

# Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area

## Newsletter

Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism

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### WHAT A WONDERFUL TEAL SEASON!

The 2014 Low Plains Early Teal Season was by far one of the best in recent years, if not decades. We had record numbers of teal in the fall flight and the rains we received in June and July set us up with some of the best habitat possible. The rains this past spring came at the right time to favor the germination and growth of a variety of annual moist-soil plants that produce copious amounts of seeds favored by many birds, especially ducks. Teal

numbers at the beginning of the season (September 13-28) were in the 35,000 to 50,000 range. This is good for the early teal season. The hunters responded to the excellent conditions and good teal numbers as shown in the table below.

The 2014 season had the greatest participation of any teal season in the past several years. These hunter number estimates are based upon the Daily Hunt Permits that have

been required of hunters for many years. This year the Department has introduced the iSportsman electronic hunt permit system. This system will replace the paper permit system entirely in the Spring 2015 Turkey Season. Looking at the table one can easily pick out the years when water was in very short supply (2005) or the Area was completely dry (2012).

With the high hunter

*(Continued on Page 3)*

#### Inside this issue:

Blue-winged teal	2
Hunter Origin	3
iSportsman	3
KDWPT Web Site	4
	6



Cheyenne Bottoms is a Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Project funded by your purchase of hunting equipment. Some of the best wildlife hunting and viewing opportunities in the United States can be had on land purchased and maintained by these hunter generated dollars.

YEAR	NUMBER OF HUNTERS	YEAR	NUMBER OF HUNTERS
2005	121	2010	1196
2006	1975	2011	830
2007	458	2012	0
2008	778	2013	1499
2009	839	2014	2510

Number of hunters during the early teal season at Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area, 2005-2014.

# BLUE-WINGED TEAL

The following information is taken from *Ducks, Geese and Swans of North America* by Frank Bellrose.

The most distinguishing feature of the flying blue-winged teal is the large gray-blue patch on the wing. When the drake is decked out in full nuptial (spring) plumage, the white crescent contrasting with the steel-blue head and neck is a unique feature.

The blue-winged teal is primarily a bird of the northern prairies and parklands, with numbers rapidly diminishing northward. It is the most abundant breeding duck on the mixed prairie grasslands of the Dakotas and the prairie provinces of Canada, followed closely by the mallard. In certain years when habitat conditions are particularly good, blue-wings breed by the hundreds in marshes and rain ponds along the Gulf Coast of Louisiana and Texas. They are common in all regions between these two areas at varying densities.

At Cheyenne Bottoms, the blue-winged teal is the most common nesting duck. Results of duck nesting studies done from 1966 to 1970 and again from 1990 to 1991, blue-winged teal comprised 35% to 60% of all duck nests found. The estimated number of blue-winged teal nests on Cheyenne Bottoms during those years ranged from a low of 66 (1990) to 653 (1991). The average for the 7 nesting years studied was 319 nests.

Blue-winged teal are generally the first ducks south in the fall

and the last ones north in the spring.

More than other ducks, they differ in chronology of migration between the sexes.

Adult drake blue-wings depart the breeding grounds well in advance of the adult hens and immatures. Most flocks after mid-September are composed largely of adult hens and hatch year birds. The blue-winged teal has the most complex migration pattern of all ducks in North America. In late summer many immatures and even some adults move north from their breeding grounds in Montana and the Dakotas to the prairie provinces of Canada. From countless staging areas widely dispersed over the northern Great Plains, blue-wings fan out far and wide. Most fly long distances in migration before stopping, and apparently because of these long flights, few really large concentrations of migrants are found north of their winter grounds. Although the continent east of the Rocky Mountains is blanketed by many migration corridors, only two are outstanding for the blue-winged teal. One leads from Manitoba and Minnesota to Florida, the other from extends from Saskatchewan south-southeast across the eastern Great Plains to east Texas and



Photo by Dan Witt

Louisiana.

Blue-winged teal winter farther south in greater numbers than any other duck in North America. Most of them in northern South America and Central America. Wintering populations can be found in the southeastern states from New Mexico to North Carolina and all states south.

Blue-wings are poor homers but great pioneers. They are extremely flexible in their nesting area selection. The heart of their breeding range coincides with the region most affected by drought. Their ability to breed in Louisiana, Texas, Kansas, Illinois and elsewhere when unusually favorable habitat conditions develop indicated their adaptability in meeting the challenges of their environment.

Blue-wings favor grass for nest sites. Hayfields are used extensively for nesting in the mid-West. Nests have been found near the water's edge and as far away as one mile. Average clutch size is 10 eggs with an average 24 Day incubation period.

## WHAT DO THE HUNTERS CALL HOME???

numbers and a good number of teal present, hunter success was good. The table below shows the hunter success, by Pool, this past season. These data were generated from the Daily Hunt Permits provided by hunters.

With the increase in the daily bag from 4 teal to 6, the success rate has increased the past two years. Depending upon what the weather does in October and November, most hunters and public land managers feel that the regular duck season should be a continuation of the teal season. This should mean some outstanding waterfowl hunting opportunities on all of the Department managed wetlands. Get out and enjoy the Kansas Outdoors!

Many folks across the United States do not consider Kansas a 'destination state' for tourism. There is, however, one group that has not agreed with that assessment for decades, hunters.

A prime example of this can be seen in reviewing the Daily Hunt Permit returns from the recently completed teal season.

Estimates can be made with regard to the place of hunter residency. This past September about 23 % of a sample of 2,000 permits were from Barton County. Sedgwick County was the next most represented Kansas County at 11%.

The word about the fine habitat conditions at the Bottoms, coupled with record fall flight forecasts, must have leaked out. The 2014 teal season had an unusual number of non-Kansas residents enjoying our space. A bit more than 18% of the hunters were from out of state. That's a figure we normally see during the regular duck season, not teal season. Some of the most represented states were Missouri, Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Iowa, Arkansas and Colorado. Some hunters came from relatively far away states such as New Jersey, Pennsylvania, North and South Carolina.

## Electronic Daily Hunt Permit System

As mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter, the Department is implementing an electronic daily hunting permit system on Jamestown, Lovewell, Clinton, Elwood, Kansas River, Milford, Cheyenne Bottoms, Texas Lake, Isabel, McPherson Wetlands, Slate Creek Wetlands, Neosho, Melvern and Lyon Wildlife Areas.

To utilize the electronic daily hunt permit system, the first step, which can be done at any time, is to log on to: <https://kdwpt.isportsman.net> then click on Register to set up an account and obtain a General Access Permit. Once you have the General Access Permit and are ready to hunt, you can log in on a computer or smart phone or call in on a cell phone or landline (1-844-500-0825) and "check-in". After you've finished hunting for the day, you can "check-out" the same way.

Beginning in Spring 2015, the old paper Daily Hunt Permits will no longer be available. So, if you're still using the cards, start playing around with iSportsman and get used to it. If you need help or have questions, call any of the properties listed above or call the Public Lands Section at 620-672-5911.

POOL	NUMBER OF HUNTERS	TEAL HARVESTED	HUNTER AVERAGE
2	895	3,794	4.24
3A	270	1,069	3.96
3B	338	1,302	3.85
4A	471	1,765	3.75
4B	126	503	3.99
5	146	730	5.00
UNSPECIFIED	407	1,693	4.16
TOTAL	2,510	10,856	4.32

Number of hunters, teal harvested and hunter success, by Pool at Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area during the 2014 teal season.

## **WILDLIFE, PARKS AND TOURISM WEB SITE**

The Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism web site provides a host of valuable services. Examples include: weekly waterfowl reports; WIHA and FISH Atlas; Hunter Ed Class schedule; license and permit sales; hunting and fishing regulations; legislative updates; and the Outdoor Store with books and DVD's related to all outdoor interests. Don't forget that each Department property has it's own page. Check it out at:

[www.kdwpt.state.ks.us](http://www.kdwpt.state.ks.us)



Cheyenne Bottoms was designated as a 'Wetland of International Importance' by the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands in 1988. Only 35 sites in the U.S. are recog-



nized as such. In addition, it is recognized as an 'Important Bird Area' by the American Bird Conservancy and is listed as a 'Hemispheric Reserve' by the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network.

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Equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from programs described herein is available to all individuals without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, sexual preference, religion, age or handicap. Complaints of discrimination should be sent to Office of the Secretary, Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism, 1020 So. Kansas Ave., Suite 200, Topeka, KS 66612.