

Council Grove Wildlife Area News

Area News – Spring 2012

Annual Youth Spring Turkey Hunt a Success!

On April 7, the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT) conducted the 12th Annual Council Grove Spring Turkey Hunt. A rainy spring morning did not hamper 15 eager area youngsters the morning of the hunt, and by day's end, all the participants were fortunate to see or hear wild turkeys. Eight of the participants harvested a turkey (two for one younger hunter) while others enjoyed encounters with their quarry but were unable to harvest. It was the first turkey for each of those who harvested a bird.

Area landowners provided access for this special event, which has become a big draw for area youth. The primary goal of the hunt was to enhance outdoor recreation opportunities for area youngsters, bringing them together with others of like interest. Young were paired with knowledgeable and experienced adult volunteers in an effort to initiate or further entice participants to enjoy the spring pastime of wild turkey hunting. All participants received hands-on hunting instruction, turkey hunting gear, and meals.

The following individuals and organizations assisted with the hunt:

Organizations: The National Wild Turkey Federation, The Quail and Upland Wildlife Federation, KDWPT, the U.S. Army Corps Of Engineers, and Cabela's of Wichita.

Individuals: Randy Benteman, Marvin Peterson, Brandon Houck, Jared McJunkin, Tyson Powell, Spencer Tomb, Allan Cashman, Mike Wells, Mark Hawkins, Phillip Buttrey, Jim Evans, Jason Harris, Nanci Sigle, Martin Godlove, Josh Patry, Alden Neff, Derek Jackson, and Trent and Frank Siegle.

"I would like to sincerely thank all of those who contributed to this 12th annual event," said Brent Konen, Council Grove Wildlife Area manager and organizer of the hunt. "By donating resources and sharing their time and talents, they instilled not only an interest in turkey hunting in 15 area youth but also enhanced their appreciation for the outdoor world and developed some lasting friendships and memories to last a lifetime. Without the dedication and support of volunteers, this rewarding event would not be possible each year."

Volunteers interested in helping with next year's hunt should phone Konen at 620-767-5900.



2012 Youth Turkey Hunt Participants

New Regulations For 2012, To Protect Waters From Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS).

Recreational boaters and anglers should be aware of new regulations concerning boats, bait and fish that went into effect Jan. 1. These new regulations were approved by the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT) Commission in their December 2011 meeting.

They were designed to protect the natural resources of Kansas from further spread of aquatic nuisance species (ANS).

The KDWPT began looking at the movement of bait fish and water as the main vector in spreading ANS to non-infested waters in 2006. A survey of anglers was undertaken in 2007 and the results showed that the majority of anglers use live bait and get it from a commercial bait dealer. When anglers chose to collect their own bait from the wild, a majority of anglers transported bait fish to their fishing destination and were apt to release remaining bait at the end of the trip.

Furthermore, many anglers could not correctly identify species commonly caught and used as bait in Kansas. In addition, the water was a vector for transport for ANS not seen with the naked eye.

Sixty-three percent of respondents said they thought that the collection of wild-caught bait would increase the likelihood for the spread of ANS species. Seventy percent thought the draining of water from boats and other equipment after use in zebra mussel-infested waters would prevent their spread. Respondents indicated a restriction on the use of wild-caught bait to the water where collected was the most acceptable option to prevent the spread of ANS.

However, despite efforts to inform and instruct Kansas anglers and boaters on the proper techniques to prevent the spread of ANS, species like zebra mussels, white perch and others have been spread to more waters of the state. The decision for more regulations was difficult, but KDWPT officials believed it to be in the best interest of all Kansans to protect and conserve these fish and wildlife resources and recreational opportunities.

The specific regulation changes for 2012 are:

USE IT WHERE YOU CATCH IT

Wild-caught bait fish may be used on the body of water where taken. If taken on a flowing stream or river, the wild-caught bait fish shall not be transported upstream across any dam or natural barrier.

NO LIVE FISH FROM ANS WATERS

No person may possess any live fish upon departure from any designated ANS waters.

DON'T DUMP BAIT

Wildlife may not be stocked or released on department lands or waters, navigable publicly-owned rivers, and federal reservoirs, unless authorized.

DRAIN WATER

The livewells and bilges shall be drained and the drain plugs removed from ALL vessels being removed from the waters of the state before transport on any public highway of the state.

SCENARIOS

Here are a few scenarios to determine the interpretation of the new regulations.

Scenario: Can you collect bait at a reservoir/lake and then transport in a car to the other side of the lake to use?

Yes. However, if it is ANS designated water the rule is different. No live fish may be possessed upon departure of that water. If you have to leave the property owned by that entity, the fish must be dead. If you can get from one side of the lake to the other without leaving the property, the transport is legal.

Scenario: Can you collect bait in a lake or reservoir and use it in the spillway?

No. Wild-caught bait may only be used within the impoundment where caught.

Scenario: Can you collect bait in the stream/river above a reservoir and use as live bait in the downstream impoundment?

No. Not as currently worded and the KDWPPT intends to amend this in 2013.

Scenario: Where can you use live bait caught in a river or stream?

Bait fish taken from flowing water can be used on any portion of that water, provided you don't cross an upstream dam or natural barrier.

Scenario: Can you collect bait from a pond and take it to the lake or stream?

No. Wild-caught bait must be used where caught.

Scenario: Can you purchase bait and transport to any location?

Yes. New rules have been passed to make sure bait sold from a Kansas commercial bait dealer has been inspected for disease and ANS. It is recommended you keep your receipt. However, if these fish are taken to an ANS designated water, they must be dead before you leave the property (even bait fish).

Scenario: Do you have to drain all water when leaving an area?

Yes. Water must be drained and the drain plug removed from all boat bilges and livewells prior to transport on a public road. (Typical boats leaving a reservoir could contain 468-975 zebra mussel veligers — barely visible to the naked eye — if not drained).

Scenario: What is considered dead when fish are removed from any ANS waters?

Fish cannot be alive. Fish must look and act dead. It's recommended to cut the fish, pack the fish on ice or haul away in a dry container.

Scenario: What do you do with unused bait?

Do not release it into the water. Dispose of bait on dry ground or in an approved bait receptacle.

These new regulations are intended to protect Kansas' natural resources. The principles behind the regulatory changes follow the longstanding CLEAN, DRAIN and DRY recommendations when using Kansas waters. The goal is to prevent the spread of ANS, while still allowing the use of these aquatic resources.

ZEBRA MUSSELS DISCOVERED AT COUNCIL GROVE AND MELVERN RESERVOIRS

EMPORIA – On Wednesday, June 29, 2011, officials with the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers announced that zebra mussels have been found in Council Grove Reservoir in Morris County and Melvern Reservoir in Osage County. Adding the twelfth and thirteenth Kansas reservoirs to the infested list disappoints KDWPT aquatic nuisance species biologist Jason Goeckler because he knows the spread can be prevented.

“We expected Council Grove Reservoir because zebra mussels naturally move downstream, and they were found in Council Grove City Lake last July,” Goeckler explained. “The Melvern infestation is a different story because it could have been prevented. I still think we can prevent further spread of aquatic nuisance species if lake users will follow a few basic precautions.”

All un-infested Kansas waters are under continual zebra mussel surveillance by KDWPT staff. A day after biologists found zebra mussel larvae, called veligers, while sampling Council Grove Reservoir, a lake user found a rock with a single adult zebra mussel attached. Within days, both veligers and adult mussels were found at Melvern Reservoir. Veligers are too small to see with the naked eye and suspend for several weeks in the water before sinking to the bottom and attaching to a hard surface. While they are suspended in the larval stage, zebra mussels can be easily transported in flowing water or water in boats, bait buckets and through other recreational activities.

Zebra mussels are native to the Black and Caspian seas in Europe. They are believed to have been transported to the Great Lakes in the ballasts of transoceanic ships. Since first being discovered in 1988, zebra mussels have spread quickly to other waters in the Midwest. Control is expensive and there is no way to eradicate them once they become established.

While an adult zebra mussel is only about the size of a dime, the species poses a threat to our native fish and aquatic animals. One adult female can produce up to 1 million eggs per year, and zebra mussel colonies quickly become quite dense, attaching to any hard surface, including native mussels, crayfish, turtles, boats, docks, as well as water intake structures. They even attach to other zebra mussels, creating layered colonies up to 6 inches thick. Densities of more than 1 million zebra mussels per square meter have been documented in Lake Erie. In addition to the threat they pose to our environment, native species and water recreation, zebra mussels will cost water suppliers, power plants and other water-related businesses \$1 billion each year -- costs we all help pay.

Adult zebra mussels are filter feeders, and an infestation can dramatically disrupt a lake's food chain by removing plankton native fish rely on. KDWPT biologists have documented decreases in body condition and abundance in several game fish species after zebra mussel infestations. Zebra mussel feeding habits may also increase the potential for blue-green algae blooms, which can be toxic to humans and animals. Dense colonies of zebra mussels make wading and swimming along shorelines dangerous because of their sharp shells. When zebra mussels die, the odor and shell fragments that wash up make any shoreline activities unpleasant.

With these latest discoveries, KDWPT will increase local outreach efforts through signage and information materials in an attempt to educate lake users about the dangers of spreading zebra mussels. All lake users are asked to help stop the spread of zebra mussels to another water body. Goeckler reminds all anglers and boaters to remember three simple rules: CLEAN, DRAIN, and DRY. Inspect your vessel for any zebra mussels before you leave the boat ramp area. (Zebra mussels are on the prohibited species list, which means they can't be possessed alive. Having a live zebra mussel attached to your boat is a violation.). Drain all water from the boat's livewell, baitwell and sump area

(Drain any bait buckets, as well – never pour live bait into the lake, dispose of it on land.) Dry the boat and trailer for at least five days before putting them in another lake, or wash the boat and trailer with 140-degree water.

“It’s important that lake users take the threat of aquatic nuisance species seriously,” Goeckler added. “If their spread is allowed to continue, our water-based recreation opportunities may be changed forever.”

Zebra mussels are just one of several invasive species that threaten our waters. Prevent their spread by following the CLEAN, DRAIN, and DRY procedures and never move water or fish from one body of water to another. For more information about aquatic nuisance species, go to www.kdpwt.state.ks.us and click on the “STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS” window on the lower left of the Homepage.

Fall Outdoor Youth Event a Success:

The Council Grove 8th Annual Outdoor Youth Event was conducted on Saturday, September 24, 2011 at Council Grove Lake. Fifty-one youngsters attended this year, and appeared to enjoy a beautiful fall afternoon afield. This special event provided participants with a free opportunity to enhance shotgun, air rifle and archery shooting and safety skills, ultimately encouraging them to spend additional time in Kansas great outdoors! The event is part of Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks & Tourism’s (KDWP) “Pass It On” Program, designed to recruit and retain Kansas hunters, particularly youngsters.



Archery station at annual outdoor youth event.



Shotgun station at annual outdoor youth event.

The afternoon began with a hearty lunch provided by the Flint Hills Chapter of Quail and Upland Wildlife Federation (QUWF), followed by a brief orientation of the event. Participants were then divided into four groups and allowed to visit each of the four different stations for nearly one hour. Designed to provide as much hands-on instruction as possible, visitors to each station received a brief orientation by a certified instructor, then jumped right in to actual shotgun, air rifle, and archery skills development training. Two of the stations provided students with opportunities to learn fun wing-shooting techniques with youth model 20 gauge shotguns and flying clay targets. A third station provided opportunities to develop or enhance their skills at shooting youth compound archery equipment at life-sized Kansas game animal targets. The final station provided students with opportunities to shoot air rifles at swinging metal targets.

Event organizers were pleased with how all of the kids conducted themselves during the event. All participants were responsible, improved their shooting and safety skills, and most importantly had fun! Many individuals were awarded

door prizes, provided by QUWF, to encourage them to take what they had learned one step further and do some hunting this fall.

Gear and supplies, including shotguns, shells, bows, arrows, targets, and eye and ear protection were provided by KDWPT's "Pass It On" Program. This program is designed to reverse the declining trend of hunting participation in Kansas. The program encourages youth to spend time afield by introducing them to shooting sports and hunting. Its goal is to ensure that every youngster, or person that has an interest in hunting, is provided with an opportunity to experience this treasured pastime.



Air rifle station at annual outdoor youth event.

Area KDWPT staff would like to thank the following individuals and organizations for their assistance with this successful annual event:

Organizations: Flint Hills Chapter of Quail and Upland Wildlife Federation, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Ace Hardware, S&S Outfitters, Ray's Apple Market, and KDWPT's "Pass It On" and Hunter Education Programs.

Individuals: Mike Miller, Wayne Doyle, Kent Barrett, Jesse Gehrt, Randy Benteman, Rick Sellers, Mike Lowry, Neal Whitaker, Rick Haug, C.L. Henton, Don True, Faron Adams, Chris Myers, Dennis DeLay, Allan Cashman, and numerous parents.

More Upland Habitat Enhancement Completed in 2011 With Help From the Quail and Upland Wildlife Federation (AGAIN!):

The Flint Hills Chapter of Quail and Upland Wildlife Federation (QUWF) have stepped to the plate again to assist with on-going efforts to enhance upland wildlife habitat at Council Grove Wildlife Area. In the spring of 2011, approximately 18 acres of former croplands in 3 tracts, were converted to native grasses and forbs. QUWF provided financial assistance to apply herbicide prior to planting and agreed to provide use of their no-till drill at no cost to KDWPT. Area game and non-game species should benefit from these changes funded by this partnering organization. Since 2006, approximately 86 acres have been similarly enhanced in 14 different tracts. QUWF has annually assisted with upland habitat enhancements on this wildlife area since 2004. Thanks QUWF!



Native grass and forb planting near Slough Creek.

Would you like more information about the Council Grove Wildlife Area?

Please contact:

Brent Konen – Area Manager
Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks & Tourism
1130 Lake Road
Council Grove, KS 66846
#620/767-5900
brent.konen@ksoutdoors.com
www.ksoutdoors.com

