

KANSAS

Wildlife & Parks Magazine

FOR HUNTERS, ANGLERS AND OUTDOOR ENTHUSIASTS | \$3.75 | SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2019

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Sous Vide style

◆ Float tube fishing
& more!



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KANSAS
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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



A Champion for Kansas Tourism

I'd like to use my space this issue to welcome a new member to our team - Bridgette Jobe. Bridgette started with us on July 15, 2019 as the director of Tourism. Before coming to our agency, Bridgette served as executive director for the Kansas City Kansas Convention and Visitors Bureau for 21 years. I met Bridgette in January when I was speaking to a room full of Kansas' finest travel and tourism professionals at the Destination Statehouse event at the Capitol. I remember she asked me a question that I had no idea how to answer; I instantly liked her.

While at the Kansas City Kansas Convention and Visitors Bureau, Bridgette was actively involved in many state and regional tourism organizations. She is a past president of the Travel Industry Association of Kansas and served on that board for many years. She was chairman of the Governor's Council on Travel and Tourism. She was instrumental in the Kansas City Regional Destination Alliance - a partnership of tourism organizations in the Kansas City area on both sides of the state line. And in early 2019, Bridgette was presented the Hospitality Leadership Award by the Kansas City Area Hotel and Lodging Association. All this to say, I feel very lucky that we now have such an accomplished leader as our Tourism director.

There were several things that attracted Bridgette to the director of Tourism position. Foremost, she believes that tourism in Kansas is an economic driver for the state and saw this as an opportunity to be a leader in carrying that message forward. Knowing she would have supportive leadership and qualified and passionate staff already in place helped, too. After much thought, she felt the time was

just right to move into the role.


In a past conversation with Bridgette, I asked her to define Tourism in Kansas, to which she replied, "The main function of Kansas Tourism is to inspire travel to Kansas."

In the short time she has been with us, she has already set the tone for future marketing efforts, saying "Kansas is an ideal travel experience because it offers an affordable, authentic American experience. Through its scenic beauty, vibrant cities, outdoor experiences and amazing people, Kansas is a place where travelers enjoy the journey as much as the destination."

Bridgette also recognizes that any new resident or new business owner in Kansas will be a visitor first. Successful tourism marketing means dollars for Kansas. And it is the intent of our new director of Tourism to bring as many visitors to Kansas as she can.

I traveled to Washington D.C. last spring with Bridgette and a handful of other tourism leaders to visit with our federal legislators. The visits were very productive, and I learned a lot about tourism strategy from these seasoned experts. Bridgette was especially helpful and it was clear that she handles sensitive, difficult issues with wisdom, humor and grace.

Bridgette has hit the ground running and is working diligently to make a positive difference in our Tourism Division and the rest of our agency. She has initiated strategic planning for our state tourism program and is focused on generating metrics to identify initiatives that are working and efforts that aren't producing the results we want. It's a model of vision combined with well-considered action.

I look forward to us all getting to work with and benefit from Bridgette! 



KDWPT-managed Dove Fields Make Ideal Hunting Spots



The 2019 Kansas dove hunting season begins September 1 and opportunity awaits. More than 50 fields managed specifically for dove hunting by Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT) staff will open to the public beginning next week. See the complete list at ksoutdoors.com.

Though flood events earlier in the year have had a significant effect on spring plantings across the state, many KDWPT-managed dove fields are holding healthy crops of sunflowers and wheat stubble. Visit the link above to check on the status of individual fields. The season will run September 1 through November 29, during which time hunters may take mourning, white-winged, Eurasian collared, and ringed turtle doves.

Tips prior to dove hunting:

- A Kansas hunting license and Kansas HIP Permit are required to hunt doves.
- Shotguns must be plugged, making them incapable of holding more than three shells at a time.
- Many KDWPT-managed dove fields require non-toxic shot. Visit ksoutdoors.com, call the area office, or consult Page 38 of the *2019 Kansas Hunting and Furharvesting Regulations Summary* for area requirements.
- Electronic check-in, using the Kansas iSportsman app, may be required when hunting KDWPT-managed lands. To set up an account or access a pre-existing account, visit <https://kdwpt.isportsman.net/>.
- The daily bag limit for mourning and white-winged doves is 15, possession limit is 45. (There is no limit on Eurasian collared and ringed turtle doves, but any taken in addition to the daily bag limit for mourning and white-winged doves must have one fully-feathered wing and/or head attached while in transport).
- Migratory doves may only be taken while in flight.

Latest Commission Action

A reduction of disabled veteran's license fees by half. This change will allow Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism staff to better meet future demand by spreading funding further, as applications for disabled veteran's licenses have routinely surpassed available funds in recent years.

The removal of otters from current furbearer and coyote management units, so that designated otter management units may be established. In coming seasons, hunters will be able

to take one, two or five otters depending on which otter management unit they hunt.

A change in the start time of furbearer seasons. All hunting, trapping and running seasons for furbearers will now begin at 12:01 a.m.

The next KWPT Commission meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 19, 2019 at the Kansas Wetlands Education Center, 592 NE K-156 Hwy, in Great Bend.

Fishing the Flood

Kansas anglers are likely to experience fantastic fishing this fall and winter after what could only be described as a rough spring and summer. The heavy rains and high water levels that kept anglers away provided ideal conditions for many game fish.

"A lot of fish that would have been harvested earlier in the year weren't, so they're still out there," said Doug Nygren, Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT) Fisheries Division director. "The high water and flooded vegetation also helped produce some tremendous year-classes of fish, and we can usually expect great things after high water."

The same high water that foiled anglers for months with closed boat ramps and covered shorelines also flooded thousands of acres of vegetation, creating ideal spawning and nursery habitat. The inundated cover provided freshly-hatched fish a place to escape predators and grow and those young-of-year sport fish that thrived should result in legendary year-classes of fish down the road. In addition, the conditions helped produce big numbers of gizzard shad, the preferred food for most Kansas sport fish. Already, anglers report catching heavier-than-usual wipers, catfish and white bass.

Some anglers worry that releases after high water may flush open-water sport fish species - like walleye, saugeye, white bass and wipers - through the outlet tubes. Still, Nygren said there are positives. Catfish anglers have had a fantastic year catching channel, blue and flathead catfish from outlets and rivers. And while water was being released, shore-bound anglers, who might not normally have a chance to catch walleye, saugeye and wipers, have enjoyed great success.

If you haven't fished this year, make sure you take advantage of the great fall fishing to come. And if you buy your fishing license now, it's valid for 365 days from the date of purchase.

This would also be a great time to buy a five-year fishing license at the discounted price that saves residents \$35. That one purchase will keep you fishing through what should be fantastic angling years in Kansas.

"We're in a pretty great situation," said Nygren. "There are going to be some big year classes from this year of high water. Our future looks pretty bright."

BIRD BRAIN

Looking for Franklin's Gulls

with Mike Rader

With an abundance of species travelling through to distant wintering grounds, fall in Kansas is an exciting time for birders. Some of these birds will stay in the state throughout the winter, while others will not be seen again until their passage back to northern breeding grounds. A huge influx of all types of birds, from shorebirds and water birds to songbirds and all their offspring, can be seen in the state. In the fall, I look forward to the massive flocks of Franklin's gulls that use our Kansas

reservoirs to rest before continuing their migration.

Franklin's gulls are among the smaller gulls we see in the state - about crow-sized - with a wingspan of approximately 3 feet and a weight around 12 ounces. Named in honor of early expedition leader Sir John Franklin, they are a "hooded" gull species, meaning they have a black head when in alternate (breeding) plumage. They are a beautiful bird, especially in the spring when they have bold, white crescents around the eye and a

pinkish blush to the white breast feathers. In fall, they lose most of the hood, with only a few blackish feathers on the back of the head remaining. They have a dark gray back and wings, white belly, tail and underwings, with black wingtips and white spots on the very ends of the wing feathers.

Franklin's gulls nest in the prairie regions in the upper Midwest and central Canada, with a few breeding birds found at the large central Kansas marshes of Cheyenne Bottoms and

Quivira. They form massive migratory flocks, with many numbering in the tens of thousands on large Kansas lakes. Milford, Tuttle Creek, Wilson, Perry, Clinton, Waconda Lake, Kanopolis and several other lakes are great locations to see the vast amount of birds. They are famous for following operating farm equipment to feed on earthworms, grasshoppers, grubs, seeds and some small rodents. Often they are observed flying around high in the sky, sometimes catching flying insects, but otherwise looking like they just enjoy being birds!

According to Wetlands International in 2018, there was an estimated population of 1 to 1.5 million individuals, but it seems there must be more given the numbers we see in Kansas in early fall. They linger in our part of the country for a few weeks before most make the flight to wintering grounds on the Pacific coast of Peru and Chile in South America. I'm sure it's spectacular to see the number of birds there in concentrated flocks.

The Kansas Ornithological Society will meet October 4-6 in Wichita. A paper session with interesting presentations will highlight Saturday, with field trips to local birding hotspots occurring on Sunday morning. I'd bet that we will see some Franklin's gulls! More information about the meeting can be found at: www.ksbirds.org.



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LAW MATTERS

with Colonel Ott

Gearing up for Fall



I long for cooler days and colder nights, not only because I'm not a fan of the summer heat, but because it also means fall is here and hunting seasons are upon us. As time permits, I find myself preparing, working on bows and fine tuning firearms.

With hunting season quickly approaching, I wanted to take the opportunity to share the different ways to get in touch with a Kansas game warden - but first, let me explain how we are structured.

The Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism Law Enforcement (LE) Division is the only place to work as a Kansas game warden. Kansas has 105 counties, and each is part of a game warden patrol area. The state is divided into three regions and each region is divided into districts; a regional captain oversees each region, while a lieutenant oversees each district. Game wardens are responsible for patrol duties in their assigned coun-

ties within each district. We have other LE personnel in key positions throughout the state to oversee programs and other personnel.

The LE Division is currently staffed with 87 personnel statewide, including all commissioned LE personnel, such as the uniformed game warden you see on patrol to me, the division director.

All LE Division staff can be contacted directly, through other KDWPT staff, through the sheriff's office of any given county or through the KDWPT regional offices. Most LE staff are not assigned to offices, so it may be necessary to leave a message at the office or on their cellphones. The cellphone numbers for all game wardens are listed on ksoutdoors.com and in our regulations summaries.

The LE Division also maintains a Facebook page, *Kansas Wildlife, Parks & Tourism-Game Wardens*. I invite everyone to like the page and follow it closely as we regularly release information, share photographs and interact with the public. You may also use this platform to send messages to LE staff. The page is managed by just a few individuals, but

they will forward on anything that pertains to other staff and get the message to the appropriate place.

We strive to be accessible and truly want the public to contact us with issues, information, tips and anything you feel we need to know.

Have a great fall. Spend some time in the great Kansas outdoors and feel free to reach out to a Kansas game warden if the need arises. And don't hesitate to say "Hi" when you see one of us, as we are always willing to talk about the natural resources that we took an oath to protect.



Backcountry Access Pass Removed

In a 5-0 vote, Kansas Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KWPT) Commissioners recently approved the removal of a backcountry access pass, \$50, at their August 15 meeting in Overland Park. The pass, established late last year, would have been a requirement for hikers looking to explore Kansas' up-and-coming state park, Little Jerusalem Badlands, without a guide.

"Kansas state park staff believe our parks should be accessible to all, and removing this fee will make Little Jerusalem Badlands State Park just that - accessible," said Kansas state parks director, Linda Lanterman. "We've hired a naturalist who will instead offer informative, guided tours on a regular basis once the park opens."

Game Warden Profile

Vince Wonderlich, *Johnson county*

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

My most memorable investigation was when I caught a Kansas hunter harvesting deer without deer permits. It was the first time I used social media, online mapping services, electronic media and meta-data to solve a case. A neighboring game warden notified me about possible illegal snagging of paddlefish taking place in my area involving the hunter on a photo-streaming website. In addition to fishing, there were a lot of hunting pictures. The number of images displaying harvested bucks appeared to be unusual in the short amount of time the images were posted. A search warrant of the property and an electronic search warrant were executed, and simultaneous interviews were done. The cooperation among the search warrant team and interview teams were wonderful; the cooperation with the district attorney office later was great, as well. The hunter was fined for the violations, restitution was sought for the value of the wildlife illegally taken, and their privileges to hunt were revoked for several years.



How are you involved in your communities?

I have developed relationships with local state legislators, county commissioners, landowners, and local business owners. I have worked with a lot of local businesses and provide them support and educational programming. I've provided youth hunting opportunities for a local boys and girls club. Local high schools have asked me to be a source for their students with interest in becoming a game warden, as well as provide programming for their classes. I also volunteer as an assistant coach on my son's baseball team.

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

FAA Part 107 Remote Commercial Pilot Training, Law Enforcement Small Unmanned Aircraft, Background Investigator, Wicklander-Zulawski & Associates Criminal Interview and Interrogation Training, IHEA-USA Hunting Incident Investigation Academy, Boone and Crockett Official Scorer, Field Training Officer Training, NASBLA Marine Accident Training, NASBLA Marine Theft Investigator, NRA Precision Rifle Operator, US Dept of Homeland Security Tactical Medical Instructor, and Hunter and Boating Education Instructor.

What is the best thing about being a game warden?

I enjoy the capability of wearing a number of hats as a law enforcement officer: I am a patrolman, detective, an educator, and an ambassador. I enjoy the freedom that being a game warden offers me; I have the luxury to work whenever and wherever I am needed. There have been several times when I have been patrolling from a boat checking duck hunters or anglers, and thinking to myself, "I can't believe I get paid for doing this."

If I was not a game warden, I would probably be...?

A United States Army Ranger.

What/Who influenced you to become a game warden?

When I was in 6th grade, my class took a field trip to a nearby state park. When we arrived, there were different state fish and game employees explaining their careers to us. I remember listening to the game warden tell us several stories of catching poachers as he leaned against his jon boat. He wore a badge and a firearm and I just thought that was so cool. A few years later, I had another opportunity to speak to him, because his truck had a flat tire in front of our house and he had to call for assistance. While in college, I worked as a summer water patrol officer. The game warden who influenced me later became one of my supervisors.

What is your most embarrassing moment while on duty?

I cannot remember any embarrassing moments as a game warden, but I do remember one time when I was a summer water patrol officer. I was coming into the boat ramp after patrolling the reservoir that afternoon. There were a couple of groups launching and trailering their boats there. Instead of tying up my boat to the dock cleat from inside the boat, I decided to step onto the dock and secure it there. As I stepped onto the dock, I pushed the boat away and I fell into the water. As I pulled myself out of the water, I could see everyone staring. That was pretty embarrassing.

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

I would really like to harvest a trophy bull moose or a large trophy elk sometime.

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

There are more fishing opportunities in Johnson County than anywhere else in the state. There are 42 CFAP lakes and five stream access points within Johnson County.



BOAT KANSAS

Hunting From a Boat

with Chelsea Hofmeier

Boating is a diverse recreational activity with many niches. Hunters may not always consider themselves boaters, but as soon as they step into a boat to duck hunt or commute to their favorite hunting spot, they become one. Regardless of the game they seek, hunters that utilize boats must follow all the same boating laws and regulations the rest of the boating population does, including following navigation rules, possessing the required equipment and abiding by the boat's capacities.

Boating accidents claim the lives of more hunters annually than gunshot wounds, mostly from falls overboard as a result of their boat being improperly loaded, or due to moving around the boat unsafely. Avoiding some of these common mistakes can go a long way toward bringing hunters home safely after each outing.

Overloading the boat or loading the boat unevenly. The weight of too much gear or passengers on your boat can cause the boat to capsize or swamp. Comply with the capacity plate if present. It is also important to evenly distribute weight around the boat. If your boat does capsize, it will most likely still float, so stay with your boat and try to reboard.

Sudden shift in weight. Standing up or quickly moving, especially in a smaller boat, can cause a boater to fall overboard or the boat to capsize. Keep your center of gravity low and always hold onto something whenever boarding or moving around the boat. Another boat's wake, someone else losing their balance, landing a bird, or your dog's sudden movement are all potential factors in an unexpected shift in weight on your boat.

Not wearing a life jacket. Often times wearing a life

jacket can be the difference that saves your life. There are life jackets for every season including inflatables, camouflage vests and float coats.

Dressing incorrectly for water. Cold water can be a killer, even on sunny days. Dressing in several layers under your life jacket will trap body heat even when wet. Polypropylene or wool are excellent materials for cold weather conditions.

Hunting in bad weather. Boating in rough water or stormy conditions is not a good idea no matter the activity. Always check the weather beforehand, learn the visual signs of approaching weather systems, and stay as close to the shore as possible.

Not familiarizing yourself with the area. Be prepared for your hunt by acquainting yourself with the area you will be visiting. File a float plan by telling someone where you are hunting and when you expect to return. Boating safety also increases with numbers, so hunt with a companion or a group.

Drinking alcohol. Alcohol impairs judgement and reflexes - two very important requirements while hunting and boating - in addition to dilating blood vessels, which can speed up the effects of hypothermia. Make plans to celebrate the success of your day after your hunt by keeping the alcohol on shore.

Represent the boating community proudly and safely by taking these precautions to ensure that you have a successful hunting trip!

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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. My color makes me easily recognizable.
2. I can be very territorial, especially during nesting season.
3. I'm the official state bird in seven states, but not Kansas.

>>> See answer on Page 14

HUNTING HERITAGE

with Kent Barrett

Bullet Basics: Part 2

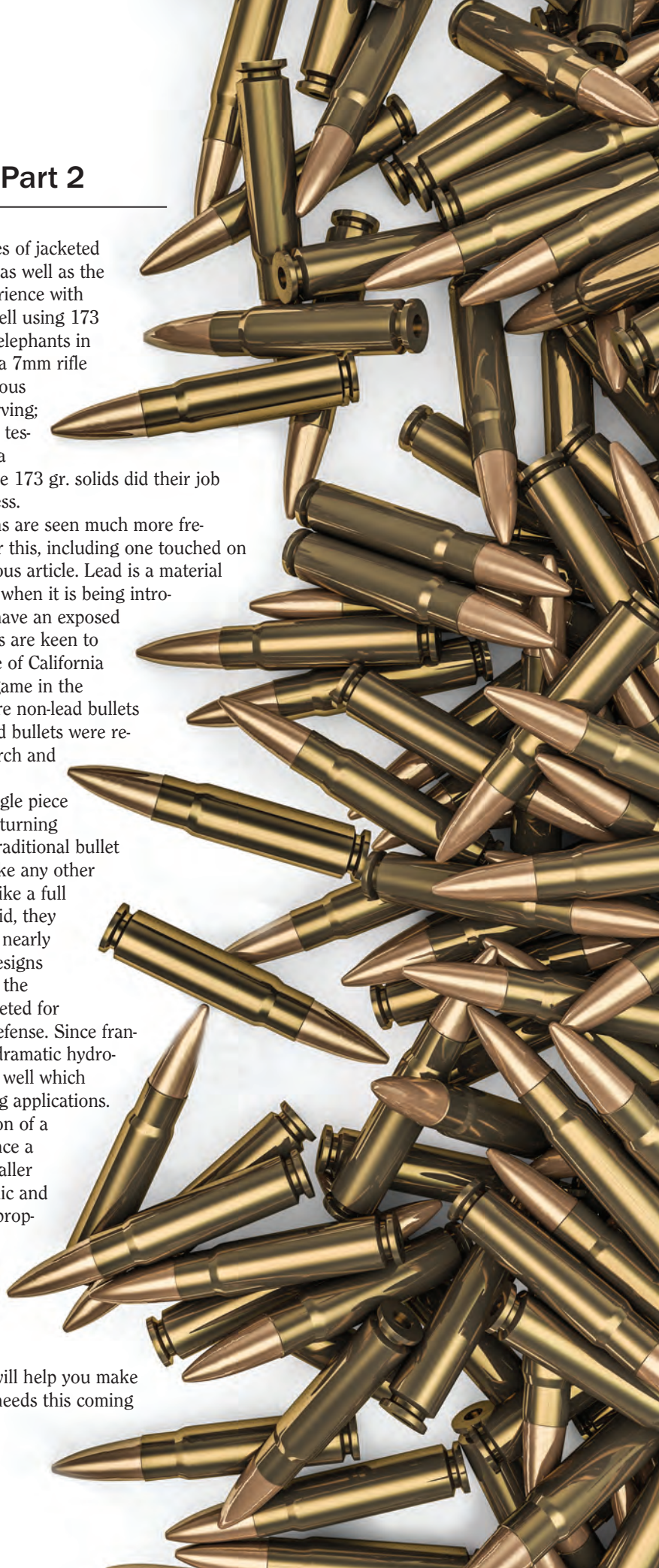
In the last article, we considered the different types of jacketed bullets in use today. Now, we will consider the solids as well as the use of polymer tips for jacketed bullets. My first experience with solids was when I read about W. D. M. “Karamojo” Bell using 173 gr. Kynoch solids in his .275 Rigby rifle to hunt bull elephants in Africa at the close of the 19th century. The idea that a 7mm rifle was the premier caliber for hunting large and dangerous game like elephants, rhinos and buffalo is a bit unnerving; however, the fact that Bell could and did is more of a testament to his marksmanship and hunting skills than a glowing endorsement of the particular caliber. But the 173 gr. solids did their job and penetrated deeply which contributed to his success.

Skip ahead a century or so and solid bullet designs are seen much more frequently by hunters today. There are many reasons for this, including one touched on in our consideration of soft point bullets in the previous article. Lead is a material with known toxic properties that must be considered when it is being introduced into our food system. Since soft point bullets have an exposed tip made entirely of lead core material, not all hunters are keen to eat game shot with them. As of July 1, 2019, the state of California requires the use of non-lead bullets for hunting any game in the state on public or private ground, but does not require non-lead bullets for target shooting applications. Modern types of solid bullets were re-introduced by 2003 and have been undergoing research and improvement since then.

Modern solid bullets are typically made from a single piece of copper or copper alloy rod. These can be made by turning them on a lathe or by using a forming process on a traditional bullet press. Solids can be made with a cavity at the front like any other hollow point design or have a completely solid nose like a full metal jacket (FMJ). Because these solids are, well, solid, they are very efficient hunting rounds because they retain nearly 100% of their weight and penetrate well. There are designs where copper powder is compressed and formed into the bullet. These “solid” frangible rounds are being marketed for hunting applications as well as target and personal defense. Since frangible rounds break up on contact, they can produce dramatic hydrostatic shock. However, they generally don’t penetrate well which makes them less appealing or illegal for many hunting applications.

Another feature of many bullet types is the addition of a polymer tip; the tip does a number of things to enhance a bullet’s terminal performance. A tip will provide a smaller point to the nose, making the bullet more aerodynamic and works to improve retained velocity and trajectory. A properly constructed tipped bullet will have a slight space between the end of the tip shank and the core that allows the tip to set back into the jacket on impact, therefore creating reliable and controlled expansion, even at lower velocities and greater ranges - all of which are advantages for the hunter.

I hope knowing the differences in bullet designs will help you make an informed choice on what bullet will best fill your needs this coming season.



Have you seen Rusty flat-sedge, *Cyperus odoratus*, in wet ditches, around water's edge or suddenly appearing in the middle of your yard?

Sedges seem to grow spontaneously in landscapes after a rainy year like just experienced across Kansas. Sedges are members of the Cyperaceae family of plants, and occur worldwide from the tropics to the arctic regions. There are more than 2,000 species of sedges with a very unique feature - the stems are triangular in cross section and do not have interval joints. An easy rhyme to remember for differentiating sedges from other tall-stemmed plants is, "Sedges have edges, rushes are round, grasses have joints from the top to the ground." No matter if the species of sedge is short or tall, the triangular stem lacks joints or nodes.

In addition to having a three-sided stem, sedges contain other features in groups of three. Rusty flat-sedge, for example, has three long and narrow leaves near the top of the stem. Flowers of this species are inconspicuous tubes attached to spike shaped structures at the top of the stem. The traditional flowering parts are present, but are small and not likely to be noticeable without a hand lens or microscope.

Rusty flat-sedge seeds may lie dormant for years until there is sufficient rainfall to cause germination and growth, preferably in full sun. To add Rusty flat-sedge to a garden, collect the seed spikes in the fall after they have

dried and turned a rusty, reddish brown color. Crush the seed spikes by hand and scatter in low damp areas to sow for growth the following year.

While the Rusty flat-sedge is not a known host for insects, taller plants may serve as a perch for insects or small birds. The plant is not palatable for livestock or wildlife.

Nut Grass or Yellow Nutsedge, *Cyperus esculentus*, is a familiar related sedge found in somewhat damp locations. It has an edible tuber that has been widely consumed since ancient times. While it is largely unappreciated when it appears in residential landscapes, pulling Nut Grass stems is not a successful way to remove the plant because the tuber stays in the ground and regrows new stems.

Another related plant *Cyperus papyrus*, commonly named papyrus plant, was used to make paper in ancient Egypt; the word "papyrus" provides the origin of the word "paper." Triangular papyrus stems were stripped of outer fiber and the inner pith was then laid in strips side by side. A second layer of pith was placed with perpendicular orientation on top. These layers were then hammered and pressed together to bond. Long sheets were created that could be written on and then rolled up into scrolls for storage. Dry climate has preserved some ancient papyrus scrolls for several thousand years. In addition, papyrus plant fiber is used to weave baskets and mats in ancient and modern culture.

Sedges are easy to identify in sunny and wet habitats because of their unique non-jointed, triangular stems.

They may not feed insects, birds or grazing animals, but humans have used their fiber for thousands of years. Be sure to look for them in your own landscape and when out in nature.



Photographer: Michael Haddock - www.kswildflower.org

with Marc Murrell



When I began my career with the Department in the Information/Education Section in 1989, I had many responsibilities. One of those was to assist with the agency's Kansas State Fair display. The late Dean Deutsch, assistant Law Enforcement supervisor, was in charge of the first few fairs I worked.

I remember my first fair well; all the sights and sounds were entertaining. I even discovered what a Pronto Pup was, as I'd heard all about them - it's an oversized corn dog on a stick and one of seemingly 978 things you can get deep fat fried at the fair.

In the beginning, live animals were a feature in our display. The El Dorado Correctional Facility had an Honor Camp where inmates rehabbed animals and we borrowed some of those. Dean even brought animals and one is most memorable.

I was sitting at my desk when I heard a commotion and yelling. I looked up to see a spotted fawn walking wobbly down the hallway. A few seconds later, Dean paused in the doorway with a cynical glare. His glasses and



Marc Murrell, director of the Great Plains Nature Center in Wichita, sits next to KDWPT's newest display at the Kansas State Fair - a mountain lion mount. The specimen pictured was legally harvested in the state of Idaho.

watch were broken and he was bleeding from his head. The fawn had got the better of him. Dean had picked up the fawn after someone "rescued" it. He placed the fawn in the backseat of his Chevy S-10 Blazer and all was fine until he hit the brakes.

"That thing went crazy and started bouncing all over," he barked as my hysterical laughter began. "It was kicking the tar out of me!"

Our annual white-tailed deer fawn, spots and all, was the impetus for one of the funniest questions I've ever answered. Amazingly, it happened multiple times when someone asked, "Is that the same fawn you had last year?"

Though popular, live animals were problematic in some ways. Dean put young raccoons in a cage next to the

bobwhite quail one year and the next morning the quail were no more.

Dean retired and I phased out live animals in favor of aquariums and small dioramas. KDWPT now staffs a giant, semi-trailer-sized aquarium, a state park cabin and a tourism booth in addition to our main display.

I've enjoyed the millions of people I've visited with over the years, and all of the regulation-related questions I've been asked.

I've also enjoyed the ever-popular subject of mountain lions. People told me thousands of stories about friends of friends, their uncle's aunt's cousin's brother's pastor's encounter with one, or more, sightings of these elusive big cats.

"Why won't you guys

admit they're here?" was always asked. My standard answer - based on fact - was, "There's no reason to think they're NOT, but we can't PROVE every sighting."

Fortunately, in Barber County in 2007, we got our first confirmed evidence of a mountain lion in modern times and we now stand at 21 confirmed sightings.

"See? I told you so!" were responses the following year.

While I'm not retiring, I am passing the reins of the fair over to Dustin Teasley, so it's only fitting in my 30th and final fair that we had a mountain lion display. I'm sure it generated a lot of interest and discussion, which, ironically, is one of the things I might miss most about my 300+ days of staffing the Kansas State Fair.



Pond-to-Plate

with Tanna Fanshier

Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT) employees explored a new way to get folks hooked on fish and fishing in urban areas! Toting toothpicks in place of tackle, and fry-baskets instead of fishing rods, KDWPT staff manned a booth at the Wichita Old Town Farmers Market. They baited in market-goers with free catfish samples and information on the numerous fishing opportunities in the Wichita metro area.

KDWPT's exciting new partnership with the Old Town Farmers Market is part of the agency's ongoing effort to recruit, retain, and reactivate participation in outdoor activities like fishing and hunting. The market provided ample opportunity to promote fishing



as a fun way to harvest local protein, and allowed KDWPT employees to interact with an audience not typically targeted in traditional outreach efforts. Market-goers were pleasantly surprised by the scrumptious, flakey catfish, and even more thrilled to learn that these harvest-sized fish are stocked twice monthly in more than 30 urban fishing

lakes in the Wichita area!

Information on stocked lakes can be found in the *2019 Kansas Fishing Atlas*, the *2019 Kansas Fishing Regulations Summary*, or under the fishing tab on ksoutdoors.com.

Next time your stomach is rumbling, ditch the grocery store, and check out some of the awesome opportunities to fill your plate with locally-caught fish instead!

The feeding frenzy is just beginning, though. Join us this winter as we extend our partnership with the Old Town Farmers Market to bring wild game and conversations about Kansas hunting to the table.

Hope to see you next time.



FISHIN'

Follow the Food

with Mike Miller

Most experienced anglers know that one way to find reservoir white bass and wipers in the fall is to watch for the birds. Gulls and other water birds will actively circle and dive above schools of sport fish as they feed on gizzard shad. The birds are picking up the scraps. And this usually occurs on the main lake. But what if there aren't any birds to follow?

Without birds or visible surface activity, you'll have to rely on electronics to find gizzard shad. Narrow your search by graphing along main lake points and rocky or rip-rapped shorelines, especially on the windy side of the lake. Gizzard shad feed on microscopic phytoplankton and zooplankton, and wind-driven current provides ideal feeding conditions on the windward shore for shad, which in turn attract sport fish.

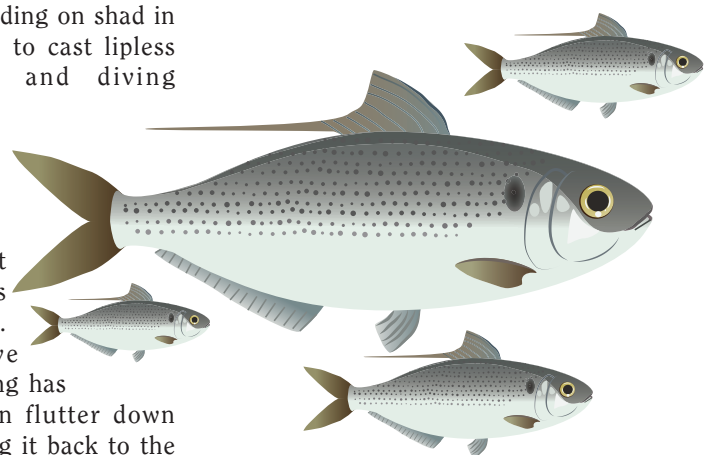
Later in the fall, start searching in main lake coves with feeder creeks where the water temperature will be

warmer. Begin casting along the secondary points in the coves but always watch for any surface activity. Don't ignore the very backs of coves and creeks, especially if there is flooded brush and vegetation. A day of wind can concentrate shad in coves on the windward shore, and they may take refuge in the vegetation.

When I find fish feeding on shad in the open water, I like to cast lipless crankbaits, spoons and diving crankbaits; all in silver, white or chartreuse to imitate shad. You can cover a lot of water with crankbaits and a fast retrieve often elicits reaction strikes. Spoons are effective after the surface feeding has slowed. Let the spoon flutter down near the bottom and jig it back to the boat, imitating an injured shad.

When fishing shallow in the backs of coves, I like an eighth-ounce jig with a white or chartreuse shad body or Ned Rig with a one-sixteenth-ounce head. Cast as tight to the windy shore or brush as you can and use a slow retrieve or jigging action back to the boat.

In fall, find shad and you'll catch fish.



Shutterstock/11357655726



As technology progresses, so does the popularity of photography! Major camera companies are working on lighter cameras with similar capabilities to the heavy Canon and Nikon units that we carry around. I haven't switched to the smaller units yet, but Jim Griggs with Great Plains Nature Photographers makes a very compelling argument for these mirrorless, smaller and lighter units. Several of the big name nature and environmental photographers are changing to these machines. It seems there is a transformation occurring in the business.

It is almost impossible to make a living in the photography business. Unless you work for *National Geographic* or make a connection with a company or organization with a specific mission that requires photography, it is a difficult process. Having said that, Schools like Rocky Mountain School of Photography and New York Institute of Photography provide quality education and the opportunity to start a business that usually involves weddings, architecture and portrait gigs; fashion photography is a very select venue.

Most of us take courses, go on expeditions, and hone our skills to the best of our capabilities for satisfying images that we share on Facebook or other social media. To validate our work, we enter contests like the Five State Photography Competition in Hays or state fair contests. The genuinely skilled and talented enter the contests affiliated with *National Geographic*, *Outdoor Photographer*, *Audubon*, and other national and international publications and organizations. The prize money and recognition involved is significant and compelling.

The rules and regulations involved with these contests are daunting. The skill level of some folks in Adobe Photoshop makes it almost impossible to detect manipulation of an image. Some remarkable images of birds flying into a camera frame generate suspicion of baiting or arranging the image, which is prohibited. They will send a photographer to the site of an image under question. Captive animals versus wild animals or birds can be an issue. Arranging perches or flight paths of birds can be prohibited. Each contest has very specific rules that require careful attention.

There are other ethical and technical items that are pertinent. If you, the photographer, are in a group of serious birders, it is possible to get into trouble with them. Anything that makes a bird vary from its normal activity is absolutely frowned upon by some people. Using an electronic call is repugnant to some, so it's important to know your group before you join. Some groups don't even allow tripods or flash units.

Normal rules of photography always apply. You can take images of private land and objects if you are in a public area; you can't shoot into areas where people expect privacy, such as inside houses. A model release is not generally required unless that image will be used for commercial purposes. If you are respectful and polite, you can generally get all the pictures you want. Be careful around military bases, schools and children – it is a sad commentary but this is the world we live in.

Drones – though they are being banned from more areas all the time – provide striking images if you can get them. Don't plan to fly a drone over wildlife areas, as they are prohibited. Light painting is now prohibited in some areas, too.

All this to say, be careful, transparent and honest in your contest photos, and always get permission if it is in the least bit questionable.

I hope you get it right and win a contest!



Coached on Cooking

Both of my kids play on traveling sports teams and I often get to visit with parents outside of Pratt during practices and between games. Conversations often turn to hunting, trapping or fishing because that's what I gravitate to; I am afforded the luxury of being able to trek outdoors more than most because of my job and location.

I am always surprised at how many parents can relate to the outdoors, and I've noticed they are typically drawn to one type of fishing or hunting. One parent makes and sells a line of hard baits for largemouth bass, while another is a tournament angler with his son. One is an engineer who keeps up on all the latest electronics for his tricked out fishing boat. One only hunts ducks, another only deer, and yet another is

rabid about goose hunting. The common theme is they know one season really well.

Most of the anglers only catch and release, and the hunters don't often talk about cooking game meat. They either know how to cook it just one way, they give it away or they have the game processed for them. This is where I come in.

Going to tournaments includes packing snacks to save money, and we always have deer sticks or something of the like in our cooler. I get an odd satisfaction of seeing other parents raise an eyebrow when I pull out a jar of canned carp, oddly packaged sausage or another concoction I made myself. It's also satisfying to see their reaction when I explain the process of how I made what they just ate. I get a lot of positive feedback, and many eventually ask for recipes and tips.

Now, I'll pass on to you, the reader, some of my most popular coaching tips when it comes cooking wild game.

Batter up!

TIPS ON WILD GAME

1. If you can't keep fish alive until cleaning them, throw them on ice.

2. Remove slow swim or red meat from fish such as paddlefish, wipers and catfish to improve the flavor of the finished product. Don't skimp on this - I would rather have one pound of great fish than one-and-a-half pounds of not so good fish.

3. Cutting fish into evenly-sized pieces will help the meat to cook more consistently.

4. When freezing fish, put water in the bag and squeeze the air out the top and seal baggie while doing so.

5. When freezing fish or game, lay and freeze the bags flat. This makes thawing time quicker when you go to cook it.

6. When freezing game, keep it as whole as possible. Remove as much fat and membrane as possible but don't cut or grind into serving sizes until needed. The more surface area you have, the more likely chance it will freezer burn.

7. If you think game, like deer, tastes gamey, soak the meat in salt water. Use ¼ cup salt per gallon of water and soak for 24 hours. If you have an animal that you did not make a great shot on, debone the meat and soak it in a cooler with icy salt water for about three days, draining the water off each day and reapplying the solution. Rinse the meat before use or freezing.

8. Consider purchasing an inexpensive fridge for the garage. Put butchered deer in meat lugs, cover with saran wrap and let

it chill in there for three days before final packaging and freezing.

9. Keep or clean hair off of big game meat. Nothing tells your hunting buddies more about your outdoor skills than how you take care of the meat.

10. Juices from duck and goose will run red even when done. Waterfowl is overcooked when juices run clear and will result in meat tasting a lot like liver.

11. Cook deer to medium to avoid dry meat.

12. Marinade game meat for at least 24 hours and keep as much salt out of the marinade as possible. Salt will cause the meat to dry out. Use lemon juice if you want to tenderize a little. Salt it when you are ready to eat it.

13. Sugars burn easily while cooking, so if you are putting a sugar based product on

your meat, put it on after it's done and broil it for just a few minutes to set it.

14. To retain moisture, wrap lean game meats in a double layer of foil once done cooking and let it rest for 20 minutes.

15. If grinding deer meat into burger, use a ratio of 60 percent beef burger and 40 percent deer. This is a great way to almost double your amount of burger.

16. When field-dressing deer, bring a sealable gallon baggie along to put the back straps in. If you wait and transport the carcass, sand and dirt may get on those prime pieces of meat if left on the animal.

17. Study a diagram about the location of glands in deer and remove accordingly. Also remove all fat from the meat before packaging and freezing.

18. Invest in a vacuum sealer. Air is the enemy of frozen meats!

19. Initial and date your packages of meat. If you butcher two deer on the same day, mark one with the current date and the other with the following date. This will help you identify a whole animal if something tastes off with one - perhaps an older buck that was more suitable for grinding than steaks. This also helps identify particular animals if you have big game tested for diseases like Chronic Wasting Disease.

20. Field dressing and butchering any wild game can be overwhelming. There are plenty of instructional videos online. The more you do it, the better you will get.





Writings From a Warden's Daughter

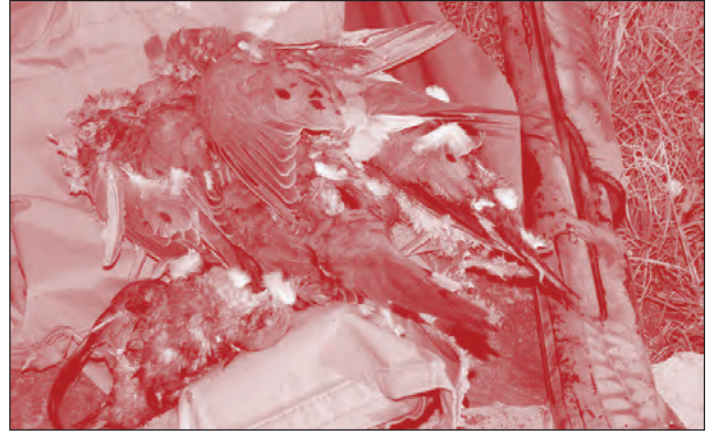
with Annie Campbell-Fischer

My dad served as a Kansas game warden for more than 35 years. These are his stories.

Bait and Switch

Early in the 2005 Kansas dove season, Dad received a call from a landowner informing him that someone illegally entered onto his property and scattered milo around the shoreline of a pond. The landowner reported that spent shotgun shells littered the area and it was evident that mourning doves had been taken. Hunting migratory birds over bait is strictly prohibited by federal regulations, and Dad left immediately to investigate. He located the pond and gathered evidence supporting the landowner's observations. He found milo scattered around the entire shoreline of the half-acre pond and collected spent 12- and 20-gauge shotgun hulls and several discarded dove wings. After taking photos, Dad left the area. For ten days straight, mornings and evenings, Dad kept the baited pond under surveillance. But as the late September nights cooled, doves migrated out and the opportunity to apprehend the illegal hunters passed.

After discussing the baited pond with a game warden from a neighboring county, Dad and the other warden decided to watch the pond in 2006. Starting in mid-August, they began checking the pond periodically and just prior to the September 1 dove season opener, they discovered the pond



banks had again been baited with milo. The two game wardens devised a plan.

Opening day came and went without any action, but on the morning of the second day, Dad located two trucks parked along the road adjacent to the pond. He called his neighboring warden to pick him up and Dad rode on the tailgate of the patrol truck as the other warden drove slowly toward the pond. When they got close, Dad hopped off and dropped below the dam. He could hear continuous shooting from three locations surrounding the pond. Using shallow ditches, trees and rock piles to stay concealed, Dad was able to approach safely and without being detected. After he radioed the other game warden to return, Dad waited for a pause in the shooting to announce his presence. After telling the suspects to stop shooting, he cautiously stood up and confronted three camouflaged law-breakers. Dad directed them to lay down their shotguns and walk over to him. About this time, the other warden and his K-9 partner arrived. At first, the suspects denied any knowledge of the piles of milo visible beneath their feet around the pond. However, while the K-9 officer gathered shotguns and other evidence, Dad determined that one of them was from out-of-state and hadn't bothered to purchase a nonresident Kansas hunting license and Harvest Information Program stamp and his shotgun wasn't plugged as required by federal law.

The three violators were charged in federal court for hunting migratory game birds over a baited area. The out-of-state hunter was issued a notice to appear in county district court on his Kansas license violation. The trio paid a total of \$3,340 in penalties, which was partially based on the 24 doves taken and seized as evidence. Had the two wardens not stopped the illegal hunt within the first hour of legal shooting time, the penalties could have doubled. But their primary mission was to protect the resource. Mission accomplished.

WAY outside

BY BRUCE COCHRAN



"HOPE YOU'LL EXCUSE THE WAY THESE LOIN CHOPS LOOK. I BUTCHERED MY DEER WITH A WEED WHACKER."

"WHAT AM I?" answer: Northern cardinal

The folks I get to meet are among the many aspects I love about my career. In 2006, I became involved with an organization where I met some of those folks called the Turtle Survival Alliance (TSA). The TSA is a group initially formed under the auspices of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature – an international governing body that oversees the status, protection, and international trade in wildlife. Despite its unfortunate acronym – the turtle TSA formed prior to the airport TSA – it has become quite an influential stand-alone group. Not all of its members are stereotypical wildlife types either; there are a few that originate from non-science backgrounds.

I had the opportunity to visit with one individual, George Meyer, several times over the years. George was a writer and producer for *The Simpsons* for 16 years; he also previously worked as a writer for David Letterman and *Saturday Night Live*. In the past, George and I had some long rambling conversations about Black Sabbath, sci-fi literature, space travel, and who knows what else. With an increased focus on relevancy by state wildlife agencies, I decided that if George and I had a chance to chat again, I wanted to ask him about his interest and journey into the conservation field.

This year our meeting was in Tucson, which also happened to be George's hometown. The conference was located at Loews Ventana Canyon Resort. George told me about how he used to hike and camp in Ventana Canyon in his younger days as a Boy Scout before the resort was built. Later in life, George became involved with the Nature Conservancy, and then with



Conservation International (CI). His dedication to these groups even resulted in a frog species being named after his daughter in 2005. Through his connections at CI, he was introduced to the TSA, which led us to sitting on a couch in the lobby of a hotel located in a canyon where he once hiked as a youngster. I asked George if he felt his interest in the environment bled over into his work – he responded definitely!

mulching. While animation can be over the top and focus on the absurd, the point is, you don't have to be the most environmental to make a difference – you just have to care.

A few years ago, George wrote a humorous opinion piece for BBC News about being a hypocrite. Essentially, many of us care about the environment, yet we still do many things that are opposite of our convictions. Some of our actions are done consciously, while others are not so obvious such as using plastic silverware and Styrofoam plates, flying on gas guzzling airplanes, or racking up miles in our vehicles for work. It's important to recognize these facts and make changes wherever possible. And even more importantly, we need to raise awareness in those with complete disregard for the environment.

*“Find what excites you
or makes you happy.”*
–George Meyer

While chatting about the changes he observed as Tucson expanded over the years, I had a little fan boy moment. I steered the conversation to one of my favorite episodes of *The Simpsons* from season 12 titled “Lisa The Tree Hugger.” In this particular episode, Lisa falls for the handsome leader of a radical environmentalist group. The storyline goes through an ongoing game of one-upmanship over who can be the most environmental, including absurd activities such as pocket

If you are interested in the outdoors or other environmental issues, it is not hard to become involved. To quote George, find what excites you or makes you happy. Research to see what activities or groups are out there, and then make connections. And definitely visit one of our state parks or nature centers – our staff can get you pointed in the right direction.

Park View

with Kathy Pritchett

Looking Forward to Fall

Work continues at Little Jerusalem Badlands State Park. Hardened surface trails, a parking lot, restrooms, a shade structure and information panels are all being added. Keep checking ksoutdoors.com for news regarding the official opening.

Parts of the Flint Hills Trail State Park will be temporarily closed as contractors remove old, non-functional culverts to replace them with new ones. In some areas, the trail will remain open while contractors are working. Watch for signs and be careful when in these areas. Removing or redirecting water around the trail as quickly as possible is key to keep the surface in riding condition. While replacing these culverts is inconvenient to users, it is critical to the trail's usability.

This year's unprecedented flood caused damage and closures to many of our parks over holiday weekends when they are typically filled to capacity. However, the water is receding! Staff

may still be assessing damages, so please obey posted notices - especially when facilities are closed due to unsafe conditions. If conditions warrant, boat ramps may be closed and swimming may be prohibited. These restrictions are for public safety as well as to prevent further damage to facilities. Damaged electric and water lines will be upgraded to current standards. If you have any questions about specific campgrounds or facilities, call that park office directly, as conditions change.

Elk City State Park has re-opened. The flooding forced the closure, as roads were covered with water and the utility company shut off the electricity. Cross Timbers and Fall River campgrounds are all now above water, though staff are still removing debris and assessing damages. Some docks may be unusable. Hillsdale also faced extended flood conditions, so not all facilities may be available. Kanopolis State Park is open again, though some campgrounds and trails are still affected. Tuttle Creek continues to hold

significant amounts of water, so some campsites may be closed for a while.

Events in the park continue throughout the fall and winter months. The 17th Annual Fall Rendezvous will be at Fall River State Park the weekend of September 28. Hike the trails at Milford with their Monster Myths by Moonlight on October 12. Trail events currently scheduled may have to be re-routed or postponed depending on trail conditions after the flooding. Find details on these and other events at ksoutdoors.com/State-Parks/Event-Calendar.

Fall is also a beautiful time to visit Kansas state parks. The fall color should be spectacular due to the over-abundant rainfall received this year, making the season the perfect opportunity to take photos or soak in the quiet. Additionally, the kids are back in school, mid-week crowds are minimal and animals are busy preparing for winter. Not to mention the weather is cooler - most of the time anyway.

Hunting Atlas Now Available

The wait is over for hunters anticipating the arrival of Kansas' newest hunting atlas. The 2019-2020 Kansas Fall and Spring Hunting Atlas includes maps of Walk-in Hunting Access (WIHA) properties - private lands leased by KDWP and opened to public hunting - and state and federal public wildlife areas. Grab a printed copy from your license vendor, or download the electronic copy at ksoutdoors.com by clicking "Hunting," then "Where to Hunt." Printed copies may also be requested by calling KDWP's Pratt Operations Office at (620) 672-5911.

Hunters are encouraged to retain their hunting atlas through the 2020 spring turkey seasons, as the 2019-2020 atlas includes both fall and spring Walk-in Hunting Access (WIHA) enrollments; a separate spring atlas will not be printed.

More than 1.1 million acres of land has been enrolled in the WIHA program for upcoming seasons, with more than



4,400 unique tracts mapped. And while the printed atlas will be up-to-date as of its print date, additional acreages may be added to the program post-printing, as landowners continue to sign up. Hunters are encouraged to view the online atlas throughout the season for the most current maps.

All WIHA properties are designated with signage displaying the lease dates, which can begin Sept. 1, Nov. 1, or April 1, and end Jan. 31, March 31, or May 31. All regulations for KDWP public lands apply to WIHA properties, and accessing a WIHA property prior to or after the lease dates shown is prohibited.

To learn more about the WIHA program, or to download an electronic copy of the 2019-2020 Kansas Fall and Spring Hunting Atlas, visit www.ksoutdoors.com.



2019 Deadline to enter is Oct. 11!

Photo submissions for the 7th annual “Wild About Kansas” photo contest are being accepted now through Oct. 11, 2019. Divided into five categories, participants can submit photos related to:

- Wildlife** (game and nongame animals, primarily mammals, migratory birds, furbearers, etc.)
- Outdoor Recreation** (people participating in recreational activities outdoors, not hunting or fishing)
- Landscapes** (scenery; wildlife may be present, but should not be the sole focus of the image.)
- Other Species** (insects, reptiles, and amphibians)
- Hunting and Fishing** (hunters and anglers; set-up shots following a hunting or fishing trip. Photos with dead game will be accepted, however, “action” shots, or photos taken during the activity will be given preference.)

RULES

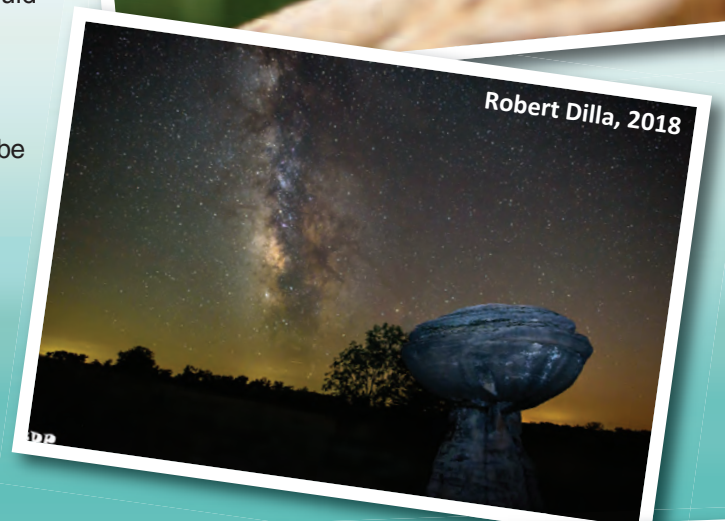
Photographers can submit up to three photos total. Photos must be taken within the state of Kansas and must be the entrant’s original work. The contest is open to both residents and non-residents of Kansas, and there is no age limit.

JUDGING

Each photo will be judged on creativity, composition, subject matter, lighting, and the overall sharpness. Photographs from participants under the age of 18 will be placed in a youth division; all others will compete in the adult division. Winning entries will be featured in the 2020 January/February photo issue of *Kansas Wildlife & Parks Magazine*.

HOW TO ENTER

Entries must be submitted no later than **5 p.m. on Oct. 11, 2019**. Photo format should be JPEG or TIFF. All photos must be submitted electronically. Photos that do not meet the minimum file size requirements (1 MB) will NOT be accepted. To enter, visit ksoutdoors.com and click “Publications,” then “2019 Wild About Kansas Photo Contest.”





Mushroom Rock State Park

text & photos by
Rick McNary
outdoor writer/photographer

As you travel west on a graveled road from the Scenic Byway 140 through the undulating Smoky Hills, you crest a hill and immediately notice the unusual formations. Rising from the earth's floor, they look out of place. Pause at the top of the hill and let your mind wander a bit before you approach the park; imagine being in a covered wagon and cresting that same hill 150 years ago.

Imagination. That's what makes Mushroom Rock State Park different than other state parks; it stirs your imagination. Although it's only five acres and easily explored in a short period of time, there is something almost magical that makes you want to stay longer to let your imagination wander. The incredible, almost unbelievable, rock formations are listed as one of the 8 Geologic Wonders of Kansas.

On the north side, the trail leads you past Pulpit Rock, duly named for its shape. The trail also winds around, up and over more rocks which children find delightful to scamper on. Make sure you look for the rock with the flat top and a tree growing out of it. If you're like me, you'll scratch your head trying to figure out how a tree that big could grow in something so solid.

On the south side of the road, a bench provides a nice respite as it overlooks a wooden ravine with a footbridge traversing it. This is a delightful place to soak in the sounds of nature, watch the lizards dart across the sand and,

again, let your imagination wander. Songbirds flit about in a cacophony of nature's harmony while cattle in nearby hills carry the base line.

Hike over the bridge and through the native grasses and wildflowers and you will discover Mushroom Rock and Devils Oven formation which also resembles, from one point, a shoe.

As you gaze upon the rock formations, you notice the tops of the mushroom-shaped rocks are much harder than the pedestals upon which they stand. I assumed, and commented to my wife, that it must be two different types of geologic matter (admittedly, I'm not a geologist).

However, I discovered that all of it is the same type of geologic matter - Dakota sandstone. The difference between the top and the bottom is a fascinating work of nature called concretions, or cemented calcium carbonate. Nature makes its own cement over millions of years as moisture and geologic particles cause the area to solidify into a hardened mass. The top part is literally hard as cement while the lower part is, by comparison, much softer and susceptible to erosion. Therefore, the hardened parts are cemented concretions; the softer parts are uncemented.



The unusual rock formations at Mushroom State Park are all the same type of geologic matter - Dakota sandstone. The difference between the tops and the bottoms of the "mushrooms" is a fascinating work of nature called concretions, or cemented calcium carbonate.



Mushroom Rock State Park operates under the auspices of the nearby Kanopolis State Park and is for day-use only; there is no camping allowed and no permit required. Restroom facilities are available.

These formations are also known as hoodoos - rock formations that are hardened on top and perch on bases that are softer in composition. Strikingly, these rocks show the non-uniform patterns of erosion mainly caused by wind, not by water. The largest rock with concretions measures 27' in diameter; that's about the width of a two-car garage.

Before 1963, anyone who wanted to visit the rocks had to travel a rough road across private property. However, Ellsworth County built a road that led to the five acres. The land on the north side and south side were owned by two different parties, but the Ellsworth County Historical Society purchased the two parcels, then donated them to what would eventually become the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism. Mushroom Rock is a satellite of Kanopolis State Park, administered by park manager Jason Sunderland.

"This place is such a rarity that we get travelers from all over the U.S., Europe and Asia," Sunderland says. "It's odd to drive down a country road in Kansas and see car tags from California to New York."

"Although it's only five acres, it attracts a lot of tourists," Sunderland continues. "Various archeology and geology clubs take their members there. On one of the rocks is a carving from the 1800s of the American flag. It's good to see the old carvings like

that but really frustrating to see the new ones."

"We hope to get a trail grant to place signage at points of interest," Sunderland says. "We also would like to put in a picnic area. People who come seem to enjoy staying for a while. Even though its small, people don't seem inclined to hurry through it."

The mushroom rocks are almost like Mother Nature made them just for us to pause in wonder, then begin to let our minds wander at the marvel of her design, the stories of the past and hope for the future.

For me, I traveled back to the time when only Native Americans lived on the Great Plains. Did this area hold a place of spiritual significance to them? Was it a place where important meetings were held by various tribes? Did they climb on these rocks to peer across the valley for bison?

With its proximity to Coronado Heights thirty miles to the southeast, one can't help but wonder if Coronado saw these rocks in 1541 while searching for the seven lost cities of gold. If not he, then surely a scouting party of his conquistadors reported back to the troop their incredulous findings.

What did the early settlers think as they traveled the nearby Smoky Hill Trail and took a short diversion to see the rocks? How did pioneer explorers



like Kit Carson and John Fremont describe it to people as a landmark for travel? Carson called it, "his favorite little place." Since Fort Harker was just a few miles away, notable figures like Buffalo Bill Cody and General George Custer frequented this area.

It's also hard to imagine how different this area would be had the French refused to sell it to America in 1803. Then, the mushroom rocks belonged to France as this area was part of Louisiana Territory, a massive swath of 827,000 acres ranging from New Orleans clear to the Canadian border in northwest Montana. At the same time that Lewis and Clark navigated up the Missouri River, diplomats from America were brokering a deal with France to buy the property for \$15 million, the modern-day equivalent of \$330 million.

Spend some time in the park and you'll see what I mean; your imagination just begins to wander.

Although you can tour the entire park in a short period of time, do yourself a favor; take your time. Mushroom Rock State Park is best enjoyed slowly with a camera, a pair of binoculars, a cup of coffee, a journal and your imagination. 🐃



Several of the stones have carvings, much like the ones pictured above. A staff favorite is a carving of the American flag dating back to the 1800s.



GETTING THERE

Mushroom Rock State Park is 5 miles north of Kanapolis State Park on the Prairie Trail Scenic Byway (K-140). Turn west on Avenue K, which is a gravel road, and travel 3 miles. It is waiting to surprise you as you crest one of the Smoky Hills.

UPON ARRIVAL

Make sure you carve out time to take the Kanapolis Lake Legacy Trail, a self-guided tour of 27 historical sites including the remains of Fort Harker in the city of Kanapolis, about six miles to the west. This military fort was active from 1866 to 1872 and was considered one of the most important forts west of the Missouri River. The Legacy Trail was developed by the Army Corps of Engineers.

Mushroom Rock State Park operates under the auspices of the nearby Kanapolis State Park and is for day-use only; there is no camping allowed and no permit is required. Restroom (vault) facilities are available.

Ellsworth Country Historical Society provides a valuable look at the history of this region.

**TO CONTACT MUSHROOM
ROCK STATE PARK
STAFF, SEE:**

Kanapolis State Park
200 Horsethief Rd.
Marquette, KS 67464
(785) 546-2565

ksoutdoors.com/State-Parks/Locations/Kanapolis

A Trip Worth Repeating

by Brent Frazee
outdoor writer

Each November, Joe Herzog and his wife BJ, short for Billy Jean, pack their vehicle to the brim and embark on their annual vacation. They drive almost 20 hours over the course of several days from their home in the Washington, D.C. area until they reach their idea of paradise – the farm country of central Kansas.





Joe Herzog (pictured bottom left) and his wife BJ, make a 20-hour drive to Kansas from their home near Washington, D.C. every year to hunt. Their favorite game? Upland birds, especially quail.

It's quite a change of pace for the couple; they leave behind the concrete and fast-paced life of a Washington suburb to the quiet, slow pace of country life.

But that's exactly what Joe is looking for. Quail abound in these fields, and to a lifelong hunter, that is an irresistible lure.

"We just don't have many birds left where I live," said Herzog, 79, a retired Army colonel. "I remember years ago reading a magazine article called 'Hunting Quail in Kansas,' and I turned to BJ and said, 'We're going on a road trip.'

"That was in 1990, and we've been coming back ever since."

But Herzog isn't alone in his love of the open fields, dusty backroads, and friendly atmosphere of rural Kansas.

Each year, tens of thousands of nonresidents travel long distances to partake in one of the Sunflower State's biggest tourism draws – hunting.

A lasting tradition

Herzog has simple instructions for friends and relatives who want to contact him in the fall.

"I tell them, 'Don't get married, don't die in November, because I'll be in Kansas,'" he joked.

It has been that way for almost 30 years. When he and BJ first traveled to Kansas, they had no contacts and no real game plan on how to gain access to good hunting ground.

"We would just drive the backroads and when we'd see a good place to hunt, we'd knock on the door of a farmhouse and ask for permission," he said. "People were very friendly.

"I would ask 10 people, and nine of them would let us hunt."

At the time, Joe and BJ would hunt together behind their German shorthair, Sam. The small brushy

fields in the Emporia area were full of quail and the hunting was memorable.

"There were a lot of days when I had my limit by noon, and we would just go driving around in the afternoon, sightseeing," Herzog said.

Things are tougher these days, Herzog added. BJ's health no longer allows her to hunt with her husband, though she still goes along for the trip. And Joe's contacts have dwindled as landowners have passed away or sold their farms.

According to Herzog, the quail also are not nearly as numerous as they once were. And Joe no longer follows one of his dogs through the field, after traveling to Kansas with first his German shorthair and later with two Vizslas – all named Sam.

But the Herzogs still come back. Kansas still has some of the best bobwhite quail hunting in the nation. Joe meets up with friends he has met over the years, and tags along with them on hunts.

Joe takes pride in the fact that he can still keep up with young guys walking across fields. He is an excellent shot, perhaps a testament to his Army days or maybe





A 1990 magazine article titled "Hunting Quail in Kansas" is what turned long-time non-resident hunter, Joe Herzog, on to the Sunflower State. His come back every year since.

Another long road trip to Kansas

Woo Daves, a nationally known pro bass angler, also includes Kansas in his vacation plans each fall. But he travels to the Sunflower State for the most unlikely of reasons – to hunt rabbits.

Kansas is famous for its pheasant, quail and deer hunting. It is far less recognized for its rabbit hunting. Yet, Daves is happy to travel to the plains of Kansas from his home in Burrowsville, Va., each year.

He and a few of his friends time their trip to take place the week after the firearms deer season ends. By the time they arrive and release their beagles for the chase, the fields have calmed down and the fun begins.

"Kansas is about as good as it gets for rabbit hunting," said Daves, 73. "It's pretty wide-open, so you can watch the dogs work. That's what I like, when you hear those beagles get out the trail and they bring those rabbits right past you."

Daves and his friends take rabbit hunting seriously. They will take as many as 30 beagles with them to Kansas; they will hunt 15 one day, and a fresh 15 the next.

The dogs are pampered. They stay in roomy kennels, and comfortably wait for their chance to get in on the action.

"We don't hunt properties but one day," Daves said. "We're not out to shoot every rabbit on the farms we hunt. They normally get hit by rabbit hunters one day each year, that's it.

"By now, we have permission to hunt enough land that we can

move from spot to spot."

Daves first came to Kansas to hunt pheasants with another pro bass angler, Stacey King. While he was blocking, Daves took note of all the rabbits he saw.

The next year, he joined Steve Desch of Topeka, another avid rabbit hunter, on a hunt specifically targeting the cottontails. They shot plenty of rabbits, and Daves has been coming back ever since.

Thirty years – for Daves, that adds up to a lot of hunts, a lot of rabbits and a lot of memories.

"A lot of hunters come to Kansas for the pheasants or deer," Daves said. "I don't know of many who will travel as far as I do to hunt rabbits.

"But that's my thing. I own 22 beagles, and I travel to other states to hunt rabbits – but Kansas is special."



Woo Daves, professional bass angler and dog owner to 22 beagles, comes to Kansas not to hunt deer or birds, but rabbits.



Jim Dickson (right), Louisiana, proudly displays one of his Kansas turkeys. Now 76, Dickson is still keeping his hunting tradition alive.



A special reunion

When Jim Dickson and Spencer Tomb get together each spring to hunt turkeys in Kansas, it amounts to a reunion.

They were classmates at the University of the South in Sewanee, Tenn., and each went on to establish noted careers.

Dickson, who now lives in Ruston, La., became a wildlife biologist and one of the nation's leading authorities on the wild turkey. Tomb, now retired, served as a botany professor at Kansas State University.

They kept in touch over the years, and turkey hunting reunited them. Dickson was introduced to Kansas turkey hunting when he was invited to participate in the Kansas Governor's One-Shot Turkey Hunt years ago.

Shortly after, he and Tomb started their tradition of hunting together each spring. They've been hunting together for 12 years now, and they hope to extend that streak even further.

Dickson, who describes himself as a "turkey-hunting addict," hunted 31 days last year in four states other than Kansas – Louisiana, Alabama, Tennessee and Nebraska.

But he always considers his time in Kansas as the highlight of his spring road trip.

"At one time, Kansas was poor in turkeys," said Dickson, who is 76. "But the restoration program (by what is now the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism) was immensely successful and the population has blossomed.

"It will wax and wane, but there are still a lot of turkeys."

Dickson and Tomb usually hunt together in the Council Grove area. They often split up and hunt separate parts of the private farms where they have permission to hunt, then get together later in the morning. They often are carrying big toms when they do.


"I always look forward to coming back to Kansas," Dickson said. "It has some ideal

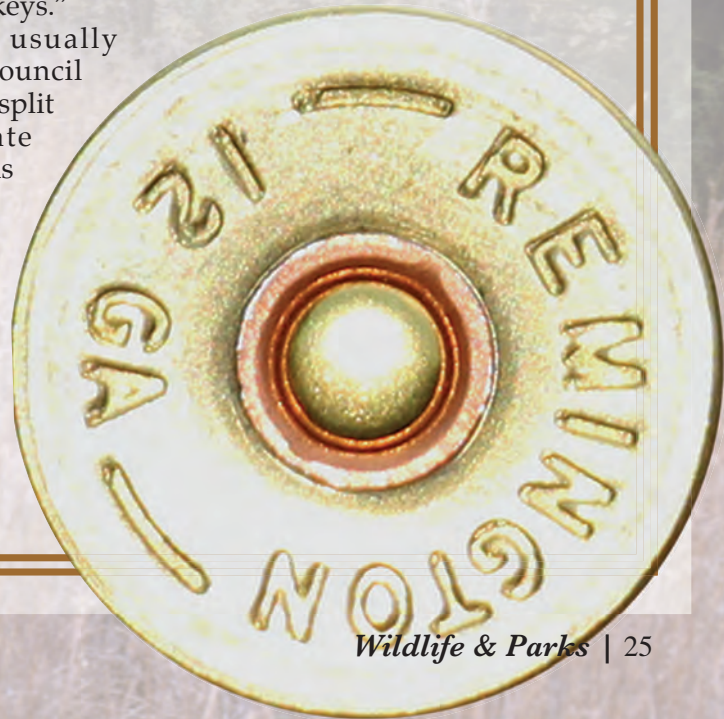
turkey habitat – ag fields, pastures, and fallow fields that intersect with timber.

"The landscape is broken up, and that's what turkeys like."

But it's more than just the hunting that makes Kansas special, Dickson said.

"I've made a lot of friends in Kansas," Dickson said. "In places like Texas, there aren't that many good places to hunt that aren't leased up anymore. But you can still knock on doors and get permission to hunt in Kansas.

"For a turkey hunter, it's just a great place." 



FLOAT TUBE FRENZY

by Marc Murrell
staff writer

Anglers are a unique bunch, and each have their own preferred methods and techniques. For one Wichita man, float tube fishing is his preferred method and it has been for decades.



BE





“I started fishing when I was two years old,” said Terry Forcum, 77. “I started float tube fishing in 1964 in Oklahoma and have been doing it every year since.”

Forcum has lived in Wichita for nearly three decades now and these years have been drastically different than the first four decades of his life. He’s a man of many talents and he’s done it all over the course of his lifetime and learned from experience, rather than schooling. He admits he went to college for a semester but it wasn’t for him.

“I learned everything I needed to know that semester,” he laughed.

While looking for something to do in Oklahoma in 1960 other than college, 18-year-old Forcum saw two buddies hitchhiking trying to get to Ft. Worth, Texas to become bull riders. He thought, “what the hell” and picked them up, went back home, packed a few things and left his mom and dad a note letting them know he’d call when he got there.

“I was a bad bull rider,” Forcum laughed. “I rode a few, but not very many and I was there to just kind of fill out the field.”

Like all bull riders, injuries were common.

Fortunately, the worst injury Forcum received was some broken ribs after getting hooked by one particularly ornery bull.

“I did that for a while and then quit,” he said.

Forcum went on to more successful ventures, most notably with a welding business and as a professional world’s long-drive golf champion.

“I finished second in 1982 and won it in 1983,” Forcum said of his links experience. “I finished third in 1988 and was the only guy ever to finish first, second and third using a wood head.”

He speaks fondly of those years and the people and places he got to see as a result of his competitive golf experience. Forcum traveled all over the world with huge sponsorship deals from many major companies, likely making more than 1,000 appearances in a 10 year period. He played on several of the professional golf tours including three PGA regular tour events, 10 senior events and 10 or so Nike tour events.

Although he enjoys hunting

deer as well, Forcum definitely loves his fishing – particularly bass fishing – and doing it from a float tube adds an element of excitement.

“You’re right there with ‘em and I’ve caught 5 pound bass with this much line out,” Forcum said holding his fingers only inches apart.

And while Forcum enjoys catching ANY bass, he particularly relishes BIG bass in the 5-10 pound range.

“It’s really a challenge to catch the big ones and I work hard at it,” Forcum said.

All of the bass Forcum catches over 5 pounds get their photo taken, all of which are saved on his computer in a file labeled as such. He estimates he’s easily caught 45-50 bass in that category in the last few years and never gets tired of all the commotion when one is hooked.

Flint Hills farm ponds and watersheds are Forcum’s favorite places to bass fish and he’s got access to some dandies. These waters often don’t get much pres-

sure and Forcum has been managing some of them by removing loads of small bass annually. Doing so results in more, bigger bass with fewer mouths to feed. He's seen the difference it can make in just a few short years and gets excited talking about the improved fishery created with just a little management.

His favorite time to fish – other than any time he can go – is from April into the fall, though he says it slows a bit during the winter. After parking his vehicle only a few yards from the water's edge, he gears up with waders, swim fins and a float tube that resembles a giant spider missing a leg – he has six rods sticking up from a homemade rod holder strapped to the back of his tube and one rod lying across the front of his tube.

"I don't want to be tying on all the time if I want to try something different," he said about his menagerie of rods.

Forcum eases into the water carefully to avoid taking a spill. He admits he likely does more "walking" in 6-footish of water as he tip-toes around the edge, rather than paddling out to the middle and not touching the bottom.

"I think I have better control that way and I can turn around and fish back towards the shore or cast parallel to the shore in front of

me," Forcum said.

Unlike some bass anglers, Forcum doesn't spend hundreds of dollars on his rods – he actually enjoys finding a good deal on sale. Each of his rods are outfitted with a bait-casting reel spooled with 17 pound monofilament line. His lures of choice have two things in common – they're generally large and each is equipped with a plastic trailer of some sort. His favorites are swim baits, buzz baits (he says he's caught fish on them in January), spinner baits and a drop-shot rig with a crawfish imitation.

In recent years, Forcum has started making his own bass lures and even selling them. It's an interesting venture and he enjoys knowing something he made catches fish. He works on his lures when he's not fishing or when the weather isn't good and he cranks out as many as he can.

In between fishing trips and even during a few with his cell-phone, Forcum is still working; his company, GAF Promotions, specializes in promotional products and printing. He's at home on the water paddling around in his float tube as he enjoys the tranquility of it all and appreciates the time he's spent doing it.


"It's been fun, I've had a good life," Forcum said of his 77 years on earth.

The lure of 5 pound bass is

addictive to Forcum. He admits he never knows what he's going to catch and is looking around every corner of cover in a pond hoping for the next big one he can take a photo of and release to fight another day. It's the joy of this fight that keeps each trip fresh and mysterious.

"I can't wait to get my hands on them, get the hook out, kiss them between the eyes and turn 'em loose," he said of what's fun for him float tube fishing. "And you never know what you're going to get size-wise."

Forcum has managed to float tube fish in every month for the past several years; he doesn't mind the cold, although he admittedly spends less time at it during the winter months. One thing is certain – he's not about to give up float tube fishing any time soon.

"I don't know how many years I've got left," Forcum concluded. "But you can bet I'll be fishing every one of them!" 



Terry Forcum gears up with waders, swim fins, a float tube, and a homemade rod holder capable of holding six rigs.



Terry Forcum has two requirements for his fishing lures: that they be large and equipped with a plastic trailer, like the one shown above.



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Sous Vide

by Rob McDonald,
outdoor blogger

The cooking method you need to know

Preparing wild game for the family table can be intimidating. Lean cuts of protein from deer or waterfowl can easily be overcooked, making some hunters nervous to put wild game on the dinner menu. One unique cooking method gaining popularity with hunters and chefs alike consistently produces perfectly-cooked protein – Sous Vide.



What is Sous Vide?

Sous Vide is a french culinary term meaning “under vacuum,” referring to the process of vacuum-sealing food in a bag, then cooking it to a precise temperature in a circulating water bath. This versatile cooking method was once limited only to professional kitchens and high-end restaurants. More recently, food preparation manufacturers are offering affordable and easy-to-use sous vide equipment for home kitchens.

The Advantages

Precision temperature control coupled with even circulation of the heated water produces unrivaled cooking results. The sous vide cooking technique offers consistency that is both predictable and repeatable, bringing food up to an exact temperature and holding it there. Not only is sous vide consistent, but cooking foods – particularly cuts of meat, in their own juices – produces an end product that is both juicy and full of flavor.

With a little practice, you can decide at exactly what temperature you like certain cuts of meat cooked, and the sous vide will take care of the rest. By utilizing precise control of the water bath temperature, you have control down to the degree, ensuring there is no risk that your meal will be underdone or overdone. Another great advantage of the sous vide method is time; time is on your side when you cook with sous vide. As a virtue of a steady temperature, ensuring your food will not be overcooked, it's possible to leave your dish in the sous vide for hours and never worry about it being overdone. If you're not sure exactly what time supper will be, or want the luxury of a perfectly-cooked dish when you're ready to eat, not the time, then you need to give sous vide a try!

Putting It Into Practice

So here it is, you've got a few beautiful duck breasts from a fantastic hunt. Now to cook them! First, you'll need a sous vide cooker. There are a number of sous vide models available from \$30 and up to well into the hundreds of dollars. Pay attention to the volume capacity, usually measured in quarts or liters. This detail describes the size of container, filled mostly with water, the sous vide can effectively heat. If you think you might try a whole venison shank, or antelope shoulder, then opt for a sous vide that will heat water in a 48 quart cooler. There are plenty of options and features including Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, and starter kits, though a simple sous vide with accurate controls is more than sufficient.

Next, because sous vide cooking takes place with the cut of meat in a plastic bag, you will need a freezer-style zip top bag, or a vacuum-sealed bag, if you have access to a vacuum packer.

Finally, you will need a container. Any variety of container that is water tight and will withstand the cooking temperature used for sous vide cooking will suffice. Of course, a stock pot, soup pot, or large dutch oven will work; but so will a cooler or even a bucket.

One fantastic aspect of cooking with sous vide is the ability to add seasonings and flavorings to a dish during the cooking process, sort of like cooking in the marinade. Consider what flavors you'd like to use, and you're to create a beautiful and delicious wild duck dish to share with family and friends. 🐓



Duck season brings with it magical mornings in the marsh, with beautiful waterfowl cupped and coming into your decoy spread.

Bring the magic of those hunts home, and share it with your friends and family in the form of an amazing sous vide duck breast meal, like the one pictured here.

Wild Duck in the Sous Vide Recipe

As an avid waterfowler, I pursue ducks and geese across the state of Kansas from Cheyenne Bottoms to Kirwin Lake, and Waconda Lake to Flint Hills Wildlife Refuge. There's something magical about a fall morning over decoys with duck wings whistling overhead. After a successful day at the marsh, the hunt provides rewards in the kitchen and at the table.

Here is one of my favorite duck breast recipes cooked with the sous vide method!

Preparation

Carefully examine the duck breast and clean any shot or feathers. Trim away any silver skin or connective tissue and pat dry.

Lay the cleaned and dried wild duck breast into your zip top, or vacuum style bag. Drop in the rosemary, garlic cloves, vinegar, worcestershire sauce, ½ Tablespoon of olive oil, and 1 Tablespoon of butter. Seal the bag up, and it's ready for the sous vide.

To prepare your sous vide for cooking, follow the directions for your particular make and model. However, the method is pretty straight forward. I generally use a large stock pot with a sous vide clipped onto the side. Fill with warm water a little below the maximum fill line on the sous vide.

Cooking Temperature

Gently lower the cooking bag into the water. To try and keep things organized, I like to use clothes pins and pin my cooking bag to the side of the pot. Set the sous vide for your desired temperature, my perfect temperature is 132 degrees for rare to medium rare. When you are cooking waterfowl, think beef; Wild waterfowl should be considered a red meat and cooked accordingly. If you like your steak or prime rib rare cooked to 130 - 135 degrees, then cooking duck or goose breast to this temperature will be perfect. Set your sous vide to 140-145 degrees if you prefer medium-rare, and 155 to 160 if medium is right for you.

Set It and Forget It

One of the key components of sous vide cooking is knowing your food will be perfectly cooked. Sous vide heaters warm the cooking water evenly and circulate the water to produce the perfect, steady temperature. By giving your food enough time to come up to the water's temperature in the hot water bath, you can be sure your duck breast will not be overdone.

My experience has been that seasoned duck breast will be perfect at 132 degrees in about an hour, but you can leave it in the sous vide for 2 hours, 3 hours, or even 6 hours for added flavor without the risk of overcooking!

Ingredients:

boneless / skinless breast meat from 3 medium-to-large ducks

1 Tablespoon olive oil

2 Tablespoons of butter

4 large garlic cloves, peeled and smashed

2 sprigs of fresh rosemary

2 teaspoons balsamic vinegar

1 teaspoon worcestershire sauce

Several pinches of kosher salt & a few grinds of fresh black pepper



Put a Sear On It

While sous vide cooking is a fantastic way to impart flavor, get consistent cooking results, and achieve the perfect doneness for your wild game dishes, it does not produce that outer sear we all crave. Adding that nice outer sear to your sous vide dish is relatively easy.

When you are ready to eat, and the duck breast has had plenty of time to cook to perfection, it's time for a quick sear. Turn off the sous vide, remove the cooking bag (it will be hot) and remove the duck breasts.

In a heavy iron skillet over medium high / high heat, melt the remaining butter and add the remaining olive oil. Be careful not to burn the oil. When it gets good and hot, sear the sous vide duck breast for 20-30 seconds per side, just long enough to get a nice brown sear.

Finally sprinkle the hot seared duck breast with coarse salt, and fresh cracked pepper. Cover loosely with aluminum foil to rest, then slice and serve while it's still hot. Serve with a delicious roasted green vegetable, maybe a baked sweet potato, and some crusty bread!



Becoming an

OUTDOORS-WOMAN

by Rick McNary
outdoor writer and photographer





If you're a woman with a desire to try an outdoor adventure with a group of other women in a safe and supportive environment, Becoming an Outdoors-Woman (BOW) is designed just for you.

Tapping into one of the fastest growing sectors of the travel industry – women-only adventure trips – BOW's popularity has increased in parallel and offers entry-level through advanced courses for women interested in outdoor adventures.

"BOW is designed for a person new to outdoor activities," says Jami McCabe, Director of BOW in Kansas. "Many of the women who join us for the first time are nervous because they have either no, or very little, experience with outdoor-related activities. But by the time the weekend is over, they leave with new friends, new skills and new confidence."

The primary BOW events are in the spring and fall at Rock Springs 4-H Camp near Junction City. The sessions begin at noon on Friday and concludes Sunday afternoon. The classes offer a wide range of activities from which participants can choose and are divided up into three sections: hunting and shooting; fishing; and non-harvest activities. For the 2019 fall session, 45 classes were offered.

"There is something for everyone," McCabe says. "At our spring session, we built a bat-house, so women learned how to use woodworking and wood-burning tools. Many women had never used a power miter saw but our instructor, Amanda, taught them how to use one safely so they all went home with a project they made from start to finish."

"Back in 1999, I heard about BOW and went the first year by myself," McCabe says. "I was a bit intimidated and thought the women there will know everything and they'll all be friends and I'll be an outsider, but it's not like that at all. Many are first timers like I was and the ones that have been here before go out of their way to make the new ones feel right at home from the time they check-in until they leave."

"The first year I took natural history, botany and orienteering but the second year I took turkey hunting because it was a sport I could go do by myself. I took it again the second year and took archery along with it. I

fell in love with archery, so I bought a bow the next month. It was so much fun, I started competing in archery, then the BOW director asked me to teach a class. I taught archery for four years and, when the former director retired, I was fortunate enough to become the new director."

"I fell in love with archery, so I bought a bow the next month. It was so much fun, I started competing.."

McCabe's story progression from first-timer to engaging in competition to becoming an instructor is common among BOW instructors, including Jennifer Farwell.

"In my first year, I took a stream ecology class taught by a Wildlife and Parks conservation officer and it blew my mind," Farwell says. "It's amazing what lives in our streams! I also took a class on Kansas ghost towns and, holy smokes, there are some amazing stories about towns that no longer exist!"

Although she enjoyed those classes, it was another class that changed the course of her future.

"I'm originally from Leavenworth and my Dad was in the military," Farwell says. "He taught my brother and I how to use firearms, so I was familiar with them but not confident. However, after taking a class at BOW I learned so much more about how the gun worked and about marksmanship, so I came back super excited and wanted to get into competitive pistol shooting."

Farwell turned that excitement into competitive pistol shooting at state and national levels. In addition to competition, Farwell added to her skills by becoming a certified instructor through the National Rifle Association.

In the past decade, the number of women who target shoot has increased more than 70 percent to more than six million. Along those lines, the number of women who hunt has increased 45 percent to more than three million. Clay target shooting is the fastest growing sport in American high schools.

"I was thrilled when Jami asked me to be an instructor," Farwell says. "Some of the classes have a lot of energy like the last class

I taught where we shot at metal targets after our initial instruction. They loved hearing the BING when they hit the target. Some were so shy and reserved when they started, but with each target they hit they became more confident. You could literally see the confidence on their faces when they left."

"Sometimes it can be intimidating to be around a bunch of new people, but we work hard to make it a safe, non-judgmental place where the women can ask a lot of questions. I want them to have the same confidence that I walked away with after my first year."

Her involvement in pistol shooting brought an unexpected benefit; she met the man who would become her husband.

"We were at a shooting event and all the other people knew what Shane was going to do, so they had their cell phones out when he dropped down on one knee and proposed. One guy joked, 'You better make sure she doesn't have any guns on her when you propose.' It's fun to share the sport with the man I love."

Farwell brings another unique perspective to BOW after her experience serving in the Peace Corps in a rural village in West Africa. She would have stayed longer but the threat of Bohko Horan and the kidnapping of foreigners forced her to return to America.

"In those small African villages, we did things together as a community. If one person went to the well, a group went to the well. I appreciated the communal aspect of their village and enjoyed just sitting around and talking. However, back in the states, I missed that because we're all in a hurry and live in individual homes with fences between us and we lose our sense of community. We have to make our own community and BOW became a way for me to engage with people who share similar interests in an activity that is meaningful."

Another such instructor is a high school industrial arts teacher, Amanda Torbett, of Lawrence.

"I saw a brochure for BOW and thought I'd try it out," Torbett says. "I've always had an affinity to the outdoors and when I went the first time 15 years ago, it was game over for me; I was hooked. I think I've taken every class that has ever been offered. I've discovered things I didn't know that I would enjoy, and I've learned it in a nonthreatening environment. None of the instructors are trying to show off about how good they are."

"While BOW is focused on outdoors skills, the lessons transcend into all facets of life."

After few years, McCabe asked Torbett to become an instructor.

"I'm a teacher by trade so it's kind of my jam," Torbett says. "I enjoy teaching and watching women catch a passion for something new. I will teach basic do-it-yourself skills this fall session with essential power tools and projects. I know the women will discover a new skill, but more importantly, discover something about themselves."

"BOW instills a sense of self-confidence and self-sufficiency. While BOW is focused on outdoors skills, the lessons transcend into all facets of life. Both from my own experience and from speaking with other participants, this program helps many women who are redefining or defining themselves."

The attitude of the instructors creates a welcoming environment for first time BOW participant such as Jessica White, who attended the Spring '19 session with her mother.



BOW participants hold up the golden treasures of their class - highly-coveted morel mushrooms.



Woodworking continues to be a popular course at BOW, as attendees learn lifelong skills they can use both indoors and outdoors.



From shotguns and rifles to handguns, like the one above, BOW attendees can easily learn shooting skills in a safe and fun environment.

"My parents have always been active in the outdoors and so was I," White says. "Mom is hardcore into caving, repelling, and kayaking and Dad is into hunting and fishing. Mom suggested we go to BOW and I loved it. The best part was the classes; the instructors made it so exciting even for someone like me who has been doing it my whole life. They introduced me to it in a way to make me more confident to go out do it myself."

"For example," White continues. "I love going fishing with my Dad and we really bond but I never learned to tie a clinch knot until I went to BOW. Learning that basic skill meant I could go fishing by myself and opened up a whole new world to me. I've also hunted a lot, but I shot better at the shotgun class than I ever have."

In addition to the shotgun class, White took fishing, limb-lining and a cooking class.

"It was my first time camping with women," White says. "Sometimes it's hard for women to learn something from their husband or boyfriend, but BOW offers a safe and supportive place. I'm in my early 30s and it's hard to find other women my age who want to spend their weekend doing outdoor activities. You either have to know the right person or go do it on your own."

"Some women my age have kids and are busy at soccer games and others just want to party. I'd rather have a picture of me on social media doing cool things that no one else is doing rather than one of me nursing a hangover."

"Rock Springs is a beautiful place," White added. "The food is great, the instructors are wonderful, the ones who've been here before are so supportive and the new friends I made I'm still doing things with outside of BOW."

The reasons for women signing up for BOW are as



A BOW attendee uses a woodburning tool to embellish a wooden cooking utensil.

varied as the people. Reflecting on nearly two decades of involvement with BOW, McCabe relates one of her favorite stories.

"One lady was about 80-years-old and had lost her husband a few years earlier. He had been an avid outdoors person, but she was not. However, she wanted to come to BOW and do things that he had done as a way to remember him. She was happy to shoot a bow just once or shoot a clay pigeon just once, because it was her way of remembering him. She also insisted she sleep in the top bunk of the bunkhouse and, I have to admit, it made me just a bit nervous watching her climb up there."

In addition to the primary offerings in the spring and fall, other BOW activities throughout the year involve a cattle drive, learning to cook with Dutch ovens, maps and orienteering as well as backpacking.

The spots fill quickly so early registration is a must.

And McCabe will let you have the top bunk if you really want it, even if you're 80 years old. 🐃

Although McCabe has a group of veteran BOW members who are now instructors as well as other men and women from the state who are experts in their field willing to volunteer a weekend for the BOW courses, she is always looking for additional classes and instructors.

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PAW PAWS

The Tropical Fruit of Kansas



text and photos by Michael Pearce
outdoor content manager

Mother Nature's Kansas pantry is packed in early fall. Upland bird and waterfowl populations are at annual highs while venison is more flavorful and tender than after the rigors of rut.

It's also when she provides us a wild green fruit some of us cherish. The thumb to fist-sized fruit contains a pudding-like treat similar to the texture, color and flavor of rich banana custard.

Paw paws, a native fruit found in much of eastern Kansas, are good as-is or made into a sweet dessert bread. A well-known Lawrence restaurant even makes paw paws into five-star desserts.

Never seen or heard of them? You're not alone.

"I can't believe the number of outdoorsmen around here who don't know a thing about them," said Greg Pickett a rancher, outdoorsman and paw paw fan from Elk County. "There are lots of them around here. You'd think they'd notice. There's nothing else around here that looks like a paw paw."

A Bizarre Find

"It's a wonderfully bizarre plant we have growing right here in Kansas," Kelly Kindscher, Kansas Biological Survey botanist has said of paw paws in the past. "It's a kind of tropical plant, with those huge tropical leaves and bizarre banana-tasting fruit. In the spring they have these reddish-brown flowers that seem out of place here, too."

The western-most range of paw paws includes parts of eastern Kansas. They're well distributed within our eastern two and three tiers of counties. Lyon, Pottawatomie, Greenwood and Butler counties all contain good groves. Nationally, the paw paw range goes as far north as southern Michigan and south through most of Dixie.

The paw paw's leaves dwarf those of native trees in Kansas.

Leaves 10-12 inches long, and 8 inches wide are common; some have been measured 18-inches long and a foot wide. They also turn a gorgeous yellow in the fall. They're so unique, Pickett and others can spot them driving down a highway.

But the huge leaves don't come from huge trees. Usually growing in groves, only a tall paw paw will reach 15 feet. The heaviest part of the trunk may only be wrist-thick and branches are as equally flimsy. Paw paws, the largest native fruit in the continental U.S., often grow in clusters of two to four with several clusters per tree. That's enough weight to resemble the posture of a Charlie Brown Christmas tree.

Pickett and I agree the ripe fruit tastes like a sweet banana, others compare them to mangos. Like a banana, they need to be soft to be ripe. While it isn't healthy to eat the skin and seeds, the pudding-like filling is loaded





Paw paws, left, are loaded with Vitamin C, healthy fats, antioxidants and essential amino acids.

with Vitamin C, healthy fats, antioxidants and essential amino acids. The seeds are big and can easily be spit out.

The fruit is a very popular food among a variety of wildlife, especially raccoons and deer. The huge leaves are also the only place where stunning zebra swallowtail butterflies lay their eggs.

Paw paws have been an important human food for centuries. Spanish explorers found native tribes eating them in the 1500s. George Washington loved to eat them; he and Thomas Jefferson grew them on their plantations. The Lewis and Clark expedition relied on them heavily for a while.

Kansas' earliest settlers surely gathered them. Elk County has a Paw Paw township. The tiny town of Howard has a Paw Paw street. As children, my grandparents picked them annually for food in the early 1900s in Leavenworth County.

Some groves may not be totally natural since native tribes and early pioneers both planted paw paws as they moved around to create a future source of fruit.

The ripe fruit can taste much like a sweet banana, or even a mango. And much like a banana, the fruit needs to be soft to be ripe.

Finding These Tree Treasures

While paw paw pickers have long been highly secretive about the location of their favored groves, beginners can do some exploring and find groves of their own. It's best to concentrate the search in low-lying areas. Most groves are in moist soil and growing under a tall canopy of

other trees. My best groves are near streams, but I've found them around springs on hillsides, too.

Many state parks have hiking trails that go through great paw paw habitat, as do some primitive roads through wildlife areas.

Keep looking for those tell-tale huge leaves. You'll learn ripe paw paws put off a sweet scent that can carry far in a breeze. You'll eventually be able to recognize mid-winter groves by the bark and shape of the trees. No promises as per what you'll find the following fall.

We have groves on our farm that have rarely had a fruit in the past 45 years. On my main paw paw property, there are groves that are annually empty and several that usually have just a few. Then, there's one grove that seems to produce four to six gal-



lons every fall. It's smaller than some garages. Pickett said he finds the similar situations on his ranch.

Fruit blends in well with the canopy and can be hard to spot. While many will be within easy reach, shaking the tree's limber trunk can dislodge higher ripe fruit. Beware – getting beamed by a falling paw paw can hurt – trust me!

After scouting in the late summer, return when the fruit is nearly or completely ripe. I've picked paw paws in Butler County anywhere from Sept. 20 through Oct. 10.

Paw paws that have started to ripen can be finished at home. I like to put them in a brown paper sack with the top rolled down. Some people put a ripe banana in the bag to speed up the process.

Ripe paw paws will keep longer if refrigerated.

First timers should show some restraint when eating paw paws as a few people get "gastric distress." Again, the seeds and skin shouldn't be eaten.

Since paw paws often come by the dozen, many people like to use the surplus for cooking. We keep the small fruit in the refrigerator to eat directly. Separating the flesh from skin and seeds is time consuming, so I save larger fruit to make paw paw bread. They'll work in about any banana bread recipe. You can combine the two kinds of fruit if needed.

The pulp of paw paws and paw paw bread freeze and thaw well. We like to save a few for the holidays. It makes a nice gift for those who we know are interested. Thankfully, their number is currently growing.

Renewed interest

Through the late 1800s and well into 1900s, the popularity of paw paws grew steadily. Some predicted them to be a great cash crop and new varieties were developed.

For generations the song, "Way Down Yonder in the Paw Paw Patch" was taught to Kansas' rural school children, including me in the third grade.

But through the mid and late 1900s, interest in the fruit dropped to almost nothing. Pickett and I felt like long-lost



While many paw paws will be within easy reach, carefully shaking the tree's limber trunk can often dislodge higher ripe fruit.

cousins when we learned the other also picked paw paws after we had met in 2005.

But interest has certainly increased in recent years, much because of the recent field-to-table, organic and locavore move-

ments. There are now more than a dozen big nurseries across the nation researching and producing improved paw paw trees. They're more commonly planted in Kansas, both for the fruit and the beauty of the huge, gold leaves.

There are even paw paw festivals and celebrations held every fall in at least three states.

Interest in gathering Kansas paw paws is growing, as is purchasing and selling them as a produce item. They're seasonally sold at a few farmers' markets in eastern Kansas and have become a source of some extra income for those who can find plenty.

Ross Jones first tasted paw paws while squirrel hunting with his grandfather near Valley Falls decades ago. Last year he gathered boxes of ripe fruit from a huge grove behind his house in rural Douglas County and began marketing them in Lawrence. Some were sold at the Lawrence farmers' market. A local grocer took a few. Several potential markets had never heard of the paw paws and declined. The staff at Free State Brewing, a downtown brewpub and eatery that has been voted the best place to eat in Kansas several times, knew exactly what Jones had.

Chuck Magerl, Free State proprietor, has been featuring paw paw dishes for about 20 years. Paw paw ice cream, cheesecake, bread pudding, sauces for pork dishes and more have become popular additions to Free State's autumn menu.

"I think some people are still intrigued by them and they like that paw paws have just such an incredible flavor," said Magerl, a fan of native plants and foods. "I know we've got people who look forward to enjoying them here every fall."

Longtime pickers like Pickett, Jones and I certainly understand.

Grow Your Own

Brad Loveless is a huge fan of paw paws.

"They're something that's really good for the environment and wildlife," said Loveless, Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism secretary. "I know when I can find something edible in the wild, rather I catch it or hunt it or it's a wild fruit, it's always special and so fascinating to me."

Loveless enjoys paw paws so much, he grows trees and transplants them to the wild. His meth paw germination came from years of experimen

First, he places the cleaned seeds in a sealable enough peat moss to cover each seed in about a moist moss. Keeping the seeds moist is important a half-hour on a countertop can dry them out en leave them sterile.

"It's important that it's wet, but you don't wa too moist," said Loveless. "Check the bag in a da two and if there are droplets of water on the insi the bag add a bit more peat moss." Next comes l of patience and faith.


Loveless lets the seeds in the sealed bag sit fo two months, or maybe even three. He then movi them to a larger container with enough soil to di roots 10 to 12 inches. Again, patience.

Loveless has had to wait up to two months before the planted seeds sprouted. Rather than transplant them to the wilds immediately, he allows the young plants to gather strength indoors, with plenty of water and sunshine for a few months.

"They'll have a lot better chance of survival if you wait and transplant them outside in September or October," said Loveless. "Things are much cooler then and their requirements for moisture won't be as high."

He'll plant the seedlings beneath a tall understory of tree tops, near a creek. He checks the soil to make sure roots can go straight down. Each plant is watered when transplanted. Success rates are good. It can take seven or eight years before those seedlings mature into fruit-producing trees. Loveless said it's worth the wait.

"It's just such a thrill to take a youngster or a friend out there and show them those things," said Loveless. "They're like a real hidden treasure just growing out there in the woods."

If you would prefer to purchase paw paws instead of seeking them out, contact Ross Jones at 816-590-1053 or e-mail wej66102@gmail.com. 

Paw Paw Bread Recipe

3 cups paw paw pulp*
1 tsp. vanilla
5 eggs
1 cup softened butter
2 cups (level) sugar
¼ tsp. fine salt
2 tsp. baking soda
2 ½ cups flour
Spray oil

*Ripe banana, mashed, can be substituted for, or mixed with, paw paw if needed.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Spray oil on 2 standard-sized bread loaf pans, a bundt pan or five mini loaf pans. Set aside.

Whisk together flour, baking soda and salt. Set aside. Cream sugar and butter until light and fluffy. Add eggs one at a time while beating well to mix in. Add vanilla and paw paw pulp and beat to combine. Add dry ingredients and mix just enough until the flour is incorporated.

Pour batter into sprayed pans and place in oven. (Put a cookie sheet below mini-loaf pans, if being used.) Bake 40-45 minutes for mini loaf pans, 45-60 minutes for standard loaf or bundt pans. Cake should be brown on top and pulling away from sides of the pans.

Cool 20 minutes before removing from the pan.



Grandpa Harry Cooking with Cast Iron

text and photo by Rick McNary

Harry opened up the door to the wood cookstove and started a fire. The early morning sun cast shadows on the golden lab still curled in the corner. The cast iron skillet clanged on the metal surface.

Harry wiped his hands and picked up the note on the counter.

*Dear Grandpa Harry,
I did a project for school
about cooking outdoors with
cast iron and showed the
pictures from our camping trip.
The teacher suggested I
interview you about how to
cook outdoors with cast iron.
I can't wait to see you in a
few weeks.*

Love, Ethan

*P.S. Tell Chauncey I bought
him a frisbee.*

Harry finished breakfast and sat down in the wood rocker. He nodded off but was suddenly awakened. Ethan was here; he could tell by Chauncey's bark.

"Hi, Grandpa," Ethan bolted out of the car. "Hey Chauncey, here's a frisbee!"

The old man chuckled as the dog chased the Frisbee.

"I can't wait to get started learning how to cook. This will be a fun school project."

"Well, now is as good a time as any," Harry said. "I have some fixin's ready to make lunch."

"Now?" Ethan asked. "But it's ten o'clock in the morning."

"Well, here's your first lesson in

cooking with cast iron: you have to plan ahead. Here, let's go sit on the stumps around the fire pit."

"I came up with some questions I'm supposed to ask."

"Fire away."

"Why do you like cooking with cast iron?"

"Durability. I fixed my breakfast this morning on a skillet that my mother used when I was a little boy."

"What's the most important part of cooking with cast iron?"

"Even heat," Harry lit the fire. "I'll wait till this firewood turns into coals before I start cooking."

"Do you use charcoal briquets?"

"I suppose you can, but I have firewood, so it seems silly to pay for something I get free."

"Why do you like cooking outdoors?"

"Because it gets too hot indoors," Harry chuckled. "I've never had air conditioning and cooking inside gets too hot."

"What's your favorite cast iron thing to cook with?"

"Dutch ovens. You can cook all kinds of meals, desserts and bread."

"What's your favorite part of cooking with cast iron?"

"It's a way of life," Harry mused. "Slow, planned and durable. I want things to last a long time."

"I hadn't thought about that before," Ethan said. "You have a lot of really old things that still look new."

"Except me," Harry laughed. "Another reason is that it forces you to plan in advance. I kinda wonder sometimes if some people's health problems are because they decide at the last minute what they're going to eat."

"Yeah, we eat a lot of microwave meals," Ethan said sheepishly. "That food doesn't taste nearly as good as yours."

"It's also done slowly," Harry went on. "If you hurry the fire, it'll just burn the food; you have to take your time and do other things while it's cooking."

Soon, the coals are ready, and they loaded the larger Dutch oven with fixings for stew.

"Now in the smaller one," Harry explained. "We're going to make The Harry Wither's Peach Cobbler Surprise."

"Why is it a surprise?" Ethan quizzed.

"You're gonna be surprised how good it tastes!"

As the meal slowly cooked, the old man, the lad and the dog wandered the property, checking on the chickens and splitting wood for the winter.

"Is it time to eat yet," Ethan asked. "I'm hungry! You know, Grandpa, the best part of coming up here is spending so much time outdoors with you."

"Well, Grandson, my favorite part of cooking outside is just that; being outside."

Harry lifted the lids and ladled the stew into two bowls then set on the stumps by Ethan.

"This is fantastic, Grandpa! And the Harry Wither's Surprise is delicious!"

"You ought to do a cooking demonstration for your class," Harry said. "I have an extra Dutch oven for you. But there's one condition."

"What's that?" Ethan asked.

"From now on, that dessert will be called, 'The Ethan Wither's Surprise.'"

"You're the best Grandpa ever," Ethan leaned over to hug the old man.

Chauncey woofed his approval.

Species Profile: Cicada

As fall makes its entrance and the weather cools, a familiar summer sound will soon disappear – the symphony of the cicada. The cicada song is not sung without reason. Male cicadas rub their wings together to emit the noise in order to attract mates and ward off predators.

Cicadas are an important component of our ecosystem. They serve as food for birds, bats, spiders, fish and reptiles. Your dog may even occasionally snack on one. that is, if they can catch them!

Cicadas are not locusts, in fact they are more closely related to crickets. And although they look menacing, cicadas are harmless and do not bite.

Cicadas feed on sap from woody plants and tree roots.

Female cicadas lay around 500 eggs within tree twigs before dying shortly thereafter. Eggs remain on the tree for about six weeks before hatching. Once the eggs hatch, the nymphs will drop to the soil below to begin the molting process. They then reemerge to begin their short life cycle above ground.

Cicadas will generally live between five and six weeks – just long enough to eat, breed, and of course, sing you a summer song.





Kansas is home to nearly one million acres of land open to hunting, including fields managed specifically for dove. It's just one more way the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism is working to make *opportunity last.*

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