

Kansas
State Report
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Mother Earth News Fair

On October 19-20, 2019 KDWPT participated at the *Mother Earth News Fair* in Topeka as part of the R3 effort. These fairs offer a unique blend of demonstrations, workshops, and a vibrant marketplace and present a variety of sustainable lifestyle topics through hands-on workshops. KDWPT's Fisheries and Wildlife divisions presented one-hour deer and fish cleaning workshops, and the private lands wildlife habitat program, Habitat First, was promoted to attendees, who, on average, own 20 acres of land each. This is third year KDWPT has been a sponsor at this unique sustainable lifestyle community event, which draws more than 15,000 people.

Scott Riffle Beetle Not Listed as Federally Endangered Due To KDWPT Efforts

After a comprehensive review, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) announced last week that it would not list the Scott riffle beetle, *Optioservus phaeus*, under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). The Scott riffle beetle is a tiny brown and black aquatic insect that was first identified as a distinct species in 1978. A groundwater spring complex in Historic Lake Scott State Park near Scott City is the only place in the world the insect is known to exist. An Oct. 4, 2019 USFWS news release reported that due to ongoing conservation actions and protections by KDWPT, federal protections for the beetle under the ESA were not warranted.

The USFWS also expressed confidence in KDWPT's ability to continue managing for the beetle in the wild, based on the best available science. The USFWS will continue providing conservation support and guidance, as needed.

Based on data collected in 1984 and 2017, management efforts are working, as the population has remained stable for more than 30 years. Additional conservation efforts for the species include population monitoring, deployment of a real-time water quality and quantity monitoring station, and predatory fish removal.

Paddlefish Stocked

Last fall, KDWPT fisheries staff traveled to Blind Pony Fish Hatchery in Missouri to pick up 5,000 17-inch, young-of-the-year paddlefish to stock in Pomona, Perry and Tuttle Creek reservoirs. Paddlefish are native to eastern Kansas rivers, and they get big – the Kansas state record is 144 pounds. However, the species has largely disappeared from Kansas waters due to modifications of river systems, invasive species and changes in water quality. Existing Kansas

fisheries that provide angling opportunities depend on paddlefish moving upstream from Oklahoma and Missouri during the spawning run. These stockings will attempt to establish populations in Kansas reservoirs that could eventually provide angling opportunities. Kansas hatchery-produced hybrid wipers were traded to Missouri for the paddlefish.

More To The Mountain Lion Story

On Jan. 31, 2019, a dead mountain lion was discovered by upland bird hunters in Rooks County on Thursday, Jan. 31, 2019. The hunters contacted the local KDWPT game warden, who investigated at the scene. It turned out that another group of bird hunters had shot and killed the mountain lion earlier in the week in fear for themselves and their dogs.

Mountain lions are native to Kansas but the big cats were extirpated by the early 1900s. There is no hunting season on mountain lions in Kansas and they may not be killed without reason. The Rooks County mountain lion is the 20th confirmed in Kansas since 2007 and the second that has been killed.

There's more to that story now thanks to our friends at the United States Forest Service's Rocky Mountain Research Station in Missoula, Mont.

In May, KDWPT biologists sent tissue samples from the mountain lion to Montana for genetic testing and the results recently arrived. The mountain lion, which was confirmed to be a sub-adult male during necropsy by department biologists (not a female as initially reported), has a 99.8 percent probability of belonging to the South Dakota/Nebraska breeding population, which includes animals sampled from the Black Hills of South Dakota and Western Nebraska.

Aquatic Nuisance Species Testing

As part of the department's early detection protocol for zebra mussels, KDWPT staff collect water samples twice a year (early summer and late fall when water temperature is around 75-80 degrees) from approximately 109 KDWPT-managed impoundments throughout the state. Samples are collected using a plankton net to filter and collect water from areas that experience high boat traffic, such as around docks, piers, and boat docks. The water samples are then examined by a laboratory operated by Montana Fish and Wildlife for the presence of juvenile zebra mussels, also known as veligers. Microscopic veligers can often be detected before adult zebra mussels are found. No zebra mussels were detected in 2018 but they were confirmed in one lake in 2019.

Turkey Hunting Regulations Change

Wild turkey populations are declining across the Midwest and Kansas isn't immune. Though the Sunflower State still boasts one of the strongest wild turkey populations in the region, statewide surveys suggest immediate action is needed if Kansas is to have any measurable impact on slowing the decline.

In recent years, declines in both habitat quantity and quality have been observed and significant weather events have negatively impacted nesting and brood rearing successes. In 2019, the estimated statewide turkey production was the lowest on record in Kansas.

In an effort to give populations an adequate opportunity to recover, staff developed progressive recommendations for the 2020 spring and fall turkey seasons. Though not all staff recommendations were approved as presented, Commissioners approved the following at their Nov. 14 meeting in Scott City:

- Bag limits in Turkey Management Units 3, 5, and 6 (northeast, southcentral, and southeast) will be reduced from two turkeys to one turkey beginning with the spring 2020 season; spring bag limits in Units 1 and 2 (northwest and northcentral) will remain at two male turkeys.
- An amendment to reduce the fall 2020 season to 41 days for all open Turkey Management Units. Currently, the fall season runs October through January; however, under the new regulation, the 2020 fall season will run Oct. 1-Nov. 10, 2020. Unit 4 remains closed to fall hunting.

Staff recommended suspending the fall season in Units 3, 5, and 6. However, Commissioners were hesitant to agree, for fear of losing the fall turkey hunting tradition. An amendment to create a bearded-only fall hunting season was introduced by the Commission, but was unable to gain a majority vote. The current regulation allowing a hunter to harvest one turkey of either sex during the fall season remains in place.

KDWPT's Wild Turkey Committee will continue to refine and update the Turkey Adaptive Harvest Strategy, which provides a consistent and transparent method of developing staff recommendations for spring and fall season bag limits. The goal is to maintain a robust turkey population that provides high hunter satisfaction.

Fisheries Research

KDWPT's Fisheries Division's has a variety of ongoing fisheries research projects, some conducted by division staff and some are being done through collaborative efforts with Nebraska University, Kansas State University, and Emporia State University. Research topics included the study of growth rates and movement of blue catfish in the Kansas River, Asian carp densities and movement in the Kansas River, crappie age and growth in Kansas lakes and reservoirs, walleye telemetry research at Glen Elder Reservoir, use of remote cameras to survey angler use at state and community lakes, and managing gizzard shad populations in small impoundments.

Moose Spotted In Kansas

A moose was spotted in Kansas on Dec. 20, 2019, in Jewell County near the Republican River. The young bull had previously been spotted in Nebraska where there have been reports of resident moose in recent years. However, based on this animal's travel history, it's likely it came from Minnesota. A KDPWT Facebook post with a photo of this moose reached more than 400,000 people and was shared more than 3,000 times in just a few days.

This is just the second moose documented in Kansas in the past 30 years. A young bull was documented in 1987, as it made its way from northcentral Kansas and eventually ended up in southwest Kansas. The most recent news on the latest wanderer was that it probably crossed north, back into Nebraska.

Hunt/Fish and Camping Apps Launched

KDWPT's Licensing Section successfully launched two new mobile apps, making campsite reservations and license and permit purchases available on-the-go. KDWPT has made CampIt KS and HuntFish KS available at no charge to users. And the addition of "e-licenses" will also provide a cost-savings to the agency, and convenience to license holders. Since an early-January launch, 9,599 iOS apps have been downloaded and 5,009 Android compatible apps have been downloaded.

Spanish Regulations

KDWPT is expanding outreach efforts to Hispanic and Latino communities, launching the Department's first-ever annual publications tailored specifically to Spanish speakers. Translated publications will include KDWPT's 2020 *Kansas Hunting & Furharvesting Regulations Summary* and 2021 *Kansas Fishing Regulations Summary* and state park informational brochure. The Department also has plans to expand these efforts to include area signage and a website.

No Leftover Nonresident Deer Permits in 2019

For the first time since Kansas' nonresident deer permit process was revamped in 2008, there were no leftover permits for the 2019 season. KDWPT established a quota of 21,816 permits and received 24,024 applications. The application period for the 2019 draw took place April 1-26.

Permit numbers are set for each of the 18 deer management units, using adjustment factors set in statute. Adjustments were made for the 2020 season, including adding a modest number of permits in some units. However, more than 24,000 applications were received again this spring.

White-nose Syndrome In Kansas Bats

Surveys for white-nose syndrome in bats in Kansas were conducted in 2019 between February 22 and April 18, and samples were tested by the U.S. Geological Survey National Wildlife Health Center in Madison, Wis.

To date, white-nose syndrome has been confirmed in 33 states and seven Canadian provinces. White-nose syndrome was first detected in Kansas in 2018 and has since been detected in six Kansas counties. In these areas, biologists observed an increasing number of symptomatic cave myotis and tri-colored bats, with tri-colored bats most affected.

World-class Non-typical Whitetail Taken By Kansas Bowhunter



In October 2019, Kansas bowhunter, Brian Butcher, harvested a whitetail buck in Chase County October that measured an unofficial net non-typical score of 321 3/8 inches. If accepted and verified by the Boone and Crockett Club, the deer would rank fourth in the world for non-typical whitetail deer. As for the Kansas record books, Butcher's buck will be the largest non-typical whitetail ever taken, surpassing the current state record for a non-typical whitetail harvested with archery equipment by 57 2/8 inches.

COVID-19

Responding to concerns from rural public health officials, Kansas Governor Laura Kelly suspended the sale of nonresident turkey permits just six days before the season opened in April. Due to certain quarantine requirements, refunds were provided upon request for permits purchased prior to the suspension; however, those permits were honored if hunters wanted to travel and hunt. More than 13,000 nonresidents hunted turkeys in Kansas during the 2018 spring season, so KDWPT braced to lose more than \$2 million in revenue. However, increased resident sales of hunting licenses, turkey permits and fishing licenses were up considerably through April.

The Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT) kept Kansas' 28 state parks, 63 state fishing lakes, and more than 100 wildlife areas open to the public during the COVID-19 crisis. In addition, KDWPT's online and mobile sales options allow Kansans to purchase the licenses, permits and reservations they need without risk of exposure to COVID-19.

Without competing activities and extra time on their hands due to furloughs or layoffs, Kansans visited state fishing lakes, reservoirs and state parks in record numbers in April and May.

Virtual Commission Meeting

Due to concerns related to COVID-19, the Kansas Wildlife, Parks and Tourism Commission conducted its first-ever virtual public meeting through a Zoom video conference on April 23, 2020. The meeting was open to the public and comments and questions were taken through Zoom and a chat room that was monitored. The meeting went surprisingly well and was considered a success.