

# KANSAS

*Wildlife & Parks*

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# On Point

by Mike Hayden



## *Fear of Access Unfounded*

**W**hile I've addressed this issue before, I believe it's necessary to begin a new discussion. It's about river access. In Kansas, the term river access is almost an oxymoron. We don't have access to our rivers the way citizens of many states do. Kansas has more than 10,000 miles of streams and rivers, but access to nearly all is controlled by private landowners because landowner permission is required for access.

The only exceptions are three rivers defined by state law as navigable. Those rivers are the Missouri, the Kansas, and the Arkansas. By law, the public has the right to be on these rivers, to enjoy these rivers, within the normal high-water lines. Just as access to any private land is protected, crossing onto private land beyond the highwater mark or crossing private land to get to these rivers without permission is a crime.

Currently, access to these rivers is limited to areas owned by the state or a community or by leasing adjacent private land. In some stretches of the Kansas River, there are convenient access/takeout points for floaters. In many other stretches and on other rivers, access/takeout points are few and far between. The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks has worked diligently over the past five years to develop access points. Staff have worked with local communities and willing landowners and provided funding for parking areas and boat ramps. In recent years, there has been interest from local communities to provide access to the Arkansas River. These communities are realizing how vital this type of recreation can be to tourism and quality of life for residents.

Unfortunately, there has also been a recent outcry from some landowners who

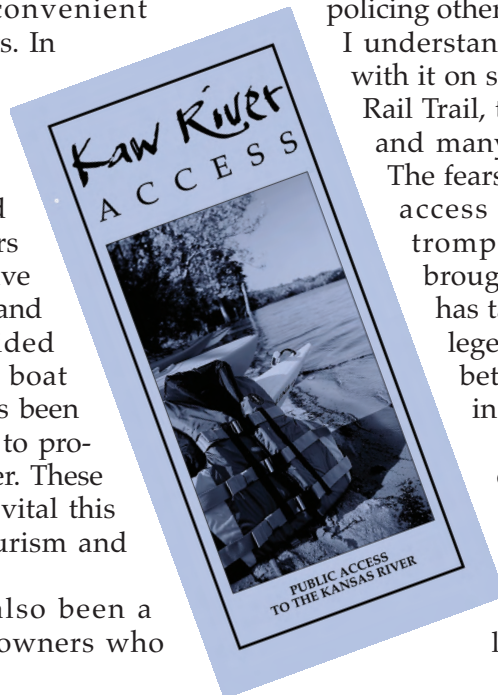
fear any developed access. They are concerned about trespass, littering, and vandalism, all of which are valid concerns. However, I believe their fears are unfounded. Let me explain.

The river beds, up to the normal high-water mark, are currently considered open to public use. A limited group of people are using some of these rivers without much oversight. They may be riding four-wheelers or motorcycles, having parties or shooting, and there are few regulations to govern their actions. I can understand concern over this largely unregulated activity. However, these are not the people who are asking for more access points to our navigable rivers. In fact, I'll wager that many of the folks currently using the rivers prefer limited access and no oversight.

The people and groups who would benefit from improved river access are people who value this resource. They are canoers, kayakers, birdwatchers, hunters, and anglers. They are willing to pay for the access and conservation of this resource, and they'll likely provide law enforcement assistance in policing others' behavior.

I understand fear of the unknown. We've dealt with it on similar issues such as the Prairie Spirit Rail Trail, the Walk-In Hunting Access program, and many of the original river access points. The fears have not come to fruition. Improved access didn't result in hordes of people tromping through these areas. Rather it brought a conscientious constituency who has taken great care to ensure access privileges are preserved. I have no doubt that better access to our rivers would result in the same type of users.

The bottom line is that enjoying our rivers is a privilege not available to many of us. Expanding these opportunities to more people would likely elevate the value of this resource and allow KDWP and adjacent landowners to take better care of it. ♡



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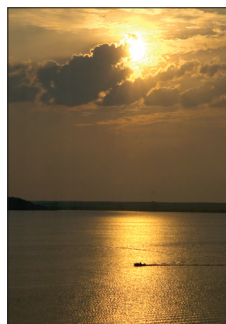
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**Front Cover:** Well-known wildlife photographer Bob Gress, of Wichita, snapped this shot of a prothonotary warbler as it bathed in a pool. See Gress's photo essay on Page 14. **Back Cover:** A lone boater cruises across Kanopolis Reservoir at sunset in July. Mike Blair took the image. See the Boater Education story on Page 29.



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## Letter . . .

Send your comments and questions to:

[mike.miller@ksoutdoors.com](mailto:mike.miller@ksoutdoors.com), or to Kansas Wildlife & Parks magazine, 512 SE 25th Ave., Pratt, KS 67124

### FLORIDA OWLS

Editor:

We have been wintering on the southwest coast of Florida in Cape Coral. We have many little burrowing owls in the community. Whenever one is discovered, immediately four stakes and tape are placed around its area. They are definitely a protected bird here.

Highway construction, condo construction, utility construction, etc. are all mandated to stop until after a certain date.

They nest very near where many go by and really don't mind being looked at from about 6 feet away. I couldn't think the Kansas and Florida owls must be closely related.

*Bobbie MacNair  
Dodge City*

Dear Mr. MacNair,

The owls you enjoy watching in Florida and the comical little owls common on Kansas prairie dog towns are the same species. They are year-round residents in Florida, whereas they nest in Kansas during the summer and winter in Texas or Mexico. Thanks for your letter. I did not know that what I considered a western prairie bird also resided in sunny Florida.

*-Miller*

**Editors note:** In the May/June 2009 issue of Kansas Wildlife & Parks magazine, a cutline under a photo in the "Drum Major" story by Marc Murrell mistakenly referred to the river below Marion Reservoir as the Neosho. Of course, it's the Cottonwood River. The Cottonwood River joins the Neosho east of Emporia and perhaps that is where my confusion stems from. The error is mine, not the author's.

*-Miller*



# HUNTING with Wayne Doyle HERITAGE

## Who's Safe?

There is a tendency to assume that most firearm-hunting-related incidents are caused by young hunters. Based on that assumption, many argue that the Kansas Hunter Education Course should be required only for those under 16; that adult

hunters are more experienced, therefore safer. However, even a brief look at the hunting

incident data refutes that argument.

Over the years, statistics show that hunters under 16 are rarely the cause of an incident. And young hunters who are under the direct supervision of an adult are never the cause.

So who causes incidents? Using the data from 2008 we find that only one shooter was under 16, and that one was a self-inflicted incident. The average age of shooters in hunting incidents was 39.2 years. The oldest shooter was 68. All three shooters involved in fatal hunting incidents were adults (31, 54, 68). Six of the seven self-inflicted incidents involved shooters over 21. All seven shooters in the swinging on game incidents (normally the most common incident in Kansas) were adults.

All hunting incidents are preventable. Most happen because the shooters become complacent about their gun handling skills. "This will never happen to me" is a common sentiment among experienced hunters. The rules

of safe gun handling get lost in the excitement of the hunt. Safeties go into the "off" position too early. Muzzle control is forgotten. Situational awareness is lost. And someone is hurt or killed – but not by a young hunter.

When I joined the tradition of the hunt, I had a mentor who used a phrase at the start of every hunt: "Load your brain before you load your gun." He meant to ALWAYS control the muzzle of your gun; ALWAYS be certain of your target and what lies beyond it; ALWAYS keep your finger off the trigger until ready to fire; ALWAYS treat every firearm as if it is loaded.

I harp about the safe rules of hunting often because my job is to make hunting safer, but the fact is hunting is already extremely safe. In 2008 there were 16 incidents in Kansas out of millions of hunter-days. Hunting is safe and getting safer thanks to the efforts of our volunteer Hunter Education Program instructors.

Be safe out there!

Keep your head in the game. Know what is going on. Always practice the rules of safe gun handling. Always! Every time! Without exception! Keep hunting safe.

## A Lesson Learned

## BIRD BRAIN with Mike Rader

I received a call in mid-May from Ed Vickers, a teacher from Harper, concerning an injured bird that a student had brought in. Vickers allows his students to raise chicks and pigeons as part of their science studies, so he was the logical teacher to bring a bird. He told me that the bird appeared to be some kind of sandpiper with a broken wing, and it had a silver band on one leg and a yellow band on the other.

It's best to leave wildlife alone. However, I was willing to make exception with this injured banded shorebird because of the possibility of retrieving important migration movement on a particular species. This report sounded interesting, so I went to the school to both identify and pick up the bird.

I learned that Koby Stolsworth, the student who found it, observed the bird that morning on the walk to school. It was dragging the injured wing. He caught it and took it to Vickers. I identified the bird as a semipalmated sandpiper, a small shorebird species that migrates through Kansas annually. It is a small brown and white bird with partial webbing between its toes. The bird was active but still bleeding from its wound. I took the opportunity to speak to the class on the bird and its biology. I was frank with the students, letting them know that this bird would probably not survive. Blood loss, shock, and the inability to give the bird what it needs to eat are common problems with keeping them alive. Sandpipers eat small invertebrates such as snails, midge and mosquito larvae, and other tiny prey, so keeping one fed and alive is impossible. The bird probably flew into a power line, and it didn't survive.

The leg bands on this bird presented a great opportunity to give the class a perspective on what it may have experienced and where it had been. Scientific researchers capture, band and release birds with the hope of getting information back from sightings of banded individuals or recovery of bands from birds that did not survive. Recovered bands can be reported to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the agency will send a certificate to the reporting individual, detailing information about the bird in question.

I have a friend who works with shorebird research in the USFWS in Denver, so I dropped a note to her about this sandpiper. Knowing that school in Harper might be out by the time the information got back by regular means, she did me a favor and got the information fast-tracked by putting out the word to bird banders. The number and color combination let us know that this particular semipalmated sandpiper was



Mike Blair photo

banded as a chick in a nest of three at a site just outside Barrow, Alaska, in June of 2008. That's right, Barrow, Alaska! That's more than 3,000 miles from Harper.

Chances are, this bird was only halfway back on its spring trip to the Arctic. Semipalmateds leave the Alaskan breeding grounds in late summer, typically flying to British Columbia, Canada, along the Pacific coast, and cut across inland from there. They use marshes throughout the central U.S to feed and replenish fat reserves, continuing to wintering grounds from the West Indies to the coasts of northern and central South America. That trip can be as far as 6,000 miles from its birthplace in Alaska. That's a tremendous journey for a bird that is approximately 5-6 inches long and weighs less than 2 ounces. Some individuals of this species that breed in the eastern Arctic are thought to make a non-stop flight of 1,900-2,500 miles from New England, across the Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean to Central America. Pretty amazing!

This bird probably flew all those miles from Alaska with other juvenile sandpipers, independent of any parental guidance. Adult sandpipers usually migrate first, with the young-of-the-year birds leaving later in the summer. The sandpiper would have survived its first winter in South America and was making its way back to the Arctic for the summer. There are numerous perils along the way: from animal and avian predators, bad weather, drought conditions, the potential of starving, and the of physical barriers such as highlines, cell phone and other towers, and wind turbines.

I am sorry this bird did not survive – I do take heart in knowing that one student, a teacher, and his class were concerned enough to contact me. This little bird provided valuable scientific information to those who study shorebirds and helped students in Harper understand shorebird migration.

## Letter . . .

### BIG FLATHEADS

Editor,

"Stream Inventory" (Page 24, May/June 2009 issue). Great article and the picture with the three big flatheads caught my eye. The picture indicates cold weather. It has been my experience that flatheads and warmer weather go together - late April to mid-November. The other four or five months, they seem to disappear. Can you tell me why and how old would you say the flatheads in the picture are?

*Eldon Hellman  
Eureka*

Dear Mr. Hellman,

Thank you for your kind comments. To answer your first question, during the colder months of the year, flathead catfish will seek out deep holding areas in rivers and reservoirs. Such areas could include bridge supports, logjams, concrete aprons below dams, and rocky rip-rap areas where pockets of deep water are formed by the current. They are more sluggish during the winter months. Flatheads spawn in June or early July and become more active in warmer temperatures.

The answer to your second question is a little more difficult. The most accurate method of aging a flathead catfish is by cutting off a pectoral spine and making a very clean cut separating the spine into two pieces. Looking at a cross section under a microscope you would see rings, much like that of a felled tree. These "annuli" can be counted to determine age of the fish. Using weight to estimate the age of a fish is not accurate. River flatheads are not usually as big as those found in lakes and reservoirs. The flathead from the pictures in the article were anywhere from 6-10 years of age. A 65-pound flathead surveyed from the Kansas River was aged at 21 years in a study performed by graduate students from Kansas State University. The quality of conditions that a fish lives in is a major factor influencing growth and health.

They are an incredible fish here in Kansas. As stream biologists, we always look forward to finding them, no matter how many times we've previously seen them.

*Mark Van Scoyoc  
stream monitoring program Coordinator*

## IT'S THE LAW

*with Kevin Jones*

### New Fishing Regs

July and August are the months when some types of fishing slow down. The flurry of the spring fishing season has passed, and the summer heat has sent a lot of fish deep. Folks have settled into the summer routine, and the eagerness of wanting to be outdoors may have dampened a bit. This is the time when handfishing and floatline fishing come to the forefront. Historically, both these methods of fishing were prohibited in Kansas; however, over the past two years, things have changed.

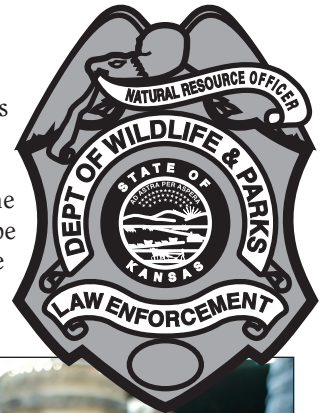
In 2007, limited handfishing opportunities became available in Kansas as a three-year pilot program. The special, limited season allows flathead catfish to be taken by hand on the flowing parts of the Kansas River, to its confluence with the Missouri River, and on the Arkansas River from the John Mack bridge on Broadway Street in Wichita to the Kansas - Oklahoma state line. Handfishing is prohibited on all other waters. A special hand fishing permit is required in addition to meeting regular fishing license requirements.

Floatline fishing, commonly called jug fishing, is beginning its three-year pilot program this summer. There are special permit requirements in addition to the regular fishing license requirement. There are eight federal reservoirs where floatline fishing will be allowed. They are Council Grove, Hillsdale, John Redmond, Kanopolis, Pomona, Toronto, Tuttle Creek and Wilson. Float-line fishing is prohibited on all other waters.

It is important to note that both handfishing and floatline fishing have other regulatory requirements that must be followed. Be sure to get a copy of the *2009 Kansas Fishing Regulations Summary*, available at license vendors and on the department's website, and learn what those requirements are.

For handfishing, this will be the third summer of the program. An evaluation of the program will be conducted after the season, based to a significant level on the required survey responses from handfishing anglers. A report of the evaluation will be given to the Commission with a recommendation of whether the program should be kept in place, changed or discontinued. The floatline fishing pilot program will run through the summer of 2011. Here again the program will be evaluated and recommendations made to the Commission concerning its future.

So, if you would like to give either method a try, read and follow the fishing regulations, get your license and permit, and enjoy.

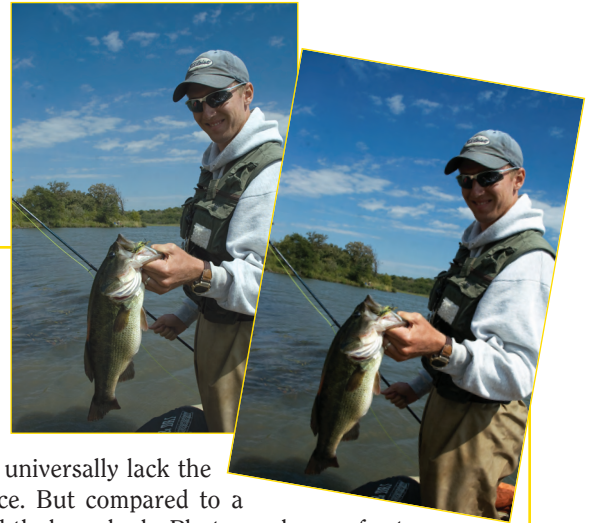


# DIGITAL IMAGE

with Mike Blair



## Contrast Your Way To Better Prints



**T**aking pictures has never been easier since digital cameras came to town. These compact wonders make photography easy and inexpensive. The latest digital single-lens-reflex cameras are arguably better than film ever was. And even the inexpensive point-and-shoot models make photography a round-the-clock hobby, given their small size and ease of operation. There's really no excuse for not carrying one in a pocket or purse.

Good as they are, I've noticed one common problem. Digital cameras almost universally lack the proper contrast in a captured image. You might not recognize it at first glance. But compared to a well-adjusted picture, a digital image straight from the camera often has a slightly hazy look. Photographers refer to such an image as "thin."

This can be fixed in two ways, depending on your camera's capabilities. High-end cameras often allow menu changes to adjust sharpness, contrast, and saturation. Consult your camera manual for instructions. Unfortunately, such changes are applied to all photographs regardless of light, atmospheric shimmer, and other variables. I leave these camera settings at their default values, preferring to "fix" the contrast problems on an individual basis in post-processing.

All modern digital cameras come with some type of processing software that can be loaded onto your computer and used to adjust a picture. Many digital photographers buy and use more advanced programs like Photoshop or Photoshop Elements for this purpose.

Whichever program you use, open the image and navigate to a contrast slider. In Photoshop, go to "Image" - "Adjustments" - "Brightness/Contrast." Move the contrast slider in the positive direction and you'll see the difference instantly on the photograph.

Don't overdo it. Normally, an increase of about 20 to 25 is about right. Too much, and you get color shifts and a surreal look to the image.

Use this trick, and you'll be impressed with the results. It will make your photography effort much better with just half a minute of work.

## HUNTING ACCIDENTS DECREASED

The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) reports that there were 16 hunting accidents in 2008, with three fatalities, two of which were not actually legal hunting incidents. This is a decrease of three accidents from the previous year and is a very small number considering that approximately 271,000 hunters spent more than 3 million days afield.

The three deaths is unusual for Kansas, where hunting fatalities are rare. The first occurred on March 24 when the shooter fired at a nongame bird roosting in a tree behind the victim. Victim leaned in to watch and was struck in the head with a .22 long rifle bullet. Alcohol was involved. The shooter was not hunter education certified and is now serving time in state prison.

The second fatality happened on Aug. 1 when a 68-year-old hunter returned to his vehicle after coyote hunting. The man was feeling dizzy from the heat and possibly had low blood sugar. With the safety apparently off, he attempted to put a trigger lock on his still-loaded rifle in the cab of his vehicle. The rifle fired, killing his wife, who was seated in the passenger seat.

The third fatality occurred when a 54-year-old hunter swung on flushing quail and fired, hitting his hunting partner. The victim (age 64) was at least partially screened by heavy weeds. The shooter and victim were long time friends and hunting partners. Again, the shooter was not hunter education certified.

"All these incidents were preventable with proper observance of the rules of safe gun handling and common sense," said Wayne Doyle, KDWP statewide hunter education coordinator.

—KDWP News

## COLORADO BOAT INSPECTIONS

Kansas boaters traveling to Colorado should anticipate being inspected this year as new regulations designed to prevent the spread of zebra and quagga mussels take effect for the 2009 boating season, the Colorado Division of Wildlife (DOW) reports. All nonresident boats and Colorado boats that go out-of-state and return to Colorado must pass a state-certified inspection for ANS prior to launching in any Colorado lake, reservoir, or waterway. In addition, boats that have launched on any of the Colorado lakes or reservoirs where mussels have been detected are required to pass an inspection before launching at a new location. Hand-launched crafts — including kayaks, rafts, canoes, and belly boats — are exempt.

The Colorado regulations fall in line with regulations issued to Kansas boaters by KDWP.

—KDWP News

## Game Wardens Gather

The annual 5-state Game Wardens Association meeting was hosted by Kansas and held in the Coldwater area on May 26, 27 and 28. Ninety officers registered from the five member states (Colorado, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas and Kansas), along with four federal officers from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. In addition, several retirees continued their 5-State attendance. One retiree of note was Pat Weldon from Oklahoma, who is 82 years old and the founder of the 5-State Association. Early in his career, Weldon noticed that poachers didn't care about state lines. He thought game wardens should be able pass along information that would help catch and prosecute bad guys. With help from others, his vision has been realized. Weldon has attended every 5-State meeting and is easy to spot because there is always a crowd of officers hovering around him, trying to learn from him.

In skills competitions, members vied to be the best in several different challenges. B.J. Thurman from Kansas took home the individual golfer award while Gary Barnes from Texas and Matt Stucker from Kansas got together to take the team event. Mokie McCrary from Texas won the muzzleloader competition. Clay Moyers from New Mexico took the shotgun award. In the traditional archery competition, Tracy Galvin from Kansas took the top prize while Mark Murray from Oklahoma won in the compound class. The rifle was won by Kelly Dobbs of New Mexico. The pistol competition was won by Cory Chick of Colorado. The all around award was won by James Edwards Jr. from Oklahoma. Congratulations to all those that won and all those who competed.

After the competitions, the group reviewed cases worked between states, emphasizing using available technology to help with manpower shortages. A key item discussed was the internet camera and how it can be used.

Another program discussed was a youth hunt conducted by Texas and Kansas officers. With the help of the Lakin chapter of Pheasants Forever and the 5-State Game Wardens Association, the Boys Ranch in Texas is now bringing some of their kids up to the Lakin area to hunt pheasants. The day starts with retired Kansas game warden Jim Kellenberger teaching practical wingshooting skills. They are then taken out to the field to hunt released pheasants.

The meeting continued with representatives from each state giving an overview of their departments and divisions outlining any major cases, changes, promotions or problems. Several lively discussions ensued with many thoughts and ideas exchanged. New state representatives were picked, and the meeting was adjourned with anticipation of the next meeting in Texas in 2010.

—Matt Stucker

# FISH SQUEEZER

with Tommie Berger

## Find Fish Beating the Summer Heat

July and August are our hot months, but the summer fishin season is in full swing. Fisheries biologists are busy conducting fishing clinics, presenting summer library programs, as well as doing fisheries work such as building fish habitat, seining shorelines, updating fishing reports, and supervising creel surveys.

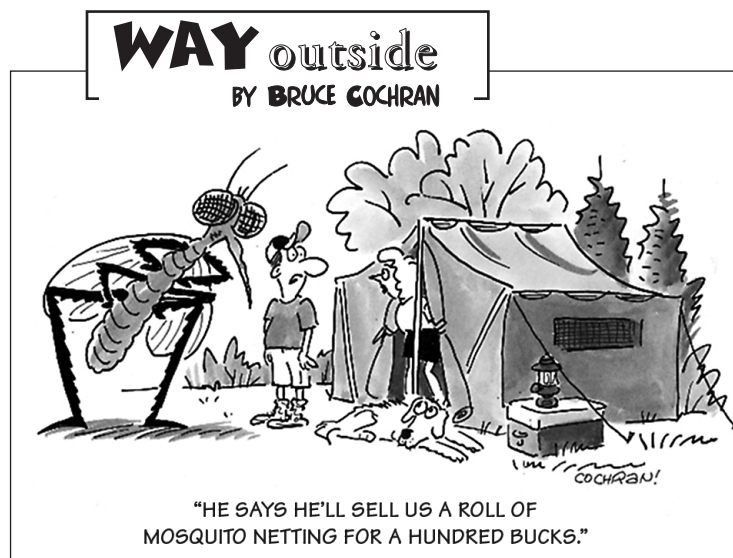
We get calls in the summer about fishing and what fish do when the weather gets hot. Most Kansas fish are warm-water species, and they have adapted and evolved to tolerate high water temperatures. They make seek cooler water, or they may only be active during the night, but they continue to eat and can be caught if anglers adapt.

Fishing is often more productive in the early mornings and late evenings. The water temperature is the lowest at dawn in the summer months. Cloudy days are generally cooler than sunny days and may provide for better fishing. Some anglers prefer to fish at night, either from shore with a lantern or from a boat with floating lights. Lights often attract bugs, which attract smaller fish, which can attract bigger fish, which usually attract anglers.

Another great way to beat the summer heat is getting in the water with the fish. Float tubes are a great way stay cool while fishing. My favorite wet fishing method, though, is wade-fishing streams, using sponge bait for channel catfish. I wade fish during the day and, yes, the catfish bite just as well then as they do at night. If I get hot, I just find deeper water or take a dip.

My son Fritz and I even like to run banklines while wading the stream or river. The heck with a boat – shorts and old tennis shoes work just fine as long as you can get to the water through the stinging nettles (burning weeds we call them) and the poison ivy. Long pants will get you through the nasty stuff, but they come off easy enough when its time to get in the water. A 20-pound flathead on a bankline is pretty fun when you meet him at eye level with the dip net in hand.

My 4-H Sportfishing kids have been bugging me for a month now to take them on our annual overnight banklining expedition – their favorite fishing session of the year. Find a way to get out and fish even though it is hot, and take those kids fishing!





## TJ's Memorial Youth Deer Hunt



Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, in cooperation with the Hunting Heritage Group, hosted its 2nd Annual Youth Deer Hunt on September 13 and 14, 2008, in memory of TJ Hellerud. TJ was an avid hunter who spent many hours in a tree stand before he was killed in a car accident at the age of 16. Hunting was more than just a hobby for TJ; it taught him the balance in nature. Cynthia Maier, TJ's mother, said hunting taught TJ "the struggle for survival, the reality of death and the appreciation of life."

Ten youth between the ages of 10 and 16 attended 2008's event, along with a special guest from Missouri: Colby Littlefoot, a young man who had a dream of harvesting a big Kansas buck. Colby is suffering from Duchenne's muscular dystrophy and is confined to a wheelchair. He was accompanied by his mother and grandfather on the hunt. He was a very deserving young man who has out lived most individuals that have been diagnosed with this disease. It was our goal to give him a hunt of a lifetime.

The 10 hunters harvested eight does. Colby harvested a trophy mule deer buck. Participants not only hunted but were mentored on a variety of other subjects, such as deer habitat and management, hunting strategies, gun handling, marksmanship, and shot placement. Hunters sighted in their rifles at the range before they and their guardian or parent joined their guides in a ground blind. Participants, parents, family friends, and volunteers were also treated to a buffalo burger lunch that was served in the comforts of the Cedar Bluff Lodge. Cedar Bluff Lodge also provided lodging for our special guest while Best Western of WaKeeney generously provided rooms for the participants who traveled from outside the surrounding area.

The event was a huge success thanks to the generous sponsors, knowledgeable volunteers, gracious landowners, enthusiastic kids, and the parents/guardians who brought the kids. Special hunts like this one are part of the Kansas hunter recruitment and retention program called "PASS IT ON." This program addresses the need to recruit new hunters and retain existing hunters in order to ensure the future of hunting in Kansas.

— Jason Hawman, NRO, Ellis

On The Web  
with Mark Shoup



Lions Online

### Lions Online

Everyone is fascinated with mountain lions, and unconfirmed reports of Kansas lion sightings are common. But man's encounters with mountain lions are very real and, as with all predators, confrontations occur wherever we occupy the same habitat. Close encounters are sometimes fatal and always unpleasant. Nonetheless, people seem fascinated with this subject.

Linda Lewis maintains and updates some expanded accounts from *Mountain Lion Attacks On People in the U.S. and Canada* by Thomas Jay Chester, supported by other sources, at her website, <http://users.frii.com/mytmyk/lions/attacks.htm>. These cover 100 years of accounts and contain a variety of outcomes. Consider the outcomes of these two nonfatal encounters.

#### Sept. 23, 1916

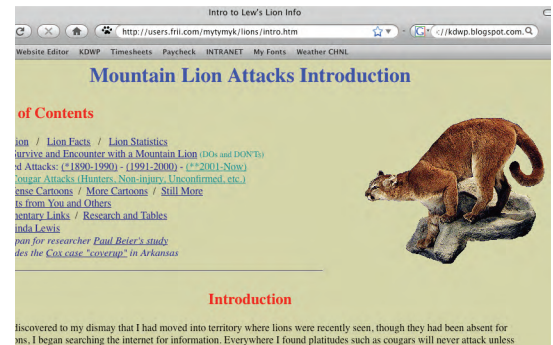
Doreen Ashburnham, 11, and Tony Farrer, 8, were walking the trail to Bear Lake near the town of Cowichan Lake in British Columbia looking for their horses. The two youngsters were carrying bridles with big snaffle bits when they saw a cougar lying on the trail facing them. Doreen must have turned, as the lion jumped on her back knocking her to the ground, gnawing and clawing her back and hip. Tony came to the rescue, hitting the lion repeatedly with his bridle. The lion backed off Doreen and both children tried to drive the lion away with their bridles. But the lion sprang forward again, "catching Tony by his forehead with its front paw, rip-

ping his scalp, then his shoulders, his hips, his legs into ribbons of flesh." Afraid of hitting Tony with her bridle Doreen says, "So I jumped on his back and I reached around and put my arm in his mouth – you can see where I got nicely chewed up in a few thousand places – and I managed to scratch a little bit his eyes, and it finally let go."

A 2.5-year-old lion with cataracts was found and shot. As Doreen recovered from blood poisoning and Tony from the multiple lacerations all over his body, [the kids received] a congratulatory letter sent by former American President Teddy Roosevelt.

#### July 29, 1990

Nine-year-old Scott O'Hare, of Dayton, Wyoming, was mauled in Glacier National Park, Montana, 50 miles northeast of Kalispell at about noon by a young female cat, who authorities said made an unprovoked attack. Park rangers tracked and killed the animal less than 100 yards from where the incident happened. The boy was flown to the hospital where he underwent surgery for deep cuts and puncture wounds in his head, face, neck, and right arm. His parents filed a claim for \$1 million against the National Park Service the following year.





## Froggin' Time



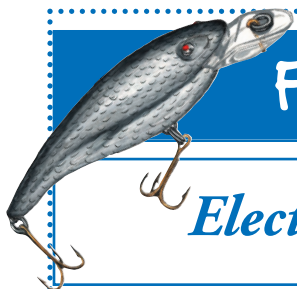
The bass croaking of bullfrogs reminds us that summer has arrived, and fun waits in the marsh. Armed with a flashlight and a mesh bag and stylin' in a pair of cutoff jeans, watershoes, and bug repellent, it's to the pond to collect some bullfrogs for dinner. Frogs can be caught by dip net, hand, gig, hook and line, bow and arrow or crossbow. A line must attach bow to arrow, and the arrow must have a barbed head.

If you're lucky enough to catch your limit of eight frogs, you've got work to do. Cleaning bullfrogs can be tricky at first, but after a few it gets easier. Start by dispatching the frog. Then cut the skin in front of the legs around the body and pull the skin off the legs using a pair of pliers. It should come off in one piece.

Being careful not to break the leg bones, remove the legs by cutting the meat and joint away near the tailbone. Next, place the joint, where the leg bone meets the foot, over a knife. Fold the foot over and cut it off. This can all be done without breaking any bones. While rinsing, remove the large, yellow tendon and other veins, found where the leg attached to the body. The legs can then be refrigerated in salt water.

Frog legs are tasty rolled in seasoned flour and fried. They are also great baked or grilled. I like to spray a butter-flavored nonstick spray on them, sprinkle on some blackening seasoning and place on the grill. You can also fillet the meat off the bone, place on a skewer, season and grill. Go to your spice rack and experiment.

Use your favorites. Frog leg meat has a mild flavor, so don't over season or use lots of different spices. Frog legs will surely bring a unique addition to a 4th of July party.



## FISHIN' with Mike Miller

### Electric Windows

Mid-summer in Kansas can be a tough time for bass anglers. Daytime temperatures of more than 100 degrees are more common than not, and it can be as difficult to motivate ourselves to fish as it is to motivate the fish to bite. However, there are what I call "electric windows," and they aren't an accessory on a new car.

There are windows in the summer that do provide great fishing. The only problem is that these windows are usually short-lived. Right before sunrise to an hour after sunrise is a great time to be on the water. If you've been there, you know what I mean when I say that there can be electricity in the air at this time of day. The water is alive and fish and other animals are

feeding in the brief, pale dawn light. Fish will be found shallow and aggressive.

Just before sunset to dark can also be an "electric window." Again, fish will move shallow and feed aggressively. For bass, use large, noisy topwater baits, flashy spinnerbaits or jig and pig combos. A big, soft-plastic swimbait retrieved just under the surface will likely elicit violent strikes. Fish want to make the most of their feeding window, and a big bite is more efficient.

The other summertime "window" is just before an approaching thunderstorm. We've all felt it - the warm wind reluctantly subsides and the air begins to cool. If you're lucky enough to be at a farm pond, you'll likely catch a mess of fish. It may only last 30 minutes, but it will be an exciting half-hour. My preference for this limited window is a noisy topwater plug - my trusty black Jitterbug - especially if the wind dies completely, but other baits will work. I just like the excitement of a topwater strike.

Don't let the heat get you down this summer. Watch for the "electric windows," and catch some fish.



# PROFILE:

with Mark Shoup

## Keith Sexson Assistant Secretary, Operations



Anyone who knows Keith Sexson (KDWP's assistant secretary in charge of Operations) understands one essential characteristic of the man who has made his long KDWP career such a success – very little upsets him. While Sexson is a hard-working man dedicated to making this agency the best of its kind in the nation, this tranquil quality has kept him smiling and affable through 40 years of service.

The man charged with seeing that almost 400 employees maintain and grow a first-class natural resource agency said, "If there is nothing you take personally in this business, then you can do anything." "Anything" means meeting the needs of hundreds of thousands of hunters, anglers, boaters, and parks users while helping all those employees want to do their jobs well – a symbiosis that is no mean feat.

Sexson grew up in the small town of Weskan near the Colorado border, where his father was a rural mail carrier, and he worked summers on his uncle's farm. He developed strong bonds with local kids whose primary forms of entertainment were hunting, fishing, and shooting. As a young boy, he subscribed to the Outdoor Life Book Club, where he was "tutored" by the likes of Jack O'Connor. In 1967, he received a bachelor of science degree in zoology and had almost completed a master's degree in 1969 when he was offered a job with what was then the Kansas Forestry, Fish, and Game Commission.

Sexson's first post was in Garnett, where he served as the agency's quail project leader. Six months later, the job was moved to Burlington, with added duties of overseeing upland bird and small game projects. In 1975, the "research and survey" office was moved to its current location in Emporia. Sexson supervised population and habitat surveys, trap and transplant programs, electronic monitoring, and satellite habitat imagery for the species he helped manage. The job would continue evolving.

In 1978, Sexson's job narrowed its focus to big game – at that time, turkey, antelope, and deer. In 1982, his focus became strictly deer, but from 1990 to 1994, he supervised both deer and furbearer projects. However, 1994 marked a big change in Sexson's career when he moved to the Pratt Operations Office, taking over the position of Wildlife Section chief.

Sexson explained why he made the move: "As I watched the agency grow and change, I realized that if I wanted to be a part of that and have some influence, I had to move to where the larger decisions are made. I had a lot of contact with our field people as well as the secretary, and I felt that I had something to contribute." That contribution would become even more demanding in 2000, when Sexson was appointed to his current job, the second highest in the agency.

"I never had my sights set on the assistant secretary job, but when it was offered, it just felt right," he explains. "I was confident that I could take a broad overview and maintain and enhance the programs we had in place, as well as develop new ones. But my confidence came from the fact that we have great leaders and support staff in this agency. We had great challenges, especially on the park side, but that didn't bother me. I was positive we could deal with them because we have such good people from top to bottom. It's them that make the job easy. Sure, this job has its challenges, but with 40 years of experience with one agency, I feel a responsibility to make it the best it can be. We are as strong as agency as any of its kind in the country, and we often operate on a fraction of the monetary resources of other states."

When asked about his most rewarding experience in 40 years with KDWP, his answer is surprising – people. The staff who work for the natural resources of Kansas, and whom he must guide. "A few years ago, we implemented an employee classification study. We made it a priority to make sure that our employees were classified according to the duties they were expected to deliver. A successful agency depends on its employees, and we wanted to make sure they were duly classified and compensated."

There is a trickle-down effect to this kind of leadership: employees who know they are appreciated are going to work harder and do a better job of serving their constituents – the hunters, anglers, boaters, and park users of Kansas. Still, there are challenges ahead.

"We need to find a consistent financial base to continue our services, particularly on the parks side," Sexson explains. "It's true for fisheries and wildlife, too, but we need something that will relieve uncertainties about some constituent programs."

Sexson's job is high pressure despite his low-key personality. Would he have done something else if given the chance to start over?

"I thought about computers at one time," he answers, "but looking back, I wouldn't trade this profession for anything. You're not going to get rich, but there haven't been many days when I went home from work and wasn't ready in the morning to get right back into it. Not many people can say that."

# HUNTING SPOTS

with Marc Murrell

## Preparation Begins Now

When July and August roll around, there aren't many options for those that like to hunt or trap. Most seasons are several months away and it's difficult to fathom crisp fall days chasing your favorite game when it's 105 degrees in the shade. But now is the perfect time to prepare. And you'll be well served by the time spent when all you have to do is throw your gear in the truck and head to the woods when the season opens. Here are a few areas to consider this summer:

### ARCHERY GEAR

If a new bow was under your Christmas tree, get it ready now. Adding accessories and tuning a bow takes time. If you're not comfortable with the process, a local pro shop is a good place to get expert advice. It doesn't hurt to practice now, either. Rather than shooting dozens of arrows during long practice sessions, shoot a few each session, concentrating on proper form and fundamentals.

### HUNTING SPOTS

It's getting harder to find and keep good hunting spots, particularly for deer hunting. If you don't have a spot lined up, you can take a few summer road trips, making contact with landowners before fall harvest finds them busy from dawn to dark. Computer research can help in the form of locating maps of prospective areas. Google Maps, Map Quest and MSN Maps are all good resources for aerial photography.

### CONDITIONING

It's easy to become sedentary during the off-season, but if you plan on traipsing through the CRP fields or heading west for bigger game, you should plan regular cardio workouts. It makes good health sense, and you'll welcome the fitness this fall, hunting harder and enjoying your time more.

It's also important to exercise your four-legged companions. Bird dogs need regular conditioning to keep them in good shape, particularly for warm, early-season hunts. If you've got a retriever, obedience and other training should be on-going, so they're sharp come duck season. Keep training sessions short and always end them on a good note.

### TRAPPING PREP

Trappers often use summer months to dye, dip or wax traps. It's a good time to make new cables, anchors and other supplies needed for water or land trapping. And many trappers use this time to make their baits or lures they plan to use this fall for various species of furbearers. A fishing trip for carp or drum at this time of year will yield plenty of bait for raccoons. Either ground or chunked, these fish provide an ideal attractant for various kinds of sets, and the results can be preserved or simply frozen.

### SHOOTING

Some hunters get their shotgun out for the first time on opening morning. However, a little practice will help even the best wingshooters, and it's a great summer activity. There are local gun clubs with set times for the general public to shoot, as well as organized leagues for trap, skeet and sporting clays. It's a fun way to spend an evening, and the reward for your efforts will be seen when you fold that first rooster of the season with one shot.



# LOOK BACK

with Bob Mathews

## Billisms

Bill calls me every year, in early summer, for the latest news on pheasant and quail populations in Kansas. An experienced bird hunter, Bill always does his homework on hunting prospects several months before he and his longtime hunting partners make the trek to Kansas from their homes in the eastern U. S.

I've never met Bill, but we've had enough telephone conversations that I consider him an old friend. Most of our discussion focuses on the details of bird hunting Kansas. Where are the best prospects this year? What has changed about bird season regulations? What kind of cover conditions should he expect? But he's always curious about my life, my kids, my plans, my interests. And, since that feeling is mutual, we've gotten to know each other fairly well.

It's no surprise that Bill and his hunting partners, all retirees now, have developed many friendships among Kansans. With his passion for

hunting and his easygoing style, he's rich in friends. Over the years, he and his group have built relationships with numerous landowners who, I'm certain, are glad to host Bill and his buddies each fall.

"What I like most about Kansas is the people I meet, so I'm coming back there as long as I'm able . . . no matter what the bird hunting is going to be like." That's a 'Billism' I've come to expect every year.

In my 31 years with the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, I've gained a deep respect for my past and present co-workers and their dedication to the conservation cause. I'm retiring this summer and will miss their wisdom and energy and dedication.

I've enjoyed serving the hunters, anglers, campers, and boaters I've encountered in my career with KDWP. We've had our occasional disagreements, but I've always appreciated their passion for their outdoors. That's what Bill personifies. I'll miss him as much as anyone.

## BEE NEST SURVEY



Bumble bees are important pollinators of agricultural crops and wild plants, but little is known about their natural history in North America. University of Georgia doctoral student Athena Anderson is trying to fill this knowledge gap by conducting a bumble bee survey asking people throughout the U.S. to provide information on these interesting creatures. For a link to participate and fill out the survey, go online to the Wichita Great Plains Nature Center's Honeybee web page or email [nest-survey@yahoo.com](mailto:nest-survey@yahoo.com).

—KDWP News

## Youth Waterfowl Hunt

The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks and the Hunting Heritage Group Inc. (HHG), will host a youth waterfowl hunt in October 2009 during the youth waterfowl season. The event will be conducted around Cedar Bluff Wildlife Area on both public and private land. Each hunting group will be accompanied by a guide. Besides hunting, participants will participate in a variety of classes to further understand the sport of waterfowl hunting.

Fifteen hunters will be selected to participate in the hunt. Youth participants in this hunt must be at least 10 and no older than 15. In addition, candidates for the hunt must complete and submit an application form by September 12th. Application forms may be obtained at [www.kdwp.state.ks.us](http://www.kdwp.state.ks.us) or by contacting natural resource officer II Jason Hawman at (785) 743-2942. There is no charge for the hunt.

Special hunts like this one are part of the Kansas hunter recruitment and retention program called "PASS IT ON." This program addresses the need to recruit new hunters and retain existing hunters in order to ensure the future of hunting.

—KDWP News

**PARK  
VIEW**



with Kathy Pritchett

## Geocache Winners

Ken and Rosie DeWitt of Salina located all the sites in KDWP's geocache contest within a two-week period. The DeWitts began on May 1, the opening day of the contest, finding caches at two sites that day, and four the next. By May 13, they had located all 31 caches. They were the first to turn in their form last year, too, though last year, it took them a month to finish.

"This year, since we were both retired, it took less time," said Ken.

"The park rangers are outstanding at helping people out," Ken continued. "If anybody has any problems finding the sites, they should just ask." Rosie echoed his advice, adding, "We drove over 6,300 miles."

Rosie said they did encounter some snags because of high water

and coordinate formats but added, it's a fun activity that can be done quickly. Next year's goal, at least for Ken, is to find all caches in two days.



The best science can only be that which is immune from the inherent biases of politics, religion, economics, and personal ambitions. I've been guilty of ignoring good science based on personal preference. Case in point is purple martin biology. Do purple martins eat mosquitoes? Hardly any! Yet, I'd guess 95 percent of humans believe otherwise. So why is this misinformation so prevalent? False claims put out for many years by a well-known martin advocacy organization and businesses which make money selling martin houses perpetuated the myth. Well-founded food habit research proves that purple martins eat a variety of flying insects but virtually no mosquitoes. They don't eat mosquitoes because they feed during daylight hours when mosquitoes generally are not out. They typically feed high off the ground, away from the prevalent mos-



quito swarms. Anecdotal, unsupported speculation perpetuates the other view. Making up science is not necessary for promoting this attractive bird. It exhibits ample positive traits for its own self-promotion. They are human friendly, fun to watch, and certainly eat a lot of insects, particularly flies and flying beetles. For years, I thought it best to let folks continue to think that martins annihilate mosquitoes. After all, birds should enjoy all the positive press they can get right? Well, sure. But, not at the expense of facts and sound science. Good science has for too long been held hostage by

forces that don't like answers yielded by sound science. Its time to come clean and face facts – whether related to purple martins or any number of other pressing issues of the day.

### RECORD RAINBOW

It wasn't a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, but the rainbow on the end of Ken Phelps' line was golden. The Gardner man was fishing with PowerBait in Shawnee Mission Park Lake on March 3 when he hooked a new state record rainbow trout.

After weighing, confirmation by district fisheries biologist Richard Sanders, and a 30-day waiting period, Phelps' 9.33-pound rainbow trout was officially recognized as the new state record. It was a mere .02 pounds more than the old record of 9.31 pounds, caught by Raymond Deghand of Topeka in 1982. Phelps' fish was 25 ½ inches long and had a 17-inch girth.

For more information on Kansas state record fish and KDWP's Master Angler Program, pick up a copy of the *2009 Kansas Fishing Regulations Summary*, available wherever licenses are sold, or visit the KDWP website, [www.kdwp.state.ks.us](http://www.kdwp.state.ks.us).

—KDWP News

### 3rd Annual TJ's Memorial Youth Deer Hunt

Thanks to the success of last year's TJ's Memorial Youth Deer Hunt, Hunting Heritage Group, Inc. and the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) will host the third annual youth deer hunt during the special youth and disabled hunting season this fall. This year the hunt will be on the September 12 and 13. Hunters will hunt from a blind with an experienced guide/mentor on private land that neighbors the Cedar Bluff Wildlife Area in Trego County. A couple of the youth participants will have the opportunity to hunt in specially designated areas on the Cedar Bluff Wildlife Area.

The first morning will consist of classroom instruction along with a trip to the range to sight in rifles. After lunch, guides will accompany youth hunters and their parents/guardians to their designated blinds. All hunters will return to the meeting area that evening. If youth are unsuccessful that evening, they will be invited to hunt the following day.

Ten hunters will be selected to participate in the hunt. Youth participants in this hunt must be at least 10 and no older than 16. In addition, candidates for the hunt must complete and submit an application form by August 12. Application forms may be obtained at [www.kdwp.state.ks.us](http://www.kdwp.state.ks.us) or by contacting natural resource officer II Jason Hawman at (785) 743-2942. There is no charge for the hunt.

In addition to the 10 youth participants, there will also be two special guest hunters. One is a young man from Oklahoma who has leukemia and the other a young man from Kentucky who has cancer on his spinal cord. Both hunters were referred by the Buckmaster's Life Hunts program that is designed to grant hunting wishes for critically ill and disabled youngsters.

Special hunts like this one are part of the Kansas hunter recruitment and retention program called "PASS IT ON." This program addresses the need to recruit new hunters and retain existing hunters in order to ensure the future of hunting in Kansas.

—KDWP News

# 2009 Sportsmen's Calendar

## **TURKEY**

### **FALL TURKEY:**

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

## **BIG GAME**

### **DEER:**

- Youth/Disabled: Sept. 12-20
- Muzzleloader: Sept. 21-Oct. 4
- Archery: Sept. 12-Dec. 31
- Firearms: Dec. 2-13
- Extended antlerless: Jan. 1-10, 2010

### **ANTELOPE**

- Archery: Sept. 19-27 and Oct. 10-31
- Muzzleloader: Sept. 28-Oct. 5
- Firearms: Oct. 2-5

### **ELK (residents only)**

#### **Outside Fort Riley:**

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

#### **On Fort Riley:**

- Muzzleloader and Archery: Sept. 1-Oct. 4
- Firearm: Oct. 1 - Dec. 31, 2009 (any elk)
- Firearm First Segment: Oct. 1 - Oct. 31
- Firearm Second Segment: Nov. 1 - Nov. 30
- Firearm Third Segment: Dec. 1 - Dec. 31

## **FURBEARERS HUNTING & TRAPPING**

- **Nov. 18-Feb. 15, 2010**  
Badger, bobcat, mink, muskrat, opossum, raccoon, swift fox, red fox, gray fox, striped skunk, and weasel
- **Beaver trapping: Nov. 18-March 31, 2010**

## **MIGRATORY BIRDS**

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

### **DOVE (Mourning, white-winged, Eurasian collared, and ringed turtle doves)**

- Season: Sept. 1 - Oct. 31 and Nov. 7-15, 2009

### **EXOTIC DOVE**

- Nov. 20-Feb. 28, 2009

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

- Sept. 1 - Nov. 9, 2009

### **SNIPE**

- Sept. 1 - Dec. 16, 2009

### **SANDHILL CRANE**

- Nov. 11-Jan. 7, 2010

## **UPLAND GAME BIRDS**

### **PHEASANT AND QUAIL**

- Nov. 14-Jan. 31, 2010

### **PRAIRIE CHICKEN**

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

## **SMALL GAME**

### **SQUIRREL**

- Season: June 1 - Feb. 28, 2010

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

- Season: All year

### **CROW**

- Nov. 10 - March 10, 2010

## **FISHING**

### **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.



We look at birds everyday. We watch them fly through the yard, flit across the road, flush into a thicket, or sit on a fence. We look at and hear them and think we know them. They are always around us, yet many of us never *look* closely enough to really see them and bath time may provide enlightening looks. While bathing, birds show us unique behaviors, odd shapes, brilliant colors, and new attitudes.



# Splish Splash, Was Taking A Bath

text and photos by Bob Gress  
Manager, Great Plains Nature Center, Wichita



Painted  
banting



# Baltimore Oriole

Somehow, these familiar birds now look different. Getting a good view of a bathing bird is difficult. Birds are wary when they bathe. They may be most vulnerable to predators when they let their guard down and flutter wildly in an open pool. With the assistance of high-speed flash, a dripping hose, and a photo blind, these photos give us the opportunity to see birds in a unique way.





indigo  
bunting



## gray catbird

Wild birds may bathe in several ways. Pheasants, quail, turkeys, prairie chickens and even house sparrows frequently take dust baths. They form small depressions in fine dust and roll, fluff and shuffle dust throughout their feathers. When they rise and shake out the dust, it takes with it oils, moisture and dandruff that have accumulated in the plumage.

Birds will also sunbathe. Cormorants, orioles, cardinals and thrashers will perch at odd angles, contort themselves and open their feathers to allow the sun to reach the skin on their backs, necks and throats. Swallows may lie for several minutes on concrete so hot it is difficult to touch with bare hands.

yellow warbler





## scarlet tanager

Rain bathing is common to many birds. They get wet, so why not take advantage of the opportunity? Some birds are even observed moving onto open branches during gentle summer rains to take advantage of a light shower.

After the rain is over, birds move out to open pools, wet leaves, or soaked grass lawns to flutter about and bath. Some birds even take advantage of heavy dew or fog for a bath.

Preening follows bath time and feathers are carefully drawn through their bills one at a time to realign the tiny barbs that hold the feather vanes together. Preening also removes more of the oils, dirt and parasites. No matter how they bathe, birds are meticulous at keeping their feathers in good condition and in working order. Their lives depend on it!

## *northern cardinal*







# Meade State Park: Prairie Oasis

text and photos by J. Mark Shoup  
*associate editor, Pratt*

*Meade State Park and Fishing Lake is truly an oasis in an arid part of Kansas. The water, trees and park facilities provide a welcome and popular get-away for folks in southwestern Kansas.*

On a blistering hot August day in 1874, Cheyenne Chief Medicine Water and 25 Cheyenne warriors were roaming the sandsage prairie in southwest Kansas. They had slipped away from a newly-established reservation in what is now Oklahoma and were out for revenge on the white men who had driven them from their hunting grounds. A survey crew comprised of Capt. O.F. Short and five other men were the unwitting targets of the Indians' anger.

Hiding in a ravine, Medicine Water and his warriors launched an ambush that led to a running 3-mile battle and ended with the entire crew dead near a lone cottonwood tree. This relatively minor skirmish in the ongoing High Plains Indian wars came to be known as the Lone Tree Massacre. Remarkably, the world that

Medicine Water knew would change so rapidly that only 50 years later, a nearby area was about to become Meade State Park.

*Hiding in a ravine, Medicine Water and his warriors launched an ambush that led to a running 3-mile battle and ended with the entire crew dead near a lone cottonwood tree. This relatively minor skirmish in the ongoing High Plains Indian wars came to be known as the Lone Tree Massacre.*

The rapid transformation of the arid High Plains from Wild West to settled frontier was driven by two basic human needs — land and water. Land was plentiful in these parts, and the vast Ogallala Aquifer provided ample underground well water for budding

communities such as Meade, about 12 miles north of the Lone Tree site. Areas for recreational facilities such as a state park and associated lake, however, were rare because of the lack of rainfall. Stump Springs and other artesian springs about two miles west of Lone Tree offered the necessary ingredient for a recreational facility unlike any other in southwest Kansas.

In 1927, the Kansas Forestry, Fish, and Game Commission purchased 920 acres of this spring-rich area — known as the Turkey Track Ranch — from owner A. J. Austin. A dam was soon in place, and by 1929, the 100-acre “Lake Larabee” — named for commissioner Lee Larabee, who was instrumental in purchase of the property — was full and open to the public, complete with surrounding state park.



Meade State Park manager, Mark Goldsberry was born and raised in Meade County. He's managed the park for nearly 30 years, but he's never lost his sense of wonder and appreciation of this truly unique natural area.



With the help of the Friends of Meade State Park, this visitor's center opened in 2007. The ADA-accessible facility is available for programs, meetings and family gatherings

Because of the springs feeding the lake, it remained full year-round despite the area's lack of rain. Or it did for another 50 years or so.

During this time, the park surrounding the lake evolved dramatically. The 1874 Indian uprising was given its name for the obvious reason that trees are rarities on the sandsage prairie. This began to change on Feb. 1, 1938, with the arrival of the first Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp. Among other work, tree planting began, and although the first camp didn't stay a full year, the second — a "colored" CCC camp — arrived on Feb. 2, 1939, and stayed until April of 1942. These men worked on the dam, built the adobe fish hatchery that remains today, and planted trees around the lake and throughout the park's campgrounds. It is they, in large part, who are responsible for the beautiful oasis that Meade State Park is today. When they left in 1942 — many to fight in WW II — they left a legacy. A legacy of trees.

*A little-known fact is that shortly after the second CCC camp departed, nine Japanese Americans were interned at Meade's old CCC barracks on April 22, 1942. Here they would remain until the war's end, in servitude under President Roosevelt's "Executive Order 9066," which forced U.S. citizens of Japanese ancestry to be relocated from the West Coast and their property seized.*

A little-known fact is that shortly after the second CCC camp departed, nine Japanese Americans were interned at Meade's old CCC barracks on April 22, 1942. Here they would remain until the war's end, in servitude under President Roosevelt's "Executive Order 9066," which forced U.S. citizens of Japanese ancestry to be relocated from the West Coast and their property seized. While these people continued working on and improving the property, locals apparently were not happy about the policy. The local newspaper called them "loyal, patriotic American citizens" and noted that they were "second- and third-generation Americans," some with relatives in the U.S. armed services, who were "well-educated victims of circumstances."

Over the years, Meade would obtain additional acreage, including a 400-acre wildlife area and 200 acres for what is now Meade State Fish Hatchery. This, combined with 443 acres of state park and, today, an 80-acre lake, make a complex that is more than just a place to go camping.

"You can't separate these



The old barracks housed Civilian Conservation Corps camps in the late 1930s and early 1940s. During World War II, nine Japanese Americans interned in servitude here.

# Meade State Park Historical Timeline

## 1900s

- 1925 – On March 27, plans made to purchase 920 acres of the Turkey Track Ranch from Mr. A. J. Austin.
- 1926 – Plans drawn up for dam on Lake Larabee.
- 1927 – On March 24, the Kansas Forestry, Fish and Game Commission purchased part of Turkey Track Ranch for development of a state lake and recreation area.
- 1927 – In May, construction on dam started.
- 1928 – In August, the lake started filling with water.
- 1929 – The park opened to the public on June 5.
- 1938 – On Feb. 1, the first CCC Camp came to Meade.
- 1939 – On Feb. 2, the “colored” CCC Company arrived.
- 1942 – On April 9, the second CCC Camp left.
- 1943 – On April 22, nine Japanese Americans brought to work at the state park and game farms.

- 1964 – “Meade County Lake” turned over to the Kansas Park and Resources Authority.
- 1977 – The lake was dredged and piers added.
- 1978 – Artesian springs still ran water over the spillway.
- 1983 – The lake went dry.
- 1985 – A pipeline was laid to the lake to pump groundwater.
- 1986 – The Kansas Park and Resources Authority and Kansas Fish and Game merged and became Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, with responsibility to manage Meade State Park and Wildlife Area and Meade State Fish Hatchery.
- 1995 – Fire destroyed many of the area’s trees and damaged campgrounds

## 2000s

- 2000 – The campgrounds were remodeled under the “Parks 2000” program.
- 2003 – Heavy rain ran the lake over the spillway.
- 2007 – The new visitor’s center was completed.

elements of the area because they’re all connected in people’s minds,” explains park manager Mark Goldsberry. “We have to look at it and manage it as a whole unit with all of our staff working together.”

At one time, the area housed a game farm that raised pheasant, buffalo, deer, and elk, but these

projects were phased out in the 1960s. And like all such properties, the Meade facilities would undergo renovation. In 1977, the lake was dredged to remove silt, and piers were added. And in 1980, Mark Goldsberry took over as park manager, a position he still holds. (See “Profile,” on Page 9 of the Nov./Dec. 2008 issue *Kansas Wildlife & Parks*.) Even in his time, the park has changed in many ways. It attracts as many as 110,000 visitors a year to this remote part of the state, approximately one-third of them non-resident. This is particularly impressive because the nearest town of Meade — population 1,500 — is 12 miles away. The nearest “big” towns — Liberal, population 16,500, and Dodge City, population 22,000 — are approximately 50

miles away. Still, the theme of the movie *Field Of Dreams*, “build it, and they will come,” echoes the appeal of Meade.

“Demand has increased from station wagons and pup tents to motor homes with satellite dishes,” Goldsberry notes. “Today, all-season roads and patrols are necessary year-round on much of the property. But we’re protecting this area because it’s a special piece of nature rarely found in this part of the state. It’s especially important for kids and families.”

Although Goldsberry occasionally has to deal with common law enforcement problems such as vandalism, conflicts among campers, and even gangs, his main focus is on programs that promote the value of nature.

One of the biggest such events of the year at Meade is OK Kids Day, designed as “a free and fun way to enrich children’s lives with nature, wildlife, recreation, and outdoor enjoyment — simple



One of the park’s most popular events is the OK Kids day when more than 1,000 people show up to enjoy the facilities and learn about the Kansas outdoors.

pleasures that so many kids miss in today's technology-driven world." In 2002, Kansas Wildscape, which promotes such events, honored Meade State Park staff and volunteers with a \$250 Honorable Mention award for their outstanding OK Kids Day, which included a scavenger hunt, bird walk, water safety training, and tours of the fish hatchery. This year, 1,000 people registered for the event, which included a fishing derby, canoe safety, wing-shooting, Laser Shot simulated hunting, archery, a moonwalk, geocaching, crafts, and trolley rides.

"We try to educate our young park visitors to respect the land," Goldsberry explains. "It's a holistic thing we're trying to pass

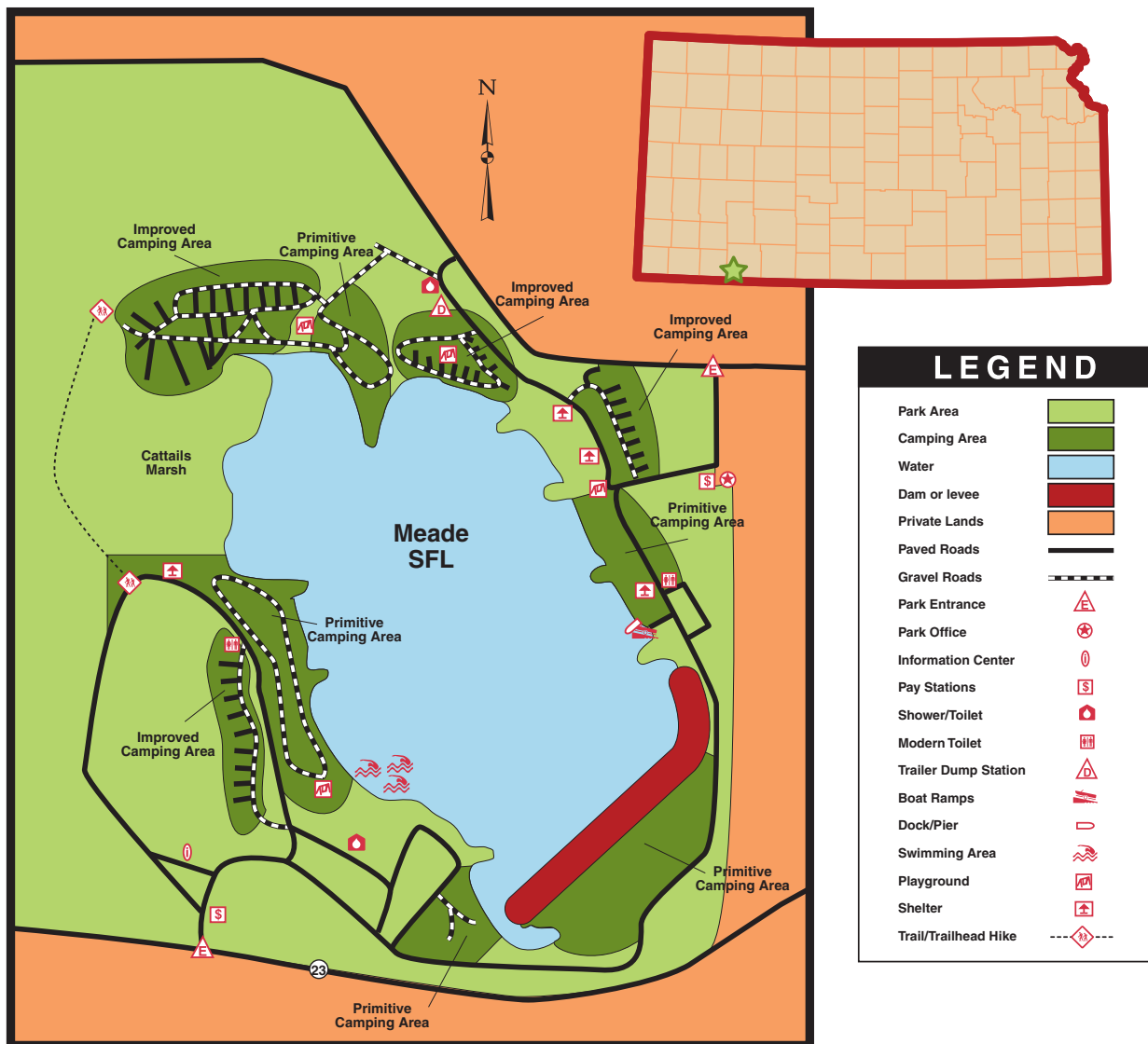
sitting on a rock or gathering around a campfire is necessary for human development, in my opinion."

*"We try to educate our young park visitors to respect the land, Goldsberry explains. "It's a holistic thing we're trying to pass on. People can recharge themselves here, and I guarantee you that watching a bobber with a kid will reveal things you never would find sitting at home."*

Friends of Meade State Park is a group that provides essential support for this mission. Comprised of volunteers throughout the region, the group raises funds and provides manpower for capital improvements in the park and on the lake. As needed, they also produce educational programs and materials and have been instrumental in creation and support of a new visitor's center at the park.

The park has seen many

on. People can recharge themselves here, and I guarantee you that watching a bobber with a kid will reveal things you never would find sitting at home. Just





Over the years, Meade State Park has evolved, catering to park users' needs. While there are still plenty of tent camping sites, the park also boasts 42 sites with electrical hook-ups. Water is the attraction in this arid place, and water is and will be the issue of the future.

changes under Goldsberry's watch. He has trained 13 park rangers in his tenure. The park has grown from 16 electrical hookups in 1980 to 42 today. With the help of Friends of Meade State Park, the ADA-accessible visitor's center has been built and was dedicated in December of 2007. The center is available year-round for informational programs, meetings, and family gatherings. Donations from the friends group and other supporters have provided money for kitchen equipment, furniture, and computers. Programs feature everything of local interest, from the lake and park to the history of the aquifer that charges the lake.

The aquifer, in fact, is this fragile area's most important feature. Although it remains unseen, its effects — and man's effects on it — are clearly visible. As mentioned earlier, artesian springs filled the lake for decades. In 1978, these priceless fountains still ran pure, clean water over Meade's spillway, but in 1983, the lake went dry. The cause? They are many and much-

debated: Colorado catching snowmelt in reservoirs, improved farming practices such as terracing that catch runoff, private dams, and perhaps the most incisive, the advent of the circle-pivot irrigator in the late 1960s. All these factors likely contributed to depletion of

*"Water is the biggest issue we have to deal with now," says Goldsberry. "With a 60-inch evaporation rate in dry years, we can keep up by pumping, but in some years, that means pumping 300 acre-feet or more. That brings the lake up about 1 inch a day in winter."*

the Ogallala Aquifer, which literally turned off the artesian spring faucets.

This forced perhaps the biggest management change in Meade State Park history. After obtaining a water right for 500 acre-feet per year, KDWP began pumping groundwater to fill the lake in 1984. Today, it is a rare year when this is not necessary to maintain the oasis that so many southwest Kansans enjoy.

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have to deal with now," says Goldsberry. "With a 60-inch evaporation rate in dry years, we can keep up by pumping, but in some years, that means pumping 300 acre-feet or more. That brings the lake up about 1 inch a day in winter."

"Although I still believe that as an agency, we have the same values and challenges of our forebears," Goldsberry muses, "the lowering of the aquifer and dried springs are among several issues they could not have foreseen. Still, we're all in this together. We've got to make it work for the generations to come. And I enjoy it. I'm 59, and this job is still not boring. There's something new every day. That keeps the job fresh."

For those traveling through southwest Kansas, a visit to Meade State Park is an unexpectedly pleasant side trip. For those who live in the area and make regular visits, it is critical to their quality of life, and the sadsage prairie would be poorer without this oasis on the plains. ♡

# BOATING SAFER



Mike Blair photo

## KANSAS BOATER SAFETY • COURSE



by Erika Nighswonger  
*boating education coordinator, Pratt*

*The Kansas Boating Education Program not only fulfills mandated education requirements, but it makes our lakes safer for all boaters.*

Every summer, Kansans of all ages head out to the lake hoping to enjoy a fun day of sun and waves. With approximately 186,000 surface acres of public water, there is not a shortage of choices on where to go and what to do. From rivers and ponds to small lakes and large reservoirs, there is a place for every type of boating enthusiast. The safety of these boaters is the first priority of the Boating Education Program of Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks.



## ATTENTION BOATERS

**DUE TO FLUCTUATING WATER LEVELS,  
UNMARKED WATER HAZARDS MAY EXIST.**

**PLEASE USE CAUTION WHILE UNDERWAY**

**BOATERS MUST ALSO REDUCE SPEED  
TO A NO-WAKE SPEED OF  
FIVE MILES PER HOUR OR LESS  
WITHIN 100 FEET OF THE FOLLOWING:**

BOAT DOCKS, BOAT RAMPS, PERSON(S) SWIMMING, BRIDGE STRUCTURES, MOORED OR ANCHORED VESSELS, SEWAGE PUMP-OUT FACILITIES, AND NON-MOTORIZED WATERCRAFT.

### Common Boat Related Markers



### SKIER DOWN FLAG



Minimum 12" x 12"  
Red or Orange in Color



### PUMPOUT STATION

**Dump Sewage Properly  
Pump-it Don't Dump-it**



In addition to the education portion of the program, public awareness has been a major emphasis. Signs near boat ramps in state parks are placed to help boaters remember safety facts and regulations.

Many boaters are unaware of the required education law that has been in effect since January of 2001. In Kansas, anyone born on or after January 1, 1989, must complete an approved boating education course in order to operate a vessel, including a personal watercraft (PWC), without supervision. The minimum age for operation is 12 if the individual has a recognized certificate. A supervisor must be someone who is over 17 and who either meets or is exempt from the legal requirements.

Confused yet? You're not alone. I receive several phone calls each week from confused boaters wanting clarification. Basically, it says if you were born during or

after 1989, you must take and pass a boating education course approved by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) in order to operate a boat without supervision. There is no minimum age to take the course, but you must be 12 in order to operate a vessel without being supervised (and have completed the course). If you are 11 or younger, or do not have a certificate, you must have someone on board who is 18 or older who either has a certificate (which meets the legal requirement) or was born before January 1, 1989, (which means they are exempt.)

The KDWP Boating Education Program provides current and correct regulations to course providers, ensuring that everyone who takes the course is taught the correct information. Some course providers advertise their course as approved for Kansas, but only the courses listed on the KDWP website under "Boating" are authorized. It is the department's goal to make sure everyone taking a course is taught the most accurate and up-to-date regulations and



boating safety information.

Traditionally, an eight-hour classroom course was the only way a person could receive a boating education certificate. However, families found it increasingly difficult to make that time commitment, so other options were developed in order to meet boaters' needs. A home-study course is now available at no cost. The home-study packet includes the textbook used in the classroom course, as well as a test that can be filled out at your own pace, then mailed back for grading. Students must get 84 percent of the answers correct to pass, and tests are usually processed two times a week.

For those who either wait until the last minute or would prefer to get their results immediately, internet testing is available for a fee. There are two authorized internet providers that are accepted by the KDWP Boating Education Program. Each of these sites allows you to take practice exams before the final test, and payment is required only after you pass. After passing, a temporary card can be printed to use until your permanent card arrives in the mail. The price for internet testing is around \$30, but the con-

venience of being able to get a card instantly can be worth the cost.

Classroom courses are still taught across the state, usually from February through May. Courses are taught by volunteer instructors, U.S. Coast Auxiliary members, and KDWP employees. Classes are listed on the KDWP website as they are scheduled, and there is no fee for these courses. However, the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary does charge a fee for their text book, depending on which course you take. Modified

For those who either wait until the last minute or would prefer to get their results immediately, internet testing is available for a fee. There are two authorized internet providers for the State of Kansas.

[www.Boat-Ed.com/kansas](http://www.Boat-Ed.com/kansas)  
[www.BoaterExam.com/usa/kansas](http://www.BoaterExam.com/usa/kansas)

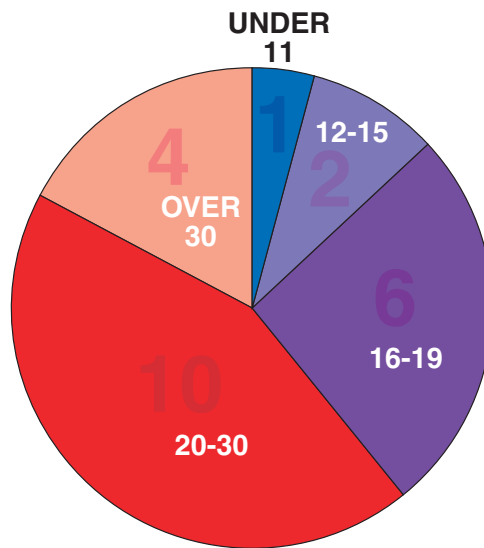


Mark Shoup photo

The public awareness ramp sign campaign also educates boaters about the dangers of spreading aquatic nuisance species such as zebra mussels, white perch, Eurasian watermilfoil, asian carp, and New Zealand mud snails.

courses are taught a few times throughout the year, which include some classroom work, but also provide a day of “hands-on” activities on the water. Usually these are taught at Fort Riley in May and August, with the water portion taking place at Milford Reservoir.

The education course is only one part the Boating Education Program in Kansas. Safety messages and signage are an important initiative to remind boaters to be safe on the water. Each year, new types of signs and displays are set up around the state and are designed to catch boaters’ eyes as they travel to the lake. Safety messages include something as small as life jacket signs posted throughout state parks or signs



**PWC Accidents by Age for 2008**

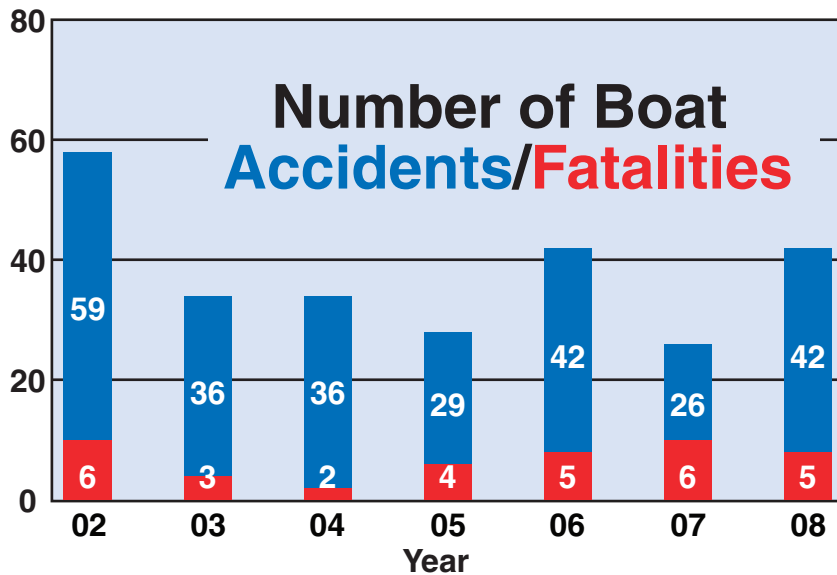
painted on the concrete boat ramps. The newest signs being posted in state parks include a two-sided message board with room to hang banners underneath. These signs are designed to remind boaters of some potential hazards or legal requirements as they are walking to the courtesy dock on their way out for the day. The back side of the signs show aquatic nuisance messages, warning boaters who are leaving the lake about the dangers of spreading zebra mussels and other invasive species.

Reaching the public through programs and boat shows is a continuing project that involves many KDWP employees. The sport and boat show season kicks off in January. For eight straight weeks, booths are set up across the state with a primary goal of ensuring that everyone who stops by can get questions answered and receive accurate, up-to-date information about boating safely in Kansas. During the Topeka Boat & Outdoor Show and the Kansas Sport Boat and Travel Show in Wichita, the PWC simulator is used to interact with the public. Life jacket fitting and the ignition safety switch are two of the main topics covered, along with the simulator to inform and encourage everyone to be safe. There are now two sizes of simulators to accommodate everyone, from the smallest child to the adults who will act like they don’t want to ride, but if you offer to hold their stuff, will hop on in a heartbeat.

The primary goal of boating education in Kansas is to reduce accidents and fatalities and keep boating safe for everyone. In the past six years, there have been 297 boat accidents reported, resulting in 30 fatalities. Most people mistakenly think that PWCs (commonly referred to as Jet Skis ©) are involved in the majority of these



The personal watercraft simulator is a popular education tool that is featured at boat, sport and travel shows throughout the winter, and appears at some modified courses.



incidents. The truth is that PWCs were involved in 35 percent of the reported accidents, with five fatalities resulting from those accidents. It might be surprising to learn that canoes and kayaks actually accounted for eight fatalities in the past six years. There has been a noticeable growth in the popularity of paddlesports as access points have been developed along the Kaw River in northeast Kansas.

Most people think of a collision when they hear the term “boat accident,” but the majority of fatalities nationwide come from falls overboard and capsizing. Kansas is no different. That is where the safety issue involving paddling makes an appearance. Many people don’t wear their life jackets while floating the river or paddling around a lake. If they get caught in rapids or lean out too far and end up in the water, a life jacket becomes the most important piece of safety equipment. Most people who drown while boating had no plans to get into the water that day, and anyone who has every tried to put on a life jacket while in the water knows how difficult it is. But what if there wasn’t a life jacket on

board to begin with; or it floats away from the boat and you can’t reach it; or worse yet, you are injured as you fall out of the boat and end up unconscious in the water? Without a life jacket, worn properly and of the appropriate



size and style, a fun day on the water can turn into a tragedy.

The law requires that anyone 12 and under must wear a USCG approved life jacket while on a boat, even while it’s anchored. There must be an approved life

jacket on board for every person on the boat or being towed, and these jackets must be readily accessible. Kansas law states that “readily accessible” means the life jackets or PFDs (personal floatation devices) are plainly visible to the passengers, in an area that can be reached without opening a compartment, not still covered by plastic wrapping material, or necessary to reach under part of the boat’s hull to get to them. There is a Zero Tolerance Policy for life jacket violations, and you can expect to get a ticket if you are checked and your jackets are not readily accessible. The easiest way to comply is simple — just WEAR IT!

With the new styles of life jackets on the market, including the inflatable belt packs, the old excuse of being uncomfortable or hot just doesn’t work anymore. These new jackets are so light and small, you’ll most likely forget you are wearing them. The inflatable life jackets cannot be worn on a PWC as the label states. They are not approved for children 15 and under, or for use when waterskiing and towing. Always make sure you check the label on a life jacket to see if it’s approved usage and size.

With nearly 100,000 boats registered in Kansas, it’s clear that boating recreation is popular. KDWP’s Boating Education Program has a goal of keeping boating recreation safe and fun for everyone. Consider completing the Boating Education Course. Even if you aren’t required to have it, you’ll learn valuable lessons that will keep you and your family safe on the water. ♡



# Sweat Equity Crappie

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

The hot days of summer's bite are truly worse than their bark in July and August. Kansas is usually wrapped up in a heat wave at some point during this time that threatens record temperatures. Outdoor activities like fishing usually don't attract much attention, particularly during the heat of the day. And if you believe in the lyrics of one of Mark Chesnutt's country hits, "It's too hot to fish..." you're probably staying near the air conditioner.

But don't tell that to Kansas anglers Jim Bybee and "Crappie" Chatt Martin.

"The hotter the better," Bybee said of his summer success.

"I like it hot and the hotter the better," said Martin, another believer in sweltering crappie catches. "July, August and September can be a magical time, particularly for big fish."

Bybee is an avid angler and spends countless days on rivers and reservoirs across Kansas. He enjoys fishing for many species, including white bass and walleye, but his favorite is crappie. He fishes the Crappie Buster tournaments regularly, as well as other regional and national crappie tournaments, and does well.

Bybee is successful catching crappie throughout the year and usually has a proven pattern no matter the month. When I met him a few years ago, we chatted about good months to catch fish.

"I like fishing most any time, but I've had really good luck in the heat of the summer when it gets really hot," Bybee said. "When we start getting those 100 degree days and it stays that way for a while, fishing can really get good."

He told me to give him a call when it got REALLY hot and we'd go try it. When that July

day came, I joined Bybee and his teenaged son Cody. By the time we started fishing at 11:30 a.m., the mercury had already climbed into the mid-90s, and the surface water temperature wasn't far behind.

"It's 88.8," Cody said as he read the water temperature.

Bybee said we'd be fishing shallow around emerged and submerged structure. His favorite offering is a 1/8-ounce orange jig head rigged with a brown and chartreuse tube body. His rig consists of an 8-foot, 5-weight fly rod with a small spinning reel

spooled with 6-pound, green Iron Silk. We tried several spots before I felt the familiar thump and set the hook. Immediately the fish rolled at the surface in less than 3 feet of water, and it was all I could do to contain my excitement.

"Holy Cow!" I shouted as Jim told Cody to hand him the net. "That fish is huge!"

At roughly 15 inches, the big white crappie looked like a dinner plate and was nearly as wide as it was long. It weighed in at 2 pounds, and it helped me forget how much I was sweating.

"That's about like some of the ones we've been catching," Bybee admitted. "And we'll catch some more like that before we're done."

Only minutes later Bybee proved his point as he caught one even bigger.

"This one goes about 16 ¼ inches," Bybee said as he measured what we later called Boone and Crockett-sized crappie.



Crappie expert Jim Bybee prefers to fish summer crappie with an 1/8-ounce orange jig head and a brown and chartreuse soft-plastic body. He jigs with an 8-foot fly rod.

## Did You Know?

**The Kansas state record white crappie weighed 4 pounds, ¼ ounce and was caught in 1964 from a Greenwood County farm pond by Frank Miller. The state record black crappie is the oldest Kansas record, and that fish weighed 4 pounds, 10 ounces. It was caught by Hazel Fey from Woodson County State Fishing Lake in 1957.**

We kept fishing, and I asked him if several fish generally came off the same spot to which he replied, "No, usually only one or two."

The words had barely escaped his mouth when he set the hook and added, "But sometimes three," as he netted another mon-

strous slab.

Over the next four hours, we tried dozens of different places. Some yielded fish and others didn't. The extreme heat affected everything.

"Look at those turkey vultures in the shade," Bybee pointed out as we motored by and watched the ugly birds with their outstretched wings.

"The water temperature is up to 91.8," Cody reported at one stop.

But despite the heat, we continued catching fish. The action wasn't fast, but the anticipation of huge fish lurking beneath the surface kept me on the edge of my seat. We caught several more of those brutes and even added a few "normal-sized" slabs in the 11- to 13-inch range. We estimated we'd caught more than 40 crappie, and we kept 14. Seven of these fish had Bybee dreaming of future crappie tournaments.

"I'd take these seven in a tournament any day," Bybee said, reading the scale at nearly 15 pounds.

Martin would likely agree. He's spent countless hours fishing in tournaments, for fun, or guiding clients. He's well known among avid crappie anglers and loves



"Crappie" Chatt Martin loves fishing for crappie most any time of the year. However, a summer pattern might be his favorite because he catches bigger fish, like this fat 2-pounder, he caught from Toronto Reservoir.

fishing for crappie most any time of the year. But if he's looking for quality versus quantity, you'll see him on the water during the heat of summer when many other anglers have hung up their boat keys.

"It's really a time when you can target big fish," Martin said of those days when the mercury pushes to near 100 degrees or more. "It can get really good when we have stable weather patterns."

Trees are critical to Martin's summer success. Flooded timber on most any reservoir can produce excellent results. He believes crappie relate to those trees just like other species of fish.

"I think they act just like a bass, and think they own that tree,"

Martin said of his theory of crappie holding near a stick-up or standing tree. "It's much more of a precise or finesse fishing technique, and the smallest of ticks can produce the most monstrous crappie."

The size of the tree doesn't necessarily correspond to the size of the fish. Martin likes the smaller trees, roughly 6 inches in diameter because he can fish just one side, and if a fish is there, it can see the bait from either side. On larger diameter trees, he fishes around the tree to make sure a fish holding there gets a crack at his offering. Branched trees offer more opportunity, but Martin prefers stumps. He says a single tree will rarely produce

more than one fish.

Martin's bait of choice at this time of year is a minnow, and he usually believes it outfishes a jig. The hardest part about using live minnows in 100-degree heat is keeping them alive.

"You've got to get them warmed up," Martin said. "If you get them at the bait store in 60-degree water and take them to the lake and dump them in 90-degree water, they're going to die, and crappie don't hit dead minnows."

Martin doesn't launch his boat with less than five dozen medium-sized minnows aboard, and he puts them in his bait well and turns the aerator on so it just dribbles in to avoid the temperature shock.

A 1/32-ounce jig in red is a favorite for fishing minnows according to Martin, who generally hooks them through the lips. A bigger hook is better, too, and he has many of his jig heads custom-made with a bigger hook.

"That's a lot of bait, and crappie have a big mouth. With a smaller hook, you can pull it right out of their mouth," Martin said from experience. "Some guys will even grind down a 1/8-ounce head to a lighter weight while still keeping the bigger hook."

A heavier jig head also impedes the natural swimming action of the minnow, according to Martin.

"The minnow can dance around more on a lighter, 1/32-ounce head," he said. "I'll even jig it and pop it which looks like the shad they're used to seeing flipping around."

A 9- or 10-foot jiggling pole is ideal for dipping trees, according to Martin. Anything longer makes it hard to work around the trees, and you have to get your boat too close with anything

## Plan Ahead

shorter. He fishes 10-pound (2-pound diameter) Power Pro High-Vis Yellow line on a spinning reel. Being able to see his line is critical to this technique.

"I'll lower that bait down slow, and I'll raise it up slow next to the tree," Martin described. "As soon as I feel a tick or see the line move, I'll stop, and I won't set the hook until I see the fish move off with it."

Martin says the normal "thump" hit of a feeding crappie isn't often the case with this type of finesse fishing.

"I think they're either tail-slapping it or mouthing it to run it off," Martin said of the typical tick-tick hits. "It's kind of territorial thing rather than a feeding thing. I'd love to have a camera down there to see

In addition to the difficulties of keeping bait alive during the heat of the day, it's also a tough task for the fish Jim Bybee and "Crappie" Chatt Martin keep for dinner. They advise anglers to simply bring a cooler and put them on ice straight from the lake and skip the livewell.

"The fish will go bad if they die in the livewell, and it's tough to keep them alive, even in a good livewell in real heat," Martin said. "If they get yellow they don't taste near as good."

Don't forget about keeping yourself comfortable, either. Bybee brings a big jug of cold water and keep hydrated.

"You really sweat a lot, so it's important to drink plenty of fluids," Bybee advises.

what's going on."

So if you think it's too hot to fish, think again. As you relax in a recliner after a sweltering day on the water watching the weatherman proclaim this the hottest

day since 1962, you'll feel better. Your sweat equity will be the payoff when you sit down to a tasty dinner of fresh crappie fillets and the bite of those dog days of summer won't feel so bad. ♡



Jim Bybee and his son, Cody, hold three crappie that totaled nearly 4 feet long. They caught more than 40 crappie that day, keeping 14 of them ranging from 11 ½ inches to 16 ¼ inches.





# MANAGING STRATIFICATION FOR BETTER FISHING

by Leonard Jirak  
*district fisheries biologist, Hartford*

***At certain times of the year, water in lakes and ponds separates, or stratifies, by differing water temperatures. An aeration system is one way to protect your fish from severe stratification.***

**H**ave you ever jumped into a pond in the summer and felt the water get colder as you went deeper? Cold water is denser, or heavier, than warm water, and it settles to the bottom while the warm water rises to the surface. In early spring, as the warm winds and sunlight warm the surface of a pond or lake, deeper water stays cool. In time, the water separates into layers, or stratifies, due to the differences in buoyancy. In addition to tempera-

ture differences, there are chemical and biological differences in the water within these layers.

The top layer of water, which is warmest and least dense, is called the epilimnion. The middle layer is the metalimnion, or thermocline. The colder bottom layer is the hypolimnion. The thermocline is where the water temperature changes rapidly from warm to cool, and this layer can be as narrow as 12 inches or as wide as several yards. The thermocline

can move up or down within the water column as the season changes.

Wind and other weather conditions such as cloud cover or heavy rains can mix the layers of water and break up the thermocline. Hot, calm weather can make it more distinct. The hypolimnion contains little or no dissolved oxygen and is much colder than surface water. All of the dying plants and animals end up at the bottom and as they decay, they

use up oxygen and produce other organic compounds. In a nutrient-rich pond, a thick, black, stinky mud accumulates on the bottom.

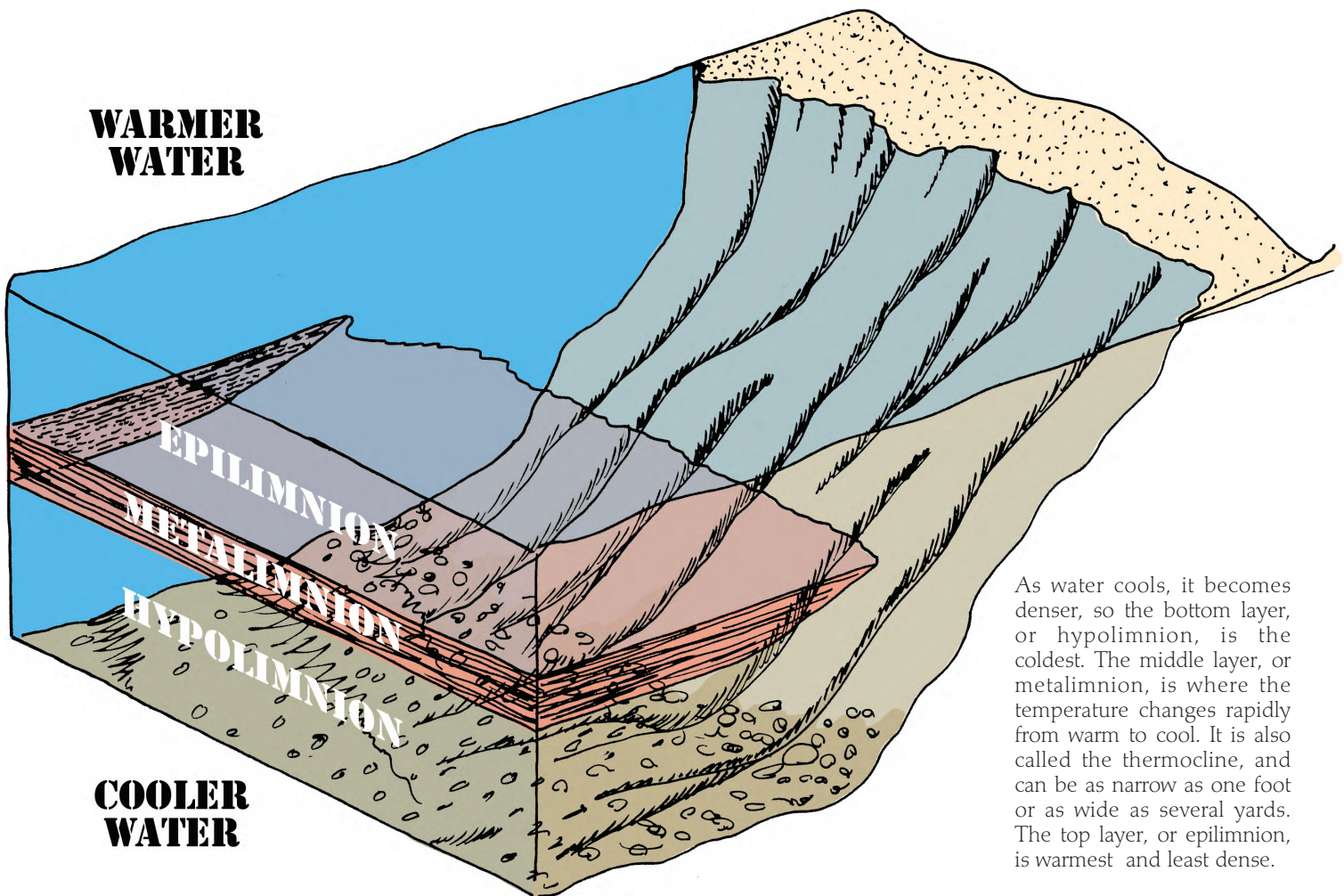
In Kansas, stratification will begin in May or June depending on daytime heating, and this summertime stratification can be a problem, depending on conditions. Dissolved oxygen in water is critical to all aquatic life. In severe stratification, the bottom layer has little or no oxygen, and the warm top layer can also be low on oxygen. Green aquatic plants add oxygen during the daylight hours and then use it during the night. So fish kills can occur in the late night or just before daylight when oxygen

levels are the lowest.

Most fish kills happen without much warning and are usually severe. The fish normally suffocate due to the lack of oxygen. Certain species succumb to low oxygen levels more quickly than others. For example, walleye are some of the most sensitive to low oxygen levels, and carp and black bullheads are the most tolerant. Warning signs include a rapid change in water color from green to gray then brown within a couple of days, or when fish that are fed quit eating. If you feed fish and they stop eating, stop feeding immediately as uneaten food will decay and use up more oxygen. Another sign is fish at the surface

gasping for air, which usually happens right before they begin dying. Unfortunately, this usually occurs late at night when no one sees it, and it's too late by the time it is discovered.

Water is densest at 39 degrees and least dense when it's colder than 32 degrees. That's why ice floats, which is quite handy because ice forms a protective layer, insulating the deeper water. There is very little stratification in a lake or pond when temperatures are lower than 60 degrees. When water temperatures rise above 70 degrees, water density changes rapidly. The change in water density at temperatures between 75 degrees and 77 degrees is about 30



As water cools, it becomes denser, so the bottom layer, or hypolimnion, is the coldest. The middle layer, or metalimnion, is where the temperature changes rapidly from warm to cool. It is also called the thermocline, and can be as narrow as one foot or as wide as several yards. The top layer, or epilimnion, is warmest and least dense.

times greater than the change in density at temperatures from 39 to 41 degrees. So once surface water temperatures get above 75 degrees, the water tends to layer out quickly, depending on wind activity.

The water layers also have a distinct difference in chemical composition. The top layer receives direct sunlight and is in contact with the atmosphere, so there is usually plenty of oxygen in this layer. Contact with the atmosphere adds oxygen since the air is made up of 20 percent oxygen. This increases with wind and wave activity. A large amount of the oxygen in the upper layer is produced through "photosynthesis," the absorption of carbon dioxide and the production of oxygen from green plants. This process takes place to the depth that sunlight can penetrate. In clear lakes it can be as deep as 20 feet, but in murky water it may only occur a couple of feet deep. In the middle layer, or thermocline, there is less oxygen and higher concentrations of carbon dioxide.

The thermocline prevents the movement of water and dissolved gasses from hypolimnion to the layers above it. In a short time, bacterial decay of the organic matter (dead plants and animals) can use up the oxygen in the bottom layer. As the decay takes place, it also gives off by-products. Some by-products are in the form of gasses such as carbon dioxide, sulfur dioxide, and ammonia, which are toxic to fish and other fauna. Fish avoid this bottom layer.

The chemical makeup of water allows the absorption of gasses such as oxygen and the others mentioned above. Increased pressure due to the weight of water allows the water to absorb more gas, both toxic and beneficial.



Pratt Hatchery manager Mark Kumberg reads the dissolved oxygen level of a hatchery pond while a portable aerator pumps water into the air to oxygenate it.

Also, colder water can hold more of these gasses. Think about carbon dioxide in soda: as long as the lid is on tight and the soda is cold, it does not fizz much but if the lid is opened on a warm soda, carbon dioxide will fizz all over the place.

Bubbles in the foam are made of the carbon dioxide gas, which is added to soda when it is bottled. When there is a turnover of the layered water, the trapped gasses move to the surface where pressures are less, and they bubble



Ponds that are sheltered from the wind, receive livestock or fertilizer runoff and have little flow-through are prime candidates for summer fish kills. An impending kill may be difficult to predict since they often happen just before dawn, when dissolved oxygen levels in the water are typically lowest. (photo courtesy of Leonard Jirak)

into the atmosphere. This interface with the atmosphere then provides oxygenation and purification of the water.

Many people think that by building a deeper pond, they have more room to grow big fish, but often a deep pond only increases the volume of water in the toxic hypolimnion. If this volume of water is too great, it can overwhelm the amount of good water and cause a fish kill when the pond or lake turns over.

Turnover can occur when strong wind or cooler temperatures, or both, cause the warm upper layers of water to mix with the cold bottom layers. This usually happens in the fall when surface temperatures cool enough to make the surface water as dense as the bottom water. A strong thunderstorm or wind can also cause a turnover. If the turnover is preceded by a few cloudy days and the oxygen levels in the upper layers are low, the chance of a fish

kill is even more likely.

Supplemental feeding can increase stratification and the chances for a fish kill. This has become much more common the past 20 years as more people feed their fish. The feeding increases the nutrient load of the water. Nutrient loading increases algae, phytoplankton, (microscopic plants) and weed growth. These are all green plants that produce oxygen during the day but respire or use oxygen at night. They also use oxygen when they die as microbes break them down. So a large die-off of plant matter can also deplete oxygen. Dead algae and phytoplankton break down quickly and are more likely to cause a fish kill than dying weeds, which decompose more slowly. Over time, all bodies of water increase in nutrient content as part of the natural aging process where lakes become swamps and swamps become wetlands. This is called eutrophication, and it takes

hundreds or thousands of years unless man's activities speed it up.

Many people do not like plants or weeds in their ponds and stock grass carp to control them. However, this just redistributes the nutrients. While the grass carp may eat the weeds, the algae or phytoplankton blooms become heavier. Stocking grass carp should not be done without careful consideration and perhaps advice from a fisheries biologist. Plants aren't necessarily bad because they protect the shoreline from erosion and provide fish habitat.

So how can we avoid fish kills associated with stratification? First, we need to identify which lakes or ponds have the greatest potential for a fish kill. Typically, ponds that are enriched by feeding (fish food), fertilizer runoff, livestock waste runoff and other organic waste are fish kill candidates. Ponds or lakes fed from runoff on native grass pastures seldom

experience problems. The amount of flow-through and exposure to the wind are also factors. Ponds with low flow-through and those that are sheltered from wind will have more potential for fish kills. Your local fisheries biologist can provide you with some advice on steps you can take to prevent a fish kill. There are 18 district fisheries biologists located throughout the state. Their names, districts and numbers are listed on Page 37 of the 2009 *Kansas Fishing Regulations Summary*, or you can call the KDWP Operations Office at 620-673-5911.

If you decide that aeration is needed, there are several ways to do it. Aeration is simply adding air to the water. An aeration system can be fairly simple and cost-effective. A bubbler system is one of the easiest to construct. It pumps compressed air through a hose or pipe near the bottom of the water through small holes in a stone or fine membrane. This type of system works much like using an air stone and air pump in an aquarium. This will add a small amount of oxygen to the water, but more importantly it will break up the stratification and allow the water to mix and interface with the atmosphere, releasing the toxic gasses and adding oxygen. This a very cost-effective way to aerate a body of water. As the small bubbles rise, they expand and drag water with them to the surface creating a current and mixing the water. This also makes the whole body of water available to the fish. This system is much safer than other methods because the compressor or air pump can stay on shore, and electric lines do not run into the pond. A one-third horsepower pump can aerate several acres of water. A word of caution: if this method is first turned on during late summer when the water is severely stratified, it may



The author shows the fruits of a well-managed pond – a channel catfish that weighs nearly 30 pounds. Aeration will increase fish carrying capacity and keep fish healthier.

photo courtesy Leonard Jirak

cause a fish kill by mixing too much bad water with the surface water. This type of aerator should be turned on in the spring and left on all summer. If it is installed in mid- to late summer, it should be

turned on for a few minutes the first day and gradually increased over a 10-day period, before it is left on full time.

A surface agitator is another effective aerator. This device can

save fish if a fish kill is about to happen or is in progress. This method will quickly add air to the water to keep the fish from suffocating. Drawbacks are that it does not mix the whole pond and is less cost-effective than a bubbler system. One option would be to watch the weather and only turn it on when conditions are right for a fish kill, thus saving on the electric bill.

The third method is a fountain system, which is much more expensive to setup and maintain but can add beauty to a backyard pond. Fountains mix water with air by spraying water into the air through a pressurized nozzle. They come in all sorts of decorative sprays and can even be lit up at night with colored lights. They are more effective if water is drawn from the hypolimnion,

mixing the whole pond. It can cost several dollars to tens of dollars a day to operate a fountain.

Remember that water is most dense at 39 degrees, and the warmest layer will be at the bottom when the pond is iced over. Running an aeration system in winter can keep areas ice free for waterfowl and maintain oxygen levels in the water. Winterkill is rare in Kansas but can happen in shallow, nutrient-rich ponds after long periods of ice and snow cover, which prevents photosynthesis by shading out the sunlight. Aerating for short periods will thaw ice cover and allow some oxygen exchange with the air. Because cold water holds more oxygen and the fishes' metabolism is much slower in cold water, not much aeration is

required. Super cooling can occur by aggressively mixing the water layers in the winter. The water can be cooled to below 35 degrees and cause fish stress. Most fish in Kansas can easily survive temperatures down to 39 degrees, but prolonged temperatures below 35 degrees can cause severe stress and even winterkill. If agitated enough, water can cool below the freezing point and become super cooled, causing fish to die by creating ice crystals in their blood.

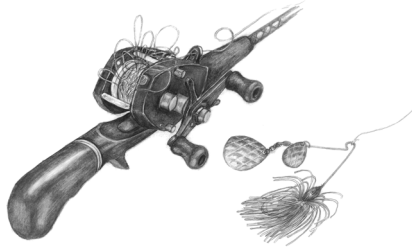
Mixing air with water is a natural cleansing mechanism, and it provides the necessary environment for many living organisms. Increasing the amount of oxygen in the water actually can help control aquatic vegetation. Animals use oxygen and give off carbon dioxide and plants use carbon dioxide and give off oxygen. High oxygen levels in the water can stress plants, decreasing plant populations. Aeration will increase the fish carrying capacity of a body of water and keep those fish healthier. Most fish kills and stress from water quality problems can be prevented by proper aeration, whether it's natural or man induced.

Companies that manufacture and install aeration equipment can be found on the internet or through advertisements in outdoor and rural publications. Most companies also provide a company technician who can evaluate a problem and advise if an aeration system is needed, as well as which type fits your needs. There may also be options that operate on solar power or wind energy.

Don't wait until you find dead fish after a warm, calm summer night. Visit with your local fisheries biologist and evaluate your pond or lake to see if you should be concerned about aeration. You and your fish will be glad you did. ♡



Aeration systems can be bubblers, pumps or fountains. Fountains are effective and can add an element of beauty to a pond, but they are the most expensive system to operate.



# Backlash

by Mike Miller

## I & E Career Comes To An End

**B**ob Mathews has served as the chief of the Information and Education Section since about 1992. That's a long time, but it represents only a little more than half of his tenure with Kansas Wildlife and Parks. His entire career has been spent communicating a passion for Kansas outdoor resources and outdoor recreation. Thirty-one years with the same outfit is a pretty nice career for this Garden City native with a degree in journalism.

Mathews' communication skills pretty much cover the media gamut. He's worked in print news, magazine, radio, television, video, and the Internet. You might recognize his voice before you recognize his face because his baritone words have smoothly narrated countless KDWP video productions.

But if you don't recognize him, that's fine with him. One of his endearing qualities is a willingness, or even preference, to stay in the background. Mathews has never asked for or expected credit or recognition. He's always let his work speak for itself. For a man whose byline has appeared hundreds of times and who has appeared on camera dozens of times, Mathews was always a reluctant face of the department. Ego was never a part of his motivation.

Mathews has seen dramatic changes in the way we communicate since his first day with the department in 1977. He went from rapping out stories on a manual Royal typewriter to producing entire publications on a desktop computer. Today, nearly everything I&E produces is also produced digitally and distributed in printed form and via the World Wide Web.

The section has also seen some welcome improvements under his watch. For the past 5 or so years, the hunting and fishing regulations have been printed at no cost. A contract company sells the advertising that appears in the pamphlets and subtracts the revenues from the printing bill. This has saved tens of thousands of sportsmen's dollars.

The Hunter Education Program, under Wayne Doyle's direction, has improved and advanced with much better delivery and availability – the course has been transformed from a lengthy classroom “barrier”

to new hunters, to an outdoor initiation with lots of hands-on activities. The core of the program – the volunteer instructors — are better equipped and better trained than ever. We've also worked out agreements with 28 middle schools to offer Hunter Education as part of their curriculum. Boating Education, which is mandated by state law, is offered through KDWP classes, correspondence, and an internet course. The section operates or participates in the operation of four nature centers. More than 200,000 people and students visit our nature centers annually. The weekly news release package is now emailed to more than 1,600 newspapers, websites, publications and individuals, providing immediate nationwide coverage.

The small information section is well-equipped and produces, updates and prints more than 200 brochures, pamphlets and booklets each year. Nearly all publications are also available in PDF form on the webpage. And there are tens of thousands of other public contacts made through Archery In The Schools, Becoming An Outdoors-Woman, Pass It On, OWLs, ECO Meets, and other education/information programs.

If you shake his hand, you'll feel the callouses of an accomplished guitar picker, which provides another bit of irony. For a man who would rather not be the center of attention, he's spent many evenings picking and singing for appreciative crowds. His nickname, which is really only known by a close circle of friends, is “The Breeze.” It comes from the song by Lynyrd Skynyrd and his talent for coming into or leaving a room without being noticed.

And now The Breeze is blowing east. Just like the inevitable changes he's been a part of here at KDWP, Mathews will be a part of the next big one: his absence. We'll miss him, but because of his preference to stay in the background, it may take awhile to realize just how much. In fact, he has kept his retirement plans so low key, I nearly missed this opportunity to write about a colleague, mentor and good friend before he was gone. Good luck, Bob, “Keep blowin' down the road.” ♡

