



El Dorado Wildlife Area News

Area News – Fall 2016

2016/2017 Hunting Outlook:

Upland Birds: The fall hunting outlook for quail on the area is fair to good. Hunters should see quail numbers that are again 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, 2014, 2015, and 2016 are believed to have resulted in improved production, as several coveys were observed or reported early this fall, often in areas where habitat work has recently been completed. 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. Timely precipitation throughout July and August produced robust habitat conditions. Hunters should expect to find many area habitats to contain tall and dense vegetation. The wildlife area lies outside the primary range of ring-necked pheasant. Hunters occasionally encounter pheasants on the area, but numbers are low.



Northern Bobwhite.

Waterfowl: The fall hunting outlook for waterfowl on the area is fair. Waterfowl populations are reported to remain strong following another good production year within breeding habitats to the north. Habitat conditions however here are not nearly as strong as those experienced in 2013. Abundant precipitation and several short duration flood events during the summer have kept lake levels full. Food producing plants could not become established on lake fringes because of the floods and full lake levels. As such, few food resources will be available for waterfowl this season. With full lake levels, hunters have adequate opportunity to conceal themselves for a hunt, and boat access from wildlife area ramps remains good. 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 Southeast Duck Zone.



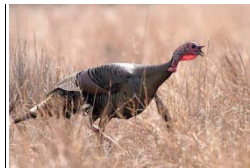
Drake pintail.

Deer: The fall hunting outlook for deer on the area is fair. The 2012 EHD outbreak that struck many Midwestern states is believed to have had an impact in Kansas, but deer losses were not as extensive as other nearby states. Frequent and large reports of die-offs were lacking within the county and on the wildlife area in that year. Regardless, hunter reports from 2013 indicated that many hunters saw fewer deer and fewer older bucks. Reports from the 2014 season however were more optimistic as hunters reported seeing more deer including some quality bucks. As expected, hunter reports from 2015 were less desirable as significant lake flooding impacted some woodland and cropland habitats on the wildlife area and diminished the ability of the property to hold animals. Hunters reported seeing fewer deer but sightings of some quality bucks still occurred. Although deer sightings and deer sign appeared less frequently this year, antlerless deer and fawns were a common sight again this summer, and reports of a few nice bucks have been received, suggesting that an area breeding population remains strong and will provide hunting opportunity into the future.



White-tailed buck.

Turkey: The fall hunting outlook for turkey on the area is good. Area populations remain strong following good production dating back to at least 2012. Several broods were again 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.



Wild Turkey.

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.



Successful squirrel hunt.

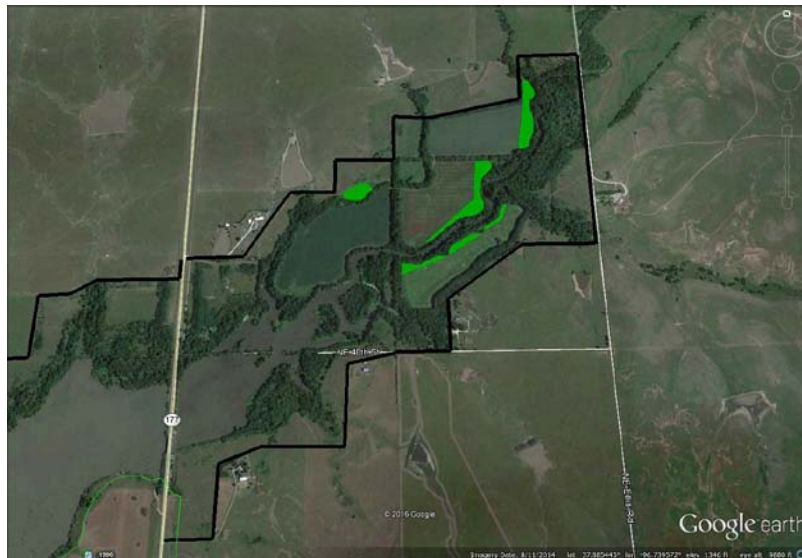
Furbearers & Coyotes: The area is open to the hunting and trapping of furbearers . In most years, good opportunity to harvest beaver and raccoon exists. Coyote and bobcat populations are generally fair, providing some opportunity.



Coyote.

Year Four of Upland Habitat Planting Plan Completed:

A 5 year plan designed to provide multiple benefits, including those to enhance water quality, wildlife habitat, and associated recreation was initiated in 2013. Beginning that year, 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. In 2013, six former agricultural tracts were planted totaling approximately 30 acres along Durechen Creek. Similar efforts were completed in 2014, converting portions of 4 tracts totaling 10 acres along Cole Creek. In 2015, 3 tracts were converted totaling 34 acres along the Walnut River. In 2016, approximately 12 acres were planted within 4 tracts along Satchel Creek. The final year of the plan is scheduled to be completed next spring when approximately 5 acres adjacent to Bemis Creek will be planted. At the conclusion of the work scheduled during 2017, each of the primary drainages leading into El Dorado Lake will have received habitat improvements. By improving habitat, we can enhance wildlife populations and outdoor recreation opportunities such as hunting.



Satchel Creek Area. 2016 habitat planting locations.



Durechen Creek Area. 2013 habitat planting locations.



Cole Creek Area. 2014 habitat planting locations.



Walnut River Area. 2015 habitat planting locations.

Hunter Education – So much more than just gun safety!

Those not familiar with the Hunter Education Program of the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks & Tourism (KDWPT) might first perceive the nearly 45 year old program as one simply designed to teach safe gun handling. Although safety is a core principal of the program, a dedicated group of volunteer instructors also teach so much more, in hopes of instilling safe, responsible, and ethical qualities and providing a foundation of information upon which graduates of all ages can become successful hunting conservationists.



Hunting is a cherished pastime in Kansas.
It has been estimated that nearly 3 million days of hunting occur each year in the sunflower state.
Fewer than 20 hunting related incidents typically occur annually in Kansas, thanks in part to the Hunter Education Program.

The Kansas Hunter Education program was implemented by law in 1973. Its mission is to “start individuals on the hunter’s path with the highest sense of ethics, safe gun handling skills, an understanding of the hunter’s role in wildlife management, and a commitment to live up to the traditions of the hunt and the standards that society expects of hunters.” It is taught by over 1,300 volunteer instructors and has graduated approximately 500,000 hunters since inception. The program is mandated to provide at least 10 hours of coursework to include topics of hunter responsibility and ethics, hunting heritage and early firearms, firearm basics, ammunition, firearm handling and safety, marksmanship and shooting fundamentals, bow-hunting, conservation and principles of wildlife management, survival and outdoor emergencies, water safety and hypothermia, preparing for the hunt, and hunting skills.



Safe gun handling is a core principal taught in hunter education classes.
Instructors also share other valuable lessons involving ethics, responsibility, and the role hunters play in conservation.

The term conservation implies wise use, and like safety, is a central theme of the program. Students are taught the value of wisely using and respecting our renewable wildlife resources. They are taught of the value of habitat, wildlife management, and game laws. They are taught that as hunters they fund conservation efforts by paying license fees and excise taxes on sporting equipment and that those monies are utilized for wildlife management activities. They are taught that they will play a role in the future of the sport and that they have a responsibility to respect lands and landowners.

Do YOU need hunter education? Before January 1, 2005 the Kansas hunter education law required any hunter born after July 1, 1957 to have successfully completed hunter education unless hunting on one's own land. Prior to 2005, it had been argued by some that the law served as a barrier to those wishing to try hunting because it required completion prior to any actual time spent pursuing the sport. As a result, since 2005, some exceptions have been granted with the intention of maintaining safe hunting experiences while providing opportunities for those wishing to try hunting without first seeking a 10+ hour course. These exceptions allow one to try hunting, while directly supervised, to determine if it is something of interest to them before investing their time to complete the course. Currently, the following exceptions to the hunter education law exist including those hunting on one's own land; those youth age 15 and younger if directly supervised by an adult 18 or older; and lastly, those age 16 or older, possessing an apprentice hunting license and directly supervised by a licensed adult of at least 18 years of age. Apprentice hunting licenses are valid for the remainder of the calendar year and may be purchased twice. Ultimately then if you are born after July 1, 1957 and plan to hunt on land other than your own, you will eventually have to complete a hunter education program if you wish to hunt in Kansas. Although most classes are predominately comprised of youth (age 11 and above), adults of all ages, and backgrounds also attend. For those that may have completed a course in another state, Kansas does recognize certifications from other state hunter education programs.



Kansas law requires those hunters born after July 1, 1957 to complete a hunter education course. Exceptions do exist, but if you intend to hunt on land other than your own, you will eventually have to complete a hunter education program.

Is the program successful? The answer to that question can depend upon how you measure. The Kansas Hunter Education program has been attributed with the reduction of hunting related injury incidents. Recent estimates indicate that nearly 3 million days of hunting occur in Kansas each year. At the same time, ONLY 6 to 20 hunting related injury incidents are reported each year! Of course even one incident can be argued to be too many, but careful review of each incident illustrates that a violation of basic safety rules was committed. Without those violations, these incidents would not occur. Basic safety rules are of course stressed, illustrated, and practiced at each class in the hopes that they will be implemented throughout the students hunting years.



Live fire exercises conducted at many classes, reinforce classroom instruction, and provide hands-on learning opportunities of firearm basics, safe handling, and shooting fundamentals.

Success cannot only be measured in terms of safety, but also in enhanced student knowledge and character. Volunteer instructors serve as liaisons between the sporting public and the KDWPT. They share experiences, values, and lessons learned over a lifetime of participating. They share hard lessons witnessed or learned themselves in the hopes of preventing similar outcomes with students. They share personal and professional passions hoping to instill similar views. They serve as mentors, illustrating the wonder of nature, the challenge of the pursuit, and the reward of a day spent afield. Those discussions and experiences with students reinforce many mid-western values, including lessons of respect, ethics, conservation, stewardship, and the value of education and our natural resources.



Instructors share valuable insight and experiences from a lifetime of participating. They do so with the hope of developing future hunting conservationists that place high value in the qualities of stewardship, ethics, and respect.

Without the work of volunteers the Kansas Hunter Education Program would not exist. Volunteers within any organization can be described as passionate, caring, individuals with a desire to share or give back. Volunteer instructors within the Kansas program are no different. Those familiar with the program in Morris County know that we are fortunate to have two such individuals within our community that have dedicated countless hours to help meet the mission of the Hunter Education Program. Allan Cashman and Dennis DeLay have over 70 years of combined teaching experience and have certified over 2,500 students in the Council Grove area! Allan has been instructing since 1982, has taught in 50 classes, and certified over 950 students. Dennis has been instructing since inception in 1973, has taught approximately 73 classes and certified nearly 1,700 students. Clearly their dedication is an asset to the program and the area hunting community.

Do you know a hunter? Chances are that the Hunter Education Program and its corps of volunteer instructors played a brief but positive role in developing that person and their outdoor interests. I'd like to tip my blaze orange cap to those volunteers and parents that recognize the need to send future hunters down the right path, and to those students that successfully meet the challenge of becoming safe, responsible, and ethical Kansas hunters.



“Habitat First” Program Provides Landowners with Wildlife Habitat Management Assistance:

Want to see more wildlife on your land or improve your hunting opportunities? Want some help? The Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks & Tourism (KDWPT) recognizes that HABITAT is the key to doing so and has dedicated staff members, and a library of information, to help anyone with their wildlife management goals.



The “Habitat First” program has been recently unveiled to assist landowners with creating, enhancing, or restoring wildlife habitat on their lands. Wildlife Biologists can meet with you on your property to discuss your goals and review existing habitats. From those initial discussions they can help you to develop a wildlife habitat management plan and provide details about programs and partners that may provide financial assistance to help meet your goals. In addition, biologists maintain an impressive library of information on the KDWPT web site that provides wildlife habitat enthusiasts with an array of helpful information. Within that library, habitat management practices are described and illustrated and may include practices designed to enhance many types of habitats for wildlife including grazing lands, hay lands, cropland, CRP, wetlands, and riparian areas and forests. Financial assistance may also be offered for implementation of some practices! Want to learn more? Visit the KDWPT web site at www.ksoutdoors.com or contact the wildlife biologist assigned to your county for more information. Landowners in Morris, Chase, and Butler Counties can contact Jeff Rue at #316/322-7513 to learn more about how the “Habitat First” program can assist you.



The favored fall season is upon us. Get out and enjoy some time in your favorite neck of the woods!



Native grass and forb plantings, like this one completed in 2016 along Satchel Creek, are enhancing habitat quantity and quality on the wildlife area. In turn, hunting opportunities for species such as deer, turkey, and quail are improved.

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

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