



The Voice of Outdoor Kansas

May-
June 2013

P.O. Box 771282
Wichita, KS 67277-1282

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Natural Resource Management

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Go to our Web site,
www.kswildlife.org,
for additional KWF information

Arkansas River sees more use when dry

Heavier use can lead to property disputes,
vehicle and wildlife violations

The prolonged drought has reduced the flow of many streams and rivers in Kansas, and the Arkansas River is one of the most notable victims. In many places in central and western Kansas, the river is dry or has minimal flows or shallow pools. As a result, there has been increased vehicle and other activity along the river, leading to confusion and disputes about landowner rights and legal activity on the river. Local law enforcement agencies and the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism plan to patrol the more heavily-used portions of the river, using all-terrain vehicles to watch for vehicle and wildlife violations and disorderly behavior.

Respecting Property Lines

There are more than 10,000 miles of streams and rivers in Kansas, and most stream and river beds are privately owned. The rivers in the public domain are the Arkansas, Kansas and Missouri rivers; however, most of the adjacent land is privately owned. Those rivers are open to the public only between the ordinary high water marks on each bank – the line where high water has left debris, sand, and gravel during its ordinary annual cycle. Fences, markings or signage are not required to define the property boundaries.

When those rivers flow through private property, permission is needed from adjacent landowners to access the rivers or to engage in any activity on the property above or beyond the ordinary high water marks. Violators can be cited for trespassing. In some places, the ordinary high water

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Protecting the Land... Passing on Our Traditions



KANSAS WILDLIFE FEDERATION

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KANSAS WILDLIFE FEDERATION

The voice of outdoor Kansas

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This message is in a different format to draw attention to a form of communication we will be using in the future. I have written before that we need to communicate more with our membership. We appreciate your patronage and financial support but we want to make this organization responsive to its membership. We will be sending out pertinent information and notices of upcoming events via email in a format similar to this example. Of course to take advantage of this information, you need to give us your email address. Please contact us at info@kswildlife.org and give us your email so we can better share with you these conservation updates. We will not share your email with anyone else and will not stuff your inbox with useless information every day. We plan to send these email information updates no more than once a week or as needed to keep our membership informed about critical conservation issues.

As seen in other places in this newsletter, we are celebrating the 25th anniversary of our week-long Outdoor Adventure Camp for 10-12 year-olds. This is a major accomplishment of which we are very proud. Many different folks have stepped up to keep this camp going for 25 years. We give a special thanks to Tommy and Theresa Berger who have coordinated the camp for more than 15 years. Several campers have returned as adults to be counselors, which makes a good statement about the value of the camp. We are always in need of more counselors, so if you can help us during this week, please contact us at the email above or any of the phone numbers listed in this newsletter.

The peak of the fishing season is upon us. May is always the best fishing month of the year. It is the time when even novice anglers have a good chance of catching something. Crappie and bluegill will be close to the bank spawning, walleye will start feeding on the shallow flats and catfish are becoming active in lakes and streams. I hope you have a chance to go fishing and take a young angler with you.

Donate Now!

To remove your name from our mailing list, please [click here](#).

Questions or comments? E-mail us at info@kswildlife.org or call us (316)-214-3001

KWF FEATURED SPECIES



White bass are silver-white to pale green with darker, slender striping along their sides. The forward dorsal fin is a spinous ray; the posterior dorsal fin is softer with notched tails. During late April and early May they travel from reservoirs, big lakes and rivers to spawning sites miles up tributaries...

[Learn More about White Bass](#)

QUARTER CENTURY OF OUTDOOR ADVENTURE!

KWF's OUTDOOR ADVENTURE CAMP (OAC) TURNS 25 THIS YEAR! THIS SIX DAY SUMMER CAMP HAS EDUCATED HUNDREDS OF KIDS ABOUT NATURE, FISHING, SHOOTING SPORTS, AND CRAFTS. YOUR SON OR DAUGHTER SHOULD BE A PART OF THIS WONDERFUL EXPERIENCE. REGISTER BY MAY 31. [LEARN MORE:](#)

[HTTP://KSWILDLIFE.ORG/
OUTDOORADVENTURE-
CAMP.PHP](http://kswildlife.org/outdooradventure-camp.php)

Kansas Wildlife Federation
P.O. Box 771282
Wichita, Kansas 67277-1282
Phone: (316) 214-3001

Outdoor Adventure Camp

Name _____

Age _____ Sex _____

Address _____

County _____ Phone _____

Parents' Names & Day/night Phone Numbers:

Father _____

Mother _____

Group Picture Order \$10.00 Each _____

Please include payment with camp fee.

T-shirt: (Adult Sizes)

Size: ____ SM ____ Med. ____ LG ____ XL ____ XXL ____

(T-shirts included in Craft Fee)

Full \$300 fee with application due May 28.

Refund only upon written notice of cancellation
prior to May 28.

No reductions or refunds for late arrivals or
early departures.

**Make check payable to the
Kansas Wildlife Federation (KWF).**

Call 785-526-7466 for details or send
application with payment:

Outdoor Adventure Camp

C/o Theresa Berger

406 S. New York Ave.

Sylvan Grove, KS 67481

E-mail: bergkwf@wtciweb.com

2013 Outdoor Adventure Camp: A summer treat for youngsters

25th anniversary of OAC

Outdoor Adventure Camp (OAC) is a six-day summer camp for kids who either enjoy the outdoors or want to learn more about it. This conservation education program is co-sponsored by the Kansas Wildlife Federation and KSU Cooperative Extension Service. This will

be the 25th anniversary for this popular camp and educational opportunity.

If you are a Kansas youngster who enjoys the outdoors, now is the time to make plans to attend Out-

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2013 NWF Alternate

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Junction City, KS

Kansas Wildlife Officers

Association

Iola, KS

KANSAS WILDLIFE FEDERATION

Officers and Board of Directors

The Kansas Wildlife Federation promotes hunting and fishing opportunities and associated recreation for the benefit of all hunters, anglers and conservationists.

KWF supports the sustainable use and management of fish and wildlife and their habitats through education, partnerships, outreach and policy oversight.

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Open

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Please send your mailing label and new address, clearly printed. Allow 2 to 6 weeks for the change to be made. Send to:

Kansas Wildlife Federation Newsletter
P.O. Box 771282
Wichita, KS 67277-1282

Can you help?

Outdoor Adventure Camp is an ongoing project of KWF, run strictly by volunteers who feel strongly that youngsters need to have an opportunity to learn more about the great outdoors! Volunteer counselors are needed to spend a week or even just a few days supervising youngsters. We prefer a counselor for every 8 to 10 youngsters. That means for 50 kids, usually about 40 boys and 10 girls, we need 4 to 5 male counselors and 1 to 2 females.

In the past, we've had parents attend with their youngsters, grandparents, college students wanting to get into the counseling or camp administration field, teachers and people interested in helping children. We prefer college students who have an interest in working with kids- an internship may be worked out with instructors. We also have a few openings for junior counselors as well. You must be at

least 18 years of age.

Who wouldn't like to spend a week with 50, 10 to 12 year-olds—trying to get them to sleep, keeping them in line all day and nursing cuts, bruises, poison ivy—helping kids have a great summer outdoor experience?! You'll be ready to go home and relax when it's over. Moreover, it won't cost you a dime, except for the gas to get to camp. Seriously, it is a rewarding experience. Please consider helping out. Call me to get your name on the list.

This camp is funded primarily through fees collected from those attending. Outdoor Writers of Kansas provides scholarships for participants from the Big Brothers/Big Sisters program each year. Sportsman's groups throughout Kansas often fund local youngsters to provide scholarships to help with the cost.

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Calendar of events

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| June 1 | KWF Kenneth Francisco Memorial Family Fishing Day, Newton |
| June 2-7 | KWF 25th Anniversary Outdoor Adventure Camp, Camp Wa Shun Ga |
| June 8 | Walk With Wildlife, GPNC, Wichita |
| June 8 | Kansas State Rifle Assoc. Annual Meeting, Topeka |
| June 8 | 4th Annual Justin Corbet Shooting Sports Foundation "Youth Day", Ravenwood, Topeka |
| June 12 | KWF/TimberRidge Let's Get Outdoors Day Camp, Olathe (go to www.kswildlife.org) |
| June 15 | Symphony in the Flint Hills, Ft. Riley |
| June 22 | Great American Backyard Campout |
| June 27 | Kansas Wildlife, Parks and Tourism Commission mtg, Garden City |
| July 20 | Kansas Wildlife Federation BOD meeting, Manhattan |
| August 1 | Kansas Wildlife, Parks and Tourism Commission mtg, Yates Center |
| Aug 6-8 | KGLC Mid-/Shortgrass Range School, Camp Lakeside at Lake Scott |
| Aug 12-14 | America's Grasslands Conference, Manhattan |
| Aug 20-22 | KGLC Tallgrass Range School, Camp Wood YMCA at Elmdale |
| Sept 6-7 | Bluestem Farm & Ranch Wildlife Appreciation Days, Emporia |
| Oct 17 | Kansas Wildlife, Parks and Tourism Commission mtg, Hutchinson |
| Oct 19 | Kansas Wildlife Federation BOD meeting, Great Bend |

Kansas Wildlife Federation to sponsor day camp

TimberRidge Adventure Center in Olathe to host event

The Kansas Wildlife Federation is taking reservations for its Day Camp June 12th at TimberRidge Adventure Center for boys & girls 10-12 years old. This is the first day camp the Kansas Wildlife Federation has offered. We chose the TimberRidge Adventure Center to host the event because of its excellent record of conducting day camps for kids. Their staff will conduct most of the activities and three members of the Kansas Wildlife Federation will also provide expertise.

One of those members is Phil Taunton from Emporia, whose radio program "What's In Outdoors" on KVOE extols the benefits of outdoor experiences for kids. His Last Child on the Prairie is an excellent direc-

tory for parents and teachers wanting to know how to provide children with outdoor experiences. Our other two participating members are Cynthia Rhodes, the KWF Education Committee chairperson, and Ted Beringer, Northeast District Director of the Kansas Wildlife Federation.

The fee is \$25 per child, due no later than May 21st. The camp is limited to 15 kids, with priority given to children of parents who are members of the Kansas Wildlife Federation.

Please notify Ted Beringer, Day Camp Coordinator, by email (beringert@umkc.edu) if you are interested in having your child attend; place "Day Camp" in the subject line. The Day Camp is on the Kansas City Star list of summer camps.

The Day Camp's schedule of events is as follows:

9:00 am	Arrival & Paperwork
9:15 am	Introduction and
Games	
10:00 am	Fishing
11:00 am	Boating
12:00 pm	Lunch
12:45 pm	Archery
1:45 pm	BB Guns
2:30 pm	Hiking
3:30 pm	Wrap up
4:00 pm	Leave for Home

TimberRidge Adventure Center is at 12300 S. Homestead Lane, Olathe, KS 66061. To learn more about TimberRidge Adventure Center, visit: http://jcprd.com/parks_facilities/timberidge.cfm

HELP

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KWF volunteers donate a tremendous amount of time and money. We wel-

come any donations or funding ideas to improve the program.

Anyone who wants to present a program at camp should call me. We're always looking for new ideas. Outdoor Adventure Camp is for youngsters, and they come first!

It takes a lot of work by a number of volunteers to make it a positive learning experience. Can you help? Call Theresa Berger at 785-526-7466 or e-mail her at bergkwf@wtciweb.com.

OAC

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door Adventure Camp from Sunday, June 2 through Friday, June 7 at the Camp WaShunGa area of Rock Springs Ranch, just south of Junction City. The camp is open to boys and girls ages 10 to 12 this summer.

Mornings will be spent traipsing the grounds at Camp WaShunGa with instructors, getting a hands-on feel for how various critters and plants live together in the ecosystem we call Kansas. Afternoons are spent learning about several areas of the outdoors, including mammals, insects, birds, fish and amphibians and reptiles. Ecology, wetlands, riparian areas and

watersheds are some terms you will learn about at this unique camp.

Since the prairie does not go to sleep at sundown, neither will you. Depending on the evening, you may be out and about prowling for owls, stargazing, spotlighting spiders or watching bats gobble bugs.

Other activities include scavenger hunts, water sports including swimming and canoeing, fishing, shooting sports including rifle, shotgun, archery, and pellet gun. You'll pick your choices, or participate in all if you like.

The price of the camp includes all food, instruction and lodging. A swimsuit, sleeping gear and clothes you'll wear for a week are about all you need to bring. Sunscreen, insect

repellent, a cap and water bottle also will come in handy. The price for the entire week is \$300, which includes arts and crafts. You may want to bring a little money for snacks and souvenirs at Milford Hatchery and Nature Center. Space is limited and registration deadline is May 28.

Send your application and full fee to Outdoor Adventure Camp, c/o Theresa Berger, 406 S. New York Ave., Sylvan Grove, KS 67481. Checks should be made payable to the Kansas Wildlife Federation. If you need more information or an application, phone 785-526-7466. Evenings are best, or leave a message on the machine. You can also go to the KWF website www.kswildlife.org for an application form.

Angling couple holds records after catching tournament-winning blue catfish

By Daniel Xu
Outdoor Hub Reporters

Stefanie Stanley hooked a giant-sized blue catfish at the Catfish Chasers Tournament in Kansas last Saturday, securing her first place on the podium and the biggest catch recorded in any of the state's lakes. According to Kansas.com, the Olathe resident was fishing in Milford Reservoir when the catfish took her shad bait.

"We knew he was nice, but then he came up and barrel-rolled beside the boat," Stefanie said. "We were like, 'Holy cow, this is a whopper.' It has shoulders on it like a linebacker."

It weighed in at a little over 82 pounds and needless to say, she won the tournament by a sizable margin.

"These blue catfish are really growing, they're making a world-class fishery here in Kansas in a lot of our lakes," said David Studebake, co-owner of the tournament. "It

won't be long before the new state record comes from Milford. It may only be a couple of years."

Perhaps that new record will come from the same fish. Stanley's stunning catch was released back into the water after spending some time in a tank while officials weighed it. According to the tournament owners, it is the largest catfish ever caught in Milford Reservoir, and the biggest from any Kansas lake.

Still, it wasn't entirely unexpected for Stefanie. The Stanleys are known for hauling big fish. Last summer Stephanie's daughter BayLeigh caught a 70-pound catfish from the Kaw River, which seems small next to her husband's 102.9-pound catch out of the Missouri River.

"She has the biggest ever from a lake, and he has the biggest from a Kansas river," said Studebake's partner Rich Witt. "Those are some nice fish."

Stefanie's husband, Robert Stan-

ley, currently holds the state record for the largest blue caught not only in a river, but anywhere in the state.

When FOX4 asked him if he thought his wife was trying to one-up him, Robert replied, "more power to her. I was excited she did it and by herself too."

Stefanie's previous personal best was a 48-pounder.

"It's kind of like giving birth, that feeling you're just shaking, you're in awe. It's an amazing feeling!" Stefanie said. Her team also bagged \$2,000 in the tournament.

Part of their success can be attributed to the catch-and-release policies of tournaments like the Catfish Chasers as well as a boom in the species' population. Although native to Kansas waters, new regulations and abundant food have led to an increase in the blue catfish. They also serve to decrease the number of invasive zebra mussels, which they munch down on with zeal.

2013 Fishing Atlas now available

Kansas Fishing Atlas is one-stop shopping for anglers
in search of the perfect fishing hole

Packed with over 60 pages of detailed, easy-to-read maps, the 2013 Kansas Fishing Atlas is a must-have for any angler. In addition to maps of public waters, anglers can also find maps of Fishing Impoundment and Stream Habitats (F.I.S.H.) waters, Community Fisheries Assistance Program (CFAP) leased properties, and lakes deemed as Family Friendly Facilities (FFF).

F.I.S.H.

F.I.S.H. sites are privately-owned ponds or streams the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism

(KDWPT) has leased and opened to public fishing. These sites are numbered in red on each map.

CFAP

CFAP leases fishing rights for lakes operated by communities to ensure no additional fees are charged for anglers. More than 200 community lakes, covering nearly 13,000 acres, are enrolled in CFAP for 2013.

FFF

FFF lakes are alcohol-free fishing spots with flush toilets, regular security patrols, security lighting

and easy accessibility, making them perfect for family fishing outings. FFF lakes are indicated on the list of CFAP-enrolled properties found at the front of the fishing atlas.

Anglers can obtain the 2013 Kansas Fishing Atlas from most KDWPT offices and license vendors, as well as online at www.ksoutdoors.com

To download an electronic version of the 2013 Kansas Fishing Atlas, visit www.ksoutdoors.com and click "KDWPT-Info/Locations/Hunting-Fishing-Maps-by-County/2013-Fishing-Atlas."

Outdoor Adventure Camp celebrates 25 years

It is a special year for the KWF Outdoor Adventure Camp so please join the KWF board of directors and hundreds of former campers in celebrating its 25th year! Over the last quarter century, 800 kids have gone

through the camp with many of those kids attending all three years of their eligibility. All have been introduced to the life sciences and shooting sports, as well as outdoor recreation activities available in Kansas.

Some participants have not only been involved in OAC as campers but also have come back to be counselors. A couple of those, Clay Mrkonic and Shandra Robb, have provided insights as to their experience at OAC.

Clay Mrkonic

My name is Clay Mrkonic; I'm from Merriam, Kansas. When I was 9 years old my Grandpa George presented me with a snippet from a KWF article describing an opportunity to volunteer as a camp counselor. He asked if I would tag along as a "junior camper" if he would become a counselor. Being the ever-precocious/ornery youngster, I was skeptical at first. It would be the first time in my life spent away from my folks. As my Grandpa told me more and more about the opportunity, I began to get the feeling that Outdoor Adventure Camp (OAC) was right up my alley! So began an adventure spanning 15 years (first as camper, then as a counselor) that has been so enriching and rewarding it's tough to put into words.

From learning the proper way to handle firearms, seeing my first owl in the wild, or mastering the improved clinch knot, the list of things I learned at camp is long. I have always been passionate about the outdoors. As a young camper, OAC reinforced and expanded this passion, giving me an invaluable knowledge base and an education that I not only utilize day-to-day, but will undoubtedly carry for life.

Fast forward to spring of 2000. I received a call from Tommie and Theresa Berger, OAC coordinators, in need of volunteer counselors. At 19, my summer schedule was wide open (to say the least) so I jumped on the opportunity to get back to the camp I had such fond memories of. My first year as a counselor (a somewhat selfish attempt to entertain a longing for youthful nostalgia), made me realize just how important OAC camp is for our younger generation. I was hooked!

Now at 32 years old, the hectic responsibilities of adult life are ever present. However, the first full week of June is always dedicated to OAC. I only have to remember the look on a camper's face when they catch their first fish or break their first clay pigeon to realize using one week of "vacation" days – out of two weeks available – to share the natural wonders of our great

Shandra Robb

My name is Shandra Robb and I am from Wichita. I was introduced to the Outdoor Adventure Camp (OAC) at an early age, since my dad, Steve Sorensen, started the camp in 1986 for the Kansas Wildlife Federation. While I thought I should have been allowed to attend when I was eight, I had to wait until I was ten, just like all the other campers.

I wanted to go to OAC because my whole life I had grown up in a deer-hunting, fish catching, duck retrieving-dog home. I didn't have to go because of my dad but I think he is the reason I went in the first place. I was the opposite of everything we grew up doing in our family but I still wanted to go to camp. I fell in love with most things about camp life. I will say the late snore-warnings from the male counselors and the women leaders letting us stay up late whispering were memorable.

When I look back on that first year, I was scared to do almost every activity they offered but especially shoot a shotgun. We went up that long road to the shotgun range and I got my brave face on. I listened about safety and watched a few people shoot, then it was my turn. I went up and held the gun and did everything our instructor said except one thing. I did not hold that gun nearly tight enough or close enough to my shoulder. When I pulled that trigger, I missed the clay target and gave myself a black eye. Lucky for me I had a dad to go to late in the night crying and to tell me to take two Tylenol and go back to bed! I never had the courage to shoot a shotgun until I was an adult counselor. Now I try and get everyone of my campers to do it at least once. It's some of the most unlikely kids that do the greatest.

I didn't have the great first year you might think. And some years were a little rougher than others and some better than you would ever expect. I made a whole lot of friends during those weeks. Oh and boys, there were a lot of cute boys. Clay Mrkonic was a camper with me for at least one year. We have been counselors and friends for the last several years.

I attended camp all three years I was eligible and wanted to go back as a 13 year-old. No luck. When I was 15 I was

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Please consider giving your children the same great chance that Shandra and Clay had. Sign your young person up today. And if you don't have a young person eligible for camp, please consider donating to the Kansas Wildlife Federation to help support the activities at the camp.

Range schools focus on soil health in August

“Creating Range Wealth Through Soil Health is the theme for the Kansas Grazing Lands Coalition (KGLC) summer range schools,” said Tim Christian, state coordinator for the group. “The Mid-/Shortgrass Range School runs from August 6-8 at Camp Lakeside, Lake Scott, and the Tallgrass Range School is set for August 20-22 at Camp Wood YMCA, Elmdale.”

The theme is indicative of the need for ranchers and land managers to employ grazing, structural and management practices that benefit the native grasses which in turn sustain or improve soil health creating a positive cycle that improves over time. The benefit to ranchers is their ability to harvest the increased forage with their livestock that occurs as soil water intake increases, microbial activity is stimulated, and other well-documented cyclic functions come into balance, said Christian. Our cadre of instructors - ranchers, agency, university and organizational staffs - will balance a good deal of hands-on instruction with

classroom presentations.

The 2013 registration fees have not changed from previous years at \$300 per person. The fee covers course materials, on-site lodging and meals, and other related costs. Ranchers, landowners, and students may qualify for a \$150 scholarship if they meet eligibility and request one using KGLC’s scholarship form. Agency staffs may qualify for \$100 in scholarships. The form and more information on the Schools is available at www.kglc.org under 2013 Range Schools found in the navigation bar. Scholarship applications must be submitted by July 23 for the Mid-/Shortgrass School and August 6 for the Tallgrass School.

We try to hold down costs for those interested in attending, said Christian, and we rely on our supporting partners to provide in-kind and cash underwriting to offset our costs to put the Schools on. Partners include the Natural Resources Conservation Service; Fort Hays State University; Kansas State University; Kansas Department

of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism; The Nature Conservancy (which hosts one-day of the Mid-/Shortgrass School on their Smoky Valley Ranch); Kansas Section of the Society for Range Management, US Fish and Wildlife Service Partners Program, and Feed-Lot Magazine. Other partners will be coming onboard in coming weeks, he said.

KGLC organized in 1991 as a non-profit educational organization and its vision is to regenerate Kansas grazing lands. This is achieved through the management, economics, ecology, production, and technical assistance programs provided by voluntary methods to reach landowners, ranchers, and others making decisions on grazing lands.

For more information on the 2013 KGLC Range School, contact Tim Christian, state coordinator, at 620-241-3636, email to tdchristian@cox.net or Ken Sherraden, assistant coordinator, at 785-922-7061, email kenneths.herraden@sbcglobal.net. You also may go to the

RIVER

Continued from Page 1

mark may be hard to distinguish, but in most areas, it is relatively clear. An apparent trail leading from the river onto private land does not give the public permission to use the trail or the land around it. If in doubt about the property line, err on the side of caution and confine activities to the river bed.

Responsible Use of the River

People using the Arkansas River are subject to the same laws and

regulations as on land, so operating a vehicle while intoxicated, reckless driving, disorderly conduct and other violations are prohibited. Also, destruction of certain wildlife habitat can be a violation, such as destroying beaver dams and lodges. Where there is some water flow, a beaver dam helps hold back the flow, creating vital habitat for other wildlife during a drought.

And, given the increased activity, consideration and respect for others will be necessary for everyone to enjoy the experience. Personal safety is also important, and proper protec-

tive gear should be worn at all times. While on the river, remember that emergency response time may be longer. Most cell phones have GPS capabilities that allow local dispatchers to locate a 911 call and send emergency personnel to the right location.

With the proper respect for property, other users and the river environment, everyone using the Arkansas River can enjoy a great outdoor experience. For information about the Sunflower State’s rivers and streams, visit www.ksoutdoors.com, then click on KDWPT Info – Locations – Rivers-and-Streams Access.

CLAY

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state (KS) with our youth is a com-

plete no-brainer.

Being a realist, I know that a significant percentage of what we teach and experience at OAC may fall into obscurity at some point. However, if each youngster can take even one

thing they learned/experienced at camp to enrich their own lives and pass that knowledge on, I feel we have done a good job.

Cheers to another 25+ years of OAC!

Phil Taunton wins National Wildlife Federation's 'Volunteer of the Year' Award



Phil Taunton, center, Emporia, receives the National Wildlife Federation 2012 Volunteer of the Year award from Steve Allinger, NWF Board President, left, and Larry Schweiger, NWF CEO and President. Phil is a freelance outdoor writer and hosts the What's In Outdoors radio program at KVOE in Emporia. Phil also serves as the Southeast District Director for the Kansas Wildlife Federation.

Phil Taunton of Emporia, Kansas has been selected as the National Wildlife Federation's (NWF) 2012 Volunteer of the Year. He is receiving this prestigious award because of his spirit of volunteerism and his passion for connecting children and their

families with nature. Phil Taunton will receive the award on Saturday, March 16th, 2013 at NWF's annual meeting in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

"It's the dedication and commitment of people like Phil Taunton that

helps ensure a wildlife heritage for our children," said Larry Schweiger, President and CEO of the National Wildlife Federation. "Phil's volun-

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SHANDRA

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asked to attend camp as a junior counselor and help Theresa. One day dad asked me if I wanted to join Tommie and Teresa Berger as a counselor and I said yes immediately.

I got a lot out of OAC, both as a camper and as a counselor. I could name so many plants and trees and birds and

reptiles. What I really got is a guide for self-survival in a lot of ways. I think that camp is a good place to start learning these things. Learn about food and how to catch it, find useful berries and leaves...and harmful ones, too. We always show the campers on the first day what poison ivy looks like and, wouldn't you know, the next day at least 3 kids have it. We teach them to trap and look for game trails. My favorite time is the fishing derby and s'mores night down at the campfire. Campfire is awesome.

I probably don't remember all the things I learned at OAC. I try to pass along that which I do to my kids. My daughter is nine and anxious to attend camp with her mom. Her grandfather brings her up for a day when he attends camp to visit with campers and take pictures. I think she is hooked.

I hope as many kids can attend OAC as possible to be exposed to the outdoor opportunities that Kansas has to offer. They won't regret it.

25th 4-H Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Program contest

By Cindy Higgins
and Cynthia Rhodes

The 25th 4-H Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Program (WHEP) contest took place April 12 at Flat Rock Ranch, residence of Bob and Karen Henderson, by Hamilton in Greenwood County. Bob and Charlie Lee, Kansas State University, started this contest in 1988.

Two age groups (9-13 and 14-18 years) competed in this wildlife management contest that required students to identify foods eaten by wildlife, determine wildlife habitat by observing aerial photographs, choose wildlife management practices for a specific species and land area, and write a management plan.

Competitors, boys and girls, totaled 42 students comprising ten teams and a number of individuals. Event winners were as follows.

Junior Division:

1st Individual – Hunter Mericle,
Winfield, KS

2nd Individual – Bailey Haunschild,
Winfield, KS

3rd Individual – Hunter Seacrest,
Pleasanton, KS

1st Team – Pleasanton FFA B-Team,
Pleasanton, KS

2nd Team – Newton Jr., Newton, KS

3rd Team – Cowley Junior G Team
Winfield, KS

Senior Division:

1st Individual – Brooke Falk, Eskridge, KS



Cindy Higgins

Participants in the 2013 WHEP contest receive instructions from Eve Clark, center, Administrative Assistant at KSU Extension Wildlife in Manhattan.

2nd Individual – Fritz Berger, Sylvan Grove, KS

3rd Individual – Jennifer Coates,
Eskridge, KS

1st Team – Cowley Sr., Winfield, KS

2nd Team – Mission Valley 1, Eskridge, KS

3rd Team – Sylvan Grove, Sylvan Grove, KS

The 2013 National Wildlife Habitat

Evaluation Program will be held in Trafalgar, Indiana at the Indiana FFA Leadership Center on July 21 –July 24. The top Kansas Senior Division team is eligible to compete at this national event.

Information needed to compete in the contest is contained in the Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Handbook 2nd Edition, which is on the KWF website (www.kswildlife.org).

KWF to host Kenneth Francisco Memorial Family Fishing Day

Kenneth Francisco of Newton loved to fish. He also served 26 years in the Kansas House of Representatives, Kansas Senate and the Kansas Racing Commission. Kenneth enjoyed spending time outdoors and passing on his love for the outdoors to his children and grandchildren. Kenneth passed away on March 7. His family designated the Kansas Wildlife Federation to receive his memorial.

To carry on Mr. Francisco's legacy, KWF will conduct the Kenneth Fran-

cisco Memorial Family Fishing Day on June 1 in Newton. The event will run from 10 am to 2 pm at the Spring Lake ponds at Spring Lake Road and Old Main Street.

The event is intended to introduce families with young kids to the opportunities of fishing. Instructions will be offered to first time anglers, young and old, by experts from the Kansas Wildlife, Parks and Tourism. Equipment will be supplied or people can bring their own. The weekend of June 1 & 2 is Free Fish-

ing Days in Kansas and anyone can fish during those two days without the need for a fishing license. Participating families will be provided fishing tackle they can use in future fishing adventures.

Participants must register by sending name and number of people involved to info@kswildlife.org. Children must be accompanied by a parent. Lunch will be provided free of charge to registered participants.

If you have any questions call 316-214-3001.

Ad Astra Archery Tournament successful

The 3rd annual Secretary of State Ad Astra Archery Tournament took place on Saturday, April 20, 2013 at MacLennan Park in Topeka. An outdoor event, 155 school children from kindergarten through 12th grade braved the chilly breezy day and took part in the competition. In addition, the general public enjoyed the Learn to Shoot area with one-on-one instruction. Archers and the public also enjoyed the horses from the Shawnee County Sheriff's Office Mounted Posse, as well as the fishing clinic by the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KD-WPT), and various rides such as the gladiator joust and whirly bird.

Secretary of State Kris Kobach presented plaques and other items to the following winners of this tournament:

K-3 division

- 1st Place: Jalee DeVader, Centershot Ministries at Wanamaker Woods Church of the Nazarene
- 2nd Place: Reagan Kobach, Centershot Ministries at Open Door

Baptist Church

- 3rd Place: KayLynn Hall, Centershot Ministries at Wanamaker Woods Church of the Nazarene

4th-6th grade division

- 1st Place: Grant Ricke, Clearwater USD 264
- 2nd Place: Jack Rowland, Clearwater USD 264
- 3rd Place: Hannah Schoonover, Erie Arrows (Erie & Chanute)

7th-8th grade division

- 1st Place: Nikki Duerksen, Clearwater USD 264
- 2nd Place: Jacob Spellman-Sak, Clearwater USD 264
- 3rd Place: Cody Hanna, Clearwater USD 264

9th-12th grade division

- 1st Place: Micaela Keehn, Jackson Heights High School
- 2nd Place: Jessica Koch, Clearwater USD 264
- 3rd Place: Bradon Williams, Clearwater USD 264

Ad Astra Archery Tournament Inc. was formed this year as a not for profit corporation. Tax deductible donations enabled Secretary Kobach to present financial awards for the highest scoring archers in each division at the Kansas Archery in the Schools Program tournament held in Hays, Kansas, who are eligible to participate in the national championships of the National Archery in the Schools Program in Louisville, Kentucky, and who make the trip to represent Kansas there. Two individuals met the criteria this year, and they are:

- Elementary School Division, 1st Place:** Katelyn Blanco, Clearwater
- Middle School Division, 1st Place:** Tatyana Miner, Clearwater

Special thanks to Gary Keehn (KDWP) for serving as range master and Joyce Ellis (KASP tournament) and Shelby Stevens (KDWP) for serving as scorekeepers. Plans are to hold the 4th annual Ad Astra Archery Tournament in the spring of 2014.



Shotgun winner

Craig Turner is the winner of the Mossberg 500 Youth Model shotgun given away this year by the Kansas Wildlife Federation. Turner, left, accepts the shotgun from Carl Conley, KWF South-central District Director, at the 2013 Hunting and Fishing Expo in the Flint Hills Mall in Emporia.

KDWPT announces five-year review of state listed species

The Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT) is currently conducting the five-year review of the list of Kansas species that are threatened, endangered, or species-in-need-of-conservation (SINC). The five-year review is required by the Kansas Nongame and Endangered Species Conservation Act of 1975. Any individual or group can petition KDWPT to propose an addition, deletion, or modification to the current lists by providing pertinent scientific information required within the petition.

KDWPT relies on the Threatened and Endangered Species Task Force to assist with the review process. The task force consists of members representing various disciplines, including state and federal agencies and state universities. To determine if a full review is warranted, the task force examines updated scientific information and research for cur-

rently listed species and those proposed for listing by petition. Species experts are consulted and all available data is evaluated during the full review. After a full review is completed, the task force makes recommendations to the KDWPT Secretary and the Kansas Wildlife, Parks and Tourism Commission at a public commission meeting. These recommendations and any amendments to them are published in the Kansas Register for public comment for at least 90 days. The secretary then submits to the commission the recommended changes, if any, that should be made to the list of threatened and endangered species or SINC.

At the last five-year review in 2008, three species were added to the state threatened list (shoal chub, plains minnow, and delta hydrobe snail) and two species were removed from the list (bald eagle and peregrine falcon). The current

state threatened list includes six invertebrates, 13 fish, seven amphibians, seven reptiles, two birds and one mammal. The state endangered list includes 10 invertebrates, five fish, three amphibians, four birds and two mammals. The state species-in-need-of-conservation (SINC) list includes 17 invertebrates, 31 fish, two amphibians, seven reptiles, 15 birds, and six mammals. Species on the SINC list are deemed to require conservation measures to prevent them from becoming threatened or endangered. Complete lists can be viewed on the KDWPT website, www.ksoutdoors.com. Go to Services, then click on Threatened and Endangered Wildlife.

A recent survey conducted by Responsive Management, an internationally recognized research firm specializing in

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Creating successful youth outdoor programs: Get parents involved

By Anthony Larson
Coulees Region Adventures

Outdoor youth programs are often held up as inherently positive and effective methods for getting kids outside. But how effective are they, and what's the best way to leave a lasting impact?

This weekend, as I was fishing one of my boyhood spots—mostly for nostalgia, partly to kill time—something magical happened. A group of three boys pedaled past me on their bikes, all in a hurry to get to somewhere; a fishing hole just down river from me.

I pulled in a nice 10-pound carp, and one of the boys was watching me pull it in from a distance. I could hear him yelling something to his buddies but I couldn't understand it, I have to assume that it was a relayed report.

Shortly afterwards, one of the boys hooked into a carp about the same size as mine (or bigger if you ask the boys—the nature of fishing I guess) and was battling it in.

I quickly grabbed my camera and ran

over to watch them haul it in. It gave the boys quite a fight as they were using light tackle. I could see the looks on their faces when it would make big runs. When they got the fish to shore, none of the boys really knew what to do with the fish. Finally, after a one-minute debate, one of the boys went down to the water's edge and yanked the fish out of the water.

After posing for a few pictures, one of the boys offered me the carp—which I gladly took for my collection in an old timer's smoker, and we parted ways.

This weekend's event really brought up a good notion that I've been kicking around for a while. I hear a lot of chatter in the fishing industry on how we need to be more youth-focused and that we need to "take a kid fishing."

Do we really? Are youth the future of the outdoor (or any other) industry? It seems that everywhere I go in the professional fishing industry, there is some mention of youth mentoring programs. I think just about every professional angler I know is involved with a program or is promoting a program of some sort. It

seems that every one of the programs has a common theme: "kids are the future of the fishing industry (or any other outdoor industry)."

I think it's great that we are an industry that's youth-focused and driven to constantly give back to our communities. And truth be told, I'm involved in quite a few programs in the La Crosse area myself, but something dawned on me about a year ago. Are the children REALLY responsible for the future of the industry?

The reality we face is no, the children really aren't the future of the industry.

GASP, what?! Yep, the truth is that adults aged 25-35 are, the sandwich generation that gets missed when thinking about all these programs.

Here's the thing: studies show that youth who engage in outdoor sports often drop out of the sporting industry around age 16. There are several factors for this: school, work, and organized life cut into the fun. Studies further show that the child then becomes active at age 25,

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Council Grove Regional Envirothon



Cindy Higgins

Envirothon participant listen to a discussion regarding animal identification from a KDWPT employee.

**By Cindy Higgins
and Cynthia Rhodes**

On April 24, 23 teams participated in the Council Grove Regional Envirothon, which was attended by more than two hundred competitors, team advisors, parents, U.S. Army “solider buddies,” NRCS staff, four KWF board members, and others. Teams attended presentations in the morning and were tested in the afternoon. Cold weather prompted orga-

nizers to move the event from Canning Creek Cove at the Council Grove Reservoir to the Morris County 4-H Building.

The Kansas Envirothon is an outdoor environmental high school competition where students learn and are tested on soils, forestry, wildlife, aquatics, and a current issue. This year, all teams are required to compete in oral presentations over the topic of grasslands.

The competition results are as follows.
1st place Clay Center High School

2nd place White City High School
3rd place Wakefield High School
4th place Mission Valley High School

Top teams from the four Kansas Regional Envirothon competitions will compete for the Kansas State Envirothon honors on May 8 at the Webster Conference Center by Salina. More information about the Envirothon contests may be found at the KWF website (www.kswildlife.org).

SPECIES

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natural resource and outdoor recreation issues, found that conservation of threatened and endangered wildlife remains important among Kansans. Some interesting findings include:

A majority of Kansas residents (91 percent) agreed that the department should continue to identify and protect habitat critical to threatened and endangered species.

A majority (73 percent) of residents agree with the statement, “Wildlife that is threatened and endangered in Kansas yet abundant in other states should still be protected in Kansas.”

Petitions must be received by July 31, 2013 to be considered for the current five-year review. Petition forms can be downloaded at <http://www.ksoutdoors.com/news/Services/Threatened-and-Endangered-Wildlife> and must be submitted to the Office of the Secretary, 1020 S. Kansas Ave., Suite 200, Topeka, KS 66612-1327.

2012 report on Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease helps clarify extent of outbreak

A total of 1,274 deer were suspected of having Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD) in Kansas in 2012, and although considered to be one of the worst outbreaks in the state, data suggests that this disease had “patchy” impacts on populations within deer management units (DMU).

Seventeen deer from 16 counties were diagnosed with EHD in 2012, with 16 of the deer being EHDV-2 positive and one deer being EHDV-1 positive. Sick or dead deer found during the outbreak that exhibited symptoms or signs suggestive of EHD were designated as suspects and counted, making the total count 1,274, including the ones that were

tested.

To put Kansas EHD mortality rates into perspective, surrounding states reported the following figures for 2012: Illinois – 2,925; Iowa – 2,974; Nebraska – 5,998; Missouri – 10,177.

The 16 counties with confirmed cases of EHD-infected deer in 2012 included Anderson, Atchison, Coffey, Cowley, Dickinson, Doniphan, Douglas, Franklin, Jackson, Jefferson, Leavenworth, Lyon, Marshall, Osage, Republic, and Wilson.

Despite the high mortality rate associated with this disease, deer populations typically recover within a few years following EHD die-offs. The deer population in eastern Kan-

sas continues to be robust and “gaps” left by EHD will quickly fill in with deer moving in from adjacent, less affected areas.

Although the viral cause of EHD was not discovered until the late-1950s, reports of die-offs consistent with EHD date back to the 1890s. Large scale regional deer population decreases have not been observed, but this disease can have a significant effect upon the deer in a localized area because of the high mortality rate associated with it.

EHD is an acute, infectious, viral disease transmitted between animals by biting midges. EHD typically

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TAUNTON

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teer efforts have had a major impact on his community and the National Wildlife Federation is grateful for his continued support and determination to make our world a better place.”

Phil Taunton has excelled in his service and dedication to educating Americans on the importance of wildlife conservation. In alignment with NWF’s mission and “Be Out There” campaign, his passion for outdoor sport education activities and wildlife has led him on a campaign to inspire today’s youth to get involved in the outdoors.

As an active outdoorsman and conservationist, he has been involved in several environmental education programs including Green School Initiatives, ECO-Meets, No Child Left Inside and local Envirothon competitions. He was also instrumental in the development of Emporia

State University’s education booklet titled “Last Child on the Prairie: A Directory for Parents and Teachers for Returning Children to the Outdoors.” Along with providing an excellent guide for outdoor volunteers and resources, the booklet paid homage to local youth, Beau Arndt, who was tragically killed in a hunting accident. Phil worked with the Arndt family to help create “4 Beau Arndt, Love of the Outdoors” Outdoor Appreciation Days and a scholarship at Emporia State University in Beau’s name.

As a prominent outdoor education instructor in Kansas, Phil’s leadership roles are vast amongst local hunting and shooting sport organizations. He has been a key supporter of KWF’s Outdoor Adventure Camp, a premiere summer camp where children are introduced to fish and wildlife management, wetland ecology and other conservation practices. His advocacy for outdoor education branched into local legislative processes where he spoke on behalf

of KWF in front of the Kansas Sub-Cabinet. He was also instrumental in the development and drafting of the “No Child Left Inside” executive order with NWF’s Allen Cooper.

Phil was also influential in bringing an anti-poaching act titled, HB 2709 Penalties and restitution relating to hunting violations, trespassing and criminal hunting, to the floor with Representative Peggy Mast. Through the use of a survey on his radio show, “What’s In Outdoors” on 1400 am KVOE, Phil promoted this act and engaged listeners with discussions of wildlife news, conservation legislation and other conservation issues within the local area.

Phil Taunton’s love of the outdoors and his dedication to conservation has fueled his passion to create abundant educational opportunities for children to connect with nature and become stewards of the land. He truly embodies NWF’s mission to “inspire Americans to protect wildlife for our children’s future.”

Jamestown NAWCA II dedication held

In March, Ducks Unlimited and partners dedicated the Jamestown Wildlife Area Phase II project in Kansas, made possible through a North American Wetland Conservation Act (NAWCA) grant (<http://www.ducks.org/conservation/public-policy/nawca>). Many partners, neighboring landowners, duck hunters and DU volunteers attended the event. DU will erect a cairn with a plaque honoring these partners and DU major sponsors who supported the project on the Buffalo Creek Marsh unit.

The second phase of the Jamestown project included acquisition of 997

acres at both Jamestown and Talmo Marsh Wildlife Areas, and restoration of 393 acres of upland and wetland habitat. The Jamestown and Talmo Marsh Wildlife Areas combined provide over 4,000 acres of shallow wetland habitat for migrating waterfowl.

"This is a large and diverse partnership that has come together for this project," Secretary Robin Jennison of the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT) said in his remarks during the dedication ceremony.

Indeed, local governments, tourism, economic development, utilities, government agencies and non-gov-

ernmental wildlife organizations are among the partners. These include the City of Jamestown, Cloud County Tourism, Cloudcorp, the Boards of County Commissioners from Cloud, Jewell and Republic counties, Kansas Alliance of Wetlands and Streams, Westar Energy, Kansas Wildlife Federation, Pheasants Forever, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, The Nature Conservancy, DU and KDWPT. The restored and protected wetlands provide important stopover habitat for waterfowl during spring and fall migration, particularly mallards, northern pintails, blue-winged teal, Canada geese and snow geese.

Young wildlife deserve to be left wild

'Rescuing' presumably abandoned young really a death sentence

A lone fawn curled up amid tall grass in early spring can be an endearing sight, but it also can make an attractive target for more than just predators. Every year well-intentioned people attempt to "rescue" these presumably-abandoned young, often with deadly consequences. In almost all cases of young fawns found alone in the wild, the mother is typically feeding nearby, keeping a distant eye on her offspring. When concerned individuals decide to retrieve these young animals, they are unintentionally giving the fawn a death sentence.

The notion that a young animal found in the wild will die if not given care is wrong. Not only are most young found in the wild not abandoned, picking them up is against the

law. Both the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT) and the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) have regulations against such activity that can result in a fine up to \$1,000 or more. In addition to legal repercussions, wild animals can pose a number of health risks, including diseases such as distemper, rabies, Lyme disease, roundworms, tapeworms, mites, tularemia and more.

Additionally, if a "rescued" animal were to bite someone, it must be put to death and tested for diseases. Even if they don't bite, the young usually fail to survive in captivity because most people are not equipped to handle wild animals, especially as they mature. On the off chance the animal does survive in captivity, it typically

loses instincts that allow it to survive in the wild.

It is important to remember that although young wildlife may be cute, they belong in the wild. Wild animals cannot legally be inoculated by veterinarians, and few people really know how to care for them.

If you should see a young animal in the wild this spring or summer, observe at a distance and consider yourself lucky. But remember, just because they are temporarily alone, that doesn't mean they are abandoned.

If You Really Care, Leave Them There.

If you find an injured animal, a list of licensed rehabilitators can be found on the KDWPT website, www.ksoutdoors.com, by clicking "Services/Rehabilitation."

DISEASE

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occurs in late summer and fall and is thought to be consistent with periods of biting midge abundance. Freezing temperatures usually greatly reduce these populations, bringing a sudden end to outbreaks, however

active midge populations have been reported during winter in more mild climates.

Deer infected with EHD suffer from dehydration and high fever, causing them to seek water. Consequently, most deer that have fallen victim to this disease are found near the edges of rivers, ditches, and marshes.

There is no known effective treat-

ment or control for EHD.

Other wildlife species in Kansas, such as mule deer, elk, and pronghorn, can also be infected with EHD virus but are less susceptible to the disease.

For more information, visit <http://www.vet.uga.edu/scwds/pdfs/HD.pdf>, or <http://www.usask.ca/wcvm/herdmed/specialstock/deer/hemorrhagic/index.htm>.

Tips for safe boating

Recreational boating - enjoyed by more than 70 million Americans each year - can be a wonderful way to spend time with family and friends. Making safety a priority can ensure that boating stays fun. Unfortunately, more than 3,000 people are injured and approximately 700 die in boating incidents each year, according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

In an effort to prevent such tragedy, May 18-24 is recognized as National Safe Boating Week. The following safety tips from The Lehigh Group make sure that time spent in and around the water this summer is both enjoyable and safe.

Wear It - Properly fitted life jackets can prevent drowning and should be worn at all times by everyone on any boat. Comfortable Coast Guard-approved life jackets are widely available.

Take a Course - More than 7 out of

every ten boating incidents are caused by operator error. Boating education courses teach the rules for safe operation and navigation of recreational boats, and can help boat operators keep their passengers safe.

Upgrade Equipment - An upgrade or rope replacement will mean better performance and higher safety assurance for captains and first mates alike. Look for changing color or fraying in your ropes as a signal of age and wear. U/V rays can break down the fibers in rope, making them more prone to fading and tears. If these signs are present, it is best to discard and replace with high-performance rope, such as Wellington®-branded marine cordage, which has elasticity that allows it to absorb sudden shock loads, and resists rot, abrasion, mildew, marine growth, gasoline and oil.

Don't Drink - Alcohol use affects judgment, vision, balance and

coordination, and is involved in about one-third of all recreational boating fatalities, according to the CDC. Boating under the influence of alcohol is just as deadly as drinking and driving. Due to sun exposure and heat, people are likely to become impaired more quickly when on the water. So play it safe and avoid alcohol when boating.

Know about Carbon Monoxide - Carbon monoxide (CO) is an odorless, colorless and poisonous gas that is emitted by all internal combustion engines, such as boat engines and onboard motor generators. In the early stages, the symptoms of CO poisoning are similar to seasickness, but CO can kill in a matter of minutes. The only way to detect CO is with an alarm, so install CO alarms on board, especially in living and sleeping areas of large craft. In smaller vessels, consider a portable carbon monoxide alarm sized just right for travel and recreation.

CRP general sign-up offers conservation opportunities

Landowners can decide acres best suited to farming and to conservation

Beginning on May 20, the US Department of Agriculture will hold a Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) general sign-up. According to PLJV Conservation Policy Director Barth Crouch, this is a good opportunity to enroll expiring or new acres of marginal, highly erodible land into the Conservation Reserve; however, like all opportunities, the details are important. The program currently has around 27 million acres enrolled with 3.3 million acres due to expire on October 1 of this year. This means there is the opportunity for approximately 7 million acres of highly erodible cropland to be protected during this sign-up.

"With droughts plaguing the western Great Plains, this gives landowners a chance to decide which of their acres are best suited for farming and conserve the acres least suited for agricultural production," says Crouch. "When that land is enrolled and converted to

a grass and forb cover, it will provide homes for grassland birds for the next ten years, and hopefully beyond."

To prepare for the general sign-up, the Farm Service Agency is conducting a review of the soil rental rates, which is the amount paid to the contract landowners based on the soils in their fields. The new rates will be based on the National Agricultural Statistics Service's cash rental data, plus ten percent. Although this method works well in areas where cash rent is the dominant way agreements between landowners and agricultural tenants are handled, it falls far short in areas where shared cropping — the landowner and the tenant split expenses and profits — is the dominant method of renting farm ground. To show the problem this can cause, in the five states that cover the range of the Lesser Prairie-Chicken — Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas — there were

substantial numbers of counties where soil rental rates went down from \$1 to \$4 per acre after the initial review.

"Lowering the rental rates may influence landowners, even in the face of drought conditions, to try to put expiring CRP acres back into cropping of wheat, corn or soybeans," says Crouch, "and it is critical that we retain these acres, especially in areas that are serving as valuable habitat for the Lesser Prairie-Chicken. One alternative is to enroll expiring or new acres into Continuous CRP practices that pay sign-up incentive payments of \$150 per acre."

Practices that offer higher payments are CP42 for pollinators, State Acres for Wildlife for Lesser Prairie-Chickens and CP23A for playas. For more information about Continuous CRP practices or the CRP general sign-up, contact your local USDA Service Center.

Cornell Labs' 'Merlin' to be a bird ID wizard

By Krishna Ramanujan

Soon, when you see a bird you can't identify, Merlin, a new online bird ID tool from Cornell, will be able to help.

When sent a photo, Merlin's visual recognition system will help ID the bird. If a photo is not available, Merlin will play "20 questions," asking the inquirer about the location and date of the sighting among other questions before suggesting which species is most likely.

The developers seek the public's help to train the program, now under development at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology (with plans for a prototype later this year). Like a child learning new skills, this artificial intelligence program needs lots of input to become more accurate.

People can contribute through six activities at <http://AllAboutBirds.org/labs>. While bolstering Merlin, users also become better birders by learning which features are important. "Mark My Bird" shows users a photo of, say,

a cardinal and then asks them to click on graphics to indicate the bird's color patterns, size and shape. Another activity, "Bird Color Challenge," flashes a photo of a bird, then asks users to select the most prominent colors they remember.

The project is funded by the National Science Foundation.

To see the full article on this subject, go to the KWF website at:

<http://kwfnews.blogspot.com/2013/04/cornell-labs-merlin-to-be-bird-id-wizard.html>

Help conduct the Nightjar Survey

The 7th year of the Nightjar Survey Network is kicking off soon with survey dates in April for southern portions of the United States and later dates in May and June for other areas. This will be the first entire season with the new survey website www.nightjars.org. The new website provides an opportunity for volunteers and the general public to work more interactively with nightjar survey data, adopt survey routes online, enter data, view past survey years, and receive noteworthy Nightjar Survey news items.

The Nightjar Survey Network is a

program designed to collect information on the population distribution and trends of nightjars, such as whip-poor-wills, chuck-will's-widows, common poorwills, and others. Data collected also provide clues to factors that influence their abundance and help to plot a course for their conservation (see

<http://www.nightjars.org/survey-news/nightjar-survey-network-investigate-the-influence-of-landscape-composition-on-nightjar-populations/>).

Since 2007, 564 volunteers have surveyed 695 routes and have counted over 12,000 nightjars. We are always

in need of additional volunteers to survey routes. Nightjar survey routes are composed of 10 stops, spaced one mile apart, and can be completed in less than 2hrs.

If interested in helping out collecting data that can help conserve nightjar species, visit the www.nightjars.org website, see a map of available routes, log-in to adopt a route, and review and print survey instructions.

For more information, contact Michael Wilson, Center for Conservation Biology, College of William and Mary & Virginia Commonwealth University, at e-mail: nightjars@nightjars.org

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KDWPT sport fishery access program receives national award

FISH program receives special recognition from American Fisheries Society

The American Fisheries Society (AFS) presented the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT) with the 2012 Sport Fish Restoration Outstanding Project award at the March 21 commission meeting in Topeka. KDWPT received the award for the Fishing Impoundments and Stream Habitats (FISH) program in the category of Sport Fishery Development and Management. Mike Stone, AFS 2012 Sport Fish Restoration Awards program chair, presented the award to the commission on behalf of the KDWPT fisheries section.

First introduced in 1998, the FISH program was developed by KDWPT to increase public angling opportunities throughout the state. By partnering with private landowners to lease fishing rights, the FISH program provides anglers with access to waters not normally open to the public. Bodies of water commonly leased by the FISH program include private ponds, streams, and community lakes where angler fees had previously been charged.

A recent revitalization of the program using a combination of Sport Fish Restoration, fishing license, and Farm

Bill Voluntary Public Access funds, combined with update lease rates and incentives for landowners, resulted in a 181 percent increase in fishing locations in the past year.

FISH sites are typically open for public access from March 1 to October 31; however some landowners may allow year-round access.

For more information, including bodies of water currently enrolled in the program, fish species available at each area, and instructions on how to enroll your property, visit www.ksoutdoors.com.

Table tips for white bass

It's the white bass time of the year, and Kansas waters are loaded with them. When the fish make spawning runs up rivers and creeks feeding into lakes, they can be caught in abundance.

White bass are fighters at the end of a line, especially light line. They will take a variety of live baits, minnows in particular, and an assortment of lures - small crank baits, spinners, jigs.

But some people turn up their noses at eating white bass.

"They taste fishy." "Too strong."
"Not good to eat." "Trash fish."

And other anglers just smile and prepare white bass for the evening meal or to go into a freezer.

According to fishermen, the common way to deal with white bass for cooking is to fillet them then use the tip of a sharp knife to cut out the strip of red or dark flesh. It is not difficult, and this strip is also common in the white bass cousins - striped bass and hybrid bass. It is what gives the "strong" taste.

With this strip of red gone, prepare the fillets as you would most any other freshwater fish.

A second treatment method is more involved.

Put the fillets, red streak and all, in a pan and cover it with buttermilk. Let the pan sit in a refrigerator for a couple of hours then remove, discard the buttermilk and cover the fillets with a half and half mixture of white vinegar and water. Let this sit for an hour or so then pour off the liquid and rinse the fish then pat dry with paper towels.

With either treatment, the white bass fillets will be ready for your choice of cooking routes.

PARENTS

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as they graduate school, or start looking for affordable entertainment as a young family.

Another factor in midlife outdoor sports is mom. If mamma ain't on board, nobody's on board. Family dynamic studies show that women set the tone for family fun activities. If she isn't comfortable with the kids going on outings, then she more than likely isn't going to sign

off on the event.

What's problematic about all these wonderful youth programs that are popping up all over the place is the lack of follow through. So you've created a really fun event, you teach a gazillion kids how to cast and catch fish. When little Johnny comes home, he talks about the good times he had and unless his parents are supportive of him following through with his newfound skills, he's going to fall right back into the same routine he had before the event.

How does one correct this or enhance their youth programs? Become more par-

ent-focused. When you're running your youth program, look for parents that are interested. Engage with them and ask if they have any questions. Find out if they are interested in following through with outdoor activities after the event. Have fliers and information handy for them to look at post event. I often invite parents and families on 1:1 outings after the event, inviting dad or mom to be more hands on so they can do it themselves.

Because truth be told, the ultimate youth mentoring program is parenting. It only takes a couple hours to get out and try new things.

Most Wanted: Find a funky nest

Whether you find a robin's nest on a statue or a hummingbird's nest on wind chimes, your picture of a bird nest in a funky place can win big in the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Funky Nests in Funky Places contest. With nesting season underway, this contest challenges everyone to get outside and watch nature in even the most unexpected places.

"Just start looking," says Karen Purcell, who created the contest several years ago as part of the Cornell Lab's Celebrate Urban Birds citizen-

science project. "Past experience has shown us you can find bird nests in the most surprising places. We've seen them in helmets, old boots, stoplights, store signs, car tires, clotheslines, mailboxes, potted plants, and even a stuffed moose head!"

The Funky Nests contest begins May 1 and lasts until June 15. Entries may be photos, videos, artwork, poems, or stories. You don't have to be a bird expert or an expert photographer. People of all ages are welcome to participate as individuals or

with a class, community center, or afterschool program. Prizes include binoculars, bird feeders, cameras, an iPad, and more.

Entry deadline is June 15.

Find more information about how to find nests, approach nests without disturbing the birds, and enter the contest at www.FunkyNests.org.

Celebrate Urban Birds is a free, year-round project that focuses on the arts, creating green spaces for birds, and learning how birds use urban spaces.

Invitation to join the Cats Indoors listserv

Grant Sizemore, the new Cats Indoors Program Officer at American Bird Conservancy, invites you to join ABC and work on a crucial frontier of wildlife conservation: the impacts of feral and free-ranging domestic cats.

The Cats Indoors listserv is an excellent resource for cat-related news, updates, and action alerts. We hope that you will support ABC's efforts to reduce the negative impacts of feral and free-ranging cats by subscribing to the Cats Indoors listserv today.

To join the listserv, send an email to catsindoors-subscribe@lists.abcbirds.org with subscribe written in the subject line or body of text. Please contact Grant Sizemore with questions, comments, or concerns at gsizemore@abcbirds.org.

Mystery malady kills more bees, heightening worry on farms

By Michael Wines
The New York Times

A mysterious malady that has been killing honeybees en masse for several years appears to have expanded drastically in the last year, commercial beekeepers say, wiping out 40 percent or even 50 percent of the hives needed to pollinate many of the nation's fruits and vegetables.

A conclusive explanation so far has escaped scientists studying the ailment, colony collapse disorder, since it first surfaced around 2005. But beekeepers and some researchers say there is growing evidence that a powerful new class of pesticides known as neonicotinoids, incorporated into the plants themselves, could be an important

factor.

The pesticide industry disputes that. But its representatives also say they are open to further studies to clarify what, if anything, is happening.

"They looked so healthy last spring," said Bill Dahle, 50, who owns Big Sky Honey in Fairview, Mont. "We were so proud of them. Then, about the first of September, they started to fall on their face, to die like crazy. We've been doing this 30 years, and we've never experienced this kind of loss before."

In a show of concern, the Environmental Protection Agency recently sent its acting assistant administrator for chemical safety and two top chemical experts here, to the San Joaquin Valley of California, for discussions.

In the valley, where 1.6 million hives of bees just finished pollinating an endless expanse of almond groves, commercial beekeepers who only recently were losing a third of their bees to the disorder say the past year has brought far greater losses.

The federal Agriculture Department is to issue its own assessment in May. But in an interview, the research leader at its Beltsville, Md., bee research laboratory, Jeff Pettis, said he was confident that the death rate would be "much higher than it's ever been."

To view the entire story at its original source, follow this link:

http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/29/science/earth/soaring-bee-deaths-in-2012-sound-alarm-on-malady.html?ref=todayspaper&_r=0

EPA surveys finds more than half of the nation's river and stream miles in poor condition

From Outdoor Hub

Recently, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency released the results of the first comprehensive survey looking at the health of thousands of stream and river miles across the country, finding that more than half – 55 percent – are in poor condition for aquatic life.

“The health of our Nation’s rivers, lakes, bays and coastal waters depends on the vast network of streams where they begin, and this new science shows that America’s streams and rivers are under significant pressure,” said Office of Water Acting Assistant Administrator Nancy Stoner. “We must continue to invest in protecting and restoring our nation’s streams and rivers as they are vital sources of our drinking water, provide many recreational opportunities, and play a critical role in the economy.”

The 2008-2009 National Rivers and Stream Assessment reflects the most recent data available, and is part of EPA’s expanded effort to monitor waterways in the U.S. and gather scientific data on the condition of the Nation’s water resources.

EPA partners, including states and tribes, collected data from approximately 2,000 sites across the country. EPA, state and university scientists ana-

lyzed the data to determine the extent to which rivers and streams support aquatic life, how major stressors may be affecting them and how conditions are changing over time.

Findings of the assessment include:

- Nitrogen and phosphorus are at excessive levels. Twenty-seven percent of the nation’s rivers and streams have excessive levels of nitrogen, and 40 percent have high levels of phosphorus. Too much nitrogen and phosphorus in the water—known as nutrient pollution—causes significant increases in algae, which harms water quality, food resources and habitats, and decreases the oxygen that fish and other aquatic life need to survive. Nutrient pollution has impacted many streams, rivers, lakes, bays and coastal waters for the past several decades, resulting in serious environmental and human health issues, and impacting the economy.

- Streams and rivers are at an increased risk due to decreased vegetation cover and increased human disturbance. These conditions can cause streams and rivers to be more vulnerable to flooding, erosion, and pollution. Vegetation along rivers and streams slows the flow of rainwater so it does not erode stream banks, removes pollutants carried by rainwater and helps maintain water temperatures that sup-

port healthy streams for aquatic life. Approximately 24 percent of the rivers and streams monitored were rated poor due to the loss of healthy vegetative cover.

- Increased bacteria levels. High bacteria levels were found in nine percent of stream and river miles making those waters potentially unsafe for swimming and other recreation.

- Increased mercury levels. More than 13,000 miles of rivers have fish with mercury levels that may be unsafe for human consumption. For most people, the health risk from mercury by eating fish and shellfish is not a health concern, but some fish and shellfish contain higher levels of mercury that may harm an unborn baby or young child’s developing nervous system

EPA plans to use this new data to inform decision making about addressing critical needs around the country for rivers, streams, and other waterbodies. This comprehensive survey will also help develop improvements to monitoring these rivers and streams across jurisdictional boundaries and enhance the ability of states and tribes to assess and manage water quality to help protect our water, aquatic life, and human health. Results are available for a dozen geographic and ecological regions of the country.

PETA aims to 'spy on hunters' with drones

By Daniel Xu Outdoor Hub Reporters

The animal rights organization People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) announced plans on April 8th for a drone program that will use remote-controlled aircraft to keep an eye on hunters. According to a press release, the group is actively shopping for drones to include in the program. The top contender is Aerobot’s state-of-the-art CineStar Octocopter, although it remains to be seen which particular drone type the organization will choose.

“The talk is usually about drones being used as killing machines, but PETA drones will be used to save lives,” says PETA President Ingrid E. Newkirk. “Slob hunters may need to rethink the idea that they can get away with murder, alone out there in the woods with no one watching.”

The program will fly drones over popular hunting and fishing spots, although specific locations have not been released. PETA intends on using the devices to record illegal activity and combat those that “gun down deer and doves.” The drones will not have any weapon capabilities.

The reaction from sportsmen to this program has been overwhelmingly negative. While a number of hunters approve of anti-poaching drones such as those supplementing conservation forces in Nepal and Kenya, some say that based on PETA’s past history with hunting, law-abiding outdoorsmen will be targeted. Many worry that the drones will accomplish nothing more than to harass hunters and anglers.

“While hunters disguise themselves as trees and pretend they are ducks, it is only fair to give animals something to fight back with,” wrote activist Alisa Mullins on PETA’s official blog.

Cornell team sets new U.S. birding record

In a race against time, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Team Sapsucker obliterated the previous U.S. record for the number of bird species identified in a 24-hour period. These six intrepid birders, all members of the Lab's staff, went on a blitz through Texas on Thursday, April 25, finding a stunning 294 species—far above the previous record of 264 which the same team set in Texas two years ago and matched last year. This extreme birding effort, traditionally called a "Big Day," is also one of the largest fundraisers of the year for the Cornell Lab.

Thanks to sponsorship by Carl Zeiss Sports Optics, LLC, all the money raised helps advance bird conservation efforts. Some comments from the team about the rare combination of events that led to a once-in-a-lifetime birding experience:

Andrew Farnsworth: "One of the keys to our success this year was a truly unique weather phenomenon: a cold front with wind and rain that dropped through Texas the day before, colliding head-on with birds migrating north from Central and South America, where, conversely, conditions were great for birds to take off on their journeys. It resulted in what we call a 'fallout' on High Island along the Gulf Coast east of Galveston. An incredible variety of species all hunkered down to refuel and wait for better conditions. The trees and the ground were just dripping with fantastic birds!"

Chris Wood: "Texas is an incredible state for birds—really the crossroads for all the species you might find in North America. You can get everything from grassland and prairie birds, to desert birds, and even Eastern forest birds... all in one state."

Brian Sullivan: "I don't know that I'll ever be able to come close to having this kind of birding experience in North America again. I really think this is a record that will be nearly impossible for us to beat. I hope the wonderful habitats that are here for birds will be preserved so we can continue to see all these species 10 or 20 years from now."

First bird of the day: Ross's Goose (midnight)

Final bird of the day: Virginia Rail (11:41 p.m.)

The members of Team Sapsucker are Chris Wood (captain), Jessie Barry, Tim Lenz, Marshall Iliff, Brian Sullivan, and Andrew Farnsworth. Last year Team Sapsucker raised \$250,000 for bird conservation. To help them break this fundraising record for birds, supporters can donate at birds.cornell.edu/bigday.

Technology should never replace nature in our lives

By David Farbman

As we head into the Easter holiday weekend, I am boarding Delta flight 1927 from chilly Detroit to sunny Sarasota with my wife and kids. I sit down next to my boys Hunter and River and my wife Nadine sits with Fischer.

Before I finish stuffing the coats into the overhead compartment, Hunter and River both belt out, "Dad, where are the iPads?" I roll my eyes and hand them the tablets.

Looks like I'm using my laptop on this flight, I think to myself, oh well, so much for Zero Dark Thirty. As I look down at my iPhone, I say to myself, Yikes, we have become total tech toy addicts!

Now don't get me wrong, as the founder of Outdoor Hub, the world's

leading outdoor media company online, I have nothing against technology—in fact I love it! However, as awesome as technology is, it should never replace or destroy our attachment to nature. It is within nature that we can slow down and take a moment of calm, a moment of presence. How many of us do not need a little more presence in our lives? Being outdoors has a way of restoring our soul.

I love nature and I immerse my kids in it every chance I get. My family knows what nature does to restore my soul, they see how excited I become and how aware I am when I am in nature. In this ADD-crazed partial-attention society we live in, they get to see their dad in his element. They can sense how present I am there with them, unlike too many times where I am sneaking looks at my iPhone before

I put them to bed, or as I am watching a tee ball practice. I wish I could say I'm not guilty of these things, but I am, and that is more the reason why I hit the woods, or a lake, or a field with them for a relaxing walk every chance I get.

My action item for you this holiday weekend is to take some time with your family or whomever you are with and get your butts outdoors. Take a few minutes to sit by a big tree, stroll through the woods, or sit somewhere and gaze at a pretty view, a park perhaps. Leave the phones, the tablets, the laptops, and any other gadgets and be one with nature. When we take to Mother Nature in this way she has a way of providing us the ultimate return on investment by raising our state of presence and recharging our batteries, it's just plain good for the soul!

Waterfowl mating systems

'Until death do us part' — a statement that is general true for geese, but not ducks

Like many animals, waterfowl form pair bonds with members of the opposite sex for the purpose of reproducing. The types of pair bonds formed, however, are not what one would think. Waterfowl mating systems vary considerably. Some species pair for life, whereas others invest a lot of time forming new pair bonds each year—an activity that at first glance would seem too costly and time consuming.

Only about 44 percent of waterfowl species—all of which are geese and swans—form long-term, monogamous bonds. That means that the males of the remaining species must form new bonds each year by finding a new mate, investing in courtship displays and competing with other males.

Monogamy, or pairing for life, is common in geese and swans. They do not form bonds until they are at least two years of age, but more commonly do so in their third or fourth year of life. Therefore, geese do not nest and lay eggs until their second year or later and swans typically do not begin laying until their fourth year. Male geese play a significant role in raising young, including vigilance over and defense of females while they are incubating and brood rearing. If one of the pair dies, the other will eventually re-pair, but this may interfere with or prevent the surviving mate from breeding for that year. Divorce has also been noted in geese, in which pairs will separate. Divorce has been seen in pairs that

were not successful in their nesting attempt or in laying and hatching eggs.

Either way, there is a cost of failed breeding in a year if a mate is lost.

Ducks do not form long-term pair bonds, but instead form seasonal bonds, otherwise known as seasonal monogamy, in which new bonds are formed each season. Seasonal monogamy occurs in about 49 percent of all waterfowl species. In this mating system, pairs generally form on the wintering grounds in the first year of life, and those bonds are maintained only through egg laying. Each winter, the birds must find a new mate and establish a new bond for that breeding season. Males that form seasonal bonds do not participate in raising the young, but will defend the space around mated females to prevent other males from gaining access to their mate. If the male of the pair dies during spring migration north, females will quickly find a new mate for that season, and nesting will not be delayed in that year. Seasonal monogamy is common among dabbling ducks, diving ducks and some sea ducks.

An interesting twist on seasonal monogamy occurs in some cavity nesters and sea ducks that do not form bonds until their second year of life. Research has shown that some goldeneye pairs reunite each year on the wintering grounds and return to their previous breeding territory. This system is possible only in species that exhibit strong philopatry to both

wintering and breeding sites. Philopatry is a behavior in which individuals return to the exact site, either on the breeding or wintering ground, from the previous year, enabling pairs to find each other. Males do not participate in raising the young, but they do defend females. Re-pairing is also suspected for buffleheads, long-tailed ducks, harlequin ducks and common eiders.

The final mating system observed in waterfowl is polygamy, in which multiple partners can occur. Polygamy is uncommon among waterfowl and observed in only 7 percent of species, including the ruddy duck, musk duck (Australia), comb duck (South America, Africa and southern Asia), and maccoa duck (Africa), all of which are stiff-tail ducks, and the magpie goose (Australia). In this system, pair bonds are weak or not formed at all, but instead males defend mating territories that may attract several females. For example, male musk ducks establish and defend breeding territories along shorelines and engage in elaborate courtship displays to attract females to their territories. Females visit these territories, and the males will mate with several females. In North America, the ruddy duck is the only duck to occasionally exhibit polygamy (they also form seasonally monogamous pair bonds). The polygamous mating system of waterfowl is not well studied or understood.

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Rainwater basins and playas: Same but different

Learn how and why on Playa Country radio

A 21-county area of south central Nebraska is home to thousands of rainwater basins, which are identical in function to the playas of the southern plains, but formed by different natural forces. In addition, these basins hold water longer than the playas to the

south, providing lush plant and invertebrate life for migratory birds on their way north in late-winter to nest. Listen to the latest episodes of Playa Country, a 41/2-minute weekly radio show, to learn more about conservation easements or visit the Playa Country webpage to learn

about other topics (www.pljv.org).

- Rainwater Basins and Playa Wetlands: What Are the Differences?

- Rainwater Basin Conservation Landowner Story

- Rainwater Basins, the Central Flyway, and Migratory Birds

Sunny with a chance of fun

By Larry D. Hodge

Sunfish provide more enjoyment per pound than any other freshwater fish.

Whether it's the best kind of fish, the best place to fish or the best bait to use, it's hard to get anglers to agree on anything.

But ask them what kind of fish is best for getting kids hooked on fishing, and the answer will almost certainly be the same: sunfish.

Sunfish refers to a whole group of small fishes that are pretty, plentiful and pugnacious. Bluegill, redear, green, redbreast and warmouth sunfish - often referred to as bream, collectively - are commonly found in Texas creeks, rivers, stock ponds and reservoirs. Wherever they are found, they provide perhaps more fun per pound than any other fish. Famed Texas author John Graves observed that fishing for bream with a fly rod is "as pretty fishing as a man can want."

Sunfish are often referred to as panfish, and for good reason: Cleaned, scaled, corn-mealed and fried whole, sunfish provide some of the tastiest eating Texas waters have to offer. A stringer of sunfish and some potatoes, onions and bacon fried up streamside in a skillet make a breakfast (or lunch or dinner) that is the epitome of "eating local."

Fishing for sunfish isn't about size. It's not the size of the fish in the fight that counts; it's the size of the fight in the fish. And as Graves alluded, a feisty sunfish on a fly rod or ultralight tackle rewards the angler with an exciting experience. Sunfish are deep-bodied,

which gives them a lot of surface area to leverage against the water during a fight, and their flat, slender bodies and fins allow them to accelerate and change direction quickly.

"Pound for pound, bluegills will rival any freshwater fish in Texas in fighting ability," says Ben Neely, formerly a fisheries biologist in Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Abilene office. "There is nothing quite like catching a 10-inch bluegill on ultralight gear."

Part of the charm of fishing for sunfish like bluegills is the simplicity of it.

"Bluegill fishing gets back to fishing the way it should be," says Neely. "You don't need fancy electronics, high-dollar equipment or a boat to find quality bluegills. All you need are a few hooks, split shot, bobbers, some nightcrawlers and a light-action rod rigged with light line."

That's the gear Neely, Lance Benson and I use on a day spent fishing on Lake Athens. That trip reveals a whole new aspect of bluegill fishing to me. Neely and Benson are friends, but when it comes to seeing who can land the biggest bluegill, the gloves come off and it's bare-knuckles fishing. The barbs traded between the two over the size of fish being caught are sharper than the hooks being used.

It's obvious both Neely and Benson are not just casual sunfish anglers. They're addicts who have studied their quarry and stalk it with the intensity of a half-starved subsistence hunter.

"When I'm going after bluegill, I look for two things - vegetation and bottom structure," Neely says. "I want to find an area with rocks or stumps that

border aquatic vegetation. I'll set my bobber to suspend a chunk of nightcrawler a few inches off the bottom. A small split shot between the hook and the bobber makes sure the bait gets to the bottom but still allows it to flutter down slowly."

Neely's technique is based on bluegill behavior. Adult bluegills, as befits a species often preyed upon by bass and other predators, are ambush feeders: They hide among underwater vegetation or structure and dart out to nab food that comes within reach.

Although they are always aggressive, male sunfish redline their macho meters during the spring through summer spawning season. Males scoop out spawning beds in sand or gravel in shallow water, often congregating in large numbers. Besides fertilizing any eggs laid in its nest, the male guards the nest and its eggs from all other fish, even the female that produced them. The males will chase anything that violates their space, including baited hooks. Toss your bait into the middle of a bluegill's bed and let it sit. He may dart off when the bobber hits the water, but soon he will return to charge the intruding hook.

Sunfish, especially bluegills, are favorites in farm ponds and other private fishing lakes both for the fishing they offer and for the forage they provide for largemouth bass and other fish. Many a lifetime memory has been made with a cane pole, bobber and supply of locally sourced crickets, grasshoppers, worms or - for the squeamish - canned whole-kernel corn. Public waters almost always offer sunfish as well.

MATING

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Why do such differences exist? That question is difficult to answer and falls into the category of "which came first, the chicken or the egg?" There are many theories as to why different mating systems evolved; researchers, however, will never truly be able to determine the evo-

lutionary factors that shaped mating systems. Instead, there are several characteristics of waterfowl species associated more often with the different mating systems. Long-term pair bonds are generally observed among species of waterfowl that have large bodies; live longer because of lower annual mortality; exhibit low annual production (fewer young produced); have slow-maturing young; exhibit high philopatry to the breeding and wintering sites and depend on lim-

ited food resources on the breeding grounds.

These characteristics are typical of geese and swans. On the other hand, seasonal pair bonds are more typical of species with small bodies; species that exhibit higher annual mortality; higher annual productivity and breed in seasonal, highly productive environments. These characteristics apply to most dabbling ducks and diving ducks, such as mallards, teal, canvasbacks and redheads, to name a few.

Kansas Wildlife Federation
P.O. Box 771282
Wichita, KS 67277-1282

The Kansas Wildlife Federation is Working to Preserve a Way of Life for Kansas!

Conservation of the state's natural resources means . . .

- Public awareness of our state's wonderfully diverse advantages and a determination to keep and improve them for wise use now and in future years.
- Proper safeguards—within the bounds of wise use—for the state's soil, water, forests and wildlife, to assure proper balance, use and advancement of our state's entire economy!

How You Can Help:

- * **Basic Membership:** As a Basic member, for \$30 you'll receive 6 issues of the KWF newsletter packed with the latest information on wildlife resources, events and issues around the state. You also have voting privileges at the KWF Annual Meeting.
- * **Expanded Membership:** When you send in your Expanded member dues of \$75, you receive the basic membership benefits, and, as a bonus, a free copy of *Watching Kansas Wildlife: A Guide to 101 Sites* and a complimentary ticket to the KWF Annual Meeting
- * **Kansan:** For an annual fee of \$150, you receive all the benefits listed above plus a copy of the book *Kansas Wildlife*.

Here's How to Join:

Complete the form on Page 17 and mail with your membership fee to:
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