

McPherson Valley Wetlands Update:

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Hunting seasons are barely over, but the preparation for next hunting season is already underway at the McPherson Valley Wetlands. Staff are undertaking an aggressive burning campaign this spring to try and improve upland habitats. At publication time, approximately 1,000 acres have been burned, with plans to burn approximately 850 additional acres. Following burning activities, strip disking will take place to stimulate annual forbs for brood rearing cover and annual seed production. Draw-downs have been ongoing for a couple months now to encourage good annual vegetation in our marsh units. Hopefully, Mother Nature will bless us next fall and supply timely run-off rains to inundate all our marshes and provide migrating waterfowl good-quality habitat.

Staff at the wetlands are glad to visit with anyone relative to area management, waterfowl numbers, water levels, etc. Feel free to stop by or give us a call. Our schedules are anything but routine, so it is best to make appointments if you plan to stop by. We appreciate any comments or ideas that you may have to improve the area or make it a more enjoyable place to visit.

2010 – 2011 Hunting Season Results

Hunter participation and harvest at the wetlands was pretty similar to last season. However, duck and goose harvest were both down from 2009. At the wetlands, we average 2,727 hunters, who harvest 2,077

ducks, 74 geese, 367 pheasants, 17 quail, and 549 doves. These averages were figured back to 2004 (see below). About everything in 2010 lines up with the seven-year average, with the exceptions of pheasant and dove harvest. Higher than average dove harvest the last two years is completely the result of our dove / sunflower management field at the Farland Lake unit.

| Year | Hunters | Ducks | Geese | Pheasants | Quail | Dove |
|------|---------|-------|-------|-----------|-------|------|
| 2004 | 3556 | 2787 | 149 | 474 | 27 | 89 |
| 2005 | 2164 | 681 | 26 | 435 | 28 | 484 |
| 2006 | 1633 | 217 | 12 | 365 | 16 | 517 |
| 2007 | 3140 | 3078 | 169 | 386 | 8 | 307 |
| 2008 | 3026 | 3214 | 54 | 400 | 10 | 146 |
| 2009 | 2858 | 2584 | 83 | 254 | 8 | 1149 |
| 2010 | 2714 | 1980 | 22 | 256 | 20 | 1151 |

The ducks just never seemed to get here in any numbers until the opening weekend of pheasant season. From this point in the season on, it was very hit and miss for duck hunting success, due in part to loss of water, and no ducks. We still managed to salvage an average year, and as always, we are expecting higher numbers next year.

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Planned Maintenance Projects for 2011

There are currently several projects slated for the summer of 2011. Several have been put on hold due to wet conditions, budgeting, and other unforeseeable items but will be completed as soon as possible.

The first project that has been ongoing for over a year is the placement of rip-rap on the east and south dike of Pool 8. Pool 8 was originally designed as our main water storage pool, and wave action from a few years of holding water high has taken its toll on this dike system. To stop these effects, staff ordered several hundred tons of rip-rap to be placed on these dikes. The problem is getting the rip-rap where it is needed. Currently, the rip-rap is sitting just south of headquarters on Moccasin Road. Hauling in that much weight will take its toll on our dike system, therefore, conditions have to be very dry. Also, the ditch along Moccasin Road has been cleaned out by the local drainage district. To gain access to our dike system via the shortest route possible, we will have to install two new culverts and build a ramp across this ditch. This will be a two-fold win for us. It will allow heavy equipment on our dikes to place the rip-rap, and it will also provide better hunter access to the Big Basin marsh units.

The second project will be to replace rock on various parking lots and area roads. Staff will identify needs following the spring wet season and focus efforts where needed.



Federal Frameworks

The purpose of hunting regulations is to keep harvests at levels compatible with a population's ability to maintain itself. In the US, the regulatory tools that waterfowl managers use to do this are *framework regulations* and *special regulations*.

Framework regulations consist of the outside dates for opening and closing hunting seasons, season length, daily bag and possession limits, and shooting hours. The Migratory Bird Treaty sets the earliest and latest dates within which states may hold hunting seasons, and stipulates that season lengths may not exceed 107 days. In practice, season lengths tend to fluctuate with bird abundance. They also vary by flyway -- usually longest in the Pacific Flyway and shortest in the Atlantic Flyway, reflecting differences in the abundance of birds, number of hunters, and other factors. States work within the framework regulations to set their individual seasons.

The number of birds of a species or group that can be harvested in a day is defined as the daily bag limit. Bag limits tend to be larger for birds that are highly productive, very abundant, short-lived, or lightly hunted. For ducks, daily bag limits are usually most liberal in the Pacific Flyway and most restrictive in the Atlantic Flyway, for the same reasons that the season lengths differ. Shooting hours limit the time of day when migratory birds may be harvested. Since 1918, shooting hours generally have been one-half hour before sunrise to sunset.

Special regulations consist of framework regulations that generally are applied on a smaller scale. Examples include split seasons, zones, and special seasons. States have been allowed to divide their hunting period for most species and groups of birds into two or sometimes three nonconsecutive segments in order to take advantage of peaks of abundance. Zoning is the establishment of independent seasons in two or more zones within a state to distribute harvest opportunity more evenly among hunters throughout the state. Generally, special seasons focus on those species

considered to be more lightly utilized than others. Special seasons are usually, but not always, in addition to the regular season.

Other regulatory tools are available as well. Closed seasons occur when there are not enough birds of a particular species to withstand harvest. For example, canvasback seasons have been closed in the recent past. Permits are effective regulatory mechanisms that allow hunters to take a limited number of birds of a certain species. Recent examples of the use of permits have been with some Canada goose populations and with tundra swans.

Quotas are defined as predetermined apportionments of a limited resource. Recent examples of quotas have been with some Canada goose and sandhill crane populations.

Harvest regulations are published annually in the Federal Register, and opportunity for public comment is part of the regulatory process. Each year, as the regulation-setting process unfolds, the most up-to-date information is listed in the Current Federal Regulations section of this website.

Brief History of Waterfowl Regulations in the US:

1920s -- Waterfowl hunting regulations were liberal (for example, 107-day seasons, 75 ducks per day) and similar among states.

1930s -- After the drought years of the 1930s, more conservative regulations were adopted.

1940s -- The flyways approach to regulation setting was developed.

1950s -- Fine tuning of regulations along flyway lines. Differences recognized in waterfowl abundance, hunter demographics and climate. Regulations became more complex.

1960s -- Special seasons sprouted up throughout the continent.

1970s -- Population goals and harvest guidelines guided the regulation-setting process.

1980s -- Drought and decline in waterfowl populations; removal of special seasons.

1990s -- Development of Adaptive Harvest Management.

Content taken from www.flyways.us.



Etiquette For Hunting in a Crowd

- Do not crowd in on other hunters. Respect their space.
- Do not shoot at ducks that are beyond your effective shooting range. Let the ducks work. This will minimize crippling loss and save shells.
- Do not pass-shoot at ducks that are swinging somebody else's decoy spread.
- Do not try to call ducks away from another party when they are locked onto their spread.
- If moving through an area and another party is working ducks, stop or do whatever is necessary to avoid flaring their birds.
- Do not speak derogatorily about nearby hunters. Sound travels well over water, and under-the-breath criticisms could escalate competitive tensions.
- Stay in line and wait your turn at the boat ramp.
- Do not block the boat ramp. Be loaded and ready to launch quickly when your turn comes.

- When trailering your boat, clear the ramp quickly. Wait to store gear and fasten tie-down straps when you are out of the way.
- When running a boat, be courteous with your wake when passing other boats or wading hunters.
- If you finish your limit, pick up and leave quickly so others can claim your spot.
- Ultimately, remember the Golden Rule and apply it when hunting. By treating other hunters fairly and respectfully, you will have a more enjoyable, less stressful hunt, and hopefully the example you set will have a positive influence on other parties in your area.

After Wade L. Bourne, *Ducks Unlimited*, May/June 2001.

Upland Bird Habitat Disk Strip Project

Staff will continue the upland strip-disking project this spring and early summer. Results from last year's limited efforts were very positive (See pictures below) and provided very improved conditions in unproductive grass tracts. Staff has budgeted and bid solicitation is complete on a new 14-foot heavy disk specifically for continued efforts of strip disking upland sites and turning tough soils in marsh units. This unit will drastically improve our ability to manage the vegetative communities to favor annual plants as opposed to perennial plants.



Disked strip in native grass.

Strips will be disked throughout the area at all three units as conditions and time allows. Besides

providing brood rearing habitat, they will provide a little extra food resources for all wildlife with the production of seeds from these annual plant communities.

Dove / Sunflower field

As we have for the last two years, KDWP will have a dove management field on the farthest-east edge of the Farland Lake Unit southeast of Inman. This field is approximately 60 acres of sunflowers, of which 25 percent will remain as KDWP's share. This 25 percent will be mowed in stages prior to the September 1 dove season opener. This field is located one mile north of 11th and Arapahoe. There is an iron ranger on site where hunters can pick up daily hunting permits, and remember non-toxic shot must be used for hunting doves.



Farland Lake sunflower / dove field.

Check the waterfowl reports or area news links on the MPWL webpage for updates about this field. There is no better way to introduce a youth to hunting than at a good dove field. The action can be fast and furious and supply lots of shooting opportunities for impatient youth. Not to mention, it's a pretty good time for adults too!

Regulation Reminder: Froggin'

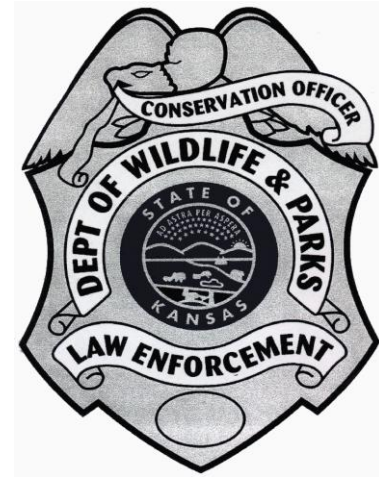
July 1 marks the opening of bullfrog season in Kansas. Many sportsmen venture out to the wetlands to take advantage of this tasty amphibian. However, management and law enforcement staff have encountered many violations among this group of sportsmen, and a courteous reminder of applicable regulations covering bullfrog hunting seems appropriate:

1. Bullfrog season runs from July 1 through October 31.
2. Daily creel limit is 8, with a possession limit of 24 bullfrogs.
3. Unless exempt, a valid fishing license is required.
4. Legal method of take includes: dip net, gig, hook and line, hand, bow and arrow, or crossbow. A line must attach bow to arrow and the arrow must have a barbed head. **ANY OTHER METHOD OF TAKING BULLFROGS IS PROHIBITED!**
5. **THE SOUTH REFUGE IN THE BIG BASIN IS CLOSED TO FROGGING.**

Be Safe!

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Link to the McPherson Valley Wetlands webpage:
<http://kdwp.state.ks.us/news/KDWP-Info/Locations/Wildlife-Areas/Region-4/McPherson-Valley-Wetlands>



Two Time Losers!

By Game Warden Hal Kaina

As the game warden responsible for McPherson and Rice counties, I have the opportunity to work frequently at the McPherson Valley Wetlands. Season openers are days that provide plenty of hunter contacts for the KDWP law enforcement staff. Sometimes these openers provide plenty of entertainment that we can reflect on later and just smile. The following account is about one of these humorous contacts from the 2010 early teal season.

McPherson Wetlands manager Brent Theede and I decided to pair up for the opening day of the 2010 teal season. We met up at the wetlands office before sunrise and went over our game plan for the day. It was decided that we would work hunters, starting at the Big Basin Unit. This “work” includes checking licenses, shotgun plugs, shot type, and ducks bagged. After completion of these checks at the Big Basin, we would then proceed to the Chain-o-lakes, Inman Unit, and maybe some private duck holes along the way. We chose to give the hunters about an hour to harvest some teal and then began our license checks.

The first group of hunters we checked was a group of four males. We proceeded to check their licenses, plugs, etc. They were super friendly guys, and nothing appeared out of the ordinary. We chatted for a while until Theede noticed a funny looking wing sticking out from the bottom of a pile of teal. Sure enough, a hen wood duck was stashed under the teal, and sure enough, nobody could figure out how the wood

duck got in there! This was a real head scratcher. How did that wood duck get in there with all their teal? After some debate, the hunters were advised that the guilty party could accept responsibility or they could all share in the reward. One of the members of the group admitted his guilt and was rewarded with a ticket for taking a wood duck in closed season. We commented that they should pay more attention to what they are shooting at in the future and bid them farewell.

After a couple hours, and 40 more license checks, Theede and I finished up our hunter checks at the Big Basin and Chain-o-lakes. We stopped at the Inman gas station and got a couple of cold beverages before heading to the Inman Unit. Upon arrival at the Inman Unit, we noticed a suburban parked in one of the parking lots with the driver door open. Seeing that nobody appeared to be around, we decided to check it out. When we got out to check the vehicle, the door was open and nobody was in the vehicle. It was then that we noticed two males stalking some ducks. Now I have seen a lot of duck hunters in my nearly five years of employment as a game warden. However, these guys were a new breed of duck hunters, the likes of I have never seen. It appeared to be a military-style assault on the ducks. One guy would kneel and provide cover, while the other would charge forward and find a spot to kneel. Hand signals were then given to move forward. This leap frogging action continued for some time as we watched with some amazement through our binoculars. Five minutes or so passed and a pair of wood ducks flew over these new-breed of hunters. They blasted away with their shotguns and one bird dropped from the sky.

Theede and I had seen enough. We proceeded in my patrol truck on the dike to drive out to the hunters. As they saw us, they began to withdrawal their assault force back to their truck, in a rather rapid manner. We reached them after a short drive and got out to speak with them. I asked the two if they had a chance to harvest any ducks. They said no. I asked them if they had gotten a chance to at least shoot at some ducks. Again, the answer was no. At that time, I advised them of what we had observed. The story began to change a little. They claimed they had shot a teal but now needed to go back to their vehicle to get their waders to retrieve the bird. I told them not to bother with the long walk. We would help them out by retrieving their bird if they would point it out to us. They both looked at each other and, with sagging shoulders, pointed to the pool to the northwest of our location. I waded out and retrieved a

hen wood duck. Both males were issued paperwork rewards for their deed, which they had to autograph. We also provided them with waterfowl identification booklets and advised them not to return to the McPherson wetlands property until they worked on their duck identification skills.

Now for the best part of the story, these two gentlemen were two of the four we had contacted first thing in the morning. Remember the four hunters that had the wood duck hidden under the pile of teal? In my eyes that qualifies them for the title, "The Two Time Losers"!

The game laws are in place to provide equal hunting opportunities to all hunters. They also help to provide adequate wildlife for hunting by future generations. It only takes a few bad apples to mess things up for everyone. Please take an active role in protecting YOUR public hunting ground from those unethical individuals cheating us all. Write down license plates if possible. Call Operation Game Thief immediately and provide as many details as possible. Don't delay. If you wait hours or days after the incident, chances are slim the person will be caught. The number for **Operation Game Thief** is **1-877-426-3843**. Why not program it into your cell phone for when you might need it later? The reward for catching these game hogs will be that next limit of ducks that YOU lawfully harvest on YOUR public hunting area. For game law questions feel free to contact warden Hal Kaina at 1-620-628-4754.



Waterfowl Trivia: Hybrids

Occasionally we hear about hybrid waterfowl in Kansas. This interesting twist from mother nature brings a whole new dimension to waterfowl identification. Below are pictures of several “hybrids”, see if you can figure out what these things are. The answers will be in the 2011 Fall newsletter.....





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