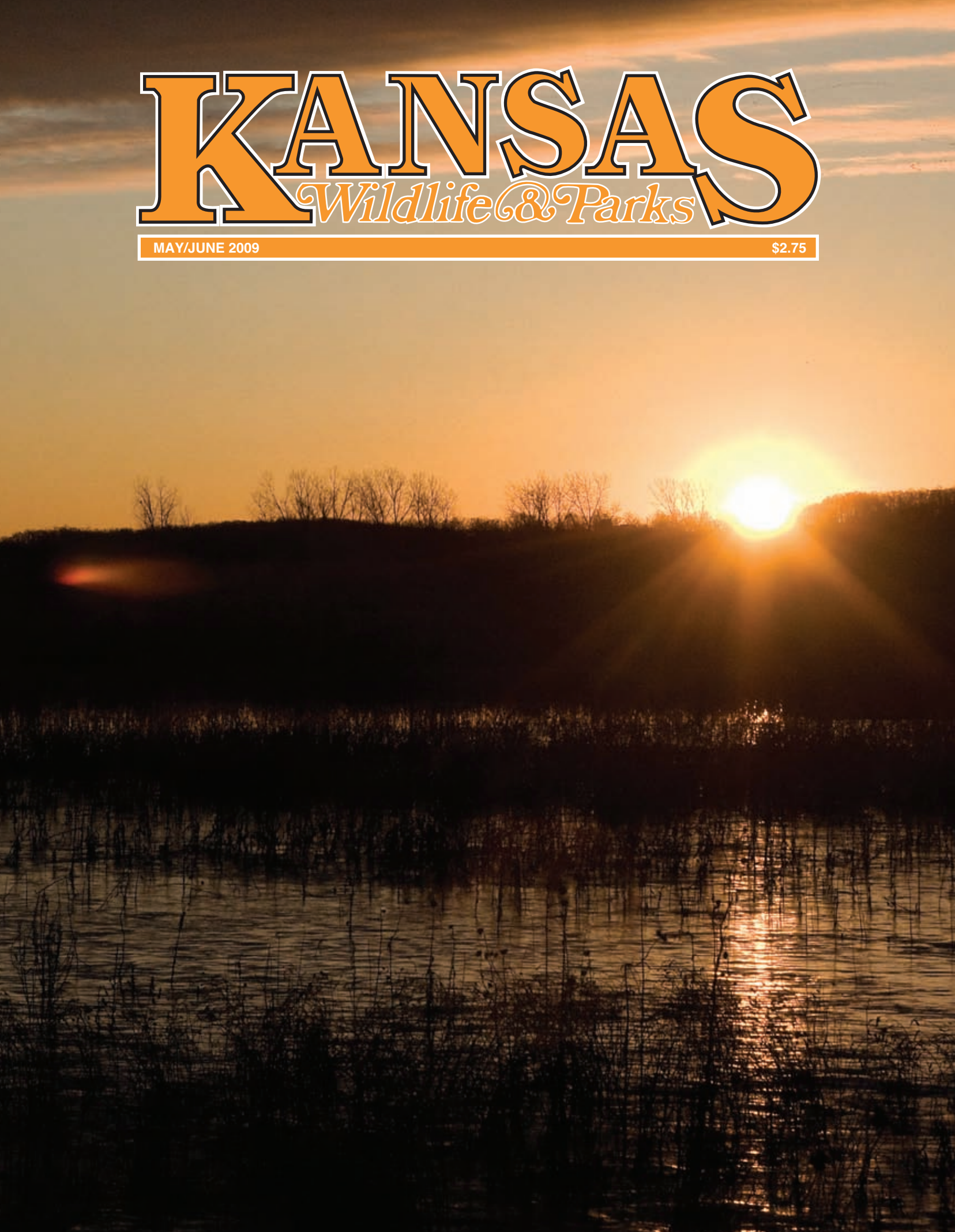


# KANSAS

*Wildlife & Parks*

MAY/JUNE 2009

\$2.75





# On Point

by Mike Hayden



## Good News

I've got good news and news of the inevitable. The good news is that KDWP will not be increasing fees in 2010. After much deliberation, budget cutting and examination of revenue projections, staff have determined that the department can maintain current services for another year without raising fees. The inevitable news is that fees will eventually have to be increased, probably in 2011.

I understand why fee increases generated interest among our constituents. I also learned that there were many misconceptions about how our agency is funded and where the receipts from license and permit sales end up. I hope I was able to explain that in my last column. However, it's a simple fact of economics that as the cost of business goes up, so does the cost of products. The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks is like many other businesses. Our budget has been impacted by the increased costs of fuel, utilities, and salaries. To continue to provide the services and level of opportunities our constituents enjoy and expect, we have to raise fees. Our basic fees haven't been increased since 2002, so it will be time in 2011.

In the meantime, staff will continue to look at ways to increase revenue within our current fee structure. Some of the ideas being considered will entice people to purchase licenses and permits every year, rather than one out of every three, as many do. We'll also look at packaging licenses and permits, providing a savings over purchase of items individually. Staff will also continue to examine which fees should be increased and what those increases should be.

During the past several months, we've received lots of input on our fee proposals from the public and from within the department. We'll consider every idea, but in the end, we will strive to do what's best for our constituents who fish, hunt, boat and use our states parks, as well as the natural resources they enjoy and we protect. It's a difficult balancing act because our constituents and our resources are widely varied. We know we won't please everyone, but our mission is to provide Kansans with outdoor recreation opportunities, and we'll do that the most efficient way possible.

One of the troubling issues we struggle with is the decline in resident hunting and fishing license buyers. This is important not only because it affects our annual revenues, but because hunting and fishing are treasured heritages. Ensuring that future generations understand and enjoy these natural heritages is important to our mission, as well as to our employees.

Most KDWP employees grew up hunting, fishing and camping and appreciate how much their lives have been affected and guided by those traditions. It's important to all of us that these traditions are carried on, not only to sell licenses and permits, but because we need future generations involved. Today's youth will be tomorrow's caretakers of our natural resources and outdoor traditions, so they must learn to appreciate them today. The bottom line is that the people who enjoy and appreciate our resources always have and always will pay for their conservation. ♡

**1 On Point**

Good News *by Mike Hayden*

**16 Benedictine Bottoms Wildlife Area**

Missouri River mitigation efforts have resulted in several new wildlife areas in northeastern Kansas. The featured Benedictine Bottoms provides a variety of outdoor opportunities. *by Mike Blair*

**23 Drum Major**

Considered a "rough" fish by some, the freshwater drum gets an undeserved bad rap. In truth, drum hit bait and lures aggressively and fight hard. They're not bad table fare, either. *by Marc Murrell*

**28 Window On The Wild**

The Kansas Wetlands Education Center at Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area opened on April 24. The center will educate visitors about the value of Cheyenne Bottoms and wetland ecosystems. *by Bob Mathews*

**34 Stream Inventory**

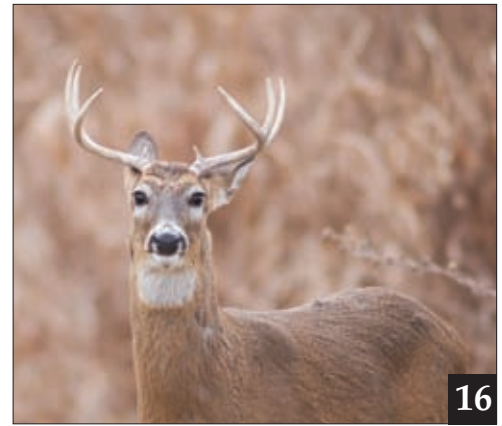
Each summer, teams have been taking inventory of aquatic life and water quality at streams throughout Kansas. This ongoing effort provides biologists with valuable baseline data. *by Mark A. VanScoyoc*

**41 Find Your Hunt**

The Special Hunts program just got better. This year, private land leased by KDWP will be open to limited hunts, in addition to the special hunts offered on public lands. *by J. Mark Shoup*

**45 Backlash**

Fairweather Johnson Turkey Hunter *by Mike Miller*



16

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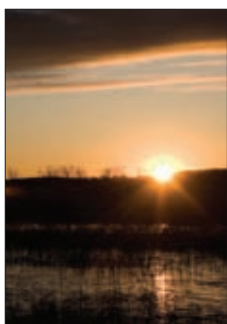
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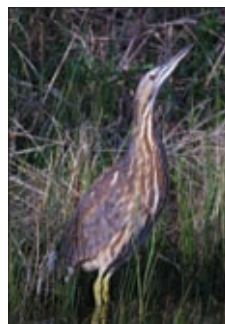
KANSAS WILDLIFE & PARKS (ISSN 0898-6975) is published bimonthly (every other month) by the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, 1020 S Kansas Ave., Topeka, KS 66612. Address editorial correspondence to Kansas Wildlife & Parks Magazine, 512 SE 25th Ave., Pratt, KS 67124 (620) 672-5911. Send subscription requests to Kansas Wildlife & Parks Magazine, P.O. Box 8059, Red Oak, IA 51591. Subscription rate: one year \$10; two years \$18; and three years \$27. Articles in the magazine may be reprinted with permission. Periodical postage paid at Pratt, KS and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Kansas Wildlife & Parks Magazine, P.O. Box 8059, Red Oak, IA 51591. For subscription inquiries call toll-free 1 800 288-8387.



28



**Front Cover:** The sun rises over Benedictine Bottoms Wildlife Area in Atchison County. Mike Blair shot the scene using a 50mm lens, f/6.3 @ 1/125 sec.  
**Back Cover:** An American bittern poses in a pool on the Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area. Blair took the photo using a 600mm lens, f/11 @ 1/500 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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## Letters . . .

### NEED CALENDAR

Editor:

I have lived in both Missouri and Kansas and have always subscribed to the conservation magazine.

I was wondering why Kansas doesn't put the hunting and fishing calendar in the *Kansas Wildlife & Parks* magazine. It is always on the last page of the Missouri Conservationist magazine, and it is so handy to be able to refer to it.

Just a thought.

*A dedicated reader,  
Mike O'Connor*

**That's a great idea. Check out Page 14.**

*-Editor*

### OVERWHELMED

Editor:

I have to disagree with the idea we are procrastinators ("Procrastination" March/April 2009 issue). I am an avid hunter who is really just overwhelmed. Let me explain.

In the past, I have spent countless hours with my maps and county directories looking for likely hunting spots. One weekend, I drove over a hundred miles of dirt road, made dozens of long distance cell phone calls scouting likely hunting areas, and came up empty.

I have two grandsons whom I would dearly love to get into the field. And therein lies the problem: the field.

Our hunting fields have become so large it takes an army to hunt them. It is just big agriculture that discourages many hunters. Not to mention trying to gain access. How do four or five buddies or my grandsons and I hunt a section of cut milo? At the end of the day, you and the birds have had a good workout, but neither of you has seen one another.

To get young people interested, they need success, like I had when I was young. (1963-1968) At that time, an 80-acre field was a pretty good size. There were fence rows, shelterbelts, lots of cover, and it was all neatly divided up into small plots and easy to hunt with four to 10 people. If you had a half section to hunt, you would find some help at lunch in town. Then you might have 10 to 15 hunters and some dogs.

In the last year, my grandsons have become involved in fly fishing. One of the key elements for them to become "hooked" is catching fish. At least that can still happen



# HUNTING *with Wayne Doyle* HERITAGE

**Hone Your Skills Now**

*"The hunter should be aware of being led astray by the ease with which he can fire half a dozen shots from his repeating rifle; and he should aim so carefully with each shot as if it were his last. No possible rapidity of fire can atone for habitual carelessness of aim with the first shot."*

*Theodore Roosevelt*

**N**ow that we have reached the slow season for hunters, it's time to think about preparing for the next season. After all, it's only about three months until the dove opener.

There are all kinds of things we need to do: things to buy, exercising and training the dogs and ourselves, loading shells, and tuning calls. But we are most in need of working on the one thing most of us aren't all that good at: shooting. The firearm or bow is the primary tool of the hunt for most of us. We need to be masters of that tool, and only practice makes perfect. Thinking about or reading about or talking about shooting or watching hunting shows does not make us good shots. We have to shoot and shoot a lot if we are to prevent that "habitual carelessness of aim" in Roosevelt's warning.

This is the time of the year to get to the range and practice – practice with the gun we will use, at the distances that define our individual maximum effective range, and from the positions we will use. Get coaching if needed. Practice! Practice! Practice! Make the first shot be the only shot. Don't depend on "rapidity of fire." In the words of a great prairie philosopher, "Git 'er done!"

## WAY outside

BY BRUCE COCHRAN



"IT'S NOT JUST A ROD AND REEL, SIR. IT'S A LURE PRESENTATION SYSTEM."



## BIRD BRAIN

with Mike Rader

### Great Time To Be A Birder

Migration slows in late May and early June, with only the species that nest in Kansas left behind. However, more than 200 species are known to breed in Kansas, so you can still view a nice variety. In fact a collective birding effort, known as the Breeding Bird Survey, is conducted by a large number of volunteers on dozens of pre-determined 25-mile routes across the state each year. Most have been conducted for decades and provide valuable data on trends of breeding bird species in Kansas. Every state has this program, so an accurate, long-term picture of most bird species numbers can be determined on a nationwide basis.

I really enjoy going to areas in the western half of Kansas during this time of year, as well. You won't see the sheer numbers of species, but there are many species that occur only in prairie grassland habitat. It's enjoyable to bird without the hustle and bustle found in the more urban parts of Kansas. There is something both calming and exciting when I can hear the songs of western meadowlarks, dickcissels, lark sparrows or the booming of prairie chickens without being interrupted by a car passing every few seconds. It may not sound as exciting as looking at a Blackburnian warbler in a tree top, but I appreciate it just about as much.

May and June are a great months to be a birder in Kansas. May has proven to be the best month to find the greatest number of bird species that pass through Kansas. On any given day in the first two weeks of May, there are well over 200 species in the state. I know this because I've been part of a team that has tried to see how many birds we could find in a 24-period. This experience, known as a "Big Day," is a game some birders play that proves what a fantastic state Kansas can be for bird watching. Teams often use these events to raise funds for local birding clubs, Audubon chapters or university avian research trips. Groups get individuals to pledge a dollar amount per species located during the period. Past efforts have yielded several Big Days of more than 200 species, with the highest count topping out at 225 a few years ago. That record missed as many as ten species, seen either the day before or the day after that count period, so a 230-plus day is possible.

May is a great time to travel to different areas of the state to catch migration at its peak. The eastern third of Kansas often holds some of the most colorful denizens of the bird world - wood warblers. Most of these tiny birds are stunning to look at, and seeing between 30 and 40 species is possible. Many are very rare and can't be counted on every year, but just the possibility of seeing these little, winged gems keeps birders in the woods. The eastern two to three tiers of counties, from the Oklahoma line to Nebraska, are usually best. A few pockets of good habitat around Wichita, the central part of the state and the extreme southwest corner of Kansas provide some decent opportunities to see warblers, as well.

What central Kansas lacks in migrating warblers, it makes up for with shorebirds and other water bird species. Nothing compares to the marshes of Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area and Quivira National Wildlife Refuge for viewing shorebirds. In years with adequate water, both areas will be teeming with bird life. Shorebirds refuel on the abundant food resources these marshes provide as they migrate to breeding grounds, which can be up to thousands of miles away. Several species of waterfowl stay in the area to nest, as do some species of herons, egrets and other water birds.



blackburnian warbler by Bob Gress

## Letter . . .

because they have been places they can catch fish! Now they love to fly fish. If I take these boys to a section of cut or uncut milo, walk them all day and not even have one good shot, I have just killed any enthusiasm the new hunters may have had.

As far as the Walk-In Hunting areas are concerned, it is a great idea but has some issues. 1) Overhunted; 2) not the best game ground in the world to begin with; and 3) not managed in a way that would increase game in the given area.

However, I would not want to complain without an idea. So try these ideas and maybe some will stick somewhere.

1. WIHA - If an area is to be so designated, would it not be sensible to see that the area is managed for game production? And if it cannot be managed, then why spend the money on the area? I have been to WIHA sections that would only support field mice.

2. Perhaps the state wildlife areas, which seem to be devoid of huntable wildlife, should be managed in a way that is more huntable and more favorable to wild game production and hunting success.

For instance, the wildlife area west of Kingman is a beautiful wildlife area. Lots of space, lots of cover, and not very huntable for game birds. It is so vast in size, where do you start? Never tried deer there - too many people!

I would like for you to try and see with me the vision of those small fields of long ago. Thick fence rows, shelter belts and the edges game birds love to inhabit, cut and uncut milo areas just wide enough for five to ten hunters and a couple of dogs to work effectively. Adjacent fields of cut wheat or CRP that could be worked by a reasonable size hunting party.

Maybe, with the right plan and incentives, farmers would till the state wildlife areas in a manner that would create "sustainable wildlife production." I would suggest looking at TU's (Trout Unlimited) example of grassroots work with all parties involved to create success in sustainable trout populations through out the US.

Challenging? YES! Doable? YES!

Think about sustainable and huntable game populations, and we can all be winners. More hunting fees, more game to harvest. Isn't that what it's all about?

*Mike Fulton  
Wichita*

## IT'S THE LAW

*with Kevin Jones*

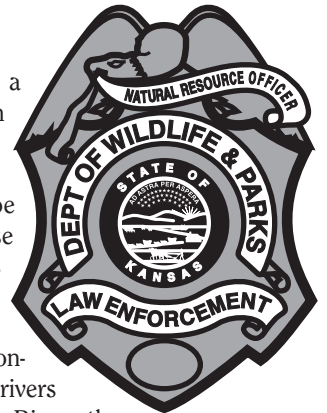
### Law Of The River

Each year questions come up about where a person can float down a river. Often the question relates to gaining access to fish a particular stretch of stream, and other times the question arises when someone simply wants to paddle their canoe for an afternoon float. In many states people can use the streams and rivers for recreational purposes without getting permission from land owners. However, in Kansas, the rules are different.

The key issue is whether the stream or river is considered navigable. This designation is given to three rivers flowing through or bordering Kansas: the Kansas River, the Arkansas River and the Missouri River. Because these rivers are classified as navigable, any person gaining legal access to the river channel may travel up and down its corridor provided the person does not go above the normal high water mark. Anyone going outside this travel area may be in jeopardy of trespass on private land. Legal access is gained by getting permission to cross the private land to get to the river. In some instances, KDWP, or other governmental agency, provides public access across privately owned land, often through a lease agreement with the landowner. If you don't have landowner permission to get to the river, these public access points provide the sites to put in or take out.

Travel on all other streams and rivers in Kansas requires permission of the landowner or person controlling the land through which the water flows. While the water in these rivers is considered public water, the law restricts the passage of people on that waterway by requiring permission from the landowner to travel within their property boundaries. Just as an angler fishing from the bank must have permission from the landowner, so does the angler fishing from a boat. In a similar manner, you have to have permission to be within the property boundaries of a landowner whether walking across the land or floating down a stream.

A little effort may be necessary to get permission, but it is well worth the peace of mind knowing you are doing things right. Be on the safe side of the law. Always get permission before going onto private land.



## DIGITAL IMAGE

with Mike Blair

### Take Better Fishing Pictures



**P**hotos are the best way to remember a fishing trip, especially if you happen to catch a lunker. But any fishing picture is memorable, and taking a few moments to set up the shot will result in lasting memories.

The best shots show action. To get these, keep a small digital camera around your neck or in your pocket so you'll be ready when your fishing partner gets a bite. Lay down your own rod, and grab the camera to capture the excitement and concentration of the angler fighting a fish. This can capture expressions that can never be staged - especially when filming a youngster.

Try to get the angler and the fish both in the frame as the fish is pulled from the water. The best shots are those where sunlight comes from behind you to light up the subject, but be careful that your shadow doesn't ruin the picture.

Once a fish is landed, set up the angler holding the fish and the rod. Most pleasing are shots where the angler kneels and poses with the fish. It might be helpful to turn the angler sideways to the sun so that squinting is not a problem. If the angler is kneeling, the photographer should too. Take the picture from the same level as the subject. Move in close and turn the camera vertically for a more pleasing picture.

When fishing from a boat, try to capture a sense of the water as the angler holds the fish. Also, regardless of location, try to avoid horizon lines that cut the frame in half.

Taking a few minutes to control light and background can help provide pictures of lasting importance. Don't wait for sunset. Shoot the pictures in good light, rather than flashing them after dark. You'll get a much better sense of the trip as it was, and years later, you'll be glad you filmed it right.

## SHAWNEE DAM RENOVATION

This summer, visitors to Shawnee State Fishing Lake (8 miles north and 4 miles west of Topeka) will notice a big change. Local contractors are renovating the dam, which is approximately 50 years old and has recently begun to show deterioration. Although the dam is not in imminent risk of failure, KDWP is rehabilitating the dam to provide many more years of outdoor recreation.

The project is expected to be completed by late summer and will involve enhancing the emergency spillway, installing a new valve to control the lake level, and re-shaping the back side of the dam. In order to safely complete the project, the lake water level will be lowered, but officials believe the lake will not have to be drained.

The lake should begin refilling in the fall, flooding exposed areas where vegetation will have grown up, creating improved habitat once the lake is refilled. For the angler, this should mean better fishing in the future.

Shawnee State Fishing Lake will remain open to fishing during this project. For information, contact David Farmer at 913-845-2665 or the KDWP Region 2 Office, 785-273-6740.

—KDWP News

## GUN-A-WEEK DRAWING

Pass It On-Outdoor Mentors works to find mentors for children who want outdoor experiences. Teaming with youth mentoring organizations such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters, which has more than 100 years of mentoring experience, Outdoor Mentors hopes to make a difference in the lives of Kansas Kids.

The group's latest effort to raise awareness of the issue and money to fund youth hunts and other outdoor programs is a "Gun-a-Week-Drawing." Throughout 2009, Outdoor Mentors will offer ticket purchasers a chance to win a gun every week for 52 weeks (beginning last March 1). Each ticket enters the purchaser in a drawing every week for a new firearm. After 52 weekly drawings, all of the winning tickets will be pooled for a bonus drawing, guaranteeing that one lucky person will win at least two guns. A consolation drawing will be held for everyone who did not win during the weekly drawings.

Drawing winners will be notified weekly. Those who participate in the Gun-a-Week Drawing can check winners weekly at the Outdoor Mentors website, [www.outdoormentors.org](http://www.outdoormentors.org). Click "2009 Gun-a-Week Tickets are now Available" for

weekly winners or to purchase tickets. Each ticket requires a \$50 donation. For a \$100 donation, participants receive three tickets. Tickets may also be obtained by phoning Mike Christensen at 316-290-8883 or by emailing [mchristensen@outdoormentors.org](mailto:mchristensen@outdoormentors.org). The average value of firearms in the drawing is \$800.

—KDWP News

## USDA CONSERVATION ONLINE

The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) has established a new bibliography of publications about effects of conservation practices on dozens of different kinds of North American fish and wildlife. The bibliography is available online from NRCS's National Agricultural Library at: [nal.usda.gov/wqic/ceap/ceap07.shtml](http://nal.usda.gov/wqic/ceap/ceap07.shtml).

Titled "Effects of Agricultural Conservation Practices on Fish and Wildlife: A Conservation Effects Assessment Project Bibliography," the bibliography includes conservation practices for creating structures in streams to using fire to benefit wildlife. Virtually all habitat types in Kansas and the rest of the country are included.

—KDWP News

## Letter

Mike,

I won't disagree that the Kansas landscape has changed dramatically since the 1960s, but hunters must adapt. While large fields are more difficult to hunt with small parties, any field has specific areas where birds prefer to hang out. Hunting these pockets with two walkers and one strategically placed blocker can work well.

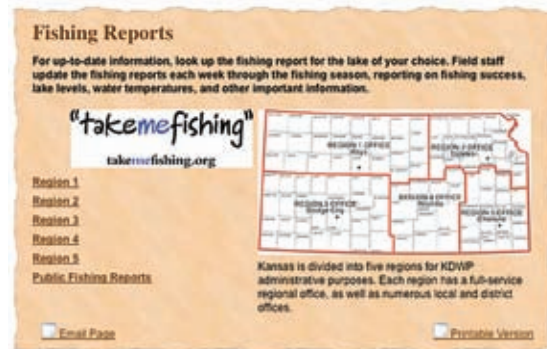
I will disagree with your evaluation of WIHA land. WIHA is private land and just like any privately-owned land, some of it will be prime bird habitat and some will not hold birds. And that changes from one year to the next, depending on land use and weather. The program provides premium payments for long-term leases and habitat enhancement practices. The bottom line is that WIHA has added 1 million acres of Kansas land to that available to hunters, more than doubling the amount open prior to the program.

It's true that public land, especially that near urban areas receives heavy hunting pressure. However, it's hardly devoid of game. I hunt several public areas every year. I'm not always successful, but I've had great hunts. I usually avoid opening weekend and try to sneak away during the week. I often have the areas to myself. Area managers strive to provide optimum hunting opportunities, but they also attempt to provide optimum wildlife habitat. In fact, they do exactly what you recommend. Most areas have native grass, food plots, hedge rows, shelter belts and/or plum bushes. Some are farmed, but contract farmers leave certain amounts of grain unharvested for wildlife.

You might find the type of hunting you're looking for in center pivot circle corners. Some farmers enroll their corners in CRP, and the grass corners next to milo or corn stubble provide excellent hunting for a small group of hunters.

I commend you for wanting your grandsons to enjoy hunting. I know we all want young hunters to have quick success, but I'm not sure that harvesting birds will be as important to them as the time you spend teaching them about hunting. I hope you have many enjoyable hunts with them.

-Editor



## FISH SQUEEZER

with Tommie Berger

### Fishing Reports and Forecasts

May and June are the real beginning of summer – schools are letting out and everyone is anxious to get to the lakes to fish, camp, or enjoy the water sports. The water is warming up nicely and many of our warm-water fish species are spawning, so fishing is very good. To find out where the best fishing is, check the KDWP website fishing reports, updated weekly by district fisheries biologists.

Another good resource to help you find good fishing is the *2009 Kansas Fishing Forecast*, which is also on the KDWP website and was printed in the March/April issue of this magazine. The fishing forecast uses biologists' sampling data to rank lakes in terms of the densities of certain sized fish. For example, a lake with a density rating of 16 for crappie over 10 inches long, theoretically has twice as many crappie over 10 inches long as a lake with a rating of 8. There are ratings for lunker-sized fish, as well. This publication allows anglers to select a lake with the best population of the kind and size of fish they prefer.

Of course, weather plays a significant factor in fishing success during early summer. Storms might interrupt your fishing trip or excess runoff might make the water muddy. A phone call to a local KDWP office or district fisheries biologist will help you learn if conditions have changed due to a storm.

May is when biologists collect their yearly electrofishing samples of largemouth and smallmouth bass. Bass generally spawn in smaller state and community lakes in early May and that is when they are easiest collect with a shocker boat. Bass spawning may

occur in mid- to late May in our larger reservoirs with smallmouth spawning several weeks before the largemouth. This is often when anglers catch their biggest bass of the year. A lot of fish stocking will be going on during these months.

With school out, biologists will be conducting fishing clinics for Kansas youth. This is the time when our sun-fish spawn in Kansas and fishing clinic success is always much better if we can get the youngsters into some spawning bluegill. But the kids do not have to participate in a fishing clinic to get in on great bluegill action. Parents and grandparents should schedule a fishing trip right now. Most farm ponds and many state fishing lakes or community lakes have good bluegill populations. Check the Fishing Forecast for good locations and plan for that bluegill action to be at its peak sometime around Memorial Weekend. Your local fisheries biologist can also steer you in the right direction.

Biologists consider April, May, and June high-use fishing months. Our creel clerks, who have been interviewing anglers since the first of March, will be working extra hours during these months. If a creel clerk stops to visit while you're fishing, ask them where the good fishing is. They are out there nearly every day, talking to anglers, and they generally know right where the fish are biting and on what.

This is a great time to be fishing in Kansas, and there are a variety of resources out there to help anglers find good fishing. Get out and enjoy some of the great fishing Kansas has to offer.



# Letter

## TUTTLE CREEK FISHING

Editor:

I appreciate the "Fishing 2009 Forecast for Kansas." Living in Manhattan, I always am amazed at the low density of fish in Tuttle Creek Reservoir. My question is there nothing that can be done to improve the density of at least one or two species? Why does Tuttle Creek have such a low density of fish?

*Ray Kurtz  
Manhattan*

Ray,

**Tuttle Creek Reservoir is noted for good crappie, catfish, white bass and in recent years, saugeye fishing. But Tuttle is a large reservoir, and it has an even larger drainage area that can yield impressive run-off. Too much water is one of Tuttle's problems. A large release from the tubes allows fish to emigrate out of the reservoir into the Big Blue River below the dam. This is the reason for the excellent fishing opportunities at the Tubes, River Pond and Rocky Ford Fishing Area. In addition to necessary large releases over the past few years, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have been working on the dam, which required additional releases.**

High inflows and resulting outflows can also be detrimental to spawning and nursery habitat of several species of fish, but especially for crappie. Crappie recruitment is a limiting factor for maintaining high concentrations of fish at Tuttle. A falling reservoir level during the critical times of the spawn results in poor year classes of fish.

We attempt to coordinate releases from the lake via an annual water-level plan and frequent conversations with the Kansas Water Office and the Army Corps of Engineers to improve habitat conditions and sportfish recruitment. Now that dam repairs are close to completion perhaps water inflows will also be friendlier to improving fishery habitat and sportfish abundance. We are also in the process of stocking good numbers of saugeye fry and fingerlings this spring, thanks to good walleye and saugeye production in 2009. Good fishing should return in the coming years at the reservoir and the very accessible tailwater fishery.

*Chuck Bever  
Region 2 Fisheries Supervisor*

## On The Web with Mark Shoup

## Trollin' and Lasers

### Trollin' the Web

This time of year, anglers are turning their thoughts toward fish, but so are many conservationists of a "fishy" mindset. For those interested in learning more about native fishes, the North American Native Fish Association website –nanfa.org – is the place for you. The site includes links to articles on American fish, as well as information on endangered fish conservation and aquarium care. Information on biology and care of captive fish is included. A checklist of most native American fishes challenges the viewer in much the same way birding checklists do.

Geared primarily toward small and/or endangered fishes, the site includes a forum that gives viewers the opportunity to express their opinions and ask questions. A photo gallery and a store are included, and you can even learn about fish conservation grants.

### Laser In On Lakes

Anglers and lake users can find a wealth of information on Kansas (and all U.S.) lakes at [www.lasr.net](http://www.lasr.net). Lasr.net's home page has a map of the nation, so just click on the state of Kansas, then click "Lakes," and take your pick from the selection of the state's largest reservoirs. You'll not only find information about recreation at the lake but info about lodging, local attractions, events, recreation, bed and breakfasts, cabins, resorts, ranches, antiques, golf courses, museums, restaurants, festivals, arts and crafts, camping, RV parks, and much more.

Fishing, hunting, camping, boating, cabins, and trails are featured, and each page is complete with a map. The site is a nice complement to the KDWP website, but also has a national scope.





## Deer Jerky



Now is the time to inventory your freezer for any leftover deer meat. When I package deer meat, I create three categories: the good stuff – grind meat, the really good stuff – roast for making jerky, and the great stuff – backstraps and tenderloins.

The good stuff is meat to be ground that has been trimmed of all fat and cut into manageable pieces for grinding. This is suitable for making jerky from jerky shooters. I usually don't grind it until I am ready to make the jerky. The really good stuff consists of roasts specifically cut for making jerky.

I prefer to slice the meat while it's partially frozen. It is easier to cut and creates uniform slices. Using a sharp butcher's knife or automatic slicer, position the roast to be cut with the grain. This will produce a slice with long strands. Cutting

against the grain will cause the meat to fall apart when handled or when salt breaks down connective tissues. Don't cut the slices too thin. Thin slices often fall apart, get brittle, burnt or over-seasoned. Slices should be cut to at least a one-quarter-inch thick. Three-eighths is even better. Seasoning and flavor can be managed by how long the slices soak in the brine solution. All brine solutions contain a form of salt as a preservative and will cause the meat to swell and retain fluid. Some pieces may resemble steak instead of jerky. But once dehydrated, the slices will be approximately one-half the original thickness and one-quarter the original weight.

An oven, dehydrator, or smoker can be used to dry the meat. When using an oven, avoid too much heat and leave the door cracked open to allow moisture to escape.

Dehydrators often use heat to dry as well. Too much heat can cook the meat. Turn the meat at least a couple of times during the process to help with hot spots and sticking.

I prefer smoking jerky. Hang the slices, and smoke them for three to four hours. Then, if feasible, get a high volume of warm air moving through the smoker to dry out the meat.

Making jerky is labor intensive, but it's worth it. Your friends will surely find your stash and beg for more. Hide it well, or you'll need more deer next season.



## FISHIN' with Mike Miller

### Crappie Bump

If you love to catch crappie, you know exactly what a "crappie bump" is. It's something dedicated crappie anglers live for. As I write this, the crappie spawn is just around the corner, so it's time to talk about the *bump*.

Most crappie caught during the spring are caught on jigs. I've written in depth about fishing jigs and how effective they can be, but I've not written enough about the *bump*.

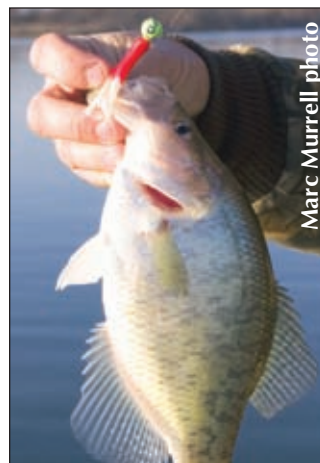
The *bump* is what happens when a crappie inhales your jig. It usually happens as your jig falls or it's suspended. The feeling of that strike – the bump – is unmistakable and unlike other fishes' strikes. We wait and wait for that moment, and when it happens, a jolt of electricity goes from our fingers, through our wrist, arm and the rest of our

body before the impulse finally fires and we set the hook. Sometimes we're in time and we feel the throbbing weight of a fish, and sometimes we're a half-a-second late and there's nothing there. When we miss, we drop the jig back down quickly and we wait some more. We live for the *bump* and for the weight of a fish on the end of our line – the bend in our rod.

Crappie will move shallow as soon as the water temperatures warm to the high fifties. This happens first in the upper ends of reservoirs and ponds, as well as the creeks and streams that flow in. This water can often be several degrees warmer than main-lake water and that's where the crappie will be.

It's when they're shallow that we can find and catch them most efficiently. They concentrate in water 1 to 4 feet deep, usually around rocks, weeds or brush. It's time.

I know folks love crappie because they're so good to eat, and I love to eat fresh fried crappie. But if you want to know the truth, I love crappie for the *bump*.



Marc Murrell photo

# PROFILE:

with Mark Shoup

## Lloyd Fox



If you've ever seen KDWP big game biologist Lloyd Fox at a Kansas Wildlife and Parks Commission meeting, dressed in suit and tie and reciting statistical data with fluency and ease, you might guess his primary element to be behind a desk, staring at an Excel spreadsheet. You would be wrong.

Fox grew up on a farm, where his father raised cattle, sheep, pigs, chickens, and hay. Fox hunted rabbits, deer, and ruffed grouse in the nearby apple orchards, and fished for trout in the nearby stream. His family kept beagles for rabbit hunting. Every winter, he trapped mink and muskrat.

"It was the best education I ever had, that and hunting squirrels with my father," Fox says.

And what western mountain state do you suppose offered such an idyllic childhood? New York, of course. That's right, New York, which for most westerners conjures images of one of the world's largest metropolitan areas. At the mention of this stereotype, Fox's response was light-heartedly terse: "I've never been there." "There," meaning New York City. Fox grew up in the Finger Lakes region of northwestern New York, and he's a country boy through and through. He's also one of the most analytical and intelligent men I have met, all this wrapped in a selfless humility and subtle sense of humor that makes him likeable and effective.

After four years in the Air Force, Fox earned a degree in wildlife science from Cornell University, and later, a PhD in environmental science from State University of New York in Syracuse. In 1973, he was one of the eager young biologists who came to Kansas when the Kansas Forestry, Fish, and Game Commission, in response to pleas from Kansas sportsmen to do more for wildlife, nearly doubled the number of agency biologists. Fox took the position of district wildlife biologist at Mound City. In 1982, he moved to Pratt to work as the state's furbearer biologist. In 1984, this position and Fox moved to Emporia. In 1994, Fox became the state's big game coordinator.

In this capacity, Fox is responsible for developing the state's deer management programs. He maintains databases on deer populations, hunter success rates, and deer/vehicle collisions. He also coordinates landowner and hunter surveys and directs research

projects. Fox also has an instrumental role in wildlife disease issues and preparation for state emergencies dealing with disease.

It's a large plate, but Fox's work with KDWP has come with many rewards.

"I had the opportunity to work on the first eastern turkey reintroductions in Kansas, and I've worked with river otters, pronghorn, and swift fox, among others," he notes. "I have a real fondness for the swift fox, but they're all rewarding. Raccoon studies have been

a great part of the job, too, and this has been special because I've had the opportunity to bring in new students and watch them develop. You get to meet some great young people in this job, and I love that. Right now, I'm working with some (students) on spotlight distance sampling, estimating the species abundance of deer."

Fox believes that one of his most satisfying accomplishments with KDWP is his role in establishment of the Chronic Wasting Disease Symposium.

"Back in the mid-1990s, [former KDWP biologist] Kevin Church and I came up with the idea for a symposium that would include biologists from the FDA, CDC, the Fish and Wildlife Service – all federal agencies concerned – as well as state wildlife agencies and university researchers, just to address chronic wasting disease," he explains. "This was before CWD had gotten much attention, but we got it all organized and planned for Sept. 17, 2001. Then came the 9/11 attacks on New York, and no one could fly in. We had to reschedule to the next year in Denver, and now it's a bi-annual event."

When it comes to the future, Fox believes balance is key. "As consumptive activities become less essential, even to hunters and anglers, KDWP's biggest challenge is to be leaders in the field of wildlife research. We need to recruit top research people, but we also need balance between gaining knowledge and providing services."

Fox recently received the 2008 Kansas Wildlife Federation Conservationist of the Year award in recognition of this unassuming man's contributions to the wildlife of Kansas. When asked how long he intends to continue the work he loves, he is both evasive and clear in his priorities: "I'm just trying to make it to lunch," he quips. "The white bass are in the river, and it's really hard to stay in the office."

### SPORTSMEN RAISE \$700 MILLION

More than \$740 million will be distributed to 56 state and territorial fish and wildlife agencies to fund fish and wildlife conservation efforts, boat access, shooting ranges, and hunter education in 2009. The funding is made available through the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration and Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration programs, which are

administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Funds are generated by federal excise taxes on purchases of firearms, ammunition, archery, and angling equipment and boat motor fuels. The Wildlife Restoration apportionment for 2009 totals nearly \$336 million, with more than \$64.7 million marked for hunter education and firearm and archery range pro-

grams. The Sport Fish Restoration apportionment for 2009 totals more than \$404 million.

Under the 2009 distribution, Kansas will receive nearly \$6 million for wildlife restoration and hunter education projects and more than \$5.6 million for sport fish restoration. These funds pay up to 75 percent of the cost of each eligible project, and the states are required to contribute at least 25 percent.

—KDWP News

# HUNTING SPOTS

with Marc Murrell

## Huntin' Night Crawlers

It's walleye time in Kansas. May and June are the two best months for catching walleye. After spawning in late March, walleye disappear for several weeks. But when water temperatures reach the 60s, walleye move to the shallow mud flats to feed and replenish. They feed on larval forms of various insects, and a jig-and-night crawler is one of the best baits. On a good day, an angler might use several dozen night crawlers. So to be ready for walleye time and have a ready supply of night crawlers, you must do some hunting before you go fishing – night crawler hunting.

Successful night crawler hunting is a matter of timing since a good rainstorm makes them easy pickings for those not afraid of a little backache. And you don't have to travel too far, either. You've probably seen them on your driveway or sidewalk, so your front lawn might be a good hunting spot. However, if your lawn has been treated regularly with chemicals, chances are there won't be many night crawlers. All is not lost, though, as city parks or vacant lots can be great places for catching squirming worms. Older parts of town with big, towering trees and plenty of leaf litter are excellent places.

Night crawler hunting usually begins right after dark when worms start to emerge from their burrows. A red light of some sort or softened (a bright light tends to spook the night crawlers) white light works well for finding your way in the dark. Once a night crawler is spotted approach slowly and quickly put one hand over it. Grasp the crawler nearest to its tunnel and hold until the worm relaxes and gently pull it from the hole with even pressure. Carry a small bucket or milk jug to put crawlers in as you hunt. Walk lightly since the vibration from heavy steps will cause basking night crawlers to snap back underground in a split second.

Night crawlers can be kept for months in a refrigerator when placed in commercial Styrofoam boxes with pre-mixed (pre-cooled) bedding and



Marc Murrell photos

stored at 45-50 degrees. A commercially-prepared worm food is available for occasional feedings, and it's important to read and follow all label instructions on the worm box, bedding and food.

Check the box every few days and remove sick or dead crawlers. Decaying worms produce a gas that kills other crawlers in the box, so remove any that appear to be in less than excellent physical condition. Good crawlers are round, shiny, fat and just "look" healthy.

Anglers headed out for a day of fishing often transport crawlers in a small Coleman cooler with some bedding. A reusable freeze block is ideal to keep the bedding cool, and worms can be taken from the cooler as needed for fishing. If the temperature gets really hot, the cooler can be placed in a larger cooler on ice to better preserve the night crawlers.

One tip is to never put worms leftover after a day of fishing back into the main container from which they came. It's best to keep them in another cooler as there's a good chance some of these may die from the stress of the day, and you don't want to contaminate your bulk supply.

So if you want to save yourself a sizable chunk of money, grab a bucket, flashlight and some old clothes and head out after a good spring rain. You just might be surprised how many night crawlers you can pick up in a couple hours. Your reward will come when you feel the *tap, tap, tap* of a hungry walleye!

# LOOK BACK

with Bob Mathews

## The Pittman-Robertson Advantage

Kansas hunters can take satisfaction in the recent opening of the new Kansas Wetlands Education Center at Cheyenne Bottoms (see story on Page 28). Without their support dollars, Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area – and the new education center – would not exist.

In the early 1900s, after Cheyenne Bottoms had been subjected to decades of entrepreneurs' attempts to farm the basin, strike oil on it, or drain it, a growing coalition of local groups and individuals threw their support behind a new idea: to lobby for inclusion of the marsh in the federal wildlife refuge system.

Their attempts were helped by a deluge of water in 1927, which produced some of the highest water levels ever recorded there. The huge numbers of waterfowl and other migratory birds using the area in 1927 and 1928 illustrated the sprawling wetland's importance to migrating birds – and to people who appreciate that wildlife legacy.

Officials from the Kansas Forestry, Fish and Game Commission began lobbying the fed-

eral Bureau of Biological Survey to seek Congressional approval to develop the basin as a wildlife refuge. Congress eventually relented, but the Great Depression intervened. Funding was simply not available.

In 1937, Congress approved the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act. Better known as the Pittman-Robertson Act (named for its authors, Sen. Key Pittman of Nevada and Rep. A. Willis Robertson of Virginia), this new law imposed a federal excise tax on sporting arms and ammunition, generating millions of dollars for just such purposes. One of the first projects undertaken by the Kansas Forestry, Fish and Game Commission was the acquisition and development of Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area.

Hunters' dollars, to this day, foot the bill for acquisition, development, and maintenance of Kansas public wildlife areas. The 20,000-acre Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area attracts hunters and bird watchers from across the U.S., and is recognized as a wetland of international importance.

## INSTRUCTORS OF THE YEAR



The Advisory Committee to KDWP's Hunter Education Program named Steven Taylor, Edwardsville, the 2009 Hunter Education Instructor of the Year. An active instructor for 27 years, Taylor has organized and taught in classes in the Kansas City area, is the director of live-fire activities at the Wyandotte County Lake annual Hunter Education Clinic, and coordinates all classes held at the Tri-County Gun Club. Taylor is also active in marksmanship training for 4-H youth shooting programs.

In addition to Taylor's award, exceptional instructors in KDWP's five regions were named Regional Instructors of the Year. These include Larry Stones, Kirwin; Dennis Vincent, Leavenworth; Joseph Vogel, Dodge City; Evan Yoder, Peabody; and Charles Beckman, Mound City.

Taylor received a Henry Big Boy .45 caliber rifle with his award, and the regional honorees each received Henry Golden Boy .22 caliber rifles.

—KDWP News

### PARK VIEW



with Kathy Pritchett

## Kansas AmeriCorps



Does a program for young people that allows them to serve the environment and assist in natural disaster recovery while getting a living stipend and money for college sound too good to be true? It's not; it's simply KDWP's Kansas Outdoor AmeriCorps Action Team. For the past ten years, KDWP has administered an AmeriCorps grant that put 54 young people to work in state parks, nature centers and centers of education across the state. When needed, members serve in areas hit by natural disasters. AmeriCorps service begins for many members a life-long service ethic.

AmeriCorps is a service-learning program modeled on the Peace Corps. In exchange for a year's service, members

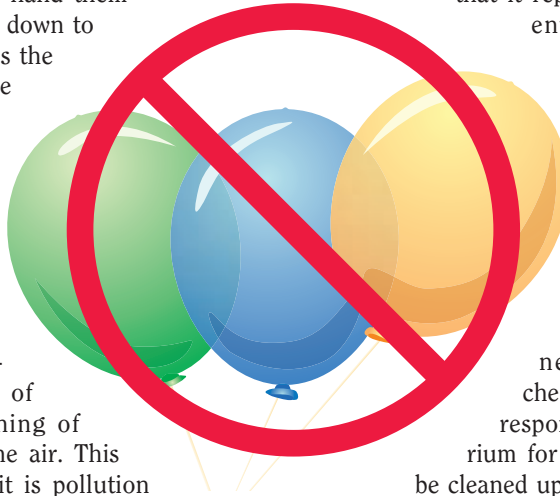


receive a living stipend during the term of service and an education award of \$4,725 (\$2,362 for members serving 900 hours) upon completion of service. They get valuable training and experience in areas ranging from CPR and use of power tools to public speaking, trail building, and campground design. The education award can be used within seven years for education expenses at Title IV schools or to pay off qualified student loans. Full-time members are also eligible for health insurance and childcare assistance.

We are now recruiting members to start the program September 1. Economic stimulus monies may also fund additional members to start during the summer. Contact the state park office where you would like to serve or check out the KDWP's website at [kdwp.state.ks.us/news/StateParks/AmeriCorps](http://kdwp.state.ks.us/news/StateParks/AmeriCorps).

Take several hundred plastic bags and hand them out to a bunch of kids. Now take them down to your nearest stream and have them toss the plastic bags into the water while cheering. Sound ridiculous? Of course it does. But we witness similar pollution activities regularly.

Hardly a week goes by without some “balloon release” to commemorate holidays, weddings or other special event. This activity has a new name – “ballution.” Although it is still considered an atrocious polluting activity – throwing a bunch of plastic into a river – we think nothing of tossing the same kind of trash into the air. This aerial junk may go out of sight, but it is pollution and it does not disappear. Biodegradable latex balloons are not an excuse because they still fall to earth as pollution and are around long enough to be a health hazard to wildlife and trash on the landscape. Perhaps the worst thing about “ballution” is



that it represents such a crass disregard for the environment. The inconsiderate “balluting” of our air sends the wrong message to kids. This kind of negative environmental training is hardly biodegradable and may take many years to correct.

Every time you witness mass balluting at events ranging from the local high school pep rally to the Super Bowl, envision this same amount of trash being thrown into the nearby stream. Would everyone be cheering? If you have to ballute, find more responsible ways to do it—inside an auditorium for instance. At least there, the mess can be cleaned up appropriately with not nearly as much harm to the environment and wildlife. At a time when environmental problems such as global warming seem so complex, stopping ballution is such a simple and positive act anyone can do. Resist this pro-littering movement. Refuse to ballute!

## Tightening Our Belts

Kansas state park visitors will notice differences this year as we tighten our budget belts. Budget cuts weren't finalized when this went to press, but it's a safe bet that some areas will be mowed less, office hours reduced, and areas within some parks may not be opened at all this season.

No park will be closed, but budget cuts at the Kansas Department of Corrections have reduced our use of inmate labor crews. In addition, Parks Division seasonal salary dollars will be reduced, so there simply won't be enough staff to complete some tasks. Mowing may be reduced, and visitors may need to use on-line sales, off-park vendors, camp hosts, gatehouses or self-pay stations to obtain permits. Parks will rely heavily on volunteers.

Capital improvement funds for this year and next have been reduced, so improvements that occur are previous years' projects or projects undertaken with grant funds.

Costs, such as utilities, are fixed, so we are cutting spending in areas that won't impact the quality of our visitors' stays. We want to weather this economic downturn without raising fees.

– Kathy Pritchett

## Benefit Youth, Donate Firearms

The Youth Shooting Sports Alliance (YSSA) has introduced its new Donated Firearms Program to generate funds to purchase equipment and supplies needed by priority youth shooting sports programs nationwide.

“The program provides an opportunity for sportsmen and women to donate their old guns and help the YSSA build the next generation of shooters,” said David Baron, president of YSSA. Donated firearms will be sold on GunBroker.com to raise funds for youth shooting sports programs, and the winning bidder will be provided a tax-deductible receipt from YSSA, a 501 (c) (3) foundation. Prospective donors are asked to complete an electronic form on YSSA's website, [www.youthshootingssa.com](http://www.youthshootingssa.com), to donate a firearm. The online form also requires that the donor designate a Federal Firearms Licensee (FFL) who will handle the shipping of the firearm to YSSA's designated FFL holder.

–National Shooting Sports Foundation's Bullet Points



# There's Gold In Them Hills!

by Kelly Johnston

Wildlife and Parks Commission Chairman, Wichita

In August, it is common for Kansans to go to the Rockies or the Sierras in search of golden vistas and sparkling memories. My parents took us several times to Rocky Mountain National Park in the mid-1960s. We backpacked up to Lost Lake in the valley of the Big Thompson River. We camped for a week, caught a lot of trout, explored the alpine meadows and talus slopes, and swam in the crystal cold water. Leaving was never fun, but at least the hike out was downhill.

When my wife and I were raising our family, we also took our children to the high country at Jackson Hole, Yellowstone and Glacier National Park. But our camping trips more often stayed in Kansas. We had many wonderful trips to El Dorado State Park and to the banks of the Whitewater River in Butler County where a friend had a farm. My children learned on those trips about sedimentary rocks, fossils, the flora and fauna of Kansas, and they heard around the campfire the story of the catfish that was so large it couldn't be pulled out of the river with a grappling hook and a rope tied to a Jeep.

They took home memories of midnight adventures on dark water to check limb lines, and were awed at the sights of tree branches coming alive, diving into the water, and the thrashing of flatheads or channel cats trying to escape the approaching oarlocks. The kids were always on the edge of their seats, big-eyed and a bit spooked by nature hiding above us among the cottonwoods. Baiting those hooks was like making a wish. Back at camp, the kids would wonder what was happening to those forlorn minnows, and imagine the behemoths that were grinding their jaws in the muddy depths.

These days, we are empty-nesters. It has been several years since I have seen more than a bump on the horizon. I have been retreating instead to the Chautauqua Hills. I have discovered that there is magic in those Hills.

A couple of springs ago, I was north of Cedar Vale in March when the pastures and hillsides were bright green, but the timber along the creek bottom was still dark, with only a tinge of green from newly budding leaves. As I came around a bend in the creek, I was startled to see an intense purple band of redbud blossoms at the edge of the pasture, and extending upward 6 to 8 feet along the timbered border. I had never before seen the redbud bloom so dense and defined.



Mike Blair photo

I made another amazing discovery last summer while spending a few days defusing in the Hills. The July night was clear and still. While sipping bourbon and listening to the coyotes, we gazed at the Milky Way and its backdrop of stars that can never be seen in town. Too lazy to count the stars, it was not as difficult to mark the satellites, aircraft and other objects moving across the heavens. No, we were not "visited." Instead, what surprised and entranced me was the dark band on the near horizon formed by the bluffs above the creek. Dancing above the pasture within that border were thousands of fireflies. At a distance, the fireflies didn't seem to move very much. The terrestrial horizon had become a mirror image of the starry sky.

While I was deer hunting last December, I was sitting on a Chautauqua Hills ridgeline in a blind trying to be quiet and still. I had been there for several hours of the afternoon, which had been continuously overcast and cool. I could only hear my heartbeat, the wind through the trees and grasses, and an occasional crow call or raptor screech. I was ashamed when I had to move my feet and rustled the leaves beneath me.

As sundown approached, all of a sudden, the sun broke out along the horizon and cascaded the entire canyon with light. Somehow, the acutely-angled light caused the red-yellow grasses on the hillside opposite my blind to be spun into shimmering strands of gold. It was breathtaking. I imagined that it was a sight like this that the Native Americans described, and Coronado misunderstood.

I know that there are golden aspens and magical sights in the western high country, but the Chautauqua Hills are much closer. I love our state, and if you spend enough time "in them hills," you too will strike gold.

## FISHING LAKES BAN ALCOHOL

KDWP has banned all alcohol – including 3.2 percent malt beverages – from state fishing lakes in many parts of the state. Intoxicated drivers, trash, vandalism, fights, and rowdy parties that disturb other lake users are among reasons for the move.

Perhaps the biggest danger is intoxicated drivers leaving lakes, damaging private and public property, and endangering lives. Bans in recent years have almost completely eliminated this activity at the most problematic lakes.

The following lakes are closed to all alcohol possession or use: Rooks State Fishing Lake (SFL), Atchison SFL, Douglas SFL, Leavenworth SFL, Middle Creek Lake, Miami SFL, Pillsbury Crossing Wildlife Area, Pottawatomie SFL #1, Pottawatomie SFL #2, Shawnee SFL, Pratt Backwaters, Kingman SFL, Black Kettle SFL, McPherson SFL, Chase SFL, Butler SFL, Cowley SFL, Lyon SFL, and Montgomery SFL.

If problems persist, more lakes may be added in the future.

—KDWP News

# 2009 Sportsmen's Calendar

## TURKEY

### 2009 SPRING TURKEY

- Regular Season  
(firearm/archery): April 8 - May 31, 2009
- Archery-Only Season: April 1 - 7, 2009
- Youth/Disabled Season: April 1 - 7, 2009

### 2009 FALL TURKEY:

- Season: Oct. 1-Dec. 1, 2009 and  
Dec. 14-Dec. 31, 2009; and Jan. 11-31, 2010.

## FURBEARERS HUNTING & TRAPPING

*NOTE: All furbearer hunting, trapping, and running seasons begin at 12 noon on opening day and close at midnight of closing day.*

- Season: Nov. 18, 2009 - Feb. 15, 2010  
Badger, bobcat, mink, muskrat, opossum,  
raccoon, swift fox, red fox, gray fox,  
striped skunk, weasel:

## BEAVER TRAPPING

- Season Dates (statewide):  
Nov. 18, 2009 - March 31, 2010
- NO OPEN TRAPPING OR HUNTING  
SEASON ON ANY OTHER FURBEARERS

## BIG GAME SEASONS

### DEER:

#### DEER

##### Application Deadlines:

- Resident Any-Deer Draw: July 10, 2009 **ONLINE ONLY**
- Resident Whitetail Any Season: Dec. 30, 2009
- Resident Archery: Jan. 30, 2010
- Nonresident: June 1, 2009 **ONLINE ONLY**
- Antlerless Whitetail: Jan 30, 2010
- Hunt-own-Land: Dec. 30, 2009.

- Youth and Disability: Sept.12 - Sept. 20, 2009
- Early Muzzleloader: Sept. 21 - Oct. 4, 2009
- Archery: Sept. 21 - Dec. 31, 2009
- Early Firearm (DMU 19 only):  
Oct. 10 - Oct.18, 2009
- Regular Firearm: Dec. 2 - Dec. 13, 2009
- Firearm Extended Whitetail Antlerless Season:  
Jan.1 - Jan.10, 2010 ( Open for Units 4, 5, 6, 7,  
8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 19 only.)

- Archery Extended Whitetail Antlerless Season  
(DMU 19 only): Jan. 4 - Jan. 31, 2010
- Special Extended Firearms White-tailed  
Antlerless Season: Jan.11- Jan.17, 2010  
(Open for unit 7, 8 and 15 only.)

## ANTELOPE

#### ANTELOPE

##### Application Deadlines:

- Firearm & muzzleloader: June 12, 2009;
- Archery: Oct. 30, 2009

- Firearm Season: Oct. 2 - Oct. 5, 2009
- Archery Season: Sept. 19 - Sept 27 &  
Oct. 10 - Oct. 31, 2009
- Muzzleloader Season: Sept. 28 - Oct. 5, 2009

## ELK (residents only)

#### ELK

##### Application Deadlines:

- Residents: July 10, 2009
- Hunt-Own-Land: March 14, 2010

### Outside Fort Riley:

- Muzzleloader Season: Sept. 1 - Oct, 4, 2009
- Archery Season: Sept. 21 - Dec. 31, 2009
- Firearm Season: Dec. 2 - Dec. 13, 2009 and Jan.1,  
2010 - March 15, 2010

### On Fort Riley:

- Muzzleloader and Archery Season: Sept. 1 -  
Oct. 4, 2009
- Firearm Season for Holders of Any-Elk Permits:  
Oct 1 - Dec 31, 2009
- Firearm First Segment: Oct. 1 - Oct. 31, 2009
- Firearm Second Segment: Nov.1 - Nov 30, 2009
- Firearm Third Segment: Dec.1 - Dec. 31, 2009

## MIGRATORY BIRDS

DUCK AND GOOSE SEASON DATES WILL BE SET  
AT AUGUST 6 COMMISSION MEETING IN MEDICINE LODGE

### DOVE (Mourning, white-winged, Eurasian col- lared, and ringed turtle doves) pending

- Season: Sept.1 - Oct. 31 and Nov 7-15, 2009
- Daily bag limit: 15
- Possession limit: 30



## **EXOTIC DOVE**

### **(Eurasian collared and ringed turtle doves only)**

- Season: Nov. 20, 2009 - Feb. 28, 2010
- Daily bag limit: No limit
- Possession limit: No limit

## **RAIL (Sora and Virginia)**

- Season: Sept. 1 - Nov 9, 2009
- Daily bag limit: 25
- Possession limit: 25

## **SNIPE**

- Season: Sept. 1 - Dec. 16, 2009
- Daily bag limit: 8
- Possession limit: 16

## **WOODCOCK**

- Season: Oct. 17 - Nov. 30, 2009
- Daily bag limit: 3
- Possession limit: 6

## **SANDHILL CRANE**

- Season: Nov. 11 - Jan. 7, 2010
- Daily bag limit: 3
- Possession limit: 6

## **UPLAND GAME BIRDS**

### **PHEASANTS**

- Season: November 14, 2009 - January 31, 2010
- Youth Season: November 7 - 8, 2009
- Daily Bag Limit: 4 cocks in regular season, 2 cocks in youth season

### **QUAIL**

- Season: November 14, 2009 - January 31, 2010
- Youth Season: November 7 - 8, 2009
- Daily Bag Limit: 8 in regular season, 4 in youth season

### **PRAIRIE CHICKEN**

- Early Season (East Zone):  
Sept. 15 - Oct. 15, 2009
- Daily Bag Limit: 2
- Regular Season (East and Northwest zones):  
Nov. 21, 2009 - Jan. 31, 2010
- Daily Bag Limit: 2
- Regular Season (Southwest Zone):  
Nov. 21, 2009 - Dec. 31, 2009
- Daily Bag Limit: 1

## **SMALL GAME**

### **SQUIRREL**

- Season: June 1 - Feb. 28, 2010
- Daily bag limit: 5
- Possession limit: 20

### **RABBITS (Cottontail & Jack rabbit)**

- Season: All year
- Daily bag limit: 10
- Possession limit: 30

### **CROW**

- Season: Nov. 10 - March 10, 2010
- Limit: No Limit

## **FISHING SEASONS**

### **BULLFROGS**

- Season: July 1 - Oct. 31
- Daily bag limit: 8
- Possession limit: 24

### **FLOATLINE SEASON**

- July 15 - Sept. 15, 2009 (daylight hours only)
- Area Open: Hillsdale, Council Grove, Tuttle Creek, Kanopolis, John Redmond, Toronto, Wilson, and Pomona reservoirs.

### **HANDFISHING SEASON**

- June 15 - August 31, 2009
- Area Open: Arkansas River from the John Mack Bridge on Broadway St. in Wichita down stream to the Kansas-Oklahoma border; and the Kansas River from its origin downstream to its confluence with the Missouri River.

### **PADDLEFISH SNAGGING SEASON**

- March 15 - May 15, 2009
- Area open: posted areas inside city parks on the Neosho River below the Chetopa and Burlington city dams, Marais des Cygnes River below Osawatomie Dam to Old KC Rd., and the Browning Oxbow Lake of the Missouri River – or other areas as posted by KDWP.

### **TROUT SEASON**

- Oct. 15 - April 15, 2010
- Area open: Designated trout waters listed at [www.kdwp.state.ks.us](http://www.kdwp.state.ks.us)

# Benedictine

*The 2,200-acre Benedictine Bottoms Wildlife Area looks much different today than it did just 12 years ago when the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers purchased it. The Corps leased the land to KDWP to develop and enhance the area's wildlife habitat.*

**B**ig river country plays by its own rules. Fast current and muddy water are forever restless. Shifting sandbars and caving banks show constant change. Everything's big – distances are vast, trees are tall, and rank ground cover is nearly impenetrable. In good years, crops are bounteous; in bad, they're scoured from fertile soil by angry floods.

And people must learn to live with it.

The mighty Missouri is such a place. In broad bends and oxbows separating the states of Kansas and Missouri, the river's wide flood

plain is fickle habitat. Levees seek to tame the river, but Nature scoffs. This land was always wild, and it always will be. That makes it perfect for wildlife areas springing up along the river corridor.

The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks has three new wildlife areas in northeastern Kansas representing nearly 8 square miles of Missouri river habitat. All three are mitigation areas with special benefits to Kansans. These unique wildlife areas provide excellent habitat and hunting opportunities without direct cost to

# Bottoms

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



sportsmen. All costs of management and operation, including salaries of area workers, are paid by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Mitigation areas are a type of public payback for Corps work performed as long as 70 years ago. The Missouri River has been an important supply route for the country's interior. Barge traffic was often hindered by the wide and shallow river. In the 1930s, the Corps began to channelize and deepen the river as a solution.

Since the river and its floodplain have always been public land, this work in altered and dimin-

ished public natural habitat. Since then, the Corps has purchased large tracts of tenuous farm ground along the river to replace, or mitigate, habitat lost due to these alterations.

The land remains in ownership of the Corps, which licenses it back to state wildlife agencies for management and protection of the resource. KDWP has been a beneficiary of these tracts since the mid 1990s. Given their locations along the Missouri River, they are easily accessible to urban population centers such as Kansas City, Topeka, Lawrence, and St. Joseph, Mo.



One problem encountered at Benedictine was sandy soil that would not hold water in the wetland areas. KDWP pumps the areas to provide wetland habitat and waterfowl hunting.

Currently, three Kansas wildlife areas are mitigation properties along the Missouri River. The oldest and best developed is Benedictine Bottoms Wildlife Area near Atchison. All three are managed by KDWP's public lands manager Kirk Thompson. Development, which is ongoing, of these areas will result in significant wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities.

The Corps purchased this floodplain tract of about 2,200 acres in the mid-1990s. From bare farm fields, they immediately began to develop wildlife habitat. The tract was then licensed in perpetuity to KDWP in 1997.

Habitat development continued under the authority of KDWP, with all costs paid by the Corps under terms of the mitigation agreement.

Initial plans included development of three habitat types: one-third native grasses; one-third hardwood timber; and one-third river bottom natural regeneration and wetlands. Though only about 100 acres of the area was wetlands, proximity to the large river made the wetlands an important loafing and feeding area for waterfowl and other wetland species.

As wetland areas were dredged out and began to fill naturally, an unexpected problem

arose. Soils in the floodplain were sandy and water quickly drained away. Clay in the subsoil was a type that didn't hold water well. After thorough research, it was determined that a particular soda ash from Wyoming would react with the clay to change its nature. The clay could then hold water.

At Corps expense, many loads of soda ash were trucked to Benedictine and disked into the dry soil in all wetland areas. For several years, the problem was solved, and area wetlands held water as expected, but the soda ash apparently leached out of the clay subsoil zone. At present, wetland areas are pumped to

provide water during hunting seasons, but natural retention is an ongoing problem.

Food plots are planted at Benedictine to provide wildlife with additional food. Corn, soybeans, and winter wheat enhance abundant natural forage from native plants like smartweed and foxtail.

True riparian forest conditions exist at Benedictine on the river side of a levee that protects much of the area from flooding. This

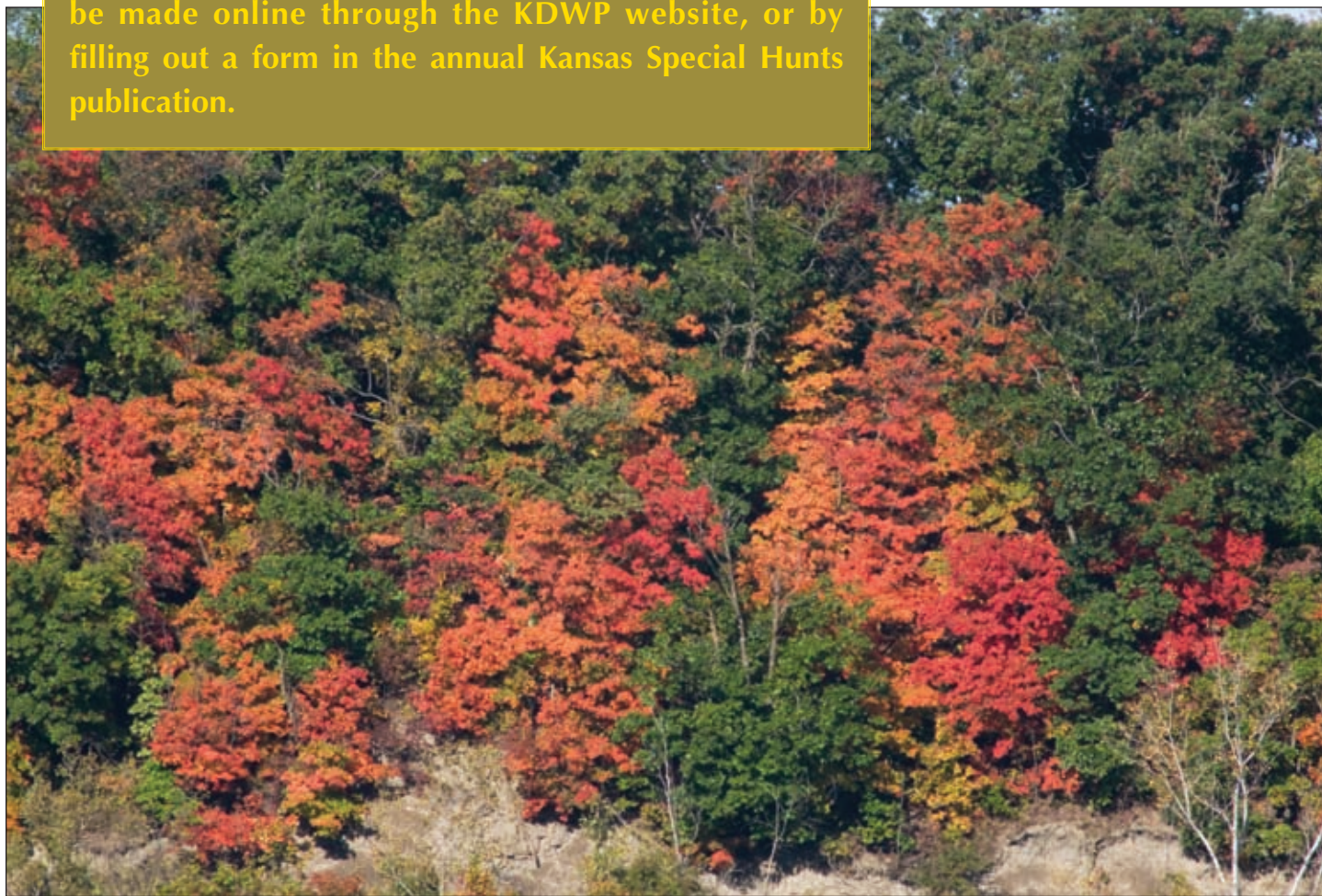
habitat is made up of natural elm-ash-cottonwood forest and includes a variety of other trees like soft maples, mulberries, and boxelder. Though managed, this several-mile-long strip is left to the natural conditions expected along a river corridor. This habitat, representing about a fourth of the entire holding, provides excellent deer hunting opportunities.

The protected side of the levee includes roughly 1,600 acres and

is the habitat development area. In 12 years, Benedictine Bottoms has grown impressive wildlife cover. Dense, young cottonwoods interspersed with native grasses create ideal habitat for gamebirds and mammals. Trees now average about 30 feet tall. Thinning trees and conducting controlled burns help adjust plant densities and encourage natural food plants.

Most hunting on Benedictine is allowed by special permit only. Exceptions are dove and teal hunting during September, when hunting is open to all with no permit necessary. Otherwise, from October 1 through March 31, all access is restricted.

**To apply for a special hunt at Benedictine, go to KDWP's website and type the words "special hunts" into the search box. Or call the Region 2 Office at (785) 273-6740 for more information. Application can be made online through the KDWP website, or by filling out a form in the annual Kansas Special Hunts publication.**



The riparian area is made up of elm-ash-cottonwood forest, along with soft maples, mulberries and boxelder. Color can be spectacular in the fall. The timbered areas on the river side of the levee provide excellent deer hunting opportunities.



In the winter, bald eagles will often congregate along the river and the wildlife area, especially if there are large numbers of waterfowl present. The eagles can provide excellent viewing opportunities

Each hunt day allows a limited number of hunters on the area. This provides quality hunts with a minimum of disturbance by other hunters and visitors. In addition, waterfowl and upland hunting days are staggered to avoid potential conflicts within the habitat. Waterfowl hunting allows three daily groups on Sunday-Monday-Wednesday-Friday of each week. Upland hunting days are Tuesday-Thursday-Saturday, with two groups allowed each day.

Deer hunting has rules as well. Permits are assigned based on deer population but are limited in number to ensure high-quality hunting. A limited number of archery deer hunters receive a permit good for one month. Muzzleloader hunters lucky

enough to be drawn may hunt the entire muzzleloader season. The regular firearm season is divided into two parts for Benedictine hunting. A permit will be issued for either the first or the last half of that season.

Its diverse habitat makes Benedictine home to many wildlife species. Proximity to the big river makes it a natural gathering place for waterfowl. Ducks use the area's wetlands, and large flocks of snow geese are often seen overhead during winter. A refuge on the area's east end encourages birds to stay in the area. Eagles are also frequent winter visitors, utilizing the waterfowl for food.

White-tailed deer are plentiful. The area is known for large bucks, and the carefully regu-

lated hunting program ensures a good chance of success. With the proper permits, a day of hunting affords a reasonable chance of taking both a doe and a buck.

Game birds like bobwhites, pheasants, and doves offer good hunting at Benedictine Bottoms. Additionally, a growing eastern turkey population will allow turkey hunting for the first time in 2009.

Pheasant hunting has traditionally been excellent on the area, providing the best ringneck hunting in eastern Kansas. Unfortunately, heavy flooding and spring rainfall during the past several years created soggy conditions that limited production. Pheasants still occupy the area but in lower numbers than before. With better weather



## New Wildlife Areas

Elwood and Dalby wildlife areas are two recently-acquired mitigation areas. Located just west of the city limits of St. Joseph, Mo., Elwood Wildlife Area is 1,100 acres of farm ground, timber, and a great deal of typical upland game habitat. During its first year as a KDWP wildlife area, food plots were established and managed for dove hunting with excellent results. Parking areas were developed and graveled, and area signs were also erected. The area received good usage from both Kansas and Missouri hunters because it sits directly adjacent to the state border.

The most recent acquisition in 2008 is Dalby Wildlife Area southwest of Atchison. Like the others, it lies along the Missouri River and includes mostly farm ground and big riparian timber along the riverbank. A creek bisects the area, dividing the large agricultural fields.

This area is not currently open to access because of an active railroad line. Before parking, access, and signage can begin, a safe way of crossing the rail line must be put into place. Kansas Wildlife and Parks engineers and Thompson are developing plans with the rail company to initiate these crossings.

during nesting season, they are expected to rebound.

Those wishing to hike, bird-watch, or photograph the area during restricted months must also apply for an access permit. This serves them in the same way as it protects hunters – ensuring a quality experience with a minimum of contact with others.

The permit application period for all Benedictine Bottoms entry is June 1 through July 15. Permits are drawn in late July, and notification ranges from immediate for online applications to at least six weeks lead time through the mail.

By Corps restriction, camping is not available on mitigation wildlife areas. Hunters and permittees wishing to use Benedictine Bottoms may camp or rent a cabin at nearby Atchison State Fishing Lake.



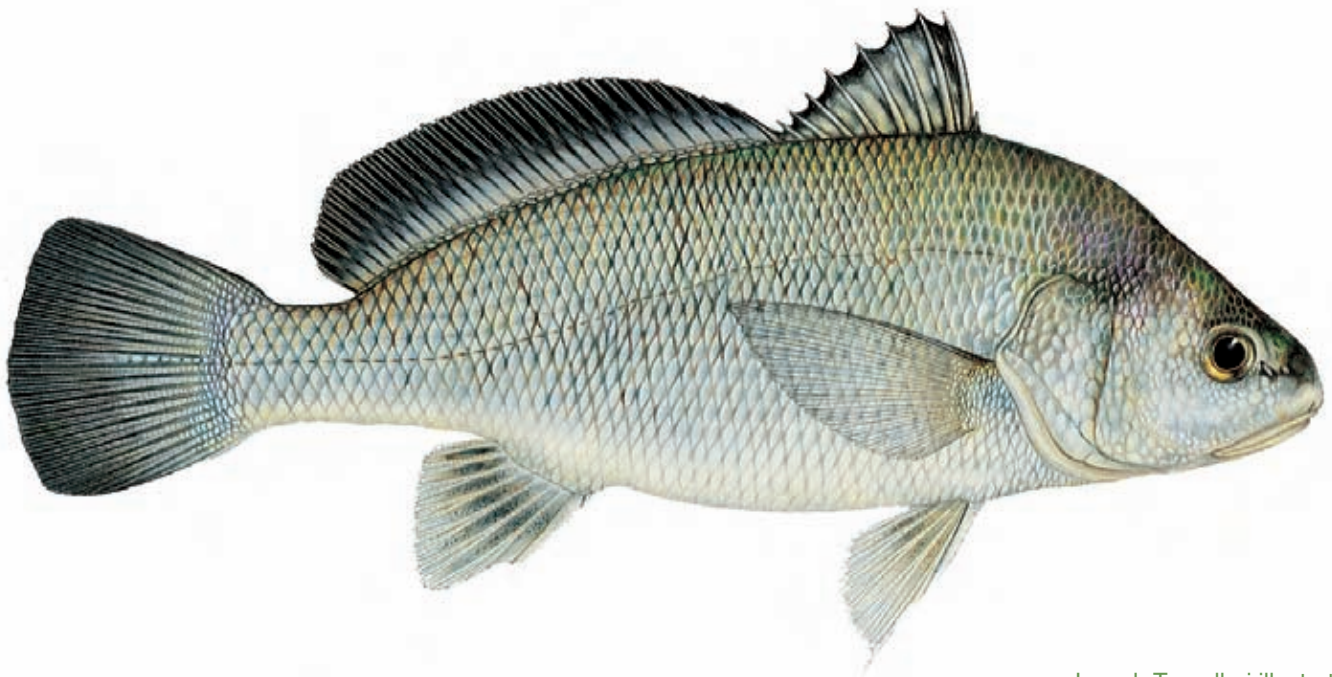
Hunting at Benedictine is limited by special draw. Hunters apply for a specific type of hunting, and those drawn are limited to specific days in order to prevent crowding and ensure high-quality experiences.

The three mitigation areas of north-eastern Kansas are a great addition to Kansas' public lands. Thousands of acres of new wildlife habitat are now available to outdoors enthusiasts. As development continues, the areas will continue to improve at no cost to our state. KDWP will work hard to protect and enhance these special trusts along the mighty Missouri River, benefiting residents of both states. 🇺🇸

In addition to Benedictine Bottoms, recently acquired Elwood and Dalby wildlife areas will provide great opportunities for all outdoor enthusiasts.







Joseph Tomelleri illustration

# Drum Major

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

*The freshwater drum may be labeled a rough fish, but if you're looking for good fishing fun, this under-appreciated fish can fit the bill.*

**I**t's the Rodney Dangerfield of fish. Okay, so maybe that title belongs to the lowly carp, but the freshwater drum is a close second. Neither fish gets any respect. You won't find a drum fishing circuit called the D.A.S.S. (Drum Anglers Sportsman's Society). And I'll bet you'll never see a TV angler catch a drum or read a magazine titled *Drum Insider*. Drum are unceremoniously lumped into the "rough fish" category and don't garner the admiration of other more glamorous species, at least in Kansas.

But take that drum, or at least a similar variety in the same family, *Sciaenidae*, move it to the coast, and it's a different

story. Red drum, also known as redfish, have their own tournament circuits and are highly prized as a game fish. They're considered fine table fare and a fair number of Cajun dishes aren't complete without some form of this fish present. You'll never see a southerner scoff at hooking one of these fish, even when fishing for other species.

But that's exactly what happens in Kansas when anglers tangle with our own inland version of redfish called the freshwater drum. Walleye anglers hate drum because they're masters at stealing the night crawler from a jig-n-night crawler combination aimed specifically at walleye. And even though a drum will

outfight any walleye, those hooked and landed probably won't be photographed and gently released. Most are chucked back with a few choice words not suited for PG-13 movies. With some regrets, I admit that I speak from experience.

But I'm not on the bandwagon for all-out drum equality. I realize they're never going to garner the attention afforded to largemouth bass or walleye. Nor do I believe we'll ever see Skeeter or Ranger come out with a boat model "specifically engi-

*But I'm not on the bandwagon for all-out drum equality. I realize they're never going to garner the attention afforded to largemouth bass or walleye.*

neered with the serious drum fisherman in mind." But I've learned that anyone who enjoys a good battle with a hard-fighting fish won't find any better adversary than the fresh-

water drum. So here's my confession: "My name is Marc and I've fished for drum on purpose." (And I liked it.)

I was taught the joys of drum fishing by two late friends, Larry Buchholz and his dad, Bill. Larry died 11 years ago of heart failure at age 47, and Bill passed away a few years ago. Both were fishing fanatics who enjoyed ANYTHING tugging on the end of their line. They were old school and firmly believed fish, no matter the species, were meant to take home and eat.

"Why even bother going



Drum are common in many rivers and reservoirs, but the best fishing may be in the tailwaters below a reservoir. The fishing can be spectacular after a rain, especially if the reservoir is releasing water. Just thread on a night crawler and hang on!



With a face only a mother could love, drum will hit a jig or crankbait, but they are most vulnerable to worms. Their love of this bait often causes serious walleye anglers to cuss and insult the drum's ancestry. However, the truth is that they fight hard and are good to eat.

fishing if you're going to let them go?" Bill would quip.

Both anglers often chastised me for filleting fish. They always just "peeled" theirs, the equivalent of skinning and leaving the fish whole.

"You're wasting too much meat!" they barked.

The father-son duo loved fishing the spillways below reservoirs, particularly after the gates were opened to release water. Larry loved the variety of

fish you could catch while Bill loved the fact he could keep a 15-inch walleye after it was flushed through the dam of a

*A simple rig with a ½-ounce egg sinker and a No. 4 bait holder hook kept a fat wad of worm steady at the edge of the current in an eddy.*

reservoir with an 18-inch minimum length limit.

"That 15-incher will eat just as well as one 3 inches longer," he'd laugh.

Although catfish, wipers, white bass and the occasional crappie would make it into their baskets, the fish caught with most regularity was the drum. And a 5-pound drum in fast current is a battle worthy of any angler. While I enjoyed many fishing trips with both of them, I



Matt Farmer holds a nice stringer of drum caught in the Neosho River below Marion Reservoir. Drum fishing can be good in just about any river or large reservoir, but it's best below the spillways when reservoirs are releasing water.

hadn't been back to many of their favorite spots since their passing.

With all the rains last spring, I thought about Larry and Bill. I knew both would be chomping at the bit to head to one of their favorite haunts, the Marion spillway. So, with their memory fresh in my mind, I loaded up enough night crawlers to choke a truckload of robins and pointed

*I couldn't think of a more fitting tribute on Memorial Day weekend than honoring a couple fishing buddies by hitting their old stomping grounds.*

my pickup toward Marion Reservoir. Once there, I and slipped and slid my way down the slick bank to the fast flowing water. A simple rig with a ½-ounce egg sinker and a No. 4 bait holder hook kept a fat wad of worm steady at the edge of the current in an eddy. Within seconds, I was setting the hook on a 3-pound drum and the fight was on. Moments later I was

releasing the fish at my feet, anxious to cast back out.

The action was fast and furious for the next two hours. I caught drum after drum, most within two or three minutes of my bait hitting the bottom. The occasional catfish or wiper would break the species streak, but I easily caught and released 60 drum weighing from 2 to almost 5 pounds. I was about to leave when Matt Farmer arrived. He lives nearby, and I'd called

him with the hot report. He was anxious to get in on the action.

Farmer started out pitching a lure hoping to catch a more glamorous wiper or walleye. But after I handed him my pole with a 3-pound drum heading for the main current, he was quickly converted to a bait angler. I rigged his rod with a sinker and hook while he landed my fish. Within seconds of casting his glob of worms into the rushing water, he was hooked up,

amazed at how hard his fish fought. Another 90 minutes went by and several times we each had drum on at the same time. I didn't count, but I'd guess we caught another 30 fish before I decided to put a few on a stringer for photos.

*Drum are actually very good to eat. Their meat is sweet and lacks the fishy-tasting red meat found on white bass. It usually takes a 4- or 5-pound fish to yield a decent fillet, though. But I'll bet a dollar that if you fry some up and throw it in with some walleye at your next fish fry, no one will know the difference.*



Mike Blair photo

Current is the ticket. When water is being released, river fish will move to current breaks below the outlet and feed on whatever rushes by. Drum anglers will often catch a variety of other species, including channel catfish, wipers, flathead catfish and walleye.

As I snapped photos, I reminisced aloud about how much fun I used to have with Larry and Bill along the river. Ironically, Larry was fishing that same spot the day before he died Memorial Day weekend. I'm sure he and Bill were looking down on us. I bet they were smiling, seeing how much fun I was having sharing the excellent fishing just like they'd done with me for many years. And as I released the drum after the photo session, I could almost hear Bill say, "Why even bother going fishing if you're going to let them go?" 🍷

# WINDOW ON THE WILD

by Bob Mathews

*Information and Education Section chief, Pratt*



Mike Blair photo



Bob Mathews photo

*The new Kansas Wetlands Education Center offers  
a closer look at the lively world of wetlands.*

**T**he Kansas Wetlands Education Center has something to show you. The eagerly-anticipated interpretive center at Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area was officially opened April 24. Situated in the southeastern portion of the world-famous marsh, the facility's opening culminates several years of collaboration among a variety of partners. It also marks an important milestone in the rich history of Cheyenne Bottoms, providing the means to illuminate that history and enlighten visitors about the unique value of Cheyenne Bottoms and all wetlands.

Located eight miles northeast of Great Bend, the facility features the expansive Koch Wetlands Exhibit, as well as a 75-seat auditorium, classroom, offices, and gift shop. Affiliated with Fort Hays State University's Sternberg Museum of Natural History, the Kansas Wetlands Education Center will be operated by FHSU. In cooperation with a Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks educator stationed there, FHSU staff will conduct on-site and outreach educational programs. Equipped with state-of-the-art interpre-

Fittingly — given the unpredictable wet and dry cycles that characterize Central Flyway wetlands — construction was delayed for several months due to unprecedented high water levels in the Cheyenne Bottoms basin. Heavy rains in August of 2007 transformed Cheyenne Bottoms following several years of dry weather that had left most of the basin cracked and dusty. Almost overnight, the central Kansas marsh became a sprawling lake. The construction was further delayed by snowstorms during the winter.

tive displays, the center offers an array of interactive exhibits illustrating the unique natural resources of Cheyenne Bottoms and other wetlands. The Koch Wetlands Exhibit, underwritten by a \$500,000 grant from the Fred C. and Mary R. Koch Foundation, provides an overview of the variety of Central Flyway wetlands, from the playa lakes of western Kansas to the flooded timber marshes of eastern Kansas.

Part of the mission of the education center is to conduct wetland research in Kansas. In addition to its public education and interpretive programs, the center hosts FHSU graduate students conducting wetlands research projects on the 19,857-acre Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area; the adjacent 7,200-acre Cheyenne Bottoms Preserve managed by The Nature Conservancy; and nearby 21,820-acre Quivira National Wildlife Refuge managed by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife



Mike Blair photos

Planning for the wetland center began in 2003, but construction didn't begin until the fall of 2006. Weather delays, including historic flooding in 2007, slowed the finish, but a grand opening was conducted on April 24, 2009.





Mike Blair photo

Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area is a 19,000-acre complex of wetland pools and grassland, managed primarily for migratory water birds. Recognized internationally for its importance to migrating birds, the area attracts hunters and birders from across the U.S.

Service. Several graduate research positions were created specifically for the center. The first graduate student researchers will initiate their work this fall. While final details are not yet determined, one student is planning on conducting research on duck nesting within the basin. A second student is planning work on macro-invertebrate production and its timing and contribution to waterfowl brood rearing. A third student is interested in researching the effects of invasive plants on marsh habitats.

Collaboration, planning and development on the Kansas

Wetlands Education Center began in 2003, after KDWP received a \$2 million grant for facility construction from the Kansas Department of Transportation, through funds from the federal Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21). Under the direction of Dr. Ed Hammond, FHSU's president, and Mike Hayden, KDWP secretary, a variety of partners joined forces to begin planning the facility. Representatives from local governments, including Barton County, Barton County Community College, Great Bend, Hoisington, Claflin, and Ellinwood participated in early

planning and discussion. Kansas Department of Commerce, The Nature Conservancy, and the Kansas Wildscape Foundation lent support, as well. The Fred C. and Mary R. Koch Foundation donated funding for development of the Koch Wetlands Exhibit. Representatives from KDWP, FHSU, Nature Conservancy, Great Bend, and Barton County appointed representatives to serve on planning teams to develop building and exhibit design recommendations. Gov. Kathleen Sebelius joined a variety of local and state citizens Oct. 27, 2006, for a groundbreaking ceremony.

# What is a Wetland?

**Wetlands are transition areas between land and water.**

Wetlands act as natural regulators and filters. They absorb runoff and feed it slowly and steadily into permanent bodies of water. Along the way, wetlands purify the water by trapping silt and filtering out pesticides and other pollutants.

## Hydrology of a Freshwater Marsh



## Wetland Vegetation



## Northern Wetlands

## The Value of Wetlands

## Decomposers and Consumers

Fittingly — given the unpredictable wet and dry cycles that characterize Central Flyway wetlands — construction was delayed for several months due to unprecedented high water levels in the Cheyenne Bottoms basin. Heavy rains in August of 2007 transformed Cheyenne Bottoms following several years of dry weather that had left most of the basin cracked and dusty. Almost overnight, the central Kansas marsh became a sprawling lake. The construction was further delayed by snowstorms during the winter.

While KDWP retains ownership of the land the education center is on, FHSU is responsible for its operation and maintenance, as well as management of exhibits. Local communities provide a base of volunteers to assist with special educational programs, as well as promotion and marketing of the new facility.

Designed by Manhattan architects Bowman Bowman and Novick, the 11,675-square-foot, crescent-shaped



A \$500,000 donation from the Fred C. and Mary R. Koch Foundation helped pay for the educational displays in the center. The displays provide an interesting timeline of the wetland's history. The unique building design provides a panoramic view of the demonstration wetland being developed just outside the windows.

Designed by Manhattan architects Bowman Bowman and Novick, the 11,675-square-foot, crescent-shaped Kansas Wetlands Education Center features an expansive wall of glass looking out on the world-famous marsh. Exhibit design and construction was by Chase Studios, which has developed nature center exhibits and displays around the world.



Bob Mathews photos

Kansas Wetlands Education Center features an expansive wall of glass looking out on the world-famous marsh. Exhibit design and construction was by Chase Studios, which has developed nature center exhibits and displays around the world.

Among its other attractions, the Koch Wetlands Exhibit includes a large wall panel with map of Cheyenne Bottoms and its features, including up-to-date information on seasonal wildlife activity on the marsh and management activities underway. Other design elements include a topographic depiction of the marsh and its natural communi-

ties; welded steel, life-sized sculptures of birds that frequent the area; and a historical interpretation display that illustrates tools, weapons, gear and other accessories used by human visitors to Cheyenne Bottoms throughout history. In addition, three-dimensional, interactive exhibits illustrate the rich variety of plants and animals common in marshes, along with displays depicting the various types of wetlands found in Kansas, from the playas common in western Kansas to the flooded timber marshes of eastern Kansas.

It is appropriate that the opening of the Kansas Wetlands

Education Center coincided with the peak of spring migration. The spectacle of thousands of migrating birds has drawn human visitors to this central Kansas marsh for generations. Now, the stories of Cheyenne Bottoms, of Kansas wetlands, and of the unique contribution these habitats provide are on display for visitors from around the world, thanks to the dedication and partnership of many Kansans. ♡

# STREAM

by Mark A. VanScoyoc

*stream assessment and monitoring program coordinator, Pratt*

***Each summer for the past 12 years, crews of biologists and biology students have been surveying the habitat, water quality and aquatic life in Kansas streams.***

# INVENTORY

A photograph of a city skyline at sunset, with the buildings silhouetted against a warm, orange sky. The city is reflected in a body of water in the foreground, which is also reflecting the sunset light. The water is calm, and the reflection is clear. The sky is a mix of orange and yellow, with some darker clouds. The overall mood is serene and peaceful.

On October 27, 2004, roughly 8 miles east of Kingman, a portion of an anhydrous ammonia pipeline failed releasing an estimated 204,000 gallons of anhydrous ammonia. Some of the anhydrous ammonia entered nearby Smoots Creek causing a widespread kill of aquatic life for approximately 13 stream miles. Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks biologists were dispatched to the area to identify species and numbers of fish killed. Then stream biologists were asked to monitor this 13-mile stretch for the next 5 years to assess the recovery of the aquatic community. Sound complicated? Not really.



Ryan Waters photo

After spilled anhydrous ammonia killed much of the aquatic life in a stretch of Smoots Creek, the stream survey crews were asked to take an inventory and compare it to data collected before the spill. Continuing surveys then marked the stream's eventual recovery.

**F**or the past 15 years, KDWP stream biologists have been collecting information about fish, freshwater mussels, and other aquatic organisms in our state's streams and rivers. In addition to this biological data, other non-biological data, also known as abiotic data, have been collected as they relate to habitat and water quality conditions of wadeable streams in Kansas. Abiotic data collected includes dissolved oxygen, pH, flow, vegetation surrounding the stream (referred to as the riparian zone), canopy cover, most common trees over the stream, fish habitat, the primary substrate, or bottom material, in the stream channel, and other important information.

An understanding of the surrounding land usage is also important. Whether an area is urban or rural in nature can help biologists understand some of the potential impacts facing our streams and rivers and the aquatic communities inhabiting them.

This inventorying process establishes baseline data that is valuable to resource managers and others, as it was after the Smoots Creek spill.

### STREAM MONITORING IN ACTION

Stream biologists had surveyed areas of Smoots Creek within this vicinity in 1996, 1999, and 2003. Having something to compare to while monitoring the creek made it possible to determine or infer whether those same species of fish and other aquatic organisms sampled years earlier, prior to the spill, were still present.

One of the great features of streams is how resilient they can be when given a chance to recover. They filter and dilute potentially harmful materials that occur as runoff from urban and rural areas. Preliminary data indicates that the aquatic communities of Smoots Creek are recovering. Much research is

being done showing us exactly how important flowing water is to the health of not only our fish and wildlife, but to society as a whole. Monitoring fish, mussels, and other macroinvertebrates in our state's waterways provides a gauge of how effective we are at managing water quality and land usage practices statewide. The health of these aquatic communities acts as an "early-warning device," alerting us to potential problems; you may have heard these animals referred to as "indicator-species."

In addition to monitoring recovering streams, crews have surveyed streams within the Little Arkansas basin for the Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy (WRAPS) project that developed best management practices (BMPs) aimed at reducing levels of atrazine, a common herbicide used to control broadleaf and grassy weeds. Atrazine enters streams and rivers mainly through runoff from row crops treated with the herbicide or wastewater



Ryan Waters photo

Crews travel the state surveying streams, mostly on private land with landowner permission. The program requires lots of equipment and lots of hard work. But for the true “fish heads,” handling large flatheads like these is obviously more fun than work.

from manufacturing facilities. Studies have shown this herbicide to be moderately toxic to humans and animals, but especially to aquatic life. The goal of the BMPs is to improve the health of aquatic communities. It’s been three years since these streams were surveyed. The sites will be resurveyed in the summer of 2009, and the data will be compared to data collected before BMPs were implemented.

Fish data is not the only useful information for detecting change. Aquatic macroinvertebrates, primarily insects, are extremely useful since these organisms recover from events or show changes in conditions more quickly than stream fish. Aquatic insects reproduce in large numbers and are easier to collect, making them excel-

lent indicators. Still, it’s best to have as much data as possible when assessing an area, so it’s critical that biologists collect both fish and invertebrate data. What

you don’t find in a stream can say just as much or more about its condition as what you do find.



Kristen Hase photo



Eric Johnson photo

Fish are not the only life sampled. The database also includes records of aquatic invertebrates collected, as well as quality of the water.

## ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEWS OF PUBLIC PROJECTS

KDWP ecologists use stream survey data to perform environmental reviews for proposed development projects such as bridges, highways, and other structures. Special emphasis is given to animals listed as threatened or endangered (T&E) as well as those listed as Species In Need of Conservation (SINC) and the habitats they occupy. Publicly funded develop-

ment projects are required under federal law to obtain an action permit if development activities could impact sensitive species and the areas they inhabit. Action permits are rarely required, but when they are, special conditions that require mitigation or some type of preventive action to reduce or minimize potential impacts may be necessary.



Kristen Hase photo

While most of the fish species sampled in streams are small, not all of them are. These shovelnose sturgeon are native to streams and rivers in northeastern Kansas.

### BY THE NUMBERS INFORMATION FROM KDWP STREAM SURVEYS

## 1994 - 2008

2 FEET – average depth of stream survey site.

18 FEET – deepest depth from a survey site.

45 – most number of fish species collected at a single site (Shoal Creek, Cherokee County, Schermerhorn Public Park)

90 – percent of survey sites that occur on private land (always with prior permission)

120 – number of fish species collected.

224 – miles of Kansas streams surveyed.

230 – number of different families of aquatic insects collected.

1,319 – acres of streams surveyed.

1,421 – number of sites surveyed in Kansas.

12,426 – most fish collected from one site; Arkansas River, Wichita, below Lincoln St. dam (This was also a sub sample, meaning we examined a smaller sample from the main sample for reference purposes.)

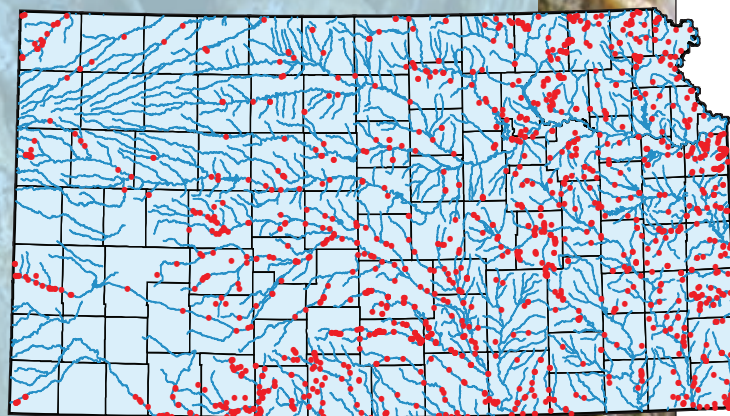
80,467 – non-biting midge flies (blood worms) collected, most abundant aquatic insect collected.

368,585 – aquatic invertebrates collected.

492,710 – red shiners collected, most abundant fish in the state.

1,430,138 – total fish sampled by stream survey program.

Source: KDWP Stream Survey database,  
compiled 02/09 by Ryan Waters, stream biologist



This map clearly shows the multitude of drainages in Kansas, most of which are small creeks and streams. The red dots mark sample sites completed within the last 12 years.



## CURRENT AND FUTURE ENDEAVORS

As stream survey crews ready for the 2009 field season, stream biologists are currently establishing their schedules of where they will be this summer. Various monitoring and assessment sites will be revisited. The aforementioned Smoots Creek and areas of the Little Arkansas basin are examples of such sites. Surveys within the Verdigris basin will also be conducted to fill in some of the “gaps” present in our stream database.

In the meantime, plans and proposals are being made to facilitate the development of an assessment tool that will aid resource managers in ranking or listing habitats or areas of greatest concern across Kansas as well as the sensitive species associated with them.



Ryan Waters photo

The orange-spot sunfish is one of the more colorful native fish collected, but small streams routinely yield a wealth of vividly marked lesser-known fish species.

Development of such a tool will require partnerships and collaborative efforts of people from many walks of life here in Kansas, not the least of which will be the landowners who allow access to the streams or rivers flowing through their land. Without the support of these individuals, it would be impossible to collect the information necessary for the development and implementation of plans and programs that will benefit Kansas.

So now you've read a little bit about what the KDWP stream survey program does and you're asking, "How can stream surveys benefit Kansas, and exactly what are these partnerships about?" As mentioned earlier, the landowners of this state will be key

participants in supporting the program. The US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) will no doubt play an important role in restoration efforts such as dam removal, restoration of riparian systems, in-stream habitat restoration, and other similar endeavors. But it will be up to the KDWP Stream Survey Program to collect data before and after such efforts to determine their success and work to refine future restoration and rehabilitative efforts.

Our sister agencies, such as the Kansas Water Office and the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, also may play roles. Additionally, we will look to the scientific professionals at state colleges and universities for their expertise in developing tools and programs geared toward assessing threats to streams and rivers, as well as targeting efforts. We advocate better land use practices that will lead to better habitat and better water quality. Eventually, we hope to successfully raise and stock native Kansas fish species back into



Kristen Hase photo

In larger streams, native species such as this long-nosed gar are often collected.

our systems. We will not only keep common species common, but strive to make uncommon species common again.

Whether you fish or not, streams and rivers are important to all people. They provide the water we drink, irrigate our crops, are critical to wastewater treatment facilities, and are important habitat for fish and wildlife. They are a great way to escape from it all. Unless fishing, you don't need a permit or license to enjoy the streams and rivers of our diverse state, just permission from the landowner. Streams flow through our backyards, parks, as well as our childhood memories, and it is only right that we share such memories with our younger generations. We may get upset when they flood their banks, but what would happen if they stopped flowing altogether? 🍷

## RIVER FACTS

The United States has more than 250,000 rivers comprising approximately 3.5 million miles of rivers.

Kansas has approximately 135,000 miles of rivers and streams of which 35,000 are perennial (flow year round)

The Arkansas River forms in the Rocky Mountains in Colorado and meanders 1,450 miles through Kansas, Oklahoma, and Arkansas. It is the main water source for the state of Arkansas.

The longest river in the United States is the Missouri River at 2,540 miles.

The largest river is the Mississippi River which has a flow volume of 593,000 cubic feet per second at its mouth (4,435,948 gallons per second).

Nearly 40 percent of the rivers and streams in the U.S. are too polluted for fishing and swimming.

Of the 1200 species listed as threatened or endangered, 50 percent depend on rivers and streams.

Source: [americanrivers.org](http://americanrivers.org), Kansas water office: [kwo.org](http://kwo.org)

A 2006 KDWP survey yielded the following information:

72.2 percent of surveyed anglers indicated they would sacrifice fishing opportunities to protect threatened or endangered species in Kansas.

65.6 percent of surveyed anglers indicated that it is important to protect non-game fish in addition to providing a sport fishery.

Source: 2006 KDWP Licensed Angler Survey Report  
[kdwp.state.ks.us/news/Other-Services/Publications/Fish-and-Wildlife-Management](http://kdwp.state.ks.us/news/Other-Services/Publications/Fish-and-Wildlife-Management)





# Find Your Hunt

by J. Mark Shoup  
associate editor, Pratt

***The concept behind the Special Hunts Program is to provide hunters with opportunities to hunt on public areas where hunting isn't usually allowed. Now this limited-draw program has been applied to select private lands.***

**H**ave you ever dreamed of having access to a special piece of property that is managed or selected just for its fantastic game habitat? A place where you could hunt with the knowledge that you might have an excellent chance to bag game and that you will be one of a few people hunting? A place that is not only game-rich but is normally closed to hunting?

Unless you own land or have exclusive access to private land, this can be hard to come by, but KDWP's Special Hunts Program makes such dream hunts possible. The program's roots go back to the early days after the Kansas Park and Resource Authority was merged with the Kansas Fish and Game Commission, creating the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. It started about 1990 in

Region 1, northwest Kansas, says regional public lands supervisor Bruce Taggart, Hays.

"Parks and wildlife folks began thinking together about ways to improve hunting opportunities in areas normally off-limits to hunters, without disturbing the mission of these areas, such as park use or wildlife watching," Taggart explains. "At that time, everything was handled at the

regional and local level, and our first special hunt was a pheasant hunt at Glen Elder State Park. That was such a success, we began developing guidelines for other areas, including waterfowl refuges. We found that limited hunting days on the perimeter of a refuge did not disrupt the waterfowl that depended on the refuges. Eventually, we had goose hunts in all the state parks in the region, as well. From there, it spread to other areas of the state, and now it's a statewide program."

The program, which offered a limited number of hunters access to specific areas on select days, went statewide in 2000. Hunters made application for the hunt-type and day they desired, and selection drawings were held at the Pratt Operations Office. The program has grown from 240 hunts in 2000 to 918 last year, with multiple hunters per hunt. But it's about to get even better.

Until this spring, all special hunts in Kansas were conducted on public areas not open to public



Some special hunts are designed specifically to provide youth with high-quality hunting opportunities. All provide the lucky hunters who draw access without crowding. The special hunts program features a variety of opportunities including deer and waterfowl.

hunting. While this offers excellent hunts, this type of public land is limited. Using the highly-popular Walk-In Hunting Access program as a model, a pilot project

was initiated to expand special spring turkey hunting opportunity. Landowners were asked to lease private land to KDWP for special turkey hunts, and seven landowners were enrolled, offering 27 tracts of land in Clay, Dickinson, Douglas, Leavenworth, Osage, Ottawa, Riley, and Sumner counties. More than 5,000 acres of private land was opened for limited access spring turkey hunts, including youth-only, youth-mentor, and just restricted access hunts, depending on the wishes of the landowners.

While seven landowners may seem like a modest start, the project offered 67 special hunts this spring, providing 81 hunters with 486 total hunter days. By modeling itself on WIHA, the private lands offerings for special hunts this fall should expand the special hunts program greatly. But for the landowner, the program has its own rewards. He gains the satisfaction of knowing that he is



helping pass on the important American tradition of hunting while still controlling access to his land. One of the perceived drawbacks of the regular WIHA program is that the land is opened to unlimited access. Landowners, especially those with land in more populated counties, are wary of heavy, unrestricted access. In the special hunt program, the landowner can limit special hunts on his land to specific species or equipment types. Here's how it started and how it will work.

While the WIHA program has more than 1 million acres enrolled, there are few tracts in the urban counties. In 2008, KDWP surveyed landowners and sportsmen who live in these urban areas of Kansas to get their views about access to private land and hunting opportunities. One of the objectives of the study was to determine a way to increase hunting access in areas where most people live. The study revealed that landowners would be open to the an access program if they could control access, and hunters would be open to hunting if they could do so in a controlled environment with limited access. The need for more hunting land near urban areas, combined with information from the surveys, inspired the Special Hunts On Private Lands Program.

This fall, the program will lease private land for limited-access public hunting. Landowners, working with district



Mike Blair photo

The private land special hunts will be tailored to the landowners' wishes. A limited number of hunters will be allowed access on specified days for specific hunting opportunities.

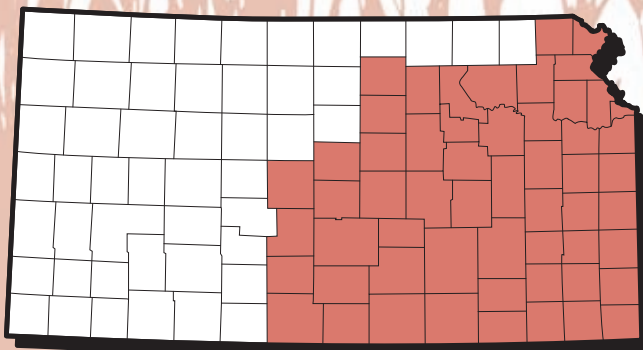
wildlife biologists, will determine how many days and what types of hunting they will allow on their property. KDWP will advertise the hunting opportunities and accept applications for each hunt. Random drawings will determine which hunters will be allowed to hunt properties on specific dates. Successful applicants will be provided with permits to be placed

on the dash of their vehicles and carried with them so that both the landowner and KDWP officers can easily verify that each person hunting has permission.

Resident landowners, absentee landowners, tenant farmers, estate managers, trust managers, and others who manage privately-owned land within the designated area are eligible to apply for enrollment in the private lands special hunt program. Urban counties were chosen as a priority for the program because of a lack of public access to private land and the proximity to urban centers. Any private land with high-quality habitat and hunting opportunities will be considered for enrollment.

In addition to financial and philosophical incentives, other components of the program are attractive to landowners. State law provides that private individuals who lease their land to the state for recreational purposes are immune from damages or injuries resulting from ordinary negligence. In addition, the special hunt program provides landowners knowledge of who is on their property on each scheduled hunt date. Landowners may select specific species, dates, and hunt types that meet their desires for their property. Landowners will also like the fact that access to lands enrolled in the spe-

### Private land in shade counties is eligible for the Special Hunts Program



cial hunt program will be limited to foot traffic only, unless posted otherwise.

Payment to landowners will be based on the amount of acreage enrolled, species that may be hunted, and number of hunter days allowed. Base payment requires either 20 hunter days for turkey or deer, 40 hunter days for other game, or a combination of the two options. Each additional big game day adds \$10, and each additional other game day adds \$5 to the total payment up to the maximum amount allowed for the size of the property enrolled. The deadline to enroll is July 15.

Whether conducted on private or public land, these special hunts are designed to provide the kind of high-quality outdoor experience that will bring erstwhile hunters back into the fold while exciting the imaginations of

The online application and hunt information is on the KDWP website, [www.kdwp.state.ks.us](http://www.kdwp.state.ks.us). Click "Hunting" at the top of the page, then "Special Hunts" in the left-hand column. The application deadline is July 15.

For more information on public lands hunts, phone Robert Barbee at 620-672-0786, or email [robertb@wp.state.ks.us](mailto:robertb@wp.state.ks.us). For information on private lands hunts, phone Jake George at 620-672-0760 or email [jakeg@wp.state.ks.us](mailto:jakeg@wp.state.ks.us).

youngsters who may have never had the opportunity to hunt. They include upland, waterfowl, and deer hunts. Some may be equipment-specific, such as archery deer hunts. Some waterfowl hunts may focus primarily on goose hunting. Whatever the case, the habitat is always prime, and competition from other hunters is low, so the opportunity to take game is greatly increased.

Many of these hunts are perfect for people with disabilities who may be provided assistance and

special facilities such as disability-accessible blinds. Other hunts are open to anyone who applies.

While approximately 90 percent of special hunt applicants now apply online at the KDWP website, the agency produces a special hunts booklet with hunt descriptions, maps, and an application. These are available at most KDWP offices, but because of the short timeframe for landowners to sign up for the program, private lands special hunts will not be included in the brochure this year. If a brochure is produced next year, this information will be included, but because nearly all participants are applying online, this may be the last year for the printed brochure. However, all information included in the printed brochure is included on the KDWP online page for special hunts.

Special hunts are free, but appropriate licenses, certificates, permits, and stamps are required. If you need more information or clarification, contact any agency office. For questions on specific hunts, contact the local area office where the hunt is offered. Applicants successful in the public lands draw will receive more information from the area manager by mail prior to the hunt. Applicants who are drawn for a private lands hunt will be notified by email with additional hunt information and their special hunt permit. ♡



Marc Murrell photo

A variety of youth/mentor hunts are available. Some allow only the youth to hunt, while others allow both the mentor and youth to hunt.



# Backlash

by Mike Miller

## Fairweather Johnson Turkey Hunter

I admit I'm a Fairweather Johnson when it comes to turkey hunting. It's not that I can't handle cold windy April days – okay, so I don't really enjoy a cold April wind anymore. In my younger days, I would take the first few days of turkey season off and hunt — no matter the weather. I was driven by the goal of killing a turkey more than the enjoyment of the experience.

When I first read through Bob Gress' article on his quest for a photograph of a black rail in the last issue, it made me think. I was thoroughly entertained by Gress' tale of frustration as he described the enormous effort it took to just get a glimpse of the rare bird. I was impressed at the lengths he was willing to go to — summer nights on a Kansas marsh – mud, mosquitoes, sweat and other slithery, biting things. And while I admired his determination and the final success, his last two sentences caught my attention: "For years, one of my goals was to get good photographs of a black rail. Now that I have the photos, I realize that the real reward was the journey."

You can call me a wimp if I don't go turkey hunting on a morning when the wind is blowing 30 mph; I don't care. I'm after the journey, not the bagged turkey, although killing a turkey is the final culmination. I guess that might sound contradictory when you consider my example of Gress' black rail saga, but it's not. I don't want my hunt to be easy, but I want to enjoy every aspect of it. Killing a bird isn't nearly as important to me any longer. What's important is to hear the silly birds gobble repeatedly from the roost when a coyote howls or I do a poor impression of a barred owl. It's important to hear, feel and smell the woods wake up around me.

I like the warm spring days with little wind because that's the best time of all to be in the woods. Without turkey hunting, I'd feel silly taking time off work and getting up at 4 a.m. to go out and sit against a tree in the woods. Spring turkey season is a perfect excuse that most people will accept.

And, to be sure, there will be lots of obstacles to make the journey more memorable. There are ticks crawling on my neck, skunks that surprise me as I walk in the dark, stupid turkeys that thoroughly out-smart me, and an occasional wet foot when the creek crossing jump is miscalculated.

I feel similarly about wind and bowhunting deer

because most of my bowhunting is done from a tree-stand. Deer move less in high winds, and it's not much fun hanging on as your tree sways to and fro. A little wind is acceptable, almost necessary, since it can be difficult to get away with drawing a bow in dead calm conditions. I've learned that the hard way more than once.

Pheasant hunting isn't nearly as enjoyable when the wind is blowing more than 20 mph. In high winds, the birds can be skittish, and you miss an important cue to locating a flushing bird – that explosive sound of wings. The "pop" of a rooster's wings as it launches from the weeds at my feet always results in an intense adrenaline rush – something I often don't recover from in time to make a good shot. But that rush is what makes pheasant hunting so much fun. Hearing is an important aspect of bird hunting for me.

Waterfowl hunting is different. I love to hear the "hiss" of wings as a squadron of redheads buzzes the blind, and there is the sudden optimism of approaching birds when you hear a mallard drake's nasally "quack." But wind is often necessary for good duck hunting. They fly lower and are more eager to join decoy spreads in heavy wind.

But I think hearing is most important to spring turkey hunting. Not only does a tom's gobble give away its location, but the conversation a hunter can have with a bird makes this hunt unique. When a tom answers your calls and continues to gobble in response to your yelps, well, that's a turkey hunter's dream. I don't care much about hunting trophy gobblers — I don't weigh them any more, nor do I measure beards and spurs. If a bird gobbles at my yelps and comes within shotgun range, I don't care if it is a three-year-old gobbler or a jake. My only standard in spring hunting is that I won't ambush a bird. I want to call it into range. And like I said earlier, I don't have to kill a bird to thoroughly enjoy a morning hunt.

So, I'll admit to being a Fairweather Johnson when it comes to turkey hunting. And if you're wondering why this column seems to be overly obsessed with wind, it could be that I'm writing it on the heels of four straight days of ridiculously high spring winds. Kansas is dang-well living up to its windy reputation this spring. ♡

