

KANSAS

Wildlife & Parks Magazine

FOR HUNTERS, ANGLERS AND OUTDOOR ENTHUSIASTS | \$3.75 | MARCH-APRIL 2019





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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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COMMON GROUND

with Brad Loveless



Life's Journey

You may have already noticed the new title and photo on this page. I'm Brad Loveless, the new Secretary of the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT) and you and I have a lot in common.

I say that with confidence because if you read this magazine, I know you care about the Kansas out-of-doors and that you're passionate about what swims, flies, runs and crawls in it, just as I am. I adopted Kansas as my home after coming here for graduate school and falling in love with a girl, three sons and your state.

In my first couple of months on this job, I've talked with a number of terrific KDWPT employees, many from the public and dozens of our legislators. I've found that all share these same passions. Certainly the most exciting and anxious times I've had so far include speaking to outside groups and testifying in front of legislative committees on behalf of our department. It seems that everyone (and I mean everyone) has an interest in what we do.

Walking out of a committee meeting in January, I commented to a coworker that the committee's questions took us all over the place, from worker retirement to Walk-in Hunting, and from camping fees to crappie limits. His response was "They're all that way." I hope they all are because I believe this common connection and enthusiasm we share will help us work together to improve every aspect of the Kansas environment.

I understand that when addressing issues, it's common to focus on what's different about our perspectives rather than what's similar. We are, by nature, problem solvers, so we focus on problems, or differences. However, throughout my initial interactions, I've been elated to learn that we share far more common beliefs than we have differences. As we move forward and tackle difficult issues, my prayer is that we never lose sight of what we have in common.

So far, getting to know KDWPT employees and connecting with you and other stakeholders in our natural resources has consumed much of my time. Because I believe we're all in this together, I want to share with you a summary of the words I sent to my KDWPT team a couple of days after I started my new job.



Dear KDWPT Coworkers:

Last Monday was my first day at KDWPT, but it started with me finalizing my exit from Westar Energy. Wrapping up a 34-year career in just a few days left our Human Resources staff tying up more than just a few loose ends. Literally, it was a short walk from my office at 818 Kansas Ave. to my new one here at 1020 Kansas Ave. Figuratively, it's been a lifelong journey and as I walked out of the Westar doors carrying a box of personal belongings, my briefcase and a bag of clothes draped over my shoulders, I had a déjà vu moment.

My mind flashed back to June 1977 and the feeling I had walking across the Ohio State University campus, just a few days out of high school, preparing to start my summer job. I was carrying everything I needed for the summer as I walked into an exciting new phase of my life. I felt the same walking down Kansas Ave. that Monday in January. At the 900 block, a friend who knew about my job change shouted from his 3rd Floor window, "Brad, you look like you're homeless."

He was right. But it only lasted for two blocks.

I couldn't have asked for a better reception. You all have been warm, helpful and welcoming. I got to know, trust and respect many of you over the past decades by working with you, trying our best to take care of Kansas and Kansans. It is now my pleasure and honor to do that as your Secretary. It's hard for me to find the right words to describe how I feel about the value, the challenge and the sacredness of our mission for Kansas. But I know it feels like home.

I look forward to getting to know you and doing great work together.

I sincerely believe we can accomplish great things if we all work together, focusing on our similarities rather than our differences. We can always find common ground. 🐃



A Turkey Tale

By: Paislee Grace Davidson

Age: 8

Equipment: Crossbow

It was a cold rainy day on April 8, 2018. My dad and I pulled up to the hunting area, grabbed our gear and rushed out to the spot. Dad set up the ground blind and decoys as fast as he could. We were ready to hunt.

We got all snuggled in the blind, set up the crossbow to make sure I could see through the scope. We started calling for turkey. It took about 15 minutes before a hen yelped at us. She came in to the decoys but then walked away.

We called for another 30 minutes and a hen popped up out of nowhere. Dad just saw the hen, but when I looked to the side of the blind; I told him there was something else. It was a tom. The hen walked through the decoys and he followed! The crossbow was ready so I started aiming.

When the tom hit the 20 yard mark my Dad told me to use the center circle on the scope, take a deep breath, and squeeze the trigger. So, I did and made a great shot. The turkey flapped and walked in the woods. We jumped for joy and recovered the bird about 30 minutes later. It was so much fun I plan on hunting more with my family.

Kudos on the Photo Issue

Editors:

Our compliments on the 2019 Photo Issue of *Kansas Wildlife & Parks Magazine*. It is superb. We have surely enjoyed it. The use of orange, yellow and green beautifully set off the camouflage photos. It is an issue we're keeping to enjoy in the future. Keep up the good work.

*Mike and Marguerite Feist
Ellinwood*

Mike and Marguerite,

Thanks for the compliment on the magazine. Our Ace graphic designer, Dustin Teasley, built the layout using wildlife images "cut out" of their backgrounds, or COBs, then placed them on textured backgrounds in Photoshop. About six different arrangements over two color schemes supported the theme and photographs.

Editors



BIRD BRAIN

Whooping Cranes *with Mike Rader*

Whooping cranes and their cousins, sandhill cranes, are two of my favorite bird species. I am inspired and thrilled by the sight of these birds, and their calls suggest something ancient and primal. And the sight of a whooping crane gives me hope that wildlife conservation programs are working.

Life history data provided by Cornell University shows the population of wild whooping cranes sunk to a low of 15 in 1941, making them critically endangered with a real risk of extinction. They were charter members of the lists generated when the Endangered Species Act was signed in 1973, and while it has taken many years, the population has reached a high of more than 600 today. Just more than 500 birds are counted in the traditional Central Flyway flock, which is about half of the conservation goal of 1,000 individuals. If the flock size can reach and maintain that number for 10 years, the species could be down-listed from Endangered to Threatened. The whooping crane recovery coordinator for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service speculates the goal could be achieved in 20 years if the current rate of adding birds to the flock holds. This population nests in Wood Buffalo National Park in the Northwest Territories and Alberta, Can., migrating through the central U.S. and spending the winter at Aransas National Wildlife Refuge on the Texas Gulf Coast.

An experimental eastern migratory flock includes about 100 birds hand-reared, released in Wisconsin and trained to migrate to the southeastern U.S. There is some natural reproduction occurring within this flock. There is also a small experimental flock of non-migratory birds in Louisiana. These peripheral flocks were established to prevent a catastrophic event such as a major hurricane from wiping out most of the population. However, these efforts are seeing only limited success, making conservation of the Central Flyway population extremely important.

Whooping cranes are the tallest birds in North America, reaching 5 feet with a 7.5-foot wingspan and a weight of about 15-17 pounds. Adults are bright white, with black wingtips, black on the face, a red crest and black legs. Youngsters are sort of a dirty reddish-brown color and can be mistaken for sandhill cranes, even though they are not the typical gray color of that species. Whoopers have a varied diet that includes small vertebrates such as mice, frogs, snakes and fish; invertebrates such as mollusks, crustaceans, and insects; and plant material, including tubers, berries and waste grain. They mate for life and usually produce only one or two chicks a year, making rapid population growth impossible, so the effort to minimize hazards along the migration route is critical. Birds are lost to predation, collision with power lines, poaching and other dangers. Potential collisions with the growing number of wind turbines and electricity transmission lines presents a challenge to wildlife managers and power companies alike.

Those of us who live in central Kansas are fortunate to be in the migration path of these cranes, and Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area and Quivira National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) host most of the birds. Spring migration occurs in late March through April and the birds are usually in a hurry to get to the northern breeding grounds. Fall migration begins in November and can stretch out until mid-December, as the birds hang around longer, taking advantage of the waste grain food source on harvested crop fields.

As this flock grows, the chances of seeing this magnificent species in Kansas is improving. Even though I have observed plenty of these birds, I still love the thrill of checking out the central Kansas marshes during migration, hoping to see them again. The best times to view them are early morning before they go out to feed and late afternoon when they return to the refuges to roost. Staff at the Kansas Wetlands Education Center at Cheyenne Bottoms and Quivira NWR track sightings and are great about getting the word out when the birds are using the areas.



MORE INFORMATION ON WHOOPING CRANES:

www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Whooping_Crane/overview
www.savingcranes.org/species-field-guide/whooping-crane/
operationmigration.org/the-whooping-crane.asp

Mike Rader photo

Game Warden Profile

Scott Stoughton, Kingman and Harper Counties

Game warden Scott Stoughton started as a warden in Hiawatha in 2010, covering Brown, Doniphan and Nemaha counties. After eight years he transferred to Harper/Kingman counties.

What is your most memorable investigation that you have worked on?

The one that comes to mind was my first big case, which came during my first year as an officer. An outfitter in northeast Kansas was bringing in clients who had not received deer permits through the draw and he was providing them with permits purchased by his friends and family. I believe there were five clients charged in federal court along with the outfitter. There were two trophy bucks killed, as well as a few does. It was my first opportunity to work on a case with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service agents and wardens from other states, and I learned a lot, including some things to do differently the next time. It probably isn't my biggest case, but it will always be one of my most memorable.

What is the best thing about being a game warden?

The variety of the job and spending time outdoors are my favorite parts of the job. No two days are the same when you are a game warden. I couldn't do a job that keeps me stuck inside doing the same thing every day.

If you weren't a game warden what would you be doing?

Working in the medical field. I was a biology major in college and considered working in healthcare before realizing I was not meant to be indoors all the time.

What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

Spending time with my wife and kids. I also enjoy hunting, fishing and trapping when time allows.

What/Who influenced you to become a game warden?

I was introduced to the outdoors at a young age going hunting and fishing with my dad. I've always had a strong interest in wildlife and the outdoors, but what really made me decide on a career in the wildlife field was spending two summers in a seasonal position with KDWPT's stream survey crew.

What is your most embarrassing moment while on duty?

Nothing comes to mind. I guess it hasn't happened yet.



How are you involved in your communities?

After eight years in northeast Kansas, I recently transferred to Harper County. I've always helped with Hunter Education and hope to get an annual class started in my new area. I also recently completed training to be an National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP) instructor and look forward to getting involved in that program locally.

What is your favorite area in Kansas to hunt or fish?

I've had the opportunity to hunt in many areas across Kansas, but my favorite place to hunt is next to any farm pond, hunting mallards.

What activities can people enjoy in your area?

Deer hunting is definitely the most popular hunting activity in my patrol area, but there can be great upland, waterfowl and predator hunting as well. In my part of the state, fishing is fairly limited to several state fishing and community lakes.

Do you have any special certifications or training as a game warden?

In late 2015, I received a promotion to Natural Resource Officer II as a K9 Officer. In the spring of 2016, my K9 partner, Hunter, and I completed Wildlife Law Enforcement K9 Certification through the Indiana Department of Natural Resources. I'm also a certified instructor for Hunter Education, Furharvester Education, and National Archery in the Schools.

Do you have a dream of an outdoor adventure that you'd like to fulfill?

I've got a pretty long list of outdoor adventures that I dream of doing, but hunting moose in Alaska is at the top of that list.

What is one thing about your patrol area that most people don't know?

Kingman State Fishing Lake is in my area and offers anglers one of the few places in Kansas to fish for northern pike.



BOAT KANSAS

Cold Water Boating

with Chelsea Hoffmeier

Kansas

Boating season – we’ve been waiting for it. The winter months are getting behind us, the first day of spring is just around the corner, and the boat is primed and ready for its maiden voyage of the year. As good as all of that sounds, we shouldn’t let our excitement cloud our judgement. Take these early season precautions to make sure your first boating trip of the year is a safe (and warm) one.

Hypothermia is a very real danger, even when the sun is out. Hypothermia occurs when exposure to cold causes our bodies to lose more heat than our bodies can generate. Unbeknownst to most, water doesn’t have to be extremely cold to cause hypothermia – temperatures just have to be colder than normal body temperature (98.6 degrees). Just because it has been a balmy 70 degrees for a few days doesn’t mean water temps have caught up with the air temperature. So what can you do? Dress for the water temperature, not the air temperature.

Appropriate cold water boating apparel consists of several layers of synthetic fabric, which help keep cold water off your skin. Cotton fabrics, which pull heat from your body by keeping water next to your skin, should be avoided. It is also a good idea to bring an extra pair of clothes in a dry bag in case you end up getting wet.

Pack a warm hat. Hats help slow down heat loss, half of which is lost through your head when in the water.

Another way to prevent hypothermia while boating is to

drink plenty of fluids (no alcohol or caffeine), and eat high energy foods beforehand. The healthier you start your day, the better your body will be able to respond, and the clearer your thoughts will be, should an accident occur.

Boating in any form is always safer when done with someone else, but it is even more important not to go out alone when cold water boating. Don’t go seeking that early season boating selfie. Grab a buddy, and always let someone know where you’ll be and when you plan to return.

Lastly, ALWAYS wear a life jacket. Whether you are hunting or fishing in the colder months, or are out enjoying the heat in the middle of the summer, a life jacket is imperative. When it comes to being submerged in cold water, flotation is necessary to keep you at the surface of the water without expending what little energy you may have left. You’re never too old, or too cool, to stay alive.

Even when taking all of these steps, accidents can still happen, so it is important to watch for signs and symptoms of hypothermia in yourself as well as your boating buddies. Symptoms include shivering; slurred speech; slow breathing; cold, pale skin; loss of coordination; and fatigue. Any person pulled from cold water should be treated immediately for hypothermia by preventing further body cooling and taken to the nearest medical facility.

No matter what time of the year it is, boat smart, boat safe, and have fun.



A New Path Forward

with Tanna Fanshier

Five years ago, I was waving goodbye to my parents as they dropped me off at Ford Hall for my freshman year at Kansas State University (KSU). Eager to start my new life as a college student, I remember shooing my mother out of my dorm room as she tried to help me unpack. It wasn’t until I watched my family drive away on Manhattan Avenue that I felt the pang of finality. This was it. I was beginning down a new path in life. I was headed toward a future I couldn’t imagine yet. And while I was overwhelmed, I was excited.

My first day here at Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT) as the new R3 coordinator, I felt a lot of those same emo-

tions. Watching my parents drive out of town after helping me settle into my new apartment in Pratt took me right back to move in day at KSU’s Ford Hall. Only this time, I wasn’t embarking on a new journey alone. I’ve got an inspiring team of dedicated colleagues who I get to share this R3 journey with, and this article serves as an invitation for you to join us, too.

So, what is R3 anyway? As Kent Barrett mentioned in his Hunting Heritage column from the November/December 2018 issue, R3 stands for “recruitment, retention, and reactivation” and represents a nationwide effort to grow and maintain participation in hunting, angling, and shooting sports.

While they may not have been umbrellaed under the term R3, recruitment and retention efforts have always

been a focus of KDWPT. However, current R3 initiatives place more emphasis on developing programs, strategies and campaigns that have measurable outcomes, and can generate data to inform future efforts. We will spend time with individuals in the field, as well as time with them online (social media), and we’ll spend time with the data, too.

As we begin this newly-defined path of recruitment, retention and reactivation, our first priority is building a strong outdoor network by ensuring all agency members, partners, and stakeholders have a seat at the table and a voice in the R3 conversation. After all, how can we chart a new path forward if we don’t know where we’ve been and where we want to go?

Now that my boxes are unpacked, it’s time to get to work. Stay tuned for more R3 highlights to come.

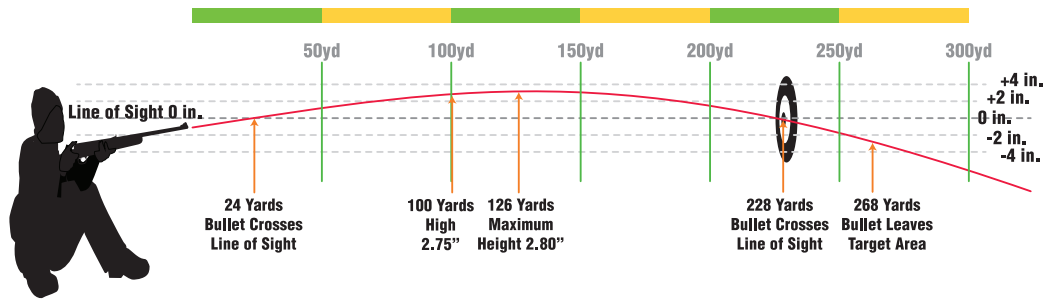
HUNTING HERITAGE

with Kent Barrett

Point Blank Range

In popular usage, “point blank range” has come to mean extremely close range, so close that one can’t miss, but without being so close that it becomes a contact shot. In rifle shooting, point blank range is the range at which you don’t have to aim high or low to hit your aiming point, and this is especially important for hunters. We all know that most shots for a hunter are not precise or set up and may even be hurried. How do we do a better job of making sure that the shots we take are effective on the animal we are hunting?

For the hunter, point blank range is the distance where the hunter can simply place their point of aim in the center of the target area and still make a lethal hit. So first, the hunter must determine what the size of the target area is for the game he or she is hunting. For a white-tailed deer, a lethal target area is about 6 inches in size and includes the heart and lungs. So, the hunter needs to know how their firearm and ammunition combination works together in order to see what point blank range is. We want a trajectory that stays within 3 inches above and below the line of sight to make sure that the bullet does not get out of our 6-inch target area. If we use my rifle as an



example, we would be using an old school caliber, 7X57 or for you Brits, .275 Rigby. I shoot a 139-grain bullet with a factory listed muzzle velocity of 2,740 feet per second. This information can be put into a point blank range ballistics calculator to determine bullet trajectory. We need to know the ballistic coefficient for the projectile, in this case, 0.486, bullet weight 139 grains and actual measured muzzle velocity from my rifle’s 20-inch barrel of 2,672 fps. Sight height for my scope is 1.5 inches. We can adjust for our zero range to determine overall trajectory. The bullet will leave the barrel below the line of sight and rise to the apex of the arc of travel before gravity exerts its natural effect and the bullet begins to fall back to earth. A graph of my load is shown above.

As you can see, the bullet crosses line of sight for the first time at 24 yards and again at 228 yards. The minimum point blank range is zero yards with the

bullet hitting 1.5 inches low. The maximum point blank range is 268 yards. Between zero and 268 yards, if I aim at the center of the target area, my bullet should impact within the lethal target zone of my deer with no holdover compensation. The bullet impact will be 2.75 inches high at 100 yards, which I can plan for. All of these calculations, of course, must be verified through shooting at the range.

Now everyone has to make their own decisions on what they shoot and how they choose to sight in. With new scopes, laser range finders and bullet drop compensating (BDC) reticles, it is easier to make long-range shots and quickly calculated shots by allowing for custom holdover on the target. But for an easy way to shoot at close to intermediate distances, calculate point blank range for your firearm system and hold at center of the target area. It’s simple and effective.

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’m a rodent
2. My name makes me sound like I’m really big
3. I hop on two legs

>>> See answer on Page 14

Woolly Verbena Purple Plants for Pollinators

Verbena stricta

by Krista Dahlinger
Kansas Native Plants Society

Perhaps you've seen a plant on the roadside that looks like a hand with long purple fingers waving in the wind. If you have, it was probably woolly verbena. The plant is easy to identify by its long purple flower spikes above a tall dark leafy stem. Each flower spike can grow 12 inches long with flowers emerging first from the lower part of the spike. Dark green, toothed leaves with pointed tips grow along opposite sides of the stem, which is often reddish. Both the leaves and stems are covered in fine fuzzy hairs giving this plant its common name, "woolly." The underside of the leaves display conspicuous veins that are a helpful identification clue in early spring before blooming begins. Up close, the small lavender-to-purple flowers along the spike have five fused petals that flare outward. These flowers do not have a scent humans can detect.

Woolly verbena blooms from June through September along roadsides and disturbed areas. Cattle avoid eating them due to their bitter taste. This allows the plant to reach maturity, bloom and reseed in increasing numbers in overgrazed pastures. Woolly verbena does not easily compete with tall grasses or dense mature vegetation, so it is not usually found in undisturbed prairies. Roots can grow to 12 feet deep, which help the plant access deep soil moisture and survive through dry seasons and drought.

Woolly verbena has been found in every county in Kansas. The flowers produce nectar summer through fall to attract a wide range of butterflies, including Monarchs and skippers. And several bees seek out woolly verbena to collect and distribute pollen as they go from flower to flower. Woolly verbena is also the host plant for *Crambodes talidiformis*, or verbena moth, a small plain brown moth. Its seeds are eaten by upland and various songbirds including cardinals, juncos and sparrows.

Planted in a garden, woolly verbena will add dramatic height and color. Because the plant prefers disturbed and poor soils, it should grow readily if not crowded by taller plants in early spring. Once established, it will not require additional water, and because it attracts a wide range of pollinating insects, it should reseed and form drifts of attractive plants.

For more on
the woolly verbena, visit
www.kswildflower.org.



frog fruit.
Craig Freeman photo



rose verbena
Craig Freeman photo

Other plants in verbena / vervain family you may have noticed include the very early blooming, reddish purple, rose verbena, a low growing plant with flowers arranged in a round cluster instead of along a spike. Around the edges of streams or ponds, frog fruit, features small lavender flower clusters with a darker center.



Michael Haddock photo

EVERYTHING OUTDOORS

Crappie Spawn!

with Marc Murrell

Spring is a wonderful time of year. Everything is waking up from a long winter and the warmer temperatures give us reasons to celebrate. If you love to fish, you're likely licking your chops waiting for the crappie spawn.

The spawn is my favorite time to fish because when it's good, it's really good. And even when it's mediocre it's better than most other times of the year. You don't have to have a boat, and you'll find good crappie fishing in small state fishing lakes to large reservoirs.

Crappie begin moving toward the shallow spawning areas in response to photo period (longer days) and water temperature. When the water temperature nears 60, it's time to think about finding spawning crappie. North-shore banks that face the south and those with gravel or rocks warm up quicker and might have spawning fish activity sooner than other areas. Also, in reservoirs, the water in the upper ends will warm earlier.

Fish are accessible from shore this time of year and more crappie are caught by jig and minnow-dunking bank anglers than at any other time of year. Crappie fishing during the spawn is a great opportunity for anglers of all skill levels.

Crappie seek gradually sloping banks, usually with some brush or

gravel. But don't rule out steeper banks, as fish will still spawn there but they'll be deeper.

Any kind of rod-and-reel works, but many anglers prefer a spinning outfit with 6-8-pound test line. Small jigs of various colors, usually 1/8-ounce or lighter, can be pitched out and retrieved steadily, or popped occasionally. If the water is shallow, or if snags are present, a bobber suspending the jig about 12-15 inches below the surface will allow a much slower, methodical approach, either steadily retrieved or stop-and-go. Many anglers make the mistake of casting as far out into the lake as possible. When the spawn is really cooking, it's best to cast parallel to the bank and the bobber method shines in 1-3 feet of water.

Smaller male crappie (those with dark, vividly-marked bars and spots) are usually first on the banks. But the females won't be far away and often hang out in slightly deeper water initially.

Consult the *2019 Fishing Forecast* to find waters with good crappie populations, but even those with moderate numbers can be good during the spawn because all the fish are concentrated along the good spawning banks. Mother Nature is the best manager for strong crappie populations. When rains raise water levels in early spring, flooding brush, crappie can produce good year classes. In three to four years, fish from that big year class will be filling anglers' stringers.

In average years, the spawn usually gets going in early-to-mid April and can go through May. Not all crappie spawn at the same time, and the intensity is often interrupted by weather events. But if conditions stay ideal, it's a great time to get together with friends and family for some fantastic crappie fishing.

Black Or White?



White crappie female, top
white crappie male, bottom

Avid crappie anglers can tell the difference between white and black crappie at first glance. However, many novice anglers mistakenly identify (not that it matters as they both look the same sizzling in hot grease) spawning male white crappie as black crappie. These spawning male white crappie are often the blackest of black and much darker than their female counterparts.

The easiest way to distinguish the two is look at the overall coloration and pattern of black or dark blotches on the sides. White crappie have vertical barring that may be only slightly darker than the rest of the body to coal black. Black crappie don't have any pattern to their black spots and they appear randomly over their sides.

If you want to positively identify your fish (which isn't really necessary since creel or length limits don't differentiate) count the spiny dorsal fins. White crappie have six or fewer spines while black crappie have seven or more.



A jig-and-bobber combination allows a crappie angler to fish shallow and slow, an often deadly combination for spawning crappie.

“Grow a thick skin and quick” and “Accept that the only constant is change.” These were the first of many tips my boss gave me as I nestled into this job six years ago. Thankfully, my then fresh-out-of-college self took heed of his words and his instructions have served me well.

When I first arrived at the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism, I began to have some anxiety over being a young, Middle Eastern female working in what was clearly a mostly older caucasian male workforce. For some reason, I expected something different – something a little more balanced. I then began to question whether I would fit in, and if my peers would accept me as a true “peer.” After a short time, I realized my worries were in vain, because I quickly found myself in the company of extremely welcoming coworkers. Not only would I “fit in,” but over time my coworkers would express their appreciation for having someone with a “new outlook” and “fresh ideas” to share. What I feared would be my biggest hindrance became one of my greatest assets – the fact that I wasn’t the “typical” employee here.

Time passed, but I still had one lingering question. If my workplace was such a welcoming environment, why weren’t there more women, more people here who looked like me?

Before we delve into that, let’s first go back to the advice my boss gave me. “Grow a thick skin and quick” was intended to caution me. My boss explained that because my work would have a lot of eyes on it, and would ultimately be shared with the public, it would inevitably be criticized at some point. The sooner I could accept this, and learn not to take anything personally, the better off I would be.

The second bit of advice my boss gave me, “The only constant is change,” was intended to inspire me. It referred to the fact that although things are good, they will change. But that wasn’t the inspiring part – the opposite applied: when things are bad, they will change.

As I celebrate my six-year work anniversary, I feel grateful for the opportunities I’ve had, proud of myself for sticking out the bad days, and I find myself reflecting on one very important question. How did I get here? The answer to that question and to “Why aren’t there more people here

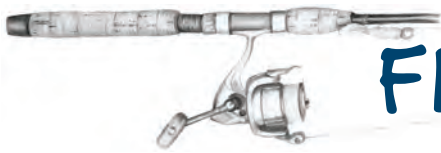
like me?” are one and the same: *I have a mentor.* While I’m happy to share that, six years later, I work with more women now than ever before, but I’m noticing many of them don’t have a mentor.

Had it not been for my boss willing to give me an interview, teach me what took him decades to learn, create opportunities, and advocate on my behalf, I can’t guarantee I’d be here, let alone *still* be here. My boss has dedicated more than six years now to facilitating not only my professional growth, but also to fostering my love of Kansas outdoors, to the point now where I’m considering how I might be able to serve in a mentor capacity in the future. However, I can guarantee that this would not be the case, had I not had a mentor.

Whether it’s teaching someone how to tie an improved clinch knot, or ensuring they have a seat at a meeting they wouldn’t normally be invited to, I encourage you to serve as someone’s mentor. And if that someone happens to be “not the typical,” even better.

As for the next six years? Well, let’s hope you and I can keep meeting “same time, same place.”





FISHIN'

"Baby Ned"

with Mike Miller



I've written before about the effectiveness of the Z-Man TRD plastic bait, also referred to as the Ned Rig, and I've caught just about every sport fish in Kansas and four species in Canada on it. Now I can add rainbow and brown trout to the list (actually, my wife added brown trout to the list). But when I cast it for trout, I shorten the body a little. Last winter, managing editor, Nadia Reimer dubbed the modified Ned Rig the Baby Ned. She used it to catch some very nice trout from the Pratt Centennial Pond.

I first caught trout on the Baby Ned a couple of years ago in Colorado. The wind was howling down the canyon

making it too windy to flyfish. We stopped by a state lake that I knew contained some big trout, and I wanted to fish even with the high wind. I grabbed a spinning rod loaded with 4-pound test line and cast a spinner without a strike. I had some 1/15-ounce chartreuse jig heads and a few TRDs, but they looked too big for trout. I cut one in half, threaded it on the hook and made side-armed casts to keep it under the wind. On the third or fourth cast, I felt a "tick," set the hook and was into a battle with a raging 3-pound rainbow. I caught a couple more, all heavy, hard-fighting fish.

Then last fall, my wife Lisa was

casting the tried-and-true gold Little Cleo spoon through a deep hole in the Rio Grande River to no avail. I gave her a Baby Ned with a chartreuse head and half of a green pumpkin TRD. I instructed her to cast quartering upstream and let it drift with the current, reeling just fast enough to keep it out of the rocks. When she got the hang of setting the hook whenever she felt something different, she was into fish. She caught seven really nice browns that afternoon, and we both were hooked on the Baby Ned for trout.



Writings from a Warden's Daughter

with Annie Campbell-Fischer

My dad served as a Kansas game warden for more than 35 years. Growing up in his "office," our home, provided a childhood different than most small-town girls experience. These are his stories.

Weight of A Feather

A wintery Friday evening brought 6 inches of snow to northeast Kansas, but that wouldn't keep two Kansas game wardens from their Saturday morning patrol. As the freshly whitewashed countryside came to life, the wardens noticed various animal tracks crisscrossing the road as they drove, observing and listening.

At a three-way intersection, they noticed something new in the snow - freshly pressed vehicle tracks that weaved back and forth from one roadside brush thicket to another. The tracks followed a roadway that meandered through a farmyard where the landowner happened to be outside. The wardens stopped to chat, a common occurrence that builds relationships with landowners and helps wardens make cases. The landowner told them he'd observed a truck passing through his farmyard every Saturday morning for several weeks. He suspected the occupants were road hunting.

Following the landowner's hunch, the game wardens continued following the tire tracks as they turned onto a road lined with dense plum thickets. While the thickets hid the truck from the wardens' sight, with their windows down on this calm morning, they could follow the truck's progress by the sound of the motor. When they could tell the suspicious truck had stopped, they both got out of the vehicle to listen.

Suddenly, the sharp crack of a .22 shot broke the silence of the winter morning. The wardens hurried to the location where the truck had stopped but it was already down the road and out of sight. They then noticed a single feather. Tipped in

soft tan, covered in russet and peaked in dark brown, the feather was easily identified by the wardens as that belonging to a hen pheasant. There were no pheasant tracks in the snow, just the single feather beside human shoe prints leading into the plum thickets and returning to where the truck had been stopped. The feather was collected.

As the wardens crested the next hill, they observed the suspect truck stopped again, and they saw the passenger retrieving a dead rabbit from a roadside thicket. Hastening their approach, the wardens intercepted the passenger before he could re-enter the truck. Since the pair appeared to be hunting, the wardens requested to see hunting licenses. When neither of the suspects could produce one, the warden's asked if they'd seen any hen pheasants. Blank stares were all they got. The passenger was asked to move way from the truck's toolbox he was leaning heavily on and at the bottom of the toolbox, the warden discovered a hen pheasant wrapped in a grease rag.

With evidence in hand and after a few more questions, the wardens issued the violators several notices to appear, including hunting without licenses, taking game with the aid of a motor vehicle, taking a protected game bird and by use of illegal equipment. Seized evidence included the .22 caliber rifle, two cottontail rabbits and the hen pheasant.

As the wardens made their way back to the farmyard, they could see the landowner smiling before they exited their truck. He already knew the story and was grateful for the wardens' work.



Smokin' Good Tips



This past holiday season, I didn't have any deer meat handy, so I decided to try my hand at making bacon. I found a group called "Makin' Bacon" on Facebook, and after reviewing strings of posts, I felt comfortable enough to try it on my own, incorporating some of the things I've learned smoking meat over the years. I'll share those tips with you here.

Cold smoke versus hot smoke - cold smoke is when smoke is added to the food with temperatures low enough that it doesn't cook. Hot smoke is when smoke is added to meat when temperatures are high enough to begin or finish cooking food.

I cold smoke meat at 90-110 degrees. Cheeses, I cold smoke at much lower temperatures to prevent melting. When hot smoking, I run 140-225 degrees. I recommend using a temperature probe for both internal food temperature and smoke chamber temperature to maintain a more consistent product. You may be wondering about the temperature gap between 110-140 degrees and the maximum temperature of 225 degrees. I consider the 110-140 too warm for cold smoking but not hot enough to finish a food for safe consumption. I also top out hot smoking at 225 degrees because if temperatures are higher than that, meat cooks without incorporating smoke into it. A perfect example is brisket, which I smoke at 225 degrees until the desired internal temp is reached, then bring it up to 350-400 degrees to break down the fibers in the meat and make it tender.

When it comes to cold smoking, there are two rules I follow: never cold smoke meat under 90 degrees and never take meat from the fridge straight to the smoker. Always allow meat to warm up slightly before smoke is added.

Since I have a hard time regulating heat in my smoker, my first batch of bacon went into the oven at the lowest setting until the internal temperature reached 100 degrees, then it went to the smoker. Smoke doesn't easily penetrate into meat until it gets to around 90 degrees. Conversely, once the outside of the meat begins to cook, or gets to 130-140 degrees, smoke doesn't penetrate well, either. However, smoke will continue to build up on any fat that is exposed and you'll get that over-smoked or tinny flavor. Also, I smoke pork no more than three hours.

While researching the simplest recipe for bacon, I learned about different types of bacons. Traditional bacon is made from pork bellies. Buckboard bacon is made from other various parts of a pig but traditionally the front shoulder (pork butt), and Canadian bacon is made from the pork loin. All bacons are cured to some degree but only Canadian bacon is hot smoked and can be eaten once smoked and sliced. The other two cuts are traditionally cold-smoked since they are later fried or cooked to finish after slicing. I also learned to pick a belly that flexes a bit, which indicates more meat in the cut. Also, once you remove it from the smoker, place it in the fridge or freezer to cool, which makes slicing easier.

I made two batches of bacon and, as usual, I learned from each experience. The fried strips received many compliments when shared with coworkers. It was good enough, I think I'll do it again.

Matt Smith: 2019 Snipe Award Winner

Matt Smith, Region 1 Wildlife Division supervisor, was recently honored with the 2019 Snipe Award by the Kansas Chapter of The Wildlife Society. This award, given to individuals who have shown exemplary dedication in the field of natural resources, was presented to Smith at the 2019 Kansas Natural Resources Conference held Jan. 31-Feb. 1, 2019 in Manhattan.

Smith began his career with the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWP) in 1997, serving as a biologist technician out of Dodge City. Smith held the title of Wilson Area district wildlife biologist before being promoted to his current position in 2015. Now in Hays, Smith supervises nine district wildlife biologists, three biologist technicians, and one habitat specialist - positions that are responsible for covering 54 western Kansas counties.

The Snipe Award is one of many that have bestowed to Smith. Others include his 2003 KDWP Special Projects Award, 2012 Kansas Wildlife Federation "Wildlife Conservationist of the Year" award, 2013 KDWP Wildlife Section Award, and being named to the Pheasants Forever/Quail Forever Hall of Fame in 2014.



Fish Squeezer

with Tommie Berger

The Career That Chose Me



I grew up in the 1950s in a typical farm family in northeastern Kansas where Dad and my uncles did not always follow the hunting and fishing rules. Part of my job as a kid was to watch out for the game warden. Then one day I got caught by a game warden and that was the day that I decided I wanted to be one.

It was a winter day when Dad and I stopped by Brown County State Lake. When we rolled into the concession, I got out and noticed the center of the lake was full of ducks and geese. I told Dad I was going down to the edge for a closer look. The lake was frozen around the edges and at the shore I saw a beautiful mallard drake carcass partially frozen in the ice. I found a rock and chipped the bird out of the ice. With prize in hand, I headed back to the concession to show Dad what I had found.

I busted through the door and ran over to Dad beaming from ear to ear. "Look what I found - isn't he pretty?" About that time a HUGE guy in uniform sauntered over and said "Son, have you got a license to have that bird?" I can't recall whether I dropped the duck but I do remember trying to stutter something about being too young to need a license - looking at Dad hoping he would bail me out. The big guy smiled and said he was just kidding but that duck season was over and he could not let me keep the duck.

I handed the duck over with a dejected look on my face. He reached down, pulled the couple of curly tail feathers from the drake and handed them to me. "Here son, you can have these for a souvenir." That gesture turned a nasty game warden into a nice guy in my eyes. The game warden was John Spence and from that day forward I've respected game wardens and always thought I wanted to be one.

When I got to college at Kansas State University, I learned that there were options for jobs with the Kansas Fish and Game Commission other than game wardens. My path ended up being in fisheries but I was a deputy game warden in my early career so I guess I ended up being a game warden after all!

WAY outside

BY BRUCE COCHRAN



"WHAT AM I?"
answer: kangaroo rat





Changing With The Times

with Daren Riedle

I started out 2019 riding in an old Land Cruiser near Memel, South Africa with my friend and professional hunting guide Willem Koch. We've been working together since 2004 to expand ecotourism opportunities on Willem's ranch and others.

Koch admittedly focused solely on game species when he first started his hunting business, but his interests have evolved significantly since then. Since taking over ranching operations, Koch has become quite an adept birder and is proficient with amphibians and reptiles, too. His expanded knowledge of these nongame species has led Koch to take on a more holistic approach toward maintaining a functioning ecosystem. And it's working. Koch has seen not only the game species in his area thrive as a result, but nongame species, as well.

During this year's trip, Koch and I were leading an eclectic group of herpetologists, entomologists, and general "nature lovers" – a pretty typical make-up for most of our outings. And while it's safe to say a lot of these folks wouldn't identify themselves as part of the "hunting crowd," a wonderful benefit of our excursions has been finding common ground between those two groups – hunters versus non-hunters – or those whose wildlife values tend to be intrinsic, meaning they value wildlife for wildlife's sake, and those who tend to have more utilitarian values.

By essentially blurring the lines between hunters and non-hunters, and showing his guests the value of both perspectives, Koch is making an impact. Believe it or not, several "nonhunting" folks who have attended these ecotourism trips have since returned to hunt for the first time. It would appear Koch's approach is changing attitudes regarding how some view wildlife management and conservation. It's

also allowed Koch to diversify his income stream. It has me thinking, could this work in Kansas?

We know the North American Model of Wildlife Management has always relied on a close partnership with sportsmen and women, as hunters and anglers have made, and continue to make, significant contributions to wildlife conservation. But we also know our society is changing, becoming more diverse, and with that, so are our wildlife value orientations. Recognizing these societal changes, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies passed a resolution over the summer of 2018 tasking its members (representatives from state wildlife agencies such as ours) with the development of a "roadmap" to engage and serve diverse constituencies, and help more people connect with nature. I'm currently serving as the Kansas representative for this initiative. As I mentioned in my November/December 2017 column on the Kansas Monarch Butterfly plan, engaging diverse groups and finding common ground is essential to the success of conservation efforts. And as I have learned working with Koch over the last decade and a half, direct involvement and open dialogue is the best way to find consensus among diverse viewpoints. Having said that, one of the biggest challenges we face is engaging those who have no connection with the outdoors.

If you're reading this, I think it's safe to say you have a connection, or at least an interest, in the outdoors. And if I'm correct in my assumption, I encourage you to consider providing a positive "first" outdoor experience for someone. It doesn't matter if that experience is taking someone fishing or showing them a butterfly in their own backyard. Help others develop their own personal set of wildlife values, so they, too, can come to the table to help support the natural resources we all hold so dear. It's going to take all of us.



Daren Riedle photo

Park View

with Kathy Pritchett

A New Year Brings New Opportunities

Exceeding our expectations (and t-shirts ordered), 1,500 visitors hiked with us on January 1 for our annual First Day Hikes at Kansas state parks. First Day Hikes - a nationwide event - have become a tradition for many Kansas families willing to brave the cold in an effort to start the New Year off in a healthy and fun way.

With each new year comes new changes, and we're excited to share many of those updates with you here.

"Our staff have been busy during the 'off' season, working on new facilities for visitors and making improvements to some already fantastic areas," said Kansas State Parks director Linda Lanterman. "I invite you to come see the changes, and to check out our two new state parks - Little Jerusalem Badlands and the Flint Hills Trail."

Here's just a teaser of what you can expect in 2019. Let's Camp America, scheduled for the first weekend in May, is a national effort to encourage people to get outside and enjoy camping in America's state parks. Kansas state parks will waive the need for a daily vehicle permit on May 4 to in recognition of this effort. Camping fees will still apply.

The Overlook Trail at Little Jerusalem Badlands is complete, though interpretive signage has yet to be installed. The Rim Trail has been

marked and will be finished next. The parking lot perimeter fence is complete, and the parking lot will be done soon. We will open as soon as possible. Due to the fragile nature of the rock formations, visitors will not be allowed past the fencing except on organized tours, which we will schedule after the opening.

More miles of the Flint Hills Trail State Park are now open, from I-35 east of Ottawa, west to Vassar and from Allen, west to Council Grove city limit. We are working on trailside amenities, such as parking lots and drinking water access. Three trailhead parking lots are done. Users are out on the trail every day on the sections that are completed.

The docks are in and functioning at Cheney Marina, which is open for full service. Meade State Park boasts a brand new playground this year. New fish cleaning stations are installed at Prairie Dog, Lovewell and Webster state parks.

Clinton State Park is finishing a restroom and rinse-off station near the trail to the beach. Pomona State Park is refurbishing the Osage Campground. Wilson State Park has added a bicycle "fix-station" that will provide riders with a stand and tools to make simple bike repairs.

Whether you choose to hike, bike or drive - make your way to a Kansas state park in 2019.



Remembering Andrew Schaefer

On February 6, 2019, Fisheries Division staff were given the tragic news that their coworker, Andrew Schaefer, died in his home from unknown causes.

To many Kansas anglers, Andrew was known as the Cheney District fisheries biologist. To his colleagues, Andrew was known as a bright biologist who had a passion for fisheries management and the great outdoors - a young man taken entirely too soon.

"Andrew's family is at the forefront of our minds as they navigate this impossible and heartbreaking situation," said Brad Loveless, KDWPT Secretary. "I know I can speak for the entire KDWPT family when I say Andrew's contributions to the Kansas conservation community will not be forgotten."

Andrew came to KDWPT in the fall of 2016 where he took over fisheries duties in Harper, Harvey, Kingman, Reno and Sedgwick counties. In an introduction letter he wrote for his first district Fisheries newsletter, Andrew shared with readers his love of waterfowl and upland bird hunting - and of course, fishing.

I have been asked about the photography methods I use to capture images of wildlife and how to get started. I hope my story inspires someone to pick up a camera.

Today, everyone has a smart-phone capable of taking great pictures. That is huge because you don't have to spend a lot of money to get started. And most of us have pets, which make perfect subjects. It's easy to put pets in good light and fun poses and your phone is always handy. And you can immediately share your images with like-minded friends, developing a network of folks to share ideas and information with. Responses from others is one of the benchmarks of success and validation. Excellence in photography requires feedback and comparisons to other photographers and their work.

I was always a hunter carrying a camera. I documented where I was and what I harvested with a "point and shoot" camera. I started that process in my youth and have some terrific memories in scrapbooks. Although I had no concept of composition, lighting or precise focus, I had images of hunts, my horse, the camp and my friends. I was the complete photographer as I understood it at the time.

That all changed when I took to a photography course at Bosque Del Apache National Wildlife Refuge in New Mexico. I saw images that had artistic and emotional components I had never experienced. While there, I had sandhill cranes 10 yards from me, sleeping on one leg with their head under their wing in the beautiful early morning sunrise. The sky behind them was filled

with huge waves of snow geese. It took my breath then and still does when I remember that moment. My little camera did its job and I had a picture, but the guys with the big lenses and cameras had images I couldn't even achieve. I was hooked. Taking a photography course is a great way to improve your skills.

Take lots of pictures and learn your camera. Let me say that again: learn your camera! Be able to control shutter speed, ISO, depth of field and start planning your shots. Go online and see what the professionals are doing. You will be stunned at the effort, planning and expense these folks go to for a picture. My wife Sandra and I went to a program at the Kaufman Center in Kansas City put on by a National Geographic photographer who spent a year in Yellowstone documenting wolves. He then went to the Arctic where the wolves were isolated and human contact was not uncomfort-

able for them, allowing him to get amazing family images. He also went to Africa and spent some time with the gorillas in Rwanda and Uganda. It was an amazing show.

Probably the most important thing you can do is to find a skilled mentor or two. Mike Blair, Bob Gress, David Seibel, Judd Patterson, Jim Glynn, Karole Erickson and Jay Miller have been invaluable friends who have taught me so much. Entering photo contests can also fuel your fire to get better and validate your efforts. Take trips and shoot new places. Lastly, know your home territory and use your imagination to get new angles, lighting, and composition. Make special efforts to get pictures you can share and make other people happy. I think that if you can tell a story with your picture and make it good for your friends and family, then you are successful. It has worked for me.





BURN IT DOWN

TO BUILD IT UP

**BY GEORGE GURLEY
PHOTOS BY JON BLUMB**

Twenty years ago, my wife Susan and I came into possession of 160 acres in rural Douglas County in a neighborhood known as “Vinland Valley.” The hand that smoothed most of Kansas to a monotonous flatness had indulged in a whimsical moment there, and shaped the landscape into an eccentric but lovely collection of grassy knolls. However, our property was an eyesore. It was an overgrazed wasteland dominated by gnarly hedge trees and noxious thistles, bereft of wildlife. The main culprits were plowing and fescue, a “cool season” grass that farmers had planted to replace warm season, native grass. Native grass was adapted to the harsh climate of Kansas. It didn’t need fertilizer and it thrived in drought. Farmers liked fescue because it greened up

in the springtime. But fescue provided poor habitat for wildlife and it turned out to be poor forage for cattle.

Bitten by the dream of returning the land to its natural state, we signed up for the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The program paid most of the cost of drilling native grass – big and little bluestem, Indiangrass, switchgrass and sideoats grama – and planting wildlife habitat features such as plum thickets. After eradicating the fescue and drilling the grass seeds, we waited for our tallgrass prairie like parents awaiting the birth of a child. When flocks of blackbirds descended to feast on the seeds, I ran shouting at them like a



When George and Susan Gurley acquired 160 acres in Douglas County, they started a project to restore the land's native habitat and wildlife. Controlled burning was a primary tool.

madman, firing my shotgun in a futile attempt to drive them away. By early, summer a fine green vegetation covered the land like a pool table's baize. I asked our NRCS agent what it was. "Ragweed," he said with a grim grin. By mid-June, we had a crop of ragweed, thick and tall as sugar cane. It seemed like an impenetrable mass through which sunlight couldn't penetrate. We were stricken with a sense of failure.

But soon we heard a thrilling bird call: "Bob-white." Quail had returned. In the next few years, native grass flourished and out-

competed the ragweed. Forbs that had been sleeping in the ground appeared – daisy fleabane, cinquefoil, sunflower, moth mullein, smartweed, lamb's quarter, blue sage, buffalo bur, milkweed, Queen Anne's lace, spiderwort and many others. Insects flourished in the new environment, accompanied by an explosion of wildlife – rabbits, songbirds, turkeys. It was time to watch it all go up in flames.

Every spring in our neighborhood, the songs of mating birds are accompanied by the whining of fire truck sirens. Almost every day, the Palmyra Volunteer Fire

Department is called into action by grass fires that have "gotten away." The county's burn bans on days when the wind is too strong are routinely ignored by grown men who love to play with matches. An innocent backyard trash burning project can quickly become a raging prairie fire when the wind shifts.

The practice of burning the prairie has been around since prehistoric times. Fire burns off dead grass and weeds, repels the advance of invasive trees, recycles nutrients back into the soil and reinvigorates the grass, producing sweet, fresh forage that grazing animals love. Before the hand of man, lightning was a periodic cause. Native Americans



set grass fires to manage and nurture the buffalo herds. Today, ranchers and hobby farmers burn grass for economic and conservation purposes. We try to burn half of the property every year with the help of fireman Mike Hirschman and his Safeburn crew. Photographer Jon Blumb has compiled a portfolio capturing the demonic power of these gaudy infernos.

Prairie fires can be thrilling. Sometimes the heat creates roaring tornadoes of smoke. Crackling flames can reach 20 feet high. Night fires, creeping and winking over the horizon, present a hypnotic spectacle. One spring, fire swept so quickly over an 80 acre patch that a perfect rectangle of smoke rose up and floated away intact before it dispersed into the sky.

A planned fire, called a “prescribed” or “controlled” burn, utilizes backburning strips to impede the spread of the fire. But for all their utility and beauty, even planned fires can be dangerous. The unforeseen makes every burn an adventure. The vagaries of wind and vegetation can foil the best-laid plans. Something always goes wrong.

I once caught myself on fire foolishly trying to fill the gas tank of my mobile pump while the engine was still running. A few years ago, a successful burn was followed by a snow fall, which I assumed would snuff out any lingering flames. But the next day I looked out the window and saw a towering conflagration heading toward the house and the nearby propane tank. Apparently, lingering sparks from a smoldering stump had been blown to a patch of thick, unburned grass.


An Easter egg hunt some years ago was transformed into a scene from “Gone With the Wind” when a car’s catalytic converter



set the grass on fire. On New Years Day of the 2000 millennium, my children were setting off firecrackers. One of those parachute rockets landed in the dry grass. Suddenly, a lip of flame appeared and quickly spread. A strong south wind fanned the fire and drove it in the direction of our barn. We watched helplessly as doom approached the 100-year-old edifice. At the last moment, we heard the saving wail of the fire

The fruits of the Gurley’s labor include more bobwhite quail and abundant native grasses and forbs – good for all wildlife.

engine. Within minutes, volunteers in yellow suits swarmed over the barnyard, chopping down burning fence posts and taming the fire with the fire truck’s powerful hose.

The benefits of burning are threatened by conflicting values of spreading suburbia and concerns about the contribution of burning to global warming. Some spring days our valley is filled with smoke from grass fires in the Flint Hills 50 to 100 miles west. The tallgrass prairie once comprised some 167 million acres stretching from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico. Only 4 percent to 13 percent of this precious resource remains and fire is necessary to conserve what we left. To participate in a prairie burn is to feel a distant connection with our nameless ancestors who tamed fire and kept the flames burning through the dark depths of winter. It is to witness the paradox of fire as the source of light, warmth and sometimes destruction and death. 





2019 Fishing Forecast

On the following pages, you will find the best and most current data that will help you find the top fishing spots in Kansas. You can find more information, including Weekly Fishing Reports and the *2019 Kansas Fishing Regulations Summary* at www.ksoutdoors.com.

Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism fisheries biologists manage more than 200 community lakes, 63 state fishing lakes and 24 reservoirs in Kansas. Management techniques include setting creel and length limits, stocking fish, surveying anglers and enhancement fish habitat. To do this, biologists need to know what lurks below.

Sampling is done in the spring and fall. Spring sampling is usually done with electroshocking when species such as black bass are in shallow water. The shocker boat's electrical current stuns bass temporarily, allowing biologists to net and place them in a holding tank. Each fish is measured and weighed, then released. In the fall, nets are used to sample species such as crappie, walleye, white bass, wiper and channel catfish. Data recorded, when compared to data from past sampling efforts, tells managers whether what they're doing is working or if it needs to be changed. It helps them make recommendations for regulations and make stocking requests.

Biologists take the same data and put it in a format that helps anglers catch more fish in the Fishing Forecast. Here's how it works.




Let's use largemouth bass as an example. The data shows how many largemouth bass 12 inches long or longer that were shocked per hour of effort, which is the Density Rating. A 12-inch bass is considered high quality by most anglers. The Preferred Rating is the number of those bass 15 inches long or longer. The next rating is the Lunker Rating, which lists the number of largemouth bass in the sample that were 20 inches long or longer. These are bass that will probably weigh 5 pounds or more and are considered lunkers by most anglers. The "Biggest Fish" rating is the biggest fish recorded during sampling and gives anglers confidence that big bass exist in a population. The Biologist's Rating is an opinion on the fishery – Poor, Good or Excellent – and it may not agree with the Density Rating. This could occur if there were environ-

mental factors that impacted sampling results, and the biologist feels the population is better than the ratings show.

Theoretically, a lake with a Density Rating for largemouth bass of 72 has twice as many bass longer than 12 inches per acre than a lake with a Density Rating of 36. The final rating is the Three-year Average, which allows anglers to see trends in populations.

Lengths for each category are different for each species, and water bodies are divided into three categories – ponds, less than 10 acres; lakes, 10-1,200 acres; and reservoirs, larger than 1,200 acres – because sampling methods are different.

Review the forecast, make a trip to a lake that looks promising and find out for yourself what lurks below. 

WALLEYE

IMPOUNDMENT	Density Rating (>15")	Preferred Rating (>20")	Lunker Rating (>25")	Biggest Fish (lbs.)	Bio. Rating	3-Year Average (>15")
RESERVOIRS						
CEDAR BLUFF	6.38	0.21	0.00	3.87	G	5.53
WILSON	5.57	3.17	0.00	6.26	G	4.94
GLEN ELDER	3.08	0.38	0.00	4.63	G	3.58
EL DORADO	2.53	0.80	0.00	4.59	G	3.22
KIRWIN	2.20	1.07	0.13	6.56	G	2.18
WEBSTER	2.00	0.83	0.00	5.62	G	2.11
MILFORD	1.50	0.25	0.00	4.39	G	2.50
MARION	0.80	0.07	0.00	3.73	F	1.81
CHENEY	0.55	0.15	0.05	8.27	F	2.02
LOVEWELL	0.50	0.15	0.00	5.00	F	1.17
COFFEY CO.	0.50	0.00	0.00	2.35	F	0.53
MELVERN	0.31	0.00	0.00	1.40	F	0.29
HILLSDALE	0.17	0.08	0.08	5.84	F	0.61
LAKES						
GRIDLEY CITY LAKE	4.00	0.00	0.00	2.23	G	3.89
JEFFREY EC - MAKE UP LAKE	1.83	0.00	0.00	3.02	G	1.06
HERINGTON CITY LAKE-NEW	1.50	0.25	0.00	2.94	F	1.08
SABETHA - PONY CREEK LAKE	1.17	0.17	0.00	2.91	G	1.28
BROWN SFL	0.75	0.25	0.00	3.22	P	0.50
BUTLER SFL	0.75	0.25	0.00	3.45	P	0.75
COUNCIL GROVE CITY LAKE	0.75	0.50	0.00	4.51	F	0.83
LEAVENWORTH SFL	0.67	0.50	0.00	3.42	P	0.44
YATES CENTER-SOUTH OWL LAKE	0.67	0.33	0.17	7.12	F	0.61
HOLTON - BANNER CREEK LAKE	0.50	0.13	0.00	3.89	F	1.33
CRITZER LAKE	0.50	0.33	0.17	7.21	P	0.25
JEFFREY EC. - AUX. MAKEUP LAKE	0.38	0.25	0.00	2.75	F	0.50
(FISH) GRAHAM CO - TREXLER POND	0.33	0.33	0.00	3.05	F	0.33
ALMA CITY LAKE	0.33	0.33	0.00	2.76	P	0.29
WINFIELD CITY LAKE	0.30	0.10	0.00	3.35	F	0.63
LEBO CITY LAKE	0.25	0.00	0.00	1.72	P	0.25
PLEASANTON - EAST LAKE	0.17	0.17	0.00	2.97	F	0.75
WELLINGTON CITY LAKE	0.17	0.17	0.00	4.38	P	0.17

SAUGER

IMPOUNDMENT	Density Rating (>11")	Preferred Rating (>14")	Lunker Rating (>17")	Biggest Fish (lbs.)	Bio. Rating	3-Year Average (>11")
RESERVOIRS						
PERRY	1.70	0.65	0.15	2.78	E	2.18
CLINTON	0.94	0.88	0.50	2.65	F	1.38
MELVERN	0.13	0.00	0.00	0.58	P	0.13
LAKES						
HOLTON - BANNER CREEK LAKE	2.13	1.38	0.63	2.00	E	3.61

SAUGEYE

IMPOUNDMENT	Density Rating (>14")	Preferred Rating (>18")	Lunker Rating (>22")	Biggest Fish (lbs.)	Bio. Rating	3-Year Average (>14")
RESERVOIRS						
SEBELIUS (NORTON)	9.40	1.90	0.90	6.18	G	5.53
KANOPOLIS	7.69	5.81	0.44	6.42	G	5.15
COUNCIL GROVE	1.47	0.33	0.13	3.47	F	1.13
LAKES						
GRAHAM COUNTY-ANTELOPE LAKE	15.00	8.25	0.00	3.89	E	17.67
WELLINGTON CITY LAKE	14.50	4.00	0.33	4.56	E	8.22
SCOTT STATE LAKE	7.58	2.17	0.33	6.12	E	10.08
CHASE SFL	5.50	1.50	0.25	3.49	G	3.00
SHERIDAN SFL	5.17	0.00	0.00	1.60	F	4.11
OTTAWA SFL	4.00	2.33	0.17	3.92	G	3.32
CENTRALIA CITY LAKE	3.88	2.13	0.38	7.41	G	6.54
BONE CREEK LAKE	2.63	0.13	0.13	6.44	G	0.92
MIDDLE CREEK SFL	2.17	2.00	0.33	4.20	G	1.56
WASHINGTON SFL	2.00	1.50	0.50	4.30	F	1.67
HOWARD-POLK DANIELS LAKE	2.00	2.00	0.75	4.35	G	3.25
SABETHA CITY LAKE	1.83	1.50	0.00	3.92	G	2.00
MCPHERSON SFL	1.80	1.00	0.60	4.96	F	1.83
PAOLA CITY LAKE	1.67	1.50	0.50	6.14	F	0.78
STERLING CITY LAKE	1.67	0.00	0.00	2.11	P	1.00
ATWOOD-LAKE ATWOOD-MAIN	1.33	1.33	1.00	5.38	G	2.56



CHANNEL CATFISH

IMPOUNDMENT	Density Rating (>16")	Preferred Rating (>24")	Lunker Rating (>28")	Biggest Fish (lbs.)	Bio Rating	3-Year Average (>18")
RESERVOIRS						
BIG HILL	4.60	0.60	0.00	6.16	G	4.68
CLINTON	4.50	0.00	0.00	4.33	G	5.48
HILLSDALE	4.08	0.00	0.00	5.04	G	4.53
ELK CITY	3.50	0.69	0.13	8.62	G	3.53
MELVERN	3.25	0.00	0.00	3.28	G	3.71
WILSON	3.07	0.37	0.03	9.23	F	2.46
LOVEWELL	3.00	0.60	0.20	13.58	G	3.35
MARION	2.60	0.13	0.07	11.70	G	3.73
FALL RIVER	2.33	1.00	0.33	9.59	G	1.56
GLEN ELDER	2.08	0.50	0.13	18.12	G	1.72
POMONA	1.83	0.08	0.00	5.03	G	2.74
WEBSTER	1.75	0.58	0.08	13.00	G	1.11
TORONTO	1.67	0.67	0.17	13.23	G	1.44
PERRY	1.45	0.15	0.00	6.86	F	2.05
KIRWIN	1.40	0.73	0.13	12.91	G	0.61
LAKES						
PLEASANTON - WEST LAKE	14.00	2.00	0.00	8.72	E	12.11
GARNETT-CEDAR CREEK LAKE	13.25	1.63	0.00	8.40	E	9.15
HOWARD-POLK DANIELS LAKE	12.00	1.50	1.00	12.74	G	5.17
PLAINVILLE LAKE	11.50	0.25	0.00	5.27	G	8.25
FORT SCOTT-ROCK CREEK LAKE	10.33	0.67	0.00	6.51	E	10.33
COUNCIL GROVE CITY LAKE	9.00	1.25	0.25	8.74	E	5.00
NEBO SFL	8.50	0.00	0.00	5.30	E	5.94
HORTON-MISSION LAKE	8.17	0.17	0.00	5.36	E	4.17
EUREKA CITY LAKE	7.33	0.67	0.00	6.54	G	7.56
BUTLER SFL	7.25	0.75	0.50	14.95	G	6.25
CHASE SFL	7.25	0.25	0.25	13.91	G	5.58
MONTGOMERY SFL	7.00	0.00	0.00	3.69	G	3.39
COWLEY SFL	5.75	0.50	0.25	14.23	G	4.92
OLATHE-CEDAR LAKE	5.50	0.00	0.00	4.57	G	6.42
SABETHA CITY LAKE	5.33	0.17	0.00	6.76	E	5.08
CHANUTE CITY LAKE	5.25	0.75	0.00	7.14	G	5.67
KINGMAN SFL	5.20	1.00	0.40	8.53	G	4.10
CRITZER LAKE	5.17	0.50	0.17	7.65	E	5.72
MOUND CITY LAKE	5.17	1.67	0.00	7.35	E	6.67
BROWN SFL	4.75	0.25	0.00	5.51	G	2.92
MARION COUNTY LAKE	4.75	0.50	0.00	6.03	G	4.00
SHAWNEE SFL	4.33	0.17	0.00	5.19	G	2.67
JEFFREY EC.- AUX. MAKEUP LAKE	4.25	0.75	0.38	10.98	G	2.71
ATCHISON SFL	4.25	0.25	0.00	6.61	G	3.17
POTTAWATOMIE SFL #2	4.25	0.50	0.25	8.66	G	2.67
WASHINGTON SFL	4.25	0.00	0.00	5.20	G	4.50
JEWELL SFL	4.00	0.00	0.00	3.25	G	2.92
BOURBON SFL	3.75	0.25	0.00	4.45	G	3.92
NEOSHO SFL	3.75	0.00	0.00	4.03	G	4.17
DOUGLAS SFL	3.67	0.00	0.00	3.07	G	7.44
PARKER CITY LAKE	3.67	0.33	0.33	8.64	G	2.33
YATES CENTER CITY LAKE-NEW	3.67	0.33	0.33	11.04	G	2.11
LYON SFL	3.50	0.17	0.17	15.87	G	2.56
HOLTON - BANNER CREEK LAKE	3.38	0.50	0.13	13.23	G	3.43
MIDDLE CREEK SFL	3.17	0.50	0.00	4.78	G	3.39
SEVERY CITY LAKE	3.00	0.67	0.00	7.18	F	1.22
WINFIELD CITY LAKE	2.90	0.00	0.00	3.73	G	2.83
SEDAN - OLD (NORTH) CITY LAKE	2.75	0.75	0.25	13.37	E	2.75
THAYER CITY LAKE (NEW)	2.75	0.50	0.00	6.46	G	3.13
MCPHERSON SFL	2.70	0.20	0.00	5.21	F	2.17
GREAT BEND-VETS PARK LAKE	2.67	0.00	0.00	2.78	F	2.17
GARNETT-CRYSTAL LAKE	2.67	0.33	0.00	7.89	G	1.33
GRIDLEY CITY LAKE	2.67	0.67	0.00	7.19	G	4.56
GRAHAM COUNTY-ANTELOPE LAKE	2.50	0.00	0.00	4.38	F	2.58
(FISH) GRAHAM CO - TREXLER POND	2.33	0.00	0.00	2.29	F	1.11
ALTAMONT CITY LAKE-WEST	2.33	2.33	1.33	11.80	G	2.33
BONE CREEK LAKE	2.25	1.00	0.50	28.75	E	2.67
YATES CENTER-SOUTH OWL LAKE	2.17	0.17	0.00	5.82	G	1.72
HARVEY COUNTY LAKE - EAST	2.00	0.00	0.00	5.22	E	3.50
MADISON CITY LAKE	2.00	0.17	0.00	6.00	G	1.83
STERLING CITY LAKE	2.00	0.00	0.00	2.09	F	1.00
GEARY SFL	1.75	0.25	0.00	7.13	F	2.08
LOGAN CITY LAKE	1.75	0.00	0.00	3.29	F	0.88
PONDS						
JEWELL CITY LAKE	5.00	0.00	0.00	4.87	G	3.39
ELWOOD WILDLIFE AREA POND	0.25	0.25	0.00	7.72	P	0.25

BLUE CATFISH

IMPOUNDMENT	Density Rating (>20")	Preferred Rating (>30")	Lunker Rating (>35")	Biggest Fish (lbs.)	Bio Rating	3-Year Average (>20")
RESERVOIRS						
ELK CITY	2.25	0.00	0.00	8.67	G	1.39
COFFEY CO.	2.11	0.94	0.11	35.71	G	2.70
MILFORD	2.00	0.10	0.05	22.50	G	2.20
CLINTON	0.69	0.06	0.00	18.00	P	0.50
EL DORADO	0.60	0.00	0.00	11.47	G	0.77
PERRY	0.45	0.05	0.00	20.94	F	0.21
LOVEWELL	0.40	0.00	0.00	9.81	F	0.45
LAKES						
YATES CENTER CITY LAKE-NEW	1.17	0.17	0.00	12.58	P	0.72
JEFFREY EC - MAKE UP LAKE	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.75	P	0.00

FLATHEAD CATFISH

IMPOUNDMENT	Density Rating (>20")	Preferred Rating (>28")	Lunker Rating (>34")	Biggest Fish (lbs.)	Bio Rating	3-Year Average (>20")
RESERVOIRS						
FALL RIVER	0.33	0.17	0.00	7.51	G	0.19
BIG HILL	0.30	0.00	0.00	4.54	G	0.25
WEBSTER	0.25	0.08	0.08	10.10	G	0.14
EL DORADO	0.20	0.00	0.00	6.32	G	0.15
LA CYGNE	0.17	0.00	0.00	3.29	G	0.31
SEBELIUS (NORTON)	0.10	0.00	0.00	2.20	G	0.17
WILSON	0.10	0.00	0.00	2.90	P	0.10
LAKES						
CRAWFORD SFL	0.33	0.17	0.00	7.87	G	0.33
SEVERY CITY LAKE	0.33	0.00	0.00	1.68	P	0.33
NEOSHO SFL	0.25	0.25	0.25	15.63	G	0.42
GARNETT-CEDAR CREEK LAKE	0.25	0.00	0.00	3.48	F	0.25
HOWARD-POLK DANIELS LAKE	0.25	0.00	0.00	4.05	P	0.17
THAYER CITY LAKE (NEW)	0.25	0.25	0.25	12.61	F	0.25
WILSON SFL	0.17	0.17	0.00	7.06	G	0.17
EUREKA CITY LAKE	0.17	0.00	0.00	3.27	F	0.17



LARGEMOUTH BASS

IMPOUNDMENT	Density Rating (>12")	Preferred Rating (>15")	Lunker Rating (>20")	Biggest Fish (lbs.)	Bio Rating	3-Year Average (>12")
RESERVOIRS						
SEBELIUS (NORTON)	62.87	26.35	0.00	4.44	E	57.94
LA CYGNE	50.59	39.41	7.06	9.31	E	68.49
WILSON	28.69	11.24	0.17	4.92	E	13.13
GLEN ELDER	27.13	11.64	0.24	5.20	G	13.25
WALNUT CREEK - TORONTO RES.	15.97	10.98	1.00	4.45	F	26.12
MILFORD	15.38	6.90	0.00	3.91	G	12.64
PERRY	13.25	6.02	1.20	6.20	G	7.72
KANOPOLIS	13.25	4.42	0.00	3.15	F	5.64
COFFEY CO.	12.54	6.27	0.00	3.32	F	8.00
BIG HILL	12.40	4.40	0.00	3.38	G	25.08
CLINTON	12.39	3.87	0.00	3.34	F	6.64
LAKES						
GARNETT-CRYSTAL LAKE	204.55	66.67	3.03	5.20	E	190.20
BUTLER SFL	193.14	90.20	6.86	7.03	E	140.20
ALMA CITY LAKE	161.83	57.60	0.00	3.00	G	100.87
COWLEY SFL	147.06	38.24	0.00	3.67	G	150.54
GRIDLEY CITY LAKE	133.33	9.33	0.00	1.81	G	103.07
GARNETT CITY LAKE-NORTH	130.00	45.38	0.77	4.65	E	121.84
STERLING CITY LAKE	117.65	43.14	0.00	3.07	G	75.35
LENEXA-LAKE LENEXA	116.35	21.15	0.96	4.77	G	83.08
CARBONDALE CITY LAKE - EAST	112.75	11.76	0.00	4.35	G	69.28
POTTAWATOMIE SFL #1	111.78	2.79	0.00	1.83	G	186.31
HORTON-LITTLE LAKE	108.43	24.10	3.01	5.17	E	108.43
BROWN SFL	105.42	47.19	1.00	4.74	G	105.42
DOUGLAS SFL	102.94	5.88	0.00	1.88	G	94.44
PLAINVILLE LAKE	100.30	23.95	0.00	3.19	G	51.40
NEBO SFL	96.39	42.17	6.02	4.79	E	77.63
KIOWA SFL	91.43	37.14	0.00	2.41	F	79.81
YATES CENTER CITY LAKE-NEW	84.43	23.77	1.64	5.00	G	79.56
MARION COUNTY LAKE	84.31	10.78	0.00	3.09	G	60.29
JEWELL SFL	84.03	65.97	1.26	6.24	G	60.85
MEADE STATE LAKE	80.39	70.59	3.92	5.97	F	64.97
ATCHISON SFL	77.31	49.20	0.00	3.58	G	105.81
POTTAWATOMIE SFL #2	75.65	39.13	0.87	5.13	G	52.12
SHAWNEE SFL	74.98	43.09	1.72	4.69	G	61.68
MADISON CITY LAKE	71.86	54.75	6.84	5.19	G	61.21
GREAT BEND-VETS PARK LAKE	71.43	11.11	0.00	2.24	F	38.29
MCPHERSON SFL	71.43	44.81	1.30	4.81	G	70.94
SHAWNEE COUNTY-LAKE SHAWNEE	70.59	7.84	0.00	2.81	F	57.08
LYON SFL	66.87	16.97	0.00	3.86	G	75.85
WASHINGTON SFL	65.94	6.99	1.00	6.08	F	43.82
MOLINE OLD (SOUTH) CITY LAKE	65.87	20.96	0.00	2.24	G	52.63
GARNETT-CEDAR CREEK LAKE	63.27	35.20	5.10	5.79	G	67.91
ALTAMONT CITY LAKE-EAST	62.22	37.78	2.22	4.96	G	62.22
BALDWIN - SPRING CREEK LAKE	60.42	8.33	0.00	4.25	F	74.33
JETMORE CITY LAKE	60.00	33.33	2.67	7.69	G	60.00
DOUGLAS COUNTY-LONESTAR LAKE	53.92	8.82	0.00	4.22	F	64.38
SEVERY CITY LAKE	53.89	0.00	0.00	1.51	G	39.79
COLDWATER LAKE	52.94	25.49	0.00	3.84	F	58.49
HORTON-MISSION LAKE	50.87	38.15	0.67	5.83	G	50.87
SPRING HILL CITY LAKE	50.49	24.27	0.00	5.03	G	44.27
ATCHISON CITY LAKE #3	50.00	0.00	0.00	1.16	P	50.00
HOWARD-POLK DANIELS LAKE	49.90	26.95	0.00	3.96	G	59.17
OLATHE-LAKE OLATHE	49.06	17.92	0.00	3.24	G	47.90
CHASE SFL	47.96	23.47	1.02	6.09	G	35.31
HOLTON - BANNER CREEK LAKE	47.59	17.47	0.00	3.47	F	33.59
PLEASANTON - WEST LAKE	46.08	31.37	3.92	6.39	G	45.03
WICHITA - KDOT - WEST BORROW PIT	46.00	10.00	2.00	4.92	F	46.00
OLATHE-CEDAR LAKE	45.87	25.69	0.00	5.01	G	59.54
YATES CENTER-SOUTH OWL LAKE	45.14	14.58	0.00	3.68	G	42.32
SEDAN - OLD (NORTH) CITY LAKE	45.10	29.41	3.92	4.61	G	43.00
HOLTON-ELKHORN LAKE	45.05	3.00	0.00	1.84	P	45.05
GARDNER CITY LAKE	42.99	20.56	0.00	3.86	G	50.38
SCOTT STATE LAKE	41.99	9.96	0.00	3.90	G	50.11
BLACK KETTLE SFL	41.38	25.86	0.00	4.64	F	32.45
WILSON SFL	40.59	18.24	0.59	4.54	G	55.94
LEAVENWORTH SFL	39.16	3.01	0.00	1.96	F	37.41
LEBO CITY LAKE	38.71	18.55	0.00	3.26	F	32.33
OSAGE SFL	37.25	6.86	0.00	3.52	F	33.66
OTTAWA SFL	36.47	14.12	0.00	3.50	F	21.58
EUREKA CITY LAKE	35.93	3.99	1.00	5.24	G	45.88
WINFIELD CITY LAKE	34.13	13.17	0.00	4.31	F	21.38



LARGEMOUTH BASS

IMPOUNDMENT	Density Rating (>12")	Preferred Rating (>15")	Lunker Rating (>20")	Biggest Fish (lbs.)	Bio Rating	3-Year Average (>12")
PONDS						
JEWELL CITY LAKE	143.14	80.39	0.00	3.09	F	114.99
EMPORIA-JONES PARK - W PND	92.86	0.00	0.00	1.17	G	84.73
FORT SCOTT-GUNN PARK W PND-#2	80.00	40.00	0.00	3.88	G	60.89
EMPORIA-JONES PARK - E PND	50.00	20.00	0.00	2.48	G	75.88
EMPORIA-JONES PARK -N PND	36.36	27.27	0.00	2.87	G	73.74
EMPORIA-PETER PAN PARK	35.29	17.65	0.00	2.86	G	29.49
FORT SCOTT-GUNN PK E PND-FERN	28.41	8.52	0.00	2.91	G	28.41
ELK CITY WA PONDS	22.73	4.55	0.00	1.58	G	22.73
MELVERN RIVER POND	19.33	10.08	0.00	4.76	G	36.33
BUFFALO RANCH POND	18.52	0.00	0.00	1.00	G	18.52
OLPE-JONES PARK POND	17.96	11.98	0.00	2.20	G	20.61
ELWOOD WILDLIFE AREA POND	16.83	4.81	0.00	4.10	G	16.83
FALL RIVER RES. ST. PK. - KIDS PND	10.00	0.00	0.00	1.41	G	27.78
KANOPOLIS ST. PK. POND	10.00	10.00	0.00	2.12	P	10.00

SMALLMOUTH BASS

IMPOUNDMENT	Density Rating (>11")	Preferred Rating (>14")	Lunker Rating (>17")	Biggest Fish (lbs.)	Bio Rating	3-Year Average (>11")
RESERVOIRS						
COFFEY CO.	28.92	16.38	1.39	3.42	G	39.47
GLEN ELDER	17.77	11.40	1.68	3.54	G	19.11
MELVERN	17.46	10.44	0.95	3.06	G	16.82
WILSON	13.93	11.07	3.69	4.21	G	8.13
EL DORADO	12.35	3.53	0.00	1.84	G	19.70
MILFORD	9.81	7.43	1.06	3.14	G	8.25
PERRY	9.64	6.02	0.00	2.73	F	5.09
LAKES						
JEFFREY EC.- AUX. MAKEUP LAKE	10.82	7.21	0.00	2.00	G	12.41
GRIDLEY CITY LAKE	8.00	8.00	0.00	1.50	F	5.73
POTTAWATOMIE SFL #2	6.09	2.61	0.00	1.43	F	2.70
ALMA CITY LAKE	4.11	4.11	2.74	2.65	F	3.55
WINFIELD CITY LAKE	3.59	1.20	0.00	2.10	F	3.75
JEFFREY EC - MAKE UP LAKE	0.92	0.92	0.00	1.69	F	6.35

REDEAR

IMPOUNDMENT	Density Rating (>7")	Preferred Rating (>9")	Lunker Rating (>11")	Biggest Fish (lbs.)	Bio Rating	3-Year Average (>7")
RESERVOIRS						
BIG HILL	0.50	0.00	0.00	0.35	P	0.72
LAKES						
DOUGLAS SFL	23.00	0.75	0.00	0.68	G	20.58
LYON SFL	8.50	1.00	0.00	0.53	G	6.42
MONTGOMERY SFL	8.50	0.50	0.00	0.57	G	5.71
COWLEY SFL	7.50	1.75	0.00	0.67	G	8.08
MOLINE OLD (SOUTH) CITY LAKE	6.75	1.00	0.00	0.62	G	3.75
SEDAN - OLD (NORTH) CITY LAKE	6.00	0.00	0.00	0.36	G	6.00
SEVERY CITY LAKE	6.00	2.00	0.00	0.54	G	7.50
YATES CENTER CITY LAKE-NEW	6.00	4.60	0.00	0.83	G	3.27
SHAWNEE SFL	4.50	0.00	0.00	0.54	F	1.75
NEOSHO SFL	4.00	0.00	0.00	0.40	G	2.17
LEAVENWORTH SFL	3.75	0.25	0.00	0.46	F	6.42
WILSON SFL	3.75	2.50	0.00	0.67	G	8.42
THAYER CITY LAKE (NEW)	3.67	0.00	0.00	0.37	G	2.58
BONE CREEK LAKE	3.38	0.13	0.00	0.51	E	4.68
PAOLA CITY LAKE	2.50	0.25	0.00	0.76	G	4.50
GRIDLEY CITY LAKE	2.25	0.75	0.00	0.85	F	1.33
BOURBON SFL	2.00	0.75	0.00	0.46	G	1.13
LENEXA-LAKE LENEXA	2.00	0.50	0.00	0.40	G	3.83

BLUEGILL

IMPOUNDMENT	Density Rating (>6")	Preferred Rating (>8")	Lunker Rating (>10")	Biggest Fish (lbs.)	Bio Rating	3-Year Average (>6")
RESERVOIRS						
WEBSTER	11.88	0.13	0.00	0.44	G	8.88
SEBELIUS (NORTON)	4.20	0.10	0.00	0.43	G	5.13
BIG HILL	3.80	0.00	0.00	0.30	F	3.83
HILLSDALE	2.81	0.06	0.00	0.36	F	3.60
KIRWIN	2.69	0.06	0.00	0.46	F	1.58
LOVEWELL	1.44	0.00	0.00	0.32	F	3.13
WILSON	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.26	G	1.31
CLINTON	0.94	0.00	0.00	0.29	P	0.90

BLUEGILL

IMPOUNDMENT	Density Rating (>6")	Preferred Rating (>8")	Lunker Rating (>10")	Biggest Fish (lbs.)	Bio Rating	3-Year Average (>6")
LAKES						
ALTAMONT CITY LAKE-WEST	73.00	1.00	0.00	0.41	G	73.00
PLAINVILLE LAKE	56.00	0.00	0.00	0.42	G	33.50
ALTAMONT CITY LAKE-EAST	50.50	0.50	0.00	0.44	G	50.50
LENEXA-LAKE LENEXA	39.00	1.50	0.00	0.43	G	25.83
GARNETT-CEDAR CREEK LAKE	20.13	0.00	0.00	0.34	G	9.33
MCPHERSON SFL	15.67	0.00	0.00	0.33	G	16.61
EUREKA CITY LAKE	15.50	0.00	0.00	0.33	G	13.08
WASHINGTON SFL	13.00	0.00	0.00	0.37	F	20.83
SEVERY CITY LAKE	12.50	0.00	0.00	0.32	G	13.50
SCOTT STATE LAKE	12.33	0.11	0.00	0.32	G	22.78
HOLTON - BANNER CREEK LAKE	11.83	0.00	0.00	0.33	F	6.69
HOWARD-POLK DANIELS LAKE	11.75	0.00	0.00	0.26	G	8.25
ROOKS STATE LAKE	11.00	0.00	0.00	0.41	F	5.50
OLATHE-CEDAR LAKE	11.00	0.00	0.00	0.21	F	14.00
EDNA CITY LAKE	8.50	0.00	0.00	0.30	G	8.50
PAOLA CITY LAKE	8.00	0.25	0.00	0.41	G	16.75
POTTAWATOMIE SFL #1	7.75	0.00	0.00	0.27	G	9.75
JEFFREY EC. - AUX. MAKEUP LAKE	7.63	0.00	0.00	0.27	F	6.38
PLEASANTON - WEST LAKE	7.50	0.00	0.00	0.24	F	16.83
MARION COUNTY LAKE	7.25	2.50	0.00	0.44	G	8.00
LYON SFL	6.50	0.50	0.00	0.44	G	7.75
MIAMI SFL	6.50	0.00	0.00	0.22	F	7.69
OLATHE-LAKE OLATHE	6.25	0.00	0.00	0.20	F	6.42
MONTGOMERY SFL	5.25	0.25	0.00	0.40	G	3.05
STERLING CITY LAKE	5.00	0.00	0.00	0.24	F	2.22
WILSON SFL	4.50	0.25	0.00	0.35	F	2.75
GARNETT-CRYSTAL LAKE	4.00	0.00	0.00	0.19	F	4.50
LOGAN CITY LAKE	4.00	0.00	0.00	0.16	F	4.50
SEDAN - NEW (SOUTH) CITY LAKE	4.00	0.00	0.00	0.18	F	3.25
HARVEY COUNTY LAKE - EAST	3.80	0.00	0.00	0.42	G	3.30
BROWN SFL	3.50	0.00	0.00	0.26	F	5.83
COWLEY SFL	3.50	0.25	0.00	0.33	G	4.42
CRITZER LAKE	3.50	0.00	0.00	0.31	F	2.50
MADISON CITY LAKE	3.50	0.38	0.00	0.71	F	9.50
SHAWNEE SFL	3.00	0.00	0.00	0.18	F	1.92
(FISH) GRAHAM CO - TREXLER POND	3.00	0.00	0.00	0.22	F	1.83



BLACK CRAPPIE

IMPOUNDMENT	Density Rating (>8")	Preferred Rating (>10")	Lunker Rating (>12")	Biggest Fish (lbs.)	Bio Rating	3-Year Average (>8")
RESERVOIRS						
KIRWIN	17.31	3.44	0.25	2.16	G	12.00
SEBELIUS (NORTON)	6.00	2.30	0.10	1.06	G	4.37
CEDAR BLUFF	4.61	4.00	1.11	1.25	G	2.09
WEBSTER	3.44	0.13	0.00	0.80	F	3.04
LOVEWELL	2.63	0.06	0.00	0.62	F	1.49
BIG HILL	1.20	0.10	0.00	0.57	P	0.50
HILLSDALE	0.56	0.19	0.00	0.36	P	0.73
LAKES						
(FISH) GRAHAM CO - TREXLER PND	39.33	0.00	0.00	0.40	F	29.06
DOUGLAS SFL	19.50	6.50	0.75	0.87	G	7.92
HOLTON - BANNER CREEK LAKE	16.50	3.67	0.17	0.96	E	8.75
ATCHISON SFL	8.50	5.50	0.00	0.70	G	20.00
LENEXA-LAKE LENEXA	5.50	3.00	0.00	0.60	F	4.33
GRIDLEY CITY LAKE	5.00	3.00	2.00	1.51	G	2.03
MCPHERSON SFL	4.67	0.83	0.00	0.57	F	3.67
GRAHAM COUNTY-ANTELOPE LAKE	4.67	2.33	1.33	1.80	F	2.14
STERLING CITY LAKE	4.67	2.00	0.00	0.79	F	3.44
JEWELL SFL	4.25	0.00	0.00	0.45	F	8.58
MONTGOMERY SFL	4.25	0.50	0.00	0.88	F	3.35
ANTHONY CITY LAKE	4.20	2.80	0.60	1.83	F	6.98
NEOSHO SFL	4.00	0.33	0.00	0.64	G	3.33
POTTAWATOMIE SFL #1	3.50	0.00	0.00	0.42	F	2.08
ALMA CITY LAKE	3.50	0.50	0.00	0.54	F	2.88
SEVERY CITY LAKE	3.50	0.00	0.00	0.51	P	3.50
HOWARD-POLK DANIELS LAKE	3.25	0.00	0.00	0.41	F	1.42
HARVEY COUNTY LAKE - EAST	3.00	2.60	0.60	1.32	P	3.30
BOURBON SFL	2.75	2.75	1.00	1.38	F	3.04
COWLEY SFL	2.25	1.50	0.75	2.11	P	3.58
LYON SFL	2.25	0.50	0.00	0.51	F	2.92
MIDDLE CREEK SFL	2.25	0.25	0.00	0.63	F	1.83
BROWN SFL	2.00	0.50	0.00	0.60	F	6.00
POTTAWATOMIE SFL #2	2.00	0.00	0.00	0.45	F	2.42
COUNCIL GROVE CITY LAKE	2.00	0.67	0.00	0.49	F	2.00
CENTRALIA CITY LAKE	2.00	1.63	0.38	1.12	F	2.33
MOLINE OLD (SOUTH) CITY LAKE	2.00	0.50	0.00	0.55	F	1.67
SEDAN - OLD (NORTH) CITY LAKE	2.00	0.00	0.00	0.35	F	2.00
PAOLA CITY LAKE	1.75	0.50	0.00	0.51	F	5.67
BELLEVILLE-ROCKY POND	1.50	1.00	0.50	1.06	P	5.50
PONDS						
ELWOOD WILDLIFE AREA POND	1.50	1.00	1.00	1.18	P	1.50

WHITE CRAPPIE

IMPOUNDMENT	Density Rating (>8")	Preferred Rating (>10")	Lunker Rating (>12")	Biggest Fish (lbs.)	Bio Rating	3-Year Average (>8")
RESERVOIRS						
HILLSDALE	35.00	12.25	0.81	1.01	G	28.90
CLINTON	33.81	14.19	1.38	1.56	G	24.33
PERRY	17.63	4.81	0.38	1.27	E	16.60
ELK CITY	16.73	6.87	3.60	2.11	E	11.39
TORONTO	16.50	6.81	3.06	2.48	G	12.54
MELVERN	14.79	1.50	0.86	2.22	F	6.76
LOVEWELL	13.00	4.25	0.44	1.51	G	12.43
KIRWIN	9.75	3.13	1.31	1.77	G	4.52
POMONA	9.25	3.25	0.69	1.58	G	7.65
KANOPOLIS	6.89	1.56	0.44	1.49	G	5.61
FALL RIVER	6.75	2.19	1.88	2.23	G	6.96
LA CYGNE	6.13	2.69	0.44	3.43	G	5.38
COUNCIL GROVE	4.83	1.08	0.25	1.52	F	3.15
COFFEY CO.	4.38	3.25	1.94	1.96	F	6.28
EL DORADO	4.33	2.80	0.60	1.53	G	6.00
BIG HILL	2.40	1.30	0.20	0.86	F	2.78
GLEN ELDER	2.09	0.64	0.27	1.34	F	1.84
LAKES						
OLATHE-CEDAR LAKE	73.00	19.00	4.50	1.89	G	44.00
EUREKA CITY LAKE	45.00	25.00	0.75	0.94	G	38.58
HOWARD-POLK DANIELS LAKE	43.00	12.00	1.50	1.48	G	17.67
GARNETT-CEDAR CREEK LAKE	39.00	5.75	2.00	1.73	G	23.54
MCPHERSON SFL	36.83	3.17	0.00	0.79	G	29.97
WINFIELD CITY LAKE	35.63	4.13	0.50	1.79	G	17.31
MOLINE NEW (NORTH) CITY LAKE	22.50	11.50	5.25	1.52	G	15.67
OLATHE-LAKE OLATHE	21.50	2.75	0.00	0.67	F	10.39
ALTAMONT CITY LAKE-EAST	19.50	1.00	0.50	1.25	G	19.50
PLEASANTON - WEST LAKE	19.50	1.50	0.50	1.00	G	19.83
YATES CENTER CITY LAKE-NEW	18.40	2.60	0.00	0.74	G	7.15
GREAT BEND-VETS PARK LAKE	14.67	4.67	1.33	0.95	F	8.00
YATES CENTER-SOUTH OWL LAKE	14.40	6.20	1.60	1.77	G	8.33
HORTON-MISSION LAKE	14.00	4.00	0.50	1.14	G	7.75
SEDAN - OLD (NORTH) CITY LAKE	14.00	1.50	1.50	0.77	G	14.00
SEDGWICK COUNTY-LAKE AFTON	13.40	8.60	1.40	1.52	G	13.40
MIDDLE CREEK SFL	11.50	5.75	0.25	1.37	F	4.58
ALTAMONT CITY LAKE-WEST	11.50	3.50	1.50	1.23	G	11.50
HOLTON - BANNER CREEK LAKE	11.50	4.33	0.17	1.14	G	5.17
SCOTT STATE LAKE	10.89	2.67	0.22	1.40	G	22.04
HERINGTON CITY LAKE-NEW	10.00	3.00	0.25	1.28	G	14.33
MOLINE OLD (SOUTH) CITY LAKE	9.75	4.75	1.00	1.52	F	6.08
BROWN SFL	9.00	2.00	0.00	0.54	F	12.00
OLPE CITY LAKE	9.00	3.50	0.50	1.41	F	5.17
BUTLER SFL	8.50	0.75	0.25	0.00	P	3.75
COUNCIL GROVE CITY LAKE	8.00	0.67	0.00	0.54	G	6.83
PAOLA CITY LAKE	7.75	7.25	0.50	0.89	G	6.67
LEBO CITY LAKE	7.25	4.25	2.25	1.24	G	7.33
BELLEVILLE-ROCKY POND	7.00	0.00	0.00	0.39	G	3.75
JEFFREY EC.- AUX. MAKEUP LAKE	6.75	2.50	0.38	1.18	F	6.42
ALMA CITY LAKE	6.50	2.00	1.50	1.68	G	7.50
NEOSHO SFL	6.00	2.33	0.00	0.73	G	6.08
LYON SFL	5.75	4.75	2.25	1.10	G	9.17
OTTAWA SFL	5.17	2.67	1.83	1.53	G	13.28
SABETHA CITY LAKE	5.00	1.00	0.50	1.36	F	10.00
HARVEY COUNTY LAKE - WEST	4.80	1.60	0.60	1.41	P	4.80
GARNETT-CRYSTAL LAKE	4.50	1.00	0.00	0.60	F	17.25
PLEASANTON - EAST LAKE	4.50	2.75	0.75	1.08	F	3.25
HARVEY COUNTY LAKE - EAST	4.20	1.60	0.60	1.19	F	4.50
ATCHISON SFL	4.00	3.50	1.00	0.83	G	11.00
NEBO SFL	4.00	0.00	0.00	0.37	F	8.50
SHAWNEE SFL	4.00	1.00	0.25	1.55	F	4.67
CENTRALIA CITY LAKE	3.88	2.88	0.25	1.03	G	21.04
MIAMI SFL	3.75	2.25	0.00	0.70	F	6.75
MARION COUNTY LAKE	3.75	3.75	3.25	1.65	G	3.63
SEDAN - NEW (SOUTH) CITY LAKE	3.50	0.50	0.00	0.43	G	7.75
ELLIS CITY LAKE	3.33	1.33	0.67	1.16	P	5.67
CHASE SFL	3.25	2.25	0.75	1.35	G	3.00
POTTAWATOMIE SFL #2	2.25	1.25	0.25	2.80	F	2.42
POTTAWATOMIE SFL #1	2.00	1.00	0.00	0.53	P	1.13
THAYER CITY LAKE (NEW)	2.00	0.67	0.00	0.75	G	1.50
PONDS						
GLEN ELDER STATE PARK POND	10.00	5.50	0.00	0.84	G	10.56
ELWOOD WILDLIFE AREA POND	9.00	1.50	0.00	0.59	F	9.00





WHITE BASS

IMPOUNDMENT	Density Rating (>9")	Preferred Rating (>12")	Lunker Rating (>15")	Biggest Fish (lbs.)	Bio Rating	3-Year Average (>9")
RESERVOIRS						
GLEN ELDER	16.38	14.00	2.13	2.65	E	14.90
CEDAR BLUFF	12.50	12.04	4.71	1.99	E	14.09
FALL RIVER	8.67	7.00	2.17	2.56	G	4.72
CLINTON	7.94	6.31	1.31	3.13	G	8.75
KANOPOLIS	7.56	2.81	0.56	2.20	G	7.49
MARION	7.33	4.40	0.00	1.63	G	4.59
JOHN REDMOND	5.10	0.55	0.15	2.55	G	4.86
LOVEWELL	4.25	2.20	0.00	1.40	G	4.58
TORONTO	3.92	1.83	0.08	2.42	G	4.81
MILFORD	3.75	1.40	0.05	1.60	F	2.12
KIRWIN	3.47	2.73	0.53	2.33	G	2.63
ELK CITY	3.13	2.06	0.25	2.04	G	4.67
COUNCIL GROVE	2.93	1.13	0.00	1.26	F	1.49
COFFEY CO.	2.78	2.61	0.72	2.00	G	3.10
BIG HILL	2.70	2.70	0.40	2.23	F	3.09
LA CYGNE	2.33	1.75	0.08	1.34	G	2.09
PERRY	2.25	0.30	0.00	1.28	F	3.33
POMONA	2.08	1.83	0.00	1.46	F	2.51
WILSON	2.00	1.93	0.33	2.28	F	2.19
EL DORADO	1.87	1.80	0.40	2.02	F	2.86
MELVERN	1.81	1.69	0.69	1.96	F	7.42
WEBSTER	1.42	0.83	0.08	1.71	G	4.33
CHENEY	1.40	1.30	0.15	2.12	G	4.62
LAKES						
HERINGTON CITY LAKE-NEW	19.25	11.25	0.50	1.63	E	15.58
JEFFREY EC.- AUX. MAKEUP LAKE	16.13	9.63	2.75	1.80	E	9.63
HOLTON - BANNER CREEK LAKE	10.88	6.25	0.63	2.19	E	6.44
WINFIELD CITY LAKE	7.10	4.80	0.00	1.49	G	3.83
JEFFREY EC - MAKE UP LAKE	6.00	4.00	0.50	1.86	G	5.72
MARION COUNTY LAKE	3.50	3.50	0.00	1.51	F	1.75
PAOLA CITY LAKE	3.17	3.00	0.17	1.95	F	2.50
CHASE SFL	2.25	1.00	0.00	1.37	P	2.00
GEARY SFL	2.00	1.00	0.50	2.06	F	2.92
HARVEY COUNTY LAKE - EAST	1.25	0.75	0.00	1.06	F	1.71
LYON SFL	1.17	1.17	0.83	1.87	F	1.39
COUNCIL GROVE CITY LAKE	1.00	1.00	0.00	1.08	F	2.33
SEDAN - NEW (SOUTH) CITY LAKE	1.00	1.00	0.25	1.53	F	1.13
COWLEY SFL	0.75	0.75	0.00	1.48	P	0.75

WIPER

IMPOUNDMENT	Density Rating (>16")	Preferred Rating (>20")	Lunker Rating (>24")	Biggest Fish (lbs.)	Bio Rating	3-Year Average (>16")
RESERVOIRS						
SEBELIUS (NORTON)	11.00	5.40	0.20	8.56	E	9.73
EL DORADO	5.40	3.60	0.00	5.38	G	4.41
CHENEY	5.15	1.50	0.00	7.32	G	4.80
MILFORD	3.45	1.70	0.00	5.82	G	6.05
KIRWIN	3.40	0.40	0.00	6.21	G	2.19
WEBSTER	3.08	1.58	0.08	7.59	G	1.47
MARION	2.87	0.20	0.00	3.66	G	6.23
GLEN ELDER	2.17	2.17	0.21	8.27	G	2.50
CLINTON	1.19	0.94	0.00	5.49	F	1.02
CEDAR BLUFF	0.83	0.71	0.04	7.53	F	1.84
LA CYGNE	0.83	0.08	0.00	5.25	G	0.87
POMONA	0.67	0.08	0.00	3.41	G	1.33
COUNCIL GROVE	0.40	0.40	0.00	5.48	F	0.91
LOVEWELL	0.40	0.10	0.00	4.88	F	0.57
COFFEY CO.	0.11	0.06	0.00	4.90	F	0.17
LAKES						
GREAT BEND-STONE PARK LAKE	5.00	1.67	0.17	6.63	G	2.56
HERINGTON CITY LAKE-NEW	5.00	3.00	0.00	4.62	G	8.92
WINFIELD CITY LAKE	4.80	0.90	0.00	5.05	F	3.00
JEFFREY EC - MAKE UP LAKE	3.67	0.50	0.17	8.83	G	2.83
PAOLA CITY LAKE	3.67	0.83	0.00	5.05	G	2.06
SABETHA - PONY CREEK LAKE	2.83	1.67	0.33	6.46	G	4.56
WELLINGTON CITY LAKE	2.83	0.33	0.00	4.54	G	5.17
MARION COUNTY LAKE	2.75	0.25	0.00	3.71	F	1.75
JEFFREY EC.- AUX. MAKEUP LAKE	2.63	1.25	0.13	5.27	G	3.21
GRAHAM COUNTY-ANTELOPE LAKE	2.00	0.25	0.00	5.19	F	3.75
GRIDLEY CITY LAKE	2.00	0.33	0.00	4.32	F	2.67
EUREKA CITY LAKE	1.17	0.50	0.00	6.27	F	0.67
LEAVENWORTH SFL	1.00	1.00	0.67	7.76	F	0.83
CRAWFORD SFL	0.83	0.67	0.00	4.83	G	0.89
MIDDLE CREEK SFL	0.83	0.17	0.00	4.52	F	1.28
PLEASANTON - EAST LAKE	0.67	0.17	0.00	5.37	F	0.33
GARNETT-CRYSTAL LAKE	0.33	0.00	0.00	2.46	P	0.33
CENTRALIA CITY LAKE	0.25	0.00	0.00	3.77	F	0.42
GARNETT-CEDAR CREEK LAKE	0.25	0.25	0.00	6.37	P	0.08
LEBO CITY LAKE	0.25	0.00	0.00	2.95	P	0.88
HORTON-MISSION LAKE	0.17	0.00	0.00	3.88	P	0.17
YATES CENTER CITY LAKE-NEW	0.17	0.00	0.00	2.16	P	0.33

El Dorado

State Park

text & photos by Rick McNary

On days when the wind lays soft against the prairie, I like to slip my kayak into the serene lake at El Dorado State Park and glide quietly through the maze of skeletal trees, standing tall above the water's surface like nature's sentinels. Nearby, fishing boats propelled by trolling motors hug the shoreline. In the distance, ski boats and jet skis frolic on the open water.

On days when the wind roars across the prairie, I plow into the waves with heavy strokes. In the distance, sailboats with canvas sails bowing in the wind tack across the water.

I spent my childhood a few pastures over from the lake and have watched it grow up from two small lakes into one large one. The original lakes, Bluestem and El Dorado, still outline the eastern shores but expand into what is now El Dorado Reservoir – an elegant 8,000 acre body of water with 98 miles of serpentine shoreline.

The decision to construct the lake was made in 1965 to control flooding, provide a water supply for the area and provide recreational opportunities. Construction began in 1973 and was completed in 1981. I recall those damaging floods when, as a child, my father stopped our car along the hill east of El Dorado (near the present-day prison) because he could go no further; flood waters covered the entire valley.



As it sometimes does with change, heartache attended the damming of the Walnut River as farmers and ranchers living on the homesteads of their ancestors lost their land to the lake.

Today, as I fish her bountiful waters, park my trailer in a campsite, hike the numerous trails, scout for bald eagles in the winter, or attend a festival, I'm never far from a memory of what lies beneath the water: the old rock quarry where dirt bikes raced, ranches dotted with Charolais and Simmental cattle, the swinging bridge, the Chelsea Methodist Church and the Foster Family Cemetery. I recall the Thunderboat Regatta in the late 70s on Bluestem Lake as colorful boats like Circus/Circus and Miss Budweiser with 12-cylinder Rolls Royce engines thundered around the lake. You could hear them for miles.

Now, with more than 2,000 acres of park and 4,000 acres of wildlife area surrounding the reservoir, the state park provides a myriad of recreational activities that are enjoyed by people from all over the world.



El Dorado State Park Range Facility

The newest feature at the state park is the \$2.5 million state-of-the-art shooting range facility, which opened in December of 2018, and is the result of decades of planning. The money for the construction of the range came, in a roundabout way, from gun owners and hunters. Of that \$2.5 million, 75 percent of the money came from an 11 percent federal excise tax placed on all firearms, ammunition and archery equipment sales. The other 25 percent came from a state fund comprised of revenue from the sale of hunting licenses and permits. Costs associated with the continued operation of the range now falls on the shoulders of a local nonprofit made up of community volunteers who raise the operation funds needed.

"Years of research and planning went into choosing the location and design of the gun range," says Seth Turner, El Dorado State Park manager. "This site was chosen for its optimal location, safety

and minimal environmental impact."

"The gun range is a great example of how the federal government, the state government and local citizens work together," says John Grange, president of The Friends of El Dorado Gun Range Facility. "The land is owned by the Corp of Engineers, the State built the range, then our nonprofit provides for the day-to-day operation. We hired Johnnie Throckmorton to be our range manager and rely on volunteers to be our Range Safety Officers (RSOs). The range is never open without an RSO present."

Fishing

The lake attracts anglers from all over to test their expertise on wiper, walleye, largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, crappie, white bass, catfish – and during the winter months, trout. But one species in particular has local fisheries biologist, Craig Johnson, excited. As part of the unique Kansas Walleye Initiative, anglers could soon be seeing more and larger walleye.

"We used to stock the lake with hundreds of thousands of small fry," says Johnson. "With this new program, we take the fry to a hatchery and grow them for 180 days so they're around 8 inches long when we stock them now. The survival rate will be much better."



Hunting

The wildlife area around the lake provides more than 4,000 acres of public hunting and trapping access. Wooded areas, open prairies, and rocky shorelines provide a variety of habit for turkey, deer, quail, prairie chicken, rabbit, squirrel, raccoon, coyote, bobcat and waterfowl.

"This has been a good year for waterfowl," said assistant wildlife area manager, Tyler Burt. "The lake was down about 5 feet for quite a while, which allowed vegetation to grow. Once the water levels rose again, that provided excellent habitat for waterfowl."

Boating and Watercraft

The lake attracts a variety of watersports enthusiasts. The Shady Creek Marina, located on the south end of the lake near the state park Office, offers a full line of service and sales. It's also a great place to catch a bite to fuel up for a hike.

Trails

First Day Hikes Events – Each year, El Dorado State Park participates in a “First Day Hike” on New Year’s Day. This year, more than 250 braved frigid temperatures to hike the state park’s trails.

Teter Nature Trail – A .75-mile hiking/interpretive trail at the east end of the Walnut River campground.

Walnut Ridge Trail – A .75-mile hiking/biking trail located across the Walnut River from the Walnut River Campground.

Double Black Diamond Mountain Bike Trail – A 2-mile hike/bike trail located just across the river from the Walnut River Campground and connecting with the Linear Trail.

Walnut River Trail – An extension of the Linear Trail, this hardened trail is approximately 2-miles long and winds throughout the Walnut River Campground.

The Linear Trail – A hard surfaced, multiuse trail constructed by the City of El Dorado. The trail starts



from two locations in the city and ends as it crosses the bridge into the Walnut River Campground.

Shady Creek Nature Trail – This .75-mile-long hiking/interpretive trail is near Shady Creek Marina.

Boulder Bluff Horse Trail – This 17-mile equestrian trail follows the shoreline of scenic El Dorado Reservoir through a variety of terrain. The trail is also open to hiking and biking. Area 2 Campground has utility campsites along with corrals, a wash bay, manure bunker, a large riding arena, and a large picnic shelter with electricity.



2019 Events

March

- 2 - Flint Hills Trail Run
- 30 - American Bass Tournament

April

- 13 - Sunflower Bass Tournament

May

- 4 - FREE PARK ENTRANCE DAY
- 4 - Confidence Horse Course
- 18 - Grit, Gravel, Grind Cycling Event
- 18 - Kids to The Park Day
- 27 - Friends of the Lake Pancake Feed

June

- 1 - Storm the Dam Trail Run
- 1 & 2 - FREE FISHING DAYS
- 7 & 8 - Kansas Walleye Tournament
- 9 - El Dorado Lake Triathlon
- 15 - Friends of the Lake Mud Run
- 21-23 - KS Veterans & Family Reunion

July

- 4 - 4th of July Parade
- 25-27 - DAM Music Festival*

August

- 24 - Tiara Triathlon
- 24 - Grit, Gravel, Grind Cycling Event
- 31 - Friends of the Lake Labor Day Breakfast Feed

October

- 6 - FREE PARK ENTRANCE DAY
- 6 - OK Kids Day
- 26 - Halloween Family Fun Night

November

- 29 - FREE PARK ENTRANCE DAY

**A new addition to the state park since 2017 is the DAM Music Festival held each June. Headlining country music stars attract more than 15,000 festivalgoers over the three-day period during which time DAM purchases the use of all campsites.*

Camping

El Dorado State Park offers four primary campgrounds, which include nearly 1,100 campsites: 500 utility sites and 600 primitive sites. There are also 11 group picnic shelters, five small sleeper cabins, five deluxe cabins, a modern shower, laundry and restroom facilities, swim beaches, and an equestrian arena. Reservations can be made at the state park office or online at www.reserveamerica.com

Sailing

Sailing is a popular activity on the lake. The Walnut Valley Sailing Club – a private club in the Boulder Bluff area at the northwestern part of the lake – provides a variety of services, as well as classes for all skill levels.

Archery Range

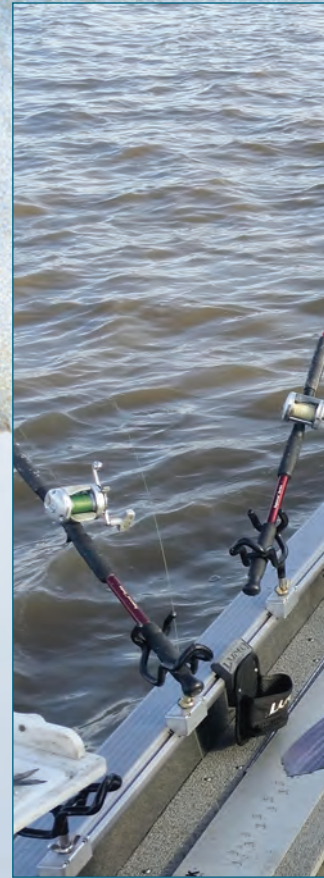
Near the east end of the dam, an archery range is available for public use. Warm up for archery season by shooting the area's many targets, each located at different distances and elevations.



Friends of El Dorado State Park

In the 20 years since its inception, the Friends of El Dorado State Park have provided much-needed items and services not included in the park's budget. The friends group has purchased a patrol car, new radios, computers, woodworking equipment, and shotguns for ranger vehicles. In addition to clean up and maintenance, the friends group operates a general store in Bluestem Point and manages the various concessions in the park.

For more on El Dorado State Park and others, visit ksoutdoors.com. 



BLUE CAT

text and photos by Brent Frazee

BOOM!

Joseph Tomelleri illustration

There was nothing subtle about the bite John Jamison got as he drifted baits across a flat on Milford Reservoir.

The medium-heavy-action rod in a holder bent almost to the water after a fish slammed the cut shad floating just off the bottom. Jamison knew what that meant. A big blue catfish was picking a fight.

“These blue cats are so aggressive,” said Jamison, a nationally-known tournament catfisherman from Spring Hill.

“When they hit, you’ll know what you have. There’s no picking around. They hit like a freight train.”

Jamison fought the fish for about 15 minutes, then finally got the catfish’s jug head to the surface. A friend scooped the pot-bellied fish into a landing net, then the two anglers wrestled it into the boat.

“That one will go about 35 pounds,” Jamison said matter-of-factly. “That’s a nice fish, but there are blue cats that are a lot bigger in here.”

A place where a 35-pound fish is just a how-hum catch? Welcome to big-game fishing, Kansas style.

Jamison is one of many anglers riding the wave of trophy catfishing in

the Sunflower State. Since Milford was successfully stocked in 1990, other reservoirs such as Melvern, Perry, Clinton, El Dorado, Coffey County, Tuttle Creek and Elk City have followed suit and are quickly developing into trophy catfish water.

“When you can go out and have a reasonable chance of catching a 30- to 50-pound fish, that’s exciting,” said Doug Nygren, Fisheries Division chief for the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT). “And some of these reservoirs haven’t even reached their potential yet.”

A quickly developing fishery

Jamison marvels at how far blue cat fishing in Kansas has come since he started fishing for them in 1978.

“When I got started, I just fished from the bank on the Kansas River,” said Jamison, who has excelled on the national catfish tour and is a member of the Lund Boats pro staff. “We would go

after blue cats before it was ‘cool.’

“We’d catch 25- to 35-pound fish, and we were really into it. When my friend, Royce Stiffler, caught a 56-pound blue cat that was a state record, we didn’t know if they got that much bigger in Kansas.”

Take a look at today’s record book. A fish that almost doubled the weight of Stiffler’s fish, a monster that weighed 102.8 pounds, was caught by Rob Stanley of Olathe in 2012 on the Kansas side of the Missouri River.

But the real story is how quickly the blue cat fishery has developed in reservoirs. Stanley’s wife, Stefanie, landed a blue that weighed 82.05 pounds on Milford in 2013 – a record for Kansas reservoirs. And some fisheries staff believe that’s only the start.

“Blue cats are long-living fish,” said John Reinke, Region 2 Fisheries Division supervisor for KDWPT and former Milford Reservoir fisheries biologist. “Once they grow to a certain length, they really start putting on the weight.”



Best Bets For Big Blues

A successful management program by KDWPT has brought big game blue catfish fishing to Kansas. Here are a few reservoirs where anglers can get a big tug.

- **Milford Reservoir (16,000 acres, near Junction City):** Milford is still the king of Kansas blue-cat fishing. It was the first Kansas reservoir stocked (in 1990), and it now has a naturally sustaining population. It has a slot limit to protect big fish. Anglers must now release all blue cats from 25 to 40 inches. Only one of the daily limit of five can measure over 40 inches.
- **Perry Reservoir (11,630 acres, north of Topeka):** Veteran anglers rate Perry as one of the hottest blue catfish reservoirs in Kansas right now. It has a growing population, with big fish starting to show up. It has a 35-inch minimum size limit.
- **Coffey County Reservoir (5,090 acres, near Burlington):** This power-plant reservoir for the Wolf Creek Generating Station is developing a good population of blue catfish. It has good numbers of 20- to 40-pound fish, according to veteran cat man Mark Thompson.
- **El Dorado Reservoir (8,000 acres in Butler County in south-central Kansas):** After several years of stocking, natural reproduction is now sustaining the population. It has good numbers of mid-sized fish. A slot limit is in effect. Anglers must release all blue cats from 25 to 35 inches, and only two of the daily limit of five can be 36 inches or longer.
- **Melvorn Reservoir (7,000 acres in Osage County in southeast Kansas):** Melvorn is another reservoir that offers big-fish potential. John Jamison, who fishes the national catfish circuit, has caught blue catfish exceeding the 50-pound mark here. A 35-inch minimum size limit is in effect.

“Because blue cats have been in Milford for quite a while now, there’s a good chance there are bigger ones (than the current lake record) out there.”

Jamison has caught blue catfish as big as 72 pounds at Milford. And he too is excited about the future.

“I wish these reservoirs had blue cats 40 years ago when I was getting started,” Jamison said. “Really, Kansas is just in the beginning stage. It has so much potential.

“I see our state becoming a trophy destination in a few years.”

A management success story

Anglers can thank KDWPT fisheries staff for much of that success. Kansas biologists tried stocking Milford with blue cats in the 1970s, but found little success.

“They just wouldn’t stay in the reservoir,” Nygren said, indicating that the stocked blue cats would swim up tributaries and head into the rivers.

But through trades with other states, KDWPT staff found a strain

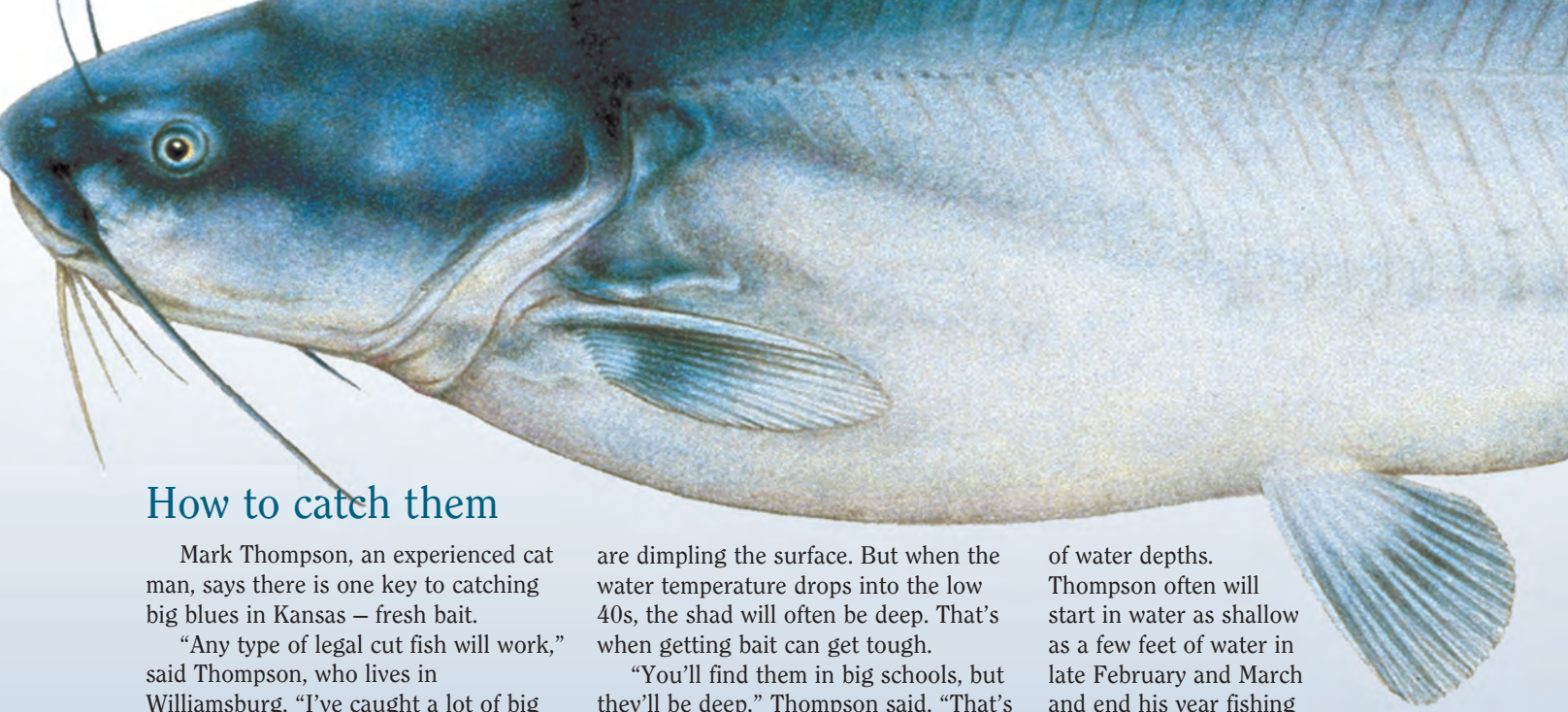
of blue cats that were homebodies. Fisheries biologists then devised a successful plan to take advantage of those fish.

Fry that were obtained were raised to sizes of 6 to 8 inches – big enough to survive predation – in Kansas hatcheries before they were stocked. The plan paid off and Milford quickly developed an impressive blue catfish population.

With Milford’s rich nutrients and its abundant shad population, the blues thrived to the point where natural reproduction is now sustains numbers.

KDWPT’s hatchery staff follow those guidelines for building blue cat populations at other reservoirs, stocking for five years with a 35-inch minimum length limit. When those fish become sexually mature and are able to reproduce, Mother Nature takes over.

There must be something in Kansas water that the blue catfish like. KDWPT has found success in most reservoirs it has stocked. “Blue catfish are a real success story in Kansas,” Nygren said.



How to catch them

Mark Thompson, an experienced cat man, says there is one key to catching big blues in Kansas – fresh bait.

“Any type of legal cut fish will work,” said Thompson, who lives in Williamsburg. “I’ve caught a lot of big blues on cut shad, but I’ve also caught them on crappie heads and even white bass heads.

“But the big thing is, they have to be fresh.”

That’s why Thompson often has his throw net in the boat when he goes fishing. He spends the first part of his day casting for shad. Under Kansas regulations, crappie and white bass have to be caught on rod and reel before they can be used as bait.

It’s often easy to find schools of shad when the water is warm and the baitfish

are dimpling the surface. But when the water temperature drops into the low 40s, the shad will often be deep. That’s when getting bait can get tough.

“You’ll find them in big schools, but they’ll be deep,” Thompson said. “That’s when you need a heavy cast net.

“You can get them (shad), but it’s a lot of work.”

It often pays off for Thompson, though. He catches big blue cats throughout the year at Kansas reservoirs. Even in the winter, when other anglers have retreated to their dens, he lands sizeable fish.

“Blue cats will feed all winter long,” he said. “They’re really active in 45- to 50-degree water.”

Throughout the year, those blue catfish can be found in an impressive range

of water depths.

Thompson often will start in water as shallow as a few feet of water in late February and March and end his year fishing water as deep as 60 feet. He fished those depths on a trip last fall at Melvern. Drifting across a flat near the river channel, he kept an eye on his electronics and noticed the marks of baitfish on the screen. Seconds later, one of the rods bent sharply.

He quickly reeled in a 6-pound blue catfish and reacted with slight disappointment.

“The big ones aren’t hitting today,” he said. “But they’re in here. The biggest fish I’ve caught (and released) here at Melvern weighed 58 pounds.”





Fishing strategies

Imagine landing a 60-pound fish in only a few feet of water? It can happen at Milford.

Ryan Gnagy, who runs Prime Time Catfishing Guide Service, has seen it happen in late winter and early spring.

When the winter-killed shad pile up along wind-blown banks, the big blue cats will move for easy food. Gnagy will follow them there.

He uses his sidescan to locate concentrations of the big blues, then will anchor and have his clients cast to the spot where he located the fish. Then the fun begins.

“When you set the hook, the fish immediately come to the surface,” Gnagy said. “It’s almost like topwater fishing for big catfish.”

Gnagy pinpoints March, April and May as the best months to fish for big blues at Milford. But late July and early August also can be good, using totally different techniques. In the summer, Gnagy will often troll on the main lake with long lines and planer boards to get the bait off to the side of the boat, away from the prop wash. He also will drift stretches on the main lake where there is structure — dropoffs, humps, ledges and points.

He often uses 7-foot, 6-inch, medium-action baitcasting rods, 80-pound-test braid line, and 8/0 circle hooks. The weight of the sinkers depends on the situation, he said.

Jamison has designed his own line of baitcasting rod, the John Jamison 8-foot Blue Cat 1. Made by the Rod Shop in

Kansas City, the rod features a strong butt and a fast tip.

“A lot of the tackle we use isn’t a lot different than light saltwater equipment,” Jamison said. “We have the opportunity to catch a 100-pound fish, and we have to have the equipment that can handle that kind of fish.”

The future

Kansas blue-cat fishing is no longer a secret. Take it from Gnagy. He has customers who travel from all parts of the country to hire him for a day of blue-cat fishing.

“I’ve had clients from 20 states and as far away as Arizona, California, New Jersey, even Panama,” he said. “People have heard how good our blue-cat fishing is and they’re willing to travel to fish here.”

That’s a good thing and a bad thing. Many anglers say the increased popularity of blue-cat fishing at Milford has affected the fishing.

KDWPT staff responded to those


concerns by putting a slot length limit on blue catfish at the reservoir. Today, anglers at Milford have to release blue catfish from 25 to 40 pounds, and only one of the daily creel limit of five can be longer than 40 inches.

KDWPT also has put more restrictive regulations on blue catfish at other reservoirs such as Perry, Tuttle Creek and El Dorado.

It takes years for blue catfish to grow to monstrous sizes, biologists say. They want to make sure those trophy fish are around for a while for anglers to enjoy.

Many anglers are fully supportive of such measures. They have a self-imposed requirement of releasing all blue catfish they catch that are 10 pounds and larger.

“Our top-end fish at Milford have gone downhill a bit, but there are still loads of 20- to 30-pound fish,” Gnagy said. “And we still have some trophy fish in here.

“Now that they will be protected, I think we’re going to see even better fishing.” 



Cozy Winter Crappie

text and photos by Rick McNary

Are you looking for a good way to get outdoors during the winter yet avoid the brutal cold weather? Then grab your fishing pole and head to one of the heated docks in Kansas. These warm shelters offer abundant fishing opportunities for both novice and expert anglers. Sometimes, limits of crappie are filled quickly, yet, at other times, only seasoned anglers who've

developed the skill to detect the subtle strikes can catch fish.

"Sometimes, the fish hit a jig as soon as it sinks," says Dean Schmidt of Potwin, a dedicated crappie anglers. "And at other times, the strike is so light you have about a fifteenth of a second to respond. I'm 80 years old and have been fishing for crappie since I could walk. They're my favorite fish."

Heated docks are enclosed wood or metal structure set on floats and either attached to a marina or to the bank with a walkway. Many are handicap accessible. Although the lake surrounding it might be iced over, the water inside the dock remains open for fishing. Both the outside and the inside perimeter of the dock have a walkway so you can fish either location. The docks are



heated with a furnace that can be regulated so, even on the coldest days, those fishing inside are comfortable.

The most popular fish caught in these docks are crappie, although other species can be hooked, as well.

"In warmer weather, crappie are a lot more aggressive because they are eating shad and are competing with three or four other fish for that one shad, so the strike is a lot harder," Schmidt says. "We've watched the fish with an underwater camera and they basically open their mouth, suck in the jig, then spit it out; that's when we feel an extremely light bump. I fish with my micro-light pole with the line in one hand while watching the spring bobber I've attached to the tip. Any movement in that tip that I didn't cause, I set the hook. I may be old, but I can still set the hook fast enough."

Schmidt began making his own crappie jigs in 1972 after reading an article about micro jigs in an issue of *Outdoor Life*.

"Feather jigs are very popular, but I discovered banana jigs while I was fishing in Wisconsin a few years back," Schmidt says. "I brought one back and taught

myself how to make them and now they are my favorite jigs to catch crappie. I make about ten thousand a year and sell quite a few."

Submerged below the water's surface around the dock are various types of habitat for crappie. The most popular forms of this cover - also known as structure - are evergreen trees. Although other more permanent forms of structure are built of longer-lasting plastic pipe, evergreens are the least expensive.

Heated docks keep crappie anglers warm when the weather is cold but the fishing is hot. It's social and includes some good-natured ribbing among anglers.

"I suggested that we add a few trees around the heated dock at Eureka City Lake," Schmidt said.

"Pretty soon, they put me in charge of it, so a bunch of us sunk 65 trees below and around the dock. A couple of us were in the city's boat and the rest were on the bank. We'd pull up in the boat, they'd load us up with four trees, then we'd go out and tie them to concrete blocks and sink them. Those trees will last about seven years before decay takes over, but in the first couple of days, we noticed the fishing increased considerably. We sunk a few extra where the windows of the dock are because we didn't want guys standing inside where it was warm and fishing out the windows where it was cold. If they do, they'll get hung up in a hurry. It seems to work.

"After we sunk the trees around the dock, we continued sinking them in a line out in the water into about a depth of 25 feet," Schmidt said. "This created kind of a highway of protection for the fish to move around from shallower water back into deeper water. They're like you and me when they travel, they need signposts and structure provides that for them."

The heated dock at Eureka



City Lake is named in honor of Bob Wasinger, a local angler who drew the plans on a sheet of paper.

"It took a while from the time Bob drew those until we had it built," says Willy Day, city lake manager. "There were a lot of meetings and a lot of different plans drawn up and all sorts of ideas talked about, but when it was all said and done, we built it just like Bob drew it up."

Eureka City Lake is a part of the Communities Fisheries Assistance Program (CFAP) of the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT). This program is designed to provide Kansas anglers access to more than 200 community lakes leased by KDWPT without paying additional angler fees. Most of the docks are the result of partnerships between the city or community and KDWPT.

"We have a lot of retirees come

here," Day said. "There's a couple of guys from Wellington who have been making this a regular day trip for years. When the fish are biting, it's the best fishing hole in the state. But when the fish ain't biting, it's nothing but a gossip parlor. Old men can out-

Brush piles and other man-made structures are placed under the floating docks to attract and hold large schools of crappie during the winter.

gossip women any day of the week. There's a couple of those old guys in there who get to fussin' over who's a better fisherman and I tell 'em they need to go to couple's counseling."

Another heated dock is the Jayhawk Marina at Hillsdale. Kim Burnett, another dedicated crappie angler, is often found in one of the heated docks of Kansas.

"The presentation of the jig has to be slower in the winter," Burnett says. "You have to try a variety of jigs and let the fish tell you what they want. I prefer short poles from 32 to 48 inches because you are just dropping down vertical. There's no room or need to cast. I tie my own flies and jigs and find that the fish are kind of choosy. I also like the meat of the fish better in the winter than in the summer; summer-time meat is kind of mushy, but crappie meat caught in the winter is much whiter and firmer."

Burnett is a Fishing's Future Certified Angler instructor, a program made available to interested residents through KDWPT's Aquatic Education Program, FishKS. He spends much of his free time either fishing or teaching others how to fish and tie jigs and flies. Like Schmidt, he has turned his love for fishing into both a fantastic community service, as well as a side business by selling jigs and flies.

"I don't make any money off it, really," Burnett says. "I just take the money and buy more fishing stuff with it."

Another CFAP heated dock rests on the water of Lake Shawnee, near Topeka. John Knight, Shawnee County Parks and Recreation Manager, was instrumental in having the old structure replaced in 2001 by using a combination of county tax and state dollars.

"There are a lot of retirees who fish here, many of whom are trying to get away from their wife's honey-do list," Knight says. "Some even show up without their fishing poles. The dock is handicap accessible and we're seeing more young people show up with their





grandpas then coming back by themselves.

“When they built our dock, they lined the interior walls with the same kind of odor-eliminating surface that hog farmers use to minimize the smell. That keeps it from smelling fishy.”

Some docks, like the one at Melvern, are privately owned as part of a marina, but allow usage with a day fee. Owner Eric Ratzloff sees an increase in usage each year.

“The local 4-H club made a club project of putting in small fishing line recycling containers,” Ratzloff says. “And Emporia State University is using our dock as a site to do research studies on mud puppies.”

Marion County Lake’s heated dock, like others, offers land-bound anglers the opportunity to fish away from the restraints of a bank.

“It’s not much fun fishing from the bank if that’s your only option,” Schmidt says. “The dock at Marion gives people who might not own a boat the opportunity to get out over deeper water and fish over structure where the fish are hanging out.

“We need more of these

around the lakes in Kansas,” Schmidt says. “There’s nowhere for old guys like me to go in the winter and this gets us outside and socializing with others. Not all the stories you hear in the docks that these fishermen tell are believable, but it’s a group of guys that are happy to see new people show up. Guys like me have a lot of knowledge and we’re anxious to teach others how to do it.”

Schmidt, and others mentioned in this story, recognize the opportunities for civic groups to become more engaged.

“Imagine a Lion’s Club or a Rotary Club sponsoring a Kids’ Fishing Day on a heated dock. That would be a great service project for any group wanting to connect with youth. Plus, it’d be nice to have more help taking care of the docks or even getting new ones built around the state. It would be a great community project for a group that wanted to put one on a big or small lake near them.”

When cold weather hits and a dose of cabin fever compels you to go outside, venture in to the warmth of a heated dock. If you’re new to the sport, you’ll

find a group of people anxious to share their fishing wisdom. If you’re an expert, take an extra pole and teach someone else the tricks of the trade.

But then again, apparently you don’t need a fishing pole at all to enjoy a heated dock. 🐻

Where to Fish

Jayhawk Marina
Hillsdale Lake,
26353 Jayhawker Drive
Paola, KS
Phone: 921-557-9900

Eureka City Lake
4 miles north of Eureka
620-583-5858

Lake Shawnee
3137 S.E. 29th
Topeka, KS
785-251-6800

Marion County Lake
620-382-3240

Melvorn Reservoir
31271 Marina Parkway
Melvorn, KS
620-256-6656

Three experienced anglers spread along the shoreline of a Jefferson County pond. One marched to the end of a small point and cast a crankbait toward stick-ups and aquatic vegetation he could reach. Another arched long casts over a broad, shallow cove with a Whopper Plopper topwater plug. The third stood by the dam where he could parallel cast the shallows with a spinnerbait or cast out to the deepest parts of the pond.

Half-way through the third angler's first retrieve a fish struck. His sweeping hook-set would have made a professional bass angler proud. He fought the fish perfectly, letting the rod dip when the bass made a run, then cranking the reel to ensure there was no slack in the line. Just as he slid the flopping bass up onto the shore, another of the anglers announced he'd hooked a bass, too.

Never more than a few minutes passed when at least one of the trio wasn't hooked into a nice largemouth or crappie. But in this case, the size of the angler was far more impressive than the size of the fish.

At four years old, Emmaus, the first angler to connect, was barely half as tall as the fishing rod he handled masterfully. The other two accomplished anglers were his brothers, Shepherd, six years old, and Simon, the old man at eight. Sisters Rael, 10, and Selah, 12, though not along that, day are also master anglers.

Their father, Wayne Simien Jr., was the same when he was their age, though he's famous for other things these days.

Wayne Jr. is one of the best-known players in the storied history of University of Kansas (KU) basketball. He was First-team All Big-12 twice, Conference Player of the Year once, and was named consensus first-team All America his senior year. His jersey number hangs from the rafters at Allen Fieldhouse amid the likes of Wilt Chamberlin and Danny Manning. He was a first-round draft choice of the Miami Heat and played on one of their NBA championship teams.

Living in south Florida offered Wayne Jr. more than lucrative income and a chance to be part of a NBA champion team. When not on the hardwoods, he chucked crappie-sized shiners for big bass in the Everglades and plied off shore for a variety of saltwater species. As often as possible his favorite fishing buddy, his father, was along. So it's been all of his life.

Wayne Simien Sr. may be the most avid angler in the nation. His family jokes that he rubber-necks whenever he drives by any kind of water, from tiny trout streams to huge reservoirs. They say he barely sleeps he's so



A FAMILY of FISHERS

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY
MICHAEL PEARCE



excited the night before he starts a fishing vacation. His first paycheck out of college, from Hallmark Cards in Leavenworth, was used to buy a car-top boat.

Like his son, Wayne Sr. started fishing as a youngster. Early on, he promised himself two things: He'd never marry a woman who couldn't bait her own hook. And if blessed with children, he would give them plenty of opportunities to go fishing.

"I'd had so much fun fishing with my dad, I wanted (them) to experience the same things," said Wayne Sr.

He found a woman who could bait her own hook in his wife, Margaret. They fished across Kansas, Oklahoma and Missouri while dating and they still take a "date-trip" to Table Rock Lake every fall. Wayne Jr. was born in 1983.

"As soon as he was out of diapers I started taking him," said Wayne Sr. "I'd walk down to the dock with Wayne in one arm, a handful of G.I. Joes and we'd go fishing."

Today, Wayne Jr. recalls naps on a boat seat and playing with toys when the fish weren't biting.

"Some of my earliest memories are of fishing with him," Wayne Jr. once said of his father. "And they're great memories."

Before he won his first basketball game, Wayne Jr., had won countless battles with bass and crappie. He did his share to help win a father/son bass tournament when he was six. He credits learning to detect subtle winter crappie bites as a child for the soft-touch that made him a finesse, as well as power, basketball star.

The bond between fishing father and son held as their time casting together began to crumble. Wayne Jr. wasn't even in middle school when the gifts of his father's height and mother's athleticism (she was a gifted volleyball player) made him stand out on the basketball courts.

Weekends and summers were soon spent taking Wayne Jr. to camps and tournaments. To make travel easier, Wayne Sr. sold a fully-rigged Ranger bass boat he'd won in a bass tournament to afford a van they needed to transport his son around.

Time together fishing became even more precious when Wayne Jr. began the hectic routine of classes, practices and games at KU. Many times Wayne Sr. launched his boat at nearby Clinton Reservoir on the

outside chance his son could get free for a short trip.

"I know our time together is getting shorter and shorter," Wayne Sr. told a journalist at the time. "I'll take an hour or whatever I can get and

make the best of it. To be able to spend any time together is special to me."

Wayne Jr.'s love of angling never faded. He listed Table Rock Lake in Big 12 media guides as his favorite place, while most players listed big cities like Las Vegas or New York.

Instead of listing state high school championships or being named a McDonald's All-American as his proudest accomplishments, Wayne Jr. listed the day he out-fished his dad and his uncle.

"That's big league in our family," he said at the time. "That's pro stuff."

With his first check from being a professional athlete, Wayne Jr. bought his father a fully-rigged, top-of-the-line Ranger boat to replace the one he'd sold years ago.

Wayne Jr. played professional basketball for five years, before walking away from several promising and lucrative seasons. He had other plans for his future. In 2009, Wayne Jr. and his wife, Katie, returned to Lawrence so Wayne Jr. could start working at a campus ministry. He also wanted to ensure his children could see their grandparents.

Today, the Simien families live side-by-side on a spacious, secluded cul-de-sac near campus. Wayne Jr.'s five children have been raised with a deep commitment to faith, family and, of course, fishing.

As his father had done for him, Wayne Jr. took his kids to ponds and lakes as soon as they were big enough. And it's likely they have caught more fish than many adult anglers in Kansas.

A few years ago Emmaus set the hook on a fish literally bigger than his two-year-old self. The minnow-taking culprit was a surprise 50-pound flathead catfish. Wayne Jr. took the rod before his youngest child was pulled into the water. During the entire fight, Emmaus' two sisters played the part of sports cheerleaders, making up choreographed cheers through the struggle. The three boys never left their dad's side until the fish was led into the shallows and Wayne Sr. waded in and grabbed it by hand.

Father and grandfather are along on many fishing trips, though it seems they spend more time unhooking fish for kids than casting for themselves. The boys usually know exactly what lures they want to be casting.



The girls like a more relaxed approach.

"The boys like to cast lures but I'd rather fish with minnows," said Rael. "I just cast it out, then watch it. Sometimes I can set it down and go look at flowers, or something. It seems like minnows usually catch the biggest fish, anyway."

On a trip last autumn, with maternal grandparents – Jim and Diane Allen – along, the girls indeed fished with minnows while their brothers roamed the banks, casting lures. Often Selah or Rael took a seat by one of their grandparents and visited quietly. As Rael predicted, minnows caught bigger crappie and bass than lures that day. A channel cat of about six pounds was the best fish landed. The two girls and four-year-old Emmaus tag-teamed the fish, taking turns with the rod and reel before Rael expertly netted it.

I was blessed to have met Margaret Simien more than 40 years ago during a summer job at Hallmark. A deep friendship began and she's like a big sister to me. My father and Wayne Sr. were good friends who talked hunting and fishing every chance they could at Hallmark. Since we all now live in Lawrence, I'm able to stop in for a visit.

The family's fascination with fishing is obvious as soon as you step in the door of the grandparents' home. Unless KU or Kansas City sports are on, a large television is usually tuned to fishing. Often the kids cluster around their grandfather to watch.

I have been around the kids enough they know I'm an angler. Usually, that's their select topic of conversa-

tion when I'm there although interrogation would be a better description. Recently Shepherd walked up and shot out a Gatling gun string of questions at me.

"Mr. Michael, have you been fishing?" "How many did you catch?" "How big?" "All the same size?" "What did you catch 'em on?" "Which crankbait?" "Big or little "Rat-l-trap?" "Were you fishing it fast or slow?" "Deep or close to shore?" "What color?" "Ok, was it pure silver or did it have a color up along it's back?" "Blue?" "We have one of those. It's a good crankbait. I like fishing it for bass."

This is a six-year-old, a first-grader asking graduate-level questions.

I knew I'd totally been accepted one afternoon when they let me see their most prized possession – the family tackle box. It's so big two of the boys had to tag team to tote it onto the driveway.

There was like a moment of respectful silence when the big box was opened. Then, five young voices chattered like chipmunks on espresso about what they saw.

Tiny fingers pointed out spinners they used to catch trout in Missouri. There was the lure that caught a 3-pound smallmouth at Perry Reservoir before their grandfather even had his line in the water. The three boys had special reverence for the top-water lures they'd used to catch nice bass a few weeks before.

Simon and Shepherd recanted details I've never noticed the countless times I've caught top-water bass. At one point the six-year-old looked me in the eye, paused and slowly said, "I mean it, Mr. Michael. He blew – up – on – it!"

Eventually their father came to enjoy the fishing lure frenzy. After a few minutes, the girls headed off to grab some freeze-pop snacks for everyone. All the kids politely asked for favored flavors. Little Emmaus was the last to divert his attention from the tackle box and make his request.

"Selah, can you get me a chartreuse freeze pop, please?" he asked. His father instantly laughed aloud.

"That's one of his favorite bait colors," said his dad, cracking a smile of equal amounts pride and humor. "Seriously, how many four-year-olds ask for a chartreuse freeze-pop?"

"Only those named Simien," I replied. 🐮



Grandpa Harry

State Park Bound

text and photo by Rick McNary

Harry opened the door to the wood cook stove and stoked the firewood. Chauncey laid curled on his dog bed near the fireplace.

“Well, good morning, sunshine,” Harry said to his sleepy-eyed grandson coming through the hallway. “Did you rest well?”

“I did,” Ethan replied. “I got kind of cold then Chauncey crawled in bed with me. He sure warms things up.”

“That he does,” Harry chuckled. “He usually sleeps with me but when you’re here, he prefers you.”

“He kind of smells things up, too,” added Ethan.

Chauncey, unfazed by the insult and laughter, rose and sauntered towards Ethan to greet him.

“Are we going to the state park

today, Grandpa?” Ethan asked. “It’s cold outside and if you don’t want to, we don’t have to. But when I sent you the note, I thought it would be warmer than it is now.”

The note. Oh, how Harry cherished going to the mailbox in anticipation of Ethan’s letters. He kept those letters in a cigar box right beside the letters he had sent home to Gladys during the war.

“How do you want your eggs this time,” Harry asked, sliding the cast iron skillet onto the stovetop. “Sunny-side up?”

“Sure! Will you make one for Chauncey, too?” asked Ethan. “He looks pretty hungry.”

“He’s getting too fat,” Harry chuckled.

“In fact, exploring that state park will be good for both of us. My old bones need limbered up!”

“Do you go to the park often, Grandpa?”

“Oh, yes!” Harry exclaimed. “At least once a week to volunteer, and often to hike and fish.”

“I told my teacher we were going to visit a state park, so she asked me to write a report for history on state parks. I learned a lot,” shared Ethan. “Grandpa, did you know that Niagara Falls was the first state park?”

“No, I did not know that,” said Harry.

“Yeah, and there are more than 10,000 state parks in America,” said Ethan, excitedly. “The biggest one is in Alaska and has three million acres.”

Harry and Ethan continued to chat over breakfast. Harry marveled at all that Ethan had learned, and grew more excited than ever to show Ethan his favorite state park.

After dishes, the gang loaded up in Harry’s ’49 Ford and trundled down to the park. Once past the entrance, Ethan couldn’t believe his eyes. The park was bigger than he had imagined.

Before opening his door, Ethan reached in his backpack.

“Can I put this collar I made on Chauncey now?” asked Ethan.

The old lab leaned towards Ethan, sniffing the leather collar.

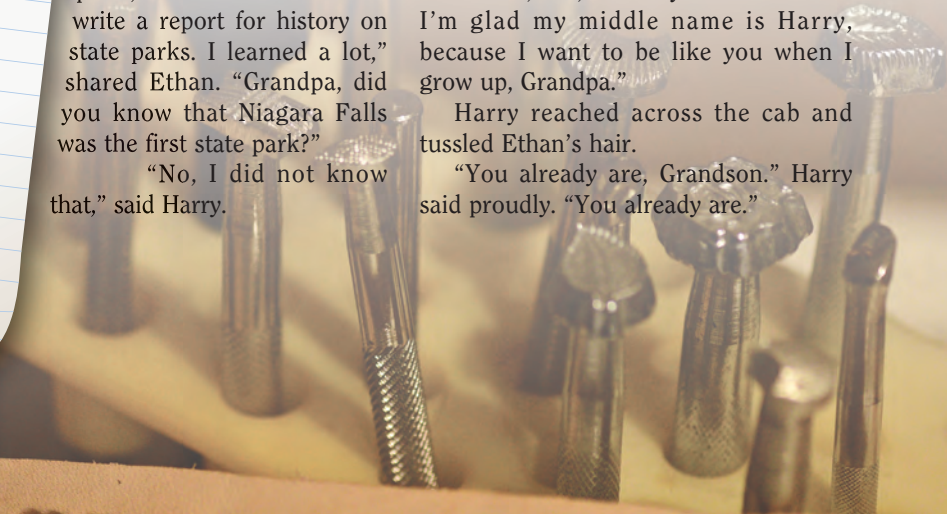
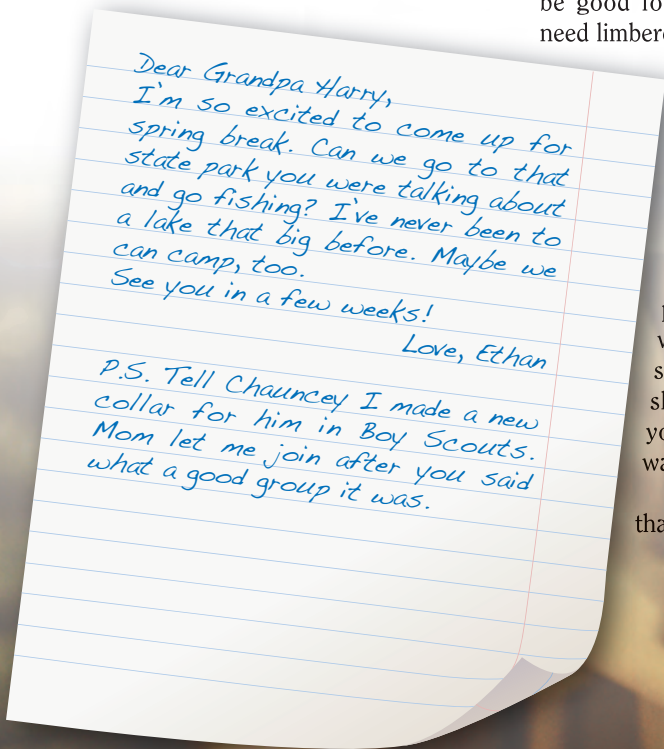
“See Chauncey, I even stamped your name on it!” said Ethan with a smile.

“Grandpa Harry, I made you something, too,” Ethan said, reaching in his bag. Out came a leather bookmark with Harry’s name on it.

“I thought it would be cool to make something for you and Chauncey to remember our first trip to a state park together,” said Ethan. “I made me a bookmark, too, with my initials: E.H.W. I’m glad my middle name is Harry, because I want to be like you when I grow up, Grandpa.”

Harry reached across the cab and tussled Ethan’s hair.

“You already are, Grandson.” Harry said proudly. “You already are.”



Species Profile **Arkansas Darter**

with Annie Fischer

Native to Kansas, the Arkansas darter – or Ark darter for short – is found in the prairie streams and springs of southcentral, southwest and extreme southeast Kansas. This little swimmer averages 2 ½ inches long, with males donning orange bellies and gill covers, while females are mostly brown with some blotching. Ark darters spawn between March and May, and live just 2-3 years.

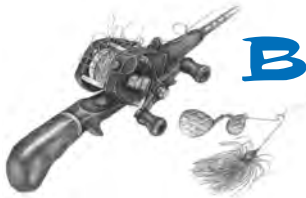
While they feel most at home in clear, cool, shallow water with vegetation for cover, Ark darters have been known to adapt to warmer water for short periods.

A unique feature of this fish is that it lacks a swim bladder, thus the Ark darter maneuvers through its environment like a small “dart.”

For many years, the Ark darter has been listed as a threatened species in Kansas, but fisheries biologists are hopeful for the species. More than 25 years of data collected by Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism’s Stream Survey and Assessment Team, combined with an intensive study in 2015, reveals the Ark darter population appears stable enough to down-list the species from “Threatened” to a “Species In Need of Conservation.”



Ryan Waters photo



Backlash

with Mike Miller

Hunting The Social Factor

Over the past 25 years, state agencies and conservation groups have spent a good deal of time and energy trying to understand the decline in the percentage of our population who hunts. It's a relevant issue because hunters pay for all wildlife conservation; license revenue doesn't just help conserve game animals and their habitats. In fact, many more nongame animals benefit from the wildlife conservation programs funded with license revenue. So, efforts to understand the decline and to recruit, retain and reactivate hunters are absolutely worthwhile.

A list of potential causes for the decline has been assembled and include required hunter education, increased cost, single-parent families, generational differences, competing interests, urbanization, fear of firearms, time commitments, difficulting in accessing private land, fewer family farms, anti-hunting sentiment, loss of habitat, and overly complicated regulations.

And there is one reason often given by hunters who hunt infrequently or don't hunt but would like to: they've lost contact with the people they enjoyed hunting with. It's the social factor, and I believe we may underestimate its importance.

If you ask a hunter why he or she hunts, their answer may not be easy for them to articulate because it's so personal. But there is a basic need among hunters to share their experiences with other hunters, even if it's just telling a story about a recent hunt.


And the social factor isn't unique to hunting. Leisure activities that require considerable time, effort and money, often require a mentor or friend. We enjoy these activities more and our motivation to be involved is much stronger when we do them with people we enjoy. And if you're new to hunting, having someone, a mentor, to show you some basic skills will make your experience more successful and more enjoyable.

The truth is that all of the things listed above have had an impact on hunter numbers. But the social factor, which is woven through most of the barriers identified, is critical. It only takes a generation to lose the heritage within a family. If a young father quits hunting because his brother, whom he always hunted with, moves to another state, his children may not get the chance to experience hunting. Losing touch with the people, land and traditions can happen quickly, and there are many activities waiting to take hunting's place.



It's ironic that an activity that can be so personal and solitary is so dependent on social support. When I was immersed in learning to bowhunt, I spent many hours shooting my bow, discussing which broadheads were best, scouting areas and putting up treestands with friends and mentors prior to the season. During the seasons, I spent hundreds of hours sitting in a treestand alone. However, I called my hunter friends and mentors as soon as I got home (this was obviously before cell phones) to go over what I'd seen and learned and to hear their hunting stories.

As I've grown older, some of those friends and mentors have drifted away and we don't spend as much time hunting together. As a result, I hunt much less avidly. Today, I have a few trusted friends and family who I love to hunt and fish with but it seems more difficult to make the time. What that really means is that hunting is not a high priority like it used to be. And I'm pretty happy these days just taking my dog out for a short hunt, just me and the dog.

While my motivation to hunt has changed over the years, I still firmly believe that every parent and/or grandparent should spend time hunting and fishing with their children and grandchildren. I'm grateful mine did and I know how the time I spent with my family hunting and fishing shaped my life. I believe I turned out to be a better person because of that time outdoors with Dad, Granddad and good friends. So, while I'll say it's enough to save hunting in the name of revenue for wildlife management, I believe it's bigger than that. Our hunting heritage has a positive impact on our quality of life in many ways. 



Nature Every Day

nature.org/kansas

