

The Voice of Outdoor Kansas

**January-
February 2014**

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

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

KSU study shows pumping of High Plains Aquifer cannot be sustained

A recent Kansas State University (KSU) study of the High Plains Aquifer shows that 30% of the aquifer has been pumped and that given current trends, another 39% will be pumped by 2050. Current levels of crop and livestock production cannot be sustained, although cutting back now, according to researchers, would reduce the production in the short-term but extend the lifetime of the aquifer and increase net production over time.

The High Plains Aquifer supplies 30% of the nation's groundwater and the Kansas portion support the Congressional district with the highest market value for agriculture in the nation. Recharge accounts for 15% of current use. It would take an 80% reduction to reach recharge equilibrium.

An article in the New York Times called the aquifer depletion, "a slow motion crisis decades in the making, imminent for some, decades away for others, hitting one farm but leaving an adjacent one untouched." The depletion is largely due to the switch over the past forty years or more from a rotation of corn, sorghum and wheat to largely mono-cropped corn being fed to the large cattle feedlots that have sprung up along with irrigation.

To read the report, go to <http://www.k-state.edu/media/newsreleases/aug13/groundwater82613.html#.Unr01TJvAP4.email>

Protecting the Land... Passing on Our Traditions



KANSAS WILDLIFE FEDERATION

Officers and Board of Directors

Kansas Wildlife Federation, Inc.
P.O. Box 771282
Wichita, KS 67277-1282
Business: 785-650-3182
Fax: 316-755-2239
E-mail: info@kswildlife.org
Website: www.kswildlife.org

KWF OFFICERS

President:

Troy Schroeder

1785 CR 390
Albert, KS 67511
Home: 785-650-3182
E-mail: troyas@gbta.net

Immediate Past President:

Don Snider

2319 W. 60th North
Wichita, KS 67204
Home: 316-755-0920
E-mail: drsnider@cox.net

Administrative Vice President:

Terry Sullivan

341 S. 3rd Street
Clearwater, KS 67206-9465
Home: 620-584-6795
Cell: 316-833-1102
E-mail: sullivan@sktc.net

Conservation Vice President:

Steve Sorensen

9 Weatherly Ct.
Valley Center, KS 67147-8547
Home: 316-755-2239
Cell: 316-214-3001
Fax: 316-755-0321
E-mail: webforbs@cox.net

Secretary:

Matt Nowak

1007 N. 2nd
Lansing, KS 66043
Business: 913-684-8979
Home: 913-727-3871
E-mail: matthew.c.nowak@us.army.mil

Treasurer:

Brian Snider

3404 E. Central Ave., Apt. 312
Wichita, KS 67208
Home: 316-210-1277
E-mail: sniderbm@gmail.com

Editor:

Steve Sorensen

President's Message

By Troy Schroeder

This is the time of year when we usually look back at what we have accomplished in the past year and look ahead to the next. The accomplishments are addressed elsewhere in this newsletter so I will concentrate on the future here.

1. I would like to see the membership get more involved in KWF activities. We plan to have a few outdoor experiences like floating the Kaw last year. That is a good opportunity for members to get together for some outdoor fun. Watch future newsletters and our website for more info.

2. One of the easiest ways to get involved is to attend the annual meeting scheduled for Feb 22 in Salina. We will have a short business meeting, hear some good speakers in the afternoon and finish the day with an auction and banquet where we honor several Kansans for their contribution to wildlife and conservation. Look for details elsewhere this newsletter.

3. We are going to work more cooperatively with other groups and organizations such as Friends of the Kaw, Kansas Native Plant Society and Audubon of Kansas in order to more effectively accomplish common projects.

4. We will continue to maintain and enhance our youth education efforts. In addition to our week-long Outdoor Adventure Camp, we plan to have other weekend and day camps. One very popular event is a fishing day and we will try to do more this year.

5. Of course increasing membership is a goal again this year. Memberships provide most of our



operating funds. We are offering a youth membership this year as well as a half price basic membership for you to give to friends with your renewed membership.

6. We plan to add affiliate members as well. Those are other organizations that wish to affiliate with us as a group, like we do with the National Wildlife Federation.

7. One project that we are discussing is the development of better wildlife habitat along county roads.

8. We affiliated with the Greater Northwest Kansas Community Foundation last year and intend to build that fund throughout the year through donations that provide the giver tax advantages and the opportunity to leave a wildlife legacy.

9. In a year or so we hope to be able to hire a part-time office person to do some of the things volunteer board members currently do.

One thing I'm sure of is that 2014 will be filled with opportunities and challenges. We wish you the best for the New Year and look forward to working with you throughout the year.

2014 KWF Annual Meeting set for Salina

The Kansas Wildlife Federation's 2014 Annual Meeting is set for Friday and Saturday, February 21 and 22, at the Quality Inn & Suites by Choice Hotels at 2110 West Crawford Ave. in Salina. The 2013 Conservation Achievement Program (CAP) awards banquet will be held Saturday night at the same location.

Friday night we will convene a meeting to review pending Kansas legislation dealing with wildlife issues and discuss any resolutions to be brought before the membership

at the meeting Saturday morning. Come participate in this important process.

A block of rooms has been reserved at the special rates of \$60 and \$65 per night (single or double beds) and will be held until February 11. Call the Quality Inn at 785-825-2111 to make reservations. Be sure to tell them that you are with the Kansas Wildlife Federation to receive the special room rate. Call soon before the rooms run out.

See you in Salina.

2014 Annual Meeting registration form

Yes – I am registering for the 2014 KWF Annual Meeting to be held February 21 & 22 at the Quality Inn & Suites by Choice Hotels at 2110 West Crawford Ave. in Salina.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____ E-mail _____

Meeting Registration (includes Lunch): _____ @ \$15 (before 2-14-14)
_____ @ \$20 (after 2-14-14)

Conservation Achievement Banquet: _____ @ \$25 (before 2-14-14)
_____ @ \$35 (after 2-14-14)

Total Sent: _____

I will bring an item to be auctioned for KWF's education programs.
Yes _____ No _____

Please make checks payable to Kansas Wildlife Federation
MAIL TO: KWF Annual Meeting
Kansas Wildlife Federation
P. O. Box 771282
Wichita, KS 67277-1282

KANSAS WILDLIFE FEDERATION

Officers and Board of Directors

KWF DIRECTORS

Northeast District:

Ted Beringer

15313 W. 80th Terrace
Lenexa, KS 66219-1530
Home: 913-541-1859

E-mail: beringert@umkc.edu

Northcentral District:

Nick Levendofsky

206 Washington Ave.
Republic, KS 66964-9714
Home: 785-361-2100

E-mail: nick.levendofsky@gmail.com

Northwest District:

Dave Hendricks

P. O. Box 488
WaKeeney, KS 67672-0488
Home: 785-743-2644

E-mail: afbldave@yahoo.com

Southeast District:

Phil Taunton

2508 Loma Vista Drive
Emporia, KS 66801-5856
Home: 620-342-5016

Cell: 620-794-5373

E-mail: ptaunton@cablone.net

Southcentral District:

Carl Conley

320 S. 2nd
Clearwater, KS 67206-9454
Home: 620-584-2733

Cell: 620-641-3026

E-mail: conleyfam@sktc.net

Southwest District: Open

2013 NWF Representative:

Troy Schroeder

2013 NWF Alternate

Representative:

Ted Beringer

KWF Affiliates:

**Geary County Fish & Game
Association**
Junction City, KS

Kansas Wildlife Officers

Association

Iola, KS

Quail & Upland Wildlife

Federation

Buffalo, MO

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.

Director at Large:

Elby Adamson

1838 12th Rd
Clay Center, KS 67432
Home: 785-632-5986

E-mail: elbyadamson@yahoo.com

Director at Large:

Angela Anderson

353 Road 300
Allen, KS 66833
Cell: 620-481-9547

E-mail:

mystery_barnowl@yahoo.com

Director at Large:

Cindy Higgins

1023 Elm
Eudora, KS 66028
Home: 785-542-2606

E-mail: cinhiggins@yahoo.com

Director at Large:

Randy Kidd

16879 46th St.
McLouth, KS 66054
Home: 785-863-3425
E-mail: drrkidd@gmail.com

Director at Large:

Cynthia Rhodes

6505 NW Indianola Rd.
Whitewater, KS 67154-8843
Home: 316-799-2315

E-mail: cynrhodes@gmail.com

Director at Large:

Jim Strine

1900 Fort St.
Hays, KS 67601-4304
Home: 785-625-8940

E-mail: jstrine@ksu.edu

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

Annual Meeting Agenda

Kansas Wildlife Federation 63rd Annual Meeting February 21 and 22, 2014 Salina Quality Inn 2110 W. Crawford Salina, KS

Friday, February 21st

6:30 pm Registration
7:00 pm 2014 Legislation Presentation
Chris Tymeson, KDWPT
2014 Resolution Review

Saturday, February 22nd

8:00 am Registration
9:00 Opening of KWF Annual Meeting
Pledge
Presentation of Minutes of 2013 Annual Meeting
9:30 Committee Reports
Treasurer
Issues and Action
Education
Membership
10:00 Affiliate Reports
10:15 Break
10:30 Resolution Adoption
11:00 NWF Report
11:15 Election of KWF Officers
12:00 Lunch (included in cost of registration)
Lesser Prairie-chickens in Kansas
Jim Pitman, KDWPT Small Game Supervisor
1:30 pm Getting Kansas Kids Outdoors
Brian Shaffer, PF/QF Youth Coordinator
Mike Christensen, Pass It On – Outdoor Mentors
Kevin Reich, Fishing's Future
Nick Prough, Quail & Upland Wildlife Federation
2:45 pm Break
3:10 pm Getting Kansas Kids Outdoors (cont)
Ed Augustine, Geary County Fish & Game Association
Walton School presentation
Pat Silovsky, KDWPT
4:30 pm Adjourn
2013 Conservation Achievement Program Awards Banquet
5:30 pm KWF Social Hour with Live and Silent Auctions
7:00 pm KWF Annual CAP Banquet and Awards Program

CALENDAR of EVENTS

Jan 9	KWPT Commission Meeting, Southwest College, Winfield
Jan 11	7th Kansas State NWTF Awards banquet, Concordia 785-243-7798
Jan 13	Kansas Legislature Reconvenes, Topeka
Jan 18	KWF Board of Directors Meeting, Wichita
Jan 18	Grassland Heritage Foundation annual meeting, KU-Higuchi Hall, Lawrence
Jan 24-26	Monster Buck Classic, Kansas Expo, Topeka
Jan 24-26	Kansas Women In The Outdoors Winter Campout, Melvern call Tonya 785-366-3565
Jan 25	Eagles Day, Free State High School, Lawrence
Jan 30-31	Kansas Natural Resource Conference, Wichita www.kansasnrc.org
Feb 5	KSU/Extension Burn School Minneapolis 785-392-2147 anruiz@ksu.edu
Feb 7-9	KC Hunters Expo, Overland Park
Feb 7-9	Topeka Boat and Travel Show, Kansas Expocentre
Feb 14-17	Great Backyard Bird Count. www.birdcount.org
Feb 15	Council Grove QUWF Banquet, 620-767-6990
Feb 20	Kaw Valley QUWF Banquet, Topeka 785-220-3342
Feb 21-22	Kansas Wildlife Federation Annual Meeting & CAP Banquet, Salina
Mar 4	Emporia QUWF Banquet, 620-794-8425
Mar 8-9	5th Kansas Hunting & Fishing Expo, Emporia 620-342-4631
Mar 12-21	Spring Black-footed Ferret Survey, SE Logan County
Mar 17-23	Spring Break for Kansas Regents Schools
Mar 20	KWPT Commission Meeting, Kansas History Museum, Topeka
Mar 29	Spring Turkey Hunting Clinic, Emporia 620-437-2012
Apr 17	KWPT Commission Meeting, Great Plains Nature Center, Wichita
Apr 25-27	Kansas Birding Festival, Milford Lake, Wakefield
Apr 28-May 2	Triple "E" Program, Geary County Fish & Game Association
May 2-4	Kansas Ornithological Society Spring Meeting, Junction City http://ksbirds.org
June 1-6	KWF Outdoor Adventure Camp, Camp Wa Shun Ga, Rock Springs 4-H Ranch
June 14	Symphony in the Flint Hills, Rosalea, Butler County
June 19-22	Hunt 4 Hunger Midwest Outdoor Expo, Topeka
Oct 23-24	Governor's Conference on the Future of Water in Kansas, Manhattan
Nov 7-9	Kansas Herpetological Society annual meeting, KSU, Manhattan

For a more up-to-date calendar go to <http://kswildlife.org/calendar.php>.

Goodman receives wildlife award

By Ben Fitch

While the Lyon County Commission received a third-quarter report from Flint Hills Community Health Center CEO Phillip Davis at its October 31 meeting, County Attorney Marc Goodman sat back and received an award.

Representatives from the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism surprised Goodman with the Natural Resources Protection Award from the Kansas Wildlife Officers Association.

The achievement, said Representative Dave Adams, was several cases

that Goodman has prosecuted over the past several years including the Beau Arndt case. Arndt was killed in 2007 while hunting geese when a drive-by road hunter shot into the field and hit Arndt by accident.

"There was another case that went under the radar that year where a person was killed and Marc prosecuted that case," Adams said. "An individual claimed he was hunting birds and shot another individual. Through the years, Marc has been a friend to the constituents in Lyon County, but particularly, the hunters, landowners and law enforcement officers."

Goodman was completely surprised

by the award, he said.

"It's upholding the law, but it's a side that wildlife and game guys and law enforcement in that area, at least I thought, had all been forgotten about," Goodman said. "From the time I came on, I put our office in behind them to support them, and not act like these were just silly rules. They are rules we are supposed to live by."

Assistant County Counselor Mike Halleran is also a former recipient of the award.

The Kansas Wildlife Officers Association is an affiliate of the Kansas Wildlife Federation.

GCFGA Youth Pheasant Hunt



Participants from the Geary County Fish and Game Association's Youth Pheasant Hunt line up for a photo. Their faces pretty well reflect the success of the event. Photo by Cynthia Ahlers.

By Cynthia Ahlers

The annual Youth Pheasant Hunt at Geary County Fish and Game Association's Sportsman's Acres near Milford Reservoir was held October 19, 2013. It was a great success. There were 16 hunters that participated and had the opportunity to hunt 61 pheasant that were purchased from Kolling Pharm.

The hunters listened to presentations on safety as well as a presentation from Mr. Kolling on the pheasants. Eight of the hunters - Tyler

Herman, Wyatt Ahring, Tyler Wel-fringer, Ryan Coffman, Ariana Ahlers, Parker Greening, Seth Hokanson, and Brett Schwarz - won half day hunts at Kolling Pharm that were donated by Mr. Kolling. Two hunters - Karter Carlson and Nathan Williams - won pheasant mounts, one of which was donated by taxidermist Gene Moore. Two hunters - Wyatt Ahring and Ariana Ahlers - won lifetime hunting licenses.

GCFGA appreciates the donations from Flinthills Chapter of Quail For-

ever, Fort Riley Outdoorsman Group and the Kansas State Rifle Association, along with Geary County Fish and Game, to help make this event possible. Special thanks to all the volunteers from GCF&G - Tom Goudey and George Ahlers for helping and Ken and Lori Malone for the wonderful lunch, as well as the parents and volunteers from other groups.

The hunt was organized by Bill Ahlers for the Geary County Fish and Game Association, with the help of Tom Greening.

Frozen lakes require extreme caution

Cold spell has likely caused many lakes and reservoirs to freeze up

After a week of nighttime temperatures in the single-digits and daytime highs in the teens and twenties, most Kansas water bodies are covered with a sheet of ice. While beautiful and perhaps alluring to anglers and explorers, a frozen lake can be deadly and deserves respect and caution.

Ice fishing in Kansas has a marginal tradition at best because we are at the southern range of weather conditions required to make ice on large water

bodies. Weather during many winters may not get cold enough or stay cold long enough to freeze lake surfaces with enough ice to support human traffic. However, when those arctic blasts do get this far south and remain for any length of time, those who have enjoyed Kansas icefishing are anxious for another opportunity.

The adage that "first ice is best ice" indicates that fishing can be very good soon after ice is formed and may

draw anglers out before conditions are "safe." And many veteran ice anglers will tell you that no ice is safe. No matter how cold it is or how thick the ice appears, venturing out on a frozen lake always requires precautions.

The following are a few common-sense ice safety rules:

- Wait for at least 4 inches of clear, hard ice before venturing out on foot.

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A call for 2014 resolutions

Resolutions adopted at the annual meeting of the Kansas Wildlife Federation are an opportunity for the membership to guide the future direction of the Federation's activities. The following is an example of a previous KWF resolution you can use as a guide to develop your proposed resolution. Utilize a Whereas to explain the facts involved in the resolution. The Resolves are used to state actions called for by the resolution.

If you have an issue you would like to see addressed by KWF members at the 2014 Annual Meeting February 22 in Salina, please send the proposed resolution to KWF by January 25, 2014 at KWF Resolutions P.O. Box 771282 Wichita, KS 67277-1282 or e-mail it to info@kswildlife.org.

The proposed resolution will be reviewed Friday night, February 21 and presented to the membership for adoption at the annual meeting. If you have any questions regarding the process, contact Steve Sorensen, Conservation Vice President, at 316-214-3001 or info@kswildlife.org.

Example

Supporting Water Quality Protection of Kansas Streams

Whereas, the mission and policy of the State of Kansas is to protect the environment for existing and future generations of Kansans along with the wildlife resources of our rivers; and,

Whereas, it is the purpose of the Kansas Wildlife Federation to support sound conservation measures in support of the same purposes; and,

Whereas, clean water is a precious resource in short supply in Kansas which without adequate protection will limit economic growth; and,

Whereas, current legislation is designed to dismantle water quality protection criteria in Kansas and will do great harm to the maintenance of healthy stream systems for wildlife and people by requiring adequate water quality standards on only the largest of our Kansas rivers; and,

Whereas, current legislation will result in a bypass of any public involvement in the water quality criteria setting process, violating provisions of the Clean Water Act and lead to extensive litigation and loss of state authority over water quality protection in Kansas; and,

Whereas, current legislation requires the Kansas Department of Health and Environment to assess the social, economic, and regulatory impacts of each stream prior to classification which is beyond their capabilities and will subject all streams to a state of no classification if this legislation is passed; and,

Whereas, requirements of any legislation that only endangered species considerations are relevant for streams that don't meet the 7Q10 flow criteria do not address the significant sport fish and wildlife use and needs of our streams and rivers.

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved that the Kansas Wildlife Federation at its Annual Meeting on Feb. 17, 2001, in Salina, Kansas, opposes any legislation which reduces water quality protection for Kansas streams; and,

Be It Further Resolved that the Kansas Wildlife Federation urges the State Legislature and the Kansas Department of Health and Environment to uphold the water quality standards of Kansas and provide protection of rivers and lakes from degrading pollution so as to prevent any necessity of the Environmental Protection Agency from assuming regulatory authority over Kansas's water quality enforcement; and,

Be It Further Resolved that this resolution be supplied to the Governor, appropriate state agencies, and key members of the Kansas Legislature.

The Kansas Wildlife Federation: A Look Back

As we transition from the old to the new year, sometimes it's good to look back at what we've done in years past. The Kansas Wildlife Federation was created in 1950, originally as the Kansas Association for Wildlife (KAW). KAW asked for affiliation with the National Wildlife Federation in the early 1960's. Our name was changed officially to the Kansas Wildlife Federation on July 1, 1963, in an effort to meet uniformity of names of NWF's state affiliates.

The following is a list of just some of KWF's accomplishments over the years:

- We've protected and increased angler access to impoundments across the state, both public and private;
- We helped lead the development of the Hunter Education Program in Kansas;
- We take the right to hunt seriously, and since our beginning, we've made sure Topeka respects gun rights and the

rights of gun owners to use their tools in the field;

- We helped protect landowners and hunters alike by working in Topeka to protect landowners from liability suits;
- We helped reintroduce the Golden Eagle to Kansas with a release program we worked out with the Topeka Zoo, Westar Energy and the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism;
- We kept the water flowing to Cheyenne Bottoms – one of the world's best known bird watching places, and an invaluable place for Kansas hunters. We continue to monitor developments that may impact this important public area;
- We've equipped and trained some of the first grassroots stream monitoring teams in Kansas;
- We've taught hundreds of kids through the years at our Outdoor Adventure Camps, our Hunting, Fishing & Furharvesting Schools and our new

TimberRidge Day Camp. In 2013 we celebrated our 25th Outdoor Adventure Camp;

- We've kept conservation in the public eye by acknowledging local heroes through our Conservation Achievements Program, an annual award ceremony that garners statewide recognition;
- Since 1987, when KWF presented the Kansas Roadside Habitat Plan to Governor Hayden, we have been involved in efforts to improve habitat and native plant diversity to beautify our roadsides and benefit our wildlife;
- We were instrumental in getting Kansas included in a multi-state compact that keeps wildlife violators in other states from hunting or fishing in Kansas and visa versa;
- We've worked with Kansas conservation organizations to minimize the impact of wind energy facilities on

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Five tips to prevent winter from taking a bite out of your boat and trailer

It's already a brutal winter in parts of the country. If your boat and trailer are going to spend the snow season outside exposed to the elements, Boat Owners Association of The United States (BoatUS) has five tips to protect your investment and prevent winter's bitter effects from taking hold and causing problems down the road:

1) Water is enemy #1: Keeping the boat and trailer rig in a slightly bow-up position will allow water to drain. Don't forget to remove drain plug and tie it to the ignition key where you will find it in the spring. Yes, do this exactly as instructed. Now. You will lose it otherwise - trust us, we know. Also ensure that the boat's cover is tight and periodically check inside throughout the winter - just to make sure no water is accumulating and that no critters have moved in;

2) A little spray will do you good: Spraying water-and-dirt displacing lu-

bricants such as Boeshield T-9 on metal trailer roller assemblies, winch gears and electrical connections will keep moisture away and rust at bay. Now may also be the time to take care of any rust spots on the metal trailer frame: sand, prime and paint;

3) Best boat theft prevention tip in the world: If you're storing your boat in the driveway, turn it around 180 degrees, with the tongue facing towards the house. Not only will this keep your neighbors guessing all winter long about that name on the transom, but it will make the job harder for a thief to steal your boat and that's the real name of the game here. Adding a lock on the trailer hitch only improves your odds the bad guy will look somewhere else;

4) What to do about boat trailer tires: In addition to being a theft deterrent, removing the tires and storing them inside the garage will keep the sun from dam-

aging them. With the tires off, this may also be a good time to repack the bearings. Block the trailer's frame and secure plastic (contractor grade) trash bags over the hubs and brakes to keep them dry. If tires won't be removed, position the trailer so that the tires rest on a piece of plywood or plank to prevent dry rot, as parking on grass can hasten a tire's demise. Cover tires (again with plastic bags or covers) to keep the sun off and hubs and brakes dry. To avoid flat spots from happening, move the trailer periodically a few inches throughout the winter;

5) Don't park under trees: Howling winter storms can snap off tree limbs. Besides adding unsightly stains, falling leaves and needles can make their way inside blocking transom drain holes, making your boat into a nice bathtub as it slowly fills with water over the winter.

Fish and Wildlife Service proposes special rule under Endangered Species Act

Endorsing landmark state conservation plan for Lesser Prairie-Chicken

In light of a landmark conservation plan developed by the five range states of the lesser prairie-chicken, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today proposed a special rule that would provide regulatory certainty for landowners by exempting from regulation conservation actions and development undertaken in accordance with the plan, should the bird be listed under the Endangered Species Act.

The Service will accept comments for 30 days on the proposed special rule, which would exempt from regulation under the Act any activities that harm or result in take of the prairie-chicken if incidental to carrying out the state-developed range-wide lesser prairie-chicken conservation plan. The proposed special rule would also exempt take incidental to routine agricultural practices on existing cultivated lands and to landowner participation in the Natural Resource Conservation Service's Lesser Prairie-Chicken Initiative.

"Regardless of whether the lesser prairie-chicken ultimately warrants the protection of the ESA, we can all agree that continued state leadership in management and recovery of this species, as well as a conservation strategy that is compatible with the economic well-being of ranchers and other private landowners, is what is needed here," said Dan Ashe, Director of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. "The states' plan, along with this proposed special rule, could provide an unprecedented model for state leadership in conservation of a threatened species."

The lesser prairie-chicken is a species of prairie grouse commonly recognized for its colorful spring mating display and orange eye combs. For nearly 15 years, the Service has considered the lesser prairie-chicken to be a species in trouble, and the severe drought experienced in recent years in the southern Great Plains has not helped matters.

Once found in abundant numbers

across much of Colorado, New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma and Kansas, the lesser prairie-chickens' historical range of native grasslands and prairies has been reduced by an estimated 84 percent. Taking actions to conserve the species will also restore the health of native grasslands that support local economies and communities in addition to migratory birds and other wildlife.

On May 6, 2013, the Service proposed a rule that, in the event that the lesser prairie-chicken were to be listed as a threatened species, would encourage voluntary participation in conservation programs benefiting the species. Today's proposed revision more specifically identifies and endorses the five states' range-wide conservation plan as one that, when implemented, addresses the conservation needs of the species.

The Service also reopened the public

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KSU forester recognized by the Society of American Foresters

After 35 years of service to the people of Kansas, Jim Strine, Kansas Forest Service, District Forester (who retired in July) was recognized by the Society of American Foresters receiving the Presidential Field Forester award.

The award recognizes foresters who have dedicated their professional careers to the application of forestry on the ground using sound, scientific methods and adaptive management strategies. Presidential Field Forester Awards are presented to individuals who have displayed uncommon talent, skill, and innovative methods to achieve a record of excellence in the application of forest management.

Strine was also recognized by K-State Research and Extension County Agents at their 2013 Annual Conference, receiving a "Friends of Extension" award for his years of service and dedication to Extension. Strine served as a district forester with the Kansas Forest Service for 35 years providing professional expertise to the people of Kansas in a 24-county district in northwest Kansas.

Jim joined the KWF Board of Di-



Dave Walters, Vice President of SAF, presents Jim Strine the Presidential Field Foresters Award at the 2013 National Convention in Charleston, S.C.

rectors in July as a Director at Large. Jim's expertise in forest and riparian habitats and his long-time experience

in northwest Kansas will provide excellent guidance as a member of the KWF Board.

Prairie conservation strips save soil

Prairie conservation strips interlaced with row crops could be one of the most cost-effective and low-effort conservation practices available to farmers and landowners in the Midwest.

According to research from the ISU STRIPs team (Science-based Trials of Rowcrops Integrated with Prairies), converting one tenth of a row-cropped field to perennial prairie could result in a reduction of more than 90 percent in soil and nutrient runoff from the entire field. A new economic analysis shows that the average cost to treat runoff from an acre of corn or soybeans is just \$24 to \$35 per year.

The analysis was conducted by John Tyndall, a member of the STRIPs team and ISU assistant pro-

fessor in Natural Resource Ecology and Management. The cost is spread over a 15-year land management regime. Tyndall's estimate includes the cost of land conversion, maintenance and the "opportunity cost" of lost revenue or rent from acreage taken out of crop production. More than 90 percent of the total cost is the opportunity cost, which can be offset if the land is enrolled in federal conservation programs such as the Environmental Quality Incentive Program or Conservation Reserve Program.

How Tyndall estimated these costs and ranges (representing different land values) is outlined in a new publication, "The Cost of Prairie Conservation Strips," available on the Leopold Center website and the

STRIPs website. Go to: <http://www.leopold.iastate.edu/news/leopold-letter/2013/fall/cost#sthash>.

FWS

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comment period for the proposed listing of the bird for an additional 30 days. The reopening of the public comment period and the revised 4(d) special rule will publish in the Federal Register on December 11, 2013. Comments will be accepted until January 10, 2014. More information on the lesser prairie-chicken is available online at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/LPC.html>.

Farm Bill update: Sodsaver slipping away

Regular contact with natural world can help provide health, happiness and a longer life

By Ryan Stockwell

Senior Agriculture Program Manager
National Wildlife Federation

With only a few workdays left for Congress between holiday breaks, time is running out for completion of the Farm Bill. Despite the fact that little advancement has been made to date, there is still a chance that the Farm Bill conference committee will be able to complete their negotiations and Congress will be able to pass a final farm bill. Congressional members and stakeholders alike have roundly rejected the idea of yet another short term extension. Moreover, the conference committee continues to push forward on resolving key differences between the Senate and House versions of the Farm Bill.

While food stamp (Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program or SNAP) funding levels and crop support systems (price supports vs. crop insurance) are garnering the lions' share of attention, key conservation issues remain as significant topics of debate. In particular, Sodsaver, a provision that protects remaining native grasslands by reducing subsidies on row crops from converted native grassland, remains highly contested, as do proposals by Senator Hoeven (ND) to weaken Swampbuster provisions to make it easier for farmers to drain wetlands while continuing to receive taxpayer subsidies.

Those opposing a national Sodsaver provision wrongly argue it adds red tape to farm bill programs. In reality, farmers already have to maintain and show cropping history and records to determine crop insurance rates. In the event a portion of land has no cropping history and becomes farmed, farmers already must make a declaration for no history in order to qualify for crop insurance at reduced guaranteed yields. Adding sodsaver would simply save taxpayers an

State	Acres of non-cropland converted to cropland, 2011 to 2012	Number of hunters in 2011	Retail sales of hunting goods in 2011	Jobs created or maintained from hunting retail sales in 2011
Nebraska	54,876	128,445	\$562,145,198	8,856
South Dakota	27,128	270,287	\$723,236,029	11,034
Texas	26,395	1,146,657	\$2,118,800,404	36,170
Florida	24,961	241,792	\$965,096,389	14,673
Iowa	22,301	253,071	\$448,854,497	6,975
Kansas	20,932	282,626	\$404,795,400	6,200
California	16,385	394,471	\$1,141,737,383	20,640
Georgia	15,441	391,644	\$977,169,692	23,996
Indiana	14,682	391,738	\$229,913,491	3,765
Minnesota	12,453	476,540	\$733,229,489	12,439
Illinois	12,273	511,766	\$1,324,341,410	18,049
Wisconsin	11,413	894,522	\$2,565,720,458	34,180
Montana	10,080	150,071	\$633,572,345	11,140
North Dakota	9,908	82,440	\$147,595,292	2,254
New York	9,708	823,410	\$2,252,489,306	23,697
Ohio	9,643	552,936	\$853,801,721	20,471
Pennsylvania	9,115	774,930	\$985,541,569	15,211
Michigan	8,803	528,936	\$2,361,806,575	34,473
Colorado	6,979	259,200	\$465,114,406	8,355
Virginia	6,268	432,416	\$976,807,941	20,492

For a complete list of converted acres: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=newsroom&subject=landing&topic=foi-er-fri-dtc>
For a complete list of economic data on hunting: www.sportsmenslink.org

estimated \$16 million per year by reducing the subsidy to ensure that farmers are not converting fragile grassland for the sake of farming the government. Opponents also argue sodsaver is only needed in the Prairie Pothole Region (PPR). However, USDA data shows the vast majority of all land conversions occur outside of the PPR.

Beyond taxpayer savings, sodsaver has an additional value to the hunting and outdoor economy. Hunters spend over \$38 billion per year annually. Waterfowl hunting is a significant economic driver for many Great Plains, Mississippi River and Delta states (see chart). That outdoor economy relies upon waterfowl dependent upon grasslands and wetlands throughout their migratory territory, not just in the Prairie Pothole Region. Converting grasslands and wetlands to agricultural production ends up costing hunters and the outdoor economy. And based on the fact that we have been losing grasslands, wetlands, and forests at a record pace (see chart), the outdoor economy is in

for some difficult times.

A while back, I met a duck hunter on a plane. He told me of the long history his family had hunting ducks in North Dakota. But then, a few years ago on their annual hunting trip, they arrived to North Dakota to find their favorite wetland had been drained, burned, and put into agricultural production. In fact, during that ominous visit, the night sky glowed from all of the wetlands set afire. They, and many other hunters like them, have not gone back since. The once thriving outdoor economy in that area is now a ghost town.

Grasslands and wetlands need protection. Our outdoor heritage and economy are too important. Contact your Senators and Representative to tell them we need a national Sodsaver in the next farm bill. Also tell them you oppose any efforts to weaken Swampbuster's vital protections of wetlands. It is important to contact Senator Roberts, as he sits on the conference committee.

For more information contact Ryan Stockwell at stockwellr@nwf.org.

Second wave of Snowy Owls may be coming

We're experiencing what could be the largest-ever influx of Arctic Snowy Owls into the Northeast, the Great Lakes and Great Plains states, including Kansas. And more may be on the way. The killing of some owls at New York City airports has resulted in an outcry against the practice, which was deemed necessary to protect passengers after instances when owls were sucked into plane engines. Now that the Port Authority has announced it will move toward non-lethal trap and release methods, the logical question to ask is, "What next?"

Dr. Kevin McGowan, a biologist at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology says:

"We applaud the move by the Port Authority to pursue non-lethal methods of removing Snowy Owls from JFK and LaGuardia airports. This is essential to reduce risk to people, and it also preserves the lives of these magnificent raptors."

"The sudden influx of these birds, called an 'irruption,' may be the first wave. More Snowy Owls are poised to head south looking for food and will be attracted to wide open expanses, such as airports, because they resemble their native tundra. Now that we know this is happening, airports can prepare for it by connecting with local wildlife removal experts, as the Port Authority has done. In most cases, we'll be talking about a few birds per



Photo credit: Diane McAllister, British Columbia

airport."

"More than likely these Snowy Owls are moving south from the Arctic because of a shortage of their favorite food up north-lemmings, or because of a bumper crop of young. We can expect them to stick around through early spring before they head back to the Arctic again."

"This year's Snowy Owl irruption is the largest we've seen in decades in

the Northeast and this is an awesome opportunity for people to see these birds. A really great way to find out where they are in your area is to check out the live maps at eBird, which tracks reports of the Snowy Owls, at www.eBird.org. Snowy Owls are one of the most impressive animals on the planet. You don't have to be a bird watcher to appreciate how cool they are!"

NWTF Flint Hills Gobblers Chapter receives national award

The National Wild Turkey Federation Flint Hills Gobblers Chapter received word from NWTF National Headquarters in Edgefield, South Carolina, that the 12th Annual Flint Hills Gobblers Spring Turkey Hunting Clinic held March 30th, 2013, had been awarded the "Best JAKES Event" award. The award will be presented at the 38th Annual National Wild Turkey Federation Convention & Sports Show in Nashville, TN. Flint Hills Gobblers committee members Mark Osmundson and Gib Rhodes will accept this prestigious

award for the chapter at the Federal Breakfast on Friday morning, February 14th.

Each year the National Wild Turkey Federation presents awards to the top Outreach events held throughout the United States & Canada. Awards are given in three divisions, which includes JAKES (activities for kids aged 17 and younger, WITO (Women in the Outdoors), and Wheelin' Sportsmen.

Flint Hills Gobblers president Gib Rhodes said, "The NWTF Flint Hills Gobblers Chapter is honored to have

won this award. It shows that the hard work and dedication of our committee members and volunteers for our JAKES program has been recognized at the national level. Each year over 1,000 NWTF JAKES events are held throughout the United States and Canada so this is a huge honor! Right now plans are being made for the 13th Annual Flint Hills Gobblers Spring Turkey Hunting Clinic on March 29th, 2014, at the Dry Creek Sporting Clays, south of Emporia. We look forward to making our next JAKES event to be our best ever."

Americans skeptical of 'Smart Guns'

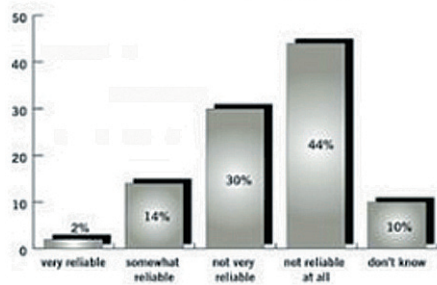
Oppose their legislative mandate, national poll finds

By a wide majority, Americans are skeptical of the reliability of technology intended to prevent all but authorized users of a firearm from being able to fire it. They also say overwhelmingly that they would not be likely to buy such a so-called “smart gun” and overwhelmingly oppose any government mandate requiring the use of this technology should it become available.

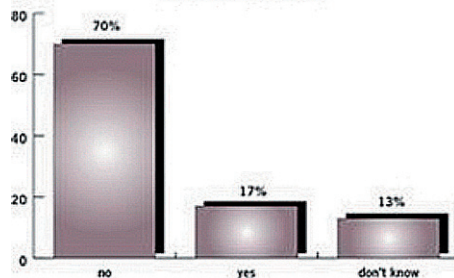
These findings were among the results of a national scientific poll of more than 1,200 Americans conducted in October by McKeon & Associates and released November 12 by the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF), the trade association for the firearms and ammunition industry. Although attempts to develop and market firearms equipped with authorized user recognition technology have been discussed for many years, the topic has been revived in recent months by some gun control advocates, remarks by President Obama and by the depiction of a smart gun in the latest James Bond movie.

Asked “How familiar are you with efforts to develop a firearm that will only fire for a specific authorized person(s)?”, only 20 percent of respondents said they were very or somewhat familiar with the concept of “smart gun” technology. When told that such firearms would incorporate biometric or radio frequency identification (RFID) with an activation system that would rely on battery power, 74 percent of respondents said that these firearms would not be reliable at all or very reliable. Only 16 percent thought “smart guns” would be very or somewhat reliable. Some 10 percent responded “don’t know.” Gun owners overwhelmingly (84%) believed a smart gun would not be reliable, while a clear major-

How Reliable Would a Smart Gun Be For Protection?



Should Government Mandate Use of Technology If/When Available?



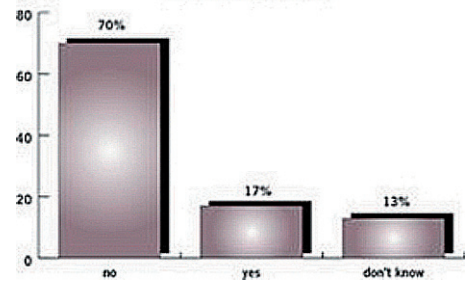
ity (60%) of non-gun owners also believed they would not be reliable.

To the question, “How likely would you be to purchase a gun with smart gun technology that prevented it from firing except for specific authorized users?” an overwhelming 74 percent of respondents overall said that they would not buy or would not very likely buy such a firearm. Only 14 percent of those polled said that they were very or somewhat likely to purchase a “smart gun.”

Some 70 percent of the survey sample also said that did not believe that government should mandate that all firearms produced incorporate “smart gun” technology should it become commercially available. Only 17 percent approved of a mandate, while 13 percent didn’t know.

The poll conducted Oct. 7-8 has a margin of error of +/- 4.1 percent. Respondents self-identified as 25 percent Democrat, 23 percent Repub-

Should Government Mandate Use of Technology If/When Available?



lican and 52 percent independent. As to ethnicity, 70 percent of respondents said they were Caucasian, 14 percent African-American, 9 percent Hispanic; and 7 percent, other. As to age, 17 percent of respondents said they were 18-30; 28 percent, 31-45; 33 percent 46-60; and 21 percent, 60 or older.

“The National Shooting Sports Foundation does not oppose the development of owner authorized technology for firearms and, should such products come to market, individuals should be able to decide for themselves whether they want to purchase them. However, we do oppose legislative mandates that would require manufacturers to produce only such firearms,” said Larry G. Keane, senior vice president and general counsel.

“We commissioned this poll to help determine where Americans stood on this issue. We are not surprised, frankly, to find that the majority of those polled were skeptical of this technology, although the margins were perhaps higher than even those of us familiar with the arguments would have expected. We are encouraged by the fact that seven out of ten of those surveyed did not believe the government should mandate the “one-size-fits-all” approach of so-called “smart gun” technology.

2014 Youth Essay Contest

Gun giveaway and guided hunt

ATTENTION YOUNG HUNTERS: Write a story and win a guided spring turkey hunt, a new turkey shotgun and a turkey hunting vest loaded with turkey hunting supplies! This is the 12th year of this contest and past winners have all been successful at harvesting a gobbler!

To commemorate the 12th year of this contest, the Flint Hills Gobblers Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation will be providing a new shotgun to the author of the winning essay. The contest is co-sponsored by the Flint Hills Gobblers Chapter, Bluestem Farm and Ranch Supply of Emporia and the Conrad Carlson Charitable Foundation of Osage City. Youth 16 years and younger from Chase, Coffey, Greenwood, Lyon, Morris, Osage, and Wabaunsee counties are eligible to participate.

JAKES stands for Juniors Acquiring Knowledge, Ethics, and Sportsmanship.



Many of the National Wild Turkey Federation programs are also aimed at creating safe, knowledgeable, and responsible hunters. The 2014 Topic: In 500 words or less, "Why is hunting important for conservation?"

Participants must be available to hunt during the 2014 spring turkey season, and if chosen, must purchase a Kansas spring turkey hunting permit. The lucky

winner will receive a guided spring turkey hunt during the 2014 spring turkey hunting season. The winner also will receive a turkey hunting vest and other turkey hunting items donated by Bluestem Farm and Ranch Supply of Emporia. Please submit your essay, including your name, age, address and phone number to Gib Rhodes, 1643 360th St., Madison, KS 66860 or Shelley Sparks, 1789 Road B5, Emporia, KS 66801 by March 4th, 2014.

The winner of the contest will be notified by March 14th, 2014. Lodging will be provided if the winner is not from Emporia or the surrounding area. A parent or guardian is welcome and encouraged to accompany the youth on this hunt. If you have any questions regarding the essay contest or hunt, please feel free to contact Gib Rhodes at (620) 437-2012.

Youth and women pheasant hunt draws 35 participants

Female hunters made up over a third of participants at this annual hunt

Thirty-five new hunters with limited experience came from all across the state to get a taste of what pheasant hunting can be like. Hunters ranged in age from 11 to 55, and out of those 35 hunters, an impressive number of 11 participants were female. The event is organized by Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism staff from the Glen Elder Wildlife Area and volunteers from the Pass It On – Outdoor Mentors, Inc. of Wichita.

This year hunters were joined by 10 celebrities and hometown heroes who served as hunting mentors. Celebrity hunters included former NFL players Mark Arneson, Jerry Holloway, Mel Gray, and Eric Williams; former professional drag racer Guy Caster; youth Crappiemasters champion John Gilotte; and national go-cart racing youth champions Brody and Nolan Pope. Hero-celebrities from the Kansas National Guard included LTC Damon Frizzell from

Gardner and SSGT Casey Pennock from Manhattan.

The day began before sunrise in the basement of Hopewell Church at Glen Elder State Park with a biscuits and gravy breakfast. Following breakfast the young hunters were briefed on safety procedures and then divided into five hunting groups. Each hunting group had celebrities, a hunt captain, and at least three bird dogs. Groups hunted in either Glen Elder State Park or in one of the refuge areas on Glen Elder Wildlife Area surrounding the lake where public hunting is generally not allowed.

Every group saw a good number of pheasants within shooting range and almost all of the hunters got multiple shot opportunities at the tough birds. Only the youth and celebrities hunted in each group and each youth was "shadowed" by a parent or other adult mentor throughout the morning. While afield, participants also enjoyed seeing lots of

deer, geese, ducks, bald eagles, as well as several other wildlife species.

Hunters bagged a combined total of eight roosters, with every group harvesting at least one bird. The morning of the hunt, participant Cassandra Kinzie even managed to pull off a "double" on two roosters that flushed together, making quite a present for the young lady who celebrated her birthday that day.

At lunch, groups returned to the church basement for a meal provided by the Waconda Lake Association. Hunting stories were shared and one youth hunter from each group was recognized and presented with an additional prize for demonstrating excellent safety skills while they hunted. A longest tail feather contest was also held for the successful youth hunters. After lunch, several hunters took part in a trap shoot held in Glen Elder State Park. Within a couple hours, trap

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15th Annual State Finals Eco-meet a success

Students tested on knowledge of Kansas flora and fauna

A total of 23 teams consisting of 88 students from 21 Kansas high schools participated in the 15th Annual State Finals ECO-Meet on Thursday, Nov. 7 at the Dyck Arboretum at Hesston College. Schools represented at the competition include: Blue Valley Center for Advanced Professional Studies, Chapman, Goddard, Goodland, Haven, Lakewood Middle School of Salina, Maize, McLouth, Mission Valley, Olathe South, Palco, Pratt, Salina South, Shawnee Mission South, St. Mary's-Colgan of Pittsburg, St. John's of Beloit, St. Xavier of Junction City, Tescott, Wakefield, Wilson Junior High and Wilson High School.

ECO-Meets are a series of quiz bowl-type competitions based on knowledge of Kansas plants and animals. Winners were awarded scholarship prizes. The event proved to be an exciting, hard-fought contest, with the following results posted:

Overall Team

1st place: Olathe South HS – Stephen DeHart, Rachel Meyers, Hannah Parinello, Nadia Qureshi and team coach Rene Gloschen. (\$300/student scholarship.)

2nd place: Shawnee Mission South HS – Jessica Jurczak, Jake Morrissey,

Joe Petty, Ashleigh Smith and team coach P.J. Born. (\$200/student scholarship.)

3rd place: Maize HS, Team A – Sam Urban, Skyler Roth, Ben Emerson, Kris Super, and team coach Jay Super. (\$100/student scholarship.)

Individual Events

Mammalogy

1st Place: Stephen DeHart, Olathe South HS (\$200 scholarship)

2nd Place: Jake Morrissey, Shawnee Mission South HS (\$100 scholarship)

Shortgrass Prairie Ecosystem

1st Place: Stephen DeHart, Olathe South HS (\$200 scholarship)

2nd Place: Kris Super, Maize HS (\$100 scholarship)

Eight regional qualifying competitions were held to see who claimed the honor of representing their location at the state finals. The regional locations were: Wilson Lake in Russell County, the Sternberg Museum in Hays, Milford Nature Center near Junction City, Lakewood Discovery Center in Salina, Great Plains Nature Center in Wichita, Dillon Nature Center in Hutchinson, Prairie Park Nature Center in Lawrence, and the Ernie Miller Nature Center in Olathe. The Kansas ECO-Meet committee is considering at least one new

location (Garden City) for 2014 and also a return to the Southeast Kansas Education Service Center at Greenbush to host the regionals, so there is potential for continued growth of this program.

The Kansas ECO-Meet committee would like to thank the Kansas Wildscape Foundation; the Kansas Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation, Simpson Farm Enterprises of Ransom; Barton Community College; Friends of Cheyenne Bottoms; Mareley of Hutchinson; the Kansas Wildlife Federation; the Ellsworth County Chapter of Pheasants Forever; Friends of Milford Nature Center; Mid America Awards of Salina; Goodwin Sporting Goods of Hays; and the Wildlife Education Service Section of the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism in Pratt for their continued support.

The Kansas Wildlife Federation would like to point out that Stephen DeHart, Olathe South HS, was the KWF 2012 Youth Conservationist of the Year. He was presented his trophy at the KWF 2013 Conservation Achievement Program banquet in Emporia last February.

For more information, visit kansasecomet.org, or contact Mike Rader at mike.rader@ksoutdoors.com or (620) 672-0708.

American Public Health Association adopts new policy statements

At their 141st annual meeting in November, APHA for the first time ever passed a policy resolution recognizing the link between spending time outdoors in nature and public health. Resolution number 20137 “calls on public health, medical and other health professionals to raise awareness among patients and the public at-large about the health benefits of spending time in nature and

of nature-based play and recreation.”

20137 Nature, health and wellness — To aid in promoting healthy and active lifestyles, encourages land use decisions that prioritize access to natural areas and green spaces for residents of all ages, abilities and income levels. Calls on public health, medical and other health professionals to raise awareness among patients and the public at-large about the

health benefits of spending time in nature and of nature-based play and recreation. Also urges such professionals to form partnerships with relevant stakeholders, such as parks departments, school districts and nature centers. Calls for promoting natural landscaping.

For more about APHA, visit www.apha.org.

Scorpions in Kansas

A Blog by Elby Adamson
KWF Board Member

A few years ago I received an email that had gone out to people with an interest in the natural world. The email asked if there was an instance where a species that had become extinct was later discovered to have some property that was of tremendous value to mankind.

Some people argue there's no such thing as a dumb question. I disagree and believe the question just posed is a dumb question. It is meaningless. How would I know later if an extinct species was of great value since it would no longer be around so I could answer the question?

For example, it makes no sense to ask if the passenger pigeon had some gene or other factor that would be of great use in human medicine. There are birds with similar genetic characteristics to passenger pigeons and there have been discussions of using their genes along with genetic "material" recovered from preserved specimens of passenger pigeons to recreate a passenger pigeon. However, the bird created will not be a real passenger pigeon, just something a lot like a passenger pigeon. Once a species is extinct, it is forever extinct.

Of course we might think we want some creatures to become extinct.

Scorpions may be one of those creatures. One has never stung me, but I'm told that if you camp by Milford Lake you should either keep your shoes on or be sure nothing crawls in them. A friend told me a scorpion got in one of his shoes and stung him on a toe. It hurt more than a little, he said.

There are many people who don't



Death Scorpion by Wiki Commons

even know we have scorpions in this area, but around Milford Lake and Fort Riley, they are actually fairly common. Perhaps this is a good thing as science continues to find new ways that scorpions can benefit humans.

Scientists believe certain scorpion toxins can be useful in the treatment of autoimmune diseases including multiple sclerosis, inflammatory bowel disease, and rheumatoid arthritis. One particularly powerful toxin found in the venom of the death stalker scorpion has shown promise for the treatment and diagnosis of various cancers.

Another scorpion's venom contains elements that kill one malaria parasite and attack another without harming surrounding cells. Researchers have also reported apparent anti-inflammatory properties in the venom of still another scorpion's venom that may be useful in

the treatment of arthritis.

Recently news has been released about a molecule from scorpion venom that "paints" tumors allowing surgeons to see if they have left any cancerous tissue behind when they are removing tumors.

A molecule that illuminates cancer cells—developed from scorpion venom—may someday help surgeons navigate tricky brain surgeries. There is hope the molecule will make difficult surgeries easier and may help develop ways of treating colon, skin, prostate breast and other kinds of cancer.

The goal is to help surgeons navigate difficult tumor-removing operations in real-time, as well as to guide new therapies for brain, breast, prostate, skin,

Continued on Page 20

HUNT

Continued from Page 13

shooters managed to burn up about 1,500 rounds of target ammo and blue rock that was provided as part of the event.

The day's events concluded in the evening with a Hunter's Banquet held at Memorial Hall in Downs where each youth hunter received a prize

package, and attendees learned about the importance of quality habitat for pheasants and the importance of getting more kids involved in hunting. Meet and greets with celebrity hunters concluded the evening.

"This event would not be possible without the generous support of over 30 businesses and individuals that stepped up as sponsors from the local communities surrounding Waconda

Lake," said Glen Elder Wildlife Area Manager, Chris Lecuyer. "These sponsors allow the day-long event to be offered to participants absolutely free of charge and their donations of prizes, food, services, and financial contributions continue to make the event a bigger success every year, so thank you."

For information, contact the Glen Elder Area Office at (785) 545-3345.

NWF connects kids to nature through interactive tech toys

The National Wildlife Federation has joined forces with Ubooly, the innovative, app-based learning toy that can turn a walk in the park into an interactive experience, to build much needed awareness and investments through the first-ever “Ranger Rick Ubooly Outdoor Adventure Campaign.”

Ubooly bridges the online and offline space, meeting kids where they are - on smartphones - and ushering them beyond the screen into active, educational adventures. Inspired by NWF’s ability to broaden kids love and understanding of nature and get them into the outdoors, Ubooly created a tailored learning experience or “play pack” with Ranger Rick to invite kids to play outside and learn about their surroundings while they are at it.

This holiday season, families can download the Ubooly App and get the Ranger Rick Outdoor Adventure play packs with proceeds going to support NWF’s conservation and education efforts. For more information: www.Ubooly.com/RangerRick.

“Studies show time spent in outdoor spaces reduces stress; encourages cooperation and compassion; and

helps children focus on schoolwork, think creatively, and score higher on school tests,” said Meri-Margaret Deoudes, vice president of the Be Out There (www.beoutthere.org) movement at the National Wildlife Federation. “Forming a partnership with Ubooly is another way NWF is working to get kids outdoors and enjoy nature.”

Ubooly and Ranger Rick’s Outdoor Adventure play packs feature hours of activities to help kids get outside and truly appreciate nature. Activities include scavenger hunts, nature hikes, mindfulness games and lots of exercise. Kids will also get to make collages, drawings, paintings and necklaces inspired by their outdoor adventures. Ubooly is compatible with iPhone, iPod, iPad Mini and Android devices.

“We are thrilled to be partnering with National Wildlife Federation for the first-ever Ranger Rick Ubooly Outdoor Adventure Campaign,” said Carly Gloge, CEO of Ubooly. “We are impressed by the work National Wildlife Federation has done toward funding innovative conservation programs and helping to improve kids connection to nature. Through

the Ranger Rick Outdoor Adventure Play packs, the magic of Ubooly will teach kids about the beauty and fun of the outdoor world.”

Be Out There™ is NWF’s movement to reconnect families with the outdoors. NWF’s practical tools and information help make being outside a fun, healthy and automatic part of everyday life. For other helpful resources and to learn more about NWF’s goal to get 10 million more kids spending regular time in the great outdoors visit: www.BeOut-There.org.

Ubooly is changing the way kids play, with a customizable learning toy that talks and listens. With content designed by educators and comedy writers, Ubooly is fun, educational and sparks “Active Play.” Ubooly empowers kids to choose the content and pace of their learning, and is never repetitive, with hundreds of activities to engage kid’s curiosity and imagination. Ubooly will get your child’s heart pumping and their brain growing. For more information, please visit: www.ubooly.com.

For more National Wildlife Federation news, visit: www.nwf.org/news.

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Managing media: We need a plan

American Academy of Pediatrics offers guidance on managing children's and adolescents' media use

From TV to smart phones to social media, the lives of U.S. children and families are dominated by 24/7 media exposure. Despite this, many children and teens have few rules around their media use. According to a revised policy statement by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), “Children, Adolescents and the Media” released Oct. 28 at the AAP National Conference & Exhibition in Orlando, the digital age is the ideal time to change the way we address media use.

While media by itself is not the leading cause of any health problem in the U.S., it can contribute to numerous health risks. At the same time, kids can learn many positive things from pro-social media.

“A healthy approach to children’s media use should both minimize potential health risks and foster appropriate and positive media use—in other words, it should promote a healthy ‘media diet,’” said Marjorie Hogan, MD, FAAP, co-author of the AAP policy. “Parents, educators and pediatricians should participate in media education, which means teaching children and adolescents how to make good choices in their media consumption .”

Dr. Hogan will describe the recommendations in the policy statement in a news briefing at 9:30 a.m. ET Oct. 28 at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando. Reporters wishing to cover the briefing should first check in at the press room, W203B, for media credentials. The policy statement will be published online Oct. 28 in Pediatrics and will be included in the November 2013 issue

of the journal. The policy statement replaces one issued in 2001.

The AAP advocates for better and more research about how media affects youth. Excessive media use has been associated with obesity, lack of sleep, school problems, aggression and other behavior issues. A recent study shows that the average 8- to 10-year-old spends nearly 8 hours a day with different media, and older children and teens spend more than 11 hours per day. Kids who have a TV in their bedroom spend more time with media. About 75 percent of 12- to 17-year-olds own cell phones, and nearly all teenagers use text messaging.

The amount of time spent with screens is one issue, and content is another. On the positive side, pro-social media not only can help children and teens learn facts, but it can also help teach empathy, racial and ethnic tolerance, and a whole range of interpersonal skills.

Pediatricians care about what kids are viewing, how much time they are spending with media, and privacy and safety issues with the Internet. “For nearly three decades, the AAP has expressed concerns about the amount of time that children and teen-agers spend with media, and about some of the content they are viewing,” said Victor Strasburger, MD, FAAP, co-author of the report. “The digital age has only made these issues more pressing.”

For Parents:

Parents can model effective “media diets” to help their children learn to be selective and healthy in what they consume. Take an active role in children’s

media education by co-viewing programs with them and discussing values.

Make a media use plan, including mealtime and bedtime curfews for media devices. Screens should be kept out of kids’ bedrooms.

Limit entertainment screen time to less than one or two hours per day; in children under 2, discourage screen media exposure.

For Pediatricians:

Pediatricians should ask two questions at the well-child visit: How much time is the child spending with media? Is there a television and/or Internet-connected device in the child’s bedroom? Take a more detailed media history with children or teens at risk for obesity, aggression, tobacco or substance use, or school problems.

Work with schools to encourage media education; encourage innovative use of technology to help students learn; and to have rules about what content may be accessed on devices in the classroom.

Challenge the entertainment industry to create positive content for children and teens, and advocate for strong rules about how products are marketed to youth.

As the media landscape continues to evolve at a rapid pace, the AAP calls for a federal report on what is known about the media’s effects on youth and what research needs to be conducted. The AAP calls for an ongoing mechanism to fund research about media’s effects.

More information for parents on creating a family media use plan is available on HealthyChildren.org.

KWF

Continued from Page 7

Kansas’ native prairies and the wildlife dependant upon them;

- We created the Kansas Conservation Coalition of conservation orga-

nizations, business and individuals dedicated to get strong conservation programs in national Farm Bills;

- We’ve worked to protect landowner’s rights to manage for wildlife on their private property, including prairie dogs and the federally endangered black-footed ferret.

It’s an impressive track record, and

we’re proud of it. And we’re proud of the support we’ve received from our members and supporters like you who’ve made it possible. We look forward to continuing our efforts to conserve and protect the natural resources of Kansas for the benefit of all outdoor enthusiasts. We can only accomplish that with your continued support.

Pheasants Forever hires Kansan as first senior Farm Bill wildlife biologist

Eddy will work as Kansas team leader and continue helping landowners with landscape conservation needs

Zach Eddy of St. John was recently selected as Pheasants Forever (PF) and Quail Forever's (QF) first senior farm bill wildlife biologist. Prior to his promotion, Eddy worked as a farm bill wildlife biologist, working with landowners to enroll in state and federal conservation programs. In his new role, Eddy will act as a team leader for Kansas farm bill wildlife biologists, while continuing to work with local landowners for habitat improvement.

A Dodge City native, Eddy grew up in the farming and ranching community and many of his earliest memories consist of being outdoors with his family. Following his graduation from Bethel College in 2005 with a B.A. in biology, Eddy worked in various conservation positions before starting his career with Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever in December 2011.

Eddy noted he is proud to have the



Eddy

chance to expand PF/QF's impact in his home state. "I'm humbled and honored to have been offered this opportunity, and I look forward to helping our passionate Kansas team, chapters, and partners advance their collective missions in the coming years," said Eddy.

In his role as a farm bill wildlife biologist, Eddy delivered conservation programs to private landowners in seven counties. There, he made over 700 landowner contacts, wrote habitat plans or developed program contracts for over 20,000 acres of land, and gave more than 40 presentations to diverse audiences on conservation and landscape improvement. Additionally, Eddy worked with

PF/QF's federal and state partners make positive changes to conservation programs for the betterment of landowners and wildlife.

Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever currently have eight farm bill wildlife biologist positions located in Kansas, and over 100 other farm bill wildlife biologist positions located throughout the country. This is a partnership position made possible by Pheasants Forever, Quail Forever, Natural Resources Conservation Service of Kansas, and Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism.

Eddy, his fiancé, Maura, and their pets currently make their home in Saint John. For more information on the Farm Bill Wildlife Biologist Program or "The Habitat Organization" in Kansas, please contact Zac at ZEddy@pheasantsforever.org or (620) 549-3480 ext. 110.

Shooting teams: Attend Pheasant Fest, receive \$5,000

Pheasants Forever in partnership with MidwayUSA donating to youth shooting teams attending national event

Pheasants Forever (PF), Quail Forever (QF) and the MidwayUSA Foundation invite every shooting team (school based, club, or FFA based) in the country to not only attend National Pheasant Fest and Quail Classic for free, but to also receive a \$5,000 contribution to the team just for showing up! Teams only need to register for National Pheasant Fest and Quail Classic and attend on Saturday, February 15, which is dedicated to the country's youth shooting teams.

Participating coaches and teams will have the opportunity to attend clinics and athlete seminars to make their team more successful on the range. Additionally, top instructors from around the country and Olympic athletes will be there giving their range tips and tricks. Some of the

event's featured speakers include U.S. Army Sergeant, Miss Kansas and avid hunter Theresa Vail; CZ USA sponsored shooter Dave Miller; and Xtreme Sport Shooting world record holder and television host Patrick Flanigan. In order to qualify, teams need a minimum of three athletes and one coach from each team, but there is no limit and they can bring as many teammates and coaches as they would like.

"Youth outdoor participation and education has been part of Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever since the very beginning, and with the strong support of Larry and Brenda Potterfield, we have been able to offer teams an outstanding opportunity to build and grow within their community," says John Linquist,

Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever's shooting sports national coordinator. "The youth of today are the local volunteers tomorrow, as well as future hunters and conservationists, and this is a great opportunity for them to experience the community of shooting teams from around the country."

National Pheasant Fest & Quail Classic is the country's largest event for upland hunters, sport dog owners and wildlife habitat conservationists, combining a national outdoor tradeshow, wildlife habitat seminar series, and family event complete with puppies, tractors, shotguns and art. The 3-day upland hunting and conservation extravaganza will

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How to talk to an anti-hunter

By Catherine Thagard

Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership

Hunters and anglers all love to tell a good fish tale, whether it's about the big one that got away or some other cherished outdoor experience. No matter how entertaining the story, it is inevitable that anyone sharing their adventures will sooner or later meet an anti-hunter.

In my experience, the majority of people who categorize themselves as being anti-hunting do not fit the stereotypical image of hemp-shirted vegans waving PETA flags. They are average folks who feel uncomfortable with the idea of hunting, yet can't define precisely why.

Every sportsman confronted by an anti-hunter has heard some variation of the following misinformed and inaccurate catchphrases. The next time you do, arm yourself with a logical, factual rebuttal and you may just open a mind to the idea that hunting plays an important role in conservation. Don't expect an anti-hunter to pick up arms and head into the woods to kill his or her next meal – but hopefully they will leave the conversation with a greater respect and understanding of the role of hunting in today's society.

"Hunting just to hang a head on the wall is wrong."

We agree, and in every state and province within North America, it's also illegal. A trophy on the wall is many things – decoration, art, a remembrance of a good hunt, but it is never the only thing a sportsman brings back from the field.

Failing to take every edible part of an animal, bird or fish is called wanton waste. Although the details of wanton waste laws vary from place to place, ethical sportsmen universally denounce the idea of wasting an animal. Being convicted of wanton waste carries not only legal ramifications such as loss of future hunting privileges, mandatory fines and potential jail time, but also social condemnation from fellow sportsmen. What's more, wanton waste laws have helped inspire sportsmen's organizations to donate about 2.6 million pound of meat annually to food banks,



Arm yourself with logical, factual rebuttals to common hunting misconceptions and you may just open a mind to the idea that hunting plays an important role in conservation. Photo courtesy Neil and Catherine Thagard.

homeless shelters and needy families.

"You should only shoot wildlife with a camera."

Users of our public wildlife are either consumptive, like hunters and fishermen, or non-consumptive such as birdwatchers or nature photographers. Watching a strutting sage grouse or taking a photo of magnificent bull elk is free, but the conservation programs that create these opportunities are not. And it is sportsmen's dollars raised through tag and license sales and excise taxes on hunting and fishing equipment – not general taxes – that fund state and federal wildlife agencies.

Hunters and anglers pay for important things such as habitat improvement projects, compensating farmers for crop damage, wildlife biologist salaries, fish hatcheries, migration studies, disease research, winter feed for elk and countless other things that contribute to the sustainability of all our native fish and wildlife, including non-game and endangered species.

Every photographer who snaps a picture of grizzly in Yellowstone National Park, every tourist who takes a sleigh ride to marvel at elk on the refuge in Jackson Hole or the hiker who catches a

glimpse of the successfully reintroduced native black-footed ferret can thank a hunter for that experience.

"Hunting upsets the balance of nature."

In the United States, there are more than 300 million people. We build cities and roads, put ski resorts on the mountains and casinos in the deserts. We develop oil and gas fields as dense as subdivisions that cover entire landscapes. The only balance of nature that currently exists outside of designated wilderness areas is fragile and it is one that must be constantly monitored and managed to ensure it persists in the face of ever-increasing human impacts.

Where natural predators such as wolves or mountain lions have been removed, hunters keep elk, deer and antelope populations in check and prevent damage to crops. When agricultural development paved the way for eastern whitetail deer to move west and push out the less aggressive mule deer, hunters stepped up to help maintain that native species. A well-publicized hunt in Florida aims to eliminate the exploding population of non-native Burmese

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FEST

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be held February 14, 15 and 16 at the Wisconsin Center in downtown Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

The MidwayUSA Foundation provides financial support for collegiate and high school shooting programs. The foundation, through its website, gives alumni and other interested parties at universities, colleges and high schools the ability to financially support a school's competitive shooting program or financially assist in the start-up of a scholastic shooting program. Donations

provide immediate grant potential for a school's shooting program(s) along with sustained funding from the investment earnings of the fund.

MidwayUSA Foundation, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit, charitable organization established by Larry and Brenda Potterfield in 2007. The Potterfields began the foundation as a result of their passion and interest in education for shooting, hunting, firearms safety and outdoor skills.

"We want to extend a special thanks to Larry and Brenda Potterfield of MidwayUSA," said Linquist, "Without their support and belief in Pheasants Forever's youth education mission, none of this would be possible. Their generosity will

allow another generation of youth to carry the torch and protect our outdoor heritage."

To register for National Pheasant Fest and Quail Classic, please contact Jlinquist@pheasantsforever.org. Once registration is received, more event details including your free passes, session times & a registration confirmation will be returned to your primary contact listed above. Also included will be a Team Deposit Form for the 5,000 dollar endowment gift from the MidwayUSA Foundation & your local PF/QF Chapter.

For more information on this offer, please contact John Linquist at (712) 253-0373 or e-mail John at Jlinquist@pheasantsforever.org.

ICE

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- Make test holes as you venture out to determine the thickness and quality of ice.

- Avoid ice over moving water, springs, or where large flocks of ducks and/or geese have roosted.

- Never icefish alone.
- Carry or wear a personal floatation device.

- Carry ice handspikes, which can help you climb out of the water and on to ice if you fall through.

- Include in your gear a length of rope and float cushion; something that could be thrown to someone who's fallen through the ice.

- Avoid ice if temperatures have

recently warmed; avoid honeycombed or dark ice.

Remember that no ice is truly safe. Err on the side of caution, and if you have any doubts, stay off. It only takes minutes for hypothermia to take effect in icy water, making a fall through the ice deadly serious. Icefishing is a great way to catch fish and enjoy the winter outdoors, but it requires attention and caution.

SCORPIONS

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colon, and other cancers.

"We're hoping with this Tumor Paint tool that they'll be able to see tumors that the surgeon wasn't able to get," he said. "My goal is that surgeons will be able to remove the tumor and give patients a better outcome," Dr. James Olson told reporter Brian Krans.

Use of scorpions in medicine is not entirely new.

In traditional Chinese medicine scorpions and some snakes are used to make wines that are held to have analgesic properties and are also used as antidotes for poisoning.

For something really weird consider that in some cultures people eat scorpions. In parts of China, a traditional dish is fried scorpion.

It seems highly likely that many other species of animals or plants have proper-



There is a scorpion on this rock at Ft. Riley. Can you find it? Photo by Elby Adamson

ties that we have not yet discovered. It would be a great shame if answers to human needs were pushed out of existence by our indifference and lack of steward-

ship. Sound stewardship of our natural resources including plants and animals is a hallmark of the Kansas Wildlife Federation.

Restoring soils to protect our future

By Larry J. Schweiger

President and Chief Executive Officer
National Wildlife Federation

“The nation that destroys its soil destroys itself.”—Franklin D. Roosevelt

President Roosevelt knew what he was talking about when he issued that urgent warning to the nation’s governors in the mid-1930s. Prolonged drought and fierce dust storms had swept massive clouds of dirt east from Midwestern fields, dumping copious amounts of topsoil more than 300 miles into the Atlantic Ocean and raining dust on the nation’s capital in 1934 and again in 1935. The second of those big dust storms spurred the U.S. Congress to pass the Soil Conservation Act, which the president signed into law on April 27, 1935.

Since then, farmers have learned a lot about managing soils better to produce crops for food and fuel. Federal conservation programs have helped them adopt practices and make investments to retain soils and improve downstream water quality. Despite those gains, however, agricultural runoff remains the dominant source of water pollution in this country, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency reports more than half of the nation’s rivers and streams are now considered degraded.

In 1985, Congress added basic erosion control and wetlands conservation requirements to the federal Farm Bill as a condition for receiving crop subsidies and conservation funds. Today, however, farm support systems are changing, and taxpayers are providing huge subsidies for federal crop insurance—the one benefit of the law that is not linked to

conservation requirements—at a time when those insurance risks are growing worse in a warming world. In response, NWF has been working with partners and members of the U.S. farm community to close this loophole.

The theory is simple: You do the right things on your land, and we will help you pay for crop insurance. Michigan Senator Debbie Stabenow, chair of the Senate Agricultural Committee, embedded that concept in the version of the Farm Bill that passed the Senate in 2013.

Meanwhile, the House of Representatives passed a version of the bill that does not require farmers to comply with erosion control and wetlands conservation practices in order to receive crop insurance subsidies. Sadly, that version, for the first time since 1985, would allow many farmers to receive significant taxpayer support while still draining wetlands and allowing massive soil erosion on their land.

With intensifying superstorms and violent floods, soil erosion is expected to get much worse in the years ahead. From Arizona to western Texas, the Southwest already is experiencing more frequent dust storms and massive forest fires so hot they burn the organic humus from forest soils. And when the topsoil sponge is burned, rainfall produces greater potential for rapid runoff and flash floods.

As climate change threatens to further damage productive soils, we must do more—not less—to maintain these precious resources and curb water pollution. NWF recently issued a report titled Counting Cover Crops that assesses the state of winter cover crops in the Mississippi River Basin. These crops are critical for protecting exposed agricultural

lands, cutting sediment losses, replenishing soils and providing vital habitat for wildlife. Unfortunately, such crops currently are used on only 2 percent of farmland in the basin.

In the Middle East, we’ve seen images recently of dust storms so large they darken the sun across a barren desert landscape that sits between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers—a region once called Mesopotamia, the famed “Fertile Crescent.”

Considered the birthplace of civilization because of its extravagant capacity to produce a diversity of crops and domesticated animals, the Crescent enabled its residents to move beyond subsistence living and forge more advanced cultures. Today, however, after centuries of abuse to the land, the Fertile Crescent has lost much of its capacity to produce food. Instead, it now produces a lot of dust. We should take heed.

I am troubled by the acceleration of human-caused soil degradation during the past century with no end in sight. With overpopulation and failed land stewardship, humans now wield the capacity to degrade and destroy productive agricultural lands faster than ever.

Do we need to destroy every landscape we touch? My answer is an emphatic NO! We must learn lessons from past generations. By working together to advance sound soil management practices such as winter cover and continuing to require erosion control as a condition for receiving subsidies, we can have healthy, abundant farmlands. By restoring damaged lands, we can maintain vital resources and prevent further degradation of our waters as we confront climate change by storing carbon in our soils.

HUNTER

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pythons who are endangering not only wildlife but domestic animals and humans as well. In the southern states where feral hogs have multiplied alarmingly, culling helps to preserve natural flora and fauna. Hunting reduces the number of so-called “problem bears” in

the picturesque towns that have replaced the woodlands the bears used to call home. As humans, our simple existence has already upset the balance of nature and hunting is a very important management tool that enables our game and fish agencies to protect, and when necessary, restore that delicate balance.

You may be asking yourself why you should care what anti-hunters think. But before you go putting that sticker on

your truck of a cartoon kid whizzing on the word “anti-hunter,” remember this: in America, only about 30 million of us hunt and fish. That leaves approximately 270 million who don’t. In a democracy such as ours they are the majority who will determine the outcome of ballot initiatives that affect your sporting opportunities. As a hunter and conservationist, you need to do your part and help them make an educated decision.

Beneath the virgin prairie

**By the Editorial Board
The New York Times**

Even if you have stood on a remnant of virgin prairie, it is hard to imagine what was lost when the tallgrass prairie was plowed. Settlers were staggered by the scope of the prairies, and they were more amazed by the richness of the soil. The biomass of roots beneath the ground was as dense and tangled as the biomass on top. And when the prairies were plowed, everything changed - the ecosystem, the structure of the soil, and, as it turns out, the microorganisms living in the soil.

A team of scientists at the University of Colorado, Boulder, has begun to use genomic techniques to analyze the subsoil microbial communities present in virgin prairie using samples taken from the few places it survives - cemeteries, mostly. What they found is abundant bacteria from the phylum called Verrucomicrobia, which is not present in the tilled fields that were once prairie.

These bacteria are not well understood, in part because they are hard to reproduce in the laboratory. Finding these bacteria is like finding a piece of a lost continent. We have

almost no sense of what the prairie soils once looked like or what biotic realms they contained before they were turned under by the plow. These bacteria are a reminder of what was lost and gained when the virgin sod was broken.

It is hard to understand the variation in biological communities that extended over hundreds of millions of acres. No one who rode across the prairie in the 19th century through grasses up to their stirrups ever stopped to admire the subsoil bacteria. Yet they were as distinctive as the bison grazing in great herds above.

A rehabilitation perspective: 2013 weather effect on Kansas wildlife

The following is an interview by Cindy Higgins, KWF Director at Large, with Diane Johnson, executive director of Operation Wildlife, Inc. in Linwood, KS, which provides rehabilitation services for injured and orphaned wild animals and relies entirely on donations to exist. It receives thousands of wild animals each year. The Kansas Wildlife Federation awarded Operation Wildlife the 1996 Conservation Achievement Program Conservation Organization of the Year.

Q: How is this year different than most years for wildlife?

Diane: We had the snowfall in March, which put babies behind by about a month. We are seeing extended baby season because of it. With the extra added rain, we are getting in a lot of flight feeders that are insect eaters that we didn't see last year. We are seeing an upsurge of West Nile Virus because of the rain.

Q: When you say upsurge, you're saying you've got a couple of instances of it?

Diane: Yes, last year it was almost nonexistent because of the drought. This year we're seeing more cases of it in birds.

Q: Any particular kind of bird?

Diane: Crows; and we're also seeing some raptors come in. The other



Some of OWL's young or injured mammals in late September. Photo by Cindy Higgins.

thing we're seeing that we haven't seen in the past are baby Broad-winged Hawks. They are extending their nesting range.

Q: Are they usually to the north or south?

Diane: Further north. We had four or five baby Broad-winged Hawks this year.

Q: How about numbers?

Diane: We've taken in about 20 percent more than last year.

Q: Is that typical? Every year you go up?

Diane: No. We had been decreasing. I think there's more availability of food because of the good rainfall that we've had in the past.

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Burn school set for Feb. 5 in Minneapolis, Kan.

By Tim Christian

Kansas Prescribe Fire Council

Fire is a key part of the ecosystem in Central Kansas District. On Wednesday February 5th, 2014 at the Minneapolis courthouse basement prescribed fire experts from Kansas State University and K-State Research and Extension

will present on fire weather, laws, smoke management, techniques, and burn crew safety beginning at 10 am. This is a tremendous opportunity to learn the most current fire strategies and stay up to date on Kansas fire law.

Cost is \$15 per person which includes a delicious meal and prescribed burning notebook. Participants are asked to

RSVP to the Minneapolis (785-392-2147) or Salina (785-309-5850) offices prior to Thursday January 30th. Whether you are an old pro or never struck a match, this program will be beneficial.

If you have questions or wish to share this information with your group, please contact Anthony N. Ruiz at 785-392-2147 or anruiz@ksu.edu

Congress strikes budget deal

Sportsmen stress importance of conservation funding

Following the mid-December announcement by House and Senate leaders of a successfully negotiated budget for fiscal years 2014 and 2015, sportsmen are uniting to advocate for strong funding for conservation initiatives as the details of the budget agreement are resolved.

If approved by Congress, the bicameral budget sets a top-line funding level of \$1.012 trillion for federal agencies through the fall of 2014 and a top-line funding level of \$1.014 trillion through fall of 2015. It also would represent a significant step toward avoiding another federal shutdown and would curb steep, sequestration-based cuts currently in place.

"Progress has been made by Congress in resolving the budget crisis, and sportsmen applaud news of this successful agreement," said Mike Nussman, president/CEO of the American Sportfishing Association. "Another federal shutdown must be avoided so that all sectors of our economy - including the nation's \$646 billion outdoor recreation economy - can prosper."

While applauding the bipartisan agreement, sportsmen stressed that funding for critical conservation programs is far from secure and urged Congress to act swiftly to allocate funds for measures important to natural resources management, fish and wildlife conservation and public opportunities to hunt, fish and recreate.

"We commend congressional leaders for brokering a budget compromise in the name of our nation's

economic security," said TRCP President and CEO Whit Fosburgh, "but the future of American conservation and natural resources management still hangs in the balance.

"Right now, House and Senate appropriations committees are determining individual funding levels for a broad suite of federal programs," Fosburgh continued. "Conservation funding must be prioritized in these negotiations. Sportsmen are united in supporting a \$30 billion allocation for the Interior, Environment and Related Agencies appropriations bill for fiscal year 2014."

Outdoor recreation, including hunting and angling, is a major economic driver in America. This sector of the economy is responsible for \$646 billion in direct consumer spending each year, supports more than 6.1 million jobs and sustains rural communities across the nation. Yet lack of funding certainty from year to year has had an enormous negative impact on the ability of agencies to fulfill their conservation missions, jeopardizing those economic benefits, jobs and an industry that relies on sound natural resources management.

"We all agree that the nation has to get its fiscal house in order, and the budget deal is a first step," said Ducks Unlimited CEO Dale Hall. "Programs such as the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, Land and Water Conservation Fund and state wildlife grants must have adequate funding, so we urge Congress

to recognize the outdoor economy as the major economic driver it is. Where else can you invest \$30 billion and get a \$646 billion return on that investment?"

The budget could move to the House floor for a vote as early as tomorrow, with a Senate vote taking place soon thereafter. The House is scheduled to depart for its holiday recess on Friday, and the Senate is set to adjourn next week.

"Congress can give Americans an early Christmas present by passing the budget," concluded Steve Williams, president of the Wildlife Management Institute, "and then passing an appropriations bill that reestablishes America's century-old commitment to conservation."

WEATHER

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Q: Anything else?

Diane: Actually, from a gender basis we are seeing more females being born this year—squirrels, raccoons. The ratio of males to females: females are greater this year. It's just really weird we're so behind. We got snow in May, everybody said 'oh, let's not breed' and now they're doing double duty to catch up.

To learn more about Operation Wildlife, Inc and its operation, go to: <http://www.owl-online.org/>.

Feral cats pose threat to Black Hills birds, lions

By Bob Speirs

Rapid City (SD) Journal

Feral cats roaming Black Hills communities present more than just a question of how to reduce their numbers humanely.

The wild cats have long-reaching consequences for native species large and small. The list of animals that are affected when domestic cats have to fend for themselves starts with native birds and chipmunks and goes up the food chain to mountain lions.

Hunters using trail cameras have been recording images and data concerning cougar numbers, travel patterns and overall health. Disturbingly, some of the lion images show mature cats slowly starving to death due to disease.

Feline leukemia is easily transferable between domestic cats and lions. It can cause blindness long before it causes death. Starving or diseased lions are less likely to succeed at hunting their natural prey and more prone to human conflict.

John Kanta, regional wildlife biologist for the state, shared data collected during years of graduate study conducted on the Black Hills lion population. He told the Rapid City Journal (<http://bit.ly/17LLFOx>) that some lions develop a taste for domestic cats and actively enter communities to pursue

them.

"Cats are cannibals," Kanta stated. "Males target young lions as well as house cats."

Female lions that lose their litters come back into heat sooner. Returning feral cats to communities could be creating an environment that lures lions to their deaths through disease, car accidents and forced removal by the state Game, Fish and Parks Department.

Advocates for feral cats see programs like Trap-Neuter-Release — which traps feral cats, sterilizes them and releases them back into the wild — as a humane way to reduce the number of feral cats without having to euthanize.

One such group, Alley Cat Allies, states on its website that "Trap-Neuter-Return is the humane and effective approach for stray and feral cats. Now in practice for decades in the U.S. after being proven in Europe, scientific studies show that Trap-Neuter-Return improves the lives of feral cats, improves their relationships with the people who live near them, and decreases the size of colonies over time."

Peter Marra of the Smithsonian's Conservation Biology Institute along with Fish and Wildlife Service biologists conducted a three-year study involving 21 similar projects in the U.S. and Europe. The data was released in January.

It estimated the free-roaming cat population at 30-80 million. It concluded that as many as 3.7 billion birds are killed by house cats in the U.S. each year and that up to 20.7 billion small mammals also died due to house cat predation.

Currently more than a third of all bird species in the nation are endangered, threatened or in significant decline, according to data released by the American Bird Conservancy.

Marra and his associates concluded that the impact of feral and free-roaming domestic house cats was the single greatest human-caused sources of mortality among U.S. birds and mammals.

While many communities have ordinances regulating dog ownership, very few include ownership regulations for cats.

Emotions run high between advocates of cats and their nomadic and predatory ways and advocates for native wildlife.

South Dakota's state bird ensures that pheasant hunters keep a tighter rein on feral populations in the eastern part of the state. South Dakota and Michigan are currently the only two states that allow hunters to euthanize feral cats.

Read more here: <http://www.kansascity.com/2013/11/25/4636560/feral-cats-pose-threat-to-black.html#storylink=cpy>

Wind turbines blamed in death of estimated 600,000 bats in 2012

Wind turbines killed at least 600,000 — and possibly as many as 900,000 — bats in the United States in 2012, researchers say.

Writing in the journal *BioScience*, the researchers said they used sophisticated statistical techniques to infer the probable number of bat deaths at wind energy facilities from the number of dead bats found at 21 locations.

Bats, which play an important role in the ecosystem as insect-eaters, are

killed at wind turbines not only by collisions with moving turbine blades but also by the trauma resulting from sudden changes in air pressure that occur near a fast-moving blade, the study said.

Study author Mark Hayes of the University of Colorado notes that 600,000 is a conservative estimate — the true number could be 50 percent higher than that — and some areas of the country might experience much higher bat fatality rates at

wind energy facilities than others.

Hayes said the Appalachian Mountains have the highest estimated fatality rates in his analysis.

With bats already under stress because of climate change and disease, in particular white-nose syndrome, the estimate of wind turbine deaths is worrisome, he said — especially as bat populations grow only very slowly, with most species producing only one young per year.

Will Congress be naughty or nice to grassland wildlife?

By Lara Bryant
NWF Blog

After two long years of trying to pass a new Farm Bill—a giant, 5 year piece of legislation that funds everything from food stamps to agriculture subsidies to conservation programs—members of the Farm Bill Conference Committee have assured us that negotiations are going well and that a shiny new five-year Farm Bill is coming our way in January of 2014. The last farm bill, which was passed in 2008, expired this past September, and it is crucial that a new farm bill is passed soon. While we don't know yet exactly what the final bill will look like, we are optimistic that the new legislation will require that farmers take basic conservation measures to protect soil and wetlands in exchange for receiving crop insurance premium subsidies, and this is good news. However, another important habitat protection provision called Sodsaver is falling through the cracks, largely due to heavy opposition from House Agriculture Committee Chair Frank Lucas (R-OK). This is bad news for grassland birds, which are declining at alarming rates.

Sodsaver will limit subsidies on native grassland converted to crop production. This means that if a farmer chooses to convert native grassland cropland, he/she can't get the same kinds of subsidies that other farmers would get. Sodsaver is not regulatory; it does not take away a landowner's choice to plow up native grasslands. It merely ensures that landowners who do so pay for it themselves. When billions of dollars are being cut from the food stamp program in the name of fiscal responsibility, it does not seem right that landowners can still plow up risky marginal land and still receive a full plate of entitlements.

Farm bill negotiators are considering limiting Sodsaver to the Prairie Pothole Region (PPR). That would



This Upland Sandpiper wants to know, why won't Congress put a national Sodsaver provision in the Farm Bill? Photo: David Seibel BirdsInFocus.com

be short-sighted and unfair. Though the prairie potholes are a very important ecosystem, other native grasslands are in danger. Pollinators and grassland birds depend on grasslands across the USA, and tend to migrate from Canada to Mexico in search of habitat and breeding ground.

According to USDA data, more than 398,000 acres of grasslands and other valuable wildlife habitat were converted to cropland between 2011 and 2012. That is about the size of 300,000 football fields. If laid end to end, they would stretch from San Francisco to Washington DC. Analysis of Farm Service Agency (FSA) data shows that 89% of recent conversions occurred outside of the PPR. Particularly, Texas and Florida had a very high number of acres put to the plow (26,395 and 24,961, respectively).

NWF and many other conservation groups have supported a new five-year farm bill because it provides funding for voluntary conservation programs, but it becomes harder to

justify doing so when the farm bill also subsidizes conversion of wildlife habitat. Several of my friends, conservationists and fiscal conservatives, have questioned me closely on why our taxpayer dollars fund any kind of agricultural subsidies. I am a strong supporter of farmers, and I think it is important that we provide them a strong safety net; but not at the expense of our natural resources. In the 1930s, massive conversion of grassland to cropland, along with farming of vulnerable lands without conservation practices contributed to the first Dust Bowl. If we lose our grasslands to the plow, we put ourselves at greater risk of incurring Dust Bowl II.

It is not too late to let Congress know that you want a strong, national Sodsaver provision in the final farm bill. Senator Pat Roberts of Kansas sits on the Farm Bill conference committee that is currently trying to negotiate a single bill from the House and Senate versions passed in 2013.

Pheasant crisis in South Dakota — how could it be?

By Tom Franklin
TRCP Blog

The \$750 million pheasant hunting industry is important to South Dakota economically as well as recreationally.

When the 2013 pre-season pheasant brood survey for South Dakota showed a 64 percent drop from 2012 and a 76 percent decline from the 10-year average, hunters that are familiar with the traditional world-class pheasant hunting in the state took notice. Many canceled their hunting plans altogether.

The statistics caught the attention of South Dakota Gov. Dennis Daugaard, who understands what the \$750 million pheasant hunting industry means to the state economically as well as recreationally. In response to the crippling drops in pheasant numbers, the governor quickly called together his game and fish, agriculture and tourism departments for a summit to identify the problems responsible for the pheasant decline and to develop a path

forward to reverse the negative trend.

The event was held on a bitterly cold December day in Huron, SD. The town is known for displaying the largest pheasant statue in the world as a symbol of the importance of the state bird. Secretary of South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Jeff Vonk explained that healthy pheasant populations require food, cover and water across the landscape. While weather is also an important short-term factor, habitat is the long-term driver of pheasant abundance.

He quoted the great wildlife manager Aldo Leopold as having the answer to the challenge, "Game can be restored by the creative use of the same tools that have heretofore destroyed it—the axe, cow, plow, fire and gun. Successful management is the purposeful and continual alignment of those factors to benefit the species."

So what can be done about this habitat crisis? Summit participants agreed that conservation policy should

play a major role and suggested several actions:

- ♦ Pass a Farm Bill with strong conservation features, including a targeted Conservation Reserve, wetlands and grassland protection and conservation compliance features that prevent crop insurance from causing habitat conversion.

- ♦ Pass legislation to tax grazing lands based on actual use rather than on soils capacity to produce crops.

- ♦ Increase funding for the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks to manage pheasant habitat.

It was encouraging to witness Gov. Daugaard's attentiveness to the needs of the sportsmen but much work remains. Watch a video from the summit below and stay tuned as the TRCP and our partners provide opportunities for sportsmen to speak up on behalf of key conservation initiatives. To see the video, go to: <http://blog.trcp.org/2013/12/17/pheasant-crisis-in-south-dakota-how-could-it-be/>

What are those really big doves in my yard?

By SeEtta Moss

Bird watchers from almost all of the lower 48 states and some of Alaska and Canada have found a new and quite large species of dove in their neighborhoods and yards. They are called Eurasian Collared-Doves because they are the species of collared-doves that come from the continent of Eurasia (Europe and Asia). Besides their large size, they can be identified by the distinctive black collar on the back part of its neck, darker wing tips, and tail that is not sharply pointed like those on Mourning Doves.

Eurasian Collared-Doves look similar to African Collared-Doves, a species sold as captive birds that escape or are turned loose. Often called Ringed Turtle-Doves, they can establish feral populations in some areas and they hybridize with Eurasian Collared-Doves making it difficult to



distinguish the two species.

However, if you see the underside of their tails the Eurasian Collared-Doves have are grayish on their undertail areas with extensive black on the underside of their tail feathers, while the African Collared-Doves have white undertail areas have very limited black on the undersides of their tails. They can also readily be identified by their very different calls— listen to them on the Audubon

Guides website (<http://www.audubon-guides.com/speciesSounds/Birds/Eurasian-Collared-Dove.html>). As I type this I can hear one calling from my backyard.

Eurasian Collared-Doves were first seen in North America in Florida in the late 1970's to early 1980's. They had been released in the Bahamas in the mid-70's and established there so it is thought that the birds got to Florida by natural means. Since then they have exploded across the United States only a few populated areas in north central and northeastern states and adjacent Canadian provinces not yet reporting them. They are associated with human populations including grain elevators where spilled grain is readily available as well as backyard bird feeders.

Many backyard bird watchers

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Study: Targeted culling for CWD has little effect on hunting

Chronic wasting disease, the deer-equivalent of mad cow disease, has crept across the U.S. landscape from west to east. It appeared first in captive mule deer in Colorado in the late 1960s. By 1981, it had escaped to the wild. It reached the Midwest by 2002. Little is known about its potential to infect humans.

Now researchers at the University of Illinois offer a first look at the long-term effectiveness of the practice of culling deer in areas affected by CWD to keep the disease in check. Their study appears in the journal *Preventive Veterinary Medicine*.

Each year, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources tests 7,000 (hunted, culled or incidentally killed) deer for CWD infection, conducts aerial surveillance to see where deer congregate and sends in sharpshooters to cull deer at the sites with disease, said Jan Novakofski, a professor of animal sciences at the University of Illinois and an author of the study.

"We know a lot about how far deer typically move," he said. "If they're sick, they're going to spread the disease that far. So if you find a deer that's sick, you draw that small circle and you shoot there."

He called this approach "a textbook scientific strategy for control. You reduce contact and you reduce the spread of infection with the smallest overall impact on healthy deer."

Novakofski and his colleagues at the Illinois Natural History Survey (part of the Prairie Research Institute at the U. of I.) found that the strategy

worked: The prevalence of CWD in tested Illinois deer remained at about 1 percent from 2002 to 2012.

The team also found that hunters were killing more deer each year in each region of the state (north, central and south) regardless of CWD and CWD management. Statewide, the number of deer killed by hunters went from 147,830 in 2001, before the appearance of CWD, to 181,451 in 2012. The only exception: Two counties out of 10 with cases of CWD saw a reduction in hunter harvest over the same period.

"We wanted to know whether Illinois hunters have fewer deer to hunt now than they did before CWD," said Nohra Mateus-Pinilla, a wildlife veterinary epidemiologist at the INHS who led the study with postdoctoral researcher Mary Beth Manjerovic. "We found that hunter harvest has increased, and the prevalence of CWD has been maintained at low levels for 10 years in Illinois."

This finding answers a long-time complaint by some hunters that the culling of deer makes it harder for them to find deer to shoot, Novakofski said.

"Since 2001, hunter harvest of deer has increased similarly in the northern region of Illinois, where CWD occurs, and the rest of the state, where there is no disease or sharpshooting," he said.

In the two Illinois counties with fewer deer, "the reductions were 11 to 20 percent," Manjerovic said.

The team compared the Illinois experience with that of Wisconsin, which changed its CWD-manage-

ment strategy from one that relied on culling to one that consisted primarily of allowing hunters to thin deer herds, the researchers said. Wisconsin saw a striking increase of infection in CWD-tested deer after it did that, the team found.

"In the early years in Wisconsin, (CWD prevalence) was still about 1 percent, just as it was in Illinois," Manjerovic said. "Then the strategy changed. Since 2007, CWD prevalence has increased to about 5 percent."

"We can't find an environmental or other variable that explains the increase in prevalence except a change in management," Novakofski said.

The numbers may not seem alarming to some, said postdoctoral researcher and co-author Michelle Green. But the trend is of concern, she said.

"CWD is a prion disease (like mad cow disease) and it's 100 percent fatal. There's no current way that we can actually make the deer better, so it's important that we keep it from spreading too far throughout the population," she said. "And then there's also the connection to mad cow disease. We don't have enough information yet to really understand what the impact to human health could be."

"We all hope that there is never a case of chronic wasting disease in humans. We all hope that it never spreads to people or agricultural animals," Novakofski said. "If it ever does, the investment in maintaining prevalence at a low level in Illinois will be repaid a thousand-fold."

DOVES

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complain that the Eurasian Collared-Doves chase away the Mourning

ing Doves from their feeders. These birds are larger than any of our native doves plus they "are also known to be aggressive and behaviorally dominant over similar species" according to an article about them by Cornell Lab of Ornithology (see

<http://www.allaboutbirds.org/Page.aspx?pid=1784>). I personally want to feed native species so I do my best to exclude them from my feeders (I will post on some of my efforts in a later blog after I have more time to evaluate their effectiveness)

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

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