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KANSAS

Wildlife & Parks Magazine

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KANSAS
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INSIDE COVER Flint Hills Trail State Park proves fun for all ages. Staff 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



Why All the Focus on R3?

from the secretary

These past several months, I've had the opportunity to speak quite a bit with the Education team at the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. I've always been interested in what these folks do - from nature centers to boating instruction, Archery in the Schools to the Great Kansas Birding Trail. Lately, it seems everyone is evaluating these programs and many of our other functions through the "R3 lens:" **How do they impact recruitment, retention, and reactivation?**

This shouldn't surprise anyone. Every business needs to focus not only on retaining current customers, but recruiting new ones and reactivating those who have become inactive. Our agency has never aggressively pursued R3 as we are right now, and we only plan to increase efforts. Though the COVID-19 pandemic certainly gave us our fill of loss, it also resulted in many Kansans pursuing outdoor activities for the first time, and many others dusting off their gear to recreate outdoors as they haven't in years. Record increases in hunters, anglers and campers in 2020 remained high in 2021. Our efforts to communicate with and encourage these participants has never been so focused and effective as it is now. Our new licensing system, Go Outdoors Kansas, rolled out at the beginning of May will only enhance these abilities in the future. Many of our programs appeal to adults as well as youth - hunter education, certified fishing instructors, boating education and special hunts to name some. Another high demand program, Becoming an Outdoors Woman (BOW), is focused on adult females and has been terrifically successful at the outdoor skills it teaches, too.

Now, the preponderance of our recruitment efforts are centered on our youth. In late January, there were a record number of schools and students competing at our championships for the National Archery in the Schools program (NASP) in Hutchinson. At 72, the number of schools teaching hunter education has never



A record number of schools and students competed at our championship for the National Archery in the Schools program (NASP) in January.

been higher and our Student Air Rifle program, started in 2019, is also rapidly expanding. Partnering with Bass Pro/Cabela's Outdoors, we received a mobile catch center that will be used for family fishing education programs in Wichita, Topeka and Kansas City in 2022. These springboard from the very successful Vamos A Pescar (Let's Go Fishing!) programs that attracted scores of families to fishing and water education programs in Emporia in 2021.

With these new and growing programs, there will still be more to come. Our extremely talented Education professionals will make sure of that, and they will have even greater opportunities in the near future for both new and experienced outdoor enthusiasts to enjoy Kansas and our outstanding resources, so stay tuned. I'll be cheering them on while trying to stay out of their way! 🐮

IN THE MAIL

A Special Hunt

My son and I had a great time at the Trego County special hunt at the beginning of December and appreciate the opportunity. The property was beautiful and was loaded with deer. We also tent camped at Cedar Bluff State Park and had a great time there as well. You all are doing a good job managing that property. The native prairie at Cedar Bluff is impressive. Here are the deer my son and I harvested.

Thanks, Seth Reece

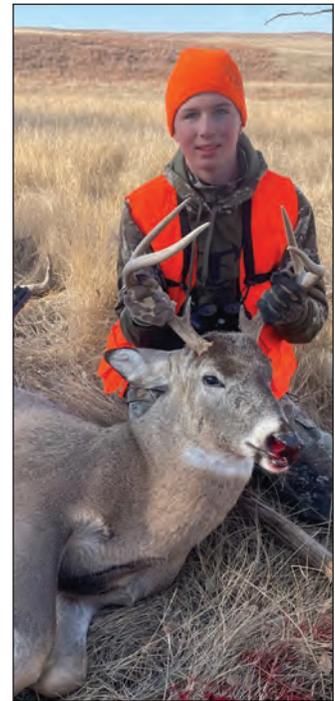
Mr. Reece,

First, thank you for taking the time to write. Secondly, a big congratulations to you and your son on two very beautiful bucks. The two of you should be proud of the time and effort you put in to the hunt. It obviously paid off!

We sincerely appreciate the kinds words regarding your enjoyable experience, and how our efforts as agency to manage those lands and provide public hunting opportunities, contributed to the lifelong memories you've now created.

We hope you'll come back in years to come.

Nadia Marji, executive editor



in the mail

The Ivory-billed Woodpecker Survives

Dear Nadia,

My dogs and I have for two decades made an annual journey from Arkansas to Kansas for many days of pheasant/quail/rabbit hunting. We just love Kansas, its wide-open spaces, and your outdoorsperson friendliness. I admire what KDWP does for wildlife and hunters. I recognize that your WIHA program is the best there is on the planet.

But this letter is mainly about a North American bird species believed extinct for 80 years. It is not extinct.

Like most KWP Magazine subscribers, I am a lifelong hunter and fisherman. But I am also a lifelong birder. Birds struck my fancy before I could even walk, my parents say. While most of you likely don't consider yourself birders, I know that you have an appreciation for all things wild. Probably all of you have heard of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker. It is the largest woodpecker that the USA ever had, larger than the big Pileated Woodpecker.

This bird, monikered "The Lord God Bird" in the 1800s, has presumptuously been believed extinct since the mid-1900s. It is not extinct. It survives in our modern era in its historic southeastern USA home range. If you have any familiarity with the ivorybill story, the species has been seen by a few lucky people in each of the eight-plus decades since being declared extinct. In 2009, some Louisiana residents (who are sportsmen and women, I might add), were sometimes seeing a male-female pair of ivorybills near their homes on their heavily wooded property. A trail camera was placed in a key location where the birds were believed to sometimes roost for the night, and definitive trail cam photographs were soon achieved. These 2009 photos

proved beyond doubt that the species has survived. The photos are the only half-decent photos of the ivorybill obtained in nearly a century.

Those photos were the impetus for my new book, "The Ivory-billed Woodpecker: Taunting Extinction, Survival in the Modern Era," published recently in August 2021. It is available from Amazon.com and Barnesandnoble.com if you wish to see the photos and read about the miraculous survival of our largest woodpecker.

To me, it's a celebration that all my fellow sportsmen and women can participate in – the survival of a shy, quiet, retiring, master-of-its-wild-environment bird species. We keen outdoorspeople are about the only humans left who can understand how such a wild species can live its life while essentially eluding detection by humans. We all have a chance of seeing in our modern era this very large woodpecker in conceivably any forested region of the southeastern USA. Some of you may have even already seen one.

*Sincerely, Guy Lunea
Sherwood, AR*

Mr. Lunea,

It's always nice to hear from those who have chosen to make Kansas part of their annual adventures. I can only imagine how much ground you and your dogs have covered pursuing birds and rabbits in our state. I'd love to see some photographs some time, if you don't mind sharing.

In regards to your comments regarding the elusive Ivory-billed Woodpecker, I must admit I am uneducated; however, your letter has certainly ignited my curiosity! Thanks for sharing – I'll have to look into this.

Nadia Marji, executive editor

Nygren Leaves Long-lasting Legacy After 41-Year Career



Doug Nygren helped bring millions of smiles to Kansas anglers during his 41-year career. Nygren, 66, retired as the Fisheries Division director for the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) on March 7.

“Doug deserves a lot of credit for the fishing we now have,” said Mike Miller, assistant secretary for KDWP. “(Kansas) has been at the cutting edge in fisheries in several programs. Doug was always looking for better ways to do things. He never lost his passion for creating more and better fishing opportunities.”

A 1979 graduate of Missouri State University, Nygren started with the agency in 1980. He was first a conservation worker, then fisheries biologist for south-central Kansas for 10 years. In 1992, he began managing some fisheries programs. He was appointed division director in 1996.

Nygren is proud of what the division accomplished in those 26 years.

“Things are so much better than they used to be. We have

more places (for the public) to go fishing than ever,” said Nygren. “Under my watch we had some unbelievably talented staff that were so passionate about what they could do for fishing.”

Miller gave Nygren much of the credit for a new program that is helping solve a decades-old problem of keeping good largemouth bass populations in Kansas’ aging lakes. The program tricks hatchery bass into spawning six weeks ahead of when they’d naturally spawn.

The result has been young fish twice the size of normal bass going into their first winter, a time when most naturally spawned bass don’t survive. Survival rates are much higher.

“We’re seeing that this program is making a difference. That’s the kind of thing Doug did all through his career,” said Miller. “Instead of giving up years ago, and stocking species of fish that are easier to produce and raise, Doug kept looking for ways to get more largemouth bass into our lakes. They’re one of our most popular fish.”

Miller also said Nygren played a huge role in the agency’s Community Fisheries Assistance Program, which largely used federal conservation funds to help open over 200 community and county lakes to free public angling. Before, most charged an access fee. Stocking rates have also increased for lakes in the program.

The current Walk-In Fishing Access, trout stocking program and walleye initiative, have grown with Nygren’s care. Hatchery facilities and stocking success have grown exponentially.

Miller noted Nygren has long been active in national fisheries organizations. He brought what he learned from other states back to Kansas. Just as often, he shared Kansas’ successes with other states.

Nygren has always been quick to pass credit to his staff. Most pass it back.

“Doug was always forward thinking and really supported his staff, rather it be getting them better equipment or just letting them know they’re appreciated,” said Sean Lynott, a regional fisheries supervisor who worked with Nygren many years. “He listened to his biologists and wasn’t afraid to let them take a chance. Doug usually had good, positive input.” Miller said such an attitude allowed Nygren to assemble, and keep, literally one of the top fisheries staff in the nation. It’s why Nygren, Miller and others are optimistic about the future of Kansas fishing.

“The division will reach new heights,” said Nygren. “I’m leaving a tremendous crew behind.”

Nygren plans to take off a few months to travel with his wife and fish with his grandchildren. Later this year he’ll start a position with the National Fisheries Habitat Partnership, coordinating national reservoir partnerships.

Kansas Fisheries Staff Allay Fears with 25-lake Study on Largemouth Bass Virus

Though it's been 15 years since Largemouth Bass Virus (LMBV) was first identified in a Kansas lake, Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) Fisheries Division staff remain committed to fully understanding the effects of this disease on one of Kansas' most popular sportfish.

Beginning in 2018, Fisheries staff from KDWP's Research and Survey Office in Emporia systematically examined 25 waterbodies across Kansas that had presumably healthy, popular largemouth bass fisheries; populations with declining relative abundance or size structure; and, populations that were previously identified as being positive for LMBV. While the study brought to light the presence of LMBV at eight waterbodies not previously known to harbor the virus, what may be most surprising is the data that wasn't there.

Largemouth Bass Virus Study Highlights

- A total of 1,260 largemouth bass were examined throughout the three-year study.
- Of the 25 waterbodies tested, 14 of those waterbodies tested positive for LMBV, six of which were already known to have LMBV.
- There was no evidence of LMBV effects on body condition, relative abundance of quality-length fish, or growth.

Staff were surprised, but relieved, to learn that there was no evidence of LMBV having long-term effects on body condition, relative abundance of quality-length fish, or growth rates in the Kansas populations.

"It's very possible that the acute effects of LMBV have already occurred in some of these impoundments," said Jeff Koch, KDWP Fisheries research supervisor. "If that's the case, that likely means many of these populations have already rebounded and have perhaps even developed some degree of immunity to the virus. In fact, some of our best largemouth bass fisheries tested positive for LMBV and have not shown evidence of any substantial population-level effects. Either way you look at it, the data is promising."

Symptoms of LMBV typically occur in waterbodies during the heat of summer or other periods when fish are stressed. Though not all infected fish exhibit outward symptoms, LMBV can cause buoyancy and swim bladder issues, causing infected fish to lose equilibrium and become lethargic, ultimately resulting in death. Currently, LMBV has been found in the eastern and southern United States, though more research is still needed to understand its full range.

"Largemouth bass virus is a relatively new disease, so it's all the more important that we continue to study its range and effects, and add to the scientific community's body of knowledge," added Vanessa Salazar, KDWP Fisheries biologist. "Thanks to the hard work and expertise of many biologists in our division, we've been able to accomplish just that."

Similar to most aquatic pathogens, LMBV is transmitted in water or even damp livewells. Anglers are encouraged to clean, drain, and dry their boats and equipment before moving to a new waterbody to help prevent the spread of aquatic pathogens and nuisance species.

To learn more about KDWP's study, visit <https://afspubs.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/aah.10133> to access the March 2022 issue of *Journal of Aquatic Animal Health's*, "The Effect of Largemouth Bass Virus on Bass Populations in Kansas Impoundments."



Walleye Harvest Regulations Adjusted at Marion Reservoir as Part of 4-Year Study

Walleye harvest regulations have changed at Marion Reservoir – north of U.S. 56 between Marion and Hillsboro – as part of a four-year pilot study to improve fishing opportunities. Effective January 1, 2022, Marion Reservoir walleye is managed with the following harvest regulations:

- 18-inch minimum length limit
- 3 per day creel limit, with no more than one fish 21 inches or longer

The study, which began January 1, 2020, is organized into two phases: a two-year Grow Phase and two-year Harvest Phase.

During the Grow Phase, which took place January 2020 thru December 2021, walleye were managed with a 21-inch minimum length limit and a 5 per day creel limit. This was done to increase densities of walleye in Marion Reservoir longer than 18 inches.

Now, the waterbody is in its two-year Harvest Phase. Through December 2023, Marion Reservoir's walleye population will be managed with an 18-inch minimum length limit and a 3 per day creel limit, with no more than one fish 21 inches or longer.

Marion Reservoir is one of three Kansas reservoirs that can sustain a fishable walleye population through natural recruitment. Enhancement of walleye broodstock is a major goal of the study, as enhanced recruitment would equate to increased walleye population density and increased walleye fishing opportunities for anglers.

In addition to closely monitoring the walleye population throughout the duration of the study, Fisheries staff will also conduct a creel survey from March through October 2022 to collect valuable harvest data and angler input regarding the study.

Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, Emporia State University Partner to Provide New Fishing Opportunity

King Lake, on the northern edge of Emporia State University (ESU) and I-35, will soon be Kansas’ newest waterbody open to the public for fishing, thanks to an ongoing partnership between ESU and the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP). Positioned in front of ESU’s newly constructed Prophet Aquatic Research and Outreach Center, King Lake’s fishery will be managed by ESU students enrolled in Fish Ecology and Fisheries Management courses, with the guidance of KDWP Fisheries biologists.

“This arrangement is going to allow students at ESU the opportunity to get hands-on experience managing a fishery, while affording Emporia-area anglers another location to wet a line,” said Ben Neely, KDWP Fisheries biologist. “We’re excited to see this fishery grow and to see more anglers out there enjoying what this lake has to offer.”

An initial survey of the lake was conducted by students in Dr. Rachel Bowes’ Fish Ecology class in November 2021. Working alongside KDWP Fisheries biologists, students sampled 12 fish species, including good numbers of bluegill, largemouth bass, and white crappie. Students also identified management strategies moving forward, which will include supplemental stockings of channel catfish and largemouth bass to help achieve a balanced food web and increase angling opportunities. Additionally, winter stocking of rainbow trout is being considered to provide winter angling opportunities in the area.

“Emporia State University is proud of our long-standing partnership with the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks,” said Dr. Brent Thomas, dean of Emporia State’s College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. “The presence of a public fishing lake on our campus that is collaboratively managed by our students and the agency will provide unique applied-learning opportunities to our Fisheries and Wildlife students.”

Anglers can access King Lake via the I-35 underpass off Highland Street, east of the KDWP Research and Survey office and ESU soccer field. Currently, fishing regulations for King Lake follow statewide regulations; however, regulations may be adapted as additional surveys are conducted (<https://ksoutdoors.com/Fishing/Fishing-Regulations>).

When fishing at King Lake, a current fishing license is required (unless exempt); and, anglers may keep the following:

Species	Minimum Length	Daily creel limit
Channel Catfish	NA	10
Crappie	NA	50
Largemouth Bass	15 inches	5

KDWP Launches New Licensing System: Go Outdoors Kansas

The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) is proud to announce the launch of Go Outdoors Kansas – KDWP’s all-new licensing and boat registration system designed to provide outdoor recreationalist with an improved customer service experience. More than 500 license and boat vendor locations are now processing transactions through the online system.

Outdoor-goers can access the new system at GoOutdoorsKansas.com and download the mobile app for IOS and Android devices. Some customers may need to first delete the HuntFishKS mobile app, as it is no longer operational; customer information will not be deleted when removing the mobile app.

KDWP’s new mobile app – Go Outdoors KS – allows users to quickly view all purchased licenses on-the-go, regulations and sunrise/sunset times in the field, and report harvests immediately after hunting. Customers may also conveniently register and renew water vessels through the new system.

KDWP Offers Durable License Cards



The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks launched a new licensing system recently, Go Outdoors Kansas, that will improve the customer experience for all outdoor recreationalists in the Sunflower State. As part of the enhanced system, outdoor-goers have the ability to purchase a durable license card upgrade that can withstand harsh outdoor conditions. These collectible cards resemble the style of a credit card and are optional for every customer to purchase for an additional \$6.

Each card will include the customer’s information and current licenses at the time of purchase. The hard cards may be purchased anywhere hunting and fishing licenses are sold and will be mailed within one week of purchase.

Two design options are available for purchase, both featuring artwork created by local illustrator and graphic designer, Dustin Teasley of Pratt, KS. Purchasers can select between a crappie and a pheasant, or purchase both designs. Purchasers must simply have a current fishing or hunting license on file.

BIRD BRAIN

Wait, That's Not a Crane...

with Mike Rader



One of the more common, yet often misidentified, birds we see here in Kansas is the Great Blue Heron. Over the years, I've received calls from folks talking about the "crane" they saw in their farm pond, local creek or up in a tree. I explain that while we do get cranes in Kansas, they are wonderful migrants that come through twice a year - the abundant Sandhill Crane and the rare and stately Whooping Crane. Sandhill Cranes particularly have been common in south-central Kansas as a wintering species the last several years but are very unusual in the summer when they are on their breeding grounds.

The Great Blue Heron belongs to a large group of wading birds that also includes smaller species, including two species of night heron, bitterns, and the white waders - Great, Snowy and Cattle Egrets. All told, we have 12 species of herons that have been recorded in Kansas. For sheer numbers, some of the egrets may outnumber Great Blue Herons, but they are the species more people are able to see as they are common across our state.

Great Blue Herons are our largest and heaviest heron, standing around 54 inches tall, weighing a little over 6 pounds

and having a wingspan of approximately 6 feet. These adaptable birds are often thought to just eat fish but they will consume just about anything they can swallow. While fish do comprise a large part of their diet, they will also eat frogs, snakes, crayfish, small mammals, and birds. I've seen videos of them in alfalfa fields miles away from any water catching and consuming pocket gophers!

These herons are communal nesters, meaning they will build large, flat nests of sticks in sturdy branches at the tops of trees, usually in the company of other pairs of herons. They start nest construction early in the year before leaves are on the trees, typically along riparian zones on creeks and rivers. They are somewhat quiet when making nests, laying eggs and incubating, but when the young hatch, they can cause a lot of noise. The call of begging young and the multiple trips from a food source back to the nesting trees make them obvious and easy to watch.

Great Blue Herons can be found in Kansas during every season, with a few staying around in winter close to streams and other waterbodies that do not completely freeze. They are most abundant after nesting season is over, typically late July and August. The marshes of central Kansas can be a spectacular opportunity to see lots of herons and egrets, usually taking advantage of waterbodies drying down, leaving fish exposed in the shallows.

These large birds are fun to watch and are easy to identify when you know what to look for. One tip to remember is that if you see one in flight, they pull their head and neck back, making them look short. Cranes fly with their heads and necks extended out to full length, giving them a more streamlined appearance. Their blue and gray plumage is different from cranes and most show a plume of a long feather or two from the back of the head. They are quite beautiful in breeding plumage, which can be seen in late winter through summer. Keep an eye out for them in your bird watching outings. Happy Birding!

from the kdwp staff

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 found throughout North America.
2. I am commonly mistaken for a rattlesnake.
3. I can grow as long as 4 to 9 feet.

>>> See answer on Page 10.



Keep it Simple *with Dustin Teasley*

Hunters and anglers often feel the need to do something special with the game they harvest, either to cover up a preconceived gamey taste or to give their catch a special treatment not typically given to domestic or store-bought foods. I am no different, but I have discovered that a few store-bought seasonings and spices can make game taste delicious.

One of my biggest pet peeves while eating at restaurants is the lack of boldness with seasoned foods, especially meats. Restaurants will often use mild recipes or season to appeal to the largest portion of their clientele. As for me, well, I want a seasoning that screams, “Hey, I’m here, and I am not apologizing about it,” without being rudely hot or salty.

With all the choices available, finding a good store-bought seasoning for game can be overwhelming. When I do find one, I pass it along. Not everyone has the know-how or trust in themselves to venture into making their own set of seasoning. Knowing they can just go pick up a simple seasoning and cook up a tasty meal is a big step in becoming an avid hunter or angler.

While grilling scaled trout, I like to use Zatarain’s Blackened Seasoning. For frying catfish nuggets, I typically use the cornmeal-based seasoning Andy’s Red Fish Breading. Recently, I have found a new gem. While I was looking for something different, I picked up a variety of breading mixes made by Louisiana Fish Fry Products. Their New Orleans style breading mix was a knock-it-out-of-the-park winner for me. I have used it on crappie and catfish, and it produces a thin, crisp layer crunch followed by a flaky and steamy meaty center.

I have found that these store-bought seasonings are simple to use, yet can still pack a great punch of flavor. They can be used light or heavy depending on your own personal tastes, but provide a great starting point. The only drawback is availability. More than once, I have used a seasoning that I considered a staple in the pantry, only for it to be discontinued at local stores or even all together. Buying



online has provided a great avenue in securing these hard-to-find gems in times of need.

Now, I’m not saying I’m going to quit looking for new and great ways to prepare fish. I always come across new ways to season fish, and love trying them out. But when I’m craving a good crappie fillet or making that catfish bonanza for a group of friends, I will keep it simple and use a store-bought seasoning. Because sometimes, simple just simply tastes better.



Simple Fish Fry

Prep: 10 minutes

Cook Time: 25 minutes

Servings: 4

6 catfish fillets • Louisiana Fish Fry Mix
Skillet with 1/4” Vegetable Oil

Rinse catfish fillets in cold water. Dredge and coat each fillet in fry mix and send to the hot skillet. Four minutes on first side then turn over. Cook until fillet flakes apart.

from the kdwp staff



Law Matters

Wear Your Life Jacket

with Colonel Gregory Kyser



Summer is quickly approaching, which means a busy time for Kansas game wardens. With many Kansans taking to the water to enjoy recreational boating on our state's lakes and reservoirs, our game wardens will be out patrolling to make sure safe boating laws are being followed. Being safe while boating is a must and having the proper personal flotation device (PFD) is the first step to having a great time on the water.

Kansas law requires that all boats have at least one life jacket of proper size, in serviceable condition and readily accessible for each person on board. Children 12 and younger must always wear a life jacket while on board a boat or being towed behind the boat on skis or a tube. Additionally, each person operating or riding a personal watercraft must also wear a properly fitting life jacket at all times.

It is recommended to wear a life jacket that is appropriate for the water activity taking place. To assist with this, life jackets will soon sport a new label to let the purchaser know how much buoyancy the life jacket provides. Lower number life jackets are better suited for activities that occur near the shore, while higher number life jackets are suited for off-shore activities and offer more buoyancy. The new labels have images that explain which life jacket is best for specific water activities, such as tubing or water skiing. The labels will also show the life jackets turning ability and whether it will turn an unconscious wearer face-up. While the new labels are beneficial, older life jackets can still be used as long as they are in good condition, with no rips or tears in the fabric.

Be safe, wear your life jacket, and enjoy your time on the water this summer!



BOAT KANSAS

Watersport Safety

with Chelsea Hofmeier

The temperature fluctuations of early springtime are a thing of the past and the water is slowly beginning to warm up. Now is the time recreational boaters start dusting off those waterskis, tubes and wakeboards in preparation for the start of prime lake season!

Watersports add an exciting and entertaining element to boating. Anyone engaging in these fast-moving activities should take several things into consideration before and during your outing.

In the state of Kansas, towing is allowed from a half hour before sunrise to a half hour after sunset. The boat that you are towing with must be equipped with a wide-angle mirror or an observer who is at least 12 years old. A bright orange or red flag no less than a 12 inch square must be visibly displayed immediately after the person(s) being towed are in the water, either getting ready to be towed or during retrieval of a fallen skier. Pay attention to the capacity limit displayed on your boat's capacity plate and remember that the person(s) being towed are included in this number. Lastly, anyone 12 years old and younger are required to wear a U.S. Coast Guard approved life jacket while being towed behind a vessel. Life jackets worn for watersports should remain intact and securely attached to your body. Look for a snug fit and three to four strong belts so they won't get torn off easily.

Different types of towing activities require specific rope lengths and materials. The average waterski rope is 70 ft and needs to have stretch for higher speeds, as opposed to a 75-85 ft wakeboard rope that does not need stretch for a more consistent pull from the boat. Tubing ropes are the shortest at 60 ft but have the most stretch to pick up slack in the line. No matter the type of towing rope required, all of them should be stored properly when not in use so that they continue to function safely.

There are also different speeds recommended for towing sports. Speed limit suggestions include 25-36 mph for water-skiing, 18-22 mph for wakeboarding, and less than 20 mph for tubing activities. Making gentle throttle adjustments is important regardless of the speed you are pulling someone. The boat's operator also has several responsibilities. The engine should be turned off while anyone is entering or exiting the boat to avoid propeller strikes and carbon monoxide exposure. The driver should know the body of water they are on and be focused on what is ahead and not distracted by their surroundings to ensure their participants are kept away from dangers. When retrieving their towed participants, the boat should always be pulled up to them on the driver's side. Lastly, communication between the driver and watersport participants should be clear by going over what hand signals are to be used.

Boat smart, stay safe, and have fun on the water Kansas!

from the kdwp staff



BULLSEYE Classic Cartridges 6.5 x 55 Swedish Mauser *with Kent Barret*

from the kdwp staff



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In 1891, work started to produce a first-generation smokeless powder cartridge for the Scandinavian market. Norway and Sweden wanted a cartridge that would serve the needs of both countries' militaries while allowing each country the freedom to select their own rifle platform to fire the round. Ultimately, Norway adopted the Krag-Jorgensen M/1894 rifle while Sweden adopted the Mauser M/1896 rifle to fire the 7x57mm round.

When the Swedish-Norwegian Rifle Commission began work in 1891, various calibers were tested in an effort to find the optimum bullet size for this new cartridge. After testing 8mm, 7.5mm, 7mm, 6.5 mm and 6mm bullets, the optimum caliber was determined to be the 6.5mm (0.256 inches). This provided a smaller bullet diameter and lower free recoil than the full-power service rifle cartridges selected by other countries. Combined with heavy-for-caliber bullets in the 160 grain range, velocities were nothing spectacular although the cartridge was flat shooting and penetration on targets was astonishing. Amund Skoglund of Norma Ammunition explains, "A lot of hunters won't admit to it, but I am convinced that the success of this cartridge is due to its design, moderate velocities and great range of bullet weights. Nobody likes to get punished by heavy recoil, and normally shoots better when not in pain or waiting for a painful hit."

Ultimately, it is all about the bullet. Neal Emery from Hornady said, "It's definitely a 6.5 thing-all sectional density. A controlled expansion bullet in .30 caliber weighing 140 grains would be rather short for its weight. A 140 grain controlled expansion bullet of the same construction in 6.5mm is going to be longer; therefore it has a higher sectional density and will penetrate further."

Some 6.5mm bullets today have a ballistic coefficients in the .610 to .625 range. Bryan Litz, of Berger Bullets, explains, "A high BC bullet can maintain velocity better than a low BC bullet under the same conditions. All measures of ballistic performance including drop



and wind deflection are related to the bullet's ability to maintain velocity." This is evident as the latest darling of the shooting world, the 6.5 Creedmoor, that has blazed across the scene.

The Creedmoor is a true short-action cartridge designed on the .308 case. This allows for long heavy bullets to be seated out some. The 6.5 Swede uses a long-action, so it is better suited to heavier bullets than are its short-action cousins. There is nothing that the short-action rifles can do that the long-action 6.5 Swede can't do. Because it has the greater case capacity, a strong modern action 6.5 Swede with good handloads can certainly keep up with the others if not outperform them.

The 6.5 Swede is a great cartridge for shooting paper targets, coyotes, deer, elk, black bear and even moose. On an African safari, it is an excellent choice for antelope and with a heavy, bonded 150 grain plus bullet will do well on oryx and wildebeest-sized animals. Even after 129 years of service across the globe, the 6.5mm Swedish Mauser is worthy of being considered a classic cartridge.

“WHAT AM I?” answer: Gopher (Bull) Snake



Predicting Growth

with Daren Riedle

One aspect of wildlife biology that fascinates me the most is understanding how animal population's function. What makes a population persist? What causes a population to grow or shrink?

We often use mathematic models to address these questions. The most simplistic model is known as the BIDE model. The BIDE model can be written as Births + Immigration - (Deaths + Emigration), or simply the number of individuals entering a population minus the number of individuals leaving a population. The BIDE model gives us a rudimentary look at population growth rates, but to step it up a notch we can learn a lot more by comparing vital rates among multiple individuals within a population.

What are vital rates, you may ask? Simply, these are values associated with maturation rates, birth rates and death rates. To collect this data, many biologists study a group of individuals over a period time using a technique known as capture-mark-recapture. When we set out to study a population, we try to capture individuals, record basic data on size, age, and sex, give them an identifying mark (marking techniques are so broad they make up their own chapter in most wildlife textbooks), let them go and hope we see them again at some point in the future.

After multiple recaptures, we have begun building an encounter history for that individual. Some individuals we may see repeatedly year after year, while several years may pass between sightings for others. Some individuals may have repeated sightings before disappearing forever, while others are only ever captured once.

While tracking individuals over a significant period of time, you can begin to collect data on apparent survivorship, or what percent of your population survives from one year to the

next. We call this value apparent survivorship, as we are not always sure whether the individual has died, or just left the study area.

Ideally while following your group of organisms, you can observe birth rates or fecundity (number of offspring). If the age of the individuals you are following is known, you can begin constructing a life table - something very similar to what insurance actuaries do. For each age class, you have percent survivorship and average number of offspring. If you multiply survivorship at age 1 by the average number of offspring at age 1, you get realized fecundity or simply birth rates x death rates. If you add the realized fecundity value for each age, then the sum of those values will equal the replacement rate for the population. If this value is less than 1, then your population is declining, while a value greater than 1 denotes a growing population.

As I mentioned during Flatlander Podcast Episode 22: Wild Attractions, you can actually determine the reproductive value of anyone individual within a population, once these initial vital rates have been determined. Essentially the reproductive value is the expectation of future offspring, or the age at which an individual will produce the most offspring in the current and future years.

Once these values are in place, we can manipulate them virtually to see how a population will respond to various natural stochastic events, or even harvest. Of course, we can't always predict mother nature, nor all the curve balls she throws at wild populations, but hopefully we can have some handle on what to expect. Sadly though, these types of data are missing for many species, as it can be very laborious and time consuming to collect. We as an agency are always looking to improve this situation with time.

from the kdwp staff

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Flat is a state of mind! Get to know the people, science, and stories that make the Kansas outdoors more than flyover country.



Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease

with Shane Hesting

Once every 3 to 6 years – or longer, depending on herd immunity and environmental factors – death and morbidity come to thousands of deer in Kansas from a single disease agent. This disease occurs in Kansas to some extent every year, but the last time a serious outbreak occurred in Kansas was during the summers of 2011 and 2012. Hemorrhagic disease, specifically EHD (Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease), happens fast and ends just as fast, leaving hundreds if not thousands of deer dead in its wake.

Causes

Hemorrhagic disease is a vector-borne disease, meaning the virus is transmitted to deer by a small biting fly called a midge, commonly *Culicoides sonorensis* in Kansas. Once deer are infected, midges bite the deer, pick up the virus and then transmit it to other deer. The disease cycle ends with the first killing frost of fall, as freezing temps kill the midge vector.

Behavior

Deer are also commonly seen standing or lying in water. It is speculated they do this for two primary reasons: 1) They are febrile (have fevers) and water cools the body, and 2) being in water is an effort to avoid predation. Sick deer instinctively know they are in trouble, and predators represent a serious risk to their survival during their compromised condition. Symptoms include labored breathing, tongue hanging out, frothy foam at the mouth, general lack or greatly reduced fear of people and bloody noses.

Affect on Deer

Hemorrhagic disease can affect deer in three different ways: peracute (quick death within days of infection), acute (death within weeks of infection), and chronic (surviving the infection but left with sequelae).

Affect on Population

Anywhere from 10 to 80 percent or more of a deer population can be wiped out by EHD. In 2011, hundreds of deer were lost, but in 2012, with a continuing drought, EHD killed approximately 130,000 deer. We know this because abrupt changes in herd density estimates, gathered from surveys later that fall, showed a sharp drop in densities. EHD was the only thing that could cause such a decline in that short of time.

When an organism is born, it becomes part of the beautifully complex, collective thing we call life. And, at some point, all lifeforms will experience disease. "Disease" is simply defined as "a departure from health." From trauma to tissue (e.g., collisions and broken bones and edema) to viral and bacterial infections that kill cells and destroy vessels to parasites that attack organs and tissues, the list of causes of departure of health is virtually endless. When we come across a diseased organism in the field, we refer to it as "ADR: Ain't Doing Right."

from the kdwp staff



FROM KDWP PARTNERS

Call of the Wild(scape)

Archery for Everyone

with Marc Murrell



Chapman took the team titles for middle and high school.



Regan Morris, Chapman, took first in the female division.

Archery is an activity that can be enjoyed by most anyone. You don't have to be incredibly strong, fast or able to jump high to have success. That's one of the biggest incentives for kids in grades 4-12 to join the National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP).

NASP began in 2002 in a cooperative effort between the Kentucky Fish and Wildlife and the Kentucky Department of Education agencies. Initially dedicated to only one state and named as such, the concept quickly caught on in many states and went national. It doesn't discriminate based on popularity, athletic skill, gender, size, or academic ability. Teams can range from 12-24 archers and at least four of the opposite gender must participate and get included in the top 12 scorers for the event.

The goal is to get kids together in a team setting and learn some of life's lessons from being a member of a team while also working individually. These include things like improving focus, self-control, discipline, patience, social skills, and confidence. Surveys have shown many of these kids participating in archery also did well in classes. It's not uncommon to see kids from the traditionally recognized sports, like basketball and football, get together on a NASP team with kids not involved in those activities. This in and of itself bridges the gap that sometimes exists with certain groups in those grades.

Archery is a sport individuals can enjoy well past graduation, and hopes are many eventually get into target archery and bowhunting as adults. The Kansas Wildscape Foundation is proud to partner with the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) in administering the NASP program in Kansas which began in 2006.

On President's Day Weekend 2022, there were 430 kids from five different states that assembled in Overland Park for the first annual "Border Wars" tournament conducted by the Missouri Conservation Heritage Foundation, KDWP, and Wildscape, with

additional assistance from the Kansas Bowhunters Association (KBA) and other volunteers. The event was a great success and the Governor's Cup went to the eventual team winner from Sarcoxie, Missouri, in a multi-state shoot-off. In addition to the medals and trophy, this winning team was also awarded a grand prize of \$5,000. Plans are underway for a similar event in 2023.

The Kansas NASP tournament, sponsored by KDWP, Wildscape and the KBA, was held a week later at the Kansas State Fairgrounds in Hutchinson. Teams from all over Kansas assembled roughly 320 students who competed in the two-day tournament. Scholarships and plaques were awarded, and Chapman took the team titles for middle and high school while Herington won the elementary division. Individual results were also tallied, and Oswego's Jesse Blummer shot a 293 (out of a possible 300) and took home the first place plaques, a new Mathews bow and \$1,000 in scholarship money. Chapman's Regan Morris was first in the female division winning the same prizes. Second place trophies and \$500 scholarships went to Chapman's Ben Griffis (279) and Pittsburg's MaKayla Keller (276). Scholarships for \$250 each and plaques were awarded to Oswego's Olivia Jackson (275) and Riverton's Tony Hodge (270).

To date, NASP has put a bow in more than 18 million kids' hands and awarded more than \$2.3 million in scholarships. There are currently 2.23 million kids participating in 47 states, 8 provinces and 11 countries. The NASP curriculum has trained more than 100,000 adults to assist with the program. Kansas' popularity is gaining and in 2019, there were 360 teachers representing 291 schools and 11,593 students participating in the Kansas NASP.

If you or your school are interested in learning more about NASP, or would like to sign up, check out www.naspschools.org. Or questions can be directed to Kansas' coordinator at KDWP, Lyndzee Rhine, at lyndzee.rhine@ks.gov, or call (620) 672-5911.



KANSAS NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

www.KansasNativePlantSociety.org

Narrow-leaved Coneflower *Echinacea angustifolia*

with Krista Dahlinger

One of the most iconic summer blooms on the Kansas prairie would be Echinacea, commonly referred to as Coneflower, Purple Coneflower, or in the case of *Echinacea angustifolia*, Narrow-leaved Coneflower.

Of the four species of Echinacea found in Kansas, Narrow-leaved Coneflower is the most frequently encountered. With a taproot that can grow between 5 and 8 feet, it is a tough perennial of the Great Plains that thrives in both the dry, chalky shortgrass prairies of western Kansas as well as the rocky prairies of the Flint Hills and is well adapted to drought. The only region of Kansas where one cannot find this species is in the southeast, where it is replaced by the true Purple Coneflower, *Echinacea purpurea*.

Each year, coarse textured tufts of leaves send up straight, stiff-haired flowering stalks between June and July. At the end of each stalk is a single, very spiny flowering head. The spiny disc flowers that make up this head have earned this plant the nickname "hedgehog plant." In fact, Echinacea comes from the Greek word for hedgehog. Around the base of these prickly disc flowers, ray flowers slowly expand, revealing petals that can be white, pink, light purple or any range in between. The center of the



inflorescence is lit up by bright yellow pollen grains that attract a wide variety of pollinators.

Over 26 different wild bees have been documented visiting Narrow-leaved Coneflower. At the end of the season, the dark brown stalks topped with the now dry "hedgehogs" provide an interesting shape and texture to the prairie landscape. These sturdy remains can withstand the elements well and are often standing strong through fall. The seeds serve as an excellent food source for various songbirds, including Goldfinches.

In addition to being useful to wildlife, the importance of Narrow-leaved Coneflower to the indigenous people of the plains has been well documented. For instance, the Omahas and Poncas referred to this coneflower as "comb plant" as the spiny, dried seed head made for a useful comb. More importantly, Narrow-leaved Coneflower was the most widely used medicinal plant of the Plains Indians. The root and other parts of the plant were used as a general painkiller for things such as toothaches and sore throats and was used as an antiseptic for wounds and as a remedy for colds. Yet another name for this plant is "Snakeroot" as its pulverized root was used as a treatment for snakebites. In the late 1800s, H.C.F Meyers, a medicine salesman from Nebraska, patented Narrow-leaved Coneflower as a new medicine that he claimed cured a wide array of ailments, including rabies.

When you happen upon a prairie full of this wonderful Kansas native in bloom, you will likely find that it can soothe what ails you without even having to harvest it.

from the kdwp staff

WAY outside BY BRUCE COCHRAN



"WHEN DID YOU FIRST BEGIN TO REALIZE THAT YOU HATED STINKBAIT?"



New Great Plains Bumble Bee Atlas Engages Community Scientists to Track Bumble Bees

US Fish and Wildlife Service partners with national nonprofit to launch region-wide effort that engages community scientists in pollinator conservation



With pollinator declines accelerating, a new project has launched that provides an opportunity for people in Kansas, North Dakota and South Dakota to take action to conserve bumble bees. A partnership between the Xerces Society and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Great Plains Bumble Bee Atlas will improve scientists' understanding of the bumble bees of the upper Great Plains and provide land managers with the information they need to conserve them.

Bumble bees are charismatic and easily-recognizable bees that play an essential role in sustaining the health of our environment. Across all three states, there are 31 species of bumble bees that pollinate flowers in natural areas, urban areas, and rangelands, as well as the crops in farm fields and backyard gardens. Unfortunately, many of these species are at risk and face an uncertain future.

Bumble bee declines are alarming and widespread. The goal of the Great Plains Bumble Bee Atlas is to learn more about the distribution and needs of these essential pollinators so that more effective efforts can be made to conserve them.

"We're at a point now where we need to take action to protect bumble bees," said Rich Hatfield, Senior Conservation Biologist and Bumble Bee Lead for the Xerces Society. "But, we want to make sure that our actions are as effective as possible for the animals we're trying to conserve. These Atlas projects are equipping land managers with the tools they need to make evidence-based decisions that will make a lasting impact on species conservation."

Volunteer community science projects like this one can be a powerful way to gather critical information about wildlife quickly and across a wide geographic area. While new to these states, the Great Plains Bumble Bee Atlas will be part of a coalition of Xerces Society Bumble Bee Atlas projects currently taking place in the Pacific Northwest, Nebraska, Missouri, Minnesota, and

California. In 2021 alone, more than two thousand individuals dedicated thousands of hours conducting surveys that resulted in approximately 13,000 bumble bee observations. These observations are vastly changing scientists' understanding of bumble bee populations.

The information gathered by community scientists provides a modern day snapshot of bumble bees that can be used to assess bumble bee ranges, phenology, habitat associations, evaluate how they have changed over time, and provide a benchmark to which future conditions can be compared.

While more general community science efforts have been successful at gathering observations, the vast majority of those observations are in areas with higher population densities. The Atlas project also prioritizes rural areas to discover how bumble bees are faring in more natural environments, along with the habitats that they depend on. Doing so will take the cooperation of stakeholders throughout the region and a team of trained volunteers eager to collect the data.

"It is a great opportunity to get people engaged with nature," says Daniel Kim, Grassland Bird and Prairie Pollinator Biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, "and at the same time, fill knowledge gaps that will help current and future conservation efforts."

Joining the Great Plains Bumble Bee Atlas only requires an interest in pollinator conservation and time. Training is provided to anyone wishing to participate and several training events will be held throughout the region in May, June and July 2022. These workshops will provide community scientists with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to be successful. To avoid harming bumble bees through the course of the research, participants will learn to take high quality photographs of bumble bees and submit their observations using the North American community science platform Bumble Bee Watch.

"More people are awake to the fact that pollinators are in decline, and they want to help" says Katie Lamke, conservation biologist with the Xerces Society, "The Atlas will provide just that: an opportunity to make a real contribution that will help protect bumble bees. In the field of conservation, where declines and threats exist in every direction, projects like the Great Plains Bumble Bee Atlas are truly restorative, for both building community and saving pollinators."

To stay informed about the progress of Great Plains Bumble Bee Atlas sign up for the mailing list at www.bumblebeeatlas.org/greatplainsbba.html.

For more information about the Great Plains Bumble Bee Atlas project, please visit <https://www.greatplainsbumblebeeatlas.org>.

For more information about Bumble Bee Watch, please visit <http://www.bumblebeewatch.org/>.

For more information about bumble bee conservation, please visit <https://xerces.org/bumblebees/>.



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POLLINATOR PLOT

Flourishing

BY MARY WINDER

Dave Weber beamed as he surveyed the 10-acre pollinator plot he planted along Sheridan Road on his farm in the bluffs about three miles south of Wathena. The project, part of a USDA Conservation Reserve Program called CP-42 Pollinator Habitat, was planted only late last year, but the native wildflowers are already growing well, blooming profusely, and bustling with the buzz and hum of insects.

“I couldn’t begin to list all the pollinators that are using it...”

Weber said, noting that he has seen native bees, honeybees, and butterflies, as well as many other types of insects and hummingbirds. Other frequent visitors to the pollinator plot have included quail, pheasants, turkey, deer, and rabbits.



This article first appeared in The Kansas Chief newspaper of Doniphan County.



Weber became interested in planting for pollinators after learning about declining pollinator populations around the world, due in part to the loss of their habitat. In December 2017, Weber planted a small, 2-acre wildflower plot on his own along his driveway as a first step in providing habitat for pollinators.

“I couldn’t believe the use by pollinators and wildlife,” he said. “I looked at that little plot and I thought, ‘Wow, I’m really on to something here.’”

Weber decided that he wanted to do more, so he recently went through the process of enrolling 10 acres of his farm in a 10-year, CP-42 program. His project was approved, and he was ready to move forward with the process of preparing the area for planting.

For his CP-42 plot, he intentionally chose 10 acres visible from the road.

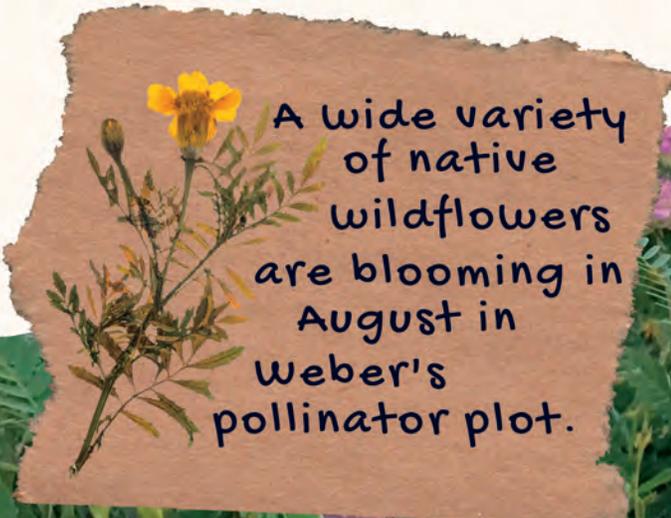
“I didn’t want to hide it over the hill where no one would see it,” he explained. “I want to share it with people and have it in a place where they can drive by and see the native wildflowers and take pictures if they want.”

The 10 acres had already been planted to native grass some years before, so Weber’s first step was to hay it in late August 2020. He then used a glyphosate herbicide in early September to kill the grass. This was followed by a light disking. Cool season foxtails popped up in the area in early October, so Weber applied another round of glyphosate.

“The week of Thanksgiving, I disced again and then harrowed the soil twice to make it smooth and level,” said Weber. “For these native wildflower seeds, you want a clean, firm seed bed and soil contact no more than one-eighth inch deep. On the Saturday after Thanksgiving, I broadcasted the seed using a three-point seeder on the back of a tractor.”

“I then ran a cultipacker over the area in two different directions,” he added. “Then I let Mother Nature make the contact with the freeze-thaw cycle, rain, and snow. The key is dormant planting and planting early in the dormant season is better.”

Weber planted 61 different species of native wildflowers in this pollinator plot. That number of species is much higher than what is required as part of the CP-42 program. He planted a Bee and Butterfly Habitat Fund multi-species seed mix, adapted specifically to the area where Weber’s farm is located. Weber describes this seed mix as being “a major component” in his project.



A wide variety of native wildflowers are blooming in August in Weber's pollinator plot.



"It is an outstanding multi-species seed mix," he said. "Ideally, you want three or four wildflower species blooming in each month of the growing season, which runs from about April 20 to Oct. 20 here."

Some of the wildflower varieties included in Weber's seed mix are: clasping coneflower, pitcher sage, purple prairieclover, prairie spiderwort, several milkweeds, wild bergamot, several sunflower types, heath aster, compass plant, and curly top gumweed.

Weber notes that some of the wildflower varieties he planted in the plot last year probably won't be blooming in the patch for three to four years due to growth habits of the plant species, but plenty of the wildflower types have already been blooming this season.

"I am extremely pleased with how well it's done in the first year," said Weber, noting that photos of his blooming native wildflowers will appear on The Bee and Butterfly Habitat Fund national website.

He believes that the high-quality seed he used in addition to the extreme attention to detail in getting the seed planted have been factors in its successful growth this year. He explains that the native plants are accustomed to growing in this area and can withstand stressful periods, such as drought.

Weber notes that Tyler Warner, district wildlife biologist with the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP), has been instrumental in the development of this pollinator plot.

In addition to the obvious benefits the pollinator plot provides for insects, other species benefit, as well, according to Weber. He said the bare ground component and insects living in the plot provide quail, for instance, with what they need to raise their broods.

There will be maintenance for Weber to perform with the pollinator plot in the months and years to come. He has already done some spot mowing this year. Starting in year four of the pollinator plot, he plans to perform a dormant season burn every three years. He will also need to keep a constant watch for invasive, non-native plants that could harm the pollinator plot. These non-natives he will work to control include: sericea lespedeza, Johnson grass, brome, and fescue.

This pollinator plot is by no means the first conservation project for Weber on his 160-acre farm. In the years since purchasing the farm in 1993, he has implemented various projects to conserve the highly erodible soil and to provide habitat for wildlife. It is his belief that his farm should not be row-cropped.

"A conservation lesson we all need to learn is to farm the best and leave the rest."

pollinator plot





Weber, an avid hunter and angler, has another 90 acres on the farm that has been planted to native grasses and some native wildflowers since 1998.

He has also planted 72 shrub plots and food plots for wildlife. Shrubs he has planted include hazelnut, American plum, roughleaf dogwood, fragrant sumac, and false indigo. In addition, Weber's farm includes steep, timbered ground and five acres of Missouri River bottomland.

Controlled burning is an important management tool that Weber uses throughout his farm. He has divided the farm into patches and has created fire lanes between the patches by using mowing, discing, and raking lanes clean.

Through the years, Weber has earned several honors for his conservation efforts. These include the 1996 Kansas State Bankers Association wildlife habitat award, two Quail Unlimited awards including the National Landowner of the Year award in 2009, and a wildlife habitat award from Pheasants Forever in 2017.

Weber, who is active in the Northwest Missouri Chapter of the Pheasants Forever

organization, has an interest in wildlife and conservation that dates to his childhood. He remembers watching a movie in 1965 called "Those Callows" that aroused his interest in these subjects.

"That movie struck a chord with me and started me on the path to conservation," he explained. "Now, I have a passion for wildlife habitat and good land stewardship.

"I want to be the best steward I can be. We have that obligation as landowners."

"I feel so blessed to be able to live in the middle of this. It is special," he said, gazing out at the hills of native grasses, timber, and wildflowers. "I have a passion for this. It can be frustrating and aggravating sometimes, but I can never give up."

The bee balm plant in Weber's plot has a high rating for value to pollinators.



Some of the wildflower varieties included in Weber's seed mix are:

clasping coneflower,
pitcher sage,
purple prairieclover,
prairie spiderwort,
milkweeds, wild bergamot,
sunflower variety,
heath aster, compass plant,
and curly top gumweed.



pollinator plot



Grayhead coneflowers, shown in the foreground, bloom in the pollinator plot during July.

Weber sees his conservation efforts, including the recently planted pollinator plot, as actions he can take to make a positive difference. His future plans include to “keep learning, keep tweaking, and keep an open mind.”

One issue he has researched in recent years is the use of neonicotinoid pesticides and their effects on insects and animals that rely on insects for food. It concerns him. He has noticed fewer numbers of insects, such as grasshoppers, lately and fewer birds like purple martins, turkeys, and bluebirds.

Weber's hope is that others will join him in taking steps that will result in increased habitat for pollinators and wildlife.

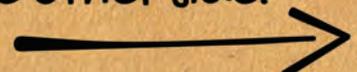
“Pollinator habitat is so lacking in the landscape,” he explained.

“Any amount of habitat people can develop and anything people can do to help will be beneficial.”

Weber encourages anyone interested in planting a pollinator plot of any size to contact Tyler Warner with the KDWP, The Bee and Butterfly Habitat Fund, the Pheasants Forever Chapter of Northwest Missouri, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service office in Troy. 🐮



Tear out and save the Kansas Wildflowers & Native Plants poster on the other side!



Kansas Wildflower



Canadian Columbine
(*Coquilegia canadensis*)

A photograph of a Canadian Columbine plant. The stem is reddish-brown and has several green, lanceolate leaves. There are several flowers in various stages of bloom, ranging from green buds to bright red flowers with yellow centers.



Purple Poppy Mallow
(*Callirhoe involucrata*)

A close-up photograph of a single, large, vibrant purple flower. The petals are broad and slightly ruffled, with a bright yellow center containing numerous stamens.



Purple Spiderwort
(*Tradescantia occidentalis*)

A photograph of a Purple Spiderwort plant. The leaves are long, narrow, and green. A large, purple flower is in full bloom, showing its characteristic spider-like shape with long, thin petals. A small insect is visible on the flower.



Black-eyed Susan
(*Rudbeckia*)

A photograph of a single Black-eyed Susan flower. It has a dark brown, textured center surrounded by bright yellow, slightly drooping petals.



Purple Prairie-Clover
(*Dalea purpurea*)

A photograph of a Purple Prairie-Clover plant. It features several upright, green stems with small, purple, cylindrical flower heads. The leaves are small and finely divided.



Indian Blanket Flower
(*Gaillardia pulchella*)

A photograph of a single Indian Blanket Flower. It has a bright orange-red center surrounded by yellow and orange petals.

s & Native Plants



Compass Plant
(*Silphium laciniatum*)



Butterfly Bush
(*Buddleia*)



Missouri Evening Primrose
(*Oenothera macrocarpa*)



Scarlet Gilia
(*Ipomopsis aggregata*)



Blue Sage
(*Salvia azurea*)

Common Milkweed
(*Asclepias syriaca*)





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by Rob McDonald,
Modern Wildman Blog

BAIT UP!

Tips & Techniques for Catching Fishing Bait

While artificial jigs, soft plastics, crank baits, and even prepared dough baits have their place, it's tough to beat the *reel deal* when it comes to catching fish this season. From minnows to frogs and panfish to crawdads, baiting up with fresh bait is incredibly productive.

Let's look at some tips, tricks, and techniques to sourcing quality bait, while protecting our favorite fishes at the same time.

Know the Regulations Before Collecting Bait

There are about as many ways to catch bait for fishing as there are species of fish to fish for. Keep in mind that most methods of harvesting bait from the water require a state issued fishing license for any individual that requires a fishing license to fish. Always check local regulations concerning methods of take, and specific local restrictions on harvesting bait.

Live baitfish, crawfish, leeches, amphibians, and mussels may be caught and used as live bait only within the common drainage where they were caught. However, bluegill and green sunfish collected from non-designated aquatic nuisance species waters may be possessed and used as live bait anywhere in the state.



Terrestrials

While aquatic species make fantastic fish bait, don't underestimate terrestrial bait sources. Generations of anglers have looked to chicken livers for catfish bait, but venison liver is just as productive and stays on the hook much better!

Insects such as grasshoppers and crickets can be incredible bait as well, a bedsheet in tall grass makes a great seine for catching grasshoppers. Earthworms, sod worms, redworms, and nightcrawlers will catch practically anything that swims; so, don't overlook turning over logs, and digging in moist soils for squirmy baits.



Tools **Seins and Cast Nets**

Dropping a net over schooling baitfish such as shad or shiners is extremely productive. Likewise, pulling a seine net against the current of a creek or stream, or across a shallow pool will put all sorts of bait in your bucket.

Remember, a net is not a legal method of take for gamefish, and any incidental catches should be returned to the water immediately.

Traps

Minnow and crawdad traps are a terrific tool for sourcing baits. Set traps in a location that baitfish and crawfish hide out in, such as rocky banks or weedbed edges. Try baiting your trap with dry bread, dry dog food, or hot dogs.

Dip Nets

Turning a kiddo loose along a fertile shoreline with a dip net is a sure-fire way to source all sorts of terrific bait.

Never underestimate time exploring the water's edge, rolling over rocks with a simple net and bucket in tow.

Minnows, frogs, crayfish, nymphs, and leeches all make fantastic fishing bait that can be sourced with just a simple dip net.

Rod & Reel

Sometimes the best bait for the gamefish you're after is caught with an ultralight rod and reel. Species such as bluegill, green sunfish, and even golden shiners can be caught with small jigs, baited hooks or flies.

Try a small pinch of earthworm, or beef stick on a #6 or #8 baitholder hook under a light bobber for fast action, and to put baitfish in your bucket.

Keeping Your Bait **Lively and Wigley**

Acquiring enough bait for an angling outing can take a little time. It's critical to take special care of your bait if you want to keep it fresh, alive, and wiggling on a hook.

Baitfish and Crawdads

Choose a clean bucket or container to keep your bait in, with fresh water sourced from the same location as the bait's source.

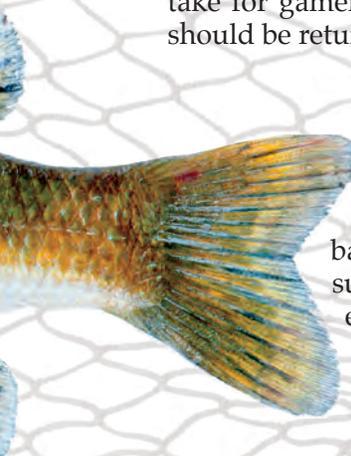
A mesh or perforated lid will keep jumping bait in while still allowing for new oxygen. A bubbler, circulating pump, or aerator is a must to keep bait alive in a bucket for any length of time.

In hot weather, keeping baitfish alive may require ice and insulated buckets to tame warm water temperatures.

Worms and Terrestrials

Worms and insects can be hardy bait, but you should take care to keep them out of direct sunlight and hot temperatures.

Worm species such as red wigglers will take a lot more abuse than night crawlers, so choose your bait accordingly.





bait up

THE BLIND FISHERMAN

BY BRENT FRAZEE
FREELANCE WRITER



When Christopher Flores casts one of his custom-painted crankbaits into a Kansas lake, he immerses himself in his favorite type of therapy.

Now 38 years old, he has battled diabetes his entire life. And the disease is taking its toll.

Christopher Flores is legally blind, only able to see with tunnel vision in his left eye. He is completely blind in his right eye.

But put him on a rocky bank on a beautiful spring day, and he is at peace with the world.

"I love being out in nature, by the water, listening to the waves, the birds and the wind," said Flores, who lives in Russell. "Fishing is so peaceful. It just takes the stress away."

Being a Type 1 diabetic creates plenty of stress. The chronic disease, which affects how the body processes blood sugar, has ravaged Flores' health, to the point where he can no longer drive or hold down a fulltime job.

But fishing is a lifeline. He spends hours painting crankbaits, producing the colorful lures that most people wouldn't think possible of a man with limited vision.

Then he either uses them to catch bass and wipers or sells them to the highest bidder on Facebook auctions.

"It's just such a rush, to catch a fish on a lure I have painted," he said. "I'm not looking for fame or the spotlight."

"Yeah, I'd like to be a success in the fishing industry, but I don't want to turn this into a big-time business. That would kind of ruin it for me."

"I'm doing this because it's my passion. I hope to inspire others with a disability to not give up."

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Despite his limited eyesight, Christopher Flores works to paint colorful lures that he auctions off.



All of these lures were custom painted by Christopher Flores. *Christopher Flores photos.*

Overcoming obstacles

Flores has a remarkably good attitude for someone who has been through what he has.

About 20 years ago, he started having severe gastrointestinal problems. His weight dropped from 150 pounds to 87, and doctors diagnosed him with gastroparesis, where a paralysis of the stomach leads to an inability to process some types of food.

"I would have severe reactions when I would eat meat," he said. "I had to basically become a vegetarian."

His medical chart includes much more. He underwent quadruple bypass heart surgery two years ago. And then there were the eyes.

Since he was diagnosed in 2015 with a massive bleed behind one of his eyes, he has undergone numerous laser

procedures and two invasive surgeries.

"Because of the problems with my eyesight, I lost my driver's license," he said.

But he hasn't lost his spirit. He says his health is stable now, and he credits his lure designing with giving him a new life.

The roots of an angler

When Flores moved to Kansas with his mom in 1996, it amounted to culture shock.

He spent much of his early life in an urban setting in Santa Clarita, California, near Los Angeles. At age 10, he found himself

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in the little town of Rexford in northwest Kansas where his mom moved to take care of a family member.

Wide-open spaces replaced urban blight and country living became a new way of life.

"I went from a school of 1,500 kids to a school with a graduating class of 12 in Rexford," Flores said. "And that was one of the biggest graduating

birthday, he bought me my first spinning combo and a bunch of lures and tackle," Flores said. "That got me started."

There was definitely a learning curve, Flores said. But his grandfather worked with him on his casting. He set up a 5-gallon bucket in the boy's backyard and had Christopher practice casting a plug into his target.

"I practiced constantly and I got good at it," Flores said. "That's when I started catching more fish."

At first, he relied on live bait. But then he was ready to make another progression. He watched the pros catch fish on crankbaits in TV shows and he was intrigued.

"To be able to fool a fish into thinking a lure was the real thing was an adrenaline rush," he said.

able to fool a fish into thinking a lure the real thing was an adrenaline rush."

classes they've had."

That change wasn't necessarily a bad thing for Flores, though.

When his grandfather, David King, from Colorado came to visit, Flores' life changed forever. King was an avid angler and he saw the potential that surrounded his grandson's new home.

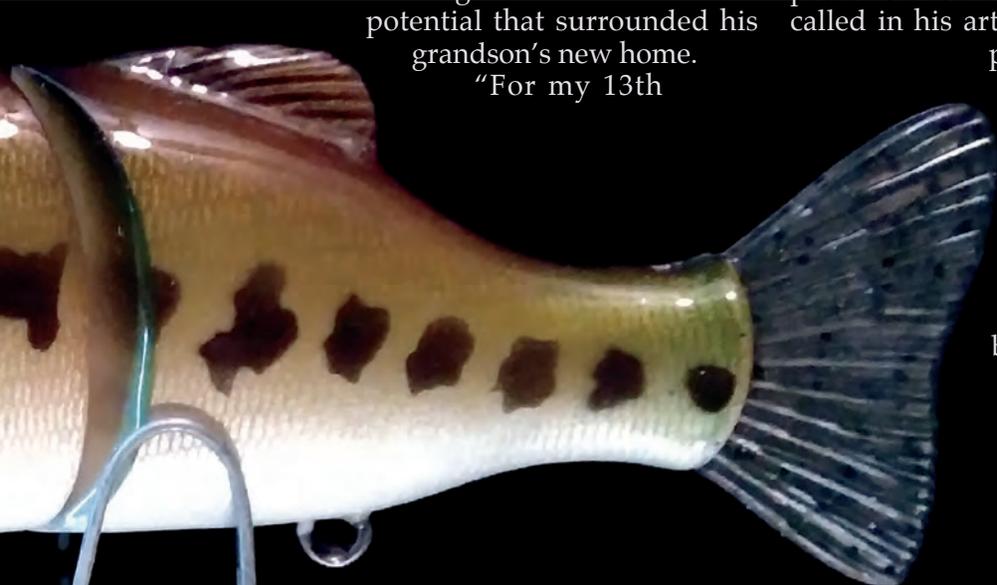
"For my 13th

Designing lures

Eventually, Flores tired of using the same old crankbaits and the same old colors.

He desired baits with unusual patterns and mixes of colors. So, he called in his artistic side and began painting his own.

He started by purchasing cheap lure blanks and using spray paint to make crude lures. But he studied his craft and eventually became proficient at





using an airbrush and acrylic paint and ink.

"I remember painting a crankbait with a baby bass design to it," he said. "I sold it on Facebook for \$18 and I was excited."

Flores continued to refine his skills by making his own stencils and using lace and other items from craft stores to further detail his own line of baits.

Now he has incorporated flame-type patterns from the days when he designed hot rods, and intricate scale patterns onto some of his lures. He often buys used name-brand crankbaits, sands the paint off them and gives them a new look.

Cody Callaway of Junction City is among Flores' supporters.

"It's hard to believe that someone with the eye problems he has could paint baits like this," he said. "They're beautiful, and they catch fish."

"I've caught some nice bass on some of his baits."

Flores has, too. He remembers an

evening when he used a Whopper Plopper-type bait that he painted to experience a rare flurry of fishing.

"I don't own a boat, so I fish from shore," he said. "I remember one evening just as it was getting dark. I tied on this topwater lure I painted and caught a bass right away. Then I caught three or four more before it got dark."

"It was just so much fun to catch bass on something I made."

The future

Flores paints each lure he sells. There's no assembly line, mass production or large-scale plans.

His work area? Not what you would expect. He paints his crankbaits in his bedroom.

"I have a pegboard with more than 100 lures hanging on it," he said. "I don't think I'll ever run out of baits."

Flores sells his lures through auctions on Facebook pages such as Fishing Flea Market by Bass Fishing





“Just because you have a disability, you don’t have to let it hold you back.”

Media and through his own Facebook page, the Blind Fisherman. He now is learning to carve his own wooden baits out of pine or poplar.

As for his health, Flores describes it as “stable” for the time being. Doctors have not ruled out that he could go totally blind at one point, but that doesn’t appear imminent.

For now, Flores is living with his disability and making the most out of his situation.

“When people find out that I have diabetes, they always tell me all the things I can’t do,” he said. “But I don’t listen to that.”

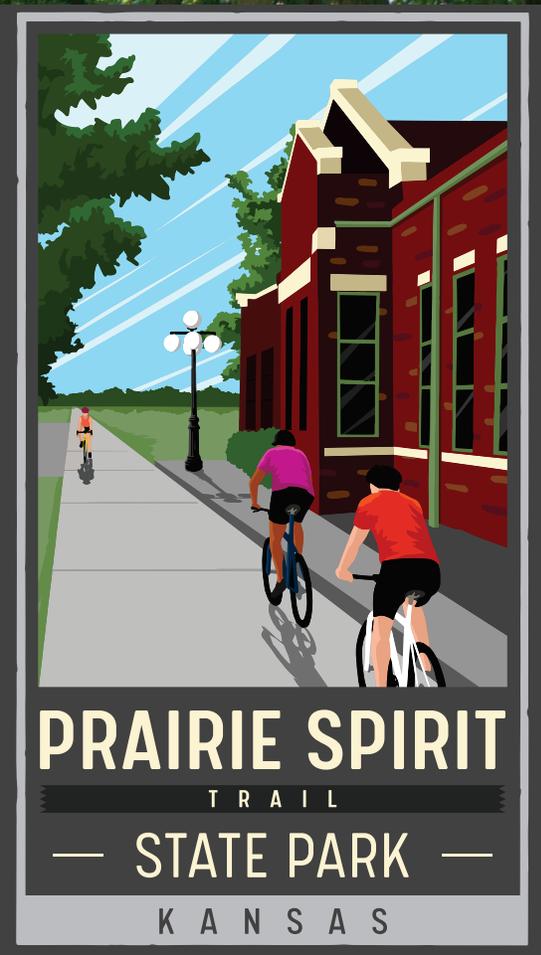
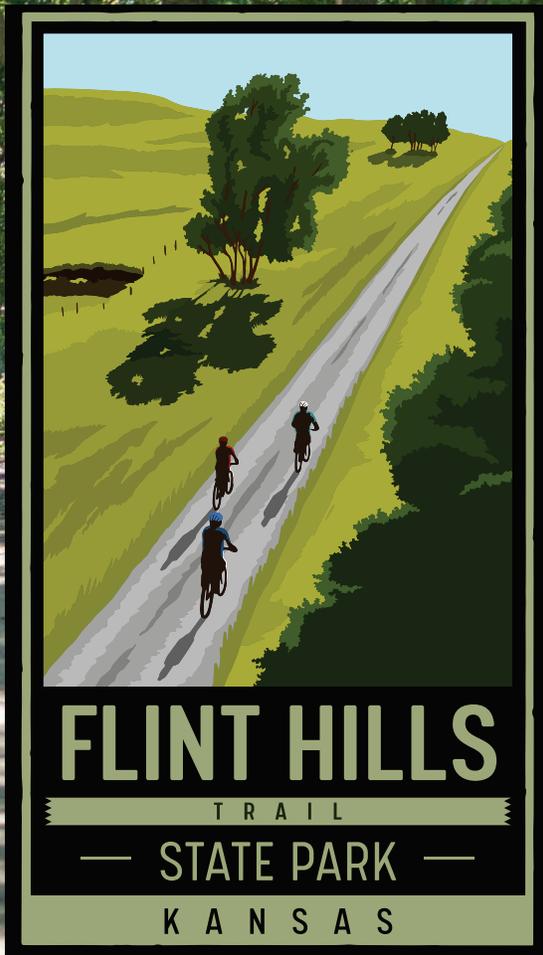
“That’s part of the reason I started my Blind Fisherman page on Facebook. I want people to see that just because you have a disability, you don’t have to let it hold you back.” 🐟





Kansas Rail

Trails





Pomona State Park is only about a half-mile from the Flint Hills Trail. The Kromnackers like to cycle in to enjoy an overnight stay.



BY MICHAEL PEARCE, FREELANCE WRITER

Nick Kromnacker is serious about cycling. Some days he pedals deep through the legendary Flint Hills. Long past where pavement ends, his views stretch miles as the breeze rolls the tops of tall prairie grasses and dozens of species of vibrant wildflowers.

Other days he cycles amid steep ridges covered with towering oaks and hickories. He'll pass over streams so clear he can count the pebbles in 2 feet of water. In the spring, he cycles through tunnels of blooming redbuds.

Most treks he's joined by his wife, Kelli, with their two young sons in tow. On easy day trips, the Kromnackers, from Overland Park, enjoy both the wilds of the tall timber and tallgrass prairie within one public place – the 90-mile-long Flint Hills Trail State Park.

"We have just so much fun out on that Flint Hills Trail," said Kromnacker. "Our kids, (Kelvin, 6, and Isaac, 3) are getting to grow up out there with us all together. It's so easy for us to relax together. There's so much to see and do every trip."

From the state park's trail, they've also done slow cycling detours through iconic little Kansas towns, where huge hamburgers are from locally raised beef. Everyone they see smiles and nods.

Avid campers, the Kromnackers have also turned off the trail and pedaled about half-mile to Pomona State Park. There, they've relaxed with quiet rides along the broad shorelines of Pomona Reservoir in the daylight. By night they've sat around a campfire and listened to local musicians before heading into their tent.

The Kromnackers are part of a growing group of cyclists learning of the great adventures awaiting within Kansas' two rail-trail state parks – Flint Hills Trail State Park and the 51-mile Prairie Spirit Trail State Park.

"We've seen a significant increase in trail visitations since the pandemic began. A lot were local people wanting to get outside and get some exercise while still finding some solitude," said Trent McCown, manager of both state parks. "Then we have special events like an ultra-marathon that draws people from 23 to 25 different states."

Nick Kromnacker, his wife, Kelli, and sons Kelvin (6) and Isaac (3) frequently enjoy the family time and solitude on the Flint Hills Trail. Hard surface and very minor grades make the pedaling easy.

From railroads to perfect trails

The two trails meet in Ottawa. Both are open to cyclists and hikers. Flint Hills Trail allows horseback riders. No state park permit is needed to access the trails.

The Flint Hills Trail runs mostly east and west from Osawatomie to Council Grove. Prairie Spirit Trail angles north to south, from Ottawa to Iola. Both trails took the place of abandoned railroad lines.

The rails and ties are long gone, and hard-packed crushed limestone covers most places. Inclines are so mild they're hardly noticed. Such places are ADA approved.

Conditions are good enough that six-year-old Kelvin Kromnacker easily handles stretches of the trail on his small bike. His parents often travel the trail via electronic bikes.

The Kromnackers appreciate that they encounter no vehicles on vast majority of the miles of the trails.

"You never really relax when you're riding on the backstreets in town," he said. "Out on the trails it is safer, for sure. That makes cycling a lot more fun and relaxing."

Access to both rail-trails is easy, and rides can be short for those short on time, energy or experience.

"Every town on the trails now has parking areas where people can access the trail," said Jeff Carroll, owner of Ottawa Bike and Trail. "People can do out and back trips or they can drop of a second vehicle at the next town's parking area. There are so many opportunities."

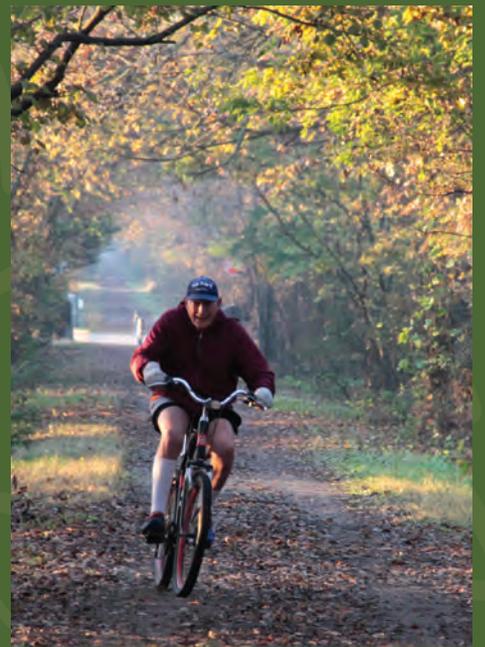
The Kromnackers often take guests, who don't share their experience, to a special place.

"We like the stretch between Rantoul and Osawatomie," said Kromnacker. "It's a nice, pretty stretch, with all the woodlands and only 10 miles. About anybody can do 10 miles, even if they take a break or two. We stop often to look at things, anyway."

McCown and Carroll agree users needn't get bored with either rail trail. As well as the tall timber, wide prairies and another state park, the Flint Hills Trail passes natural and improved wetlands. Both trails bisect fields of ripening crops, pastures of grazing cattle and pass over streams that are "...gotta get a pic of this" pretty.

Those who look will see the remains of stone buildings built by pioneers. Each of the 15 or so small towns along the trails has its own personality and flare.

Council Grove pays homage to its rich history along the Santa Fe Trail. Osawatomie does the same for the pre-Civil War battles of the "Bleeding Kansas" era.



Kansas two rail-trail state parks offer over 140 miles of trails open to the public. All four seasons have their advantages.

Ever-changing wildflowers and assorted migrations, like butterflies, makes every trip to the rail-trail state parks unique.



Never a dull ride

The changing flora and fauna amid the many landscapes keeps views changing.

"The last few years people have become very interested in seeing the monarch butterfly migration in late summer," said Carroll. "We were seeing swarms of monarchs and other butterflies all over milkweed along the trail some days"

Birdwatchers are discovering the wonderful diversity of habitats and birds along the trails, ranging from prairie chickens on the best prairies to the crow-sized pileated woodpeckers and brilliant warblers in the woodlands.

On a single day in May of 2020, an avid birder identified over 90 species of birds while hiking two miles in the Rantoul access area.

Chances to see fall foliage are as varied as the landscapes along the trails. The hardwoods and sycamores of the eastern woodlands can come ablaze with fall color. The many native grasses and shrubs of the prairies do, too. Early sumac leaves can be neon red. Prairie grasses hold their pastel colors well into winter.

Special events on the rail trails have become popular attractions.

Organized cycling events, small town trail celebrations and cycling fun rides are increasing. Carroll's shop offers Saturday morning rides that start with waffles and coffee. A Thursday evening ride ends at a local brewery.

His annual Moonrise Bike Ride to overnight at Pomona State Park, complete with music and meals, attracted around 200 people last year.

"It'll be bigger this year. We'll have two nights instead of one," said Carroll. "It's really growing." (For more information on that, and other organized rides, go to ottawabikeandtrail.com.)

The Kromnackers enjoy the Moonrise Bike Rides. Their boys smile and wave at others as they pass. The overall mood is festive; everyone seems happy and helpful.

Their favorite rides, however, are still when it's just the four of them. Even with the growing popularity of the rail-trails, they can usually find a place to themselves.

"(There are) so many types of enjoyment out there. It's nice when it's just us enjoying nature," said Kromnacker. "We like to get just enough exercise the kids fall asleep on the way home." 

Plan Your Trip!

Trent McCown, manager of both rail-trail state parks, has been working on them for over 25 years. He reports some notable improvements happening at Flint Hills State Park.

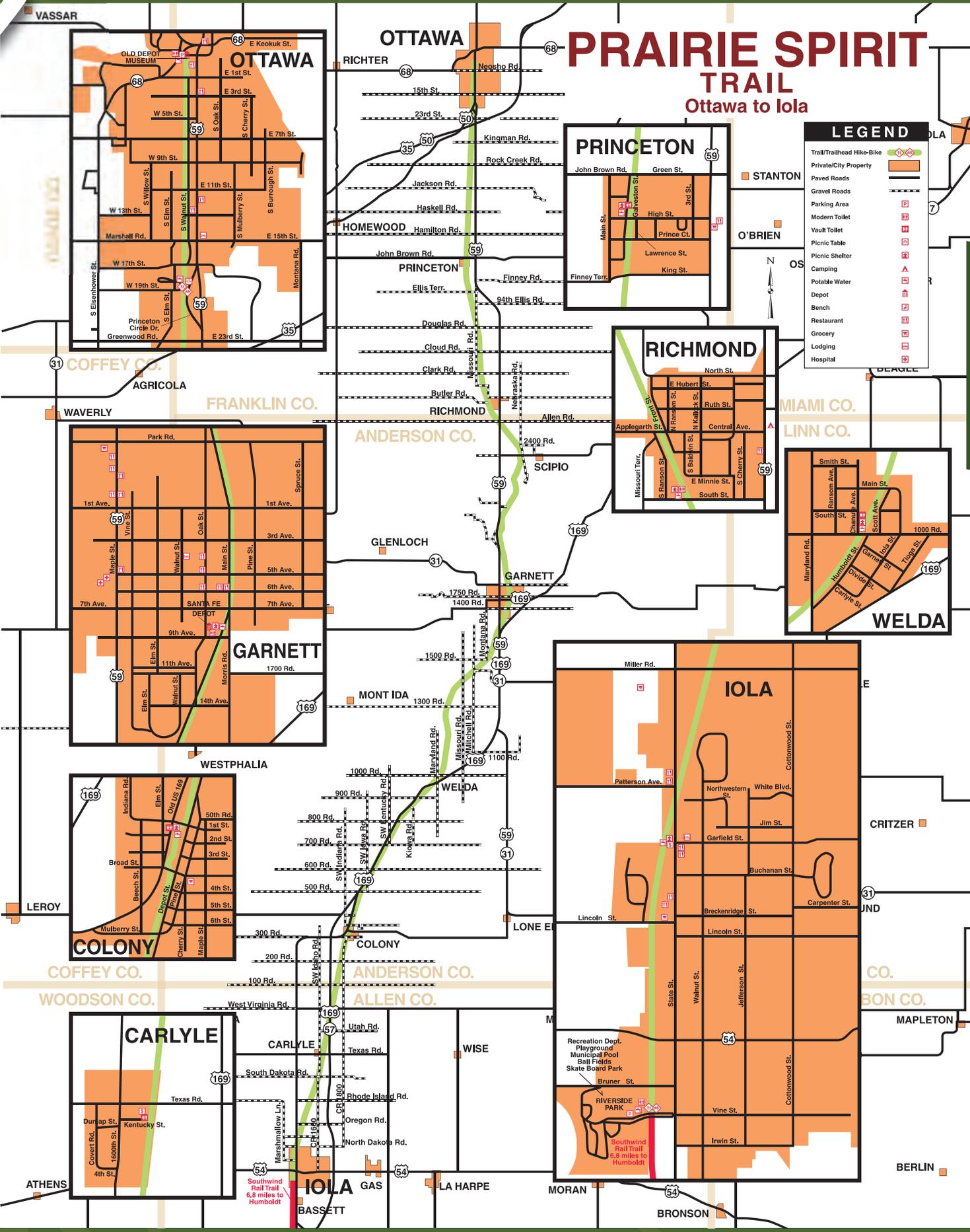
- Permanent restrooms and picnic shelters are being placed at Bushong, Admire, Miller and Pomona access areas.
- A transportation grant will allow the building of a bridge over railroad track west of Ottawa later this year. When completed, the bridge will eliminate a four-mile detour on public gravel roads.
- It's hope basic work can be started this year on the undeveloped, and currently closed, section of the trail from Council Grove to Herington. When finished, it will add over 20 more miles to the Flint Hills Trail.
- McCown said the town of Osage City is currently doing trail upgrades through their community.
- Also, Osawatomie continues to work diligently to make it easier for trail users to access their town and is actively promoting use of the trail.



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kansas' rail trails

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KANSAS
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Species Profile



from the kdwp staff

Plain Pocketbook Mussel

Lampsilis cardium

Common in southeast Kansas, the Plain Pocketbook Mussel is known for its unique reproduction. The female's mantle flap extends well beyond the shell's edge to form a moveable, fish-like lure to attract predatory fish. When the fish goes after what it thinks is a tasty treat, the mussel releases larvae that attach to the gills of the fish!



Did you know?

Common host fish for the Plain Pocketbook Mussel includes: largemouth and smallmouth bass, bluegill, sauger and walleye.



Backlash

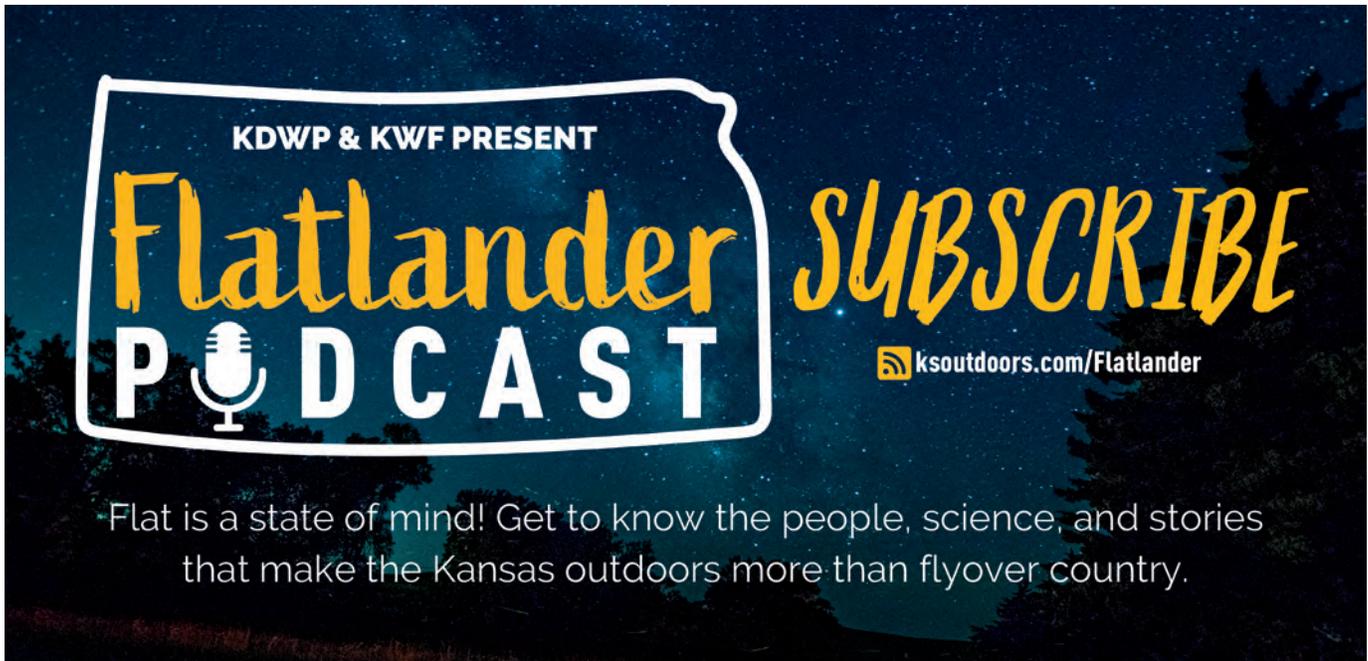
with Nadia Marji

The Power of the Podcast

It's been just over a year since the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) – in conjunction with our friends at the Kansas Wildlife Federation (KWF) – launched “Flatlander” podcast. It's hard to believe that what started as a fun concept to have informal discussions about Kansas out-of-doors has since blossomed into 30 unique and fascinating episodes with some of the Sunflower State's top subject matter experts!

The podcast is hosted by Laura Mendenhall (KWF), Tanna Fanshier (KDWP), Lyndzee Rhine (KDWP/KWF) and yours truly – Nadia Marji (KDWP). And, it's recorded and edited by the multitalented Megan Mayhew, KDWP's digital communications manager.

- **Episode 1: The North American Model of Wildlife Conservation** starring Brad Loveless, KDWP Secretary and Steve Bender, Director of Conservation Partnerships for the National Wildlife Federation
- **Episode 2: The Great Morel Hunt** starring Jeff Conley, KDWP Fisheries Program Specialist
- **Episode 3: Turkey Talk** starring Kent Fricke, KDWP Small Game Coordinator
- **Episode 4: Injured and Orphaned Wildlife** starring Kyla Beavers of Beavers' Den Wildlife Rehabilitation Center
- **Episode 5: Neosho River Bottom Hunt** starring Rick Hines, Neosho County landowner and conservationist, and Brad Harris, outdoorsman and land steward
- **Episode 6: Snakes on the Plains!** starring Herpetologist Dexter Mardis
- **Episode 7: Kansas Grasslands** starring Rachel Roth and Nicole Brown of the non-profit conservation organization “Grassland Groupies” and hosts of educational comedy podcast, “The Best Biome”
- **Episode 8: Meet the Hosts of Flatlander Podcast** starring Laura Mendenhall of KWF, and Lyndzee Rhine, Nadia Marji, and Tanna Fanshier of KDWP
- **Episode 9: Boating and Paddling Education and Safety** starring Chelsea Hofmeier, KDWP Boating Education Coordinator
- **Episode 10: Bats in Kansas** starring Sam Pounds, KDWP Ecologist
- **Episode 11: Working Lands for Wildlife** starring Wes Sowards, KDWP Wildlife Division Assistant Director
- **Episode 12: Human Dimensions and Conservation** starring Susan Steffen, KDWP Human Dimensions Specialist
- **Episode 13: The Magnificent Monarch** starring Pam Martin, resident monarch enthusiast and KDWP Education Specialist
- **Episode 14: Pass It On! Outdoor Mentors** starring Brittany French, PIOOM Director of Field Operations
- **Episode 15: Birds and Birding - What's it all about?** starring Bob Gress, resident bird expert and outdoor photographer
- **Episode 16: Catch up with the Flatlander Hosts** starring Tanna Fanshier and Lyndzee Rhine of KDWP, and Laura Mendenhall of KWF
- **Episode 17: Water in Kansas** starring Libby Albers of Kansas Alliance for Wetlands and Streams and Flatlander hosts Laura Mendenhall and Lyndzee Rhine
- **Episode 18: Non-lead Hunting Ammunition** starring Chris Parish, Peregrine Fund President & CEO, and Leland Brown, Oregon Zoo Non-lead Hunting Education Coordinator
- **Episode 19: KDWP Special Hunts Program** starring Mike Nyhoff, now-retired KDWP Public Lands Manager
- **Episode 20: Civic Engagement** starring Mark Schreiber, Kansas House Representative and Brad Loveless, KDWP Secretary



from the editor

Flatlander Podcast can be downloaded from Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Stitcher, iHeartRadio, Pandora and Google Podcasts.

- **Episode 21: Maidens, Mallards and Marshes - A Women's Waterfowl Experience** starring members of wildHERness and Tanna Fanshier, KDWP Recruitment, Retention and Reactivation Coordinator
- **Episode 22: Wild Attractions** starring Daren Riedle, KDWP Wildlife Diversity Coordinator
- **Episode 23: Lions, coyotes, and bears, OH MY!** starring Matt Peek, KDWP Wildlife Research Biologist and Flatlander hosts Tanna Fanshier and Laura Mendenhall
- **Episode 24: Civic Engagement Part Two - KDWP Commission** starring Mike Miller, now-retired KDWP Assistant Secretary, and KDWP Commissioner Lauren Queal Sill
- **Episode 25: Foraging and Entomophagy (Eating bugs?)** starring Amy Bousman, bug enthusiast and Functional Nutritional Therapy Practitioner at the Atma Clinic

- **Episode 26: The Fallen Outdoors Team Kansas** starring Robert Lovell, Kansas Team Lead for The Fallen Outdoors
- **Episode 27: Wildflowers and Native Plants** starring Brad Guhr, educator at Dyck Arboretum of the Plains
- **Episode 28: Threatened and Endangered Species** starring Ed Miller, Endangered Species Specialist
- **Episode 29: Scavengers and Carrion** starring Diedre Kramer, KDWP Fisheries and Wildlife Biologist
- **Episode 30: The Great Kansas Fishing Derby** starring David Breth, KDWP Sportfish Education Coordinator

Do you have an idea for a future guest speaker or topic? Are you a subject matter expert in your conservation-related field? We want to hear from you! Send an email to Flatlander producer, Megan Mayhew, at megan.mayhew@ks.gov.

If you're like me, you're astounded (maybe even awed) by the breadth of subjects, and subject matter experts, who have been gathered in a relatively short amount of time. I think that's the power of being passionate about your subject matter; that's the power of collaboration; and, that's the power of the podcast at work.

Podcasts have the ability to reach listeners where they are,

when they want, and only to share the subjects that mean the most to the listener (because remember, there's always that looming fast-forward button). But more than that, podcasts have the ability to bring the listener into the fold, inviting them to become part of a conversation that truly matters. So pull up a seat, put in your headphones, and find out why "Flat is a state of mind." 



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