



Prairie chickens. Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka.

There were two kinds of prairie chickens in Kansas—the greater and the lesser. Both were hunted for sport and as a source of sustenance. From 1865 to 1879 prairie chickens were reasonably common, and many were taken. News reports such as the following regularly reported the numbers acquired. A poor hunt killed only twenty-five or so.

OUR SUPERINTENDENT, J. LOOMIS, SPENT LAST SATURDAY WITH us, and had a chicken hunt with conductor Warner and Major Anderson of lightning fame. They bagged sixty four chickens, and every agent from here to Wallace got a brace of nice birds with compliments of Superintendent L.—*Brookville. (Ellsworth Reporter, 31 August 1876)*

THREE WAGON LOADS OF CHICKEN HUNTERS, DULY EQUIPPED with fire arms, ammuniton, sedlitz powders, etc., started for Gypsum creek last Tuesday morning, to be chaperoned by Mr. Frank Wilkerson upon the stamping grounds of the fes-

tive chickens. They killed some 60 chickens, notwithstanding "thunder, lightning storm." (*Saline County Journal*, 17 August 1876)

Prairie-chicken hunts usually lasted an entire day and were less demanding than buffalo hunts. Often there was a friendly competition among hunters as to which group could bag the most birds:

THE NEXT THING UPON OUR PROGRAMME WAS A DAY'S SPORT with the prairie chickens, and the objective point Sterling, in Rice county. Having had so enjoyable a taste of the companionship of the Topeka Nimrods, they were cordially pressed to continue lending the light of their countenance upon the party, and after much sighing they ne'er could consent, consented—at least three of the four did—Judge Brockway being so closely confined to county matters demanding his attention as to find it imposssble [sic] to leave.

A nine-hour ride, a cordial welcome from Ricksecker, the land agent of the Santa Fe at Sterling, a comfortable tucking in our little bed, and the general turning out at day-break, each and every one declaring that to lie longer in bed on so glorious a morning would be positive sacrilege.

The prairie chicken, as all Kansans term it, is, as is well known, the same bird familiar to ornithologists as the pinnated grouse, the most conspicuous of all the American grouse family. Though hardly a handsome bird from its rather dusky feathering, [it] is still attractive from its spirited bearing, the delicate pencilings of its feathers, and its bars of different shades of yellow and brown across the breast. It is a larger bird than the ruffed grouse, its flesh quite dark, and as many an epicure knows of exquisite flavor when "cooked to a turn." The pinnated grouse or prairie chicken has the power of inflating the two yellow sacks which he carries on the side of his neck, and during the mating season the cocks are often seen, as the writer of an exceedingly interesting and graphic

article in one of the popular monthlies puts it, "strutting and swelling in mimic grandeur, with expanded wings and tail, and making a trumming noise with their wings, striving to please by their pompous ways." At these times they court conflict, and two cock birds never meet without having it out. They spring into the air, striking at each other with feet and wings and continue the animated condition of things generally until the one proves his claim to first choice, and the other sadly concludes to put up with what may be left. The writer hitherto referred to gives so keen and inspiring a description of a scene quite familiar to old residents in the west, but evidently one of greatest novelty to him, that its substance is here given largely in his own words. One day, while upon the prairie, he noticed some objects on the summit of a knoll, and by careful watching discovered they were prairie chickens. Moved by curiosity, he carefully approached, and soon saw fifteen prairie fowl apparently dancing a minuet. They were scattered about on the short line twenty yards apart, nodding their heads to one another, and presently two would run out, and perform the figure which in a country dance is known as "cross over and back," all the while uttering a soft note of "coo-cooe," the last syllable being much elongated. Then followed "salute your partners," and "dos a dos." This scene of merriment was sustained for half an hour or more and until a shot from a neighboring gun caused the birds to run into the tall cover of the reeds. The bright sunshine of autumn, and the conspicuous group of native birds, impressed the scene vividly on the spectator's mind, and subsequently on relating it to a farmer, near by, the good old son of toil remarked, "Yes, them same birds do skye round there mostly every day."

No sooner were we robed and ready for the fray than Rick, as every one hereabouts calls Ricksecker, had his team at the door, and hardly were the suburbs of Sterling reached before we had a taste of something in the way of the wagon locomotion, Rick letting his ponies out until they plunged

forward on a dead run. Over the perfectly smooth race-track like road we dashed like a whirlwind, and we had the sensation of a runaway without its dangers, for a [sic] at a word and the tightening of the reins, the ponies came down to a jog, and the dogs were thrown out to their work. It could not have been possible to make a finer hunting ground than the grand expanse of swelling prairie, the thickly matted buffalo grass, just high enough to afford excellent cover for the chickens and not too high for the dogs to work in, to the utmost satisfaction both as to themselves and the men folk behind them. Morton had his favorite pointer Bang, and Burlingame his crack setter, Ranger, and the constant bantering between the two as to the respective merits of setters and pointers bid fair to receive new impetus from the day's doings. While never agreeing on the dog question, there was no disputing judgment as to character of ammunition used by these old hands at chicken shooting. Four drachms of powder with No. 6 shot, in August and September, and after than No. 4 and 5, owing to the longer range at which the chickens must be reached and heavier feathers as they attain maturity.

Hardly had the dogs been commanded to "hie on" before Bang struck the faint scent where a covey of the birds had recently been hiding, and, in an instant reached them with every vein in his sleek brown body standing out like whipcords. The birds were running in the grass, and hardly had Bang come to a full point, before Ranger, some fifteen yards distant crouched in the tangled growth carpeting the prairie until his long, fleecy and brilliant coat, looked like some bunch of autumn verdure. The weather was warm and clear, and, with a grandly proportioned cornfield near at hand, the fowl were loth to exert themselves. They laid close, and so many steps did we advance ahead of the dogs, that to one not conversant with the cunning of the prairie chicken, the conviction would almost, if not quite, force itself upon the mind that both pointer and setter had played us false. Just

as something of this kind was creeping over your most obedient, swish! flashed an old cock bird so close to my nose that I involuntarily made a lunge at him with my gun, so bewildered that I never dreamed of shooting. The Judge, not daring to shoot owing to my being in range, held up until the bird flew beyond his reach, but Burlingame let fly, shot clean over, and thus the laugh was on all three of us. Auter, in the meantime, bagging a young 'un with that cool and satisfied bearing so dreadfully provoking to those whose powder but scented the open air. "Look sharp!" hoarsely ejaculated Morton, "the hen bird is here with a covey, and we'll get 'em up one at a time." Sure enough, up popped a youngster not twenty feet distant, and he was my meat. It had not touched the grass before the Judge flushed a pair and nipped them both in exceedingly pretty style. Another chick up only to go back to mother earth again, when the parent bird broke cover, and, making a sudden dart almost in Burlingame's face, gave that gentleman a chance for a difficult shot which he accomplished with a grunt of satisfaction that demonstrated his keen desire to get even with the Judge. Only the first bird breaking cover escaped in the entire covey of thirteen, and then onward we moved for new fields to conquer. In the meantime Rick had marked down a large flock flying from the feeding ground to the open prairie, and, speeding his ponies to us, made the new field for sport in a jiffy. Out on the long sweeping prairies of Kansas, one drives at will, there being no fences but such as are easily circumvented, and streams so readily forded as to offer no obstacle to the driver's desire to go anywhere and everywhere. As my companions were starting off behind the dogs, Rick, who remained in the wagon, called me and suggested that I try him and the team as pointers, and promising me three or four fine opportunities for "single" birds rising one at a time. Nothing loth, I assented, and walking at the horse's heads, soon had the satisfaction of seeing a cock bird break cover with a rush, and, taking my time, brought him to the grass at fifty yards.

Following on a few steps another took wing and, flying directly in the line with the team, I had another chance for distinguishing myself. Of the seven birds Rick had marked down I bagged six and knocked feathers out of the seventh. In the meantime the rivalry between Burlingame and the Judge waxed exceedingly warm, and upon picking them up for the return to town for dinner, we found Morton had twenty-six, Burlingame twenty-six, and Auter, who had talked least of all, thirty-one; the sum total of the morning's sport reaching ninety-seven.

Somewhere about three o'clock in the afternoon we went south of the river for a change, and had the best of luck, especially as night approached, the birds becoming almost as tame as domestic fowl as the twilight fell over the beautiful valley. On the way home we had some of the jolliest sport imaginable with jack rabbits, one of which would make a half dozen of the ordinary breed of long ears. They, like the chickens, are fond of the road just at nightfall, and often, when waked up to a fitting sense of the situation, would shoot ahead of us on the road as if greased, and sent bounding into futurity by some ponderous arm of warfare. Their jumps are something astonishing, and to take them in the air is the pride of old hunters who, by the way, never confess to shooting them but for the mere fun of the thing.

The chicken season, the present year, is of such glorious promise as to fairly make the boys ache over the enforced delay until Aug. 1. The season throughout southwest Kansas is fully a month in advance of previous years, and the young birds are growing so rapidly and are in such remarkably large numbers that it does appear hard that we should have to wait so many weeks yet before taking the field. But it is this very adherence to the letter, as well as the spirit of the game laws, that has led to the amazing increase of both quail and chickens, old settlers declaring they never before saw anything like it. Last year very many—thousands upon thousands—of the young birds were drowned or so weak-

ened by the continued wet weather as to die long before reaching maturity. There has been much rain this season, but mostly in hard showers followed by warm, sunshiny days, thus enabling the birds to seek dry quarters and to recuperate and grow fat upon the unstinted abundance of grain. The young birds are plumper and heavier than ever before known at this stage of their growth, and the opening day of the shooting season—Aug. 1—will, unquestionably be one long to be remembered in the game annals of Kansas. (*Osborne County Farmer*, 9 August 1878)

As with waterfowl, the locations of upland game birds—prairie chicken, quail, and turkey—were noted by the various newspapers in western Kansas. Quail and prairie chicken were particularly abundant along the more eastern portions of the Kansas Pacific Railroad:

TO THE SPORTSMAN WHOSE CHIEF DELIGHT IS IN HIS BREECH-loader and his pointers or setters, the very finest sport may be had by getting off at any of the stations along the line from Kansas City to Salina. The whole of that country swarms with quail and prairie chickens. The abundance of quail may be estimated by the fact that they are sold in the markets at one dollar to one dollar and a half per dozen, and prairie chickens at two dollars and a half per dozen. In the season a good shot can bag his fifteen to twenty brace of quail per diem with ease. (Weston, 1872, p. 130)

LARGE FLOCKS OF WILD TURKEYS REPORTED IN THE VICINITY OF Wichita. (*Ellsworth Reporter*, 18 November 1875)

PRAIRIE HENS ARE NUMEROUS IN THIS COUNTY AND THEY WILL make chickens plenty next fall. (*Ellsworth Reporter*, 19 April 1877)

Wild turkey and quail were common in the forested areas of eastern Kansas and extended westward along the rivers and streams.



Hunting prairie chickens. Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka.

Hunters were frequently able to take large numbers, as is evident in the following excerpts:

TWO HUNDRED WILD TURKEYS WERE CAPTURED IN A SINGLE day's hunt, recently, by some of the soldiers at Fort Larned. (*Hutchinson News*, 10 April 1873)

THE MANHATTAN NIMRODS, HAVE HAD A CHAMPION HUNT. One party killed 616 quails, chickens, rabbits, &c., and the other party 431. (*Ellsworth Reporter*, 18 December 1873)

Buffalo were the dominant vertebrate species on the open prairie and the herds were immense. It is almost incredulous, and difficult to grasp fully, the tremendous size of these herds. In some cases the herds were so large that trains had to stop while they passed:

of our sportsmen to kill them off. This should not be done. We might, sometime, be afflicted with grasshoppers as is the case with Minnesota and Iowa, and in that event these vast flocks of insectivorous birds could do much towards routing them and keeping them out of our cornfields. So don't kill the birds. (*Smith County Pioneer*, 31 August 1876)

THE SWALLOW, SWIFT, AND NIGHTHAWK ARE THE GUARDIANS of the atmosphere. They check the increase of insects that would otherwise overload it. Woodpeckers, creepers and chickadees are the guardians of the trunks of trees. Warblers and flycatchers protect the foliage. Black-birds, crows, thrushes and larks protect the surface of the soil. Snipe and woodcock protect the soil under surface. Each tribe has its respective duties to perform in the economy of nature, and it is an undoubted fact, if the birds were all swept off the earth, man could not live upon it; vegetation would wither and die; insects would become so numerous that no living thing could withstand their attacks. The wholesale destruction occasioned by grasshoppers, which have lately devastated the west, is undoubtedly caused [sic] by thinning out of the birds, such as crows [sic], prairie hens, etc., which feed upon them. The great and inestimable service done to farmer, gardener and florist by the birds is only becoming known by sad experience. Spare the birds and save your fruit; the little corn and fruit taken by them is more than compensated by the quantity of noxious insects they destroy. The long persecuted crow has been found, by actual experiment, to do more by the vast quantities [sic] of grubs and insects he devours than the little harm he does in the few grains of corn he pulled up. He is one of the farmer's best friends. (*Ellsworth Reporter*, 3 May 1877)

In the latter 1900s the English sparrow was proposed by some as a solution to help control the grasshoppers. Although the

sparrows would have eventually spread to Kansas anyway, they were introduced to several localities in the region:

A MOVE IS BEING MADE IN THIS STATE TO INTRODUCE THE English sparrow—which goes for insects more than any other bird. (*Ellsworth Reporter*, 26 February 1874)

ONE OF OUR CANADIAN EXCHANGES (THE COBURG (ONT.) SENTINEL) writing of the English sparrow, says: "These pugnacious immigrants are rapidly spreading over this Canada. The towns and cities along the seaboard already swarm with them, and from thence they have spread [sic] over the whole northern part of this continent, and will be a great benefit in the destruction of grubs and worms of every kind." It will be remembered that a few sparrows were recently brought here. It is said that they, too, are rapidly increasing in number. We believe it to be the duty of Kansans to take special pains to introduce these useful birds into our State. They will do more towards ridding our fine prairies of such pests as the grasshoppers than all other birds put together. (*Saline County Journal*, 13 December 1877)

Some of the insect-eating birds were protected by law as early as 1868 in Kansas, but enforcement was scant (chapter 5). There were, however, those who suggested that protecting the birds would ultimately result in the birds themselves destroying the crops.

THE CRY OF SOME PEOPLE IS THAT THE "SLAUGHTER OF BIRDS" must be stopped. It is certainly a question as to what bounds the prevention of killing or trapping birds should be carried. A bill pending before the Legislature of Indiana to prohibit the killing of quails for five years is strenuously opposed by the farmers on the ground that the increase would be so great by the end of that time that all the grain in the State would not suffice to feed them. An exchange, commenting on the subject, says;

There seems to be good cause for this fear, for if there are 500,000 quails in the State and each pair produced ten chicks a year (both small quantities,) the total number at the end of two years would be 18,000,000, and at the end of the fifth year 3,888,000,000, which would require 15,000,000 bushels of grain per day to feed them.

In Kansas the cry is: "Preserve the birds; they will destroy the grasshoppers." Now, which is best—that the crops should be destroyed [*sic*] by the birds or the grasshoppers. (*Saline County Journal*, 15 March 1877)

In response, some editors quickly pointed out the beneficial aspects of planting trees:

TREES FURNISH A HOME FOR MILLIONS OF BIRDS, AND THUS are the growing crops protected from the ravages of devouring insects.

The joyous song of the birds makes the heart of a man happy, and thus are the burdens of life made lighter by the planting of trees.

Trees casts a welcome shade along the dusty highway, and the heart of the weary traveller is made to rejoice. (*Ford County Globe*, 26 February 1878)

Some suggested that the law protecting birds be expanded to include all bird species. This idea was eventually implemented with the 1876 bird law (chapter 5):

A CORRESPONDENT OF THE NEW YORK *TRIBUNE*, GIVES THE following advice to the people of the grasshopper devastated region: "Let the people of those Western States take better care of their birds! For years past they have waged such systematic warfare against them that the market of even the eastern cities have been glutted with grouse, prairie hens, wild turkey, etc., which if unmolested, would have kept the insects in check. We cannot derange nature's balance of power and not expect to suffer somewhere. A law to prevent the

W. S. NEFF SELLS HIS PET BUFFALO, "DICK," TO P. T. BARNUM in New York City. There were a good many pet buffaloes in the county at this time (1873). Mrs. Ira Stockbridge and a neighbor lady each caught a calf near Bull's City, and succeeded in domesticating them until they became great favorites. They were killed by some sportsmen, who claimed that they thought the yearlings were wild, and not owned by anyone. John Fink, William Rader and other gentlemen kept young buffalo with their herds. There was no utility in them except the mere exhibition. Attempts have been made to train a pair of them to yoke. They pulled admirably, but there was no obstacle in the way of their sweet wills. In summer, they took the shortest road to water, regardless of intervening obstructions, and they thought nothing of flinging themselves over a perpendicular bank, wagon and all. (*Osborne County Farmer*, 7 October 1880)

THE GENERALLY RECEIVED OPINION THAT THE PRAIRIE CHICKEN cannot be tamed or domesticated is rather stretching the facts. Mr. Edward Van Horn, of this city, has one not half grown following one of his domestic hens around, and is becoming familiar with the premises although caught out on the prairie but a few days ago. Anyone that questions the truth of this statement are [sic] referred to Mr. Van Horn who has the chicken and is ready to make proof of the same. (*Larned Chronoscope*, 10 June 1881)

Impressive large animals captured or shot by the settlers were often reported by the local newspaper:

HENRY HOKE WRITES US THAT HE SHOT A FISH CRANE [GREAT blue heron] last week, near the Smoky, that measured five feet and eight inches from tip to tip. (*Russell County Record*, 30 September 1875)

ED. MURPHY SHOT A MAMMOTH PELICAN WEDNESDAY. IT MEASURED 8 feet from tip to tip, being the first specimen of the

bit, prairie chicken, or some other small game, and although but a short distance away, I was unable on account of the long grass to determine what it really was, until on coming quite near, the hawk slowly and heavily arose into the air, to a height [sic] of about forty feet, bearing in his claws a large bull snake, whose contortions and twisting embarrassed the flight of the hawk to such an extent that he remained almost stationary for some time at the altitude before mentioned—during which period the snake apparently coiling himself about the body and wings of his captor so effectively, that they started all at once for “terra firma” more after the manner of an old boat than anything else I know of.

Being somewhat anxious to see how things were going to terminate, I left the wagon and started for the scene of conflict; nearing the spot I observed the hawk industriously going for the snake, tearing him with his beak and otherwise making a total wreck of the serpent; but who on my approach rose swiftly, bearing his victim, inanimate, defunct, in the shape of an inverted letter “U,” and was soon lost to sight.

It reminded me somewhat of the “coat of arms” of some nation or other, or else somebody’s trade mark, I am not sure which, representing as it did an eagle or other large bird—in flight, bearing in his talons a writhing snake. (*Ellsworth Reporter*, 29 August 1872)

EARLY ON TUESDAY MORNING WE RODE OUT OF KING CITY IN route for McPherson Centre. As we passed up the creek we saw legions of prairie chickens pursued by rapacious hawks. We felt sorry for the chickens and lost no opportunity to direct a pistol shot at their pursuers. (*Hutchinson News*, 31 October 1872)

Many detailed observations were recorded that indicated the settlers’ abiding interest in the environment and in native ani-

ing up the young corn and scratching up the millet seeds that were recently sown. But they are supposed to have aided the cold wet weather in killing the young 'hoppers, as none are left. B. P. HANAN (Langdon). (*Hutchinson News*, 17 May 1877)

PRAIRIE CHICKENS ARE VERY NUMEROUS—HELPING THEMSELVES to the unhusked corn. (Bridge). (*Saline County Journal*, 26 December 1878)

Prairie dogs are primarily herbivores, living on the grasses and forbs of the prairie. As grasslands were broken for crops, prairie dogs became pests after the corn and wheat. Attempted control measures included shooting and spreading poisons in the burrows:

THE PRAIRIE DOGS ARE MAKING TERRIBLE HAVOC ON CORN and wheat fields in our immediate neighborhood. The farmers have waged war on them and say they intend to drive them away. (Smolan). (*Saline County Journal*, 12 June 1879)

And during the late 1860s and early 1870s, antelope and buffalo not only ate but trampled the crops in the field:

IN 1870, THE AMOUNT OF CROPS PLANTED, CONSISTED OF about three acres of sod corn, a few beans and vines. But, the buffalo which were about the only inhabitants that could be utilized by man, and which roamed these hills in vast herds, completely demolished that small planting and nothing came to maturity. (*Smith County Pioneer*, 27 July 1876)

DROVES OF ANTELOPE FEED ON THE WHEAT FIELDS OF OUR county daily. (*Ellis County Star*, 4 January 1877)

Both the gray wolf and prairie wolf, or coyote, turned to domestic livestock and fowl for prey when available. Many editors reporting the depredations simply referred to "wolves," and

which fish could be caught, and second, establish fishing seasons, which would allow the fish population to reproduce and thereby reestablish their numbers. However, some interested observers argued that an even greater increase in numbers could be realized if new stocks, representative of exotic species of game fish, were introduced into the waters of the state, and that additional habitat could be created through the construction of small ponds. Finally, in 1877 a state law was enacted that not only included all of these ideas but created the office of fish commissioner to see that the objectives were met.

The fish commissioner pursued his duties with considerable vigor. Citizens were particularly interested in the stocking of game fish as a way of increasing populations rapidly and also providing new species. However, knowledge of fish and their habitats and behavior was poor in 1877, and much effort and not a little money went for naught. To understand this, one need look no further than the efforts to stock salmon in Kansas with the expectation that they would emigrate to the Gulf of Mexico, then return large enough to be caught for food.

Almost from the inception of statehood there was a game law that protected some kinds of the native wildlife, as most settlers who immigrated to Kansas came from states where there had been game laws in effect. It is not so surprising, then, that Kansas enacted its first game law in 1861, the year it acquired statehood. But this initial law established season limits for only five species of game animals:

*Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Kansas:*

SECTION 1. That it shall be unlawful for any person or persons to shoot, kill or trap, within this State, any prairie chickens, quails, partridges, wild turkeys and deer, between the first days of April and September, of each year.

SEC. 2. That any person convicted of violating this act, shall be fined in a sum not exceeding five dollars, and shall be liable for costs of prosecution.

SEC. 3. That justices of the peace shall have jurisdiction of the offenses under this act, and all proceedings shall be in the

name of the State, and shall be regulated as other criminal proceedings of a minor character, before justices of the peace.

SEC. 4. That all fines imposed under this act shall be paid to the justice before whom the proceedings are had, who shall, within thirty days, pay the same into the county treasury, for the use of the common school fund of the county in which the offense shall have been committed.

SEC. 5. That, whenever the county board of commissioners shall have received a petition from at least twenty freeholders of such county, praying that this act be inoperative in such county, they may, in their discretion, so proclaim; and, after the date of such proclamation, no provision of this act shall be in force for twelve months.

SEC. 6. This act to be in force from and after its publication. Approved May 10, 1861.

(Session Laws of Kansas, 1861)

This law gave no protection to waterfowl, songbirds, hawks, owls, and other birds. These species could be, and often were, hunted throughout the year whenever the opportunity arose. For the animals listed the season was an ample seven months in length. In 1865 the legislature amended the 1861 law. It left the length of the hunting season the same but removed prairie chicken from the list, thereby permitting them to be hunted throughout the year:

*Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Kansas:*

SECTION 1. That section one of the act to which this is amendatory be and the same is hereby amended, so as to read as follows: Section 1. That it shall be unlawful for any person or persons to shoot, kill or trap within this State any quails, partridges, wild turkeys or deer, between the first days of April and September of each year.

SEC. 2. That section 1 of said act be and the same is hereby repealed.

Approved February 13, 1865.  
(Session Laws of Kansas, 1865)

The removal of prairie chickens from the list of protected birds resulted in an increased number being killed and sold cheaply in the eastern markets. Concern over this development led a few people to urge that they be included once again on the protected list:

THE PRAIRIE HEN, OR PINNATED GROUSE (*CUPIDONIA CUPIDO*), will soon become extinct unless steps are taken for its protection, where alone it is now common, upon the prairies of the West. Ten years more of indiscriminate slaughter will make these beautiful birds almost as rare upon the prairies of Illinois as they are upon Long Island, where they were once equally plenty, but are now nearly extinct.

The wholesale manner of their destruction may be understood from the fact that they are often received in such quantities in New-York as to only be worth from 20 to 40 cents apiece, and we have known tuns [*sic*] of them to spoil upon the hands of dealers. We remember when the price for them in Indiana and Illinois was six to twelve cents each and we have seen them sold ready dressed for the table, within thirty years past, less than forty miles from Chicago at 37½ cents per dozen.

So much for description. Now for the object of writing this article. It is to urge the legislators of all the States where the prairie hens now abound to make stringent laws for their protection—to make it the duty of somebody to enforce these laws—to make the penalty fine and imprisonment for killing these birds at any time between Feb[r]uary and November, or making a wholesale destruction of them at any season with such traps and snares as are now used at the West for the purpose of supplying the people of New-York with this delicious game at the price of ordinary scallawag beef. (*Junction City Union*, 29 July 1865)

In 1868 a revised game law, which follows, restored prairie chicken to the protected list and added elk, snipe, and woodcock, with a seven-month season from 1 August to 1 March.

Quail and pheasant (ruffed grouse) remained on the protected list but with reduced seasons of five months from 1 October to 1 March. Additionally, for the first time fifteen species of songbird were protected throughout the year, but birds such as waterfowl, hawks, and owls remained unprotected. The early settlers viewed hawks and owls as undesirable species because of the supposed depredations against the farmer's domestic fowl. Consequently, on the prairies of western Kansas these large, predaceous birds were avidly hunted (see chapter 4).

*Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Kansas:*

SECTION 1. It shall be unlawful for any person to kill, destroy or take, or pursue with intent to kill, destroy or take, by any device, contrivance or means whatsoever, any grouse, prairie hen or chicken, woodcock, snipe, wild turkey, deer, elk or fawn, between the first day of March and the first day of August, or any quail or pheasant between the first day of March and the first day of October, in each and every year. Thrushes, robins, bluebirds, woodpeckers, mocking birds, yellowhammers, peewees [peewits], swallows, martins, bluejays, kildees [sic], snowbirds, wrens, meadow larks and doves shall not be killed at any time.

SEC. 2. It shall be unlawful for any person to buy or sell any of the above mentioned birds or animals which shall have been killed or taken during the time when the killing or taking of the same is prohibited by the last section; and the having in possession any of the above birds or animals, recently killed or taken by any person or persons, shall be deemed and held as *prima facie* evidence that the same were killed or taken by the person or persons having possession of the same, in violation of the provisions of this act.

SEC. 3. Every person offending against the provisions of either of the two preceding sections of this act, shall be subject to a fine of fifteen dollars for each deer, elk or fawn, and three dollars for each bird of the classes above described, which he shall be convicted of having taken, killed or destroyed, or having bought, sold or had in his possession.

SEC. 4. It shall be unlawful for any person, at any time, to take, catch or kill, within this state, by means of any trap, net or snare of any kind, any of the birds, of game of the kinds above described, except upon his own premises; and any person offending against the provisions of this section shall be subject to the same penalty as is prescribed for offenses against the first two sections of this act.

SEC. 5. Any person who shall go upon the premises of another, or of any corporation, whether inclosed or not, and shall be found hunting, trapping or ensnaring any of the above named birds or animals, in violation of the provisions of this act, shall be deemed guilty of trespass, and may be prosecuted by any person in possession of said premises, before any justice of the peace of the county, or other court of competent jurisdiction, and subjected to a penalty in any sum not less than five nor more than fifty dollars, to be paid, one moiety to the complainant, and one moiety into the county treasury for the benefit of the common school fund of the county: *Provided, however,* That a judgment against a person for a violation of this act under either of the first four sections thereof, shall be a bar to any prosecution under this section for the same offense.

SEC. 6. All fines imposed under the first four sections of this act shall be paid into the county treasury, for the use of the school fund of the county in which the offense was committed.

SEC. 7. This act shall be in force from and after its publication in the statute book.

Approved, March 2, 1868.  
(Kansas, State Statute, 1868)

In 1871 the legislature passed the following law providing protection for the California quail from March 1871 to November 1876. This law is rather curious in that California quail were not known to inhabit Kansas, occurring far to the west, in California and Arizona. I could find no explanation for the introduction

owner so to do, shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and shall, on conviction thereof before a justice of the peace, be punished by a fine of not less than five dollars, nor more than twenty dollars for each offense.

SEC. 2. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after its publication in the *Kansas Weekly Commonwealth*.

Approved March 1, 1872.

(Session Laws of Kansas, 1872)

There was little in the way of enforcement for any of these laws. From time to time hunters were apprised of the trespass law and admonished to adhere to it by editors:

IT MAY BE INTERESTING TO SOME OF YOUR READERS TO KNOW that farmers northeast of the city, (and elsewhere I believe,) are not unmindful of the hard lesson they learned last year, nor heedless of the many well-intended hints which accompanied contributions for their relief; and the time has now come when they seem unanimously resolved to discharge a well-known, though hitherto neglected duty, in protecting themselves against the wanton slaughter of chickens, which a Providence has bountifully bestowed upon western farmers to check the ravages of grasshoppers, and mitigate locust scourges. Farmers are practical if not theoretical, and though they trouble themselves little with abstruse calculations, they are expert at the four first rules, especially the first and third. By these they find that a chicken which eats about 100 grasshoppers daily, destroys about 12,000 of them before they begin to deposit their eggs in the fall; and if, as "bug-ologists" tell us, each hopper lays an average of about 5,000 eggs, then each chicken would this year destroy 60,000,000 of next year[']s grasshoppers, and consequently the vast numbers of chickens annually slaughtered by professional gunners and sportsmen, who ought to be in better business, would be sufficient to destroy such numbers as Prof. Tice himself could not calculate—such numbers as no repetition

of our limited number of figures is capable of expressing; but, as we can easily guess, quite all the grasshoppers and locusts from here to the Rocky Mountains and as far beyond, together with myriads of other voracious tribes which every year mock the patient farmer's toil. In this determination to protect their protectors, farmers are considerably influenced by being continually overrun by hunters who have no respect for game laws and little sense of propriety in them, some even possessed of effrontery enough to ride over hedges and hedge rows, and around people's gardens shooting barn-yard fowls, chickens, ducks and turkeys, alike. This, of course, is done only when there happens to be nobody around. It may seem incredible, but is nevertheless strictly true and the perpetrators or suspected ones, are watched for. (*Wichita City Eagle*, 5 August 1875)

NEXT WEEK TUESDAY THE HUNTERS WILL MARCH TO THE prairie chicken grounds. We hope they will obey the law in every respect, and hunt on grounds only after the owner's consent. One man may not care whether a hunter kills all the chickens within fifty miles of him, while another man may have a special interest in preserving all the birds upon his place. There are more chickens this year than there has been for many years before. There is a great plenty for all, without violating in any way the spirit and provisions of the law. Ask the farmer's consent first, and then enjoy yourself. (*Saline County Journal*, 10 August 1876)

Many hunters did not observe the trespass law and, in addition, occasionally shot farm animals. This practice irritated farmers, who published the names of the guilty parties and proclaimed their property to be off-limits to hunters:

THE VOICE OF THE QUAIL IS HEARD IN THE LAND; ALSO THE voice of the farmer whose dog has been shot by mistake for quails. It is "voicy" enough in either case. (*Saline County Journal*, 19 November 1874)

son, destroying vermin, insects and small animals. This being true it is bad economy to kill them and sell their hides for that price. They do no harm and much good. They should be cultivated. (*Hutchinson News*, 13 January 1876)

Natural calamities, such as early hard freezes and hailstorms, took their toll on birds. These periodic weather phenomena must have accounted for the deaths of many.

AN ITEM IN THE BELOIT *GAZETTE* SAYS THE QUAILS OF THAT section are all frozen to death, and it will be years before these beautiful birds will be so plentiful in Mitchell county as during the past year. (*Ellsworth Reporter*, 18 February 1875)

THE LATE FLOOD HAS BEEN DEATH TO GOPHERS, GROUND squirrels[,] rabbits, snakes, etc. Scores of them can be seen lying dead along the streams and on the prairie. (*Stockton News*, 31 May 1877)

KIRWIN WAS VISITED WITH ONE OF THE MOST SEVERE AND DESTRUCTIVE hail and rain storms on the 21st ult., that ever passed over this section of the country, some of the hail stones measured 5 3-4 inches in circumference, and weighed over 3 ounces[.] The ground was covered with hail in some places to the depth of 2 inches. Prairie chickenes [sic] and birds were killed on the prairie by the hundreds. 438 window lights were broken in [K]irwin. (*Stockton News*, 7 May 1879)

Quail especially were appreciated by both farmers and hunters, and their killing stridently condemned by some editors. Any reduction in their population was noticed, and many suggested that hunters should limit themselves to taking no quail, relegating instead their hunting to other species.

THE *UNION* SAYS THE RAILWAY AGENT AT ST. GEORGE, FROM Oct. 25th to Dec. 23rd, 1874, killed 934 quails, 84 grouse,

59 rabbits, 8 geese, 4 ducks and 1 deer. We think for each quail, and grouse, he ought to receive twenty lashes well laid on with a raw-hide. (*Ellsworth Reporter*, 22 July 1875)

A MR. REESE OF BOURBON COUNTY, TRAPPED 920 PRAIRIE chickens in five days. He ought to be caught in the jaws of a powerful steel trap, and kept the remainder of his life. (*Ellsworth Reporter*, 11 February 1875)

IT IS A DEPLORABLE FACT THAT A GREAT MANY QUAILS WERE killed by the severe winter and that something must be done to prevent their entire extermination. Several of the prominent hunters of this place propose that a written agreement be entered into by all the sportsmen of Saline county in which they shall agree to refrain from shooting quail until another year. Most of the quail killed each season are shot by town hunters, and this agreement if carried out as intended, will serve to populate the now almost depopulated quail districts. (*Saline County Journal*, 27 May 1875)

In 1876 the game law was amended. It removed elk from the protected list. At the same time the hunting season was reduced to 4½ months for deer, turkey, prairie chicken, and ruffed grouse and to only 2 months (November and December) for quail, due in large part to the reduced numbers. Not all hunters approved (the *Saline County Journal* of 3 February reported that "the prairie chicken and quail hunters begin to mourn over the 'anti-hunting' disposition of the present Legislature"). The law, which follows, also listed twenty-eight species of birds that were totally protected; however, it made no changes in the 1868 law that excluded waterfowl, owls, and hawks.

*Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Kansas:*

SECTION 1. It shall be unlawful for any person or persons to hunt or pursue, kill or trap, net or ensnare, destroy or attempt to kill, trap, net, ensnare or otherwise destroy any wild buck, doe or fawn, wild turkey, prairie hen or chicken,

ruffled grouse (commonly called partridge or pheasant), between the first day of January and the fifteenth day of August in each and every year, or any quail between the first day of January and the first day of November, or any woodcock between January first and July first: *Provided, however,* That it shall not be lawful for any person at any time to kill any quail other than upon the party's own premises, unless permission first be had.

SEC. 2. Any person or corporation violating any of the provisions of the preceding section shall forfeit and pay a fine of fifteen dollars for each wild buck, doe or fawn thus killed, trapped, netted, ensnared or otherwise destroyed, bought, sold or had in possession; and a fine of ten dollars for each wild turkey, prairie hen or chicken, ruffled grouse, pheasant or woodcock thus killed, trapped, netted, ensnared or otherwise destroyed, bought, sold or had in possession as aforesaid.

SEC. 3. No person shall at any time within this state kill or attempt to kill, trap, net, ensnare or destroy any California quail, turkey buzzard, robin, blue bird, swallow, martin, musquito [*sic*] hawk, whippoorwill, cuckoo, woodpecker, cat bird, brown thrasher, red bird, hanging bird, blue jay, finch, thrush, lark, cherry bird, yellow bird, oriole, bobolink, English sparrow, wren, phebeewee, indigo bird, swallow, king bird, or other upland insectivorous birds, or rob or destroy the nests of such birds or any of them; and every person so offending, on conviction thereof, shall be fined in a sum not exceeding five dollars for each and every offense proven: *Provided,* That it shall not be necessary on the trial of any action or prosecution to prove that the bird killed, trapped, netted or ensnared was an upland insectivorous bird: *And provided further,* That it shall not be necessary on the trial of any prosecution under the provisions of this act to prove the true name of the bird caught, killed, trapped, netted or ensnared, it being sufficient to show that a bird was caught, killed, trapped, netted or ensnared.

SEC. 4. No person shall at any time within this state, with a trap or snare or net, take or attempt to trap, snare or take any wild turkey, prairie chicken, Virginia partridge, pheasant, grouse or quail, except on his or her premises and for his or her family use; and any person so offending, on conviction thereof, shall be fined in a sum not less than five nor more than ten dollars for each and every offense.

SEC. 5. It shall be unlawful for any person to intentionally destroy or remove from the nest of any prairie chicken, grouse, quail or wild turkey any eggs of such fowl or birds, or for any person to buy, sell or have in possession or traffic in such eggs, or willfully destroy the nest of any such birds or fowls; and any person so offending, on conviction thereof, shall be fined in the sum of five dollars for each and every offense.

SEC. 6. It shall be unlawful for any person, railroad corporation or express company, or any common carrier, knowingly to transport or to ship, or to receive for the purpose of transporting or shipping, any of the animals, wild fowls or birds mentioned in this act in or out of the state of Kansas; and any common carrier so offending shall forfeit and pay to the state of Kansas, for each and every offense, the sum of one hundred dollars, the same to be recovered in an action brought in the name of the state of Kansas by any person against any such person, corporation or company before any court of competent jurisdiction in any county into or through which said game may be taken; and any agent of any such person, corporation or company who shall knowingly violate the provisions of this section by receiving or shipping any such game as the agent of such person, corporation or company, shall, on conviction thereof, be fined in a sum not less than ten nor more than fifty dollars; and the having in possession any of the above birds or animals recently killed or taken by any person or persons, shall be deemed and held as *prima facie* evidence that the same were killed or taken by the company, corporation or

person having possession of the same in violation of the provisions of this act: *Provided*, That such penalty shall not apply to the transportation of such birds and animals in transit through this state from other states and territories.

SEC. 7. The provisions of this act shall not apply to any person who shall kill any of the birds or animals protected by this act for the sole purpose of preserving them as specimens for scientific purposes, nor to any person who shall collect the eggs or nests of any birds for such scientific purposes: *Provided*, That in a prosecution for the violation of any of the provisions of this act, it shall not be necessary for the prosecution to prove that the killing of the birds or animals, or the taking of the nest or eggs, as the case may be, was not done for scientific purposes.

SEC. 8. All prosecutions or suits under this act shall be commenced within three months after the offense is alleged to have been committed; and the court before whom any action is prosecuted under the provision of this act shall tax, as part of the costs of the case, against the defendant, on conviction, the sum of ten dollars, to be paid when collected to the attorney prosecuting such action.

SEC. 9. Chapter forty-five of the general statutes of eighteen hundred and sixty-eight is hereby repealed.

SEC. 10. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after its publication in the *Commonwealth*.

Approved February 23, 1876.

(Session Laws of Kansas, 1876)

In 1877 the game law was again amended. Instead of listing the species that were protected, it listed those species that were not. The law protected all species (including turkey) except waterfowl, hawks, owls, and snipe. The hunting season for prairie chicken was increased to six months, and quail to three months.

*Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Kansas:*

SECTION 1. That it shall be unlawful for any person or

persons at any time to catch, kill or trap, net or ensnare, or to pursue with such intent, any wild bird, except the wild goose, duck, hawk, owl and snipe; and any person or persons violating the provisions of this act shall be fined in any sum not more than fifteen dollars nor less than five dollars, for each and every offense, to be recovered in any court of competent jurisdiction in the proper county: *Provided*, That it shall not be unlawful to kill the prairie chicken between the first day of August and the first day of February; and it shall not be unlawful to kill quail from the first day of October to the first day of January of each year: *And provided further*, It shall not be necessary on the trial of any action or prosecution to prove the true name of the bird caught, killed, trapped, netted or ensnared—it being sufficient to show that a wild bird other than those excepted in this act was caught, killed, trapped, netted or ensnared by the defendant or defendants.

SEC. 2. It shall be unlawful for any person intentionally to destroy or remove from the nest of any wild bird any eggs or the young of such bird; or for any purpose to buy, sell or have in possession, or traffic in such eggs, or willfully destroy the nest of any wild bird; and any person so offending, on conviction thereof, shall be fined in the sum of five dollars for each and every offense. . . .

SEC. 7. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after its publication in the *Commonwealth*.

Approved March 5, 1877.

(Session Laws of Kansas, 1877c)

There was little effort to enforce the game laws. In a few cases grangers or farming groups and gun clubs took the initiative to prosecute those hunters who operated outside the law, an action that some editors publicly lauded:

WE ARE GLAD TO SEE THAT SOME OF THE GRANGES ARE TAKING up the bird question in the proper spirit, and propose to

prosecute offenders under the law. Keep the ball moving. (*Ellsworth Reporter*, 20 May 1875)

THE SMOKY HILL GUN CLUB WILL PROSECUTE ANY PERSON found [g]uilty of violating the law, as above stated, in this county. It is to be hoped that the law will not be violated. (*Ellsworth Reporter*, 9 January 1879)

With limited law enforcement, however, there was little respect for opening day of hunting season, and many hunters chose not to honor it. Editors had a rather unique way of suggesting that some nimrods had opened the season early:

PRAIRIE CHICKENS WILL BE RIPE NEXT SATURDAY. SOME THAT were accidently killed last Saturday are reported good. (*Ellsworth Reporter*, 30 July 1874)

IN SPITE OF THE LAW THE SHOOTING OF PRAIRIE CHICKENS has been going on over a fortnight, some parties bringing in 30 or 40 birds. These same parties are the first to squeal about horse stealing, but they violate the law as much as a horse thief. (*Ellsworth Reporter*, 1 August 1878)

All of the gaming laws enacted from 1861 to 1877 listed the protected animals and set the season during which the game animal could be hunted. None, however, addressed the number of animals that could be taken in a day's hunt. A local hunting group in the Saline valley suggested that such a measure would help protect the birds:

THERE SEEMS TO BE A DISPOSITION AMONG SOME OF THE sportsmen to form a regular association for the government of hunters in this section of the country. They regard it as necessary to establish certain rules, and that they should be rigidly enforced. One of them would be the limiting [of] the number of birds to be killed by one hunter during one hunt or for the season. The usual wholesale slaughter of birds repeated each season, will soon deprive the country of

like Shylock, "my sins upon my own head," because they owe something to society as well as other people. The influence of their example is contagious. If that example is not of the right kind its tendencies are bad, and this increases the labor of the good people of the city to keep matters "straight." As a further consideration for those who engage in hunting on Sunday, we would suggest that they are observed by their fellow citizens, and such conduct is sure to be set down as details of their character, and as such, it may at some time or other enter into an estimate of them, in such a manner as to hurt. We hope we may not have our attention drawn to this matter any more. (*Hutchinson News*, 5 September 1872)

A NUMBER OF OUR CITIZENS WERE OUT CHICKEN SHOOTING on Sunday; every one of their wives would have been better pleased if they had chosen some other day. Even if men disregard the laws of the land and of God, I think they will agree that it is wisest to abstain from all that shocks the moral sense of a good woman. E. PARSON (Brookville) (*Ellsworth Reporter*, 7 August 1879)

In a scathing editorial condemning those individuals who killed large numbers of prairie chicken, the remarks of the *Ellsworth Reporter* were particularly vitriolic toward those who hunted on Sunday:

IT IS WELL KNOWN BY THE SPORTING AND GAMING GENTRY OF the country that they are now licensed by law to make a business of killing the prairie chickens and grouse which a kind Providence has made it congenial for their growth among all civilized communities of this once barren wilderness of hills and plains. As civilization and habitations for man are spreading over this vast country, it is with gratifying delight we welcome the approach of this beautiful and luxurious bird, evidently designed for the sustenance [sic] of man. These birds, at a certain season of the year are protected from the ravages of the shot-gun in the hands of a

certain class of gentry, who seem to live for nothing else but to ramble the earth and kill and destroy, unwontonly [sic], everything which comes in their course. These birds make their nests around and about the fields of the farmers who take almost as much pride in the fine display of the wild chicken that hovers over and about his place and feeds upon the sweat of his brow, as he would over his domestic fowls. It is with a feeling of sadness for one to witness the wholesale destruction of his companions of the field. In the past few days there have been hundreds of these birds slaughtered and hauled away. Only two guns killed over one hundred in an afternoon; it cannot certainly be that such a number could be consumed in an equitable manner. This *kill* gentry is not only content to play their foul game on the working days of the week, but will openly and above board violate the laws of both God and man, and all honor of decency and respect, to the quietness of a peaceful and religious community, will march deliberately out before the astonished and worshiping people on the holy Sabbath day and engage in their murderous destruction of the fowls of the field, that even our domestic fowls will start up and hunt a place of safety. This community is aroused with indignation at such outrageous proceedings against respectability and moral principals. The time has now come to assert our rights by interfering, and protect, as far as the law will assist, in arresting this wicked conduct.

Hereafter be it known that if there be any more shooting or hunting on the Sabbath day in the community known as the Buck-Eye or Crown Hill lands, if such is the case, the law will be consulted, irrespective of parties.

Yours, WM. FARIS (*Ellsworth Reporter*, 21 August 1879)

The buffalo, which along with the antelope was never provided protection under the law, was the most common large game mammal in Kansas. Interestingly, many of the hunters of the buffalo felt twinges of conscientious regret after killing large numbers. In

was one taken near Lawrence in 1907 (Johnson, 1981), but probably isolated colonies existed in north-central and northwestern Kansas.

There was no protection for Kansas furbearers until 1911. At this time the trapping of raccoons, skunks, civet cats, opossums, muskrats, and minks was legal only from 16 November to 14 March. In 1911 the legislature prohibited the taking of any remaining beaver for at least ten years. In 1921 the legislature proscribed trapping for another ten years; seasons remained closed until 1943. At that time the responsibility of establishing a trapping season for beaver was delegated to the Fish and Game Commission; a beaver season was not opened until 1951-52 (Johnson, 1981).

Otters were common in the major streams of Kansas. However, fur trapping and habitat destruction evidently extirpated the otter shortly after the turn of the century. The last reported record was cited by Lantz (1905, p. 178) as being "captured near Manhattan in September, 1904." Subsequently, seventeen otters from Minnesota and one from Idaho were reintroduced onto the south fork of the Cottonwood River in Chase County in 1983, 1984, and 1985. Although young have occasionally been killed on nearby highways, the current status of otter in Kansas is unknown (Keith Sexson, personal communication).

Wild turkey were no longer found in Kansas by the early 1900s (Thompson and Ely; 1989, 1992). In 1941 wild turkey were reintroduced onto two game farms for extensive study (Wild turkeys, 1941). By 1959 some wild turkeys were immigrating into southeastern Kansas from Oklahoma (Hanzlick, 1960). Additional turkeys were released in 1966 and 1967 to fourteen sites in Kansas. These birds came from Texas and Oklahoma. The first spring hunting season was held in 1974, and the first fall season in 1979. Seasons have been held every year since (Keith Sexson, personal communication, 1993).

The effect of the early pioneers on prairie chicken (greater and lesser), sharp-tailed grouse, and ruffed grouse was a mixed bag. The easily hunted ruffed grouse was gone from Kansas by the turn of the century. Ruffed grouse from Wisconsin were reintroduced into Kansas from 1983 through 1989 and from Minnesota in 1991. It appears that populations are established at

some locales in northeastern Kansas (Randy Rodgers, personal communication, 1993).

The greater prairie chicken, in presettlement times, extended westward to about the middle of Kansas but was probably not abundant. Initially, with the removal of the buffalo and the change that was brought in the structure and complexity of the grassland, the populations declined. However, as small farms became established and grazing of domestic cattle occurred, the populations increased dramatically (Greater prairie chicken, 1978).

By 1900 with more intensive and extensive agriculture, the populations of the greater prairie chicken in the east began to dwindle, whereas those in appropriate areas in the northwestern Kansas expanded. These populations too essentially disappeared after the mid-1920s. Today we find greater prairie chickens where there is extensive cover of tall- and midgrass prairie, mostly in the Flint Hills and north-central Kansas (Greater prairie chicken, 1978).

The lesser prairie chicken was found throughout southwestern Kansas before the arrival of the immigrants. Although these birds were hunted for market as well as for local consumption, populations survived the frontier period in relatively good condition. However, in the 1930s populations were damaged because prolonged drought reduced water supplies, cover, and food (Greater prairie chicken, 1978). Prior to the drought the lesser prairie chicken expanded its range into most of western Kansas, southwestern Nebraska, and northeastern Colorado (Harrison, 1974).

Populations of both species of prairie chicken increased because early agriculture broke relatively little land in the vast prairie expanse and the crops provided food for the chickens. However, as farming technology increased to allow greater acreage to come under the plow, populations of both greater and lesser prairie chicken again declined (Harrison, 1974).

Since the 1950s populations of both the greater and lesser prairie chicken have expanded their range and increased their numbers. Prairie-chicken populations tend to fluctuate in response to environmental conditions, and limited hunting seasons have little effect. Consequently, a hunting season was reestablished in 1957 and has been held every year since (Horak, 1987).

Sharp-tailed grouse were relatively common in the northwest quarter of Kansas prior to settlement and existed in the state

until the 1930s. Grazing and conversion of prairie to cropland eventually resulted in the demise of this species (Mathews, 1980). Releases of sharptails from North Dakota and Nebraska were carried out in 1982, 1984, 1986, and 1988. These releases have been successful in establishing breeding populations in Rawlins, Osborne, and Rooks counties (Rodgers, 1992).

Other native species of wildlife extirpated from Kansas that have not been reintroduced include the black-footed ferret, the white-tailed jackrabbit, and the common raven. The common raven is largely a carrion feeder and utilizes dead buffalo for food. When the buffalo were eliminated from Kansas, so too was the common raven (Thompson and Ely; 1989, 1992). Black-footed ferrets have not been sighted in Kansas since 1957. These animals usually den in prairie-dog burrows and almost exclusively use prairie dogs for food. As more land was used for agriculture, prairie dogs were poisoned. Because of this, dog towns were reduced in size to the point where they could not sustain black-footed ferrets (Bee et al., 1981). It is probable that black-footed ferrets will never return to Kansas short of allowing extensive prairie-dog towns to develop.

The white-tailed jackrabbit was an inhabitant of native prairie particularly in northwestern Kansas. According to Carter (1939) the white-tailed jackrabbit began to decline in numbers in 1875. It is uncertain whether this decline was caused by converting prairie to cropland, a slight shift in climate, or increased competition with the more arid-adapted black-tailed jackrabbit. Whatever the case, it is doubtful that any whitetails exist in the state, although Bee et al. (1981) believe that they might occur in northwestern Kansas.

Diversity of wildlife generally depends on the variety of habitats available. At the time of settlement there was relatively little habitat diversity, but as settlement proceeded, those few habitats were altered and the changes led to the reduction of some populations, particularly buffalo, antelope, elk, deer, mountain lion, otter, beaver, and populations of such birds as plover, quail, prairie chicken, and turkey. However, the activities of the settlers created new habitats in the form of croplands, weedy fence rows and borrow ditches, and buildings. The weedy fence rows and borrow ditches, in addition to becoming a preferred

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