

Outdoor Oklahoma

NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2022 — ONLY \$10 A YEAR

Special Pullout Section:

2023 Wildlife Habitat Calendar

INSIDE

Memories
Turned
Masterpieces

Elk Hunter's
Internal
Debate

A PUBLICATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION



PANORAMAS



Jerrod Davis

Oklahoma's furbearer trapping season begins in earnest Dec. 1. While participation in this method of hunting has varied over the years, it's still a vital component in the wildlife management goals of the Wildlife Department.

Trapping is a tradition in the great outdoors. The practice goes back to ancient times, and certainly was practiced by the early American Indians. These indigenous people knew well the plentiful bounty provided by this great land; furbearing animals including raccoon, mink, badger, muskrat, opossum, weasel, bobcat, beaver, skunks, and foxes offered a multitude of benefits for surviving in primitive times.

What we think of as modern trapping techniques arrived with the European settlers of America in the 1600s. And many fortunes were made when the first mountain men started trapping in the western regions of our country. This rich heritage opened the way for settlers going from one ocean to another.

The tradition survives today in a highly regulated form, offering much the same benefits the earlier generations enjoyed.

Regulated trapping helps maintain a balance between wildlife and people. It can reduce or prevent agricultural crop damage, livestock depredation, or property damage. Trapping allows us to manage wildlife species through data collection, collect license fees to fund conservation activities, and make decisions about, protecting or relocating threatened or endangered species.

Regulated trapping can benefit a subsistence lifestyle, or supplement an income, by using the harvested animal in many ways: fur to make coats, gloves, mittens, trim on coats and sweaters; meat for human consumption; and the rest of the animal for other by-products such as soaps, lubricants, and attractants.

Something many people don't realize is that the species managed with regulated trapping are abundant, and those populations are not negatively affected by legal trapping. No threatened or endangered species are legally trapped by licensed trappers. And capture devices and methods are rigorously tested to ensure modern trapping is conducted in a humane manner.

Trapping for a specific species can actually create a positive effect on overall population health. This is because in today's wildlife management landscape, biologists use science-based decisions to benefit both animals and people, and those decisions are strictly enforced with laws at the state, national, and international levels.

Trapper education is highly encouraged and can be taken online for free; just scan the QR code.



Anyone interested in some hands-on learning about trapping is in luck! Several events have been set to teach people about this hunting method:

- Oklahoma Fur Bearers Alliance (OFBA) will conduct three-day youth trapping camps Dec. 16-18, 2022, at Lake Carl Blackwell, and Dec. 30-Jan. 1, 2023, at Waurika Lake. For more, contact Shannon Sheffert at okshefferts@hotmail.com or call at (405) 742-7884.
- ODWC will have trapping workshops Jan. 21-22, 2023, at Fort Gibson Wildlife Management Area (tentative site), and Feb 11-12, 2023, at Packsaddle WMA. 🐾

Jerrod Davis, Senior Wildlife Biologist-Furbearers
Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation

Outdoor Oklahoma

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER • VOLUME 78 •
NUMBER 6

Published by the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation
1801 N. Lincoln Blvd, Oklahoma City, OK 73105
P.O. Box 53465, Oklahoma City, OK 73152

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Art direction by Stroud Design, Inc.
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 Printed on recycled, recyclable paper.

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for online credit card orders

Subscriptions are \$10 per year; \$18 for 2 years; \$25 for 3 years. Single copies \$4. Production and distribution costs not covered by subscription fees are borne by Oklahoma sportsmen and sportswomen through hunting and fishing fees.

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ON THE COVER:

This terrific image of a crouching bobcat taken by Matt Haney of Leedey is featured on the cover of our annual Wildlife Habitat Management Calendar pullout section. Readers wishing to hang the calendar can simply open the magazine at the center spread and, starting from behind with the cover, remove the page sheets, leaving the calendar pullout section stapled together. The calendar begins on Page 11.

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OKLAHOMA



OFF THE BEATEN PATH

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

RARE BEE FOUND IN OKLAHOMA FOR FIRST TIME

BY JENA DONNELL,
COMMUNICATION
SPECIALIST

Researchers with the Oklahoma Natural Heritage Inventory recently documented a rare species of bee, the **morning glory longhorn**, while surveying at Cookson Wildlife Management Area. This is the first time the species has been detected in the state; though it is generally thought to range east of the Great Plains, the bee was also documented in eastern Colorado in 2013.

"The bee is on the larger side, about the size of the first digit of your pinky finger," said Mary Powley, research technician with the Inventory. "The defining feature for the species is a distinctly shaped structure found just above the mandibles."

Males of this species have long antennae, a trait common among longhorn bees, but those antennae are unusually thin when compared to other North American longhorn bee species.

Powley documented the bee in July while examining a patch of bigroot morning glory growing along a roadside. Her work was part of a larger effort by the Inventory to document the state's bee community.

A male and a female of the species documented,

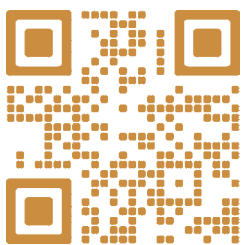


USGS NATIVE BEE INVENTORY PROGRAM

The morning glory longhorn bee, a rare species, was documented recently for the first time in Oklahoma.

indicating an established population may occur at Cookson WMA.

The Inventory team has received funding from the Wildlife Department to assess the conservation status of Oklahoma's 10 or so bumble bee species, and from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to document pollinators inhabiting the nine National Wildlife Refuges in the state. Both projects are set to begin in 2023. For more, scan the code. 📱

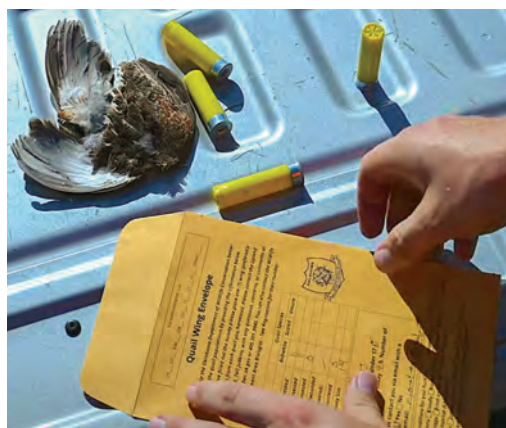


QUAIL HUNTERS ASKED TO DONATE WINGS AT WMAS

During quail hunting season, wing collection boxes are placed near entrances at several wildlife management areas: Beaver River, Optima, Packsaddle, Cooper, Kaw, Drummond Flats, Canton, Fort Supply, Cross Timbers, and Pushmataha.

For research purposes, hunters are asked to donate a wing from each quail they harvest using the envelopes available with the donation boxes. Wing research can help determine the status of quail populations at those WMAs and can offer clues about how next year's season might pan out.

To watch an Outdoor Oklahoma TV show segment about quail wing donations, scan the code. 📱



OUTDOOR OKLAHOMA TV

Hunters at select WMAs can help with quail research by donating a wing from each harvested quail.

GAME WARDEN'S JOURNAL

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



Jim Gillham



Andrew Potter



Blake Cottrill



Game Wardens **Jim Gillham**, based in Atoka County, and **Andrew Potter**, based in Choctaw County, received information about a boat tied up at Hugo Lake that appeared to have electroshocking equipment in open view. Wardens waited for the operator to show up. Investigation and interviews led to the seizure of multiple shocking devices, wire lead sets, and catfish. The suspect was charged with possession of shocking devices on or near waters of the state, taking of game fish by illegal means, and possession of wildlife not legally taken.

Game Wardens conducted a hunter's education class for Murray, Garvin and Carter counties in September at the Murray County Expo. Kerr Pumps sponsored the event and donated a lifetime combination hunting and fishing license as a prize at the end of the class. The winner was Kade Hillis from Carter County.

Game Warden **Blake Cottrill**, based in Garfield County, checked an Alabama hunter Oct. 11, after his investigation found that the hunter did not buy a license until after the buck had been dead several hours.

During an interview, the hunter admitted he didn't have a deer license while chasing the buck and bought one only after the deer was harvested. The hunter was



Game Wardens **Jaylen Flynn**, based in Carter County, **Dylan King**, based in Oklahoma County, and **Mark Murray**, based in Oklahoma/Canadian counties, combined efforts during the opening week of archery deer season to track down an Oklahoma County suspect believed to have illegally harvested a large buck before buying an archery deer license.

The deer and compound bow were seized as evidence in the case. The person was cited for hunting without an archery deer license and taking wildlife illegally. 🦌

cited for hunting without a valid archery deer license as well as the illegal possession of a white-tailed deer. He faces a minimum of \$6,500 in fines and restitution, as well as forfeiture of his archery equipment.



Jaylen Flynn



Dylan King



(Reports from the Oklahoma 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.

Vamos A Pescar Grants Bring Fishing to Hundreds in OKC Area

J.D. STRONG/ODWC



Two years ago, the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation partnered with the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation's George H.W. Bush Vamos A Pescar Education Fund to conduct state and local initiatives focusing on engaging Hispanic families in metro areas.

OKC Latina was the first organization in Oklahoma to be awarded this grant.

In the pilot year, ODWC and OKC Latina were able to reach more than 21,000 social media

accounts on Facebook and Instagram, with more than 1,000 interactions and engagements on those platforms. And through seven hands-on fishing clinics in summer and fall, about 300 people were exposed to recreational fishing and conservation in Oklahoma.

Families that attended three consecutive events went home with fishing poles, a loaded tackle box, and city and state fishing licenses for the adults in the family.

In 2022, Vamos A Pescar again awarded a grant to OKC Latina, and a second grant was awarded to the Scissortail Park Foundation. In this second year, OKC Latina was able to reach over 45,000 social media accounts on Facebook and Instagram, with more than 2,000 interactions. More than 130 people attended spring fishing events with OKC Latina, and more were signed up to attend three fall dates. Families that attended three consecutive events went home with fishing poles, a loaded tackle box, and city and state fishing licenses for at least one adult per family.

The Scissortail Park Foundation was able to reach over 100,000 people on Facebook, Instagram, email, and through a summer booklet placed in downtown Oklahoma City hotels and mailed to members. Six evening fishing events during summer drew about 650 participants. Participants went home with certificates and fishing poles.

During all these events, ODWC volunteers helped participants with hands-on fishing, including baiting hooks, casting bait, taking fish off hooks, and getting lines untangled. ♡



COURTESY OKC LATINA



COURTESY SCISSEORTAIL PARK FOUNDATION



OUTDOOR CALENDAR

FOR THE LATEST UPDATES, GO ONLINE TO LICENSE.
GOOUTDOORSOKLAHOMA.COM/EVENT/EVENTS.ASPX

NOTICE: Events listed were scheduled at press time; events are subject to change.

NOVEMBER 2022

- 5** Oklahoma City Free Fishing Day, no city permit required.
- 6** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
- 7** Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commission meeting, 9 a.m., Oklahoma City. Livestream: YouTube.com/OutdoorOklahoma.
- 8** 2022 Oka' Sustainability Conference, East Central University, Ada. Register: license.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/EventsHome.aspx.
- 9** Learn to Hunt Quail online seminar. Register: license.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/EventsHome.aspx.
- 11** Veterans Day; state offices closed.
- 13** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
- 16** Learn to Hunt Deer Gun Season online seminar. Register: license.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/EventsHome.aspx.
- 20** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
- 24-25** Thanksgiving Holiday; state offices closed.
- 27** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
- 29** Learn to Hunt Pheasant online seminar. Register: license.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/EventsHome.aspx.
- 30** Learn to Hunt Waterfowl online seminar. Register: license.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/EventsHome.aspx.
- **Hunter Education Classes:** Nov. 5 in Sulphur, Blanchard/Dibble; Nov. 12 in Omega, Edmond, Jenks. Register: license.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/EventsHome.aspx.
- **Ducks Unlimited** events set in Durant, Nov. 1; Tulsa, Nov. 3; Ardmore, Nov. 17; Bixby, Nov. 17; Porum, Nov. 18; Guthrie, Nov. 18. Info: www.ducks.org/Oklahoma/events.
- **Friends of NRA** event info: www.FriendsOfNRA.org.
- **National Wild Turkey Federation** event set at Cookson Hills, Nov. 3. Info: www.nwtf.org/events.

DECEMBER 2022

- 3** Oklahoma City Free Fishing Day, no city permit required.
- 4** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
- 5** Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commission meeting, 9 a.m., Oklahoma City. Livestream: YouTube.com/OutdoorOklahoma.
- 11** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
- 16** Oklahoma Fur Bearers Alliance youth trapper camp, Lake Carl Blackwell. Register: license.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/EventsHome.aspx.
- 18** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
- 25** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA. Christmas Day.
- 26-27** Christmas Holiday; state offices closed.
- 30-Jan. 1** Oklahoma Fur Bearers Alliance youth trapper camp, Waurika Lake. Register: license.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/EventsHome.aspx.
- **Ducks Unlimited** event set in Elk City, Dec. 1. Info: www.ducks.org/Oklahoma/events.
- **Friends of NRA** event info: www.FriendsOfNRA.org.
- **National Wild Turkey Federation** event info: www.nwtf.org/events.

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

WELCOME TO THE DOCK!

ARE THE FISH BITING? YOU BET!

Are the fish biting? You bet! Step onto The Dock and take a gander at some remarkable catches made recently by Oklahoma anglers. Here's a few we thought you would enjoy! To see more or submit a photo of your catch, go to www.wildlifedepartment.com/fishing/the_dock or scan the code:



Jennifer Frazier, catfish, Lake Thunderbird, Aug. 6, 2022.



NEW STATE RECORD!

Dalton Grooms, shortnose gar, 12 pounds 10 ounces, Fort Gibson Lake, Aug. 10, 2022.



Alvin A., sunfish, Canadian County, Sept. 5, 2022.



David M., non-native mirror carp, Taylor Lake, May 6, 2022.



Sarah Hall, black bass, Cleveland County, Aug. 7, 2022.



Michael Pierce, black bass, Lake Lawtonka, July 22, 2022.

IT'S THE LAW: NONRESIDENT QUAIL HUNTERS

Effective this season, quail hunting will close Jan. 31, 2023, for hunters with a nonresident license on select wildlife management areas in western Oklahoma as listed in the "Special Area Regulations" section of the 2022-23 Oklahoma Fishing and Hunting Regulations. Nonresidents will still be able to hunt until Feb. 15, 2023, on any private lands in western Oklahoma or any WMAs

not specifically listed as being closed to nonresident hunting in the Regulations. Resident license holders are not affected by this new regulation and may hunt quail statewide on public or private lands through Feb. 15, 2023. For Special Area Regulations, scan the code. 🦋



WILD ABOUT COOKING

CHILI COLORADO

Chili Colorado is the perfect addition to a cold winter's day. Enjoy it with warm tortillas, in a taco, in a burrito, or just eat it straight out of the pot. Inspiration for this recipe came from Rick Martinez of the Bon Appetit test kitchen.

—Smokey Solis, *Communication and Education Specialist*



COURTESY: SOMMUCHFOODBLOG.COM

INGREDIENTS

- 2 lbs venison roast, cut in half-inch cubes
- 3 ancho peppers, dried and deseeded
- 3 pasilla peppers, dried and deseeded
- 3 guajillo peppers, dried and deseeded
- 8 cups chicken stock
- 10 cloves garlic, chopped
- 3 Tbsp vegetable oil
- 1 Tbsp ground cumin
- 3 tsp Mexican oregano
- 3 tsp fresh sage
- 2 bay leaves
- Salt and pepper

DIRECTIONS

- Bring 3 cups chicken stock to boil.
- Remove stems from peppers, place into a large bowl, and pour hot chicken stock over peppers. Cover with plastic wrap; allow to soak for a half-hour.
- Put chiles and stock into a blender and mix to make a smooth puree; set aside.
- Heat vegetable oil in a heavy pot on medium-high. Brown venison. A darker crust on some meat chunks is desired.
- Once meat is browned, add cumin, oregano, sage, bay leaves, and garlic to pot. Stir until fragrant.
- Pour remaining chicken stock in pot with meat and simmer for an hour.
- Pour chile puree into pot and simmer 45 minutes. The mixture will darken and thicken over time; adjust simmer time depending on desired thickness of sauce.
- Serve with warm tortillas, rice and beans. ♥

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 Editor Nels Rodefeld and Associate Editor Don P. Brown,

I've never written to a magazine before, but the cover of the Sept./Oct. magazine made me so angry, I was persuaded to write. I majored in wildlife management in California. A lot of our education was about how to talk to the public, especially nonhunters, about wildlife management.

When I first saw your cover, I thought, "Oh, this man has tranquilized this doe,

and he is happy she is doing well and coming out of anesthesia. Wonder what was wrong with her?"

Imagine my disappointment to find that Outdoor Oklahoma magazine put on the cover a dead deer (who looks very much alive) and a man happily petting her!

It doesn't matter what is said in the article. You had the opportunity to educate your readers about population management. Instead, you have now made a good portion of your readers angry and feeling sick that you would put a photo like that on the cover of their magazine. A picture is worth a thousand words! Some may be nonhunters, but now they have become anti-hunters. Smiling and petting a dead deer you just killed? That is appalling!

If this is truly a magazine for all outdoor Oklahomans and not just another hunting magazine, perhaps you could illuminate what other people do: SCUBA dive in our lakes, hike our trails, rock climb, wilderness camping, swimming holes ...

Louise Burton

P.S. I don't know if there is a "Letters to the Editor" section in the magazine, but I challenge you to post this.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Louise, challenge accepted. I appreciate your feedback and respect your perspective. I'm thankful for this continued opportunity to educate you and others. Please understand we never mean to be offensive and recognize your feelings.

Deer hunting, antlerless harvest, and hunter recruitment are critical for the fish, wildlife and habitat we protect. The image on the cover of the September/October issue of Outdoor Oklahoma represents all three.

Deer Hunting: The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation is responsible for managing the state's fish and wildlife resources and habitat. The Wildlife Department does not receive general state tax appropriations. Hunting and fishing license sales and federal grant revenues (the amount granted is dictated by the number of licensed hunters and anglers we have) are the main funding sources.

Deer hunting is the most popular hunting season in Oklahoma and provides millions in funding for wildlife conservation. It is essential to our operation. Not only is deer hunting a management tool used to

maintain healthy populations, it is also a funding mechanism.

We often use harvest photos in our communication outlets. Before publishing any photo, a set of guidelines must be met. These guidelines include proper hunter orange, legal means of take, proper safety measures, minimal blood, no visible tongue, etc. This photo met all our guidelines. It is not uncommon for a harvested deer's eyes to remain open. Harvested deer with eyes open also appear on pages 20, 21, and 22.

Antlerless Harvest: A communication campaign aimed at increasing the percentage of antlerless deer harvested was initiated two years ago. Imagery is a large part of that effort. Not only is it challenging to find images that meet our criteria listed above, but it is more challenging to find images of adult men with harvested antlerless deer. Because the primary target audience for this campaign is adult hunters (of which the majority are male), it is important they see antlerless harvest being celebrated. Considering nearly 90 percent of our readers hold a hunting license and 83 percent of our readers are interested in topics related to hunting, using this image on the cover of Outdoor Oklahoma was a strategic move for our communication plan.

You wrote, "You had the opportunity to educate your readers about population management." I am proud to say that for two consecutive years, hunters have helped us meet our antlerless harvest goal. I believe this is in large part due to my team's relentless efforts to educate constituents about the importance of antlerless harvest.

Hunter Recruitment: Hunting and fishing are intertwined with wildlife conservation. Unfortunately, states are experiencing a decline in hunting license sales and participation. This has resulted in loss of critical funding for wildlife conservation. So, recruitment, retention, and reactivation (R3) of participants in conservation-related recreation is paramount to preserving our outdoor heritage. While it may be lost on the reader, the hunter in the photo is a new hunter. That fact is highlighted in the Table of Contents on page 1. He is also Hispanic. Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) are also critical components of R3 efforts. Imagery, again, is used to support our DEI goals. That stems from the notion that people can't be what they can't see.

You're correct, there is more to share beyond hunting and fishing. We have been working to provide more varied content. Outdoor Oklahoma is not just another hunting magazine as you point out. However, hunting and fishing are the cornerstones of ODWC. While I acknowledge and respect your opinion, the cover of Outdoor Oklahoma represents so much more than a hunter "petting a dead deer."

Dear Game Warden Capt. Mark Reichenberger,

I wanted to say thank you for putting on the hunter safety class in Alva. The group was very complimentary of the quality job that you did presenting. You spoke at a pace and level the youths could easily understand. You answered questions about firearms in a way that helped the kids learn and not feel embarrassed or talked down to. I appreciate how you were so helpful with the student in the class that needed special attention.



Mark Reichenberger

The youths, parents, and I were very impressed and appreciative.

Greg Highfill, Woods County, Oklahoma Extension Service

OF ELK & ETHICS



INNER DEBATE ELEVATES HUNTER TO SPORTSMAN

BY KYLE WRIGHT

Full disclosure and necessary backstory: I have never shot an elk.

After reading that sentence, you might be tempted to move on. But hang on and hear me out because the circumstances around why I haven't taken an elk are actually what makes my story worth reading.

Where I grew up in small-town Oklahoma, an elk might as well have been an elephant. In my youth and naiveté, I was convinced that every bull elk bugled in the Colorado Rockies. But those mountains loomed a world away from my world of bullfrogs and BB guns.

As I grew up and became more familiar with geography, I figured out that Colorado was actually an easy day's drive

from my Oklahoma home. Not that proximity got me any closer to an elk hunt, mind you. I had no money to pay for a guided hunt, and I had no clue how to hunt them on my own. Then I met and married a girl that was raised in the foothills of the Rockies. Surely this would be my chance to worm my way into some prime elk hunting habitat!

No such luck. No one in her immediate family hunted or knew anyone who did. Years passed, and I resigned myself to the reality that an elk hunt would exist only in my dreams. Between a lack of hunting connections, that pesky, prohibitive income, and my asthmatic lungs, it just didn't seem like a possibility.

There was one glimmer of hope, but this lifetime hunting license holder knew it was a longshot. Since the 1960s, the

Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, in conjunction with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, has offered an annual controlled hunt for elk in the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge. But drawing that tag is like winning the lottery. So, I more or less put the matter out of my mind.

Then things began to change.

Thanks in part to Oklahoma's nearly 2,500 Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation members, the Sooner State's wapiti (elk) herd began to grow, and the Wildlife Department increased opportunities to hunt wapiti. In 2014, a statewide elk season opened for private lands. And for Lifetime Hunting License holders like me, the privilege to harvest an elk is included without having to buy the regular elk hunting license. It wasn't long before photos of hunters beaming behind their homegrown elk began to show up on my social media sites.

The bulls being taken at first weren't giants. But they were getting better every year. Then young Olivia Parry took the best typical on the Oklahoma record books in 2016, an elk that stretched the tape to 377 6/8". The nontypical record was set just a year later when Johnathan Moore downed a bull that measured 371 6/8". As encouraging as those successes were, though, I still had no access to the private lands where elk were being hunted, and I just never gave it much thought.

Until my friend Chandler Henderson uttered something as I stepped out of his truck a couple of Decembers ago in my quest to take a mule deer.

"If you see an elk, feel free to shoot it."

I'd first hunted with Chandler after drawing one of Oklahoma's coveted rifle tags for a pronghorn antelope. That draw works the same way the elk draw does, but with better odds. It's still a once-in-a-lifetime pull, though. Chandler farms and hunts private land in Cimarron County, the westernmost county in Oklahoma's Panhandle. He was kind enough to guide me to a heavy horned goat one September. So when he invited me out to try for a muley, I made the drive back to the Panhandle that December. Chandler is well-acquainted with mule deer hunting; he holds the Cy Curtis state record for the species, a 191 7/8" monster he arrowed in 2014.

Oklahoma's Panhandle doesn't look like elk country. It's so flat that on a clear day and from a good vantage point,



Kyle Wright with a white-tailed buck he took during archery season 2019.

landmarks can easily be identified in four other states. There are no snow-capped mountains or aspen-rimmed meadows in Cimarron County. But there is a lot for elk to eat. They can feed on a veritable buffet of corn and milo and soybeans and wheat.

"If you see an elk, feel free to shoot it."

The minute those words came out of Chandler's mouth, I looked down at the rifle in my hands. I was carrying an as-yet-unbloodied 7mm-08, more than enough gun to take the white-tailed deer I hunt close to home, and plenty for a deep-chested muley. But, I thought, what about an 800-pound bull elk? With the 120-grain hand-loaded ammo I had with me, I considered that fate could lead the bull of my dreams across my path that afternoon, and I feared not having enough gun — everything considered — to get the job done.

I'm sure Chandler attributed my silence on that first afternoon's hunt to a deep focus on muleys. But in truth, a debate was raging in my head: If I saw an elk, and since I was concerned about the punch of my bullet, would I shoot? Or



"The Sooner State's wapiti (elk) herd began to grow, and the Wildlife Department increased opportunities to hunt wapiti."

would discretion prove the better part of valor and lead me to pass up such an opportunity? Would I ever have a chance at an elk again? Would I be able to live with myself if I wounded an elk and couldn't finish it off? Although the country is wide open in Oklahoma's Panhandle, there are still cuts and draws into which an elk could easily disappear, never to be found again.

On and on, the deliberation in my mind continued, until the sun finally set and settled the moral debate for me. There would be no elk sighting that first afternoon. And, thankfully, I wouldn't have to answer that ethical question that kept circling in my mind.

I didn't see an elk that whole trip. But last year, I got another chance to hunt elk with Chandler. He'd been given permission on property where elk had been seen, and he said I needed to drive up and hunt before the corn was cut. Oklahoma's archery seasons for elk, deer and pronghorn are open concurrently the first two weeks of October, so I made my way to the Panhandle then, full of the daydreams and optimistic confidence all hunters share at the beginning of the season.

"If you see an elk, feel free to shoot it."

Chandler set me up on a stool tucked just inside the first row of a corn circle. Later that afternoon, sipping lukewarm water and staring straight into the setting sun, I sure didn't feel like I was on an elk hunt. In fact, if the crossbow in my hands had been a shotgun, I'd have sworn that I was on my family's annual Labor Day dove hunt in Harmon County. But sure enough, we saw elk on this property. Bulls, too, but they were hundreds of yards away, well out of range for the crossbow I was carrying.

Daylight was draining from the sky on the last afternoon of my hunt when I saw a bull elk step out of a corn circle 500 yards to my north. I checked my watch and saw that I only had 10 minutes of legal shooting light left. Reminding myself that I had nothing to lose, I started walking straight toward the bull.

That bull immediately saw me approaching but didn't seem worried in the least. I stopped to range him as I walked, and by the time I'd cut the distance in half, I started thinking that I might actually get close enough for a shot. The last time I ranged the bull it was 146 yards away. Feeling confident in my crossbow's setup, I told myself that I'd count off 100 more steps, take a knee to get one last range, load my bolt, and squeeze off a shot if one was presented. I resumed walking.

Then another bull emerged from the wheat to the east. I felt like this elk hunt was preordained, as if the good Lord was orchestrating the events that would culminate in my first elk kill. The original bull I was stalking was clearly distracted, rubbernecking between me and the rival headed his way. Before I knew it, I'd not only reached but surpassed my 100-step goal. I knelt on a bare patch of earth, ranged my bull one last time, loaded my bolt, flicked off my safety, and got my eye into the crossbow's scope.

That's when the bull turned.

Where once he'd been broadside and barn-sized, the bull was now quartering sharply away from me, throwing nervous glances over its shoulder. I centered my crosshairs in the crease of its armpit, took a deep breath, and said a little prayer. Then I flicked the safety back on, and I lowered the crossbow to my lap.

I watched as the one bull joined the other. Together, they faded into the corn circle and disappeared into its depths.

I decided there were just too many factors working against me in taking an ethical shot that afternoon: low light conditions, the limitations of a crossbow's range, and a bad shot angle on what had clearly become a nervous animal.

Again I left the Panhandle empty-handed. But the question that haunted me for years was finally answered. I do have the ethical decision-making ability necessary to call myself a true sportsman. That knowledge may not fill my freezer with venison or hang a shoulder mount above the fireplace, but I've decided I'd rather have an empty stomach than a sour one any day.

On my next trip to the Panhandle, I'll be confident and well-prepared for taking an elk. I won't have to endure another afternoon of moral dilemma again.

"If you see an elk, feel free to shoot it."

If I ever I hear those words from Chandler again, I'll be ready. ♡



Kyle Wright with a white-tailed buck he took during deer gun season in 2020.

2023 OKLAHOMA WILDLIFE HABITAT MANAGEMENT CALENDAR

Outdoor
Oklahoma

SPECIAL PULLOUT SECTION







TRUMPETER SWAN (*Cygnus buccinator*)

JANUARY 2023

| December 2022 | | | | | | | February 2023 | | | | | | |
|---------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|---------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S | M | T | W | T | F | S | S | M | T | W | T | F | S |
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| 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |
| 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 |
| 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | 26 | 27 | 28 | | | | |

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|--|-----------|-----------|--|-----------|---|--|
| New Year's Day 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6  | 7 |
| 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14  |
| 15 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21  |
| 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28  |
| 29 | 30 | 31 | <p>For free technical assistance on wildlife and habitat management, landowners may call:</p> <p>Northwest Region: Brett Cooper, (405) 740-9830 Southwest Region: Chase Waldorf, (405) 397-1599 Central Region: Kyle Johnson, (405) 590-2584 Northeast Region: Lauren Johnson, (918) 607-1518 Southeast Region: Leah Lowe, (405) 206-7720</p> | | | |



TIMBER STAND IMPROVEMENT (TSI)

Although a TSI project can sound daunting, it simply involves removing undesirable trees, thinning to relieve overcrowding, and using prescribed fire to rejuvenate the habitat and maintain the open canopy. Desirable deer and turkey foods are already hidden within the soil in the form of roots and seeds. All that is required is sunlight to stimulate their emergence.



Scan the QR Code for details.

JANUARY HABITAT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

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

JANUARY POND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

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



BOBCAT (*Lynx rufus*)

FEBRUARY 2023

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|--|-------------------------|--------------------|---|-----------------|--------|----------|
| Operation Game Thief: Anonymously report game and fish law violations by calling toll-free (800) 522-8039. | | | 1 | Groundhog Day 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5 ○ | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
| 12 | 13 ● | Valentine's Day 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |
| 19 | President's Day 20 ● | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 |
| 26 | 27 ● | 28 | For free technical assistance on wildlife and habitat management, landowners may call: Northwest Region: Brett Cooper, (405) 740-9830 Southwest Region: Chase Waldorf, (405) 397-1599 Central Region: Kyle Johnson, (405) 590-2584 Northeast Region: Lauren Johnson, (918) 607-1518 Southeast Region: Leah Lowe, (405) 206-7720 | | | |

January 2023

| | | | | | | |
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| 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 |
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March 2023

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| 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 |
| 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | |



BAT BOXES

Bats are extraordinary insect eaters that feast on moths, beetles, and even biting insects like mosquitoes using echolocation, a mixture of active sonar and special ear features that allow bats to "see" with sound. While some of the insects hunted by bats are considered a mere nuisance, others can cause damage to crops or landscapes. With the "free pest control" bats can offer, many landowners install bat boxes to welcome bats to their properties.



Scan the QR Code for details.

FEBRUARY HABITAT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

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

FEBRUARY POND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

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



BLACK-TAILED JACKRABBIT (*Lepus californicus*)

MARCH 2023

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|--|------------------|---------|-----------|----------|----------------------|----------|
| Operation Game Thief: Anonymously report game and fish law violations by calling toll-free (800) 522-8039. | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5 | 6 | 7 ○ | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
| Daylight Saving Time Begins 12 | 13 | 14 ◐ | 15 | 16 | St. Patrick's Day 17 | 18 |
| 19 | Spring Begins 20 | 21 ● | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 |
| 26 | 27 | 28 ◐ | 29 | 30 | 31 | |

| February 2023 | | | | | | | April 2023 | | | | | | |
|---------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S | M | T | W | T | F | S | S | M | T | W | T | F | S |
| | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | | | | | 1 |
| 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |
| 26 | 27 | 28 | | | | | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 |
| | | | | | | | 30 | | | | | | |



DAVID A. NEWCOMB

EARLY SEASON WETLAND DRAWDOWN

A drawdown that is well-timed and of proper duration is one of the most effective tools in wetland management. It can allow a wetland manager to directly influence the composition and production of moist-soil plants, optimize food production, and provide a nutrient-rich habitat for the exhausted and depleted migrants come fall.



Scan the QR Code for details.

MARCH HABITAT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

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





MARCH POND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

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



WILD TURKEY (*Meleagris gallopavo*)

APRIL 2023

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|--|---|-----------|---|--|-----------|---------------------|
| Operation Game Thief: Anonymously report game and fish law violations by calling toll-free (800) 522-8039. | | | | | | 1 |
| 2 | 3 | 4 | 5  | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| Easter 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13  | 14 | 15 |
| 16 | 17 | 18 | 19  | 20 | 21 | Earth Day 22 |
| 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27  | 28 | 29 |
| 30 | For free technical assistance on wildlife and habitat management, landowners may call: Northwest Region: Brett Cooper, (405) 740-9830 Southwest Region: Chase Waldorf, (405) 397-1599 Central Region: Kyle Johnson, (405) 590-2584 Northeast Region: Lauren Johnson, (918) 607-1518 Southeast Region: Leah Lowe, (405) 206-7720 | | | | | |

| March 2023 | | | | | | | May 2023 | | | | | | |
|------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S | M | T | W | T | F | S | S | M | T | W | T | F | S |
| | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | | | | 1 | 2 |
| 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | | |



FARM POND PROGRAM

Need help getting your half-acre to 5-acre pond ready for family members and friends? Send an application to the Farm Pond Program by May 31 for a chance to receive fish. Applications received June 1 or later will be eligible for next year's program. Eligible ponds cannot have an existing fish population, the owner cannot charge a fee for fishing at the pond, and Game Wardens must be allowed to check for fishing licenses (if required) at that pond. Receiving fish from the program does not require the landowner to offer fishing access to the public.



Scan the QR Code for details.

APRIL HABITAT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

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

APRIL POND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

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



GREATER PRAIRIE-CHICKEN (*Tympanuchus cupido*)

MAY 2023

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|--------------------|-----------------|---------|-----------|--|---------|----------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 ○ | 6 |
| 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 ● | 13 |
| Mother's Day 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 ● | 20 |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 ● |
| 28 | Memorial Day 29 | 30 | 31 | <p>For free technical assistance on wildlife and habitat management, landowners may call: Northwest Region: Brett Cooper, (405) 740-9830 Southwest Region: Chase Waldorf, (405) 397-1599 Central Region: Kyle Johnson, (405) 590-2584 Northeast Region: Lauren Johnson, (918) 607-1518 Southeast Region: Leah Lowe, (405) 206-7720</p> | | |

| April 2023 | | | | | | | June 2023 | | | | | | |
|------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S | M | T | W | T | F | S | S | M | T | W | T | F | S |
| | | | | | | 1 | | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
| 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |
| 30 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |



PREVENTING FISH KILLS

Adding some form of aeration to your pond can help with oxygen depletion issues. This can take the form of fountains, underwater diffusers, or agitators. Aeration not only provides an immediate supply of oxygen for fish, but also reduces stagnation, facilitates aerobic breakdown of organic materials on the pond bottom, and prevents wintertime freezing.



Scan the QR Code for details.

MAY HABITAT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

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




MAY POND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

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



PAINTED BUNTING (*Passerina ciris*)

JUNE 2023

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

| May 2023 | | | | | | | July 2023 | | | | | | |
|----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S | M | T | W | T | F | S | S | M | T | W | T | F | S |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | | | | | | | 1 |
| 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |
| 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | | | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 |
| | | | | | | | 30 | 31 | | | | | |



MANAGING FOR TURKEY ROOST SITES

Roost trees are as tall or taller than most surrounding trees. They have a number of large horizontal branches that make for good perches as they roost and the understory of these trees are thin. Shorter vegetation under and around roosting trees allows turkeys to identify threats or predators easier. A dense and taller understory can make a roosting turkey more susceptible to threats from below. As the understory around favorable roosting sites begins to fill in, these sites become less desirable to turkeys.



Scan the QR Code for details.

JUNE HABITAT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

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

JUNE POND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

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



SPECKLED KINGSNAKE (*Lampropeltis holbrooki*)

JULY 2023

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|--|---------|---|-----------|----------|--------|----------|
| Operation Game Thief: Anonymously report game and fish law violations by calling toll-free (800) 522-8039. | | | | | | 1 |
| 2 | 3 ○ | Independence Day 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 9 ● | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| 16 | 17 ● | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |
| 23 | 24 | 25 ● | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 |
| 30 | 31 | For free technical assistance on wildlife and habitat management, landowners may call: Northwest Region: Brett Cooper, (405) 740-9830 Southwest Region: Chase Waldorf, (405) 397-1599 Central Region: Kyle Johnson, (405) 590-2584 Northeast Region: Lauren Johnson, (918) 607-1518 Southeast Region: Leah Lowe, (405) 206-7720 | | | | |

| June 2023 | | | | | | | August 2023 | | | | | | |
|-----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|-------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S | M | T | W | T | F | S | S | M | T | W | T | F | S |
| | | | | | | 1 | | | | | | | |
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| 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | |



HEMI-MARSH

Simply put, a hemi-marsh is a patchwork of about 50 percent open water and 50 percent emergent vegetation or wetland plants. This ratio can fluctuate within and between years, but the goal is to manage for the mix to be about equal. The overall, simplified concept of hemi-marsh management is to manage the water for the highest quality and diversity of food plants for wildlife.



Scan the QR Code for details.

JULY HABITAT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

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

JULY POND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

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



TEXAS HORNED LIZARD (*Phrynosoma cornutum*)

AUGUST 2023

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|--------|--------|--|---|---|--------|----------|
| | | 1  | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6 | 7 | 8  | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 13 | 14 | 15 | 16  | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24  | 25 | 26 |
| 27 | 28 | 29 | 30  | 31 | | |

| July 2023 | | | | | | | September 2023 | | | | | | |
|-----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S | M | T | W | T | F | S | S | M | T | W | T | F | S |
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| 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
| 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |
| 30 | 31 | | | | | | | | | | | | |



KYLE JOHNSON/ODWC

EDGE HABITAT

The value of edge habitat for wildlife has been advocated for many years, but these transitions between two habitat types are not always suitable for quail and other species. All too often, the borders that exist between grasslands and woodlands or croplands and woodlands are abrupt and lack the diversity required to attract and hold wildlife.



Scan the QR Code for details.

AUGUST HABITAT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES.

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

AUGUST POND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

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



MOURNING DOVE (*Zenaida macroura*)

SEPTEMBER 2023

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

| August 2023 | | | | | | | October 2023 | | | | | | |
|-------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|--------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S | M | T | W | T | F | S | S | M | T | W | T | F | S |
| | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | | | | | | |
| 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | |



PREScribed BURN ASSOCIATIONS

The Oklahoma Prescribed Burn Association (OPBA) was created in 2010 to support local burn associations and develop more across Oklahoma. The OPBA website has detailed information for landowners wishing to start a new burn association in their county or find information on existing associations to join. The website also has numerous resources that provide education and training on weather and smoke, local PBAs, laws and regulations, fire planning, and equipment vendors.



Scan the QR Code for details.

SEPTEMBER HABITAT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

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

SEPTEMBER POND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

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



GREAT HORNED OWL (*Bubo virginianus*)

OCTOBER 2023

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|--------|----------------|--------------|--|----------|--------|----------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 ☾ | 7 |
| 8 | Columbus Day 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 ● |
| 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 ☾ |
| 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 ○ |
| 29 | 30 | Halloween 31 | <p>For free technical assistance on wildlife and habitat management, landowners may call: Northwest Region: Brett Cooper, (405) 740-9830 Southwest Region: Chase Waldorf, (405) 397-1599 Central Region: Kyle Johnson, (405) 590-2584 Northeast Region: Lauren Johnson, (918) 607-1518 Southeast Region: Leah Lowe, (405) 206-7720</p> | | | |

September 2023

| | | | | | | |
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November 2023

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ROSALIE WALKER

MANAGING NATIVE WILDFLOWERS FOR MONARCH BUTTERFLIES

Whether traveling through Oklahoma during the spring or fall, monarch butterflies are in search of two primary things – plenty of milkweeds and plenty of wildflowers. Without them, few, if any, monarchs are likely to be seen. However, Oklahomans managing for an abundance of both are in for a treat each year when these fascinating insects pass through.



Scan the QR Code for details.

OCTOBER HABITAT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

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

OCTOBER POND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- Stock new ponds with fingerling catfish (100/acre) and bluegill (200-500/acre).



WHITE-TAILED DEER (*Odocoileus virginianus*)

NOVEMBER 2023

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

| October 2023 | | | | | | | December 2023 | | | | | | |
|--------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|---------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
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| 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
| 29 | 30 | 31 | | | | | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |
| | | | | | | | 31 | | | | | | |

CHAD BENNETT/READER PHOTO SHOWCASE



GAME BIRD HABITAT IMPROVEMENT IDEAS

November through early February is the best time to strip disk for game birds including dove and quail. It will create brood-rearing habitat and food sources the following summer. Plowing or disking turns the ground and stimulates growth of forbs or weeds quail love and need. Disking a few strips next to grasslands or low-growing shrubs mimics the once-abundant patchwork of small crop fields mixed with grassy and weedy strips that produced high numbers of upland game birds.



Scan the QR Code for details.

NOVEMBER HABITAT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- Flood green-tree reservoirs only after the first frost.
- Begin to flood wetland areas.
- Cut and remove invasive eastern redcedars to improve habitat.
- Evaluate forage resources and plan dormant season phase of grazing.

NOVEMBER POND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

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



BLUE JAY (*Cyanocitta cristata*)

DECEMBER 2023

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|--|---|----------------|-----------|-------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Operation Game Thief: Anonymously report game and fish law violations by calling toll-free (800) 522-8039. | | | | | 1 | 2 |
| 3 | 4 ☾ | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 10 | 11 | 12 ● | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| 17 | 18 | 19 ☾ | 20 | Winter Begins 21 | 22 | 23 |
| Christmas Eve 24 | Christmas Day 25 | 26 ○ | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |
| New Year's Eve 31 | For free technical assistance on wildlife and habitat management, landowners may call: Northwest Region: Brett Cooper, (405) 740-9830 Southwest Region: Chase Waldorf, (405) 397-1599 Central Region: Kyle Johnson, (405) 590-2584 Northeast Region: Lauren Johnson, (918) 607-1518 Southeast Region: Leah Lowe, (405) 206-7720 | | | | | |

November 2023

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January 2024

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FISH STRUCTURES FOR HABITAT

Shelter, or structure, is an important habitat component for fishing ponds or lakes. Artificial structures like tire reefs, wooden pallets, broken concrete, sections of large diameter pipe and PVC trees are all good substitutes [for natural structure]. You can construct your own artificial brush piles at low cost.



Scan the QR Code for details.

DECEMBER HABITAT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

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

DECEMBER POND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

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

ADAIR COUNTY'S HERMAN JONES WINS LANDOWNER HONOR



Herman Jones

The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation honors Adair County landowner Herman Jones of Stilwell as its 2022 Landowner Conservationist of the Year. This award recognizes landowners who have exercised outstanding wildlife conservation practices on private property.

Jones, along with his family, have owned and managed about 1,300 acres in south-eastern Adair County, near the Bell community, for many years. This property is predominately oak/hickory forest indicative of the Ozark Highlands of the northeastern part of the state. When he first started working on his property, it looked much like the rest of the county: thick underbrush with a dense, closed canopy in dire need of management.

About 12 years ago, Jones enrolled about 800 acres into the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Healthy Forests Reserve Program. This program promotes the recovery of threatened and endangered species through habitat management. Southern Adair County is home to the federally endangered Ozark big-eared bat (OBB), to which Jones was able to enroll his property to help restore habitat back to a more favorable environment.

The hack-and-squirt method was used, according to a prescription, to thin timber to allow better access and flyways for the bats. Fireguards were put in place to

allow prescribed burns to set back succession after the thinning project. Even though this program was aimed at OBBs, all wildlife benefited greatly from this thinning/burn regime.

Jones has also been in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), building ponds and planting grasses. He also has drilled wells and placed stock tanks used both by livestock and wildlife through the State Cost Share Program.

With Jones' conservation practices in place, he has seen a great response from deer and especially turkeys. Native forbs and grasses are being promoted with the sunlight now being able to reach the forest floor. With a thinned canopy, large mast-producing trees have ample resources needed to produce, without being choked out by the excess timber and closed canopy.

About 20 acres of food plots are planted annually on the property, normally to wheat, turnips or oats. Occasionally soybeans will also be planted during the growing season to draw deer onto the property. Jones' family has a deep tradition of hunting, and he encourages that same tradition now on his property with his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

Jones has shown no matter how rough or rugged a property may be, a little bit of habitat management goes a long way for the benefit of wildlife. Congratulations to Herman Jones for being named the 2022 ODWC Landowner Conservationist of the Year.

— **Nathaniel Kester, Wildlife Technician**



Forbs and native grasses have returned to the habitat allowed by the openings created in the forest canopy following the timber thinning from about 12 years ago. Fire is used to keep succession in early stages.



Dead snags are allowed to stand following the hack-and-squirt treatment and burning.



DON P. BROWN/ODWC

Tim Starks at work on his wood duck mount.

MEMORIES TURNED MASTERPIECES

TAXIDERMISTS TRANSFORM NATURE'S BOUNTY INTO ARTISTIC BEAUTY

Most anyone fond of the natural world is also captivated by taxidermy, the “art of preparing, stuffing, and mounting the skins of animals.” It’s a practice that goes back to ancient Egypt. But through the centuries, methods improved and techniques developed allowing true works of art to be created by expert taxidermists.

For almost 40 years, scores of these skilled artists have gathered for the annual convention and competition of the Oklahoma Taxidermists Association. This past summer, around 200 people gathered in Midwest City for seminars, socials, live competitions, and awards. Mounts ranging from a sunfish to a

giraffe could be seen in the competition room.

One of the most popular contests requires participants to complete a mount of an animal or game bird in the span of three hours. It’s like taxidermy on steroids — an intense session where work that normally could take the artist months to complete must be done in only 180 minutes!

While the artists are hustling to finish before time expires, fellow taxidermists are milling about, watching and perhaps picking up tips and techniques as each mount takes shape.

Here’s a look at some of the sights from the 2022 convention.



DON P. BROWN/ODWC

Jerry Huffaker sculpts the nose on his pronghorn form while other conference attendees look on.



DON P. BROWN/ODWC

Nathan Cook of Graham, Texas, prepares his whitetail form to receive the nose.

Right: Huffaker fits the pronghorn skin over the form.



DON P. BROWN/ODWC



DON P. BROWN/ODWC

A deer form awaits its future glory.



DON P. BROWN/ODWC

Jerry Huffaker works on his pronghorn mount during the competition session.



DON P. BROWN/ODWC

Cory Loeper, owner of Warbird Taxidermy in Piedmont, places some stitches on the swimming hooded merganser mount that he created during the three-hour competition.



DON P. BROWN/ODWC



DON P. BROWN/ODWC



DON P. BROWN/ODWC

Tim Starks does some detailed work on a wood duck mount during the competition session.

FINISHED MASTERPIECES

PHOTOS BY SMOKEY SOLIS/ODWC

RACCOON

CREATED BY ANGIE MITCHELL
OF ALMA, ARK.



WILD TURKEY

CREATED BY DUSTIN MCDANIEL
OF COWETA.



WHITE-TAILED DEER

CREATED BY A TALENTED
OTA MEMBER.



**MALLARD/PINTAIL HYBRID
AND PINTAIL DRAKE**

CREATED BY TIM SPARKS
OF CASPER, WYO.

RUDDY DUCK

CREATED BY REYDON REGISTER
OF FLETCHER.



LARGEMOUTH BASS

CREATED BY KENNETH BAUMAN
OF ANADARKO.

Conservation

Get Outdoors!

The weather can get frigid this time of year. But you can still enjoy the outdoors if you know how to stay warm. Start by wearing a layer of clothing under your regular clothing. Then put on a coat, preferably waterproof. Cover your extremities with waterproof gloves or mittens, socks, boots, scarves and hats. A face covering will help, too. Try to stay dry when outside, and seek protection from any rain, sleet, or snow.

Hunting Tip

When hunting in cold weather, consider bringing along something to warm you from the inside. A thermos of hot chocolate, or soup is a good way to ward off feeling cold outside. Tip: Put your full thermos into a wool sock to help keep the heat.

Fishing Tip

Cold-weather fishing is normally for the dedicated anglers! Good ways to stay warm around the water include placing hand warmers in your pockets, using waterproof and lined gloves, and wearing overcoats that fit loosely over your clothing layers. Tight coats or clothing allow more heat to escape and do not keep you as warm.

for Kids!

Word Search: Cold Weather Gear

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| S | L | A | M | R | E | H | T | G | U | S | Y | Q | N | Z | F |

Find and circle these words related to staying warm outside during winter.

Boots
Gloves
Layers
Stocking Cap

Coat
Hand Warmer
Mittens
Thermals

Earmuffs
Jacket
Scarf
Thermos

Some COOL FACTS About Porcupines:

- In Oklahoma, they are mainly seen in the western half of the state.
- They are covered with up to 30,000 barbed quills for protection.
- Quills are loosely attached and easily stick into anything they touch.
- Porcupines cannot “shoot” or “throw” their quills.
- They can reach 3 feet in length and weigh up to 25 pounds.
- They are nocturnal and mostly solitary in lifestyle.
- Their preferred den locations are in hollow trees or under rocks.
- These rodents are plant eaters and spend much time in trees.
- Porcupines generally give birth to one or two porcupettes in spring.

MATTNAD/WIKIMEDIA CC-BY-SA 3



WADE FREE/ODWC



GARY ESLINGER/USFWS

Color a Critter: Porcupine



OWCF Inducts Larry Nichols at Second Gala

The second Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Foundation Call of the Wild Gala and Oklahoma Conservation Hall of Fame Induction was held Oct. 6, 2022, at the Omni Convention Center Hotel in Oklahoma City.

The event honored J. Larry Nichols of Oklahoma City as the Hall of Fame's second inductee.

Nichols, 79, is a co-founder and chairman emeritus of Devon Energy Corp. He served as a director from 1971 to 2016. In 1980, he became Devon's CEO, then chairman in 2000, then executive chairman in 2010.



Foundation Executive Director Rick Grundman addresses the crowd at the Call of the Wild Gala.




OWCF Board of Directors member Tess Maune served as emcee for the Gala.

Nichols served as law clerk to Chief Justice Earl Warren and Justice Tom Clark of the U.S. Supreme Court from 1967 to 1968. He then served as special assistant to Assistant Attorney General William Rehnquist in the U.S. Department of Justice in Washington, D.C.

Nichols is vice chairman of the National Petroleum Council and serves on the board of the National Association of Manufacturers. He is a former chairman of the American Petroleum Institute. Nichols earned a bachelor's degree in geology from Princeton University and a law degree from the University of Michigan.

The Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Hall of Fame recognizes conservation leaders in Oklahoma, one of the most ecologically diverse states in nation. Oklahoma is home to a wide variety of habitats for than 760 different species of wildlife.

OWCF supports the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation to bring more wildlife and wild spaces projects to Oklahoma in a more rapid manner. Since ODWC doesn't receive appropriated state tax dollars, donating to OWCF is one of the best ways to help positively impact Oklahoma's wildlife and wild spaces. 



THE OKLAHOMA WILDLIFE CONSERVATION FOUNDATION (OWCF) is the nonprofit organization formed to work exclusively alongside and provide added financial support to the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation and its activities in managing the state's fish and wildlife resources and habitats. The Wildlife Department receives no general state tax appropriations; ODWC operates primarily with license sales and federal matching grants. OWCF provides supporters an outlet to show their passion for the outdoors by investing their time and money in projects that will make a difference for generations to come.

All donations are tax-deductible. For more information, go to www.OKwildlifeoundation.org or www.facebook.com/OKWildlifeFoundation.



The Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Foundation is now set up as a charitable organization through AmazonSmile. AmazonSmile is a program that donates 0.5 percent of your eligible purchases on Amazon to a charity of your choice. All you need to do is start your shopping at smile.amazon.com. The donation will be made at no extra cost to you, and you can choose from nearly a million public charitable organizations.

Barry Bolton, Board of Directors



Barry Bolton was born and raised in Tulsa. He earned a bachelor's degree in zoology from the University of Oklahoma and then accepted a fisheries technician position with the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation at the Fisheries Research Lab (OFRL) in Norman.

While working at the OFRL, Bolton completed a master's degree in fisheries at OU. Following a brief stint as the Department's aquatic resources education coordinator, he was promoted to assistant chief of the Fisheries Division in 1989. In 2008, he became chief of the Fisheries Division.

Bolton retired in February 2022 after a 43-year career with ODWC. He resides in Norman, with his wife, Sheri, and has a son living in Seattle.

Bolton was interested in the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Foundation from the outset; he was the first ODWC employee to make a donation to the Foundation. He has attended Foundation meetings since 2018 and was appointed to its Board of Directors in June 2022.

Bolton understands challenges related to funding for ODWC programs. Inflation, increased opportunities to access Pittman-Robertson conservation funding, and static license fees have created the need for additional matching funds. Passage of the Recovering America's Wildlife Act will require even more matching funds that are already in short supply.

Alternate sources of revenue will be critical to the future of ODWC. Bolton said the Foundation can be an integral part of the future of fish and wildlife management in Oklahoma.



Barry Bolton after taking a Merriam's wild turkey.

Bolton grew up fishing streams and farm ponds in northeastern Oklahoma. While employed with ODWC, he became an avid quail, turkey, waterfowl, and big game hunter. Hobbies include hunting, fishing, backpacking, photography, travel, woodworking, and collecting 1970s vinyl records.

Bolton hopes to work with the Foundation Board of Directors to build relationships with ODWC employees and create long-term funding solutions for ODWC programs. ♡



Barry Bolton after reeling in a striped bass.



Barry Bolton hoisting a king salmon he caught on a fishing trip to British Columbia.

OUTDOOR STORE

license.GoOutdoorsOklahoma.com

Sign in or shop online as a guest. Items also available in person at ODWC headquarters 1801 N. Lincoln Blvd. in Oklahoma City.

***Prices listed on these pages do not include \$3 online ordering convenience fee.*



NEW ODWC LOGO DRINKWARE

Double-wall high-grade stainless steel 16-oz coffee mugs and 20-oz tumblers made by Yukon with DuraGrip powder coat finish featuring the new ODWC arrowhead logo. Tumblers come in navy, white, and bottomland camo; mugs come in olive drab and navy. They are vacuum-insulated and BPA-free. Ships separate from other Outdoor Store items. — \$20



OKLAHOMA HABITAT DONOR WINDOW DECALS

Show your support of the Wildlife Department's Land Acquisition Fund with these striking window decals. All proceeds are earmarked to help provide hunting and fishing access to the public. — \$10 each



NEW OUTDOOR OKLAHOMA CAPS

These sleek fabric caps sport the latest Outdoor Oklahoma logo design! They are the Richardson 112 model, mid-pro shape, pro-curved visor, adjustable snap-back, 60% cotton/40% polyester. Various colors and styles will be available (subject to availability). — \$20



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

Dress up your vehicle while showing your support of our great state's wildlife resources by getting a wildlife license plate. Nine Wildlife Conservation Plates are available to serve as your regular, rear-bumper license plate. The plates cost just \$40 (original or replacement) or \$36.55 (renewals) above your regular annual registration fee with proceeds going to Oklahoma's Wildlife Diversity Program. The forms are available at local tag agencies, or online at tinyurl.com/WildTags.



HABITAT DONOR CAPS

Top-quality, American-made caps display the Habitat Donor Patch of your choice, which designates you as a contributor to the Department's Land Acquisition Fund. Wearing this hat means you care about future generations and the great hunting and fishing tradition. Specify hat style on order form. — \$20



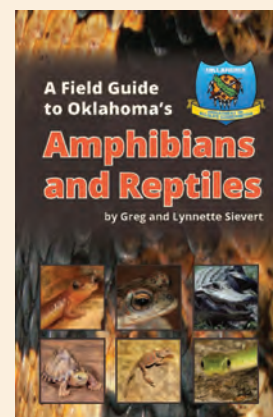
OKLAHOMA WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA ATLAS

The Wildlife Management Area Atlas presents maps of Oklahoma's WMAs and ODWC-ed fishing lakes. At 109 pages, the atlas features lands purchased before 2018. Each map shows special features such as parking sites, camping areas, and food plots. Your atlas purchase comes with a bonus one-year subscription to the award-winning *Outdoor Oklahoma* magazine. — \$25

NEW EDITION!

A FIELD GUIDE TO OKLAHOMA'S AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES

Get an introduction to Oklahoma's 140 species of salamanders, frogs, turtles, lizards, snakes and alligator in the 4th edition of our guide to the state's amphibians and reptiles. Six species accounts have been added and range maps have been updated throughout the guide. — \$20



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SOUTHERN REDBELLY DACE

WATCHABLE WILDLIFE • BY LYDIA GEARHART, COMMUNICATION INTERN

The southern redbelly dace (*Chrosomus erythrogaster*) can be recognized by the bright red color the males acquire on their undersides in the summer months.

This small fish can be found in clear, rocky streams, with spring-fed pools. They use vegetation and overhangs on the stream banks for hiding.

In Oklahoma, they can be found in

spring-fed creeks of the Ozarks, Arbuckles, Wichita Mountains, and at times in the Blue River mainstream. They are mostly found in quiet pools but can sometimes be found in large

schools in faster-flowing water.

Southern redbelly daces are minnows with size ranges from 1-1/2 to 2-3/4 inches long. Their average life expectancy is about two years.

This species primarily feeds on diatoms, algae, and organic detritus scraped from the bottom. They will occasionally feed on aquatic insects.

As summer approaches, the color of sexually mature males becomes more vibrant as they obtain bright red undersides and

bright yellow fins to attract mates. Breeding occurs mostly from April to June in shallow areas of the creeks. The males are not competitive, and usually a single male will breed multiple females.

One or two males will press up against the female using their breeding tubercles to hold themselves against her and to stimulate the release of her eggs. The female deposits her eggs, and the eggs stick to a rock in the water. Breeding can be repeated many times during the breeding season. A single female's egg production varies from 200 to 6,000 eggs, depending on her size.

When the southern redbelly dace is faced with a predator, it doesn't dart off alone. Instead, they school together to improve their chances of survival. They also use a chemical alarm signal to warn others when danger is nearby. The other daces nearby will school together when they sense the chemical alarm signal.

Southern redbelly daces are countershaded: the fish is lighter on the underside and darker on the topside. This countershading helps them avoid predators easier.

Overall, this unique minnow is one to keep an eye out for, especially during summer when the males' bright red undersides help them stand out in the rocky habitats. 🍀

As summer approaches, the color of sexually mature males becomes more vibrant as they obtain bright red undersides and bright yellow fins to attract mates.



ANDREW ZIMMERMAN



BRANDON BROWN/ODWC



OKLAHOMA YOUTH HUNTING PROGRAM

Memories are easily made around a warm and crackling fire on a crisp autumn evening at deer camp. Help keep these hunting traditions alive; invite someone this year who has never experienced wonderful times like these in Outdoor Oklahoma.

Outdoor Oklahoma

