



El Dorado Wildlife Area News

Area News – Fall 2013

2013/2014 Hunting Outlook:

Upland Birds: The fall hunting outlook for quail on the area is fair. Hunters should see quail numbers that are slightly increased as compared to last fall. Quail production in recent years (2007-2010) was believed to have been hampered by heavy rains, cool temperatures, and significant flooding during the critical reproductive months of May, June, and July. The 2011 and 2012 reproductive seasons however were notably different. Rather than too much moisture and associated cool temperatures, both years were marked with record breaking excessive heat and drought. Quail production during those years is believed to have suffered as well. More moderate weather conditions in 2013 are believed to have resulted in improved production, as several coveys were observed or reported early this fall, but current quail populations remain below levels observed during 2005 and 2006 when quail populations were very good. Hunters should be aware that cover conditions will be heavy as a result of abundant rainfall that occurred in early August. Within most habitat areas, natural vegetation and area crops should provide good food and cover conditions for wildlife, including quail, and should help to sustain breeding populations into next spring. The wildlife area lies outside the primary range of ring-necked pheasant. Hunters occasionally encounter pheasants on the area, but numbers are low.

Waterfowl: The fall hunting outlook for waterfowl on the area is good. Waterfowl populations are reported to remain strong following another good production year. Habitat conditions have improved with rains that fell in early August and may be the best seen in nearly a decade. During most years, lake habitats lack significant food resources. This year however is different as many plants became established within dewatered zones at the upper ends of the lake following the drought. Now that the rains returned and lake levels have risen within these zones, many of those plants will provide food and cover for wetland wildlife species including waterfowl. Of concern however is the period of time that the vegetation has been flooded (it is degrading) and whether lake levels will remain within the vegetation throughout migration. Of interest to area hunters also is that similar habitat conditions have been reported throughout much of eastern Kansas and may serve to distribute waterfowl throughout the region rather than concentrate them for much of the upcoming season. Weather will undoubtedly play a part (as it always does) in determining the extent of waterfowl use this year as well. Hunters are encouraged to visit the area website to view weekly waterfowl population and habitat condition updates. Hunters are reminded that El Dorado Lake lies within the new Southeast Duck Zone.

Deer: The fall hunting outlook for deer on the area is fair to good. Although a concern to biologists, last years' outbreak of EHD was not as extensive as other nearby states. Frequent and large reports of die-offs were lacking within the county and on the wildlife area. As such, deer populations currently appear to remain good. Antlerless deer and fawns were not an uncommon sight this summer and reports of a few nice bucks have been received.

Turkey: The fall hunting outlook for turkey on the area is good. Area and regional populations remain strong despite poorer and later production in 2013 as compared to last year. Several broods were observed this summer indicating a moderate level of production on the wildlife area. Hunters should find good turkey numbers early this season with numbers declining later in the year as some harvest occurs and remaining birds spend more time on nearby private property as a result of hunting pressure.

Small Game: Opportunities to hunt fox squirrel and cottontail exist. Of the two, fox squirrel, typically provide greater opportunity. With much of the area wooded and with hunting interest in squirrels often low, the area can provide some attractive hunting. Cottontail populations are often not strong, but can provide some opportunity during most years.

Furbearers: The area is open to the hunting and trapping of furbearers. In most years, good opportunity to harvest beaver and raccoon exists. Coyote and bobcat populations are generally fair, providing some opportunity.

Upland Habitat Planting Plan Unveiled in 2013:

A new 5 year plan designed to provide multiple benefits, including those to enhance water quality, wildlife habitat, and associated recreation was initiated this past spring. Beginning in 2013, portions of agricultural lands along 5 lake tributaries will be idled and planted to native grasses and forbs. These annual planting projects are designed to enhance grassland cover availability in areas dominated by woodland and cropland habitats. As a result, plantings should enhance habitat diversity within the wildlife area, ultimately enhancing habitat for wildlife species such as quail, turkey, deer, and others, and enhance lake water quality by filtering some run-off from adjacent agricultural lands. This spring, 6 former agricultural tracts were planted totaling approximately 30 acres along Durechen Creek. Similar efforts are being planned in 2014 to convert portions of 3 tracts totaling 12 acres along Cole Creek. Additional work will be conducted each spring along each of the primary drainages leading into El Dorado Lake. By improving habitat, we can enhance wildlife populations and outdoor recreation opportunities such as hunting.



Grassland habitat planting at El Dorado Wildlife Area

Area Habitats Enhanced with Tree Cutting Project (Again!):

Visitors to El Dorado Wildlife Area may again notice that many area tracts recently received tree cutting treatments. Significant work was completed early this year with another round just wrapped up in late September. Although the primary goal of these projects is to simply maintain and enhance grassland dominated habitats from tree encroachment for the benefit of species such as quail, other more specific goals have also been identified. Those goals include: protecting the integrity and diversity of native grass and forb stands; enhancing nesting and brood rearing cover for game bird species and other wildlife; enhancing capabilities of grass filter strips to filter run-off from adjacent agricultural fields; enhancing vegetation management capabilities in smooth brome stands; reducing competition to benefit desirable shrubs such as plum, sumac, and dogwood; removing bush honeysuckle as an emerging invasive threat to area woodland habitats; protecting existing infrastructure such as fences, power supply lines, and levees; and enhancing management vehicle access to area lands. Since 2004, nearly 586 hours of mechanical tree shearing has been completed. Organizations such as the National Wild Turkey Federation and the Kansas Forest Service have provided financial assistance to complete some of this work in past years.



Tree invasion is threatening grassland habitats throughout El Dorado Wildlife Area. Tree cutting is one method employed to maintain and enhance area habitats for the benefit of game species.

Hunters Reminded of New Public Lands, Big Game, & Turkey Regulations:

The Kansas Wildlife, Parks and Tourism Commission has recently approved new regulations relating to hunting on public lands, and hunting of big game and turkey. Designed to provide hunters with equal opportunities on limited public lands, and to simplify equipment regulations for the hunting of big game and turkey statewide, the following regulations have been enacted:

- Baiting is illegal on public lands. Bait is considered any grain, fruit, vegetable, nut, hay, salt, sorghum, feed, or other food or mineral capable of attracting wildlife. Liquid scents and sprays are not considered bait.
- Only two portable blinds or tree stands are allowed per hunter on public lands.
- Portable blinds and tree stands must be marked with the owner's name and address or KDWPT number. Portable blinds may not be left unattended overnight on public lands.
- Decoys may not be left unattended overnight on public lands.
- Commercial guides must have a permit to guide on public lands. The permit is free and must be specific to the land where guiding takes place.
- Big game hunters can now select any caliber centerfire rifle or handgun, any gauge shotgun with slugs, and any muzzleloader rifle and pistol .40 caliber or larger.
- Crossbows are now legal equipment during archery seasons for anyone with a valid archery permit.
- Turkey hunters are no longer restricted to 20 gauge shotguns or larger. All gauges are allowed, using shot size No. 2 through No. 9.

Would you like more information about the El Dorado Wildlife Area?

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