the top of the fillet lengthwise, cutting deeper as you get closer to the lateral line. Turn the fillet around and do the same from the bottom, stopping at the lateral line.

The larger a fish is, the larger the red meat will be, and larger yet is the importance of removing it. A juvenile catfish (one with spots), for example, tastes great whole, but larger fish may need to be filleted and red meat removed to make it just as good. Extra time cleaning, especially on bigger fish will almost certainly improve the flavor of your fish.

Walleye fillets have very little distasteful slow swim muscle and require no additional trimming.



FISHIN' with Mike Miller

Line Tricks

When white bass, crappie and smallmouth bass are in shallow water, an eighth-ounce jig is one of most effective lures you can use. The angler imparts the action on the lure, raising the rod tip up, then letting the jig fall. Just before the jig hits the bottom, the angler raises the rod and "jigs" the lure back up. Fish almost always take the lure as it falls. Because of this, the angler must be in "contact" with the lure as it settles. Often a strike can be felt through the rod as a subtle "tic," but some strikes are seen as the line jumps or twitches. The final and critical task is setting the hook before the fish figures out the lure is an imposter and spits it out - something that takes about a half-second.

Here's a little tip to make you more successful when fishing light jigs. Try one of the super lines in a bright

color. I've had great success with flame green Fireline. This "unifilament" line is strong, has a small diameter, handles light jigs well, and does not stretch. This means the angler can feel everything that comes into contact with lure. I use the green color because I watch my line to see subtle strikes and to gauge the depth of the jig by the angle of the line to the water. Seeing small=diameter monofilament can be difficult in low light, so I like the bright green. When fishing in clear water, I add an 8-foot leader of clear 6-pound monofilament. The leader disappears in the water, and it also provides a little stretch, which can be nice if a large fish makes a sudden run close to the boat or when "snapping" the line to free a jig snagged in the rocks. I've found that a double uni-knot works well to connect the two types of line. Try it, and you'll catch more fish on your jigs.



LOOK BACK

with Bob Mathews

Dr. Clarke

It took him a few years to find his calling, but once he did, Robert F. Clarke pursued it with a vengeance.

A Virginia native who met and married a Kansas girl shortly after World War II, Clarke was working as an engineer for the Santa Fe Railway when he found his calling. Appropriately, that “watershed moment” in his life happened as he was mucking around in frog habitat. A biology professor from Kansas State Teachers College (now Emporia State University) saw Clarke collecting frogs in a rain-swollen drainage ditch near the campus. Impressed by Clarke’s

passion for collecting reptiles and amphibians, the professor encouraged Clarke to pursue his passion in college.

He heeded the professor’s advice, enrolling at KSTC in 1952 at the age of 33. He completed his bachelor’s degree in 1955, his master’s degree in biology in 1957, and his PhD in zoology in 1963.

In addition to his 30-plus years of teaching, Dr. Clarke’s skill as a naturalist and illustrator enabled him to help build broad appreciation for wildlife in Kansas. He was a singular force behind creation in 1980 of the Chickadee Checkoff program as well as public understanding of the numerous lesser-known wildlife species in Kansas. One of his most




visible efforts was creation of the “Something Wild” series of natural history profiles that ran in numerous newspapers around the state. Dr. Clarke developed and illustrated more than 100 “Something Wild” installments during the 1980s, promoting the Chickadee Checkoff program as well as public understanding of the numerous lesser-known wildlife species in Kansas.

Dr. Clarke, who passed away April 2 in Emporia, left a legacy for all Kansans with his long, illustrious career as an educator. His contributions helped us understand the rich natural world around us. And it all began with a serendipitous encounter in a rain-soaked ditch, where young Robert Clarke was pursuing his passion one day in 1951.


SOMETHING WILD!
By Robert F. Clarke, Ph.D.

Western
HOGNOSE SNAKE
Heterodon nasicornis




THE NAME COMES FROM THE UPTURNED SNOUT, WHICH HELPS IN SIGHTING ITS FAVORITE PREY—TOADS—THAT ARE USUALLY UNDER COVER IN THE DAYTIME, WHEN THE SNAKE IS ACTIVE.

WHEN STARTLED, THIS ENTIRELY HARMLESS SNAKE ACTS LIKE A COBRA, SPREADING ITS “HOOD” AND SWELLING (BUT WITH THE MOUTH CLOSED!)



IF THE BLUFF HAILS, THE SNAKE “PLAYS DEAD”




TOADS INFLATE THEMSELVES WITH AIR TO AVOID HORNED LIZARDS—BUT THE HOGNOSE SNAKE HAS A RIDGE IN THE MOUTH-LONG TUBER IN THE MID OF THE JAW THAT GIVES THE TOAD A “PUNCTURE.”

“WOLF ADDER”

“MANY PEOPLE BELIEVE THAT THIS SNAKE IS POISONOUS—IT IS NOT! SOME EVEN THINK THAT THE BREATH IS VENOMOUS!”


THE USUAL HABITAT IS SOFT OR SANDY SOIL.




Support the wildlife of Kansas.
Check the [] on your state income tax form.

SOMETHING WILD!
By Robert F. Clarke, Ph.D.

PIED-BILLED GREBE
Podilymbus podiceps



THE PIED-BILLED GREBE IS A COMMON SIGHT ON PONDS, SLOUGHS, AND LAKES. IT IS A SMALL, DARK BIRD THAT IS OFTEN ALONE, ALTHOUGH SOMETIMES IN GROUPS OR ASSOCIATED WITH DUCKS. GREBES ARE THOROUGHLY AQUATIC—ONE OF THE BEST OF THE SWIMMING BIRDS—AND THE HABIT OF SUDDENLY DISAPPEARING BENEATH THE SURFACE AND REAPPEARING QUITE A DISTANCE AWAY AND STAYING UNDER FOR A LONG TIME, HAVE GIVEN THE NAME “HELL-DIVER” TO THIS BIRD. FEET ARE NOT WEBBED, AS ARE DUCKS, BUT THE TOES ARE SEPARATE AND LOVED.



NEST IS A LARGE FLOATING MASS OF DECAYING PLANT MATERIAL, ANCHORED TO DEAD OR GROWING PLANTS. EGGS ARE COVERED WITH WET DEBRIS WHEN NOT BEING INCUBATED.



A PECULIAR TRAIT IS SWIMMING WITH ONLY THE HEAD ABOVE THE SURFACE OF THE WATER.

Support the wildlife of Kansas.
Check the [] on your state income tax form.

5-YEAR TRAILS PLAN

guide those who build and maintain recreational trails, their partners, and other decision-makers in efforts to provide the public with high-quality trail experiences.

The plan identifies needs for both existing and future trails based on review of existing plans from Kansas and across the nation, current trail facilities, as well as various studies on the subject. New reports were studied in depth and incorporated into the plan as they fit the need for better trails in Kansas. Multiple state agencies, foundations, and professional organizations

were also consulted.

Kansas State Trails Plan 2008 is also intended to bring Kansas into compliance with statewide planning requirements outlined in the Recreational Trails Program (RTP), administered by the Federal Highway Administration. In Kansas, the RTP is administered by KDWP's Parks Division.

To download a complete version of *Kansas State Trails Plan 2008*, go the KDWP website, www.kdwp.state.ks.us, click on "State Parks" at the top of the page, then "2008 Trails Plan" in the left-hand column.

—KDWP news

KDWP has announced guidelines for improvement of existing trails and development of more trails throughout the Sunflower State. *Kansas State Trails Plan 2008*, is a 103-page document will serve as the primary planning resource to

PROFILE: with Mark Shoup

MISSION (MORE THAN) ACCOMPLISHED

For Karen Beard and the KDWP License Section she supervises, summer (with deer permits) is the busiest time of year, and that's saying something. It may seldom cross the average outdoorsman's mind, but without Licensing, KDWP couldn't operate. Hunting, fishing, and boating as we know it wouldn't exist. Licenses, permits, and stamps (all called "issues") are the heart of conservation, what regulates how natural resources are used, instead of abused, and what raises money for the conservation efforts we all appreciate.

Consider the following issues the Licensing Section must sell and keep track of, many in multiple variations (such as nonresident either-species deer permit, resident antlerless deer permit, etc.): hunt, fish, lifetime, trap (plus fur dealer records), deer, turkey (spring, fall), elk, antelope, waterfowl, paddlefish, controlled shooting area, dog training, field trial events, bobcat, Harvest Information Program (HIP), crane, and a variety of boating registrations.

This is a year-round effort that is accomplished with the skills of just seven people, plus Beard. There's Mary Becker, Raeanne Holmes, Terryl Henderson, Sherrill Orr, Elaine Sexson, Corey Hoemann, and Miguel Vega, who runs the print and mail room, which I forgot to mention. The print/mail room handles all KDWP printing needs, including surveys, bulk mailings, and many brochures. It also handles all the mail coming to and from the KDWP Pratt Operations Office. Santa Claus would have fun lugging the bags of mail that go in and out of this room each day.

Most KDWP employees can tell you when the busiest time of

year is, but for Beard, the answer is a bit different: "Our busiest time is any opener. The opening of any season is a busy time for us, whether it's telephone requests from deer hunters or when the pheasant season starts and what licenses are required."

Beard, who has a computer degree, has been with the agency 26 years, having moved to Pratt from Eureka right after high school looking for better job options. She started as a temporary data entry clerk and worked her way to Licensing Section chief, a position she has held since 1993. And sometimes, there are headaches associated with license sales.

"If it's not a hunter calling, it's the vendor trying to figure out how to issue a permit," she says. "We're an evolving agency, so keeping up with annual changes in the law and permits is the most challenging part of the job. It takes a lot of reading and asking questions. We also have more than 650 vendors selling licenses and permits, and we have to keep them informed, as well. Our automated system has helped with that."

For Beard, it's been worth every minute.

"With a background in computers, database management is my thing," she notes. "I started at the bottom and worked my way up to a great job. From temp to section chief, what more could you ask for? You work hard, and it pays off."

But the best part is the people she works with. "Good employees and teamwork make this job fun. In Licensing, it's not 'your job' or 'my job'; it's 'our job.' We keep each other informed with lots of cross-training, so everyone knows everyone else's job."

Think tens of thousands of deer permits sold and recorded each year. Now multiply that by dozens, and you get a small grasp of what Licensing accomplishes day-in, day-out. The most amazing thing is not that they do it and do it well. It's that they do it with such cheer.

"We are the first line of contact for KDWP, so how we treat people reflects on the entire agency. We try to make it less complicated."

For this outdoorsman, that mission has been accomplished many times over.



HUNTING SPOTS

with Marc Murrell

GET YOUR FROG ON

The call is unmistakable. The bass VAR-RROOOM, VAR-RROOOM booms across inky water, and it's music to the ears of frog hunters who may salivate in anticipation of things to come. The Kansas frogging season officially kicks off July 1 and remains open until the end of October.

The bullfrog is the quarry of frog hunters. The biggest frog species in North America comes in various shades of green with a light-colored belly. Bullfrogs have a large tympanum, the round recessed spot on the side of the head which functions similar to the human ear. A male's tympanum is larger than its eye while a female's is about the same size of its eye or smaller.

Obviously, bullfrogs are found near water. Rivers, streams, marshes, small wetlands and farm ponds are all good frog hunting spots. In late evening, frogs move to the bank or onto floating vegetation and wait to feed on just about anything that comes by. Marshes and wetlands are ideal frog habitat and easily accessed on foot, but farm ponds are probably the best and most popular frog hunting hotspots.

The daily creel limit on frogs is eight. A valid fishing license is required to take, catch or kill bullfrogs. Frogs may be taken day or night by dip net, hook and line, hand, bow and arrow, or crossbow. Arrows must be barbed and attached to the bow by a string.

Frog legs are a delicacy, and the white meat has a sweet, pleasant taste. The easiest way to cook frog legs is to pan-fry them in a small amount of oil. The legs should be dipped in egg, rolled in cracker crumbs or flour, and seasoned with salt and pepper. The legs should be cooked on each side for several minutes on medium heat until they are a crisp, golden brown.



Record Largemouth



A new Kansas state record largemouth bass was caught in a private strip pit in Cherokee County on May 3 and has been certified by the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP). Fourteen-year-old Tyson Hallam, of Scammon, took the trophy fish during the West Mineral Eagles Fishing Tournament using a jig and pig. The monster largemouth weighed 11 pounds, 12.8 ounces, edging the 31-year-old state record of 11 pounds, 12 ounces caught in 1977 by Kenneth Bingham of Topeka.

The fish was weighed on a certified scale and witnessed by Mined Land Wildlife Area manager David Jenkins, along with Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks fisheries biologist Rob Friggeri, who confirmed the species and measured the fish at 28 inches long and 19 1/8 inches in girth.

A potential state record fish must remain intact until officially certified as a state record. Anyone who believes they have caught a state record fish must bring the fish to a grocery store or other business with certified scales as soon as possible. The weighing must be witnessed. The fish must be species-confirmed by a Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks fisheries biologist or a Wildlife and Fisheries Division regional supervisor. (A tissue sample may be required.) A color photograph of the fish must accompany the application. Frozen fish and species that are threatened or endangered will not be accepted.

All applications for state records require a 30-day waiting period before certification.

ALIEN INVADER SIGNS

It's the boating season, and the KDWP wants all boaters to have fun. However, staff want to ensure that boaters protect the resource they enjoy from dangerous aliens -- commonly called aquatic nuisance species (ANS).

KDWP staff are in the process of placing new ANS signs across the state to raise public awareness of precautions that must be taken to prevent spread of zebra mussels and other ANS. These signs are not all the same and target several different species in addition to zebra mussels, including Asian carp, white perch, and others. Signs will be placed at all KDWP-managed areas to remind the public to take precautions every time they visit a lake.

ANS may also be reported through KDWP's Operation Game Thief -- 1-800-426-3843 -- or online at www.ksogt.com. For more information, visit the KDWP website, www.kdwp.state.ks.us. Just type ANS in the search box for details, including photographs, of aquatic nuisance species in Kansas.

—KDWP news



Help STOP the Zebra Mussel

BOATERS

- Remove visible mud, plants or animals before transporting equipment
- Drain all water from equipment
- Clean and dry all equipment
- Discard live bait in approved receptacle
- To kill Zebra Mussels, dry equipment for five days or wash with high-pressure hot water

Boat Hot Spots

STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS!

www.ProtectYourWaters.net

Federal and State Law Prohibit the Transport of Zebra Mussels

FISH SQUEEZER

with Tommie Berger

Summer Testing

Fisheries biologists are busy throughout Kansas year round, despite the fact that some think we just go fishing all the time. During the summer, we are busy conducting fishing clinics, doing Summer Library Programs, and real fisheries work like building fish habitat, shoreline seining, updating fishing reports, and supervising creel surveys.

One important mid-summer fisheries management task is shoreline seining or electrofishing for baby fish. Biologists and their summer aides generally start in July with sampling of gizzard shad populations on reservoirs. Gizzard shad are the most common and most important forage fish for our reservoir game fish. We sample these little fish with either a 50-foot bag seine or a shocker boat. Some biologists feel that seining is

more efficient, especially if the reservoir has a clean bottom with not many snags in seining locations.

On reservoirs I manage, I seine primarily swimming beaches because they have a clean sandy bottom. Some biologists prefer to electrofish shad, shocking the same locations each year for a predetermined period. During these yearly samples, we count the numbers of shad and sort them by size. Collected data is a great management tool. Comparing data from year to year, we can see trends in both numbers and average size of the

shad, which tells us whether we have a good forage base developing or whether the game fish might go a bit hungry over the summer, fall, and winter. We also collect other species of baby fish: bass, bluegill, walleye, or other species. This information tells us if game species are reproducing at a good rate and is often the first indication we have about the growth potential of fish populations.



Crouch Joins Playa Lakes Joint Venture

The Playa Lakes Joint Venture (PLJV) has appointed Barth Crouch as the organization's new conservation policy director, and federal Farm Bill programs will be his primary area of responsibility. Crouch is no stranger to Farm Bill programs. He most recently worked as a regional biologist with Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever, where, in addition to biological and chapter duties, he focused on the organization's efforts to target existing Farm Bill programs for the benefit of birds. These programs - particularly the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) - benefit birds throughout the Great Plains.

"In the early 1990s, wildlife agencies and organizations were just beginning to realize the value of the Conservation Reserve Program for birds," Crouch said. "Today it is even more important to keep as much habitat in the program as possible."



PLAYA LAKES JOINT VENTURE

Some of Crouch's immediate responsibilities with PLJV will be to help draft a cooperative agreement with the Farm Service Agency (FSA) to enhance CRP for playa lakes and lesser prairie chickens. He will work closely with the FSA and the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the two federal agencies that administer Farm Bill programs.

The creation of the conservation policy director position was approved by the PLJV Management Board in January, and the candidate search began soon after. PLJV was awarded a Wildlife Action Opportunities Fund (WAOF) grant to

help fund the position, which will be matched by non-federal sources. The WAOF grant program was created by the Wildlife Conservation Society with support from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. The program supports implementation of priority actions of State Wildlife Action Plans. This award to the PLJV will help Kansas and other PLJV states implement several playa conservation and policy-related strategies identified in their plans.

—KDWP news

The race could not happen if not for the Kansas Ultra Runners Society. The Society weed eats at least 8 miles of canyon trails that staff cannot access with bigger equipment. This year, they are also working on clearing ice storm debris and more

April 5, 2008 marked the 10th Annual Rockin' K Trail Run on the trails at Kanopolis State Park. During those 10 years, 791 runners from 33 states, Japan and Germany have entered, with 691 finishing. Of those finishing, 532 ran the marathon race and 159 completed the 50-mile run. In those 10 years, temperatures ranged from 19 degrees to 85, weather from muddy to dry to 7 inches of snow.

The race starts at Horsethief Canyon, crosses native prairie, splashes through spring-fed water crossings and across beaver dams, and crosses barbed wire fences up and down canyons to the bluffs above the Smoky Hill River.

inaccessible trail miles. They keep staff aware of problems on the trails and handle all the logistics of events such as the Rockin' K run. This group is representative of the friends groups and other supporting associations, highlighted elsewhere in this issue, that are vital to successful state park operations.

Interestingly, many Kansans who have participated in this run are surprised to find such a challenging trail "in their backyard." With high fuel prices, this just might be the year to explore the wonders of Kansas on your vacation. Kansas is hurricane-free, and the only sharks you'll encounter are fossilized.

Olathe Youth Wins Kansas Junior Duck Art Contest

Layne Anderson, an 18-year old senior at Olathe Northwest High School, captured Best of Show honors for Kansas at the Junior Duck Stamp Art Contest on March 26 in Wichita. Her acrylic painting of a pair of ring-necked ducks won the top spot in the judging and went on to represent Kansas in the national Junior Duck Stamp competition in San Diego, Calif.

Anderson's entry competed against the other 49 states' Best of Show entries on April 17 at the San Diego Zoo. The first place national winner received a \$5,000 scholarship, a free trip to Washington, D.C., and their entry was made into a Junior Duck Stamp that is sold nationwide. Proceeds from the sale of the \$5 stamp funds conservation education and art scholarships.

Anderson's artwork was among 883 entries from students in 51 Kansas public schools, seven private schools, 11 home schools, five art studios, and two 4-H clubs. Anderson plans to attend Baker University in the fall where she will continue to take art classes.

Most conservationists know about the Federal Duck Stamp, required of waterfowl hunters. Revenues generated from their sale are used to purchase lands for the National Wildlife Refuge System, as well as other conservation efforts. The Junior Duck Stamp program was created to help American youth increase awareness and appreciation for wetlands and waterfowl. The Great Plains Nature Center, the Coleman Company, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service sponsor the Junior Duck Stamp program in Kansas.

—KDWP news



KDWP's Doyle Receives Hall of Fame Award



Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) hunter education coordinator Wayne Doyle has been named to the International Hunter Education Association (IHEA) Hall of Fame. The award was presented at the recent IHEA conference in Illinois in recognition of his exceptional contributions to hunter education.

Doyle has been actively involved with hunter education for 24 years. He started as a volunteer instructor and soon became an area coordinator and active member of the Kansas Hunter Education Advisory Committee. In 1998, he was hired by KDWP to coordinate the hunter education program in Kansas.

"Wayne's outstanding leadership skills, his enthusiasm and innovative ideas have paid great dividends for hunting and for the Kansas Hunter Education program," said Ross Robins, KDWP Chief of Education. "His love of hunting, shooting and wildlife along with his sense of purpose and drive to do things right have been key to his many contributions to hunting and Hunter Education. These contributions compelled the Kansas Wildlife Federation to name him Outdoor Skills Instructor of the Year. Whether it is his innovations in instructor training, his work with the Kansas Legislature to improve laws, or his tireless dedication to improve hunter ethics and the image of hunters, Wayne's work has made a difference that will be felt for years to come."

The International Hunter Education Association (IHEA) is the professional association for 67 state and provincial wildlife conservation agencies, and the 70,000 volunteer instructors who teach hunter education in North America.

Doyle's contributions to hunter education have been numerous and far-reaching:

- purchased five LaserShot hunting simulators for use in hunter education classes and secured four seasonal positions as a means to introduce hunting and basic hunting concepts to many thousands of citizens across the state at classes, fairs, and other events.
- provided staff and volunteers with trailers, traps, shotguns, targets and ammunition to encourage live fire in hunter education classes, as well as to promote hunter recruitment across the state. In addition, he has provided volunteers and staff with bowhunter education trailers for use in bowhunter education classes and the promotion of bowhunting.
- proposed and successfully promoted changes in Kansas law aimed at the recruitment of new hunters, including legislation to allow young hunters to hunt without hunter education while under direct supervision and a minimum age for kids to obtain a hunter education certificates. He then proposed and successfully shepherded legislation that allows first-time hunters 16 and older to purchase a one-time apprentice license, permitting them to try hunting under supervision before taking a hunter education course.
- implemented wingshooting clinics and wounding loss seminars across the state. He obtained certification as a National Sporting Clays Association Level One instructor and made it possible for 15 of his volunteer instructors to obtain Special Level One certification for hunter education instructors. In addition he has implemented a number of advanced hunter education classes.
- developed an instructor intranet site where volunteer instructors can schedule classes, order supplies, assemble and submit class rosters, check records and perform numerous other activities. Additionally he developed an online new instructor orientation workshop.
- worked with volunteer instructors and with Oquirrh Productions to develop HE Tools as an extremely effective teaching tool for hunter education classes. Developed Powerpoint presentations for classes and made laptops and projectors available for instructor use.
- has been an active and influential member of the hunter education community at the national level. The IHEA presented him with the Ed Kozicky award in 2003 for his assistance, counsel and support of the President of IHEA. He has chaired or co-chaired committees for IHEA. Wayne was an integral member of the IHEA Summit on Youth Recruitment in 2005.

AmeriCorps



AmeriCorps members serving in the Pratt Headquarters office responded to some of the areas damaged in a tornado that touched down in rural Pratt County in May.

They picked up debris, separating metal from wood, moving tree limbs to a pile to be burned and placing scrap metal in another pile, and tried to help families salvage what belongings they could.

Said AmeriCorps member Seth Wiley: "This was my first experience helping victims of a tornado. I met a boy, and he was telling me about where they were when the tornado happened and what he thought and felt during the situation. It is something that no child or anybody should have to go through, but he kept his head up and is doing well with this situation."

AmeriCorps is a service learning program modeled on the Peace Corps. Members assigned to KDWP's Kansas Outdoor AmeriCorps Action Team serve for either 1,700 or 900 hours during an 11-month period beginning in September. They receive tangible benefits of a living stipend during the term of service, health insurance for members serving 1,700 hours, and an education award of \$4,750 (\$2,375 for members serving 900 hours). They also gain the intangible benefits of training and experience in areas ranging from CPR and use of power tools to public speaking, trail building, and campground design. Furthermore, a program goal is to instill a service ethic that lasts a lifetime.

AmeriCorps members were vital to the immediate response and recovery efforts in Greensburg last spring and summer. They also responded to areas that were flooded or damaged in ice storms. The department's AmeriCorps program has been in operation for nine years, and member recruitment for the tenth year has begun. Persons interested in serving in the program should contact the state park nearest the area where they could serve.

– Kathy Pritchett

FIVE-YEAR T&E REVIEW



KDWP is mandated by the Kansas Nongame and Endangered Species Conservation Act of 1975 to review all current and proposed threatened and endangered (T&E) species every five years, and 2008 marks another year for review. A Threatened and Endangered Species Task Force comprised of members from state and federal agencies and nongovernmental organizations will review the currently-listed species and those species proposed for listing.

During this review, species can be added, removed, or status changed based on petitions to KDWP's endangered species coordinator. These petitions must have documented scientific evidence to support a change. The task force then makes a recommendation for each

species to KDWP Secretary Mike Hayden. These recommendations and any amendments are published in the Kansas Register for at least 90 days so that the public may comment. After the 90-day comment period, Secretary Hayden then makes recommended changes, if any, to the Kansas Wildlife and Parks Commission.

If changes are suggested and approved, KDWP must take conservation measures that will properly reflect the new status of any species affected.

For more information on this five-year review, go online to the KDWP website, www.kdwp.state.ks.us. Click "Other Services" at the top of the page, "Threatened and Endangered Species," and "Species Status Review."

–KDWP news

Not Wile E.'s Roadrunner

text and photos by Mike Blair
staff photographer/associate editor, Pratt

Mention “roadrunner” and most of the Baby Boomer generation will envision the Roadrunner cartoon. The real-life roadrunner doesn’t do much to dispel that image. Speedy, quirky, and elusive, the roadrunner is one of our most interesting native bird species.



If you've spent any time around roadrunners, it's easy to see how the cartoon got started. Roadrunners are goofy birds. In the cartoon version, a roadrunner with a perpetual grin always bested the hungry coyote. Though the bird's curiosity led it to stop at every new coyote trick, its speed always won out in the end.

And that's pretty close to accurate. I've chased roadrunners all over southern Kansas, and you never know what to expect. Some days, you can't find one in its habitual digs, and the next, a roadrunner is standing in your driveway in town. One will hop up on your truck to watch you work, and the next is so sneaky you're lucky for a glimpse. Some birds let you walk or drive along beside them as they hunt, and others dive into brush at the sound of an approaching car. The mood of an individual often changes from day to day, making the search unpredictable.





Greater roadrunners are desert birds, and this limits their range in Kansas. They are found all along the southern third tier of Kansas counties, most common in the western half. They have rarely been reported near the Nebraska line. They do not migrate, but establish breeding ranges and live there throughout their lives. Young birds disperse during their first year, and evidence suggests that roadrunners, like some other southwestern animals, including armadillos, may pioneer northward into new areas.

Any such movement is limited by food availability. Greater roadrunners are omnivores, meaning they'll eat both animal and vegetable matter. However, they rely on insects and reptiles for 90 percent of their diet, both of which are scarce or absent during Kansas winters. Seed-bearing favorites like prickly pear cactus and smooth sumac provide only limited winter forage. Hunting roadrunners have to scratch through soil litter to find insects and small arthropods for winter food. The farther north and the more snow, the harder

this becomes. One local expert birder I know spotted a roadrunner near his bird feeder frequently one winter, and he theorized that small birds were part of its winter diet.

Greater roadrunners are long-tailed, slender birds with oversized bills. Heavily streaked with tan and dark brown plumage, they are naturally camouflaged in the sage and brushy flats they occupy. They belong to the group of birds known as cuckoos and spend the majority of their time on the ground. They slightly resemble hen pheasants, but are darker brown, have larger heads and bills, and distinct head crests that are erected when alarmed or curious. Habits and similarity make northern Kansas reports possible mistaken identities with pheasants of that area.

The greater roadrunner also has a colorful, distinguishing head mark. A blank patch of skin behind each eye is shaded light blue merging with orange. Especially when the crest is flared, the color is quite noticeable.

Roadrunners have long, powerful legs for run-



Roadrunners have zygodactyl feet, with two toes pointing forward and two toes back, similar to woodpeckers. Most birds have three toes forward and one back. The X-shaped tracks of roadrunners have sometimes helped me find the birds as I searched new areas along sandy or muddy roads.

ning and leaping while catching prey. They can sprint at speeds of more than 15 miles per hour and prefer running to flying.

Roadrunner wings are short but strong, used more for maneuvering and short climbs than for sustained flights. Even when escaping predators, the birds use a combination of leaps, turns, and flight bursts through thickets and trees, rather than long distance escapes.

These acrobatics also help them catch fast-moving prey. Roadrunners hunt through likely habitat, watching for any living thing small enough to eat. Grasshoppers are a favorite, but mice, rodents, snakes, lizards, birds, and eggs are fair game. Small birds like field sparrows, surprised and jumped from a nest or while feeding, can seldom escape the sprint and leap of a roadrunner. Flying insects and birds are snatched from the air as they make their getaways.

Lizards and snakes are commonly eaten and fed to young during nesting season. Speed of





Roadrunner nests are stick platforms placed from ground level to 15 feet or higher. Most nests are in shrubs or low trees. The two roadrunner nests I've known were both in evergreen trees – one in a pine, 9 feet above ground, and the other in a large cedar, about 15 feet high. The nests are larger versions of a brown thrasher's nest, with pencil-diameter sticks and twigs fashioned into a circular platform. The nests are not easy to find; I've covered a lot of ground in several known nesting territories without success.

the roadrunners is again evident when chasing lizards in thick escape cover. Fast reflexes make them more than a match for snakes – including rattlers – that try to defend against the lightning strikes of the bird's heavy beak. Roadrunners often seize and batter reptiles and other large prey against the ground to kill them.

Poisonous prey? No problem. Roadrunners relish such fearsome creatures as tarantulas, scorpions, centipedes, and other spiders. These birds are also the only true predators of the highly venomous tarantula hawk, a giant black wasp that hunts and stings tarantulas. Roadrunners attack stinging arthropods at the source, popping tails off of scorpions or crushing abdomens to render stingers useless, before eating their dangerous meals.

Roadrunners are most visible and interesting to watch during nesting season. This occurs spring through mid-summer. Greater roadrunners are monogamous and may mate for life. They often defend a breeding territory all year.

Courtship begins in early spring, when males often sit on a favorite perch and "sing" at sunrise. Members of the cuckoo family, roadrunners utter a dove-like coo, but the mating call is much more aggressive and descends from a high pitch. When a female appears, the male displays by bowing, alternately lifting and dropping his wings and spreading his tail. It may parade back and forth with his head held high and crest flared. The male may also offer food to the female.

Nests contain two to six white eggs. Eggs are laid at considerable intervals, and each takes about 18 days to hatch. It's not uncommon to find a fresh egg and hatchling in the same nest. By the time the last chick pips, some nestlings may be half grown.

Male and female roadrunners share incubation, with the male normally taking night duty. One parent stays at the nest until all eggs hatch, though the warmth of nestlings allows short breaks. After hatching is complete, the nest full of odd-sized young requires full-time hunting by both parents.



Should an intruder appear, adult roadrunners click their bills to show alarm. This rapid clicking can be heard for some distance. Parents may use a decoy display to draw attention away from the nest. Similar to the broken-wing act of a killdeer, the roadrunner feigns a broken leg by dragging the tail, stretching its head low to the ground, and scrambling and dragging a foot as if unable to escape. As the intruder is lured away, the roadrunner gradually rights itself and sprints out of sight.

Young roadrunners are especially ugly when first hatched – naked, black, and greasy, with huge heads. Eruption of dark pinfeathers continues their strange look for several days, but feathers grow quickly. Soon, they are miniature versions of their parents.





As nestlings gain strength, they climb from limb to limb in the nest tree, waiting for their parents to return with a meal. At night, they settle back in the nest for the shared warmth of their siblings. By three weeks old, they leave the nest, never to return. For a time, they hunt with their parents before gaining independence.

Grasshoppers make up the bulk of a young roadrunner's diet, and fortunately, hoppers are plentiful in mid-summer. The leaping, flying insects provide large and nutritious meals and help sharpen the youngsters' hunting skills for other prey as well. Young roadrunners soon live on their own, though they continue to occupy their parents' territory until they seek a mate as adults.

The roadrunner has a powerful digestive system that processes bones, scales, and spines of such reptiles as the horned toad. Birds up to the size of full-grown mockingbirds are caught and eaten, but feathers are usually stripped before ingestion. All eaten material passes through a roadrunner's digestive tract, unlike owls and other birds that regurgitate hard matter, hair, and feathers in the form of pellets.

The greater roadrunner is one of the state's most interesting birds. It's too bad that limited range precludes many Kansas birders from watching it. Even so, it's common enough that a trip to southwest Kansas provides a decent viewing opportunity. Watch it sprint through sage and snatch a lizard, and you'll see for yourself why Wile E. Coyote could never catch this cartoon bird. ♡

Severe cold and storms can be hard on Kansas roadrunners. When necessary, the birds drop their body temperatures slightly to enter a torpor and help save energy. To derive warmth, feathers on the back can be spread wide to absorb sunlight through dark skin patches. Berries, grain, and seeds become emergency foods in winter storms.

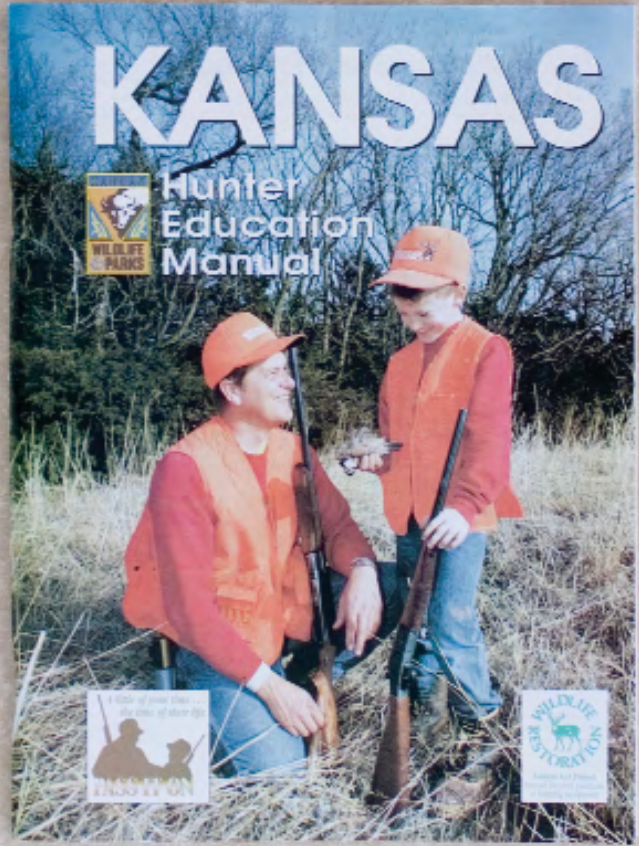


HUNTER EDUCATION STUDENT TEST



by Mike Blair

9. Direct pressure, elevation, and pressure point are ways to start a fire.
- A. ways to start a fire.
 - B. ways to clean a gun.
 - C. ways to stop bleeding.



13. Habitat is the key to important
- A. to all wild animals
 - B. only in winter
 - C. only during the

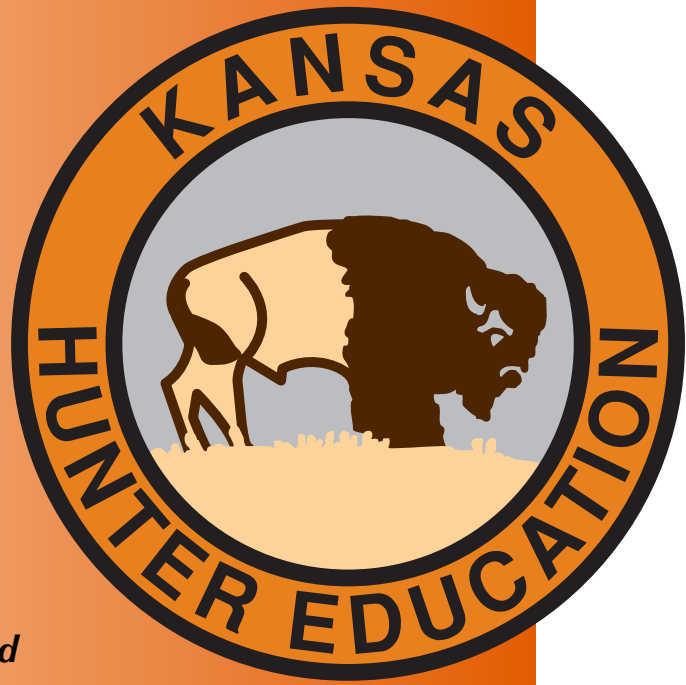
Readin', Writin', and Hunter Education

by Monica Bickerstaff

assistant hunter education coordinator, Pratt

photos by Mike Blair

Today's busy youth find making time for hunter education difficult, so KDWP hunter education coordinators have recently worked with interested Kansas middle schools to offer the course as part of their curriculum.



This marks the 35th anniversary of mandatory hunter education in Kansas. More than 470,000 students have successfully attained certification since the law became effective July 1, 1973.

The primary goal of hunter education, since its inception in the U.S. in 1949, has been to promote safety. State programs succeeded in dramatically reducing hunting accidents and now have broadened their emphasis to promote ethical hunter behavior, wildlife conservation awareness and appreciation for wildlife resources.

Shortly after hunter education became mandatory in Kansas, professional educators serving as volunteer hunter education instructors saw the benefits of incorporating hunter education in their schools. Not only did it allow students to obtain their hunter education certification, it also offered opportunities to incorporate life skills in ethics, wildlife management, and conservation.

Tonganoxie Junior High School incorporated hunter education in their physical education program in 1978, where it continues to be offered today. Wellsville Middle School (WMS) incorporated hunter education in its curriculum in 2002.

Marlow Westerbeck, WMS faculty member and 17-year veteran volunteer Kansas Hunter Education instructor, facilitates their program. Westerbeck observes, "We started our program in 2002 at Wellsville, and it originally started out as a nine-week course as a middle school elective. We've since modified the curriculum a little bit to fit in with some of the other rotation that the middle school students do, and it's now a one-semester course, first and second, two a year. We run through approximately 20 kids a semester. Once again, as I said, it's an elective for our kids, so it's optional if they want to take it or not."

He continues, "When visiting with our guidance counselor at

Wellsville, he's indicated to me that since we started the program we have yet to have a negative comment with our parent-teacher conferences over the success of our program. Everyone has been real supportive – community, parents – and it seems to be increasing in enrollment as each year progresses."

Impressed with the success of Wellsville's program, Central Heights Middle School (CHMS) in Richmond offered hunter education to its students for the first time in the 2005-2006 school year. Offering students instruction in safe firearm handling, along with the added benefit of hunter education certification are key reasons principal Buddy Welch supports offering the course in his school.

Jeff Meyer, CHMS faculty member, approached Welch about the prospect of offering hunter education to their students. Meyer indicated to Welch his willingness to become a cer-

tified instructor and to teach the course at their school. Welch understands the challenges his rural school students face participating in weekend school activities. He knows it's difficult for them to travel to outlying towns to attend weekend hunter education courses, and he had this to say about incorporating the program into their curriculum: "... (with Meyer) being certified and being able to teach the course and our students getting that opportunity to take that course here at school, on school time, has been a great benefit for our students here at Central Heights."

The people who ultimately benefit from hunter education instruction, the students, have their own unique views of the advantages of the program in their schools. A graduate of Tonganoxie Middle School's longstanding program reported, "It's better to have it in school because you get to have more of a hands-on course." Echoing Welch's sentiment about the ben-

efit of offering the program on school time, the Tonganoxie student observed he might not have been able to take the course if it hadn't been offered through the school.

The success of offering hunter education programs in each of these three schools is obvious, so why don't we offer it in more schools? That's where I come in. As assistant hunter education coordinator, I have been charged with launching an initiative to encourage more middle and junior high schools to incorporate a Kansas Hunter Education/outdoor skills-related curriculum in course offerings. Since Kansas law prohibits certification of anyone under the age of 11, we are focusing initial efforts on middle school curriculums.


At the recommendation of administrators representing schools offering successful hunter education programs, I invited seven professional educators from across the state to actively participate as members of the Kansas Hunter Education

in Our Schools Advisory Committee. Those agreeing to participate included a retired superintendent, two middle school principals, a college professor, and three middle school faculty members. The members were a mix of hunters, non-hunters and volunteer certified Kansas Hunter Education instructors.

The first meeting of the advisory committee opened with my sharing the project's goal: to develop an interactive course of instruction, guided by state and federal curriculum standards, designed to inspire Kansas middle school-aged youth to explore nature and the outdoors, as well as teach them skills that will allow them to participate in a safe and knowledgeable manner. The curriculum will not only provide a student with basic outdoor skills but will also provide him/her with a background in basic firearm safety, ethics, wildlife management and conservation that will spark a

KDWP provides schools with all the teaching materials for classroom work. A field trip off school grounds is a great way to provide some of the hands-on field training. Schools are encouraged to partner with community members who are certified hunter education instructors for instruction.





To learn more about the Kansas Department of Wildlife & Parks Hunter Education in Our Schools program, contact the Hunter Education Section at (620) 672-5911.

by Mike Blair

The initiative is timely, given the 2005 publication of Richard Louv's book, *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*, in which he "explores the increasing divide between the young and the natural world, and the environmental, social, psychological, and spiritual implications of that change." Published findings from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's 2006 *National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation* show a continual decline in participation of "the overall number of hunters in the United States . . . from 1996 to 2006".

Louv writes in his book's Introduction:

While I pay particular attention to children, my focus is also on those Americans born during the past two to three decades. The shift in our relationship to the natural world is startling, even in settings that one would assume are devoted to nature.

He continues:

Our society is teaching young people to avoid direct exposure to nature. That lesson is delivered in schools, families, even organizations devoted to the outdoors, and codified into the legal and regulatory structures of many of our communities. Our institutions, urban/suburban, design, and cultural attitudes unconsciously associate nature with doom — while disassociating the outdoors from joy and solitude. Well-meaning public school systems, media, and parents are effectively scaring children straight out of the woods and fields.

desire to further discover the many opportunities afforded them by nature and the potential lifelong recreational enjoyment it holds.

Next, committee members were given an overview of the no-cost educational resource materials, supplied by the Hunter Education Section of the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, standard to every basic hunter education course throughout the state. Student manuals, videos, and the popular computer-based Laser Shot shooting simulator (frequently used in schools where actual firearms are not permitted) were listed among the resources available. Additionally, committee members were briefed on the volunteer instructor certification process and how it would be customized for professional educators to account for their knowledge and experience regarding presentation skills, learning styles, lesson plans, and classroom setup. All were intrigued with the program's flexibility.

Committee members engaged in a lively brainstorming session identifying the optimal means to promote our flexible program to their professional colleagues. The outcome: produce a 6- to 10-minute video for distribution to administrators that includes commentary from administrators involved with existing programs on the benefits and challenges of offering such a program in public schools. It should also include students stating why they prefer having the opportunity to receive their certification on school time. The advisory committee developed a packet of information con-

taining specific examples of our Kansas Hunter Education student learning objectives as matched to appropriate Kansas Education Curriculum Standard indicators, and recommended including informational brochures specific to conservation, hunting, ethics and handling firearms in the home. Additionally, the committee suggested procuring booth space at professional conferences including the Kansas Association

As a result of the Committee's input, Hunter Education in Our Schools portfolios containing a copy of the short video, appropriate brochures provided by the National Shooting Sports Foundation, a letter including identification of standards addressed by our program and a copy of the current *Kansas Hunter Education Student Manual* have been distributed to hundreds of professional educators



of Middle School Administrators, United School Administrators, Kansas Association of Elementary School Principals/Kansas Association of Secondary School Principals, and the Kansas State Department of Education, where information packets could be distributed. As a drawing card, committee members recommended the use of a Laser Shot shooting simulator at the booths. The advisory committee emphasized the need for community involvement by encouraging schools to partner with community members certified as volunteer hunter education instructors.

throughout the state.

Since launching the Hunter Education in Our Schools initiative in the spring of 2006, the number of participating schools has increased. Our goal to inspire middle school-aged youth to explore nature and the outdoors as well as teach them skills that will allow them to participate in a safe and knowledgeable manner is being realized. Whether graduates choose to hunt or not, educators can rest assured they have raised their students' awareness of the overall importance of hunting's role. ♡

A Life In Wildlife Biology

by J. Mark Shoup *associate editor, Pratt*
photos by Mike Blair

So you want to be a biologist, eh? You won't get rich, but if you're committed to conservation of our wildlife resources and the people who appreciate them, wildlife biology can be a rewarding career.

Anyone who has worked for a state wildlife agency has probably heard the story. It goes something like this: a starry-eyed young outdoorsman graduates from high school and heads off to college, intent on being a wildlife biologist. He struggles through his first tests in college algebra and microbiology. Scratching his head, he goes to see his advisor.

Advisor: What do you want to do when you graduate?

Student: I want to be a wildlife biologist.

Advisor: That's a good profession, but I guess I'm biased because that's my field. What makes you want to study wildlife biology?

Student: Well, I love to hunt and fish.

Advisor: Do you like working with people?

Student: I'm not sure what you mean. I just love being out in the woods.

Advisor: Would you like drawing up contracts with landowners, conducting surveys, working in a lab, answering email, planting crops, driving long distances, talking to elementary school children about your work?

Student: Well, I'm not sure about any of that.

Advisor: What about giving up opening weekends of hunting seasons?

Student: But my friends and I always hit the openers . . .

You get the idea. While almost all wildlife biologists love to hunt and fish, our hypothetical advisor may tell this young student to find another profession if a love of hunting and fish is the only motivation — or perhaps even the primary one — for becoming a wildlife biologist.

Charlie Swank — KDWP wildlife biologist stationed out of the Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area office — understands this concept well.

"To be a wildlife biologist, first and foremost you must have a love for the resource," Swank says. "But you need to understand people — landowners, hunters, anglers. You have to be willing to drive the countryside and get to know as many landowners in your district as possible. In your free time, you do need to hunt, fish, or trap, or you won't be able to talk to these people."

"Not everyone likes sitting in an office working on a computer," Swank continues, "but it's part of the job. And there are unpleasant things you occasionally have to do, such as put down a wounded animal."

Just getting a job once you have a degree can be difficult, too. Swank, who grew up in Oklahoma, spent three years working part-time jobs and temporary positions for wildlife agencies before he snagged the Council Grove Wildlife Area manager job in 1974. He worked that job for three more years before getting the wildlife biologist position at Cheyenne Bottoms.

Caveats aside, for many people, wildlife biology is the perfect job. Much of the work is

outside, in the country, and sometimes they do exciting things like trapping and transplanting game or monitoring game movements. Ensuring ample habitat exists for game is an important part of the job, too, as is convincing landowners to

improve wildlife habitat and open their land to hunters.

In fact, Swank's favorite part of the job is working with people. "I really enjoy working with landowners on WIHA [Walk-In Hunting Access] contracts," he said.



Most full-time wildlife biologists started working with the department as summer aides, seasonals, or part-time help before getting a full-time position. Some of the part-time jobs include research projects.



One of the most important duties of a wildlife biologist in Kansas is working with landowners. More than 97 percent of the land in Kansas is privately owned, so working with landowners who are interested in wildlife and wildlife habitat is critical to conservation.

"It gives me a chance to learn my district and the people who own and work the land. Many times, I'm the first person from the agency they have met, and many have become good friends. I like doing wildlife surveys, including deer spotlight surveys, waterfowl and game bird counts, and frog and toad surveys."

A typical year for wildlife biologists begins about the time hunters are hanging up their guns. With the exception of spring turkey hunting, most hunters consider season's end about late January or early February. In February, Swank may be trapping wild turkeys for transplant from an area

where the population is high to one where few turkeys are present. In March, he starts working with landowners who are interested in enrolling their land in WIHA. Throughout the spring, he helps landowners plant food plots and wildlife habitat, burn overgrown grasslands, and plan other wildlife-

Jim Haas is a landowner in Comanche County, Swank's territory. Haas has participated in WIHA since the first year it was open and now has a large number of acres enrolled. Here's what he thinks about it: "I've known Charlie for a long time, and when I saw an article about WIHA in *Kansas Wildlife & Parks* magazine, I gave him a call. We visited a little, and I got in. It's worked out real good although I was skeptical at first about finding trash lying around, but we've not seen anything. Hunters often go out of their way to avoid conflict."

Animal damage control is a year-round issue. This can mean anything from protecting a home from a noisy woodpecker to removing or chasing turkeys, geese, or deer from areas where they are unwanted. Another year-round activity is giving presentations to schools, scout groups, civic organizations, and others.

friendly projects. This is also a time when he's actively conducting surveys and call counts, which involves traveling established routes and listening for game birds calling during the mating season. This gives biologists an idea of how healthy game populations are prior to nesting season.

July 1 marks another "start" for the biologist's year. It's the start of a new fiscal year for KDWP, and money for new equipment and other purchases must be allocated. The WIHA sign-up period ends July 1, and that's when Swank and other biologists across the state begin posting WIHA ground. (With

more than 1 million acres enrolled, WIHA posting continues into November.) Summer is time for more landowner consultations, some migratory bird banding, and filling out status reports for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP), a federal pro-



Much of what wildlife biologists do involves wildlife and its interaction with people. They may be asked to relocate Canada geese that have overstayed their welcome in an urban area. Educating people about wildlife and assisting them in dealing with associated problems is a big part of the job.



Duties of a wildlife biologist may include trapping, tagging and studying wildlife populations, and that is a part that attracts interest. However, field work may be a small percentage of the job's duties.

gram for landowners who want to develop and improve wildlife habitat.

In late fall and winter — when hunters are doing their thing — wildlife biologists work with landowners on WIHA contracts for the spring turkey season. At this time, they conduct chronic wasting disease surveillance and testing. They also work opening weekends of hunting seasons, checking WIHA land

to see how hunters are doing and reporting any violations. This is also a time for repairing equipment such as seed drills, root plows, moisture-barrier layers, and propane guns, used for chasing nuisance animals away from homes and other areas where they may be a problem.

Swank is one of those people for whom wildlife biology is a perfect fit. He's a self-starter and early riser who likes

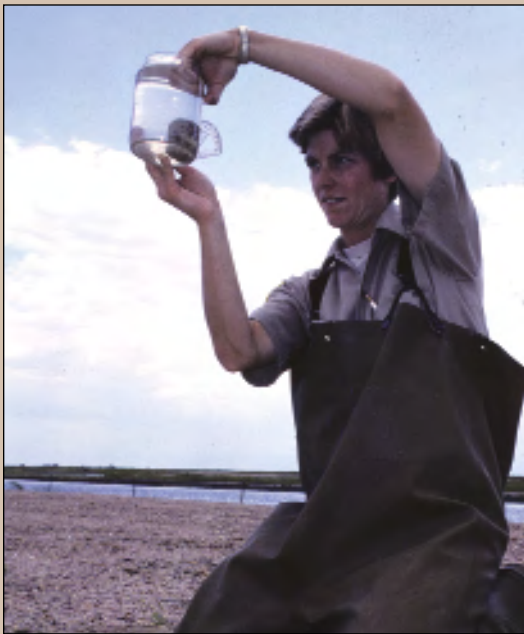
people, enjoys the freedom of being outside, and gladly travels his nine-county area throughout the year.

"I don't make a lot of money, especially compared to much of my family, who are attorneys, but I wouldn't trade places," Swank explains. "And in some ways, my job is harder than it used to be. I don't do well with computers, but I didn't grow up in the computer age. With more and more programs like WIHA and WHIP, we are busier than we've ever been, too. But a lot of our agency has changed for the better. Equipment is easier to get, and we're better equipped than we've ever been in my tenure."


Swank has only one concern about the future of wildlife biology: "When I started, most wildlife biologists were farm or ranch kids, or they had grown up hunting or fishing or both. Now, you have a lot of people wanting into the field who do neither. But if they don't, they just won't understand our constituents. They should at least be willing to learn."

In Kansas, though, Swank is still optimistic. He sees good, hard-working young people entering the agency every year,

"The main thing is, you don't do this because you want to hunt and fish. I love hunting and fishing as much as anyone, but I sought this job because I'm concerned about the resource and want wildlife to thrive. That often means sacrificing personal time hunting, but that's okay with me. If I had it to do over again, I'd do the same thing."



and expects it to continue. As for this transplanted Oklahoman's future in Kansas, that is in no doubt, either.

"I can't think of a better place to be if you want to hunt and fish like I do. We're right in the Central Flyway. Access to private ground is still fairly easy to get. We have the best all-round hunting anywhere, and most of my friends are here. Kansas is where I want to be." 

The Official Word: What it takes to get a wildlife biologist job.

It should be noted that this position is no longer officially called "wildlife biologist." It now bears the formal name, "environmental scientist," but as the saying goes, "a rose by any other name would smell as sweet."

If you think this would be a sweet job, here's the official entry-level job description: "The incumbent has district responsibilities in several counties. This position [may] supervises one [or more] biologist technician. Work involves responsibility for organizing, coordinating, and directing district wildlife programs/projects, and includes Hunter Education and Hunter Recruitment/Retention programs; planning and implementing wildlife habitat improvement programs (both USDA WHIP and KDWP WHIP) on private land; administering walk-in hunting access program (WIHA) in assigned district, including property review, landowner contacts, contract negotiations, and posting of signs; assisting Public

Lands Section with wildlife management programs; coordinating with local, state, and federal agriculture and natural resource agencies and constituency groups; conducting various wildlife surveys and disease monitoring and control efforts; responding to animal damage complaints; coordinating and participating in public information and education efforts; conducting environmental assessments; and completing various administrative duties necessary to support the district wildlife management program.

Minimum qualifications include a bachelor's degree in environmental, agricultural, or natural resources. One year of field experience is strongly preferred.



Today's biologists must be skilled with computers and familiar with various software applications, so that the field data can be stored, analyzed and published.

The Family Who Catfishes Together ...

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

... has fun together. Family fishing trips are great recreation, and in Kansas, catfish angling opportunities are outstanding. From catching bait to catching fish, catfishing at a Kansas reservoir is great family fun.



It's one of my fondest childhood memories. I would accompany my grandpa on family camping trips to Kansas reservoirs. The highlight of the weekends would be sitting on the bank on 5-gallon buckets fishing for catfish. Our venture would start off during daylight hours and end up under the warm glow of a Coleman lantern well into the night. The play-by-play of Kansas City Royals baseball games would accompany the steady hum of insects and night sounds.

We never caught much because Grandpa

always believed bigger was better. He'd tie on a chunk of liver big enough to choke a grizzly bear and cast it as far out into the lake as possible. Relegated to cheap pole holders, the rods would sit, sometimes for hours, before a big enough channel catfish would take the bait. After we landed the huge fish, I would receive detailed instruction on how to handle it and properly place it on a stringer. I was reminded, time and time again, to make sure it was tied securely before I chucked the tethered fish back into the lake.

My grandpa is gone now, but I'll always have those wonderful memories. Another chapter in my life has started, and now I'm taking my kids on catfishing trips, creating memories I hope they cherish.

My daughter, Ashley, was our first child. Most people assumed I wished for a boy based on my outdoor pursuits and sports interests, but that could not have been further from the truth. A healthy, happy child was the only thing on my wish list, and a young lady can tag along with Dad as well as any boy. She's proved it. Now 15 years old, she's killed several turkeys and been on dozens of fishing and hunting trips, both as an observer and participant. Some of my fondest memories with her involved catfishing.

Ashley and I would head out into the Flint Hills on a warm spring day with a plan of scouting turkeys and fishing small, meandering streams full of hungry channel catfish. Turkey scouting was usually brief as the anticipation of catching a mess of channel catfish was brought to the forefront by memories of past trips. It wasn't uncommon for the two of us to catch 15 to 20 fish. We released most and kept just a few for the skillet.

I discovered early on that a small child's attention span was extremely short, so planning ahead on these adventures was mandatory. I packed enough snacks and drinks to feed a kindergarten class. Ashley was kind of like her dad and was content as long as her tummy was full.

On most trips, the catfish kept us busy enough that



What better way to keep two active boys entertained and cool on a hot summer day – catching crawdads for fish bait. There are lots of natural lessons to be learned turning over rocks in the shallows – and crawdads to be caught!



Ashley never got bored. We'd spend time at one hole in the stream, and when the action slowed, we'd move to another. Our favorite stream wasn't much wider than the average two-car garage, and bank access was easy. A glob of wiggling night crawlers threaded on a hook tempted most hungry channel catfish in the vicinity.

Ashley would get the privilege of handling the rod and reel duties after a bite while I'd do my best to land the fish without falling in the creek. Most of the time, I managed the latter without incident, but there were a few slips and dips I'm sure Ashley will remember more than the fish we caught. And I had to remind her she shouldn't remember, and not tell her mom about, the words she heard just as I realized I was going in the drink.

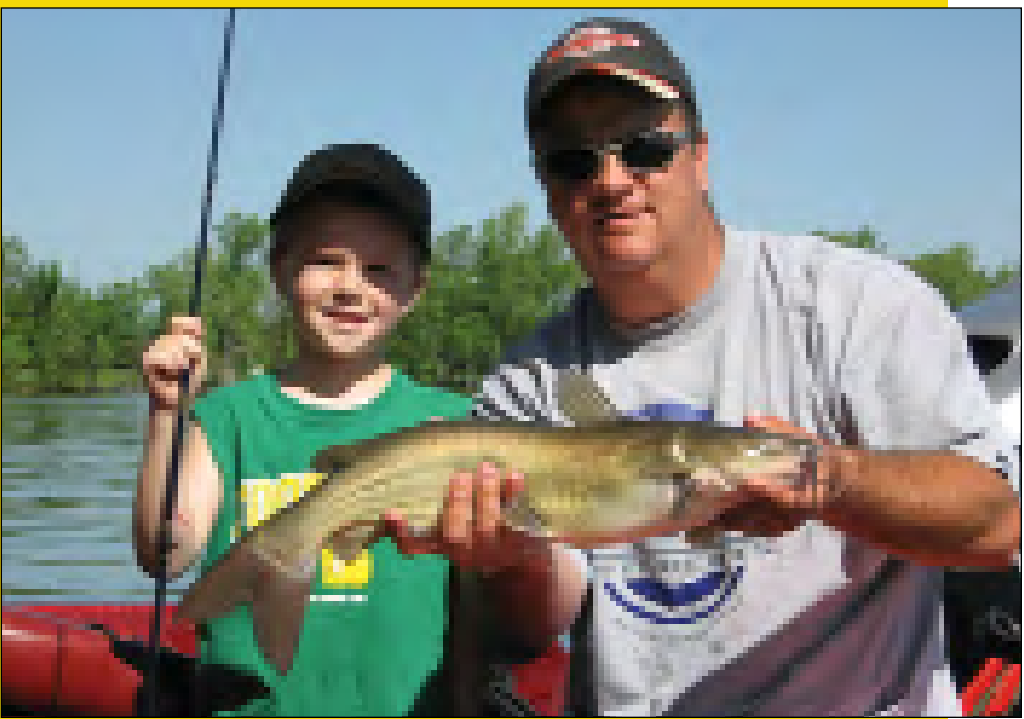


Those one-on-one trips with Ashley were fun and extremely memorable. When Ashley was 6 years old, we added a couple more fishing buddies to the household when my twin boys, Brandon and Cody, were born. It didn't take long for both boys to

show an extreme interest in fishing. Armed with Zebco youth rod and reels, they practiced fishing in the backyard for everything from catfish to sharks to whales. A child's imagination is amazing, and it's no wonder fish stories get bigger as fishermen grow up.

When the boys were old enough, we started fishing for catfish as a family on camping trips to area reservoirs during the summer. Mom wasn't much of a participant as most mornings the kids were awake and raring to go long before her alarm clock sounded. I'd try quietly to get them ready, which wasn't easy. Their anticipation of checking trotlines nearly rivaled the excitement of Christmas morning.

We'd usually set a couple of trotlines, tying them to a stump on shore and stringing them out into the lake, ideally ending in water that wasn't over 4 feet deep. It's not that I thought that's where the



At most Kansas reservoirs, channel catfish are an underutilized resource, and they will bite well through the summer. At smaller state and community lakes, KDWP stocks millions of channel catfish each year for angling fun.



In the heat of summer, a trotline baited and set at night may be the best way to catch channel cats. There are lots of baits that work, but gizzard shad might be the best, and catching them is as much fun as fishing for catfish.

most channel catfish would be caught, but I wanted to check them by wading as the kids watched anxiously from shore. Wading into chest-deep chilly water is a great way to wake up fast. An old window weight tied to the end kept the trotline in place and a jug placed just above it kept the cut bait, stink bait and

night crawlers suspended just off the bottom.

We wouldn't have success with each hook, but it wasn't uncommon to catch three or four channel catfish each morning. The biggest might have weighed 7 pounds, but many were 2-3 pounds and just right for filleting. Our goal was to catch

enough for a big fish fry Sunday afternoon with enough left over to take home to my grandma. Since Grandpa was gone, she always appreciated a mess of catfish fillets.

One of our most unique trotline experiences happened five summers ago when my boys were 4 years old and my daughter was 10. We arrived at the lake Friday afternoon to a gusty, 25 mph north wind blowing right into the shoreline behind our camper. Although chilly, the kids wanted to swim and were doing so when they discovered hundreds of big, yellow grasshoppers being blown across the lake into shore. Although Brandon and Ashley were squeamish about touching and holding them, Cody wasn't afraid and came to shore with each fist clenched and grasshopper parts sticking out in every direction.

"Those would make great catfish bait," I told him as his eyes lit up. "I'll go get a minnow bucket and you can put them in that and we'll bait the trotline tonight."

Cody continued, mostly by himself, picking up dozens of grasshoppers, and it wasn't long before there were so many grasshoppers in the bucket that when he'd open the lid to put three in, six would jump out. The boys couldn't wait to bait the trotline that night.

We decided to try an experiment and bait one trotline with nothing but grasshoppers, which we called Cody's, and the other with the usual catfish bait. The next morning the results were startling.

Cody's trotline had fish on nearly every other hook. I surmised the catfish came into the shallows that night to feed on the grasshoppers that didn't make it to Cody's bucket. The other trotline had less than half the number of channel catfish.

In two nights, Cody's grasshoppers caught 21 channel catfish weighing up to 6 pounds. The other trotline with the usual catfish bait netted eight fish of similar size. The kids were amazed at the number of fish. Cody was particularly proud,

since he was largely responsible for most of the grasshopper gathering. His sister summarized the success by saying, "Awesome, we should get t-shirts made that say, 'Grasshoppers Rule!'"

We all can't wait to go camping again this summer. The memories we've made will last a lifetime and are recorded in photos, and we look forward to adding more. And when the kids grow up and move away, I'm sure we'll all remember and reminisce about all the fun times



Mom and daughter compare catches on a recent summer outing. And while catfish like this are great fun to catch on rod and reel, they also provide great table fare.

Getting By With A Little Help From Our Friends

by Kathy Pritchett
public service administrator, Pratt

photos by Mike Blair

Local volunteers participate in friends groups across the state to help state parks enhance recreation opportunities while operating with limited staff and budgets.



Webster's New World Dictionary defines "friend" as "an ally, supporter or sympathizer." In the world of Kansas natural resource management, a friends group is an indispensable partner in meeting KDWP's mission. Friends groups are comprised of volunteers who organize to further the mission of the state park they form to support.

The groups are as effective as the dedication of their members. In most cases, KDWP couldn't pay for this much dedication. The networking and publicity provided by friends group members is vital to the future of Kansas state parks. Although the department appreciates the funding and labor contributions of the friends groups, their most important contribution is their ambassadorship for state parks. Before the formation of the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks in 1987, the Kansas Fish and Game Commission managed fish and wildlife resources, and the Parks and Resources Authority, a separate agency, managed state parks. Advisory associations formed for each state park and for many wildlife areas. Though the sense of ownership fostered in these associations encouraged community and constituent support, conflict sometimes arose when management decisions did not match association views. After the two agencies merged, the Kansas Senate passed legislation in 1990 authorizing "citizen support organizations," or friends groups.

Shortly after that, the Kansas Wildscape Foundation was developed as the umbrella orga-

nization under which smaller friends groups could charter while allowing Wildscape to handle the details of tax-exempt 501(c)3 status and fund administration. Although Wildscape supports many KDWP functions, its role as facilitator between public and private sectors impacts friends groups the most because obtaining tax-exempt status is complicated for many small groups.

The first project of the Friends of El Dorado Lake was to obtain a low-cost loan to purchase five cabins for El Dorado State Park. Revenue from rental of those cabins paid off the first loan and allowed them to obtain a second loan to build two more cabins. Now, the park boasts 10 cabins. In 2005, the group funded a laundry facility in the Walnut River campground. Located adjacent to the deluxe cabins, the

building holds four washers and four dryers. The following year, the group developed an additional laundry facility in the Bluestem Point Campground. The El Dorado Friends Group collects all revenue for both laundry facilities. The revenue generated goes toward paying off debt on the new facility, purchasing new washers and dryers, and on-going maintenance of the facilities, which will further benefit El Dorado State Park.

The Friends of Prairie Spirit Trail formed for the purpose of bringing the trail (from Ottawa to Iola) to reality. The first project undertaken by the Ottawa and Garnett chapters was to raise \$70,000 to match a federal grant to lay the first segment of the trail. Since accomplishing that goal, the groups have continued to raise funds in support



Funding to build cabins at Cheney State Park was secured by the Friends of Cheney State Park. The Friends of Cheney State Park committee, shown here, manages volunteer help and approves large projects such as cabins.

of the trail, purchased trail amenities, contributed hours of maintenance, and enthusiastically marketed the trail in a variety of venues.

Friends of Prairie Dog State Park's Adobe House (near Norton) formed to help maintain the only adobe structure in Kansas that remains on its original site. The first project for the group was to raise funds to match a Bureau of Reclamation grant to adequately restore and protect this fragile historic building. While still assisting with the Adobe House, the group moved on to manage and maintain a boat dock, collecting the rent for the boat slips. More recently, the group purchased beach sand for the park with the proceeds from its projects.

For 13 years, the Friends of Crawford State Park have operated a marina, which offers invaluable services such as boat slip rental, concession items, and restaurant services to area patrons. This is the ninth year this facility has operated in the black due to the donated management of friends. Friends and park staff began a new venture this past season with the development of the park's first rental cabin. The cabin was designed and developed by the park staff and totally financed by the friends group. In addition to monetary contributions, many of the friends group members volunteered their time and helped to complete the project in a timely manner. The cabin enjoyed a 57 percent occupancy

rate its first season, with a 100 percent occupancy rate on weekends.

The Friends of Tuttle Creek State Park only recently organized. This group has opened a camp store in the River Pond area to carry all those things that campers have forgotten at one time or another. They are a dedicated group with ambitious plans to assist park constituents.

The Friends of Fancy Creek Range helped build and now operate the Fancy Creek Shooting Range. They host and support shooting events for youth and women, as well as keeping the range open on a regular schedule for public use. Concealed carry and hunter education classes are regularly held at the range. Plans are under



El Dorado State Park's friends group obtained low-interest loans to purchase some of the first cabins there. With continued support from this group, the park now has 10 cabins that are extremely popular with park visitors.



The Friends of El Dorado Lake provide this laundry facility and one other at El Dorado to park visitors. It is maintained year-round. This is just one of their many projects that benefit park users.

consideration for the group to construct a building for education classes. Such a building could also be rented out for special events and the proceeds returned for range improvements.

Cedar Bluff State Park is fortunate to have two friends groups working to improve the park for area constituents. The Cedar Bluff DIEHARDS maintain three revenue-generating projects, including a dry dock boat and camper storage facility, a sailboat mooring facility, and reservoir topographical map sales. Fees generated go to enhance existing facilities or to provide new facilities or amenities that result in new and improved opportunities for constituents. The DIEHARDS also hosted a Holiday in Lights event, for which they purchased materials and then volunteered for the event. In addition, they gave a sizeable donation to the Plainville Rescue Squad for their efforts in the recovery of a

drowning victim. (The Plainville Rescue Squad is also a non-profit organization.) The DIEHARDS purchased and planted wildflowers throughout a Memorial Park and attached memorial plaques inside of a gazebo.

Cedar Bluff's second group, Dream, Inc., maintains a facility at Cedar Bluff called Dream Camp, a retreat for educating, treating, and supporting families dealing with substance abuse issues. The facility has also been loaned to the Messiah Lutheran Church for a group teen retreat.

The Friends of Cross Timbers and Fall River state parks has obtained a grant from Wal-Mart for a raptor rehabilitation center, added soda machines, and sold firewood. They have also held several fundraisers in the park, including a bean feed, Dutch oven supper, fishing tournament, Kids Day Camp, and Spookfest. More events are scheduled for Toronto Days over the Fourth of July weekend and



the Spookfest on October 11. Future plans include concessions and laundry facilities in the park.

Each year, the Friends of Eisenhower State Park works to raise funds for needed projects around the park. The group built and runs the camp store. During the 2007 camping season, the friends group purchased items to be placed in the park store for retail sales, two sun shades for the beach, a shower outside the beach restroom so park visitors can wash sand off before using the inside shower, and a 220-gallon fish tank as part of the new park office's educational



A wide diversity of constituents, such as these youth hunt participants, can benefit from friends group projects like cabins and shelters.

display, depicting a native stream complete with tiger salamander, box turtle, and many other Kansas animals that live in or near streams.

At Wilson State Park, one volunteer group was used in KDWP's Adopt-a-Public Land program. Although two groups were needed — one for each area of the park — only one area was adopted. The Lake Wilson Area Association (LWAA) undertook this challenge in the Otoe Area. The LWAA also maintains a fish cleaning station in the Hell Creek Area. This group is making annual deposits in a bank account they hold for the maintenance and repair of the facility. Area volunteers and bike organizations have developed the Friends of Wilson Lake Trails group and are responsible for care and maintenance of the major trail in Hell Creek.

The Friends of Cheney Lake and the Cheney Lake Association have purchased new hand-held radios and an

antenna for the maintenance staff and camp hosts, contributed to the new Cheney Reservoir real-time weather station (which can be accessed at www.ninnescah.org/weather/n_sawweather.htm) purchased trees for an arboretum project at the Ninnescah Sailing Association, and assisted with all aspects of the OK Kids Day held on Free Park Entrance Weekend May 3 at Cheney State Park. The group also purchased a grapple fork attachment for the park's skid steer to aid in flood damage repair.

The Friends of Maxwell and the Friends of the Sandsage Bison Range support KDWP's bison refuges. Both groups guide tours of the bison ranges, conduct educational events, and hold fundraisers for promotion of the ranges.

In Wichita, the Friends of the Great Plains Nature Center recently launched a project to create and sell a computer screen-saver of colorful songbirds.

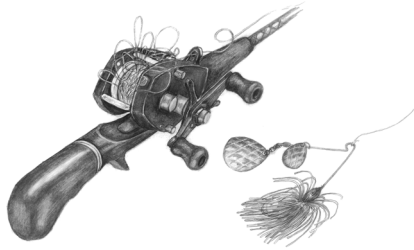
The biggest venture for

friends groups is a cabin-building partnership with KDWP, the Department of Corrections, and Kansas Wildscape. Inmates gain construction skills and build self-esteem and cabins, and parks benefit by having their own cabin designs built with low labor costs. Kansas Wildscape funds the materials and transport, receiving a percentage of the rental fees for administrative costs to allow them to pay the interest on the construction loan. Last year, inmates built 12 cabins, including two for wildlife areas. Wildscape has since secured more funding to accelerate the building. By 2009, there should be more than 100 cabins available to rent at Kansas state parks.

The rapid rise in fuel costs over the past year has squeezed already tight park budgets. Utility costs and fuel for vehicles consume more of the budget than they did just two years ago. Fuel costs have also driven up the costs of the goods and services the parks must purchase. Without the efforts of the friends groups to get projects done and raise additional funding, park visitors would see less frequent maintenance, and facility improvements would go unfinished or not even begin. But with the aid of the friends groups, KDWP is still able to provide all the amenities park users enjoy.

And that's what friends are for.

If you have an interest in assisting your local state park or wildlife area, contact the manager or call 620-672-5911 for more information. ♡



Backlash

by Mike Miller

What Do You Remember?

We've all heard this excuse: Kids today are programmed for instant gratification and must have lots of action or they won't enjoy hunting or fishing. Do me a favor. Remember some of your best hunting or fishing trips. Dig deep and think back to some of those trips when you were young. Do you remember how many fish you caught or how many pheasants were killed? My bet is you remember those days spent with people you care about. You probably remember something funny someone said or did. But I'll bet the number of fish caught or game taken is more difficult to come up with.

It's funny how we gauge the success of our hunting and fishing outings. In the present, we often set standards of bag limits, fish caught, or big deer seen. But 10 years from now, 20 years from now, how will success be judged?

When I was a young boy, I was obsessed with fish and fishing. I loved everything about it – still do. But when I reminisce, my earliest and most vivid fishing memories don't include me catching fish.

I have one memory from when I was five or six. Dad, Granddad and I were in a small aluminum boat on a mountain lake. It was late in the evening. Though I'm sure I had a pole, I don't remember fishing. What I remember was Dad and Granddad arguing over whether or not a trout they'd seen rise would hit Dad's fly. They then argued over whether it was a big or small fish. It was good-natured ribbing between them, and I remember them laughing. Granddad finally convinced Dad to cast to the fish, and it hit. Granddad was right on both accounts – it was a big trout that we kept. I remember it was dark when we got back to the campground and trailer where Mom, Grandma and little sister Teri waited. I was carrying "our" fish, as proud as if I'd caught it, and I remember waking Teri, so she could see the fish. That seemingly unremarkable event has stuck in my memory banks for 44 years.

In another vivid memory, I'm 6 years old, and I'm in the same boat with Granddad, Grandma and their Dachshund Katy. Grandma hooked a big trout. I

wanted to net that fish in the worst way, but Granddad was certain I would fall out of the boat. With amazing dexterity, he steered the boat and netted Grandma's big trout while keeping me and Katy at bay – we both were trying to "help" land that fish. I even remember the lure Grandma caught the trout on – a green Lazy Ike.

I won't argue that fish and game are why we are out there, and that success will obviously add enjoyment to our trips. But we carry with us the rest of our lives what really matters – the feelings, the people, the places. Don't fool yourself into thinking that a kid has to have lots of action fishing or hunting to make it fun. They may get bored, or cold or tired, but they'll still remember the time you spent together.

Here's one more. I'll never forget my first pheasant – I paid lots of dues before I got it. But I remember more vividly hunts with Dad when I didn't even shoot. I also remember one with Granddad during my first season. It was cold and blustery, and I can't remember seeing more than a few birds. But I remember how much I enjoyed being with Granddad. He told me great stories about the history and people of this Kiowa County farmland.

On the last walk, which was the homestead Granddad lived on in the 1940s, a rooster flushed between us. We fired simultaneously, and the bird sailed down in thick grass. The two of us began a tense and thorough criss-crossing search. I was losing hope when Granddad hollered. I hurried over to see Granddad holding "our" bird.

We headed for town. It was near dark, and we were cold, tired and happy. The memory of that hunt is as good as any I have.

So what did you remember? I'm afraid that we adults put too much of our own expectations into trips, and when those expectations aren't met, kids think they should be disappointed. Never lose sight of what was important to you and know that carrying on our hunting and fishing traditions is important for more than just the future of those traditions. It's important for the well-being of our future generations. ♡

