

KANSAS

Wildlife & Parks

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2009

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On Point

by Mike Hayden



Get Away Right Here

It was a good summer for KDWP. By the end of May, there had already been as many fishing licenses sold as were sold all of last year. The department had to reprint fishing regulation summaries in June – all 250,000 initially printed were distributed. Throughout the summer, park visitation was 30 percent above last year's. There are plenty of theories as to why: the sagging economy is keeping people closer to home, water has returned to several of the reservoirs in northwest Kansas, and the weather was great in May and June. Memorial Day weekend was one of the best weather-wise in recent history – that is if you like to spend time outdoors, fishing, camping and boating.

And each time we see license sales jump up or fall off, we're reminded that we still can learn more about why our constituents do what they do. We've been working on hunter and angler recruitment now for almost 10 years, and those efforts are beginning to pay off (a recent survey ranked Kansas at the top of states for the percent of youth under 16 who had fished in the previous year). Services to our customers have improved: buying permits and licenses has never been easier with point of sale and online options; programs such as WIHA, F.I.S.H., Special Hunts, and CFAP have opened a new world of hunting and angling access and opportunities; hatcheries are using innovation to produce and stock more sport fish than ever; the cost of entering a state park is half what it was just three years ago; and cabins at our state parks and wildlife areas have attracted a new base of customers who don't own an RV and weren't sure about "roughing it."

New cabins come on line almost monthly, and there are now 73 cabins available for rent at state parks and wildlife areas. State park cabins range from rustic to those with full amenities, including bathrooms, kitchens and even air conditioning. The online reservation system is handy, and cabins have proven popular. Most cabins were full through the holidays and weekends this past summer, and many are reserved


for opening weekends of hunting seasons.

But I have a great idea: a cabin stay this fall would be a great vacation close to home. Better yet, schedule your stay during the week. You'll save money and have the parks, lakes or wildlife areas to yourself. Summer is the busy time for state parks, and opening-day weekends are busy for wildlife areas. But some of the best weather of the year will be in September and October, and the summertime crowds are long gone.

A state park or wildlife area cabin makes a great hunting or fishing base camp and includes everything your party will need for a comfortable stay. Most are located near large public hunting areas, reducing the amount of driving you'll do. And fall fishing can be uncrowded and fantastic.

A fall cabin vacation is a bargain. Nightly rental fees range from \$30-\$40 for rustic cabins and \$55-\$60 for deluxe cabins. Many parks have reduced nightly rates for mid-week stays, and there may also be savings for off-season stays – October through March.

There are descriptions of all cabins, along with photos and fees, on the department's website. It's also easy to make reservations online, and the reservation calendar lets you see if the cabin you desire is available on the days you want. Cabins can also be reserved by calling the local KDWP offices.

KDWP has cabins in most state parks, all a short distance from trails, wildlife areas, historical sites, and water. There are also a few cabins near state fishing lakes, including Atchison, McPherson, Ottawa, and the Mined Land Wildlife Area. These cabins truly offer opportunities for secluded and peaceful stays. Check out the department's website, www.kdwp.state.ks.us, to learn about KDWP cabins. Or, if you're ready to reserve a cabin, you can go to reserve.ksoutdoors.com. Everything can be taken care of online. Enjoy a great get-away this fall without driving hundreds of miles. There are great, affordable get-aways right here in Kansas. 

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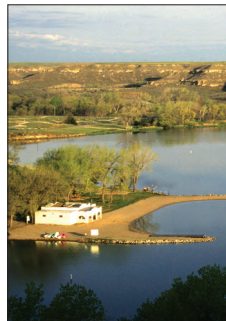
Wallace Weber donates his Russell County family farm to Pheasants Forever to ensure a legacy of land ethic, hunting heritage and conservation. *by J. Mark Shoup*

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Preparing To Anticipate *by Mike Miller*



Front Cover: Muzzleloader hunters can start hunting Sept. 21 this year, getting an early start to the deer seasons. Mike Blair took this photo of a white-tailed buck. **Back Cover:** Scott State Park and lake provide a scenic and peaceful refuge on the Kansas Great Plains. Marc Murrell snapped this photo from a bluff high above the lake.



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

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Letter . . .

LIKES SPRING WIHA

Editor:

I hunted turkeys in Kansas this past April for the first time in order to get a chance at the Rio Grande subspecies fairly near my home in Wisconsin. I did not have any particular place lined up to hunt but took a chance on being able to hunt places with public access based on the information I found on the Department website relative to the Walk-In Access Program to private land, as well as federal lands. For these reasons, I picked northcentral Kansas.

I was very pleasantly surprised by the opportunity provided by your Walk-In program. There were plenty of properties in the northcentral part of the state. Every one of these properties that I hunted was quality turkey habitat. In fact, some of the best looking turkey hunting ground I encountered had Walk-In access. The maps were accurate and the properties well signed. I did find what I considered to be fairly significant hunting pressure on these properties on the weekend but pressure during the weekdays was low.

In short, I had a high quality hunting experience in Kansas, which in my opinion was principally due to a well-managed hunter Walk-in program. Please extend my sincere thanks to any members of your department responsible for management of this program. Congratulations on a job well done.

*Steve AveLallemant
Arbor Vitae, WI*

GRESS FAN

Editor:

Just started reading your latest issue on a flight out to California. One of the best.

You guys put out an amazing magazine. The photos and text by Bob Gress were exceptional. Secretary Hayden's article inside the front cover is always informative and provocative.

I always enjoy reading about KDWP personnel. Every contact I've had with KDWP personnel over the years reminds me how much all of you love what you are doing. How could you not? Being outdoors in Kansas is gift I enjoy more



Mike Blair photo

HUNTING *with Wayne Doyle* HERITAGE

Fair Chase

The department is very good at the science of wildlife management, maintaining habitat so that wildlife flourish. But we must remember that it is society that determines what and how we hunt. Whether by tradition, legislative action or interest group pressure, society sets the rules by which hunters must pursue their sport.

Much of how society measures the hunt and hunters falls under the concept of fair chase. At its simplest, fair chase is the idea that the hunted animals must have a chance to escape; that the tools of the hunt must not give an unfair advantage to the hunter. Society expects that hunters will set fair chase as their standard of ethical hunting. Any method of hunting that is perceived to be unfair is open to question. In some quarters, using dogs for other than retrieving is considered as giving the hunter an unfair advantage. Obviously, that idea comes from people who have never seen a wily old rooster give good bird dogs the slip or a raccoon leave a pack of good hounds in a state of bewilderment.

Current attacks on hunting rarely have anything to do with safety issues and if they do, hunting can be shown to be one of the safest of all activities. Even cheerleading causes more injuries than hunting.

The effective attacks on hunting deal with fair chase issues, or rather the perception of fair chase. It is important that hunters recognize that these issues are out there and that society holds us to a high standard. Our ethical standards must continue to be above reproach. We must honor the tradition of the hunt and the game we pursue by proper conduct in the field. That's what Teddy Roosevelt, Aldo Leopold, Shane Mahoney and Jim Posewitz would want. Hunt fair chase!





great-crested flycatcher
Mike Blair photo

As I write this column in mid-July, we have just come off of a long string of days with high temperatures in the 90s and low 100s here in Pratt. Today, however, it's 68 degrees with rain showers - the perfect inspiration for writing about fall birding.

Shorebird migration has been going on for a few weeks now, with September and early October mostly finishing up the seasonal travels of that group of birds. However, many other kinds of birds are in peak migration during these months, with most species of neotropical birds through Kansas by mid-October. September is a great month to go birding, with many species of warblers, flycatchers, hummingbirds, orioles and others abundant in most parts of the state. Our nesting sparrows, such as grasshopper, lark, Henslow's and a few others leave Kansas in early fall, making us wait in anticipation for the influx of the later October and November migrants to our state. These include Lincoln's, fox, Harris's, white-crowned and a number of other sparrows that we get to chase around on Christmas Bird Counts later in the year.

Although all parts of Kansas experience an influx of birds during fall migration, my favorite place to go in early fall is Morton County. Apparently I'm not alone, as there are groups of birders who travel from across the state on a pilgrimage to the Cimarron National Grasslands and southwest Kansas. The attraction is mainly due to the possibility of rare or unusual species for Kansas that show up during this time. Birding friends Scott Seltman, Sebastian Patti, Max Thompson, Ted Cable and others began inviting me to participate on trips there in the late 1980s, and I still try to get out there at least one weekend each September.

Many interesting species can be found in southwest Kansas over the span of a few weeks in early fall, including specialties like Cassin's kingbird, red-naped sapsucker, ladder-backed woodpecker, rock wren, green-tailed towhee, canyon towhee, sage thrasher, Western tanager, Bullock's oriole and

BIRD BRAIN

with Mike Rader

On Any Given Sunday

many others not usually encountered in other parts of the state.

A group of dedicated rarity-chasers from Wichita, usually led by Pete Janzen and Kevin Groeneweg, often join a group from the Kansas City area, organized by Nancy Leo, Matt Gearheart and others over the Labor Day Holiday weekend and start finding good stuff. Several others of us will wait until the second or third weekends to go, hoping to get some of the later-arriving species.

By the end of September and into early October, migration has tailed off, but it's never too late to find something exciting that will make the long trek worthwhile. Many folks travel to this part of the state to try to add a new species to their life list or Kansas list, but most intriguing to me is the possibility of seeing something potentially new to Kansas. A trip "out west" can provide a chance to see many birds in a short period of time, so be prepared. There have been a few trips that have been a bust, with only a few birds seen, but it can be really great on any given weekend. Check with your local birding organizations to see if there are folks planning on going out - it can be an amazing time.



Harris's sparrow
Mike Blair photo

Letter . . .

and more each day. I'm a life-long Kansas resident – 57-plus years – and am so thankful for our ever-expanding outdoor opportunities.

Please pass my thanks on to Mike Blair, Mark Shoup and everyone else who contribute to the magazine and KDWP programs.

I've gotten to know Mike Rader at some of the birding events this year and look forward to more times together.

Thanks again.

*David S Welfelt
Newton*

Editor:

The July/August issue presented some good items and one unfortunate note. Bob Gress' photo spread was fantastic to the point of being thrilling. Really nice work, and not often seen with these beautiful small species. The bio on Keith Sexton was also above par, which is appropriate as Keith has always operated at that level. The years do go by – I hadn't realized he'd been with the agency that long. I could not make the claim that he is a friend; most of my contact over the years was via telephone, but his cooperative, friendly attitude made every contact a pleasure. Not to mention the reliable, in-depth knowledge he generously and consistently offered. Keith would've been a success at anything he wished to try. Fortunately for our state and its wildlife, he chose an area all Kansans can value.

The downside to the issue was the unhappy news that Bob Mathews is leaving our state. His service has been invaluable and superlative. It's always disheartening to lose a proven, diligent professional. Certainly he has earned a large measure of good luck, and undoubtedly he'll have it. So long Bob. Your efforts won't soon be forgotten.

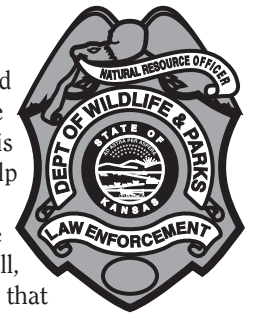
Regards,

*Randy Winter
Manhattan*

IT'S THE LAW

with Kevin Jones

Rules For Safety



The fall hunting seasons are upon us, and long-awaited trips afield are becoming a reality. It's time to get outside and enjoy the experience and create new memories. Time is precious to all of us, and there are a few things that help make an experience more rewarding.

Each fall, our officers check thousands of hunters in the field. If you are contacted by a KDWP game warden this fall, here are a few things identified by Kansas game wardens that will help them do their job more efficiently and keep everyone safe.

FIRST, use safe practices when handling guns and control the muzzle. Know how to safely unload a firearm and make it safe. Do not lean firearms against unsecured or unsteady rests such as fences and vehicles. Make sure you are familiar with your gun's safety and never carry the gun with the safety off. Never point the muzzle of your gun at anything you do not want to shoot.

SECOND, have your license, permit, stamps, and hunter education card with you in the field. Carry them where they are easily accessible.

THIRD, keep dogs under control or kennel them while visiting with an officer to ensure everyone's safety.

FOURTH, and very important, do not use a rifle scope in place of binoculars or a spotting scope. Binoculars and spotting scopes should be used for spotting game and identifying targets before the rifle scope is used. Rifle scopes are sighting devices for the gun, and if the gun discharges, the bullet is going to hit where the scope is trained.

And **FIFTH**, keep the game you bag separate from the game bagged by other hunters. This simple step can speed up the process of field checking your game.

Help our officers do their jobs by being patient, cooperative and providing forthright answers to their questions. Remember, the officers are doing the job they were hired to do – to keep hunting safe and protect the wild resources you cherish. It the mission of the Law Enforcement Division to provide courteous, professional law enforcement services. By practicing these tips, our officers will be able to do their job in a safe, efficient manner and let you get back to hunting.





HABITAT HELP with Jake George

CONTINUOUS CRP NOW



Most everyone who is familiar with the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) can tell you that the large tracts of maintained and reestablished grassland help to decrease soil erosion and improve surface water quality. Most hunters can tell you that these same tracts, when properly managed, provide excellent wildlife habitat. But what about Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CCRP) practices?

Not many people, except those landowners already enrolled, are aware of the many options for habitat improvement offered through the CCRP. Being a continuous program, CCRP does not require a general sign-up in order for landowners to enroll. Because of the large number of CRP contracts that are set to expire in the coming years, compounded by the current lack of a general sign-up, enrollment in CCRP practices has become an increasingly important tool for the maintenance and creation of wildlife habitat.

CCRP enrollment is similar to CRP in that tracts are retired for a period of 10 to 15 years; however, only small portions of the field, such as filter strips, are included, allowing the majority of the field to be farmed. Although CCRP tracts are generally smaller in total acreage than those enrolled through the CRP general sign-up, these areas provide quality habitat for wildlife by creating increased edge, diversity, and small patches of permanent cover in and around fields.

CCRP offers landowners many options, whether they are planning to break out ground with an expiring CRP contract or are looking for a way to increase wildlife habitat and diversity. Landowners with an interest in wildlife should call 620-672-0760 for the name of a KDWP private lands biologist who can assist with developing a plan that will help ensure that wildlife benefits from these practices are maximized.

2009 Kansas Hatchery/Stocking Report

Each year, district fisheries biologists examine sample and creel census data for the lakes they manage and come up with a management plan to maintain and enhance angling opportunities. One of the most important tools in this process involves stocking game fish. Requests for numbers and sizes of specific game fish species are presented to hatchery staff at four KDWP hatcheries: Meade, Pratt, Milford and Farlington.

Fisheries section staff work long hours each spring and summer to collect and raise fish to meet the requests. The result is an incredible number of game fish stocked each year and ultimately more fish for anglers to catch. The following are the cumulative stocking requests and fish produced for 2009.

- Walleye - fry requested: 36,341,000 – stocked: **52,375,504**
- Walleye - fingerlings requested: 652,800 – stocked: **797,166**
- Saugeye - fry requested: 2,000,000 – stocked: **5,950,000**
- Saugeye - fingerlings requested: 680,475 stocked: **792,229**
- Wiper - fry requested: 5,526,000 stocked: **8,991,000**
- Wiper - fingerlings requested: 349,897 – stocked: **425,547**
- Largemouth bass - fingerlings requested: 255,610 – stocked: **126,703**
- Smallmouth bass - fingerlings requested: 131,950 – stocked: **129,000**
- Striped bass - fry requested: 300,000 – stocked: **500,000**
- Striped bass - fingerlings requested: 53,100 – stocked: **58,108**
- Sauger - fry requested: 900,000 – stocked: **1,160,000**
- Channel catfish-fry requested: 2,200,000 – stocked: **2,600,000**

Expected production results for this fall.

- 310,500** channel catfish intermediates
- 615,000** channel catfish fingerlings
- 5,000** paddlefish intermediates
- 17,200** redear sunfish fingerlings
- 15,725** wiper intermediates
- 20,000** bluegill adults
- 74,750** blue catfish fingerlings
- 10,050** hybrid sunfish adults



Mike Blair photo

FISH SQUEEZER

with Tommie Berger

Fall netting to predict the future

September signals the end of summer, and many of us begin looking forward to the fall hunting opportunities. Fall fishing can be some of the most successful of the year, so you need to mix in some fishing trips around the hunting.

Most warm water fish species in Kansas reproduce or spawn in the spring or early summer. Most fish will only spawn one time per year but some sunfish species – namely bluegill and green sunfish – will spawn several times during the summer months if the conditions are right.

I've heard from anglers who think fish spawn both in the spring and the fall because they often catch fish in the fall that are full of eggs. Just because fish have eggs in the fall does not mean they are ready to spawn. Cold winter water limits fish growth during this season, so most fish start egg development in late summer and fall so that the eggs are mature by spawning time in the spring. They simply carry those eggs around all winter, and the final developmental stages happen when the water starts to warm up in the spring.

Late summer and fall are

the seasons when we really find out what kind of spawning success our fish had. Biologists start seining or electrofishing for young-of-the-year (YOY) fish during mid-summer, and sometimes we can evaluate several different species with this type of equipment. During the fall netting season, which starts in mid- to late September, we often see YOY fish in our half-inch mesh trap nets. Numbers and sizes will often tell us the strength and health of the year class. Some species, such as walleye and saugeye, may grow to a length of 6-10 inches that first summer, and we catch them with 1-inch gill nets. If we catch six or more per 1-inch gill net, that usually means we have a good year class coming on. In 2007, I had 50 walleye per 1-inch gill net at Wilson, but last year I only collected about eight per 1-inch net.

However, we have learned over the years that lots of YOY fish in the fall does not always mean a strong year class the next year. If the spawn was late and the YOY fish are small, they may not make it



Mike Blair photo

through their first winter. Not only do they get eaten by other fish, they also cannot put on enough body mass or body fat to get them through a long winter without much food. We find this often with largemouth bass in reservoirs. They might have great spawning success and lots of little bass, but they really take a hit their first winter, and next year everyone wonders where they all went. Many times, they just do not survive the winter and early spring when food is not available.

So, as fall approaches, biologists will be evaluating

spawning success for the past year and will be trying to make predictions on how strong our 2009 year class of fish will be. Most of the time we can do a pretty good job of making those predictions, but sometimes we have to wait a full year from now to know for sure.

Make time to fish this fall, but don't get caught up in the myth that because fish have eggs in the fall that they are spawning. Like other animals, fish have gestation periods and most fish species only spawn one time a year – in the spring or early summer.

DEPP ON SHOOTING

Actor Johnny Depp, star of movies such as *Pirates of the Caribbean*, says he grew up plinking, starting at about age six in his native Kentucky. He would like to pass along the interest in shooting to his 10-year-old daughter and seven-year-old son, reports the Indo-Asian News Service. "I will most certainly take my kids out for target practice," Depp said.

—*Bullet Points*

WATERFOWL COURSE

The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) Hunter Education Section is offering a waterfowl hunting course on Oct. 3 at the Kansas Wetlands Education Center. The center is located on U.S. Highway 156 northeast of Great Bend on Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area.

The course will feature round-robin training, with participants learning techniques for calling, decoy setting, safety and tactics, conservation, duck identification,

retrieving (with and without dogs), and prevention of wounding loss. In addition, participants will pattern shotguns, learn range estimation techniques, and practice shooting clay targets with nontoxic shotshells.

A \$25 pre-registration fee is required but will be refunded to those who show up. The registration deadline is Sept. 29. Contact the KDWP Hunter Education Section at 620-672-5911.

—*KDWP News*



There is good news for nonresident deer hunters this year: all applicants for Nonresident Whitetail Either Sex Deer permits were successful. This is the first year all applicants have been successful, and this success is directly attributable to changes in the permit allocation process made by the KDWP last year. Not only were all applicants successful, leftover permits were available in all units.

The current allocation system was developed after nearly two years of work, which included extensive public input, 14 public meetings, and legislative approval. The old process of allocating permits was based on a percentage of permits sold to residents in each unit the previous year. The new system is based on "adjustment factors," including landowner preferences, deer-vehicle accidents, hunter demand, age structure in the harvest, and health of the herd. The new process also eliminated the transferable permit system that had become burdensome and confusing to both landowners and hunters.

—KDWP News

On The Web with Mark Shoup

KDWP BLOG REMINDER WHERE TO SHOOT

KDWP BLOG

Got a suggestion, compliment, or something you want to get off your chest. Express your opinions at the KDWP Blog. Hunters, anglers, boaters, campers, and wildlife watchers are passionate about their outdoor recreation. KDWP staff share that passion and want to hear what you think about the topics and issues introduced on the KDWP website.

The blog exists to allow the exchange of ideas and opinions between the department and its constituents, so visit today and express an opinion or just "listen in" at <http://kdwp.blogspot.com>.



WHERE TO SHOOT

Hunting season is in full swing, but many hunters are still looking for places to sight in rifles, sharpen wingshooting skills, or just have fun

shooting. If you're in one of these categories, wheretoshoot.org is the place for you. This is a state-by-state directory where you can just click a big button that says "Find a Place to Shoot," and the hunt begins.

You can search by state, area code, or zip code and specify a number of shooting options, including archery, handgun, instruction/rentals, retail, rifle, shotgun, and women's/youth programs. A search of clubs offering shotgun shooting within 60 miles of zip code 67124 turns up nine places to shoot, including their distances from Pratt. A similar search from zip 67208 (Wichita) reveals 16 locations. Each location includes a link that provides information on the individual facility and contact information.

Don't put off practice this fall because you don't know where to go; wheretoshoot.org will tell you.



Glen Elder Youth Fishing Tourney

KDWP hosted the 5th Annual Youth Fishing Tournament at Waconda Lake on June 6. A record number of young anglers boarded boats and hit the water for a full day of fishing. The fish cooperated, and all boats were able to bring in at least a few, with small walleye dominating the catch. Of the 121 youth who fished on the 29 boats volunteered by local anglers, 104 were able to catch at least one fish. The total of 454 caught fish included 175 walleye, 106 crappie, 97 drum, 55 white bass, 11 channel catfish, six smallmouth bass, three wipers, and one bluegill.

Special thanks to the boat drivers, the Waconda Lake Association for providing lunch, Wayne Miner, who donated 100 dozen night crawlers, and numerous local sponsors who donated prizes worth more than \$1,000. Special thanks also to the staff of the Glen Elder area office for assisting with the event.

Glen Elder staff plan to host this event again in June 2010, so mark it on your calendars.

—Glen Elder staff



DOVE FEAST



The long awaited hunting seasons are finally here when dove season opens September 1. It's a great feeling to be in the field again, enjoying the sights and sounds of a warm September evening. Then a gray blur of a dove streaks by. Startled back to reality, you snap off a shot into thin air. Dove season has officially begun.

If you are smart enough to remember an extra box of shells, you may come home with a limit of 15 doves. Now the work of preparing them for the table begins. I used to wait until I got home to clean doves, but I've noticed an improvement in flavor when I dress the birds as soon as I retrieve them. I carry a small cooler with ice to keep dressed doves cool. I know it sounds messy, but it's actually easier than cleaning them in a dark garage

when you get home. I think I still have loose feathers floating around my garage from one of those late-night cleanings.

Now when I get my dressed birds home, I give the breasts a thorough rinsing and place them in cool salt water in the refrigerator. If I don't eat them the next evening, I can keep them this way for up to four days before freezing. It's best to freeze dove breasts in a plastic container covered with fresh water. This protects the meat from freezer burn. You can do this with freezer bags but be sure to place bags in a pan when freezing and thawing. Sharp bones always puncture the bag, and you will have a mess.

The standard cooking method for doves is to wrap with bacon and grill, but I will sometimes use a variation of this

method. I like to place pickled jalapenos into slits cut along the keel bone before wrapping with bacon. I also use the cheapest, thinnest bacon I can find. One slice can be cut and stretched over four doves and pinned with toothpicks. It is also helpful if you consistently turn the breasts while on the grill until the bacon is done. Remember, the secret to great tasting dove is not overcooking it. Overcooked dove is dry and liver-flavored. Trust the bacon. When it is done, so is the dove.



FISHIN' with Mike Miller

FISHING ROCKS, ROCKS

Yep. Fall fishing rocks, and I mean that both in the spirit of youth slang because it's good – "it rocks" – and because fishing around rock structure "rocks" during the fall.

Fall fishing can be excellent, but it's not as dependable as springtime fishing. It's true, the water is cooling in the fall, and the fish will feed heavily with winter approaching and because prey species are plentiful. But there are days when fall fish are tough to catch, so narrowing your focus to specific structure can help you be more successful.

In a lake or reservoir, start fishing the rocks – riprap along dams and jetties, rocky points, or natural rock shorelines. If you find rocks close to deep water, such as along the dam, a shoreline where the river channel swings in close, or a long point that slopes to deep water, you've found gold.

It's all about the food. Rocks attract stuff that game fish

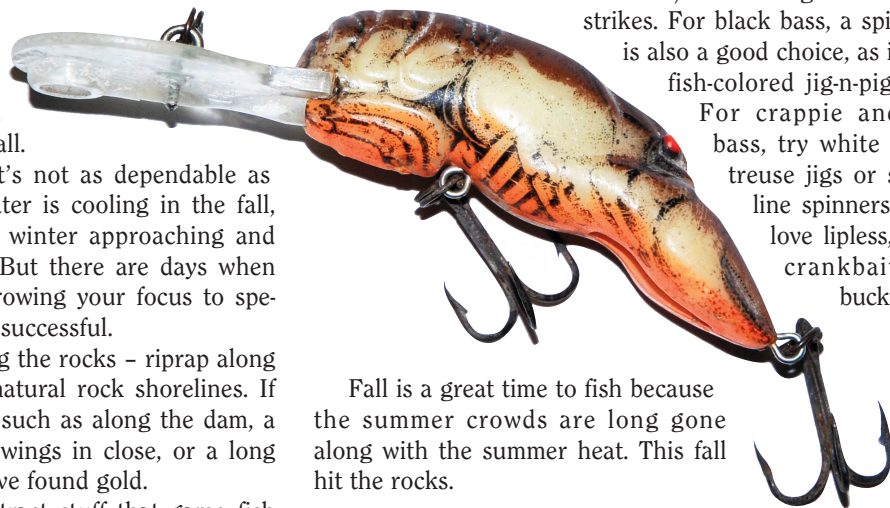
like to eat – gizzard shad and crayfish. Gizzard shad are the main forage in our reservoirs, and they will often congregate along rocky/riprapped shorelines. Crayfish live in the rocks, and they are large, high-protein meals all fish love to eat.

Deep-diving shad- or crayfish-colored crankbaits are great fall lures. Use the deep-diving plug even in shallow water, bouncing it off the rocks if you can. When the lip hits a rock,

the noise and/or darting action elicits strikes. For black bass, a spinnerbait

is also a good choice, as is a crayfish-colored jig-n-pig combo.

For crappie and white bass, try white or chartreuse jigs or small in-line spinners. Wipers love lipless, rattling crankbaits and bucktail jigs.

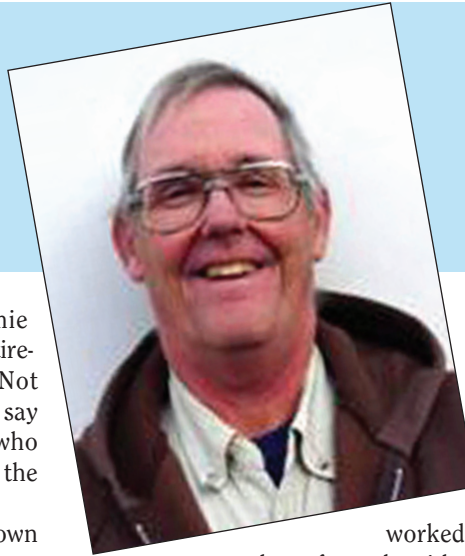


Fall is a great time to fish because the summer crowds are long gone along with the summer heat. This fall hit the rocks.

PROFILE:

with Mark Shoup

TOMMIE BERGER



Anyone who knows district fisheries biologist Tommie Berger knows he is knowledgeable, friendly, upbeat, and a tireless ambassador for the natural resources of Kansas. Not everyone, however, would know that Berger is lucky. I say Berger is lucky because he is one of those rare people who knew early on what kind of work he wanted to do, and the stars aligned for him perfectly.

"When I was five or six years old, my dad took me to Brown State Fishing Lake," Berger recalls. "We were in a bait shop, but the lake was mostly frozen over, and I told Dad I was going out watch some ducks swimming in an open spot in the lake. On the way out, I found a dead mallard in the ice, and I was so excited that I dug it out and ran back to the bait shop to show it to my dad. There was this great big game warden in there named John Spence, and he looked at me kind of scary-like and said, 'Son, do you know that waterfowl season is closed? I can't let you keep that duck.'

"I was so scared that I gave it right over to him, but then he smiled and pulled the curly tail feathers out, handed them to me, and became real nice and polite. From that day on, I knew I wanted to be a game warden or work with natural resources."

Berger's upbringing fostered this desire. He spent his first 12 years in rural Brown County, fishing for bullheads and channel cat in the Wolf River, which ran through the family farm. Two ponds provided ample opportunity for crappie and bass fishing, and he had a .22 for rabbit hunting. Game birds came into the mix when he was about 10.

"One day, I saw some quail and ran to the house and told Dad," he explains. "He went to the gun cabinet and pulled out an old single-shot 20-gauge and said 'Have at 'em.' I was so surprised and proud because I had never been permitted to hunt with the shotgun before. It took me two or three boxes of shells before I ever got a quail, but I didn't care. I had earned the right to hunt them, and that felt great."

When Berger was in sixth grade, the family moved to rural Leavenworth County where he continued to pursue his hunting and fishing exploits, and by the time he reached high school, he told everyone he was going to be a game warden. Graduating from Basehor High School in 1967, Berger went straight to K-State and earned a degree in fisheries and wildlife management in 1971. He was also enlisted in Army ROTC during this time, so after graduation, he went to Ft. Gordon, Georgia where military police training awaited. With two weeks left in this training, he was told that an opening had come up at Ft. Riley, and Berger jumped on it. He was headed close to home for his duty station. But Lady luck had more good fortune. Once at Ft. Riley, he volunteered his services to the Rod and Gun Club, where he found that the fort's conservation officer was leaving in a month, and he was offered the job.

Thus, Berger spent the last 17 months of his active duty service in the very field for which he was schooled.

During his time at Ft. Riley, Berger worked with and got to know a

number of people with the Kansas Forestry, Fish, and Game Commission, and when he mustered out of service in 1973, he landed a job in Manhattan as the agency's district fisheries biologist. In 1978, he was transferred to Dodge City, where he met his wife, and in 1994 he took the job based at Wilson Reservoir. Today, Berger manages Wilson and Kanopolis reservoirs, along with state and community lakes in Ellsworth, Lincoln, Ottawa, Russell, and Saline counties.

It would seem that Berger has led a charmed life, but hard work has been the driving force behind his success. Like all fisheries biologists, he is responsible for spring and fall fish sampling of the lakes in his district, evaluating fish populations, recommending length and creel limits and stocking requests, maintaining fish feeders, habitat and water quality management, and weekly fishing reports. But Berger has a passion for people and the good instincts to understand that educating the public is key to resource management.

"A big part of my career has been spent trying to get people to enjoy the great outdoors," Berger explains.

To this end, he is involved in KDWP's Hunter, Bowhunter, Furharvester, and Aquatic education programs. In addition, he is active in the Becoming an Outdoors Woman Program and the annual Outdoor Adventure Camp for youth at Rock Springs 4-H Camp. If this were not enough, he writes a weekly column for six newspapers, broadcasts two reports per week on four different radio stations, each a different program, and writes the "Fish Squeezer" column for this magazine.

"People need to know about the outdoors, but hunters and anglers need to know they are important, too," he adds. "They buy the licenses and fund the resources, so communicating with them is as important as recruiting the younger generation. I hope our young biologists are ready carry on this education mission."

Berger has been with the agency for 36 years now, but when asked about retirement, he scoffs. "I wouldn't trade these years for anything. I don't think I'll ever quit. It would be a tough day for me, but when I do, I'll still keep working with kids and anyone else who wants to learn about the outdoors."

This "working" is really a figure of speech for Berger. Wildlife may be his love and career, but he's a people person at heart. And a big heart it is.

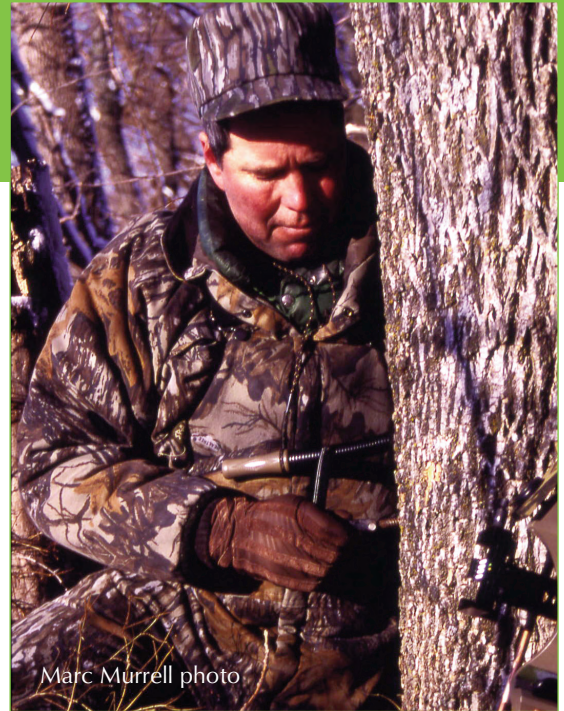
HUNTING SPOTS

with Marc Murrell

TREESTAND SAFETY

Deer hunters all across Kansas will be heading to their favorite tree-stands in the next few months. Most archery deer hunters and many firearm deer hunters prefer to hunt from elevated stands. Hunting from stands that are 12 to 20 feet above ground provides several advantages. First, elevation provides the hunter with a commanding view of the area. Second, the hunter is above the deer's normal field of vision, and third, the scent of the hunter may be carried above the deer's sense of smell. Stands can be as crude as a piece of lumber nailed to the fork of a tree or as elaborate as a commercial ladder stand with padded seat and gun rest. But hunters beware, there are risks involved with treestand hunting. In a careless instant, your hunt, or your life, could be ruined.

Each hunting season we read the tragic headlines or hear about a treestand accident. Some accident victims are lucky, suffering only broken bones, scrapes, cuts or bruises. Occasionally the results of a fall are tragic and result in paralysis or even death.



Marc Murrell photo

Hunt safely from treestands by following these basic rules:

• **Use a quality stand designed for the type of hunting you enjoy.** Stands made of wood and nails are notorious for rotting and becoming unstable due to wind and weather and crash down when a hunter least expects it.



Marc Murrell photo

• **Have a plan.** Deer hunting is often a solitary pursuit, but you should always let your family and hunting buddies know where your treestands are. Draw a map of your hunting spots with approximate locations of each stand. Always tell a loved one or friend where you're hunting each trip. Let them know when you expect to be back. If you have a cell phone, carry it.

• **Wear a quality safety harness at all times.** This is one of the most important rules – wear a safety harness, even when you're putting the stand up or adjusting a stand that's already up. It's a good idea to read the instructional material included with your safety harness, and "test drive" it in a tree a few feet off the ground in your yard.

• **Take extra precaution when using screw-in tree steps.** Make sure the step is securely threaded into healthy, solid wood. Keep your foot close to the tree rather than on the outer end of the step. Always use caution when steps might be wet or icy.

• **Never leave screw-in steps and portable stands in the tree year-round.** Weather, insects and animals can damage the equipment, making it dangerous.

• **Always use a haul line.** Use a haul line to get rifle (unloaded of course), bow and other gear safely into and out of your stand.

• **Never step on or rest your weight on a dead limb.** And never assume a limb is safe because it was last year. It's best to check any limb before you put any weight on it.

• **Follow all instructions that come with a commercial portable stand and safety harness.** Use common sense, and hunt only as high as you feel comfortable.

**PARK
VIEW**



with **Kathy Pritchett**

**Kansas
AmeriCorps**

Have you stayed in a KDWP cabin and enjoyed the convenient ramp to the porch and deck? Have you walked on Tuttle Creek's Western Heritage Trail? Have you visited Elk City State Park after this summer's floods and marvelled that most of the flood debris was gone? Were trees blocking your street from ice storms or wind events removed, cut up and chipped? If so, you benefitted from KDWP's participation in the AmeriCorps program.

AmeriCorps is a service-learning program modeled on the Peace Corps. In exchange for a year's service, members receive tangible benefits of a living stipend during the term of service and an education award upon completion of service. They also gain the intangible benefits of training and experience in areas ranging from CPR and use of power tools to public speaking, trail building, and camp-ground design. The education award can be used within seven years for education expenses at Title IV schools or to pay off qualified student loans. Full-time members are also eligible for health insurance and childcare assistance.

In the 10 years that KDWP has administered an AmeriCorps program, members have built trails, renovated campsites, developed outreach media, presented entertaining educational programs, and worked hard to improve the environment. They also

served on the front lines of natural disaster recovery, such as the tornados in Hoisington, Chapman and Greensburg, and the flooding in Independence. Members secured the safety of citizens, removed debris and helped recover damaged possessions. AmeriCorps members also visit state park campsites to take surveys on visitor satisfaction.

The program has served as a "foot in the door" for 19 members who eventually became full-time KDWP employees. Other alumni have used their education awards to finish degrees, many in teaching or other areas of public service, such as firefighting. The program has benefited KDWP tremendously in terms of getting projects done that wouldn't have been completed because of limited manpower and budget.

AmeriCorps participants have benefited, as well. Some who knew they wanted a career in natural resources have made important networking contacts. Others, less sure about a career path, have found one through the program. Still others who may have struggled to find a direction have found abilities and motivation through the mentoring aspect of the program.

The next time you visit a state park or wildlife area, watch for the AmeriCorps logo. It may be on a sign, a brochure, a survey or a member's shirt or hat. If you have the time, ask about the program and what it means to the member.

For more information, go online to kdwp.state.ks.us/news/State-Parks/AmeriCorps.



DOYLE, HAGEMAN TO HALL OF FAME

The Kansas Hunter Education Instructor Association (KHEIA) – an independent group of volunteer instructors – inducted three people to the Kansas Hunter Education Hall of Fame last July. Stacy Hageman, Zenda; Wayne Doyle, Pratt; and George Peterson, Topeka, join three others in the Hall of Fame, which was opened in 2006.

Hageman is administrative assistant for the statewide Hunter Education (HE) Program, working out KDWP's Pratt Operations Office. Peterson is a 33-year volunteer instructor from Topeka who has been referred to as a "fundraiser extraordinaire." Doyle has been statewide coordinator for KDWP's Hunter Education Program since 1998 and has been involved with the program for 25 years.

Criteria for nominees to the Kansas Hunter Education Hall of Fame include a minimum of 15 years service as a certified HE instructor, any KDWP employee, or anyone who has given significant support to the HE program. Nominees do not have to



be KHEIA members. Selection is limited to a maximum of five inductees per year, and awards are to be presented at least once every three years. Previous inductees include Ed Augustine, Junction City; Lloyd "Butch" Harris, Topeka; and Dean Wiegels, Leoti.

—KDWP News



There is some disagreement about the climate change issue isn't there? Let's rethink this whole argument. Exchange the word "conservation" for the "climate change" connotation in anything you read about this issue and you may develop a different perspective. The exact measures being proposed in current legislation addressing "climate change" should be the very same tactics if we were to supplant the word "conservation" into the proposals anywhere reference is made to climate change, greenhouse gases, or emissions.

Forty years ago, it was appropriate to consider that polluters were responsible and should pay for their pollution. Consequences of greenhouse gases were pretty well known even then. Now, it appears we are on the verge of seeing some significant climate change legislation passed. But, the broader issue is still conservation. I wonder if there would be so much opposition if the terminology was

couched in terms of "conservation" rather than the seemingly volatile "climate change" wording?

As a hunter and angler, do you have anything at stake in the American Clean Energy and Security Act being considered at this writing? You bet you do! There will be money in this bill to address conservation issues for Kansas wildlife. Ultimately, several million dollars a year will be available to apply to such projects such as improving rangeland condition for prairie chickens, which will help both wildlife and the beef producers. Other projects will deal with improving migration for stream fish by taking out or improving low head dams that impede reproduction. There will be substantial help for dealing with the negative effects of wind power – which may have major impacts on prairie chickens and potentially other prairie-dependant species. We could put major funding behind bringing bobwhite quail back.

Invasive species pose a grave threat to

some native species. The wildlife component of this conservation legislation will provide tools needed to fight a nuisance species war. Climate change issues deal with wildlife changes too. But, it's all conservation. As sportsmen and other outdoor enthusiasts, we need to re-enforce that conservation is a good thing and is the necessary mind set for sustaining a healthy future for our planet and our offspring. It's a simple formula: conservation is good; pollution is bad. Fix it!

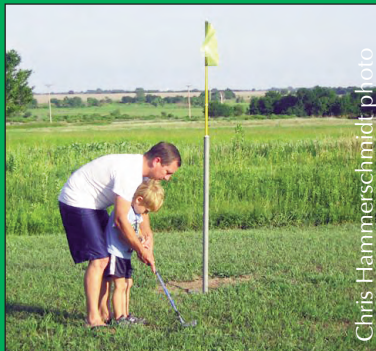
PLAY 18 AT ELK CITY

For those who love state parks and would like to sharpen their short golf game, Elk City State Park's new 3-par golf course is the place to go. While you won't be able to putt, each hole ranges from 60-100 yards, offering the perfect opportunity to practice approaches and chipping. Elk City State Park is in Montgomery County on the shores of Elk City Reservoir, just west of Independence.

The course was the brainchild of park manager Chris Hammerschmidt and his staff. The first nine holes were built in July of 2008, with fairways mowed through tall pasture grass and "greens" consisting of a tightly-mowed area with a car rim embedded in the ground and filled with sand. A permanent pole complete with flag is placed in the middle of the "cup," and linksters are required to chip, rather than putt, to hole out. Each hole is complete with hazards, including dog-legs, trees, and water.

The course proved to be so popular that another nine holes were added in the fall of 2008, and players can be seen on the links every weekend throughout summer. Tournaments are held on holiday weekends. The only cost is a park vehicle permit.

—KDWP News



KDWP Wildlife Areas Beckon Dove and Hunters

To enhance public land dove hunting opportunities, select KDWP wildlife areas feature fields managed specifically to attract doves. Dove fields may include standing or mowed sunflowers, unharvested strips of wheat and burned crop stubble, mowed wheat, mixed plantings, or any combination of techniques.

Some areas will have restricted hunting dates or times, and others may be restricted to youth, novice, and/or disabled hunters. Some may also require hunters using managed dove fields to obtain and complete a daily hunt permit or obtain access through a drawing. Others are open to the general public. Fields within waterfowl management areas require non-toxic shot only.

Go to the KDWP website to find details on areas specially managed for doves. Click "Hunting/Migratory Birds/Doves/Managed Hunting Areas" for details on the nearest managed dove area.

—KDWP News



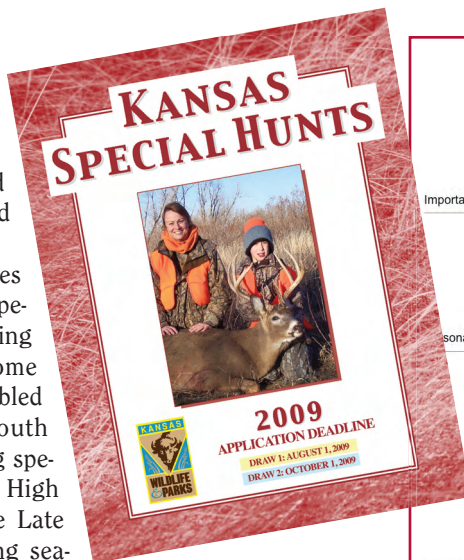
SPECIAL HUNT DEADLINE

The deadline for November through February special hunts is Oct. 1. The Special Hunts Program offers a variety of limited hunts, and many are designed to introduce youth and novices to hunting, usually in an uncrowded place with a good opportunity for success.

Not all special hunts are for youth or novices only. Some are open to all hunters, and each special hunt targets specific game species, including doves, upland game, waterfowl, and deer. Some take place during special the special youth/disabled deer season Sept. 12-20, some during the youth upland game season Nov. 7-8, and others during special youth waterfowl seasons, Oct. 3-4 for the High Plains and Early zones and Oct. 24-25 for the Late Zone. Still others occur during regular hunting seasons and are open to everyone. Special hunts will be conducted in all regions of the state on both public and private land.

Apply now by going online to www.kdwp.state.ks.us. Click "Hunting" and then "Special Hunts." If you do not have computer access, apply by telephone at 620-672-5911 and ask for special hunts.

—KDWP News



SPECIAL HUNT APPLICATION
Second Draw - November 2009—February 2010

Please fill out this form completely and accurately! Only one application per period per hunter is allowed. Good luck!

Deadline for application is 11:59p CDT October 1, 2009

Results for the First Draw (September & October hunts) are available at <http://specialhunts.kdfishandwildlife.org>

Important - Please Read

Review the 2009 Special Hunts Booklet before filling out this form. It is important to note that some hunts require youth or novice hunter participation, so make sure you understand the type of hunt being offered before applying.

This online application requires an e-mail address. Successful applicants will be notified by e-mail only. If you do not have an e-mail address or are unable to use this form you may apply by phone. Call (620) 672 5911 and ask for Fisheries & Wildlife. You may refer other potential applicants who may not have internet access to this phone number as well.

Personal Information

Name:

Address:

City: State: Zip:

Phone:

E-mail:

Verify E-mail:

Date of Birth:

Acknowledgement:
Checking this box indicates your acknowledgement that the personal information on this form is true and accurate to the best of your knowledge. Fraudulent and duplicate entries will be discarded.

Hunt Preferences

List preferences only once per column; repeating the same choice three times will not increase your chances of selection. Select "ANY" date option for best odds of a successful application. You must select a hunt code - selecting "ANY" by itself will not work.

Open the 2009 Hunt Code Table in a new window for details. Note: this is the second of two draws. Apply now for November-February hunts. The application period for September/October hunts is closed

To erase a selection, choose the blank option (first in the list):

Choice	UplandDove	Waterfowl	Deer	Fall Turkey	Furbearer/Coyote
1st	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
2nd	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
3rd	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Kansas ECO-Meets

The Kansas ECO-Meet season is right around the corner, kicking off with the Wilson Lake meet on September 30. The ECO-Meet program is a series of quiz-bowl-type competitions and is in its eleventh year as a statewide program. It gives middle and high school students the opportunity to prove their knowledge and skills in identification of native Kansas plants, wildlife and ecosystems. Students compete in four different events within a meet. Individual competitions include two table tests, which involve a certain grouping of Kansas wildlife and a particular ecosystem. Teams compete in interpretive skits and plant scavenger hunts. Regional events provide awards to students in the form of medals, and most offer scholarships to top finishers.

There are nine regional ECO-Meets planned for this fall, with the following locations scheduled:

- **Wilson Lake - Sylvan Grove - Wednesday, 9/30**
- **Hays/Webster - Hays - Thursday, 10/1**
- **Milford Lake - Junction City - Wednesday, 10/7**
- **Lakewood Discovery Center - Salina - Thursday, 10/8**
- **Great Plains Nature Center - Wichita - Tuesday, 10/13**
- **Dillon Nature Center - Hutchinson - Wednesday, 10/14**
- **Prairie Park Nature Center - Lawrence - Monday, 10/1 (new event for 2009)**
- **Southeast Kansas Education Center - Greenbush - Thursday, 10/22**
- **Ernie Miller Nature Center - Olathe - Wednesday, 10/28**



The State Finals ECO-Meet will be held at Ft. Larned National Historic Site on Thursday, Nov. 5. With the help of the Kansas Wildscape Foundation, the KDWP, private companies and other organizations, scholarship funds are available to top-placing teams and individuals at the state finals.

For more information about participating in ECO-Meet, assisting at an event, or helping with scholarships, go online at www.kansascomeet.org or contact Mike Rader at (620) 672-0708 or miker@wp.state.ks.us.

— Mike Rader

2009 Sportsmen's

TURKEY

2010 SPRING TURKEY

- Regular Season
(firearm/archery): April 14 - May 31, 2010
- Archery-Only Season: April 1 - 13, 2010
- Youth/Disabled Season: April 1 - 13, 2010

2009 FALL TURKEY:

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

FURBEARER HUNTING & TRAPPING

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

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

BEAVER TRAPPING

- Season Dates (statewide):
Nov. 18, 2009 - March 31, 2010

BIG GAME

DEER:

- Youth and Disability: Sept. 12 - Sept. 20, 2009
- Early Muzzleloader: Sept. 21 - Oct. 4, 2009
- Archery: Sept. 21 - Dec. 31, 2009
- Early Firearm (DMU 19 only):
Oct. 10 - Oct. 18, 2009
- Regular Firearm: Dec. 2 - Dec. 13, 2009
- Firearm Extended Whitetail Antlerless Season:
Jan. 1 - Jan. 10, 2010 (Open for Units 4, 5, 6, 7,
8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 19 only.)
- Archery Extended Whitetail Antlerless Season
(DMU 19 only): Jan. 4 - Jan. 31, 2010
- Special Extended Firearms White-tailed
Antlerless Season: Jan. 11- Jan. 17, 2010
(Open for unit 7, 8 and 15 only.)

ANTELOPE

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

ELK (residents only)

Outside Fort Riley:

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

On Fort Riley:

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

MIGRATORY GAME BIRDS

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

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

EXOTIC DOVE

(Eurasian collared and ringed turtle doves only)

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

RAIL (Sora and Virginia)

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

SNIPE

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

WOODCOCK

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

SANDHILL CRANE

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

Calendar

TEAL

- Season High Plains: Sept. 19-26
- Season Low Plains: Sept. 12-27
- Daily bag limit: 4
- Possession limit: 8

DUCK

- Season: High Plains:
Oct. 10 - Jan. 5, 2010 and Jan. 23-31, 2010
- Season: Early Zone:
Oct. 10 - Dec. 6 and Dec. 19 - Jan. 3, 2010
- Season: Late Zone:
Oct. 31 - Jan. 3, 2010 and Jan. 23-31, 2010
- Daily bag limit: 5 (consult regulations)
- Possession limit: twice daily bag

CANADA GEESE

- Season:
Oct. 31 - Nov. 8 and Nov. 11 - Feb. 14, 2010
- Daily bag limit: 3
- Possession limit: twice daily bag

WHITE-FRONTED GEESE

- Oct. 31 - Nov. 8 and Nov. 11 - Jan. 3, 2010
- Daily bag limit: 2
- Possession limit: twice daily bag

LIGHT GEESE

- Oct. 31 - Nov. 8 and Nov. 11 - Feb. 14, 2010
- Daily bag limit: 20
- Possession limit: none

UPLAND GAME BIRDS

PHEASANTS

- Season: Nov. 14, 2009 - Jan. 31, 2010
- Youth Season: Nov. 7 - 8, 2009
- Daily bag limit: 4 cocks in regular season, 2 cocks in youth season

QUAIL

- Season: Nov. 14, 2009 - Jan. 31, 2010
- Youth Season: Nov. 7 - 8, 2009
- Daily Bag Limit Quail: 8 in regular season, 4 in youth season

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
- Daily Bag Limit: 2 (Southwest Zone 1)
- Possession Limit: twice daily bag

SMALL GAME ANIMALS

SQUIRREL

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

RABBITS (Cottontail & Jack rabbit)

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

CROW

- Season: Nov. 10 - March 10, 2010
- Daily bag/Possession Limit: No Limit

FISHING SEASONS

BULLFROGS

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

FLOATLINE SEASON

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

TROUT SEASON

- Oct. 15 - April 15, 2010
- Area open: Designated trout waters listed at www.kdwp.state.ks.us



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

Far and few between, lakes are, in this arid, western Kansas land. But Lake Scott State Park is much more than access to water. The park provides unique outdoor opportunities, as well as a lesson in Native American history.



Great Plains Paradise: Lake Scott State Park

Anyone who has driven west on Highway 96 toward Scott City — perhaps to a sporting event or just as a diversion from the I-70 route to Colorado — knows that it is a long, flat, straight road. Passing through Scott City, most people never realize that one of the most stunning landscapes in the Midwest lies a mere 12 miles north of town.

Geologists tell us this natural artistry began in the Tertiary

Period, as far back as 60 million years. The great Rocky Mountains blasted skyward some 63 million years ago, propelled by massive shifting of the Earth's crust. Rivers and streams poured out of these mountains, carrying with them immense amounts of rocky debris which, over the next several million years, laid immense sheets of sand and gravel over western Kansas. Beneath this, one of the largest "underground oceans" in the world — the Ogallala Aquifer,

comprising approximately 174,000 square miles — was buried. Above ground, seeps and streams continued to sculpt the landscape, slicing through a veneer of younger deposits. Evaporating water also deposited a soft, limy cement — called "caliche" — that would later be used as mortar by European settlers when they cut the much harder limestone deposits — another product of this geological activity — to build the first permanent homes in the region.



Fed by Ladder Creek and springs, the lake is clear and maintains a consistent level even during dry years. Bass, bluegill, catfish and walleye tempt anglers year-round, and during the winter, rainbow trout are stocked to provide a welcome winter angling opportunity.

All these deposits, even the limestone, were relatively soft, making the perfect material for Mother Nature to carve the landscape that may now be seen just north of Scott City, at Lake Scott State Park. If one were to suddenly snatch L. Frank Baum's "Dorothy" from her bland silver screen farm into this environment instead of Oz, she still would likely say, "I don't think we're in Kansas anymore, Toto."

Perhaps as fascinating as the natural history of this area is the human history it attracted. The first known humans to inhabit this area were Taos Indians. That's right, Taos. Apparently fleeing Spanish oppression in New

Mexico, these native people found a perfect place to settle in the arid High Plains about 1664. The canyon was protected from the sight-line of wandering enemies and the worst of winter winds, and natural springs provided ample water year-round. They dug irrigation ditches to water crops and built the northernmost pueblo in the United States.

The eight-room building, called El Cuartelejo ("distant quarters" in Spanish), was short-lived, however. Perhaps they grew homesick or sensed that the Spanish had left the Pueblo homeland, but whatever the reason, the Taos left the area about 20 years after settling there. Shortly after, another tribe

of Pueblo Indians, Picuris (called Picurie in Kansas) occupied the familiar-looking homestead for a couple of years. Historians believe that early French explorers occupied the site for a time, with the last historical reference coming about 1727. For about 175 years, this once vibrant home would remain abandoned and disappear under the stoic power of wind, erosion, and time.

Enter pioneer settler Herbert L. Steele. In 1888, Steele filed a claim in the canyon less than $\frac{1}{4}$ mile from where El Cuartelejo once stood. In 1892, he married Liza Landon, who lived on nearby timber claim with her family and taught school. Using natural limestone for building material and caliche for mortar, both readily available in the area, the couple built a home for themselves that still stands in the state park. The cool springs near Ladder Creek provided ample water for the Steeles, as well as their livestock, garden, and orchard. The thick limestone and mortar kept them warm in winter. A springhouse was built over a nearby artesian well, providing natural refrigeration for milk, cream, eggs, butter, and other perishables in the warmth of summer.

When Herbert Steele was working his ground one day in the mid-1890s, he discovered what appeared to be very old irrigation ditches. Being a man of ingenuity, he decided to put them use. At this time, he also found numerous Indian artifacts. Realizing the significance of his find, he contacted the University of Kansas, which sent archeologists to investigate. This excavation uncovered remains of the old pueblo's stone walls, as well as numerous other artifacts indicating the presence of Pueblo Indians, as well as Apache. The old warriors' refuge was once

again brought to light. (In the early 1970s, the foundation of the pueblo was reconstructed and can still be viewed today.)

Many years later, Herbert and Eliza wanted to preserve El Cuartelejo, so on Sept. 18, 1922, they deeded the site to the Kansas Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR). This visionary and resourceful couple would later deed the rest of their property to the state of Kansas for a park. In 1928, the Kansas Forestry, Fish and Game Commission (now KDWP) took over management of the area, which would eventually include 1,120 acres. In the 1980s, it was

listed by National Geographic's Traveler magazine as one of 50 "must-see" state parks in the country.

The years that carved a canyon in this area and blessed it with natural springs and the consistently-flowing Ladder Creek also made possible construction of the 100-acre Scott State Fishing Lake in 1930. Because of these precious water sources, the lake level varies less than 10 inches in any given year, even in one of the most arid parts of the state. The lake is a remarkable jewel in the crown of this area, which is surrounded by Ogallala rock formations rising 200 feet or more above the water.

Some 150,000 anglers, campers, and nature lovers travel here each year to enjoy the scenery. Some come as far away as Europe, Asia, and the Middle East.

Popping off U.S. Highway 83 onto state highway K-95, the first thing visitors to Lake Scott State Park sees is a spanking new visitors' center. Here, they can pick up park permits, brochures, and any other information they may need for a stay in this paradise on the plains. The facility includes new desks and printers for office staff, a new security system, and a conference room. Eventually, it will be able to host interpretive programs with visual aids, including DVDs



There is dramatic topography surrounding Lake Scott, providing many pleasant views. The region is short grass prairie with limestone outcroppings. The area is known for mule deer, prairie chicken, quail, and excellent pheasant hunting.



Like Meade State Park and many other areas in Western Kansas, Scott carries its own history of the Indian Wars. As recounted in the state park's brochure, "In 1878, Chief Dull Knife and Little Wolf of the Northern Cheyenne escaped from the reservation near Fort Reno, Oklahoma. Their escape took them through western Kansas, and on Sept. 27, the men, women, and children of the Cheyenne Nation made a stand on the bluffs of Beaver Creek, just south of Lake Scott State Park. This encounter with the U.S. Calvary was the last Indian battle in Kansas.

"During the battle, the women and children hid inside a den, which is still visible today. Colonel William H. Lewis was wounded during the fighting and died en route to Fort Wallace, making him the last white casualty of the Indian Wars in Kansas." This fight is known as the Battle of Punished Woman's Fork.

El Cuartelejo is the name of these ruins, remnants of the northern most pueblo dwellings built by Taos Indians in the 1600s. The foundation of the eight-room dwelling was reconstructed in the 1970s to illustrate what it might have looked like hundreds of years ago.

and other media, that will cover park and Indian history, as well as wildlife that inhabit the area.

Other park improvements are in the works. One cabin was installed in late spring, and another is planned for completion this August. In keeping with the Southwest theme offered by El Cuartelejo, both will be finished on the outside with stucco. Using matching funds from the DAR and the Kansas State Historical Society, park staff hope to eventually build an interpretive center

over El Cuartelejo, not only protecting the site from the elements but offering comfortable year-round access.

After entering the park, if you take the left fork in the road, you'll pass Big Springs Nature Trail and Picnic Area. A stop at this shady rest area will not be regretted. Big Springs is the largest natural spring in the area, and it also home to the Scott riffle beetle. A unique endangered species, this beetle is found nowhere else in the world. After



that, travel north to the Steele Home Museum, which is a must. Today, the house is preserved much the same as the Steeles furnished it and is maintained by local volunteer Lavonne Kelch, who knew the Steeles when she was a young girl. Kelch provides tours of the house on special occasions, complete with period dress.

Then on to El Cuartelejo. Or you can take your pick among numerous campgrounds surrounding the lake, set up camp, and then sight-see. You'll get an eyeful just viewing the area. For those who enjoy sitting on the beach and enjoying a more "tropical" atmosphere, the privately-operated Beach House provides the requisite beach and concessions.

With all that Scott has to offer, park manager Rick Stevens' dream is closely tied to El Cuartelejo. "The theme of this park is Native American," he

The park's office and visitor's center opened just this year and houses park staff offices, a conference room and will eventually host interpretive programs. Other park additions include two new rental cabins that can be reserved online or by calling the park office.

explains. "There's a fascinating story there because of the many artifacts that we have found, and we're starting to understand more about how those people lived 350 years ago. To me, this inspires a desire to incorporate a 'green' philosophy in the park, getting to know what it was like to live independently off the land."

While park goers may not be living a Jeremiah Johnson life when they come to Scott, there is plenty of nature to enjoy, and food to be had. Because of its distance from any urban centers, Scott is a relatively quiet park, according to Stevens. People can boat but only at no-wake speeds, making the angling experience a pleasure.

“Walleye are the big secret here,” says Stevens. “They’re kind of hard to catch, but we’ve got some good ones. Bass and channel cat fishing are also very good, and crappie are plentiful but fairly small. In the winter, trout fishing is a big pull, and our cold springs keep them alive longer than most places. We have quite a bit of trout fishing after the season is over.”

Working at Lake Scott State Park is a natural fit for Stevens, who is a Scott City native and has managed the area since 1976.

“My dad grew up west of the lake, and I used to come up here as a kid,” he explains. “I hadn’t intended to work here when I was young. I wanted to go to the mountains, but I got married and

was lucky enough to get this job, so I just stayed. It’s been good to me. I’m glad it worked out this way because it’s a great job.”

I can certainly see why it would be. Last spring was my first trip to this area, and I don’t know why I

put it off for so long. If you’ve never seen it, put Scott on your must-see list. It is truly one of the most beautiful places in the Midwest, or anywhere else in the country. ♡



The Steele Home Museum is a unique feature of the park. Built from stone mined in the area, the home is furnished much it was in the 1800s. Tours can be provided for special occasions.



Outdoor Learning Lens

text and photos by Hannah and Victoria Brass

Wilmore

An uncle's gift opened up a new window to wildlife for two sisters. Setting the remote trail camera in strategic places on a Red Hills ranch turned out to be fun and educational.

Last fall, we received a Cuddeback wildlife camera from our uncle. He didn't give us any instruction; we had to figure it out on our own. He gave us a camera and a box of batteries, and then said, "Figure out how to use it, then take pictures." We were excited to get the camera and started reading through the instruction manual as soon as we got it.

Once we got the material, it took us less than 10 minutes to read through the instructions and program the camera. After we got it programmed, we went looking for a spot to place the camera. To find a good spot to set up our camera, we looked for signs of deer: tracks, droppings, and trails. That didn't take us too long, so next we had to find a way to hang the camera. The camera came with screws so that you could mount it on something. We knew we

would want to move the camera to different spots in the near future, so we didn't want to screw the camera to a tree. The hardest part of the whole process was trying to find a way to hang the camera. We ended up using a cable with sliding fasteners. This worked really well. It allowed us to hang the camera securely and still make it easy to take down.

Then the fun part began. We had to make sure the camera worked, so we took turns jumping in front of it. Every morning as soon as we got up, we went to check our camera for new pictures. Some days we had five new pictures, while other days we had 50. Every couple of days, we would take the memory



card home to look at the pictures. That was probably the best part. We never knew what we were going to see. Not only did we see deer, we saw coyotes, armadillo,

raccoons, opossums, porcupines, squirrels, and lots of turkeys. It was fun to see how these animals acted in their natural environment with no humans around. We tried putting the camera in a couple of different places and got good results each time. We were also very impressed with the nighttime pictures. Some of our best deer pictures were at night.

There is a picture delay setting that came in very handy. We had the delay set to five minutes. When we first put the camera up, we had the delay at one minute. We got multiple pictures of the same animals. After the first two nights we had 150 pictures, so we decided to change the delay to 5 minutes, which worked a lot better.

The camera used four D cell batteries. One of the features we liked was the battery meter. When we turned the camera on, we would know how much power we had left. We had the camera set up in the coldest part of the year, and took over 400 pictures, but we never had to change the batteries. There was about a 4-day period when the temperature never got above freezing, but



Most trail cameras are used by hunters to "scout" their hunting areas, but they're also just plain old fun. Checking the memory card each morning can be exciting.



it still took the same amount of pictures with the same quality.

After we put the pictures on our computer, we could do a lot of things with them. We emailed them to friends. We also made a slide show of the pictures and set it to music. We even showed the slideshow to our local 4-H club.

With this wildlife camera, there are so many things we could do. The locations of the camera gave us different results. Once we got the pictures, we could choose how to use them. There was always something new, so we never knew what to expect. We were surprised by how easy it was to use the camera. We were also surprised by how much fun it was for us. It is a great way for us to get outside and have a good time. 🦌



One particular buck appeared on camera on several occasions. In the photo above, it would appear it's missing its antlers. With a little searching, the girls found both shed antlers (above) and kept them as a neat treasure to remember the buck by.

Pheasant Hunt Tradition: Getting Started





Jon Blumb photo

by Bill Graham
Kansas City, MO

Pheasant hunting is a treasured tradition among Kansas hunters. Opening day is often a big family reunion with friends converging from all parts of the country. But if you didn't grow up with this tradition, you can start your own.

Kansas pheasant hunting is a longtime passion for many who enjoy boots crunching across frosty autumn fields, big birds flying across wide skies, and a shared camaraderie about shots made and missed. But pheasant hunting is also a tradition open to anyone willing to master the sport's three Ws — where, when and what.

Hunters who start chasing this gaudy, fast-flying and great-tasting game bird must decide where to go, when in the season they're going and what hunting strategy fits the conditions in the field. They will find a warm welcome in the rural areas where the hunting is best.

Pheasant season is an economic boost and revered reunion time for family and friends in the Sunflower State. More than 100,000 hunters go afield each season, and they bag from 425,000 to 824,000 rooster pheasants annually.

But there's plenty of room for

newcomers, said Randy Rodgers, pheasant biologist for KDWP.

"I think we can squeeze a few more in," Rodgers joked, referring to a state where hunts often occur in section-sized fields and too few hunters is the problem rather than too many.

The easiest way to get started is to accept an invitation from friends or family to tag along on an opening-weekend or late-season hunt. Just wear comfortable boots, clothes tough enough to turn briars and milo stalks, and a blaze orange hat and hunting vest so you're safely visible to other hunters.

But if you're a newcomer to the state or the sport, some research and planning will get you afield, too. First, decide where in the state you want to hunt.

"Traditionally it's the northwest, southwest and northcentral parts of the state that have the largest pheasant populations," Rodgers said. "Then there's some birds in the southcentral and northeast areas."

The Kansas pheasant hunting forecast for this season will be released in mid-September and will be posted on the department's website kdwp.state.ks.us.

So pick a region, and then narrow that down to a county or town as a destination. The next question is where to find hunting land open to the public.

The department's Walk-In Hunting Access (WIHA) Program annually makes about 1 million acres of private farm land available to hunters. Landowners are paid by the agency to open their lands to hunting. The fields in the program are scattered throughout the state, and many are in prime pheasant country. Field crews work through the summer, posting signs on each WIHA tract, and maps of the walk-in areas are published in the 2009 Kansas

Hunting Atlas, also available in PDF form from the department's website.

A tip: the farther you get from town and heavily-traveled highways the less likely a walk-in area has been trampled by hunters. Also, don't let the fact that someone has already hunted a walk-in field that day discourage you. Pheasants run, hide and move

between fields during the day. Your walk may be the productive one.

"It's very possible to find birds at walk-in areas," Rodgers said. "Certainly as the season gets farther along and the birds get hunted more, they get more wary."

KDWP also manages state-owned public wildlife areas and thousands of acres of huntable



Jon Blumb photo

A well-worn receiver shows the shine of many days in the field. Pheasant guns are as much a part of the tradition as the hunting, often handed down from family members. The high-brass pheasant loads are in place, ready for the next walk.



Bill Graham photo

The timing of your hunt is a big decision. Opening weekend is a common tradition, but access for a newcomer can be difficult to obtain early in the season. While bird numbers are higher opening weekend, some winter weather later in the season can often improve hunter success. Colder temperatures and, better yet, a little snow may cause pheasants to congregate and hold in heavy cover.

land at federal reservoirs. Pheasant habitat is often excellent on these areas.

A good bet for newcomers is to use maps to base hunts in areas that include both walk-in fields and public wildlife areas. If one fails, the other may produce birds. Private land is also often available for hunting in the middle to the late part of the season for those who politely request and receive permission from landowners. Access early in the season may be reserved far ahead of time for friends and family.

"I think the key word is respect," Rodgers said. "If you show respect to the landowner, there's a good chance it will be

reciprocated."

When to go is the next question. The opening weekend of the Kansas pheasant season is when the roosters are the most

numerous and the least wary in the field. But it's also when the hunting pressure is the highest. Opening weekend has a holiday feel with special breakfasts for



Mike Blair photo

The moment pheasant hunters live for: the flush. A wily pheasant will often run ahead of approaching hunters, flushing far out of range. But when one does hunker down to flush at the hunter's feet, the explosion of color and feathers causes the adrenaline to surge.

hunters in the mornings and dances at night as a mix of in-state and out-of-state hunters bring cash to town.

Many opening weekend hunters book their lodging and make arrangements for access a year in advance, said Roger Hrabe, director for Rooks County Economic Development in Stockton.

“One of the things we encourage is for hunters to come a little bit later in the season,” Hrabe said. “It’s more likely that lodging will be open, and the fields are less crowded. Of course, there might not be quite the number of birds. But sometimes that depends on the weather, anyway. Usually the colder it is the better the hunting.”

But opening weekend is a fun time to be afield, and it’s a good time to make long-term contacts with other hunters and property owners in cafes and at social

events. Where there’s a will, there’s a way.

“I think our walk-in hunting has reduced hunting pressure on public lands for opening weekend,” Rodgers said. “Also, I think people would be shocked at how light our hunting pressure is at walk-in areas in some parts of northwest Kansas.”

What strategy you use to find and flush birds depends on where you’re hunting, what time of year it is, and weather conditions. One or two hunters walking in heavy weed cover or native prairie grasses near crop fields can bag pheasants, especially if they have good bird dogs for pointing and retrieving.

But most hunts involve several hunters and an organized plan for sending a line of hunters through a field. Pheasants can hide in a teeny bit of cover and let you walk past, or they might run out the other side

of the field the minute they hear the pickup doors slam. Usually, some hunters set up as “blockers” at one end of a field at a road or open area to deter pheasants from running completely out the end of the field. Then the other hunters walk toward them from the other end. Both walkers and blockers put people on the end of their line slightly forward to make a “U” shape that can keep birds from running out of the side of the field.

Sometimes pheasants will hold for a dog during a walk, and a hunter will get a shot from a flush in front of a point.

But often, the birds will flush wild when they get nervous, and when the walkers meet the blockers, there can be several pheasants flushing at the same time. Be safe with your shooting when this happens. This is where the orange clothing really pays off — blaze orange lets hunters easily



Jon Blumb photo

Dedicated pheasant hunters will walk many miles in pursuit of their quarry, and seeing the countryside is part of the fun. After the first two weeks of the season, hunting pressure will drop off significantly, but there are still plenty of birds for good hunting.

see and keep track of each other

Walking fields in such a manner can involve a half-dozen or dozens of hunters, depending on your party and the field size. But have a plan and be quiet as you enter fields, Rodgers said. Keep bird dogs working close and under control so they don't flush roosters out of gun range.

"Pheasants have a heck of an early warning system," he said. "A little noise made by slamming car doors or talking with your buddies, especially a few days into the season, can send the birds running out the other end of the field."

Weather and food sources can affect strategy, too. On some days, pheasants will hold tight in cover like wheat stubble and let hunters walk past unless a hunter accidentally steps on them or a dog points them. On other days, they'll run or fly at the slightest disturbance.

Cold weather might have them holed up in tall grasses such as Conservation Reserve Program plantings. Warm days might have them spending all their time pecking for grain and dusting in the milo stubble. Some days their cover and food preference seems to be just on a whim.

That's part of the challenge of pheasant hunting and why people keep going afield for them, besides the fact that their thick, white-meat breasts taste delicious.

You're never exactly sure where these sassy game birds will be and when they'll fly, and if your aim will be true when they do fly.

But the only way to know is to go, and the fields are open to anyone willing to explore them. 🦋

Bill Graham is a freelance outdoor writer from Platte City, Mo. who's hunted pheasants and quail for 35 years. A longtime member of the Outdoor Writers Association of America and former staff writer for The Kansas City Star, he's tromped many fields in Kansas and Missouri looking for upland game birds.

Getting started

- Pheasant season opens Nov. 14 and closes Jan. 31. There is also a special youth season on Nov. 7 and Nov. 8. The daily bag limit is four cocks during the regular season and two during the youth season. Complete information on all aspects of pheasant hunting, including regulations and locations of the walk-in and public wildlife areas, is available at kdwp.state.ks.us.

- Most towns in prime pheasant areas have a chamber of commerce, visitors bureau or similar business group that can direct hunters to available lodging and meals. Many will also offer tips on good hunting areas, and they usually keep lists of professional guides and fee-hunting locations, where property owners usually have a daily per-gun charge for access. They're experienced at helping new or out-of-state hunters get started.

- Get used to hearing shouts of "rooster" or "hen" as pheasants flush. Only the cock, or male, pheasants are legal to shoot. Hens are protected to ensure good breeding populations. Roosters have colorful, iridescent feathers and long tails, while hens are a dull brown with shorter tails.

- Many hunters prefer 12-gauge shotguns with modified or full chokes and game load shells with extra powder and shot. But a 20-gauge with an improved cylinder choke will take birds, too, if the hunter sticks to close flushes and avoids long-range shots at birds that can fly 60 mph when they're in a hurry and have a tailwind.

- Buy weekly newspapers in the area where you plan to hunt. They'll contain information on special dinners for hunters, where to buy ammunition and perhaps even hunting access opportunities.



Bill Graham photo

As a hunt tradition evolves, the people, dogs and land become more important than pheasants killed. However, pheasants have to be there for the tradition to begin.

THE EARLY MUZZLELOADER



Randy D. Smith photo

inset photos by Dustin Teasley

Getting access to hunt private land during the firearms deer season is not as easy as it use to be. And I've noticed that Walk-In Hunting Access areas in prime deer territory are busier in recent years. However, I've found a way to hunt deer without much competition by taking advantage of the Kansas early muzzleloader deer season. I usually have very little

competition during muzzleloader season and see more than a few good deer.

Kansas resident hunters can purchase an any-season whitetail permit that is valid statewide during any season with equipment valid for the season. That means you can hunt during the September muzzleloader season with a muzzleloader and hunt with a centerfire rifle during the

firearms season if you don't fill your permit.

Muzzleloader deer hunters may hunt with rifles that fire a bullet at least .39 inches in diameter or handguns that fire a bullet at least .45-caliber with a barrel length of at least ten inches.

I've hunted deer in Kansas for more than 20 years using both muzzleloading rifles and handguns. For several seasons, I simply

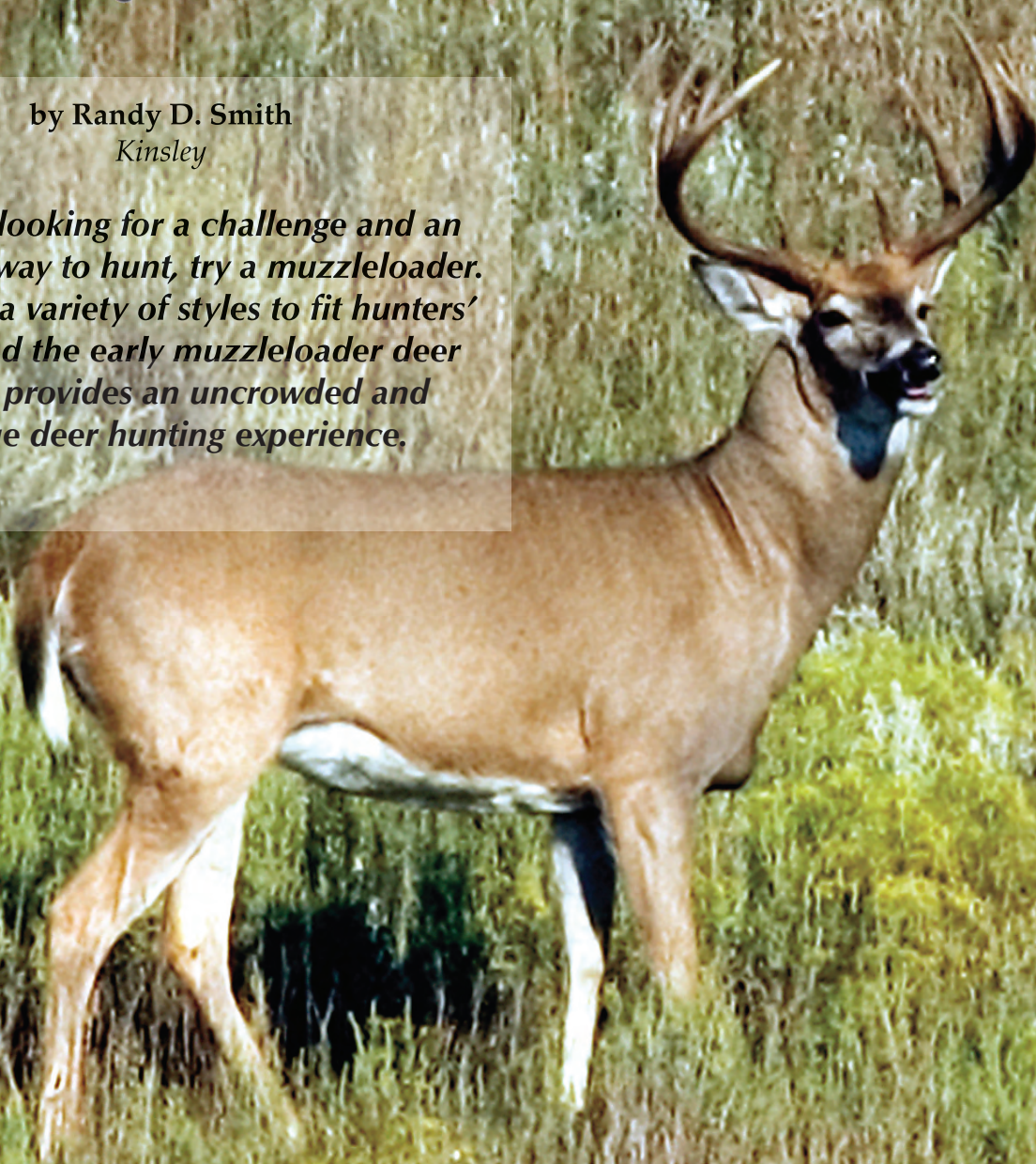
SEASON ADVANTAGE



by Randy D. Smith
Kinsley

If you're looking for a challenge and an enjoyable way to hunt, try a muzzleloader. There are a variety of styles to fit hunters' tastes, and the early muzzleloader deer season provides an uncrowded and unique deer hunting experience.

Mike Blair photo





added a scope to a muzzleloader and used it during regular firearms season. As far as performance is concerned, a properly sighted .50-caliber muzzleloader will match the first shot capability of a modern centerfire .30-30 or .45-70 round. For most whitetail hunting conditions, there is very little disadvantage to using a muzzleloader except that there is no immediate backup round. A muzzleloading hunter must pick his shots carefully and concentrate on effective first shot placement. I refrain from taking a muzzleloader shot at a moving deer, something I might do under certain conditions with a lever-action

or bolt-action rifle. Most of my shot opportunities are less than 100 yards, which is well within a muzzleloader's capabilities.

There are disadvantages to hunting deer during the muzzleloader season, which opens Sept. 21 this year. Foliage is usually heavy, deer traffic is light during the heat of the day, and insects can be aggravating. If I kill a deer, I get the carcass to the processor as quickly as possible to prevent it from spoiling.

I've found that I have my best luck hunting from a treestand, ground blind, or by still hunting isolated areas far from human traffic. My last three muzzleloader deer were taken in isolated patches of woods surrounded by cropland during still hunts, but I've taken a lot of deer from ground blinds. I usually set up ground blinds in transition areas where deer move between feeding

areas and day-time bedding areas. One of my favorite locations is a wooded area bordering an alfalfa field. I set up at the edge of the woods and wait for deer to pass by at dawn and dusk.

There are basically three styles of new muzzleloading rifles to choose from: historical replicas, replica hunters, and inlines. Historical replicas try to be exactly like primitive sidelock and flintlock rifles of specific historical periods. My primitive sidelock muzzleloader is a percussion .58 caliber round ball replica of the Lemah Plains Rifle with a traditional 1:66 round ball twist rate (rifling that makes a full twist in 66 inches).

A replica hunter has the lines of a primitive rifle but normally has amenities like modern recoil pads, sights, rifling twist rates and perhaps internal components such as coil spring locks rather than flat spring locks. My replica hunter is a contemporary version of a .50 caliber English Sporting Rifle with a laminate stock, modern Williams open sights, Black Ice metal coating, modern recoil pad, and a 1:24 twist rate that allow me to use modern projectiles.

Most inline muzzleloaders are made along the lines of a modern hunting rifle. Modern inline muzzleloaders handle very similarly to modern cartridge rifles. I have an older White Bison .54-caliber inline with an open striker percussion cap system and a Traditions Pursuit Pro .50-caliber inline with a break action .209 shotgun primer ignition system, fiber optic open sights, aluminum ramrod, and synthetic stock. Both of my inlines are equipped with scopes, and I didn't use them during the Kansas early muzzleloader season (until 2008, scopes were not legal during the early muzzleloader season). Frankly, my replica hunter will perform just as well as any inline,



Randy D. Smith photo

Some muzzleloader hunters enjoy the historical aspect of the equipment, using rifles that are historical replicas, along with horn powder flasks and buckskin possible bags.

and I enjoy hunting with it. I use my Leman Plains Rifle for rendezvous and historical reenactment most of the time. When I had it made, I specified .58-caliber, so I could hunt elk and bear with it.

At 100 yards, all of these rifles will shoot similar groups, and there is no clear advantage of one over the other. Beyond 100 yards, the scoped inlines have an advantage over the open-sighted rifles. Remove the scopes from the inlines, and all the rifles will perform essentially the same, depending on the projectiles I'm shooting.

The .50-caliber is by far the most popular caliber. Nearly 90 percent of new manufactured muzzleloaders are .50-caliber. Most retailers will carry some supplies for a .50-caliber, but I normally have to order supplies for my .54- and .58-calibers. I like the .54-caliber for shooting heavy



Jon Blumb photo

grain soft lead conical bullets. I've learned from experience that I am happier with a round ball gun of .54- or .58-caliber for most hunting situations, but a .50-caliber round ball gun will do very well for Kansas deer. The .45-caliber muzzleloader is also common. Personally I consider a .45-caliber round ball gun to be a little light for shooting deer in heavy cover. I like a projectile that will produce a big hole that bleeds freely. I've

had difficulty finding substantial blood trails from .45-caliber muzzleloaders in the past.

There are three kinds of muzzle-loading projectiles: round balls, conicals and sabots. Patched round balls function best in a rifle of from 1:48 twist to 1:60 or 1:66 twist. Patched round balls lose velocity very quickly and therefore shed foot/pounds of energy quicker than other projectiles. Patched round balls are normally considered best at ranges of closer than 120 yards.

Conicals retain energy very well, and I like them for most short- to medium-range hunting conditions. A .50-caliber conical will normally weigh 385 grains, but I often use a 400 grain conical in my English sporting rifle. I have never had any deer correctly hit with a 400 grain conical travel more than 30 yards. Conicals function best in rifles with barrel twist rates from 1:24 to 1:48. Sabots normally use traditional steel jacketed pistol bullets weighing from 240 to 300 grains.

Plastic sabots prevent the bullet from damaging the rifling. The sabot allows .44- or .45-caliber pistol bullets to be used in a .50-caliber rifle with a twist rate of 1:20 to 1:28. Sabots have a shallower trajectory than a conical, retain energy better than a round ball, and do not recoil as hard as heavier projectiles. Sabots are the most popular muzzleloader projectile for hunting today, but don't overlook a conical because it is very effective. If you have or want a primitive-style rifle with a slow twist, I recommend that you stay with the round ball to achieve the best accuracy.

I advise that any muzzleloader



Randy D. Smith photo

A resident who possesses an Any Season Whitetail permit can hunt during any season with the appropriate equipment. The early muzzleloader season is Sept. 21-Oct. 4 this year. The weather can be warm and the vegetation lush (top photo). The regular season (above) provides cooler weather but more competition from other hunters.

be sighted in 2 inches high at 50 yards. With most loads, the rifle will be close to center at 100 yards and 2-3 inches low at 120 yards. Conicals will have a greater trajectory curve than sabots, so there will be some slight adjustments. I sight in a new .50 caliber gun with a moderate load of 100 grains of powder or pellets, then work my powder charge up or down depending on the groups I'm getting at 50 yards. It is not unreasonable to expect any muzzleloader to shoot cloverleaf groups at 50 yards and 3-inch groups at 100 yards.

Black powder propellants come as powders and as pre-formed capsules known as pellets. Pellets usually come in a 50-grain size and are also available in a 30-grain size. Pellets work best in in-line rifles with 209 shotgun primer ignition systems. Powders are available as pure black powder, Pyrodex (a blending of black powder and other chemicals with scrubbers), and black powder substitutes such as Triple 7, Pioneer Powder, and Goex Pinnacle. Black powder and Pyrodex are highly corrosive and should be cleaned from the barrel after each shooting session. Black powder substitutes are said to be non-corrosive, but I clean any muzzleloader immediately after use no matter what the propellant. Never use any form or any blending of smokeless powder in any muzzleloader unless it is manufactured specifically to use smokeless powder. (Savage makes a smokeless-capable muzzleloading rifle.)

Experience is necessary to find the best powder charge for your gun and bullet. Advertisements tout that certain inlines are made to use 150-grain propellant charges, claiming such loads to be an advantage. Heavy propellant charges create more recoil, foul the barrel more quickly, and do not exhibit good accuracy traits in



Jon Blumb photo

To master a muzzleloader, a hunter must learn about the different powders, ignition systems, rifle styles and bullets. Then he must find the load combination that shoots most accurately in his gun. Then he can be proud of a well-placed shot on a Kansas buck.

many rifles. Most .50- and .54-caliber muzzleloaders shoot most accurately with powder charges from 85 to 120 grains. Powders that can be measured more precisely are usually more accurate than pellets. Pellets are convenient and load very quickly and tend to work best with sabots in inline rifles. Pellets do not work very well in sidelock rifles or with conical bullets.

A muzzleloader, because it is a black powder weapon, is only effective at a maximum range of 200 yards. It is always best to go with a powder charge that is the most accurate in your particular muzzleloader. I've taken many

deer with .50-caliber powder charges from 85 to 100 grains, .45-caliber powder charges from 70 to 90 grains, and .54-caliber charges of 85 to 100 grains. I use a 100 grain Ffg black powder charge in my .58-caliber round-ball gun. Black powder in the granulation size of Ffg works best in most muzzle loading rifles. FFFfg is for pistols and muzzleloaders of calibers less than .45. FFFFg is priming powder for flintlocks and should only be used in the priming pan to enhance ignition.

My .58-caliber round ball rifle has a No. 11 percussion nipple and works best with black powder, Pyrodex, and Goex

Pinnacle. My English sporting rifle and White Bison inline have larger musket cap ignition systems, which are more dependable with Pyrodex and Pinnacle. Musket caps foul the area around the nipple more than No. 11 percussion caps. My Traditions Pursuit Pro has a 209 shotgun primer ignition system which is best for pellet loads.

A recent Kansas deer hunting regulation change to allow scope-mounted guns during the early muzzleloader season will change the configuration of many muzzleloading rifles. Effective shooting ranges will increase because a scope will aid the hunter's shooting ability. The second reason is that foliage is normally very heavy during the mid-September season, and hunters will not only be able to aim more precisely through thick brush, but they are more likely to see a branch or twig that could deflect the bullet. I will mount a new Traditions Pursuit Pro II Guide Gun test rifle with a scope

for the September hunt, and I will not be using the original planned load. Using a scope on a muzzleloader changes tactics and loads.

Iron or mechanical sights for early muzzleloader deer season is sometimes a problem for some hunters to shoot accurately. I suggest using peep sights in place of open V sights. I can shoot 100 yard groups with a peep sight as well as I can with a scope. Peep sights do not demand as much visual acuity as open sights. All a shooter does is place the front sight on the target and the eye naturally centers the front sight in the peep ring. I have some very effective smokeless powder rifles with peep sights and believe these sights are underappreciated for deer hunting. At the ranges that most deer are encountered during early muzzleloader season, open sights are more than adequate.

For years I buck hunted during muzzleloader season and took does for the freezer during regular rifle season. I've reversed my goals because of increased

hunting pressure during regular rifle season. I fill a doe tag for the freezer first during muzzleloader season and am more particular about shooting a buck during regular rifle season. First and foremost, I want venison in my freezer and to help control deer herd size in my area. Muzzleloaders are ideal for this style of hunting.

There are two drawbacks to a muzzleloader. A shooter must carefully clean his gun after each day's use, and there is only one shot for all practical purposes. I can reload my English Sporting Rifle in around 20 seconds because I use slip-fit projectiles designed for it. Even then, it is very rare to get a second shot at the same deer 20 seconds after the first. Certainly, a muzzleloader hunter is not as handicapped as a bowhunter because of the rifle's superior range and power. A hunter can use a double barrel muzzleloader in Kansas if he wants to put up with the added weight. I prefer the handling qualities of a single barrel.

I use stealth and strategy to ensure my shots are 100 yards or less. I usually attempt sitting position or well-braced shots from a rest. I have taken deer with a muzzleloader at ranges from 50 to 70 yards with off hand shots. I work for careful first shot placement, and I am conservative about when I take a shoot. I have only failed to take a deer once in the last 20 seasons. A muzzleloader is a practical, efficient, and enjoyable deer hunting tool.

The main considerations for muzzleloader success involve a consistent cleaning and maintenance program, finding the most accurate load, and becoming a proficient marksman. Take these steps, and you will probably enjoy rewarding muzzleloader deer hunting experiences. ♡



Randy D. Smith photo

The author poses with his Kansas muzzleloader pronghorn. Kansas residents can apply for a limited number of muzzleloader pronghorn permits that allow several additional days in the field before the rifle season opens.



Meat Matters

by **Patt Dorsey**

*Colorado Division of Wildlife, wildlife area manager, Durango, Colo.
(Reprinted with permission from Colorado Outdoors magazine.)*

Why do we hunt? For recreation; to be closer to nature; to spend time with friends and family; or is it for the meat? The truth for most is probably a little of all of the above.

“**D**efinition of a veg-e-tar-e-un: old Indian word for a lousy hunter.” This slogan adorns T-shirts and garners chuckles in souvenir shops. I chuckle too. How could anyone deny human biology to consider “vegetarian” a “natural choice?” And, consider hunting alien? Stifling my chuckles, I realize that vegetarians, like hunters, make complex, conscious choices about their diets. So, who is right?

Archeology shows us that people harvested wild plants and animal foods from their environment, living as hunter-gatherers

for eons. Having the architecture of omnivores — meaning: all devouring — people, like pigs and black bears, have simple stomachs and long small intestines relative to the length of our colons. Our pancreas manufactures oodles of digestive enzymes to handle everything from peanuts to pronghorn. Our teeth: robust incisors, peaked canines and cuspid molars masticate a myriad of foodstuffs.

A meat eater’s blueprint: our stomachs produce hydrochloric acid, and we rely on animal foods for omega-3 fatty acids, like DHA, for healthy hearts and vitamins, like B-12, for brain function.

People do not have rumens (like cattle or deer) or hind guts (like horses) filled with specialized microbes to synthesize nutrients from plants. Obviously, we are not herbivores.

Nor are we carnivores. People chew. Coyotes and other carnivores swallow chunks of meat from large prey or swallow small prey whole because their jaws have little side-to-side mobility. People rely on plants for important nutrients like vitamin C, for healthy immune systems. Comparing our teeth and claws with those of the puma or badger illustrates that we are poorly

adapted predators.

Many plant species disappeared when climate change altered the North American landscape from swampy forest to grassland. Large grazing animals thrived in this new environment. People responded by making dietary changes, replacing fruit and nuts with animal foods. This

protein- and fat-rich meat diet helped our ancient ancestors' brains grow.

Hunting must be the right choice. There is no historical or valid scientific argument precluding lean meat from our diets or hunting as a lifestyle choice. Vegetarianism is more about ethics and personal values than it is about biology.

Melissa Betrone, a.k.a. "Rude Becky," lives in southwest Colorado and runs Rude Becky's Sustainable Farm. She grows a lot of vegetables in a little space and targets the local market. Her nickname is a play on words — Rudbeckia is the scientific name for the black-eyed Susan, a popular garden flower and an indicator of healthy rangeland. Betrone was a vegetarian for humanitarian reasons. "I didn't like how factory-farmed animals were raised or slaughtered," she explained.

But the diet debate is not a matter of right and wrong. Hunters hunt for a variety of ethical and personal reasons, none of which include the ratio of their small to large intestines or the length of their canine teeth.

Yet for many hunters, our lifestyle choice has much to do with the meat. Dick McCabe, vice president for the Wildlife Management Institute, explained, "Although I wouldn't characterize myself first and foremost as a

Game meat is good for people, good for the environment and considered by many to be a "gourmet" protein source. Mary Ellen Keskimaki, a petite and politically-active woman, is married to Kurt, an accomplished bowhunter. She was raised on meat from a grocery store. Her father hunted during the Depression because he had to. With that unfortunate time in American history behind him, he wanted little to do with hunting. Now, Kurt fills the freezer every hunting season, and Mary Ellen rarely buys beef.

'meat hunter,' I doubt that I would hunt if the prize of meat wasn't a possibility." Meat is a concrete and necessary part of the suite of satisfactions McCabe derives from hunting. "The quality of the meat is a significant factor in determining which species I hunt and which species I choose not to pursue."

Helen Keskimaki is a health

conscious, Colorado Front Range gardener with an expertise in raising carrots. "The exercise, the meat: Everything about hunting is good for you," she stated confidently, having read numerous studies showing that game meat is better for you than eating chicken.

Betrone, who is definitely in touch with her food, found that after moving to Colorado's remote southwest corner, she had fewer choices for organic, locally raised foods. Her then-boyfriend, now-husband, was an avid hunter who introduced her to game meat. "We ate elk, venison, wild turkey and wild-caught fish. I found that I liked and missed meat," Betrone



Mike Blair photo

Game meat, such as venison, is good for people. It is generally lower in calories and saturated fat than chicken, and is higher in iron, phosphorus, riboflavin, B vitamins and several other nutrients than beef.

asserted. It seemed appropriate that she too take responsibility for her decision to eat meat.

Keskimaki appreciates that hunting gives them control over their meat. "We know our meat came from one or two animals as opposed to potentially thousands."

Betrone thinks deeply about sustainable living. She acknowledges the inconsistencies of comparing today's Four Corners area with Anasazi times, yet ponders whether people could have lived as vegetarians in southwest Colorado's high desert. With hard work, timely rains and favorable temperatures, people could grow and survive on beans, corn, onions and garlic. "You could do it, but it wouldn't taste as good," Betrone relented. "Meat is a very flavorful protein source."

Keskimaki shares Betrone's concern for the environment and

for how meat gets to grocery stores. "I like seeing elk being elk, doing what elk do."

Elk and deer are products of green sedges, delicate wildflowers, shrubs and grasses, nourished by snows that blanket the

Game meat might accurately be dubbed "the other white meat" or "the only fast food that is good for you." Game meat is generally lower in calories and saturated fat than chicken. It is generally higher than beef in iron, phosphorus, riboflavin, B vitamins and several other nutrients. Total dietary cholesterol in some game meats, like deer and pronghorn, seems high. However, these meats are a heart-healthy choice, significantly higher in cholesterol-reducing polyunsaturated fatty acids (good fats).

Rockies each winter and intense Colorado sunshine. That fact is not lost on Keskimaki, a bona fide animal lover. "Death is not suffering. There is nothing wrong with death. A good, clean death feels very right to me."

Finding local food sources is a

key to sustainability. Harvesting an elk close to home is consistent with Rude Becky's attempt at lowering her carbon footprint. Betrone's farm premise? "What's grown here is consumed here." This is a fact not wasted on people who consider being a "loca-vore" or eating local foods a wise lifestyle choice.

"Hunter enthusiasm and dollars catalyze wildlife habitat conservation efforts, protecting everything from coastal and prairie wetlands to alpine forests and tundra," explained McCabe. Conservation organization and state and federal agencies have protected millions of acres of natural open

space. Successes in restoring game populations enable wildlife managers to provide a host of other ecological and natural benefits for nongame birds, mammals and amphibians.

But hunting as a choice is far more than a manner of making meat. Hunting has personal, family, cultural, community, ecological, economic and other values to modern society.

An empty-nester, Keskimaki is raising her second family — a pair of trained vizslas. Our relationship with canine companions goes back at least 12,000 years. Hunter-gatherers valued their four-legged hunting partners so much they brought them across the Bering Land Bridge. Hungarian nobles favored vizslas for their exceptional noses and ability to point and retrieve game in dense cover. Hunters saved this old breed, which nearly disappeared during and in between World Wars I and II.

Keskimaki venerates her vizslas at least as much as the ancient hunters valued their dogs. "You



Pronghorn meat may seem high in total dietary cholesterol, but it is heart-healthy because it is significantly higher in cholesterol-reducing polyunsaturated fatty acids.



A limit of pheasants represents not only an outstanding day in the fields and some great eating, but it represents hard work, good dog work, and good friends hunting together.

may think I am crazy, but I save the heart and liver of our game for the dogs,” explained Keskimaki. The dogs end up with many nourishing meals from carrots and greens grown in her garden and scrap venison parts. “We use all the animal parts. Our neighbors even come and get bones for their dogs.”

Now an avid bird hunter, Keskimaki didn’t know anything about bird hunting until Kiki, her first vizsla, made the introduction. “When I carry a gun, the dogs enjoy it more,” she explained. “Hunting brings a different level of excitement for the dogs than when we go hiking.”

Bandit, a German wire-haired pointer and McCabe’s companion, shares Kiki’s excitement. McCabe and Bandit train everyday for a few days afield each year. McCabe spoke for both of them, “When we get to hunt, we don’t always return with meat, but we always

get home sore, tattered and wonderfully exhausted.”

Hunting is unadulterated excitement and anticipation. Hunters spend hours anticipating the weather, wondering whether they’ll draw permits, whether the dog will work, considering where

“Hunting is an escape from the human condition,” wrote Spanish philosopher Ortega y Gasset. McCabe related by observing “Hunting relieves me temporarily from the plasticized, homogenized, one-hour martinized aspects and domesticated routine of my daily life. It connects me to fundamentally important things.” An outdoorsman with a hectic career in the Nation’s capital, escape and hunting has become an imperative for McCabe. “Hunting has given me my best experiences, my best friends, my best family memories and my best food.”

to go, how to get an elk out of that ravine it’s bugling in, or how to cook that first dusky grouse of the season.

“Hunting is sensory, visceral, emotional — it’s all those things,” reflected McCabe.

Hunting is not a matter of life and death. It is much more impor-

tant than that. “I think people work hunting up in their mind into something that it is not. There is something about the excitement of the hunt, the thrill of providing our own food that overcomes the feeling of sadness,” expounded Keskimaki.

For different reasons, it is an imperative for most hunters. Keskimaki spends a lot of time by herself in the woods. “Hunting adds to my experience. I feel more competent and independent.” Confidence in one’s own abilities can be prophetic. People with confidence may succeed simply because they have it.

A powerful connection with the outdoors is important for everyone, particularly children. In his book, *Last Child in the Woods*, Richard Louv makes the point that connecting with the outdoors can alleviate childhood depression, obesity, and attention deficit disorder.

If I were to gamble, I would bet that Keskimaki is right. She believes that, “If everyone could experience hunting, even if they didn’t become hunters, they would feel very differently about it.”

I would up the ante and bet that vegetarians and hunters would agree that the debate about whom is right is not important. Thinking conscientiously about what we eat and how it gets to our table is important. We would also agree that connecting with nature is important because Nature needs its children: where

else will its future stewards come from? 🐾

Patt Dorsey is the Colorado Division of Wildlife’s area wildlife manager in Durango. She hunts, gardens and collects wild plant foods. Her four-legged hunting companion, Twister, is a German short-haired pointer.



A Legacy Of Land And Love

text and photos by Mark Shoup
associate editor, pratt

Wallace Weber grabbed headlines when he donated his family farm — 1,700 acres in Russell County – to Pheasants Forever. Weber wants to ensure a future for pheasants, pheasant hunters and for those who love this land.

Wallace Weber was a small boy in the late 1940s as he sat on his father's lap in southern Russell County. Carefully, he lifted the .22 rifle his father had taught him to shoot and took aim at his first quarry — a jack rabbit. His aim was true. More such adventures would take place in Weber's youth, hunting upland game and waterfowl, as well as rabbits, on the family farm. (His mother taught him about ducks.) A love for the outdoors that would last a lifetime grew, benefiting both Weber, the land he loves, and the wildlife that inhabit it.

Traditions established on this family farm — started by his grandfather in 1879 — have held strong. Today, Weber even hunts with his father's old Winchester Model 1897 12-gauge. And the family farm? Weber lives in the house he grew up in, but the land — 1,700 acres — is becoming a wildlife legacy. Weber has given it to Pheasants Forever (PF), a donation valued at well over \$1 million. (Pheasants Forever is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the conservation of pheasants, quail and other wildlife through habitat improvements, public awareness,

education and land management policies and programs.)

Wallace Weber's life has taken him many places and through many careers. After high school, he went to Colorado State University to study fisheries science, but he got side tracked. He developed an interest in the military and joined the school's Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC). The Army needed medical staff at the time and persuaded Weber to change majors and become a physician. He would serve 31 years, nine on active duty, including a tour as

flight surgeon for the Army's 82nd Airborne Division during Operation Desert Storm. (He retired as a colonel.) He started a dermatology clinic in Hays, continues to lecture on bio-terrorism and emerging infections, and once won the Interservice Rifle Championship Match at Quantico Marine Corps Base in Virginia.

Today, Weber is retired, but he can't sit still. He's been managing the family farm since 1987. A friend of his describes people as either dogs or cats and further categorizes them into breeds. He says Weber is a greyhound; I would concur. A lean 6 feet 2 inches, he looks and moves 15 years younger than his 65 years. He is constantly active, thinking, asking "What if?"

"I'm busier now than I've ever been," he says over a ham and beans and cornbread lunch he's cooked for me in his old stone home. "I'm learning so much about this land, about cropping, soil structure, grazing, wildlife biology."

This is a large part of retirement for Weber, improving and preserving the land, and his involvement in Pheasants Forever is partly responsible.

"I've worn many uniforms in my life," he explains. "I'm a joiner. I like to be involved in something I believe in, and I believe it's very important to work for nature," he explains. "One day, a friend of mine sent me a conservation clipping that talked about groups that take land and improve it. I wanted to control what is going to happen to my land, not what isn't. I sensed that Pheasants Forever is a group that could help me do that. Now, as a volunteer, I wear a Pheasants Forever Uniform."

His involvement in PF also got Weber to thinking about the future of his land, with consultation from his sister Cheryl, Topeka. After

reading a Pheasants Forever magazine article about a Nebraska man, Bill Baxter, who willed his 320-acre farm to PF, Weber's greyhound wheels began turning.

"I wanted to implement best management practices on mid-mixed grass prairie with a few mixed-grass experiments," he explains. "Plus, I wanted guarantees that the land would stay in a conservation program in perpetuity. So I called the Baxters, and the rest is history."

In December 2008, Weber deeded the first parcel of 320 acres to PF, and the remaining 1,380 acres will go the organization incrementally. In the meantime, Weber is busy making things happen on the property. Working closely with PF and KDWP's wildlife biologist Matt Smith, of Wilson, improvements are already underway. Managing the land for pheasants, quail, prairie chicken,

and (secondarily) deer, Weber has planted food plots in 1.6- to 6-acre rotations of wheat, milo, soybeans, alfalfa, and oats. Upland game watering devices called guzzlers have also been installed. He's working vigorously to repair salt water damage to a portion of the area from an existing oil pumping operation, for which he has no mineral rights.

PF manages a portion of the land as a demonstration unit. Eventually, the organization plans to host conservation and habitat field days to illustrate best management practices on the property, as well as conduct natural resource agency tours, PF chapter events, and youth field trips. The land will remain private until Weber's death, with hunting by written permission only. Upon Weber's passing, PF intends to open the land to public hunting.

Ultimately, the mission for the



Wallace Weber stands in front of the house he lives in today – the house he grew up in that still stands on the Russell County farm his grandfather started in 1879.

land will be to implement conservation practices beneficial to wildlife while maintaining the property's agricultural and ranching operations. Currently, the pheasant population is substantial, and the potential for quail habitat improvement appears excellent. Prairie chickens, although not as common, occupy the land as well. Three ponds are used by migrating waterfowl and are stocked with fish. A creek runs through the property, crossing a county road over an old arched stone bridge. True to his conservation instincts, Weber worries that the bridge will one day be torn out, destroying a small but beautiful piece of history that graces the landscape.

Weber has received many accolades for his "retirement" activities, including the 2008 KDWP Habitat Conservation Award, the 2009 Kansas Bankers Association Wildlife Habitat Conservation Award, and the 2009 PF Black and Gold Chapter #794 Outstanding Service Donation. None of this



Weber humbly accepted the Kansas Wildlife Habitat Conservation Award at a Wildlife and Parks Commission meeting in Topeka last March.

means as much to him, however, as knowing that he is making a difference for wildlife and that this difference will continue once his brief sojourn on this Earth is complete.

"This is just a great place to live," he explains. "I reminisce about being a kid who lived to hunt, trap, and fish on this ground. I believe it can create similar memories for other youngsters for decades, or forever." For

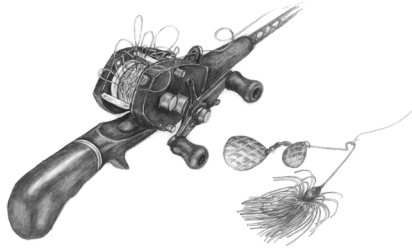
Weber, life has been good, and this family property is largely responsible, providing not only a place to hunt, fish, and trap, but a work ethic that would help him live out his dreams.

"I've had a great life, but you know, there's really three stages in a man's life: a time for learning, a time for earning, and a time for giving back." Weber is obviously at stage three, which seems to be the most gratifying. ♡

The Weber donation was made through PF's first-ever national fundraising effort, the Grassroots Conservation Campaign. To learn more about making a charitable donation to Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever, phone PF/QF's vice president of development, David Bue, at 218-340-5519, or email dbue@pheasantsforever.org.



An old, stone arched bridge still spans the creek that runs through the Weber property – a piece of history and a slice of paradise to anyone who appreciates the prairie landscape in central Kansas. Weber's donation ensures future generations will enjoy this land.



Backlash

by Mike Miller

Preparing To Anticipate

One of the best things about the upcoming hunting seasons is the anticipation I feel as fall nears. Anticipation – something to look forward to. I suppose it's the child in all of us that relishes anticipation. When we were kids, it was an approaching birthday, Christmas morning, summer vacation, or a family fishing trip. As I've aged, I've become more patient (or maybe it's just that time goes much faster now), but that tiny voice that reminds me of upcoming good stuff is still there. I guess I've never completely grown up, but I'm thankful for that because it certainly makes life more enjoyable.

One way to stoke anticipation is preparation. I'll never forget late summer Sunday evening drives when I was 13. The whole family would jump in the car and cruise the country roads in southern Kiowa County. My objective was simple; I was scouting for pheasants. It was both a challenge and thrill to see how many pheasants we could see in the fields. I kept a running total each evening, and even remember my best – 99 pheasants! I just knew it was going to be a great hunting season that fall, but opening morning seemed a lifetime away. When you're 13, two months, 12 days and 14 hours can seem like two years.

Life is better with something to look forward to. I don't know if it is my nature to always have a date or event to look forward to, or if it's the hunting and fishing passion that always kept me looking ahead. All I know is I always carry positive thoughts about upcoming seasons or trips. There's always a notion in the back of my mind, that next event, resting in my subconscious; something you know is good without consciously thinking about it. From time to time I'll bring it to the conscious mind and smile – think of the date, how near it is, and flash some picture memories of last year's event.

My preparation is more involved now than it was when I was 13. Heck, back then, my anticipation didn't need stoking. The scouting drives were fun, but pre-hunt preparation consisted of finding my hunting vest, a handful of shotgun shells, and setting the alarm. Today, preparation begins months ahead of time.

My wife and I have been taking an early-fall vacation to Colorado now for almost 20 years. We accidentally found a high-mountain cattle ranch that rents out

a few cabins. With some ponds, a couple of streams, and a decent stretch of the Rio Grande River crossing the ranch, it's a great playground; that is if you love the mountains, fly fishing for trout, peaceful evening walks, listening to elk bugle, and watching the aspens turn. I start looking at fly fishing catalogs, scanning national forest maps, reading online fishing reports, and making my gear list in early August. The Colorado trip is a week without television, email, or telephones. It renews.

Pheasant season, when my cousin, my dad and I trudge through the fields in Kiowa County for a few days, does the same. We've endured rain, 60 mph winds, long birdless walks, and warmer than normal November days. However, in my mind I carry those crisp fall days when pheasants flushed at our feet, grilled fillets filled our bellies, and we sat on the porch mellow and satisfied remembering the day. The Big Black Dog and I are already walking to prepare for the CRP fields. In October, I'll start bringing my pheasant gun to the five-stand range, organize my hunting gear, make another list, and look at photos from last year – just to revel in the anticipation.

My Dad and I made our 19th trip to fish in Canada this past June. I can't explain how much I look forward to that trip each year. However, the planning and preparation have become as important as the actual trip – getting the truck, boat and tackle ready for the long drive – being ready for anything so far from home in a place so wild. It's a challenge to anticipate what might be needed, in addition to the normal gear. I've got a notebook full of "what-to-bring" and "to-do" lists, and each May, I make new ones. They look alike, but making the list has become a ritual, and I've convinced myself that I'll remember things if I write them down.

I know I'm not alone in these feelings. Each fall I talk to hunters who are planning their trip to Kansas. They ask about the rainfall, the pheasant hatch, timing of the wheat harvest, and the bird forecast. But they know and I know, they're coming no matter what I tell them. They're just going through the rituals; preparing, making phone calls and generally working up their level of anticipation. We can hardly wait. ♡

