

# KANSAS

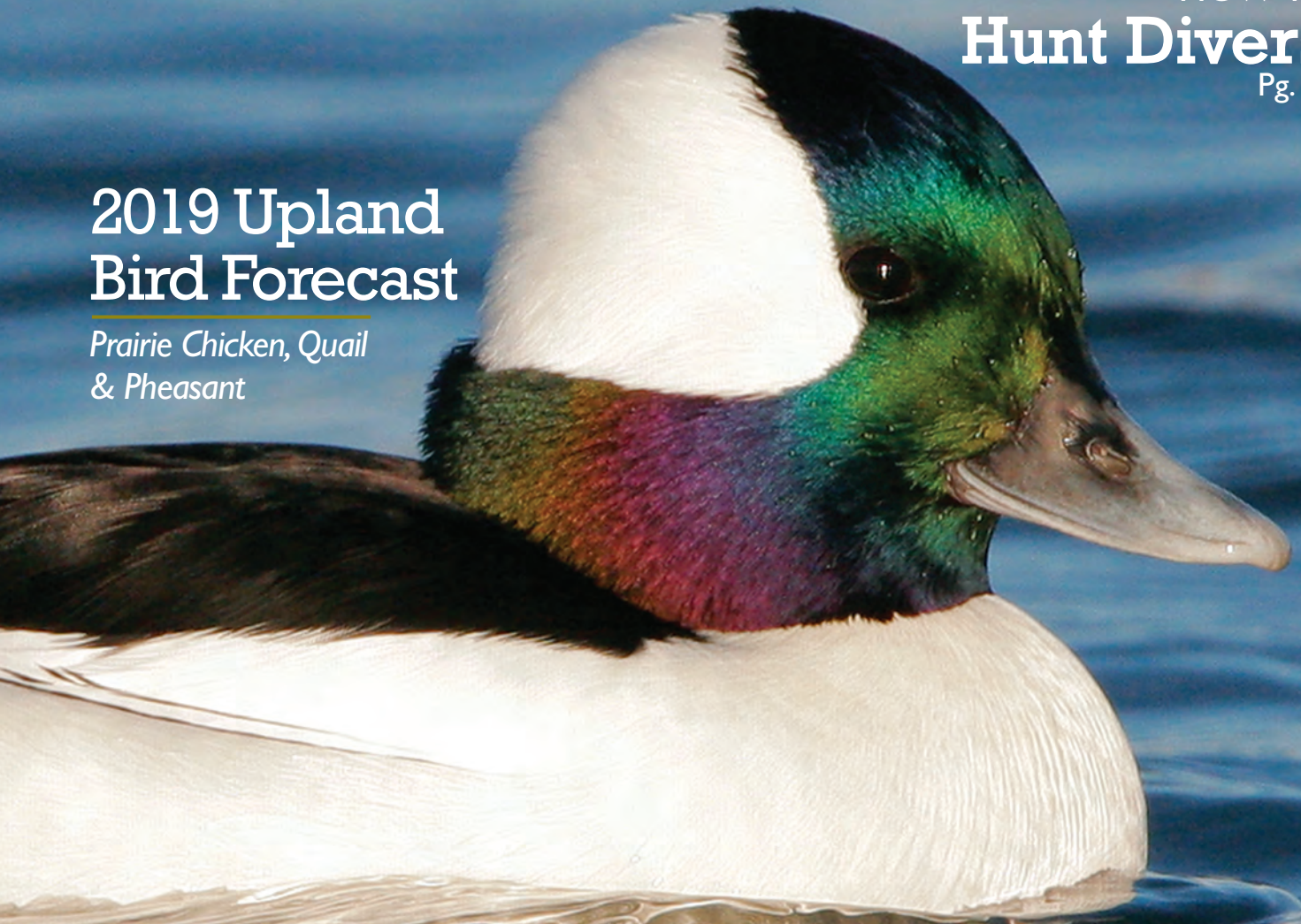
## *Wildlife & Parks Magazine*

FOR HUNTERS, ANGLERS AND OUTDOOR ENTHUSIASTS | \$3.75 | NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2019

HOW TO  
**Hunt Divers**  
Pg. 28

### 2019 Upland Bird Forecast

*Prairie Chicken, Quail  
& Pheasant*



Win a FREE  
Subscription!  
Pg. 43





**STATE OF KANSAS**  
Laura Kelly, Governor

**KDWPT COMMISSION**  
Gerald Lauber, Chairman  
Gary Hayzlett  
Aaron Rider  
Emerick Cross  
Troy Sporer  
Lauren Queal Sill  
Warren Gfeller

**KDWPT ADMINISTRATION**  
Brad Loveless, Secretary  
Mike Miller, Asst. Sec. Wildlife,  
Fisheries, Boating  
Jake George, Wildlife Director  
Doug Nygren, Fisheries Director  
Stuart Schrag, Public Lands Director  
Bridgette Jobe, Tourism Director  
Linda Lanterman, Parks Director  
Jason Ott, Law Enforcement Director  
Ron Kaufman, Info. Services Director

Chris Tymeson, Chief Legal Counsel  
Joy Duncan, Chief Fiscal Officer

**KANSAS**  
*Wildlife & Parks Magazine*

Nadia Reimer, Executive Editor  
Jessica Ward, Associate Editor  
Dustin Teasley, Graphic Design Specialist  
Annie Campbell-Fischer, Circulation



- 2 | Common Ground**  
Not a Zero Sum Game *By Brad Loveless*
- 16 | 2019 Upland Bird Forecast**  
A scientific prediction for the fall hunting season. *By Jeff Prendergast*
- 24 | Flint Hills Trail State Park**  
Stretching 117-miles, this state park is Kansas' longest. *By Rick McNary*
- 28 | Diver Delite**  
Diver ducks provide this hunting group great delite. *By Michael Pearce*
- 34 | Fishing's Future**  
This program aims to hook kids on nature and fishing. *By Rick McNary*
- 38 | The Kansas Grand Slam**  
An unlikely journey leads Dylan Campbell to a rare feat. *By Brent Frazee*
- 44 | Species Profile**  
The Bobcat
- 45 | Backlash**  
Trail Tact *By Nadia Reimer*

# Contents

**FRONT COVER** Sunlight captures the peacock-like iridescence on the head feathers of a drake bufflehead duck. Bob Gress photo.

**INSIDE FRONT COVER** Whitetails mill around in the early morning following a wintertime freeze. Marc Murrell photo.

Contact the editor: [nadia.reimer@ks.gov](mailto:nadia.reimer@ks.gov)

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

*Kansas Wildlife & Parks Magazine* (ISSN 0898-6975) is published bimonthly (every other month) by the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism, 512 SE 25th Ave., Pratt, KS 67124. Address editorial correspondence to *Kansas Wildlife & Parks Magazine*, 512 SE 25th Ave., Pratt, KS 67124, (620) 672-5911. Send subscription requests to *Kansas Wildlife & Parks Magazine*, 512 SE 25th Ave., Pratt, KS 67124. Subscription rate: one year \$13; two years \$22; and three years \$32.

Articles in the magazine may be reprinted with permission. Periodical postage paid at Pratt, KS and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Kansas Wildlife & Parks Magazine*, PO Box 16325, North Hollywood, CA 91615. For subscription inquiries call toll-free 1-866-672-2145.

Equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from programs described herein is available to all individuals without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, political affiliation, and military or veteran status. Complaints of discrimination should be sent to Office of the Secretary, Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism, 1020 S Kansas Ave., Topeka, KS 66612-1327.





# COMMON GROUND

with Brad Loveless



## Not a Zero Sum Game

Zero Sum Game (from Wikipedia): In game and economic theory, a zero sum game is a mathematical representation of a situation in which each participant's gain or loss of utility is exactly balanced by the losses or gains of the utility of the other participants.

Last January, my five-year-old grandson was lamenting how long it had been since we'd gone fishing and was discouraged at the prospect of having to wait until warmer weather. I knew the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism stocked trout around the state to provide wintertime angling and thought that might be the perfect antidote for his cabin fever, but I didn't have any experience with pond trout. The winter trout stocking program has been in place since 1995. Since stocked trout won't reproduce or survive the hot Kansas summers, these have become very popular "put and take" fisheries. Finding the nearest spot at Eisenhower State Park, I purchased my \$14 trout permit and we headed out on a bright, cold Saturday morning, confident that something in our tackle boxes would work. It didn't.

After about an hour, the little guy started to look for rocks to turn over, thought he ought to explore down past the pond dam and wondered if it might be a good idea to walk back to the truck to warm up. That was when an older gentleman fishing on the other side of the pond ambled over with a small jar in his hand. The paste in it looked like brown mustard and unlike anything I'd ever seen in a fish stomach. He said he saw we weren't catching anything and that we ought to try his paste, showing us how to mold it on to our hooks. He told us how far out to cast and suggested that we come around to his lucky spot. As he picked up his stringer of trout, he insisted that we keep the jar of bait and wished us "Good luck."

In short order, we started catching fish and had a terrific time fighting beautiful rainbow trout. Forgotten was the underside of the rocks, the backside of the dam and the inside of the truck. Later we enjoyed them a second time - for dinner that night with Grandma.

Knowing there were only so many trout stocked in that small pond, why did that stranger give us instruction and bait, knowing it would mean less for him to catch when he returned? It's because enjoying the out-of-doors is not a zero sum game, even though it might often appear so. The reason, I believe, is because the enjoyment of fishing, birdwatching,



discovering a hidden, beautiful spot in your kayak or hunting your favorite game animal is not solely defined by what you take home in your bag or on your camera. The experience is much bigger, sweeter, more memorable when shared. In my life, I have encountered many in Kansas who understood this and shared, mentored and coached me into unforgettable experiences that I'll always treasure. Using their example, I've come to understand a new math, one where I end up with more satisfaction by giving up rather than holding on to. Introducing a person to a new wonder, such as that gentleman did for us, is just such an example.

Importantly, sharing your love for your favorite Kansas outdoor experience is at the heart of our department's R3, or Recruitment, Retention and Reactivation, initiatives. Studies show that people start, stay with and reengage in outdoor activities best when invited by another enthusiast.

Busting the zero sum hypothesis, those who invite others magnify their own enjoyment by sharing what they love even when it apparently means less for them. I don't know how many times I've watched my mom passing out pieces of her famous pecan pie and being as happy at the last piece disappearing as she was with the first, even when it left none for her. Her joy was magnified by the joy she saw in us. The more she gave away, the happier she was. My mom's pecan pie was that angler's bait jar.

As we were driving home from fishing, my grandson, who is generally only quiet when he's sleeping, was oddly quiet. Finally breaking the silence, he said, "That man sure was nice to show us how to catch these trout. Maybe we can teach someone else to catch trout since we're good at it now."

I like the way he's thinking. 🐻



**Long Time Reader**

Editor:

I began reading Kansas Wildlife in the mid '80s. My Dad had a subscription and would hand them down to me when he was through with them. He passed away in 1986 and soon after his subscription expired.

I started my own subscription then and have been reading this great magazine ever since.

For some time I have worried that Mike Miller might retire. All good things come to an end. I started going to the last page to be sure he was still writing the *Backlash* column. I received the May/June issue and there it was, "A Change In Office."

I loved the photography of Mike Blair and then it seemed he was contributing less and less.

I grew up and older with J. Mark Shoup and his family. Then, he announced he was retiring. I cried when his dog died and rejoiced when he got a new puppy. I spent time in his family's hardware store. My Uncle Shorty ran Marcy's Shoe Shop in Leoti for many years. I spent a lot of happy days there planning hunting and fishing trips with him and other family.

I remember when you started writing, fishing and hunting on these pages. You have been an excellent addition. I'm sure you will do a good job in your new duties. The staff on duty now is great and I look forward to each new magazine.

Thanks for your time and the job you do.

Francis D. Marcy  
*Farmington, N.M.*

**Dog Gone Proud**

Dear Nadia,

This is Chase.

Chase wants to get his photo in *Kansas Wildlife & Parks Magazine*.

I told him that your deadline is very close, but I'd ask if you have any room in the November/December issue for this photo of him on a pheasant hunt with our friend, Ben Harper.



He was proud because this hunt he got his first pheasant.

Jon Blumb  
*Lawrence, KS*

**E-bikes Allowed at Kansas State Parks**

*In a 5-1 vote, Kansas Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KWPT) Commissioners approved the use of electric-assisted bicycles, or e-bikes, at Kansas state parks during their Sept. 19 public hearing.*

E-bikes, also referred to as pedal-assist bikes, have a small motor that engages when a rider pedals. Once engaged, the motor provides a "boost" of acceleration, allowing the rider to more easily maneuver hills and rough terrain. Only e-bikes that cease to provide assistance when the bicycle reaches a



maximum of 20 miles per hour may be used at Kansas state parks. E-bikes will also only be allowed on trails already approved for bicycle use.

"We have over 500 miles of trails at Kansas state parks," said Linda Lanterman, Kansas state parks director. "E-bikes will allow more users to enjoy these trails, including individuals who have previously been unable to because of age, disability, or physical capacity. We're really excited about the opportunities this will open up."

State park staff plan to increase public education efforts promoting safe trail use and trail etiquette, as well as increase signage on trails where bicycles are allowed. For a complete list of trails at Kansas state parks, including biking trails, visit [ksoutdoors.com/trails](http://ksoutdoors.com/trails).



# BIRD BRAIN

## Cool Weather Birding

with Mike Rader



The late fall and early winter seasons in Kansas are excellent times to bird with tremendous opportunities to see abundant waterfowl, cranes, gulls, loons, grebes, and the annual influx of sparrow species that winter in our state. And the many lakes and reservoirs across Kansas provide excellent, accessible habitat during these seasons.

The marshes of central Kansas – such as Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area, Quivira National Wildlife Refuge, Jamestown Wildlife Area, and McPherson Wetlands – are great places to look for waterfowl and other wetlands species. If you decide to visit, be aware of ongoing hunting seasons and know which parts of the areas are open to the public and which are

considered refuge zones, with no public access.

There are many large reservoirs and lakes across the state that have public wildlife areas managed by the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and others. These can be very productive for birding opportunities. State fishing lakes are also great places with public access, and many have not only great water habitat, but also associated wooded habitat great for attracting birds.

In recent years, waterfowl numbers in Kansas have been amazing, especially in central parts of the state. Do yourself a favor and plan a trip to Cheyenne Bottoms and Quivira in mid-November. There is nothing quite like sunrise/sunset at either location, watching tens of thousands of birds going out to feed or coming back in for the night. In fact, it's pretty magical at times.

Christmas bird count season begins on December 14 and runs through early January. There are typically around 50 counts that birders can participate in. Many folks participate in just one or two events, but others may go on a dozen or more! These counts are a great way to get out of the house and meet new people or it can be a way to catch up with old friends and spend some quality time together observing birds. Notifications and a schedule for Christmas bird counts in Kansas can be found at [www.ksbirds.org](http://www.ksbirds.org).

It is a busy time for us who love birding, but it's a great way to wind down from the workload and stress of early fall. Take some time to get outdoors and enjoy the abundant and diverse wildlife Kansas has to offer. You won't regret the effort!

## Lesser Prairie-Chicken Project Nationally Recognized

On October 2, 2019, the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT) was presented the Wildlife Restoration Award (Wildlife Research category) from The Wildlife Society at their annual conference in Reno, Nev. The Wildlife Restoration Award recognizes outstanding projects supported by federal Wildlife Restoration funds – also known as Pittman-Robertson funds – and associated non-federal matching funds. KDWPT Wildlife Division staff received the award for their research project, “Lesser Prairie-Chicken Habitat Use, Survival, and Recruitment.” Kent Fricke, KDWPT small game coordinator (pictured left), accepted the award on behalf of the department.

“The Lesser Prairie-Chicken Project has been one of the most productive

research projects ever funded by our department,” said Fricke, “and it exemplifies the success that can be attained when state wildlife agencies, researchers, and landowners work together. The findings of this research will continue to influence lesser prairie-chicken management for decades to come.”

The project has generated new information and helped establish common methodologies that will help researchers better understand the factors affecting habitat use and life history traits of lesser prairie-chickens. Research efforts were led by Dr. Dave Haukos, Unit Leader of the Kansas Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit at Kansas State University.



According to Fricke, none of this would have been possible without the cooperation of landowners.

“Because the vast majority of lesser prairie-chickens occur on private property in Kansas, it was imperative that relationships were developed between researchers and landowners to make this project successful,” said Fricke. “Landowner access was key.”





# LAW MATTERS

## Salvage Tags

with Colonel Ott

As the weather cools, the action heats up with animals in the great Kansas outdoors. Deer move into the rut, furbearers are out and about, ducks are passing through, and hunting pressure sends animals into areas they don't normally occupy. Although this is good news for hunting and outdoor enthusiasts, it can be somewhat taxing on motorists.

As the deer rut moves into full swing, the likelihood of deer-vehicle accidents increases substantially. This is not only frustrating and at times expensive, but also dangerous, as accidents claim lives every year. Remember to drive defensively, not just after dark, but during the day, as well. When deer are in rut, they can be active at any time.

Our department has a program to ensure that when big game and turkeys are killed in vehicle accidents, the meat may still be salvaged with the proper tag.

A salvage tag/permit tag can be obtained from game wardens, select KDWPT employees, as well as county sheriffs and some municipal police.

Arrangements to get a salvage tag are normally made through a KDWPT office or through the local law enforcement communications center. If the requestor was involved in an accident with the animal, the responding officer should have access to salvage tags or the ability to request one.

A salvage tag/permit is used in lieu of a purchased permit and is to be kept with the meat of the animal that was tagged.

The meat can be utilized for personal consumption, or donated to another person by following the same rules for animals taken during a hunt: "Any legally acquired big game or turkey meat may be given to and possessed by another, if a dated written notice that include the donor's printed name, signature, address and permit number accompanies the meat. The person receiving the meat shall retain the notice until the meat is consumed, given to another or otherwise disposed of."

The KDWPT salvage tag may also be used to tag antlered big game skulls that are located by individuals in the field. Please contact a Kansas game



warden or KDWPT employee before removing a head or skull from the field. They will respond and examine the scene to determine if there was any illegal activity associated with the animal's death. If no illegal activity is detected, the responder will issue a salvage tag for the individual to possess the skull. This does not apply to shed antlers that were dropped naturally by an animal.

Salvage tags ensure the resources we protect are not wasted in the case of an accident or incident. Many individuals across the state have benefited from this program, and we hope it continues to help many more.

Happy hunting, safe travels, and don't forget to say "Hello" to your local Kansas game warden.

## Remembering Jon "JC" Culley

Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks, and Tourism staff would like to extend their sincere condolences to the family, friends, and co-workers of Reno County Sheriff's Detective Jon "JC" Culley who passed away unexpectedly at his home on September 11, 2019 from natural causes. JC, 59, had been with the sheriff's department since 1986 and currently was assigned to the juvenile bureau.

JC also worked as a seasonal park ranger at Cheney State Park every summer since 1995, as well as serving as a part-time natural resource officer at Cheney Wildlife Area since 2004. His close friends at KDWPT affectionately referred to him as "Buford" (as in Buford T. Justice) because of the hat, sunglasses, and short-cropped mustache he sported on patrol. JC handled stressful situations in a professional, courteous, and caring manner; He was the calm during many storms at Cheney Lake over his 24 years with the department.

JC exemplified how vital KDWPT's seasonal employees are in carrying out the agency's mission and operations, providing the level of public service and safety KDWPT's constituents expect. He was the epitome of a law enforcement officer as his passion was helping others and making the world a better place. He loved to hunt and fish, and he spent every deer season at his cabin near Kanopolis Reservoir. The positive impact JC made will not be forgotten.

Stuart Schrag, *KDWPT Public Lands director*





# Game Warden Profile

Brian Hanzlick, Law Enforcement Division

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

The most memorable was the Cimarron Case that included 142 deer that averaged 160"'. The case took more than eight years from start to finish.

## What is the best thing about being a game warden?

The freedom to decide what is on the day's agenda. You may be checking hunters, assisting with cases, checking boaters, instructing Hunter Education; The days are never the same.

## If I was not a game warden, I would probably be:

A farmer and rancher.

## In my spare time, I enjoy:

Hunting, fishing and all of the outdoors.

## What/Who influenced you to become a game warden?

My family, although not all of them followed the rules. I experienced all facets of the outdoors, (good and bad) and was encouraged to hunt, fish and trap. My uncle worked for the department and allowed me to attend hunting and fishing events in Pratt. I would occasionally pal around with the guys at the hatchery, and stay at the museum across the street from the headquarters. Game wardens, biologists and parks staff also influenced my life. it's a profession that I am proud to be a part of.

## How are you involved in your communities?

I am involved with the local hunter education classes. I assist with advanced hunter education where we release pheasants and the youth chase them around during the youth season. I am honored to say that I help with Camp Hope, a camp for kids with cancer. We stock a pond that is located just outside of camp, gather fishing poles and bait and all the fish that are caught are cleaned and fed to the campers that night. It's a great experience and very humbling!

## What activities can people enjoy in your area?

Cheyenne Bottoms - it is the largest inland marsh in the United States at approximately 19,000 acres. The Bottoms has a multitude of migratory birds. It's a place where non-hunters and hunters alike travel long distances to experience.

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

K-9 handler for ten years, attended hunter incident training, interrogation and interview training, swift water rescue, among others. As a game warden, you are required to handle any situation that arises.

## What is your most embarrassing moment while on duty?

There are many, but some I will not tell. The most memorable is the time I had to write a citation with the bullet of a 22. I could not find a pen anywhere in the truck... I have packages of them now laying everywhere.

## Do you have any advice for someone who is considering a career as a game warden or in the wildlife management field?

Learn to hunt, fish and trap the right way. Once you understand this, you will realize how easy it is to cheat to kill or catch. It will also give you an advantage when pursuing those who are violating the laws intentionally. Remember, as a game warden or a responsible outdoors person, we are the voice of all fish and wildlife.

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

I would like to hunt a grizzly bear with my long bow, like Fred Bear!

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

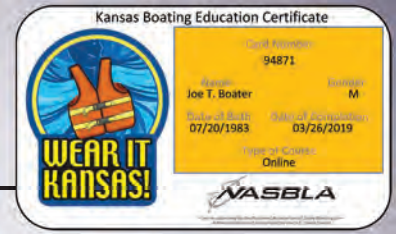
Nearly in the geographical center of the state, Barton County was created by a Legislative Act in 1867 and was named in honor of Clara Barton, the founder of the American Red Cross Association. Barton County was famous for buffalo hunting, and Migratory hunting during the market hunting era. There is Fort Zarah which was the fort along the Santa Fe Trail, a half way point from Pawnee Rock. As mentioned before, Cheyenne Bottoms is in Barton County. And Great Bend is the largest city in the county.





# BOAT KANSAS

Knowledge is Power  
with Chelsea Hofmeier



The cold winter months may be upon us now, but that does not mean boating shouldn't still be on your mind. The offseason is a great time to slow down and take a boating safety course.

So, who is legally required to take a boating safety education course? To be able to operate a motorboat or sailboat in Kansas without direct and audible supervision of someone 21 and older (18 and older if they have a boating education certificate), anyone between the ages of 12 and 20 must complete an approved boater safety education course.

The 2018 U.S. Coast Guard Recreational Boating Statistics Report shows that where boating instruction was known, 74% of deaths occurred on vessels where the operator had not received boating safety instruction. And open motorboats, personal watercrafts, and kayaks continue to be some of the leading vessel types on which these deaths occur.

If you are still not sure if you should take a boating education course, here are a few questions to help you make that decision.

- Are you new to the boating world?
- Have you been boating all your life, but need a refresher on the rules?
- Do you care about your friends and family?



If you answered "Yes" to any of those questions, take a boating education course! No matter the reason, taking a boating safety course will provide you with the knowledge to make smart and informed decisions on the water, making Kansas waterways safer for all.

Find a Kansas Boating Safety Education Course here:  
[www.ksoutdoors.com/Boating/Boating-Education/Certification-Options](http://www.ksoutdoors.com/Boating/Boating-Education/Certification-Options)



## Certified Ladies-only with Tanna Fanshier

On September 21, 22 women took to the fields of the Great Plains Nature Center in Wichita to secure their certification in hunter education and hone their skills as novice hunters. These adult women, ages 19 and up, reported being motivated by more than just the hunter

education requirement in the state of Kansas, but also by the ladies-only nature of this particular class.

This course was a Ladies-Only Internet-Assisted Hunter Education course, which allowed participants to review a large portion of the material online, then put their learning to use at a subsequent in-person field day and testing session. Aside from being open only to participants who iden-

tify as a woman, the course was also led by an all-female team of instructors from the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism and the Great Plains Nature Center.

The decision to hold a ladies-only class was in response to data showing that women are one of the fastest growing groups in outdoor recreation, yet retention rates associated with this group are shockingly low. By employing an all-female staff for the event, KDWPT organizers hoped to demonstrate female representation in the field and highlight the different paths each of the instructors took to outdoor recreation, all while encouraging social support amongst peers.

KDWPT hopes to host another ladies-only hunter education class at the Great Plains Nature Center in the spring, and is currently working to organize follow-up opportunities such as wild game butchering and cooking clinics in the Wichita area.

Visit [ksoutdoors.com](http://ksoutdoors.com) today to find a Hunter Education class near you.





# Extreme Floods Unearth Ancient Bear Skull in SC Kansas

**Matt Peek, Wildlife research biologist  
Emporia Research and Survey Office**

A mid-August kayaking trip down the Arkansas River in southcentral Kansas took a fascinating turn for sisters Ashley and Erin Watt when they happened upon a large skull protruding from a sandbar. It was partially buried nose down, but they immediately knew the shape was unique. When they pulled it from the sand and saw the large teeth of a carnivore, they knew they had something special.

Upon returning home, with a little assistance from the internet, the sisters determined they had likely found a bear skull. They shared their exciting discovery in a Facebook post, which caught the eyes of local KDWP game warden Chris Stout. Stout shared the photos with colleagues, and eventually reached Sternberg Museum of Natural History paleontologists Dr. Reese Barrick and Mike Everhart who provided insight into the significance of the finding.

At approximately 16 inches long by 8.5 inches wide, the massive skull exceeds the 24-inch Boone and Crockett Club record book minimum score for grizzly bears. While Barrick and Everhart quickly verified the sisters' suspicions that this was a bear skull, the size and fossilized appearance left them questioning whether it belonged to a modern trophy-sized grizzly or a more primitive species from the past. The skull is believed to have been deposited into the Ark River sands - an excellent substrate for preservation - and maintained until being displaced by this year's historic floods.

"The bear skull was washed out of the same river sediments that routinely produce the skulls and bones of the American bison, some of which could date back as far as the last Ice Age," said Everhart, who serves as the Adjunct Curator of Paleontology at the Sternberg Museum. "Whether it is hundreds or thousands of years old, the skull gives us a better insight into the richness of life on the plains before Western man."

Grizzly bears are native to Kansas and are thought to have occurred throughout most of the state, but history suggests the species was likely



extirpated by about the middle 1800s. Perhaps the most likely scenario is that this skull did belong to the modern species. Though old enough to have partially fossilized, the skull is in excellent condition; except for the loss of a few minor teeth, it is largely intact and minimally worn.

Ashley, a former agriculture teacher at Oxford Jr/Sr High School, and Erin, an Animal Science student at West Texas

A&M University, have graciously decided to donate the specimen to Sternberg Museum in Hays, where they figured it would better serve the scientific community than as a dining room centerpiece. Sternberg Museum is certainly excited about their new addition - the historical presence of grizzly bears in Kansas is known only through written accounts, and this could be the first physical evidence of their presence, pending species verification, of course.

In addition to the bear skull, Ashley and Erin found a partial buffalo skull and several whole antique bottles on the same kayaking trip. Both have a great appreciation for history from time spent in their youth searching for antiques at old homesteads on their family farm near Rock, KS, so this collection made for quite an exciting day. Their background in science has also framed their view of this experience.

"It's been pretty amazing not only discovering the skull but also the crowdsourcing used to determine how truly exceptional this find is," said Ashley. "We can't wait to see what further information can be uncovered about this incredible animal."

And they're not alone. As a science teacher, Ashley is excited about how many other people are following their story and have also shown great interest in what more may be learned about their unlikely discovery.



Shutterstock/Evgeny Turaev





## Standing Tall in the Fall | by Krista Dahlinger

---

Tall boneset, *Eupatorium altissimum*, can be easily identified in late summer by clusters of white flowers at the top of tall upright plants.

Just as tree leaves begin falling and yellow goldenrods are making their showy fall appearance, tall boneset plants begin to bloom. These plants can easily be overlooked the rest of the year because they do not grow to full height until after the hottest days of summer have passed. Tall boneset is a perennial plant in the aster family, and in Kansas is usually at least 4 to 6 feet tall.

Tall boneset is a native plant found across the eastern half of North America, from the Hudson Bay in Canada south to Texas; Kansas is on the western edge of its range. Tall boneset prefers to grow in open woodlands and roadsides as well as in partial shade and somewhat dry soil conditions. Plants grow in tight groups and spread slowly by underground rhizomes as well as by seed.

The leaves are long and lance-shaped with three distinctive veins running down the length of each leaf. Leaf edges are smooth close to the stem, and lightly toothed toward the pointed tip. Leaves are located opposite from each other along the short stems. The main stem branches at the top of the plant where numerous small white flowers appear in clusters. The flowers do not have wide petals, instead narrow white threads appear to radiate outward from the flower. The white flower color and unusual petal shape are helpful characteristics for identifying this plant.

Because it blooms in late summer, tall boneset attracts butterflies, moths, wasps and

beetles during a time of year when availability of other blooming plants has decreased, and insects are seeking nectar from dwindling resources. Predator insects, such as spiders and assassin bugs, use tall boneset as a staging area where their prey is likely to be found.

Tall boneset is not grazed on by deer or livestock. Plant populations may increase in number where local grasses and forbs are overgrazed or soil structures have been disturbed, giving tall boneset less competition for water and sunlight. Butterflies and moths that utilize plants in the aster family may use tall boneset as a host plant on which to lay eggs.

As a garden or landscape plant, tall boneset provides height for visual interest in late summer. It can be used as a filler plant with attractive masses of white flowers providing contrast to sunflowers, goldenrods and asters.

Tall boneset may not be showy through much of the year but the height and masses of white blooms make it easy to identify in late summer and fall.





# EVERYTHING OUTDOORS

with Marc Murrell

## Nowhere America is Home

If you happen to travel and tell anyone you're from Kansas, you often get the same cliché jabs.

"It's flat... just a flyover state... they have tornados... Dorothy, Toto and the Wizard of Oz... no trees."

The list goes on.

But if you ask people who grew up in the Sunflower State what "home" is like, you'll get considerably different opinions. Take for example one young lady from southwest Kansas, Kaylee Keller.

Keller, 21, grew up in Garden City and is a country/pop music entertainer. One of her hits titled "Nowhere America" chronicles life in the heartland – a life she dearly loves.

"SUN UP TO SUN DOWN,  
THE HEART OF A SMALL TOWN  
IS WHAT DREAMS ARE MADE OF.  
MONDAY TO SUNDAY,  
I COULD LEAVE BUT  
I'LL STAY IN NOWHERE AMERICA"

Kaylee Keller, "Nowhere America"

I grew up near Manhattan on Tuttle Creek Reservoir and on the outskirts of Topeka. Still, these bigger Kansas cities are miniscule compared to others across the country. I've spent the last 30 years of my adult life in a much smaller town, Newton, and I love it.

On a recent family vacation to Seattle, I was lamenting the morning rush hour traffic as we drove towards Mt. Rainier National Park.

"You couldn't pay me enough to work here and fight this hassle every day," I grumbled to my family.

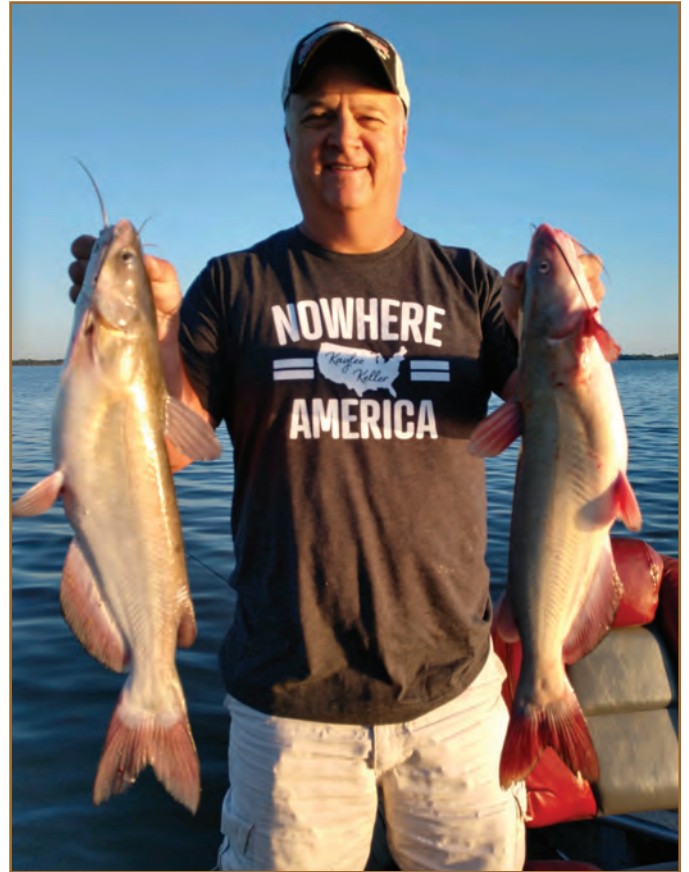
"Would you do it for \$250,000?" one of my teenage boys asked.

"Nope!" I said.

And I wouldn't.

I've got friends I've met over the course of my career who make way more money than me (that's not hard to do), but they do it in some of the biggest cities in the country.

"I can be in a tree stand in about 10 minutes," I told a new friend from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service at a conference in Maryland. "I can catch 5-pound bass, trap beavers on a stream and hunt ducks and geese all within a stone's throw of my house."



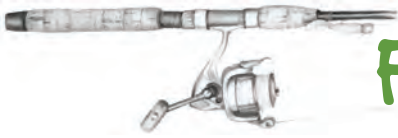
He shook his head, acknowledging the luxury he gave up when he moved from a small town to better his career.

I don't fault him one bit. Everyone has their reasons. I'm glad people are happy with a big city lifestyle and it works for them. It's just not for me.

Living in a small town, I'm perfectly content knowing all my neighbors, having a relatively short 25-minute commute to work with only two stop lights and a stop sign to nearby Wichita. My kids had a successful childhood and are well on their way to rewarding and meaningful careers. My daughter and son-in-law live less than a mile away, and I'll have near-instant access to my first grandchild in December.

I'll take Kansas all day, every day. We have some of the best hunting, fishing and outdoor opportunities of any state in the country. I'm not rich, but everything I need that makes me happy can be found in Nowhere America. Yep, my dreams are indeed made right here in a small town.





# FISHIN'

## Fishing Wish List

with Mike Miller

When I sat down to write this column, I intended to write about a Christmas gift wish list. However, as I scanned online, I realized that I really didn't need any new fishing gear. What I needed were new fishing trips. I'm guilty of not making time for fishing these days, and that's a serious offense. I truly believe in the Patrick McManus quote, "The best two times to fish is when it's raining and when it ain't," but I haven't been living by that motto.

All of my wishes are affordable and easily attainable, except maybe the Alaskan trip. I just have to make time and take time. Even if the weather isn't perfect or the fishing doesn't live up to expectations, I'll be better for it. As a matter of fact, I can't remember ever going fish and wishing I'd stayed home.

*"The best two times to fish is when it's raining and when it ain't."*

*Patrick McManus*

### My fishing wish list:

- Number one will always be an Alaskan fly fishing trip for huge leopard rainbows on the Kenai River. (By comparison, most of my wishes are pretty common.)
- Whites and wipers in the fall. There's nothing like a calm October or November day, temperatures in the high 50s, foliage painting the shoreline with yellows and oranges, and the whites and wipers chasing shad on the surface.
- Winter crappie fishing trip. I haven't fished for crappie on a Kansas reservoir in the winter for several years. I truly love the thump of a crappie bite on a jig fished vertically.
- Spring slab crappie. I love catching big crappie when they move shallow to spawn in the spring, and my expectations will always be high. I was fortunate enough to enjoy amazing crappie fishing in the mid-1990s at Kanopolis Reservoir. We caught them from boats in brush piles and casting rocky shorelines, but I had the most fun wading along the flooded shoreline brush and dipping jigs with 8-foot fly rod - doodlesocking, we called it. With just a couple feet of line out, horsing a 15-inch crappie out of the brush with the long rod is a blast.

## Rare Species Not Listed as Federally Endangered Due To KDWPT Efforts

After a comprehensive review, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) recently announced that it would not list the Scott riffle beetle, *Optioservus phaeus*, under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). The Scott riffle beetle is a tiny brown and black aquatic insect that was first identified as a distinct species in 1978. Big Spring, a groundwater spring complex in Historic Lake Scott State Park near Scott City, is the only place in the world the insect is known to exist.

An Oct. 4, 2019 USFWS news release reported that due to ongoing conservation actions and protections by the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks, and Tourism (KDWPT), federal protections for the beetle under the ESA

were not warranted.

Staff from KDWPT's Ecological Services Section and Parks Division have been working together to implement conservation actions for the Scott riffle beetle since 2016.

The USFWS also expressed confidence in KDWPT's ability to continue managing for the beetle in the wild, based on the best available science. The USFWS will continue providing conservation support and guidance, as needed.

Critical to this species is the unique spring habitat where it resides - an area KDWPT continually works to maintain and protect. Based on data collected in 1984 and 2017, management efforts are working, as the population



USFWS photo

has remained stable for more than 30 years. Additional conservation efforts for the species include population monitoring, deployment of a real-time water quality and quantity monitoring station, and predatory fish removal.

The Scott riffle beetle is currently listed as Endangered under the Kansas Non-game and Endangered Species Conservation Act and lives solely within Historic Lake Scott State Park, providing the species with a level of protection uncommon in

other areas. The local geology of the spring and the High Plains aquifer also suggest the unique spring habitat is unlikely to go dry in the foreseeable future.

"Big Spring is an uncommon habitat in an otherwise dry western Kansas," said KDWPT aquatic ecologist Jordan Hofmeier. "The fact that the Scott riffle beetle has persisted here speaks to the resiliency of the species and the habitat, and the excellent management of the area by the park staff."



# Writings from a Warden's Daughter

with Annie Campbell-Fischer

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

## Is It Real?

By the mid 1980s, Dad had worked five Kansas firearm deer seasons and he and his game warden colleagues all agreed trespassing and shooting from roadways were two of their biggest issues. When they learned about game wardens from other states who were experimenting with deer decoys, the Kansas wardens wanted to try it.

The first decoy deer in Kansas was deployed by game wardens in the southeast part of the state. When wardens in the northeast got the okay, the team needed a decoy. Dad let the local sheriffs' offices know he would be interested in any bucks that went unclaimed following deer/vehicle accidents. On an early-October morning he got a call that a 10-point buck had been hit on a Wabaunsee County road. Dad hauled it home and carefully skinned it before delivering the hide, with the hooves and head attached, to a taxidermist. Just before the December opener of firearms deer season, the deer decoy was ready.

Dad and his regional supervisor searched for a safe and isolated spot to run the decoy operation, and they selected a one-track road in Pottawatomie County locally referred to as Opossum Hollow. Permission was obtained from the landowner and three game wardens were selected to run the decoy operation.

Dad was the first observer, so on the afternoon before opening day, he built a blind by splitting hay bales in half and stacking them to look like a small stack of bales but it was hollow in the center. He placed the blind just inside a gate on the property where he could observe the roadway and vehicle occupants as they passed. Two other wardens covered potential escape routes. The wardens also posted the property with "Hunting by Written Permission Only" signs. No one had permission from the landowner to hunt or be on the land, so anyone found hunting or shooting on the property would be trespassing.

A frosty opening day greeted the warden surveillance team. In the still of the morning's first light, Dad heard the crunch of tires on the frozen roadway as a vehicle approached, and he recognized the driver as she stopped on the roadway.

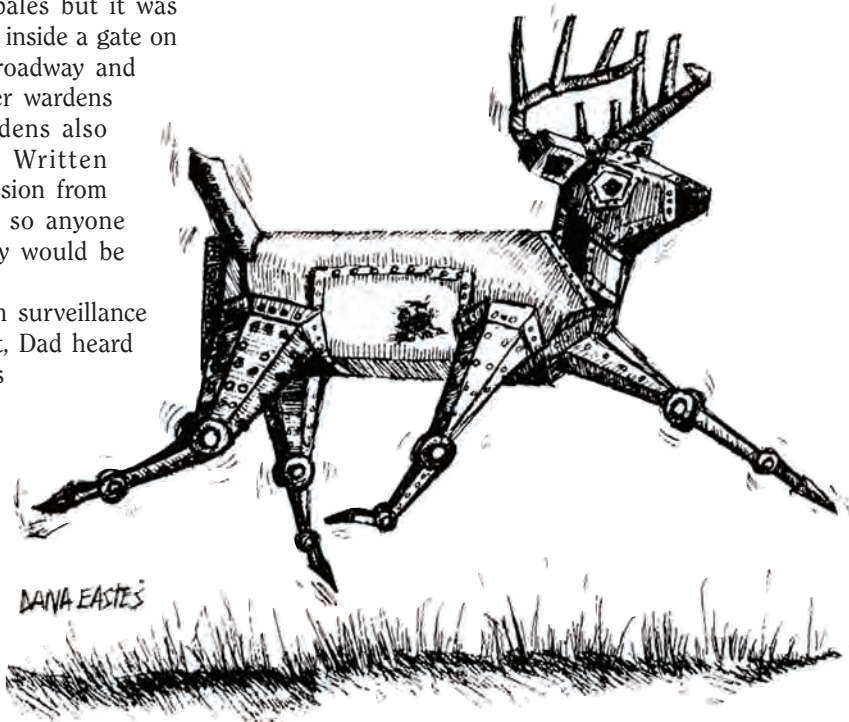
From the safety of the hay bales, he held his breath and watched as the window came down, a rifle barrel extended out toward the deer decoy and a shot rang out. Dad stood up in his blind and yelled out the woman's first name as a second shot was fired. Before a third shot could be fired he got her attention. Her head dropped in shock and prob-

ably embarrassment. Dad met her in the middle of the road and they waited for another warden. She was issued tickets for hunting without written permission and attempting to take deer from a motor vehicle.

By the end of the morning, four more vehicles came down Opossum Hollow. Shots were fired at the decoy from three of those four. In each, either the passenger or driver managed to swing a rifle out of the window and fire dangerous shots. One driver even drove past the decoy, got out and walked back down the road to shoot. That individual was issued a notice to appear in court on a trespass violation only.

Over the next decade, game wardens deployed decoy operations following trespass complaints from landowners and Dad witnessed some incredibly reckless and illegal acts. One of the worst he recalls was an individual who perched on the window of a truck doorframe and kept shooting as the truck approached the decoy. Dad's biggest disappointment was catching many people he knew from the community.

Although the decoys often ended up worse for wear, Dad is proud that his team never let a shooter escape prosecution. The decoy deer program caught lots of illegal road hunters and eventually became an effective deterrent to the practice.







## Summer Sausage in Winter

Hunting seasons are in full swing and it's time to purge the freezer before restocking with new game. Over the years I have come to appreciate this purge; using the remaining few items from last year's harvests justifies a new harvest for me. To a degree, everyone in my household is guilty of not wanting to use the last of something. No one wants to eat the last half bowl of cereal or the last three chips in the bag. But it's necessary.

I often use the purge on remaining deer meat to make a quick sausage or batch of jerky to carry with me on fall hunting trips. One of my favorites is a quick summer sausage recipe my mother used when I was young. All it really takes is a way to grind the meat but otherwise it's not labor intensive.

The one drawback to this recipe is that it was originally crafted for pork and beef burger. Beef and pork are high in fat, so the end product has a texture that is smoother and has more moisture than when made with venison.

I decided to play with the recipe a bit, introducing gelatin. As I'd hoped, the gelatin produced a smoother texture than before and prevented crumbling. The fall purge is when I often do modifications to tried-and-true recipes and this modification was a success.

Thanks Mom for the recipe.



### Summer Sausage (Joyce Teasley)

Makes approx. 8 lbs.

- 6 lbs. Ground deer meat
- 1 1/2 lbs. Ground pork
- 3 C. Water
- 1 1/2 tsp Ground mustard seed
- 6 Tbsp (1/3 C) Tender Quick
- 1 Tbsp Garlic salt
- 1 Tbsp Onion salt
- 2 Tbsp Black pepper
- 2 Tbsp Liquid smoke
- 2 Envelopes of unflavored gelatin

Mix ingredients and refrigerate for 24 hrs.

Shape into 3" diameter rolls. Wrap in aluminum foil, poke holes in bottom of foil and place on racked oven pan (for drippings). Or stuff into three 3" fibrous casings, then wrap in aluminum foil.

Bake at 275° for 2 1/4 hours.

Bloom the sausages by placing in ice water for 30 minutes immediately after removing from oven. Wrap in plastic wrap or vacuum seal, and refrigerate or freeze.

## 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. You may smell me before you see me.
2. I have a good sense of smell and hearing but poor vision.
3. In groups, we're referred to as a "surfeit."

>>> See answer on Page 14

# Park View

with Kathy Pritchett

## Parks – We’re Always Improving

October 12 marked the long-awaited opening of Little Jerusalem Badlands State Park. Celebrated with a ribbon cutting and guided tours most of the day, the opening culminated more than a year of planning and preparation in cooperation between The Nature Conservancy, who owns the land, and the parks division of the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism, which will develop and operate the park. Two permanent trails are open to visitors. The Overlook Trail takes visitors on a quarter-mile, accessible loop to a scenic viewpoint that gives a panorama of the park’s rock formations. The Life on the Rocks Trail affords a mile and a half trek along the rim of the formations, giving new views at every turn. Guided tours, which are the only way that visitors may venture past the trails, will be scheduled on a regular basis. These restrictions are to protect

the rare plants, fragile landscape and nesting areas for ferruginous hawks, among other species.

Improvements are being made to the Flint Hills Trail, 117 miles of converted railbed. Most trail events on this and our other trails have concluded by this time of year, leaving trail users traveling in the peace and quiet of nature. However, special events continue in the parks, such as campground Christmas displays, cooking contests and more.

Though hunters often use state parks as home base for their field adventures, this is the time to book a stay if you desire a quieter time in the parks.

Not to mention, photography and animal watching opportunities abound.

Annual park vehicle and camping permits go on sale December 14 and are valid from date of purchase until December 31, 2020. Campsite reservations for 2020 can be made starting at noon, December 16. Cabin reservations, as usual, may be made 364 days in advance. During the period of October 1 through March 1 of the following year, most campsites are not reservable, but are on a first-come, first-served basis.

As traffic slows, park staff use this time to complete improvement projects; Refurbishing and repairing facilities takes precedence. Park offices return to winter hours, closed on weekends. Offices are also closed for the official holidays of Veterans’ Day, Thanksgiving (and the day after), Christmas and New Year’s Day, although some parks will be open limited hours on New Year’s Day for First Day Hikes. Because parks staff rarely take vacation during the busy summer season, many take days off around the holidays, so park offices may be closed the weeks of Thanksgiving and Christmas. Call ahead if you need to do business at the park office. With the availability of online permit purchases and reservations, you may not need to make an in-person visit, though we are always happy to greet our customers.

As the year winds down, many of us take time to reflect on the past year and set goals for the next. The parks are a perfect place to contemplate the seasons of our lives.



### WAY outside BY BRUCE COCHRAN



“...BUT MOST OF ALL WE ARE THANKFULL FOR THIS TWENTY POUND TURKEY THAT I SHOT AT TEN YARDS WITH A THREE INCH, FULL CHOKE LOAD OF COPPER-PLATED FIVES.”

“WHAT AM I?” answer: Skunk





## Backyard Safaris with Daren Riedle

Colleagues of mine from Missouri called me last spring, needing photographs for a new edition of the *Amphibians and Reptiles of Missouri* they're working on. In particular, they were looking for shots of Great Plains skinks - a lizard that is very abundant in the grasslands of Kansas but is restricted to extreme western Missouri. I thought, "No problem I have them in my backyard." Then it dawned on me, how cool is it that I have this species in my backyard! The more I thought about it, the more I realized how much we sometimes overlook the wildlife in our own neighborhood.

My two-year-old daughter discovered roly-polies this summer and I will often find her poking around in the leaves with a stick trying to find them. For many of us that grew up in town, looking for roly-polies and other bugs was probably our first experience with nature and the outdoors.

I am continually impressed by what we see in our yard here in Pratt, and now we are working to make it more wildlife friendly. Several events have inspired this, but the first was finding deer tracks in our yard a couple winters back. After seeing the tracks, I purchased two trail cameras and sure enough, the deer were coming in and raiding our bird feeder in the middle of the night. We have also observed red fox and two different striped skunks frequenting our yard.

The front yard is kept up nice and neat, but we have since let the backyard get a bit shabby. Our shrubs are a

bit overgrown and we have sunflowers popping up randomly from the birds scattering seeds from the feeder, which I mow around when I can. We also have several types of pollinator plants growing in the backyard. It has now become a popular stopover for migrating monarchs and other butterflies.

When we originally bought the house, there was an old cottonwood stump that was about 15 feet tall and 4 feet in diameter. I cut it into sections and placed them around the yard near some shrubs and our bird feeders. It is near the stumps where we often see our baby skinks. The next step is to turn one corner of the yard into a pollinator garden complete with a small pond. We have observed four species of frogs and toads in the neighborhood and we hope that one day they will use the garden pond as a breeding site. I hope to report back in a year or two on the progress of our little backyard wildlife sanctuary!

We don't have to go far to appreciate the natural world around us. I know it is cliché, but we simply have to step out in our own backyard. My children and I have had a great time this summer heading out into the backyard for "lizard safaris" so I can get the photographs I need.

Late at night when everyone else is asleep but me, I will sit quietly on the back deck with a nice cigar and commune with the skunks. According to rumors around the house, my cigars probably smell worse than they do.





# 2019 UPLAND

---

## *Background*

Two important factors impact availability of upland birds during the fall hunting season: number of breeding adults in the spring and the reproductive success of the breeding population. Reproductive success consists of both the number of hatched nests and chick survival. For pheasant and quail, annual survival is relatively low; therefore, the fall population is more dependent on summer reproduction than spring adult numbers. For prairie chickens, reproductive success is still the major population regulator, but higher adult survival helps maintain hunting opportunities during poor conditions.

## *Methods*

In this forecast, breeding population and reproductive success of pheasants, quail, and prairie chickens will be discussed. Breeding population data were gathered using spring surveys for pheasants (crow counts), quail (whistle counts), and prairie chickens (lek counts). Data for reproductive success were collected during late-summer roadside surveys for pheasants and quail. Reproductive success of prairie chickens cannot be easily assessed using the same methods because they do not associate with roads like pheasants and quail.

## *Habitat Conditions*

Kansas has a dramatic rainfall gradient from more than 50 inches of average annual rainfall in the far east to less than 13 inches in the far west. The amount and timing of rainfall plays a major role in reproduction for upland birds. In the west, wet years typically improve the available cover and increase insect availability for chicks. In the east, dry years are typically more optimal, as heavy rains during spring and summer can reduce survival of nesting birds and young chicks. In 2019, Kansas had above-average precipitation throughout the winter and early spring across the state, resulting in excellent habitat conditions entering the nesting season. Heavy rains statewide in May negatively impacted initial pheasant nests and early nesting quail. Flooding associated with these storms displaced many birds and likely destroyed some nests, particularly in the eastern regions where flooding was most extreme and sustained by additional heavy rainfall events throughout summer. The resulting vegetation may challenge hunters as there is abundant and highly-distributed habitat for birds to utilize. Furthermore, rain delayed planting for all crops and a late harvest is expected. However, abundant habitat should increase winter survival in the event of severe winter storms.



# BIRD FORECAST

text by Jeff Prendergast, *KDWPT small game specialist*

## *Conservation Reserve Program*

Under the 2018 Farm Bill, the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acreage cap will gradually increase over the next five years. However, there has not yet been any new enrollment. Kansas lost approximately 50,000 CRP acres in 2019, resulting in about 1.9 million acres statewide. Hunters are unlikely to see any immediate upland bird population impacts from these acreage losses. However, with more than 500,000 acres set to expire in 2020, significant population impacts are likely if suitable habitat on CRP lands is lost. The more immediate impact to hunters is to the Walk-In Hunting Access (WIHA) program. A large portion of properties in the WIHA program include CRP and expirations can reduce habitat quality or exclude properties from the program. However, the Kansas WIHA program remains strong, with nearly 1.15 million acres enrolled (atlases are available at [ksoutdoors.com/wiha](http://ksoutdoors.com/wiha) and at any license vendor location).

## *Overall Outlook: "Good"*

Kansas should have good upland bird hunting opportunities this fall. Kansas has nearly 1.7 million acres open to public hunting (wildlife areas and WIHA combined). This is only a small portion of the more than 52 million acres of private land that also provides ample opportunity where permission can be obtained.

The opening date for pheasant and quail seasons is November 9, and youth season is November 2-3; Youth hunters must be age 16 or younger and accompanied by a non-hunting adult that is age 18 or older. Please consider taking a young person hunting this fall!

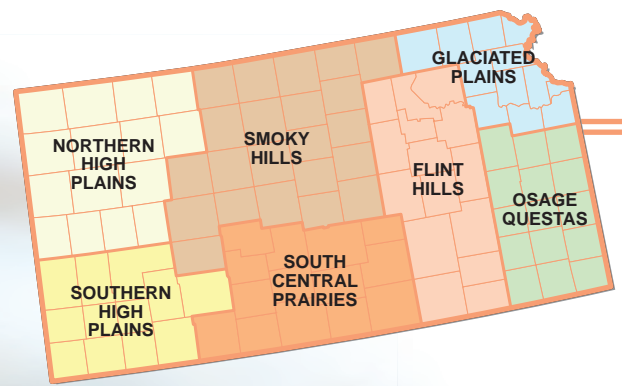


Jon Blumb, photo



# Pheasant

## STATEWIDE OUTLOOK



Pheasant hunting in Kansas should be fair to locally good this year. Heavy winter precipitation made hunting conditions tough in 2018 but provided ample soil moisture entering the 2019 nesting season. A few late winter storms raised some concern in western Kansas, but the spring crowing index remained the same as 2018, indicating there was no measurable impact on over-winter survival. Heavy rainfall continued throughout the spring and resulted in high levels of nest abandonment. However, nests that did hatch appear to have responded to the plentiful cover with relatively high chick survival, indicated by larger brood sizes. In wet years like 2019, the nesting season becomes longer, allowing for multiple reneating attempts. Overall, the large brood sizes, combined with production from reneating birds appear to have compensated for the losses from extreme spring weather. The counts through much of central Kansas decreased while numbers farther west increased or remained similar to last year. Kansas continues to maintain one of the best pheasant populations in the country and the fall harvest should again be among the leading states. The highest densities this year will likely be in the High Plains regions of western Kansas.



### *Northern High Plains*

Opportunities should be good, with slightly more birds in the region than last year. This region had the highest regional index for the summer brood survey and was the only region with a notable increase, following spring breeding densities similar to 2018. Production values were higher than 2018 due to increased nest and brood success. The highest densities will be found in the northern half of the region.

### *Smoky Hills*

Hunters should expect fair opportunities throughout much of the region with some localized areas that are good. The spring crow survey saw a slight decrease but remained above average for the region. This was followed by a decrease in the birds recorded on the summer brood survey. Regional harvest estimates were highest in the Smoky Hills last year but are expected to decline with reduced pheasant densities. The western portion of the region had the highest roadside densities this year.

### *Glaciated Plains*

Opportunities will remain poor with pheasants occurring only in pockets of habitat, primarily in the northwestern portion of the region or areas managed for upland birds. Spring crow counts declined from 2018 and remain well below average. Roadside surveys showed an increase in total pheasant observations; however, only one route observed pheasants in 2019. Pheasant densities across the region are typically low, especially relative to other areas in central and western Kansas.

### *Osage Questas*

This region is outside the primary pheasant range and very limited hunting opportunities exist. Pheasants are occasionally found in the northwestern portion of the region at very low densities.

long-term averages. While total observations in the summer roadside survey declined, the pattern was inconsistent, with some areas showing notable improvement while others declined. The highest pheasant densities will be in the western half of the region.



### *Flint Hills*

The Flint Hills is on the eastern edge of the primary pheasant range in Kansas and offers limited opportunities. Pheasant densities have always been relatively low throughout the Flint Hills, with the highest densities found on the western edge of the region. The spring crow counts declined this year, while the summer roadside survey indicated a slight increase (though with few total observations). The best opportunities will be in the northwest portion of the region along the Smoky Hills.

### *South Central Prairies*

Pheasant hunters should expect a fair season this year. The spring crow survey remained unchanged from 2018 and near

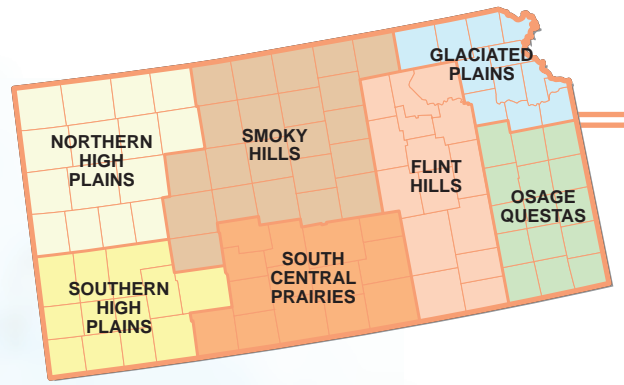
### *Southern High Plains*

Hunting will remain good, with bird numbers similar to last year. Surprisingly, the pheasant crow index increased this spring after lower estimated production in 2018. Roadside brood surveys remained the same, with all production indices increasing slightly, likely due to above-average precipitation for the region. While the 2018 harvest was lower than other regions, success rates for hunters in this region were higher. The highest pheasant densities will be in the eastern half of the region with other areas of high densities scattered throughout.



# Quail

## STATEWIDE OUTLOOK



Quail hunting in Kansas should be good in 2019. Kansas is still supporting above-average quail populations after a recent population boom. While total harvest has remained below average due to decreasing hunter participation, the average daily bag has remained at some of the highest levels observed in 20 years. The bobwhite whistle survey in spring 2019 saw a modest decline following a generally poor production season in 2018. However, this is relative to a 20-year high in 2017, so despite the decline, spring densities were still well above average. The 2019 roadside survey index was just slightly higher than 2018, suggesting

production compensated for any reductions previously recorded.

However, regional quail densities have changed. Heavy precipitation and associated flooding across the eastern regions reduced productivity. While rainfall was also high across the western regions, a mid-summer dry period and improved habitat increased production. While densities in the eastern-most regions have decreased, all remaining regional indices remain at or above their respective long-term averages. Kansas maintains one of the premier quail populations in the country and harvest will again be among the highest this year. The best opportunities will be found in the central regions, extending east into the northern Flint Hills and west into the Southern High Plains.



## Northern High Plains

Quail are limited and typically harvested opportunistically by pheasant hunters. With recent population increases, quail have expanded into the eastern portion of this region, where adequate shrub cover is present. While densities remain relatively low compared to central and southwest Kansas, this expansion will provide additional opportunity for those who target appropriate habitat. Densities on the summer roadside survey increased but remain the lowest regional density in the state.

## Smoky Hills

Hunting should be good throughout the region this year. The spring whistle survey declined slightly this year. However, there was a significant increase observed on roadside surveys (46 percent) compared to 2018. After above-average densities over the past three years, the region retained the highest roadside index for quail in 2019. Regional harvest in 2018 was the highest in the state with good hunter success rates. While quail in northcentral Kansas have seemed widespread across the landscape the past few years, they have historically been spotty in the region. The Smoky Hills will offer above-average densities again; however, targeting traditional areas and habitats will remain the best strategy for success. Densities were good across most of the region.

## Glaciated Plain

Expect fair hunting where opportunities exist this year. Bobwhite observations declined on the spring whistle count, as well as on the summer brood survey. Since the region had been

above the long-term average the past few years, densities should be near normal. While extensive flooding likely limited production, surviving adult birds from 2018 should maintain opportunities where birds were found last year. Roadside counts were highest in the northwestern portion of the region.

## Osage Questas

Opportunities will be poor to locally fair this year. While spring surveys had increased for several years, two consecutive years of poor production have resulted in population declines. Roadside surveys were substantially lower in the region this year and were the lowest of any region in the primary quail range. This is likely in response to heavy precipitation and associated flooding throughout the summer. Hunters should expect densities below last year in most places. The best hunting should be in the northwestern counties in grasslands extending east off of the Flint Hills.

## Flint Hills

Hunting in the Flint Hills should be good this year. The region had a slight decrease in the index of whistling bobwhites but remained above average. Summer roadside counts were similar to 2018. Quail production was likely impeded in the core of the Flint Hills by a wet spring and extensive prescribed burning of cattle pastures. Hunters should expect similar densities as last year. The northern half of the region recorded the highest roadside indices this year.

## South Central Prairies

Hunting should remain good throughout much of the region. Both the spring whistle survey and summer brood survey were

similar to 2018. As such, the region maintained near-average densities and was the second highest regional index on the roadside survey this year. Production appeared to be greatly improved with a much higher chick-to-adult ratio. The intermixing of quality cover types provides more consistent opportunities in the South Central Prairies compared to other regions. The roadside counts were highest in the northwestern portion of the region, although relatively good counts were observed throughout much of the region.

## Southern High Plains

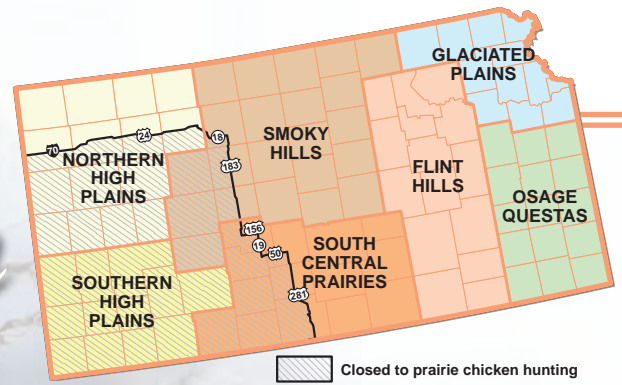
Opportunities will remain good. The quail population in the region is highly variable and dependent on weather. Whistle counts declined significantly after a mid-winter blizzard impacted much of the region. Despite this decline in adult quail, spring surveys remained above the long-term average and were the highest regional density in the state. Above-average precipitation created quality habitat, resulting in high levels of production, which off-set low adult overwinter survival. The highest densities will be found along riparian corridors where adequate woody structure exists. This association with riparian corridors also makes surveying the region for an accurate density of quail challenging, and opportunities may be better than roadside surveys suggest. Scaled quail, though found in this region, were a smaller proportion of quail observations this year than in 2018.





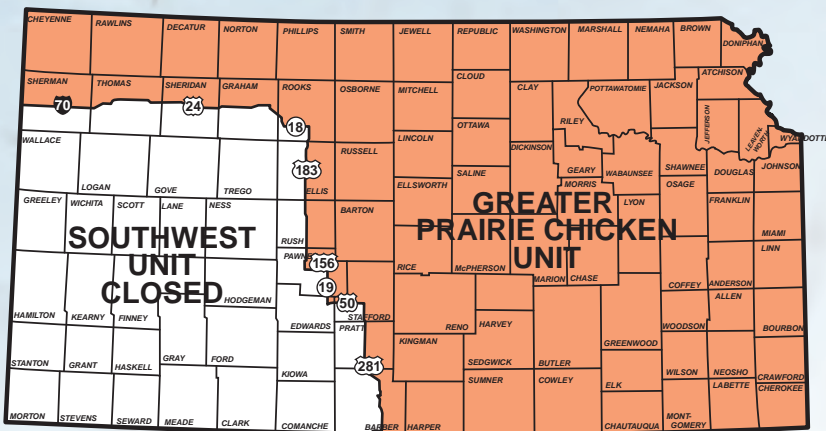
# Prairie Chicken

## STATEWIDE OUTLOOK



Kansas is home to both greater and lesser prairie chickens. Both species require a landscape of predominately native grass and benefit from a few interspersed grain fields. Lesser prairie chickens are found in west-central and southwestern Kansas in native prairie and nearby stands of native grass established through the CRP. Greater prairie chickens are found primarily in the tallgrass and mixed-grass prairies that occur in the eastern third and northern half of the state. Greater prairie chickens have expanded in numbers and range in the northwestern portion of the state while declining in the eastern regions. Hunting opportunities will be best in the Northern High Plains and Smoky Hills regions this fall, where populations have either been increasing or stable, and public access is more abundant.

The Southwest Prairie Chicken Unit, where lesser prairie chickens are found, will remain closed to hunting this year. Greater prairie chickens may be harvested during the early prairie chicken season and the regular season with a two-bird daily bag limit in the Greater Prairie Chicken Unit. All prairie chicken hunters are required to purchase a \$2.50 Prairie Chicken Permit. This permit allows KDWP to better track hunter activity and harvest, which will improve management activities and inform policy decisions.





## Northern High Plains

Populations continue to expand in both numbers and range within the region. Only portions of this region are open to hunting (see map for unit boundaries). Lesser prairie chickens occur in the southern and central portions of the region within the closed zone. Within the open area, the best hunting opportunities will be found in the northeastern portion of the region in native prairies and CRP grasslands.

## Smoky Hills

Hunting opportunities in the region should remain good. While production was likely low, spring counts were relatively good. This region includes some of the highest densities and access in the state for prairie chickens. Greater prairie chickens occur throughout the Smoky Hills where large areas of native rangeland are intermixed with CRP and cropland. The best

hunting will be found in the central portion of the region, but several other areas support huntable densities of birds in appropriate habitat. Lesser prairie chickens occur in a few counties in the southwestern portion of the region within the closed zone (see map for unit boundaries).

## Glaciated Plain

Very little prairie chicken range occurs in this region and opportunities are limited. Opportunities for encounters are highest in the western edges of the region along the Flint Hills, where some large areas of native rangeland still exist.

## Osage Questas

Greater prairie chickens occur in the central and northwestern portions of the region in large areas of native rangeland. Populations have consistently declined over the long term. Fire suppression and loss of native grassland have gradually reduced the amount of suitable habitat in this region. The best hunting opportunities will be in large blocks of native rangeland along the edge of the Flint Hills.

## Flint Hills

The Flint Hills is the largest intact tallgrass prairie in North America and has been a core habitat for greater prairie chickens for many years. Management changes resulting in both areas of too little and too much prescribed fire have gradually degraded habitat quality, and prairie chicken numbers have declined as a result. The wet spring allowed for extensive burning throughout the region this spring and likely resulted in low levels of production. Hunting opportunities will likely be reduced from last year throughout the region.



Jon Blumb photo



Jon Blumb photo

## South Central Prairie

This region is almost entirely occupied by lesser prairie chickens and areas included in their range are closed to prairie chicken hunting (see map for unit boundaries). Greater prairie-chickens occur in very limited areas in the remainder of this region and will occur in very low densities within the remaining large tracts of rangeland in the northeastern portion of the region.

## Southern High Plains

This region is entirely occupied by lesser prairie chickens; therefore, prairie chicken hunting is closed in this area.





# FLINT HILLS TRAIL STATE PARK

by Rick McNary, outdoor writer and photographer

*The longest Kansas state park, the Flint Hills Trail (FHT), also has the distinction of having the oldest historical purpose: to connect people to opportunities.*



The trail follows much of the Santa Fe Trail, which began in 1820, roughly 20 years after President Thomas Jefferson sent Lewis and Clark on their westward scouting trip. The Santa Fe wagon route was a pipeline for thousands of people headed west to new opportunities.

After the Civil War ended, rapid railroad expansion westward slowly eliminated the old wagon route. The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad Company started building the first railroad track on the old Santa Fe wagon route in 1868, much of the same railroad bed that is now the Flint Hills Nature Trail State Park.

Fast-forward a century to the 1980s, when the deregulation of the railroad industry led some companies to abandon less profitable lines. Though, railroad companies were reluctant to give up that property altogether. So in 1983, Congress established Rail Banking as an amendment to the National Trails System Act. This allowed for an agreement between a railroad company and a trail agency, such as Kanza Rail Trails Conservancy (KRTC), to use an out-of-service corridor as a trail until a railroad might need to reopen the corridor for service.

Much like the original purpose of this route built in the 1820s, current use continues the trail's purpose of connecting people to opportunities.

## CURRENT USE

"The trail is 117 miles long, from Osawatomie to Herington," says Trent McCown, FHT state park manager. "It goes through a variety of ecosystems such as woodlands, bottom lands, wide open prairies, hard-wood timber stands and varied crop lands. The seasonal changes in Kansas ensure that the trail always looks different whether it's a few weeks



The 117-mile trail goes through a variety of ecosystems, including woodlands, bottom lands, wide open prairies, hard-wood timber stands and varied crop lands.

after the burn in spring and the rich grasses cover the hills, or the fall when the leaves begin to turn. Although the trail is the same, the views are always different."

The trail is developed and maintained for about 96 miles from Osawatomie to Council Grove; the rest of the route from Council Grove to Herington has yet to be fully developed.

"KRTC volunteers have done a fantastic job through the years developing and maintaining the trail," McCown said. "With it becoming a state park, it provides some additional funding streams as well as law enforcement. Now, when people see suspicious activity on the trail, they call the state park rather than their local sheriff's department. It's like a 117-long neighborhood watch program where people who work so hard on the trail make sure people behave themselves on it.

Thankfully, most people are just out there to enjoy the unique opportunity.

"I see a variety of people on the trail from the elderly who like the slow grades and relatively level surfaces to young parents teaching their children how to ride bikes. You can ride a long

way out here and not worry about an oncoming car. People like the safety of hiking and biking along a trail that does not permit any motorized vehicle."

Just recently, the KWPT Commission passed a regulation allowing for electronic pedal-assisted bicycles (e-bikes) on the trail, creating even more opportunities for users of all ages.

## A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

There are concentrated efforts by state agencies, nonprofits, community foundations and private individuals to encourage people to go outside for physical, mental and even economic health. The Sunflower Foundation is one such group who has supported 170 trails projects in more than 65 Kansas counties.

The Sunflower Foundation President and CEO, Billie Hall, continues to provide leadership on public access to trails.

"I see trails as a vital resource to improve quality of life and quality of place," Hall said. "We are interested in the trail's development and potential as one of our state's flagship trails. We see our role as a catalyst - helping communities along the trail



embrace the health and economic development potential.”

Dr. Elizabeth Burger, senior program officer, says, “The Sunflower Foundation has been supporting trails for 15 years because they provide equitable opportunities of all ages, abilities and background to be outdoors and to connect with friends and family. The evidence shows that being outdoors in nature is good for mental health, social health, wellness and cognitive development. Many of the social determinants of health come from where we live, work and play.

### OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMMERCE

The Sunflower Foundation also sees their role in helping communities along the trail embrace economic development.

“The trail is the 7th longest one in the country,” Burger said. “It has enormous potential to drive rural vitalization like the Katy Trail did in Missouri. The trail is a great way to marry the love of the outdoors with economic health of communities. The communities

along the trail can capture the growing national interest in natural and agricultural tourism. What person from New York City wouldn’t enjoy hopping off for a farm tour? The trail builds the bridge between urban and rural.”

One such example is the city of Ottawa. The city, which serves as a hub for both the Flint Hills Trail and the Prairie Spirit Trail, recently raised more than four million dollars through Onward Ottawa to build Legacy Square, an outdoor pavilion and park venue located at the intersection of the trails.

### OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMMUNITY

The original Santa Fe Trail, then railroad, built “community” and communities along the way. While the trail connects one community to the next, it also connects people within those communities to each other. Along the trail you will find a community of cyclists, hikers, walkers, equestrians, naturalists and explorers. Groups of people con-

nect with each other in relation to their interests as the trail serves as a central, albeit lengthy, point of activity for their group.

Doug Walker, of Osawatomie and KRTC president, has spent more than 20 years advocating for public access to the trail.

“I grew up in Kansas and my grandparents lived on a farm so I could go to the farm and play. But Kansas is primarily a private-property kind of state and, other than state parks, there is very little public space. People in the city don’t have a place to go in the country and just wander by a river, hear the birds sing and travel through so many types of geology. The trail has become a destination place.”

Walker has been a part of the formation of the trail since the early days when the trail was so overgrown, people had a hard time locating it. He has also been instrumental in it becoming a state park as well as helping the City of Osawatomie raise funds to bring the trail in to town.

“My daughter asked me to go with her on Father’s Day for a

The trail is developed and maintained for about 96 miles from Osawatomie to Council Grove; the rest of the route from Council Grove to Herington has yet to be fully developed.







Just recently, the KWPT Commission passed a regulation allowing for electronic pedal-assisted bicycles (e-bikes) on the trail, creating even more opportunities for users of all ages and physical abilities.

bike ride on Prairie Spirit Trail and someone mentioned this trail,” Walker said. “No one knew where it was, but we finally found it. A couple of weeks later, we got the word out and 15 volunteers showed up to clear some trail. Then we held a public meeting and invited a local legislator. There were far more rail opponents than trail supporters in the early days; it got quite contentious at times.”

Over the course of time, those tensions have abated as people see the land being enjoyed and maintained appropriately. KRTC now has volunteers who maintain the trail and former opponents have since turned into proponents.

If you follow the KRTC group on Facebook, there are frequent conversations about areas of the trail that need repair followed by local people grabbing a chainsaw to clear trees or shovels to fill in potholes.

Along the way, businesses are tapping into the short distance from the trail to a local community to encourage tourism in their towns. Various groups such as running, cycling, equestrian, hiking, and others are scheduling activities along the trail for use. (Please note that a Special Use Permit might be required for your group; please check in with the state park office first).

### CONNECTING PEOPLE

Urban areas make up less than three percent of the landmass in the U.S., but more than 80 percent of our population lives in cities. Conversely, 97 percent of the landmass is rural, yet barely 19 percent of the population lives in rural areas.

In addition to the Flint Hills Trail’s ability to connect people to various opportunities, perhaps it’s best virtue is bridging the divide between urban and rural.

Hop on the trail at any of it’s

numerous access points and you’ll soon discover the best that Kansas has to offer: breathtaking panoramas, a symphony of songbirds, an abundance of wildlife and friendly people enjoying each other and nature at its best. 🐮

**Flint Hills Trail State Park**  
(785) 448-2627

**Kanza Rail-Trails Conservancy**  
[www.kanzatrails.org](http://www.kanzatrails.org)

- Trail Map
- Trail Access Points
- General Trail Description
- Current Trail Conditions
- Mileage and Services Chart
- Services and Business Directory
- Natural and Historic Features
- News
- Interactive Trails Map and more!







# DIVER DELITE



*text and photos by  
Michael Pearce, outdoor writer*

One second they were tiny specks far out over the lake, the next they were strafing the decoys at a speed that would have done a squadron of F-15s proud.

Kacci Everitt identified them as goldeneyes, which made sense because I saw the blurred birds were black and white.

The roller-coaster flight of the ducks had them almost out of sight when they spun and gave the decoys another pass. Everitt and Josh Waugh each fired a shot and sent a bird skipping across the water. My feeble attempt of using slow reflexes on the super-sonic ducks kicked up water a Buick's length behind the trailing bird.

I fared no better on the next few flocks before a nice drake mallard was polite enough to hang over the decoys like a piñata. I got that one.

Everitt jokingly congratulated me on my nice "trash duck." Such was my introduction to hunting diving ducks with Everitt, Waugh and Steve Davis. All three appreciate hunting these birds most waterfowlers scorn.





America's roughly 26 species of freshwater ducks are about evenly split between two families: puddle ducks and diving ducks. Puddle ducks – which include popular Kansas species like mallards, teal, pintails, wood ducks, gadwall and widgeons – prefer water most easily measured in inches rather than feet. They like it shallow enough they can tip their tails skyward and nibble on floating food or food on the marsh's bottom.

Much of Kansas' habitat is ideal for puddle ducks. The shallow marshes at places like Cheyenne Bottoms, McPherson Valley Wetlands and Jamestown Wildlife Area are naturally good and manage to provide perfect resting and feeding habitat for puddlers.

The rest of the American species are known as diving ducks because of their willingness to dive below the surface



Diver hunting decoys are on longline rigs, which have anywhere from two to a dozen decoys attached to a common mainline with heavy weights on both ends.

to feed on aquatic plants sometimes several feet below. Most species of divers can be found on deeper parts of major marshes, like Quivira National Wildlife Refuge, and they do well on large ponds, community lakes and reservoirs.

Divers can also be identified in flight because of extremely rapid wingbeats that can lead to rocket-like speeds. They usu-

barely a ripple. Instead, divers run across the water to get airborne. And their water landings resemble a belly crash.

According to Tom Bidrowski, migratory game bird program manager for the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism, ringneck, redhead

---

*Many rate a fully plumed drake canvasback as the most desirable duck in Kansas for taxidermy.*

---

ally fly low to the water with lots of twists and turns. They also lack the ease of a puddle duck that flushes from water straight into the air or softly settles on the surface with



CANVASBACK



and scaup are the most commonly-harvested species of diving ducks in Kansas.

Goldeneyes, canvasbacks and buffleheads can also be common on Kansas' waters. Bidrowski added that some winter counts show tens of thousands of divers on a single reservoir.

Drake divers can be just as colorful and attractive as any pintail or mallard. Many rate a fully plumed drake canvasback as the most desirable duck in Kansas for taxidermy. Yet, some duck hunters think divers are as lowly as carp and gar are to most bass anglers. Some won't even shoot a diver and hardly any specifically target diving ducks.

Everitt is proud to say he's in the minority of sportsmen who love hunting divers.

During his college days at Pittsburg State University, Everitt became addicted to the phenomenal winter mallard opportunities in southeast Kansas. Though, he found things to be a little different when he returned to where he'd been raised near the shores of Cheney Reservoir.



Kept in short barrels, Everitt and Waugh can get a dozen decoys out in a minute. The heavy weights keep the decoys from washing to shore.

"We kept seeing all these divers flying all over the (main) lake," said Everitt. "We decided to give them a try."

It took a while, but he and Waugh eventually figured out how to hunt divers.

Annually, the duo starts hunting divers after the first real cold snap, which may be as early as mid-November. Generally, the colder the temperatures, the better the hunting for divers.

Most of Everitt's diver hunting is on Cheney but he's also done well on Marion Reservoir.

Bidrowski said most of Kansas' federal reservoirs and state- or community-owned lakes should hold good numbers of divers until they ice over.

As much as the high numbers of ducks, Everitt and Waugh appreciate the low number of hunters they encounter when hunting mid-lake divers. Most of the few others they've seen haven't

---

*We do better out on an open point, where they can see the decoys. They're not hesitant about landing in waves."*

---

done well on divers. Everitt said that's because most don't know the many differences between hunting puddle ducks and divers.

"A lot of (successful diver hunting) is just the opposite of what you'd want to do for



Shutterstock/Ray Hennessy



puddle ducks,” said Everitt. “You’ll have a hard time drawing divers way back into the backs of coves, places where mallards like to sit and rest. We do better out on an open point, where they can see the decoys; They’re not hesitant about landing in waves.”

Unlike when setting up for puddle ducks, which means having the wind blowing from the shore to the decoys, Everitt wants the wind blowing into shore. He theorizes it’s because it makes it easier for divers to feed on assorted food blown to that side of the lake. One of those foods is the zebra mussel – an invasive mollusk that can

---

*“We kept seeing all these divers flying all over the (main) lake,” said Everitt. “We decided to give them a try.”*

---

outcompete native mollusks and fish for food.

Their diver hunting decoy spread also differs greatly from most puddle duck spreads. Rather than traditional mallard decoys on individual short lines, their decoys are on longline rigs, which have anywhere from two to a dozen decoys attached to a common mainline with heavy weights on both ends.

Kept in short barrels on their boat, Everitt and Waugh can get a dozen decoys out in a minute or so. The heavy weights also keep the decoys from washing to shore in sometimes heavy waves.

They’ve learned that diving ducks really key in on decoys of their species, so their spread looks like a diving duck convention, with plenty of goldeneye, canvasback and bufflehead decoys present. Repeatedly, Everitt has seen divers, going full speed over the water, lock onto the furthest drake decoy of their species and splash down with no hesitation. Such is why it’s important to keep the furthest



While ringneck, redhead and scaup are the most commonly-harvested species of diving ducks in Kansas, goldeneyes, canvasbacks and buffleheads can also be common on Kansas’ waters.

Shutterstock/Photojanski

COMMON GOLDENEYE








The colder the temperatures, the better the hunting for divers. Most of Kansas' federal reservoirs and state- or community-owned lakes hold good numbers of divers until they ice over.

their superior flavor.

It's easy to turn divers into tasty waterfowl jerky and summer sausage. Everitt contends the species he primarily targets – goldeneye and canvasbacks – are as good as any duck that floats, cooked more traditional ways.

"If there are problems, I think it's from people over-cooking them, and that's bad no matter what kind of duck it is," said Everitt. "Several times we've (grilled) up goldeneyes with mallards," said Everitt. "There may be a slightly different taste, but if anything, I like it a bit better." 

decoy within shotgun range.

Accomplished shooters, Everitt and Waugh enjoy the added challenge of trying to hit divers, which can make teal look like they're flying in slow motion. At least they get plenty of chances.

Though divers often get a

bad rap in the flavor department, Everitt and Waugh are both fans. None they've tried have had the "strong and gamey" taste many associate with divers. Surprisingly, canvasbacks were one of the most popular ducks during the market-hunting era because of



# Fishing's Future

by Rick McNary  
outdoor writer and  
photographer

***If you're concerned about your children spending too much time with electronics, there is a group of dedicated volunteers across Kansas who want to help you get your family outside more. Welcome to the Kansas chapters of Fishing's Future, a collection of people passionate about engaging others in the love of fishing and being outdoors.***

## **National Ties**

Fishing's Future in Kansas is part of a national organization started by Shane Wilson, a school principal in Texas who saw the need to engage students with their families.

"Shane saw the increasing breakdown in families and how obsessed kids are with electronics," says Michael Sherer, vice president of Fishing's Future. "He was an avid fisherman and started this as a way to reconnect and strengthen family bonds. In fact, if you look at the logo of the fish, the graphic of the fish is formed with the two 'F's' facing each other - Families Forever. As of October 2018, we had reached more than 1 million people, and Fishing's Future was voted the number one educational resource in the U.S. by Aquatic Resources Education Association."

Fishing's Future is on a mission to connect kids and families with nature through fishing adventures that strengthen family relationships, build stewardship of the environment and provide positive outdoor angling education for families with children between the ages of 5-16.

Family Fish Camps are hosted all across the U.S., but all have the same structure. Each camp has five stations and each participant spends a certain amount of time at each of the following stations:

**Station 1:** This is an introduction to Fishing's Future and fishing. Participants learn about safety and rules, and the more nervous participants realize that the outdoors (grass and bugs) aren't that scary.

**Station 2:** Participants learn about different types of bait, how to put a bobber, weight and hook on a line, and how to tie a knot.

**Station 3:** Participants learn how to carry a fishing pole and cast. They also learn how to properly reel in the line.

**Station 4:** Participants learn about different species of fish and what fish they might catch in the pond that day. They are taught about fishing licenses, regulations, and creel and length limits. They also learn about invasive species and the precautions to take not to introduce any to a new body of water.

**Station 5:** Participants learn how to correctly and ethically hold and handle a fish, remove a hook, and





how to gently place the fish back in the water. Participants also learn how to properly measure a fish.

The last station is where students are given a fishing pole and bait. High school students prepare and bait each pole and then rebait and fix poles that get broken.

"The Family Fish Camps are more than just teaching people how to fish," Sherer explains. "It's also about how to take care of natural resources, leave no trace, inform people about rules and regulations and why they exist."

### ***Fishing's Future and KDWPT***

Although Fishing's Future is a national organization, Kansas chapters work closely with KDWPT's sport fishing education coordinator, David Breth.

"We began work with Fishing's Future in 2012," Breth says. "We developed a training program as a partnership between the two organizations for people wanting to be involved. After they complete the Master Angler training, they can join other chapters or start their own. There are more chapters in Kansas than any other state except Texas."

For instructors wanting to begin their own chapters,

KDWPT and FF help supply fishing equipment for free or at significantly reduced cost.

"Some of these instructors are willing to drive hundreds of miles a year and spend hundreds of hours helping to put on a Family Fish Camp, staff a booth at a trade show or help with our mobile aquarium at fairs and fishing expos," said Breth. "We keep track of those volunteer hours, which help us when we apply for an in-kind match for Sportfish Restoration Fund money; They are incredibly important to us."

### ***The Great Motivator***

Phil Taunton, of Emporia, is an outdoor communicator and host of the KVOE radio show, "What's in the Outdoors." Taunton, along with others across the state, is deeply committed to carrying on the tradition of fishing they learned as children. This group of Master Anglers, all certified by KDWPT, host Family Fish Camps in various locations across the state.

"Our family had a cabin on Council Grove City Lake," Taunton says. "Pop had a set of rules and rule number one had to do with no work being done - don't even worry about getting the car unloaded and



*“We all need more outside for a better inside.” – Phil Taunton*

supplies put away until hooks are baited and lures cast to proven time-tested ‘honey holes’ around docks, stumps, rock piles and brush. Rule number two had to do with securing bait and rule number three was that if, and only if, the fish weren’t biting, you could mow the lawn.”

As Taunton speaks of his father, who passed away in 1995, his fondest memories are always centered upon an outdoors experience. Taunton decided the best way to deal with the grief of losing Pop was to pass on the love of the outdoors to others. That commitment led to his involvement in Fishing’s Future.

“I believe in getting youth and families outside for a better inside,” Taunton says. “Richard Louv wrote about Nature Deficit Disorder in his book, ‘Last Child on the Prairie.’ I agree with him that society, as a whole, needs to spend more time in the outdoors. And to me, there is nothing as much fun, and as easy on the wallet, as fishing. Seeing my niece, a rambunctious seven-year-old, catch a fish and then answering her inquisitive imagination concerning our outdoor world is why I do what I do.”

“So far this year, we’ve given away 60 rod and reel combos, tackle boxes, and other items to encourage people to get outdoors,” said Taunton. “With each one, we tell them to go catch smiles and memories that will last a lifetime.”

### ***Vamos a Pescar***

Another of Taunton’s favorite activities is a fish camp tailored to Hispanic families through the *Vamos a Pescar* (VAP) program.

“In Dodge City, 80 percent of the community is Hispanic,” Taunton says. “Last year we had 96 participants including kids, parents, grandmas and even

Family Fish Camps have demonstrations such as knot tying, fly tying, fish identification, basics of fishing, boat safety and outdoor ethics.



Fishing for backyard bass is an activity kids and parents enjoy. Plastic fish lay on the ground for participants to hook and reel in.

great grandmas. Not only are we able to help teach them how to fish, but we also can relay the rules, regulations and ethics of the sport here in Kansas. It was a great day with lots of fun, laughter and great food.”

“We have a VAP at Camp Alexander in Emporia, too, in the fall. We partner with Sally Sanchez of Hispanics of Today and Tomorrow (H.O.T.T.) and Patricia Saenz-Reye, USD 253 Migrant Education Coordinator. This is very popular with students and families and we always get a great turnout.”

### ***Not Just For Kids***

Kim Burnett, of Olathe, started fishing with parents as a young child and is widely known for his passion for fishing, especially for crappie and pan fish. He started his own chapter in 2018 after receiving his Master Angler Certification. He also owns Crappie Stopper Flies and Jigs.

“We fished all the time when I was a kid and I loved it,” Kim says. “At the time, I didn’t realize we were poor and were actually fishing for food and needed the fish to eat; I just thought we were out having fun.”

Burnett also volunteers his time doing fishing and fly tying demonstrations at retail stores like Wal-Mart and Bass Pro.

“I’m surprised how many kids have never fished before,” Burnett says. “It’s also the parents learning alongside the kids... Someone taught me how to do it so it’s my job to pass that on.”

“At the Family Fish Camps, we do a variety of demonstrations such as knot tying, fly tying, fish identification, basics of fishing, boat safety and outdoor ethics. The most popular is our backyard bass that both the kids and parents enjoy. We lay plastic fish on the ground and have a plastic plug on a fishing rod



that hooks on to it so they can cast it, hook it and reel it in. We have sponsors that give us things like rods and reels to give away. The nice thing is, all of it is free to the families."

Burnett also shared, "The best way to take a kid fishing for the first time is to take them bluegill fishing. Once they catch their first fish, they're hooked. Use a real light rig because pound for pound, bluegills are the hardest fighting fish out there. It's still one of my favorite fish to go fishing for and I've caught them all, but 'gills are my favorite."

### ***In the Classroom***

Heidi Albin, a science teacher at Complete High School Maize, uses the Fishing's Future model to teach science in a hands-on, practical way.

"My students have difficulties in the typical school environment so they need a different learning environment," Albin says. "What works exceptionally well is to teach outdoor skills along with the fundamentals of science. When the students go outside, their whole demeanor changes. They connect with the world, with who they are and friendships form more readily. What I don't see when we are outdoors are cellphones - they want to interact with each other and the outdoors."

Albin added, "A big barrier to teaching are the supplies, but Fishing's Future and Kansas Wildlife and Parks took down that barrier and provided all I needed to start. They gave me 40 fishing poles and all the equipment. That was a huge support."

For her unique work in integrating outdoor skills into her class curriculum, Albin was awarded the \$25,000 Educator Award from Milken Education Foundation in 2017.

"That I got the award was a reflection of our amazing principal and staff," Albin says. "I'd have to be pretty disillusioned to think I got it on my own. I have the best principal in the entire world that trusts the staff to be competent professionals and do what's best for the students.

"Also, the support that Wildlife and Parks and the other volunteers through Fishing's Future have been great. When I need someone to help at an event or need some supplies, I can reach out to a list of people who will drive a long way just to help out."

Recently, Albin's students became teachers themselves to a number of elementary students and their families. Her students set up a Family Fish Camp and walked the younger students through each station. When that was complete, they helped the students bait their hooks and try to catch fish with the caveat that it is easier to fish than it is to catch a fish.


There is a common theme, and almost urgency in their voice, when talking to the Master Anglers



Family Fish Camps have five stations to teach participants how to fish in a correct and ethical manner. One station focuses on the proper way to carry a fishing pole, cast, and reel in the line.

involved in Fishing's Future: kids and families are missing quality time that being together in the outdoors offers and electronics can never replace. This group of dedicated volunteers have a passion to make sure no child on the prairie has Nature Deficit Disorder.

There are numerous ways to support the efforts of Fishing's Future. You can go through the Master's Angler Certification (see the website below), help other chapter leaders with their events, or start your own chapter. You can also donate rods, reels and tackle boxes that will be passed on to teachers to use with students or to give away to families who attend Family Fish Camps.

What better way to spend outdoors than to help kids and families catch smiles and memories to last a lifetime? 

**For program information,  
contact:**

**David Breth**  
**KDWPT sportfish education coordinator**  
**(620) 672-5911**

**or visit**  
**[www.fishingsfuture.com](http://www.fishingsfuture.com)**  
**[www.fishks.org](http://www.fishks.org)**



# The Kansas Grand Slam

Until a few years ago, Dylan Campbell was only a spectator when it came to Kansas' big-game hunting. He would share the excitement when one of his buddies shot a big whitetail or mule deer. And he would listen to the stories of hunters who took big antelope not far from his hometown of Oakley.

by Brent Frazee  
*outdoor writer*



Campbell's unlikely quest for the Kansas Big Game Grand Slam started on a rainy day on Sept. 24, 2017. Shortly after the rain stopped, a buck walked out behind him, then ambled within shooting range.

Shutterstock/IWALL



Like many hunters in western Kansas, Campbell looked forward to the pheasant season and he shot doves whenever he got a chance – but big game? Nah, that just wasn't his thing.

"I had never gone big game hunting until three years ago," said Campbell, 36. "I knew we had deer and antelope in the area, but I just didn't have access to land to hunt them."

That all changed when a friend invited him to go deer hunting on his land. For Campbell, it was a life-changing moment.

"We were glassing and I saw this buck walking out of a ravine. I took a shot and I hit it, but it ran off. I had a cheap rifle and it just wasn't that accurate.

"But I followed it with my binoculars and saw where it went down. We drove over and that's where he was."

From that beginning, he has become an avid big game hunter.

Two falls ago, Campbell started chasing the dream of a Kansas Big Game Grand Slam – shooting a whitetail deer, a mule deer, an antelope and an elk. A little more than one year later, he accomplished his goal.

That mythical honor is mostly a self set goal among hunters in Kansas. The KDWPT doesn't have an official program of that sort, and wildlife biologists don't keep track of how many hunters have completed that bucket list, only acknowledging that it is a rare feat.

"It would be tough to do, especially with the rarity of the elk," said Levi Jaster, big game biologist for KDWPT. "There also are limited mule-deer rifle permits issued, and it can take a few years to draw for a rifle pronghorn tag.

"So everything has to work out right, and I guess it did for this guy."

That's Campbell's story – from a pheasant hunter to a noted big-game hunter in three short years.

## The First Shot

After Campbell shot his first deer, he was hooked. He bought a better rifle, put up trail cameras on the private land he had permission to hunt, applied for and got his necessary tags, and scouted whenever he had time.

His unlikely quest for the Kansas Big Game Grand Slam started on a rainy day on Sept. 24, 2017. Hunting private land in Logan County during the muzzleloader deer season, Campbell set up in a ground blind that he and a friend put out. There was only one problem: His buddy had taken his chair out of the blind. So, Campbell had to walk one-quarter of a mile to get his chair and bring it back to the blind – all in a driving rain.

"I really thought my friend's blind would give me a better chance, that's why I wanted to hunt there," Campbell said. "By the time I got back, I was drenched and considered just calling it a day. But it was the last day of muzzleloader, so I knew this was my last chance."

Shortly after the rain stopped, Campbell was rewarded for his decision. A buck walked out behind him, then ambled within shooting range.

"It wasn't a huge buck, but I wasn't going to pass it up," he said. "Our family enjoys eating venison, so we had some meat for the freezer."



## The Second Shot

Campbell had been drawn for an antelope rifle tag and was eager to fill it. He had never hunted pronghorns before, but he knew a good herd of them lived in Logan County where he had access to land.

"I did a lot of scouting," he said. "I saw them, but

On Oct. 7, 2017, Campbell fired and harvested his first pronghorn after walking down a trail and spotting the lone antelope 100 yards away.





Per Campbell, antelope are “easy to find, but they’re hard to get within range of.” After spotting a small group and stalking through a cornfield to get within shooting range, the antelope were spooked and ran off.

“Once you get out of that zone, you can buy tags over the counter.”

Jaster verified that, and Campbell kept his tag in his wallet during future hunts, just in case he ran across an elk in season.

On Jan. 7, 2018, it happened. While he was hunting the antlerless deer season, Campbell had his binoculars trained on a draw where he often saw does. When an elk got up, he started shaking with excitement.

“That was the last thing I expected to see,” he said.

Campbell fired and he had his first elk. It wasn’t a trophy by any means, but it was big in Campbell’s eyes.

that’s the easy part. They’re easy to find, but they’re hard to get within range of.”

When Campbell spotted a small group of antelope on Oct. 7, 2017, he tried to stalk through a cornfield to get within shooting range. The antelope spooked and ran off, but Campbell persisted. He went 3 ½ miles before finally ending the chase.

With no cellphone service, Campbell had to make the long walk back exhausted. But he wasn’t ready to give up altogether.

Low and behold, he walked down a trail and spotted a lone antelope 100 yards away. He fired and had his first pronghorn.

“I just got lucky,” he said.

to hunt them. There was a designated season, and better yet, hunters could buy tags over the counter.

“I thought for sure that the only tags were issued through a drawing,” he said. “But that was only for places like Fort Riley.



## The Third Shot

Spotting an elk in western Kansas isn’t a common occurrence. In fact, Campbell had never seen one before the fall of 2017. That changed when he went out during the muzzleloader deer season.

“I saw what I thought were two massive whitetail bucks in the distance,” he recalled. “But when I put my binoculars on, I saw they were elk.”

Campbell went home and researched what it would take

While hunting for antlerless deer on Jan. 7, 2018, Campbell saw an elk begin to stand while focused on a draw he often saw does. With his tag in his wallet, Campbell fired and had his first elk.





"I never thought I would shoot an elk in Kansas," he said.

Wildlife biologists weren't surprised. There are pockets of elk being reported throughout Kansas. Overall numbers are still low, but they do exist.

"We're getting more and more pictures of elk on trail cams," said Matt Peek, wildlife research biologist for KDWP. "Last year, there were nice-sized bulls shot in northeast and southeast Kansas.

"We're certain there are little pockets of them throughout the state. And there are signs that there is some reproduction.

"We'll never see a large population; we just don't have the habitat they like. But the numbers are increasing."

## The Fourth Shot

By this time, Campbell set a new goal. He wanted to complete his Kansas Big Game Grand Slam within a year.

It came down to the wire. During the 2018 muzzleloader season, he shot at a mule deer but missed.

Finally, on the last day of the season, he shot a small mule deer buck just six days shy of his goal; His grand slam took 371 days.

The buck ran into a maze of rocky fingers and rough terrain before it finally went down. Campbell found it two miles from where he shot it.



On the last day of the 2018 muzzleloader season, Campbell shot a small mule deer buck to successfully end his quest for the Kansas Big Game Grand slam, just six days shy of his goal.

hunting out here. One friend of mine, who is a bow hunter, crawled through a cut cornfield for a half-mile to sneak up within 30 yards of a huge deer and was able to shoot it... I just got extremely lucky."

And now?

"My only goal this year is to shoot a big deer," Campbell said. He paused and added, "But I might have used up all my luck." 🐻

"All of the big game I took were in Logan County," he said. "This is a good place to live if you're a big game hunter."

## Parting Shot

Campbell isn't letting his accomplishment go to his head.

"I'm probably not even in the top 20 hunters in my town," he said. "We do a lot of glassing, spot-and-stalk





# Grandpa Harry

## A Family of Trees

*text and photo by Rick McNary, outdoor writer and photographer*

The warmth of hot coffee soothed Harry's arthritis as he wrapped his fingers around the cup. The early morning light draped on a yellow lab curled up in the corner.

"Chauncey," Harry said, as the lab opened one eye. "I didn't sleep a wink last night. Can't wait to see our boy today."

During Ethan's previous visit, Harry taught him to make a mantle clock in his woodworking shop. For his upcoming visit, Ethan had a new request.

Harry fished the latest note out of his pocket and turned the note to the sunlight.

Dear Grandpa Harry,  
I showed my class the mantle clock I made with you. The teacher gives me extra credit if I do a presentation about the things I learn from you. She calls it the Grandpa Harry Grade. The other kids are asking their grandparents to teach them cool things, too. One kid did a thing about making pickles from cucumbers in her grandma's garden. But it's still called the Grandpa Harry Grade.  
She knows I'm coming for the holidays and she gave me a new assignment: to learn how to identify wood and the trees they come from. Can you teach me when I come?  
Love, Ethan

Later that morning, the normally quiet cabin was filled with the sounds of laughter and talking upon Ethan's arrival. Harry's arthritic pain lessened with each laugh.

"Hey, Grandpa," Ethan said, drying the last dish after lunch. "I told the class you and Grandma Gladys built this cabin and barn out of lumber from your sawmill. They're pretty excited to see the pictures. Can we start now?"

"Certainly," Harry said. "I already have a couple of pieces to start with. Generally speaking, wood is divided up into two categories: soft and hard. For example, the walls of the cabin are made out of pine logs, a soft wood. However, the floors and the cabinets are made out of oak, a hard wood."

"How can you tell the difference?" Ethan asked.

"The easiest way is by trying to drive a nail in it," Harry chuckled. "Another difference is how it burns," Harry said.

"For example, pine burns quickly and doesn't put out much heat, but oak burns slowly and puts out a lot of heat."

"Oh, that's why you put the oak logs in the fireplace before we go to bed!" Ethan exclaimed.

"Very observant," Harry smiled. "Wood also is measured by BTUs which stands for British Thermal Units. Pine has about 16 BTU, oak has 26 BTU, but the hottest burning wood is Osage Orange, also known as 'hedge.' It has a BTU of 32 - twice that of pine. Let's go to the shop and I'll show you more kinds of wood."

The next few days were spent with the old man, the boy and the dog wandering in the woods. Harry passed on to Ethan decades of wisdom about all manners of forestry. Ethan learned to identify each variety and the important role each tree plays in our environment.

Late one evening, snuggled beside Chauncey near the fireplace, Ethan said "Grandpa, thanks for teaching me about trees. The best part was The Gladys Tree where you proposed to Grandma."

"That's my favorite, too," Harry smiled. "But tomorrow I'll have a new favorite tree to add to my list."

"Which one is that?" inquired Ethan.

"We're going to the nursery to pick out The Ethan Tree," Harry said.

Ethan rose to his feet and rushed to give the old man a hug.

"That's awesome, Grandpa," said Ethan. "Can we plant it by The Gladys Tree?"

"Oh, of course," Harry said. "I think she would like that very much."

"But we need a Grandpa Harry Tree and a Chauncey Tree, too," exclaimed Ethan, "and we can call it our family of trees!"







# FREE Subscription!

Mail in your completed survey for a chance to win ONE FREE YEAR of *Kansas Wildlife & Parks Magazine*. The winner, who will be selected at random, may choose to keep the subscription or gift it to another. **POSTMARK DEADLINE: February 29, 2020**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you subscribe to other magazines (please circle one)?

YES If so, which? \_\_\_\_\_

NO

Are the font sizes and types in *Kansas Wildlife & Parks Magazine* easy to read?  
(please circle one): YES or NO

When it comes to value, *Kansas Wildlife & Parks Magazine* is  
(please circle one): Under priced Fairly priced Over priced

If the option were available, would you read an electronic version of *Kansas Wildlife & Parks Magazine*?  
(please circle one): YES or NO

What section of *Kansas Wildlife & Parks Magazine* do you flip to first?

\_\_\_\_\_

Have you purchased a Kansas hunting or fishing license within the past three years (please circle one)?

YES If so, which? \_\_\_\_\_

NO

Have you visited a Kansas state park within the past three years (please circle one)?

YES If so, which? \_\_\_\_\_

NO

If the option were available, would you auto-renew your subscription to *Kansas Wildlife & Parks Magazine*?  
(please circle one): YES or NO

What type of content would you like to see less of?

\_\_\_\_\_

What type of content would you like to see more of?

\_\_\_\_\_

*Thank you for your input!*

Clip out and mail to:  
**Kansas Wildlife & Parks Magazine**  
512 SE 25th Ave.  
Pratt, KS 67124



# Species Profile: Bobcat

These beautiful wild cats are approximately double the size of your favorite domestic house cat. Bobcats have a thick coat of fur which protects them in the elements. They have distinctive spots on the outside of their legs and black stripes on the inside. Bobcats appear to have a fur beard extending from the middle of their jowls to below the mouth. The ears of the bobcat are pointed upward, with little black tufts on the tips. And a fun little fact: The bob in bobcat comes from the tail, which appears cropped or “bobbed.”

Though they are most common in eastern Kansas, bobcats can be found throughout the state. They are partial to woody areas that have dense shrubs and cover. The adaptable bobcat dens in hollowed out logs or in rock crevices. They are mostly nocturnal, and have excellent hearing and vision which aid them in avoiding detection. They also can swim and are skilled climbers.

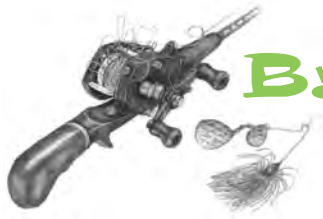
Although they can run at close to 30 miles per hour, these feisty hunters prefer to stalk and pounce on their prey. Bobcats eat rabbits, squirrels and other small animals. Though, they aren't afraid to take on large injured deer and the occasional fawn.

Apart from legal trapping, starvation, roadkill and predation by other bobcats are causes for mortality. Coyotes and dogs will occasionally prey on bobcats, as well.

In the wild, bobcats can live up to 14 years.







# Backlash

with Nadia Reimer

## Trail Tact

---

**K**ansas Wildlife, Parks and Tourism Commissioners recently approved the use of electric bicycles, or more commonly “e-bikes,” at Kansas state parks. In the months leading up to the vote, park staff’s seemingly benign proposal prompted livelier-than-expected conversations, largely about public trail use. With each public meeting, I began to wonder whether the proposed regulation would pass.

When the dust settled, it became evident the debate was really about two distinct issues: Whether the Commission should allow e-bikes at Kansas state parks, and whether trail users are aware of trail etiquette. The first issue was really a “yes” or “no” question, and Commissioners ultimately answered “yes.” The second issue, however, wasn’t as easy to answer, which means there is more work to be done.

It got me wondering, “Do I know the rules of trail etiquette?” I sat in my seat, almost shocked, because the answer bubbling to the surface was a very apparent “no.” I was silently embarrassed. My thoughts immediately shot over to one of my favorite Maya Angelou quotes, “Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.” I knew right then and there I had some bettering to do, thus began my education on trail etiquette.

According to the National Park Service, here are some of the rules we should follow if we want to show some tact on the trail.

**There is a right of way.** If we’re on the descent or just starting on a trail, we should give space to those making an ascent or completing a trail. If we’re on a bike, we should give the right of way to trail users on foot and horses. This means coming to a full stop on the bike and stepping to the side. If we’re approaching horses from behind, we should calmly announce our presence and intention, so we don’t inadvertently spook the animal or rider. And when possible, we should step off to the “downhill side” of the trail.

**Stay on the trail. Really.** Trails are designated areas for a reason – often times to protect us and/or to protect the area and associated wildlife. The only time we should consider stepping off of a trail is when we must in order to yield to other trail users. Otherwise, failure to “keep it between the lines” can be detrimental to both plants and animals.

**Observe, but don’t disturb.** Encountering wildlife

should be an expectation of trail users (and hopefully a welcomed one at that). However, we shouldn’t let our curiosity creep to the point of disturbing wildlife. Let’s observe from a distance, take a photo if we wish, then continue down the trail.

**Let nature do the talking.** We as trail users can show a great deal of tact by respecting the fact that other trail users might enjoy simply listening to nature. And if respecting our fellow man isn’t enough of an incentive, let’s keep quiet for the animals. The National Park Service website states, “Many wildlife species rely on natural sounds for communication purposes, and disrupting those sounds can hurt their chances of survival.” I, for one, can respect that.

Lastly, I’ll add to the National Park Service’s list: **Take it with you.** I’m not talking about the cool rock you saw or the bunch of wildflowers that would look great on your dining room table – those don’t belong to us. Instead, let us

only take home what we bring in, nothing more, nothing less. Whether that means grabbing a couple extra grocery sacks, bringing a small backpack, snapping on a handy fanny pack, or simply making sure our pants and shorts have pockets, there’s no reason for us to leave trash, clothing or other man-made materials behind.

Now that we all know better, we can hopefully do better. But if the rules of trail etiquette still confound us as that hiker or horse approaches, just remember the words of Elsa Maxwell, “Etiquette – a fancy word for simple kindness.” 🐾



Shutterstock/Eshma





Youth-only seasons provide ideal opportunities to hunt in uncrowded conditions. It's just one more way the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism is working to make joy last.



**MAKING IT LAST**

