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# KANSAS

*Wildlife & Parks Magazine*



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Pg. 19

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**INSIDE COVER** Kayakers at Tuttle Creek State Park. 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



## Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA)

from the secretary

Over the last year, a bill full of hope and promise for America's wildlife has been winding through the many twists, pot-holes and turns of Congress. Supported as co-sponsors by Representative Sharice Davids and senators Jerry Moran and Roger Marshall, the Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA) specifically addresses the needs of our most imperiled wildlife - nongame fish and animal species, including insects and plants. I've written before about the drastic declines in these species over the last 50 years; this bill arms state fish and wildlife agencies with the ability to slow, and work towards, stopping these declines.

The dream of RAWA started over 20 years ago with several fits and starts. Then, in 2016, a blue-ribbon task force comprised of 26 industry leaders, conservation organizations and sportsmen's groups organized by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies focused the funding need and vision that has guided us so close to the finish line today. A final vote is expected by this fall. But to be fair, the model for congressional action to address wildlife declines was developed in the 1930s, 40s and 50s with passage of the Pitman-Robertson Act in 1937 and the Dingell-Johnson Act in 1950. Those early legislations took taxes paid by sportsmen and men on gear and boat fuel and gave it back to states to spend on expanding game fish and wildlife resources, habitat, access, and management. The source of RAWA's \$1.4 billion in annual funding for states and tribal organizations comes from environmental fines and penalties. Helping species that may be experiencing declines due to degraded environmental conditions seems an appropriate fate for funds from those who didn't meet accepted environmental operating standards.

The goal of RAWA is to help recovery of both - species that are in critical decline, as well as those that are in trouble to a lesser degree. Contrast the migratory Whooping Crane, which numbers less than 1000, with Monarch butterflies which are common in Kansas (though long-term studies show not nearly as common as they used to be). These two flyers have vastly different limiting factors but agencies like the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks work with conservation partners and landowners across the state to address both. Since Kansas is 98 percent privately owned, a large fraction



The goal of RAWA is to help recovery of both, species that are in critical decline such as the Whooping Crane (pictured), as well as species that are common, but not nearly as common as they used to be.

of the expected \$19 million that the Sunflower State will receive from RAWA annually will likely go to private landowners as payments for voluntary conservation projects that they choose to participate in - projects that benefit species like the Whooping Crane and Monarch. This becomes a "win" for Kansas wildlife, landowners and ultimately, all Kansans and our neighbors. Beyond just the improved environmental health, expanding populations mean fewer plants and animals on protected species lists that need to be considered when we take actions that could have previously posed a risk to a once fragile population.

Yes, it's a hopeful time for sensitive animal and plant species across the U.S. with RAWA expected to arrive soon. It's said that "a rising tide lifts all ships." In this case, we are confident that a healthier Kansas environment will mean healthier and happier Kansans, too. 

# IN THE MAIL

## Wife's First Deer

My wife Shelly is 64 years old and retired June 2021. She has never hunted in her life, while I've always been an avid hunter. I talked Shelly into trying her luck at deer hunting. We purchased a crossbow and she practiced with the bow for many hours before the 2021 bow season. I told her, if she connects with a deer, it will be one of the most exhilarating feelings she has ever felt. On the third day that we hunted, a nice buck made his appearance in rain. Shelly was trembling (I told her that her heart will feel like it's in her throat), she aimed the crossbow at the buck and shot. The buck ran 25 yards and fell to the ground. The precisely aimed shot went through the deer's heart! After the hunt, Shelly agreed she has never experienced any feeling like that and it will be something she will never forget. Tears came to my eyes. We are having the deer mounted so she can relive this experience every time she looks at the deer. Thank you God and the Kansas outdoors for this awesome experience.

*Greg Bauer*

Mr. Bauer,

What an incredible story - thank you so much for sharing this with us.

Having learned how to hunt in my adulthood, as well, I can absolutely relate to your wife's experience.

She should be incredibly proud of her accomplishment - and by that I mean: the accomplishment of learning, and clearly mastering, something new! A handsome buck is just the cherry on top.

Congratulations to you both on a successful season!

*Nadia Marji, executive editor*



in the mail

KDWP & KWF PRESENT

Flatlander  
PODCAST

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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.

## Governor Laura Kelly Announces \$24.8 Million for Improvements to Flint Hills Trail

Governor Laura Kelly and the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks today announced that Kansas is the recipient of a \$24.8 million federal grant, made possible by the U.S. Department of Transportation's "Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity" (RAISE) program.

In May, Governor Kelly wrote to the U.S. Secretary of Transportation in support of the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Park's application for funding to expand the Flint Hills Trail – the longest trail in Kansas and the eighth-longest rail-trail in the United States.

"No other trail connects more communities, cultures, and landscapes in our state than Flint Hills Trail State Park," said Governor Laura Kelly. "I'm thrilled the RAISE grant selection committee recognized its value to Kansas, and that the 19 rural communities located along the trail will benefit from this project to make the trail safer and more accessible for public recreation."

RAISE grants are designed to "help urban and rural communities move forward on projects that modernize roads, bridges, transit, rail, ports, and intermodal transportation" while focusing on safety, accessibility, affordability, and sustainability. On August 11, 2022, the U.S. Department of Transportation announced that Kansas State Parks would be awarded \$24,821,705 in grant funding for Flint Hills Trail State Park.

A 2021 economic impact study conducted by Wichita State University's Center for Economic Development and Business Research determined that Flint Hills Trail State Park provides more than \$1.8 million in economic impact to the communities through which it passes. Linda Lanterman, Director of Kansas State Parks, believes that number will be surpassed in the near future.

"Flint Hills Trail State Park has already brought new businesses to Ottawa, and we expect completion of the trail will provide the same benefits to the communities the trail will soon reach," said Lanterman. "Having now secured this RAISE grant, I'm confident Flint Hills Trail will become a prime destination not only for Kansans but for trail enthusiasts across the nation."

Organized into six phases, the Flint Hills Trail RAISE grant project will make infrastructure improvements on 40.5 miles of the trail, including opening 27 miles of the trail, from Council Grove to Herington.

"Flint Hills Trail State Park presents a remarkable opportunity for exercise, nature-viewing, and tourism in some of Kansas' most beautiful areas," said Brad Loveless, Secretary for the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. "Thanks to this grant, and the amazing partnerships formed since the trail's inception – especially those with trail volunteers and cooperating landowners and neighbors – we're now closer to completing Flint Hills Trail."



The Flint Hills Trail, Kansas' longest trail, will be expanded due to a \$24.8 million federal grant made possible by the U.S. Department of Transportation's RAISE program.

The grant awarded for Flint Hills Trail State Park will be specifically invested in drainage improvements, pipes, culverts, bridges, base improvements, limestone surfacing, fences and gates, bollards, safety improvements and signage. This will open the full length of the Flint Hills Trail's 118 miles, making it part of 186 miles of directly connected trails in eastern Kansas.

"We've been actively developing Flint Hills Trail since 2014, making improvements as funds were available," said Jeffrey Bender, Regional Supervisor for Kansas State Parks and co-author of the grant application. "Despite the immense amount of work still ahead of us, we're extremely proud of our accomplishments to date, including obtaining the U.S. Department of Interior's 'National Recreation Trail' designation in 2020 and receiving the Federal Highway Administration's 'Environmental Excellence Award' in 2022. Being awarded this RAISE grant is just further proof of this trail's regional and national significance."

Bender added, "This grant award wouldn't have been possible without the efforts of Kansas State Parks staff, the 12 towns along the trail, landowners, volunteers, Kansas Department of Transportation and National Park Service. We're extremely grateful for their support."

To learn more about Flint Hills Trail State Park, visit <https://ksoutdoors.com/State-Parks/Locations/Flint-Hills-Trail>.

For more information on the RAISE program, including the complete list of awardees for 2022, visit <https://www.transportation.gov/briefing-room/biden-harris-administration-announces-funding-166-projects-modernize-transportation>.

## Kansas State Parks Partnering with Kansas Public Libraries to Offer Free Park Entrance

Kansas State Parks are partnering with the Kansas Public Library System to provide library patrons with daily vehicle permits available for checkout through December 2022. The daily vehicle permits provide the permit holder with admission to any of Kansas' 28 state parks absolutely free of charge.

### How It Works

- Visit a participating library (see list here [ksoutdoors.com/State-Parks/Library-Program](https://ksoutdoors.com/State-Parks/Library-Program)) and ask to checkout a "Kansas State Parks Vehicle Permit."
- Each issued vehicle permit is valid for one day only, which will be written on the front of the permit.
- Patrons using a daily vehicle permit must display the permit in their vehicle windshield when entering a Kansas state park.
- Park permits do not need to be returned to participating libraries, they can be simply discarded once used or when the permit expires.

The check out process may vary at each participating library. It is up to the discretion of each library to determine how many permits may be checked out at any given time; and, how many permits each library patron may check out in total. Contact your local participating library for complete details.

"We're committed to making sure Kansas state parks remain accessible to all," said Kansas State Parks director Linda Lanterman. "Through this collaborative effort with Kansas Public Libraries, we're able to remove a financial barrier for some who may not have been able to enjoy our natural resources otherwise. I'm excited for the individuals and families who will benefit from this, because they won't regret making the trip to a Kansas state park."

Libraries interested in participating should contact program coordinators Riston Landwehr at [riston.landwehr@ks.gov](mailto:riston.landwehr@ks.gov) or Kati Westerhaus at [kati.westerhaus@ks.gov](mailto:kati.westerhaus@ks.gov). Permits are \$5 each and are sold in books of 25. Libraries are responsible for paying for the permits in advance; however, any permits leftover after December 2022 may be returned to the State Parks Division of the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks for a full refund.

For more information, and to view a complete list of participating Kansas libraries, visit [ksoutdoors.com/State-Parks/Library-Program](https://ksoutdoors.com/State-Parks/Library-Program).

To locate a Kansas state park nearest you, visit [ksoutdoors.com/State-Parks/Locations](https://ksoutdoors.com/State-Parks/Locations).

## Kansas Game Wardens Successfully Close Large Mule Deer Poaching Case



Kansas game wardens executed multiple physical and electronic search warrants, leading to the discovery of a variety of illegally-taken wildlife - including 25 deer.

A three-year investigation in northwest Kansas involving Cheyenne, Sherman, Wallace, and Logan Counties has come to a close, thanks to numerous public tips and the diligent efforts of Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks game wardens. Throughout the investigation, game wardens executed multiple physical and electronic search warrants and conducted many interviews, leading to the discovery of 25 deer – mostly mule deer – one antelope, eight turkeys and other wildlife that had been taken illegally. Many of the deer had been shot out of season and with firearms by the guilty parties who were in possession of archery permits only; Many

deer were also taken without a permit. Of the 13 deer scored, game wardens were able to determine the average antler size at 173 inches.

In all, 140 charges were filed for nine individuals for violations from 2015-2019. Of the nine individuals charged, three individuals received more than four charges. The charges are as follows:

- Tayton Weeter pled guilty to 22 charges related to the illegal take of wildlife and was ordered to pay \$45,000 in fines and restitution. Tayton also received a 10-year hunting revocation.
- Tracy Weeter pled guilty to 12 charges related to the illegal take of wildlife and was ordered to pay \$750 in fines and \$1,688 in court costs. Tracy also received a two-year hunting revocation.
- Sean Winter pled guilty to six charges related to the illegal take of wildlife and was ordered to pay \$5,800 in fines and restitution. Sean also received a 12-month hunting revocation and forfeited a firearm.

KDWP game wardens would like to thank the public, and the local and state law enforcement agencies and prosecutors that assisted throughout this case.

To contact a KDWP game warden nearest you, visit <https://ksoutdoors.com/KDWP-Info/Locations/County-Information>.

For more on the KDWP Law Enforcement Division, visit <https://ksoutdoors.com/Services/Law-Enforcement>.

## Accessing Public Lands for Hunting, Fishing Just Got Easier

Hunters and anglers can now benefit from a new-and-improved system designed to make accessing



public lands in Kansas easier than ever. As part of the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks' (KDWP) all-new licensing purchase system - Go Outdoors KS - outdoor recreationalists will not need a separate login to "check in" and out of KDWP-managed properties, as the Go Outdoors KS licensing system and mobile app is fully integrated.

"We're thrilled to offer an improved customer experience for our constituents, especially in advance of our fall seasons this year," said Shanda Knapic, Chief of Licensing for KDWP. "Go Outdoors KS is a critical tool for hunters and anglers to safely, legally, and easily enjoy outdoor recreation in our state, and it can be accessed right from a smartphone or mobile device."

- Hunters and anglers who are familiar with KDWP's previous licensing solution, and check-in system, will notice:
- A single sign-in feature, eliminating the need to remember multiple logins
- All-in-one access, as customers may now access license purchases and check-ins from the same location
- Greater ease of use, as the customer experience remained "top of mind" throughout the system's development

Those wishing to explore KDWP's new-and-improved hunting and fishing licensing system may do so from any web browser or smart device. Here's how:

### Check-in/Check-out on The Web

- Visit <https://ksoutdoors.com/checkin>
- Click the "Check-in/Check-out" link in the top menu

### Check-in/Check-out on The App

- Download "Go Outdoors KS" from the Apple or Google Play store
- Click "Check-in/Check-out"
- Select a location
- Login with KDWP credentials
- Complete and submit "Check-in" form

"This isn't a 'one and done' project for us or for our contract vendor," added Knapic. "We're committed to ensuring that outdoor access, and making hunting- and fishing-related purchases, remains easy and enjoyable for everyone wishing to Go Outdoors in Kansas."

KDWP's state park reservation system remains unchanged by the Go Outdoors KS launch. Campers in Kansas can still access the same great features they're accustomed to - whether purchasing a daily vehicle entrance permit or securing a campsite with water and electric - by visiting [www.campitks.com](http://www.campitks.com).

To purchase a Kansas hunting or fishing license, visit [GoOutdoorsKansas.com](http://GoOutdoorsKansas.com) or download the "Go Outdoors KS" mobile app today.

To make a campsite reservation or state park-related purchase, visit [ReserveAmerica.com](http://ReserveAmerica.com).

## Outdoor Enthusiasts, Pet Owners Encouraged to Avoid Harmful Algal Blooms

Blue-green algae look much like other, more common algae but they're really a type of bacteria called "cyanobacteria." And this cyanobacteria, when in high concentrations, can cause illness in both people and pets. That's why each year, the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP), Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) work jointly to alert the public about potentially harmful algae blooms.

The process begins when KDHE is alerted to a potential algae bloom. Staff will deploy to the waterbody in question, conduct the necessary tests and determine next steps. Depending on either the presence of certain toxins, the number of cyanobacteria cells in the water or a combination of the two, KDHE may then issue a Public Health "Watch" or Public Health "Warning."

But outdoor enthusiasts can protect themselves, and their loved ones - including pets - by remaining vigilant for the signs of a Harmful Algal Bloom before a watch or warning is ever issued.

Here's what you should know:

- Algal blooms are often highly visible, appearing like a bright green slime on the water's surface, though blooms come in other colors and textures.
- KDHE monitors blue-green algae across the state April 1-

Oct. 31, when blooms are most likely to be present. However, heavy blooms have been documented well into November.

- Dogs can get sick or die from exposure to harmful blue-green algae. It's recommended that pet owners offer fresh drinking water often to their dogs while out-of-doors to decrease the pet's interest in drinking from potentially-tainted ponds or lakes. Also, dogs that have swam through possible blooms should be towed off immediately and taken to a place where they can be sprayed thoroughly with clean water. If a dog exhibits any symptoms such as throwing up, lethargy, or seizures following exposure to a natural waterbody, seek immediate veterinary attention.
- Suspected exposures to blue-green algae can be reported to the KDHE by calling the EpiHotline (877-427-7317) or by using this online form found at: [https://kdheks.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_3m9Zfcls27nckMB](https://kdheks.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3m9Zfcls27nckMB).

For more information on blue-green algal blooms in Kansas, visit [www.kdheks.gov/algae-illness](http://www.kdheks.gov/algae-illness).

For an interactive map of current Harmful Algal Bloom Watches and Warnings in Kansas, visit the KDHE website, <https://maps.kdhe.state.ks.us/habkscounty/>.

# BIRD BRAIN

Late Summer Birding & Kansas Birding Trail  
with Mike Rader

The months of July and August are not thought of as the best months of the year for birding, but there can be some rewarding times to be had. Shorebirds and hummingbirds initiate their migration in late July and into fall, so keep feeders up for the hummingbirds and visit your local wetlands to view the abundant shorebirds heading to their wintering grounds. Male hummingbirds are typically the first to migrate, with females and young birds following later in the season. Shorebirds have an interesting way of migrating as well, with adults leaving the breeding grounds of the arctic first, leaving young birds to find their way south on their own. I still find it fascinating that they do this without the aid of experienced migrant parents.

Breeding species across the state will be wrapping up their efforts by preparing their young for the upcoming migration, which typically peaks in September and October for most songbirds. Waterfowl and sandhill cranes will head here for migration and to winter in late October and November. The month of August can be sometimes interesting as some birds either failed as breeders in the north or choose to stay around all summer.

If you find yourself looking for something else to do outside, look at the new Kansas Birding Trail website - [www.ksbirdingtrail.com](http://www.ksbirdingtrail.com), initiated in March 2022. It is an extensive collection of driving routes designed to assist birders with finding quality locations across the state. A team of experts in Kansas birding strategized on what would be a great way to introduce new and out-of-state birders to some of the popular regions and locations. We put together a beautiful website that has narratives for the 12 different trails, highlighting several specific locations on each of those trails. Locations include public property, and are mostly on paved roads, allowing the trails to be accessible in most weather conditions. They are designed to be able to cover the distance in a day, with a variety of either loops that come back to a same starting/ending point and linear routes that begin at a com-



## KANSAS BIRDING TRAIL

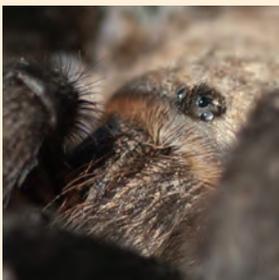
from kdwp staff

munity and terminate a few hours down the road.

The Kansas Birding Trail website was created by Mammoth Creative of Meriden with assistance from the Information/Technology team at KDWP. The text for the trail narratives and location descriptions were mostly done through a contract with Dr. Ted T. Cable, retired professor from Kansas State University. His expertise and familiarity with Kansas birding locations was extremely valuable. The fantastic photographs on the site are courtesy of Bob Gress, retired director of the Great Plains Nature Center in Wichita. The work of the concept and review teams paid off, as the site is not only beautiful, but functional as well. We hope that it will be a tool that can be useful to all birders that want to see what our state has to offer.

## 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. When threatened, I release tiny hairs that irritate (urticate) predators.
2. I can live up to 30 years, and females can lay up to 2,000 eggs.
3. My size frightens most humans, especially those with arachnophobia.

>>> See answer on Page 11.



# BOAT KANSAS

Watersport Safety  
with Chelsea Hofmeier

from kcdwp staff



**ADULT UNIVERSAL**  
User Weight: >41 kg (>90 lbs)  
Chest Size: 76-132 cm (30-52 in.)

**70**

- Drowning hazard if not worn.
- Must be fastened and properly adjusted to float the wearer.

Choose and wear the device which fits you and your activity, visit [www.XXXXX.com](http://www.XXXXX.com).  
Read and keep the owner's manual and tags for info on wear, and care.

<p>Company Name Company Address Company website if available Indication of Country of Origin USCG Approved 160.064/XXXXX UL 1123 TYPE XX</p>	<p>Lab Certification Mark</p> <p>Certifying Lab Identification and address</p>	<p><b>Use:</b> Fasten all closures and adjust for a snug fit</p> <p><b>Inspection:</b> Inspect your life vest before each outing. Do not use if your life vest shows signs of weathering, damage, or rot.</p> <p><b>Care and Storage:</b> Dry thoroughly after each outing. Store in a dry, cool place out of direct sunlight.</p> <p></p>
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The new labels on PFDs have icons noting the performance level, turn ability and warnings of the device.

The labels on United States Coast Guard approved personal flotation devices (PFDs), also known as life jackets, contain information important for all types of boaters. If you've purchased a new life jacket recently, you might have noticed it did not have the same label describing the life jacket "types" as before.

In the last couple of years, the United States Coast Guard initiated changes to the rules involving the labeling of PFDs. These changes have made it so that the life jackets are now approved for use in both the U.S. and Canada; before, the U.S. had a different labeling system than our northern neighbors, making it difficult to cross over country borders with U.S. life jackets and recreate legally.

The new labeling divides PFDs into two categories: wearable and throwable. The labels have icons noting the performance level, turn ability and warnings of the device. These icons are symbols adopted from the International Standards Organization (ISO) sub-committee for life jacket standards. The wearable life jackets will have performance level icons that contain a number, typically ranging from 50 to 150. A lower number means the PFD is intended for near-shore activities in calm waters offering greater mobility, comfort, and style with good flotation, while a higher number means the PFD is intended for offshore activities offering greater flotation, turning and stability. The turn ability icon will note if the life jacket turns an unconscious person to their back and the warning icons illustrate activities the life jacket is not

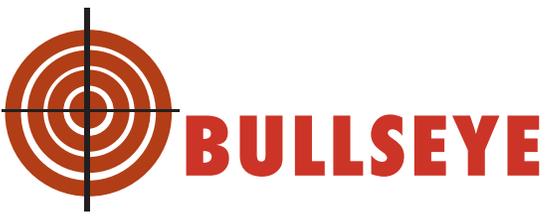
designed for. Most life jackets found in stores right now contain the new label for Level 70 devices. Be sure to choose a number and style that is approved for the activity you plan to participate in.

If you still have a life jacket with the older legacy labels - those with a type number I-IV - don't fret. These life jackets can still be used in the country they are approved in as long as they are still in good condition, readily accessible, properly fitting, and USCG approved for the appropriate activity.

Regardless of the label change, Kansas law requires that all vessels have at least one USCG approved wearable PFD for each person on board and one PFD for every person being towed. If any of those passengers are 12 years old or younger, they must always wear a USCG approved PFD while on board or being towed by a vessel. All Personal Watercraft (Jet Ski) riders must always wear a life jacket, no matter the age.

Visit [www.wearitlifejacket.com](http://www.wearitlifejacket.com) for more information on the new life jacket labeling system.

Boat operators should always ask everyone on their vessel to wear a PFD whenever on the water. PFDs can save lives, but only if they are worn. So, boat smart, boat safe, and Wear It Kansas!



## Classic Cartridges .35 Remington

*with Kent Barret*

In 1905, the Remington Arms Company introduced a John Browning designed auto-loading rifle they called – not surprisingly – the Remington Auto-Loading Rifle. The name was later changed to the Remington Model 8 Rifle.

This rifle introduced four new rimless cartridges to the American hunting public: the .25 Remington, the .30 Remington, the .32 Remington and the .35 Remington. Having rimless cases, these cartridges fed reliably from box magazines which was a great advantage.

The .35 Remington was the most popular of the four cartridges and the only commercially produced cartridge today. This is most likely because the .35 Remington was the only medium bore cartridge in the group, and with no real competition from any other cartridge at the time, it quickly filled an important role with the hunting public. The original loading sent a 200 grain .35 caliber bullet downrange at just under 2100 feet-per-second. This load was able to generate just over 1,900 ft/lb. of energy and hunters were quick to see how this could be beneficial in the woods as a “brush gun.” The Model 8 was the first commercially successful semi-automatic rifle offered to the U.S. civilian hunting market.

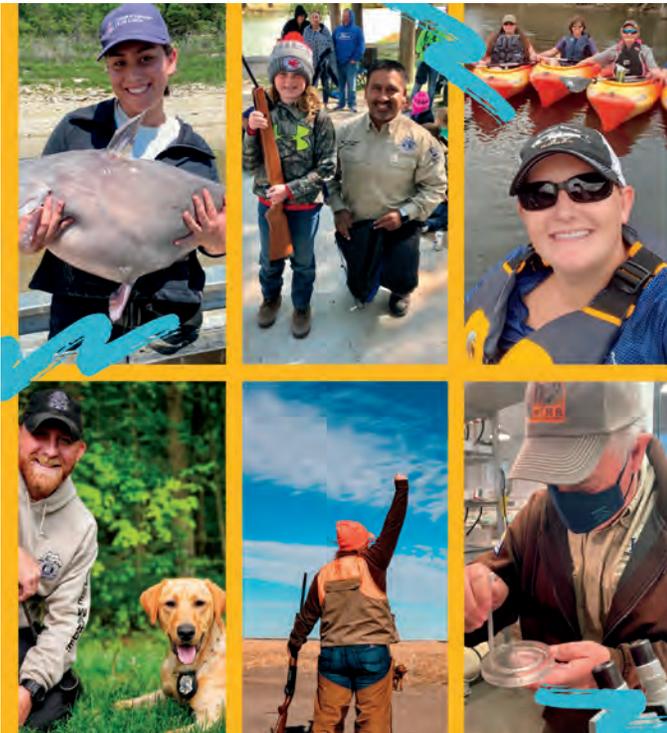
The cartridge was originally used for hunting game up to the size of moose and brown bear. Now, it is more commonly used for game such as deer, elk, feral hogs, black bear, and other medium and large game within reasonable distances.

The round still has a following and is still chambered in

lever action rifles from several manufacturers. Because of this, most of the rounds manufactured today have a round or flat nose so they can safely and efficiently feed from tubular magazines. These flat and round nosed bullets tend to produce some dramatic results at the velocities achieved by the .35 Remington, making this round deadly on big game. The heavy, slow moving bullets deliver bone crushing power but do not produce large amounts of ruined, bloodshot meat that more high velocity cartridges do. Accuracy can be quite good in these rifles if the range is kept within reason. Realistically, the maximum effective range for the .35 Remington is 200 yards although, for the average hunter, this range is probably closer to 150 yards.

Remington went to great lengths to advertise the power of the .35 Remington cartridge. These advertisements typically depicted fearless hunters facing down ferocious wolves and grizzly bears with their trusty Remington rifles and their powerful .35 Remington rounds. It is true that the cartridge has its limitations, but used under the right circumstances, it is still a formidable choice. The .35 Remington really comes into its own when used in thick cover or other limited distance situations. For most American hunters, a shot at distances over 150 will not be taken more than a few times. For those close-range shots, the trusty .35 Remington will fit the bill nicely. After 115 years, this old workhorse is still worthy of being considered a classic cartridge.

from kdwp staff



# KANSAS

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## The Life of a Ring-necked Snake

with Daren Riedle

from kdwp staff

In the last issue of *Kansas Wildlife & Parks Magazine*, I discussed how we monitor and model population growth in organisms, and why we, as biologists, are interested in defining life history traits specific to species of interest. Remember that life history traits are specific events in an organism's life that influence their ability to survive and reproduce. Some of these traits include age and size at maturity, number and sex ratio of offspring and age-specific mortality.

To follow up that column, here is a real-world example of a project that I had some students work on regarding ring-necked snakes. The idea was to provide real world data for the students to work through a population modeling exercise. At the time, I was teaching at a small university in central Missouri, which had several small woodlots on site. In one spot, the maintenance folks dumped old construction debris along a wood line, creating ideal habitat to find ring-necked snakes in the spring and fall.

For the next three years, my students and I would search these debris piles to mark and measure all the ring-necked snakes we came across. During that time, we marked and measured 205 individual ring-necked snakes, recapturing several of them multiple times.

Fortunately for us, one of the largest and most intensive studies of ring-necked snakes was conducted not too far away near

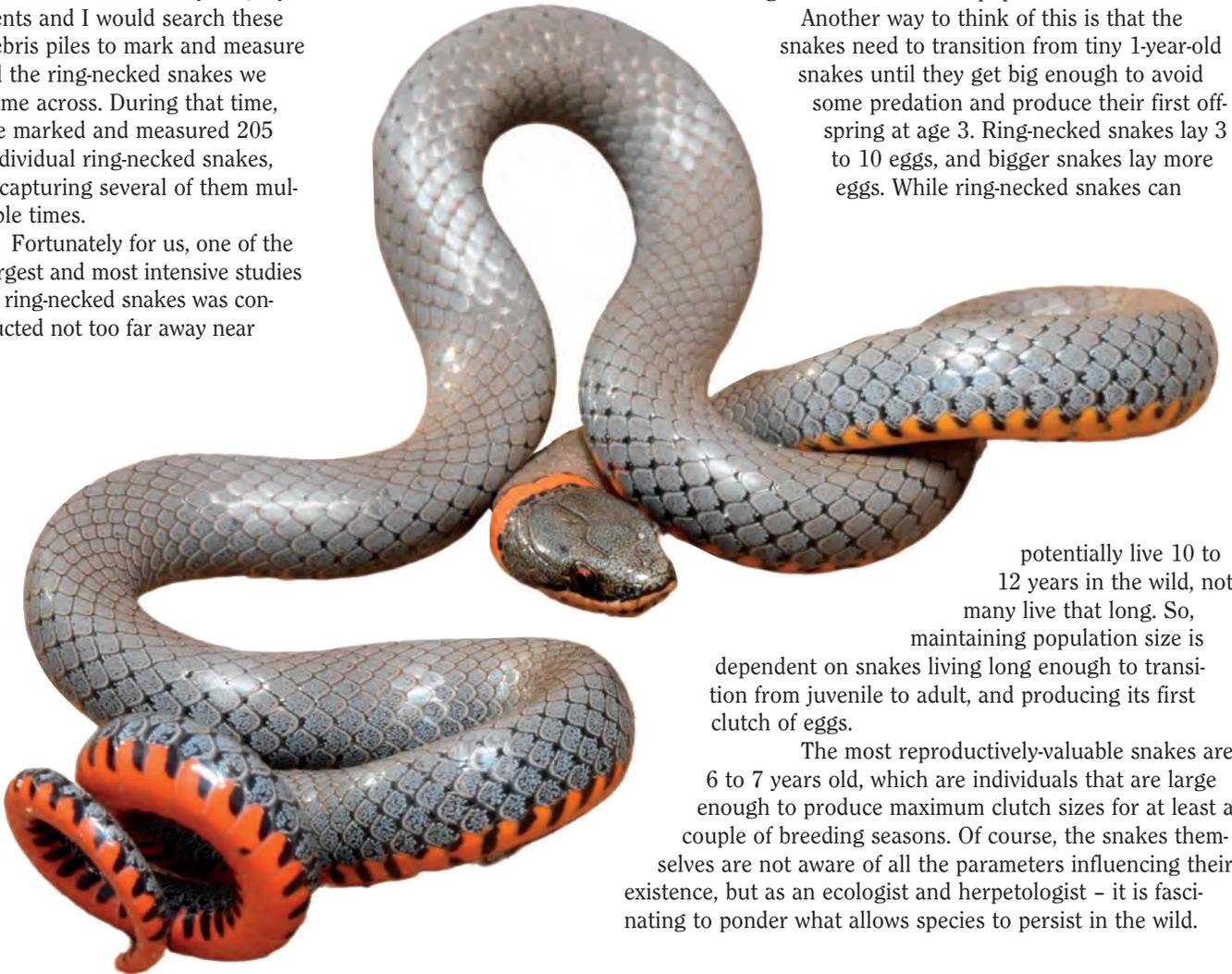
Lawrence, KS. In that study, they were able to determine age-size relationships, which provided us a rough estimate of the age of a snake for its first three years of life based on size.

Ring-necked snakes reach sexual maturity at three years. Hatchling ring-necked snakes are typically only 3 to 4 inches long, and due to their small size, are highly susceptible to predation by a wide range of critters, including many invertebrates.

If they're not made a meal, these snakes will reach maturity at 10 to 15 inches long in three years. We observed that capture rates of Year 1 snakes and adult snakes (3 years and older) were similar, while rates were much lower for snakes that were 2 years of age. These results suggest many individuals were experiencing mortality between the first and second year of life.

When we calculated survivorship, 2-year-old snakes had the lowest survivorship rates. When we modeled population growth, we found that survivorship in age 2 snakes had the greatest influence on population size.

Another way to think of this is that the snakes need to transition from tiny 1-year-old snakes until they get big enough to avoid some predation and produce their first offspring at age 3. Ring-necked snakes lay 3 to 10 eggs, and bigger snakes lay more eggs. While ring-necked snakes can



potentially live 10 to 12 years in the wild, not many live that long. So, maintaining population size is dependent on snakes living long enough to transition from juvenile to adult, and producing its first clutch of eggs.

The most reproductively-valuable snakes are 6 to 7 years old, which are individuals that are large enough to produce maximum clutch sizes for at least a couple of breeding seasons. Of course, the snakes themselves are not aware of all the parameters influencing their existence, but as an ecologist and herpetologist – it is fascinating to ponder what allows species to persist in the wild.



# Law Matters

## Operation Dry Water

with Colonel Gregory Kyser



Kansas game wardens arrested two boat operators for BUI, one driver for DUI, and another subject with a felony warrant over the Fourth of July weekend.

This Fourth of July holiday brought family festivities to area reservoirs and lakes across Kansas. Keeping everyone safe is a daily priority for the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. This holiday weekend was no different, as Kansas game wardens spent time patrolling the waters during the heat of the summer holiday.

Operation Dry Water is a nationwide law enforcement initiative to prevent boating under the influence. Over the holiday, Kansas game wardens arrested two boat operators for Boating Under the Influence (BUI), one driver for Driving Under the Influence (DUI), and another subject with a felony warrant. Wardens issued 39 boating violation citations and 80 boating violation warnings during this enforcement period.

Wardens assisted with 30 stranded boats and completed six search and rescue missions. While there was one boating accident, no fatalities or injuries were reported. Although the holiday reporting period has concluded, Operation Dry Water will remain a priority year-round and is supported by the National Association of Boating Law Administrators and the United States Coast Guard.

In addition to working summer festivities, game wardens continue to protect Kansas wildlife by investigating poaching cases. One such case recently wrapped up, which resulted in convictions of nine individuals for illegal take of wildlife, including 25 mule deer, one antelope, eight turkeys, and other animals. Many deer had been shot out of season and with firearms by suspects who had only permits for archery. Other deer were taken without any permits at all.

This multi-year investigation involved Cheyenne, Sherman, Wallace, and Logan counties. It resulted in the revocation of hunting privileges for those involved. Three suspects were ordered to pay \$51,550.00 in fines and restitution.

These enforcement actions represent a small sampling of the work of the Law Enforcement Division this summer. As we look forward to this next season, I hope you share my pride for the men and women serving as Game Wardens for the State of Kansas.

“WHAT AM I?” answer: tarantula

from kdwp staff



## ISO: Freezer

with Dustin Teasley

from kdwp staff

Unfortunately, I just experienced what every hunter and angler does at some point in life – a broken freezer. Moisture got inside the lid of my 16-cubic-foot chest freezer where nearly all of our game meat is stored. I bought it used more than 25 years ago, so I shouldn't be terribly surprised that it's time to get a new one. But there are some important considerations that need to be looked at when buying or replacing a freezer, nonetheless. Enough so that I felt an article was needed. Here are some things to note when freezing your hard-earned game meat.

There are two styles of freezers available to sportsman – upright and chest. Both have their advantages and disadvantages. Freezers are also come in two types: frost-free or manual defrost, often referred to as “not frost-free.” Modern freezers, like the one in your kitchen refrigerator, are frost-free as well as most upright freezers. Frost-free freezers periodically cycle through a process where the temperature is raised so moisture can be removed, eliminating the buildup of ice. Manual defrost freezers require the freezer to be periodically unplugged, thawed, and completely dried out before plugging back in and using. In my opinion, the style of freezer is less important than the type of freezer.

Upright freezers provide a better view of your stored food and typically have multiple shelves to separate different foods; but are mostly frost-free. Frost-free freezers are designed for short-term storage (up to 6 months) and use a circulating fan to remove excess moisture from being opened regularly. If blocked due to over-packing, the fan's function can be reduced. Most home refrigerators have frost-free freezers. Frost-free freezers during their defrosting cycle can draw moisture from meat, trapping that moisture between the meat and its wrapper. When the defrost cycle is done, the trapped moisture refreezes, causing frost. This cycle can occur hundreds of times before the food is prepared and consumed. Air is the bane of freezer food storage, especially when it comes to hard-earned game meat. Frost crystals allow air to access foods surfaces, which can cause freezer burn. And nobody wants to eat that.

Most chest freezers are manual defrost and maintain a consistent temperature as long as it is plugged in, and are great for long-term storage. Chest freezers have the advantage of holding larger amounts of food like whole or multiple deer and quarters, or halves of beef or pork. The disadvantage is that food can be lost in the “abyss” at the bottom. Although most often designed for long-term storage, finding a package of venison backstrap from 6 years ago is always saddening. Also, manual defrost freezers require periodic food removal and de-icing to maintain good working order. Not to mention, chipping packages of food free from the side of the freezer isn't fun either.

Now, as a hunter, I strive to make use of the game meat in my freezers by the time the next season rolls around, exceeding the traditional short-term use of frost-free freezers. A couple tricks I've learned to help reduce air exposure to game meat are: I wrap my venison in waxed butcher paper, and I freeze my fish in Ziplock bags partially filled with water. It may not seem like much, but it seems to do the trick.

Regardless of what type of freezer you use, be sure to learn about the method by which your freezer defrosts or thaws. It could mean the difference between inedible and edible meat. And who knows, if you maintain it right, you just might get 25 years out of yours, too!

Shutterstock/1706199265

## Pathways to Participation: Jessica's Journey

with Tanna Fanshier



Jessica Niccoli shows off a turkey she harvested during a hunt with Camp Valor Outdoors.

In the same way that a river does not take a direct path to the sea, those of us dedicated to outdoor recruitment, retention, and reactivation know that the path to outdoor involvement is winding and may vary greatly between participants. To have the greatest impact, R3 practitioners must work together to build a community of support with a broad enough reach to welcome and include all interested participants.

It is a rare blessing that a new outdoor participant shares with us their journey into the outdoors, and we are afforded a firsthand look at how their pathway was shaped by a community much broader than any one organization. It is these steppingstones of support that bridge the gap between interest in activity, its trial, and hopefully a lasting lifetime of participation. The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) was lucky enough to have recently become a featured part of one of such journeys through a participant by the name of Jessica Niccoli.

Jessica grew up in Overland Park. Describing herself as a bit of a tomboy, she admits that aside from playing outside, she was never much of an outdoorswoman. Jessica joined the Navy at a young age, serving a total of 8 years. She was a Yeoman 3rd Class Petty Officer and was at sea for a 9-month deployment during Operation Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom.

Like too many Veterans, Jessica's service left her with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Military Sexual Trauma (MST). Despite being happy with her life, loving husband, three children, and career as a paralegal, Jessica found herself missing the strong ties of her military community and seeking an escape from her PTSD. She did not expect to find her relief at the end of a flyrod, but after a trip to Colorado and an impromptu fishing lesson from a generous angler, Jessica found herself at the top of a mountain feeling completely at peace. She decided to continue exploring the solace that the outdoors could provide and resolved to seek out opportunities for female veterans in the outdoors upon her return to Kansas.

A servicewoman at heart, Jessica soon found herself not only participating, but serving as the Secretary of the Missouri Trout Fishing Association and later a group called Frontline Flyfishing, dedicated to providing flyfishing opportunities to servicemen and women from all walks of life. As her confidence grew, so did her outdoor interests; before long she was signed up for a pheasant hunt through American Heroes in Action. It was there that she learned about Wander Woman, and through them, about the She Goes Outdoors Program, a partnership project between Kansas, Nebraska, and Iowa DNR. Upon receiving her ice fishing-themed She Goes Outdoors Subscription Box, Jessica took yet another step, and drove to Nebraska to put her new gear to use at an Ice Fishing Mini-Becoming an Outdoors-Woman (BOW) event.

Less than 6 months later, Jessica was

signed up for the weekend-long Becoming an Outdoors-Woman event here in Kansas, where she experienced her first turkey class and mentored hunt! Although she left birdless, her outdoor network and knowledge had grown exponentially, and it was not long before she found herself on another hunt, this time with Camp Valor Outdoors. Led by a fellow veteran and retired officer, Jessica built on her knowledge from Wander Woman, BOW, and other past events, and managed to harvest a turkey before her coffee even had time to cool! Back at camp, the rest of the group offered their guidance and encouragement as she cleaned her own bird. Her successful hunt perfectly punctuated a pivotal point on her path, and through her adventures, she had walked alongside, helped, and received help in return from so many others on their own outdoor journeys.

The fellowship she found also bled into her professional life, as she found new ways to connect with her clients over shared adventures outdoors. The sense of community and belonging she had been missing began to return to her and the peace she had discovered years ago on that Colorado mountaintop remained.

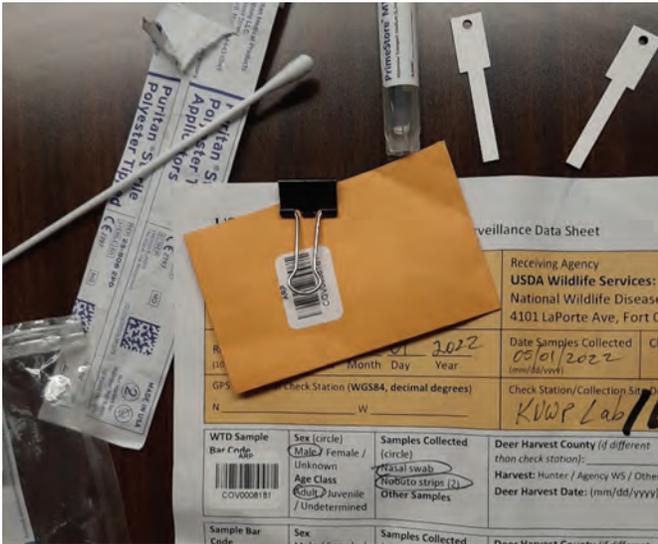
Today, Jessica credits her outdoor involvement for allowing her to speak more openly about and face her traumas related to her military service. She is excited to continue sharing her unique journey into the outdoors with others and is thankful for the patchwork of wonderful organizations dedicated to educating and providing outdoor opportunities for all. KDWP is proud to have played a small role in Jessica's journey and is thankful for her willingness to share her story. KDWP commends the work of the many incredible outdoor organizations who supported and continue to nurture Jessica's evolving outdoor interests and adventures.

For more information about starting your own outdoor journey, contact the KDWP to learn more about the programs, partners, and publications that will help get you started.



## SARS-CoV-2 in Deer with Shane Hesting

from kdwp staff



Deer SARS Sampling: Swab and media vial to detect any live virus in a deer, 2 Nobuto strips for deer blood viral antibody detection, and data sheet.

During the SARS-CoV-2 (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome-Coronavirus-2) pandemic, many scientists continually wondered if this virus would “jump” from humans to animals – it did. The first animals with SARS-CoV-2 researchers identified were companion animals, primarily cats and dogs. As of this article, 117 cats and 109 dogs have been confirmed with SARS-CoV-2. It is a safe guess that many more were infected but not tested. The most current data provided by USDA-APHIS about species and numbers of animals that have been infected can be found at [www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/dashboards/tableau/sars-dashboard](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/dashboards/tableau/sars-dashboard).

The list for wildlife includes white-tailed deer, mule deer and mink. Research published in 2021 by Palmer et al showed that white-tailed deer were very susceptible to infection by SARS-CoV-2, deer expelled loads of virus, and deer easily acquired it from each other. This led to many other questions, including: Does this virus cause clinical disease in deer? Will infected deer transmit the virus back to people, aka spillback? Will deer become a natural reservoir for this virus?

The 2021 study by Palmer et al demonstrated that deer did not develop severe clinical disease from SARS-CoV-2, and currently no outwardly sick, wild deer have been found that was the result of an infection with the virus. To answer the second question, only one rare highly divergent lineage of SARS-CoV-2 has been implicated in giving the virus back to a person – one case. Spillback from deer is rare with this virus, likely due to changes in the virus spike proteins being unable rebind to ACE2 receptor cells in people, low contact rates of people and deer,

waning viability of virus in deer carcasses, poor virus survivability on fomites (surfaces), or maybe these and other factors combined.

To address whether deer will become a natural SARS reservoir, USDA-APHIS-WS started funding state agency surveillance efforts. Last season many state agencies actively collected the appropriate samples from harvested, road-killed, and sick/suspect deer. After 2021-2022 deer seasons ended, KDWP’s private collectors and USDA-APHIS-WS had collected 264 swabs. Of those, 257 were testable, and out of those 257, there were 17 positive detections or 6.6 percent prevalence. As an example of a state with higher prevalence, the state of Virginia had a 36 percent prevalence rate, and other, more populated eastern states ranked high, as well. The inference can be drawn that in areas with more people and more deer, the chance is much greater that the virus will spread into a greater percent of deer populations in heavily populated states. However, it is still unknown exactly how the virus spread from people to deer. One can speculate that urban deer are more likely to visit a plethora of urban and suburban bird feeders, gardens, and shrubs in these areas frequented by humans. With more people dumping out loads of virus into the environment, the probability of it eventually getting into these susceptible deer populations was inevitable.

### Going Forward

This coming deer season, 2022-2023, KDWP’s private collectors and USDA-APHIS-WS will once again collect samples from harvested, road-killed, and sick/suspect white-tailed deer across the state on a limited basis. KDWP is currently running on a USDA-APHIS-WS grant that runs through November 9, 2022. It is likely this grant will be renewed to continue sampling through all the 2022-2023 Kansas deer hunting seasons. Continuing this type of sampling will help us determine if the virus is being maintained in the deer population or “burning out.” It will also help us detect virus mutations in deer populations that may answer future questions about viral spillback to humans.

### Advice to Hunters

Even though the current evidence shows the risk from deer to people is very low, SARS-CoV-2 is still relatively new on the landscape and knowledge that this virus (and all other viruses) does mutate into different strains, it is advisable to wear nitrile gloves when field dressing deer. It is always good to wear, at minimum, disposable gloves when butchering any wildlife. If a person is immunocompromised for various reasons, it is advisable to let another person, with a stronger immune system, field dress a deer.

Have a great, safe hunt in Kansas this season!

*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."*



## WILD ABOUT KANSAS PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST

Photo submissions for the 10th annual “Wild About Kansas” photo contest are being accepted now through Nov. 4, 2022. Divided into five categories, participants can submit photos related to:

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

### RULES

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

### JUDGING

Each photo will be judged on creativity, composition, subject matter, lighting, and the overall sharpness. Photographs from participants under the age of 18 will be placed in a youth division; all others will compete in the adult division. Winning entries will be featured in the 2023 January/February photo issue of *Kansas Wildlife & Parks Magazine*.

### HOW TO ENTER

Entries must be submitted no later than **5 p.m. on Nov. 4, 2022**. Photo format should be JPEG or TIFF. All photos must be submitted electronically. Photos that do not meet the minimum file size requirements (1 MB) will NOT be accepted. To enter, visit [ksoutdoors.com](https://ksoutdoors.com) and click “Publications,” then “2022 Wild About Kansas Photo Contest.”

# 2022 Deadline to enter is Nov. 4!



Tom Arnhold, 2021



Fred Schatzki, 2021



Michaela Gold, 2021

# FROM KDWP PARTNERS

## Call of the Wild(scape)

### Getting Kids Outdoors

*with Marc Murrell, Executive Director, Kansas Wildscape Foundation*

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The Kansas Wildscape Foundation, a non-profit organization founded in 1991 by former Governor and Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks secretary, Mike Hayden, has been instrumental in bringing unique outdoor opportunities to Kansans young and old. One of the more successful and noteworthy programs Wildscape created for the former is the Outdoor Kansas (OK) for Kids Program.

The first OK Kids events were held in 2001 and every Kansas state park hosted an event on the same day. Kansas Governor Bill Graves declared an official OK Kids Day by proclamation and between 4,000 and 5,000 kids attended these events the first year. The program has been expanded statewide and tens of thousands of Kansas kids have had their first outdoor experience at one of these events.

Early on, much of the focus was to have these events in Kansas' beautiful and scenic state parks. Most were onboard and some had events numbering upwards of 1,000 kids. As with any successful program, other entities noticed, and additional events were adapted as city, county or local parks or recreation centers jumped on the bandwagon with wonderful support for the program.

The number of OK Kids events has tripled since 2020 (an all-time low for obvious reasons) and in 2022, there are more than 35 sites hosting nearly 40 programs designed at getting kids of all ages off the couch and into the great outdoors.

These events all have some sort of outdoor appeal. Many include fishing derbies or clinics, nature-themed scavenger hunts or hikes, kayaking, archery and BB gun target shooting, bird watching, wildlife nest house building and even outdoor cooking demonstrations and contests. All events are free and open to the public and most occur from April to October each year.

The application period to be considered for an official OK Kids event site is in early April with notification shortly thereafter. The



Fishing is one of the many activities kids participate in during OK Kids events.

event must have several of the previously mentioned outdoor activities to be considered. Awards to each site range from \$100 to \$500 and this money is used to cover the cost of various equipment, supplies and other associated costs of conducting an event. Several sites have hosted traditionally large events with hundreds of kids, and they routinely receive the maximum award annually of \$500. All that is asked in return is a summary of attendance, kids, adults and volunteers, and a few photos of the event, ideally with the Wildscape logo and/or OK Kids logo evident.

Wildscape has invested over \$200,000 in the OK Kids Program since its inception. Much of this support comes in the form of grants like those of the Charles and JoAnne McIlwaine Foundation. Mr. McIlwaine was an avid Kansas outdoorsman and worked for the Coleman Company in Wichita. He passed in 2006 but wanted natural resources and youth outdoor education to be part of his legacy and the OK Kids Program philosophy fits that perfectly. Additionally, some of their contributions have also provided necessary support for Wildscape's Kansas WildLifer Challenge, a website-based set of activities that gets kids to try different activities outdoors like fishing, planting a tree, or catching a frog and then completing the task online with photo verification. For more information on that program, check out: [www.kansaswildlifer.com](http://www.kansaswildlifer.com). Both outdoor education programs are wonderful examples of the McIlwaine Foundation's commitment to promoting Kansas' natural resources.

More information and a list of OK Kids events on the Kansas Wildscape Foundation's website, [www.kansaswildscape.org](http://www.kansaswildscape.org). The list will provide a brief description, date and location of the event and a contact phone number for more information. For further information or to inquire about future sponsorship possibilities, e-mail Wildscape's Executive Director, Marc Murrell, at: [marcmurrell@wildscape.org](mailto:marcmurrell@wildscape.org).



# KANSAS NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

[www.KansasNativePlantSociety.org](http://www.KansasNativePlantSociety.org)

## Sandhill Plum - Kansas State Fruit *Prunus angustifolia*

with Krista Dahlinger, President

In early 2021, fourth graders in Sabetha began a class project to choose a “state fruit.” They engaged hundreds of other fourth graders across Kansas to join in on a letter writing campaign to their local legislators, and in April 2022, House Bill 2644 was signed into law. Short and sweet, the language of the bill is simple, “The fruit known as the Sandhill plum, Chickasaw plum, is hereby designated and declared to be the official state fruit.”

Sandhill plum, *Prunus angustifolia*, (“a plum with thin leaves”) plants produce fruits that contain a single pit or stone, surrounded by a fleshy, often sweet layer, a structure known as a drupe. Similar plants that also produce drupes are tree plum, apricot, and cherry. Flowers have five white petals with numerous stamens and a single pistil, and release a delightful fruity fragrance in March and April. Drupes appear from May to August, beginning as small hard green plums that increase in size, changing color from yellow to orange and red, and when fully ripe a deep reddish purple. The fully ripe and past-ripe fruit are soft and sweet and present an attractive snack to birds and small animals that gather them from branches and from the ground, helping with seed dispersal. Sandhill plums thickets increase in size through suckers as well as by seed.



from kdwp partners

Sandhill plum grows across southern Kansas along the Arkansas River water way, also to the north in the sandy soils along the Smoky Hill, Saline and Solomon Rivers as well as the Kansas River. Young plants start out with upright growth, and over time as the entire shrub increases in size, side branches descend laterally and downward. There may be thorns along the far ends of branches. The main trunk is brown with a flaky bark while younger branches and twigs are reddish. Leaves are elongated, slightly curled and smooth to toothed, and are arranged alternately along branches. Shrubs are deciduous. Shrubby thickets can grow 5 to 6 feet in height with branches too dense for predator animals to pass through.

Sandhill plums provide the rose-gold colored juice for jelly that so many Kansans cherish. Gathering the fruit is truly a labor of love, braving stiff branches and thorns to gather buckets of fruit to make jelly. Extracting the juice then adding sugar and pectin, while standing over a stove of boiling hot water are rewarded when hearing the “ping” of jar lids snapping down as the jelly begins to cool and set up.

In large landscape settings, sandhill plum thickets make good windbreaks and help sandy soil stay in place. Thickets make good corridors for birds and small animals to take cover in as they travel for nesting, resting or foraging across large areas. The Kansas Forest Service sells sandhill plum in bundles each spring.

Kudos to the fourth and fifth graders in Sabetha for choosing a native Kansas plant as the state fruit!

### WAY outside BY BRUCE COCHRAN



# HARVEST

INFORMATION PROGRAM

**DO**N'T SKIP  
*the* **HIP**



## **PURCHASE THE HIP STAMP**

The stamp, \$2.50, is required to hunt migratory game birds\* in Kansas.

*Buy it online at  
[goutdoorskansas.com](http://goutdoorskansas.com).*

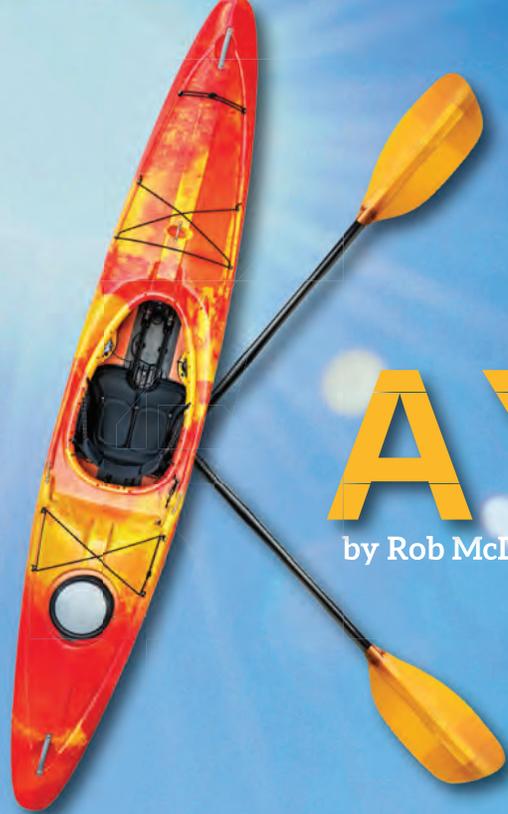
## **COMPLETE THE SHORT SURVEY**

Did you hunt dove, or ducks last year? If so, how many did you bag?

A short survey is administered at time of purchase.

## **THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP!**

Completing the HIP survey provides biologists at KDWP valuable information to help manage Kansas' incredible migratory game bird populations!



# KAYAKING

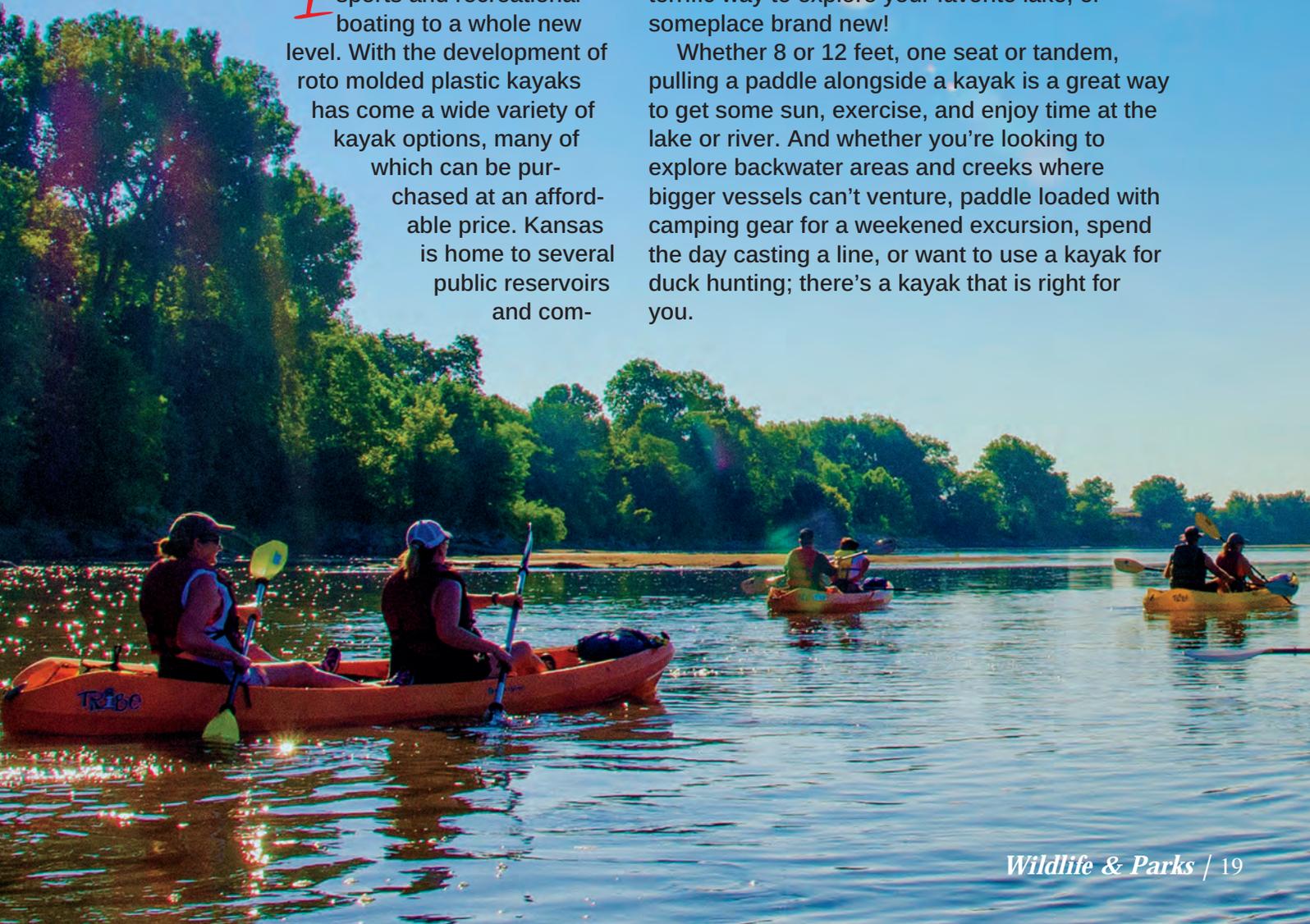
by Rob McDonald, *Modern Wildman Blog*

*Kansas*

**I**n the past several years, kayaking has taken paddle sports and recreational boating to a whole new level. With the development of roto molded plastic kayaks has come a wide variety of kayak options, many of which can be purchased at an affordable price. Kansas is home to several public reservoirs and com-

munity lakes that are open for boating and paddling, making kayaking in the sunflower state a terrific way to explore your favorite lake, or someplace brand new!

Whether 8 or 12 feet, one seat or tandem, pulling a paddle alongside a kayak is a great way to get some sun, exercise, and enjoy time at the lake or river. And whether you're looking to explore backwater areas and creeks where bigger vessels can't venture, paddle loaded with camping gear for a weekened excursion, spend the day casting a line, or want to use a kayak for duck hunting; there's a kayak that is right for you.



# TYPES of Kayaks



Kayaks can be found at most sporting goods stores, hardware stores, and even farm and ranch stores. Deciding which kayak is right for you can seem a little daunting at first, but with a little preparation, finding the right kayak isn't so tough. Let's look at the types of kayaks on the market.

## SIT-ON-TOP KAYAKS

Sit-on-top kayaks ride high, "on top" of the water. Made to be faster on the water, and more maneuverable, sit-on-top kayaks are designed with self-bailing "scupper" holes to help keep water out of the craft.

Adventuring and angling are ideally suited for

sit-on-top kayaks. Look for a kayak with features to match your needs, from lumbar-supporting seats and backrests, to dry hull storage, and cup and rod holders. Chances are, there's a sit-on-top kayak out there ready for you to give it a paddle.



Shutterstock/1506807338



# SIT-IN KAYAKS

The more traditional kayak design – adapted from white water sit-in kayaks and hybridized with traditional canoes – has developed a watercraft that is sturdy, versatile, and budget-friendly.

For kayakers looking to haul cargo such as camping equipment, trapping or hunting gear, or even the family pooch, a sit-in kayak is a great option. Although they are slower on the water, the wide hull design and low center of gravity make sit-in kayaks a fantastic option for anyone looking for something a little more “pickup truck” than “sports car.”

## PADDLING *through the Regulations*

For many people, boating regulations can get confusing. There are certain lights, fire extinguisher, whistles or horns, and registration requirements to figure out. Kayakers, however, can paddle right through all these details and head straight to the water so long as their vessel is powered by arm strength.

According to Kansas boating regulations, kayaks and canoes under paddle or pedal power do not require registration and avoid many other regulations that pertain to motor and sailboat watercrafts. Some basic “common sense” practices include:



### *Life Jackets*

There must be a life jacket that fits everyone on the water. Children 12 and younger must wear their life jacket at all times.



### *Paddle*

A sturdy paddle is a must. Paddles must be long enough to clear the sides of your kayak.



### *Lighting*

Learn and follow lighting requirements if you plan to kayak after dark.

# WHAT TO BRING

It's summertime in Kansas, and the water is calling! Put your kayak on the water at your favorite lake, reservoir, pond, or stream and soak it up, but before you shove off, here's a list of items to consider for your time on the water.

## 1 Sun Protection

The summer sun is brutal, and protection from the sun is critical. Wear sunblock, sunglasses, a wide brim hat, and long sleeves and pants made of quick drying material for the best protection.

## 2 Paddle Power

Choose a paddle that is comfortable in your hand, and long enough to clear your kayak's gunnel. Factors that come into play in choosing a paddle's length include the kayak's seat height and position, and the paddler's torso and arm length. A padded paddle grip can help with hand fatigue on longer trips.

## 3 Personal Floatation Device

Safety afloat should always be top of mind when you're on the water. Accidents can happen in the blink of an eye, and there's no better protection from drowning than a life jacket that fits, and most importantly is worn while you're on the water.

## 4 Hydration

Water, water everywhere and not a drop to drink! Don't fall into the trap of paddling out into the summer sun without plenty of cool, clean water to keep you hydrated. Paddling is a great, low impact exercise, but hydration is critical to avoid heat exhaustion or even heat stroke.





## STAYING SAFE

While kayaks are extremely versatile, fun, and adventurous; it's still critical to conduct safe boating practices. Be sure to tell someone where you're going if you're planning a solo trip, long or short.

Wear your life jacket when you're on the water, and remember a paddle out is always half of the paddle back, don't venture farther than you can safely return.

Keep an eye on the forecast and wind conditions to avoid being

stranded or capsized. And, wear visible clothing or deploy a flag if you're paddling on waters where motorboats frequent.

Kansas provides fantastic opportunities for kayakers from the public waters of the Kansas River and large reservoirs like Milford, to quaint waters like Scott Lake and community lakes across the state. Buckle up that life jacket, and I'll see ya out there! 🐃



# HOOKED

ON

# HO





# HOPPERS

by Michael Pearce, Outdoor Writer

"Nick took the cork out of the grasshopper bottle and a hopper clung to it. He picked him off, hooked him, and tossed him out. He held the rod far out so that the hopper on the water moved into the current floating into the hollow log. Nick lowered the rod and the hopper floated in. There was a heavy strike. Nick swung the rod against the pull. It felt as if he was hooked into the log itself, except for the live feeling."

Ernest Hemingway  
"Big Two-Hearted River"

## Hooked on Hoppers



While Hemingway's autobiographical character used grasshoppers to catch trout, Everett, a young angler, uses the same bait to catch bluegill over 100 years later.

**R**ather than trout fishing deep in a wilderness, like Hemingway's autobiographical character, a young angler, Everett, sat on a manicured pond bank in upscale Overland Park. As Hemingway himself had done, Nick was trout fishing to heal from the horrors of WWI. Everett went angling for much lighter reasons.

He made no move towards his cartoon character rod and reel as the yellow bobber above a hooked grasshopper disappeared below the surface. In his four-year-old mind, there wasn't a fish in the world worth spilling his cream soda, a cher-

ished side benefit of fishing with his grandfather. Only after his mentor carefully took the bottle of golden elixir did Everett battle a nice bluegill to shore.

These two fishing stories took place 100 years apart and couldn't be more different. About the only thing in common was that experts and amateurs used grasshoppers to catch fish.

So, it's been across America since long before Hemingway and will probably be long past when Everett makes his last cast as an old man. Fished right, grasshoppers can be as versatile and productive as any live bait, especially in Kansas.

# Land (and Lakes) of 'Hopportunities



Kansas anglers are blessed with kajillions of grasshoppers and thousands of places to fish them. Hoppers thrive in every Kansas county. According to Kansas State University, we have around 115 species of grasshoppers. Some places in western Kansas can average more than 15 grasshoppers per square yard of vegetation.

The most common species are “differential” and “two-striped” grasshoppers, commonly known by their colors, “green” and “brown,” respectively. Averaging about one to two inches long, both species are perfect bait for many fish species.

My friends and I have caught everything from brilliant, palm-sized longear sunfish to gar longer than our legs on “hoppers.” They’re especially effective on panfish, largemouth bass and channel catfish.

About any place grasshopper habitat meets decent water, the fish are tuned into to feeding on ‘hoppers. That includes most of Kansas’ 100,000-plus ponds, hundreds of community lakes, state lakes, reservoirs, and streams. (Go to [ksoutdoors.com/fishing](http://ksoutdoors.com/fishing) to learn about the many public fishing opportunities near you.)

hoppers

## Catching and Keeping 'Hoppers

- Most fishing spots have enough natural cover to catch grasshoppers as needed. It’s often easier, and actually enjoyable, to catch a batch ahead of time.
- Sizable gardens, native grasslands and overgrown ditches usually offer prime ‘hopper habitat. Cold-blooded, grasshoppers are usually easiest to catch in the day’s coolest temperatures just before dawn.
- ‘Hopper hunting in the darkness with a flashlight works great, as the baits-to-be seldom jumps when in the beam of a bright flashlight.
- Soda bottles or gallon jugs are great for carrying grasshoppers. (Hemingway’s character, Nick, used a glass bottle he’d toted miles.) Plastic containers need a few air holes and some grass or weeds added. The small mouth of the container allows grasshoppers to be easily added without already collected bait escaping. A little shaking usually sends just one ‘hopper out the neck of the bottle or jug at a time.
- Captured grasshoppers survive the summer’s hottest day if put in a cooler with some ice. Between fishing trips, they can last a week or more if the ‘hopper bottle is refrigerated.
- Many catfish anglers believe dead grasshoppers work as well for bait as those still alive and kicking. Friends who use them on the Kansas and Delaware rivers keep a few dozen in their freezers and do well fishing them for channel and blue catfish.
- Early to mid-fall can offer some of a year’s best fishing with grasshoppers in Kansas. Populations usually seem high at least well into September. Several times I’ve had good fishing the afternoon after a morning limit of squirrels.





## Keeping Things Simple



Rigging fishing equipment for fishing with grasshoppers can be very simple. Harold Ensley, Kansas' best-known angler and 48-year host of *The Sportsman's Friend* television and radio shows, used grasshoppers often for fishing in Gove County in the 19-teens. Ensley used a willow stick, standard string, a chunk of cork and a hook fashioned from a staple used to seal feed sacks. With the crude gear, he caught green sunfish and bullheads from clear streams deep in canyons where springs haven't flowed for decades, let alone supported fish.

Modern equipment can be almost as basic. A gold #6 hook, the size often used for crappie, easily slides beneath the hard collar directly behind the insect's head and helps keep the bait alive as long as possible.

A tiny split shot a foot or so above the bait keeps it down in the water but allows it to show some movement. A simple nickle-sized bobber a couple of feet above the grasshopper keeps the bait suspended off the bottom of the pond or lake.

Such a set-up can be cast with about any basic spin-cast outfit. Action is usually fast enough to keep kids entertained as long as their attention spans allow, especially when the bait's fished around rocks, aquatic vegetation, flooded brush or just off most grassy banks.

Those primarily targeting catfish can substitute grasshoppers for things like cut bait or gobs of earthworms. Three to five grasshoppers heaped on a hook help put out more scent than a single insect. A traditional split-shot 2 feet above the hook can

keep a sliding egg sinker from sliding down to the bait.

Anglers lacking the patience of sitting and watching a bobber or rod tip can rig a grasshopper with just enough split shot to cast the bait with a long, ultra-light or light action spinning rod. The bait can be cast towards fishy-looking spots and slowly retrieved, with stops and twitches along the way. Much like Hemingway's character did for trout, friends have waded small Kansas streams and drifted such rigs into root wads and other watery coverts for channel cats and even a few flatheads.

The growing popularity of kayaks opens many opportunities for fishing with grasshoppers. Floaters on the Kansas and Arkansas rivers have done well drifting grasshoppers. Targeted areas include any downed tree or obvious deeper hole near the shoreline; the upper portions of creek arms at any of Kansas' reservoirs or lakes could offer similar opportunities.

Having bass blow up on a grasshopper kicking on or near the surface is a great way to spend a summer evening. Again, rigging the 'hopper can be super-simple.

Just a small, lightweight hook on the end of the line can keep a lively grasshopper kicking on or near the surface as the bait is pitched or cast.

A clear bobber can add enough weight for easier casting. Keeping the bobber moving with short jerks and pauses keeps the bait on or near the surface. The bobber's surface disturbance helps draw attention to the grasshopper trailing behind.

## 'Hoppers on the Fly



hoppers

Kansas fly fishing anglers will use lookalike grasshoppers to catch bass and big panfish during the summer.

Fly fishing anglers have flocked to the Rocky Mountains for decades to artfully cast grasshopper lookalikes where trout streams cut through grassy meadows. Unlike sipping things like tiny caddis flies from the surface, trout usually crash floating grasshopper flies. It's the same for fly-fishing in the summer waters in Kansas.

Count me as one of many Kansas fly-casters who have made some great summer memories the last hour of daylight casting fake 'hoppers into ponds, state and community lakes.

Most of us fish from float tubes at dusk, when the water's surface is often flat, and cruising bass and big panfish can easily see the imitation grasshoppers we cast to near shore.

I've done well casting the same intricate grasshopper flies that worked on trout in the Black Hills or Rockies. Honestly, it seems 'hopper-sized yellow poppers work as well and are both cheaper and easier to find in Kansas.

Some evenings after super-windy days provide nearly non-stop action. Once, deep in Greenwood County, amid miles of classic Flint Hills prairies, I was semi-lost, looking for a gate before darkness fell.

Bouncing along, I noticed several sizable swirls on the surface of a half-acre pond. Of course, I had to quickly rig a fly-rod and make a few casts. Green sunfish the size of \$20 pork chops were the dominant fish. Some were 2 inches thick and up to 11 inches long. All crashed artificial grasshoppers as they battled to beat other fish to the prize.

I got home nearly two hours late. One hour was because I'd stopped and fished. The other was because darkness hampered my efforts to find a way from the pasture.

The tardiness didn't make me too popular when I finally got home. I'm sure veteran angler Hemingway and young neophyte Everett, would have easily understood. 🐃

# microfishing

by Brent Frazee, *Outdoor Writer*



**L**ogan Sleezer waded into the clear water of a small Flint Hills stream and went into blue heron mode.

After spotting the fish he was targeting, he moved slowly and stealthily until he was close enough to get the drop on them.

It wasn't long before a tiny orange spotted sunfish delicately nipped at the nub of a worm dangled in front of its face. Sleezer lifted his fishing rod and had his idea of a trophy catch—all 2 inches of it.

"Most anglers have no

idea how many species of fish live in a small stream like this," Sleezer said. "I was like that until I seined a stream with my adviser when I was in college (at Emporia State University).

"We pulled up our seine and found 10 different species of fish. I just found that fascinating."

Now he has taken that fascination even further and he fishes for those tiny minnows, darters and sunfish.

It's called microfishing and it's part of a national trend. Anglers across the country use microscopic line, hooks and bait to catch tiny fish.



Logan Sleezer examines some of the fish he caught during a July microfishing trip in the Flint Hills. He later released his catches.



**Longear sunfish**



**Blackstripe topminnow**



**Orangespotted sunfish**

The pursuit has its roots in an age-old Japanese form of fishing called tanago, in which anglers use specialized equipment to target tiny members of the carp family.

American anglers have expanded that to see how many different species of fish they can catch. They keep a life list, much like birders do.

They don't target the biggest fish out there. Instead, they chase some of the smallest.

But it really isn't about the size of the fish. It's about the diversity of species.

In that context, Sleezer enjoyed a good day of fishing on this late-July outing. He caught eight species of fish, putting them in a small plastic aquarium-like container he carried with him until he could identify them, then let them go.

Western mosquito fish, cardinal shiners, sunfish and others he caught put up a micro fight. But that's the point.

"I still fish for bigger species like bass," said Sleezer, 29, who lives in Lawrence. "That's what I grew up with, fishing farm ponds.

"But I love this microfishing, too. Sometimes the fish are so small, you can't even feel them hit. But it's exciting to see how many different species you can catch.

"I'm catching fish that a lot of anglers don't even know exist."



Rich Sleezer (right) helps his son Logan spot small fish during a microfishing outing in the Flint Hills.

## small world

One thing about microfishing, you don't need a lot of gear.

There's no need for a tackle box filled with topwater lures, jigs and crankbaits. You can leave the graphite rods and the high-speed reels at home.

All that's needed is an old rod with line tied to the last eye, line thinner than even sewing thread, special hooks that are almost microscopic and a few tiny split shot.

For bait, Sleezer often turns over rocks and uses invertebrates he finds in the stream or he brings red worms and cuts them into tiny sections.

"You don't want anything real big or they'll pick it right off the hook," Sleezer said.

There's no casting involved. It's more of a spot-and-stalk approach. You spot a school of small fish, then you try to sneak up on them.

It doesn't hurt to have good eyesight. Sleezer and his dad Rich, who is a professor at Emporia Stater University, peered into the clear water and continually found small fish hiding in the shadows of rocks. Then Logan went into action.

"He brings me along to be his spotter," Rich joked. "It's always fun to see what species we can find."

"I've watched Logan's transformation from a kid who wanted to catch the biggest bass in the pond to someone who wants to catch as many different species as he can find."

## a scientific approach

When Sleezer majored in earth science and biology at Emporia State, microfishing was a natural offshoot of his studies.

After he learned how many species inhabited creeks and streams, he researched the subject and found websites where he could order specialized equipment to catch those fish.

That interest only intensified after he moved to Virginia to pursue a more fisheries-focused Master's degree at Virginia Tech University.

"I did a lot of microfishing in Virginia," he said. "In some ways, it was easier there because the water was clearer than you'll find in Kansas.

"In Virginia, there are a lot of clear mountain streams. And there is a lot of mountainous terrain with drainages widely separated from each other.

"That leads to a diversity of species."

After earning his Master's, Sleezer moved back to Kansas and today works as a remote research associate for Mississippi State University. His job is to compile data and analyze data on the Piebald Madtom, a tiny catfish that has been proposed for federal listing under the Endangered Species Act.

That fish isn't found in Kansas, but Sleezer works remotely to gather data on the fish and determine stressors that may be limiting the size of the population and its range.

In his spare time, he pursues his hobby of microfishing. Kansas has 116 native species of fish, so his quest is never-ending.

"With microfishing, you never run out of goals," he said.



Logan Sleezer fishes the shallows of a Flint Hills stream in search of small game - a school of western mosquitofish.



## going micro

Sleezer isn't the only Kansan who enjoys that pursuit. His friend, Paul Stockebrand, a district fisheries biologist for KDWP, also is intrigued by the multi-species approach.

He too became inspired during his field work while earning his biology degree at Emporia State. He researched microfishing by reading online articles and soon was setting out to catch some of the small fish in Kansas streams.

"That's how I stocked my aquarium at one time," he said. "I would keep some of the small fish I would catch.

"Some of them, like the red shiner, are beautiful."

The challenge of microfishing in Kansas is access. Because Kansas law provides that landowners along non-navigable streams and rivers own the river bed, it can be tough to find good fishing water.

But publicly-owned land including city, state and federal parks offer possibilities. And KDWP's Walk-in Fishing Access (WIFA) program leases streams and stream access from landowners and provides access to the

public.

It takes some research to find those streams, but it can result in excellent microfishing in a beautiful setting.

The best streams feature clear, shallow water with a series of riffle-pool segments, ideal for wading.

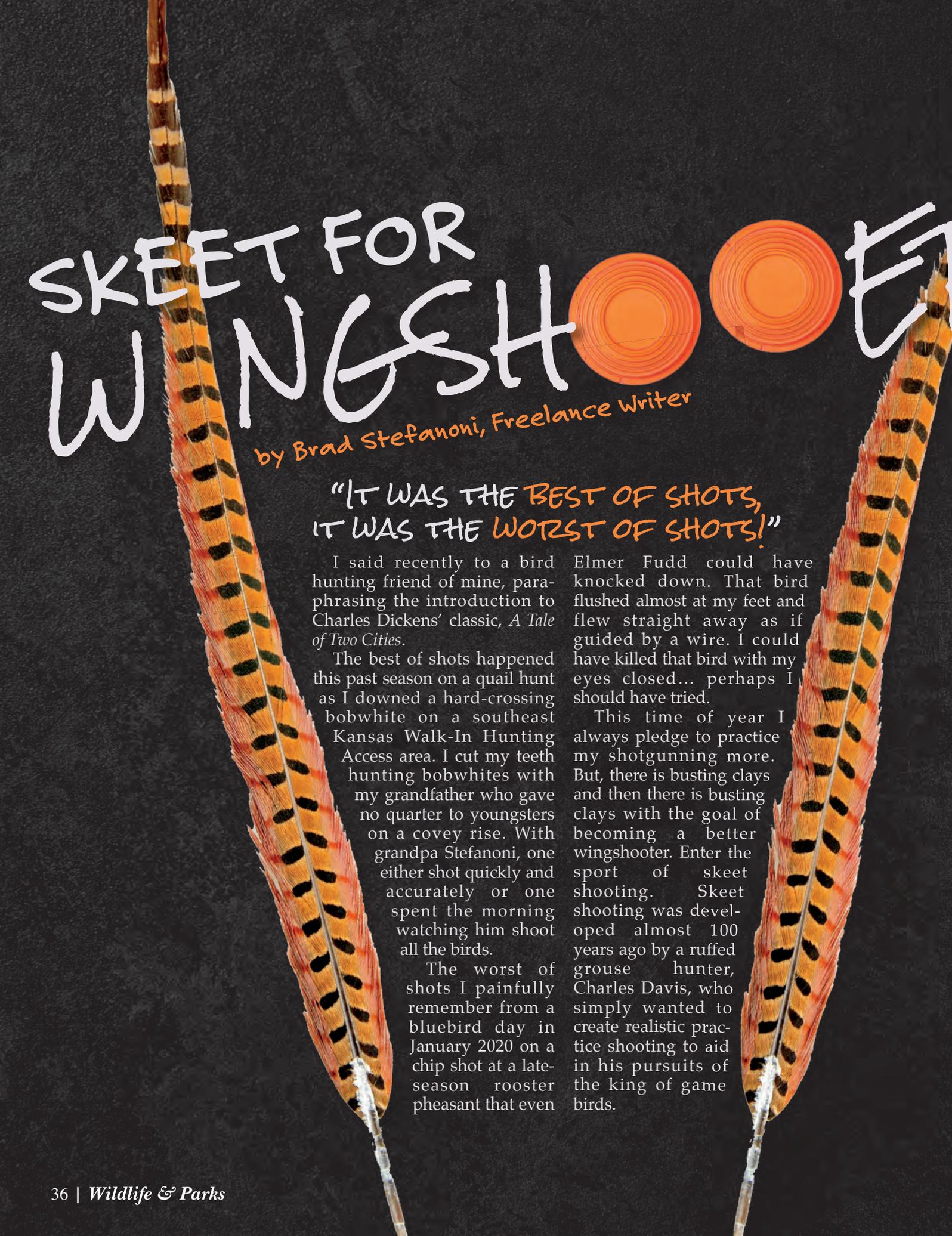
"It doesn't take much water to hold minnows," Stockebrand said.

Sleezer is meticulous in his record-keeping. Since 2010, he has recorded every fish he has caught. Today, his life list includes more than 150 species. His short-term goal is to reach 200 in the next few years.

"When my dad and I were in Minnesota, we ran into a father and son who had completed their goal of catching a fish in every one of their state's counties," Sleezer said.

"It got me to thinking, I'd like to catch a different species of fish in each Kansas county. I don't know if that's realistic, but it would be something to shoot for." 🐃





# SKEET FOR WINGSHOOTER

by Brad Stefanoni, Freelance Writer

**"IT WAS THE BEST OF SHOTS,  
IT WAS THE WORST OF SHOTS!"**

I said recently to a bird hunting friend of mine, paraphrasing the introduction to Charles Dickens' classic, *A Tale of Two Cities*.

The best of shots happened this past season on a quail hunt as I downed a hard-crossing bobwhite on a southeast Kansas Walk-In Hunting Access area. I cut my teeth hunting bobwhites with my grandfather who gave no quarter to youngsters on a covey rise. With grandpa Stefanoni, one either shot quickly and accurately or one spent the morning watching him shoot all the birds.

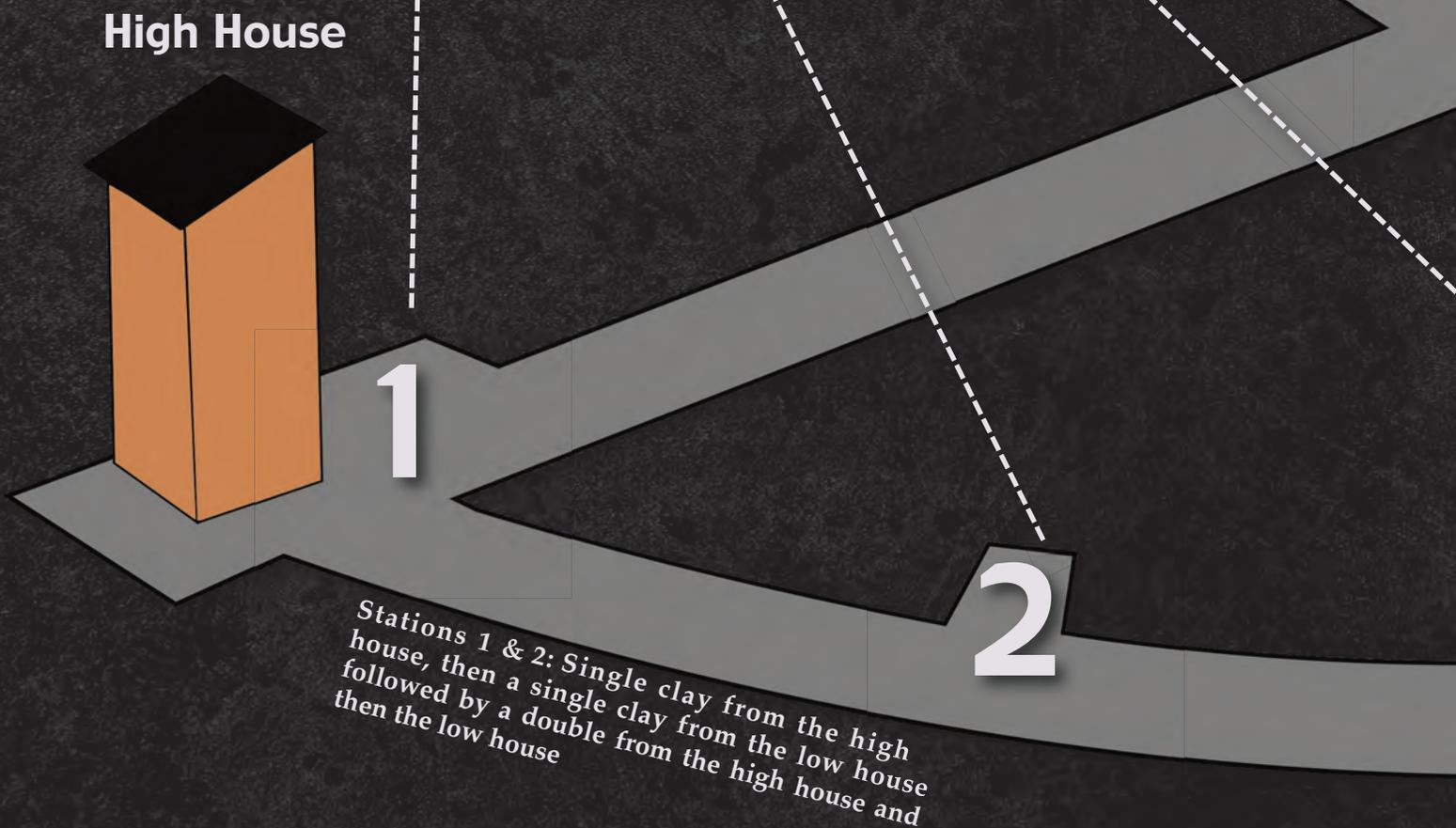
The worst of shots I painfully remember from a bluebird day in January 2020 on a chip shot at a late-season rooster pheasant that even

Elmer Fudd could have knocked down. That bird flushed almost at my feet and flew straight away as if guided by a wire. I could have killed that bird with my eyes closed... perhaps I should have tried.

This time of year I always pledge to practice my shotgunning more. But, there is busting clays and then there is busting clays with the goal of becoming a better wingshooter. Enter the sport of skeet shooting. Skeet shooting was developed almost 100 years ago by a ruffed grouse hunter, Charles Davis, who simply wanted to create realistic practice shooting to aid in his pursuits of the king of game birds.



# How THE GAME IS PLAYED



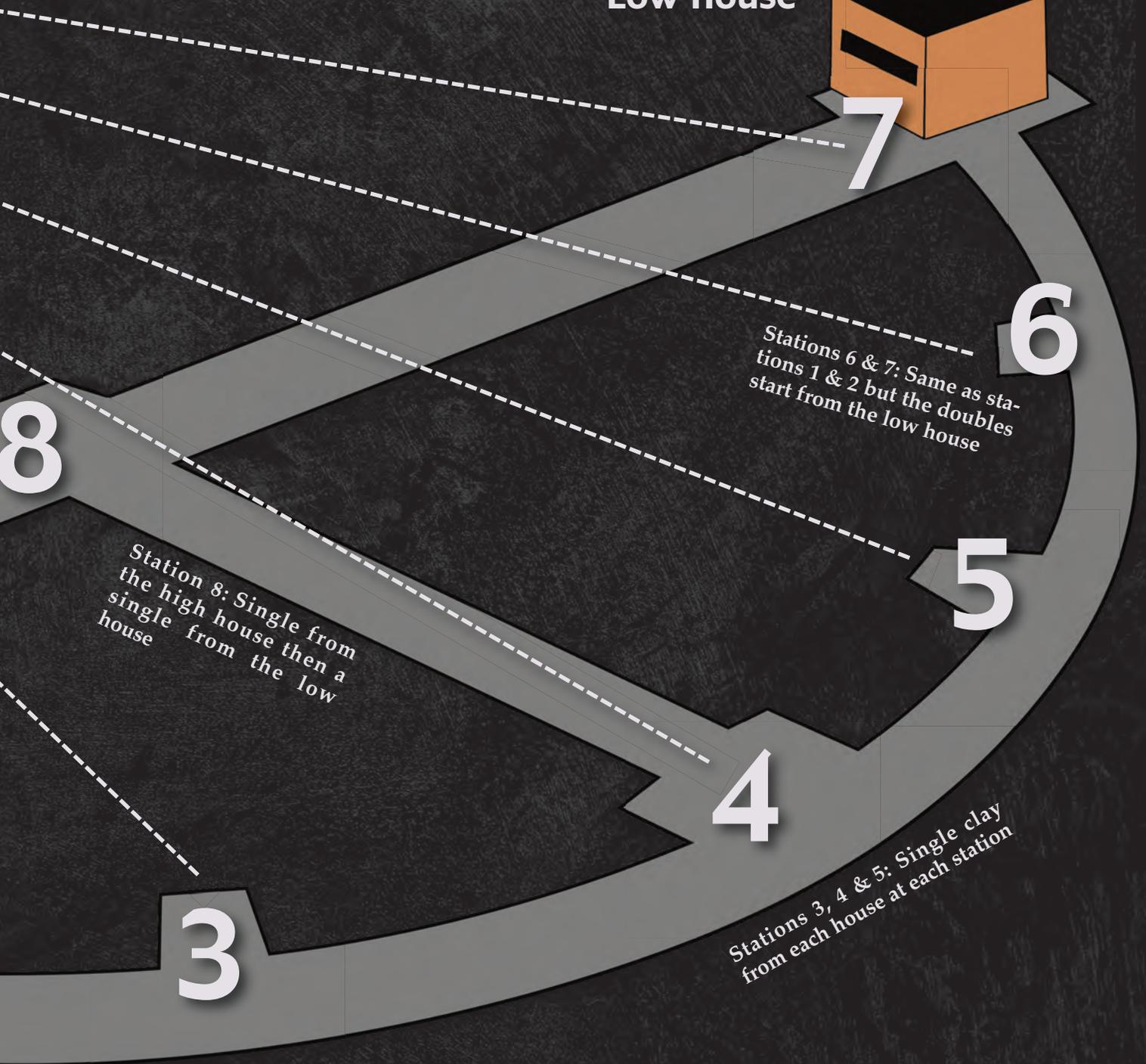
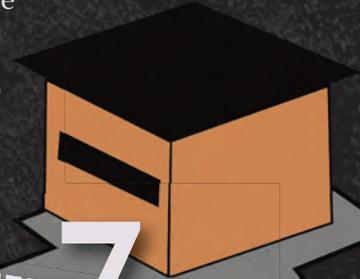
Stations 1 & 2: Single clay from the high house, then a single clay from the low house followed by a double from the high house and then the low house

According to the National Skeet Shooting Association ([mynssa.nssa-nasca.org](http://mynssa.nssa-nasca.org)), a skeet range is anchored by two trap houses spaced approximately 120-feet apart. There are seven shooting stations spaced in a semicircle-shape between the two houses and one station in the middle. The "high house" is on the left-hand side of the range and throws clays from a height of 10-feet. The "low house" is on the right and launches clays from 3.5-feet above the ground.

By the time the clay targets cross the center point they are 15-feet high and traveling at two different angles.

During a round of skeet one will shoot 17 single clays and 8 doubles. If a shooter does not miss any clays, the last shot is at station 8 from the low house. Shots from stations are structured as follows:

### Low House





It sounds a bit confusing at first but after a few rounds it begins to make more sense. A great tip for your first round of skeet is to take along someone who shoots skeet frequently so they can provide both an explanation of the mechanics and tips for shooting each station. Again, the goal of skeet is to simulate shots one might encounter while wingshooting, especially hunting upland birds like bobwhites and pheasants.

A friend of mine who lives in the northwoods of Minnesota and is a ruffed-grouse hunting fanatic recently gave me a great tip to better simulate a hunting situation. His advice was to start each station with your shotgun at a “port arms” carry position vs. starting with your shotgun pre-mounted at your shoulder. Game birds rarely give

one enough warning to pre-shoulder a shotgun so it helps a wingshooter develop better gun-mounting muscle memory.

Another tip I remember from grandpa Stefanoni was to practice with the shotgun and clothes one hunts with so as to simulate as closely as possible a realistic hunting scenario.

The easiest way to find a skeet range near you is a simple internet search for “skeet ranges Kansas.” In southeast Kansas, Claythorne Lodge has not only a great skeet range but also sporting clays and 5-stand. Powder Creek Shooting Park in Lenexa is another facility at which to hone your wingshooting eye. These two clubs and many others also offer shooting instructors for one-on-one instruction. Learning from a good shotgun



wingshooters

shooting teacher is money well spent whether one plans to simply break clays or put more birds in their game vest next season.

Check out the National Skeet Shooting Association website at [nssa-nasca.org](http://nssa-nasca.org) as it is a great resource to learn about many aspects of skeet shooting and other clay target sports.

Writing this article has fueled my fire to head out to the skeet range and make good on my pledge to practice my shotgunning more before next bird season. My trusty Labrador retriever, Raven, just gave me her thumbs-up of encouragement so she can earn her keep with a few more retrieves next fall! 🐾

# HIT THE TRAILS

AT A KANSAS STATE PARK

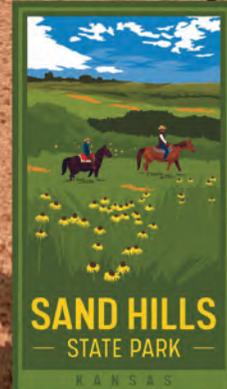
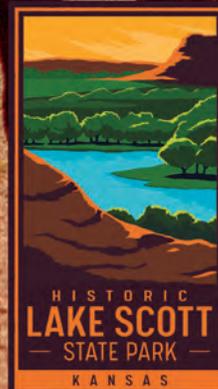


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- Milford State Park, Junction City + **Horse Campsites**
- Perry State Park, Perry + **Horse Campsites**
- Sand Hills State Park, Hutchinson + **Horse Campsites**
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# Species Profile



from the kdwp staff

## Burrowing Owl

*Athene cunicularia*

**W**ith nests located deep within abandoned prairie dog towns – or holes abandoned by fox or badgers – the Burrowing Owl is the only North American raptor to nest “below” us. And, unlike other owls, the Burrowing Owl is active during the day, often seen perched on top of mounds and fence posts. Burrowing Owls are summer residents and are found primarily in the western one-third of Kansas.



### Did you know?

Young Burrowing Owls make call sounds similar to rattlesnakes when threatened!

Length	Wingspread	Weight
9-10 inches	23-24 inches	7-8 ounces



# Backlash

with Nadia Marji

## “Cat” on Camera

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KEESLING-1

As the state’s leading natural resource conservation organization, staff at KDWP truly want to – and are happy to – serve as your go-to resource for all things related to the great outdoors. That includes assisting you in identifying the bright-eyed, blurry “being” captured on your backyard trail camera from the night before.

Most often, our constituents are pretty educated on what their furry visitor could be and simply defer to us for final “confirmation” of their suspicions or whether we can tell the age or sex of the species. During these interactions, staff ask specific follow up questions, contextual information is gained,

and an identification is typically arrived at within a few minutes of the conversation beginning. It’s an exchange that benefits both parties and usually everyone leaves on satisfactory terms in a fairly quick manner. But this isn’t always the case.

One such trail camera creature often leaves much more of a stir in its wake. It has “haunted” trail cameras around the globe, raising concern and intrigue far and wide. And it has the power to polarize even the closest of family members and coffee shop friends, as everyone seems to hold a different opinion about its existence.

I’m talking about the Puma con-

color – the mountain lion.

Despite our subject matter experts, our wildlife biologists, having dedicated decades of their lives to research, survey and field work – even they can’t seem to sway some folks against the tsunami of myths that have surrounded mountain lions for years, especially mountain lions in Kansas.

But for those whose desire truth above all, let me please curb your curiosity!

Here’s what we (KDWP) know about mountain lions in Kansas – and the furry “cousins” that are so often mistaken in their place.

- The first confirmed (meaning evidence was obtained) mountain lion in Kansas in modern times was shot and killed in 2007 in Barber County in south-central Kansas. Prior to 2007, the last mountain lion documented in Kansas was killed in 1904 in Ellis County.

- Since then, more than 20 other mountain lion sightings have been confirmed by KDWP.

- Biologists believe most verified sightings are of transient young males coming from established populations in nearby states. It is not uncommon for young males to travel great distances looking for home ranges.

- Mountain lions occur in Colorado within 75 miles of the border of south-west Kansas and have been documented with increasing frequency in the Oklahoma panhandle. They have also been dispersing from the Black Hills of South Dakota into several Midwestern states. So far, the animals appear to be passing through Kansas, rather than staying and establishing home ranges. And, KDWP has no evidence of a breeding population in the state.

- Large domestic cats, dogs, coyotes and bobcats are frequently mistaken for mountain lions. This is likely because most reported mountain lion sightings occur near nighttime and at very far distances.

- Of the “lookalikes,” bobcats are the most similar relatives of mountain lions and share many physical and behavioral traits. But the one trait that is incredibly dissimilar are their tails. Mountain

lions have a long tail – about 2.5 to 3 feet – while bobcats have a short “bobbed” tail, usually less than 10 inches.

- Mountain lions are typically anywhere from 7 to 9 feet long, while bobcats tend to max out about 3 feet long.

- Mountain lions also weigh anywhere from 90 to 160 pounds, while bobcats typically don’t exceed 30 pounds.

- Lastly, although difficult to see at a distance, bobcats also have tufts on their ears and facial cheeks; mountain lions do not.

- KDWP will investigate sightings when evidence exists such as tracks, a cached kill, droppings, fur, a photograph or video.

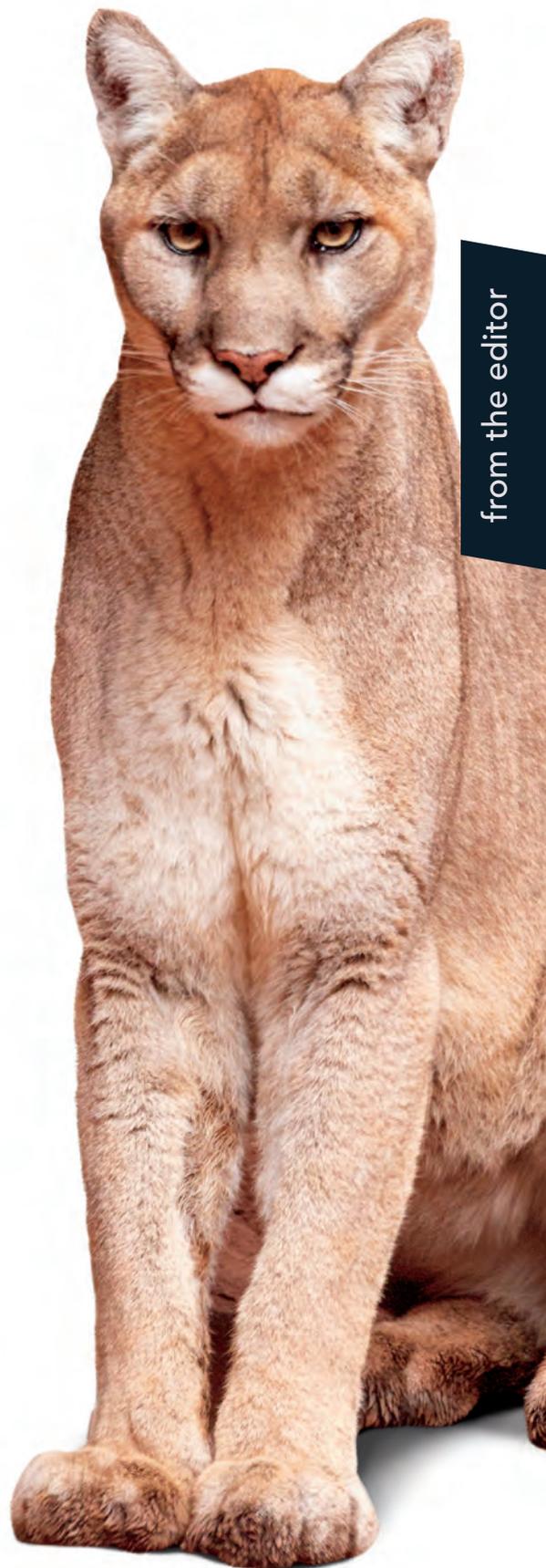
- KDWP staff may visit the location where videos/photos were taken to examine and measure certain features in the images to better judge the size of the animal in the image. KDWP also tries to authenticate photos because images taken from the Internet are sometimes submitted as “proof” of a specific mountain lion sighting.

- Kansas does not have a hunting season for mountain lions, and they may not be killed without reason. Landowners are permitted to destroy wildlife, including mountain lions, found in or near buildings on their premises or when destroying property. However, reasonable efforts must be made to alleviate the problem before resorting to killing the animal. And landowners may not possess such animals with intent to use unless authorized.

If you think you have seen a mountain lion and have evidence – such as a photograph, video, tracks or the like – contact our furbearer biologist, Matt Peek, at the Emporia Research and Survey Office at (620) 342-0658 to report your sighting.

I can’t guarantee you’ll get the answer you want (either way), but I can guarantee our staff will look at the data, make an educated determination, and answer any questions you might have.

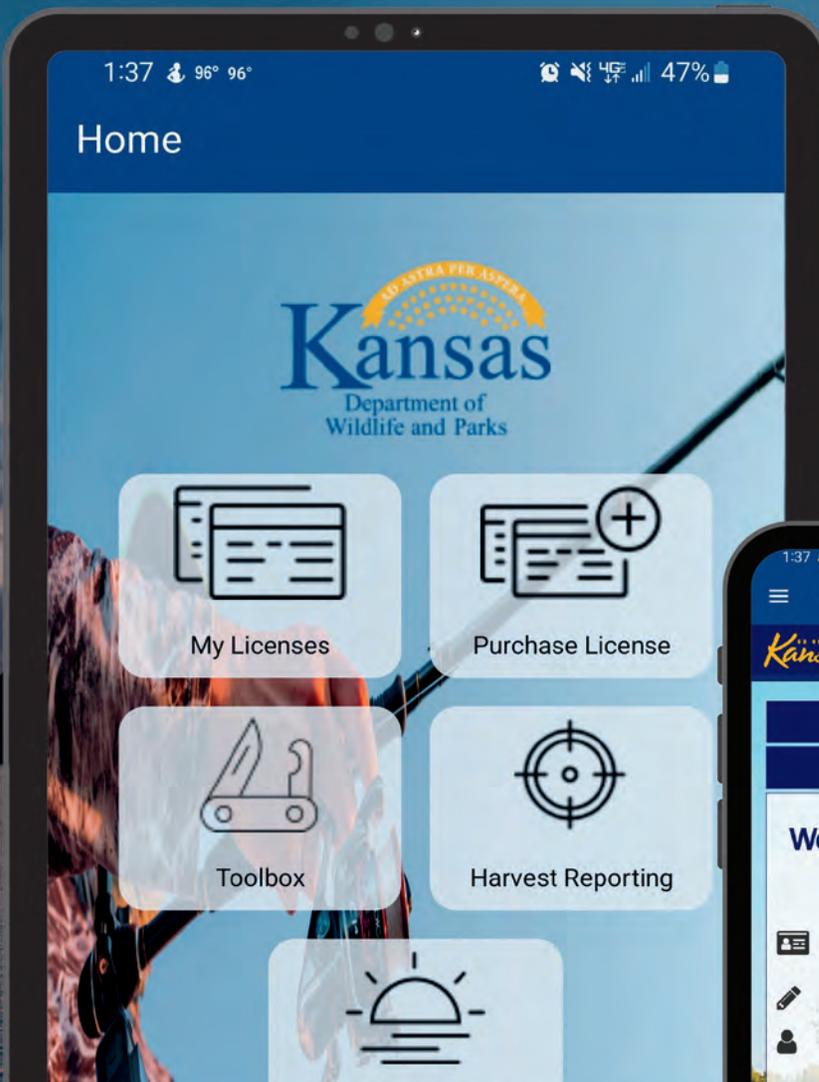
The next time you “catch” something odd on camera, ask yourself if you can or “cat” identify it! 🐾



from the editor



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