



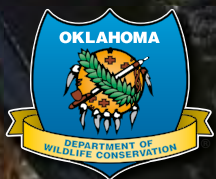
Outdoor Oklahoma

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2019 – ONLY \$10 A YEAR

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Oklahoma's Governor Talks Hunting, Angling

**Pullout Section:
2020 Oklahoma
Wildlife Habitat
Management Calendar**



A PUBLICATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

Panoramas

I am leaving the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation after 30 years of working with the sportsmen and sportswomen of Oklahoma. It seems like only yesterday I was making the trek to Oklahoma City to take the test each year along with 300 other hopeful and excited individuals, each year writing down all of the information I could remember to help me for the next test if I was unsuccessful.

When I finally did get that call and got to start my career in western Oklahoma, I was like a youngster in a candy store. My job duties would change with the seasons, and I got to work with people and serve sportsmen who shared the same mind-set as I. The idea I would have a truck and equipment to work my way around the country to check hunters or fishermen was a dream come true.

Then I realized how much our Department does in addition to law enforcement. We educate our youths about outdoor activities and work with landowners who have problems with people and wildlife. I did presentations at schools and civic groups on different outdoor topics, all of which I hadn't thought about beforehand but came to understand how important these contacts are to the public, just to visit with the Game Warden to ask questions or express concerns.

During my time as a Game Warden, the equipment has improved a great deal. We now make use of night-vision gear, newer firearms, nicer patrol vehicles of all kinds, better training and training officers, and decoys.

Some would add cell phones and electronic devices to this list, and I would agree on some days. The electronic devices along with Department advances in the license system have allowed us access to the license information at most times, which is good for both the officer and the sportsman. They have also allowed for real-time checking of harvested animals, with this information available

to the officer. Sportsmen and landowners also have a line of contact with us 24/7 with these devices, which is good for important information but challenging to handle all of the inquiries in a normal workweek.

During the 30 years I have spent with the Department, I have had the pleasure of working with some of the most talented, dedicated and determined coworkers one could have. I worked with sportsmen and landowners across the state who are second-to-none with their passion for the outdoors, and I also got to do a job I loved. When you sit back and look at all of these things combined, it is easy to understand why the Department has so many long-tenured employees. It isn't just a career; it is a way of life. And I want to thank everyone involved in letting me play one little role in it.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Hale". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "B" and "H".

Bill Hale
Chief of Law Enforcement
(Retired September 2019)

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*ON THE COVER: Oklahoma Gov. J. Kevin Stitt gives a thumbs up to the state's hunting and fishing opportunities as he enjoys bowhunting for black bear in southeastern Oklahoma. He shares some insights about hunting, fishing and conservation starting on Page 2.
(Photo by Blake Podhajsky/ODWC)*

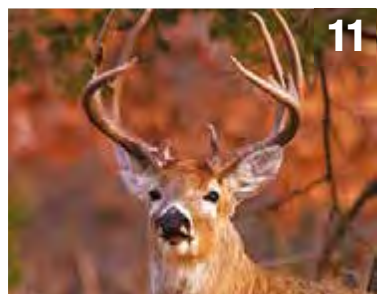
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J. Kevin Stitt, Governor

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Oklahoma Gov. J. Kevin Stitt Speaks About Hunting, Angling, Outdoors

Recently the Governor went archery hunting for black bear in southeastern Oklahoma. Outdoor Oklahoma was able to tag along and asked the governor some questions about hunting, fishing and the great outdoors.

What are your thoughts about the state's wildlife diversity?

As governor, I get the unique opportunity to travel our state. So from the Panhandle, seeing bighorn sheep out there, to southeast Oklahoma — I'm on a bear hunt down here right now — it's just beautiful. Our state is so diverse. We've got so many different areas, different wildlife habitats. It's just a fantastic state. Just part of my plan to be Top 10 in everything we do. We certainly are going to be Top 10 in wildlife and everything outdoors.

Why is wildlife important to you, and why should wildlife be important to all Oklahomans?

An appreciation for wildlife and the outdoors is part of our fabric as Oklahomans. It is something that has been passed down from generation to generation, and we want to continue to preserve our wildlife and way of life in Oklahoma. Being a fourth generation Oklahoman, a love for the outdoors was passed on to me by my father, and it is fun to pass that same passion on to my children.

Were you surprised to learn about Oklahoma's thriving bear population?

Yes! I think it's really neat that in southeast Oklahoma we have black bears. It speaks to the diversity of our wildlife populations across the state.

What would you tell someone planning to hunt black bear in Oklahoma?

Book out a week, and make sure you're on target with your bow!

Do you have any background in hunting?

As a kid, I grew up in Norman. And my dad's hobby was quail hunting. And so we always had some English pointers. And I loved going with my dad and my brothers and my uncles, and we would always go to western Oklahoma to do quail hunting. And Dad would walk me until I could hardly walk, and he would have to carry me back to the truck. Those are fond memories. I love quail hunting.

Back in high school, my buddies and I used to tube in the ponds around Norman and fish, and I started



PROVIDED



WADE FREE/ODWC

A family friend holds a paddlefish as Gov. Stitt and son Drew look on.



BLAKE PODHANSKY/OWWG

deer hunting when I was 16 with my older brother and some of his friends. I bought my first bow. It's just part of the outdoors. It's part of our fabric of who we are as Oklahomans.

What role does the hunting tradition play in your family?

I've got six children, three boys and three girls. My 16-year-old and I, it's something we certainly enjoy doing together. He's a fantastic shot, much better shot than me. Last year, he killed a big buck, about 250 yards. We just went elk hunting together. He killed a mule deer and I got an elk.

It's so fun to just hang out. Like every father, you want to find things that you can do with your children. And so it's exciting. It's something that I spent time doing with my father when I was younger, and now I get to spend quality time with my children going hunting, as well. Now my 9-year-old is begging me to take him hunting. And I bought him a single shot .22, and so now it's time to teach him how to shoot that. And then I've got a 5-year-old boy that's coming up, and hopefully he'll enjoy it as well.

What do you enjoy about hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation?

You know, part of hunting and fishing is not only hanging out with your friends and the camaraderie that's developed around deer camp, or just getting away of the city. Even if you don't harvest an animal, the fun is the experience. The harassing each other, and who's going to kill a bigger deer or bear. And the time you get to hang out away from the normal day-to-day of your job is just really enjoyable for me.

And then, being out in nature — it just allows everybody to unwind and relax, and you get to experience God's creation. The stars, I mean last night I was just in awe looking up at the stars. And it was a beautiful clear night here in Broken Bow. And just seeing God's wonderful creation. We saw this morning just the light coming through the pine trees and kind of the fog as the sun was coming up. Those things are just fantastic. I just want more people to experience that. We know that it's just who we are as Oklahomans. We love the outdoors. And I'm just trying to showcase that, lend my support to everything outdoors.

Does the success of the new Oklahoma Fishing Trail surprise you?

What surprises me is that we haven't promoted it like we should up until this point. It's fantastic. We have to continue to utilize and promote to the nation the assets in our state.

The Fishing Trail is something that Tourism rolled out. You'll see other states promoting their golf trails. Oklahoma has some of the greatest bass fishing.



Gov. Stitt holds a black bass caught while fishing with his youngest son, Houston, and middle son, Remington.

The Bassmaster Classic has been held at Grand Lake several times.

So we're just trying to tell all these folks that are into fishing, come experience the great lakes here in Oklahoma. And really, by promoting that, we're going to cause people to come here, spend their dollars, spend money in the restaurants, stay in our hotels, rent our cabins, and just experience a great thing. So we're advertising that out of state, but we need Oklahomans to experience that as well.

You recently had a chance to go snagging for paddlefish. What was that experience like?

It was a lot of fun. Paddlefish are big prehistoric fish that live in our Oklahoma rivers in the eastern part of the state. I had the opportunity to take my son Drew and one of his friends, and even though we only landed one, we had a great time.

How do hunters and anglers help rural areas?

Tourism is a huge deal for our state. Lt. Gov. Matt Pinnell is doing a great job of traveling the state promoting tourism. ... We are seeing this economy revitalized because of the tourism dollar. ... I brought my wife here, and we rented a cabin here in Broken Bow for our 21st wedding anniversary. We just had a great time.

The more we can promote our Oklahoma fishing trail and rich wildlife, the better. People are staying in our hotels, eating in our restaurants, and renting our cabins, from Broken Bow in the south to Grand Lake in the north and all of the rivers in between. In the Panhandle and

western parts of our state, we also see a variety of hunting opportunities. The diversity of our wildlife populations is a great opportunity for the rural areas of our state, and it also helps with land prices and land values, which contributes to ad valorem tax dollars for our rural communities.

What does it mean to be a Top 10 state?

Being a Top 10 state is our aspirational goal. That is our beacon. And as the governor or chief executive of the state, when I lay out that vision, what that does is it starts giving everyone a road map and a game plan. And so all my different agency heads, whether its Wildlife or Tourism or Commerce or Transportation, they now start coming to me saying, "Governor, if we are going to be Top 10 in road conditions ... here's what we've got to do."

And that's what I love, because now they are comparing to other states, and we're saying we are 28th now, the governor wants to be Top 10, here's where we have to improve. ... We have a fantastic state, and I like to remind everybody that Oklahoma is a step above every other state.

What makes Oklahoma a Top 10 state when it comes to outdoor opportunities?

Oklahoma is such a diverse state when it comes to outdoor opportunities. We have bighorn sheep and antelope in the Panhandle, black bears in the southeast, and pheasant and quail across the state. We also now have elk in Oklahoma, and obviously some world-class deer hunting. We are one of only a couple of states left that actually has a growing hunting population, and our hunting license numbers are increasing.

What's your vision for the future of conservation in Oklahoma?

I want to make Oklahoma a Top 10 state that ensures Oklahomans and sportsmen alike can continue to enjoy our rich wildlife and outdoor opportunities. We have our Oklahoma Fishing Trail that we want to continue to promote, especially since we have some of the best bass fishing in the country. We also want to continue to monitor our big buck population to encourage more hunters. It helps with leases and land values when people can come and enjoy the outdoors in Oklahoma. So, by ensuring we have a thriving wildlife population, it encourages more people to be drawn to our great state.

Now that you've been bear hunting, what's the next outdoor-related adventure you want to try?

I'm gearing up for deer season! I will probably take my son and go sit in a deer stand this fall over Thanksgiving break. 🌿

(Blake Podhajsky, Information and Education Specialist, assisted with this article.)



Gov. Stitt and his son Drew on a quail hunt.



Gov. Stitt and his son Remington enjoy some fly fishing.

Off the Beaten Path

NOTES ON WILDLIFE • OUTDOOR TIPS • READERS' LETTERS • ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS
COMPILED BY DON P. BROWN



WILDLIFEDEPARTMENT.COM

TROUT STOCKING BEGINS NOV. 1 AT SEASONAL SPOTS

While fishing can be good year-round in Oklahoma, some especially exciting angling is in store for those who take advantage of the state's trout fisheries during the colder months of the year.

The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation operates two year-round trout fisheries in the **Lower Mountain Fork River** below Broken Bow dam and in the **Lower Illinois River** below Tenkiller Ferry Dam. Trout are normally stocked in those areas every week or two.

Beginning Nov. 1, The Wildlife Department will begin stocking trout in six other designated trout fishing areas. Those areas are **Perry CCC/Lake Perry Park, Robbers Cave, Blue River, Lake Watonga, Medicine Creek** and **Lake Carl Etling**. For more details, go to wildlifedepartment.com and search for "trout information."

Trout fishing is also available from Dec. 1 to Feb. 28 at two

Close to Home Fishing locations in major urban areas: Oklahoma City's **Dolese Youth Park Pond** and Jenks' **Veterans Pond**.

Trout anglers must carry a resident or nonresident fishing license while fishing. In addition, trout anglers at Dolese Youth Park Pond must have an Oklahoma City fishing permit.

Trout, both rainbows and browns, are introduced species to Oklahoma. They thrive in colder waters and make excellent table fare. Using ultralight fishing gear with 4- to 6-pound test line and small hooks can lead to some thrilling action. For other tips, go to www.wildlifedepartment.com and search for "trout in Oklahoma."

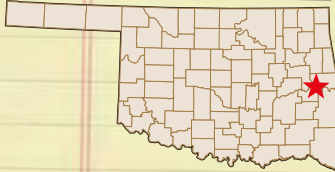
Trout fishing regulations, including daily and size limits, restricted areas and maps, can be found in the current Oklahoma Hunting & Fishing Regulations Guide online at wildlifedepartment.com, on the Go Outdoors Oklahoma mobile app, or in print where fishing and hunting licenses are sold. ✕

JUG LINER TAKES **RECORD BLUE CAT** AT KERR



Robert S. Kerr
Record Blue Catfish
(Unrestricted)

Weight:
64.7 pounds.
Length:
47-5/8 inches.
Girth:
34 inches.
Angler:
Kyle Gilstrap of Porum.
Method of Catch:
Jug line.
Date Caught:
Sept. 13, 2019.
Area Caught:
N/A.



New state- or lake-record fish have been added to the Wildlife Department's official database in recent weeks. Here is a snapshot of the big ones that didn't get away!

What's the biggest fish you've ever caught? A 7-pound largemouth, a 2-pound crappie or a 45-pound blue catfish? While your fish might not be a new state record, it possibly could be the biggest fish ever caught from your favorite lake. Thanks to a network of record-keepers at lakes across the state, your next trophy could qualify as a lake record.

The Lake Record Fish Program was established as a way to serve anglers and recognize big fish and the lakes they come from. To find out more, go online to www.wildlifedepartment.com/fishing/records.htm. --X



Game Bag

A COLLECTION OF LETTERS TO THE WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT

We'd like to hear from you! Send your letters to Outdoor Oklahoma Letters, P.O. Box 53465, Oklahoma City, OK 73152, or send e-mail to donald.brown@odwc.ok.gov.

Dear Director J.D. Strong,

My daughter and I were fishing July 14 on the Illinois River in Tahlequah. Game Warden Ben Haff was on duty and checking on licensing at our location. We felt compelled to write of his professionalism. He showed complete respect to us and everyone else we observed that he came in contact with. In our world today, it is so notable when law enforcement has all the qualities that make a person feel good even when a violation has occurred and must be handled.

What an asset Game Warden Haff is to his profession and the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation. We thank him and wish him all the best.

Patricia Strader and Mechelle Strader

Dear Wildlife Department,

Shout out to Wildlife Biologist Jerrod Davis, who:

1. Volunteered to help a 4-H student with her wildlife and trapping presentation at the Grady County Free Fair's Kids Day event.

2. Answered interview questions for a young 4-H student for a poster contest. The topic was STEM careers and draw a scientist.
3. Provided much-needed support this morning! He arrived early to the Kids Day program, and my presenting partner was running late. He helped me set up the arrow curtain and my casting targets for our spincast and bowfishing activity. Thanks for helping a frazzled presenter return to a state of calm!

Thank you Jerrod Davis for helping Grady County 4-H students continue to learn and excel in Outdoor Education, and for helping this beginner set up her first Outdoor Ed casting and bowfishing event on a large scale!

Katherine Renee Brown Hughes

Dear Wildlife Department,

The best Wildlife Expo (Sept. 28-29) we've been to! You guys have outdone yourselves. We love all the stuff geared toward kids as well as adults. This was our first year but definitely won't be our last. Thank you for all you do!

Tara Childress Helms, via Facebook

Dear Director J.D. Strong,

I just visited the Webbers Falls Wildlife Management Area road project undertaken by Wildlife Technician Jeff Howard. He has done an outstanding job bringing that area back to life! I am very happy with the progress so far, and he has other improvements in store for this fall.

Oklahoma State Sen. Dewayne Pemberton

YOUTH CAMPS FOCUS ON TRAPPING HERITAGE

By Kelly Adams, Information and Education Specialist

EDITOR'S NOTE: Parents probably don't think of sending their children to outdoor youth camp in the middle of winter. But the Oklahoma Fur Bearers Alliance holds an annual youth camp in December to educate youth about one of Oklahoma's oldest traditions: trapping. The main activity is trapping furbearers as youths learn how to conserve and protect Oklahoma's wildlife heritage through trapping. And this season, the Alliance has added a second camp, providing more opportunity for youths to learn about this important outdoor tradition.

Although European colonists originally trapped furbearers as a means to protect livestock, gardens and food stores, harvesting furbearers for their fur soon became a lucrative business. Furbearer pelts were traded for goods and commodities not readily available in North America. Soon the fur trade played a key role in the development of the region that became Oklahoma.

Many fortunes were made trapping in the West, but furbearer populations began to suffer. Wildlife resources had been seen as inexhaustible, and unregulated harvests soon resulted in great reductions and extirpations of many once-common species.

Soon, conservation efforts to regulate trapping began to take shape. Today, regulated trapping remains an important component of modern furbearer management and wildlife conservation, a fact lost on many people, even hunters. Trapping plays a critical role in finding an ecological balance as furbearer populations affect many other wildlife populations, their habitats, human health and property.

Michael Taylor, Game Warden based in Cotton County, has experienced this dilemma firsthand.

"Trapping helps balance our ecosystem and is a popular management tool at many of Oklahoma's camping areas. Specifically around Waurika Lake and its camping areas, there are nuisance animals that constantly cause problems, from the raccoons and opossums scattering the trash, to the



Youths get to learn about furbearers and management through trapping at youth camps operated by the Oklahoma Fur Bearers Alliance.

beavers damming up the natural streams, to the badgers and coyotes leaving big, hazardous holes."

As wildlife habitat continues to be fragmented and eliminated by development, wildlife managers are confronted with new challenges: coyotes killing pets, beavers cutting ornamental trees and flooding roads, raccoons invading buildings and threatening public health with diseases and parasites. These kinds of human-wildlife conflicts reduce public tolerance of and appreciation for furbearers.

Taylor reached out to R.C. Edgar, president of the Oklahoma Fur Bearers Alliance, which holds an annual furbearer youth camp. Taylor asked whether a second youth camp could be held at Waurika Lake.

The Alliance is dedicated to teaching and passing on the best, most ethical practices when it comes to wildlife management. Its roots go back more than 60 years, and the focus is the same as it has always been: helping conserve and protect Oklahoma's wildlife heritage.

"We put on a youth trapping camp during Christmas break in December. This is when youths get to learn and run a real trap line during the season. We were excited to learn of another opportunity to teach kids about trapping and wildlife conservation," Edgar said.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at Waurika Lake agreed and stepped up to help provide the best experience for the youth



This vintage photo illustrates how unregulated trapping and exploitation of furbearers contributed to the disappearance of many furbearers in parts of the nation.

campers. "The Waurika campgrounds are closed during the winter, so by having a youth trapping camp during that time is a win-win for everyone. The youths get to learn the art of trapping while removing nuisance animals from the campgrounds," Taylor said.

The camps are three days of hands-on learning. Students explore a variety of tools and techniques, and learn about Oklahoma's furbearers and their habitats. While in the field, students will identify animal tracks and game trails, and create their own trap sets. The camp is completed with a final lesson on skinning, preparing and caring for animal hides.

Both camps are open to the first 35 youths who apply. The first camp will be Dec. 20-22, 2019, at Lake Carl Blackwell near Stillwater; contact Shannon Sheffert at okshefferts@hotmail.com or call (405) 742-7884. The second camp will be Jan. 3-5, 2020, at Waurika Lake; contact Edgar at RC.Edgear@Bemis.com or (405) 238-0012.

Oklahoma's furbearer season runs from Dec. 1, 2019, to Feb. 29, 2020. In addition to beaver, nutria, raccoon, striped skunk and coyote (open season year round), trappers are allowed to take bobcat, gray fox, red fox, river otter, badger, mink, muskrat, opossum and weasel during furbearer season. Check the Oklahoma Hunting Guide for license requirements, legal traps and season bag limits. ♦♦✕



The Wildlife Department gathers data on furbearers and fur prices from a number of sources, including pelts and average prices paid for pelts sold at annual fur auctions in Oklahoma.

Outdoor Calendar

FOR NEW UPDATES TO THE OUTDOOR CALENDAR,
PLEASE VISIT THE DEPARTMENT'S
WEBSITE: WWW.WILDLIFEDEPARTMENT.COM/CALENDAR.HTM

NOVEMBER 2019

- 2** Oklahoma City free fishing day, no city permit required.
- 3** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, Dayton's 1st Deer/skull dipping, 8 a.m., OETA.
Daylight Saving Time ends.
- 4** Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commission meeting, 9 a.m., 1801 N. Lincoln Blvd., Oklahoma City.
- 10** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, European mounts, 8 a.m., OETA.
- 11** Veteran's Day (State offices closed)
- 17** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, White-tailed Deer Q&A, 8 a.m., OETA.
- 19** Okla. Striped Bass Assn. meeting, 7 p.m., Zebco, Tulsa, (918) 639-8114.
- 23** Fly fishing clinic, Arcadia Conservation Education Area, 9 a.m.-noon. Register: <https://license.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/Events.aspx>.
- 24** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, Ismat's Goose Hunt, 8 a.m., OETA.
- 28** Thanksgiving (State offices closed Nov. 28-29)

- **ODWC Classroom Hunter Education** set in Alva, Nov. 9; Blanchard, Nov. 9; Mustang, Nov. 9; Edmond, Nov. 16; Omega, Nov. 16. Register: <https://license.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/Events.aspx>.
- **Ducks Unlimited** events set in Grove, Nov. 5; Fairview, Nov. 7; Tulsa, Nov. 7; Stillwater, Nov. 14; Tahlequah, Nov. 14; Clinton, Nov. 21; Ardmore, Nov. 21; Eufaula, Nov. 21.
Info: www.ducks.org/Oklahoma/events.
- **Friends of NRA** events info: www.FriendsOfNRA.org.
- **National Wild Turkey Federation** events set in Vian (WITO), Nov. 1.
Info: www.nwtf.org/events.

DECEMBER 2019

- 1** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, TBA, 8 a.m., OETA.
- 2** Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commission meeting, 9 a.m., 1801 N. Lincoln Blvd., Oklahoma City.
- 7** Oklahoma City free fishing day, no city permit required.
- 8** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, TBA, 8 a.m., OETA.
- 15** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, TBA, 8 a.m., OETA.
- 17** Okla. Striped Bass Assn. meeting, 7 p.m., Zebco, Tulsa, (918) 639-8114.
- 22** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, TBA, 8 a.m., OETA.
- 25** Christmas (State offices closed Dec. 24-25)
- 29** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, TBA, 8 a.m., OETA.

- **Ducks Unlimited** events info: www.ducks.org/Oklahoma/events.
- **Friends of NRA** events info: www.FriendsOfNRA.org.
- **National Wild Turkey Federation** events info: www.nwtf.org/events.

**** FOR HUNTING SEASON DATES, GO TO
WWW.WILDLIFEDEPARTMENT.COM/HUNTING/SEASONS ****



Game Warden's Journal

**ACCOUNTS FROM THE FIELD BY THE PUBLIC
SERVANTS WHO ENFORCE THE FISH AND
WILDLIFE LAWS OF OKLAHOMA**



This boat was dumped in the Sheppard Point area at Heyburn Wildlife Management Area, along with tires and other junk, in late September. If you have any information about this violation please call Game Warden Karlin Bailey at (918) 625-6801.

Signs and other state property in the area are also being shot at and abused. This vandalism costs sportsmen and sportswomen money that could be used for other beneficial projects instead of being diverted for cleanup and replacement.

On Oklahoma Wildlife Department lands, it is illegal to dump or litter, deface or vandalize signs or equipment, and target shoot outside of a designated target range area.

For more details, consult the "Department Area Rules" section in the Oklahoma Hunting and Fishing Regulations Guide available at www.wildlifedepartment.com, on the Go Outdoors Oklahoma mobile app, or in print wherever licenses are sold.



Forever Chapter's second annual Buffalo Gals event at Camp McFadden east of Ponca City.

Attendees got to experience a host of activities including kayaking on Kaw Lake, training bird dogs, pistol shooting, archery and shotgun shooting.

The shotgun portion was conducted by Game Wardens Larry Green, based in Osage County, and Spencer Grace, based in Kay County. Skills developed through the day were intended to prepare the women for a dove hunt the following morning. The Buffalo Gals, ranging from 13 to 68 years old, shot eight boxes of clay targets and seemingly countless rounds of shotgun ammo.

The Game Wardens wish to thank Pheasants Forever/Quail Forever for allowing them to help and make an impact on several new shooters.

Game Wardens are seeking information concerning three butchered deer found near Woody Pace Road and Bailey Road near Antlers. The carcasses were dumped the night of Sept. 18-19. Anyone with information is asked to contact Pushmataha County Game Wardens Eric Barnes at (580) 513-5014 or Dane Polk at (580) 271-0808.



(Reports from the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation-Game Wardens Facebook page.)

EDITOR'S NOTE: Please help make a difference! When violators break the law, they steal fish and wildlife from you! Report violations anonymously by calling Operation Game Thief at (800) 522-8039. You could earn a cash reward.

On Saturday, Sept. 8, 42 women braved the heat and humidity to participate in the Cherokee Strip Pheasants Forever/Quail

2020 Oklahoma Wildlife Habitat Management Calendar



SPECIAL PULLOUT SECTION



Sandhill crane (*Grus canadensis*)

January 2020

December 2019							February 2020						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7							1
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
29	30	31					23	24	25	26	27	28	29

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Operation Game Thief: Anonymously report game and fish law violations by calling toll-free (800) 522-8039.			New Year's Day 1	2	3	4
	5	6	7	8	10 ☉	11
	12	13	14	15	17 ☾	18
	19	Martin Luther King, Jr. Day 20	21	22	24 ●	25
	26	27	28	29	31	
				30		



The Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP) is aimed at intensively managing deer herds on private lands. It is designed to give cooperators — whether landowners, hunt clubs or lease operators — extra assistance in managing deer. Under the program, cooperators set their own management goals ranging from producing maximum numbers of harvestable deer to producing trophy bucks. For DMAP to work effectively a recommended minimum of 1,000 acres is required. For more information on DMAP, call Dallas Barber at (405) 385-1791.

JANUARY HABITAT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- Strip disk to encourage native food resources.
- Prepare ground for tree/shrub plantings for wildlife cover.
- Mow to remove brush encroachment as needed.
- Half-cut trees for loafing cover as needed for small game species.





JANUARY POND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- Consider a winter drawdown to control excessive aquatic vegetation.
- Check pond overflow pipe to make sure it is clear of debris.



Black-tailed jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus*)

February 2020

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<p>January 2020</p> <p>S M T W T F S</p> <p>1 2 3 4</p> <p>5 6 7 8 9 10 11</p> <p>12 13 14 15 16 17 18</p> <p>19 20 22 23 24 25 26</p> <p>27 28 29 30 31</p>	<p>March 2020</p> <p>S M T W T F S</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</p> <p>8 9 10 11 12 13 14</p> <p>15 16 17 18 19 20 21</p> <p>22 23 24 25 26 27 28</p> <p>29 30 31</p>	<p>For wildlife habitat assistance on your land, call:</p> <p>Northwestern areas: (405) 740-9830, Brett Cooper</p> <p>Southwestern areas: (405) 397-1599, Jeremiah Zurenda</p> <p>Central areas: (405) 590-2584, Kyle Johnson</p> <p>Eastern areas: (918) 607-1518, RosaLee Walker</p>				<p>1 </p>
<p>Groundhog Day</p> <p>2</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>5</p>	<p>6</p>	<p>7</p>	<p>8</p>
<p>9 </p>	<p>10</p>	<p>11</p>	<p>12</p>	<p>13</p>	<p>14 Valentine's Day</p>	<p>15 </p>
<p>16</p>	<p>President's Day</p> <p>17</p>	<p>18</p>	<p>19</p>	<p>20</p>	<p>21</p>	<p>22</p>
<p>23 </p>	<p>24</p>	<p>25</p>	<p>26</p>	<p>27</p>	<p>28</p>	<p>29</p>

Waterfowl are flushed during a follow-up technical assistance visit to a wetland restoration project in Noble County. NRCS provides technical assistance and designs to people interested in restoring impacted wetlands. This project is among 261 properties enrolled in NRCS's Wetland Reserve Easement program in Oklahoma that aims to provide wildlife habitat, improve water quality and store floodwater, along with numerous other environmental benefits.

FEBRUARY HABITAT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- Strip disk to encourage native food resources.
- Plant native trees and shrubs as needed for wildlife cover.
- Mow to remove brush encroachment as needed.
- Half-cut trees for loafing cover as needed for small game species.

FEBRUARY POND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- Remove trees from pond dams and spillways. Check spillway for erosion and repair if needed.
- Use cut eastern reedcedar trees to create fish habitat. Attach concrete blocks to the trunk and sink the trees into your pond or lake.
- If turtles are a nuisance in your pond, build turtle traps and install them in the spring.
- Seek the advice of the Natural Resources Conservation Service on design and construction of new ponds or the renovation of old ponds and check if there is financial assistance available.







Bobcat (*Lynx rufus*)

March 2020

February 2020
S M T W T F S
1 2 3 4
5 6 7 8
9 10 11 12 13 14 15
16 17 18 19 20 21 22
23 24 25 26 27 28 29

April 2020
S M T W T F S
1 2 3 4
5 6 7 8 9 10 11
12 13 14 15 16 17 18
19 20 21 22 23 24 25
26 27 28 29 30

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2 	3	4	5	6	7
8 Daylight Saving Time Begins	9 	10	11	12	13	14
15	16 	17 St. Patrick's Day	18 Spring Begins	19	20	21
22	23	24 	25	26	27	28



Bruce Reynolds and Xerces biologist Ray Moranz inspect areas where Reynolds has cleared cedar and burned to restore rangeland health and improve monarch butterfly habitat. Reynolds' work with his local NRCS field office through the Working Lands for Wildlife - Monarch Initiative was highlighted on PBS' "This American Land" episode 701 (tinyurl.com/monarchTV).

MARCH HABITAT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- Plant native grasses, forbs or legumes.
- Plan and monitor livestock grazing this month to prevent overuse. This will help ensure adequate nesting cover as spring approaches.
- Monitor/fluctuate water levels in wetland areas.

MARCH POND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- Start filamentous algae control with Cutrine Plus® if needed.
- Clean debris from around pond overflow structures.
- On muddy ponds, put out a small row of hay bales above your pond to trap and limit sediments from entering your pond during early spring rains.

LESSER PRAIRIE-CHICKEN PROGRAMS

- LEPC Habitat Conservation Program (405) 740-9830
- Lesser Prairie-Chicken Initiative (405) 742-1233
- Partners for Fish & Wildlife (918) 581-7458
- LEPC Rangeland Plan (405) 740-9830

Operation Game Thief:
Anonymously report game and fish law violations by calling toll-free (800) 522-8039.



Rio Grande Wild Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo intermedia*)

April 2020

March 2020							May 2020						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7							
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
29	30	31					24	25	26	27	28	29	30
							31						

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Operation Game Thief: Anonymously report game and fish law violations by calling toll-free (800) 522-8039.			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Easter 12	13	14	15 Tax Day	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		



The Oklahoma Land Access Program (OLAP) provides financial incentives to landowners who allow public access for hunting, fishing, stream access and wildlife viewing opportunities on private lands. OLAP is designed to increase walk-in access. This goal compliments a main tenet of the North American Conservation Model, that every citizen has an opportunity, under the law, to hunt and fish. The democratic foundation of this conservation model has made it the most successful in the world. For additional information on OLAP, call Jeff Tibbitts at (405) 535-7382

APRIL HABITAT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- If conditions permit, disk wetland areas to promote moist-soil plants as needed.
- Plant native grasses, forbs or legumes.

APRIL POND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- Start harvesting undersized bass and bluegill and keep records (continue all season).
- If aquatic vegetation is a problem, initiate a control program; either chemical or biological (grass carp).
- Inspect the dam and spillway for washes and fill them with suitable material and compact it thoroughly.
- Create and sink artificial structure for fish attractors.



Texas horned lizard (*Phrynosoma cornutum*)

May 2020

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Operation Game Thief: Anonymously report game and fish law violations by calling toll-free (800) 522-8039.						
3	4	5	6	7	1	2
Mother's Day	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25 Memorial Day	26	27	28	29	30
31						

April 2020

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

June 2020

S	M	T	W	T	F	S



This is a property in Woodward County, where improving riparian area habitat is important for the landowner. This riparian area was infested with eastern redcedar. The landowner has been using the USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program to receive cost-share assistance to mechanically remove the cedars. If you are interested in improving your riparian area, contact the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program staff.

MAY HABITAT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- Monitor tree and shrub plantings.
- Control weed competition around new trees.
- Monitor livestock grazing program to provide nesting cover for next spring if needed.

MAY POND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- Inspect dams and dikes for leaks, seeps or animal burrows and repair as necessary.
- Add one round bale of hay per every 1-3 acres of water for slow release of nutrients in new ponds.
- Document fishing success in your pond by recording numbers, weights and lengths of fish caught. These records help biologists when you seek pond management recommendations.
- Inspect and clean out spillway, overflow tubes or pipes and remove any debris or blockages.



Longear sunfish (*Lepomis megalotis*)

June 2020

May 2020							July 2020						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	26	27	28	29	30	31	

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Free Fishing Day	7	8	9	10	11	12
Flag Day	14	15	16	17	18	19
Father's Day	21	22	23	24	25	26
28	29	30				27



HOSALEE WALKER/ODWC

By using timber thinning practices through the Wildlife Department's Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program (WHIP), landowners can improve the quality of wildlife habitat on their properties. This hardwood forest floor once was comprised of leaf litter and scattered brush, but now it is beginning to re-vegetate with native grasses and forbs. The grasses and forbs will provide beneficial cover and nutritious food for many wildlife species.

JUNE HABITAT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- Spot spray to control sericea lespedeza, an undesirable weed that competes with desirable grasses and forbs.
- Before mowing, walk out hay meadows to reduce wildlife mortality, and consider leaving unmowed strips.
- Spot spray salt cedar to restore riparian areas.

JUNE POND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- If your pond is lacking aquatic vegetation (less than 20 percent), June is the month to harvest and transplant aquatic vegetation. Consult a biologist for adaptable plant species for transplanting.
- If aquatic vegetation exceeds 20 percent of your pond, seek technical assistance on plant identification and recommended treatment method.

For wildlife habitat assistance on your land, call:
 Northwestern areas: (405) 740-9830, Brett Cooper
 Southwestern areas: (405) 397-1599, Jeremiah Zurenda
 Central areas: (405) 590-2584, Kyle Johnson
 Eastern areas: (918) 607-1518, RosaLee Walker



Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus forficatus*)

July 2020

June 2020							August 2020						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	1							
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
28	29	30					23	24	25	26	27	28	29
							30	31					

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		Operation Game Thief: Anonymously report game and fish law violations by calling toll-free (800) 522-8039.	1	2	3	4 Independence Day
5	6		7	8	9	10
12	13		14	15	16	17
19	20		21	22	23	24
26	27		28	29	30	31



This is Kay County Conservation District's Outdoor Classroom. It is heavily used by local schools for conservation educational opportunities. All outdoor classroom projects contain a water feature to help educate students on wetlands. Anyone knowing of a local school that would be interested in an Outdoor Classroom may contact the USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program staff.

JULY HABITAT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- Seed Japanese millet along mud flats for ducks.
- Continue spot-spraying for sericea lespezea, an invasive plant.
- Consider conducting a prescribed burn this month, during the growing season. It can encourage new growth leading into autumn, which can benefit wildlife.

JULY POND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- Check for fish at the surface of the pond at daylight or early morning. This could be the early sign of low dissolved oxygen that results in a fish kill. Contact local Wildlife Department office for assistance.
- Keep records on types and numbers of fish harvested by anglers. This information is helpful when considering fisheries management plans.



American black bear (*Ursus americanus*)

August 2020

July 2020
 S M T W T F S
 1 2 3 4
 5 6 7 8 9 10 11
 12 13 14 15 16 17 18
 19 20 21 22 23 24 25
 26 27 28 29 30 31

September 2020
 S M T W T F S
 1 2 3 4 5
 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
 13 14 15 16 17 18 19
 20 21 22 23 24 25 26
 27 28 29 30

SUNDAY MONDAY TUESDAY WEDNESDAY THURSDAY FRIDAY SATURDAY

Operation Game Thief:
 Anonymously report game and fish
 law violations by calling toll-free
 (800) 522-8039.

2	3	4	5	6	7	1
9	10	11	12	13	14	8
16	17	18	19	20	21	15
23	24	25	26	27	28	22
30	31	29	28	27	26	25

For wildlife habitat assistance on your land, call:
 Northwestern areas: (405) 740-9830, Brett Cooper
 Southwestern areas: (405) 397-1599, Jeremiah Zurenda
 Central areas: (405) 590-2584, Kyle Johnson
 Eastern areas: (918) 607-1518, RosaLee Walker



Greg and Linda Meyers are restoring her family's farm back to how she remembers it as a child. They are ridding the place of cedars, thinning some upland oaks and using prescribed fire to restore oak woodland and savanna habitat through NRCS' Cross-Timbers Initiative. NRCS county field offices provide conservation technical assistance to private landowners throughout Oklahoma.

AUGUST HABITAT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES.

- Complete wetland dike repair.
- Monitor grazing program to provide nesting cover for next spring.
- Before mowing, walk out hay meadows or install flush bars to equipment to reduce wildlife mortality, and consider leaving unmowed strips.

AUGUST POND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES





- Cut back or suspend supplemental feeding of catfish during the "dog days of summer" to reduce the chances of oxygen depletion.
- Check for fish at the surface of the pond at daylight or early morning. This could be the early sign of low dissolved oxygen that results in a fish kill.
- Stock fingerling catfish and bluegill, if desired.
- Consider supplemental aeration in August if visibility from green algae is less than 18 inches.
- Check sunfish and largemouth for black and yellow grub problems. If a problem exists, stock 3-4 inch redear sunfish for snail control.

NRCS



Northern bobwhite (*Colinus virginianus*)

September 2020

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1	2 	3	4	5 Free Hunting Day
Free Hunting Day 6	Labor Day 7	8	9	10 	11	12
13	14	15	16	17 	18	19
20	21	22 Autumn Begins	23 	24	25	26 Oklahoma Wildlife Expo
Oklahoma Wildlife Expo 27	28	29	30	Operation Game Thief: Anonymous report game and fish law violations by calling toll-free (800) 522-8039.		

August 2020							October 2020						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1						1	2
2	3	4	5	6	7	8		4	5	6	7	8	9
9	10	11	12	13	14	15		11	12	13	14	15	16
16	17	18	19	20	21	22		18	19	20	21	22	23
23	24	25	26	27	28	29		25	26	27	28	29	30
30	31												



Sericea lespedeza is a highly invasive, non-native species that degrades wildlife habitat by outcompeting much more desirable native grasses and forbs. One highly effective management practice to get rid of sericea lespedeza is to conduct prescribed burns in September and early October. This will kill the seeds before it has time to reproduce and will set back the growth of residual plants. For more information, contact the Wildlife Department's Biologist who serves the area.

- SEPTEMBER HABITAT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES**
- Begin to flood wetland areas. Many water control structures require "boards" to be installed to prevent water from draining.
 - Prepare ground and plant winter food plots if needed.
 - Cut and remove eastern redcedar trees.

- SEPTEMBER POND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES**
- Spray cattails along pond banks now, before the first freeze.
 - If feeding catfish, discontinue feeding when water temperatures fall below 65°F.
 - Start fall drawdown if crowded bluegill conditions exist or summer vegetation problems occur.



White-tailed Deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*)

October 2020

September 2020
S M T W T F S
1 2 3 4 5
6 7 8 9 10 11 12
13 14 15 16 17 18 19
20 21 22 23 24 25 26
27 28 29 30

November 2020
S M T W T F S
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8 9 10 11 12 13 14
15 16 17 18 19 20 21
22 23 24 25 26 27 28
29 30

SUNDAY MONDAY TUESDAY WEDNESDAY THURSDAY FRIDAY SATURDAY

For wildlife habitat assistance on your land, call:
Northwestern areas: (405) 740-9830, Brett Cooper
Southwestern areas: (405) 397-1599, Jeremiah Zurenda
Central areas: (405) 590-2584, Kyle Johnson
Eastern areas: (918) 607-1518, RosaLee Walker

4	5	6	7	1	2	3
11	12 Columbus Day	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30 Halloween	31

NRCS

Shelly Oliphant, NRCS District Conservationist, discusses grass production with Tim Ohm and son, Telson. The Ohms have used NRCS' technical and financial assistance to control cedars and restore a treeless prairie landscape under the Working for Wildlife – Lesser Prairie Chicken Initiative. NRCS provides conservation technical assistance to private landowners through 77 county field offices.

- OCTOBER HABITAT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES**
- Flood green-tree reservoirs only after the first frost.
 - Begin planning for prescribed burn program.
 - Plant wildflower seeds this month.
 - Begin to flood wetland areas.
 - Construct brush piles for winter cover as needed.

- OCTOBER POND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES**
- Stock new ponds with fingerling catfish (100/acre) and bluegill (200-500/acre).



Hooded merganser (*Lophodytes cucullatus*)

November 2020

October 2020							December 2020						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2	3					1	2
4	5	6	7	8	9	10		6	7	8	9	10	11
11	12	13	14	15	16	17		13	14	15	16	17	18
18	19	20	21	22	23	24		20	21	22	23	24	25
25	26	27	28	29	30	31		27	28	29	30	31	

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
--------	--------	---------	-----------	----------	--------	----------

1 Daylight Saving Time Ends	2	3 Election Day	4	5	6	7
8 ☾	9	10	11 Veteran's Day	12	13	14 ●
15	16	17	18	19	20	21 ☾
22	23	24	25 Thanksgiving	26	27	28

29	30 ○	Operation Game Thief: Anonymously report game and fish law violations by calling toll-free (800) 522-8039.				
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This is an upland habitat project that was restored by the USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife program. Cost share assistance was provided to remove eastern redcedars in the upland habitat sites. This project is in Woodward County and is improving habitat for the lesser prairie-chicken and many other wildlife species. The upland acres were followed up by a prescribed fire and the vegetation has returned to what it looked like 40 years ago. Anyone interested in improving upland areas may contact the Partners for Fish and Wildlife staff.

NOVEMBER HABITAT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- Flood green-tree reservoirs only after the first frost.
- Begin to flood wetland areas.
- Cut and remove invasive eastern redcedars to improve habitat.
- Evaluate areas needing prescribed fire treatment.
- Evaluate forage resources and plan dormant season phase of grazing.
- Construct brush piles for winter cover as needed.
- Order tree/shrub seedlings for spring planting as needed.

NOVEMBER POND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- Harvest crappie from farm ponds to ensure more balanced populations.
- Fence desirable fishing ponds to restrict livestock and build alternate livestock access points for a water source.
- Retrieve turtle traps and repair any damages.
- Make repairs to fishing docks and boat ramp areas during drawdown.



American mink (*Neovison vison*)

December 2020


November 2020

S M T W T F S
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8 9 10 11 12 13 14
15 16 17 18 19 20 21
22 23 24 25 26 27 28
29 30

January 2021

S M T W T F S
31
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8 9 10 11 12 13 14
15 16 17 18 19 20 21
22 23 24 25 26 27 28
29 30

SUNDAY MONDAY TUESDAY WEDNESDAY THURSDAY FRIDAY SATURDAY

		1	2	3	4	5
6	7 	8	9	10	11	12
13	14 	15	16	17	18	19
20	21  Winter Begins	22	23	24 Christmas Eve	25 Christmas Day	26
27	28	29 	30	31 New Year's Eve	Operation Game Thief: Anonymously report game and fish law violations by calling toll-free (800) 522-8039.	



USFWS

This wetland restoration project is on a property in Washington County. The landowner has been working with the USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program for several years to receive technical and cost share assistance to restore this wetland complex. Anyone interested in restoring wetlands may contact the Partners for Fish and Wildlife staff for more information.

DECEMBER HABITAT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- Construct or inspect firebreaks around your property and evaluate areas that need a prescribed fire treatment in the near future.
- Continue to flood wetland areas.
- Begin planning for prescribed burn program.
- Cut and remove eastern redcedars.
- Evaluate forage resources and plan dormant season grazing program.

DECEMBER POND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- To help clear a pond of muddy water, spread two bales of good hay per surface acre, every two weeks. No more than four applications per year and not during hot summer months.
- Trap any nuisance beavers.

Surveyors Savor Sweet Success in Study of Scarce Salamanders

By Jena Donnell, Wildlife Diversity Information Specialist

TAYLOR CARLSON/PROVIDED



Less than an inch of rain fell from 2 to 7 p.m. Oct. 9, last year, but it was enough to prompt 196 ringed salamanders to emerge from their underground homes and embark on their annual journey to a small, fishless pond in the Ozark Plateau region in eastern Oklahoma.

"These salamanders really only come aboveground for a short period of time — typically during fall rains — and their main goal during that time is to court and lay eggs," said Taylor Carlson, graduate research assistant who was studying the geographic distribution of the rare ringed salamander for Oklahoma State University.

Fall rains add water to existing ponds, creating ideal conditions for salamanders to deposit their eggs. Within a few weeks, the eggs hatch, and the larval salamanders overwinter in the pond before transforming into terrestrial adults.

Breeding activity typically only lasts a few days at an individual site but can occur from late August to November, depending on rainfall amounts. After mating, the adult salamanders leave the ponds and return to underground burrows, where they often remain for the rest of the year.

Some previous spring reptile and amphibian surveys have documented a limited number of ringed salamanders in Oklahoma. But in the first few months of her study of ringed salamanders, Carlson had already found more adults in Oklahoma than had been scientifically documented in the state's history.

"We've focused searches around four ponds in the region. The weather conditions and timing of searches have been perfect. We've collected data on more than 500 individual salamanders in only a week's time," she said then.

"Not many people have had the opportunity to see the migration of ringed salamanders to breeding ponds, and this is the first time a mass migration of these amphibians has been documented in Oklahoma. These salamanders are coming out in the middle of the night, in the middle of a rainstorm, and very few people have searched under those conditions in Oklahoma."

"This is the first time a mass migration of these amphibians has been documented in Oklahoma."



TAYLOR CARLSON/PROVIDED

Carlson's team officially kicked off its first field season in September 2018 and found the project's first ringed salamander later that month.

"We were so excited to find a large female underneath a rock near a small pond. Experiencing a mass migration only a few weeks after finding the project's first individual was a great feeling."

In addition to documenting the salamanders' locations, Carlson's team is also interested in testing different methods that could allow the identification of individual salamanders.

"We're taking photographs of each salamander; one photo of the entire back and one close-up from hip to shoulder. We need to run the photos through the software program, but it's possible that we'll be able to document individuals returning to a pond next year with these individual-specific photographs."

Elastomer dyes that fluoresce under black light are also being tested on a subsample of the salamanders in case the photographs aren't able to accurately identify the salamanders on an individual basis. This will provide Carlson's team another way to document individual salamanders returning to the same pond in future breeding migrations and to estimate population size.

Carlson will collaborate with the University of Oklahoma for the final segment of the project: attempting to identify ponds occupied by ringed salamanders by testing water samples for the rare salamander's DNA.

For now, Carlson is determined to find more salamanders in as many locations as possible.

"It's the slimiest Easter egg hunt I've ever been on." 🐸

This project is funded in part by ODWC's State Wildlife Grants Program Grant F18AF00380 and by Oklahoma State University.

Mountain Lion Sightings Confirmed 30 Times Since 2002 in Oklahoma



Game camera image, Pawnee County, Oct. 17, 2014, confirmed mountain lion.



Biologists confirmed a mountain lion was captured in this game camera photo in McCurtain County in 2018.



This photo confirmed a mountain lion sighting in Mayes County in 2019.



A Wildlife Department biologist examines a female mountain lion illegally killed in Cimarron County in 2013.



Comparison of a man's hand to the front paw of a male mountain lion dispatched in 2017 for degrading sheep in Cimarron County.

Gray dots on map at left indicate where confirmed sightings have occurred.

Although Oklahoma lies outside the commonly known range mountain lions, the state does get some infrequent visits from the big cats. Since 2002, state Wildlife Department biologists have confirmed 30 sightings in the state.

At times, it seems like everyone and their next of kin has spotted a mountain lion while in the woods or driving a lonely highway, or discovered tracks of the elusive creature. Truth is, these sightings are mostly cases of mistaken identity.

Each year the Wildlife Department investigates dozens of these reports. Dog tracks and dogs themselves are the No. 1 and No. 2 cases of misidentification. Bobcats and house cats — along with coyotes, foxes, deer and even rabbits — have also been mistaken for mountain lions.

As compelling as a reported sighting may be, state biologists must gather hard evidence before they can confirm a mountain lion sighting. And with many reported sightings, there just isn't enough physical evidence (hair, scat, tracks, photos, etc.) to confirm or deny a mountain lion was there.

The mountain lions that have been confirmed in Oklahoma are most certainly transient animals. There has never been physical evidence of a permanent, breeding population of the big cats in the Sooner State. The nearest permanent populations are known to exist in Texas, Colorado and New Mexico. And biologists in Arkansas and Missouri have reached the same conclusions as Oklahoma's biologists: Only wandering individuals have been documented in those states as well.

Inevitably someone will claim to have seen a black mountain lion in Oklahoma. However, the black panther does not exist in the wild in all of North America. Black jaguars and leopards do exist in other parts of the world, but for certain not in Oklahoma.

The mountain lion (also called cougar, panther, puma, painter or catamount) is 6 to 7 feet long and weighs 95 to 140 pounds when mature. Its long tail is more than half its body length. Overall the big cat is tan with a lighter underside, but the tail and ears are tipped with black. They are most active near dawn and dusk, and generally tend to be nocturnal.

They feed on deer and other large or medium-size animals. A typical adult cougar will kill and consume one deer per week.

In 1957, the Wildlife Department first listed the mountain lion as a game species with a closed hunting season. They are protected from indiscriminate shooting, but the law does allow people to shoot a mountain lion anytime when it is committing or about to commit depredation on any domesticated animal or when deemed an immediate safety hazard.

Anyone who kills a mountain lion in Oklahoma must report it immediately to a Game Warden or Department employee. Anyone who has evidence of a mountain lion or evidence of a sighting is asked to submit a Mountain Lion Report Form at www.wildlifedepartment.com. 🐾

Oklahoma's Confirmed Mountain Lion Sightings Since 2002

2002, McClain County – Male lion struck and killed by a motorist on Interstate 35.

2004, Noble County – Male radio-collared lion killed by train near Red Rock. Lion originated in the Black Hills of South Dakota.

2006, Cimarron County – Male lion dispatched while depredating livestock.

2006, McCurtain County – Female lion illegally shot and killed by poachers. DNA linked to Pine Ridge of Nebraska.

2009, Tillman County – Trail camera photo of lion (gender unknown) taken along Red River on private land.

2009, Atoka County – Trail camera photo of lion (gender unknown) taken on private land.

2010, Cimarron County – Male lion illegally shot and killed by hunters. DNA linked to eastern Colorado.

2010, Texas County – Male radio-collared mountain lion that had been released by Colorado Division of Wildlife in north-central Colorado on Oct. 30, 2009, walked into the Oklahoma Panhandle on April 3, 2010. This lion established a home range in New Mexico and was later legally harvested in that state.

2011, Tulsa County – Female lion captured in Tulsa. DNA linked to Black Hills of South Dakota. This lion showed no signs of past reproduction.

2011, Tulsa County – Trail camera photo of lion (gender unknown) taken north of Sand Springs in July.

2011, Osage County – Trail camera photo taken Oct. 12 of lion (gender unknown),

most likely same animal from previous confirmation.

2011, Osage County – Trail camera photo taken Oct. 26 of lion (gender unknown), most likely same animal from previous confirmation.

2011, Grady County – Sub-adult male hit and killed by motorist on U.S. 81.

2012, Osage County – Photo of lion (gender unknown) taken in November by a hunter using cellular telephone.

2012, Osage County – Female lion dispatched Dec. 11 by USDA Wildlife Services for depredating livestock. DNA linked to South Dakota. This lion showed no signs of past reproduction.

2013, Cimarron County – Female lion illegally killed Feb. 4. This lion showed no signs of past reproduction.

2013, Cimarron County – Trail camera photo of lion (gender unknown) taken on private land in Nov.

2014, Pawnee County – Trail camera photo of lion (gender unknown) was confirmed on Oct. 24.

2014, Mayes County – Trail camera photo and motion activated video of lion (gender unknown) was confirmed Oct. 31.

2014, Logan County – Trail camera photo of lion (gender unknown) was confirmed Nov. 19.

2014, Hughes County – Trail camera photo of lion (gender unknown) was confirmed on Dec. 2.

2015, Logan County – Two photos of lions (gender unknown) were reported from properties less than a mile from each other. Confirmation was completed Oct. 30. Both photos are believed to be the same animal.

2015, Pottawatomie County – Photos taken by landowner of a lion (gender unknown) on private property. This sighting is believed to be the same mountain lion from previous sightings in Logan County.

2017, Cimarron County – Mountain lion, gender unknown, visually identified by Wildlife Department personnel at Black Mesa State Park on Jan. 10.

2017, McIntosh County – Hair samples, tree scratches, and tracks indicated a mountain lion (gender unknown) near the Canadian River on Feb. 1.

2017, Cimarron County – Male mountain lion killed by USDA Wildlife Services after depredating sheep April 2. DNA analysis lists Colorado as most probable point of origin.

2017, Custer County – Trail camera photo of lion (gender unknown) was confirmed Oct. 31.

2018, McCurtain County – Trail camera photos of lion (gender unknown) from two separate locations were confirmed Oct. 5.

2019, Mayes County – Photos taken of lion (gender unknown) by the reporting party were confirmed June 19.

2019, Adair County – Tracks of lion (gender unknown) confirmed July 11.



Waterfowling Opens New World for Bangladeshi Turned Sooner

By Don P. Brown, Information and Education Specialist

Immigrant, Local Mentor Helping Hunting Tradition Endure

America's hunting tradition is in danger of disappearing as longtime hunters "age out" and new hunters are not taking their place. This "recruitment" issue is a common lament among hunting and wildlife conservation advocates because it threatens to directly affect funding for management and the very survival of the nation's hunting tradition.

Recruitment is one of the "Three R's" (recruitment, retention, reactivation) that experts say are keys to halting the downward trend.

Current hunters are being encouraged to take new people hunting and devote time to mentor them so they will become hunters. Furthermore, traditional hunters are urged to mentor people who don't necessarily look like them — people of different colors, creeds, genders or nationalities.

Enter Edmond resident Ismat Esrar, 54. Raised in Bangladesh, Esrar came to Oklahoma in 2001 with his wife and his son. He was raised in one of the world's

most crowded cities in a country that is about as large as Oklahoma, but with a population equal to about half of America's.

"I did not think of hunting, because I did not see it in my community," Esrar said. He did not grow up around guns, and only those living in remote rural areas of Bangladesh had any opportunity to hunt.

With a master's degree in urban management, Esrar landed a job with the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality in 2003. He soon developed friendships with some DEQ coworkers, including Tom Bailey of Oklahoma City.

One day while the friends were sharing lunch break, Esrar heard the others talking about their hunting trip they had the past weekend. And he noticed they were bringing meat for lunch that looked different.

"What kind of meat, Tom?" Esrar asked.

"It's duck breast."

"How do you get that?"

Ismat Esrar prepares his layout blind before the afternoon flight of geese arrives.





"We hunt," Bailey said. And that's when Esrar's interest began.

Bailey gave Esrar some wild duck meat, and he and his family enjoyed it. His wife substituted the duck meat into a traditional southern Asian dish called biryani, and it turned out very well.

Bailey recalls when Esrar said that he wanted to try waterfowl hunting. He wanted to learn to harvest and clean his own waterfowl. Esrar recalls thinking that hunting sounded fun and adventurous, but a little complex and not as easy as it looks.

Before the 2014 duck season, Bailey agreed to give Esrar a chance. He agreed to recruit the new hunter. "I definitely feel the need to pass this heritage down, whether to family, friends or coworkers. Just to carry on that heritage of conservation.

"It's every outdoorsman's responsibility to train up the next generation," Bailey said.

Esrar considers Bailey his mentor in hunting. Bailey taught the immigrant about firearms use and safety, and what needs to be done to prepare and conduct a hunt. He's now learning about duck and goose calling.

"It's all a new experience for me," Esrar said. Same for his wife, Fowzia Begum. She was initially surprised that he wanted to try hunting. But she enjoys cooking and welcomes the tasty gamebird meat.

That first season, Esrar borrowed a shotgun and camouflage clothing. Bailey taught him about the required licenses and permits for waterfowl hunting. They went out to practice shooting at pigeons, and Esrar surprised everyone by downing a flying bird on his first shot.

He said pigeons taste great with curry.



Hunting mentor Tom Bailey helps Ismat Esrar to secure his cap during a cold-weather goose hunt.



Tom Bailey and Ismat Esrar collaborate to place the decoys before a goose hunt.

Waterfowl hunter Tom Bailey of Oklahoma City found an opportunity to recruit and mentor a new hunter in his coworker Ismat Esrar, a Bangladesh native now living in Edmond.



Bailey said Esrar has impressed him over the years since he started hunting.

"It was kind of amusing at first," Bailey said. "I didn't know if he really knew what he was getting into."

"He's not crazy about the cold weather and early mornings. But he jumped right in. I was kind of surprised. He's always been very excited, and wants to learn, and is motivated." He's seen Esrar's confidence and shooting skills improve.

"I'm impressed by the way he sticks it out. He hangs like a trouper. He toughed it out through some pretty rough weather — well below freezing and snowstorms."

Bailey hunted a lot as a teen, and then life happened and the sport took a backseat. In 1987, he became a park ranger at Lake Arcadia, and became active in Ducks Unlimited. Then he discovered his church pastor was an avid waterfowler, so Bailey jumped back into hunting and has been going strong ever since.

He recognizes the need to recruit new hunters. "We've got to work hard to keep bringing more people into it. I'm not an expert hunter or fisherman or outdoorsman, but

Watch It on TV!



Watch Ismat Esrar and Tom Bailey on a goose hunt, then see Fowzia Begum, Esrar's wife, prepare a tasty Duck Biryani dish on an "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV episode set to air at 8 a.m. Sunday, Nov. 24, on OETA. Watch episodes online anytime at youtube.com/OutdoorOklahoma.



As with any new hunter, Ismat Esrar learned about firearms safety and practiced with a shotgun before getting into the field on a regular basis.



Chad Detrick of Yukon retrieves a Canada goose on a hunt he had with Tom Bailey and Ismat Esrar.

I'm happy to do that. There's just so much competition for young peoples' time.

"This is kind of a different scenario. A lot of time, we think about training up children or grandchildren. But this is a coworker."

If hunting were to fade away, it could have many negative consequences. "Even though people think wildlife populations would improve or grow, there could be problems without some control on them. Our wildlife and habitats could suffer," he said, citing threats from overpopulation like disease and starvation.

Esrar now considers himself a hunter, thanks to Tom, Glen, Bryce and Chad, his "great group of hunting buddies. Without their friendly attitude, I would not be hunting."

Esrar now owns his shotgun, camo and layout blind, and he buys his own hunting licenses. He's decided to remain in the Sooner State until he retires, and said hunting is just part of "staying here to become more Okie."

He urges anyone who enjoys being outdoors to get involved in hunting and fishing. Getting out into nature benefits a person physically and mentally, he said. It's healthy in keeping one active and providing high-quality lean meat for the table.

"It is also relaxing, just sitting by the side of a pond or out in the open sky, and looking for birds coming, and the movement of ducks and geese happens. It is a new experience for me.

"Life is a whole journey, and there are time you need to adjust and enjoy life." 🌿



Bangladesh native Ismat Esrar had found that hunting offers him the healthy benefits of relaxation and being outdoors in nature.

Duck Biryani

A healthy, tasty way of enjoying game birds with a Bangladeshi twist. Wild duck/goose meat has its own special flavor and goes well in a biryani, a traditional South Asian dish of meat and rice with aromatic spices.

Game birds are a wild, natural and free-range food source, making them a great alternative to farmed meats. It is much healthier than processed alternatives as well as low in cholesterol and high in protein.

Yield: 4-6 servings. Prep: 10 minutes. Cook: 50 minutes. Total time: 60 minutes.

Ingredients

- 2 lb duck/goose breasts, cut into pieces
- 1 lb kali jeera rice
(meat and rice: 2 to 1 ratio)
- 8 pieces peeled potatoes
- 2 tbsp garlic and ginger paste
- 1 cup plain yogurt
- 1 cup fried onion
- 1 tsp cumin powder
- 1 tsp coriander powder
- 1 tsp biryani masala powder
- 2 cups finely sliced onions
- 5 cloves
- 5 cardamom pods
- 5 whole cinnamon sticks
- 3 large bay leaves
- 8 green chilies
- Salt to taste
- 4 tbsp cooking oil
- 2 tbsp ghee (clarified butter)
- 2 tbsp butter
- 10 golden raisins
- 5 dry plums
- 6 cups hot water
- 10 saffron strands, optional
- 5 drops of rose water, optional



Instructions

1. Marinate the duck/goose meat pieces with plain yogurt, half of the garlic and ginger paste, fried onions, little salt and all the powder masala at least 30 minutes (preferably overnight)
2. In a medium pan, heat half of the cooking oil, ghee and butter on medium flame. Add half the sliced onion, 3 cardamoms, 3 cloves, 3 cinnamon sticks and one bay leaf; keep stirring. Then add peeled potatoes and continue to stir until nicely golden brown. Add all marinated meat, mix well and add some hot water. Let it cook for 30-35 minutes or until cooked. When duck meat is cooked, remove from heat and set aside.
3. In a large pan, heat remaining cooking oil, ghee and butter; add remaining ginger and garlic paste, cardamoms, cloves, cinnamon sticks, bay leaves and green chili and keep stirring until raw flavor of ginger/garlic goes away. Add rice and some salt, continue to stir until rice gets golden brown. Add some hot water in the pan (water to rice: 2-to-1 ratio). Cook the rice for 10-12 minutes on high flame until all water has been absorbed.
4. Place rice pan in a preheated oven at 300 degrees for 12-15 minutes. Remove pan from oven after and let cool for 5 minutes. Remove half of cooked rice to a bowl, keep other half in the pan. Pour cooked meat onto rice in pan, add raisins, dried plums, remaining fried onions over meat and spread all the rice from the bowl evenly on top of meat. Spread some fried onions, saffron strands and few drops of rose water over the rice.
5. Place pan in the pre-heated oven for 10-12 minutes. Remove pan from oven add some fried onions for garnish, serve

Recipe by Fowzia Begum, September 2019

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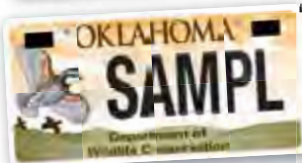
Outdoor Oklahoma Caps

These sharp, colorful fabric caps feature the "Outdoor Oklahoma" logo. Available color selections may vary (subject to availability). — \$18



Oklahoma Waterfowl Hunting Stamp

Oklahoma "duck stamps" are always popular with collectors and hunters. While each year's stamp features a different handsome design sure to add appeal to any stamp collection, funds from stamp sales are used for many kinds of waterfowl management projects. Specify year when ordering. — \$10



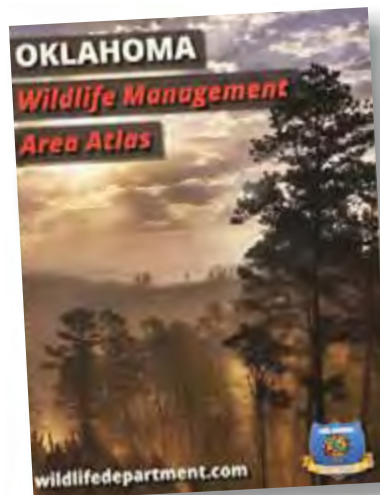
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Oklahoma Wildlife Management Area Atlas

This updated edition has topographical maps of Wildlife Management Areas and now includes Department-owned fishing lakes across Oklahoma. At almost 100 pages, the atlas presents maps showing where to access areas, adds lands that have been acquired since 2010, and shows special features at each area such as parking sites, camping areas and food plots.

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Watchable Wildlife

THE BLACK-TAILED PRAIRIE DOG

BY JUSTIN VEACH, EDUCATION INTERN

Once the most abundant mammal in North America, the black-tailed prairie dog is a small brown rodent that is no stranger to Oklahoma. Prairie dogs are a type of ground squirrel and are biologically related to squirrels, groundhogs, chipmunks, marmots and woodchucks. There are five species of prairie dogs: black-tailed, white-tailed, Utah, Gunnison's, and Mexican prairie dogs, with the black-tailed species being the only one to occur in Oklahoma.

Prairie dogs are herbivores that make their home in underground tunnels called burrows. One burrow can have up to six entrance holes. They live in colonies, also called "towns," that can be huge, with the largest recorded black-tailed prairie dog town measuring more than 100 miles long. Their name comes from their choice of habitat and their warning call, which sounds very similar to the bark of a dog. The black-tailed prairie dog was first described by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark in their expedition journals in 1804. Lewis even described them as a barking squirrel.

Some may see prairie dogs as a nuisance animal, but they are actually a keystone species. This means that they are a vital part of their ecosystem with more than 150 species relying on them for survival. Many types of plants rely on the prairie dog for increased seed production and continuous soil movement, with other animals and insects eating these plants. Prairie dogs also provide a good food source for predators, and their complex network of underground tunnels can provide a safe habitat for many other species. The removal of prairie dogs can have negative effects as they play an important part in healthy native rangelands.

Prairie dogs grow to be 12 to 16 inches long, and can weigh between 1 and 3 pounds. Females are only fertile on one day during spring, and gestation lasts 33 to 38 days. They have on average three to four pups per litter. Pups spend their first six weeks in the burrow, and at 15 months old they are fully grown. They can live up to five years for males and up to seven years for females.

They live in colonies, also called "towns," that can be huge, with the largest recorded black-tailed prairie dog town measuring more than 100 miles long.

Prairie dogs use their burrows for protection from predators and the weather, nurseries, and sleeping areas. The entrances to the burrows are often surrounded by a mound of dirt that can be up to 3 feet high. They use these mounds to scan for predators. Mounds also help prevent flooding, and they can

help with ventilation by creating a breeze through the burrow. Nursery chambers in the burrow can be up to 10 feet below the surface.

Research indicates that prairie dogs have very sophisticated communication abilities. To us, this animal's sounds might resemble a lot of simple squeaking and barking. But researchers say these animals can tell each other things in very descriptive detail. An example is that they not only can warn each other of a person approaching, but they can alert each other that a person wearing the color red is approaching!

Prairie dogs once numbered in the hundreds of millions and perhaps occupied 80 million to 100 million acres from Mexico into Canada. But due to disease, hunting and trapping, as well as loss of habitat and other reasons, the prairie dog population has declined in the past century. Now they number about 24 million and occupy an estimated 2.1 million acres, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 🌿





IMRAN AZHAR/2019 READERS' PHOTO SHOWCASE

Many myths and tall tales surround the big cat that occasionally prowls through Oklahoma. What is true is that mountain lions are sometimes seen in the Sooner State. Find out more inside this issue of Outdoor Oklahoma.

Outdoor Oklahoma

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