

El Dorado Wildlife Area News



Area News – Spring 2016

Recent Work Enhances Area Habitats

Area staff has been busy this spring completing projects to enhance habitat characteristics at the El Dorado Wildlife Area. What's been done? Take a look below to learn more about common spring habitat management practices and the benefits they provide.



Tree control and removal work continues each year.

Recent work to remove encroaching trees and enhance area firebreaks, will improve burning safety, and will encourage diverse plant communities ultimately improving habitat.



Prescribed burning was used again this spring to enhance area habitats.

Burning can efficiently stimulate desirable grassland plants while controlling tree invasion and reducing the prevalence of less desirable grass species such as smooth brome. Ultimately grassland habitats are enhanced for many wildlife species including quail, turkey, and deer.



Diverse native grass and forb plantings, like this one along Satchel Creek, were completed again this spring.

Projects such as this are enhancing habitat quantity and quality on the wildlife area. In turn, hunting opportunities for species such as deer, turkey, and quail are improved.

What's Being Done to Improve Fishing in Kansas?

Ever wonder how the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks & Tourism works to develop or improve fishing in the sunflower state? Craig Johnson, District Fisheries Biologist for the El Dorado District continues to develop a number of short videos highlighting the work done by fisheries biologists to improve fishing throughout Kansas. His most recent video entitled "Kansas Walleye Production Program" provides a unique summary of the work fisheries biologists do each year to enhance walleye production and improve fishing opportunities in Kansas. In addition, catfish anglers will be interested in another recent video developed by Johnson which provides a unique underwater perspective of feeding catfish below fish feeders in Kansas State Fishing Lakes. Can't get away to try your luck? Take a look at the library of videos on Kansas fishing that Johnson has produced. They are sure to entice any angler to begin planning their next fishing trip. They are a must see for anyone with an interest in fishing in Kansas. Check out all of the videos at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCA7nV8A8XuVEGVRAHiULtA>



Successful Kansas walleye angler.

Photo by Craig Johnson, KDWP.T.

What's Wrong With That Fish?

On occasion I receive a phone call or an email from a concerned angler. They've caught a fish that doesn't look quite right. Generally, they try to describe the ailment and ask for a diagnosis and then ask if the fish is safe to eat or release. Admittedly, I usually don't have an immediate answer, preferring to consult with those agency staff that work with fishes day in and day out...our District Fisheries Biologists. The last call that I received was pretty typical. The angler described some peculiar white spots on a channel catfish that he had caught. Equipped with a smart-phone the caller was able to email some pictures of the fish to me. I then of course forwarded those to the area fisheries biologist requesting more information. Through the process he provided a good reference that would be of value to help anyone answer the question of what's wrong with that fish and ultimately is that fish safe to eat?

Entitled "An Anglers Guide to Fish Diseases and Parasites", it provides the reader with a brief overview of the different types of organisms that parasitize fish and cause diseases in fish. It describes signs that an angler might see on the outside of the fish or internally while cleaning. Lastly it indicates to the reader whether a fish is edible and what precautions should be taken to insure food safety. Of value to any angler, the reference can be found at: http://www.tnfish.org/FishDiseasesParasites_TWRA/files/AnglersGuideToFishParasites.pdf



Fish prepared for the skillet can enhance the angling experience for many. Anglers encountering fish with parasites and disease can question the value of an inflicted fish as table fare. References indicate that most inflicted fish are safe to eat if infected portions are removed and remaining portions are thoroughly cooked.

The Role Hunters and Anglers Play in Conservation

To my generation, the absence of abundant game and fish species such as white-tailed deer, wild turkey, Canada geese, large-mouth bass, walleye, and others is incomprehensible. In my opinion, we are blessed with opportunities to enjoy a rich outdoor heritage and hunting and angling pursuits. I've often been fascinated to listen to previous generations, and read accounts, describing how this abundance was not always so.



Many wildlife species, including the white-tailed deer, benefit from the economic returns that hunters provide.

Today's wildlife wealth can be attributed to many, but leading the way, were, and still are, hunters and anglers. To those that may have never looked down the barrel of a sporting firearm, or casted a lure to a waiting fish, the conservation impacts of such activities may be a mystery, and I have found throughout my career, that it is a mystery, even to many of those within our hunting and angling ranks. How can those thought to only take from the wild, also give back? The roots of this conservation success story can be traced back to the midst of the Great Depression, and should be known to all who enjoy our wildlife resources. Let us take a look back, and in so doing, learn the role that hunters and anglers play in conservation.

History teaches us of the wide-spread economic loss of the Great Depression, and the devastating impacts that drought had upon the American people and its landscapes. Amidst such economic and natural turmoil it is easy to understand how wildlife populations plummeted. Habitat loss was widespread, and natural resource management and law enforcement was in its infancy with few laws in place and even fewer personnel available to enforce them. History has also taught us however that from those troubling times came many successful government and community programs designed to enhance land stewardship and promote sustainability. To those interested in wild lands, fowl, and game, the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act, better known as the Pittman-Robertson Act (named after its prominent congressional supporters), insured a prosperous future for many wildlife species. Upon its signing into law in 1937, the Pittman-Robertson Act became, arguably, the most successful wildlife conservation program in the world, and has been used as a model for additional efforts to expand funding for fish and wildlife enhancement programs and projects throughout the country, including right here in Kansas.



Wildlife management projects benefitting from the Pittman-Robertson Act proudly bear this logo.

The Pittman-Robertson (P-R) Act was implemented at the urging of far-sighted hunting conservationists and the firearms and ammunition industry, in response to dwindling wildlife populations. The P-R Act assesses a federal tax on sporting firearms and ammunition. That tax is distributed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service to all state fish and wildlife management agencies based upon the number of hunting license buyers and land area of each state. State agencies, such as the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks & Tourism are then reimbursed as much as 75% for costs associated with eligible wildlife management activities including land acquisition and management, population surveys, wildlife research, and hunter education. State agencies typically fund wildlife (and fisheries) management activities up-front by assessing license fees to constituents and meet the necessary 25% federal aid cost requirement utilizing such fees as well.



Public land habitat management, and associated hunting recreation, is enhanced through the collective support of Pittman-Robertson funding.

The Pittman-Robertson Act has evolved throughout its 75+ year history to include taxes placed upon archery equipment and handguns, and has fostered a companion program for angling, termed the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Program, popularly known as the Dingell-Johnson Act (again named after its prominent congressional supporters), which took effect in 1950. Like its P-R cousin, the Dingell-Johnson Act (D-J) places a tax on related products, but in the case of D-J the tax is generated from the sale of fishing related merchandise and fishing boats, motors, and trailers. These taxes are again distributed to state agencies responsible for fisheries management and again assist with aquatic habitat acquisition and management, surveys, and fisheries research.



Fisheries management projects benefitting from the Dingell-Johnson Act proudly bear this logo.

In essence then, hunters and anglers are the key to what has been termed “the cycle of success” as they pay taxes to equip themselves to enjoy their favorite pursuits. These taxes, in addition to revenues from the sale of hunting and fishing licenses, are then utilized by state fish and wildlife agencies to enhance wildlife and fisheries populations and provide the public with opportunities to enjoy these resources. By doing so, each state agency then encourages hunting and angling participation, and the cycle is renewed. In the process however, others benefit, including other non-game wildlife species utilizing that habitat which has been protected or enhanced utilizing sportsman dollars, or from other members of the public, that although they may never hunt or fish, utilize sportsman provided or managed lands and waters for favorite pastimes such as hiking, bird-watching, or canoeing. It is easy to see that hunters and anglers pay their share, and in so doing provide additional outdoor recreation opportunities for many others.



Angler and hunter dollars not only provide benefits to game species, but also enhance habitats for an array of other species, and enhance recreational opportunities for a multitude of outdoor enthusiasts.

By this time you may be asking just how many hunters and anglers are out there and how much financial windfall do they actually provide? Review of readily available information provides some answers. A national survey (completed every 5 years) designed to monitor hunting and angling participation and associated expenditures was last completed in 2011. For that year, that survey indicates that nationally, there were an estimated 13.7 million hunters and 33.1 million anglers, 16 years of age or older. In Kansas, the same survey, estimates there to have been 283,000 resident and non-resident hunters and 400,000 resident and non-resident anglers. Nationally, anglers are estimated to have spent approximately \$41.8 billion in pursuit of their pastime, while hunters spent an estimated \$34.0 billion. In Kansas an estimated \$210.3 million was spent by anglers, while hunters spent an estimated \$401.5 million. The majority of these expenditures are not collected by state fish and wildlife agencies, but rather by community economies providing food, lodging, fuel, and gear to members of the hunting and angling fraternity.

State agencies of course do receive their share of significant financial inputs from hunters and anglers. To illustrate this fact, approximately \$749 million were apportioned to states from P-R and D-J funds in 2011. Kansas received approximately \$11.6 million of these funds. Coupled with state hunting and fishing license sales of approximately \$20 million annually, it's easy to see the economic impact of hunting and angling and the funding that these activities provide to benefit all of those who enjoy outdoor Kansas.



Agency fisheries biologists enhance public fishing opportunities by utilizing funding provided in part from Dingell-Johnson appropriations.

The term conservation implies wise use, and although hunters and anglers do harvest individuals from the fields, forests, and waters of Kansas, they insure sustainability and a lasting legacy by providing dedicated financial support. Those that enjoy time spent afield on public lands and waters, or enjoy the sights and sounds of wild creatures in outdoor Kansas should thank many, but perhaps the first to be thanked is the hunter and angler, for they may often take from the wild, but as a community, assuredly, always give back.



Through your purchase of hunting and fishing licenses, and related equipment, wildlife agencies are working hard to insure that future generations enjoy a rich outdoor heritage!

What the Heck is That? It's a Bryozoan!

Several years ago now I had an individual stop by my office with a bucket full of water that contained a large gelatinous mass. The organism had been found attached to a buoy anchor line and was about the size of a football and had a brain-like appearance. "What the heck is it", he asked? Uncertain, I asked our fisheries biologist to enlighten us. His answer, "it's a bryozoan."

Bryozoans are aquatic invertebrates that form colonies. Although most species occur in ocean environments some freshwater species can be found in appropriate habitats. Colonies in our area have been reportedly found attached to docks, buoys, and submerged sticks and logs in area lakes. Colonies are filter feeders meaning that they strain microscopic organisms from the water for food. They can reproduce in a number of ways including from seed like structures and budding. They are reportedly preyed upon by snails, insects, and fish. Reports of observations from anglers and other lake users seem to be on the rise in recent years. So, now you know...no, it's not an alien life form or even an egg sack from a frog or fish...it's yet another part of our diverse aquatic ecosystems...it's a bryozoan!



Bryozoans are colonial animals that can be found in area lakes. They are often found attached to docks, and submerged sticks and logs during summer months.

Anglers and Boaters Reminded to Take Precautions to Control Aquatic Nuisance Species!

Last summer, more Kansas waters were added to the growing list of those threatened by aquatic nuisance species (ANS). ANS waters are defined as those containing Asian carp, white perch, or zebra mussels.



Asian Carp



White Perch



Zebra Mussel

Regulations have been enacted to prevent the spread of ANS. Boaters and anglers are reminded to follow these regulations while visiting Kansas waters.

1. Livewells and bilges must be drained and drain plugs removed from all vessels being removed from waters of the state before transport on a public highway.
2. No person may possess ANY live fish upon departure from any designated ANS body of water.
3. Live baitfish may be caught and used as live bait only within the common drainage where caught. However, bluegill and green sunfish collected from non-designated ANS waters may be possessed or used as live bait anywhere in the state. Live baitfish shall not be transported and used above any upstream dam or barrier that prohibits the normal passage of fish.

Always remember to **CLEAN, DRAIN, & DRY** boats and equipment. Visit www.ksoutdoors.com for more information.



Prescribed fire was utilized again this spring to enhance public land habitats and improve future recreational opportunities.

Would you like more information about the El Dorado 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

