

## THE OUTDOORS

# Wading in his dad's footsteps



**Guide enjoys successful Missouri duck opener at Smithville Lake, where his father taught him to hunt.**

By BRENT FRAZEE  
The Kansas City Star

When Dan Guyer climbed into his duck blind at Smithville Lake early Saturday morning, he took time to pay his respects to his late father.

And what better place to do it?

"Before dad passed away in 1990, he gave us a choice," Guyer said as he prepared to open the 2008 Missouri duck season. "He said we could visit him at the cemetery or when we went duck hunting."

"He was so attached to the hunting here at Smithville, this is where he wanted to have his ashes scattered."

Guyer remembers many good times with his father, David, when Smithville was still in its infancy. The newly flooded timber and vegetation were thick and gnarly, and they attracted ducks by the thousands.

Father taught son the secrets of hunting waterfowl, and traditions were born. The Guyers visited the upper reaches of Smithville often, and regularly took limits of mallards.

David Guyer became so well-known for his hunting and calling that he was posthumously elected into the Waterfowl Hall of Fame in 1999.

Meanwhile, Dan followed in his footsteps. He runs Iron Duck Hunting, guiding for everything from ducks to geese on Smithville Lake and nearby Squaw Creek National Wildlife Area. And when he's not hunting, he's busy training Labrador retrievers.

Indeed, Guyer's life revolves around waterfowl hunting. Look at the back window of his truck. You'll see a sticker reading "Duckaholic" and insignias of ducks with their wings cupped.

Guyer lives on a place overlooking the lake that has been so much a part of his family's life, and he can't wait until the fall day when he can watch the dogs he has trained show how much they have learned.

That day arrived Saturday, and Guyer joined Luke Rhoad, Steve Liles and Nicole Jeannin, who guide for him, and friend Ken Kieser in welcoming the season.

They headed out in darkness, using a boat to weave through a stretch of the Little Platte River filled with stumps and logs. Then they pulled up to their pontoon blind, which looked like a giant beaver dam or brush pile.

"This is exactly where we scattered my



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**Dan Guyer called ducks Saturday at Smithville Lake, then watched as his dog retrieved one of the birds he shot.**

dad's ashes," said Guyer, 52, of Plattsburg. "He's with us when we hunt here."

Moments later, the ducks also were with the group. Just minutes after the 2008 season opened, the group watched as two mallards suddenly cupped their wings and swooped down on the decoys.

Shots rang out and both of the drakes dropped. Then Guyer's black Lab, Mam J, swam out to make a long-distance retrieve.

Once Guyer accepted the duck he had shot, he got an unexpected surprise. He had taken a banded bird, a prize for avid waterfowlers.

"First shot of the year and I take a mallard with jewelry," he said. "What a way to start."

But the excitement didn't end there. There was long-distance calling that persuaded sky-high ducks to swoop down for a look at the decoys, excellent dog work, and more than a few chances to pull the trigger.

By the end of the morning, the group had shot five ducks — three mallard drakes, one green-winged teal and one gadwall — and the hunters were talking about the ones that had gotten away. But most of all, they were looking forward to another season of good duck hunt-

ing at Smithville.

"The best hunting here doesn't come until the first or second week of December," said Rhoad, a longtime hunting partner of Guyer's. "When the cold weather freezes a lot of the smaller water, the ducks will head to this big water, and we can really have some great hunting."

"But we have to get out here for opening day. For us, that's tradition."

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