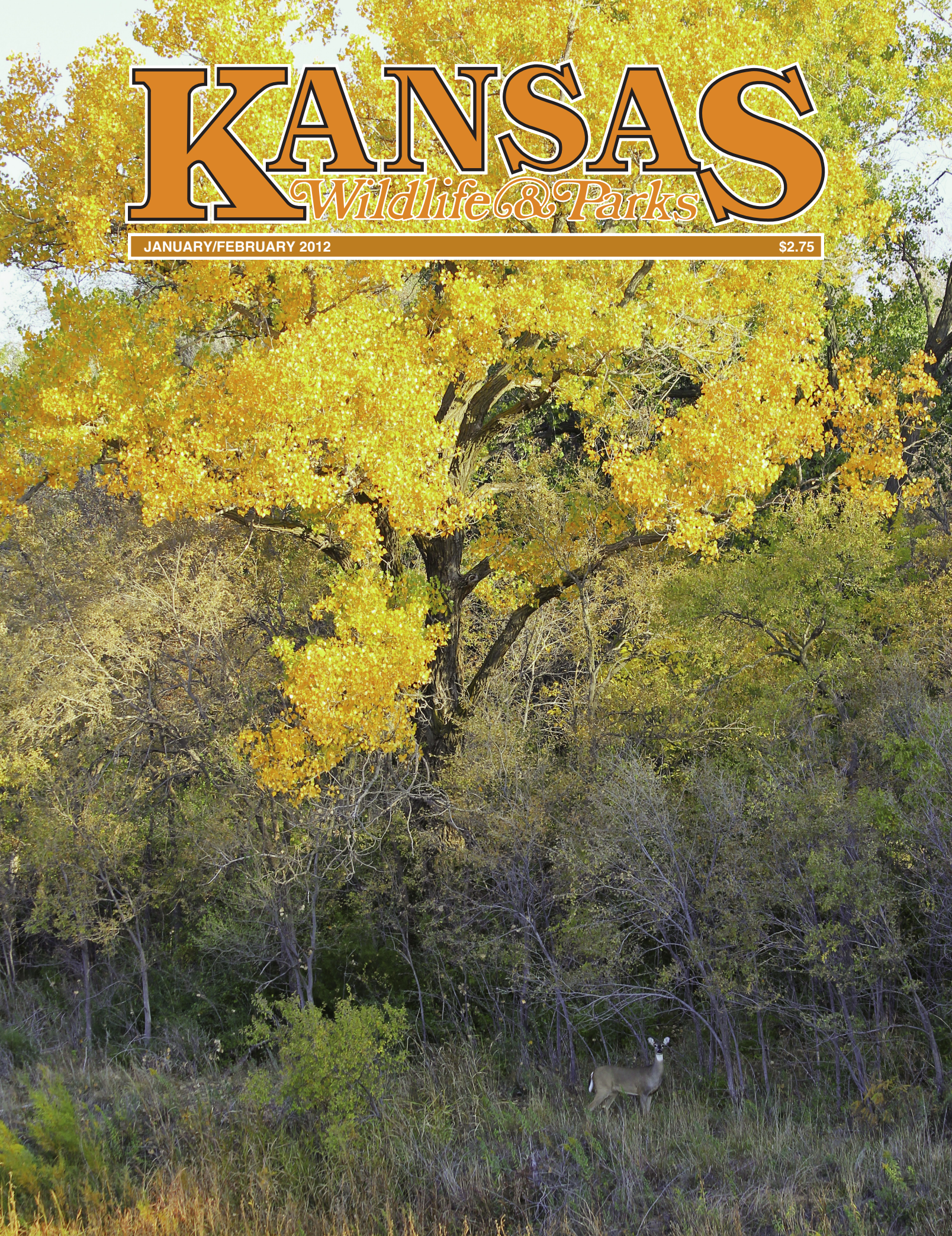


KANSAS

Wildlife & Parks

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2012

\$2.75



KANSAS *View*

by Robin Jennison



2012 Legislative Agenda

As 2011 closes and the past year's fishing, hunting, and camping trips are logged into our memory banks, we here at Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism turn our attention to the 2012 legislative session. The legislative process is an important part of protecting and maintaining our outdoor resources and heritage.

The only constant in our business is that things will change, and we must adapt if we are to continue providing the services our constituents expect. Throughout this process, we will never lose sight of our mission, which is to conserve and enhance our natural resources, while creating opportunities for Kansas citizens and future generations to enjoy those natural resources. With that in mind, we have drafted a significant 2012 legislative agenda.

Two of our initiatives are critical to the future of our programs. Kansas is truly a user-pay system for wildlife management and outdoor recreation – those who enjoy hunting, fishing, and state parks pay for those resources and outdoor opportunities. License sales and the federal excise tax on hunting and fishing equipment from the Pitman-Robertson and Dingle-Johnson acts make it possible for KDWP to work on behalf of Kansas sportsmen and women. However, license revenues haven't kept up with program costs. With rare exception, hunters and anglers take great pride in introducing someone new, particularly youngsters, to the outdoors, and those efforts, along with their financial support ensure outdoor opportunities for future generations. But the numbers of hunters and anglers are declining.

Due to changing demographics, competition from other free time activities, and availability of outdoor access, sales of hunting licenses have declined 25 percent and fishing license sales have declined 17 percent since 1980. Another factor impacting license sales is that my generation, the baby boomer generation, is reaching retirement age — the age at which we are no longer required to have hunting or fishing licenses, and we get significant discounts at state parks.

Traditionally, Kansas residents 65 and older have received benefits for their longevity and dedication to our outdoor traditions. Unfortunately for KDWP rev-

enues, the number of hunters in this age group has increased by 25 percent in the last five years. If we are going to continue providing acceptable levels of services to anglers, hunters, and park patrons, we'll need a broader base of users to help fund the costs. With this in mind, one proposal on our legislative agenda will be to remove the fishing and hunting license exemption for residents 65 and older.

I believe this broader base of support is necessary not only to maintain current programs but perhaps more importantly, to ensure new folks discover the outdoors. If we are to continue our outdoor traditions and have a big enough voice to protect our rights, it is important that we pass it on. Programs such as Archery in the Schools, shooting range development, alternative delivery Hunter Education, special youth hunts, fishing clinics, online boating education, and the Walk-In Hunting Area program must be maintained and enhanced. We must provide safe and convenient opportunities for our growing urban population to discover the fantastic outdoor recreation Kansas has to offer.

Additionally, we will propose legislation to create a Park Passport. Currently, annual vehicle park entrance permits are purchased for the calendar year at a KDWP office or vendor. With that permit on the windshield, everyone in the vehicle can access any of our 26 state parks without paying the daily entrance fee. The Park Passport would replace the annual vehicle permit and would be purchased at the time of vehicle registration, remaining valid until the anniversary of the vehicle registration. Similar programs in other states have increased permit sales because of the convenience. The program most closely resembling our proposal sold passports to 27 percent of vehicles registered. Depending on the fee set for the Kansas Park Passport, we could double our current vehicle entrance revenues if only 10 percent of vehicles registered opted for the Kansas Park Passport.

There are other issues on our agenda but none have the potential to impact our constituents the way the removing the senior license exemption and the adding the Park Passport could. I am confident that these two changes will positively impact Kansas' outdoor opportunities now and for our next generation. ♡

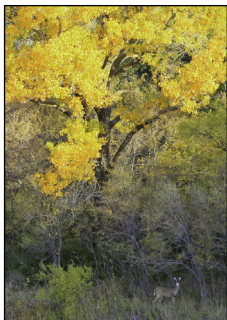


2012 Photo Issue!

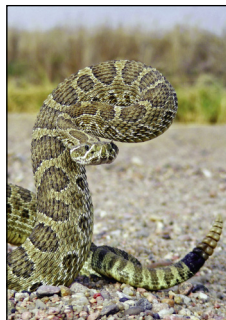
I hope you enjoy this year's collection of Kansas photographs. I leaned heavily on several of my good friends for contributions: Bob Gress, Wichita, who is unrivaled in his photography skills and knowledge of Kansas wildlife; Jim Glynn, Great Bend, who by now is familiar to Kansas Wildlife & Parks readers; Jon Blumb, Lawrence, who submitted some great black and white images; and Dan Witt, Hoisington, who has only recently been featured in the magazine. Of course there are some staff photos sprinkled in here and there.

These images should convince even the stubborn skeptic that Kansas has amazing outdoor resources and recreation opportunities.

Mike Miller



Front Cover: I'd rather be lucky than good, and that's what I was when I stopped to take a photo of a spectacular cottonwood tree. Just before I snapped a second photo, the deer trotted into the frame.
Mike Miller Back Cover: Game warden Mike Hopper talked this prairie rattlesnake into posing on a Cheyenne County road.



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KANSAS WILDLIFE & PARKS (ISSN 0898-6975) is published bimonthly (every other month) by the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism 512 SE 25th Ave., Pratt, KS 67124. Address editorial correspondence to Kansas Wildlife & Parks Magazine, 512 SE 25th Ave., Pratt, KS 67124 (620) 672-5911. Send subscription requests to Kansas Wildlife & Parks Magazine, PO Box 37828, Boone, IA 50037-0828. Subscription rate: one year \$10; two years \$18; and three years \$27. Articles in the magazine may be reprinted with permission. Periodical postage paid at Pratt, KS and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Kansas Wildlife & Parks Magazine, PO Box 37828, Boone, IA 50037-0828. For subscription inquiries call toll-free 1 800 288-8387.

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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American avocet in flight, Bob Gress



Everyone loves to watch birds, and we have an amazing variety to enjoy in Kansas. To capture a tack-sharp, full-frame image of an avocet is noteworthy. To capture that image in flight is amazing.



Yellow-crowned night heron, Dan Witt

"I never for a day gave up listening to the songs of our birds,
or watching their peculiar habits, or delineating them in the
best way I could."

John James Audubon



Black-necked stilt, Bob Gress



Red-winged blackbird, Dan Witt

“Even without trees, the prairie drew songbirds. The bobolink was one of the old-timers, and so was the kingbird. There was our western meadowlark, singer laureate of the tallgrass prairie, almost identical with the eastern meadowlark, but singing a longer and more tuneful song. Lacking trees, the meadowlarks and dickcissels and song sparrows made do, and sang from tall flower stalks; many of the grasslanders, such as longspurs, horned larks, and bobolinks simply sang on the wing.”

John Madson, *Out Home*



Blue grosbeak, Bob Gress



Dickcissel, Mike Blair



Greater prairie chicken, Dan Witt



White-breasted nuthatch,
Bob Gress

Osprey, Dan Witt



*"In my deepest troubles, I frequently would wrench myself from the persons around me and retire to some secluded part of our noble forests."
John James Audubon*



Common snipe, Mike Miller



Northern parula, Bob Gress



Pied-billed grebe, Bob Gress



Short-eared owl, Bob Gress



Wood duck, Bob Gress



Loggerhead shrike, Bob Gress



White-tailed buck, Jim Glynn



White-tailed doe, Bob Gress



White-tailed buck, Jim Glynn



Bison, Bob Gress



Bobcats, Dan Witt



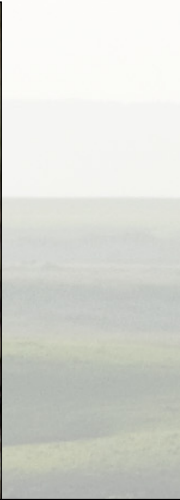
Mink, Bob Gress



Badger, Bob Gress



It's amazing how well a black-tailed jackrabbit can hide in grass just a few inches tall. This one held its hunkered-down position for several close-up photos before making its escape.





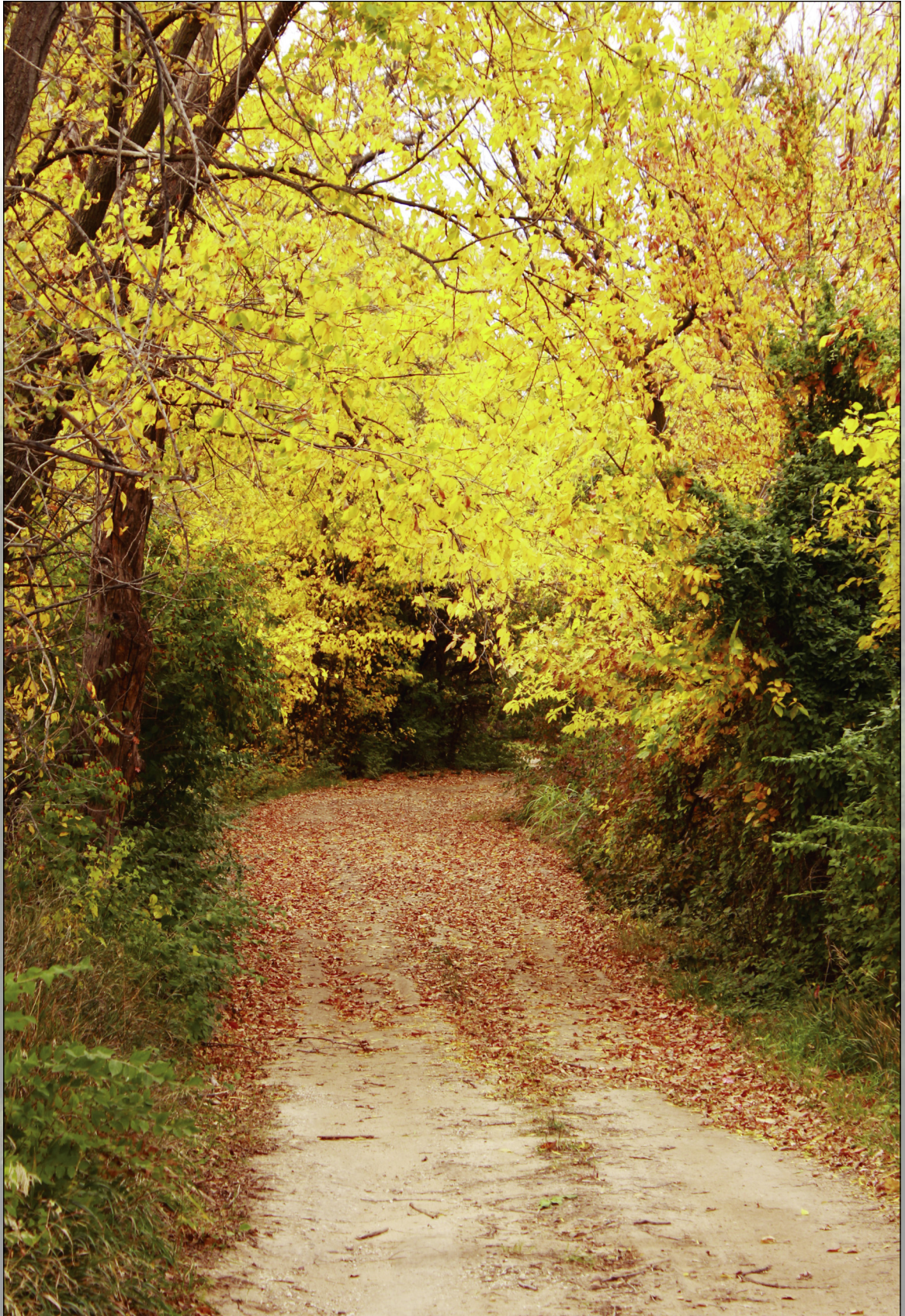
Cottonwood color, J. Mark Shoup



Fall sumac, Mike Blair



Cheyenne Bottoms sunset, Mike miller



Color arch, Mike miller



Image echo, Mike Miller



Pratt County sunrise, Wayne Doyle



Eastern Kansas hardwood color, Mike Blair



Winter walk, Jon Blumb



Eastern gobbler, Jon Blumb



Springer spaniels, Jon Blumb

While color adds pizzazz to the landscape, Jon Blumb's black and white images are stunning by contrast.



Sand pit heaven, Mike Miller



Fall black crappie, Mike Miller

Many men go fishing all of their lives without knowing that it is not fish they are after. Henry David Thoreau



You could feel the color, Mike Miller



Farm pond bluegill, Marc Murrell



Fishing 101, Mike Miller



Last cast of the evening, Marc Murrell



Glen Elder slab, Mike Miller

"I used to like fishing because I thought it had some larger significance. Now I like fishing because it's the one thing I can think of that probably doesn't." John Gierach



"Did you hear a quack?" Mike Miller

A duck hunter can accumulate more gear than he can carry or store, but all of the decoys, boats, and calls won't matter if he doesn't have optimism.

Now that's a kiss, Mike Miller



Young lab with wigeon, Mike Miller



Old lab with teal, Mike Miller



Too calm for ducks, Mike Miller



Two old dogs, Mike Miller



Anticipation!, Mike Miller

Every time I approach a bird dog on point, I feel the same boyish anticipation I felt the first time it happened when I was 12. And while you'd think I would be ready when a bird flushes, I'm always completely surprised and flustered.



Coping with a warm November, Mike Miller

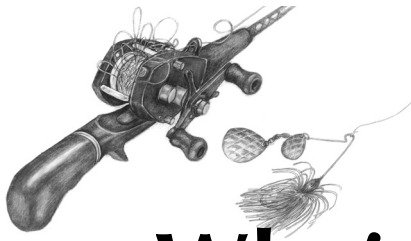


You shot it, you carry it, Mike Miller



Tranquility in Kansas state parks, Mike Blair





Backlash

by Mike Miller

Who's Your Mentor?

I pulled my truck into the two-rut lane just south of the bridge and stopped at the gate. Tall weeds bordered the dry creek bed, which was hidden by towering cottonwood trees and brush. The creek snaked to the east bordered by pasture on the south and farm ground on the north. I looked at my friend and co-worker Gene and said, "Looks pretty good, doesn't it." He nodded.

Deer numbers were lean in this country in the early 1980s, so when I found some well-worn trails in this narrow corridor of habitat, I was excited. I had just taken up bowhunting and hadn't come close to killing a deer. But I loved shooting the bow and was nearly obsessed with developing the skills necessary to be successful. I was naïve, though, in my estimation of what I knew about deer.

I walked nonchalantly a good distance into the trees to show Gene where I thought I'd put a treestand before I realized Gene wasn't walking behind me. He was still standing at the edge of the trees, staring intently at the ground. I went back to start my education. I walked over and began staring at the ground where Gene was staring like I knew what he was doing. He looked up and said, "Two trails intersect here, and there's a scrape just off to the south. See that lick branch over there?"

I nodded that I saw the tiny branch broken off about 6 feet high, but I was embarrassed because though I knew what a scrape was, I wasn't sure what a lick branch was. I decided to keep my mouth shut and follow Gene as he meticulously studied the deer sign along that creek bed. That was 27 years ago, and I followed Gene around for a long time, learning about deer and deer hunting. Although I'm certain he knew how ignorant I was, he never let on. He just kept talking and teaching. We hunted together for years and enjoyed some fantastic outdoor adventures.

When our agency assembled a committee to discuss hunter recruitment more than 10 years ago, we looked at what other states were doing. One common phrase we heard was, "It takes a hunter to make a hunter." I resisted jumping on that bandwagon because of the perception that convincing our hunters to become mentors would be an overwhelming obstacle. However, I've since learned that it really does take a hunter to make a hunter, and I've also learned that nearly every hunter has or is mentoring someone.

My initial interpretation of a hunting mentor was wrong. It doesn't have to be Dad or Mom or even Uncle John. It can be anyone who takes the time to teach another about some aspect of the outdoors. Most hunters traditionally come from a hunting family and were introduced to hunting by a trusted family member. However, I think all hunters can look back and realize that they've had many mentors. In discussions with fellow hunters, I've learned that a surprising number were introduced to hunting by someone other than a parent or grandparent. I know several avid hunters learned to hunt with a family friend.

I believe the urge to hunt is in all of us. For some, that urge is so strong, they'll seek out a mentor. It's easier for a youngster to go along with a parent or grandparent, but it's not necessary. Of course, I'm also firm in my belief that when a parent spends time hunting, fishing and teaching their child about the outdoors, the benefits go far beyond passing on the hunting heritage – both for the child and the parent.

While I consider myself extraordinarily fortunate to have learned to hunt with my father and grandfather, I realize that I've had many other mentors. Those mentors often were or became close friends, but each of them took time to pass along some knowledge about hunting. My first interpretation of a mentor was someone older — usually an adult teaching a youngster, but I've had mentors who were just a few years older, and I've had mentors who were younger.

And being a mentor doesn't require a large time commitment. I recently advised a friend who was bitten by the fly fishing bug. He's become obsessed with learning to fish with a fly rod, tying flies and studying aquatic insects. He's a voracious reader and a sponge, and it's been fun watching him progress and spend money on fly fishing equipment. Really, all I did was give him some advice on equipment, which flies to buy initially and some basic casting and fishing lessons. Then I stood back and watched him have fun.

Introducing someone to our outdoor heritage is a rewarding experience and often leads to life-long friendships. If you're an experienced outdoor person, you've probably done it without even realizing it. And if you think back, you can probably name a dozen or more people who mentored you. Those moments, large and small, have had lasting impacts on your life. Never underestimate the power of passing it on. ♡

