



Outdoor Oklahoma

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2019 – ONLY \$10 A YEAR

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Big Game
Report

The Deer
Woods Then
and Now

First Look: 3
New WMAs

A PUBLICATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION



Panoramas

I will retire this fall after almost 30 years as an employee of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation. Yes, in some ways, it seems like only yesterday. As I reflect on my career, there are a few things that will remain special to me for the remainder of my days.

First, as I've heard seemingly countless ODWC retirees say before me, ODWC is a family. It really is. Not only are these people co-workers, they are close friends. We feel each others' happiness, disappointment, joy and pain. Second is my love for all things outdoors. Not only did I have the privilege of working for the best agency in Oklahoma government, I actually got paid to do what I love.

I grew up in the Oklahoma Panhandle and graduated from Guymon High School. My father and grandfather instilled in me a deep-rooted love for hunting, fishing and the outdoors. We hunted and fished for almost everything: ringnecks from the stubble fields, ducks from the irrigation tailwater pits and playas, trout from Colorado, 37 years straight fishing the Canton Walleye Rodeo, deer hunting on Persimmon Creek. And, oh yeah, quail hunting – my favorite. We always had bird dogs. There is just something magical about watching a well-trained pointing dog do what they do. The adrenaline rush of the covey flush. The challenge of trying to focus on a single target out of a brown-gray blur of winged explosion. My favorite meal has always been fried quail and biscuits and gravy!

I attended Oklahoma State University and Panhandle State University for a short time after high school then quit to go to work in the oilfield, as my father did before me. I ran a construction company my dad owned. My favorite part of the job: guiding business customers on quail hunts. Money was good during the "boom" but not so good after the "bust." I went back to school at Southwestern at Weatherford for a while, commuting from Vici and pumping oil and gas wells when I got home from school. I then decided to attend OSU again and study wildlife ecology.

As fate would have it, as I was finishing my bachelor's degree, the Grand National Quail Foundation decided to fund a research

project to study quail. I was asked if I was interested. Oh yeah! Just as I was finishing my master's degree, ODWC solicited candidates for a new position: upland game bird biologist. Again, oh yeah!

I was hired as the "quail guy" in 1990. Try as I might, I could not control the weather. We did conduct some outstanding, cutting-edge science studying quail on the new Packsaddle Wildlife Management Area. We learned a lot about the bird by using tiny radio transmitters. We fitted more quail with radios than any

other study ever. The first round of research lasted 10 years. We learned quail have multiple mates – gypsy hens that leave the male incubating and go mate with another male. Our quail can travel long distances and on rare occasion moved well over 50 miles.

I also provided technical assistance to private landowners wanting to improve upland habitat on their properties. That was very satisfying. Then I was offered the job as Assistant Chief of the Wildlife Division and in 1999 was promoted to Chief of

the Wildlife Division.

I have seen a lot of changes in the past 30 years, including a 16-day modern rifle deer season, huntable turkey populations in all 77 counties, and a black bear season in 12 counties, just to name a few.

In Oklahoma, we have access to about 1.3 million acres open for public hunting. Even with that, our hunters tell us in surveys that they need more places to hunt. I am very proud that I was involved in the purchase of 100,000 acres now available for public hunting.

I will miss working for the hunters of Oklahoma. But I think I'm leaving it a better place than I found it. Now I will have time for more hunting and fishing with my kids and grandkids!



Alan Peoples

Alan Peoples,
Chief of Wildlife

Off the Beaten Path

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

LT. GOVERNOR LAUNCHES OKLAHOMA FISHING TRAIL

The Oklahoma Fishing Trail, an initiative designed to showcase the state's quality fishing opportunities and increase tourism, was kicked off in June.

"Our goal is to become a Top 10 tourism state, and the No. 1 fishing state in the nation," said Oklahoma Lt. Gov. Matt Pinnell, also the state's Secretary of Tourism and Branding. "Fishing is big business, and the Oklahoma Fishing Trail initiative will promote our state's unique fishing opportunities — arguably the most diverse fishing in the country — increase tourism, and generate additional tax revenue for the state.

"Most people don't realize the kind of revenue we're talking about. On average, anglers in Oklahoma already spend \$1.8 billion on fishing annually and support more than 15,000 jobs in the state. And we're only going to grow from there."

The Oklahoma Fishing Trail is a cooperative effort of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation and the Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department. It highlights 38 lakes across the state and an additional 20 Oklahoma fishing experiences that are part of the Wildlife Department's Close to Home Fishing Program.

The Trail has six loops, one for each region of the state, to help guide visitors to the perfect lake for their desired catch. The Trail's website is FishinOK.com.

Wildlife Department Director J.D. Strong said Oklahoma is already a premier destination for fishing-related tourism because of its fish diversity and liberal regulations.

"Whether you're looking for an all-around lake that's known for several different species or a specific spot to get that standout species, we've got options," Strong said. "In the Northeastern Loop, Grand Lake O' the Cherokees is a great spot for catching large-mouth bass, crappie, catfish and paddlefish, while Lake Eufaula and Lake Tenkiller were chosen for their standout crappie fishing."

Oklahoma fishing also stands out for some unique species, such as the paddlefish. The Wildlife Department's Oklahoma Paddlefish Research Center, near the Twin Bridges Area of



Announcing the new Oklahoma Fishing Trail tourism initiative are, from left, Wildlife Department Director J.D. Strong, Lt. Gov. Matt Pinnell, pro angler Jimmy Houston, and Tourism Department Executive Director Jerry Winchester.

Grand Lake State Park, will even process anglers' catches and return fillets to the angler at no cost.

Other speakers at the event included Jerry Winchester, executive director of the Tourism and Recreation Department, and B.A.S.S. National Conservation Director Gene Gilliland, former Assistant Chief of Fisheries for the Wildlife Department.

"Oklahoma is well-prepared for this increase in fishing tourism," Winchester said. "Grand Lake O' the Cherokees has twice hosted the Bassmaster Classic, the 'Super Bowl' of bass fishing. Bassmaster magazine regularly lists Grand Lake and Lake Texoma on the list of the country's best bass lakes. We have more shoreline than the East and Gulf coasts combined, and we've also got a lot of fun things to do along that shoreline: state parks, marinas, museums, breweries, casinos, restaurants. You name it, we've got it in Oklahoma."

"America's Favorite Fisherman," TV personality Jimmy Houston of Cookson helped kick off the campaign along with a group of Moore Public Schools students who participate in the Wildlife Department's Fishing in the Schools (OKFITS) program.

A free Oklahoma Fishing Trail brochure is available at TravelOK.com/Brochures or by calling (800) 652-6552. Anglers can also find the brochure at Oklahoma Tourism Information Centers, Oklahoma State Parks and at the Oklahoma Fishing Trail lakes. ☘



OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

WILDLIFE WATCHING

Wildlife Watchers

Wildlife watchers are those who do activities where observing, photographing, or feeding wildlife is the primary goal

Away From Home

Away-from-home wildlife watching is trips or outings taken at least 1 mile away from home for the primary purpose of wildlife watching (hunting, fishing, scouting, zoos and aquariums are not considered wildlife watching)

Around The Home

Around-the-home wildlife-watching is activities conducted within 1 mile of home for the primary purpose of wildlife watching

\$1.47 billion in
Expenditures:

66% equipment
30% trip-related
4% other

Oklahomans spent
22.8 million
days away-from-home
watching wildlife

While hunting and
fishing have massive
impacts on local
economies, wildlife
watching is equally
important in
generating revenue

Revenue Generated By Expenditures



Fishing
\$2.48 billion



Wildlife Watching
\$1.47 billion



Hunting
\$1.16 billion



Percentage of Wildlife Watching



Birds
29%



Small Mammals
29%



Large Mammals
14%

Data based on the Rockville Institute 2016 50-State Survey of
Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Related Recreation

wildlifedepartment.com

STUDENTS TO VIE FOR NATUREWORKS-SUTTON ART AWARD

Now in its 16th year, the Natureworks-Sutton Student Art Award competition is seeking entries. The contest awards up to \$20,000 to winning students and their instructors as determined by the selection committee.

Through this contest, more than 2,600 Oklahoma high school students have been encouraged to express themselves through art since 2003. The awards recognize high school students who demonstrate the ability to communicate current conservation topics in compelling ways.

“From honeybees to Texas horned lizards, through sculptures to pastels, these students have intriguing stories to tell,” said Audra Fogle, development director for the Sutton Avian Research Center in Bartlesville. “It is exciting to be able to connect our conservation mission with schools to provide significant scholarships for students and the teachers who work so hard to run their programs on shoestring budgets.”

In addition to the regular prizes, one entry will be selected for the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation Special Award, a cash prize for the best depiction of an Oklahoma-related conservation subject.

The art contest is free to enter and open to Oklahoma students grades 9-12 attending public and private schools or are home-schooled. In addition to the artwork, each student must submit a 250-word essay that explains how his or her work communicates information about a current conservation issue. Each submission is judged two-thirds on the artwork and one-third on the essay.

Entries are accepted in three categories: 2-D, 3-D and photography. Entries will be accepted online Jan. 1, 2020. Artwork will be due in early January and will be on public view. Award winners will be announced at a reception in February. For more information, go to www.suttoncenter.org/education. --X



COMMUNICATING EXCELLENCE: The Wildlife Department's Information Section took several awards at the Association for Conservation Information's annual conference in Georgia in the categories of marketing, videography, writing and photography. Winning ACI's highest honor for his leadership and innovation as awards chairman was Blake Podhajsky, center, a producer for the Outdoor Oklahoma TV show. Pictured are Don P. Brown, magazine associate editor; Kelly Adams I/E specialist; Darrin Hill, TV producer; and Information Supervisor Micah Holmes.

Outdoor Calendar

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

SEPTEMBER 2019

- 1** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, Fishing With Nate, 8 a.m., OETA.
- 5** Debunking Deer Management Myths Part 1, 4-7 p.m., Bass Pro Shops, Grapevine, TX, free, (580) 224-6294.
- 7** Oklahoma City free fishing day, no city permit required.
The Fish Bowl 2019, bass-striper-kids fishing tourneys to benefit Toby Keith Foundation, Lake Texoma, (405) 271-6552.
- 7-8** Oklahoma Free Hunting Days, no license required.
- 8** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, Dove Hunting, 8 a.m., OETA.
- 12** Debunking Deer Management Myths Part 2, 4-7 p.m., Bass Pro Shops, Grapevine, TX, free, (580) 224-6294.
- 14** Boat safety class, 10 a.m., Bass Pro Broken Arrow, okboated@gmail.com.
- 15** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, Dutch Ovens, 8 a.m., OETA.
- 17** Okla. Striped Bass Assn. meeting, 7 p.m., Zebco, Tulsa, (918) 639-8114.
- 21** Waterfowl blind drawings, various times and locations, Oklahoma Hunting Guide page 31.
- 22** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, Duck & Fletcher/Expo, 8 a.m., OETA.
- 27-29** Oklahoma Wildlife Expo, Lazy E Arena.
- 28** National Hunting and Fishing Day.
- 29** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, Treestand Safety, 8 a.m., OETA.
- **ODWC Classroom Hunter Education** set in Fort Cobb, Sept. 7; McAlester, Sept. 7; Fort Gibson, Sept. 7; Deep Fork NWR, Sept. 7; Sallisaw, Sept. 7; Tahlequah, Sept. 14; Woodward, Sept. 14; Enid, Sept. 14; Afton, Sept. 14; Broken Bow, Sept. 14; Ada, Sept. 14; Guymon, Sept. 14; Lawton, Sept. 20; Poteau, Sept. 21; Wagoner, Sept. 21; Jay, Sept. 21; Mangum, Sept. 21; Elk City, Sept. 21; Antlers, Sept. 21; Ardmore, Sept. 21. Register: <https://license.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/Events.aspx>.
- **Ducks Unlimited** event set in Vinita, Sept. 12; Elk City, Sept. 12; McAlester, Sept. 19; Ada, Sept. 26; Norman, Sept. 27. Info: www.ducks.org/Oklahoma/events.
- **Friends of NRA** event set in Tahlequah, Sept. 12; Idabel, Sept. 14; Stillwater, Sept. 26; Duncan, Sept. 28. Info: www.FriendsOfNRA.org.
- **National Wild Turkey Federation** events set in Walters, Sept. 7; El Reno, Sept. 14; Broken Arrow, Sept. 17. Info: www.nwtf.org/events.

OCTOBER 2019

- 5** Oklahoma City free fishing day, no city permit required.
- 6** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, Fred Manous/Habitat Mastication, 8 a.m., OETA.
- 7** Okla. Wildlife Conservation Commission meeting, 9 a.m., Oklahoma City.
- 13** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, Dayton's 1st Deer/Skull Dips, 8 a.m., OETA.
- 15** Okla. Striped Bass Assn. meeting, 7 p.m., Zebco, Tulsa, (918) 639-8114.
- 20** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, Oklahoma Deer History, 8 a.m., OETA.
- 27** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, Oklahoma Trout Areas, 8 a.m., OETA.
- **ODWC Classroom Hunter Education** set in Weatherford, Oct. 5; Jenks, Oct. 5; Shawnee, Oct. 5; Chickasha, Oct. 5; Wayne, Oct. 5; Randlett, Oct. 12; Ponca City, Oct. 12; Sallisaw, Oct. 12; Edmond, Oct. 12. Register: <https://license.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/Events.aspx>.
- **Ducks Unlimited** events set in Enid, Oct. 3; Claremore, Oct. 3; Kellyville, Oct. 5; Poteau, Oct. 10; Colbert, Oct. 24; Shawnee, Oct. 24. Info: www.ducks.org/Oklahoma/events.
- **Friends of NRA** events set in Alva, Oct. 3; Dewey, Oct. 5; Woodward, Oct. 12; Wiburton, Oct. 31; Oklahoma City, Oct. 31. Info: www.FriendsOfNRA.org.

**** FOR HUNTING SEASON DATES, GO TO**
www.wildlifedepartment.com/hunting/seasons **

SEPTEMBER BRINGS DOVE SEASON, FREE HUNT DAYS

The calendar has again rolled into September, bringing with it dove hunting! This first major hunting season each year is always highly anticipated by many hunters, and that's no surprise. Dove provide first-class wingshooting, and they are fine table fare. It's also very easy to get started in the sport. A shotgun, an ample supply of shells and a place to go is all one really needs to have a great day of dove hunting.

Dove are found from one side of the state to the other, and hunters don't have to travel far to find them. Recently harvested grain fields and cattle watering ponds on private lands can be excellent places to hunt dove, and they can often be found only a few miles outside city limits.

Additionally, excellent hunting can be found on many of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation's wildlife management areas. Many areas on those WMAs are specifically managed with dove hunting in mind.

To find out more about these areas, go to www.wildlifedepartment.com, click "Hunting" then "Where to Hunt." Or check on the Go Outdoors Oklahoma mobile app. Hunters will find maps of WMAs, along with information such as camping locations and contact information for local biologists.

Dove season will remain open until Oct. 31, then will reopen Dec. 1-29.

The first full weekend of dove season, Sept. 7-8, will be Oklahoma's Free Hunting Days, and Oklahoma residents will not need a hunting license or HIP (Harvest Information Program) permit when they go afield. That weekend will be a great opportunity to introduce a new hunter to dove hunting or squirrel hunting – or both!

"There is no excuse not to take someone new during Free Hunting Days. Not only is it a great time to take a kid hunting, it's also a great time to introduce adults to our sporting heritage as well," said Lance Meek, hunter education coordinator for the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation. "Both squirrel and dove are plentiful around the state and offer sportsmen lots of action during early September."

The Wildlife Department's Game Wardens will not enforce requirements for any standard hunting licenses or permits for Oklahoma residents on those days, but they will enforce all other game laws such as bag limits, shotgun plugs and legal shooting hours.

For more information, consult the current Oklahoma Hunting Regulations Guide found online at wildlifedepartment.com, in the Go Outdoors Oklahoma mobile app, or in print across the state wherever hunting and fishing licenses are sold. --X



WILDLIFEDEPARTMENT.COM



Game Warden's Journal

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



Several Oklahoma Game Wardens from District 7 assisted with the annual Elk City Fishing Derby this summer. Almost 600 people participated in the event! Prizes and \$700 in cash and were given to participants! As a bonus, Grant's Auction and Realty gave away two lifetime fishing licenses! More importantly, many children got to experience the thrill of catching their first fish and get outdoors!

In June, Game Wardens Brady May and Tony Clark (based in Cherokee County) and Cody Youngblood (based in Adair County) conducted a Shotgun Training and Education Program for students in the Tahlequah Police Department's Junior Police Academy. The Game Wardens introduced the students to shooting shotguns.

The academy introduces students to different aspects of law enforcement and safety. They were selected based on essays they wrote to explain why they wanted to attend. Among the activities were a CPR class, a tour of the 911 call center and county jail, a session with police K9s, an ATF explosives class, training in self-defense, and a ropes course.



In learning about firearms, the students started with handguns and rifles and concluded with the STEP event. The Game Wardens are hopeful that this academy makes a positive impact on these young people.

In June, Oklahoma Game Wardens, Texas Game Wardens and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Rangers participated in a joint effort on Lake Texoma. The agencies worked together to make hundreds of contacts on the 89,000-acre lake shared by Oklahoma and Texas. It's the 12th-largest lake operated by the Corps of Engineers. The striped bass fishery is world class, and the lake has over 1 million visitors every year.


As a result, numerous cases were filed in Oklahoma and Texas courts. Additionally numerous verbal warnings were given for lesser infractions. This was the first of many joint efforts planned to protect the wildlife in and around Lake Texoma. Special thanks go out to our legal, licensed sportsmen and sportswomen for funding and supporting endeavors like these!



(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.

RECORD FLATHEAD CATFISH NOODLED AT **KONAWA**



*Konawa Record
Flathead Catfish
(Unrestricted)*

Weight:
87.85 pounds.

Length:
53.75 inches.


Girth:
38.25 inches.

Angler:
Jayson Spencer of Ada.

Method of Catch:
Noodled.

Date Caught:
June 18, 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 wildlifedepartment.com/fishing/records.htm. ❌



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,

Huge thanks to Game Warden Jeremy Brothers, who was super professional and helpful to my student, Maeghen. She's working on the upper Red River and has struggled to find landowners to gain access in some sections. He was extremely helpful.

Shannon Brewer

Dear Wildlife Department,

My wife, Debbie, and I were driving through Oklahoma on our way to our home in St. Louis. The trailer I was towing got a flat/blowout, and I had to pull on the shoulder of the highway to change it. Shortly after I started, Game Warden Capt. Jeff Headrick pulled in behind me and had his lights

on. Every person I have ever met from Oklahoma was friendly, and Capt. Headrick was no exception. He got a floor jack out of his truck and helped me change the tire. He was professional, polite and friendly. I wanted to bring this to your attention and let you know that he is a super representative of your Department and state.

Dave Gibbar

Dear Wildlife Department,

Just wanted to let you know how much the wildlife youth camp has impacted our two boys' lives. Both say the camp changed their lives, so just wanted to say we certainly found great value in the camp and hope you will continue it for years to come!

**Campers: Jaron and Cole Toben
Karen Toben**

Dear Wildlife Department,

Although I didn't draw (a controlled hunt) this year, I had family members and friends that were successful this year. I have been successful in the past. Just wanted to say Thank You to all of you for the opportunity to put in for the draw hunts as well as the continued opportunity and liberal seasons we enjoy across Oklahoma! I appreciate and applaud your efforts.

Mike McCurley, via Facebook

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ODWC's enhanced, online solution to support Oklahoma's hunters, anglers, and outdoor enthusiasts.

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Customer Focus

View your licenses, purchase new items, and manage your preferences all online.



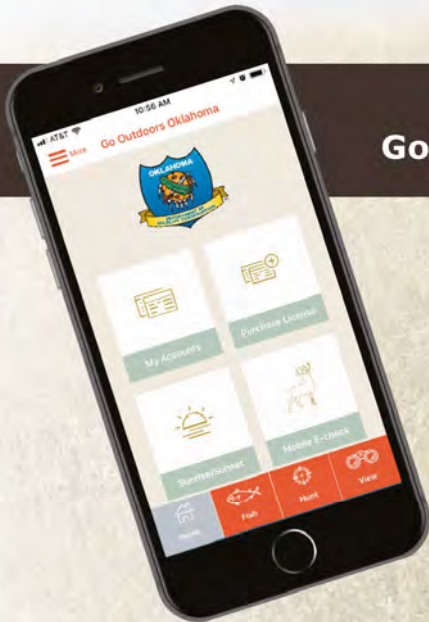
Auto Renewals

Set up your licenses to automatically renew every year. Never miss a memory!



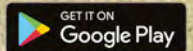
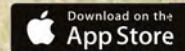
eCheck

Quickly check your game online or through the free mobile app.



ODWC'S MOBILE APP Go Outdoors Oklahoma

DOWNLOAD IT FOR FREE!



Sync & Download Licenses

Always have your licenses ready for you & your family.

Buy Your License on the Go

Be prepared for your next outdoor adventure.

Access Upcoming Events & More

Find local events, weather, tides & feeding times.

Check Your Game

Within the mobile app, with or without cell signal.

GET YOUR DURABLE COLLECTOR'S CARD

Upgrade your license to this durable card on custom art by a local artist & support the next generation of conservationists.

Buy Online at
License.GoOutdoorsOklahoma.com



OLAP ADDS TO PUBLIC ACCESS FOR 3RD YEAR

The Oklahoma Land Access Program began in 2017, when it opened about 10,000 acres of private land to public access for hunting, fishing and wildlife-watching opportunities.

As OLAP enters its third year, more than 62,000 private acres have been enrolled, said Wildlife Biologist Jeff Tibbits, coordinator of the program for the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation.

OLAP provides financial incentives to landowners who allow public access for hunting, fishing, stream access, and wildlife viewing opportunities on private lands. The Wildlife Department received a \$2.26 million dollar grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture as part of the 2014 Farm Bill, through the Voluntary Public Access — Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP). VPA-HIP programs are successful at simultaneously rewarding conservation on private lands and providing more opportunities for sportspersons.

“OLAP has grown substantially in its first three years,” Tibbits said. This year’s newest areas have added four miles of stream access and 55 acres with ponds for walk-in fishing.

A core principle of the OLAP is to increase walk-in access opportunities for hunting, fishing, stream access, and wildlife viewing. 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, and the OLAP seeks to increase access for multiple opportunities throughout the state.

Anyone with a hunting or fishing license is permitted to enter open OLAP areas for the activities specified for that area; no other permissions are required.

Another core principle of the OLAP is to include and reward conservation-minded landowners. Enrolled landowners are

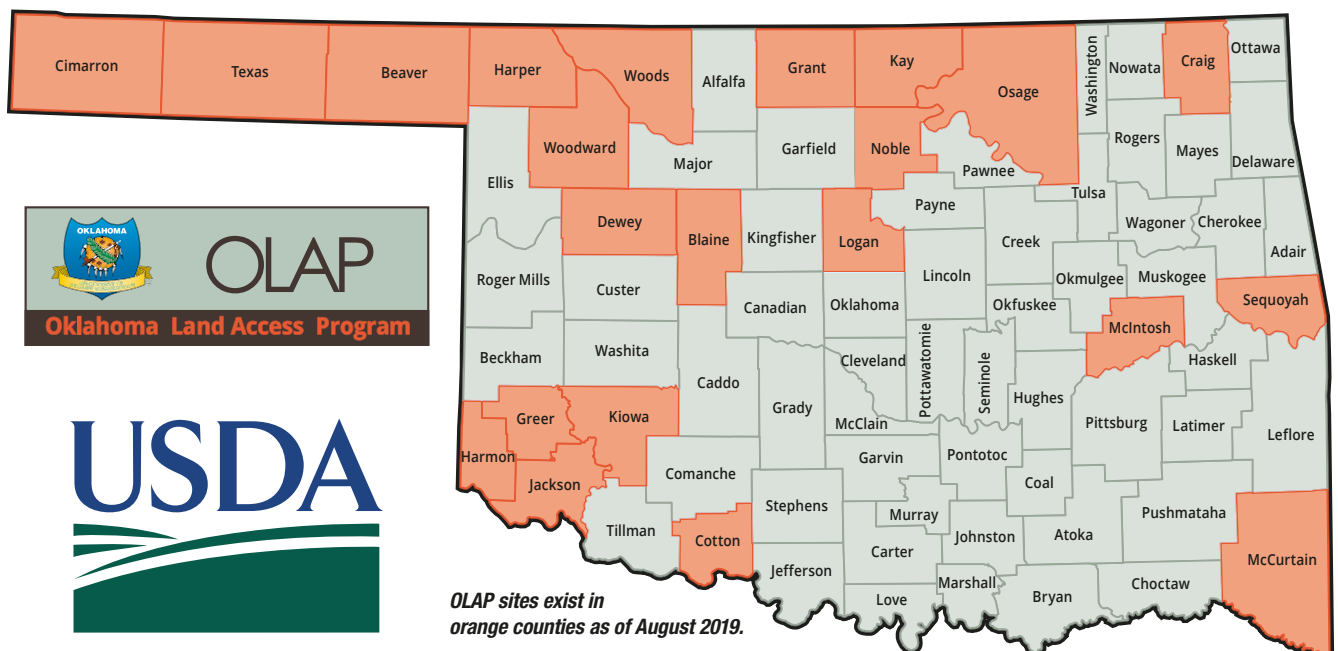


OLAP coordinator Jeff Tibbits places a sign to mark the boundaries of another private property opened for public access.

compensated based on enrolled acres, location, access type, and contract length. Almost anyone who owns or leases land can qualify for an OLAP lease, and ideal properties include CRP-enrolled grassland, native rangeland, weedy crop stubble, forests, riparian corridors, wetland areas, and wildlife-friendly field buffers. The Wildlife Department posts signs on OLAP property boundaries, and parking areas have informational signs indicating access dates and activities that are permitted.

For updated maps, lease applications, e-newsletter subscriptions and more information, go online to www.wildlifedepartment.com/olap. OLAP is also on Facebook.

OLAP is made possible by a Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program grant provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service. --X





DON P. BROWN/OWC

OKNASP coordinator Jay Rouk, left, and Wildlife Department Director J.D. Strong, right, with top archers, from left, Madison Spoonmore, Locust Grove; Cayden Eyestone, Chandler; Jarod Aycox, Zaneis; Karson Warrington, Healdton; and Reece Marble, Salina. Not pictured: Trenton Gardner, Salina.

STATE ARCHERY STUDENTS **ON TARGET AT NATIONALS**

The Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commission recently recognized a half-dozen Oklahoma students for being among America's elite young archers. The youths all placed in the top five in various divisions at national competitions conducted by the National Archery in the Schools program earlier this year. These archers are the cream of the crop not only in Oklahoma but also the nation. The students honored were:

- Cayden Eyestone of Chandler (Park Road), first place out of 2,229 competing, elementary boys division, Eastern national shoot.
- Madison Spoonmore of Locust Grove, fourth place out of 2,610, high school girls division, Eastern national shoot.
- Jarod Aycox of Zaneis, first place out of 296, middle boys division, Western national shoot.
- Trenton Gardner of Salina, first place out of 225, high school boys division, Western national shoot.

- Karson Warrington of Healdton, second place out of 225, high school boys division, Western national shoot.
- Reece Marble of Salina, third place out of 142, elementary division, Western national shoot.

Nationally, more than 2 million youths participate in the NASP program each year. In Oklahoma, more than 60,000 students in about 650 schools are active in OKNASP. About 180 Oklahoma students qualified to attend one of the national NASP shoots.

Wildlife Conservation Commissioner Bill Brewster commended the students and the outstanding success of the OKNASP program, saying, "I don't know of any other program of any kind that can show that much involvement of the youth in Oklahoma."

To learn more about the Oklahoma Archery in the Schools program and how local schools can get involved in the Department's educational programs, go to www.wildlifedepartment.com/education --X



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Bowhunters who submit observations they make during the time in the field help biologists with information about furbearers and deer populations across the state.

FURBEARER NUMBERS STEADY IN BOWHUNTER SURVEY

Archery hunting seasons will open Oct. 1 for deer, elk on private lands, turkey, bear and antelope. Thousands of sportsmen and sportswomen will take to the woods and prairies in pursuit of game with bow and arrow or crossbow.

The Wildlife Department is hoping that some of those archery hunters will volunteer to share their experiences to help wildlife biologists collect data about furbearers in addition to deer across the state.

The Department's fourth annual Bowhunter Observation Survey will begin Oct. 1 and run through Nov. 30. This survey was implemented to calculate population indices for furbearer species and deer at state and regional levels. Bowhunters spend a large amount of time in stands within the natural environment of many wildlife species while hunting deer and are in prime spots to observe these species.

During the 2018 deer archery season, more than 100,000 hunters took part. But only 350 archery hunters signed up for the observation survey, and they submitted 1,940 reports accounting for 7,606 hours of observation time. Most reports came during the first half of the survey period, and at least one report came from every county in Oklahoma except Harper County.

Based on standardized results, the state's overall furbearer population has remained fairly steady the past three years. Bowhunters reported seeing 125 furbearers for every 1,000 hours of field observation, compared with 122 and 137 for the previous two seasons.

The species included in the furbearer category, listed with most commonly seen first, are raccoon, coyote, opossum,

bobcat, striped skunk, gray fox, red fox, river otter and badger. Other species reported, listed with most commonly seen first, are fox squirrel, gray squirrel, turkey, quail, feral swine, domestic dog, elk, black bear and housecat.

The state's overall deer population is healthy and growing. Bowhunters reported seeing 904 deer for every 1,000 hours of field observation, compared with 869 and 744 for the previous two seasons.

The Bowhunter Observation Survey is now recruiting volunteer scientists for this coming archery season. The Wildlife Department is using social media outlets and email messages to ask interested bowhunters to sign up. Any bowhunters who would like to help biologists by reporting what they see in the woods can sign up at www.wildlifedepartment.com/hunting/research/bos. --X



MICHAEL BERGINOWIC

It's not too late for bowhunters to sign up to help in the Department's annual Bowhunter Observation Survey.

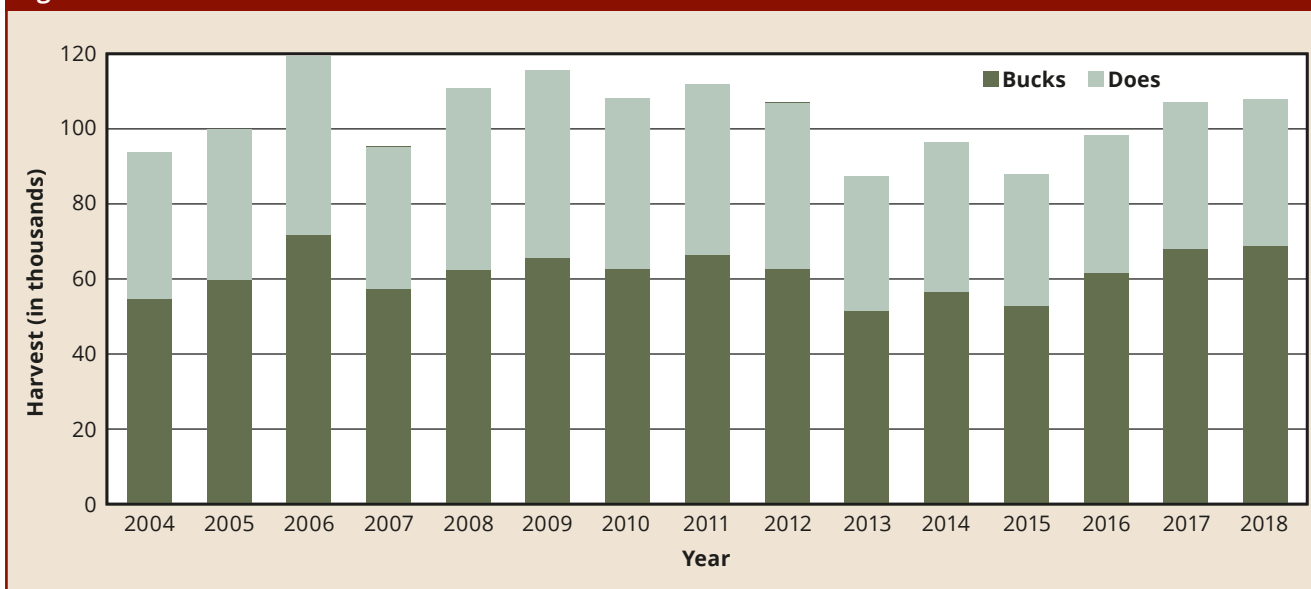
2018-19 Big Game Report



Deer Harvest Up For 4th Straight Year
Biologists Urge Hunters to Take More White-tailed Does for Herd Health

By Dallas Barber, Big Game Biologist, and Emily Clark, Big Game Technician

Figure 1: Total Harvest from 2004 to Current



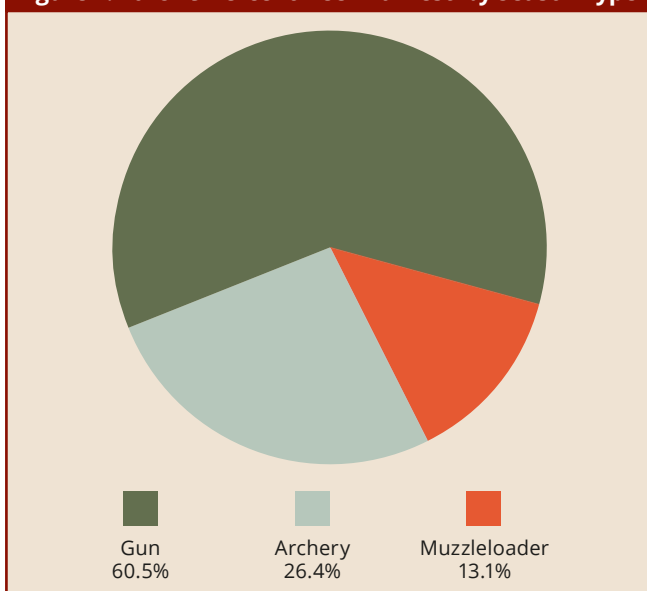
Hunters in Oklahoma are continuing to enjoy some of the most diverse deer hunting opportunities that the country has to offer. Harvest increased slightly from 2017-18, with a total of 109,260 deer taken in 2018-19.

Figure 1 shows total deer harvest from 2004 through this past season. Doe harvest landed at 36 percent for the season, which is below the target rate of 40 percent to 45 percent. In the westernmost parts of the state, 222 mule deer were taken across 14 counties, which can be seen in **Table 3**.

Gun hunting continues to be the most common hunting method. Muzzleloader hunters harvested fewer deer compared to last season, but the number of muzzleloader hunters was down as well.

Archers came up with 26.4 percent of the total harvest,

Figure 2: 2018-19 Percent Deer Harvest by Season Type



which is consistent with last season's numbers. The total archery harvest was 28,886 animals. While archery harvest this year did not set a new harvest record as it had in 2016 and 2017, the 2018 archery harvest is the second highest harvest by archers.

Figure 2 depicts the percentage of deer harvest by season.

The top three counties in harvest numbers were Osage County with 5,208 deer, Pittsburg County with 3,330 deer and Cherokee County with 2,954 deer.

Table 1 shows harvest by county, season and sex on the state's private lands. Harvest data from wildlife management areas (WMAs) and other public hunting areas is not included in order to account for counties that lack WMAs.

Oklahoma is dominated by privately owned land, making up about 95 percent of the state. Still, hunters have an abundant chance to use public hunting areas such as Department-managed WMAs, national wildlife refuges, state parks, and recreation areas. **Table 2** details deer harvest in these areas by area, season and sex.

Mule deer inhabit the westernmost areas of the state, and they can be harvested using the regular deer license. A total of 222 mule deer were harvested across 14 western Oklahoma counties. Regulations protect antlerless mule deer during gun season; this resulted in only one antlerless mule deer being harvested. **Table 3** breaks down mule deer harvest.

Deer Archery Season

In the past two seasons, archers have set new records for single-season harvest. While that wasn't the case for the 2018-19 season, archers did harvest 28,886 deer, good for second all-time. Their harvest made up 26.4 percent of the overall 2018-19 deer harvest.

Table 1: 2018-19 Deer Harvest by County, Season, and Sex (Does not include WMA data)

County	Archery		Gun		Muzzleloader		Grand Total
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	
Adair	206	259	388	807	71	250	1,981
Alfalfa	115	138	410	466	51	61	1,241
Atoka	342	364	422	809	84	293	2,314
Beaver	18	57	76	275	9	26	461
Beckham	107	151	399	748	39	78	1,522
Blaine	24	54	142	363	12	37	632
Bryan	240	252	278	483	37	106	1,396
Caddo	144	191	343	817	41	93	1,629
Canadian	59	111	154	344	18	41	727
Carter	117	200	296	532	20	89	1,254
Cherokee	377	414	602	1,160	130	271	2,954
Choctaw	246	271	265	586	65	184	1,617
Cimarron	6	18	3	115	0	17	159
Cleveland	174	220	193	300	43	120	1,050
Coal	155	217	265	529	43	132	1,341
Comanche	54	87	133	276	18	38	606
Cotton	24	43	104	201	22	18	412
Craig	172	223	442	838	67	143	1,885
Creek	250	344	423	850	79	252	2,198
Custer	41	77	153	402	19	38	730
Delaware	421	463	535	871	108	220	2,618
Dewey	56	81	169	478	15	28	827
Ellis	32	69	196	450	12	39	798
Garfield	68	93	214	360	23	58	816
Garvin	108	164	235	512	23	92	1,134
Grady	148	224	340	628	44	93	1,477
Grant	138	141	371	592	50	109	1,401
Greer	48	85	133	298	14	38	616
Harmon	72	82	185	291	12	35	677
Harper	20	39	90	288	4	22	463
Haskell	184	263	284	484	46	211	1,472
Hughes	175	264	287	620	55	193	1,594
Jackson	75	124	142	295	12	28	676
Jefferson	41	87	193	280	13	26	640
Johnston	128	153	294	394	37	61	1,067
Kay	105	118	279	484	38	61	1,085
Kingfisher	81	107	225	337	32	69	851
Kiowa	34	57	118	259	13	27	508
Latimer	133	239	158	442	44	223	1,239
LeFlore	302	384	366	817	148	373	2,390
Lincoln	124	227	377	688	64	186	1,666
Logan	154	236	368	563	56	149	1,526
Love	106	123	184	254	26	32	725
Major	80	110	274	496	21	62	1,043
Marshall	62	70	83	173	11	26	425
Mayes	291	360	437	687	98	195	2,068
McClain	82	124	201	339	27	69	842
McCurtain	360	392	446	850	147	355	2,550
McIntosh	89	142	156	362	23	97	869
Murray	65	102	96	242	5	42	552
Muskogee	192	197	281	492	45	156	1,363
Noble	122	103	281	465	39	87	1,097
Nowata	139	163	363	680	54	96	1,495
Okfuskee	92	149	196	429	45	133	1,044
Oklahoma	230	299	159	328	32	73	1,121
Okmulgee	125	148	183	428	56	126	1,066
Osage	571	734	1,257	2,151	187	308	5,208
Ottawa	170	247	347	559	61	142	1,526
Pawnee	129	172	364	592	80	127	1,464
Payne	159	245	412	669	58	141	1,684
Pittsburg	443	611	441	1,142	138	555	3,330
Pontotoc	163	244	351	560	37	125	1,480
Pottawatomie	174	271	336	611	61	208	1,661
Pushmataha	400	447	359	821	125	378	2,530
Roger Mills	92	185	429	818	24	79	1,627
Rogers	371	514	528	828	60	135	2,436
Seminole	126	152	251	443	66	188	1,226
Sequoyah	266	353	481	780	127	395	2,402
Stephens	122	201	250	528	24	100	1,225
Texas	15	23	11	105	0	12	166
Tillman	55	63	138	279	17	31	583
Tulsa	162	197	138	268	24	43	832
Wagoner	224	267	236	453	56	100	1,336
Washington	160	172	293	566	40	57	1,288
Washita	25	49	96	283	8	32	493
Woods	64	138	220	493	20	81	1,016
Woodward	110	123	275	570	27	43	1,148
Counties Total	11,554	15,281	21,603	41,076	3,600	9,457	102,571
WMA Total	999	1,052	1,136	2,253	517	732	6,689
Grand Total	12,553	16,333	22,739	43,329	4,117	10,189	109,260

Table 2: WMA Harvest

WMA	Archery		Gun		Muzzleloader		Grand Total
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	
Altus-Lugert WMA	9	11	0	8	1	2	31
Arbuckle Springs WMA	7	14	9	4	0	0	34
Atoka PHA	1	5	6	16	8	12	48
Atoka WMA	14	14	5	27	0	3	63
Beaver River McFarland Unit	0	0	0	6	0	1	7
Beaver River WMA	2	2	3	6	3	18	34
Black Kettle WMA	16	16	90	195	24	21	362
Blue River WMA	8	5	0	3	0	0	16
Broken Bow WMA	1	4	4	10	2	7	28
Camp Gruber JMTA	0	0	0	0	8	5	13
Candy Creek WMA	5	7	2	3	0	0	17
Canton WMA	22	10	17	43	14	9	115
Cherokee GMA	13	8	33	39	0	0	93
Cherokee PHA	23	18	6	41	16	23	127
Chickasaw National Recreation Area	16	17	17	22	4	5	81
Cimarron Hills WMA	0	2	1	3	0	0	6
Cookson Hills WMA	14	11	11	10	4	3	53
Cooper WMA	1	4	1	20	0	0	26
Copan WMA	15	17	6	40	6	7	91
Cross Timbers WMA	41	38	27	11	10	4	131
Deep Fork NWR	12	23	1	1	0	0	37
Deep Fork WMA	14	17	1	2	3	9	46
Dewey County WMA	0	1	0	2	0	1	4
Drummond Flats WMA	1	2	0	0	0	0	3
Ellis County WMA	3	3	1	30	5	1	43
Eufaula WMA	16	23	19	41	10	17	126
Fobb Bottom WMA	5	3	9	9	0	3	29
Fort Cobb State Park	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Fort Cobb WMA	20	21	13	22	0	0	76
Fort Gibson Waterfowl Refuge	3	2	0	0	17	17	39
Fort Gibson WMA	70	53	13	67	26	38	267
Fort Supply WMA	6	8	8	15	8	3	48
Ft. Sill Military Reservation	1	1	63	89	0	0	154
Gary Sherrer WMA	0	0	0	2	1	3	6
Gist WMA	1	3	0	0	0	0	4
Grady County WMA	2	4	0	7	0	1	14
Gruber WMA	17	14	5	77	21	34	168
Hackberry Flat WMA	3	6	0	0	5	3	17
Heyburn WMA	9	6	8	23	2	9	57
Hickory Creek WMA	3	1	8	18	1	3	34
Honobia WMA	13	20	46	81	29	31	220
Hugo WMA	57	40	43	51	17	36	244
Hulah WMA	19	26	4	70	7	14	140
James Collins WMA	50	53	9	33	0	0	145
John Dahl WMA	0	1	4	6	1	0	12
Kaw WMA	40	40	71	102	28	28	309
Keystone WMA	40	37	18	36	6	10	147
Lake Thunderbird State Park	27	31	0	0	0	0	58
Lexington WMA	20	21	42	28	13	34	158
Little River NWR	8	9	8	18	0	0	43
Love Valley WMA	1	3	16	26	0	2	48
Lower Illinois River WMA	2	0	4	3	2	0	11
Major County WMA	0	0	0	1	0	1	2
McCurtain County Wilderness Area	2	9	16	22	1	6	56
McGee Creek WMA	8	14	3	14	3	5	47
Mountain Park WMA	1	7	0	2	2	2	14
Okmulgee GMA	2	2	9	14	0	2	29
Okmulgee PHA	6	9	0	7	0	5	27
Oologah WMA	20	33	67	96	18	11	245
Optima NWR	2	3	0	0	0	0	5
Optima WMA	1	0	1	26	0	1	29
Osage WMA Western Wall	0	0	0	0	0	5	5
Osage WMA-Rock Creek	4	7	0	12	5	4	32
Osage WMA-Western Wall	19	14	0	0	1	0	34
Ozark Plateau WMA	0	1	1	0	0	2	4
Packsaddle WMA	2	4	4	60	4	7	81
Pine Creek WMA	12	8	14	30	7	17	88
Pushmataha WMA	15	12	14	36	3	28	108
Ouachita WMA (McCurtain Unit)	17	16	24	61	16	33	167
Red Slough WMA	15	10	1	2	0	0	28
Rita Blanca WMA	0	2	1	5	0	0	8
Robbers Cave WMA	0	1	0	3	0	0	4
Robert S. Kerr WMA	9	11	7	12	3	13	55
Salt Plains NWR	1	0	51	27	9	3	91
Sandy Sanders WMA	10	17	1	5	3	9	45
Sequoia NWR	12	7	1	0	30	16	66
Schultz WMA	0	0	0	3	0	0	3
Skiatook WMA	8	8	25	32	2	7	82
Sparrow Hawk WMA	0	2	1	4	0	0	7
Spavinaw GMA	40	30	8	36	7	7	128
Spavinaw PHA	3	6	9	10	1	5	34
Stringtown WMA	0	3	4	7	3	1	18
Tenkiller WMA	9	1	11	12	5	8	46
Three Rivers WMA	71	79	139	239	73	80	681
Tishomingo NWR	0	1	15	11	0	0	27
Tishomingo WMA	1	0	1	6	0	2	10
Washita Arm WMA	3	0	10	16	0	1	30
Washita County WMA	0	1	0	1	0	0	2
Washita NWR	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Waurika WMA	14	28	3	2	0	0	47
Webbers Fall WMA	1	0	0	5	1	0	7
Whitegrass Flats WMA	1	0	0	2	0	0	3
Wichita Mountains NWR	0	0	11	22	0	0	33
Wister WMA	17	26	28	39	17	33	160
Yourman WMA	2	4	2	5	1	1	15
WMA Total	999	1,052	1,136	2,253	517	732	6,689
County Total (WMAs not Included)	11,554	15,281	21,603	41,076	3,600	9,457	102,571
Grand Total	12,553	16,333	22,739	43,329	4,117	10,189	109,260

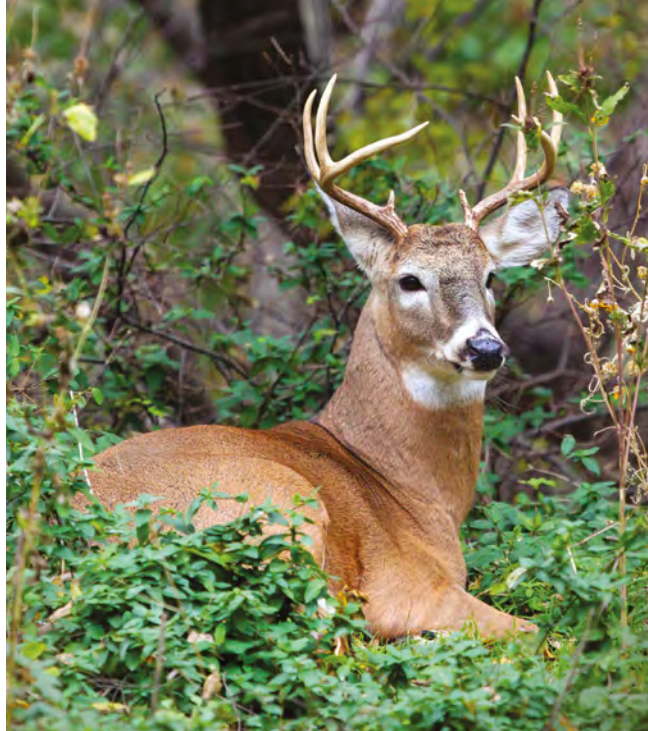
Data from the Game Harvest Survey indicates that 100,759 hunters taking to the woods with stick and string during the 3.5-month season.

Regulations remained unchanged for the 2018-19 archery deer season, and the season ran from Oct. 1, 2018, through Jan. 15, 2019. The bag limit was six deer, no more than two of which could be antlered.

A breakdown of buck and doe harvest within each week can be seen in **Figure 3**. **Figure 4** shows archery season hunter numbers and harvest since 2004.

Deer Muzzleloader Season

From Oct. 7 through Nov. 4, hunters had the opportunity to harvest deer using muzzleloading firearms. Bag limits remained unchanged, and hunters could harvest three deer: one antlered, and two antlerless with at least one taken from Management Zones 2, 7 or 8 (refer to the Oklahoma Deer Management Zones map).



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Figure 3: 2018-19 Archery Harvest by Week

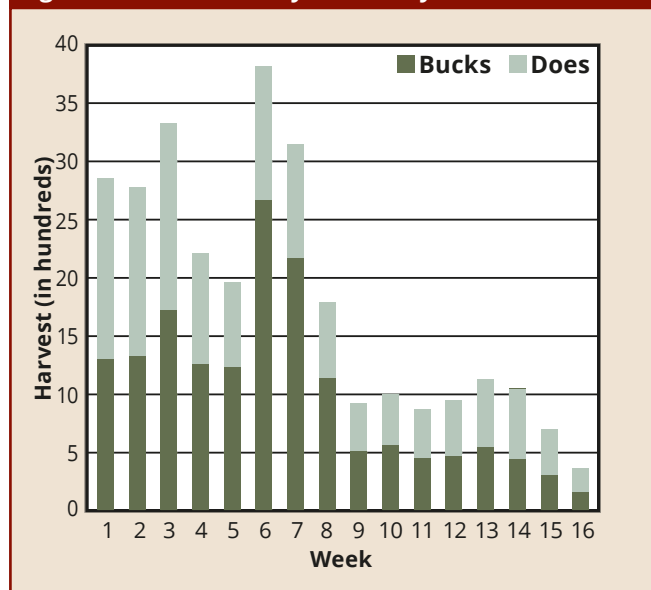


Figure 4: Archery Season Hunter Numbers and Harvest

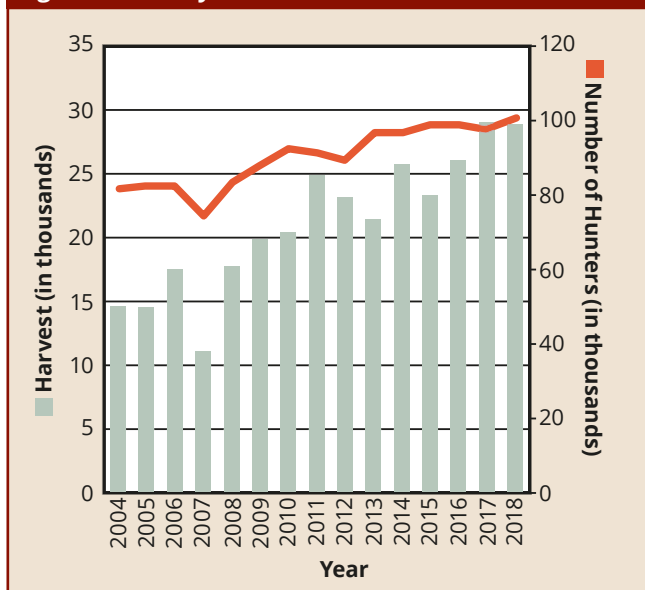


Table 3: 2018-19 Mule Deer Harvest by County, Season, and Sex

County	Archery		Gun		Muzzleloader		Grand Total
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	
Beaver	0	3	0	31	0	7	41
Beckham	0	1	0	3	0	0	4
Cimarron	1	12	0	61	0	11	85
Custer	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Ellis	0	1	0	8	0	2	11
Greer	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
Harmon	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Harper	0	0	0	13	0	3	16
Major	0	1	0	3	0	1	5
Roger Mills	0	1	0	4	0	0	5
Texas	0	3	0	30	0	6	39
Washita	0	0	0	3	0	0	3
Woods	0	1	0	1	0	0	2
Woodward	0	0	0	7	0	0	7
Grand Total	1	23	0	168	0	30	222

The Wildlife Department's annual Game Harvest Survey estimated 77,618 hunters participated in muzzleloader season. This is a slight decline from last season's 79,248. With the decline in hunters came a decline in harvest.

After the season closed, muzzleloader hunters had reported 14,306 deer taken, which made up 13.1 percent of overall harvest. That was down 13.6 percent from the 2017-18 season.

Figure 5 shows muzzleloader buck and doe harvest by day. Muzzleloader hunter numbers and harvest from 2004 to current can be seen in **Figure 6**.

Deer Gun Seasons

The 2018 gun season began Nov. 17 and ran for 16 days. Bag limits remained unchanged from the 2017 season, with hunters having the opportunity to harvest three deer, with no more than one antlered. Hunters had to harvest at least one antlerless deer from Management Zones 2, 7 or 8. A day-by-day breakdown of harvest is shown in **Figure 7**.

Oklahoma Deer Management Zones

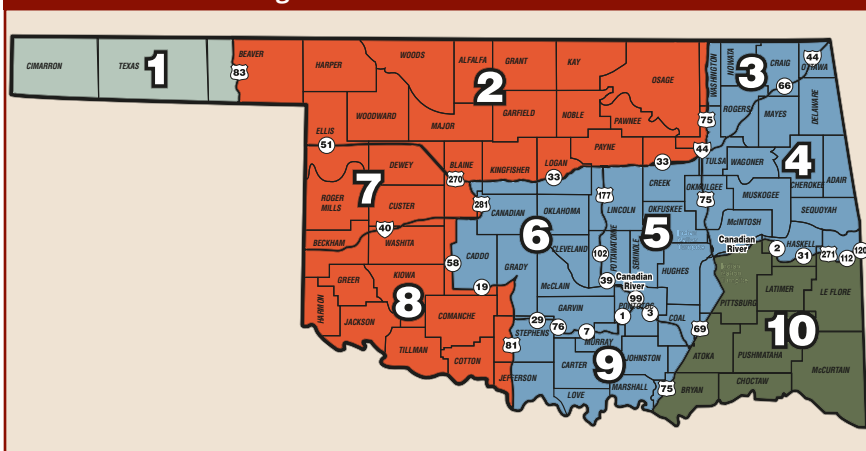


Figure 5: 2018 Muzzleloader Harvest by Day

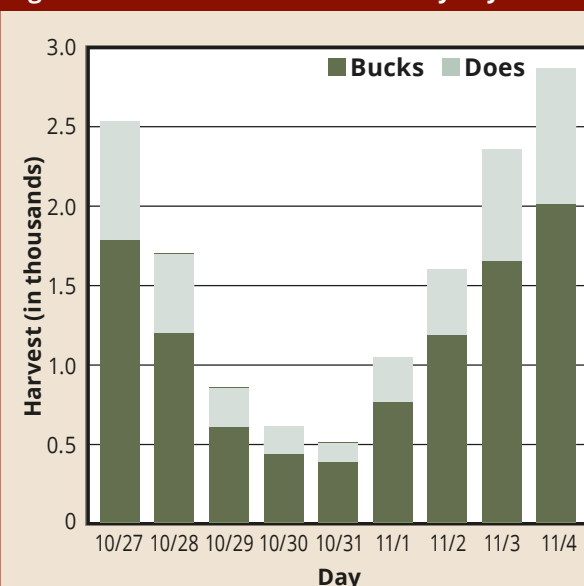
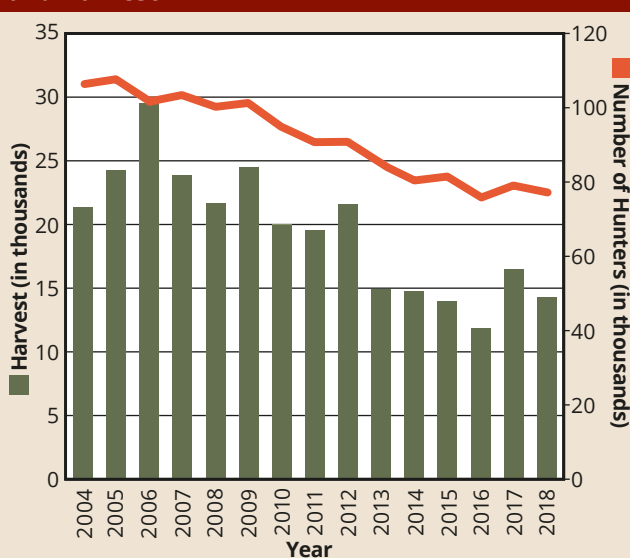


Figure 6: Muzzleloader Season Hunter Numbers and Harvest



DAYNE KEARHEADERS PHOTO SHOWCASE 2019

The Game Harvest Survey indicates that 156,152 hunters participated in Oklahoma's modern gun season, the most-popular of all season types. **Figure 8** shows harvest and participation data since 2004.

Youth hunters had an opportunity to harvest a deer with a rifle during the dedicated Youth Gun Season, which ran from Oct. 19-21. This resulted in 4,573 deer being harvested.

The Holiday Antlerless Deer Gun Season allowed for one final crack at filling the freezer. Eight of the 10 management zones were open for Holiday Antlerless season, and hunters using the online E-Check system reported 4,228 deer taken.

For all gun seasons combined, a total of 66,068 deer were harvested, which was 60.5 percent of the overall

harvest. That number represents a 6 percent increase from the 2017 seasons, and the most since 2011 for gun hunters.

Deer Age Structure 2018-19

Each season, the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation enlists students from universities across the state to collect deer jaws from taxidermists and meat processors with the hunter's approval. These jaws, combined with jaws from Deer Management Assistance Program cooperators, allow biologists to age the deer being harvested, giving them an idea about harvest pressure as it relates to specific age classes.

A breakdown of age classes harvested for does and bucks can be seen in **Figure 9** and **Figure 10**.

Figure 7: 2018 Rifle Season Harvest by Day

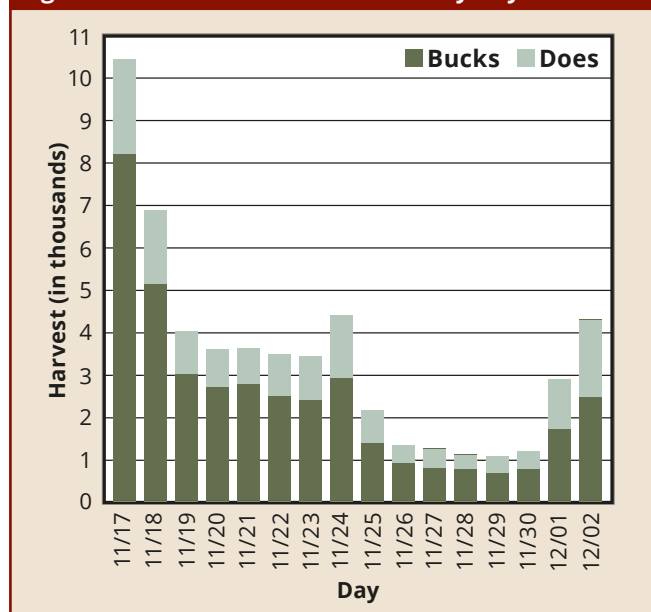


Figure 8: 2018 Gun Seasons Hunter Numbers and Harvest

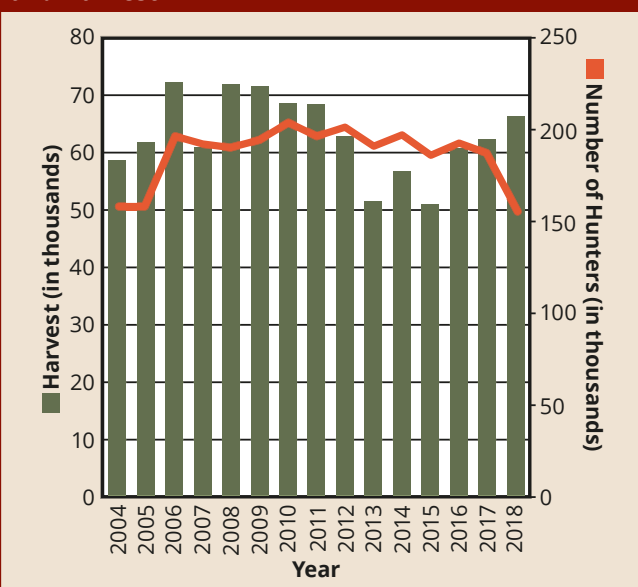


Figure 09: 2018-19 Doe Age Harvest

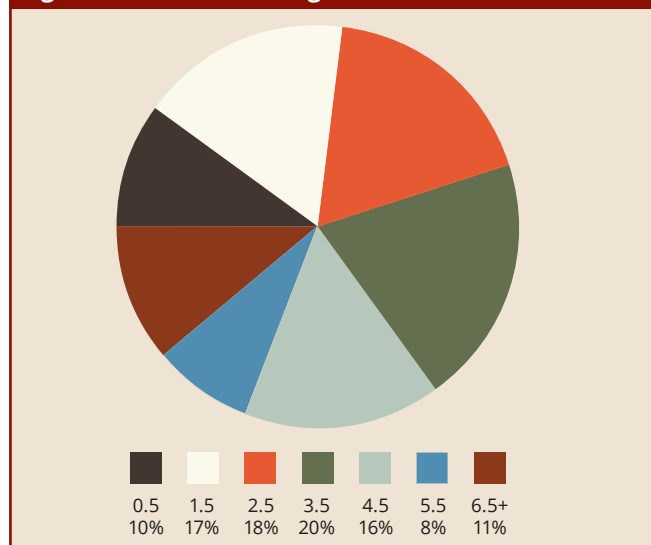
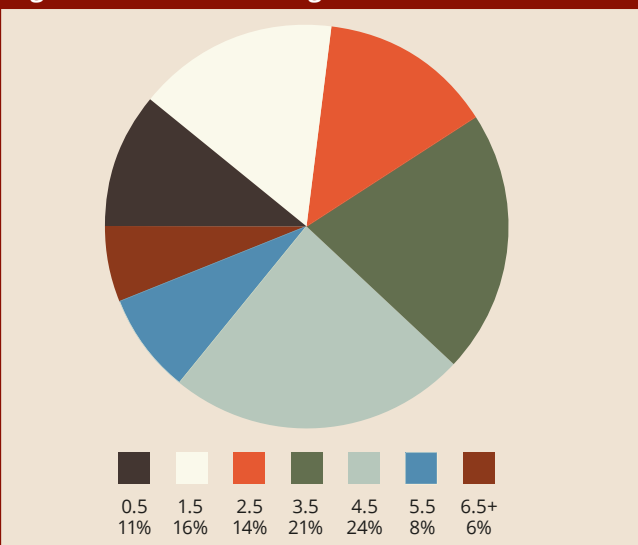


Figure 10: 2018-19 Buck Age Harvest





Hunters took 396 elk in Oklahoma this past season, which was down from the total harvest of 407 in 2017-18.

Elk

Hunters have opportunities to harvest an elk through the Department's Controlled Hunts as well as on private lands with the landowner's written permission. Seasons run concurrently with established deer seasons, except in the Special Southwest Zone.

Elk harvest for the 2018-19 seasons landed at 396, which is down from last year's 407. Bull harvest made up 179 of the total, while cow harvest accounted for the remaining 217. A breakdown of harvest by county, sex and method of take is shown in **Table 4**.

Pronghorn Antelope

The Oklahoma Panhandle continues to support pronghorn antelope with populations large enough to allow

Table 4: Elk Harvest by Sex and Method

County	Archery		Gun		Muzzleloader		Grand Total
	Bull	Cow	Bull	Cow	Bull	Cow	
Adair	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Beckham	0	0	1	3	1	0	5
Caddo	2	0	9	10	0	0	21
Carter	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Cherokee	2	1	5	2	1	1	12
Cimarron	1	0	6	2	0	0	9
Comanche	20	9	99	157	0	0	285
Delaware	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Dewey	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
Hughes	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Johnston	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Kiowa	2	0	16	22	0	0	40
Muskogee	0	1	3	0	0	1	5
Pushmataha	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Sequoyah	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Texas	3	1	0	3	0	1	8
Grand Total	37	14	140	200	2	3	396



The pronghorn harvest in Cimarron and Texas counties during 2018 was 136 animals, slightly higher than last year's 128.

hunting opportunity. Permits are drawn through the Controlled Hunts program, bought over the counter for archery opportunity, or by landowner tag draw.

These permit allocations resulted in 136 pronghorns being taken in the open zone in the Panhandle. The hunt area includes Cimarron County and western Texas County. Ninety-nine animals were harvested in Cimarron County.

Archers managed to bag 18 bucks and two does, while the rifle hunters checked in 25 bucks and 54 does. Texas County archery hunters added seven bucks, while 13 bucks and 17 does were harvested with a rifle. **Table 5** shows a breakdown of pronghorn harvest for 2018.

Conclusions

Big game hunters in Oklahoma continue to have much to be happy about. The state has been blessed with a trend of mild summers, which has helped habitat remain in great shape across most of the state. However, the harvest of whitetail does has been under the management goal of 40 percent now for a handful of seasons, and that fact is beginning to show up with population numbers growing across areas the state.

It's again time for hunters to meet the challenge to let young bucks grow and take a doe.

Table 5: Antelope Harvest by Sex and Method

County	Archery		Gun		Grand Total
	Buck	Doe	Buck	Doe	
Cimarron	18	2	25	54	99
Texas	7	0	13	17	37
Total	25	2	38	71	136

The management of Oklahoma's deer herd is largely placed on the shoulders of the hunters, as they are the ones managing private property and making harvest decisions. Remember that choosing not to pull the trigger is just as much a management decision as pulling it is.

Hunters must continue to focus on reducing the harvest of young bucks and increasing the doe harvest. The harvest of does will help prevent overpopulation in localized areas; improve an area's buck-to-doe ratios resulting in a healthier herd; reduce competition for forage and nutrients that encourage greater antler development and growth in bucks; lessen the impact on growing crops; and reduce the risk of disease spread.

Deer hunting is good in Oklahoma. So don't forget to take somebody new this season; our hunting heritage depends on it. 🌿



DESIREE BRANSON CLINE/READERS' PHOTO SHOWCASE 2019

A black bear searches a felled tree for food in the Ouachita National Forest of southeastern Oklahoma.

Bear Harvest Record Set for 2018 Seasons

Hunters harvested a record-high 85 black bears in Oklahoma during the 2018 bear archery and muzzleloader hunting seasons, more than double the total harvest of 40 bears the year before.

"Last year was an excellent year for bear hunters. The weather stayed warm, and that kept the bears and the hunters active," said Jeff Ford, a wildlife biologist for the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation.

Modern-day bear hunting began in 2009 in only four southeastern Oklahoma counties: Le Flore, Latimer, Pushmataha and McCurtain. Seasons are held for archery and muzzleloader, and hunters are limited to one bear each year regardless of method of take. A quota of 20 bears is set for the muzzleloader season, but the actual harvest the past few years has not come close to that number.

Le Flore County traditionally yields the highest number of bears each year. In 2018, hunters took 51 bears in Le Flore County. Only four of those were taken with muzzleloaders.

Latimer County yielded 13 bears for the year; Pushmataha County, 20 bears; and McCurtain County, one bear.

In all, 78 bears (43 boars and 35 sows) were harvested during the archery season, and seven bears (four boars and three sows) were taken during the muzzleloader season. Usually about three-fourths of the total bear harvest each year occurs on private land.

The bear seasons coming up this year easily could result in another record-high harvest, thanks to some major changes in the area open to bear hunting. Beginning in 2019, all or parts of 13 counties are now open for bear

hunting in the southeast.

"This year should be another great year for the hunters," Ford said. "The bears are in the best shape that I have seen in the past several years. We have had above-average rainfall, and the mast crop should be above average."

Ford said the first week of archery season is when most bears are taken, and the hunters who are out earlier in the season may have better chances for a harvest.

All hunters wanting to pursue a black bear in 2019 must buy either an archery or muzzleloader bear license before the opening dates of each season.

Archery bear season dates are defined by statute, running from Oct. 1 until the third Sunday in October. The 2019 bear season will close Oct. 20. There is no archery season harvest quota.

Muzzleloader bear season will be Oct. 26-Nov. 3, but the season will close as soon as the quota of 20 bears has been reached. Before they hunt, muzzleloader hunters must call for bear quota update information at (888) 901-3256.

For more bear hunting information, consult the Oklahoma Hunting & Fishing Regulations Guide available at www.wildlifedepartment.com, in the "GoOutdoorsOklahoma" mobile app for Apple and Android, or in print free at license dealers statewide.

As black bears become more established in eastern Oklahoma, the chances of people encountering one are increasing. To learn more about bears and what to do if you encounter one, go online to www.wildlifedepartment.com/bear-encounters. 🐾

The More Things Change...



Sight of Deer 50 Years Ago Worth Bragging About

By Don P. Brown, Information and Education Specialist

Fred Manous, 83, filled his buck tag the first day of the season in 2018. A former Game Warden, Manous has witnessed great changes in deer hunting the past seven decades.

It is often said that the greatest wildlife conservation success story in American history is the restoration of white-tailed deer to the fields and forests. Plentiful today, the whitetail was on the brink of extinction around the turn of the last century.

Consider this: The U.S. Biological Survey in 1890 estimated the wild white-tailed deer population of the United States and Canada at about 300,000. Last year, hunters took more than 109,000 whitetails in Oklahoma, fully one-third of the number believed to exist just a little more than 100 years ago.

The magnificent success story of deer restoration also played out in Oklahoma during the mid-1900s. And Fred Manous of Atoka, 83, witnessed much of that process.

"People nowadays don't realize the shortage of game that we went through. I think they would appreciate it more if they just realize where we came from," he said.

Manous was born in Atoka. When he was 5, his father died and the family moved to Rattan to run cattle free-range.

"We started hunting rabbits or squirrels. We wouldn't take rabbits until after the first frost. All my life, we kept a 3030 rifle loaded behind the door," he said.

"We were just kids with our bare feet and a .22 and an old dog. And we'd stay down in the bottom all day. If you could find a squirrel or something that was edible, well we took it home.

"We never heard of deer when I was growing up. I always wanted to hunt deer."

In 1949, when he was 13, Manous had his first opportunity to go to deer camp. He recalls riding horses 10 or 12 miles to the camp on a blistering hot day, and the next day a snowstorm blew through. "I learned early on to take a jacket with you," he quipped.

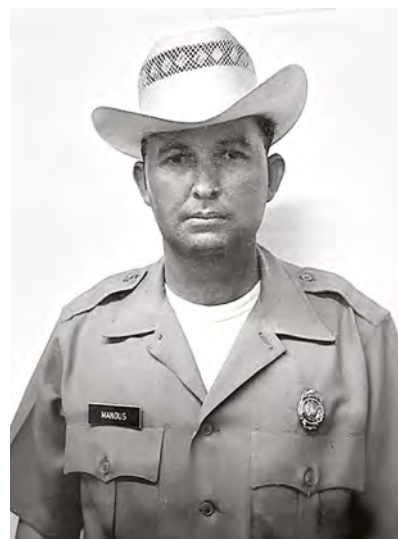
On that trip, Manous recalls the men going hiking but they left their guns

at camp. "We started up the mountain and a big ol' buck was standing in the road. And that's the first deer I ever saw.

"The next season, I saw a fawn, and I bragged about that all year long because deer were as scarce as hen's teeth!"

Manous said his folks did not hunt, so it wasn't until after he married that he started hunting deer with his father-in-law. "He was quite a hunter and fisherman. He probably hunted the first time deer season opened.

"I really didn't know how to deer hunt until I started watching some-



Fred Manous shortly after being hired as a Game Warden in 1967.

"People nowadays don't realize the shortage of game that we went through. I think they would appreciate it more if they just realize where we came from"

Meet Fred On TV!

Tune in to "Outdoor Oklahoma" on TV in early October to hear Fred Manous talk about deer hunting back in the day. Watch shows anytime online at youtube.com/OutdoorOklahoma.



ANTLERS GAME RANGER, Fred Manous, scored this kill, a 75-pound spike buck, Wednesday morning, November 7, during primitive firearms season. The buck was taken in John's Valley during the first primitive firearms season in Pushmataha county since statehood.

“Probably the first deer I ever killed was a 26-pointer in 1965. I think I’d hunted 11 years before I ever killed a deer, but it was a good one!”

one that could teach me. He kind of took me under his wing. I watched everything that he did because he had good rules and good morals.”

But he hunted for more than a decade before he had any success. “Probably the first deer I ever killed was a 26-pointer in 1965. I think I’d hunted 11 years before I ever killed a deer, but it was a good one! They only thing is: They’ve gotten smaller ever since!”

Manous recalls the many changes that have happened throughout the decades since he started deer hunting. When he started, hunting seasons were perhaps three days or five days long. Now, archery deer season runs for 107 days and gun season runs 16 days. In 1936, the year Manous was born, Oklahoma held a five-day deer hunting season restricted to seven southeastern counties, and hunters took 375 deer.

“Hunting has just evolved so much,” he said. “Then, if you saw a deer, it was a good season. Now, if you harvest one, it’s a good season.

“I see more deer coming to work in the mornings on the highway than I used to see in the woods, so you can imagine how things have changed. You might see 20 or 30 deer in one day now, when you wouldn’t see that in three or four years when I was growing up.”

Roads were few into the remote areas of southeastern Oklahoma in his early days. He recalls deer camps would line the popular roads one after another. “It was like a town,” he said. And there was an important social component in deer hunting then.

“We liked the camping. It doesn’t matter if your 83 or 40 or 20, if you’re at a deer camp, everybody’s equal – rich and poor. The camping’s part of it. The deer hunting is just a bonus.”

As more roads began piercing the heavy forests, the deer camps spread out and hunters became more isolated.

When Manous was in grade school, he said a game ranger showed up to present a program. The crisp green uniform and spit-shined boots made an

impression, and Manous decided right then that he wanted to become a game ranger (as they were called back then).

In 1967, his goal became reality when he was hired by the Wildlife Department. He was issued a pair of pants and an Army shirt, and he recalls his wife washing them every night. He saw many changes during his 30 years as a Game Warden. At first, his Department vehicle was a four-door sedan; by the time he retired, he was cruising in a four-wheel-drive pickup.

Manous became a local legend partly because of his weekly column he wrote for the Pushmataha County newspapers. “I used the newspaper more than a pistol,” he said, and he



Fred Manous in 1965 with a 26-point whitetail, the first deer he ever harvested.

found that strategy quite successful. “You just tell people what you want to do, and they are more likely to help you.”

But the major change he has seen during his years of hunting is the restoration and growth of the deer populations in the state. “When I first started to work, we were trying to get to 5,000 deer in a season. And now we get that much probably in Osage County.”

Another change that concerns him is the decline in the number of hunters nationwide, which poses a threat to the future of a great American tradition. He urges current hunters to do as he’s done in passing along the hunting tradition to the next generation.

“We should take these young people and teach them the right ways. I take my grandkids and my kids, and I want them to know how to do things and what the licenses are for, and just teach them all of it. You know, kids learn more by watching than they do by listening.”

He’s always told novice hunters to appreciate the game they pursue and to go ahead and harvest their fair share. But always do the right thing and it will pay off. When bag limits are followed, the game is being managed properly, which ensures the next generation can enjoy the same resources this generation enjoys.

“I would encourage young men who maybe have slacked up on hunting ... to try to remember what it was like when they were a child. And if a young man would remember what it was like and start over, just be that little boy, just be out there and enjoy it. You don’t have to make it hard labor; just slow down and enjoy.

“If killing is all your going for, you’re probably not going to enjoy it.”

Something that hasn’t changed in his 83 years is the joy that hunting can bring. Being in nature, being alone, pondering whatever comes to mind and witnessing the sights are all experiences hunters can cherish.

Manous says most people today want instant gratification. But the key to enjoying the outdoors is to slow down. “Some people never see a beautiful sunrise – they are just pure gold.

He recalls sitting in the deer blind with his grandson when a bobcat crossed in front of them. “You don’t get to see that sitting on the divan or uptown. You’ve got to get out in the woods and be quiet, be still. And if you can get your kids and grandkids to see those things, why not take advantage of it?”

But Manous realizes hunting is not everyone’s passion. “You either love it or you don’t.

“I love it.”

And he’s loved it for seven decades without fail. This past year, Manous was out in the woods with his son for deer gun season, continuing a lifelong tradition. And his bonus: He harvested a buck on opening day. 🦌



Fred Manous, right, along with his sons Carey, left, and Jason, and grandson Tyler (Carey’s son) with his first buck.



Fred Manous recalls how deer hunting has changed during his seven decades participating in the tradition.

*Uncontrolled
hunting
decimated
deer herds.*



Warden's Foresight Led to Great Success Story

Oklahoma's First Modern Deer Season in 1933

Despite the crippling effects of a stock market crash, bank failures, unemployment and drought, there was an additional reason to give thanks among a couple of hundred Oklahoma hunters as they sat down for their holiday feasts of 1933. Although few could scarcely afford turkey and dressing during the Great Depression, these hunters and their families got to enjoy a special treat: a delicious roast of venison.

It was a meal few of them had experienced. Earlier that year, the Oklahoma Game and Fish Commission authorized an open season on buck deer, the first such opportunity in many years. This autumn marks 86 years since that historic hunt.

Of the estimated 2,000 hunters who roamed the woods of southeastern Oklahoma or Major County that

year, 235 bucks were checked in. In the years that followed, the restoration of white-tailed deer is arguably our state's greatest conservation success story.

Through the establishment of deer refuges on many of today's oldest wildlife management areas beginning in the '30s, and then the subsequent trap-and-transplant programs of the '40s, '50s and '60s, white-tails are now found in abundance throughout Oklahoma.

As if going from 235 harvested deer in 1933 to more than 109,000 last year isn't a remarkable story in its own right, the story of how deer season was reopened after being closed for years provides an interesting case study. And if not for a savvy state Game Warden with journalistic talents, the chance to hunt deer might have not happened for a long time.

A Depleted Resource

Although not totally erased like Oklahoma's bison herds, a heavy toll had been taken on Oklahoma's whitetails due in part to market and subsistence hunting from the 1870s through statehood in 1907. In a 1912 newspaper article from *The Oklahoman*, a Bartlesville man wrote: "Unless a state law is passed preventing the killing of deer in the Osage country, it is the belief of hunters here that it will be only a few years before this game will have been annihilated in this part of the state. Five years ago, deer in the Osage country were plentiful. Today it believed less than one hundred are in existence" (Nov. 17, 1912, *The Oklahoman*).

In another article from the late teens, a group of quail hunters in the Osage were startled when their pointers jumped a big buck from a thicket — the first deer any of them had seen in years. For all practical purposes, white-tailed deer had been eliminated from the western three-fourths of Oklahoma by 1920. Although deer hunting was still being allowed for a few days each November, it was widely believed that most of Oklahoma's deer herd was being eliminated through poaching.

In the '20s, the Oklahoma Game and Fish Department (OGF) increased the law enforcement staff to about 30 full-time officers (called game rangers then), plus numerous "deputized" personnel. Still, providing protection to the scattered remnants of whitetails in Oklahoma proved a daunting task. With the land runs of the late 1880s and early '90s, the rural population in Oklahoma was significant, with hungry settlers occupying most every 160-acre tract.

Meat was a precious commodity. Nearly all rural inhabitants raised chickens for eggs and the skillet,

which required nearly round-the-clock protection from hungry predators. With loaded side-by-side shotguns at arm's reach, it's not hard to imagine what happened to any wild turkey, quail, duck or deer that may have been spotted.

Winds of Change

Disgruntled sportsmen demanded that something be done to preserve wildlife. Stocking of quail, deer and other species was demanded, but realistically, propagation of game was outside OGF's abilities in the early 1900s. What was within its capabilities, however, was the propagation of fish. Actually, the public's demand for fish was much more acute than any calls for the stocking of deer. So, during the early 1900s, the Durant State Fish Hatchery and the hatchery at Medicine Park (now named the James A. Manning Hatchery) were built, and they still provide hundreds of thousands of fish to Oklahoma waters today.

Although habitat restoration was being touted for landowners to bring back deer, quail, prairie chickens and turkeys, it wasn't the solution sportsmen were looking for. They pressed OGF to do something immediately, before all the wildlife disappeared. About the only thing left to do was declare all-out protection on dwindling game species.

Beginning in the mid 1910s, deer seasons were closed in most central and western counties. By 1922, the few remaining southeastern counties had been closed. However, it wasn't too many years later that the "political winds of the deer issue began to shift back the other direction. In response to a letter, written by a western Oklahoma landowner who had his melon crop destroyed by deer, to the OGF Commission Chairman: "Deer

and turkey are killed in Oklahoma every year (at that time both were under a closed season), and practically at all seasons of the year, notwithstanding the fact that out of our license money enormous expenditures are incurred in the way of attempting to furnish special protection to this class of protected game.

"The initial expense of protecting such game for the sole enjoyment of the lawless or law violators is probably not particularly relished by either the sportsman who puts up the money or the farmer who submits to the depreda-



Larry Embry Jr., 13, harvested the first whitetail at Camp Gruber November 11, 1951 with a bow.

tions" (Jan. 26, 1930, *The Oklahoman*).

By 1931, several newspaper articles were written about the possibility of an upcoming open deer

History of White-tailed Deer in Oklahoma

1900 – Market/subsistence hunting and unregulated harvest had eliminated nearly all deer from the state.

1917 – Total statewide deer population estimated at 500 animals. Legislature bans deer harvest.

1918-22 – From western Oklahoma moving east, counties previously open to deer hunting are systematically closed to deer hunting.

1922 – All deer hunting in Oklahoma is prohibited.

1933 – First regulated deer season (five days) is held. Hunt restricted to six southeastern counties and Major County in western Oklahoma; harvest was 235 bucks. Also, regulations put in place for wearing a red upper garment (later to become "hunter" orange).

1934 – No deer season authorized.

1935-37 – Deer season in seven southeastern counties only. Harvest is 331 in 1935, 375 in 1936, and 347 in 1937.

1938 – No deer season authorized.

1939-40 – Harvest totals: 384 in 1939 and 318 in 1940.

1941-43 – All deer hunting is closed. Many Oklahoma Game and Fish personnel are called to active military service.

1943 – Deer relocation program begins with the trap-and-transplant of 22 deer.

1945 – A total of 469 deer are harvested. Restoration efforts continue, with most deer trapped from either the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge or Fort Sill. About 50 deer captured from Aransas Pass National Wildlife Refuge on the Texas Gulf coast.

1946 – Participation in Deer Gun Season jumps to more than 7,000, likely due to returning World War II veterans looking for recreation. A total of 35 deer are transplanted from the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge to the U.S. Navy Ammunition Depot near McAlester. (In less than a decade, the military installation, now known as the McAlester Army Ammunition Plant, would serve as a source herd for trapping activities).

1946 – Oklahoma had its first archery season (one day) Nov. 11, 1946, in seven southeastern counties. No deer were harvested.

1949 – Special archery season (five days) is designated only at Camp Gruber, resulting in the first buck taken by bow and arrow during a regulated season. The deer, taken by Roland Barber, is the state's first archery buck and was a fallow deer.

1951 – First whitetail deer taken by bow and arrow during a regulated season since the days that American Indians hunted deer for subsistence is harvested by Larry Embry Jr., 13.

1954 – First statewide Deer Gun Season (five days) results in harvest of 1,487 bucks.

- 1962** – First antlerless deer season.
- 1969** – First muzzleloader season (three days) held, resulting in two deer harvested. Hunt restricted to part of Le Flore County.
- 1970** – Statewide 16-day Deer Gun Season, with a total harvest of 6,882 bucks.
- 1972** – Nine-day Deer Gun Season with all open counties and special two-day antlerless season. Total harvest 7,670 deer.
- 1975** – Cy Curtis Awards Program initiated by the Department to recognize trophy deer (harvested during the 1972 season and thereafter). In the first year, seven deer are entered. The program is named in honor of the man most responsible for the restoration of whitetail deer in Oklahoma.
- 1976** – Department begins broad-scale antlerless harvest in 19 counties by issuing permits by special drawing. Total deer harvest was 11,548 – 26 percent does.
- 1980** – State deer harvest about 14,000.
- 1982** – Antlerless permit system deemed unpopular due to perceived inequities and replaced by antlerless days available to all hunters. Total deer harvest for the year was 19,255 – 23 percent does.
- 1986** – The Department ceases any further trap-and-transplant efforts with sufficient populations of deer available to repopulate all suitable habitats statewide.
- 1989** – State deer harvest nears 40,000.
- 1990** – Statewide deer population estimated at 250,000 deer. Total deer harvest was 44,070 deer – 24 percent does.
- 1992** – Total deer harvest tops 50,000. State record archery buck taken in Oklahoma County.
- 1999** – Statewide deer population estimated at 425,000 deer. Total deer harvest for the year was 82,500 deer – 36 percent does.
- 2000** – For first time, deer harvest tops 100,000.
- 2001** – First Special Antlerless Deer Season is held in December, and Deer Archery Season expands into January.
- 2003** – Deer Gun Season expanded to 16 days. First statewide Youth Antlerless Deer Gun Season is held in October and yields 2,285 deer.
- 2004** – Statewide deer population estimated at 475,000 deer. Bowhunters set new harvest record with 14,639 deer taken. Statewide harvest is 94,689 – 40 percent does.
- 2005** – Statewide harvest is 101,111 including 40 percent does. The number of counties that recorded more than 1,000 deer harvested increased to 43.
- 2006** – Oklahoma's largest annual harvest of deer is recorded: 119,349 – 40 percent does.
- 2007** – A new state record whitetail buck scoring 194 typical is taken in Pushmataha County. By now, 4,500 deer (including 19 mule deer) have been entered into the Cy Curtis Awards Program.
- 2009** – Hunters given option to check-in deer harvests using the Internet.
- 2013** – Department begins new education initiative "Hunters in the Know ... Let Young Bucks Grow!" to urge hunters to positively influence the age structure of the state's deer herd. Statewide harvest is 107,848.
- 2013** – Hunters required to check-in all deer harvests using the online E-Check system. Total deer harvest was 88,009 – 41 percent does.
- 2019** – Participation in Deer Archery Season tops 100,000 for the first time.

in fact and effect, "Prohibitionists" so far as the taking of any kind of game is concerned. ...

"Experience in the past has taught us and is still teaching us that a 'closed' season means year-round open season. Sportsmen quite naturally lose interest and the desire to conserve that, which has been perpetually barred to them by means of a closed season. ...

"Old and heavily populated states like New Jersey and those in New England each year have an open season on deer, and a majority of those who go into their woods get a buck. And yet, Oklahoma with thousands of square miles of as primeval territory as there is in all this land cannot have enough deer to warrant hunting? Ridiculous.

"The past 11 years' experiment has convinced us that the closed season is not the panacea. Therefore, we favor giving a short open season a trial" (Aug. 13, 1933, *The Oklahoman*).

Despite OGF's best efforts to stop poaching, it was still an enormous problem. But as Chandler surmised, poaching activity would decline if hunters were given at least the occasional opportunity to take a deer

season. In January 1932, a colorful cigar-chomping attorney from Tishomingo named William Henry Davis Murray took over the reins of the statehouse. Known by his nickname, "Alfalfa Bill," Murray became Oklahoma's ninth governor. One of Murray's lieutenants in his gubernatorial campaign was Robert P. "Bob" Chandler, a newspaperman from Muskogee. Once in office, Murray named Chandler the State Game Warden (head of OGF).

Chandler, with his newspaper background, must have known well the "power of the written word."

As head of OGF, Chandler began writing articles for local newspapers about hunting, fishing and activities of OGF. His folksy, Will Rogers-like prose and honesty quickly became endearing to his readers. He became known simply as "Warden Bob."

In regard to opening deer gun season, Chandler wrote: "We believe a short open season on deer will be generally welcomed and applauded by sportsmen over the state. At the same time, we realize that such action is apt to arouse a storm of protest from the noisy minority of so-called conservationists, who are

Deer trap-and-transplant



legally and ethically. In summer 1933, Chandler led a group of OGF Commissioners on tours of the southeastern deer country to survey the population. Undoubtedly, Chandler also visited with local sportsmen in the area to promote his philosophy that a closed season on deer had “de-valued” them as a resource, and thus poaching was a greater problem. With an open season, people would do a better job of “shepherding” their local herd. Plus, having a limited open season would bring much needed commerce to the area.

A New Season

Although there was stiff opposition, Chandler’s rhetoric must have generated enough public support for the Commission to act. Under the authority of Section 3, chapter 27, session laws, 1929, “Alfalfa Bill” Murray and the Oklahoma Game and Fish Commission signed a declaration to open a season on buck deer Sept. 1, 1933.

The season would be open in Atoka, Pushmataha, McCurtain, Le Flore, Choctaw, Latimer and Major counties and was set to begin at 6 a.m. Tuesday, Nov. 7, and run through 5:30 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 11. If you were a permanent resident of one of the open counties, you could obtain a free permit, but Oklahoma residents who lived outside of one of the open counties were charged a \$5 permit.

Chandler issued a story about the very first deer permit being sold to Dr. A.C. Hirshfield (a respected Oklahoma City physician who was an avid participant in local pointing dog trials). Chandler also wrote before the season opener telling hunters that the OGF Ranger Force would be wearing new uniforms “to increase their visibility and to contribute greatly to the morale and tra-



This old photograph shows Mont Curnutt, president of the Tower Drug Co., with one of the first deer ever harvested during Oklahoma’s 75 years of regulated deer seasons. It was taken in 1933, while he and his wife were hunting early in the season. They saw the 11-point buck at a distance of about 300 yards, and Curnutt connected with a shot from his regulation army rifle. Photo published Nov. 13, 1933 in The Daily Oklahoman.

dition of the force.”

The week before the deer season opener, “Warden Bob” also wrote a lengthy column asking for vigilance in keeping the deer season safe. After the season closed, Chandler was quick to point out that not a single hunting accident had occurred. Along with giving the final tally (the majority of the 235 bucks came from McCurtain County), Chandler wrote a hilarious self-deprecating story about his experience deer hunting. “We wouldn’t take a thousand dollars for our experiences, however, but wouldn’t have gone over the same territory again this week for another grand,” he wrote about hiking up and down steep mountains for five days.

Even with the success of the 1933 deer hunt, the OGF Commission did not repeat it the following year. However, a new OGF administration reopened the southeastern deer zone from 1935-37.

In 1933, there was no Department magazine or weekly television show or website to educate and inform the public regarding conservation issues. But “Warden Bob” Chandler still managed to reach the sportsmen. Through his articles written for the “common man,” he persuaded sportsmen to set aside their preconceived notions about wildlife regulations and management. He eloquently and fairly made the case that “all-out” protection for a “somewhat abundant” resource was not the answer. With a limited open season on deer, he believed people would place a greater value on the resource. And he also held to the belief that the potential was great for white-tailed deer numbers to increase in Oklahoma.

Judging by what’s happened over the years with the state’s deer population and hunting success, “Warden Bob” could easily be considered a prophet. 🌿

Working Together for Youths

State's Controlled Hunts Program Yields Quality Outings on National Refuge

Water and sky are one in the afterglow of sunset at Sequoyah National Wildlife Refuge.

**By Craig Springer, SW Region External Affairs
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

Zayne Wagner has a whole lot going for him. The grade-school boy loves the outdoors, fishing and hunting. He's often a shadow to his dad and grandfather along the waters and in the woods and fields of eastern Oklahoma.

And Zayne lives not too far from Sequoyah National Wildlife Refuge.

The refuge, named in honor of the American Indian who invented the Cherokee alphabet, sits at the head of Robert S. Kerr Reservoir where the Arkansas and Canadian rivers conjoin then pour southeasterly toward the Mississippi. It's big water. The national wildlife refuge lies on the southwestern edge of the Ozark Highlands.

Rich bottomland hardwoods dominate the 32-square-mile refuge, interspersed with upland meadows and fields. It's habitat for a litany of dabbling ducks, snow geese and wading birds that make seasonal stopovers. Bald eagles soar the spring skies on forays from their massive nests that lie in the crooks atop muscular cot-



Zayne Wagner harvested an impressive whitetail buck at Sequoyah National Wildlife Refuge after he was selected for one of 25 youth deer hunts on the area through the Wildlife Department's Controlled Hunts program.



USFWS

Snow geese cloud the sky above Sequoyah National Wildlife Refuge.

tonwood trees. The big birds hunt bass and shad and carp and catfish — along with the occasional unsuspecting duck — to feed their hungry eaglets.

The refuge has an impressive population of white-tailed deer, too. That's what drew young Zayne to Sequoyah.

Through the annual Controlled Hunts program operated by the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, Zayne was one of the lucky youth hunters that drew one of 25 deer hunt permits at Sequoyah. For him and his family, it was a fruitful hunt.

"He doesn't realize just how big of a deer he took," said his jubilant father, Nathan. "We were confident Zayne would see deer. He and his papaw and I scouted the woods and fields three times looking for sign and where to set up on opening day."

The investment paid off. An hour after legal shooting time, a big buck showed itself at the edge of the woods.

"It was 200 yards out — too far away — and Zayne could hardly control himself. He had serious buck fever," Nathan said. "He calmed himself. And we waited it out, quiet and still, another 10 minutes as the buck lazily moved within range of a .45-caliber smokeless muzzleloader resting on shooting sticks."

Leveled on the heart and lungs as he'd been taught, he squeezed the trigger. Like a ghost, the animal was gone. The boy thought he'd missed it.

Nathan reloaded the muzzleloader, and they traipsed

through a muddy field, onward over a gentle rise and into the gray woods. That's when the boy saw the white underbelly of a most impressive buck on the forest floor. The animal bounded only a few steps from a well-placed shot. And what did he want to do next? Call his granddad.

Zayne was among 16 youngsters to harvest a deer at the refuge. What's more, these young hunters were among the first to have access to portions of the national wildlife refuge previously closed to hunting. Sequoyah National Wildlife Refuge and other national wildlife refuges across the country are opening new areas to hunting for people of all ages.

As for the Wagners, they appreciate the opportunity to hunt on the refuge and intend to try to get back to Sequoyah next deer season. They eagerly await for the next application period for the Wildlife Department's Controlled Hunts program.

Wild game and fish are common table fare for the Wagner family. And as it is with all hunters and anglers, license fees and taxes paid on firearms, ammunition and outdoor gear pay for conservation through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program.

To learn more about the Controlled Hunts program, go to www.wildlifedepartment.com/controlled-hunts. For more about hunting at national wildlife refuges, go to www.fws.gov/hunting. 🌿



Youngsters in Oklahoma have plenty of opportunities to enjoy hunting during times set aside only for them.

Youths Get Their Own Hunting Chances

Young hunters have special opportunities in Oklahoma to get into the outdoors and harvest game during times set aside specifically for them.

The first "youth only" opportunity of the fall hunting season will be Oct. 5, 2019, which is a **Youth Waterfowl Hunting Day** in all of Oklahoma's waterfowl zones.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service allows two days outside the regular waterfowl seasons to provide a special hunting opportunity to encourage youth participation in waterfowling. Youth hunters must be 15 or younger, and accompanied by a nonhunting adult at least age 18.

The daily bag limit may include ducks, mergansers, coots and geese. Bag limits will be the same as allowed during the regular season. All species and sex specific duck bag limit restrictions remain in effect.

A second statewide Youth Waterfowl Hunting Day will be Feb. 1, 2020, giving youngsters a chance for a late season experience.

For deer hunting, the most popular pursuit among Oklahoma hunters, youths 17 and younger are given the first shot with modern firearms during **Youth Deer Gun Season** each year. This year, the season will be Oct. 18-20, 2019. Also on those same days is **Youth Elk Gun Season** on private lands.

Also, hundreds of youngsters are selected by drawing each year for youth-only deer hunts through the Wildlife Department's **Controlled Hunts** program. More than 700 permits are issued to youths who submit applications in the spring.

The Wildlife Department also offers a limited number of **guided youth waterfowl hunts**, which are designed to offer youngsters ages 12-15 who don't have a mentor who hunts waterfowl the opportunity to experience the joys of waterfowling. Applications through www.wildlifedepartment.com are due by Nov. 4.

Rounding out the slate of youth hunting opportunities are the **youth spring turkey hunts** through the Controlled Hunts program. More than 30 youngsters are selected for these hunts that are held on several wildlife management areas.

Oklahoma residents younger than 16 are exempt from the purchase of the general hunting license, federal duck stamp, Oklahoma waterfowl license, Wildlife Conservation Passport, land access permit and HIP requirements.

Nonresidents younger than 16 are exempt from the purchase of the federal duck stamp and HIP requirements. Nonresidents younger than 14 are exempt from the purchase of a general hunting license in Oklahoma. 🌿

Hunter Education Live Classroom Sessions

Any time of the year is a good time to become hunter education certified. But with most of the fall hunting seasons coming soon, this could be the best time to dive into the course and learn about hunting safety, ethics and the important role of sportsmen and sportswomen in conserving wildlife.

Hunter education certification is available for anyone 10 and older in Oklahoma. It is required of anyone 30 or younger who wants to exercise the full privileges of a hunting license in the state. However, anyone of any age may buy an apprentice-designated hunting license and hunt in Oklahoma while abiding by the requirements of the apprentice-designated license.

Hunter education certification is available free online anytime: Go to www.wildlifedepartment.com, click "Education" in the Quick Links section, then click "Hunter Education."

Live classroom sessions for Oklahoma hunter education are listed below. Additional classes may be added in coming weeks. Pre-registration is required for live classes: Go to www.wildlifedepartment.com, click "Education" in the Quick Links box, then "Hunter Education," then "Find a Class." The student's full name, birth date, and last four numbers of the Social Security number are among the required items to register.

The online hunter education course (administered by the National Rifle Association) and all in-person courses are free of charge.

NORTHEAST

- FORT GIBSON: High School cafeteria, Sept. 7, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- OKMULGEE: Deep Fork National Wildlife Refuge maintenance facility, Sept. 7, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- TAHLEQUAH: Northeastern State University, Webb Educational Building, Sept. 14, 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
- AFTON: Excalibur Sports, Sept. 21, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- WAGONER: Civic Center, Sept. 21, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- JAY: Delaware County Library Sept. 21, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- JENKS: First Baptist Church, Oct. 5, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- SALLISAW: Central High School cafeteria, Oct. 12, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

SOUTHEAST

- McALESTER: Life Church, Sept. 7, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- BROKEN BOW: High school cafeteria, Sept. 14, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.
- POTEAU: Kiamichi Tech Center, Sept. 21, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- ANTLERS: Wildlife Heritage Center, Sept. 21, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

SOUTH CENTRAL

- ADA: Pontotoc Tech Center, Sept. 14, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.
- ARDMORE: Plainview Schools, Sept. 21, 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. and Sept. 22, 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. Must attend both days.
- WAYNE: Mid-America Tech Center, Oct. 5, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- CHICKASHA: Canadian Valley Tech Center, Oct. 5, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- MUSTANG: Community Center, Nov. 9, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

NORTH CENTRAL

- STILLWATER: Meridian Tech Center, Aug. 31st, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- SHAWNEE: Gordon Cooper Tech Center, Oct. 5, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- EDMOND: Arcadia Conservation Education Area, Oct. 12, 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. and Oct. 13, 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. Must attend both days.
- PONCA CITY: Gravity Room at City Central, Oct. 12, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- EDMOND: Arcadia Conservation Education Area, Nov. 16, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

SOUTHWEST

- FORT COBB: Caddo-Kiowa Tech Center, Sept. 7, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- LAWTON: Great Plains Tech Center, Sept. 20, 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. and Sept. 21, 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Must attend both days.
- GRANITE: Senior Citizens Center, Sept. 21, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- ELK CITY: Western Tech Safety Training Center, Sept. 21, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- WEATHERFORD: Crowder Lake Outdoor Classroom Building, Oct. 5, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- RANDLETT: Big Pasture Elementary School, Oct. 12, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- OMEGA: Chisholm Trail Tech Center, Nov. 16, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

NORTHWEST

- ENID: Grand National Gun Club, Sept. 14, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- WOODWARD: High Plains Tech Center, Sept. 21, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- GUYMON: Police Department, Sept. 14, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

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9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 28
9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 29
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Three New Public Areas Now Open

First Looks at San Bois, Bamberger, Neosho WMAs

Providing natural places for the public to enjoy hunting, fishing and outdoor activities has been a valued function of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation as long as most can remember. It's even reflected in the agency's mission: the management, protection, and enhancement of wildlife resources and habitat for the scientific, educational, recreational, aesthetic and economic benefits to present and future generations of citizens and visitors to Oklahoma.

In the past year, the Department has added more than 8,600 acres to the existing 345,000 acres of public lands it owns. Here's a look at the three newest wildlife management areas that are now awaiting hunters, anglers and outdoors enthusiasts.

San Bois Wildlife Management Area

Boasting some rugged terrain and panoramic views, the new San Bois WMA consists of 7,602 acres just south of McCurtain in the southeastern corner of Haskell County. Part of the San Bois Mountains, considered an outer belt of the Ouachita Mountains, crosses through the property.

Area Wildlife Supervisor JD Ridge said the WMA is surrounded by private land and visitors at present are limited to only walk-in access in one area: about a mile of road frontage on the north boundary that is reached via East County Road 1300.

"I have read that the French phrase 'sans bois' means 'without wood.' That is certainly not descriptive of Sans Bois WMA! It's a beautiful, largely wooded area," Ridge said.

San Bois WMA will offer



DON P. BROWN/DWC

Above: While the area's name might mean "without trees," only a few open areas can be found on the Sans Bois WMA.

Right: Some wetland areas can be found on the San Bois WMA in Haskell County.



KELLY ADAMS/DWC

many additional hunting opportunities to sportsmen and sportswomen. "We know there are deer and turkey on the WMA, and we'll be getting a better handle on populations as we are able to spend more time on the ground."

A wildlife biologist and a wildlife technician will eventually be assigned to the WMA. They will be well-equipped for development, operations and maintenance of the WMA.

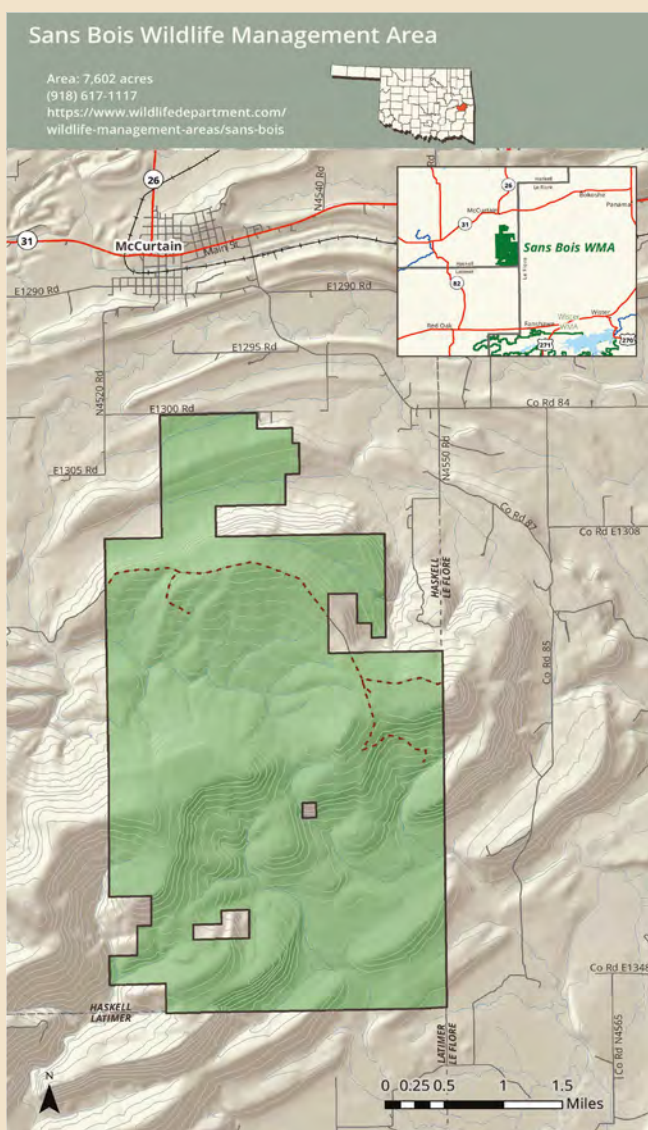
"Being that this a brand new area, there is currently very little infrastructure," Ridge said. "Our priorities are signage, enhancing vehicular access, and so forth.

Plans are in the works for public vehicular access, fire-breaks, camping areas and other features. We are diligently working on behind-the-scenes requirements and hope to have tangible projects going soon."

Before work can begin on the ground, there is much to do that is not seen by the public, such as planning, archaeological surveys, requisitioning and purchasing, and so on.

Users are required to have a hunting or fishing license, or a Conservation Passport. Camping on the area is not permitted.

For regulations pertaining specifically to San Bois WMA, consult the Special Area Regulations section in the latest Oklahoma Hunting and Fishing Guide. For more information, call (918) 617-1113. 🌲



Stands of pines are common on the San Bois WMA in Haskell County.



A splash of color helps conceal some natural drama at the Sans Bois WMA.



Improving public access into San Bois WMA will be a priority.



SKYLAR ST. YVES/ODWC

The Baron Fork Creek provides some excellent stream fishing opportunities at the Thomas A. Bamberger Sr. WMA.

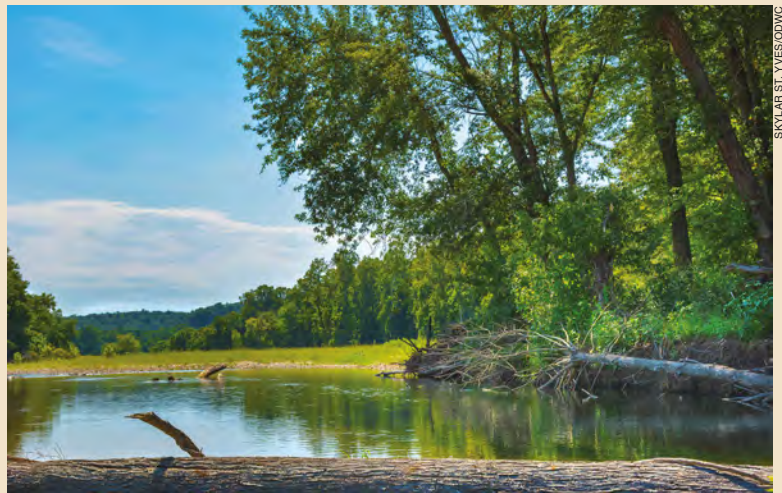
Thomas A. Bamberger Sr. Wildlife Management Area

Nestled in the Ozark highlands, the Thomas A. Bamberger Sr. Wildlife Management Area rests along the banks of Baron Fork Creek in an area known as the Dissected Springfield Plateau Ecoregion. The creek and its steep closed canopy oak-hickory forest host an assortment of fish and wildlife.

"From fast paced ultralight fishing for smallmouth, to bottomland rabbit hunting to pursuing an old gobbler on the high ridge, the Bamberger WMA has a lot to offer packed into just over 300 acres," said area Wildlife Biologist Curt Allen.

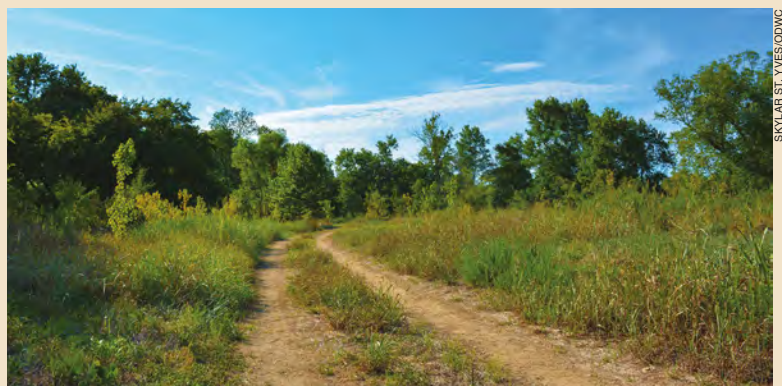
Situated just west and south of Proctor, the area offers hunters, anglers and outdoor enthusiasts pristine wilderness and stream access. Hunters will find white-tailed deer and wild turkey, while wildlife viewers can observe nesting bald eagles perched high on the surrounding hillsides. Feisty smallmouth bass and a variety of sunfish await anglers willing to wet a line.

The Adair County property provides diverse habitat consisting of upland forest and ripar-



SKYLAR ST. YVES/ODWC

About a mile of the Baron Fork Creek flows through the Thomas A. Bamberger Sr. WMA.



SKYLAR ST. YVES/ODWC

A view from the Thomas A. Bamberger Sr. WMA in Adair County.

ian acres. Streams and riparian areas are important to wildlife as they provide access to standing water and habitat diversity in the landscape.

Rarely rising above waist level, Baron Fork Creek offers excellent wade fishing opportunities as it winds for about a mile through the property.

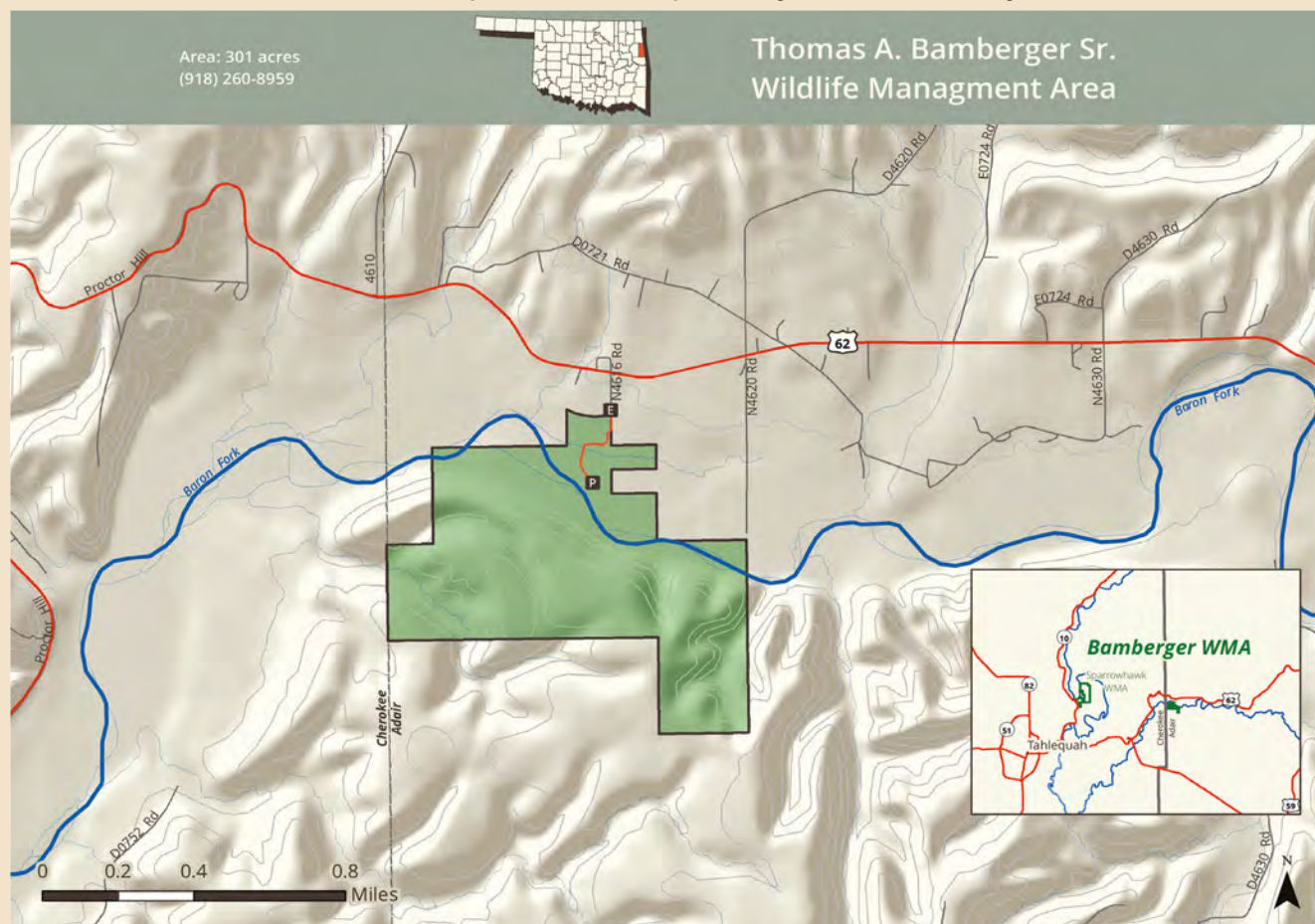
"Public access points along the beautiful Baron Fork Creek have always been few and far between. Bamberger WMA provides a unique opportunity for the public to access this wonderful Ozark stream and great smallmouth bass fishery," he said.

Wildlife Department Streams Supervisor Jim Burroughs said Baron Fork Creek has a very diverse aquatic community. It's home to the Neosho strain



COLBY FARQUHAR

About a mile of the Baron Fork Creek flows through the Thomas A. Bamberger Sr. WMA.



smallmouth bass, a unique native smallmouth bass with limited range and distribution.

Light spinning gear coupled with a small, natural colored tube is a fantastic way for anglers to catch an abundance of 7- to 10-inch smallmouths, with some fish reaching 14 inches.

Most of the property's hunting opportunities are on the south side of the Baron Fork, which requires hunters to wade across. A pair of knee-high, waterproof boots is enough to ford the creek in most places, especially in summer and fall when the creek is at its lowest.

"This WMA may not fit the picture of a memorable hunting spot, but with a mandatory creek crossing and 200-foot climb to hunt a large segment of the property, it will certainly challenge the willing and make any harvest that much more of an achievement," Allen said.

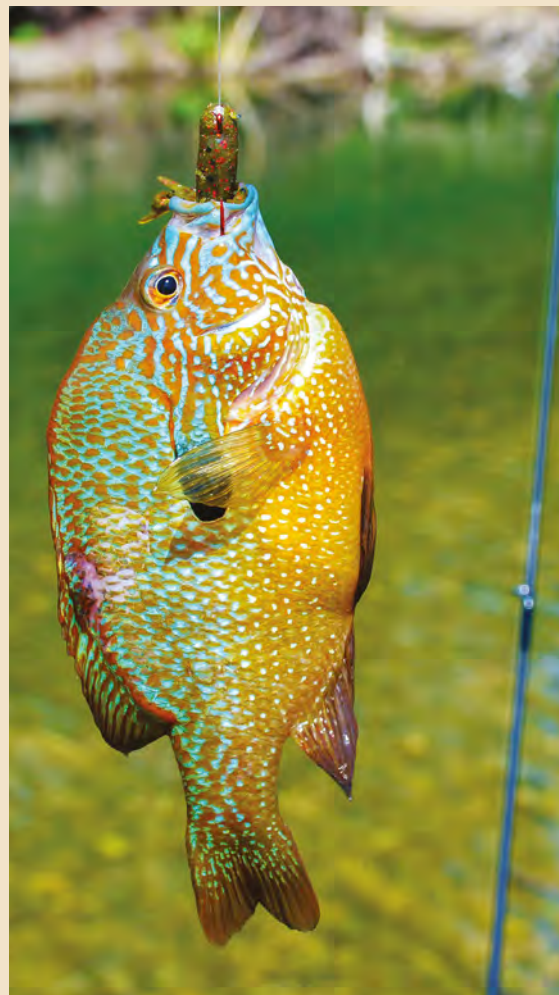
Within an hour of the Tulsa metro area, the property provides a great place for a day excursion. It is the perfect spot for outdoor recreationists looking to escape the crowds of the nearby Illinois River. While hunting and fishing opportunities are excellent, the scenery alone should be worth the trip.

The only public entrance to the property is off of U.S. 62 on N4616 Road, just 15 minutes east of Tahlequah. The parking area is beside the creek. Users are required to have a hunting or fishing license, or a Conservation Passport. Camping on the area is not permitted.

For regulations pertaining specifically to Bamberger WMA, consult the Special Area Regulations section in the latest Oklahoma Hunting and Fishing Guide. For more information, call (918) 683-1031. 🌿

Right: Catching sunfish (in photo) and smallmouth bass from Baron Fork Creek is a good bet at Thomas A. Bamberger Sr. WMA.

Below: About a mile of the Baron Fork Creek flows through the Thomas A. Bamberger Sr. WMA.





A view of the new Neosho Wildlife Management Area in Craig and Ottawa counties.

Neosho Wildlife Management Area

The Neosho Wildlife Management Area encompasses 726.36 acres situated about 6.5 miles northwest of Welch in the eastern part of Craig and western part of Ottawa counties.

The area consists of a rock bluff, bottomland hardwoods, Wetland Reserve Program units, other wetlands, several small ponds, Mud Creek, Prairie Lake. It is a diversified terrain that is mostly level or gently sloping bluff. Trees on the property include pecans, several oak species, cottonwood and others.

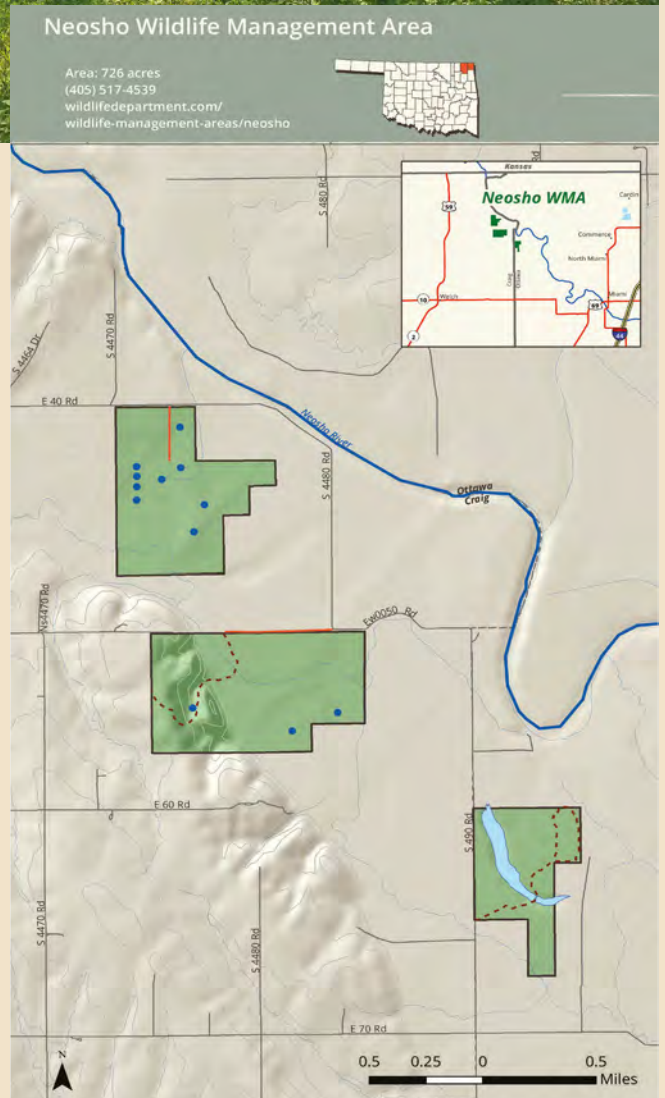
Neosho WMA is primarily managed for moist-soil species along the Neosho River corridor. Game species that are present include white-tailed deer, Rio Grande wild turkeys, several waterfowl species, woodcocks, snipe, and quail. A black bear might be seen occasionally on the area.

Limited fishing opportunities exist in a few small ponds and Mud Creek. Prairie Lake and the Neosho River are nearby.

Camping is not permitted on the area.

Visitors may request a directions map or contour map by contacting area Wildlife Biologist Scott Cox at (405) 517-4539 or scott.cox@odwc.ok.gov.

(Articles by Skylar St. Yves, JD Ridge, Curt Allen, Jim Burroughs and Scott Cox.)





SKYLAR ST. YVES/ODWC

A view of the new Neosho Wildlife Management Area in Craig and Ottawa counties.



SKYLAR ST. YVES/ODWC

A view of the new Neosho Wildlife Management Area in Craig and Ottawa counties.



SCOTT FOX/OWIC

This game camera photo captures a healthy buck on the Neosho WMA.



SKYLAR ST. YVES/OWIC

A view of the new Neosho Wildlife Management Area in Craig and Ottawa counties.

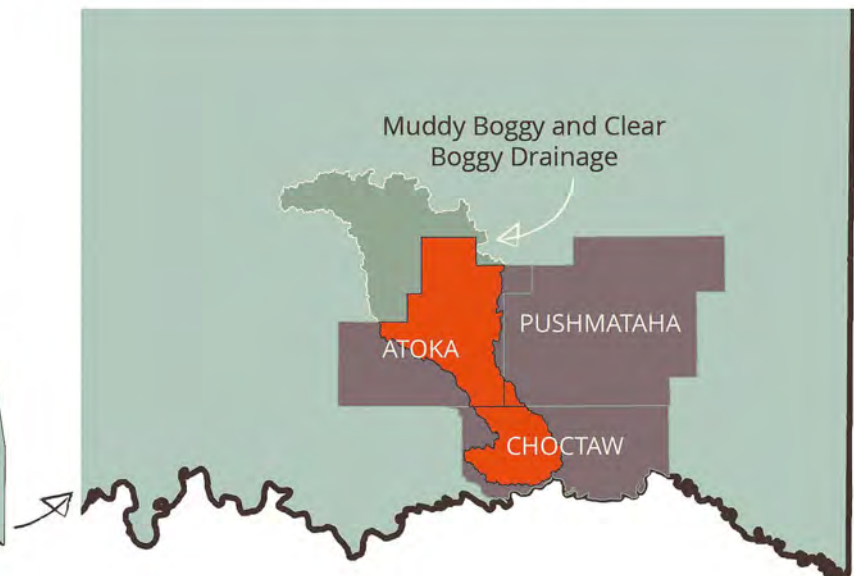
Wading through Wetlands for Western Chicken Turtles



An unusual turtle with an unusual name, the western chicken turtle can be found in southeastern Oklahoma where it spends most of its time sunning near small wetlands. To learn more about where these turtles live, the Wildlife Department teamed up with researchers from Missouri State University for a four-year search in a three-county area of the Muddy Boggy and Clear Boggy creek drainages.

86

Western chicken turtles were found in just eight of the 27 surveyed wetlands.



What Chicken Turtles Need to Thrive

Networks of vegetated, shallow wetlands are critical for this species of greatest conservation need. Naturally-formed beaver ponds appear to provide suitable habitat for these turtles. In fact, 92 percent of the western chicken turtles found in this study were located in three beaver-created wetlands.

Wooded uplands are of equal importance to the conservation of western chicken turtles. These wooded areas serve as safe passageways between individual wetlands and can provide suitable summer habitat when the turtles are less active.

Artificial wetlands, including abandoned hatchery ponds and wetlands enrolled in the Wetland Reserve Program may become more attractive habitat to western chicken turtles if water levels are managed to fit the seasonal activity patterns of the turtle.

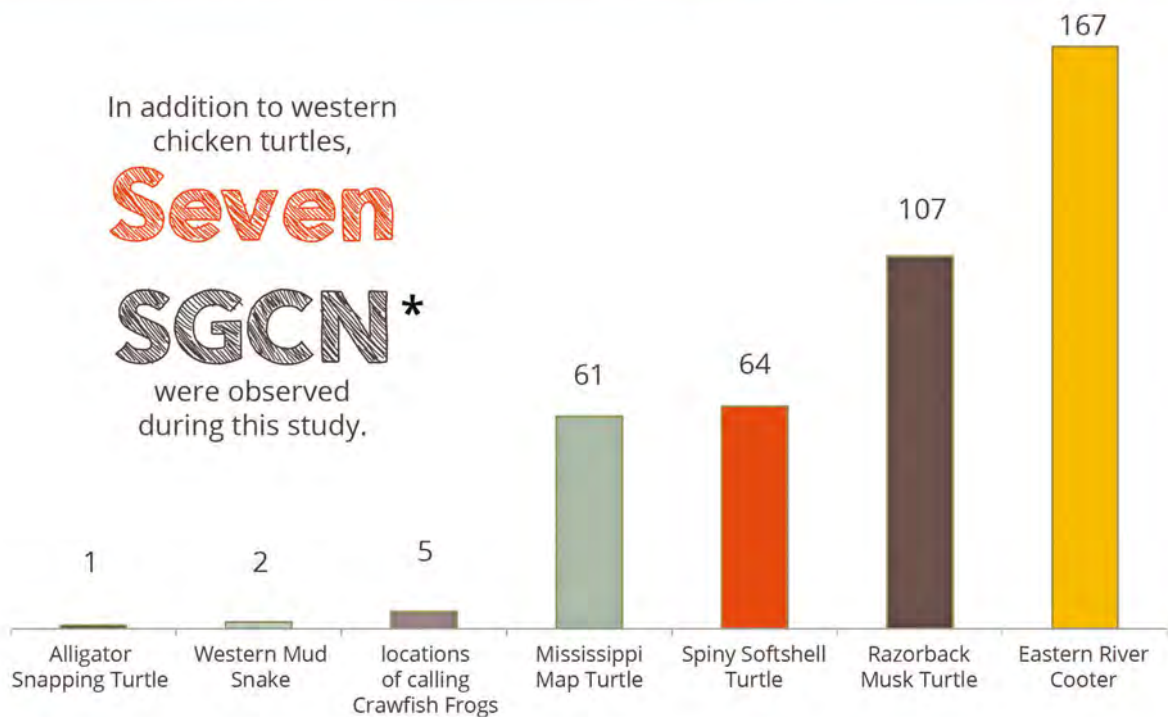


In addition to western chicken turtles,

Seven

SGCN*

were observed during this study.



The Wildlife Diversity Program, a program of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, monitors, manages and promotes rare, declining, and endangered wildlife, as well as common wildlife not fished or hunted.

* Species of Greatest Conservation Need

Financial support for this study was provided by the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation through the State Wildlife Grants Program Grant (F13AF01189) and by Missouri State University.

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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



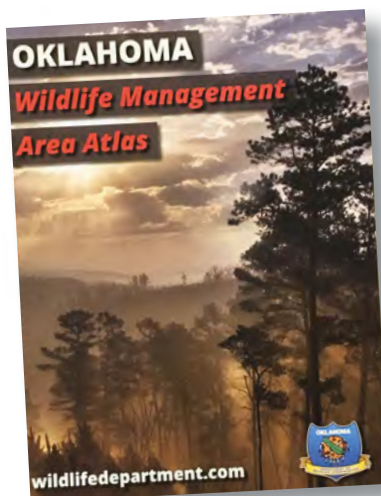
Wildlife License Plates

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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 COPPERHEAD

BY JUSTIN VEACH, EDUCATION INTERN

Forty-six species of snakes are native to Oklahoma. Of those, seven species are venomous. And the copperhead is one of those venomous species.

They are found in the eastern and central portions of Oklahoma and are important in controlling the population of rodents and vermin.

The copperhead is a pit viper, meaning it has heat-sensory pits between each eye and nostril that helps it to detect heat sources which helps it to hunt. It is a medium-size snake with a wide body and a broad head. They have a distinctive neck and get their name from their copper-red heads. They are light brown or tan in color with dark bands, which are in the shape of an hourglass, going around their body. An adult copperhead will usually grow to a length of 2 to 3 feet.

They are carnivorous and eat mostly rodents, but they also will eat insects or frogs. They are considered to be mobile ambush predators, meaning they mostly catch their prey by waiting for unsuspecting prey to move by. Then they will strike their victim. If the prey is larger, the copperhead will allow it move off and die from the venom then track it down and devour it later. If the prey is smaller, the snake will usually hold onto it and wait for it to die. At times, copperheads have been known to actively hunt for food. But they usually eat only 10-12 meals per year depending on the size of the prey.

Copperheads are mostly nocturnal during summer but are usually active during daylight in spring and fall. The mating season lasts from February to May and late August to October. Females usually give birth to four to seven young, but there have been litters of up to 20 observed. Copperheads are

ovoviviparous, which means that the eggs will incubate and hatch inside the female's body and the offspring will be born alive.

The venom of the copperhead is considered mild and is rarely fatal to people if medical treatment is sought immediately.

These snakes are generally not dangerous unless cornered or threatened, and they prefer to escape without incident. Most bites occur because the copperhead will usually stay still when it senses danger, and most people will walk right up to them without noticing them because of their extremely effective camouflage. The best strategy for a copperhead encounter is to simply leave it alone. When a copperhead bites a person, it typically won't inject much venom because it is meant to be only a warning to scare away the perceived threat.

One interesting fact about the copperhead is that a protein called contortrostatin, found in its venom, has been found to inhibit the growth of cancer cells and is being studied for use in human medicine. Another fact: When touched or threatened, the copperhead will sometimes emit a musk that smells like cucumbers. 🌿

One interesting fact about the copperhead is that a protein called contortrostatin, found in its venom, has been found to inhibit the growth of cancer cells and is being studied for use in human medicine.





The fox squirrel (*Sciurus niger*) is one of two species of squirrels found in Oklahoma that may be hunted by residents during Free Hunting Days on Sept. 7-8, 2019, which is a perfect time to introduce someone new to the hunting tradition.

Outdoor Oklahoma

A PUBLICATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

