

# Warm weather keeps waterfowl here

By Judy Sherard

*The Norton Telegram*  
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The warm weather this fall has kept many duck and geese from migrating south and seeking warmer winter quarters, said Mel Madorin, a captain in the law enforcement division of Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks office in Hays.

Madorin said duck hunting was spotty at best in this area for opening weekend. Hunters were out, but the numbers were down from some previous years. However, the usual number of hunters is expected in the area for the season as a whole, which includes many who live here, as well as those from out of the area.

Fall hunting conditions look good, Madorin said, adding that he expects duck numbers to increase.

The area provides good nesting places for Canada geese, he said, so hunting prospects for geese here look good this year, too.

Norton Wildlife Area and Prairie Dog State Park, three miles southwest of Norton, gives visitors an opportunity to view and photograph all sorts of wildlife, including waterfowl.

The two contiguous areas are run by different agencies in the state Department of Wildlife and Parks. The wildlife area borders Keith Sebelius Lake, created in 1964 when the Bureau of Reclamation completed the Norton Dam.

A 1.4-mile nature trail with interpretive

signs in the park makes a good area for wildlife watching. Waterfowl at the lake include Canada geese, wild turkey, ducks and even an occasional osprey, a fish-eating hawk.

With walk-in access nearly unlimited, the areas provide great hunting, fishing and boating. Seasonal and permanent roads give good access for vehicles. A daily fee or annual pass is required to use the state park land, though license fees for fishing, hunting and boating support management of the area.

According to the department's website report for the first week of October, Sebelius Reservoir was about seven feet below conservation pool, but more than three feet higher than this time last year.

In addition to Sebelius Reservoir and Prairie Dog State Park, the area has several community lakes. While some are dry at times, they may host waterfowl when full. They include Sheridan State Fishing Lake, Sherman State Fishing Lake, Atwood Lake, Logan City Lake, Smoky Gardens in Sherman County and Keller Lakes near St. Francis.

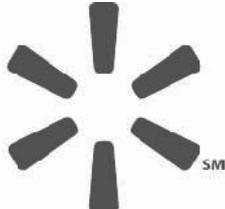
High Plains teal and youth duck seasons have ended, but the regular duck season runs Oct. 9 to Jan. 3 and Jan. 22 to 30.

A recent decline in Kansas duck numbers is due mostly to loss of breeding habitat in Canada and states north of Kansas, aging reservoirs and changing agricultural practices in the state, according to Wildlife and Parks information.



A pair of Canada geese drifted slowly across the water at Sebelius Reservoir near Norton. These and many other waterfowl can be seen at the lake.

— Photo by Dana Paxton/The Norton Telegram

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