

Midwest Association of Fish And Wildlife Agencies 2009 Kansas Report

Stream Surveyed

Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks stream survey crews surveyed streams and rivers throughout Kansas last summer, adding information to a database that helps assess and monitor the overall conditions of these waterways. These assessments are annual undertakings and have been conducted since 1994, but the surveys have expanded their scope this year.

Last summer, two five-man crews sampled 90 sites through mid-August, collecting information pertaining to basic water chemistry, stream flow, and evaluation of physical habitat. Fish, freshwater mussels, and other aquatic invertebrates are the primary focus of these sampling sites. The purpose of these surveys is to gather scientific data for long-term comparison and expand the already significant catalog of aquatic species generated from past surveys.

The information from these surveys also helps ecologists in the Environmental Services Section (ESS) review projects that could impact sensitive areas habitat. Permits are required for publicly-funded development projects if any development activities would impact sensitive species and their habitat.

Annual Kansas stream surveys have provided a wealth of information about the status of fish and aquatic invertebrates. Because most Kansas streams are on private property, landowners are first contacted to obtain permission to conduct surveys on their land.

Kansas Hunter Education Leader Inducted Into Hunter Education Hall of Fame

KDWP's hunter education coordinator, Wayne Doyle, has been named to the International Hunter Education Association (IHEA) Hall of Fame. The award was presented at the recent IHEA conference in Illinois in recognition of his exceptional contributions to hunter education.

Doyle has been actively involved with hunter education for 24 years. He started as a volunteer instructor and soon became an area coordinator and active member of the Kansas Hunter Education Advisory Committee. In 1998, he was hired to coordinate the hunter education program throughout Kansas.

The International Hunter Education Association (IHEA) is the professional association for 67 state and Canadian provincial wildlife conservation agencies and the 70,000 volunteer instructors who teach hunter education in North America.

Upland Bird Season Dates Modified

The Kansas Wildlife and Parks Commission approved a change in the opening date of pheasant season, moving it to the second Saturday in November, effective in 2009. The 2008 pheasant opened on the first Saturday in November, as it has since 2006. The pheasant season runs

through Jan. 31, 2009.

At a June 26 public hearing in Newton, the commission also approved a recommendation to return the quail season closing date to Jan. 31, effective with the upcoming 2008 season. The closing date had been the third Sunday in January since 2006.

Surveys of hunters, landowners, and department staff indicated strong preferences to return the pheasant and quail seasons to their pre-2006 structure. Commissioners did not approve a department recommendation to return the opening of regular prairie chicken season in the east and northwest units to the first Saturday in November. The 2009 prairie chicken season will open on the third Saturday in November.

KU Endowment Land Opened To Youth Deer Hunting

The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks and Kansas University Endowment created an opportunity for youth 16 and under to hunt deer. More than 1,200 acres owned by KU Endowment were opened to limited hunting during last fall's Kansas youth deer season.

The hunting sites ranged from 54 acres to 320 acres. Access to each tract was limited to one youth/mentor pair each weekend on each of the properties. Hunts were awarded on a first-come, first-served basis.

Youth under 16 had to have a valid deer permit to hunt during those weekends. Youth who were 16 had to have a hunting license in addition to a deer permit. Youth hunters were required to be accompanied by an adult over the age of 18, who could not hunt.

Online Cabin Reservation System Unveiled

Kansas state park cabins continue to grow in popularity as these modern and comfortable facilities are built across the state. In fact, the cabins are so popular that reservations are necessary to ensure availability for most weekends. Now, reserving a cabin is much more convenient since KDWP unveiled its online cabin reservation system last fall.

Cabin guests can go to the department's website and follow instructions or even watch a short video to learn how the online system works. Calendars for each cabin show what days are open. Securing online payment is easy with a credit card. Users must log into the system and set up an account to complete a transaction.

More than 60 cabins are available at 15 Kansas state parks and two wildlife areas (Mined Land Wildlife Area and Ottawa State Fishing Lake). Most of the cabins feature amenities such as bathrooms, kitchens, refrigerators, stoves, heating and air conditioning, and ADA accessibility.

KDWP Steps Up Zebra Mussel Education Efforts

Zebra mussels were found at two more Kansas lakes in 2008: Marion Reservoir, near Marion, and Lake Afton, near Wichita. This makes a total of six Kansas water bodies where zebra mussels have been identified. Since the first were found in 2003, KDWP has worked to educate anglers and boaters. Signs at major boat ramps, brochures, newspaper and television news stories, magazine articles, as well as a video posted on the KDWP website focus on prevention.

The current emphasis teaches boaters to “clean, drain and dry” their boats before launching in another lake. Other instructions include: never move fish or water from one body of water to another; empty bait buckets on dry land, not into lakes; inspect boats, trailers, skis, anchors, and all other equipment and remove any visible organisms and vegetation; and wash equipment with hot (140-degree) water, a 10 percent chlorine-and-water solution, or dry for at least five days to remove or kill species that are not visible.

Meade Bass Propagation Facility

A new fish house and state-of-the-art largemouth bass propagation facility at KDWP’s Meade Hatchery was completed in time for spawning this spring. The new building will be the site of a new and innovative project designed to give largemouth bass a head start in Kansas reservoirs.

Biologists have struggled to maintain largemouth bass fisheries in older Kansas reservoirs. As these reservoirs age, they lose quality shoreline and bass nursery habitat, and the primary forage for sport fish is gizzard shad. As a result, winter survival of young-of-the-year (YOY) bass is often very low. One of the problems with survival of YOY bass is the timing of the bass spawn. Typically, shad will spawn in late April or early May. Largemouth bass in Kansas reservoirs don’t spawn until late May. When this happens, the forage fish quickly outgrow the prey species. Fall sampling reveals that many YOY largemouth are too small and have inadequate food supply to survive the winter.

The Meade propagation facility will attempt to “trick” largemouth bass into spawning nearly a month before they normally spawn by manipulating temperature and photoperiod. The resulting fry will be stocked at 10 or 12 days old. When they are ready to convert to a fish diet, a week or two later, there should be plenty of just-hatched gizzard shad. If all works as planned, these “head-start” bass should be much larger than naturally spawned bass when fall rolls around and have a much better chance of surviving their first winter.

Kansas Wetland Education Center At Cheyenne Bottoms Opened

The Kansas Wetlands Education Center has something to show you. The eagerly-anticipated interpretive center at Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area officially open for visitors on April 24.

The new facility’s opening culminates several years of collaboration among a variety of partners. It also marks an important milestone in the rich history of Cheyenne Bottoms, providing the means to illuminate that history and enlighten visitors about the unique value of Cheyenne Bot-

toms, nearby Quivira National Wildlife Refuge, and all Kansas wetlands.

Located 8 miles northeast of Great Bend on the southeast portion of Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area, the Kansas Wetlands Education Center features the expansive Koch Wetlands Exhibit, underwritten by a \$500,000 grant from the Fred C. and Mary R. Koch Foundation, and includes a 75-seat auditorium, classroom, offices, and gift shop. Affiliated with Fort Hays State University's (FHSU) Sternberg Museum of Natural History, the Kansas Wetlands Education Center will be operated by FHSU. In cooperation with a Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) educator stationed at the center, FHSU staff will conduct on-site and outreach educational programs.

The Koch Wetlands Exhibit inside the center offers an array of interpretive exhibits illustrating the unique natural resources of Cheyenne Bottoms and other wetlands. Exhibits provide an overview of the variety of Central Flyway wetlands, from the playa lakes of western Kansas to the flooded timber marshes of eastern Kansas.

Donation To Pheasants Forever Largest In Group's 26-year History

With a desire to see his 1,700 acres stay together and managed as a wildlife habitat demonstration unit, Wallace N. Weber, of Russell County, ended 2008 by donating the land to Pheasants Forever (PF) and Quail Forever (QF). It is the single largest donation in the 26-year history of the sister organizations.

Weber, a retired U.S. Army colonel, along with his sister Cheryl, Topeka, began the process of donating the land in late December. Called Dubuque Land & Cattle, the donation includes two full sections, a half section, a quarter section, and an additional 80 acres. The first half section was transferred to PF in December 2008. Upon Weber's death, the donation will be completed, and the land will be accompanied by a charitable remainder trust for management expenses. In total, the Weber donation is expected to be valued at well over \$1 million.

The mission for the land will be to implement conservation practices beneficial to wildlife while maintaining the property's agricultural and ranching operations. The land harbors a substantial pheasant population, with great potential for quail habitat improvement. Prairie chickens and whitetail and mule deer also occupy the land. A creek runs through the property, and three ponds are used by migrating waterfowl and are stocked with fish.

PF will begin managing the land immediately as a demonstration unit. In time, the organization plans to host conservation and habitat field days to illustrate "best management practices" on the property, as well as conduct natural resource agency tours, chapter events, and youth field trips. The land will remain private until Weber's death, with hunting by written permission only. Upon Weber's passing, PF intends to open the land to public hunting.

Turkey Deaths In Northwest Kansas Investigated

The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) investigated the deaths of several

wild turkeys in Logan County last winter. A toxicology report of tissue samples received by KDWP Jan. 20 concluded that ingestion of zinc or aluminum phosphide was the cause of the birds' deaths. Cause of death for a nearby raccoon was identified as anticoagulant rodenticide intoxication.

Between Jan. 4 and 6, multiple groups of wild turkeys were found dead in and around the town of Russell Springs. On Jan. 4, seven wild turkeys and one raccoon were found dead on private property north of Russell Springs. On Jan. 6, 26 turkeys were found dead in a park in Russell Springs, and nine more turkeys were found dead on private property west of Russell Springs.

KDWP staff investigated all three sites, and collected two specimens from each site for toxicology testing. The tissue samples were sent to the Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study in the University of Georgia's College of Veterinary Medicine, and test results were provided to KDWP Jan. 20.

Zinc phosphide is a rodenticide most commonly sold as a grain-based formulation. Aluminum phosphide is used primarily to fumigate grain storage areas and is used less commonly in rodenticides. The toxicology report indicated that zinc phosphide is more likely to be the compound which caused the death of the turkeys.

Healy School Students Receive Hunter Education

Healy USD 468 is among the growing number of Kansas middle schools to include the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks' (KDWP) Hunter Education In Our Schools program. Available at no cost to schools, the optional course offers participating students the opportunity to obtain hunter education certification required of anyone born on or after July 1, 1957, before hunting in Kansas.

Students enrolled in Healy physical education instructor Dana Shay's hunter education course enjoyed an afternoon of live fire instruction from KDWP outdoor skills instructor Jim Kellenberger. Shotguns, throwers, targets, and ammunition used for these event are furnished by KDWP to schools participating in the program.

Assistant hunter education coordinator Monica Bickerstaff oversees the Hunter Education In the Schools initiative, which has 28 middle schools offering the course.

2009 Nonresident Kansas Deer Applications Only Accepted Online

The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) has announced that 2009 nonresident deer permit applications will be accepted beginning May 1, with one major change from previous years -- applications must be made online through the KDWP website, www.kdwp.state.ks.us. The application deadline is midnight on June 1. Downloadable mail-in applications will not be available, and none will be accepted. This application applies to Nonresident White-tailed Deer permits only. Nonresident Hunt-Own-Land and Antlerless White-tailed Deer permits will be available July 13 over the counter.

This change will streamline the process for both applicants and licensing personnel and was made in part because the majority of applications last year were made online.

Ten Kansas Deer Test Positive for Chronic Wasting Disease In 2008

The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) has reported 10 chronic wasting disease (CWD) cases from among almost 2,700 deer tissue samples collected and submitted for lab analysis by KDWP in recent months. Eight of the CWD-positive deer tissue samples had been reported earlier by KDWP, and two additional positive tests were recently confirmed in the final batch of samples submitted for lab analysis, according to Shane Hesting, KDWP's wildlife disease coordinator.

KDWP collected 2,693 tissue samples throughout the 2008 hunting seasons. Included in that total were nine elk; none of the elk samples tested positive for CWD. KDWP has conducted annual sampling of deer and elk since 1996 to help track the occurrence of CWD.

All 10 deer confirmed as CWD-positive were white-tailed deer taken by hunters in north-west Kansas. Of the CWD-positive deer confirmed by KDWP, five came from Decatur County, two from Sheridan County, two from Rawlins County, and one from Cheyenne County.

CWD had been documented previously in Kansas. During the 2007 season, three Decatur County whitetails were confirmed as CWD-positive. The first detection in a wild Kansas deer was a white-tailed doe killed by a Kansas hunter in 2005 in Cheyenne County. Prior to that, CWD was detected in a captive elk in Harper County in 2001.