

# Outdoor Oklahoma

JULY / AUGUST 2023 — ONLY \$10 A YEAR

## 2023 Readers' Photography Showcase

A PUBLICATION OF THE OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION



# PANORAMAS



Kelly Adams

Do you have places to go hunting or shooting? It's a question that will surely affect the future of wildlife conservation in Oklahoma.

If people don't have access to places where they can enjoy hunting and shooting, then there are going to be fewer people engaging in those activities in the coming years. Pair that with the overall decline in hunter numbers due to aging and other factors, and that means funding for wildlife and habitat management is facing a real threat under the current North American Model of Wildlife Conservation.

Having places to go hunting and shooting is a critical issue, probably the most critical issue, according to a 2021 report titled "Assessing the Quality and Availability of Hunting and Shooting Access in the United States" by Responsive Management and the National Shooting Sports Foundation.

"Access is ... more important than mentors, knowledge of regulations and licensing requirements, and numerous other considerations" when it comes to participation. "Without adequate access to places for hunters and shooters to participate, even the most intensive recruitment, retention, and reactivation (R3) efforts are destined to fall short. In fact, access programs and communications about access should be thought of as legitimate R3 endeavors."

The top access issues in the national survey were a lack of land on which to hunt, crowding, land being leased to others, land being posted by landowners, the cost of access, and traveling distance.

Among hunters in the survey, 75 percent hunt on private land mostly or at least half the time, and 44 percent hunt on public land mostly or about half the time.

But one factor stood above all others for hunters when choosing where to hunt: that the land isn't crowded with other sportsmen. Asked how important perceived crowding was in deciding where to hunt, 71 percent rated it as "very important" and 21 percent rated it as "somewhat important" — a total of 92 percent!

Those feelings aren't just nationwide. The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation has found in its own surveys that access is an issue in Oklahoma as well.

The 2020 **Game Harvest Survey** asked licensed hunters, both active and not, "How has your access to private land for hunting changed over the last five years?" Thirty-one percent of respondents said they had less access than they did five years ago. And, in a 2021 survey of female hunters, access was determined to be a major participation barrier, with 61 percent indicated lack of access ("nowhere to hunt") influenced their decision not to hunt.

Started by the Wildlife Department five years ago, the **Oklahoma Land Access Program** (OLAP) has worked to increase public access to private lands across the state. Many hunters are taking advantage of the opportunities. It appears OLAP will face some funding challenges in the near future, but we plan to keep the program going to provide more options for hunters to participate. Please go online to [www.wildlifedepartment.com](http://www.wildlifedepartment.com) to check it out.

The national report summarizes with two separate but related issues that should be addressed: the physical constraints to participation caused by less access to places, and the psychological constraint to participation due to perceptions that access is becoming more difficult (whether it really is or not).

Rest assured your Wildlife Department plans to continue efforts to offer more access to Oklahoma's hunters and shooters, even when only about 3.5 percent of the state's land is public land. Wouldn't it be great if we never had anyone decide not to participate because they thought there was no place to go. 🍍

*Kelly Adams*

**Kelly Adams**, Supervisor  
Communication Division, ODWC



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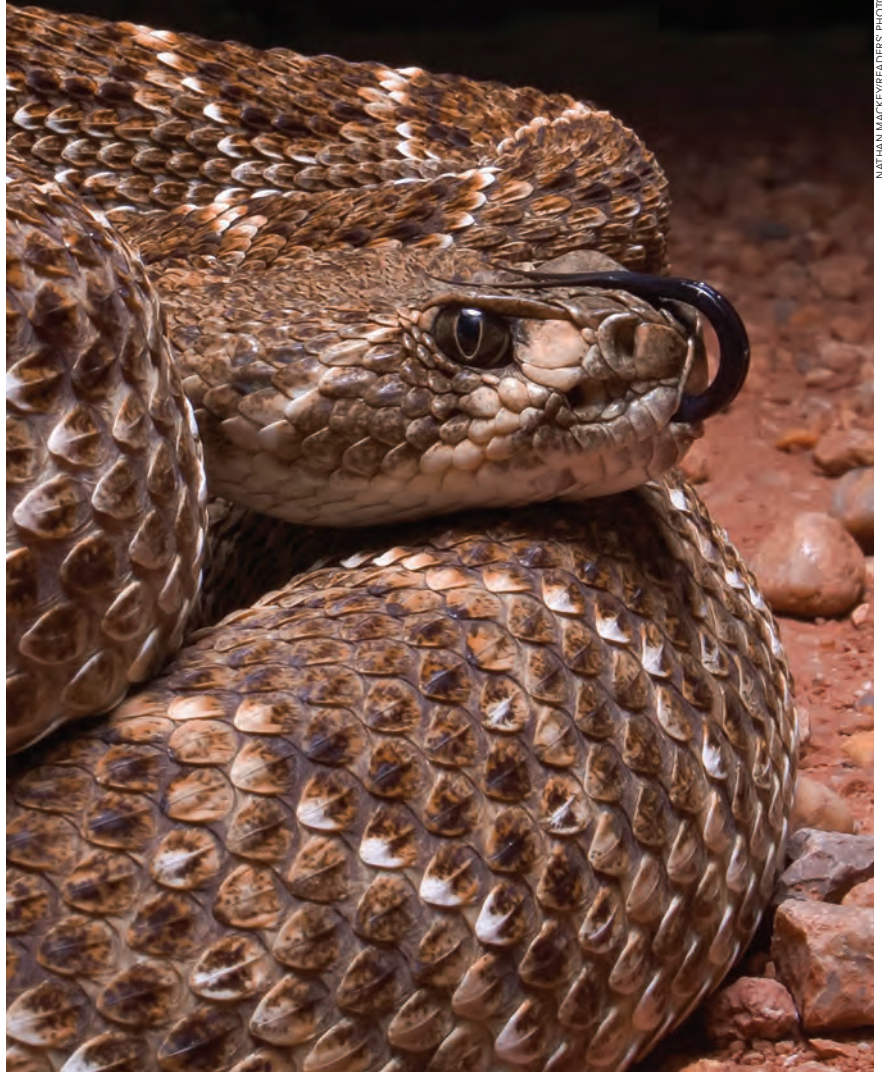
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NATHAN MACKIE/READERS' PHOTO SHOWCASE 2023


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## ON THE COVER:

Oklahoma or Mars? This otherworldly image of pronghorns at sunset in Black Mesa State Park was captured by Stephen Ofsthun of Norman and serves as the coveted cover shot for the Readers' Photography Showcase 2023 issue! See scores more of this year's finest outdoors photos starting on Page 12.

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OKLAHOMA





# OFF THE BEATEN PATH

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

## HACKBERRY FLAT BUILDING NAMED FOR EX-COMMISSIONER


A ceremony was held May 19 at Hackberry Flat Wildlife Management Area to officially name the visitors' center after former Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commissioner William H. "Bill" Crawford.

About 75 people attended the naming ceremony. The Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Foundation funded a commemorating plaque and new lettering on the building.

OWCF Executive Director Rick Grundman announced that the Foundation donated \$75,000

toward engineering and planning studies to refurbish a pipeline to bring water back to the WMA. He also said a capital campaign will begin soon with a goal to raise \$3 million for the pipeline project, which can then pair with federal grants of \$9 million to pay for the project.

Also, more than \$20,000 was raised May 21 at the first sporting clays fundraiser for OWCF at The Cedar Gate near Kingfisher.

Also, the Oklahoma Game Warden Association has pledged to donate an OGWA 5.56 rifle, serial no. 1, to be auctioned at the Foundation's annual Call of the Wild Gala, set for Friday, Sept. 29, 2023, at the Oklahoma City Omni Hotel. For gala and ticket information, email [rgrundman@okwildlifeconservation.com](mailto:rgrundman@okwildlifeconservation.com). 



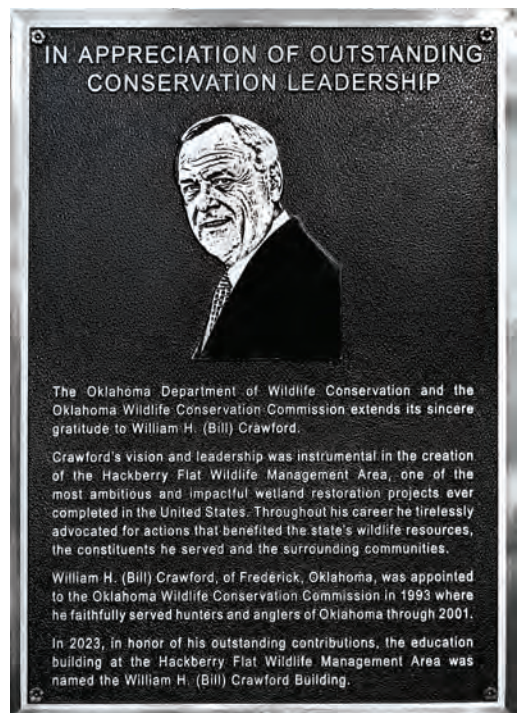
Gathered at the naming event are, from left, Commissioner James V. Barwick, Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Foundation board member John Groendyke, honoree and former Commissioner William H. "Bill" Crawford, Commission Chairman Leigh Gaddis, and Commissioner D. Chad Dillingham.



OWCF Executive Director Rick Grundman and Lacie Lowry of Griffin Media announce the winners in the Foundation's first sporting clays fundraiser.



Wildlife Commission Chairman Leigh Gaddis, second from left, with the other Gaddis Premier Wealth Advisors shooting team members: ODWC Director J.D. Strong, Roger Gaddis and Steve LaForge.



A bronze plaque of appreciation to the former state wildlife commissioner has been installed on the William H. "Bill" Crawford Building at Hackberry Flat Wildlife Management Area near Frederick.



# NEW FISH HABITAT CUBE INITIATIVE SEEKS DONORS

The Wildlife Department is partnering with anglers on a new initiative to improve fishing across the state. The goal is to install new and enhanced fish attractor sites in lakes across Oklahoma.

New attractors, known as Shelbyville cubes, offer serious benefits for fisheries managers, anglers, and fish. Not only that, these structures can last 15 years or more, all the while supplying excellent cover for fish and concentrating fish for anglers to enjoy.

Fish attractor sites have long been an important part of fish habitat management for the Department. Historically, though, manmade fish attractor sites in our lakes have been comprised of brush piles, cedar trees, pallet structures, or artificial habitats such as spider blocks made of rubber hoses and concrete. All of these things are particularly prone to deterioration or displacement, and usually within a matter of about three to five years. At that point, such habitat structures provide little, if any, benefit to fish or the anglers looking to catch them. Plus, they require time and money to replace frequently. The costs add up.

Put simply, a better, longer-term fish attracting solution would be better.

Enter the Shelbyville cube, named after the Shelbyville, Ill., Lake Habitat Alliance that developed it. The Shelbyville cube is a game-changing artificial fish attractor. And by bringing it to Oklahoma lakes, biologists are confident they've found a great option with a host of new benefits.

David Bogner and Brad Johnston, both fisheries personnel for the Wildlife Department, attended a habitat conference last year hosted by the Shelbyville Alliance and a local Friends of Reservoirs group. It was there that they were introduced to the large structures and had the opportunity to help build several. The Alliance has already installed about 1,600 cubes into Illinois reservoirs comparable to Oklahoma lakes, perfecting the design and building process along the way.



JENA DONNELL/ODWC

The cubes are about 4 by 4 feet wide and around 5 feet tall, constructed of piping that is wrapped in corrugated tubing and anchored to the lake bottom. A "floor" constructed of snow fencing prevents sinking, siltation and other displacement issues that plague Oklahoma's current artificial fish structure designs.

Equally important, the cubes attract serious usage from fish. That's a win for anglers hoping to get into some good fishing!

To kick things off, the Department recently bought supplies for an initial buildout of 10 cubes, which have already been installed at Fort Gibson Lake.

While each cube costs about \$250 to build, they could probably be built for even less if supplies are purchased in bulk. That's where Oklahoma sportsmen and sportswomen come in to make it all happen.

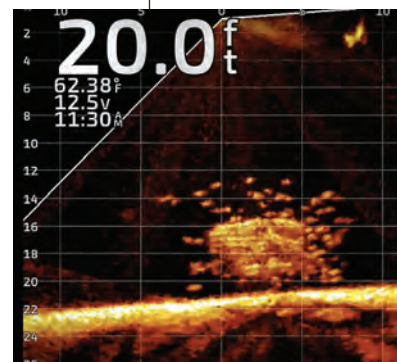
Remember that the Wildlife Department receives no general state tax funds. But donors can help the Department raise funds to create and install these cubes by adding the \$5, \$10 or \$25 "fish habitat donation" option to your [www.GoOutdoorsOklahoma.com](http://www.GoOutdoorsOklahoma.com) shopping cart. These donations can then be matched three-to-one with federal Sportfish Restoration dollars.

Once installed, habitat cube locations and coordinates will be added to the Wildlife Department's fish attractors map, which means better fishing for those anglers keeping tabs on ODWC-installed fish structure.

Scan the code to donate today to help create Shelbyville cubes for better fishing. ♡

—Jena Donnell, Communication and Education Specialist

Five completed fish habitat cubes sit at ODWC's field office. Each cube weighs about 70 pounds and stands about 6 feet tall. Cost is about \$250 per cube, and life expectancy is about 20 years.



WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT/COM

Live sonar from late April shows a large number of crappie stacking up around a Shelbyville cube placed in Fort Gibson Lake.



JENA DONNELL/ODWC

Employees attach orange snow/safety fencing to the bottom of a fish habitat cube as part of the construction process.





# 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 great 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](http://www.wildlifedepartment.com/fishing/the_dock) or scan the code:



**NEW STATE RECORD**  
Cord Smith, redear sunfish, 2 pounds 5.6 ounces, Roger Mills County pond, April 10, 2023.



**NEW STATE RECORD**  
Bryan Baker, bighead carp, 118 pounds 3 ounces, Grand Lake, May 10, 2023.



Spenser C., largemouth bass, Arbuckle Springs WMA, April 30, 2023.



Walter Hinds, saugeye, Tom Steed Lake, April 14, 2023.



**NEW STATE RECORD**  
William E. Scott, skipjack herring, 3 pounds 7.5 ounces, Eufaula tailwaters, May 1, 2023.



Victoria Vinson, blue catfish, Lake Texoma, April 28, 2023.



# 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](mailto:donald.brown@odwc.ok.gov).

**Dear Director J.D. Strong:**

We want to pass along our gratitude for the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation and commend your crew for their continued support and partnership in making our annual "Cops and Bobbers" fishing clinic a huge community success. We would not be able to make near as significant of an impact with fostering community connections without ODWC's involvement.

We want to recognize your employees who give so generously of their time. We could not get by without **Kristen Gillman's** coordination and outright support of this event. Kristen is always first in line each year to offer her support and help. She is a major asset to your organization.

We would also like to thank **Jeremy Duck** and Game Wardens **Mike France, Josey Branch, and Jacob Harriet**. They all showed up with big smiles on their faces and ready to help make this event a success. Mike, Josey and Jacob ran the casting part of our clinic, and Jeremy ran the fish ID station complete with a tank full of demonstration fish. The kids loved it!

We had 125 kids go through the clinic in just over two hours; to say your employees had their hands full is an understatement. We just wanted to let you know what an outstanding job the ODWC'S employees were. On behalf of the Stillwater Police Department



Kristen Gillman



Jeremy Duck



Game Warden  
Mike France



Game Warden  
Josey Branch



Game Warden  
Jacob Harriet



ODWC Fisheries Biologist Jeremy Duck, right, assists a Stillwater Police officer at the fishing clinic.



staff and its Community Outreach Program, please pass along our gratitude and thank them for a job well done!

**Lt. TJ Low, Community Outreach Program Coordinator**

**Dear Col. Nathan Erdman, Chief of Law Enforcement:**

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the Oklahoma Game Wardens listed below for their efforts in planning and conducting interviews, and the serving of federal search warrants during a joint investigation involving the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Wyoming Game and Fish Department.

They are Game Warden Lt. Col. **Wade Farrar**, Game Warden **Bretton Sloan**, Game Warden **Brian Meskimen**, Game Warden **Jaylen Flynn**, Game Warden **Mark Murray**, Game Warden **Chad Strang**.

These individuals provided a tremendous amount of support while planning and conducting an interview in May 2017 and an interview and execution of a federal search warrant in November 2017. All were very supportive, great to work with, and a wealth of knowledge on local communities and customs. This kind of support is vital to the success of these types of investigations, and we would not have been able to conduct the interviews without the professionalism, dedication, and positive attitude exhibited by the officers mentioned above. This case is now concluded with felony and misdemeanor convictions in multiple Wyoming courts. Please pass on my sincere gratitude to your officers for a job well done.

**Richard King, Chief Game Warden,  
Wyoming Fish and Game Department**



Game Warden  
Wade Farrar



Game Warden  
Bretton Sloan



Game Warden  
Brian Meskimen



Game Warden  
Jaylen Flynn



Game Warden  
Mark Murray



Game Warden  
Chad Strang

# ARCHERY, SHOTGUN STUDENTS TAKE HONORS IN STATE, NATIONAL COMPETITIONS



OKSSSP Senior Division State Champion: El Reno.



OKSSSP Junior Division State Champion: Okarche



OKSSSP State Top Senior Male: Baylor Crabtree of Boise City.



OKSSSP State Top Senior Female and Top Senior Overall Individual: Addison Darling of Merritt.



OKSSSP State Top Junior Male and Top Junior Overall Individual: Landyn Howard of Valliant



OKSSSP State Top Junior Female: Callie Cramer of Okarche.

Each year, thousands of students across Oklahoma participate in the Oklahoma National Archery in the Schools Program (OKNASP), Varsity Archery Program, and Oklahoma Scholastic Shooting Sports Program (OKSSSP), all among a suite of educational offerings from the Wildlife Department's Communication and Education Division.

The **state tournaments** in each of the programs are held in February for OKNASP and in April for OKSSSP. ODWC would like to recognize the winning teams and individuals from all state tournaments with their photos on these pages.

Also, many Oklahoma students go on to compete in **NASP national tournaments**. This year, Oklahoma students collectively came home with four national championships, seven Academic All-American Archer honors, and a slew of other top finisher titles.


"We are incredibly proud of all the students, teachers, coaches, and parents who have poured themselves into this amazing program," said Kelly Boyer, OKNASP coordinator for the Wildlife Department. National winners are:

## NASP Western Nationals

- Bullseye Competition: McCloud, 5th place High School Team; Kyler Perkins of Zaneis, 2nd place Elementary School Male Individual; Corie Barnes of McCloud, 2nd place High School Female Individual.
- 3D Challenge Competition: Kyler Perkins of Zaneis, 2nd place Elementary School Male Individual; Corie Barnes of McCloud, 3rd place High School Female Individual.

## NASP Eastern Nationals

- Bullseye Competition: Altus Intermediate School, 1st place, **National Champion** Elementary School Team; Locust Grove Elementary, 1st place, **National Champion** Middle School Team; Turner Holder of Altus Intermediate School, 1st place, **National Champion** Elementary School Male Individual; Remington McWhirt of Salina Public School, 1st place, **National Champion** Middle School Male Individual.
- 3D Challenge Competition: Locust Grove Middle School, 2nd place Middle School Team; Locust Grove High School, 4th place High School Team; Caden Eyestone of Chandler High School, 5th place High School Male Individual.

To learn more about the Wildlife Department's education programs, scan the code. 





PROVIDED



Varsity Archery Top Team: Noble.



Varsity Archery Top Male:  
Dax Dry of Locust Grove.



Varsity Archery Top Female:  
Ariel Waldron of Tulsa area  
homeschool.

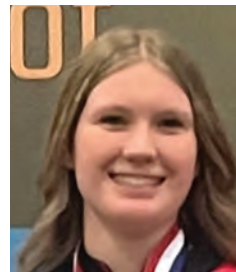
PROVIDED



OKNASP Grand State High School Top Team: Locust Grove.



OKNASP Grand State High  
School Top Male: Jaeger  
Ingram of Locust Grove.



OKNASP Grand State High  
School Top Female: Corie  
Barnes of McLoud.

PROVIDED



OKNASP Grand State Middle School Top Team: Altus Junior High.



OKNASP Grand State Middle  
School Top Male: Remington  
McWhirt of Salina.



OKNASP Grand State  
Middle School Top Female:  
Addison Saavedra of Altus.

PROVIDED



OKNASP Grand State Elementary Top Team: Altus Intermediate.



OKNASP Grand State  
Elementary Top Male: Kyler  
Perkins of Zaneis.



OKNASP Grand State  
Elementary Top Female:  
Adrianna Flood of Altus.



# GAME WARDEN'S JOURNAL

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



VIA FACEBOOK OKLAHOMA GAME WARDENS

The Oklahoma Game Warden Honor Guard joined numerous law enforcement honor guards and officers at the 55th Oklahoma Law Enforcement Memorial Service to remember the fallen heroes that made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty.

"There is much in the role of a law enforcement officer that changes over the years. Two factors remain constant: a dedication to serve, and a willingness to make whatever sacrifices are required" — Unknown.

In photo from left: Game Wardens **Zach Paulk, Lt. Chad Strang, Allen Couch, David De Montigny, Riley Wilman, Lt. Ben Bickerstaff, Logan Shimp, Josey Branch, Lt. Casey Young, and Travis Garrett.**

An Oklahoma City man and an El Reno man face charges in Major County for hunting turkeys illegally.



Oklahoma Game Warden **Phillip Cottrill**, based in Major County, was working opening morning of spring turkey season when he observed a turkey decoy placed under a feeder.

When he approached, the hunters were still in the blind. One chamber-loaded shotgun and a chamber-loaded .300 blackout were

also in the blind. Cottrill also found a dead jake turkey.

Both men were issued citations for hunting turkeys over bait, and unlawful possession of wildlife not legally taken. Weapons and the bird were held for evidence.

On April 18, Game Warden **Trey Hale**, based in Marshall County, received a tip reporting illegal fishing activity that was occurring on the Washita River at Butcher Pen Boat ramp in Johnston County. Hale coordinated with Game Wardens **Curtis Latham**, based in Johnston County, and **Zane Arnold**, based in Coal County, to investigate.

Latham and Arnold followed a water trail from the ramp to a suspect vehicle at S Connector Road and E Crestview Circle.

Hale arrived and saw the vehicle parked and unoccupied. Arnold located a shocking device, and Hale walked to the boat and observed two dip nets, a car battery, and



Game Wardens Curtis Latham and Zane Arnold.

catfish slime on the boat floor. A man approached and stated he owned the truck. The truck owner admitted to shocking the fish in the boat and that he was the only one in the boat conducting the illegal activity of using a shocking device.

The man was issued an initial citation for possession of a shocking device near public waters. The catfish, shocking device, and boat were held as evidence.

Oklahoma Game Wardens **Tim Campbell, Mike France, Dylan King, Brian Meskimen, Zach Paulk, and Lt. Chad Strang** recently had the honor of helping the



Adapting Worlds Foundation and Oklahoma City Parks and Recreation with Fishing Fun Day 2023 at South Lakes Park. The foundation seeks to provide adaptable athletic, social, vocational and residential opportunities for children and adults with intellectual and multiple disabilities.

(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.





## BIRD WATCHING CAN BENEFIT MENTAL HEALTH

Did you know that bird watching can be a relaxing and enjoyable way to spend time outdoors, but it can also improve one's mental well-being at the same time?

The Wildlife Department has joined the 988 Oklahoma Mental Health Lifeline to remind everyone about the importance of prioritizing mental health. So why not take a step back from life's daily struggles and enjoy the beautiful birds surrounding us.

Observing birds in their natural habitat is a great way to disconnect from the stresses of the day and focus on the present moment.

Please visit [988Oklahoma.com](https://988Oklahoma.com) for resources or call/text 988 for free, confidential and accessible mental health support. Follow @988Okla on social media for more information.

Also, scan the code to get inspired about attracting birds to your backyard and learn where you can go for bird watching in Oklahoma. Remember to take care of yourself, and don't hesitate to ask for help when needed. 🐦



### IT'S THE LAW:

Looking for a nearby lake or pond to enjoy some fishing? Try the Wildlife Department's **Close to Home Fishing** waters, where each pond is managed and receives extra attention when it comes to fish stocking and special events. Some special rules apply for these areas:

- No more than three rods and reels per person.
- No more than three hooks per line are allowed.
- The daily harvest limit per person is three fish, including any combination of panfish, rainbow trout, and channel catfish.
- Using any type of net to catch fish is prohibited.

There are more than 40 Close to Home Fishing sites statewide, mostly in urban areas. For a list of locations, scan the code or see page 22 in the Oklahoma Fishing and Hunting Regulations. 🐟

— Lydia Gearhart, Information Intern



## OUTDOOR CALENDAR

FOR THE LATEST UPDATES, GO ONLINE TO LICENSE.  
[GOOUTDOORSOKLAHOMA.COM/Event/Events.aspx](https://GOOUTDOORSOKLAHOMA.COM/Event/Events.aspx)

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

### JULY 2023

- 1 Oklahoma City Free Fishing Day, no city permit required.  
Vamos a Pescar Fishing Class, 5:30-8 p.m., Scissortail Park, Oklahoma City. Register: <https://license.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/EventsHome.aspx>.
  - 2 "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
  - 4 Independence Day holiday; state offices closed.
  - 9 "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
  - 11 Free Fishing Clinic, 6-7:30 p.m., Jenks. Register: <https://license.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/EventsHome.aspx>.
  - 15 Quail Forever Snake Avoidance Clinic for Dogs, 7:30 a.m., Arcadia Conservation Education Area. Register: <https://pfqf.myeventscenter.com>
  - 16 "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
  - 20 Free Fishing Clinic, 6-7:30 p.m., Jenks. Register: <https://license.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/EventsHome.aspx>.
  - 23 "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
  - 30 "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
- **Ducks Unlimited** event set in Oklahoma City, July 14. Info: [www.ducks.org/events](http://www.ducks.org/events).
  - **Friends of NRA** events set in Ada, July 20; Ardmore, July 22. Info: [www.FriendsOfNRA.org](http://www.FriendsOfNRA.org).

### AUGUST 2023

- 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](https://YouTube.com/OutdoorOklahoma).
  - 12 Oklahoma Deer Hunting Conference and ONE Nation Outdoors Expo, Fire Lake Arena, Shawnee. Info: [rick@nolanoutdoors.com](mailto:rick@nolanoutdoors.com) or <https://outdoornationexpo.com>.
  - 13 "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
  - 20 "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
  - 27 "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
- **Hunter Education Classes** set in Marietta, Aug. 5; Altus, Aug. 12; Wagoner, Aug. 12; Ada, Aug. 12; Edmond, Aug. 19; Marlow, Aug. 19; Muskogee, Aug. 19; Elk City, Aug. 19; Durant, Aug. 19; Owasso, Aug. 19; Afton, Aug. 19; Ponca City, Aug. 26; Fort Cobb, Aug. 26; Bristow, Aug. 26; Broken Bow, Aug. 26; Dewey, Aug. 27. Register: <https://license.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/EventsHome.aspx>.
  - **Ducks Unlimited** events set in Lawton, Aug. 3; Wewoka, Aug. 4; Wagoner, Aug. 5; Perry, Aug. 12; Sand Springs, Aug. 18; Guthrie, Aug. 19; Bartlesville, Aug. 19; Idabel, Aug. 26. Info: [www.ducks.org/events](http://www.ducks.org/events).
  - **National Wild Turkey Federation** events set in Seminole, Aug. 1; Blanchard, Aug. 26; Ada, Aug. 26. Info: <https://your.nwtf.org/members/events/>.
  - **Pheasants Forever/Quail Forever** event set in Oklahoma City, Aug. 26. Info: <https://pfqf.myeventscenter.com>.

\*\* FOR HUNTING SEASON DATES, GO TO  
[www.wildlifedepartment.com/hunting/seasons](http://www.wildlifedepartment.com/hunting/seasons) \*\*

# START YOUR FALL HUNTING CHECKLIST NOW

Summertime might be ideal for fishing, but it's also the best time to prepare for the fall hunting seasons. Here's a helpful checklist to get you ready for opening day!

## ☐ Hunter Education

Everyone age 10 to 30 is required to be hunter education-certified to buy a regular hunting license. The class is free online at [wildlifedepartment.com](http://wildlifedepartment.com). In-person classes are also offered statewide during summer and fall ([license.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/events](http://license.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/events)). Youths younger than 10 who want to hunt are required to have an apprentice-designated license, as they are not yet eligible for hunter education certification. Adults may also hunt with an apprentice-designated license if not hunter education-certified.

## ☐ Shooting Practice and Sighting In

It pays off to spend time tuning up with your bow or firearm before the hunting seasons arrive. The Wildlife Department has 12 shooting ranges on Wildlife Management Areas statewide, and more are coming online soon. Users may sight-in rifles, practice shotgunning with clay targets, brush up on handgun skills, and fling some arrows at paper targets. Your "ticket" to these ranges is your hunting or fishing license. For details, search "Shooting Ranges" at [www.wildlifedepartment.com](http://www.wildlifedepartment.com).

## ☐ Licenses, Permits, Regulations

Get legal before hunting by ensuring you have all the required licenses or permits. And stay legal in the field by reading this year's Oklahoma Fishing and Hunting Regulations manual, due to arrive online around Aug. 1 and in print around Aug. 15. You may get licenses online at [license.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com](http://license.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com), in the GoOutdoorsOklahoma mobile app, or at license dealers statewide. Remember to get a free Harvest Information Program permit when hunting migratory birds including dove and waterfowl.

## ☐ Scout, Scout, Scout

If you want to greatly increase your odds of success in the field, it pays to go scout the area ahead of time. Visit the places you plan to hunt, and put in the time to pattern the game you will pursue. The Department website has details on all WMAs for public hunting. And don't forget the Oklahoma Land Access Program (OLAP), which offers public access for hunting on private lands.

## ☐ Dove Season Opener

Oklahoma's first major hunting season of fall arrives Sept. 1. Dove hunting is always highly anticipated by thousands of hunters, as they provide first-class wing shooting and make fine table fare. It's also easy to get started. 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. Many WMAs across the state have been grooming dove fields for months; find out more by searching "dove hunting" at [www.wildlifedepartment.com](http://www.wildlifedepartment.com).

## ☐ Oklahoma's Free Hunting Days

The first full weekend of September is Free Hunting Days in Oklahoma. This year, on Sept. 2-3, Oklahoma residents can get outdoors to pursue any game that is in season without needing to carry a state hunting license. The free days also give current hunters a perfect chance to gather up someone who hasn't been hunting and give him or her an experience that could help preserve a time-honored American tradition in the years to come.

## ☐ September Teal, Resident Canada Goose Seasons

These seasons kick off Sept. 9. Because blue-winged teal and green-winged teal usually migrate through Oklahoma much earlier than many other ducks, hunters get a chance to harvest these birds before the regular duck seasons. Resident Canada geese have established healthy populations in areas across the state. All federal migratory bird hunting regulations are in effect for these two early waterfowl seasons. Only federally approved nontoxic shot is permitted.



*It can pay off in success to begin preparing in summer ahead of Oklahoma's dove season opener Sept. 1.*



# 2022 CREATIVE WRITING COMPETITION

## "I START GETTING WORRIED ABOUT LEGAL SHOOTING TIME"

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Each year, the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation and Oklahoma Station Chapter Safari Club International sponsor a creative writing competition for middle and high school students. A boy and a girl from two age divisions are selected winners. Students write essays using the theme "Hunting: Sharing the Heritage" or "Archery: What I Like About Archery in the Schools and Bowhunting." Winners in the age 15-17 category receive a guided antelope hunt in the Texas Panhandle, and winners in the 11-14 age category receive a hunting trip with Rack Attack Outfitters of Fairview (or similar) and a scholarship to the Outdoor Texas Camp. In this issue, Outdoor Oklahoma honors junior category male winner Peyton Baker, 13, from Weleetka Schools.



### By Peyton Baker

I have been hunting for a lot of my life. I have learned a lot about the animals and nature, and learned to enjoy and respect them. I started hunting when I was 6 or 7. I never really liked it but my dad liked taking me, so I went with him. I had a good 8-point walk in front of me when I was little. That's when I started liking it because when I saw him, my blood started pumping.

I went deer hunting in 2020. I wanted to go, so my dad made sure I could shoot his 25-06. I shot the 25-06 and his 30-30.

My dad told me there were a few deer that I could shoot. We went hunting in the evening of opening day of youth rifle season because he had taken my sister that morning. All they had seen was a bunch of does. We got there and after an hour of sitting, a doe came out. Five minutes later, a little buck started chasing her. I was thinking about shooting him, but my dad told me if I waited, a bigger one would probably come out.

I waited for another hour. When the sun started setting, more bucks started coming out. Finally, I saw one I wanted to shoot, so I got ready. I pulled the trigger. We got down and looked for 45 minutes but could not find the deer. We never found blood, either. I was so sad I had missed the deer I wanted to shoot.

We had put out cameras for 2021, so I had a list of deer to pick from. I had picked two of them that I liked, a blind 9-point and an 11-point split-G2 buck. I woke up to my dad turning on the light. I got up to take a shower with soap that takes away your scent and got ready to go. We headed to our spot. We had pictures of more bucks at the feeder than anywhere else, so that's where we sat. All we saw were some OK bucks but nothing huge. Skip a few weeks to

regular rifle season. My dad went hunting with a bow during that week to see if there were any big bucks that would show up. He saw a deer that we called Short-8. He was a big eight-pointer but he was only 4.5 years old, so my dad thought he needed another year. The buck had some good brow tines, too, but he had broken them off in a fight.

We didn't really see anything that morning, but we kept hunting hard. About 10 minutes after we climbed in the tree stand, we could see a buck coming toward our feeder. I couldn't quite tell if he was very big, so I waited until he got closer. We realized it was our 11-point buck that had split G2s. My dad tells me, "If you are going to shoot him, get ready." So I get the gun ready, put the scope on him, then I decide to let him grow. We talked about the morning hunt all that day, then my dad asked if I wanted to go hunt a new spot.

The last Saturday in rifle season, we go hunting there, and all I see at first is a few small bucks. I look up 20-25 minutes before dark, and there are three does coming my way. Ten minutes later, there is a decent buck coming my way. I get my gun ready. He stands in some thick stuff for about 5 minutes, and I start getting worried about legal shooting time. Finally he steps out, I get my crosshair behind his shoulder and pull the trigger from 50 yards. He ran off along the hill I'm standing on. I wait 30 minutes, then we go look for him. We found blood right where he was standing.

I started following his blood trail. About 100-150 yards later, he was lying there. I was so happy I had shot my first deer, and it was a 9-point buck. I sent a picture of my deer to my whole family. They were happy for me, too. I took him to a place to clean it, so we didn't have to do it. I got his head, so I got a skull mount done of him. 🦌



# READERS' PH SHOWCASE 2



**Western Diamond-backed Rattlesnake** | Nathan Mackey of Duncan

*"Greer County, Okla.: This image was taken as part of my Facebook and Instagram photography pages 'Snakes on the Plains.'"*



# PHOTOGRAPHY 2023



July is here, and that means it's again time for Outdoor Oklahoma's annual **Readers' Photography Showcase** issue. The RPS, as we call it, is easily among the most anticipated issues of the year. And for good reason!

These images are simply spectacular! And they all were submitted by our loyal and talented readers. We thank you for sharing your visual treasures with all of our readers; everyone comes away much richer as a result.

For the 2023 edition of RPS, about 360 people submitted a total of about 760 photos to be considered for publication. Some of these are among the best we've seen in the past decade. We are appreciative of everyone who took a few minutes to submit their entries. And those who submitted should be proud that each of their images was considered in our judging.

Usually one or two photos will really stand out every year, and those vie for the coveted magazine cover shot. This year, several were in that very elite group of cover-shot possibilities. You've seen the image that was eventually selected, but the others that fell just short of the cover spot are noted in this year's showcase of winners. It's a little bit of deserved recognition for those photos considered as cover finalists.

So now, let's turn the pages and enjoy a feast for our eyes as we celebrate the remarkable natural diversity that is Outdoor Oklahoma. 🐍

— Don P. Brown, Associate Editor





**American Mink - COVER SHOT FINALIST** | Anne-Marie Mee of Oklahoma City



**American Badger** | Maddax Garrett of Oklahoma City

*"I saw this badger outside its den at Black Mesa. I was surprised it let me take its picture."*





**American Alligator** | David Strozdas of Edmond



**American Bison** | Mike Fuhr of Tulsa

*At The Nature Conservancy's Joseph H. Williams Tallgrass Prairie Preserve, Osage County.*



**Eastern Tiger Swallowtail** | Steven Hunter of Charleston, Ark.



**American Bumble Bee** |  
Carrie Allen-Cole of Broken Arrow

*"This is 'Fa-bee-oh,' a handsome bumble bee enjoying our pollinator garden."*



**Wolf Spider** |  
Erin Banta of Marietta

*"I found this wolf spider resting on a black-eyed Susan at Hickory Creek Wildlife Management Area."*

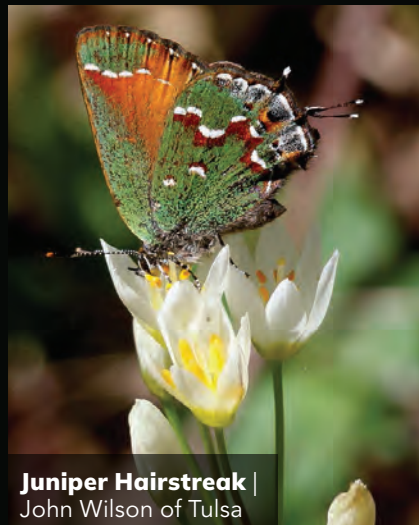


**Dragonfly** | Kay Williams of Yukon



**Bold Jumping Spider** | Kyle Hutchison of Broken Arrow

*"Living up to its name showing off its bold colors and pollen-covered body."*



**Juniper Hairstreak** |  
John Wilson of Tulsa

*"I came across this beauty while hiking near Stilwell."*





*"Freshly molted cicada showing off its new summer wardrobe at the base of a redbud tree in my front yard."*



**Green Treefrog** | Kyle Underwood of Sallisaw



**Hooded Merganser** | Randy Sander of Broken Bow



**Blue-winged Teal** | Rick Newman of Jenks







Susan Ritter of Atoka

*"A different type of hunt. Milky Way crossing a dry Muddy Boggy River."*



**Plains Box Turtle** | Bailey Downs of Sapulpa





**American Black Bear - COVER SHOT FINALIST** | Wesley Kirpach of Talihina

*"This is one of 12 American black bears to appear in our yard near Talihina in the Ouachita Mountains."*



**Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** |  
Scott Gallagher of Grove



**Red-shouldered Hawk** | Dustin Melton of Moore

*"This hawk is showing its nictitating membrane, or extra eyelid."*





**Ring-billed Gulls** | Stephen Ofsthun of Norman









Ted Nishimuta of Cushing

*Fish Ladder Lakes, Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge.*





**Common Nighthawk** | Sherman Barr of Edmond



**Eastern Collared Lizard Pair** | Jeff Fitzgerald of Moore



**Pileated Woodpecker** | Randy Sander of Broken Bow



**Mallard** | Addisyn Oden of Porter

**Spotted Towhee** | David Strozdas of Edmond



**Northern Parula** | Steven Hunter of Charleston, Ark.



"Taken in May at the J.T. Nickel Preserve near Tahlequah. I noticed he repeatedly perched in this tree to sing. While he was gone, I set up my camera to photograph him upon his return."



**Ruby-throated Hummingbird** | Mark Robinson of Tulsa



**Ruby-throated Hummingbird** | Susan Hemphill of Edmond



**Snowy Owl** | Ranae Maberry of Calumet







**Bald Eagle - COVER SHOT FINALIST** | Aneda Smith of Sand Springs

*"I see eagles quite often since I live near the Arkansas River but, it never fails to excite me when I see the flash of white head and tail."*



**Bobcat Kitten** |  
Bob Buckner of Eufaula

*"I saw the mom and another baby, but this little guy froze. He's just hanging onto the side of a tree staring at me."*



**Great Blue Heron** | Cheryl Welch of Broken Arrow





**Smallmouth Bass** | Bridget Kirk of Durant



Traci Gardner of Oklahoma City



**Osprey with Gizzard Shad** |  
Scott Gallagher of Grove





**Canada Geese** | Blake Rains of Claremore



**Zachary Handke of Stillwater**



**Common Gartersnake** | Eric Brown of Tulsa





**Western Rat Snake** | Scott Smith of Newcastle  
*"Crossing the road at Sequoyah National Wildlife Refuge near Vian."*



**Crested Caracara** | Sherman Barr of Edmond  
*"I think the range of these falcons is slowly moving north."*



**Bobcat** | Sheryl Smith of Mannford





**Wild Turkey** | Richard Taylor of Lawton



**Wild Turkeys** | Joshua VanTuyl of Lawton



**Wild Turkeys** | Susan Ritter of Atoka





**Red Fox** | Howard Jackson of El Reno



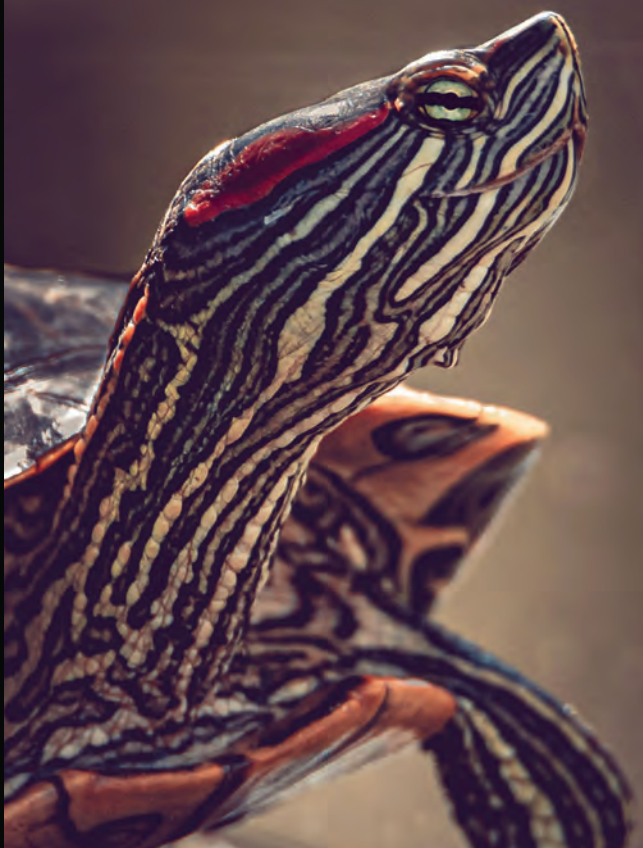
**White-tailed Deer** | Mark Bright of Oklahoma City



**Bobcat** | Ty Oliver of Tishomingo



**Red-eared Slider** | Ashley Faram of Yukon



**Longear Sunfish** | Bridget Kirk of Durant



**Jumping Spider** | Kellie Carter of Newcastle

*"This jumping spider's web must have gotten a bit wild. I think that most of it ended up on top of his head!"*



**River Otter** | Randy Sander of Broken Bow



**Great Blue Heron** | James Wareham of Bartlesville



**Limpkin** | Greg Silva of Owasso



*"2022 was the year of the limpkins in Oklahoma. This one was located June 19 at Oxley Nature Center in Tulsa."*



**Bald Eagles** | Jim Jordan of Tulsa



*Along the Arkansas River near Sand Springs.*

**American Mink with Crawfish** | Anne-Marie Mee of Oklahoma City





**Red Fox** | Scott Gay of Grove



**Bald Eagle and Mallard** | Anne-Marie Mee of Oklahoma City



"This particular duck was able to duck under just in time."



**Eastern Amberwing Dragonfly** |  
Carrie Allen-Cole of Broken Arrow



**Widow Skimmer Dragonfly** | Kay Williams of Yukon



**Green Treefrog** | Greg Silva of Owasso



**Wood Duck** | Cody Abel of Muskogee





**American Bison** | Cathy Baldrige of Okmulgee



**Bald Eagle** | Karen Perez of Cleveland



**Monarchs** | Erin Calise of Oklahoma City



Brandon Stansbury



**Elk** | Anthony Morris of Purcell

Elk harvested in the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge on an Oklahoma controlled hunt.





**Turner Falls** | Blake Rains of Claremore



**White-tailed Deer** | Michi White of Lawton





**Sandy Songer of Garvin**

*Skyline Trail, Mountain Fork River, Beavers Bend State Park.*



**Great Horned Owlets** | Ben Childers of Midwest City



**Fox Squirrel** | Carrie Allen-Cole of Broken Arrow



**Ring-necked Pheasant** | Megan Childers of Blackwell



**Leucistic Fox Squirrel** | Jerry Spears of Mangum





**Barred Owl** | Dale Parsons of Bartlesville

*"This young barred owl posed for me, directly behind my backyard fence."*



**Greater Roadrunner** |  
Jacob Miller of Arnett



**Cedar Waxwing** | Daryle Presley of Seminole



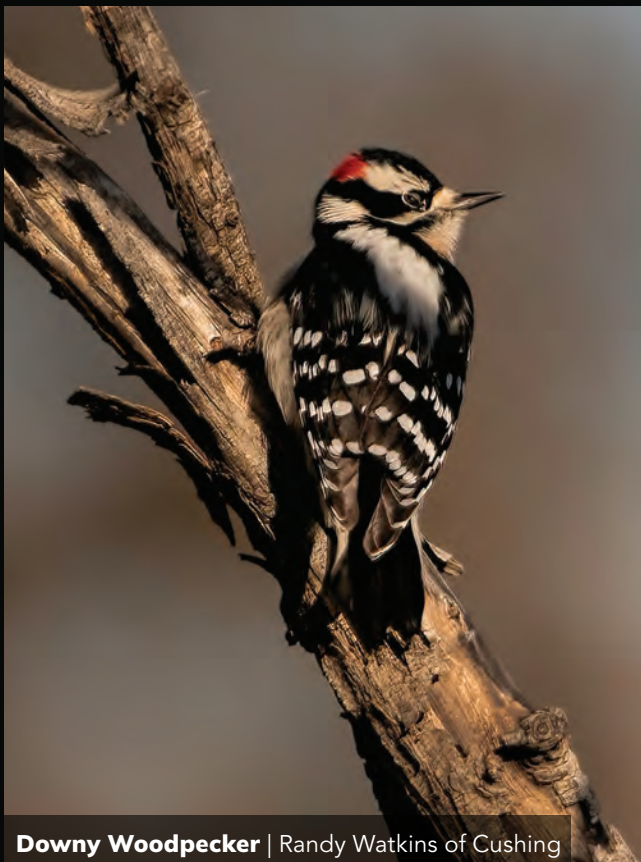
**Burrowing Owl** |  
Scott Smith of Newcastle

*"Standing by its burrow at Black Mesa State Park."*





**Red-headed Woodpecker** | Melanie Emerson



**Downy Woodpecker** | Randy Watkins of Cushing



**Painted Bunting** | Aneda Smith of Sand Springs

*"My favorite summer birds. I like to think that they flew through a rainbow."*





**White-tailed Deer** | Anjelica Newcomer of Edmond



**Northern Bobwhite** | Zachary Handke of Stillwater



**Black Bear** | Desiree Cline of Honobia

*"This young cinnamon black bear climbed up a cedar tree to observe its mother nearby."*





Stacy Freeny of Broken Bow

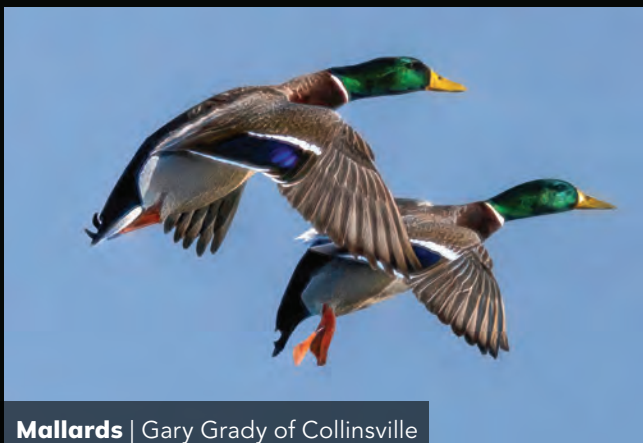
*"Kayaking in the morning sunrise. This shot is nearly 100 percent unedited, and I am so proud of that!"*



**Elk** | Jacie Jones of Blackwell



**Texas Horned Lizard** |  
Kaye Eccles of Altus



**Mallards** | Gary Grady of Collinsville



**Bald Eagle** |  
Bryna Thomas of Edmond

*This juvenile bald eagle was soaring over the dam of Lake Hefner.*





**Jerry Spears of Mangum**

*Elm Fork of the Red River, Greer County.*



**Robber Fly |**  
Mary Ellis of Oklahoma City

*"I started doing macro photography in 2022. I have learned so much about insects and I absolutely love it."*



**Gray Fox |** Darren Hill of Prague



**Bald Eagle |** Mark Robinson of Tulsa





**Broken Bow Lake** | Teresa Randall of Norman



# OUTDOOR STORE

license.GoOutdoorsOklahoma.com

Sign in or shop online as a guest. Some 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. (Online sales only.) — \$20

## Outdoor Gear



## YUKON FLOATING GUN CASE

Welded waterproof construction, thick foam padding for protection, 500d tarpaulin exterior shell, carry strap and handle, universal fit for shotgun or scoped rifle. (Online sales only.) — \$70

## YUKON ODWC BACKPACK COOLER

Double Duty — Works as Cooler or Padded Gear Bag, Keeps Ice For Days, Air Tight Zipper, Rugged Welded Construction, 20 can with Ice capacity. (Ships separate from other Outdoor Store items) — \$140.00



## 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). (Online sales only.) — \$20

## DURABLE COLLECTOR'S CARDS

Every hunting and fishing license holder can upgrade to a customized hard plastic card that won't be damaged by water, sun, dirt, or regular wear and tear like paper documents. Cards hold customer and license information on one side; the other side features artwork from Oklahoma artists that changes periodically. Several designs available. (Account sign-in required.) — \$6



## 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







## 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](http://tinyurl.com/WildTags).

## 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

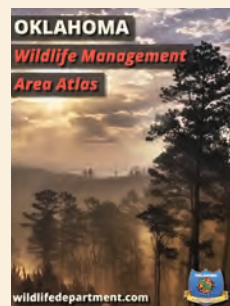


## DURABLE FIELD TAGS

A three-pack of plastic field tags with name and customer ID printed on one side, and places to write your harvest date/time and the E-Check confirmation number on the other. Reusable. (Account sign-in required.) — \$6

## HABITAT DONOR CAP

Top-quality, American-made cap displays the Bass Habitat Donor Patch, 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. — \$20



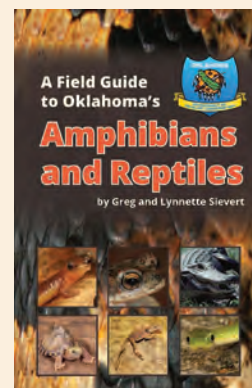
## OKLAHOMA WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA ATLAS

The Wildlife Management Area Atlas presents maps of Oklahoma's WMAs and ODWC-owned 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

## LATEST

## 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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MICHAEL BRYAN OF BARTLESVILLE



A hawkmoth visits a moonflower in Osage County. Nearly hummingbird size, these insects have a proboscis that can reach 9 inches into a flower to get nectar. This image by Michael Bryan of Bartlesville is among the best from hundreds submitted for Readers' Photography Showcase 2023, inside this issue of Outdoor Oklahoma.

# Outdoor Oklahoma

