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KANSAS

Wildlife & Parks Magazine

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INSIDE COVER A hunter's early view. Jon Blumb photo.

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

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COMMON GROUND

with Brad Loveless



Don't Wait for a Canary



People reference “the canary in the coal mine” when something indicates a hazard lies ahead. But the trouble is that canaries aren’t found in coal mines naturally. If we’re talking about environmental troubles in Kansas, we ought to use bobwhite quail, or monarch butterflies, or tiger salamanders, or channel catfish; Those are all native species that, like we Kansans, depend on the same air, water, soil, plants and animals to stay healthy.

The mission of the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) is to conserve and enhance Kansas’ natural heritage, its wildlife and habitats. We attempt to strike a balance between natural resource integrity and other human benefits such as hunting and fishing, camping, land use and development. Importantly, the integrity of our natural resources – plants, animals, soil, air and water – is a key human benefit. We are inextricably connected so we should take careful notice when there is decline. So, take notice.

The Kansas State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) monitors the status of species across all taxa of wildlife, taking an ecosystem approach to addressing threats. It then calls for the implementation of habitat-based research and conservation tasks to help these species stabilize and recover. Currently, Kansas has 133 species listed as needing special protections

and help for recovery.

Globally, significant declines across the wildlife spectrum have been seen when we use 1970 as a baseline, not so long ago – Insects and especially pollinators, reptiles and amphibians, mammals and birds, especially grassland species... Overall reductions in biodiversity – the mix of species that represent a complex and healthy ecosystem – have been reduced from 30 to 50 percent, with the largest declines in freshwater fish, muskels and insect species.

Across these diverse taxa, the causes for decline are very similar: Habitat loss and/or land use change is almost always at the top. One of the benefits of KDWP’s constant work to improve terrestrial habitat is the broad list of critters it benefits – earthworms to eagles, game and non-game species alike. Invasive species and environmental pollution follow as most frequent reasons for decline, along with climate change and often, over exploitation.

Globally, each one of us can only have a very small impact. International policies and agreements are the big factors, along with broad consumer pressure that products be produced sustainably, minimizing negative environmental effects. **But in Kansas, your impact can be much larger.** If you have room for a garden, do you have space for plants that pollinators or migrants, like monarch butterflies, need? Every summer, we watch them find our milkweed plants and benefit at each of their life stages. Is your lawn a picture-perfect fescue monoculture? If it is, it’s probably aided by fertilizer, herbicide and maybe insecticide and these are hard to keep in place, usually draining from your yard to surrounding areas where they may not be needed. Maybe you can settle for a few weeds? I know the bees in my neighborhood appreciate the dainty Dutch Clover that’s invaded spots of our yard. Many Kansas farmers and ranchers who manage many acres are adapting novel techniques to use fewer expensive chemicals, and to keep soil and the chemicals they *do* need in place and on their fields.

If land management isn’t your best option, maybe you can be supportive of conservation programs, individuals or groups that serve this mission. KDWP’s Chickadee Checkoff program has given Kansans the opportunity to donate directly to non-game species since 1980. Political candidates on election ballots may be very environmentally aware or may not make these issues a priority as they weigh what to support and oppose. And, elections in Kansas are sometimes decided by very few votes and maybe yours will be the difference maker.

So, get informed and involved. Species are declining faster than ever before in human history and their, and our, health depend on understanding the causes and making needed changes. Don’t wait for a canary in a coal mine. Instead, focus on the condition of the catfish in our Kansas creeks. All of us who live in Kansas will benefit. 🐻

Letters To The Editor

Kudos and Suggestion

Dear Ms. Reimer,

Just received the excellent, well-crafted September/October 2021 issue. Would you consider again including the various hunting season schedules as you did in the past? Keep up the good work!

*John R. Goheen
(A very long-time subscriber)*

Mr. Goheen,

First off, thank you for being a reader of *Kansas Wildlife & Parks Magazine*. This publication exists because of loyal subscribers like you; we appreciate your support.

To your point, you're not the first person to make this suggestion. Therefore, I'm pleased to share that a "sportsmen's calendar" (of some fashion) will again appear in this publication following the printing of our special photo issue early next year.

Take care and all the best,

Nadia Reimer, *executive editor*

Giant Alligator Gar Caught in Kansas

When a lure drops below the water's surface, it's not always known what might rise to meet it. On a warm night late last month, one angler fishing the Neosho River east of Parsons caught something he probably never expected to see – a four and a half-foot, 39.5-pound Alligator Gar. The kicker? Alligator Gar aren't native to Kansas and have never been documented here.

Though not always common, Alligator Gar are distributed from southwestern Ohio and southeastern Missouri and Illinois, south to the Gulf of Mexico, and a small portion of northeastern Mexico. A predatory fish, Alligator Gar are sometimes referred to as "living fossils" since fossil records trace them back nearly 100 million years. As the name implies, Alligator Gar are easily identified by their broad snouts that loosely resemble that of the American Alligator. Alligator Gar are the largest gar species with specimens weighing more than 300 pounds and measuring more than 8 feet long. Just three gar species are native to Kansas: Longnose, Shortnose, and Spotted Gar. Longnose Gar are the most common and largest gar species in Kansas. While the Longnose Gar are common in the state and reach lengths exceeding 5 feet, they are distinguished from the Alligator Gar by a narrow snout and smaller overall size, among other characteristics. So, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks Fisheries biologists must ask, "What's an alligator gar doing in the Neosho River?"

It's a good question, and one KDWP Fisheries biologists are attempting to answer.

"We're confident the information from the angler is accurate and the fish was, in fact, caught from the Neosho River," said KDWP Fisheries biologist Connor Ossowski. "However, that doesn't mean the fish originated from the river."

To determine the fish's origins, KDWP

biologists have several unique options.

Since all states involved in Alligator Gar reintroduction efforts for populations in decline have been tagging each hatchery-produced Alligator Gar, KDWP staff had the option of looking for a tag. After using a "wand" to detect any identification markers, KDWP staff are confident this catch was not part of a formal reintroduction effort.

"Because most populations of this species can be distinguished from one another with a sample of the fish's fins, another option we're considering is genetic identification," said KDWP assistant director of Fisheries research, Jeff Koch. "This will tell us if the fish came from an existing population in another state."

If genetic testing doesn't pan out, not all hope is lost; KDWP Fisheries biologists would still have one more option.

"Microchemistry is another technique at our disposal," Koch added.

Microchemistry is performed by measuring the elemental proportion of a bone on a given fish and comparing it to the elemental concentration of a surrounding water. If consistencies exist, the data may be able to help Fisheries biologists determine at least how long the fish had been in the Neosho River.

Of all the potential scenarios for how this giant came to be in the Neosho River, there's one hypothesis that rings the truest – the possibility that the Kansas-caught Alligator Gar was released from an aquarium.

"It's not unlikely that this fish was once somebody's pet or purchased from a pet store, and simply released into the river once it became too large," said Doug Nygren, KDWP Fisheries Division director. "These techniques should allow us to determine which mode of introduction occurred."

Time will tell if the Neosho River Alligator Gar made its way to the Sunflower State by natural or assisted means. While it would be

very difficult for this fish to have made its way to Kansas naturally, due to the distance to the nearest population and the series of dams along the river, KDWP Fisheries biologists won't jump to conclusions; they'll do as they always have, which is rely on verifiable data from proven research methods.

Once their research is complete, KDWP Fisheries biologists will publish the results of this catch on ksoutdoors.com and on the Kansas Fisheries Division Facebook page at www.facebook.com/KDWPFisheries.

In the meantime, it's important to note that transporting and releasing fish or other species in public waters, whether native or non-native, is illegal in Kansas. Chris Steffen, KDWP Aquatic Nuisance Species coordinator, warns, "Transporting and releasing fish risks spreading other harmful species such as microscopic zebra mussels, fish diseases, or aquatic vegetation that might be present in the water used to transport the fish."

To report a rare species find in Kansas, email rare.species@ks.gov and visit <https://ksoutdoors.com/Services/Threatened-and-Endangered-Wildlife/Rare-Species-Sighting> for more information.



BIRD BRAIN

with Mike Rader

Winter Doesn't Mean "Winding Down"



The onset of fall brings the close of yet another season of breeding, nesting and rearing the next generation of birds in the Northern Hemisphere. Many species of songbirds have migrated by now, with a multitude using the natural resources we have in Kansas to fuel their trip on the way to wintering grounds further south. Most will not be observed again until the spring migration, but we often have a few surprises that linger during winter to keep up interested. As a great consolation, we get to see thousands of Sandhill Cranes and many species of ducks and geese migrate through our state; plus, we are the wintering grounds for other species that have spent the summer in more northern areas. It's always a treat to see the first Dark-eyed Juncos, Harris' Sparrows, American Tree Sparrows, and a host of other favorite winter-time species. Tens of thousands of waterfowl fill our lakes and marshes, and we usually see an influx of gulls and other waterbirds at our reservoirs. All-in-all, there's quite a lot to keep Kansas birders occupied during the winter season.

The ongoing global pandemic is still affecting group birding events. The fall meeting for the Kansas Ornithological Society (KOS) took place in a virtual format again on October 8-10, with several presenters creating video recordings of their talks (which are available to view by registered event participants). It's still a great way to be able to see the interesting bird research projects

taking place by students and other folks in our state and other fascinating locales. There will be a few small in-person field trips in different locations around the state to add back a little "fun time" to the meeting. More information will be available on www.ksbirds.org and through social media outlets.

Christmas Bird counts for the National Audubon Society are conducted from Dec. 14, 2021 - Jan. 5, 2022. KOS will recognize and take data collected from counts scheduled the weekend prior to the counts through the weekend after they end... It's a fun way to keep sharpening your identification skills, as well as sharing birds with old friends and new ones. I'm going to guess that there will still be precautions to take when compilers are coordinating and conducting these counts, such as the continuation of COVID-19 safety protocols, but we were able to successfully do these surveys last winter, so we've had practice.

Even if you don't participate in a coordinated event, this is the season of family gatherings, so it's a great opportunity to introduce family members that don't birdwatch to the hobby. It doesn't take a lot to get started either, just a pair of binoculars, a good field guide or app, areas to see birds (they're pretty much everywhere!) and desire. It's a great way to spend quality time with family and friends, and enjoy what nature has for us. Have a safe and happy holiday season! Bird on.



Law Matters *with Colonel Gregory Kyser*

Operation Game Thief

The first sounds of geese migrating ahead of a cold front signifies to many that autumn has finally arrived. For hunters, the thought of harvesting a monster buck or finally taking a canvasback drake are just a few of the goals many have in their sights. However, there are those who abuse these very same resources by engaging in poaching activity, taking away the chance for law-abiding hunters to achieve their own goals.

Some people assume that poachers take only endangered or exotic wildlife, or big game. In reality, poachers target all types of fish and wildlife species. That's why programs like Operation Game Thief (OGT) are so important.

OGT was introduced in Kansas in 1984 with the purpose of providing an anonymous tip line for reporting fish and wildlife crimes. OGT is still active today, with 1,367 calls received in 2020. Callers can provide their information for officer contact purposes or remain completely anonymous – whichever they prefer. Before calling OGT, it's best to try and gather as much information as possible including the time and location of the crime, a description of the suspected individuals involved, and vehicle descriptions and tag numbers, if possible. In an abundance of caution, observers should never confront any violators, especially to obtain this information.

Currently, OGT calls are routed through the Jackson County Sheriff Dispatch Center. Once received, the calls are re-routed to the appropriate game warden for investigation and disposition. Because this line routes directly to a non-KDWP entity, non-emergency calls inquiring about permit status, licensing or general information need to be addressed



by calling one of KDWP's many offices, which can be found at: www.ksoutdoors.com/KDWP-Info/Locations/Administrative-Offices. KDWP staff will be happy to help.

At the end of the day, climbing down from a tree stand or picking up decoys after a successful hunt is a great feeling. Long after the hunt is over, the memories of a great day spent with family and friends is what's most important. Those opportunities are just one of the many things your Kansas game wardens are striving to protect – but we need your help. Report active fish and wildlife crimes through Operation Game Thief at 877-426-3843. For all other needs, find us at ksoutdoors.com or by calling (620) 672-5911. Happy hunting.

Report active fish and wildlife crimes through Operation Game Thief at 877-426-3843. For all other needs, find us at ksoutdoors.com or by calling (620) 672-5911. Happy hunting.



Follow **Kansas Wildlife & Parks - Game Wardens** on Facebook to stay up-to-date on poaching cases, rules and regulations, events and more!

WHAT AM I? ID Challenge

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



Clues:

1. I am really good at digging with my huge claws.
2. I can run up to 19 mph despite having short legs.
3. I have poor eyesight and spend most of my time underground.

>>> See answer on Page 13.



BOAT KANSAS

Replacing Your Boating Ed Card

with Chelsea Hofmeier

If you are between the ages of 12 and 20 in the state of Kansas and would like to operate a motorized vessel (including personal watercrafts) or a sailboat without being under direct and audible supervision, you must complete an approved boating education course and carry your certificate while on board the vessel you're operating.

If you've taken one of our boating education courses and your card is now lost, stolen, or at the bottom of the lake, no need to panic! We've got you covered.

The KDWP Boating Education Program is proud to announce there is now an easier way to get a replacement boating education certificate - without having to remember how or when you took the course. If you've taken a boating

education course using any of our approved methods (online, homestudy, or classroom), simply visit www.ilostmycard.com to look up your record, verify your details, and order a new card. It's truly that simple.

Are you coming from out of state to boat in Kansas? No need to worry there, either! A NASBLA-approved boating education certificate acquired from another state, when presented, is accepted in the state you're visiting as long as you are following the state's boating education requirements.

If you have any questions about boating education, visit ksoutdoors.com/Boating or call Chelsea Hofmeier, KDWP boating education coordinator, at (620) 672-0770. Boat safe, boat Kansas!

Linda Lanterman Honored with National Award

Linda Lanterman, State Parks director for the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, was recently honored with the Fran P. Mainella Award by the Clemson University Institute for Parks (CUIP). Lanterman was gifted the award in recognition of her long-standing commitment to diversity and inclusion in our nation's parks, to include her home state of Kansas.

The Fran P. Mainella Award is named in appreciation of the dynamic career of Fran Mainella, the first female director of the National Park Service. The award recognizes sustained and innovative achievement by a woman in the management of America's natural, historic and cultural heritage.

"Linda was a natural choice for this award as her passion and charismatic leadership are reminiscent of Director Mainella," said Bob Powell, CUIP director. "She is devoted to making our nation's parks a place of beauty, refuge and solace



LT to RT: Fran Mainella, Linda Lanterman and Bob Powell.

to everyone who wishes to visit."

Lanterman served as the past president of the National Association of State Outdoor Recreation Liaison Officers (NASORLO) and former president of the National Association of State Park Directors (NASPD), organizations in which director Mainella also held leadership roles.

"Director Mainella made an impact on a young lady who never thought she could be a park director," Lanterman said. "After that, I went on to become not only a park director, but also presi-

dent of the NASPD."

Linda is still in awe of Fran to this day, as she has made an impact on all parks and the people she has inspired.

Lanterman has long been a champion for the re-authorization of the Land and Water Conservation Fund and was active in the Great American Outdoors Act efforts, as well. She spent time in Washington, DC, educating Congress on the importance of the re-authorization and was one of the point persons for America's State Parks in the successful negotiations.

As President of the NASPD, Lanterman provided leadership for the organization and was instrumental in establishing NASPD's partnership with Clemson University for the implementation of a webinar series for State Park professionals around the nation. Lanterman is a strong believer in education and training opportunities and has served at the State Park Leadership School for two terms.

In 2006, Lanterman was assistant director of Kansas State Parks when they hosted the NASPD conference that Director Mainella attended. During the event, Lanterman and Mainella spent time together, and Lanterman credits that experience for having a lasting impact on her life and career trajectory.



The Gift of the Outdoors with Tanna Fanshier



Looking for the perfect holiday gift for yourself or the outdoor woman in your life? The She Goes Outdoors team from Nebraska Game and Parks, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, and the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks

is excited to announce the return of our popular outdoor subscription boxes! Packed with outdoor gear, educational materials, branded apparel, and more, these boxes are designed to inspire safe and fun outdoor participation amongst women.

After offering box themes for pheasant hunting, backyard birding, outdoor cooking, and fishing in year one of the program, the tri-state team is excited to announce its second year will feature themes related to ice fishing, planning for pollinators, hiking/backpacking, and a shooting range box!

Every box is accompanied by special access to live webinars hosted by experts in the field, and a chance to connect with fellow She Goes Outdoors subscribers in a safe, virtual format. Boxes are priced at \$50, including shipping, and are valued at more than \$150!

Whether you're new to the outdoors or a long-time adventurer looking to try something new, with She Goes Outdoors boxes delivered right to your doorstep, you'll have the tools, knowledge and support necessary to have a fantastic outdoor journey.

To order a box, visit sgooutdoors.com/subscriptionbox. On behalf of the entire She Goes Outdoors team, we look forward to seeing you outdoors!



FISHIN' *with Mike Miller* The Cold Bite

While hunting seasons are drawing the most attention right now, winter fishing shouldn't be ignored. As water temperatures in Kansas reservoirs cool, crappie will congregate along point breaks, river/creek channel edges and brush piles, usually in water 15 to 25 feet deep. When you find fish, which is often the biggest challenge, the fishing can be phenomenal.

I like to use 7-foot, light-action spinning outfits with a fused superline or braid. Fused or braided lines in 4- or 6-pound test diameters provide excellent sensitivity, high strength and aren't susceptible to spool memory. Even turbid lakes usually clear in the winter, so I add a monofilament or fluorocarbon leader. It might not be important to the fish, but it gives me confidence and that's important for catching fish.

We normally think of downsizing lures in cold water because winter fishing is considered "finesse" fishing. However, we should also think about "matching the hatch," and the young-of-year shad that crappie are feeding on are likely 2 to 3 inches long. I'll start with a 2-inch shad-type

plastic body and see how aggressive the fish are. Depending on the bite, I'll experiment with different body sizes, types and colors.

I don't like a heavy jig head, but when the fish are 20 or more feet deep, a single eighth-ounce jig head can take forever to sink. I'll often tie on two eighth-ounce jigs, about 18 inches apart. That provides some weight; allows me to keep my line tight, which improves sensitivity; and I can compare color combinations and body types.

Other considerations: Sometimes, less is more. We all like to think our skillful jigging motion tempts the fish, but there are times when simply holding the jig steady will elicit more bites. Depth is more important than movement. If you've got sonar, use it to position your jigs just above where the crappie are holding; they nearly always come up to hit a lure.

According to our 2021 Kansas Fishing Forecast, the top 10 white crappie reservoirs this year – measuring density of fish longer than 8 inches, as well as fish longer than 10 inches – includes Pomona, Marion, Hillsdale, Lovewell, Tuttle Creek, Melvern, El Dorado, Toronto, Milford and Perry. Tuttle Creek is top for numbers of fish longer than 10 inches and El Dorado is best for lunker-sized crappie, which measure longer than 12 inches. Good luck this winter!

HUNTING HERITAGE

Classic Cartridges .30-40 Krag

with Kent Barrett

In the early 1890s, the U.S. Army replaced their aging Springfield Trapdoor rifles chambered in .45-70 that had been in use for nearly two decades. The real driving force came from a desire to move from black powder cartridges and single shot rifles to smokeless powder and modern repeating rifles. The .30-40 Krag cartridge, also known as the .30 U.S. or the .30 Army was the result of this effort. This development provided the U.S. military with a smokeless powder cartridge for use in small-bore repeating rifles. The .30-40 Krag has the distinction of being the first U.S. military cartridge designed from the beginning to use smokeless powder. The name followed the black powder practice of the “caliber-charge” naming system, so it was designated .30 (30 caliber) with 40 grains of smokeless powder. The rifle selected to fire this new round was a modified version of the Norwegian Krag-Jorgensen rifle and was officially adopted as the bolt action M1892 Springfield. The .30-40 Krag cartridge was also used in the model M1893 rifle and later in Gatling guns.

The .30-40 Krag cartridge was developed during a time of rapid change in rifle and cartridge technology, so it has characteristics from both older and modern eras. The .30-40 Krag round uses a rimmed bottlenecked case. The rimmed case head allowed head spacing on the rim of the cartridge. However, rimmed cases can hang up in magazines and cause feeding issues in repeating rifles. This is one of the main issues that prevented the round from finding a long-term

home in U.S. military arsenals. Using a bottlenecked case allowed the 220 grain .30-40 Krag to generate 2,000 fps velocity and 1,960 ft-lbs. of energy, and with the 180-grain bullet, 2,430 fps velocity and 2,330 ft-lbs. of energy. These loads are perfect for game like deer and elk at short to moderate distances. Hunters appreciated this improved level of performance over the typical black powder loads while still generating modest recoil. Ultimately, they found the .30-40 Krag to be a wonderful all-around hunting cartridge.

In October 1899, U.S. Army ordnance officers reviewed the experiences of troops during the Spanish-American War. As a result, the army began development of a new cartridge to match the power and performance of the 7mm Mauser round used by the opposing Spanish forces during the war. In 1903, after receiving recommendations from the infantry Small Arms Board, the U.S Army formally retired the .30-40 Krag and adopted a higher-velocity .30 caliber replacement cartridge. Even though the .30-40 Krag may have not had a long run as the official military round of the U.S. Army, it is still a worthy choice for those who like to stand apart from the crowd or who like to hunt with a piece of history. While it does have some limitations, the .30-40 Krag is an outstanding choice for hunting under the right circumstances. It may not be the premier choice for a deer hunting cartridge, but it does that job well. After 128 years of service, it is worthy of being considered a “classic cartridge.”



KDWP Introduces Fully-online Option for Hunter Education

For the first time ever, the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) is offering a fully-online Hunter Education course for prospective hunters aged 16 and older. Upon successful completion of the self-paced course, students will be issued a Kansas Hunter Education Certificate, allowing them to purchase hunting licenses and permits, and be eligible to hunt without the direct supervision of a licensed adult in Kansas.

Historically, KDWP has offered two delivery methods for Hunter Education certification: a traditional, 10-hour minimum in-person course, and an internet-assisted option that requires an in-person “field day.” The newly-added, fully-online course - developed by the National Rifle Association (NRA) - is currently offered in 12 states and covers 14 subjects across four modules - Firearm Basics, Firearm Handling, Field Safety and Hunter Ethics.

“While researching online course options for our Kansas resident hunters, our team was very critical of online delivery options. We wanted a course that was comprehensive, interactive, inclusive and free,” said Aaron Austin, KDWP Education section chief. “The NRA Online Hunter Education course exceeded our expectations. The engaging online activities have the students applying what they learn in the course to real-life situations, giving them practical knowledge they can use while hunting.”

Kansas’ full-online option will not replace traditional courses or internet-assisted courses; it is being offered in conjunction with previous course formats.

To access the fully-online Hunter Education course for Kansas, visit <https://ksoutdoors.com/NRA-Online-Course>.

For more information on all things Kansas Hunter Education, including information on upcoming traditional and internet-assisted opportunities, visit ksoutdoors.com/Services/Education/Hunter/Hunter-Ed-Courses.



Seeing Seeds

By Anthony Zukoff

As fall and winter replace the vibrant colors of summer vegetation and blooms, the landscapes enjoyed on hikes become less about the great colors of the growing season and more about texture. The long dormant grasses and forbs of the late season landscape all contribute something different to our outdoor experience. Grasses that once flowed gently in the breeze now stand stiff and dry. Perhaps you will come upon Switchgrass with leaves frozen in a weeping fashion or the rigid bronze columns of Little Bluestem. Some trees, like oaks, hold on to their dead leaves longer and those crunchy leaves clinging to the branches catch the light of the sunrise and sunset in a way that can make both times of day along our favorite trail feel like two different places altogether.

If you look closely at many of the plants that remain, you will see that even their seeds contribute to the texture of the landscape. Early fall is a great time to stop and ponder the form and function of the interesting variety of seeds that our native plants worked all season to produce. Many times, the appearance of a seed has to do with how that seed is dispersed throughout the landscape. Sometimes the seeds themselves are hidden within the flesh of a brightly-colored berry. Eye-catching, shiny purple clusters of Elderberry and bright red panicles of Smooth Sumac berries are common in the fall landscape in many places of Kansas, and are consumed by birds which then disperse their seeds far and wide. Come fall, the pink pea-like flowers of various species of Tick Clover are replaced by drooping, segmented legumes that can persist on the dead plants well into winter. Very fine hairs on the outside of the segments allow them to stick tightly to animals, or unlucky hikers, that happen to brush by the plants, allowing the segments to spread and establish in new locations.

While animals are responsible for moving a variety of seeds around the landscape, one of the most noticeable types of seeds observed in the fall and winter landscape are those that are dispersed by the wind. The spindle shaped pods of Common Milkweed dry down and pop open as fall weather sets in exposing the bright white mass of silky floss attached to the dark brown seeds. The floss of each seed allows it to be picked up by even the slightest breeze and carried great distances on the wind. You are guaranteed to come across many other plants whose seeds are noticed first by a white mass of hairs or silks. The fuzzy, white spikes of Dotted Blazing Star are common in the prairies across the state late in the year. Looking closely at these seed spikes will reveal that they, too, can be carried on the wind by the numerous feather-like bristles attached to them.

Next time you are enjoying the cool air of a late season hike, stop and look for seeds. What do you see?

EVERYTHING OUTDOORS

A Tom for Mom

with Marc Murrell

I've been hunting since I was 9 years old and loved every minute of it. My dad is the one credited with my outdoor introduction, but my mom, Carol, always remained curious in the activity.

"Did you catch any?" she'd ask inquisitively after I duck hunted one morning in college.

I carefully explained to her "catching" was for fish but appreciated her interest. It was this curiosity that caused me to ask her a couple years after graduation if she'd like to give hunting a try. A bit hesitant about her lack of experience, she still jumped at the chance.

Mom wasn't a stranger to the hunting experience. My parents divorced when I was 14 years old, and she would occasionally be my hunting chauffeur since I wasn't yet old enough to drive. Most trips were after school dove hunts, and she did her part to try to help me. We'd sit back-to-back and I told her to let me know if she saw any doves approaching so I could get ready. I soon realized Mom needed a little work on her dove I.D., or any bird for that matter.

"Here comes one, Marcl!" she'd whisper way too loud.

I'd spin around, excited, only to see a lonely crow winging its way in the opposite direction.

"That's not a dove, Mom" I'd respond.

So many hunts passed with my mom telling me doves were approaching and me telling her they were robins, starlings, black birds or even a great blue heron (which must have looked like the T-Rex of all doves). Still, I appreciated her efforts as a loving mother doing her best to help her son.

When it came time for me to lead her in shotgun instruction and turkey target practice, I discovered the turkey would have to be under 25 yards for her to achieve consistency. Subsequent turkey hunting videos, instructions on shot placement and legal bearded bird identification one evening found her finally ready to go on her first turkey hunt!

A friend had offered to take



Mom and I to a great spot the first morning. As the woods woke up and the turkeys gobbled from their roost, Mom's eyes were wide. Soon, a couple jakes headed our way. But Mom missed, and they headed back the way they came. Several other close encounters on a few hunts that year didn't produce her first turkey, either.

The next spring was wet, soggy and stormy. But on the lone hunt that year, we had a strutting gobbler coming on rope to our decoys. But, at 35 yards, he folded up and beat a retreat. I hadn't a clue what happened until I looked over at my mom, smacking a giant mosquito on her forehead.

"I couldn't stand it!" she grumbled, not realizing the turkey's eyesight was good enough to see her AND the mosquito.

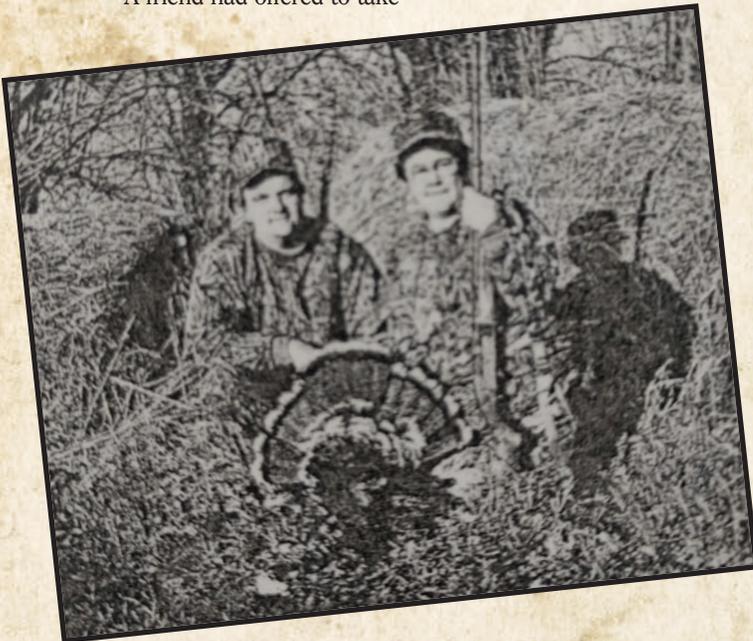
Mom said the next spring would be her last attempt to kill a turkey. She reasoned she could have bought about 25 Honeysuckle turkeys already cleaned at the store with the money she spent on a hunting license and turkey tags. And she REALLY wasn't a fan of 4:30 a.m. wake-up calls. But, more importantly, if she was going to make the 2-hour drive to my house, she'd rather spend that time with her first grandbaby, my 2-year-old daughter, Ashley. She made some valid points.

As if the Turkey Gods knew this hunt would be mom's final attempt, everything fell into place. Just like her first hunt three years prior, two jakes came to check out our decoys less than 100 yards from where we sat. Mom dropped one of them and we both celebrated her well-earned success.

I relived all those turkey hunts with my mom again when I came across an article I'd written about her first turkey titled, "A Tom for Mom" in a 1995 issue of Buckmaster's Beards and Spurs Turkey Magazine. My sister, Chari, and I were going through our mother's belongings after she passed away from COVID-19 on August 16, 2021, in Topeka's Stormont Vail Hospital. She was 77 years old.

The article really brought home what made my mother a special person. She cared deeply about Chari's and my life, as well as those of her now-adult grandchildren. She'd just started another generational journey as Hadley, her first great grandchild, was born.

Mom will be missed.





A Good Kind of Busy

with Daren Riedle

People ask me all the time, “What does your job entail? What’s your typical day?” To be honest, there is no easy answer. Ecological Services section staff, like many other sections, get pulled in many directions. This last year has been insanely busy as several ongoing projects have all entered into their final stages. As these projects wrap up, they also begin to set the stage for future work.

Late last spring, we began revising our State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP). All states must have a SWAP plan in place to be eligible for State Wildlife Grant Funds. This revision is focused on revisiting the list of species of greatest conservation need (SGCN) in the state. There is also a national push for more landscape-level conservation of species and habitats, which means more cross-border conservation collaborations.

An exercise to identify and rank regional SGCN was spearheaded by the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (MAFWA) and the Midwest Landscape Initiative. This included sitting on multiple video meetings reviewing 1,817 species currently listed as SGCN in the 13 states that make up MAFWA. The region encompassing MAFWA includes several very distinct ecosystems including eastern deciduous forest, the Great Lakes and adjacent terrestrial habitats, and the northern Great Plains.

As you can imagine, the Great Plains does not share many species with more eastern habitats. Recognizing this, the United States and Canadian provinces in the Great Plains region are coming together to develop a grassland focused amphibian and reptile working group. Additionally, we also partnered with Responsive Management to conduct a survey on Kansas Residents’ Attitudes Regarding Threatened and

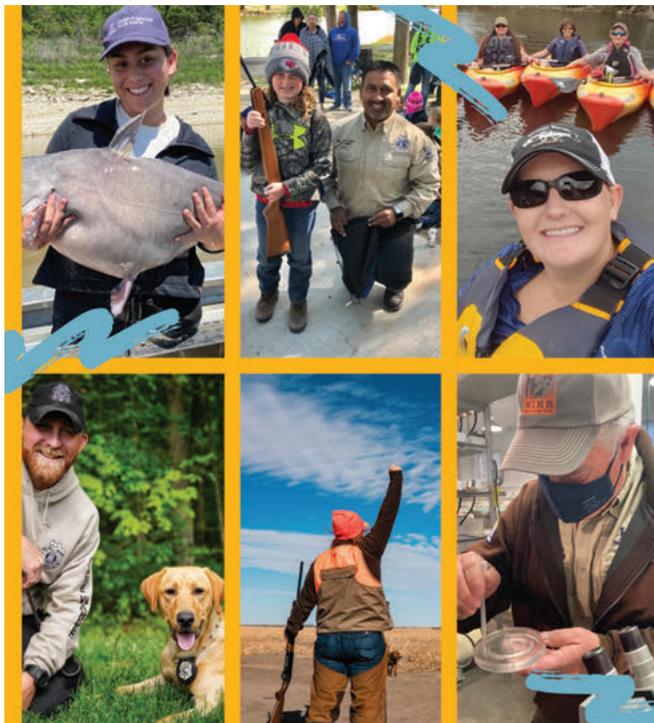
Endangered Wildlife. This is the third time the survey has been conducted, with past surveys conducted in 1991 and 2001. Highlights include continued support for protecting critical habitat and conserving threatened and endangered wildlife in the state (71 percent approval). Disappointingly, there was an increased trend in the number of Kansas residents who were not aware of our Nongame Wildlife Improvement Program, also known as “Chickadee-Checkoff,” with 68 percent of those polled never having heard of the program.

We’ve been working with the marketing firm Mammoth Creative to revamp the program and increase its presence among Kansas residents. This has included the creation of program-specific webpage, chickadeecheckoff.com, and social media advertising.

And finally, we are close to wrapping up the development of a Programmatic Safe Harbor Agreement and Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances for fourteen aquatic species in Kansas. A bit of a mouthful, but it may be one of the most important moves we’ve made as far as nongame conservation in the state goes! In short, this agreement removes and reduces the background threat of regulation for landowners, should state- or federally-listed species be introduced on their property.

There you go; a peak into some of the activities being undertaken by the Ecological Services section at KDWP.

There are currently 12 full time employees within the section, and we all have similarly full schedules, as we all work to assist the agency with protecting and managing our states diverse natural resources. It’s a good kind of busy.



KANSAS

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Writings from a Warden's Daughter

Dogs are Special *with Annie Campbell*

Having been a dog owner most of his life, Dad understands how much dogs mean to people, which helps explain why the following incidents stand out in his memory.

It was a frigid January day when Dad received a cell phone call from the Pottawatomie County Emergency Management director, who reported a dog stranded in the Jeffrey Energy Center's lake open to public hunting. The EM director asked Dad to assist any way he could, but he emphasized, "don't let anyone do anything stupid in the attempt to save the dog." The EM director, who had worked on several rescues with Dad over the years, trusted Dad's experience and judgement to keep this operation from becoming a bigger tragedy.

Dad was already on patrol and only 15 minutes from the lake, so he quickly arrived at the Jeffrey Energy guard station, where he learned the exact location of the dog. As he approached the largest of the three lakes, he noticed that most of the shoreline was ringed with about 30 yards of ice. He found the distraught dog owner standing on the shoreline near the dam, waving frantically. The man's English Setter was clinging to the ice ledge about 25 yards from shore. The man had on chest waders and had made a dangerous rescue attempt, falling through the ice into waist-deep water a mere 5 yards from shore. If he had gone any farther, this might have been a completely different story.

The EM director had called the local volunteer fire department for assistance and Dad could see them arriving on the road. "Them" ended up being one lanky young guy with a 10-foot jon boat. Dad and the volunteer fireman decided to launch the boat near the dam where the deeper water wasn't frozen, then row around the shoreline about 50 yards and pick up the dog. The volunteer fireman joined Dad in the boat without hesitation, and the dog owner wanted to go, too. However, Dad knew it wouldn't be safe to have an overanxious dog owner and the extra weight in the small boat.

Dad and the volunteer donned lifejackets and, with Dad rowing, they pushed off from shore. Fortunately, the dog was wearing a neoprene vest which provided buoyancy and heat retention, but it had been floating in the icy water for almost an hour. Dad instructed the volunteer that the wet dog would add 60 pounds to their boat, so they'd need to load it stern side. The dog offered no resistance and came aboard with relative ease. However, in the midday sun ice was separating from the far bank and drifting toward them. Dad used an oar to push against the ice island, making a path to shore. Once there, the hunter waded out to retrieve his buddy, and with a tear in his eye, he thanked Dad and the volunteer.

Dad replied, "All in a day's work," and turned to hide his own tear. Dogs are special.

Several Januarys would pass before Dad was involved in another dog rescue. On this Saturday, as Dad left to start a sunset patrol, he heard a radio call that a Pottawatomie County Sheriff's officer was on his way to the Kansas River to look for a dog floating in the water. Dad learned from dispatch that the dog was on the Wabauunsee County side of the river east of Wamego and that first responders were enroute. Arriving onsite, Dad found a worried dog owner and two Wabauunsee County volunteer firefighters.

The dog owner said her daughter was down by the river keeping watch on the dog that was clinging to an ice shelf about 20 yards out in the river. Soon, a firetruck and an ambulance arrived. Just a few months earlier Dad had viewed a video

of a KDWP wildlife area manager saving a deer by using ice picks to pull himself in a kayak across the ice to where the deer had fallen through. He saw a canoe in a nearby shed and decided to try something similar. He asked a firefighter to bring a long rope and something grip the ice with. At river's edge the firefighters secured the rope and Dad knelt in the canoe and tried to pull it across the ice with using a claw hammer but the ice was rough and irregular and he didn't make it even 5 yards. The firefighters pulled him back and they went to plan B, which was to use a 5-pound short-handle sledgehammer to break the ice ahead of the canoe while a second individual paddled toward the dog. Dad was the oldest guy present, but he wanted to do his part, so he took the sledgehammer to the bow of the canoe and put the youngest, strongest guy behind him with a paddle. Dad broke the 3-inch-thick ice, switching the sledge from right to left as his partner paddled them forward. A foot at a time, they made progress, but it was exhausting. Dad kept focused on the yellow lab as if it were his own. As they neared the lab, it panicked and swam across a narrow channel of open water to the opposite ice shelf. Dad could hear people watching from shore groan in frustration. But the open channel was only 5 yards across, and Dad wasn't swinging a sledgehammer as they approached the second time, so the dog allowed Dad to grab it by loose skin on its neck. Dad yelled "I got him!" and the shoreline rescuers pulled so hard on the rope, Dad was afraid they might capsize before reaching shore. Fortunately, they made it to shore where the exhausted dog was handed to the waiting arms of its owner, who quickly wrapped it in a blanket and took off for a vet clinic. The EMTs asked to check Dad and his young partner to ensure they were okay, but other than being completely exhausted and soaked in his own perspiration Dad was fine and happy with the results of his efforts. There was much hand shaking and backslapping before the group departed. A few days later KDWP and the Wabauunsee County First Responders each received thank-you letters and donations from the appreciative dog owner. After all, dogs are special.





ALWAYS LEARNING

with Dustin Teasley

Some of my articles don't necessarily include recipes for preparing game. It's not because I don't have recipes, but because the care leading up to cooking game is more important to me than the recipes used. I often take for granted how much I have learned over my 30-plus-years of working at KDWP and experiences in the field. Working with new hunters often puts a light on the knowledge I take for granted.

KDWP's newest Public Affairs member, Brody Latham, had never deer hunted. It was on his bucket list, so I was excited to introduce him to the wonders of deer hunting. He had no expectations, but to just get to the woods and see what it was about. Fortunately, he connected on our first outing with a nice buck - my adrenaline dump matched his!

The shot and recover were as good as you could get - top of the heart with a 50-yard recovery - but preparing the harvest is where the work begins. The weather was not as cool as I would have liked, so butchering that night was a must.

During the process, Brody asked a lot of questions. Often, I would go into too much detail as to not miss anything that might be important. I explained how I cut around the back legs when I start skinning so that cut hair doesn't stick to the exposed meat. I also showed him how to cut the skin from the inside to out, for the same reason. I worked slow, but methodically, keeping contaminants from the meat. Once skinned, we allowed the carcass to cool and the exposed fat to harden for easier removal. We then removed most of the fat and began separating muscles groups before placing in containers to refrigerate.

I store meat refrigerated in containers for five to seven days. Why? A clean shot, either heart, lung, or major

artery, bleeds the animal mostly out, which helps improve the taste. While most of the blood gets removed, once the animal's heart stops pumping blood, it gets trapped in the muscles. Rigor mortis begins and fully sets in about six hours after death. Actin and myosin proteins within the muscles pull and contract the muscle fibers together, causing the carcass to stiffen up and trap any fluids in the muscles. These proteins will eventually break down over the course of two to four days, allowing gravity to pull more blood from the muscles while being refrigerated.

Animals taken with a not-so-good shot may need assistance with this process. If I am unlucky enough to get a bad shot on a deer, I will trade the refrigerator for a cooler of salted ice water for three to four days. The salt will draw the blood and the water gives the blood a place to go. I drain the water every day, adding more ice and salt to assist in blood removal.

When I am ready to package for freezing, I don't let water touch the meat. If the method of removing blood due to a poor shot is used, I rinse the salt water off the meat in cool fresh water and pat dry. I have found that butcher's paper, waxed side facing the meat, works best for me for keeping air away

from the meat to prevent freezer burn.

When I use the frozen meat, I will either grind or slice it partially frozen. I then allow it to fully thaw out. More blood will appear and can be rinsed off, since it will be processed into sausage, jerky or steaks.

Brody has ate deer before and he and his family liked it. The deer he harvested was shot well, recovered quickly and processed in a timely manner. When he harvests a deer in the future and if it doesn't happen perfectly, I am confident he will have the tools to make the best of each and every harvest.



LT to RT: Brody Latham and Dustin Teasley.

*Kansas offers some of the finest
Canada goose hunting in America.
Seasons stretch for 3.5 months and the limit is
a liberal six per day. That's left many Kansas hunters
looking for uses for goose meat.*

Sliced thin, goose pastrami is an excellent snack on crackers, or it can be piled a half-inch high on sandwiches. Canada goose Reubens are one of the finest wild game dishes in Kansas. Pre-sliced, it's also a great gift of appreciation to give to landowners who've allowed access, or to easily share with family and friends.

The recipe is enough for the two breast slabs from one large goose. And while the mix of spices is to create pastrami

for Reuben sandwiches, those wanting to use the pastrami for snacks can simply decrease the amount of black pepper, or scrape some rub off after the meat is smoked.

I mix this up early in the season so it's ready for future hunts. It's best with large geese but will work with smaller Canadas and white-fronted geese, too.

A Jaccard meat tenderizer is a huge part of making this meat so tender, so grab one and let's get cooking!

by Michael Pearce, freelance writer



Goose Pastrami

Cure

- ¼ cup Morton's Tender Quick
- ¼ cup ground black pepper
- ¼ cup packed brown sugar
- 2 tbs. granulated garlic
- 2 tsp. dried coriander
- 2 tsp. dried onion powder
- 2 tsp. dried thyme

Rub

- 3 tbs. ground black pepper
- 3 tsp. ground coriander
- 1 ½ tsp. onion powder
- 1 ½ tsp. paprika
- 1 ½ tsp. dried thyme
- 2 goose breasts (about 1 lb. each)

Trim all fat and blemished spots from the meat. Carefully make a V-cut to remove gristle at the edge of each breast fillet. Thoroughly tenderize both sides of each breast fillet with a Jaccard.

Rub the goose breasts heavily with the cure, making sure to cover the whole piece of meat. Place in a sealable bag. Remove as much air as possible from the bag, and refrigerate for three days, flipping the bag daily.

After the three days, remove the meat from the bag and rinse it thoroughly. Soak the goose breasts in cold water for about an hour to remove the cure. Remove the goose from the water and pat dry with paper towels.

Apply rub on all sides of the goose breasts. Use fingers to form each breast fillet into a loaf-like shape.

Prepare a smoker with fruitwood and heat to 225 degrees. Place the breasts on the smoker racks. Smoke until the internal temperature reaches 150 degrees, approximately 1.5 to 3 hours. Rest for 10 minutes after removal, then slice the meat thinly against the grain.

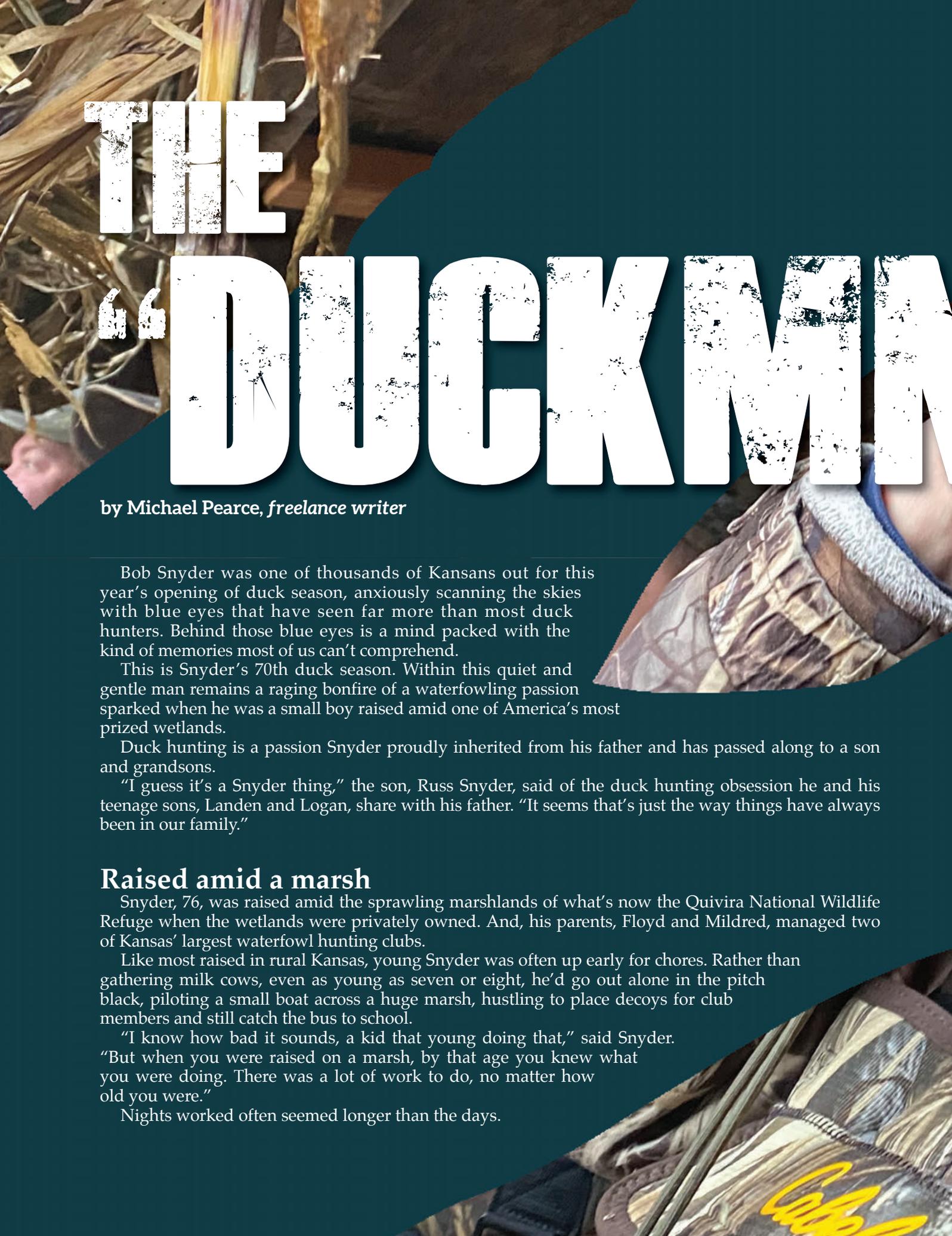
To thaw or reheat, simply place vacuum-sealed bag of pastrami in luke-warm water until pliable. Note: Warming to above 150 degrees will give the meat a "gamey" taste. Enjoy!

Honking Food Reubens

Reuben sandwiches made with wild goose can be as good as those made with corned beef. Customize the recipe to personal taste and availability of ingredients. Note: Below recipe is per served sandwich.

- 2 tsp. butter, softened
- 2 slices rye, pumpernickel or blended bread
- 2 tbsp. Thousand Island salad dressing
- 3 tbsp. sauerkraut, drained
- 2 slices Swiss cheese
- Goose pastrami

Butter each slice of bread, and place buttered side down in a skillet. Spread about 1 tbs. of Thousand Island salad dressing on each slice and cover with one slice of cheese. Evenly pile the pastrami on one slice of bread until about ½-inch thick, and top with the other. Place skillet over medium heat, cook until the bread is brown and crisp, then flip and repeat. Heat sauerkraut in microwave for 30 seconds as the sandwich is cooking. Pat between paper towels to remove some of the moisture and add to the sandwich as it's done cooking. Now, prepare to enjoy one honking good Reuben.

A person wearing a camouflage jacket is looking through a field of tall corn stalks. The scene is partially obscured by a dark teal graphic overlay that contains the title and text.

THE “DUCKMAN”

by Michael Pearce, *freelance writer*

Bob Snyder was one of thousands of Kansans out for this year's opening of duck season, anxiously scanning the skies with blue eyes that have seen far more than most duck hunters. Behind those blue eyes is a mind packed with the kind of memories most of us can't comprehend.

This is Snyder's 70th duck season. Within this quiet and gentle man remains a raging bonfire of a waterfowling passion sparked when he was a small boy raised amid one of America's most prized wetlands.

Duck hunting is a passion Snyder proudly inherited from his father and has passed along to a son and grandsons.

"I guess it's a Snyder thing," the son, Russ Snyder, said of the duck hunting obsession he and his teenage sons, Landen and Logan, share with his father. "It seems that's just the way things have always been in our family."

Raised amid a marsh

Snyder, 76, was raised amid the sprawling marshlands of what's now the Quivira National Wildlife Refuge when the wetlands were privately owned. And, his parents, Floyd and Mildred, managed two of Kansas' largest waterfowl hunting clubs.

Like most raised in rural Kansas, young Snyder was often up early for chores. Rather than gathering milk cows, even as young as seven or eight, he'd go out alone in the pitch black, piloting a small boat across a huge marsh, hustling to place decoys for club members and still catch the bus to school.

"I know how bad it sounds, a kid that young doing that," said Snyder. "But when you were raised on a marsh, by that age you knew what you were doing. There was a lot of work to do, no matter how old you were."

Nights worked often seemed longer than the days.



Wildlife & Parks

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Many afternoons Snyder stepped from the bus to help clean a small mountain of ducks taken by club members.

"Sometimes we had 100 ducks, or more, to get cleaned in one day," he said. "We had a big black kettle full of paraffin. We'd dip the ducks in that melted paraffin and when it'd cool, the paraffin and all the feathers would peel right off. We got pretty good at it, but many times we were still cleaning ducks well into the evening."

Still, Snyder was treated to a childhood watching a wetland system work as Mother Nature had long intended.

Many summers he watched as water levels dropped dramatically. Sometimes the marshes went dry and plants like barnyard grass and smartweed grew where water had been. Then in the fall, the assorted trees dropped their leaves and stopped drinking millions of gallons of water from the soil. Within days, Rattlesnake Creek once again flowed and the water table rose above the surface, quickly flooding lowlands then lush with those seed-producing plants.

It was a perfect feeding ground for millions of migrating waterfowl that soon arrived.

Back before Kansas was pocked with thousands of manmade impoundments, migrating ducks were more focused on natural marshlands. Some of the flights were mind-boggling.

Snyder recalls piloting that small boat through

pre-dawn rafts of floating ducks most easily measured in acres. Some nights the Snyders were awakened by the sounds of huge flocks of mallards arriving in the dark.

"You'd go to bed without a duck in sight," said Snyder. "Then, when you'd go out the next morning, there were so many it was like there wasn't room for another. It was crazy."

Such happenings meant club members, and their needs, arrived and stayed for days. Still, Snyder and his father often found time for their own hunts. And, he hunted often on his own.

Snyder was seven years old when he was given a single-shot .410. He shot it well and often. Many days he grabbed the little gun when he got off the school bus and hunted amid the marsh or along Rattlesnake Creek, even if just for a few minutes.

There were special times he hunted much longer.

"If there were a lot of ducks, some days my dad would let me skip school so I could hunt," recalled Snyder. "Those were my favorite days."

Snyder said his father had also skipped school when their beloved ducks were abundant during an early-1900s boyhood raised east of Hutchinson.

"I guess it's just always been like a drive in us," Snyder said of his family's passion for ducks. "It's kind of hard to explain."

Duckman

The duck-drive is deep enough that Snyder's mother pulled his soon-to-be bride aside and told her, "You're not just marrying Bob," Snyder recalls. "You're also marrying a shotgun."

Bob and Judy Snyder have been happily married for 55 duck seasons now.

Always a successful athlete and student, Snyder earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in education. Blessed with a love of youth, and a mellow personality, he succeeded as a teacher, principal, and coach at area schools.

Through it all, Snyder's drive to hunt ducks never waned. Sometimes after school he'd dash out for a few minutes at a marsh. Saturdays and Sundays were mandatory, as were holidays.

At the Snyder home in South Hutchinson, Christmas packages were opened closer to midnight than morning's first light. Extended family gathered at the marsh and followed the hunt with

traditional Thanksgiving and Christmas feasts.

Summers were almost as dedicated to ducks as autumns. Snyder had partnerships with landowners that had him putting in hundreds of off-season hours building and maintaining marshes in exchange for hunting rights.

Sometimes called "Polar Bob" for seeming to be impervious to bitter cold, Snyder toiled in 105-degree heat as well as he did 20-below wind chills.

The answering message on his phone playfully states, "Yes, you have reached the Duckman, alias Bob Snyder." The license plates on his pickups also read "DUCKMN."

Ducks weren't done any favors in 2001, when Snyder took early retirement. His celebration, of course, was a pledge to hunt every day of duck season. He ended up missing just one day, when his wife, Judy, had surgery.

Hunting five or six days a week was the norm

for years. There have been so many days when a snow machine could have worked better than his pickup on snow and/or ice-packed roads. He usually hunted no matter how bleak the outlook, based on recent hunts or current conditions.

"You have to go, to know," Snyder has long said when determining if a hunt will be productive.

Retirement gave Snyder more marsh time with others who'd done the same, too. That included Charlie Kimbell, a landowner for whom Snyder had created one of the best private duck ponds in Kansas. There was also John Dick, Snyder's best friend for decades.

Sadly, not all waterfowlers are blessed with Snyder's longevity. Both of those dear friends have since passed. Others have moved or hung up their guns. Even Snyder, a man known for strength and solid health long into his senior years, has finally begun to slow a little.

Yet Snyder's passion for ducks hasn't subsided, largely because of his newest team of hunting partners.

Three generations

Bob and Judy Snyder have two sons. The youngest, Ricky, grew up a gifted scholar and athlete. He brought his parents great pride when he followed his dad's lead and picked teaching and coaching over more lucrative careers.

Russ, their other son, certainly carries on the family's addiction to duck hunting. He and his wife, Jill, have two teenage sons, Landen and Logan. Snyders to the core, both boys are athletic, hard-working and have the kind of up-beat personalities that make a happy golden retriever's

seem dour. Both are rabid duck hunters.

Snyder relishes the days all three generations share a duck blind even more than when he played hooky to hunt ducks as a boy. There's no doubt that family passion will continue just as strong after he's gone.

Russ Snyder has purchased a major stake in a prime marsh to ensure the family will continue to have quality hunting access.

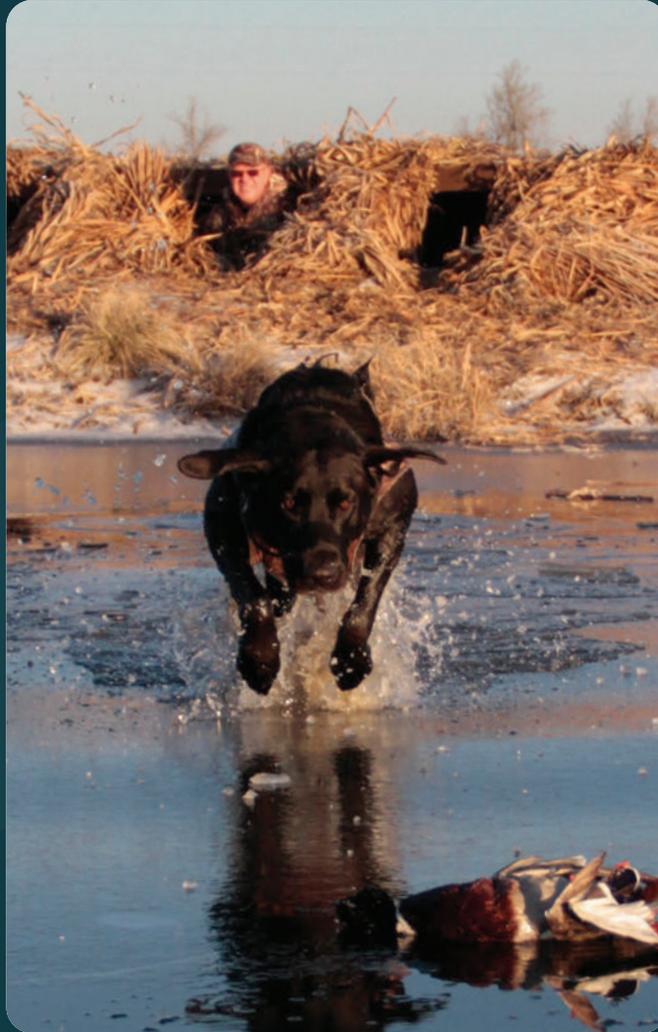
As the canvasback duck flies, Peace Creek Cemetery sits about two miles from that marsh. It's about the same distance from where Snyder was raised amid what are now Quivira's marshes. Gravestones are sparse in the tiny cemetery. Two, however, mark the burial places of Snyder's parents.

"My dad always said he wanted to be buried there so he could listen to the ducks and geese flying over," said Snyder. "That's where Judy and I will be buried, too."

Snyder's final resting place will also be within hearing distance of his son's and grandson's hunts in the nearby marsh. As sure as coming generations of Snyders will duck hunt that family marsh together, more

will also join Bob Snyder and his father in their special final resting place.

As has been said, "...it's a Snyder thing." 





PHEASANT TACTICS

by Rob McDonald,
Modern Wildman Blog

Ringnecked pheasants are considered by many a favorite species when it comes to upland game bird hunting! Pheasants thrive in grassland areas of the state, especially those enrolled into the Conservation Reserve Program, more commonly referred to as "CRP." They can also be found in grain stubble fields like: milo, corn, and wheat. Don't overlook overgrown brushy areas on field corners, around old homesteads, or scattered woody thickets.

Now, let's take a look at some of the gear a pheasant hunter should consider:

Shotgun Selection - As many miles can be required to locate birds, opt for a shotgun that you don't mind carrying for a while.

20-gauge, 16-gauge, and 12-gauge shotguns with barrel lengths from 26" to 28" are perfectly suited for hunting pheasants. You'll want a gun that is balanced in your hand, shoulders cleanly, and mounts to your eye.

For early season hunts, especially over steady dogs, a muzzle choked in an improved cylinder or modified cylinder is ideal. As the season progresses and birds begin to flush wild, switching to a full choke may help you with those longer shots.

Shotgun Shells - Pheasants can be tough to bring down. While it's true, 7 ½ or 6 shot shells have brought down plenty of birds, I prefer to go a little heavier when I'm pursuing pheasants.

Number 5, high brass game loads are an ideal shot shell selection when it comes to putting pheasants in your game bag. During late season hunts, switching to the number 4 shot is not out of the question.

Upland Armor - Tall grass, sturdy grain stocks, and jagged briars are preferred pheasant habitat; and tough country to traverse. Hunters should lace up sturdy leather boots before taking to the field to protect your feet and ankles.

Upland chaps or brush pants with nylon or waxed canvas fronts will help protect your legs from burs and briars, as well as help to keep you dry from morning dew or frost.

An upland game vest is ideal for packing along your shells, and your harvested birds. Look for a vest that's built tough with plenty of pockets.

Blaze Orange - While not required by regulation, sporting blaze orange while hunting upland birds, especially in a hunting group, is a good idea. It's best to be seen when birds are flushing and the action is heating up!

Don't Leave Home Without Them - There are always a few items that help to make your hunt a successful one.

Hunting license for individuals required by KDWP regulations. A hunting license is required to hunt pheasants. You can buy a paper license from any license vendor, print one at home, or buy yours on KDWP's mobile app, HuntFish KS.

Leather or cotton gloves will help take the morning chill off, while still allowing dexterity for handling and shooting your shotgun.

A small pocket knife is ideal for all sorts of tasks in the field, including breaking down harvested small game for the cooler or kitchen.

Carry a water bottle for you and for your dog. Much of Kansas' pheasant habitat is a dry upland climate; it's easy to get dehydrated without even realizing it.

Lastly, early season hunts can sometimes be warm on the plains. Utilizing a game bird strap instead of a vest will help your birds cool more quickly in warm weather and keep the birds from spoiling.

20 KANSAS 21

UPLAND BIRD FORECAST



STATEWIDE SUMMARIES

FORECAST FACTORS

Two important factors impact availability of upland game 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.

In this forecast, breeding population and reproductive success of pheasants, quail, and prairie chickens will be discussed. Breeding population data were gathered using spring calling 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, which quantify both adults and chicks observed. Reproductive success of prairie chickens cannot be easily assessed using the same methods because they do not associate with roads like pheasants and quail.

OVERALL OUTLOOK: “GOOD”

Kansas should have good upland bird hunting opportunities this fall. Kansas has almost 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 13, and youth season is November 6-7. The youth age was increased this year to allow hunters 17 years of age or younger to participate. Youth must still be accompanied by a nonhunting adult age 18 or older.

HABITAT CONDITIONS

Kansas has a dramatic rainfall gradient from more than 50 inches of average annual rainfall in the far east to less than 14 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 2021, Kansas had above-average spring precipitation across much of the state, resulting in good nesting habitat. Summer transitioned into a hotter and drier period which had the potential to impact chick survival. However, Kansas received enough rainfall through summer to stay relatively drought free. This, paired with ample insects and cover produced from spring moisture, appears to have sustained chicks as production indices improved.

SEASON DATES

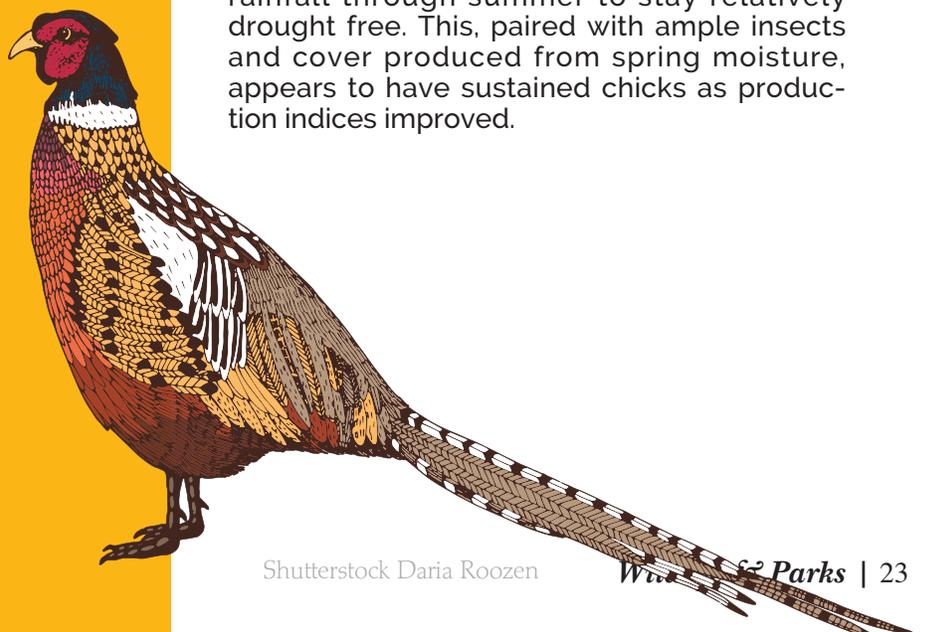
Youth Pheasant
Nov. 6-7, 2021

Youth Quail
Nov. 6-7, 2021

Pheasant
Nov. 13, 2021 - Jan. 31, 2022

Quail
Nov. 13, 2021 - Jan. 31, 2022

Prairie Chicken
Sep. 15, 2021 - Jan. 31, 2022



STATEWIDE SUMMARIES



Jon Blumb Photo

PHEASANT

Above average spring rainfall created good nesting cover across most of the primary pheasant range. Some areas in far west Kansas had better nesting conditions than observed in a decade. While spring conditions were good and there didn't appear to be problems with overwinter survival, poor production last summer left fewer birds in the breeding population this spring. Hot and dry conditions from mid-July through August was well after the peak hatching period when most birds were of considerable size and unlikely to be impacted. This did, however, create challenging survey conditions. Estimates for the summer brood survey did not show significant change; however, most regional estimates trended down. The western extent of the High Plains generally showed improvements, with the Northern High Plains having the highest regional roadside estimates. Measures of reproductions were greatly improved across most regions this year. This, combined with several opportunistic reports from farmers and staff of improved numbers, suggests that the poor survey conditions may have impacted counts. Kansas continues to maintain one of the best pheasant populations in the country and the fall harvest will again be among the leading states.

QUAIL

Kansas continues to support above-average quail populations with spring densities remaining similar to last year. This includes significant increases in spring densities in the north-central Smoky Hills region and the Flint Hills. The peak nesting for quail is later than pheasants, which has led to concern about chick survival with late summer conditions. However, reproduction measures remained high and improved across most regions on the brood survey. Despite improved production, the brood survey estimates a decrease in statewide densities of quail fueled largely by large decreases in estimates in the Smoky Hills. Disagreement between these estimates and the estimates of production may again suggest that poor survey conditions impacted counts. 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 in the Flint Hills and central regions, with plenty of quality hunting opportunity scattered in the remaining regions.

PRAIRIE CHICKEN

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 tall-grass and mixed-grass prairies that occur in the eastern third and northern half of the state. Greater prairie-chickens have recently 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 been either 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.

REGIONAL SUMMARIES

Northern High Plains (Northwest)

Public Land: 12,849 acres WIHA: 386,709 acres

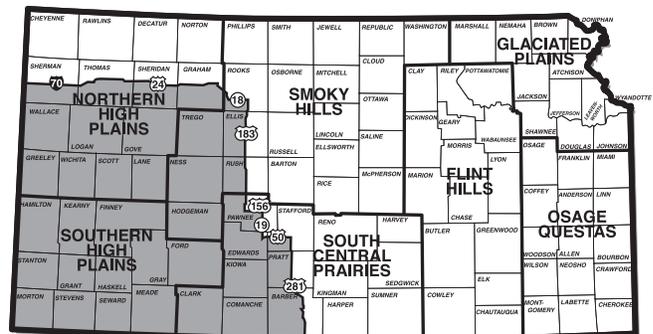
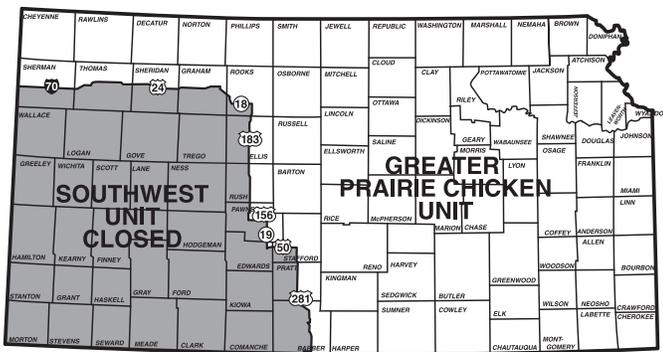
PHEASANT – Regional bird indices remained similar to last year and the region boasts both the highest regional index from the summer brood survey and spring crow survey this year. While some routes in the eastern region indicated large decreases, the western and southern portion of this region showed marked improvements. The highest densities will be found in the southwestern portion of the region. **QUAIL** – Quail are limited and are typically harvested opportunistically by pheasant hunters. Recent weather patterns have facilitated a population expansion into the area where appropriate habitat exists, providing hunters with a welcomed additional opportunity in recent years. Densities on the summer roadside survey increased. Opportunity will remain the best in the eastern-most counties of the region. **PRAIRIE CHICKEN** – Prairie chicken 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. Production in the region should be improved with above average spring precipitation across the area. Within the open area, the best hunting opportunities will be found in the northeastern portion of the region in native prairies and CRP grasslands.

Glaciated Plains

Public Land: 51,469 acres WIHA: 72,856 acres

PHEASANT – 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 decreased from 2020. While roadside surveys trended up, this can be attributed to slight improvements on a single route. Pheasant densities across the region are typically low, especially relative to other areas in central and western Kansas. **QUAIL** – Spring densities trended up and summer estimates trended down, but neither were significant changes this year. Like many regions, the last five years have provided above average opportunity for quail. While densities will still be lower than western regions, the above average densities will provide better opportunities for those spending time in northeast Kansas this winter. With the limited amount of nesting and roosting cover throughout much of this region, targeting areas with or near native grass is key for success. Roadside counts were highest in the northeastern portion of the region. **PRAIRIE CHICKEN** – 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.

GREATER PRAIRIE CHICKEN UNIT MAP



Closed to prairie chicken hunting

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. **New this year:** Kansas Prairie Chicken hunters will get to enjoy one continuous season from Sept. 15 through Jan. 31.

REGIONAL SUMMARIES

Smoky Hills

Public Land: 106,558 acres WIHA: 317,754 acres

PHEASANT – Due to poor production last summer, spring calling surveys decreased. Despite reduced production, the region maintained the highest regional harvest last year. Roadside survey estimates trended down this summer. With reduced densities, success rates may decrease. Given its size and variability, this region will still be a major contributor to overall harvest. The northcentral portion of the region had the highest roadside densities. **QUAIL** – This region has enjoyed several years of well above average quail densities. The spring whistle survey increased, maintaining above average spring densities. However, brood survey estimates decreased substantially across the region. Total regional harvest in 2020 was the highest in the state with good hunter success rates. Hunters in the area are becoming accustomed to the high densities the past few years, making birds relatively easy to find; however, targeting edge habitat and weedy areas with nearby shrubs will be most productive. Densities appear best in the south-central region but several other areas maintained good estimates as well. **PRAIRIE CHICKEN** – Hunting opportunities should remain good. Production was likely improved with good spring moisture. This region offers some of the greatest densities and access. 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 region, but several other areas support huntable densities of birds. Lesser prairie chickens occur in a few counties in the southwestern portion of the region within the closed zone (see map for unit boundaries).

Osage Cuestas

Public Land: 109,883 acres WIHA: 36,092 acres

PHEASANT – 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. **QUAIL** – Opportunities will be poor this year. While roadside estimates trended up, the improved production was not enough to recover from three consecutive years of poor production. Roadside surveys remained low, with this region

Osage Cuestas

Public Land: 109,883 acres WIHA: 36,092 acres

having the lowest regional density for quail. While hunting will be slightly improved, the best opportunity will be on areas specifically managed for upland birds, and in western counties in grasslands extending east off the Flint Hills. **PRAIRIE CHICKEN** – Greater prairie chicken populations have consistently declined in this region. Fire suppression and loss of native grassland has gradually reduced the amount of suitable habitat. Hunting opportunities are limited, but chickens can be in large blocks of native rangeland along the edge of the Flint Hills.

Flint Hills

Public Land: 196,901 acres WIHA: 79,336 acres

PHEASANT – This region 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 and summer roadside survey both remained stable. The best opportunities will be in the northwest portion of the region along the Smoky Hills. **QUAIL** – After a significant increase in the spring calling survey and upward trend in the roadside brood counts, this region has above average quail densities and the highest regional density heading into fall. Quail production can be impacted in the core of the Flint Hills with annual burning practices limiting nesting cover. Hunters will find the best success in areas that maintained nearby nesting cover and have retained shrub cover that has been removed from large areas of the region during invasive species control. High roadside estimates were scattered throughout this region this year. **PRAIRIE CHICKEN** – 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. Burning was higher than average in 2021, resulting in less nesting cover. Hunting opportunities will likely be similar to last year throughout the region.

REGIONAL SUMMARIES

Southcentral Prairies

Public Land: 41,125 acres WIHA: 65,801 acres

PHEASANT –Roadside survey estimates were very similar to last summer. While roadside estimates are lower than the other major pheasant regions, this region boasted the highest hunter success rates last year. The northeast portion of the region saw declines where a localized area suffered an extended period without precipitation. The highest pheasant densities will be found in the west central portion of the region this year.

QUAIL –The spring whistle survey and summer brood survey both trended down; however, neither saw significant declines. Harvest rates for quail were also highest in the region last year and opportunities should remain strong this year with marked improvements in key areas. The intermixing of quality cover types in the region provides more consistent opportunities across the Southcentral Prairies compared to other regions. The roadside counts were highest in the central portion of the region. **PRAIRIE CHICKEN** – 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 with encounters most likely in the few remaining large tracts of rangeland in the northeastern portion of the region.

Southern High Plains

Public Land: 116,821 acres WIHA: 172,486 acres

PHEASANT – The pheasant crow index declined this spring after drought conditions in 2020 limited production. Roadside brood survey estimates trended down for this region, but regional production indices were much improved and the best they have been this year. Roadside brood survey estimates showed improvements in the western portion of the region this year. The highest pheasant densities will be in the south-central portion of the region. **QUAIL** – The quail population in this region is highly variable and dependent on weather. The roadside estimates trended down but were greatest in the northwest portion of the region. The highest densities in this region are found along riparian corridors or where adequate woody structure exists. This association

Southern High Plains

Public Land: 116,821 acres WIHA: 172,486 acres

with riparian corridors makes surveying the region for an accurate density of quail challenging, and opportunities can be better than roadside surveys suggest at times. Scaled quail can also be found in this region but make up a small proportion of total quail. **PRAIRIE CHICKEN** – This region is entirely occupied by lesser prairie-chickens; therefore, prairie chicken hunting is closed in this area.

CRP & WIHA

Under the 2018 Farm Bill, the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acreage cap will gradually increase each year. Kansas currently has 1.7 million acres of CRP statewide.

There was an enrollment period in 2021; however, with 368,672 acres expiring and only 242,932 acres offered, there will be a net decrease in acres again this year.

Lower interest is currently attributed to reduced rental rates and incentives. In addition to loss of acres, the quality of habitat on the remaining acres may also be impacted.

There were 30 counties in Kansas that were released for emergency haying and grazing of CRP. A large portion of properties enrolled 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 1.14 million acres enrolled.

To enroll your land in WIHA, contact the Pratt Operations Office at (620) 672-5911.



FEATHERS



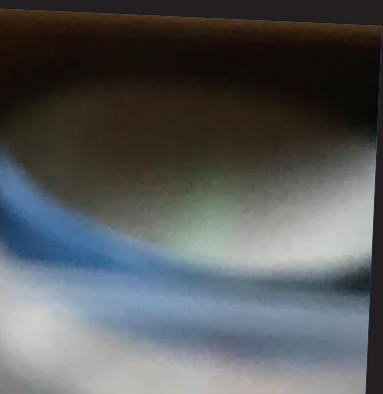
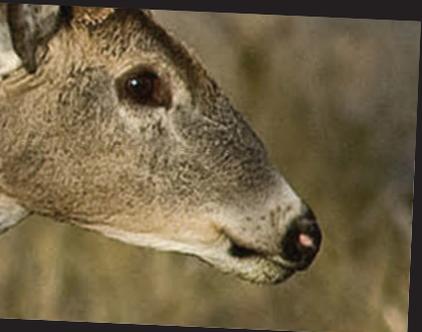
FUR



& FINS

Learn how this long-time hunter and angler shares his journey from fishing to fly-fishing and how he “ties” his passions together.





BY BRAD STEFANONI, FREELANCE WRITER

My grandfather started taking me fishing when I was “knee high to a grasshopper,” as he put it. Some of my fondest memories are etched from a similar pattern:

1. Dig worms from the compost pile in the garden.
2. Attach worms to a hook at the end of a long cane pole.
3. Eyes glued to the bobber awaiting a bite from a bluegill, green sunfish, or, hopefully, a channel catfish.
4. Help grandpa clean a couple of nice catfish for grandma to cook for the family.

Then one day it happened. I read an article about fly fishing in *Field & Stream* magazine while waiting for a haircut at the barber shop. The accompanying photographs perfectly captured a mystical art and culture that piqued my curiosity. The prose described the sights and sounds of a trout stream in, what I imagined, was near some utopian New England town.

I WAS HOOKED.





I saved up money from birthday cards, lawn mowing, and other odd jobs and purchased a fly rod kit from the local sporting goods store. Armed only with some Field & Stream articles on fly fishing I jumped feet-first into the abyss. In my mind, I was casting and fighting trophy brook and brown trout on a quaint stream in Maine. In reality, my pitiful excuse for fly casting snagged tree limbs, my clothes, my Labrador, and occasionally a bluegill from one of the local farm ponds.

But, as time passed, I got more proficient, eventually teaching my sons and wife the art of fly-fishing. I ventured beyond nearby streams to those further afield. And, it wasn't long before I wanted to tie my own flies.

The point of my stroll down memory lane is that even a flatlander from Kansas can aspire to be a fly angler. To kick it up a notch, you can also learn to tie your own flies — a great off-season, indoor hobby that can get you through the long dark nights of winter or the hot weekend afternoons of summer. Thanks to my other hobby — hunting — there are plenty of natural materials you can use, too! A form of recycling, if you will.

TOOLS & SUPPLIES

Full disclosure, this article is not “Fly Tying 101.” Volumes of books and Youtube videos are dedicated to getting one's feet wet in the art of fly tying. Rather, I'd like to show that, with a few easily obtainable materials from Kansas game animals, one can learn to tie two simple and effective flies; the deer hair caddis and the pheasant tail nymph. Both will fool the wily trout and also many panfish swimming in the waters of the Sunflower State.

- Fly tying vise: \$10 up to the price of my first vehicle.
- Fly tying bobbins: \$3
- Thread: I use mainly 70 denier for small flies (size 16-18) or 140 denier for larger flies (hint: the smaller the size number of the fly, the larger the fly is; i.e. Size 16 flies are smaller than size 10 flies).
- Scissors: fly tying scissors are best but small sewing scissors work just as well
- Glue: water-based fly tying glue is best but super glue works just fine





MATERIALS

Deer Hair Caddis
(dry fly = floats on the water's surface)

- **Deer hair:** Yearling, early season deer hair works best
- **Hooks:** Tiemco TMC100; sizes 12-18
- **Copper wire:** Hends Color Wire; size .009
- **Dubbing:** Wapsi Super Fine dubbing; tan/brown/olive
- **Hackle:** dry fly neck hackle; brown or ginger

Pheasant Tail Nymph
(wet fly = sinks under the water's surface)

- **Rooster pheasant tail feathers**
- **Hooks:** Tiemco 2488H, sizes 16 & 18
- **Copper wire:** Hends Color Wire; size .009
- **Small copper beads:** Cyclops Beads; 5/64", copper



Before we dive into the basic steps of tying each of these flies, following are a few tips I've learned over many years of tying flies and then fishing with them.

TIPS

- Don't worry if your flies aren't perfect. A trout's brain is the size of a pea. They are more worried about filling their stomachs with insects than waiting for the perfect fly to float down the river.
- You will break your thread when you tie flies. There are two kinds of fly tyers; the ones who have broken their thread and the ones who are going to.
- Don't be afraid to stray from a fly tying "recipe." If you don't have tan-colored thread, it's okay to use olive or brown thread. We are fishing, not creating a quilt.
- You don't need hundreds of dollars of fly-tying gear to get started. A beginner can get everything they need for under \$50. More gear can be added later if it turns out to be an enjoyable pursuit.
- You will lose flies when you fish. If I had a quarter for every fly I've lost to trees, submerged vegetation, or rocks - I'd be a rich man.
- The best way to get started is to just get started. Sometimes getting off of "neutral" is the hardest part so just jump in with both fins.

TYING

I follow the K.I.S.S. principle in fly tying with only 3-4 basic steps for almost every fly I tie. There are variations, of course, but these steps apply to probably 75% of the most common flies you might tie.

1. **Wrap a base of thread from just behind the eye of the hook to the hook bend.**
2. **Tie-in a strip of thin wire (the smaller the fly, the thinner the wire)**
3. **Add dubbing to the thread and wrap back to just behind the eye of the hook. This is the "body" of your fly.**
4. **Tie-in deer hair or hackle. This is the "wing" of your fly.**

Finish it off with a few half-hitch knots (or whip-finishing tool if you have one), add a bit of glue to the knot and that's it!

An excellent resource to learn how to tie these two flies and dozens more is Dakota Angler & Outfitter at flyfishsd.com. Click on the "Fly Tying Videos" link at the top of the page and you'll find videos for both the elk/deer hair caddis and pheasant tail nymph.

The best advice I can share with someone new to fly-tying is to find a good mentor to show you the basic techniques. Fire up YouTube and watch videos of folks tying flies. Then jump in, start tying, and practice, practice, practice!





BY RICK MCNARY

Women On

Although fly fishing has historically been a male-dominated pastime, there is both a national and state-wide effort to engage more women in the sport. Currently, 31 percent of the 6.1 million fly anglers are women. The newest initiative in Kansas is a partnership being formed between Flatland Fly Fishers and Wander Woman.

On a national level, companies like Orvis developed their 50/50 campaign to increase gender parity in fly fishing. This initiative, led by Orvis, has become an industry-wide focus to make it easier for women to fly fish and to change old perceptions through imagery and storytelling of women in fly fishing.

Jessica White of Shawnee is the founder of Wander Woman - Kansas, a diverse women's outdoor group that is engaged in the enjoyment of adventuring and exploring the outdoors.

"I grew up around parents who were active in outdoor activities like hunting and fishing," White said. "However, the real game changer for me was learning to tie my own hook on my own fishing line. That empowered me in a way that I seek to empower other women now with the skills to go enjoy the outdoors.

"The Flatland Fly Fisher's club has already

helped us and will continue to provide us educational support and connections to get more women outdoors."

White has found considerable success with her group due to her passion for the outdoors, as well as tapping into the current movement for women-only adventures.

"I know very little about fly fishing, but I'd like to get to a place where I can teach the basics," White said. "Women seem more comfortable and safer trying things out in a group of women. Our group provides a comfortable environment for personal growth for each woman in the outdoors. We empower women to learn, grow, enjoy nature while encouraging each other to make a commitment to wander."

Lynn Ghormley, long time Flatland club member and avid fly angler, was attracted to the sport because of the artistry.

"I started fly fishing before the movie (A River Runs Through It) came out," Ghormley said. "I saw a guy on a soccer field trying out a rod and was mesmerized with the artistry.

"I'm a musician so the combination of the artistry, being outside, enjoying nature all comes together in a perfect union."



The Fly

FREELANCE WRITER

Ghormley found, like other women, that entry to the sport in the 90s was challenging because gear was manufactured for men.

"When I first started fly fishing, I looked ridiculous wearing a pair of waders meant for a 250-pound man," Lynn joked. "Some of the rod handles were too big and as I age, they're difficult for me to use. But the manufacturers have figured it out and now make gear, waders and equipment designed for females."

The Flatland Fly Fishers began "To encourage conservation and wise use of recreational resources; to facilitate, education, and improve fly fishing awareness in the community; to fish and share outdoor experiences and to promote our fly-fishing heritage for future generations."

Ryan Allred, club media director, is excited to see the relationship with Wander Woman engage more women in the sport.

"We have several women in our club already," Allred said. "Rachel Burkhardt, one of our members, has held a variety of events to attract women into the sport. We've watched the work that Jessica White does with Wander Woman and know that this connection will be a great way to engage more women."

One thing is common for the people in either of these groups – it's their love for the outdoors and enjoying nature that compels them. They are anxious to engage others in the joys they derive from being outdoors and are willing to share knowledge and encouragement. And as you become one of them, you will soon learn their lingo and their favorite way to close a conversation: *Tight lines!*

Flatland Fly Fishers

www.flatlandflyfishers.org

flatlandflyfishers@gmail.com

Club meetings are held on the 1st Thursday every month at the Great Plains Nature Center at 6232 East 29th St N, Wichita KS 67220. Meetings start at 7 p.m.

Wander Woman – Kansas

Jessica White

Shawnee, KS

www.wanderwomanks.com

jessica@wanderwomanks.com

In Pursuit of Elk

BY BRENT FRAZEE
FREELANCE WRITER



Gene Brehm has no trouble remembering the day when he became dedicated to bowhunting for Rocky Mountain elk. After a long hike, gaining elevation, he found a big bull with a harem of cows. It was during the rut, so the bull was on the move, seldom presenting a shot. Brehm waited.

He camped near the spot, and kept revisiting. Finally, he got an ideal opportunity.

He pulled back on his bow, launched an arrow and missed.

“I shaved some hair from just under one of his legs,” said Brehm, 72, who lives outside of Pratt. “It was so disappointing. It was a long way out, and I remember telling myself, ‘I am never going to miss another elk again.’”

At the time, Brehm didn't realize how prophetic he was on that day in 1985. He dedicated himself to becoming an excellent target archer. He also exercised year-round to make sure that he was in shape for the grueling, often uphill, hikes into the mountains. And he prepared mentally for the challenge of shooting a big elk at short range in an unforgiving environment. In short, he became an elk hunter.

He didn't miss the next time. Or the time after that. Or many other times after that, either.

He shot his first elk with a bow in 1987. From 1989 through 2004, he took a bull every year.

Now in his 70s, he can look back on a hunting career in which he shot 20 elk with a bow – no easy task. And he did it the hard way. He hiked in for miles in the Colorado mountains he loved and kept going until he bumped into elk.

“I'm just totally in love with elk hunting in the mountains,” said Brehm, who was a photographer and videographer for Kansas Wildlife and Parks from 1982 to 2005. “That was my dad's passion, and it's mine, too.”

Inheriting a love for the mountains

Maybe it fits. When you grow up in a state known for its flat landscape, you yearn for the mountains.

That certainly was the case for Brehm's father. He lost an arm in combat during World War II, but that didn't keep him from becoming a crack shot.

Relying on natural ability, he became an avid shooter after he returned to his Kansas farm. He was so good at shooting trap that he was voted into the Kansas Trapshooting Hall of Fame. He also was deadly with a rifle, and developed a love for hunting.

“He had hand-eye coordination that few people could come close to,” Brehm said.

Soon his dad and his uncle start traveling to Colorado to hunt elk and mule deer. The results of their trips made a big impression on the young boy.

“I remember my dad's old pickup pulling into our farmyard and it was swaying under the weight of what they had taken,” Brehm said. “They would have four deer and two elk, and I could just see how excited my dad was.”

There were no deer in Kansas at the time. A hunter had to travel out West if he wanted to find big game. But that was fine with the young Brehm.

“Growing up seeing what my dad and uncle did on those hunting trips probably engrained in me the desire to become a big-game hunter,” he said. “My dad took 11 bull elk with his rifle and dozens of mule deer.

“I couldn't wait to hunt big game myself.”

Growing up a bow hunter

Early on, Brehm dedicated himself to bow hunting.

He remembers getting a fiberglass bow one Christmas. Later, he graduated to a better recurve.

“My brother and I became totally involved in archery,” Brehm said. “We were out in the backyard target shooting all the time.”

But information on how to bow hunt for elk was still scarce.

“There were very few articles about bow hunting back then,” Brehm said. “Once in a while, you'd see an article on an archery hunt, but there was little about how to do it.”

So, Brehm decided to do some on-the-job training.

“When I stayed in a campground of some type, I would get up at 3 o'clock and just head out,” he said. “By the time it got light, I would be two miles from camp.”

Brehm was gaining elevation most of the way. He often camped at 8,000 feet. He





Gene Brehm photo

Gene Brehm has spent most of his adult life bow hunting for elk. He posed with his all-time best, a bull he took last year in Arizona.

would find elk as high as 10,000 to 11,000 feet.

His philosophy? Get as far away from camp – and other hunters – as possible. That meant getting in excellent shape and putting on the miles. That also meant roughing it.

“Because I was always in shape, I could go to places where others couldn’t go,” Brehm said. “That doesn’t happen as often now. Networks like the Outdoor Channel show these great elk hunts and people say, ‘I want to try that.’

“There are lots of young guys who are in shape and can find these little nooks and crannies I once had to myself.”

Still, it takes a lot of experience and knowledge of the mountains to succeed the way Brehm has. He has an innate understanding of where the elk will hang out and how to get close to them.

He doesn’t like hunting in a treestand. Instead, he prefers to stalk his prey, and that can be a challenge, trying to get within bow range of a creature that can see and pick up scent so well.

“I killed several bulls by spotting them on their beds several hundred yards away,” he said. “I

would use the terrain to stay hidden and sneak to within 20 to 30 yards.

“That’s a challenge, walking that far without making a sound. But I did it several times.”

It would have been easier hunting from a treestand. But that never appealed to Brehm.

“To stay in one spot never appealed to me,” he said. “I always wanted to see what was on the other side of the mountain.

“Besides, I never had confidence that the wind would blow out of the same direction all the time I was up there. It swirls in the mountains, and elk have an excellent sense of smell.”

That’s why Brehm always plays the wind when he hunts elk. He makes sure he is always downwind of the bulls he’s pursuing.

“Some hunters talk about scent control, but that’s almost impossible the way I hunt,” he said. “When you’re walking for almost two hours up some of this steep terrain, you’re going to sweat.

“The only way you’re going to make sure they don’t smell you is by staying downwind of them.” Full camouflage and a stealthy approach also

are musts, Brehm added; he is a master at staying concealed. He remembers shooting bulls at a distance of four yards.

"It's fun when you can get close to them," he said.

A solo hunting style

Imagine hiking by yourself into pitch-black terrain. That would intimidate many hunters. Not Brehm.

"There is usually a hiking trail that you can follow," he said. "I would hear the bulls bugling and follow the sound.

"When the rut's on, they're usually with cows. I would follow the trail until I got close, then break off."

Brehm likes the solitude of hunting alone. He can cover ground at his own pace and make less noise than if he had a hunting partner. And he can stalk elk with his own passionate style.

He remembers carrying a tent tarp, a sleeping bag and a foam mat in so that he could set up a makeshift campsite. And, he would bring MREs (meals ready to eat) for food.

That was roughing it, but it was a hunting style Brehm loved.

He seldom had trouble navigating, even when he traveled in the dark. He knows the mountains where he hunts in Colorado like the back of his hand, he said.

Still, there are risks. Brehm remembers

the time he was hunting in a wilderness area and broke his leg.

"I knew there wasn't going to be anyone around to find me, so I had to do something," he said. "I made crutches out of a couple small trees I sawed down and I was able to make it back. Luckily, I was only a mile out, but it was tough."

And now...

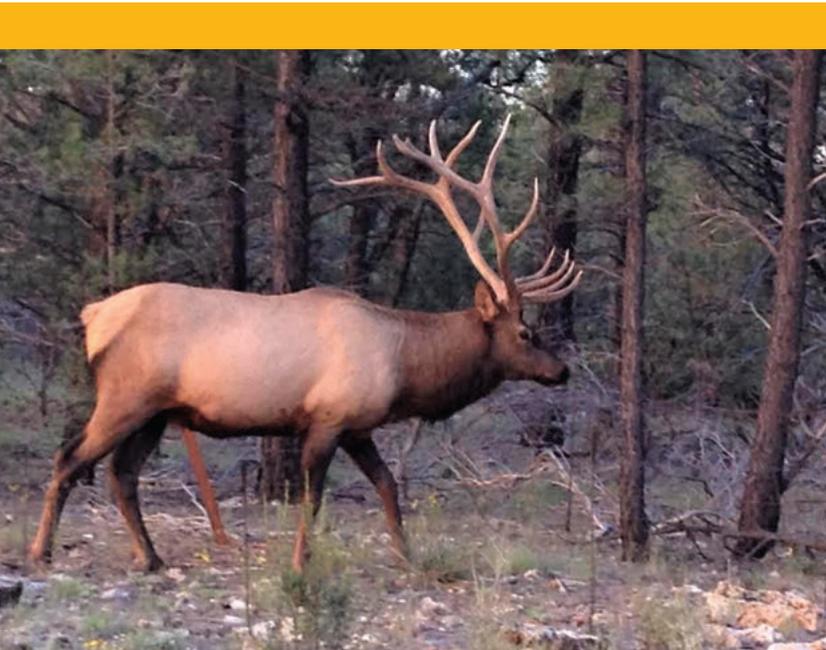
At age 72, Brehm knows he can no longer go at the pace he once did. But that doesn't mean his elk-hunting days are over.

He took his biggest bull, one that had a rack measuring 361 inches, last year on a hunt in Arizona. And he hunted mule deer in Colorado this fall.

He still gets excited when September – the month when the elk rut reaches its peak – rolls around. He can picture a big bull thrashing around in the thick woods, and he his heart beats a little faster. Once an elk hunter, always an elk hunter.

"People ask me if I've shot an elk in Kansas," he said. "I think it's great that we have elk here, but I have to be in the mountains.

"That's where my passion lies, just like my dad always felt."



When Gene Brehm isn't hunting bull elk, he is pursuing them with a camera or video camera.

He was a photographer and videographer for Kansas Wildlife and Parks from 1982 to 2005.

CEDAR BLUFF

STATE PARK



BY RICK MCNARY, FREELANCE WRITER



Cedar Bluff State Park surprises travelers willing to slow down from the blazing speeds of Interstate 70 to take the idyllic 13-mile drive across the plains of Western Kansas. After the short and scenic drive through farmland and oceans of prairie, Cedar Bluff welcomes you with her beauty nestled in the Smoky Hill River Valley.

Stunning limestone bluffs carved by the river lay amid the prairie waiting to awe adventurers with wonder and intrigue. The clear, deep water of the reservoir invites anglers, boaters, swimmers, and kayakers with multiple opportunities to enjoy its refreshing offerings. Trails in the park, like the newest Butterfield Trail, take hikers back in time to when this area was a major highway for stagecoaches headed towards Denver and Colorado Springs.

As one gazes out over the Smoky Hill River valley lush with prairie, teeming with wildlife, and sprinkled with limestone bluffs lining the river, it's easy to imagine

dozens of covered wagons and people mounted on horseback using this major artery to the west. At that time in history, the top speed of travel was 18 miles per hour on horseback or seven miles per hour in a stagecoach, all a striking difference from the 75 miles per hour on the current interstate.

"We're the best kept secret in Western Kansas," said park manager, Brian Haug. "With all that we have to offer the public in recreational opportunities, we are a draw especially for families who prefer a quieter experience."

One of those quieter experiences is the unique celebration of the Fourth of July – the Celebration of Pets and Vets. Rather than a loud festival of

fireworks, which are troubling sounds for combat veterans and frightening sounds for pets, Cedar Bluff has chosen to be a quiet place that celebrates with a different style of patriotism – parades, campsite contests and hundreds of flags lining the park's roads.

"We're a community-based lake," Haug says. "We're unique in that we are centrally located between WaKeeney, Ellis, Lacross, Ness City, and even Hays. It's a family-oriented park where they can bring the kids for the BMX track, playgrounds, fishing and boating."

The newest feature, the Butterfield Hiking Trail, located just west of the park office, commemorates the history of the Smoky Hill River Valley which



was a major thoroughfare for those headed west to Denver. The Butterfield Overland Despatch started in 1865 and provided the quickest route from Atchison, KS to Denver, CO.

The trail provides an excellent opportunity to view the prairie ecosystem of flora and fauna and has two loops. The south Butterfield Loop is 1.25 miles and gives a great view of the lake and park. The north Smoky Hill Loop is about a half mile with steeper elevation which takes you to a splendid overview of the lake. If you look to the far west, that's where the Historic Butterfield Trail Bluffton Station once set in what became infamously known as Threshing Machine Canyon.

In 1867, a party of men were taking a threshing machine to Brigham Young in Salt Lake City and camped overnight at Bluffton station. During the night, they were ambushed; all men were killed, and the machine was set on fire. The machine was left in the canyon which became an early tourist attraction but has since been moved to the Trego

County Historical Society in WaKeeney. This area became a stopping point for travelers who carved their names into the 75-foot-high bluff, which can be accessed by a road west of the park.

Cedar Bluff Reservoir, built in 1949, is 6,900 acres of clear water when full, and is surrounded by 7,300 acres of public wildlife area and 1,000 acres of the state park. It has three boat ramps and a large sandy beach and fishing dock.

"The lake is good for walleye and largemouth bass," Haug said. "There is a healthy white bass, crappie and wiper population but my favorite is the largemouth. Our local fisheries manager, Dave Spalsberry, does an excellent job of habitat management. He has placed numerous hidden structures as fish attractors and has them marked with buoys so they can easily be found.

"There is also excellent wildlife viewing both in the state park and surrounding wildlife area," Haug added. "Kent Hensley manages the habitat for wildlife diversity so well that wildlife

viewing is one of my favorite things to do.”

The state park consists of two areas: the north shore and the south shore.

The Bluffton Area on the north shore features:

- 22 full hookup sites
- 97 water and electric sites
- Group campground
- 100 primitive sites
- Two playgrounds
- BMX track
- Youth/disabled fishing pond
- Butterfield Hiking Trial
- Interactive outdoor electronic game system
- Public fishing dock
- Sandy beach with swim area
- Life jacket loaner station
- Archery range
- Fish cleaning station
- Two dump stations
- Three shower houses and restrooms
- Two group shelters
- Three modern cabins
- Three rustic cabins

The Page Creek Area on the south shore has a more remote feel and features:

- One full hookup site
- 36 water and electric sites
- 50 primitive sites
- Agave Ridge Hiking Trail - 5-mile interpretive trail
- Boat ramp w/ courtesy dock
- Fish cleaning station
- Two dump stations

Cedar Bluff Wildlife Area

There are 9,500 acres of land surrounding the reservoir, all of which is owned by the Bureau of Reclamation and managed by the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks.

Various game including pheasant, quail, waterfowl, small game, deer and turkey can be hunted in the wildlife

area. Current estimates based on surveys show a deep population of 40 white-tailed deer per square mile; hunters are encouraged to harvest does. Harvest rates are approximately 150 deer per year with a ratio of one buck for every doe.

Youth and Mentor Areas - Approximately 800 acres in the North Cove have been set aside for hunters younger than 17 who are accompanied by a licensed adult, who may also hunt. Nearly 200 hundred acres east of the dam is open to youth/mentor hunting but is limited to shotgun and archery.

Special draws - Special draw hunts are offered for both youth and adults throughout the season which provide unique opportunities for hunters to enjoy undisturbed areas. Applications for these draws open in June and the deadline is mid-August for the first draw and October 1 for the second draw.

Agave Ridge Hiking Trail - This trail is a 5-mile interpretive trail on the south side in the Page Creek Area and is on wildlife area lands. Agave, the family name for the Great Plains Yucca, is abundant on the trail. There is one mile that is paved and provides numerous signs and represents the habitat of the area. The rest of the four miles winds through the prairie with accompanying views of wildlife. Both sections can either be accessed by hiking or biking. Along the western portion of the trail is a half-mile of 100 feet tall cedar lined bluffs from whence the park derives its name. 🐃



CEDAR BLUFF

— STATE PARK —

K A N S A S

Park Manager
Brian Haug

Park Office
32001 147 Hwy
Ellis, KS 67636

Contact
(785) 726-3212



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1426 Hwy US-183 Alt.
Hays, KS 67601

Topeka

785-273-6740
300 SW Wanamaker Road
Topeka, KS 66606

Species Profile



Longnose Gar

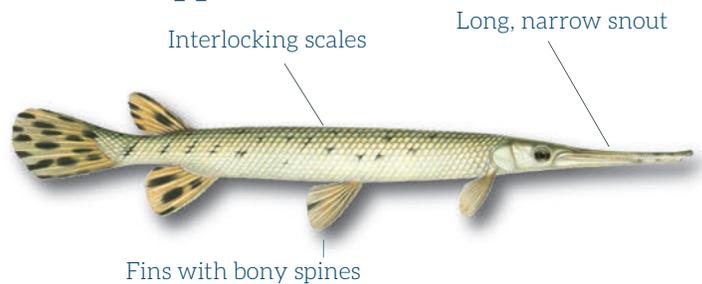
Lepisosteus osseus

It's a gar, but what kind?

Unlike the non-native Alligator Gar, the Longnose Gar is commonly found in rivers and other waterbodies within the state. With its long snout and needle-like teeth, the longnose gar is able to snare fish by whipping its head in a surprising attack from a fish that typically remains stealthily-still.

Size	Diet	Habitat
Up to 6 feet and more than 30 lbs. in KS	Smaller fish including other gar, snakes, crabs and frogs	Weedy flats, bays and bays in eastern KS rivers

Appearance



Did you know?

The Longnose Gar can breathe both water and air! Due to their unusual swim bladder, which acts like a lung, the Longnose Gar is able to live in poorly-oxygenated waters.



Backlash

with Nadia Reimer

It Pays to Have Parks

Among the myriad of things that make me proud to work for KDWP, our state parks are right near the top. We have 28 of some of the most unique, affordable, and activity-packed state parks you could dream up. Just when I think I've found my favorite, I travel to a new-to-me state park and my "favorite" changes yet again. There's just something about these special spaces that beckon me to play, to explore, to discover; And, no two parks are alike!

I recently stayed in a cabin at the Hell Creek Area of Wilson State Park, and it donned on me during an evening campfire just how lucky we are in Kansas. The positive impact Mother Nature, our state parks, and the smell of freshly-roasted s'mores have on our souls can hardly be

quantified... I think that's part of what makes the outdoors so special. But it's not just about the "feel good" impacts our state parks have, there's a really good "business" behind these spaces, too! Luckily, for readers who are left-brain dominant, we can quantify the economic impact of our state parks; and the figures are astounding.

The Parks Division recently partnered with the Center for Economic Development and Business Research (CEDBR) at Wichita State University to showcase the positive economic impact Kansas state parks have across the state and several industries. For the study, Parks and CEDBR polled 39,156 visitors who stayed at a Kansas state park between April 1, 2020 and September 11, 2020. Here's what they found:

Kansas' State Parks by The Numbers

- Survey respondents had an average party size of four people
- Survey respondents stayed an average of 4.1 days
- Survey respondents spent approximately \$510 each trip
- 91.9% of visitors indicated they would recommend the state park to others
- 79.9% of visitors indicated they would revisit the same state park within one year
- In 2020, largely due to the global pandemic, Kansas state parks saw a dramatic increase of 52% in the number of visitor days in parks. This led to an additional 1,354 jobs and \$35.2 million dollars in wages.
- In 2020, total estimated spending by visitors in Kansas was 170.1 million dollars. And, approximately 67% of spending related to nature-based tourism activities was conducted near survey respondents' destination, with sales predominantly conducted within 40 miles of Kansas state parks.
- And, 29 Kansas counties are home to at least a portion of a state park

Those who visit Kansas state parks pay for their existence, but the reality is – we all benefit from having these special spaces. From our quality life and physical and mental health, to supporting jobs and industry, Kansas state parks pay far more dividends than most realize.

The next time you find yourself looking for a wise way to

invest your time, money or energy – consider Kansas state parks. I can almost guarantee you, it will be time well wasted, money well spent, and you'll feel better after having visited.

For more on Kansas state parks, including cabin reservations and to view the full economic impact study referenced in this column, visit ksoutdoors.com/State-Parks. 



Current & Upcoming

KANSAS OUTDOOR SEASONS

HUNTING

Coyote

Open all year
Night vision equipment:
Jan. 1 - Mar. 31, 2022

Rabbit

Open all year

Dove, Exotic

(Eurasian collared, ringed turtle):
Open all year

Duck

High Plains:
Oct. 9, 2021 - Jan. 2, 2022
Jan. 31 - 30, 2022

Low Plains Early:

Dec. 18 - Jan. 2, 2022

Low Plains Late:

Oct. 30, 2021 - Jan. 2, 2022
Jan. 22 - 30, 2022

Low Plains Southeast:

Nov. 6, 2021 - Jan. 2, 2022
Jan. 15 - 31, 2022

See the *2021-2022 Kansas Hunting & Furharvesting Regulations* and *2021 Kansas Fishing Regulations summaries* for details.

Deer

Extended Firearm Whitetail Antlerless-only (Units 6, 8, 9, 10 and 17):
Jan. 1 - 9, 2022

Extended Firearm Whitetail Antlerless-only (Units 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 11, 14 and 16):
Jan. 1 - 16, 2022

Extended Firearm Whitetail Antlerless-only (Units 10A, 12, 13, 15 and 19):
Jan. 1 - 23, 2022

Extended Firearm Whitetail Antlerless-only (10A and 19):
Jan. 24 - 31, 2022

Pheasant/Quail

Nov. 13, 2021 - Jan. 31, 2022

Greater Prairie Chicken

Sept. 15, 2021 - Jan. 31, 2022

Sandhill Crane

Central Zone:
Nov. 10, 2021 - Jan. 31, 2022

Goose

Dark (Canada, Cackling, Brant):
Nov. 3, 2021 - Feb. 13, 2022

White-fronted:
Jan. 22 - Feb. 13, 2022

Light (Ross', Snow, Blue):
Nov. 3 - Feb. 13, 2022

Spring Conservation Order:
Feb. 14 - April 30, 2022

Furbearers

Nov. 17, 2021 - Feb. 15, 2022

Squirrel

June 1, 2021 - Feb. 28, 2022

Crow

Nov. 10, 2021 - Mar. 10, 2022

TRAPPING

Coyote

Open all year

Furbearers

Nov. 17, 2021 - Feb. 15, 2022

Beaver and Otter

Nov. 17, 2021 - Mar. 31, 2022

FISHING

Trout

Nov. 1, 2021 - Apr. 15, 2022

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