

KANSAS

Wildlife & Parks Magazine

FOR HUNTERS, ANGLERS AND OUTDOOR ENTHUSIASTS | \$2.75 | JULY-AUGUST 2017



SPECIAL
Camping Issue

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Camping Issue

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INSIDE FRONT COVER Sitting around the campfire is often the highlight of any camping trip. Shutterstock/Roxana Bashyrova photo.

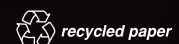
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Editorial Creed: To promote the conservation and wise use of our natural resources, to instill an understanding of our responsibilities to the land.

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KANSAS *View*

with Robin Jennison

These Aren't Your Father's State Parks

If you visit one of our 26 state parks this summer, you'll be counted among the more than 6 million visits recorded each year. That's an important statistic, not only because it shows how important outdoor recreation is to Kansans, but it also means business is good. And that's exactly how we run our state parks – like businesses.

But it hasn't always been this way. The Kansas Park and Resources Authority was created in 1955 after Kanopolis Reservoir was completed. The state agency opened Kanopolis State Park in 1958, and so began our state park camping heritage. Initially, parks were free to the public and funded through the State General Fund. As more parks were built along the shores of federal reservoirs being constructed through the 1960s and 1970s, user fees were established to pay for maintenance and improvements. State parks were still mostly funded, though, with the State General Fund.


number of licensed hunters and anglers in each state. There are very specific laws and regulations that require those funds to be used only for fish and wildlife programs. A complicated budget system was developed, keeping funding for state parks and wildlife programs separate, and ensuring the agency avoided diversion and loss of WSFR funds. However, it was about this time that the amount of State General Fund supporting state parks began to be reduced.

The agency gradually established a fee structure that kept state park recreation affordable and helped pay for staffing, security and maintenance. It wasn't easy because our parks compete with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers parks, as well as privately owned facilities. State park fees had to be acceptable to users and provide necessary funding for parks, while at the same time, parks needed to attract more customers. Out of this necessity, our park managers and staff had to be creative, innovative and efficient.

Kansas state parks needed to be more than just places to park campers and launch boats. And park staff have shown remarkable ingenuity in developing recreation and entertainment programs that have drawn people in. Cabins and yurts were constructed to provide a camping experience to those who didn't own an RV and weren't interested in tent camping. While state park visitors still come to camp, fish, boat and enjoy being outdoors, there are many more activities to enjoy today.

At any Kansas state park on any given weekend, you can hike, bike, ride your horse, attend a bluegrass concert, enjoy interpretive programs about native flora and fauna, play volleyball, run in a race or triathlon, play disk golf, shoot your bow at an archery range, and several parks offer pistol, rifle and shotgun ranges. Kansas state parks are known for world-class bike trails, accommodating equestrian facilities, and even one of the largest country music festivals in the Midwest (Kicker Country Stampede at Tuttle Creek State Park).

While our parks receive minimal support from the Economic Development Initiatives Fund, all Kansas state parks operate without State General Funds today, ultimately relying on user fees and the amazing dedication and efficiency of our staff.

These aren't your father's state parks. While you can still sit by the fire and roast a s'more, or watch the Kansas night sky for shooting stars, there is so much more. If you have fond childhood memories of camping in state parks but haven't visited in a while, you owe it to yourself to visit this summer. I'm betting you'll be pleasantly surprised. 



In 1987, the Kansas Park and Resources Authority was merged with the Kansas Fish and Game Commission to create the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. While the merger made sense because there was considerable overlap among the two agencies' constituents, hunters and anglers had long paid their way without general fund assistance. Wildlife and fish programs are funded through license and permit revenue with help from Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration funds (WSFR), derived from excise taxes on hunting and fishing equipment. WSFR funds are distributed to the states by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service based, for the most part, on the

Letters To The Editors

Kudos on Magazine

Editors:

The KDWPT magazine has great articles and photos! Thank you.

Dan Gay, Overland Park

Mined Land Cats

Editors:

Here is a photo of some of the catfish my boys, Nathaniel (17) and Kenny Paul (13), caught at one of the pits at the Mined Land Wildlife Area this past weekend. We were fishing with night crawlers and shrimp.

The largest from right to left: 15 lbs, 12 lbs, 10 lbs, 3 lbs and 2 lbs. Not in the photo is an 8 lb. caught earlier in the day. We go down every year and stay in the cabins for a weekend fishing trip. This is our FAVORITE place to fish in Kansas. We love this trip. We also caught a bunch of bluegill, redears, and a few crappie and bass.

Enjoy the photo and thanks to KDWPT for providing great fishing opportunities!

Kenny Kessler, Topeka



Double Trouble Plus One

Editors:

We got this dad-daughter double on April 15 with a bonus coyote that came into our decoys before we got into the turkeys. Shot in northwest Douglas County. Lilly shot one turkey plus the coyote. I wasn't planning on taking my turkey that morning, but when the second tom hung around after Lilly shot the first one, I figured it was a golden opportunity to have a rare success with my daughter. Lilly is 13 years old. This was her second turkey and her first coyote.

Secretary Kris Kobach, Piper



First Turkey

Editors:

Brooks with his first turkey. He took this bird in Douglas County with a youth model Winchester 20 gauge on April 21, 2017.

Captain Dan Melson, KDWPT, Topeka





AT WOODS EDGE

with Andra Bryan Stefanoni

Something About a Tent

When I was very young, it was not uncommon for Mom to spread a large quilt over a table to fashion a tent for me to crawl into on a rainy day.

Dad, a lifelong outdoorsman, loved to set up his orange pup tent in the backyard and haul out his Coleman stove and assorted freeze dried foods while filling my head full of his tales of mountain climbing adventures in Colorado. It was the next best thing, I suppose, to him actually taking me.

When I was old enough, it was only natural that I joined the Girl Scouts and began camping overnight at our local camp, Friendship Fields, and later, on week-long stints at Camp Mintahama about an hour away in the hills of southwest Missouri.

Oh, how exciting it was after a hike through the Ozark woods to arrive at our camping unit and unzip the large canvas flaps of our assigned tents. Inside, four cots awaited our sleeping bags and the worn wooden floor awaited our duffel bags.

As each day passed and we either reveled in the glory of being on our own, away from home, experiencing the outdoors, or we longed for home and our parents – or perhaps, a combination of both – the tent was our home base.

After a breakfast hike to the mess hall, we returned to our tents to hur-

riedly prepare for the day, grabbing swimsuits and flipflops and other gear. If it rained, we sought shelter in our tents and enjoyed a cozy afternoon of playing Uno and Go Fish.

After a hike to the craft hut to make ceramic vases, we returned to the tents to rest in the heat of the afternoon, exchange gossip, and write quick post-cards home.

In the years since I last called one of those tents home for a week or two, I have spent time camping with fellow mountain bikers before races throughout the Midwest, living out of a duffel bag once again and consuming great quantities of “bug juice.”

I also have spent time camping with good friends near and far, from the canyon lands in Utah to Devil’s Den a few hours south in Arkansas. Along the way, my tents provided refuge in downpours and a place to recharge after long hikes.

Then, I met a fellow outdoorsman with whom I wanted to share a tent the rest of my life. And it became my turn to build quilt-and-table tents for my toddler sons. And to put pop-up tents in the backyard for them to transform into a hideout on long summer days. Arms laden with comic books, snacks, pillows, and action figures, they’d retreat to the quiet, shady, bug-free interior while I gardened.

When they each became old enough

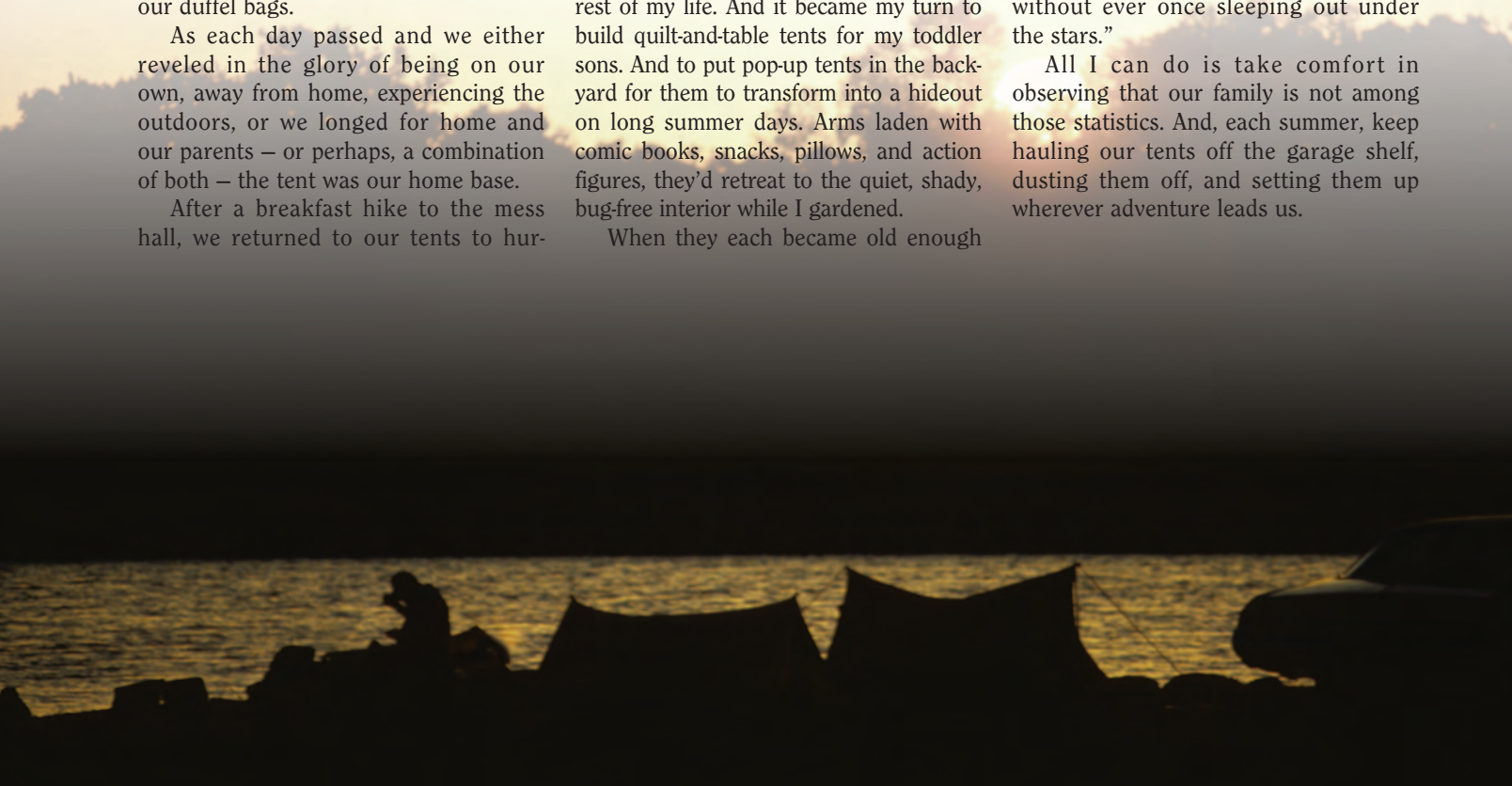
for a real campout and real tent, it was a milestone moment – perhaps more so than when they took their first steps.

I returned to Camp Mintahama not long ago, three decades after my last campout there as a girl, and could still go right to the tent that was mine that first year. My eyes were blurry, but in my mind’s eye, I could clearly see us sprawled on the cots, legs brown from the sun.

A few days later, they were filled with a new generation of girls learning to appreciate a tent. Admittedly, I worry a bit about this generation, as those from earlier generations are want to do; these tents don’t come with air conditioning and wi-fi. Will today’s children still feel at home in them? Will they long for them when they leave and eagerly anticipate them when they are preparing to return?

Outdoor writer Alan Kesselheim has noted that “A great many people, and more all the time, live their entire lives without ever once sleeping out under the stars.”

All I can do is take comfort in observing that our family is not among those statistics. And, each summer, keep hauling our tents off the garage shelf, dusting them off, and setting them up wherever adventure leads us.



BIRD BRAIN

Summer Sightings

with Mike Rader

In the dog days of summer when folks are enjoying their favorite camping spot at one of our state parks, they might not think of birding. Summertime campers may spend the heat of the day on or near the water or even in air-conditioned campers. But there are great opportunities to observe birds early in the morning, just before sundown and even in the dark of night.

Most birds are active in the cooler times of day – morning and evening, foraging and feeding young. Midday is usually spent resting out of the sun and extreme heat. A dawn birding session can be productive and rewarding, especially while other campers are still sleeping and the campground is quiet.

Owls and nightjars (common nighthawk, common poorwill, whip-poor-will and chuck-will's-widow) are active at night. They may not call as much as they did during the breeding season, but they can still be heard if you know what to listen for.

The end of summer is usually considered a “dead” time for bird watching, but birding this time of year can be quite interesting. Lots of baby birds are out of the nest by now and learning to survive. Identification can be challenging because the young don't look quite right. Many birds still care for young even after they fledge, so you can see adults feeding and protecting young from potential predators. Observing the adults will help in the identification of some of the birds you might not be sure about,

with brown-headed cowbirds being the exception. They lay their eggs in the nests of other birds, with the host parents raising them to fledging.

If you camp in the eastern half of the state and plan to spend a few days there, you can have fun by putting up a hummingbird feeder. Ruby-throated hummingbirds can be encouraged to visit quickly when they find feeders and are a marvel to observe. Hummingbird migration actually starts in August, so those camping in the western half of Kansas can also have the possibility of hummers, but not the typical ruby-throats seen in the east. Some of the western species, such as rufous, broad-tailed and calliope, begin to move out of the mountains, while not common, can be observed in the west.

Bottom line is: be sure to pack binoculars and bird books for a summer camping trip. Practicing identifying birds now will pay off when the majority of migrants come through this fall.



Photo submissions for the 5th annual “Wild About Kansas” photo contest are being accepted now through Oct. 13, 2017. Divided into five categories, participants can submit photos related to:

- Wildlife** (game and nongame animals, primarily mammals, migratory birds, furbearers, etc.)
- Outdoor Recreation** (people participating in activities outdoors, not hunting or fishing)
- Landscapes** (scenery; wildlife may be present, but should not be the sole focus of the image.)
- Other Species** (insects, reptiles, and amphibians)
- Hunting/Fishing** (hunters and anglers; set-up shots from a hunting or fishing trip. Photos with dead game

will be accepted, however, “action” shots, or photos taken during the activity will be given preference.)

RULES

Photographers can submit up to three photos total. Photos must be taken within the state of Kansas and must be the entrant's original work. The contest is open to both residents and non-residents of Kansas, and there is no age limit.

JUDGING

Each photo will be judged on creativity, composition, subject matter, lighting, and the overall sharpness. Photographs from participants under the age of 18 will be placed in a youth division; all others will compete in the adult division. Winning entries will be featured in the 2018 January/February photo issue of *Kansas Wildlife & Parks Magazine*.

HOW TO ENTER

Entries must be submitted no later than **5 p.m. on Oct. 13, 2017**. Photo format should be JPEG or TIFF. All photos must be submitted electronically. Photos that do not meet the minimum file size requirements (1 MB) will NOT be accepted.

To enter, visit ksoutdoors.com and click “Publications,” then “2017 Wild About Kansas Photo Contest.”

Go With The Flow

Ark Darter Artfully Protected *with Mark VanScoyoc*

In Fall 2016, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) rendered a decision of “not warranted” regarding the federal listing of the Arkansas darter (*Etheostema cragini*). The species was listed as “state threatened” in Kansas in 1978.

The Arkansas darter, or “Ark darter,” attained candidate status under the USFWS in 1991, but was not petitioned for listing until 2004. In 2005, a 12-month positive finding resulted in a “warranted but precluded” decision. Three years later, the USFWS was sued to list the darter and an agreement with the plaintiff was reached for a listing decision by 2016. A Species Status Assessment was initiated by the USFWS to examine such factors as the species’ abundance, habitat quality, stressors, distribution across its range, and genetic and ecological diversity. In early Fall 2016, the USFWS rendered a decision of “not warranted.”

The “not warranted” ruling is significant in that it allows state fish and wildlife agencies, where the darter resides, to implement and monitor programs aimed at improving this species’ habitat without increased federal oversight. As ecologists and biologists, we strive to work toward simple and effective solutions for conservation of the state’s native species whenever possible. And in Kansas, we know the best way to accomplish this is through fostering effective partnerships with landowners

whose properties contain critical habitats.

Partnerships such as these have allowed the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism’s (KDWPT) Stream Survey Program to collect and provide data that, ultimately, proved instrumental in arriving at the Ark darter’s “not warranted” decision. As a result of data collected through the program, KDWPT biologists characterize the

population as stable in areas with sufficient groundwater seepage and with longer stream segments not fragmented by dry channels, dams, culverts, or other impediments to fish movements.

For nearly 25 years, the stream survey program has been collecting data related to Kansas’ streams, serving as a vital tool for the conservation of aquatic species in Kansas. But you can’t mention the program without mentioning KDWPT stream biologist, Ryan Waters. Thanks to his diligence and passion for



More on The Ark Darter

The Ark Darter’s range extends into eastern Colorado, southwestern Missouri, northeastern Arkansas and north-central Oklahoma where local populations occur; however, Kansas constitutes the darter’s primary range.

Kin to fish like sauger and walleye, the Ark darter belongs to the family Percidae. The gas bladder present in most fish species that keeps them buoyant is absent or greatly reduced in darters, allowing them to easily maneuver a streambed in flowing waters by swimming in short bursts, or darting, from place to place.

Adults are typically 2.5 inches long. During breeding season, males will don brilliant hues of orange and gold that are rarely done justice in illustrations.

Kansas stream fishes, combined with his 24 years of experience, Waters was able to make significant contributions to the darter’s Species Status Assessment – a contributing factor in this decision.

Since the program’s inception in 1993, the KDWPT Stream Survey Program has recorded 23,847 Arkansas Darters at 547 locations statewide, in large part thanks to Waters and the many dedicated summer technicians who’ve worked alongside him.

Camp ITCH! *by Dustin Teasley*

When I was a kid, my brother Dennis and sister-in-law Tammy took me camping at least once each summer. One of their favorite locations was Ottawa State Fishing Lake, near Bennington. I remember always having a blast. We waded after frogs, got muddy, had campfires and most importantly, fished. One evening, while Dennis went into town to get forgotten supplies, I stayed and fished, catching two enormous drum. I couldn’t wait to show them off to Dennis when he got back, and although it was getting late, we cleaned them before dark. In a scramble, my brother lit the lanterns and began setting up the tent. He had me shimmy up a nearby tree and secure a wire to hang a lantern. After setting up camp, we built a campfire and fished a little before turning in. The next morning, I woke up in an uncomfortable condition. In the daylight, I could see that in my hurry to hang the lantern, I neglected to notice the poison ivy vine surrounding the tree’s trunk. Needless to say, the trip was cut short with another trip to town to buy calamine lotion. What followed was one of the most miserable weeks of my life. But the trip wasn’t a total loss. I caught fish and learned a valuable outdoor lesson about examining the leaves on any tree before climbing it.

HUNTING HERITAGE

with Kent Barrett

Why Do You Hunt?

Those who don't hunt ask us who do, "Why do you hunt?" Hunters often explain some benefits they get from hunting rather than sharing the motives that led them to be a hunter. There are many different motives, but one thing I know for sure, a person's decision to hunt is deeply personal.

Noted author Shane Mahoney has said, "Life continues as a death dependent process." I expect this sounds morbid to some, but death changes the way one views the world. Some critics condemn hunting as barbaric, cruel, and an obsolete remnant of our past that has been excised by civilized cultures. This idea only shows how far demographic changes have insulated some from nature's more unpleasant realities, thereby easing some people's detachment from real life. Prosperity has fostered in some an intense regard for the inherent value of life, leading them to reject the killing of any animal for any reason, considering it morally wrong. As Mahoney notes, "By focusing on the animal's death, they come to condemn the hunting process that leads to it." This can result in the inaccurate notion that hunting is only practiced today by red-

necks who murder animals to feel macho. Resolving the reality of death in one's own mind helps one understand the difference between the death of a human and the death of an animal. Whether or not, on any particular hunt, a hunter kills a deer, a pheasant or nothing at all, going to the field prepared to kill changes everything.

Killing an animal generates a wide range of emotions for hunters, including



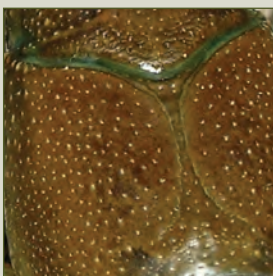
profound respect and sadness. But as Mahoney has noted, "The hunting world must also admit to its own failings. There are examples where respect for the animal is not demonstrated and where sufficient concern for the manner of its death is not demonstrated."

But there are also examples where after a poor shot, hunters have spent countless hours into the night and then have returned again the next morning to pick up the trail of wounded game. Why? It's not because of the value of the meat, but because of the value of the life! This is a portion of the responsibility that hunters accept as their part in this "equation of existence." When a hunter returns with game, they know their persistence, skill, and a bit of luck earned them the right to eat the food provided. M.R. James once said, ". . . on those occasions when I choose to kill, to claim some small part of nature's bounty for my own, I do so by choice ... and make no apology for my actions. Others may employ faceless strangers to procure their meats, their leathers ... the necessities of life. Such is their right, and I wish them well. All I ask in return is that no one begrudge me my right to do some of these things myself."

So, I will say I hunt because I am a "predator participating in a world where predation belongs." I will also say, because I hunt, I value life more fully.

WHAT AM I? ID Challenge

Using only the image and clues below, see if you can figure out this month's mystery species!



Clues:

1. I can live in and out of water.
2. I move faster backwards than forwards.
3. I can live up to 30 years!

>>> See answer on Page 13



Fish Squeezer

with Tommie Berger

Stocking Your Private Pond

What a difference water makes to Kansas. We are in a wet cycle in most of the Sunflower State, which makes nearly everyone happy. No one likes to see floods and high water over crop fields but water is certainly a blessing versus extreme drought.

Farm ponds are full and landowners are asking a lot of questions about restocking. Some pondowners found fish for restocking last spring but just in case there are those who have not, I'll pass along some helpful information.

KDWPT does not provide fish for stocking private farm ponds in Kansas. The only ponds stocked by the agency are the F.I.S.H. (Fishing Impoundments and Stream Habitats) ponds that are leased for public fishing and the district fisheries biologist makes the stocking recommendations for those.

Pondowners will need to purchase fish for their ponds from a commercial fish dealer. In some areas, coops or farm supply stores have contracts with commercial dealers who deliver fish for pickup by pondowners, ordered ahead of time. Pondowners can also find nearby commercial fish producers through the Kansas Aquaculture Association - www.kansasaquaculture.org. Some of these fish dealers will deliver fish to your location or you can make arrangements to pick the fish up at their facility - obviously there is a cost for delivery.

KDWPT recommends 100 large-mouth bass, 250 to 500 bluegill, and 100 channel catfish (all fingerlings) per acre for a pond. Keep in mind that ponds that are brim full now may not be that way in a year, so it's a good idea to stock numbers that correspond with the average size of the pond, not necessarily the full size. If you stock fewer numbers and the pond stays full, the fish should just grow faster.

To get your fish off to a good start, stock 2 pounds of fathead minnows per acre ahead of time. Grass carp are recommended for vegetation control at

five to 10 per acre of vegetation. Kansas dealers are bound by law to provide only triploid grass carp, which cannot reproduce.

If you get your pond stocked now, you'll have a place to take the kids fishing in a year or two!



WAY outside BY BRUCE COCHRAN



Food tastes better outdoors. A hot dog roasted over an open fire or even the first bite of a ham and cheese sandwich while camping beats the home-kitchen version any day.

A camping trip is also the perfect opportunity to stretch the menu. While I love a fire-roasted hot dog with a little ketchup and sweet pickle relish on a warm bun as much as the next camper, I've learned camp food doesn't have to be boring either.

Albeit by accident, we've discovered great new dishes while camping. Boiled shrimp has become a camp favorite, although one trip we forgot the cocktail sauce, which is mandatory. However, a quick search of our condiments luckily yielded some butter and Montreal chicken seasoning we melted and mixed, creating an off-hand version of shrimp scampi. Coupled with a heaping helping of cheesy, garlic mashed potatoes and a garden salad, we ate a meal fit for royalty.

Other experiments bombed. Big breakfasts are traditional - the farm-boy version of bacon or sausage, eggs and pancakes. But as cocktail sauce is to boiled shrimp, syrup is to pancakes and one outing we forgot syrup. Back to the MacGyver cookbook, we tried melting marshmallows in a pan instead. It failed epically. We even had to trash the pan!

One challenge of expanding the menu on campouts is cooking for a larger-than-normal group. We regularly camp with my sister and her crew, as well as other couples and it's not unusual to



Marc Murrell photos

have 10-12 people at mealtime. Burgers and brats are an easy fix, but its fun to literally "think outside the bun" and try different dishes.

Last summer, I pulled off a shrimp boil that was out-of-this-world delicious. We've had numerous others since at home, but none tasted as good as that one eaten while sitting on lawn chairs and enjoying our lake view with friends and family.

A shrimp boil isn't a lot of work. There's not much mess setting or cleaning up, but a little pre-planning is required to ensure having the right equipment and ingredients. The cooking sequence is specifically timed and if followed closely, can be nearly fool-proof.

Camp Shrimp

- 4-6 quarts water
- 1 can beer (optional)
- ½ cup Old Bay Seasoning
- 2 tablespoon salt
- 2 cloves garlic
- 8 medium red potatoes, quartered
- 2 large onions, cut into wedges
- 2 pounds smoked sausage, cut in 2-inch pieces (I use andouillet and German)
- 8 ears corn, shucked and halved
- 4 pounds unpeeled jumbo shrimp

Bring water, beer, salt and Old Bay seasoning to a boil in 12-quart stock pot on high heat (a fry basket in place works well to remove the food once cooked). Add potatoes, garlic and onions and cook 8 minutes. Add smoked sausage and cook 5 minutes. Add corn and cook 7 minutes. Add shrimp and cook 4 minutes. Drain and dump on a covered table. Serves 6-8.



Life Unpaved

with Nadia Reimer

When I Think of Camping



When I think of camping,
I think of **fresh air**.
Soaking up sun
from a folding chair.

A big truck bed,
filled with sticks and logs.
The wagging tail
of **an eager dog**.

I think of rods and reels,
tackle boxes, a few.
I think of **bass** and lures,
and a wide-open view.

The joy that comes
with screaming "**fish on!**"
Running amok
with no shoes on.

When I think of camping,
I think of **night**.
The light of a fire,
burning hot and bright.

It sears my dinner
and keep bugs at bay,
with its **embers of gold**,
laced with ash, gray.

I think of **marshmallows**
and graham crackers, too.
Some bars of chocolate,
one for me, one for you.

Sticky fingers,
and saying "just one more,"
before grabbing a light
to go **explore**.

When I think of camping,
I think of a tent,
the kind where **stars**
shine through the top vent.

I think of bats,
and a **coyote's call**,
and what else lurks
just after nightfall.

Sleeping bags
and getting too warm,
just to huddle back up,
before the morn'.

Chirping birds,
fog on the **lake**,
dew on the ground,
a new fire to make.

Grabbing cold orange juice
from a cooler of ice.
The **smell** of bacon,
and sneaking a slice.

I think of messy hair
and **comfy clothes**.
No cell service,
TV or radio.

When I think of camping,
I think of great times,
best spent with **family**,
two-legged and canine.



Park View

with Kathy Pritchett

Memorial Day and Fourth of July are behind us, and a long, final stretch of summer is ahead. What is there to do? Well, a whole lot of relaxing fun in Kansas state parks still waits! Over the past year, we have put in new campgrounds or enhanced existing campgrounds at Cedar Bluff, Prairie Dog and Hillsdale state parks. And slips will be going in soon at the Cheney State Park marina.

After the fireworks are over, there are triathlons, fishing tournaments, trail rides and biking and archery events. If you aren't into competing, El Dorado State Park is hosting free music festivals on alternating Fridays at the Walnut River Amphitheater. Lovewell State Park's legendary Fun Day is August 5. Lovewell then holds its "Campground Christmas" lighting contest on August 18 and 19. Even those who don't camp love to come out and see the displays. Rumor is Santa might even show up. At Tuttle Creek State Park's Fancy Creek Range, Women

A Lot of Summer Left

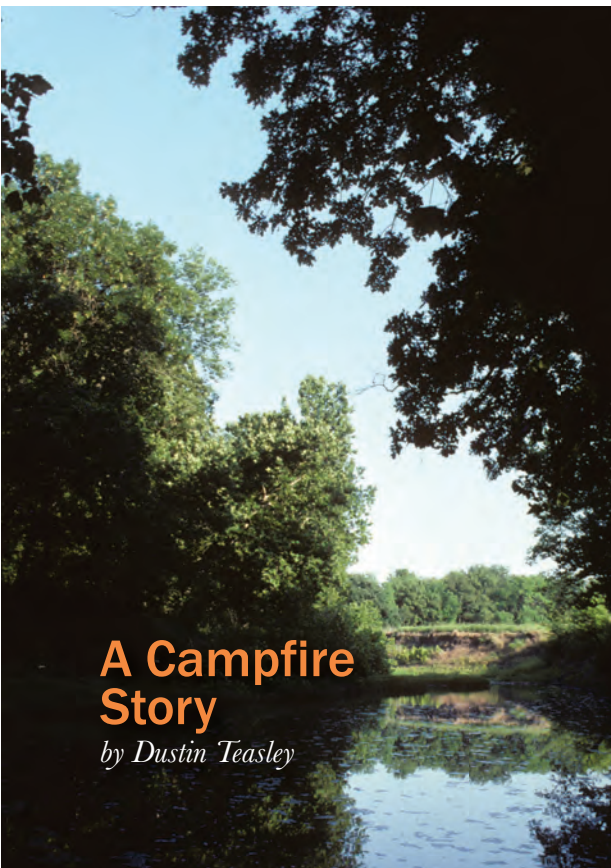
On Target will hold an instructional shooting clinic on September 9. Pre-registration is required and slots are limited, so sign up soon if you are interested.

And for those getting ready to enter college, we know cost is always a concern. Although we don't yet have formal approval, we anticipate having an AmeriCorps program again starting September 1. AmeriCorps provides a perfect way for students to get work experience and make some money. The application process is extensive, requiring background checks, but the reward is a living stipend and training while serving the term, and an education award that can be used toward student loans or college expenses at Title IV schools. The intangible benefits are members may also serve in disaster response, providing a sense of service and networking contacts that last a lifetime. Many members who have served with the Kansas Outdoor AmeriCorps Action Team have since become full-time staff. If you are inter-



ested in serving in this program, contact the state park office where you would like to serve.

One last note: The Recreational Trails Program remains authorized at 2009 levels under the Fixing America's Transportation System Act. This program provides reimbursable grants to approved projects for recreational trails. By law, 30 percent of the grants must be awarded to projects involving motorized recreation, such as ATVs, dirt bikes, or other off-highway vehicles, because the funding for the program comes from taxes on off-highway fuel sales. Applications for these grants are due August 1. If you have any questions about the program, contact Kathy Pritchett, (620) 672-5911.



I have fond memories of my dad taking me to our fishing lease Friday evenings after he got off work. Often, we would fish into the early morning hours, especially if the fish were biting. To pass the time between bites, Dad would sing his favorite Johnny Horton tunes and tell jokes and stories. One of my favorite stories fooled me hook, line and sinker until the very end. Here's how I remember it.

"Years ago one summer night, your grandpa and I went fishing at one of his favorite spots on the river near Glasco. On a big bend in the river, the landowner used old car bodies to keep the bank from washing out during high water, and the eddys around the car bodies held big ol' yellow cats. That night, we baited a few bank lines as well a couple of heavy rods and reels. For bait, we used the biggest perch we could find. Shortly after midnight, we found ourselves in the fight of our lives. A big catfish took the bait on one of the rods and nearly pulled Grandpa in when he set the hook. For half an hour he fought to bring the fish to shallow water but the cat stayed deep. Just when your grandpa thought the fish was tiring, it began to swim upstream toward one of those old car bodies. Grandpa tried desperately to turn the fish, but he couldn't. Then it just stopped. After another 30 minutes we ended up cutting the line.

"Why in the world would you cut the line?" I asked.
"You knew you had a monster on."

"Well son," he smiled, "We didn't have a choice. That ol' catfish swam into one of those car bodies and rolled the windows up on us."

I was so mad I couldn't tell you if we even caught a fish that night.

A Campfire Story

by Dustin Teasley

CAMPING OUT WITH: CODY CANADA & THE DEPARTED



Tuttle Creek State Park, north of Manhattan, is home to one of the largest country music festivals in the nation, Kicker Country Stampede. Annually, it brings in country music's top artists, among other popular pop and rock artists, for three days of nearly non-stop music performances. And you can bet their 11 cabins and more than 500 campsites fill up and then some.

This past winter, Tuttle Creek State Park again became the stop-off point for a country music tour bus, only this time the band wasn't there to hit a stage, at least not one at Tuttle – instead they were looking to get a little R&R between shows. The band, Cody Canada & The Departed – an alternative country/rock band based in the Midwest – hooked up their tour bus, settled into a cabin, and made time to visit with me before hitting the road again.

Here's a little snippet from my time at camp with Cody Canada and The Departed.

THE BAND

Cody Canada (Texas) - Lead guitar, vocals, harmonica

Jeremy Plato (Texas) - Bassist, vocals

Eric Hansen (Oklahoma) - Drummer

Ross Smith (Arkansas) - Guitar, keyboard

BACKGROUND

The band had a following from the start, due in large part to dedicated fans who grew to love Cody Canada and Jeremy Plato during their time as members of Cross Canadian Ragweed. Canada was the band's frontman, playing lead guitar and singing vocals, alongside Plato who played bass and sang vocals. After 16 years, the band split and in 2010, Canada and Plato formed The Departed. Four years later, Ross Smith and Eric Hansen came along, Smith on guitar and keyboard, and Hansen on drums. Today they're known as Cody Canada and The Departed.

THE DISH

The bands favorite places to perform in Kansas: the Cotillion Ballroom (Wichita), The Hat (Manhattan), and the Granada Theater (Lawrence).

When asked what they think of when they think of Kansas, they were quick to say: fishing; great places to eat; visiting with their manager, Brian Kinzie's, family; and none other than Superman, thanks to the character's fictional hometown of Smallville, Kan. (which some believe to really be Hutchinson).

In between a stint of shows in the Sunflower State, the band relaxed at Tuttle Creek in both their tour bus and in one of the park's modern cabins, Kiowa. Although it was no surprise to Canada that the stay would be enjoyable (he had been to Tuttle before having played Stampede several years prior with Plato), everyone agreed the park was just what they needed: something quiet and peaceful.

Now, you can't camp without making s'mores, so if you're going to fire up the pit and bust out a bag of some marshmallows this summer – at Tuttle or any of the other 25 state parks offered by the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism – the band has a few suggestions for how you can build a better s'more: syrup, peanut butter, or Cody's pick, salted caramel.

LAST THOUGHTS

Known for hits such as "Inbetweeners," "Skyline Radio," and "Ballad of Rosalie," the Departed continue to keep their edgy, country-rock legacy strong, traveling and playing often. And from the level of enthusiasm they brought to their Kansas shows (I had the pleasure of seeing them in Russell), I doubt they'll be permanently relaxing anytime soon.

For more on Kansas state parks, visit ksoutdoors.com.

For more on the band, visit www.thedepartedmusic.com.

Nadia Reimer, *managing editor*



FISHIN'

Camping = Fishing

with Mike Miller

As you might expect, my camping memories are overshadowed by fishing. I don't think I've ever camped or thought about camping if fishing wasn't a part of the outing, except for a couple of elk and turkey hunting trips.

For me, camping was a vehicle to fish. I have very fond memories of family camping trips in the mountains, but even at a young age, I liked camping because it allowed us to sleep close to the water. I've slept in the open on cots, on the ground in tents and in cozy RVs, but they were always within earshot of a gurgling stream or waves

lapping on a lake.

When I was a youngster, mornings on camping trips were the best. Rising at sunrise for a short walk to the river or lake to cast for trout, knowing you had a whole day of fishing ahead of you was magical. Just knowing the water was so near and available created a sense of contentment in me. And I was never an early riser - only when water waited.

I have an album of memories that include camping trips and fishing. My mind flips through snapshots of those trips, and I see a blissful young boy happy to be with family and looking for-

ward to fishing. Those outings bonded us as a family, but I believe those experiences also influenced who I am today, what I do for a living, where I live and what I enjoy.

Looking back, it seems amazing that the simple joy of camping and fishing with family could have such a lasting impact. And even if they don't think about it in those terms, I think parents who camped as youngsters are driven to provide their own children with the same experiences. We should never underestimate the power of passing on the outdoor heritage.



Camp Cooks - Kids

My family doesn't get to enjoy camping until baseball/softball seasons end in late July. So, we have a very short, hot window in which to plan our trips. When we do get to go, days are spent in the water trying to stay cool and the evenings are spent around the campfire, avoiding bugs. Passing the time around the campfire often involves food and food seems to taste better when you're camping. I've also found that these evenings are perfect for supervising budding young cooks.

The grate from your backyard BBQ grill and a couple of cinder blocks provide a simple and safe cooking surface. The cinder blocks and grate should be set up near the edge of the main fire so hot coals can be dragged under the grate. Cooking heat can be regulated by the amount of coals and it's safer for the kids to cook away from the main fire.

We make our hamburger patties at home and season and freeze them before the trip. Frozen patties not only assist in keeping your cooler cold, but cold burgers hold together better when they first go on the grate. This also reduces the necessity to handle raw meat, keeping hands cleaner, too. We also like to grill hot dogs and sausages and have learned to poke holes along the edges of sausages to keep them from bursting, and potentially causing grease burns or fire flare-ups.

Unless the kids are up early to go fishing in the morning, they usually stay tucked in their sleeping bags. But there's nothing like the smell of breakfast cooking to draw groggy,



hungry campers to the fire. I like to encourage the kids to pitch in and help prepare the meal and breakfast burritos are quick and easy.

Before our trip, I cook a pound of ground sausage, let it cool and add it, along with the grease, to a sealable container with eight raw eggs. I also add chopped peppers and season with salt and pepper. I pack some grated cheese and tortillas separately. Once the fire is rekindled and producing hot coals, I place a skillet on the grate and add the sausage and egg mixture. The sausage grease will prevent sticking. Constantly fold the mix away from the pan bottom until it's done and move the skillet to a cooler spot on the grate. Load up the tortillas with eggs and sausage and top with cheese. For taste, we bring picante sauce packets kept from fast food places.

Not only is camp cooking easy, it makes kids feel more involved in the whole camping process. Preparation at home with young cooks in mind will help things go smoother for everyone, and give kids the best chance for a successful cooking experience.

“WHAT AM I?” answer: Crayfish



The Way I See It

with Todd Workman

A Story of Camping And Survival

To me, a memorable camping trip is defined by mishaps, accidents, or unusual incidents and must involve narrowly escaping death at least once. I love to camp, but I can't get anybody to go with me these days. I blame social media for that. News leaks, stories spread and fabrications are made, then "poof," no more camping buddies. So, I'm stuck with memories of camping trips past. Like my first mobile camping trip in "Brown," my high school car.

It was a hot, muggy afternoon with a south wind and cumulous clouds oozing across the sky. The humidity was stifling. Anyone familiar with Kansas weather knew it was going to storm, making it a perfect day for a camping adventure.

My friend Alan and I were loading up the last of the gear, which included my large brown dome tent. I called it the Chocolate Kiss because that's what it looked like set up. He opened up the trunk of my Plymouth Fury (Brown) and threw the tent on top of the coolers and fishing equipment.

"Massive trunk - lots of room - mainly because I don't see a spare tire," Alan commented.

It was more of a question than a statement, and Alan looked at me like he was dreading the answer.

"Every time I carry a spare, I get a flat tire," I quipped. "So, I stopped carrying one and now I never get flat tires."

Alan swallowed a comeback and began examining my tires.

"Don't get too close, Al," I warned. "Those steel belts sticking out could cut you pretty good."

I'll admit, my tires looked like stainless steel porcupines.

But ol' Brown held all our camping gear and soon, we were humming down the dirt road toward our farm pond destination, Brown's frame undulating to the rhythm of the music playing, gently rocking on worn out shocks.

"You fall into one of those ruts doing 65 and you'll rip off your exhaust system," Al warned.

"Doesn't have an exhaust system," I shouted over the rumble, a plume of oil smoke and dirt billowing from under the hood. "I cut it out after the catalytic convertor clogged and set my carpet on fire. That's why the floor is just bare metal. Had some electrical grounding issues after the fire, so you can never ride in bare feet. Your bare feet hit the floor and you'll wet your pants."

Al looked worried, so I tried to ease his mind.

"This is a low maintenance road, so I take it a little slower. If I just keep Ol' Brown out of the ruts, it's as smooth as any highway."

I was looking at Al when the car suddenly slid into a rut. I overcorrected and we went airborne. My attempt to correct the trajectory by steering in midair was futile, but we landed back



onto the road like I knew what I was doing.

"Got a little air time there, but we sure stuck that landing," I said, clapping Al on the back, which caused my front seat to shift.

The original front seats had to be removed because I spilled coyote urine on them, and I had replaced them with a conversion van bench seat. I had always intended to install all four bolts, but two bolts had held until that moment, causing the seat to flip backwards. We ended up on our backs, staring at my loose head liner while Brown continued thundering down the road at a 65 mph.

"Well this is a pickle," I laughed.

"Weregonnadie!" Al screamed.

"Relax, we're in the ruts - it's like a Disney ride - we are safe as a baby," I said.

"Get up and put on the brakes you idiot," demanded Al.

"Okay, okay. On the count of three, lunge forward to get the seat upright," I said.

However, on the count of one, Brown hit something and the sudden jolt launched us both out of the van seat. Al was stuck against the passenger side glass like a tree frog and I ended up in the backseat. We were closing fast on the T in the road where the pond was located and our dirt road ended.

"Time to pull the rip cord," I shouted, grabbing the loop of 8-gauge wire mounted above the steering column. I gave it a yank and there was a loud explosion as the engine shut off. We slowly glided to a stop right at the gate.

Al, still clinging to the side window, was now pasty white and sweating profusely.

"What is that wire for?" he stammered, nodding at the wire.

"That's how I start and stop Brown," I said.

"What are the keys for then?" he asked staring at the ignition.

"Oh, the switch doesn't work anymore," I explained. "I put 'em there so I don't lose 'em. I hate losing my keys."

My adrenaline was flowing and I was pumped as I sprung out of ol' Brown to open the gate.

"This is how you start a camping trip, baby!" I yelled to no one in particular. "I can't wait to see what the weekend has in store for us!"

I could have gone home right then and called it a success, but we both decided that since we'd cheated death once, we should stay and fish. Plus, Al couldn't wait to get out of Brown and seemed to be in no hurry to get back in.

I don't have enough space to talk about just how epic this camping trip turned out to be; about how the coyotes stole our bread, the cows stampeded over Al's favorite rod, or about the tornado that came down the hill and wiped out my Chocolate Kiss dome tent and destroyed all of the camping gear. We luckily escaped with our lives, making it the best eight hours I ever spent camping.

Aquatic Wonders at Ottawa Lake | by Iralee Barnard

Visiting Ottawa State Fishing Lake in July or August is a special treat because that is when the north end of the lake is dotted with delicate, pale yellow blossoms. The American lotus is a native, aquatic plant that occurs in slow moving water up to about four feet deep. If you have never seen the flowers of the American lotus, they alone are worth the trip. The flowers can be 10 inches wide and stand a few inches above the water's surface. Observers will notice a variety of bees attracted to the flowers. The saucer-shaped leaves are bluish-green and can be as wide as two feet across. Really, everything about this plant is large. The fleshy rhizomes are the size of a human wrist and can grow 40 feet per year. Lotus can quickly form large colonies.

Visit again in the fall. By then the cone-shaped seed head of the lotus is brown and the half-inch, nut-like, round seeds will be ripe and rattle around in shallow pits on the face of the cone.

These cones are interesting and frequently used in dried arrangements. Ducks and other wildlife feed on the seeds. American Indians also ate them. Beavers and muskrats eat the rhizomes. All the while, lotus pads provide excellent habitat for fish.

Duckweed is another common aquatic plant also regularly found at Ottawa State Fishing Lake. Duckweed grows in quiet, fresh water worldwide. The tiny plants, about an eighth-inch across, float freely on the water's surface with a single root hanging below. As with many aquatic plants, they can form dense colonies very rapidly. Duckweed flowers are tiny. The plants mostly reproduce vegetatively, which is called budding, and one plant may produce over 17,000 others in only two weeks.

Duckweed thrives in nutrient-rich water and are high in protein. Herbivorous fish consume duckweed (my guppies and goldfish love it), as do

snails, flatworms, and ducks. Duckweed also provides overhead shelter for frogs, snakes, small fish, insects and crustaceans.

But even tinier still, the smallest flowering plant in the world, barely the size of a small pinhead, is watermeal. Botanically, it is called *Wolffia*, after 18th century German botanist and physician, J.F. Wolff. Three species of watermeal can be found at Ottawa State Fishing Lake. These aquatic plants form bright green mats on sheltered waters, have no stem, no root and no true leaves. Magnification is helpful if you want to see their globular bodies, but you can feel their distinctive grainy or mealy texture. Watermeal has high nutritive value, providing food for fish and waterfowl, and habitat for aquatic invertebrates.

There are so many interesting things to discover about the world of wildflowers and plants in Kansas, especially the aquatic kind.



Ken Barnard photo

Post Rock Country

by Dan Witt

Here in west-central Kansas, we are familiar with the stone used to make fence posts, homesteads and churches. It is a part of our history and heritage. As I travel around taking photographs of wildlife and scenery, I find that stone posts and buildings are attracting more photographers and historians than I expected. It seemed almost obligatory that I improve my yard here in Hoisington with some of these posts when I arrived in the early 1990s. It was revealing to me how difficult these heavy posts were to place and arrange properly. That project aroused my curiosity even more.

In the mid-1800s, settlers moving in and establishing property boundaries in areas from the Nebraska border to about Dodge City had a problem - there weren't enough trees to build fences. Dugout and sod homes were the norm, but were not sustainable or satisfactory for many families, so the ingenuity of the new residents was tested. They found limestone.

They peeled back the sod to uncover the "Greenhorn" formation of limestone that averages 8 to 12 inches in thickness. In most communities, there was a least one fellow from the "old country" who had masonry skills, and that tradition was passed down through the years. Limestone is unique in that it is relatively uniform in thickness and is soft enough for cutting or shaping. One of the more dubious stories about the process of obtaining the posts was that holes were drilled and filled with water which then expanded as it froze and broke off the posts. I got much better information at the Post Rock Museum in La Crosse. The local blacksmith made drills, chisels, feathers and wedges which were used to precisely separate the posts and blocks in a predictable manner and size. The stones were then dressed and prepared for placement. When barbed wire became necessary, these posts were customized with grooves and notches to direct the wire, which was stabilized with a smaller piece of smooth wire. The posts, which weigh 200-400 pounds, were hauled to the fence row and set in the ground about 6-8 feet apart. That's hard work!

The business of quarrying and preparing the posts and blocks declined rapidly in the early

1900s when wooden posts could be cut and imported for fencing. Metal and electric fencing also became available over the years. There are still quarry sites and rock cutters who create new posts and blocks, and repair existing structures since the limestone eventually erodes to some degree. Beautiful stone churches and buildings in this area attract tourists and historians. "Cathedral of the Plains" is one of the more famous structures and speaks to the diligence and durability of the people.

One of the most interesting things to me is these posts with remnants of old barb wire and notches are unusual perches for lots of birds. I am always on the lookout for a unique element in the photographs of our local scenery and these posts document very clearly the area in which we live. I hope you enjoy them as much as we do!



Dan Witt photos



Why Go To BOW? with Annie Campbell-Fischer

More and more women are taking up hunting, fishing and other outdoor activities as a way to connect with nature and have fun. If you're the kind of woman who hasn't spent much time outdoors, or maybe you have and are looking for new experiences, I've got just the thing for you: Becoming An Outdoors-Woman workshops. BOW, as it's affectionately known, offers women opportunities to learn about and participate in a wide variety of outdoor-related activities such as firearm handling, archery, flat-water kayaking, wilderness survival and more.

Last fall, I attended my first BOW workshop and it definitely exceeded my expectations. Each instructor I had was patient, down to earth, and truly wanted to share their specialized knowledge.

BOW is open to women age 18 and older, but that is the only requirement. BOW welcomes single women, working moms, stay-at-home moms, stepmoms, sisters, grandmothers, granddaughters, aunts, cousins, best friends and total strangers all looking to step out of their comfort zones! Each workshop is designed with the beginner in mind, so don't be nervous. Workshops are offered twice a year (spring and fall) and all the classes are taught by volunteers who are awesome at providing a low-pressure atmosphere. They are truly amazing people!

Prior to attending BOW, research the workshops you are interested in taking. You can do this online at www.ksoutdoors.com/bow. Because classes are conducted by volunteer instructors, options will vary from workshop to workshop. I took Intro to Handguns, Rifle Marksmanship, Intro to Fishing, and Fly Casting & Tying. Fly tying is much more difficult than I imagined but so fun to learn. I even came home with a few flies I tied.

Optional evening mini sessions are also available if you want to squeeze in a few more activities, like building a fire, s'mores and listening to topics such as Snakes Are Our Friends. Oh, and the nature hikes at night are a must!

Although I personally think sleeping under the stars is magnificent, if you're not quite comfortable with sleeping in a tent yet, not to worry. Sleeping accommodations consist of cabins, and yes, hot showers and indoor plumbing! (I will give three cheers for the hardcore gals camping in tents, because that is an option, too.)



You also won't have to forage for your own food at BOW, but you may learn sweet cooking secrets in Dutch Oven/Open Fire Cooking or Fish Cleaning and Cooking. Delicious meals are provided by the Rock Springs Staff and eaten in a large dining hall, giving everyone a chance to visit.

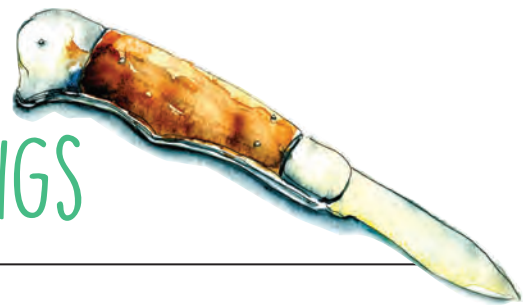
Workshops fill up quickly, but luckily first time attendees get priority enrollment. Some women, like my last year's cabin mates/now friends (Hi Melanie, Valerie, Susie, Brandy and Meghan!) attend BOW every year because they love it so much, and it's not hard to see why!

If you're interested in attending, give us a call at (620) 672-5911 and ask to speak to Shelby Stevens. Or visit www.ksoutdoors.com/bow to download a registration form. The 2017 Fall Becoming An Outdoors-Woman workshop is scheduled for Sept. 15-17. Registration forms must be completed by mail and addressed to: Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks & Tourism, ATTN: BOW. 512 SE 25th Ave. Pratt, KS 67124.



A CAMPER'S FAVORITE THINGS

by Jim Reid



There are certain things that make a camper especially happy. Here are just a few:

- The smell of coffee perking in a blue enamel pot on a green camp stove.
- The sizzle of bacon in a black iron skillet.
- The last half of a good campfire, with a fine bed of embers beneath the flicker of flames, along the remnant logs.
- Exactly the right knife for the job at hand.
- A soft bandana because few things in this world are more useful and versatile than a bandana. It can keep you warm tied around your neck and tucked in your shirt collar. It can help cool you dipped in a stream and tied around your brow or neck; or mask your face from the dust, wind and sun. It is a washcloth or a towel. It can be a filter. And a hot pad. It can wrap a wound or be a sling. It can stop the most severe bleeding if used as a tourniquet.

- Remembering how to tie just the right knot; the ones that slip when they are supposed to and the ones that do not.

- The distinctive hiss of a Coleman lantern.

- The calls of loons on a starry night.

- The rustle of cottonwood leaves playing a bed-time lullaby.

- Uncovering plenty of kindling and dry wood beneath a tarp after an afternoon shower.

- Sitting around the campfire with family and good friends. That's when the most honest and interesting discussions happen.

- An outboard motor that starts on the first or second pull every time.

- The smell of that outboard motor as it purrs away from the shore.

- Bringing spare mantles for the lantern and being able to find them.

- Oh, and dry matches.

- A tentmate who doesn't snore.

- Seeing perfectly baked, golden brown biscuits when the steam clears as the Dutch oven lid is removed.

- Not spilling ashes on those beautiful biscuits when removing the Dutch oven lid.

- Watching butter melt on hot biscuits, just before dabbing on Granny's apple butter.

- Watching a child's bobber disappear during the crappie spawn. And that squeal of glee when the speckled fish is successfully lifted from the water.

- A sharp knife and honed ax.

- A gentle rain on an RV roof or tent after lunch - the perfect excuse and background music for a little nap. Heavenly.

- A dry sleeping bag, the right pillow and a double-high air bed that doesn't leak.

- A pair of well-worn boots for a hike in the woods or along the lake's edge.

- A blaze of colors for fall camping. A bonus harvest moon, if you're lucky.

- Stable fall weather with crisp but soft morning air, and the promise autumnal migrations bring; Monarch butterflies on parade and the trill of sandhill cranes.

- A tired retriever stretched out near the evening campfire, soaking up the warmth and camaraderie the dancing flames provide. He's earned the right to join this inner sanctum of hunters who are also drawn in by the magnetism of fire.

- The glow on children's faces as they strive to roast the perfect marshmallow, perhaps for a s'more. Or maybe they want their marshmallow on fire, black, and sticky.

- Rock-skipping contests with a 10-year-old.

- Having ice-cold water in your squirt gun before declaring a squirt-gun fight with grandkids.

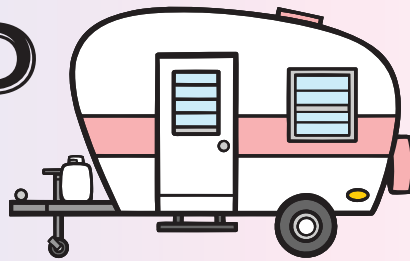
- Glorious sunsets over the lake. Every night a different spectacle, each one a delight.

- Grand Kansas skylscapes by day and a still Kansas night.



Shutterstock/Inart Illustrations

GLAMP KANSAS



by Del Hanneman

My wife Becky and I had been camping in a tent that fit over the back of our Ram 1500 pickup for several years. Of course, Becky had the back of the truck decked out with a fitted mattress, white sheets, chenille bedspread, and even a bucket toilet with a pink chenille rug. After a few years of that, we decided we were ready for an upgrade, so we went to an RV show. Neither of us saw anything that tempted us to buy. After lots of discussions, we decided what we really wanted was to look for a used Airstream trailer we could customize. We had admired them for years

Within a couple of months, we found a 23-foot 1979 Airstream in McPherson and it had been “rode hard and put away wet.” In fact, when we looked at it, Becky was ready to walk away. But knowing Becky as well as I do, I knew that if we found one in good shape, she would want to change everything anyway. I decided to buy it for a reasonable \$3,900 and our adventure began.

This took place in the spring and summer of 2011, which was record-setting for the number of days over 100 degrees. It was hot work but we were having fun and learning how to do things we had never done before. We recreated the bed and separate dinette to function comfortably for two people. The kitchen and bathroom areas required only minor repairs. With it structurally sound, the glamping began. Becky worked primarily on the inside and me on

the outside.

Common knowledge for Airstream owners is that the shine on the outside aluminum must be good enough for your wife to use it as a mirror (and I am still working on that - getting it shinier every summer). That meant removing the factory clear coat and hours of polishing. Becky doesn't do “blue,” so the traditional Airstream stripe was removed and replaced with black auto detail tape.

Becky loves using her creativity with a sewing machine. Using vintage lace that she had been saving for years, the interior took on new life. She upholstered the cushions, made curtains, and added vintage table cloths, colorful banners, rugs, outdoor lights and flowers. She ordered fabric and sewed the awning and

window awnings, embellishing them with lace trim, too. I concentrated on structure and she covered it with love and color. I remember the day I was working on the stabilizers, and she was rescreening the door. Frustrated that she had purchased screen a little too heavy, she went into the house, removed a lace curtain, and used it to screen the door. When I saw it, I was genuinely taken aback, but before I opened my mouth, I remembered what an 80-year-old repairman told me once. “If your wife will go camping with you, let her do whatever she wants on the inside of the camper.”

Camping and relationships require a lot of give and take. We enjoyed the remodeling process together and now truly love using the Airstream whenever we can find time to get away. For Becky, a little bit of lace and chenille does the trick. For me, the bikes go in the back of the truck, there's still room for fishing gear and I put the 10-foot kayaks right down the middle of all the fluff.

Camping or glamping, it doesn't matter what you call it, just that you do it.



Shutterstock/larryrains illustration

Bob Gress photo

Where to Camp in Kansas



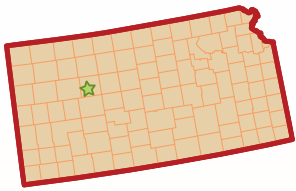
Truthfully, with its wealth of pristine rural areas, tens of thousands of farm ponds, and miles of rivers and streams, there are lots of great places to camp in Kansas. However, 97 percent of Kansas is privately owned, and camping on private land requires landowner permission. That's why the 24 Kansas state parks that provide camping facilities are so popular. But Kansas state parks offer much more than just camping.

A visit to a Kansas state park can be perfectly summed up with an old burger joint slogan, "Have it your way." Parks provide just about everything a camper can imagine, including full utility RV sites and undeveloped primitive areas perfect for pitching a tent. If it's peace and quiet you're after, you're in luck. Shady campsites with picnic tables and fire rings await. If you're more adventurous, parks offer challenging mountain bike trails, rugged races and triathlons, and more

than 500 miles of hiking and equestrian trails. Many trails offer interpretive signs to help hikers learn about the native plants and animals. Nearly all state parks are built around reservoirs and offer convenient access to the water. You'll find bathroom and shower facilities, as well as shelters ideal for large gatherings. And if you're not into roughing it, there are 121 cabins available for rent.

But that's not all. State parks offer disk golf courses, playgrounds, archery ranges, and several have pistol, rifle and shotgun ranges. Miles of paved roads are perfect for bike riders wanting a smooth path. And then there are the events. Park staff work tirelessly to develop and promote interactive events, such as sandcastle contests, mud volleyball tournaments, OK Kids events, fireworks displays, interpretive programs, live music, and more.

Visit a state park this summer and find your perfect place under the stars.

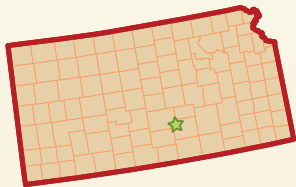


Cedar Bluff

Cedar Bluff State Park, 13 miles south of I-70 in Trego County, features the Bluffton Area on the north shore of Cedar Bluff Reservoir and the Page Creek Area on the south shore.

Bluffton offers six rental cabins, 126 utility sites and a group campground with 12 utility sites, (some have electricity, water, and sewer). Large areas are set aside for primitive camping. Page Creek offers beautiful primitive camping and 37 electric sites.

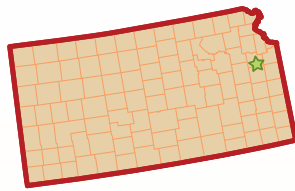
Other facilities include five shower houses, two reservable shelters, three vault toilets, numerous picnic shelters, boat ramps, two fish cleaning stations, a BMX bike trail, basketball court, and horseshoe pit.



Cheney

Cheney State Park includes two areas on the shores of Cheney Reservoir, 20 miles west of Wichita. The park offers 229 utility camping sites, as well as 452 non-utility campsites. The West Shore Area offers nine modern cabins.

Other features include restrooms with showers, shelter houses, trailer dump stations, swimming areas, picnic/day use areas, and convenient boat ramps. The marina is being renovated and will soon provide services to boaters and campers.

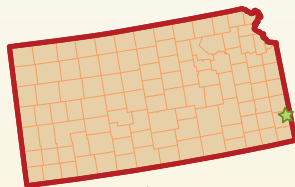


Clinton

Clinton State Park is located 4 miles west of Lawrence in the scenic Osage Questas. The 1,425-acre park lies on the north shore of Clinton Reservoir, known for its clear water and good fishing.

This park offers seven cabins and 400 campsites, including 203 water/electric utility sites, 41 of which provide 50-amp service, and 175 primitive sites.

Restrooms and showers are conveniently located, and the park features four boat ramps, a fish cleaning station, and an extensive trail system.

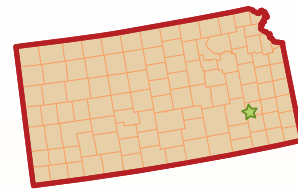


Crawford

Crawford State Park features seven campgrounds with 74 water/electric utility campsites and 28 primitive campsites. There are also five rental cabins.

On the scenic shores of Crawford State Fishing Lake, this park features two boat ramps, three bathhouses, a swimming beach, hiking and mountain bike trails and three playgrounds.

Crawford is steeped in history, from the area's Civil War events to the lake's Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp roots.



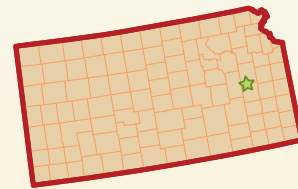
Cross Timbers

Cross Timbers State Park is located 12 miles west of Yates Center in Woodson County on the shores of Toronto Reservoir. The forested flood plain, surrounded by prairie and oak savannah, provide some of the most diverse flora and fauna in Kansas.

Shaded campsites near the lake are available for both full RV hookups and primitive camping. Four modern cabins are also available for rent. All park campgrounds are served by modern bathroom and shower facilities.

Numerous trails are open to hiking and all but the Ancient Trees Trail are open to mountain biking.

Backcountry camping is allowed by special permit on segments of the Chautauqua Hills Trail.

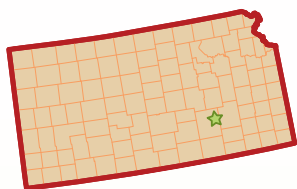


Eisenhower

Named after native son President Dwight Eisenhower, Eisenhower State Park sits on the north shore of Melvern Reservoir in southern Osage County.

The park has 186 utility sites: 81 with water, 37 with sewer hookups. There are five showerhouses, and non-utility sites are available in four camping areas. Laundry facilities are also available at the Doud shower building.

The park has four modern cabins, one primitive cabin, and two primitive yurts. Equestrian areas include corrals.



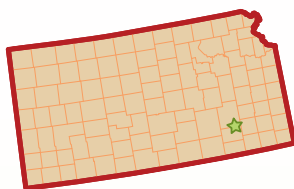
El Dorado

El Dorado State Park's four units sprawl along the eastern and western shores of El Dorado Reservoir, and include 1,100 campsites, two swimming beaches and 10 group shelters.

The equestrian campground features an arena, 23 utility sites with attached corrals, two non-utility campsites with corrals and water, 26 non-utility sites, as well as a reservable shelter.

The amphitheater often features live music, and the park hosts numerous special events throughout the year.

Ten cabins, two laundry facilities and a general store are also located in the park.



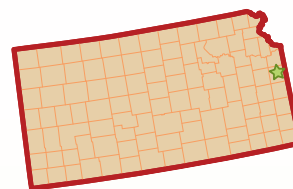
Fall River

Positioned between the Cross Timbers and the Flint Hills regions, Fall River State Park features a remarkable diversity of plant and animal life. The park is a unique blend of forested flood plains, blackjack savannahs, and tallgrass prairie.

Camping, swimming, boating, water skiing, hiking, fishing and picnicking are popular pursuits at Fall River.

The park has three modern cabins and developed campsites include restroom and shower facilities. Forty-five electric/water sites are available, and there are more than 100 primitive campsites.

Six hiking trails and an orienteering course offer visitors an up-close and personal perspective on this unique area.

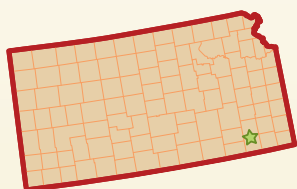


Hillsdale

Located in the rolling hills of Miami County on Hillsdale Reservoir, Hillsdale State Park attracts campers, anglers, boaters, hunters, swimmers, horseback riders, model airplane flyers, hikers, naturalists, and picnickers. And a state-of-the-art rifle, handgun and shotgun range is located within the park.

A new campground was opened last year in the Sunflower Area, featuring full utilities and 50 amp power. Camping is also available in the Russel Crites, Scott Creek and Rabbit Ridge areas.

This park also features three restroom/shower houses, two boat ramps, a swimming beach and bike trails.

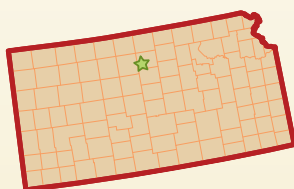


Elk City

Dense oak-hickory woodlands and tallgrass prairie set Elk City State Park, west of Independence in Montgomery County on Elk City Reservoir, apart.

Well-shaded campsites, including 11 with full-utilities, 85 with water/electric and 54 primitive are available. Facilities include restrooms and showers, a swimming beach, two playgrounds, a group shelter, fishing piers, and three-lane boat ramps.

A nationally-recognized trails system offers visitors a closer look at the area's rich variety of flora and fauna.

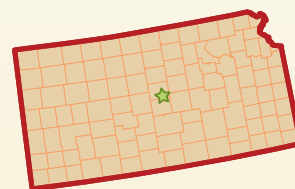


Glen Elder

Glen Elder State Park, 12 miles west of Beloit in Mitchell County on Waconda Lake, was honored as one of America's top five best state parks in *Field & Stream* magazine's August 2004 issue.

The park offers modern restroom/shower buildings, two modern cabins, and a full-service marina.

Three campgrounds include 121 electrical hookups (most with water), as well as more than 300 primitive sites.



Kanopolis

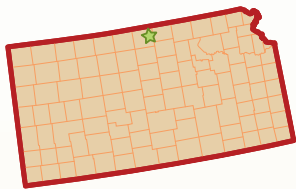
Kanopolis State Park, 33 miles southwest of Salina, was Kansas' first state park, opened in 1958. Facilities include a full-service marina, beaches, picnic areas, six modern cabins, and trails for horseback riding, mountain biking, and hiking.

More than 200 primitive campsites and 133 utility sites are located in the 14 campgrounds in the Langley Point and Horsethief areas. Equestrian camping is available in the Rockin' K Area.

Kanopolis offers 27.4 miles of

multi-use trails, all of which start in the state park.

The 3,500-acre lake offers good crappie, white bass and saugeye fishing, and the 12,500-acre wildlife area provides hunting and wildlife viewing opportunities.

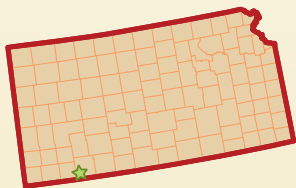


Lovewell

Located off the beaten path in northern Jewell County on Lovewell Reservoir, Lovewell offers an enticing blend of camping, fishing, wildlife watching, and special events.

The park features excellent shade and 28 full utility, 48 water/electric, 80 electric-only, and 306 primitive campsites, as well as 10 cabins. Designated electrical sites may be reserved. Walleye Point and Buffalo primitive campgrounds are reservable for groups.

The park includes four shower/toilet buildings, two vault toilets, year-round freeze-proof water hydrants, two trailer dump stations, boat ramp, marina and fish cleaning stations.



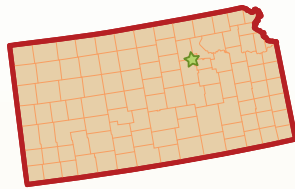
Meade

The only state park in southwest Kansas, Meade State Park is an oasis on the shortgrass prairie. The park comprises 440 acres around the 80-acre Meade State Fishing Lake.

The nature trail offers visitors an up-close look at the short-

grass prairie.

Utility and primitive camping, day use areas, a swimming beach, and boating and fishing access make this a popular destination. Campgrounds provide 42 water/electric utility sites and 54 primitive campsites.

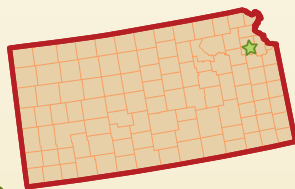


Milford

Near Junction City on the shores of the state's largest lake – 16,000-acre Milford Reservoir – Milford State Park features seven campgrounds with 90 electric and water hookups and 51 with water/electric/sewer hookups. One hundred and eight primitive campsites are also available throughout the park.

A recently completed horse campground consists of 20 campsites with full hook-ups, covered corrals with lighting, and two wash bays.

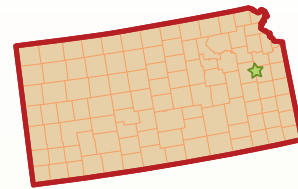
The park offers a laundry facility, 10 modern cabins, three boat ramps, a marina and two fish cleaning stations.



Perry

Perry State Park comprises two areas covering 1,597 acres on the shores of Perry Reservoir in Jefferson County. The park's four campgrounds provide four rental cabins, 110 electric/water campsites and 200 primitive campsites. Showers and toilets are conveniently located for all campers. A swimming beach and beach

house serve summertime visitors. Anglers and boaters will find two boat ramps and a fish cleaning station. Day-use areas of the park also offer nine picnic shelters.

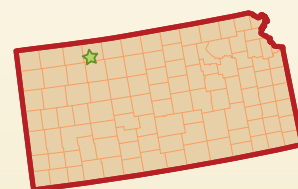


Pomona

Known for its shady campsites and great family atmosphere, the 490-acre Pomona State Park is located in Osage County on the shore of Pomona Reservoir. Visitors enjoy camping, picnicking, fishing, boating, hiking, and wildlife viewing.

The park has 142 water/electric campsites, more than 200 primitive campsites and four cabins, which overlook the lake from a bluff.

Other amenities include a full-service marina, bath house, laundry facility, picnic shelters, playgrounds, volleyball courts, horseshoe pits, a nine-hole disc golf course, four boat ramps and 2.5 miles of trails.



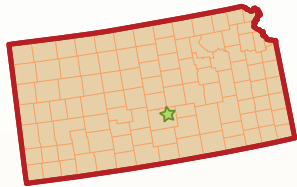
Prairie Dog

Prairie Dog State Park sits on the shores of Keith Sebelius Reservoir in Norton County. The park is home to a thriving prairie dog colony and one of the last remaining adobe houses in Kansas.

The park features 58 electric/water sites, 12 electric-only sites, more than 75 primitive sites and four reservable cabins. Some campsites are also reservable.

Camping areas include shower and restroom facilities and two RV dump stations.

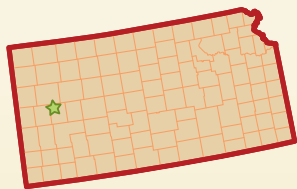
The park's 1.4-mile nature trail with interpretive signs is a great place to explore the park and observe wildlife.



Sand Hills

Northeast of Hutchinson in Reno County, Sand Hills State Park features excellent trails that wind through sand dunes, native prairie, wetlands, and woodlands. Visitors are limited to walk-in and horse trail access to help protect the area's natural features.

The park features 64 utility sites with 50-amp service, 44 of which have water, sewer, and electric utilities, and 20 with water and electric utilities. There are also 14 pull-through sites with double horse pens measuring 12 feet by 12 feet.



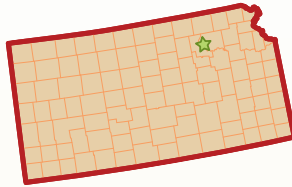
Historic Lake Scott

Between Oakley and Scott City, Historic Lake Scott State Park is a startling oasis of natural springs, deep wooded canyons, and craggy bluffs. The park surrounds 100-acre, spring-fed Scott State Fishing Lake.

The remains of the northernmost known Native American pueblo – El Cuartelejo – are located in the park, as well as the Steele home, an original settlers'

dwelling preserved much as it was 100 years ago.

The park has two cabins, 55 utility campsites, including some with 50-amp service and water hookups, three shower buildings, 100 primitive campsites, two boat ramps and a swimming beach.



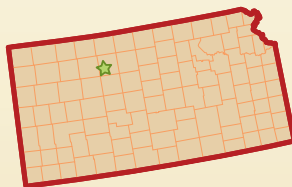
Tuttle Creek

Near Manhattan, Tuttle Creek State Park sits on the shores of Tuttle Creek Reservoir.

Four units – River Pond, Cedar Ridge, Fancy Creek and Randolph – feature a swimming beach, boat ramps, courtesy docks, and dump stations, 11 modern cabins, 39 electric-only campsites, 167 water/electric campsites, 13 full utility campsites and up to 500 primitive sites.

Tuttle features numerous nature trails, a mountain biking trail, and a scenic equestrian trail. Other amenities include a disc golf course, volleyball courts, horse shoe pits, and restroom and shower facilities.

Fancy Creek Shooting Range has handgun and rifle lanes, and new archery range is open at River Pond.



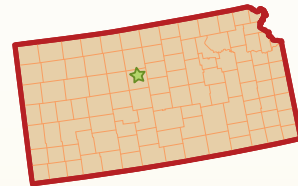
Webster

On the shores of Webster Reservoir near Stockton, Webster State Park offers a prairie setting of rolling hills on 880 acres.

Campers can choose from 93

utility campsites and more than 100 primitive campsites. Webster features swimming beaches, a sand volleyball court, horseshoe pits, playgrounds, and a hiking trail. Anglers and boaters will enjoy five boat ramp lanes, three courtesy docks and a fish cleaning station.


The 8,000-acre wildlife area offers excellent hunting and wildlife viewing opportunities.



Wilson

Set in the scenic Smoky Hills, Wilson State Park provides convenient access to one of the state's prime water recreation areas on Wilson Reservoir.

The park has two areas, Hell Creek and Otoe, both on the south side of the 9,000-acre reservoir, offering 86 water/electric sites, 82 primitive sites and four water/sewer/electric sites. Campers will enjoy day-use areas, shower houses, a swimming beach, two boat ramps, a fish cleaning station, and marina. The park also offers eight modern rental cabins.

The 25.5-mile long Switchgrass Bike Trail is known nationally and popular with mountain bikers. 

For more information about all Kansas state parks, and to make reservations, visit www.ksoutdoors.com.

Mis ADVENTURES IN CAMPING by Brent Frazee

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Whenever I see a camp equipment ad showing a perfectly manicured family smiling beside their tent, I know it has to be posed. I mean, what family looks like that after a few days at the campground? Not mine. In our portrait when the kids were young, we looked weary, unbathed and I am unshaven. If this picture was a scratch and sniff, it would smell like a campfire. My kids are wearing one of those “Please rescue us” looks and I have one of those Clark Griswold smiles. Ah, camping. It’s advertised as the All-American family sport, but somehow the Frazees never got the memo.

Oh, we had lots of fun, grilling hot dogs over a campfire, making s’mores, telling ghost stories and going fishing and hiking. But there were plenty of misadventures that disqualified us from being considered America’s Favorite Camping Family.

The trip we still talk about came when the girls were young. My wife Jana and I had joined a camping club and were eager to try out the private campground.

We rented a small RV and couldn’t wait to move in for the weekend. The first problem surfaced as we pulled up to our rental unit. Let’s just say it looked a lot bigger in the picture. The small trailer parked at the edge of a lake looked like something Hansel and Gretel would live in. It was advertised as “sleeping four comfortably,” but I highly doubted it would sleep one comfortably.

By the time I got our gear unloaded, I realized there was only one place my

daughter’s playpen would fit – right in the middle of the room, blocking the exit. That’s all right, I thought. At least there wasn’t enough room for her to get into any mischief without us knowing. Boy, was I wrong.

I was awakened in the middle of the night by a clicking sound. Bleary-eyed, I

looked over to see little Jenny leaning over as far as she could to turn the knobs to the gas stove. When I smelled the gas, I rushed everyone out of our little crackerbox.

Jana gave me one of those “I thought you said we were going to have fun?” looks. I avoided eye contact after that. A security officer saw what was happening and made sure our RV was vented before we trudged back in, this time with Jenny in the same bunk as me, facing the wall so I would notice her trying to cause more problems.

That whole night I had dreams of our peaceful little RV disappearing in a bright orange explosion.

The next morning was to be a fun day of fishing and hiking. But it started raining – first a gentle mist, then a genuine downpour. We sat inside our RV for a while before we packed everything back into the car and headed home.

I guess I shouldn’t have been that surprised. Before we had kids, Jana and I went camping with two other couples when we lived in Illinois.

The plan was for the guys to go fishing, and the girls would hike and relax on the beach. We set up camp in this peaceful meadow, fixed a fire and had a great night. The forecast called for a beautiful day – the forecast was just a tad off.

I woke to a wet sleeping bag and found a small river running through our tent. It was pouring and water was streaming downhill through our camp-

site. I was going to take a vote to see who wanted to ride it out. But the guys didn’t get a vote. The women, standing there with soaked hair, were ready to go.

I remember another trip when I tried to assemble a tent without instructions. What can be so tough about putting up a tent, right? Well, this tent didn’t have the color-coded pieces to let you know where they fit together. My wife and I worked for the longest time before we figured it. The kids learned some new words on that trip.

Then there was the time I told ghost stories around the campfire and made up one about a big ol’ monster named Yeti who was last seen in our parts. One of my daughters got so scared she insisted she wanted to go back home and sleep in her own bed. Oops.

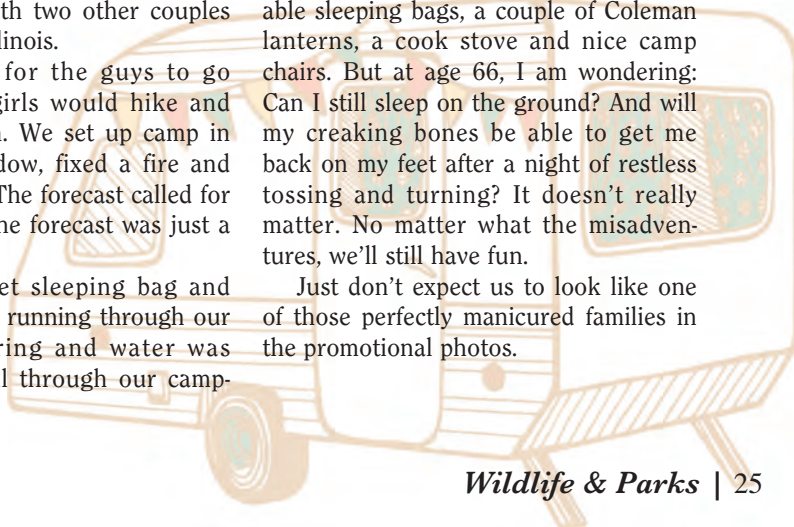
Once, we pitched our tent on the beach at my parents’ lake house in Wisconsin. Everything was fine until it started getting dark and the mosquitoes swooped down and threatened to fly away with our tent.

Through it all, though, we had some great times camping. We figured out how to cook campfire food, bought tents that were easy to put together, got together with friends, and loved staying in the outdoors. Now, we’re ready to pass it on to the next generation.

I went into the room of Chloe, my 10-year-old granddaughter, the other day and saw a sheet of paper entitled “Summer bucket list” taped to the wall. One of the items on that list was “go camping” with a crayon drawing of a campfire. We certainly have all the necessary equipment – a nice tent, comfortable sleeping bags, a couple of Coleman lanterns, a cook stove and nice camp chairs. But at age 66, I am wondering: Can I still sleep on the ground? And will my creaking bones be able to get me back on my feet after a night of restless tossing and turning? It doesn’t really matter. No matter what the misadventures, we’ll still have fun.

Just don’t expect us to look like one of those perfectly manicured families in the promotional photos.

Shutterstock/a_bachelorette illustration





“America was tamed by the Dutch oven (with a little help from the Winchester repeating rifle).”

roots by learning to use a Dutch oven and have fun doing it. It’s a good way to surprise newcomers and kids, who’ll come to appreciate the versatility of this utensil and the role it has played in feeding the world for more than three centuries.

Two types of Dutch ovens exist. One has three legs and a lip around the top for cooking with coals and is used for camping or indoor hearth cooking. The other has no legs and no lip lid and is for cooking in a modern oven or on top of a stove. These pots go by various names around the world and are now made not only of cast-iron but other materials. (This article references only the outdoor, cast iron variety, which also comes in various diameters, with 10- and 12-inch being the most common.)

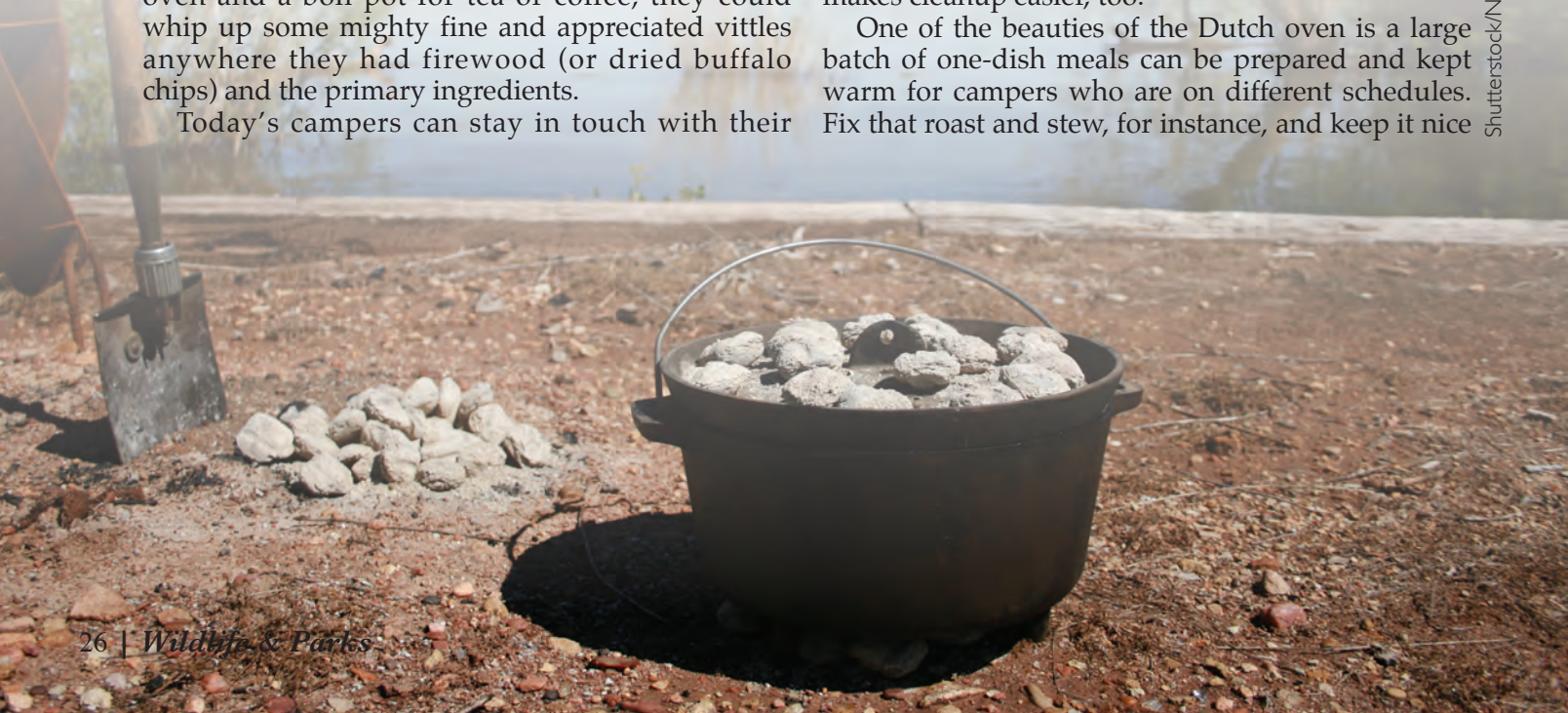
Spoiler alert: Here’s the secret up front about baking or roasting with an outdoor Dutch oven. The key is most of the coals go on the top, or lid, of the oven, which has a lip around it for the purpose of holding coals. If too many coals are beneath the oven, it will burn the bottom of the cornbread, muffins, or whatever else you are baking before the rest is cooked. A second secret: using a foil or metal pan inside the Dutch oven will also prevent the bottom of baked goods from burning, plus it makes it much easier to get the goodies out and serve them, which can also be helpful if you have another batch going in to feed a hungry crew. The pan makes cleanup easier, too.

One of the beauties of the Dutch oven is a large batch of one-dish meals can be prepared and kept warm for campers who are on different schedules. Fix that roast and stew, for instance, and keep it nice

If there’s one piece of cooking equipment that America’s settlers would not give up, it would certainly be the cast-iron Dutch oven. It can do almost anything and everything in an outdoor kitchen or frontier cabin, starting with frying and baking, and ending with boiling and everything in between. You want bread, biscuits or a cake? Dutch oven. Cobblers, too. You want pot roast with all the fixin’s? Dutch oven. How ‘bout deep-fried chicken, fish or taters? Or chili? Yep, that old Dutch oven.

If you armed a pioneer woman or chuck wagon trail cook with a black iron skillet or two, a Dutch oven and a boil pot for tea or coffee, they could whip up some mighty fine and appreciated vittles anywhere they had firewood (or dried buffalo chips) and the primary ingredients.

Today’s campers can stay in touch with their



Shutterstock/Natalia Hubbert illustration

and warm as the kids come in from playing before the anglers get back from fishing and so on.

A favorite one-dish recipe of mine is “Old Settlers’ Baked Beans.” Much like chili or gumbo, it carries many similarities from recipe to recipe, but over time folks tend to put their own spin on it. It is a hardy two- or three-meat dish with several varieties of beans, seasonings and some optional ingredients. It doesn’t take long to prepare, cooks in an hour or so in a Dutch oven, and is just as good, if not better, the next day!

- OLD SETTLERS’ BAKED BEANS -



Some recipes call for a HALF-POUND OF BACON and a HALF-POUND OF GROUND BEEF. I much prefer a pound of each, and sometimes an additional pound of PORK SAUSAGE.

In your Dutch oven, brown the beef and sausage along with the bacon, cut in one-inch strips.

Add ONE DICED ONION while browning the meat. (If you like GREEN PEPPERS OR JALAPENOS, add accordingly at this stage.) Drain all greases when the meat is cooked and onions are translucent.

Add the following ingredients and combine:

- 1/3 CUP BROWN SUGAR
- 1/2 CUP KETCHUP
- 1/4 CUP BARBECUE SAUCE
- 1 OR 2 TABLESPOONS YELLOW MUSTARD
- 1 TEASPOON CHILI POWDER
- 1/2 TEASPOON BLACK PEPPER
- 1 OR 2 CELERY STALKS, DICED (OPTIONAL)
- 16-OUNCE CAN PORK AND BEANS WITH SAUCE
- 16-OUNCE CAN KIDNEY BEANS, RINSED/DRAINED
- 16-OUNCE CAN GREAT NORTHERN BEANS, RINSED/DRAINED
- 16-OUNCE CAN GARBANZO BEANS, RINSED/DRAINED (OPTIONAL)



After stirring thoroughly, cover it with the lid. Place the coals on top and check in 45 to 60 minutes. (Add liquid, if needed; water or tomato juice works fine.) If it seems too meaty, just add more pork and beans to suit your preference. Salt to taste.

How many coals, you ask? Using charcoal is a very handy modern approach to Dutch oven cooking and will provide the most consistent results. For this and many other recipes, try 6 to 8 briquettes on the bottom and about 15 on top. Let the charcoal briquettes get well lit and gray before cooking. Wind and air temperature will play a determining factor on cooking time. If using coals from a campfire, don’t be afraid to add more to the top during the cooking time if the original coals appear to be getting weak; a small shovel (or World War II trenching tool) is handy for this. An oven lid lifting tool is also handy. Otherwise, you may want to use long-nosed or long-handled pliers and leather gloves to lift the lid.



This can be a stand-alone dish with perhaps some bread or crackers. It also works well as part of a camping or holiday feast with fried or grilled catch of the day, corn on the cob, bread and ice cold watermelon. 🐃

Jim Reid, Wichita, was the outdoors writer for the Wichita Eagle for 10 years, and retired from the Coleman Company in 2010 after 23 years in media relations. His first experience camping and cooking with a Dutch oven was when he was a boy scout.



BY
ANDRA BRYAN STEFANONI
FREELANCE WRITER

Camping Hacks

Camping buddies Larry Fleury and Phil Harries have learned their camping hacks, tips, and tricks from trial and error — and, of course, the Internet (Google: Beverage Can Store).

Whether they're car camping or backpacking, what they've learned along the way has had a big impact on how well their trip goes and how much fun they have.

"It's all about being efficient, being prepared," Fleury said.

Fleury, 30, didn't camp as a youth; he started in college with friends. He grew to love it, so much so, that last summer he wound up working in Colorado at a youth camp.

Harries, 43 and a professor at Pittsburg State University, has taken camping trips with the student climbing club, of which he is the faculty advisor. Occasionally he takes his two sons, sometimes he goes with Fleury, and once in awhile he goes by himself.

The two had no reservations about sharing their hacks, tips, and tricks with readers of *Kansas Wildlife & Parks Magazine*. Here's what you need to know.



Fire

Evidence of controlling fire dates back more than a half million years, and was most likely the biggest cultural advancement of humankind: It kept us warm and cooked our food.

Controlling it today on campouts is no different.

Fleury and Harries both have their preferred methods of building a fire, but on getting one started, they are unanimous: turn to recycling — or upcycling — household products for help.

Method 1: Stuff empty toilet paper rolls with dryer lint, a fail-safe method. It alleviates the need to find dry, reliable tinder. Collect dryer lint all year long in a bag, basket, or shoebox on top of your clothes dryer or on a shelf in your laundry room. Similarly, save toilet paper rolls and toss them in a basket or box in your bathroom. On a free evening or weekend afternoon, spend just a few moments assembling them and sealing them one by one in sandwich-sized Ziplock baggies so they're ready to use on your next campout.

Method 2: As an alternate approach, Harries also is a

proponent of dipping cotton balls in Vaseline, then storing a few in a snack-sized Ziplock baggy.

When car camping, both agree a propane blowtorch is a handy item to have, particularly for damp or rainy conditions. And both always travel with lighters instead of matches.

But check with park rangers or campsite officials in advance; some places, like Rocky Mountain National Park, don't allow fires in most areas — only burners for boiling water and cooking food.



Food

"It sounds like common sense, but pack and bring only what you'll actually eat," Fleury said.

When packing for a trip, vacuum seal food if possible. Vacuum sealers cost from \$50 to several hundred dollars and work great for keeping food fresh and clean.

"At the very least, prep whatever you can in advance and put it in Ziplock bags so you're not having to do a lot of cutting and cooking at your campsite," Harries said.

Shutterstock/_bachelorette_illustrations

"When we're car camping, I like to pack as much as I can in foil so I can pull it out and put it right on the fire."

Fleury is a fan of packing dried rice and dried beans to incorporate into campfire recipes.

"They feed more people than you'd expect," he said. "They don't take up much room, and they don't weigh much."

An added bonus: These foods nutritionally pack a punch, being high in protein and with at least 10 percent of seven vitamins and minerals.



Packing

Harries, who is a list maker, sets out a notepad the week prior to a camping trip and as he thinks of items, writes them down.

"It can ruin a trip if you forget one thing, so I'd rather put in the time in advance planning," he said.

Both men always check the weather for the location to which they're headed.

"As simple as that sounds, a lot of people look at their weather app and it's set to the town they're in, not to where they're going, and even a few hours away can make a difference," Fleury said.

To that end, both always pack a rain jacket or poncho and always pack extra underwear and socks.

And a hack they've enjoyed on cold nights: Heat water over the fire, pour it into a bottle, and put it in the sleeping bag as a warmer.

Pack these two can't-leave-home-without-it items, too: A headlamp or light that attaches to a hat, freeing up your hands, and baby wipes for easy clean-up.



Before You Go

Harries advises those new to camping and those who don't camp often to set up a tent and other gear in their yard first before packing.

"It helps to make sure you have all of the pieces and you know how to do it," he said.

It's a delicate balance between comfort and practicality when camping, Fleury noted. Bring too many unnecessary items, and you become a slave to getting them out, setting them up, and putting them away instead of getting to a campsite and immediately enjoying your surroundings. And, those items can eat up space. On the other hand, being uncomfortable — especially for newbies — can mean a ruined weekend and no desire to return.

"I think it's also important for people camping together to compromise," he said. "On the last campout we went on, a couple next to us were on an inflatable air mattress in a tipi tent. You could tell that they had compromised with each other."

Lastly, for safety: Let someone know where you're going and approximately when you'll return.



Camping With Kids

Harries, who has camped often with his two sons, said it's important to take along games for their entertainment once camp is set up and the fire is going.

"You might be fine just chilling around the fire, visiting or enjoying the night sounds, but kids are going to need some entertainment in the downtime," Harries said. "A deck of cards, comic books, a frisbee — light-weight stuff that will help them pass the time."



Maps

It's easy to rely on cell phones to find your way with a finger touch, but don't trust them entirely; in some areas, being out of range of a cell tower or with a dead cell phone battery can leave you stranded.

"Do a screen grab of a map so it's saved to your phone, print a map at home before you go, or buy one," Harries said.



Site Selection

Fleury, who has camped in the Rockies, recommended when primitive camping that a campsite be set up near flowing water to aid in dish-washing, obtaining fresh drinking water, and bathing. But avoid getting too close — if an area is prone to flooding, it's no fun awaking in the middle of the night to a tent and gear washing away.


"Know where a watershed is, and know which area water will rise in before you hammer those tent stakes," he said. "Watch out for low-lying areas where water pools."



Don't Forget

"Be kind to your camp neighbors," Fleury said. "If you're setting up camp in close proximity to others, being friendly can pay off. You help them build a fire,

they lend you something. You never know when you'll need help.

"Plus, it just makes the experience that much more enjoyable." 





The Ultimate
S'MORE-GASBORD

by Nadia Reimer, managing editor
photos by Megan Austin, freelance photographer

“First, you take the graham, you stick the chocolate on the graham. Then, you roast the 'mallow. When the 'mallows flamin', you stick it on the chocolate. Then, you cover it with the other end. Then, you scarf.”

You might recollect this famous scene between Ham Porter and Scotty Smalls in the movie “The Sandlot.” Seasoned s’more-maker, Ham, explains to newbie Scotty how to craft the scrumptious camp-favorite, using the three classic ingredients: graham crackers, chocolate, and of course, a ‘mallow.

Now, I’m not one to unnecessarily upset the apple cart – I love a good, classic s’more – but I think it’s time we broaden our horizons a bit when it comes to this classic dessert dish. I know, I know – the thought of altering such a time-tested, all-American recipe such as s’mores sounds like near blasphemy, but that’s just because you haven’t

met THESE s’mores yet.

In my mind, when you’re making a s’more, three ingredients MUST be present in order to maintain good juju with the s’mores Gods: a graham cracker, some sort of chocolate, and a marshmallow - all others are imitators. If a recipe includes these three things, I say it’s fair game and you can put whatever twist on it that you like!

Ready to hit a home run on your next outdoor adventure? Try one of these twisted s’mores recipes for a fun and fancy dessert over the fire. Your tentmates and your taste buds will thank you.

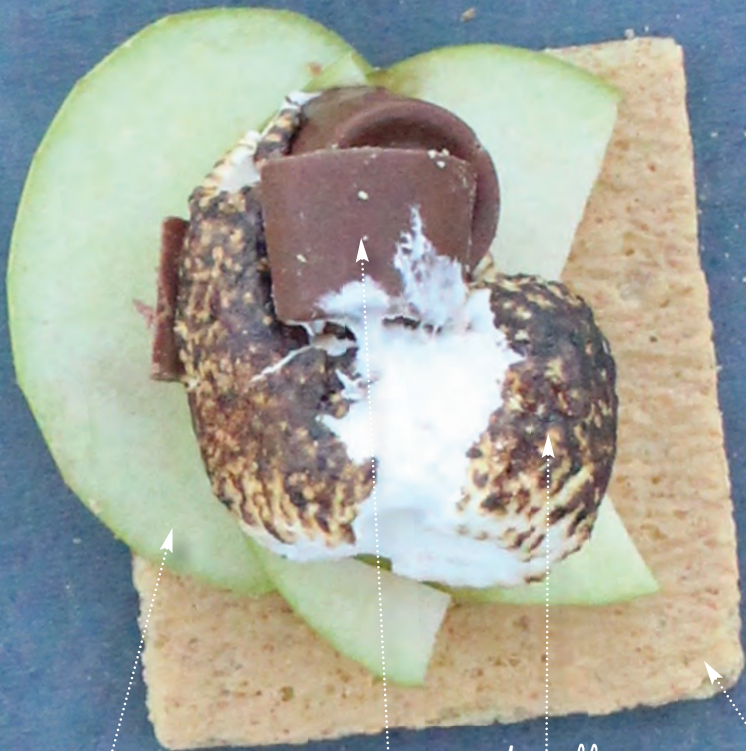
Scarf on. 🐮

FEATURED S'MORES:

Cookies ‘n Cream
Caramel Apple
PB&C
The Grasshopper

Sea Salt Caramel
Somoa-’more
*Editor’s Pick: Hazel-berry





sliced green apple

Rolo caramel candy

marshmallow

graham cracker

CARAMEL APPLE

PB & C

marshmallow



SEA SALT CARAMEL

graham cracker

Ghirardelli dark chocolate
sea salt caramel

marshmallow



SAMOA-'MORE

marshmallow





Reese's
peanut butter cup

graham cracker

THE GRASSHOPPER



chocolate
graham cracker

Andes chocolate mints

marshmallow



Rolo caramel candy

graham
cracker

toasted
coconut

HAZEL-BERRY



marshmallow

Nutella
hazelnut spread

graham cracker

sliced
strawberry

CANNED CRAPPIE — THANE LORING

“I was patrolling the park one summer afternoon and saw a group of guys at the fish cleaning station. I pulled in to check their catch and licenses. The gentlemen had already cleaned their fish and were sitting on the tailgate enjoying adult beverages when I pulled up. I checked their licenses and asked what they had caught for the day. We continued to visit about where on the reservoir they had been fishing and what lures they used when another truck pulled into the parking lot. The individual got out, reached in the back of his truck and pulled out a nice stringer of crappie.

I watched as the individual walked over to the disposal, laid his fish on the table and began to take them off a stringer. He then turned on the water and grinder and pushed all of his crappie down the disposal.

He began to pace, head down, looking underneath the station. I asked him if he had lost something, to which he responded ‘No, I’m just trying to find where the fillets come out.’

Incredulous, I asked him if he just did what I thought he did – put his uncleaned fish straight into the grinder. He said, ‘Yes, isn’t this an automated fish cleaning station?’

I explained it was designed for anglers to clean their fish and then throw the carcasses down the grinder. He looked at me, shook his head in disbelief, and said he bet it happened all the time!

I checked his licenses and went on my way. I didn’t have the heart to tell him that was the first and only time I’d ever seen that happen.”

FIRED UP— TOBY KUHN

“I had to make an arrest one time on our wildlife area early one Saturday morning. It was a camping disturbance where one camper thought it would be a good idea to turn off another camper’s generator who left it running during quiet hours. The problem was, he turned it off with a 9mm handgun.”

CAMPFIRE FUNNIES

BLUFFS IN THE BUFF— TROY BROWN

“I had been receiving reports of a lady sunbathing nude on top of the area bluffs. I alerted the public lands manager for the area, but he never came across her. We heard a few more reports over the next several months, but none of us could ever confirm it.

Fast forward to one Saturday evening in late August when a woman approached me, saying she wanted something done about the nude sunbather on the bluffs. She said her family had just come back from that area, and naturally she was upset at what her children had witnessed. I told her I would grab another staff member and that we would go check it out.

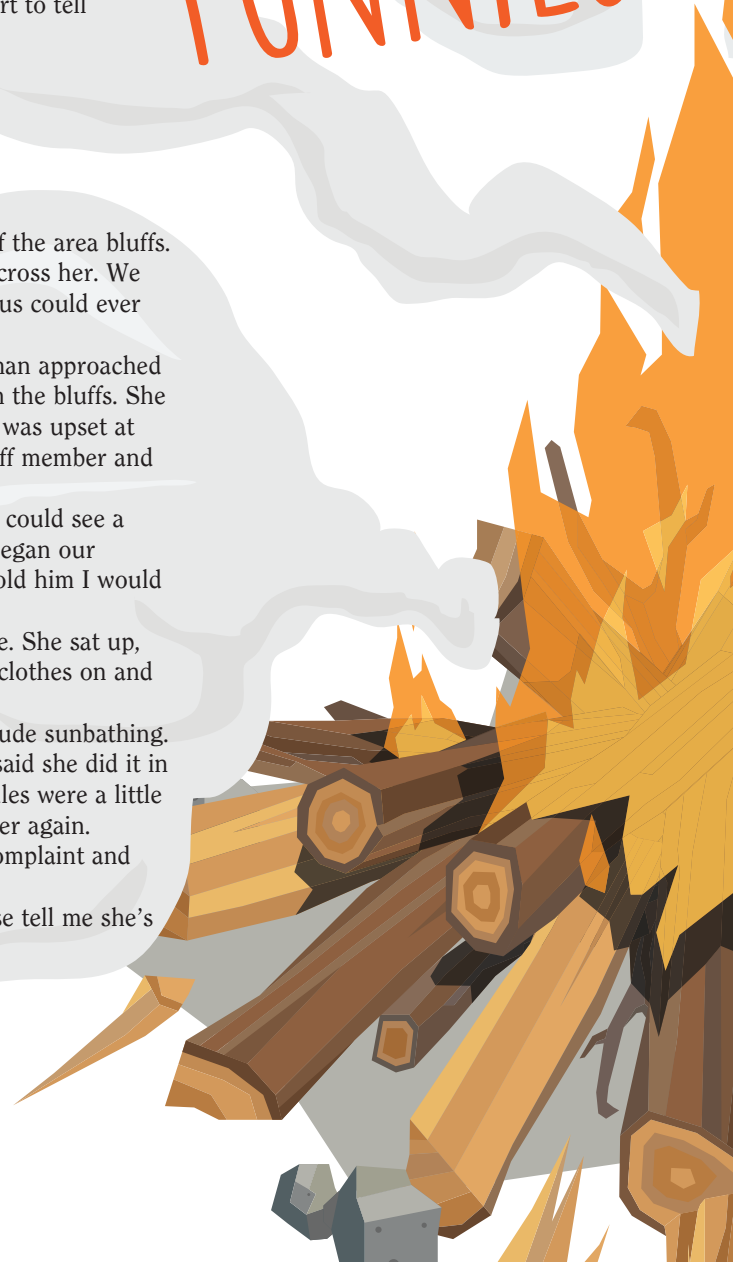
Sure enough, upon arriving at the parking lot near the bluffs, we could see a person lying in the nude about 100 yards from our location. As we began our approach, my coworker asked me what I was going to say to her. I told him I would ask her to put some clothes on and then we would go from there.

Once I thought she was within earshot, I announced our presence. She sat up, still nude and asked what the problem was. I advised her to put her clothes on and then we could talk. She complied.

I began to explain that we were receiving complaints about her nude sunbathing. I told her she could lay out, but she couldn’t do it in the nude. She said she did it in California where she was from, to which I politely replied that the rules were a little different here. She said she would comply and we never dealt with her again. When we arrived back in the park, I found the lady who made the complaint and told her the problem had been resolved. She thanked us.

Just before the family went on their way, her husband said “Please tell me she’s as beautiful up close as she appears to be from 200 feet below.”

I told him I was sorry, but that she probably wasn’t.”



SHORT-FUSED – THANE LORING

“I was patrolling the park one evening when the office radioed me that a camper was having issues with an electrical pedestal. Since the site they mentioned was all 50 amp, and we never had issues there before, I knew something was a little off.

I pulled up to the campsite, filled with several large motor homes and fifth-wheel units, and noticed a small pop-up camper. This was our caller.

I got out, walked over, and was greeted by a gentleman who said the breaker on the pedestal kept tripping. I looked down to see they had about 100 feet of orange extension cord coiled on the ground, running from their 30-amp cord coming off their camper, to the pedestal. I told him his use of that extension cord was likely the cause and that he needed to just go ahead and plug the 30-amp cord supplied with the camper directly into the pedestal.

He told me it wouldn't reach (despite the fact that the camper was only about 10 feet away from the pedestal). He then asked me what he should do. I told him that if it wouldn't reach, then he just needed to re-position the camper.

After about five minutes of him saying it was too hot to move the camper and that he wanted me to fix the issue, I simply asked him how close the cord from the camper would reach. His reply? The cord was only one foot long.

I explained to him that those cords are on a spool and should pull out farther than that. He told me ‘that's as far as it goes, young man.’

At that point, I simply just walked over to the 30-amp cord coming out of the side of his camper, pulled it out, and walked it over to the 30 amp side of the pedestal.

He looked at me and said ‘I have had this camper for three years and I didn't know it would do that.’”

A RACE TO THE ALTAR – CHRIS SMITH

“One day I stopped a van coming into the park for speeding. The van was an old 1970s model that looked as if it came straight from the West coast.

The lady driver was pleasant, but gave me a strange response when I asked what the person in the back was doing.

She said, ‘Father is having a ceremony.’

I had to ask because ‘Father’ was dressed in a black robe and had the back of the van lit up with candles.”

TOW-TALLY CAMPING – ZACH KESLER

“A camper asked our camp host one time if it would be okay for them to tow their motor home into a campsite.

The camp host didn't think anything of it at the time, but turns out they literally meant ‘tow.’

The motor home had no engine.”

THE WEIRD AND WILD
(BUT, OH, SO TRUE)
UNTOLD TALES OF
KDWPT FIELD STAFF.



Just minutes from K-7 in western Olathe, the Prairie Center, a 300-acre preserve, offers a bounty for wildflower enthusiasts, birders and general nature lovers. Besides plentiful flower and bird viewing opportunities, the Center's native tallgrass prairie and riparian woodlands are crucial links to the natural history of the area, as well as a native habitat for many animal and plant species.

"Prairie Center is not a park, it's a preserve," said Alaine Hudlin, Prairie Center manager. Since 1996, Hudlin has educated Prairie Center visitors and supported the reclamation of this preserve's prairie grassland, which includes a mix of big and little bluestem, switchgrass, prairie cordgrass and Indiangrass.

Though the Prairie Center welcomes and encourages visitors, Hudlin emphasizes guests should tread lightly since the preserve is a protected space for certain wildlife and plants. With this caveat in mind, visitors are free to enjoy a landscape that includes a lake, eight ponds, hiking trails and even an archery range.

Preserve History

Until 1968, the preserve land was privately farmed. George W. Algire and his wife Frieda homesteaded the property in 1913. A stonemason by trade, George constructed the original site structures from rock harvested directly from the land. Trees were scarce at the time, so that rock was used to build fences, too.

"Originally, only 14 percent of this area was covered with trees," Hudlin said.

A chicken coop and brooder house were completed in the early 1920s where the Algire's lived with their chickens until their home had walls and a roof. Today, the Prairie Center's lake sits where the original house was once located.

"Old cedars that flagged the drive to the old house can still be seen," Hudlin said.

The Prairie Center's legacy began in 1963 when R.C. Wagner and his son, Larry, bought the farm from Algire. The Wagners decided not to grow crops but rather restore native grasses on the farmland and preserve the remaining tallgrass prairie. They dug the lake, stocked its ponds and created trails.

In 1983, the Grassland Heritage Foundation (GHF) managed the property, continuing the Wagners' work. In 1990, management of the Prairie Center passed to The Nature Conservancy (TNC). According to Jenny Trucano Muller, director of Operations for The Nature Conservancy of Kansas, the Prairie Center was one of the first properties TNC acquired before eventually turning the reins over to Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism.

"They [Prairie Center] support TNC by providing public access to nature for people in the Kansas City area who might not otherwise have it," Trucano said.

When KDWP took over the Center, Hudlin's duties were shifted so she could help with prairie reclamation and educational programming. GHF continues to have a presence, managing the 2.6-acre Roulund-Wagner Prairie adjacent to the preserve land.

"I drew up a five-year plan to start in spring 1997. Thanks to a great outpouring of volunteer support, the large equipment crew of KDWP, Kansas Department of Transportation area supervisor Mick Halter, the local Johnson County Rural Fire District



and the environmental crews of Kansas City Power and Light and what is now Westar Energy, the work of this first plan was completed in three years."

The local fire department continues to conduct annual prairie grass burns. "It is a great partnership," Hudlin added.

The Prairie Center's crew is lean. Besides Hudlin, there is only one other permanent staff member, and two seasonal employees. "I'm the only full-time position," Hudlin said.

The Burns

Every spring, prescribed burning renews the grassland, maintaining a variety of native grasses and promoting wildflower growth. According to Hudlin, the burning protects against invasive vegetation that can choke out other plant species, while maintaining and

Preserving a Prairie Heritage

Text and photos by Jennifer Leeper,
freelance writer



promoting biodiversity. Each spring, Hudlin assigns areas to be burned and designates special protocols.

How much is burned depends on the presence and severity of invading vegetation.

“We try to get all areas burned within a three-year rotation,” Hudlin said. The burning is supplemented through hand cutting and mowing.

“We use chemical as sparingly as possible since they may affect more than what is intended,” Alaine added.

Birds

“The Prairie Center is well known for its birds,” Hudlin said.

According to Hudlin, birders come from as far as Wales and New Zealand to observe species such as the indigo bunting. Other observable species include eastern meadowlarks, grasshopper sparrows, American kestrels, mourning doves, and common nighthawks.

The Prairie Center is also a designated location for The Nature Conservancy Birding Challenge that takes place annually on International Migratory Bird Day, with the goal being to count as many species of birds as possible in one calendar day.

Wildflowers

If names like deer-tongue, dichanthelium, purpletop and shepherd’s-purse sound familiar to you, the Prairie Center might be an ideal destination. Whether you prefer a mustard plant that blooms in mid-spring or the vibrant purple of a dotted gayfeather in Indian summer, you won’t be disappointed with the 180-plus species of wildflowers at the Center.



GHF hosts periodic wildflower walks through the Center. Volunteers leading the walks come from area organizations such as the Kansas Native Plant Society

and Overland Park Arboretum. There are also more specialized wildflower tours, such as a native medicinal plant walk, and even a workshop in leading an educational wildflower walk.

Something For Everyone

Although the Center primarily attracts birders and wildflower aficionados, there are plenty of other reasons to visit. Hikers and walkers can enjoy both leisurely and more challenging stretches along the 6 miles of trail, and they won’t need to dodge bikes, horses, motorized vehicles, or even dogs as these are all prohibited. Anglers can enjoy the five-acre lake, which is stocked with bluegill, catfish, largemouth bass and hybrid sunfish.

An archery range is open daily from dawn to dusk.

Prairie Center guests can also observe other wildlife, such as slender glass lizards, ringneck snakes, ornate box turtles, white-tailed deer and coyotes.

Amateur and professional geologists will appreciate the limestone bluffs along Cedar Creek, and quartzite boulders deposited by ice-age glaciers.


Rock fences remaining from original homesteading activity in the area are another opportunity to view and identify types of local rock.

For individuals and groups interested in delving even deeper into the Center’s ecological makeup, there are 10 interactive stations available for visitors to learn about area mammals, soil, water quality, macro invertebrate, birds, reptiles and amphibians.

The Future

In addition to her continued educational outreach efforts, Hudlin also wants to focus on growing what she calls “citizen science” programming at the Center.

Currently, citizen science efforts at the Center includes data collection of five different wildlife species. Hudlin believes this kind of active, direct engagement gives visitors a greater sense of ownership in the Center, and nature in general.

For more info, contact staff at (913) 856-7669. 



CAMPING WITH GRANDPA HARRY

By Rick McNary

Rick McNary photo

Harry turned the rusted lock upside down and squeezed a drop of oil into the keyhole. His aged fingers trembled as he slid in the brass key.

The weathered wood door creaked as it opened to a musty room filled with toys and tools turned antique. Harry tapped his cane slowly as he adjusted his eyes to the light.

His fingers traced the initials he carved into a wooden post in 1934 when he and his father built the barn: H J W – Harry Jackson Withers.

Harry leaned against a dusty workbench and scanned the room filled with memories from his agile years. Rusty metal traps hung low from beams, snowshoes with shriveled bindings remained propped against wooden cross-country skis, and a rack of fishing poles stood like soldiers at attention. His yellow lab, Chauncey, sniffed an old tackle box in the corner.

Harry chuckled softly, remembering Gladys chiding him for keeping his old outdoor gear.

“If she were still alive,” he thought to himself, “she would really chide me now for going camping at my age.”

Harry hadn’t gone camping in more than 30 years, but a letter from his ten-year-old grandson, Ethan, who had been writing him each week since last Thanksgiving was about to change that.

Harry spotted his canvas tent tucked in the rafters. His cooking grate hung on a nail with his Coleman lantern. Tomorrow he would go to Yellowpine for new sleeping bags.

Chauncey ambled out the door as a car pulled up. It was Ethan and his mother.

“Hi Chauncey,” Ethan cried. “Where’s Grandpa?”

Dear Grandpa Harry,
We won our final soccer game yesterday. I’m happy that school is almost out. I joined the Boy Scouts like you said. One of the things I’m supposed to do is go camping. Mom’s new boyfriend doesn’t like to be outdoors and Dad never took me camping before he died. Could you take me camping this summer? Mom said it was okay for me to go up to your cabin again if that’s okay with you. My friends think it’s weird I want to stay in your cabin since you don’t have electricity, but I don’t need my iPad. I really like chopping wood and hauling water from the creek. It reminds me of the stories Dad told me about growing up there. I sure miss him. Mom says she’ll bring me up on Memorial Day if it’s okay.
Love, Ethan

“You ready to go camping?”

Harry propped the cane on the workbench and walked outside to greet them. He braced himself as Ethan barreled down the dirt path and threw his arms around him.

“Hi Grandson,” Harry said. “Welcome back. I was rounding up the camping equipment. I wasn’t sure what day you were coming.”

“I wanted to come right after school was out,” Ethan said, “But Mom couldn’t take any time off from work until the holiday. Where are we going camping? I bought a new sleeping bag with money I made from mowing lawns. Mom didn’t figure you had a good one anymore so she bought one for you, so we’re all set!”

Back inside the barn, Harry pointed to the things he couldn’t reach. Ethan nimbly crawled in the rafters to dig out the items.

A ‘49 Ford with the fading letters “Withers’ Sawmill” rumbled to life and Harry slowly backed it

up to the barn. They loaded camping gear, fishing poles, metal tackle boxes full of old wooden lures and a galvanized water jug on the wooden bed of the truck. Ethan proudly tossed the new red sleeping bags in the midst of the antiques.

Long before sunrise the next day, Harry tapped his cane across the wooden floor to the kitchen. Opening the door to the wood cook stove, Harry lit the fire for morning's breakfast and coffee. He heard a noise and turned to find Ethan, illuminated by candlelight, sitting in his rocker.

"Good morning, Ethan," Harry said. "What are you doing up so early?"

"I wanted to be ready," Ethan replied. "I've dreamed about this since I was here at New Years. Dad always talked about going camping but was too sick to go, and none of my friends have gone either, so I'm excited to tell them about it!"

Breakfast was soon over, the dishes were cleared and Harry fired up the old Ford again. Ethan carefully watched Harry shift gears and work the clutch as they scissored down the lane, Chauncey resting his head on Ethan's lap.

The old truck climbed the winding switchbacks slow and steady like a sure-footed mule loaded down with supplies. Ethan gasped as they pulled into a turnout overlooking Wild Horse Lake.

"That's the first place I took your dad camping," Harry said, turning off the engine. "He was about four years old then."

Harry reached across the cab of the truck and rested his hand on Ethan's shoulder. Decades of living taught Harry to recognize those sacred moments in time that are best attended in silence. An old man and a young boy who both longed for yesterday were now starting a new journey together.

After a moment, Harry finally broke the silence and said, "Here's one way to start an old truck."

Harry pushed in the clutch and the truck rolled downhill. As it gained momentum, Harry popped the clutch and the truck shuddered, before roaring the engine back to life.

They found the valley floor and chugged into a campsite surrounded by pine trees. Ethan and Chauncey jumped out as the truck pattered to a stop.

Ethan had never put up a tent before. Living in a big city didn't afford such opportunities, so Harry carefully explained each step and the reason behind it.

With camp set, Harry grabbed a couple of

fishing poles and motioned for Ethan to follow him. He'd noticed the washtub-sized rings of feeding trout scattered on the lake. A few casts later, both of them had plump rainbows ready for dinner.

Back at camp, Harry then showed Ethan the art of building a campfire. The sound of crackling pine filled the quiet campsite.

Next, Harry taught Ethan how to clean a trout and cook it over open flames.

Darkness settled over the valley as the night purchased light from the day. Nature's symphony began to play as the hooting of owls harmonized with the deep base of the bullfrogs.

"Grandpa, will you tell me a story?" asked Ethan.

Harry gazed across the campfire to see a warm glow dancing in the eyes of the young boy. He knew after this camping trip, Ethan would never be the same again, for there is something magical in the fires of an evening camp, the sound of a stream gurgling nearby, the warmth of a dog curled beside you, and the sweet lullabies of nature's music. Once nature's magic seeps into your soul, the heart is not content until it relives those joys again and again.

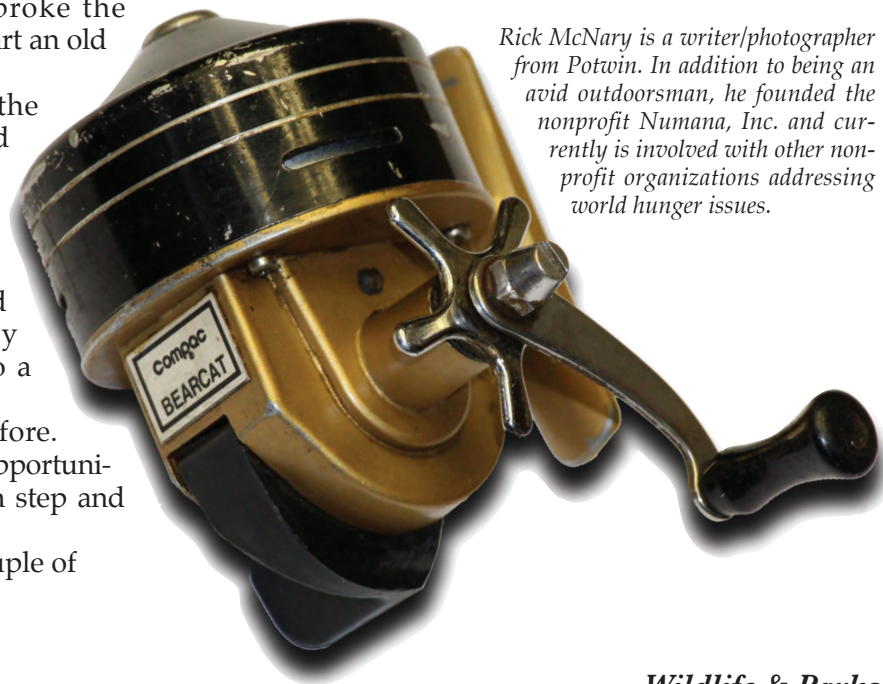
It had been a while since Harry needed his imagination. At his age, he spent the days surviving on memories, too tired to dream. Lately, though, he found himself daydreaming of the adventures he could take with Ethan.

Harry brightened the night by adjusting the logs on the fire with a long stick. He covered his legs with an old wool army blanket, took a deep breath and began telling Ethan a story.

"Once upon a time, a long, long time ago ..."



Rick McNary is a writer/photographer from Potwin. In addition to being an avid outdoorsman, he founded the nonprofit Numana, Inc. and currently is involved with other nonprofit organizations addressing world hunger issues.



Summer Calls

at Hillsdale State Park

Seemingly a reward for working especially hard the other nine months of the year, summer's arrival is sudden: School may not yet be out, and it doesn't matter what month the calendar says it is. Summer is when everyone, everywhere, realizes the weather is perfect for loading up camping gear, fishing poles, hammocks and hiking boots, and heading out to enjoy fun in the sun.

This year in eastern Kansas, that weekend happened right on the heels of torrential rains and flooding. This meant the place we had planned to camp for the first time this season – Hillsdale State Park – was soggy; trails were muddy, and the lake there was about 4 feet above its normal level.

But the call of summer was stronger than the weather report. And so we went.

My companions for the trip were my sons and husband – giving us some much needed family time away from the daily grind – and my older son's longtime friend, an avid fisherman. With Hillsdale Reservoir's 51 miles of shoreline at our disposal, we planned on hooking crappie, bluegill, and perhaps a few catfish.

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY
ANDRA BRYAN STEFANONI, FREELANCE WRITER

Day Tripping

Located between Spring Hill and Paola, Hillsdale is one of our state's newest reservoirs. Construction of the dam began in 1976 to take control of the Osage River Basin, and it was completed in 1982. Its architects left more than 70 percent of the standing timber in the basin to provide fish habitat.

The 4,500-acre reservoir is surrounded by the state park and 7,000 acres of wildlife area, which is open to public hunting. There are more than 40 miles of trails, many favored by equestrians who can find their own designated camping grounds in the park. The wildlife area holds deer, quail, squirrel, turkey, rabbit, beaver, muskrat, raccoon and waterfowl.

The area is ripe with history: Kaw and Osage Indians hunted here at one time. It's just a few miles south of the Santa Fe Trail, and in the years leading up to the Civil War, was the site of violent confrontations between pro- and anti-slavery forces. Visitors to the U.S Army Corps of Engineers Center east of the dam can find an informative display on that history.

However, we had come to fish, so we unloaded our tackle: spinning outfits, rooster tails, Mepps spinners, jigs and the like. When we couldn't locate our stringer, we made a quick trip to Jayhawk Marina on the south side of the park to buy one and check out what they had to offer.

Visitors can rent a 20-foot pontoon boat, an aluminum fishing boat, or a bass boat for a half or full day, and cabins located right on the dock can be rented for a night or weekend. The marina offers all the other usual services — slip rental, dry lot storage, food and snacks — as well as a heated fishing dock. With no need for that, we headed to shore and began The Great Fish-Off.



After a few hours, we hadn't landed anything, so the boys stripped off their shoes and socks and waded a bit, trying their hand at wrestling a carp in the shallows, and watching schools of mosquito fish.

It was then we caught a glimpse of an airplane.

The Barnstormers

The airplane was doing rolls and climbs just over the dam, sunlight glinting off its wings. But this was no ordinary plane. It was a remote control plane, and it was like a siren to my hubby and younger son, who are both model airplane enthusiasts.

We jumped in the car and, keeping our eyes on the plane, began tracking it until we found its point of origin south of the dam, just as the clouds gave way to blue sky and sunshine.

Turns out Hillsdale State Park is unique: It's the only state park with an aerial RC flying field. Active users and maintainers of that field are the Hillsdale Barnstormers, a group of enthusiasts who range from beginner to competitive flyers. They've been there since before it was designated as a state park, members say.

"There was nothing here but a

hayfield," said Gary Gasser, of Spring Hill, who serves as the group's historian. "We raised all of the funds for this, and it's paid off."

Today, the group numbers 55, while the field's amenities now include two runways — one running north-south and one running east-west, for variable wind directions — and a pavilion.

With no houses nearby to crash into, nor water features (the lake is on the other side of the dam), it's the perfect spot to fly, they say.

They fly everything: jets, helicopters, quadcopters, and the like. The enclosed trailers they pull behind their trucks house aircrafts worth a few hundred dollars to some worth \$10,000 or more.

Bent over a battery-powered Apprentice on a wooden picnic table, Cuauhtemoc Reyes, Olathe, was attaching wings to the fuselage in preparation to fly.

At the edge of a tidy and close-cropped grass runway, group vice president Kevin Schmidt, Olathe, and his brother leaned over a high-end aerobatic model, prepping it to run through a series of flight patterns to practice for an upcoming competition.

Vincente Bartron, Olathe, occupied a lawn chair in the shade with a clipboard of judging sheets at the ready.



They all made us feel welcome. Those who wish to use the field must have an Academy of Model Aeronautics membership, they told us, but visitors are welcome to observe. Many Barnstormers also are members of the International Modeling Aerobatic Club and on this particular day, they were working on top level flying patterns in preparation for competitions that will take them all over the Midwest.

This fall, the field will be the site of a race similar to a NASCAR event; picture the planes circling the field, dotted with poles, in 10 laps, making all left turns.

Elsewhere

At a cove not far from Saddle Ridge, we found Anne Anderson, Olathe, and her husband, Jordan, using paddle boards a few feet from shore.

They had just moved to the Kansas City area from Arkansas, although she and Jordan both hail from Minnesota.

“Once it warms up a bit, we’ll definitely return,” said Anne of the park. “In Arkansas, we didn’t have access to any lakes or anything.”

Moving to northeast Kansas, where there are several state parks with lakes within an hour’s drive, inspired them to invest in the paddle boards and head off on weekend adventures.

On the opposite side of the lake, we found another beach — one made especially for swimming. Despite the early-season chill of the water, it was crowded, yet another indication we weren’t the only ones feeling the pull of summer. Parents sunned themselves on towels while children splashed. Toddlers drew pictures in the sand with sticks. A few families played Frisbee, and one enjoyed a picnic.

We made a mental note to bring our kayaks and swimsuits the next time we visit.

Learning More

Before heading home, we stopped at the visitors’ center operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Volunteer Carol Platz invited us in to explore the interactive displays. I was wrong to think our middle school- and high school-aged sons wouldn’t enjoy it. They were quick to grab Crayons and blank paper to make colorful rubbings of species that can be found in the park. They enjoyed looking at the various waterfowl mounts. And an observation deck with binoculars allowed them to play I Spy.

Platz and her husband, John, volunteer at the park six months each year in exchange for being able to live in the park and enjoy its amenities. She encouraged us to visit a must-see: Hidden Spring Nature Trail.

At 1.25 miles through a wooded area, it’s easily hikeable and bikeable, even for beginners. At the trailhead, a piece of exercise equipment allows trail users to warm up before hiking. And a bridge along the route provides a scenic spot for photos.

We’ll return someday when the trails dry out – perhaps by the time this publishes, they will be.

Five miles connect the Jayhawk Area with the Russell Crites Area on the south side, and the miles of trails open to equestrians also are open to hikers and bikers.

On our drive home, the glow of summer just beginning to show on our skin and our supply of PB&J and beef jerky depleted, we played Twenty Questions and visited about our day. The boys weren’t worried one bit about not catching fish, they said, nor were they disappointed in not being able to tent camp.

“Besides,” they assured me, “it was fun just messing around without a schedule, seeing someplace new, without stuff we HAD to do.”

I agree. We all need more days like those. 🐮

For more information on Hillsdale State Park, visit ksoutdoors.com and click “State Parks” or contact staff at (913) 783-4507.



Sportsmen's Calendar | 2017

RUNNING

March 1-Nov. 8, 2017

SQUIRREL

June 1, 2017-Feb. 28, 2018

HANDFISHING

June 15-Aug. 31, 2017

BULLFROG

July 1-Oct. 31, 2017

RAIL

Sept. 1-Nov. 9, 2017 (*Sora and Virginia*)

SNIPE

Sept. 1-Dec. 16, 2017

DOVE

Sept. 1-Nov. 29, 2017 (*mourning, white-winged, Eurasian collared, and ringed turtle doves*)

DEER

Youth/Hunters with Disabilities: Sept. 2-10, 2017

Archery: Sept. 11-Dec. 31, 2017

Pre-rut Whitetail Antlerless: Oct. 7-9, 2017

Muzzleloader: Sept. 11-24, 2017

Regular Firearm: Nov. 29-Dec. 10, 2017

Firearm Extended Whitetail Antlerless Season:

Jan. 1 2018 (Units 6, 8, 9, 10, 16, and 17)

Jan. 1-7, 2018 (Units 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 11, 12, 13, and 14)

Jan. 1-14, 2018 (Units 10a, 15 and 19)

Archery Extended Whitetail Antlerless Season:

Jan. 15-31, 2018 (Unit 19 only)

GREATER PRAIRIE CHICKEN

Greater Prairie Chicken Unit

Early Season: Sept. 15-Oct. 15, 2017

Regular Season:

Nov. 18, 2017-Jan. 31, 2018

Southwest Unit: No open season

FALL TURKEY

Oct. 1-Nov. 28, 2017 AND

Dec. 11, 2017-Jan. 31, 2018

WOODCOCK

Oct. 14-Nov. 27, 2017

PHEASANTS

Youth: Nov. 4-5, 2017

Nov. 11, 2017-Jan. 31, 2018

QUAIL

Youth: Nov. 4-5, 2017

Nov. 11, 2017-Jan. 31, 2018

SANDHILL CRANE

Nov. 8, 2017-Jan. 4, 2018

CROW

Nov. 10, 2017-March 10, 2018

TRAPPING/HUNTING

Nov. 15, 2017-Feb. 15, 2018 (*badger, bobcat, mink, muskrat, opossum, raccoon, swift fox, red fox, gray fox, striped skunk, weasel*)

BEAVER & OTTER TRAPPING

Nov. 15, 2017-March 31, 2018

EXOTIC DOVE (Proposed)

Open year-round

FLOATLINE FISHING

Open year-round

RABBITS

Open year-round



Species Profile: Big Brown Bat

Bats: Don't fear them - they're not coming to suck your blood, they're on the hunt for insects!

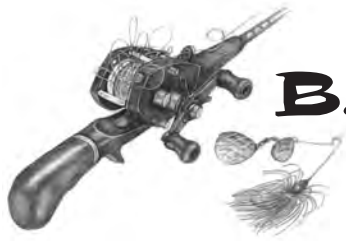
Often one of the most misunderstood species in Kansas, and throughout the world, bats are fascinating nocturnal creatures. The only mammals capable of flying and staying in flight, bats are truly a winged-wonder.

The big brown bat is one a species you might spot in the Sunflower State. As the name implies, big brown bats are brown in color and are one of the largest bats in Kansas. They can grow upwards of 5 inches long and weigh more than an ounce.

Big brown bats can be best identified by their large head, broad nose, and nearly black and hairless face, ears, wings and tail. They also don short, rounded ears and short, broad wings.

Feeding mostly on hard-bodied insects and other "pests," big brown bats pose little to no threat to humans. In fact, their eating habits make them a helpful species to have around farms and other operations where insects may be unwanted guests.

Your best chances for spotting big brown bats will be during the early evening hours as they leave daytime roosts, such as old barns or abandoned buildings, for a night of hunting insects.



Backlash

Shooting Star Campout

with Mike Miller

My mother tells me my first camping trip was when she was six months pregnant with me. It was in the Colorado Rockies and we tent camped with my grandparents. I wasn't quite a year old on the next one and Mom says it snowed.

"You crawled right into your sleeping bag and went to sleep," she added. "You were happy as a lark when we camped because you loved to be outdoors. My only worry was when you started walking because you always made a bee-line for the water."

I don't remember either trip, but it makes sense that I would head for the water. I still do. That's where the fish are.

Those first campouts probably set the stage for me to look fondly on all my camping memories. Subsequent mountain campouts stick out in my memory, but the most memorable may be an overnight trip my cousin Scott and I took to our favorite farm pond south of Greensburg.

It was the year after we moved to Greensburg. I was 12 and Scott was 13. Our families were fortunate to have a lease on the Greenleaf Pond, and we fished there whenever we could get a ride. But an overnight camping trip, just Scott and me, was an adventure.

It was mid-summer and warm, so we didn't worry about a tent. We had some food, sodas, a couple of cots and sleeping bags. We were excited but there was some trepidation - we'd be there alone.


Fishing kept us busy before dark, and I have no idea whether we caught any fish, but I'm sure we did. What I remember is laying on our cots, watching the stars on a beautifully clear night with no ambient light to interfere. The pond was 10 miles from town and there were no lights nearby. I can still remember thinking I had no idea that many stars hung above us. It was brilliant. But it got better.

As we lay there and told stories, we saw a shooting star.

Seeing a shooting star was a big deal, and we marveled at our luck. It soon turned into a competition to see who would see the next one. We saw another, then another, then another. We hissed, pointed and laughed each time we saw the streak of light in the night sky. Some were merely momentary streaks, but others were bright and blazed across the sky before dimming out. There were dozens, and I can't tell you how much fun it was.

With a short Internet search, I recently learned that we probably witnessed the annual Perseid Meteor Show. Every year, from around July 17 to August 24, Earth crosses the orbital path of Comet Swift-Tuttle, the parent of the Perseid meteor shower. Debris from this comet litters the comet's orbit, but we don't really get into the thick of the comet rubble until after the first week of August. The bits and pieces from Comet Swift-Tuttle slam into the Earth's upper atmosphere at some 130,000 miles per hour, lighting up the night-time with fast-moving Perseid meteors.

As we began to get drowsy, coyotes began howling not far away. It was a calm night and they sounded close. We were a little spooked and pulled our sleeping bags up tighter. Sleep finally came, and we woke to a beautiful summer morning. We fished a short while, then picked up our camp and waited for our ride back to town. Town was just 10 miles of dirt roads away, but it seemed like a 1,000 miles away the night before.

Scott and I usually made one or two overnight trips to the pond throughout high school, and it was easier when we were old enough to drive. We were kind of famous because our trips usually coincided with a really good thunderstorm, which often ran us back to town. When things got dry, we were invited back to spend the night. It sounds funny unless you're the ones trying to unfold a tent in 30 mph winds and driving rain. 

The Nature
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No Wi-Fi required.



Phillip Harries photo

