

# Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area

## Newsletter

Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism

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### IS THIS 2015 OR 2016?

I sat down to begin putting this issue together and found myself thinking that I had written the opening sentences before. I found out that I had, in the July 2015 issue!! The two spring seasons have a lot in common. We had a lot of plans for 2016. We had Pool 3B dry all winter, 500 acres of cattail in that pool mowed and ready to burn, and we wanted to do some dirt and vegetation work in Pool 4A. The weather changed everything, just like last year.

The spring was one of the windiest I can remember, eliminating a lot of days for burning. Then, from May 17 through June 17, we received over 11 inches of rain at the office. As of late June, Pools 1A, 1B and 1C are all at or slightly over capacity. That's the

good news. We are looking good for this fall, but like last year, we could be hurting for water in September if July and August turn off hot and dry. However, between the wind, scheduling conflicts and county restrictions we were unable to burn. The portions of Pool 4 we were wanting to build our cattail control effort off of were too wet to even see the bottom. There were several times when we were encouraged enough, after pumping Pool 3 and 4 into Pool 1, that we had equipment ready to spray or mow cattail. Then we'd get a rain that would undo weeks of pumping.

We haven't given up on cattail work. We continue to pump Pools 3 and 4 into Pool 1. We are using our 6-

wheeled ATV's to 'test' the marsh by driving out in the cattail spraying Phragmites and seeing if larger equipment can be used.

That gives you an idea of what we haven't been doing, but we have accomplished a good amount of work in other arenas.

We're planning on doing some aerial spraying of cattail and Phragmites this summer. Ducks Unlimited has contributed a significant amount of money for herbicide and we now have a contract with a local aerial applicator so we can see how this effort works out. While the cattail we spray this summer will likely still be there this fall, we hope to get a good kill that next year it 'melts' down

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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.

# GADWALL

The following is taken from All About Birds, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology web site.

In a world where male ducks sport gleaming patches of green, red or blue, the gadwall's, (*Anas strepera*), understated elegance can make this common duck easy to overlook. Gadwall are about the same size as mallards. They have a fairly large square head with a steep forehead. The bill is noticeably thinner than a mallard's. Male gadwall are gray-brown with a black patch at the tail. Females are patterned with brown and buff. In flight, both sexes have a white patch on the inside, trailing edge of the wing that is sometimes visible while swimming or resting.

You'll often see these ducks in pairs through the winter because they select their mates for the breeding season as early as late fall. Gadwall breed mainly in prairie potholes, small ponds scattered throughout the Great Plains and Canadian prairies. Some also breed on tundra, deltas, and wetlands in boreal forests of the far north. They choose well vegetated wetlands with plenty of emergent plants to feed among and take cover in. Equally important for breeding are adjacent uplands with vegetation to conceal nests



and for ducklings to hide in. Their nest site is usually in dense brush or grasses at least a foot tall, usually within 200 yards of open water, and nest islands when possible for greater safety from predators. On migration and in winter, look for gadwalls in fresh and salt water marshes and well-vegetated reservoirs, beaver ponds, farm ponds and streams. The finished nest is about a foot across with a cup 3 inches deep. Clutch size is 7 to 12 eggs. Incubation period is 24 to 27 days with the young ready to leave the nest a day or 2 after hatching.

Gadwall feed with other dabbling ducks, tipping forward to feed on submerged vegetation, such as algae, rushes, sedges, pondweed, widgeon grass and water milfoil, without diving. They also eat snails, midges, water beetles, and other invertebrates. During the nesting season, animal matter can make up to 50% of an adult gadwall's

diet, but only 5% during the winter. They sometimes steal food from flocks of diving ducks or coots.

There are many winters when gadwall stay the entire time with us at Cheyenne Bottoms. Mild temperatures kept us from freezing for any length of time and they had no reason to move further south. But in those years when they left us during the winter, they typically return in the spring around February 22.

During the hunting seasons their abundance, and therefore their occurrence in the hunters bag, varies. The percent composition of hunters' bag that is composed of gadwall over the past 15 years varied from 5% (2001-02 season) to 32% (2006-07 season) and averaged about 13%.

Gadwall populations have increased by over 2.5% per year between 1966 and 2010. This is primarily due to grass and wetland conservation efforts.

enough to have some open water areas. We have been using the aquatic backhoe to clean out accumulated silt in the ditches leading from the North Hub pump station out along the Pool 3/Pool 4 dike. This has greatly improved our pumping and dewatering effort in those pools.

Another significant project we completed was the placement of rip-rap at the out fall structure on the inlet canal west of the Area office. This was done, fortunately, in April before we began diverting water through the system. Over the years the original rip-rap had slowly failed and the canal banks were eroding away and even eroding behind the structure wing walls. This new rock should last for many years and prevent further erosion.

We have also been busy sealing and repairing the concrete on structures and dams all across the wildlife area. Sign maintenance has also received some attention during the winter and this spring. We have stained several of the entrance information signs and also the Auto Tour signs.

Work on the roads was



Erosion on the outfall structure on the inlet canal west of the Area office (left) and the rip-rap placed to repair it.

performed when they were sufficiently dry. Several thousand dollars was spent on rock and gravel. This is an ongoing maintenance program but this past spring we were able to devote more time than usual to it.

Many of this springs' projects will not directly benefit the birds or visitors to the Bottoms. However, they are efforts that need to be done and taking advantage of the time when available allows us to do them without taking time away from habitat work when we can do that. Hopefully that will not be too far away.

**CHEYENNE BOTTOMS  
INFORMATION NIGHT  
SCHEDULED**

The annual Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area Information Night has been scheduled for Tuesday, August 23, at 7 PM. It will be held at the Kansas Wetland Education Center on Kansas Highway 156 in the southeast portion of the wildlife area. Current conditions, water levels, waterfowl season dates and upland game and waterfowl migration forecasts will be presented. The get together is free and open to the public.

**HUNTERS  
ENCOURAGED TO  
USE iSPORTSMAN**

The Department is in its second year of implementing an electronic daily hunting permit system on Benedictine Bottoms, Buffalo Ranch, Bolton, Buck Creek, Cheyenne Bottoms, Clinton, Elwood, Hillsdale, Isabel, Jamestown, Kansas River, LaCygne, Lovewell, Lyon, Marais des Cygnes, McPherson, Melvern, Milford, Neosho, Noe, Perry, Slate Creek and Texas Lake.

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.

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.

## **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.ksoutdoors.com](http://www.ksoutdoors.com)



Cheyenne Bottoms was designated as a 'Wetland of International Importance' by the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands in 1988. Only 38 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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