

Outdoor Oklahoma

NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2023 — ONLY \$10 A YEAR

Special Pullout Section:

'24 Wildlife Habitat Calendar

INSIDE

Northern Bobwhite:
How Did We Get Here?

Show Respect
For Outdoors,
Leave No Trace

A PUBLICATION OF THE OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION



PANORAMAS



Lance Meek

Oklahoma's hunter education course covers what you need to know to be a safe hunter in the field. It's meant to be one of the first steps in your journey as a hunter.

While our course does focus on safety measures for hunting situations, we also cover topics like survival and wildlife conservation and management. There are so many lessons that can apply to anyone who wants to enjoy the outdoors.

With several hunting seasons recently opened or starting soon, it's a great time to share some tips and reminders from our hunter education course that can help everyone stay safe, regardless of their outdoor pursuits.

- **Share Your Outdoor Plans.** No one expects to ever need a rescue, but this simple step can make a big difference in the off-chance your outing doesn't go as planned. Whether you're going afield for a hunt, hike, or extended outdoor chore, let someone know the general vicinity you plan to explore and your expected return time. That information can send help in the right direction, when time may be of the essence.
- **Hunter Orange Isn't Just for Hunters.** Wearing a minimum amount of daylight fluorescent orange is a safety requirement for most hunters during some hunting seasons. And while intended to alert hunters of other hunters' presence, it doesn't have to be a hunters-only practice. If you're going to spend time outdoors during fall or winter hunting seasons, regardless of the reason, at least let your hat be hunter orange to allow others to be able to see you.
- **Dress for the Seasons ... Not Just the Weather.** Outerwear is covered in several hunter education lessons, and not just in the "wear hunter orange; dress in layers; avoid cotton clothes if you may get wet or rained on; the first symptom of hypothermia is shivering" kind of way. Everyone in the outdoors should be aware of all open hunting seasons and dress accordingly. That old-school Carhartt

coat, a staple for many Oklahomans during fall and winter, looks very similar to the color of a deer. And a scarf having red, white or blue in it could resemble the colors on a wild turkey's head. Many outdoor enthusiasts like to blend in with the natural environment, but be sure to factor in any open hunting seasons to your choice of wardrobe.

- **Firearms Safety Begins in the Home.** Firearms safety is of paramount importance while hunting in the field, but those lessons about storage and safety can, and do, apply to anyone who owns a firearm. Always treat a firearm as if it is loaded. Never assume that a firearm is unloaded, even if it was checked only a few minutes earlier. Store firearms and ammunition separately in locked cabinets or safes. And avoid horseplay at all times. No matter how good your kid is, or how trained they are, firearms are fascinating to kids. Do whatever you need to do to keep kids from accessing your firearms when you aren't present.

Everyone is encouraged to read through the Wildlife Department's free Hunter Education Manual, take the free online hunter education course (available through the NRA learning portal), or attend a free in-person hunter education course. The manual is a great resource for those new to the outdoor life, and it serves as a great refresher for those already certified in hunter education.

We invite everyone to take the course either online or in a classroom setting, whether they ever intend to hunt. When anyone completes the free online, the Wildlife Department receives in-kind dollars. Those dollars can then unlock additional federal funding that supports hunter education and other education programs. ♡

Lance Meek

Lance Meek, Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation

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ON THE COVER:

This remarkable image of a black bear sow and her twin cubs captured by southeastern Oklahoma photographer Desiree Branson Cline 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 the bottom with the magazine cover, pull off the page sheets and leave 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

GAME WARDEN WILLMAN HONORED AS 2023 OFFICER OF YEAR



Riley Willman

Game Warden **Riley Willman**, based in Delaware County, is Oklahoma's 2023 Conservation Officer of the Year.

Willman was honored by Shikar-Safari Club International after being selected by his peers from nominations throughout the Law Enforcement Division of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC). He's now in the running for the national Conservation Officer of the Year award.

Last spring, Willman was honored by the State Legislature for saving the life of a man in a near-drowning in eastern Oklahoma. He's served four years as a Game Warden, and he consistently logs the most contacts with the public in his district.

Willman sets examples for teamwork, public outreach, and excellence. He has participated in many programs such as fishing field days for youths and special youth hunts. He organized the largest hunter education course in his district. He engaged community support through prize donations and went above and beyond by hosting

a cookout and a shotgun sporting clays shoot for students and volunteers.

He prioritizes service to ODWC before himself and his family to make sure that the sportsmen and sportswomen of Oklahoma receive justice for wildlife crimes committed in his area.

His preparedness, quick actions, and selflessness has saved the life of several in need of rescue. From helping a citizen with a self-inflicted gunshot wound, to using tourniquets to stop bleeding on a man who slit his wrists, to risking his life by jumping into turbulent water to pull a drowning victim from the water and performing CPR on the victim to bring him back to life twice, Willman's extreme altruism shows his true dedication to all aspects of law enforcement.

Nominees from other law enforcement districts were **Stephen Paul** (Noble County); **Orlando Martinez** (Washita County); **Michael Zimmerman** (Grady County); **Dylan King** (Canadian County); **Trey Hale** (Marshall County); **Jim Gillham** (Love County); and **Cody Youngblood** (Cherokee County). 🍷

SEND US PHOTOS TO LEARN YOUR BAGGED DEER'S AGE

Did you ever wonder about the true age of your harvested deer? Oklahoma deer hunters can find out from an expert when they participate in helping ODWC biologists collect important data that

will contribute to managing the state's deer herd.

What's required is to submit images of your deer's jaw and antlers to a biologist, who can then determine age based on scientific methods. Your deer's age will be posted by your E-Check confirmation number, eliminating the guessing game of aging based on body conditions.

When processing your deer, simply remove the jaw without damaging any teeth. Or ask your taxidermist to save your deer jaw when he or she capes out your trophy. Then provide clear photos. To gather additional information on bucks, photos of antlers and the measurements of antler beam length and beam circumference are requested as well.

To learn more about the Age My Deer program and to see how-to videos, go to wildlifedepartment.com/form/age-my-deer or scan the QR code. 🍷



TROUT TIME: SEASONAL FISHERIES STOCKED AND OPEN STATEWIDE

When traditional fishing tends to slow as the weather cools off, some anglers in Oklahoma seek out some rainbows and browns at the Wildlife Department's seasonal trout fishing sites.

Starting Nov. 1, ODWC's Fisheries Division stocks trout at seasonal sites across the state. They are **Perry CCC/Lake Perry Park, Robbers Cave State Park, Blue River Public Fishing and Hunting Area, Boetcher Lake** at Roman Nose State Park, **Medicine Creek** near Lawton, and **Sunset Lake** in Guymon. Regular stocking continues at these sites until March 15 or March 31.

Trout are stocked year-round in the **Lower Illinois River** and **Lower Mountain Fork River**, where the streams remain cold enough for trout to survive even during summertime.

The daily harvest limit is three trout per day of any size. But anglers may catch and release as many trout as they wish each day.

Also, residents of the state's two largest urban areas can try some trout fishing starting Dec. 1 at some Close to Home Fishing locations. **Veterans Park Pond** in Jenks is a trout stocking site. In the Oklahoma City area, **Edwards Park** and **Route 66 Park** are trout stocking sites. These sites will be stocked through February.

Trout anglers must carry a resident or nonresident fishing license. Municipal permits may be required at seasonal sites.

Trout fishing regulations, including restricted areas and site maps, can be found in the current Oklahoma Fishing and Hunting Regulations online at wildlifedepartment.com, on the Go Outdoors Oklahoma free mobile app, or in print across the state wherever hunting and fishing licenses are sold. 🦆



Ryan Shows displays a nice rainbow trout he caught in Medicine Creek.

IT'S THE LAW: LAST-DAY DEER LICENSE

Are you concerned that you might not be able to fill your antlered deer license? If you can't connect with an antlered deer before the final day of the hunting season, your antlered deer license can be used to harvest an antlerless deer instead. The hunter must use the same method of take (archery, muzzleloader or gun season) that the antlerless deer license specifies, and only in zones that are open for antlerless harvest. Hunters must still comply with the bag limit restrictions for the season being hunted. 🦌

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 2023

- 1 "Learn to Hunt Quail and Pheasant" webinar. Register: <https://license.goooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/EventsHome.aspx>.
 - 4 Oklahoma City Free Fishing Day, no city permit required.
 - 5 "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
 - 6 Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commission meeting, 9 a.m., Oklahoma City. Livestream: YouTube.com/OutdoorOklahoma.
 - 8 "Learn to Hunt Waterfowl" webinar. Register: <https://license.goooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/EventsHome.aspx>.
 - 12 "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
 - 15 "Learn to Hunt Deer Rifle" webinar. Register: <https://license.goooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/EventsHome.aspx>.
 - 19 "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
 - 23 Thanksgiving.
 - 26 "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
- **Hunter Education Classes** set in Omega, Nov. 11; Jenks, Nov. 11. Register: <https://license.goooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/EventsHome.aspx>.
 - **Ducks Unlimited** events set in Bixby, Nov. 2; Durant, Nov. 7; Tulsa, Nov. 9; McAlester, Nov. 16; Elk City, Nov. 16; Ardmore, Nov. 30. Info: www.ducks.org/events.
 - **Quail Forever** event set in Elk City, Nov. 9. Info: www.oklahomaquailforever.org/pfqfeventsink.
 - **National Wild Turkey Federation** events set in Vian (WITO), Nov. 4. Info: <https://your.nwtf.org/members/events/>.

DECEMBER 2023

- 2 Oklahoma City Free Fishing Day, no city permit required.
 - 3 "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
 - 4 Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commission meeting, 9 a.m., Oklahoma City. Livestream: YouTube.com/OutdoorOklahoma.
 - 10 "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
 - 17 "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
 - 24 "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
 - 25 Christmas Day.
 - 31 "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
- **Ducks Unlimited** events info: www.ducks.org/events.
 - **National Wild Turkey Federation** event set in Frederick, Dec. 31. Info: <https://your.nwtf.org/members/events/>.

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

GAME WARDEN'S JOURNAL

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



Lt. **James Edwards Jr.**, Game Warden Supervisor based in Beckham County, spent some time recently with students at Sayre Elementary School to share his passion for Oklahoma's wildlife. Edwards brought a "Skins and Skulls" exhibit that allows the children to touch and hold samples from various animals while learning about them.



Around Oct. 10, two bucks were poached from the road in southern Washington County just west of the Moose

Lodge Road-Gap Road intersection. The larger buck was shot, dragged to the road, and decapitated. The smaller buck was shot and left where it fell. Anyone with information about this wildlife crime is asked to contact Lt. **Joe Alexander**, Game Warden Supervisor based in Washington County, at (918) 331-5798. To remain

anonymous, the public may call Operation Game Thief at (800) 522-8039 during business hours, and callers could earn a reward.



On Oct. 3, Game Warden **Royce Gillham**, based in Atoka County, assisted multiple agencies in apprehending a suspect that attempted to elude Love County law enforcement. Gillham assisted with the command and control of the scene due to his patrol truck's advanced communication equipment. After a lengthy vehicle pursuit, the vehicle wrecked into Lake Murray and the sus-



pect bailed out on foot. A perimeter was set up, and the suspect was taken into custody.

Game Wardens **Spencer Grace**, based in Kay County, and **Stephen Paul**, based in Noble County, responded to a late-night call Aug. 19 reporting a special-needs person operating a small ski boat was missing on Sooner Lake. The Game Wardens took a boat to the lake and began searching with spotlights and a thermal imaging device in cooperation with the Noble County Sheriff's Office and OG&E plant security. After several hours of searching and with assistance from a beautiful sunrise, the stranded boater was located, and the Game Wardens towed the boat to shore where he was reunited with his family.



(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.

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 Wildlife Department,

I just want to commend ODWC Wildlife Technician **Jesse Handke** for the help he provided. My wife and I are 75 years old, and I have a heart condition. We were out by Osage Plains Park at Copan Lake and had a flat tire in 105-degree temperatures. We watched many vehicles go by before Handke stopped and asked if he could help. He assisted us to his truck with the air conditioner running while he proceeded to fix our flat tire. We offered to pay him, and he refused. We just wanted someone to know that Handke should be commended for his actions of saving us. We are very thankful for his help.



Jesse Handke

Dole Carr

Dear Wildlife Department,

We just wanted to say thank you to **Tim Campbell**, Game Warden based in Oklahoma County, for coming to save a little bird at our school! Wonder Nature School is so appreciative of him going out of his way, doing what he normally doesn't, to help our students feel like the bird was going to be safe.

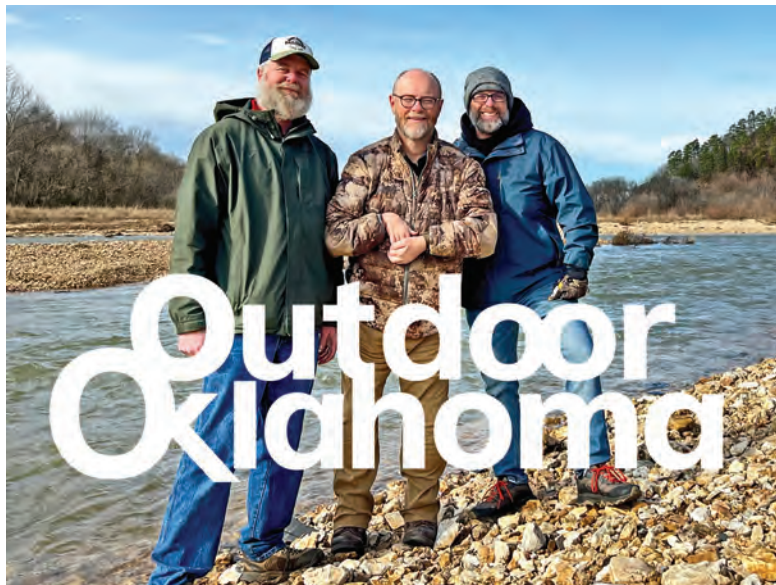


Tim Campbell

Kaylynn Vandenakker

Dear "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV Crew,

I started watching "Outdoor Oklahoma" and "The Wallace Wildlife Show" with my Grandpa as far back as I can remember. We were fortunate to have Don Wallace film a number of quail hunts on and around our land in Harmon County. We even allowed arch rival Barry Switzer in the neighbor-



Darrin Hill, Todd Craighead, Blake Podhajsky: Producers of Outdoor Oklahoma TV Show

hood. I'm not a big fan of all the new, commercialized hunting shows. "Outdoor Oklahoma" is still my favorite.

Ron Smith

EDITOR'S NOTE: Approaching its 50th consecutive year on the air, ODWC's television program can be seen at 8 a.m. Sundays on the statewide OETA public TV network. An extensive catalog of previous episodes is available free for viewing on the Outdoor Oklahoma YouTube channel.

Dear ODWC Social Media Team,

I just wanted to give huge kudos to Social Media Coordinator **Sarah Southerland** and others on the team for your social media work. My 25-year-old daughter forwarded me over a dozen memes, all posted by the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation. She found these all on Tumblr. Her comment to me is, "Oklahoma is knocking it out of the park with these memes!"



Sarah Southerland

You definitely hit her demographic. I've got to admit, most of them that she shared with me prompted me to chuckle. I shared your hard work with the Missouri Department of Conservation's media team to let them know what you all were up to. Nice job! And thank you for advancing conservation in a creative and memorable way.

Justine Gartner, State Forester/Forestry Section
Chief, Missouri Department of Conservation

WILD ABOUT COOKING

VENISON STEAMED BUNS BY WADE TRUONG



STEAMED BUN DOUGH INGREDIENTS

4 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 tsp. salt
1 1/2 Tbsp. plus 1/4 tsp. sugar
1 tsp. active dry yeast
1/4 cup milk
1 Tbsp. canola oil
1 Tbsp. rice wine vinegar
1 tsp. baking powder

FILLING INGREDIENTS

2 lb. venison with pork fat (20 percent fat)
1/2 cup rehydrated mushrooms, minced
(we used wood ears, shiitakes would also be fantastic)
2 bunches scallions, thinly cut crosswise
3 cloves garlic, minced
1.5-inch ginger, peeled, minced
2 shallots, minced
2 Tbsp. salt
1 Tbsp. soy sauce
1 Tbsp. sesame oil
1 Tbsp. rice wine vinegar
1 Tbsp. crushed Szechuan peppercorns

DIRECTIONS

- In a bowl, combine venison with all filling ingredients.
- Combine flour, salt and 1 1/2 Tbsp. sugar. In a separate container, combine yeast, 1/4 tsp. sugar and 1 Tbsp. tepid water; stir to dissolve. Combine dissolved yeast mixture with flour mixture in stand-up mixer bowl. Stir on low setting with dough hook. Add milk and oil, rice wine vinegar, and 1 cup tepid water.
- Work until a dough ball forms, adding flour or water in small amounts as needed to form a dough that is tacky but not sticky. Allow to knead for 10 minutes.
- Place dough ball in lightly oiled bowl, cover with damp cloth, and let proof for two hours in a warm place. Then roll dough out of bowl onto a lightly floured surface. Punch down and sprinkle baking powder over dough, work into a ball, and let rest 10 minutes.
- Roll dough into a cylinder about 3 inches wide, then cut cylinder into coins about an inch thick. Place some filling in center of dough coins.
- Close coins by bringing dough up from sides and pinching over the top. Place parchment paper or wax paper under bun before steaming. (The paper keeps buns from sticking to steamer.)
- Steam for 15-20 minutes until filling is cooked through. Serve and enjoy.



Wade Truong

Wade Truong is a lifelong Virginian, self-taught chef, and hunter. He's been featured in the New York Times and Garden & Gun. His passion for cooking and sharing food is the foundation of his obsession with the outdoors and the resources they provide. Truong said he believes every meal should be "enjoyed and celebrated, meaningful, and mindful."

This publication was funded by the Multistate Conservation Grant Program, a program supported with funds from the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program and jointly managed by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

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 or scan the code:



Westin Cole, black bass, 9/24/2023, Wagoner County.



NEW RECORD! Stephen Banaszak, silver carp (invasive), 31.3 pounds, 8/18/2023, Red River.



Darrell Etheridge, catfish, 9/4/2023, Lake Lawtonka.




Ramon Morales, smallmouth bass, 9/1/2023, Lake Murray.



Tara Hess, rainbow trout, 9/9/2023, Lower Mountain Fork River.



Maddox Houtman, black bass, 9/8/2023, Okmulgee Lake.



Northern Bobwhite in Oklahoma: How Did We Get Here?

By Tell Judkins,
Upland Game
Wildlife
Biologist

Habitat and weather, habitat and weather.

Raise your hand if you're tired of hearing someone go on and on about habitat and weather. It seems any time quail are mentioned, the conversation always leads back to habitat and weather. What if for once we said something different?

Or what if we just did a whole article about habitat and weather? At least then you'd know what to expect!

With temperatures from negative double-digits to well over 100 degrees F, floods to droughts, and hail to snow and ice, I don't think anyone would argue that Oklahoma has

some pretty wild weather. I also think we can agree that our state is wildly diverse not only in our wildlife but also in their unique habitats. Everything from swamps to sand dunes, alligator to pronghorn call Oklahoma home. There are even a handful of animals that no matter the wild landscape of the state you find yourself in, they are there as well... or at least they used to be.

Cue the Northern bobwhite (*Colinus virginianus*, for the fellow bird-nerds), a little brown bird/delicacy beloved by, well, just about every Okie. Most of us have a story involving a bobwhite, whether that be a grandpa's hunt-

PHOTO: KIM WATSON/GETTY IMAGES

ing story, the bird's unmistakable call, or even the memory of a covey flush with your four-legged best pal on point.

All of this, and the rich history and tradition that draw us to the uplands, help keep quail conservation a priority at the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation.

As you start to imagine diverse habitats, imagine them *with* quail. We can all picture a grassland in the northwest with quail. But do the piney woods in the southeast have quail? The grasslands and mountains, the rivers and creeks — yes, they all are home for Mr. and Mrs. Bob White, or at least they should be. Now, the editor only gave me a few pages to work with, so let's get to it?

We don't have to go too far back to find examples of wild weather. On Nov. 1, 2022, the U.S. Drought Monitor had 97.43 percent of our state in severe, extreme, or exceptional drought. No graphic is needed for everyone to know that can't be good.

If we fast-forward to Aug. 24, 2023, only 8.28 percent of the state was covered by those three categories. Mesonet.org recorded the wettest first half of July in the last 100 years in three regions and for the statewide average.

Those are just a few extremes. I wasn't even going to bring up huge hailstorms, tornadoes, straight-line winds, ice storms, torrential rain, etc.

I attended an event recently where Fidel Hernandez, Ph.D., from Texas A&M University-Kingsville spoke about the importance of determining what lens you are looking through. While not the full focus of his talk, the idea really made me think about all the lenses I look through for conservation, not only in literal binoculars or cameras but also lenses as a sense of scale.

The weather references above were focused on the past couple years, what if we "zoomed-out"? Then we start to see long-term weather patterns, a story of ups and downs. Temperature and rainfall both show a history of ups and downs when the timeline is stretched out far enough.

This idea of lenses can also apply to land. Are we talking a region, state, county, mile, section, or the 40-acre homestead?

I often find people speaking about quail habitat as either they have it or they don't. But it seems better to think of habitat as a scale, like the scale Lady Justice holds teetering one way or the other. We always have "habitat," but does that habitat have what quail need, or has the scale tipped the other way? As you gaze across the wild landscapes in your imagination,

how would your habitat scale balance out?

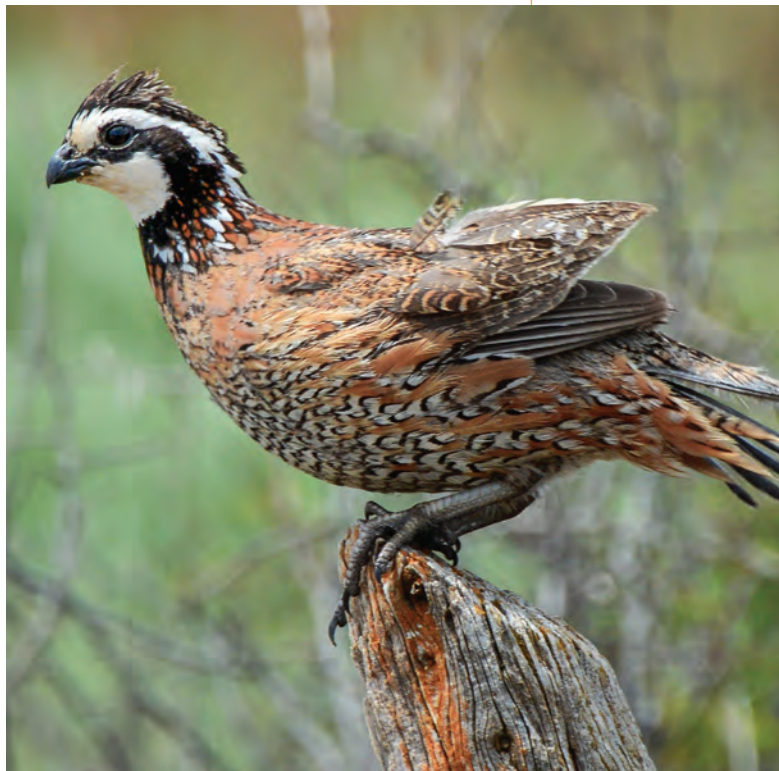
I hear people say the habitat on or around their property hasn't changed, and they ask what has happened to the quail? In short, *something* happened to push the habitat scale to the other side.

Nowadays, there are entire suites of tools that biologists, landowners, and others can use to track these changes over time. One tool we can use is Google Earth; its ability to show older satellite imagery can provide views back to the early 1990s across Oklahoma. You might be surprised to see how rapidly things have changed in parts of our state.

One notable example of these changes is urbanization. What in 1990 was 4 square miles of grasslands and small farms in northeastern Oklahoma City is today housing developments and part of the Kilpatrick Turnpike. But I thought nothing had changed? In this extreme example, finding a bobwhite in that area today would be difficult, but 30-plus years ago, quail were actually hunted in those fields!

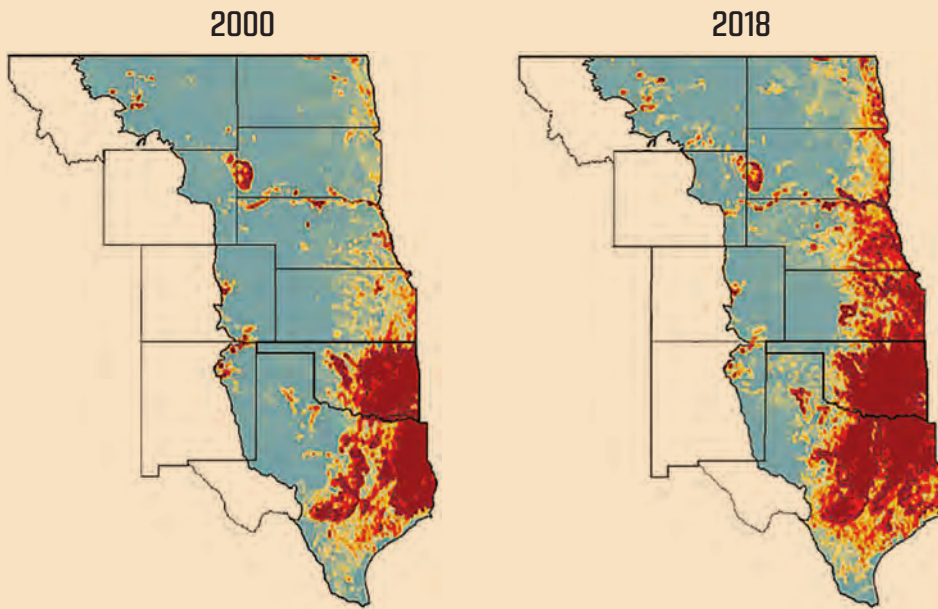


MATTHEW PALESANO/READERS' PHOTO SHOWCASE 2019



JENA DONNELL/ODWC

Habitat Changes Between 2000 and 2018



Another tool available today is the Rangelands Analysis Platform (RAP) tool at www.Rangelands.app. The graphic (above) reveals how extreme some of these habitat changes have been. In just 18 years, you can see how the red areas grew. Those red shades depict woody encroachment, eastern forests becoming more dense and shading out glades and grassland pockets, the Cross Timbers ecoregion becoming a dense oak/juniper forest, the western plains invaded by eastern redcedar, and the Southwest fighting mesquite and redberry juniper.

While urbanization and the spread of cedars are easy to visualize, the habitat changes that impact quail can be a long list: changes in agricultural production, transitions to non-native grasses such as bermuda, removal of prescribed fire, overgrazing, herbicides, and pesticides, just to name a few.

These impacts aren't only affecting quail, nor are they localized in Oklahoma. In 2019, the #BringBirdsBack campaign was started at

find the silver-bullet reason for the decline of quail. And the compass needle continues to point back to habitat and weather.

A line from the film "Field of Dreams" truly says it best: "If you build it, they will come." If your habitat provides the things quail need, then quail will be there. Promote native grasses and forbs, plums, sumac, or other native shrubby species on your property. Contact your local Prescribed Burn Association (OK-PBA.org) to learn more about the benefits of prescribed fire. Check out QuailForever.org, an amazing partner organization that is active across Oklahoma. I would also encourage you to reach out to ODWC's Private Lands Biologists (just search "Landowner Programs" on wildlifedepartment.com) to learn more about how you can improve your property for quail and other wildlife species.

So, dear reader, why do you care about the quail situation? Is it because of the tradition of the uplands? The drive to participate, witness, and experience nature? Bragging rights over whose bird dog performed better? To feel the rush of a covey rise? Or simply to hear that familiar call as you sit on the porch drinking your morning coffee.

I would argue that the fact *you do care* is more important than your individual reason why.

Together, all of us are conservation. Together, we can improve habitat. If we build that habitat (including all the niche components quail need, and the weather cooperates), the birds will come.

To learn more about quail in Oklahoma, go to wildlifedepartment.com/hunting/resources/quail. 🦋

3billionbirds.org. The site estimates more than 2.9 billion birds were lost from 1970-2019 — that's roughly one out of every four birds. The site estimated a 53 percent reduction in the grassland bird community. Still think nothing has changed?

So where do we go from here? What are we doing about it? What are you doing about it?

Issues that took several decades to create will take time to correct. For decades, researchers across the country have tried to



EMMA GATES/READERS' PHOTO SHOWCASE 2021

2024 OKLAHOMA WILDLIFE HABITAT MANAGEMENT CALENDAR

Outdoor
Oklahoma

SPECIAL PULLOUT SECTION





NORTHERN BOBWHITE (*Colinus virginianus*)

JANUARY 2024

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	Martin Luther King, Jr. Day 15	16	17 ●	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25 ○	26	27
28	29	30	31	<p>Operation Game Thief: Anonymously report game and fish law violations by calling toll-free (800) 522-8039.</p>		

December 2023							February 2024						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2					1	2	3	
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	25	26	27	28	29		
31													



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.



RIVER OTTER (*Lontra canadensis*)

FEBRUARY 2024

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
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				1	Groundhog Day 2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	Valentine's Day 14	15	16	17
18	Presidents' Day 19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29		

January 2024							March 2024						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6							1	2
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
28	29	30	31				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.



PORCUPINE (*Erethizon dorsatum*)

MARCH 2024

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

February 2024

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

April 2024

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				



DAVID BATH/CODWC

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.



AMERICAN BLACK BEAR (*Ursus americanus*)

APRIL 2024

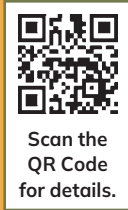
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1 	2	3	4	5	6
7	8 	9	10	11	12	13
14	15 	16	17	18	19	20
21	Earth Day 22	23 	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	Operation Game Thief: Anonymously report game and fish law violations by calling toll-free (800) 522-8039.			

March 2024							May 2024						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2			1	2	3	4	
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	26	27	28	29	30	31	
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.



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.



FOX SQUIRREL (*Sciurus niger*)

MAY 2024

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
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			1 ☾	2	3	4
5	6	7 ●	8	9	10	11
Mother's Day 12	13	14	15 ☾	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23 ◯	24	25
26	Memorial Day 27	28	29	30 ●	31	

April 2024

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

June 2024

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						



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.



NATIONAL GRASSLANDS WEEK - JUNE 18-24, 2023

JUNE 2024

SUNDAYMONDAYTUESDAYWEDNESDAYTHURSDAYFRIDAYSATURDAY

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

Oklahoma Free Fishing Days2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	Flag Day14	15
Father's Day16	17	18	Juneteenth19	Summer Begins20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29

30

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

May 2024							July 2024						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4		1	2	3	4	5	6
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			



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.



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.



BALD EAGLE (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*)

JULY 2024


SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	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	Operation Game Thief: Anonymously report game and fish law violations by calling toll-free (800) 522-8039.		

June 2024

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						


August 2024

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			



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.



AMERICAN BULLFROG (*Lithobates catesbeianus*)

AUGUST 2024

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
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				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 2024

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

September 2024

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					



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.

KYLE JOHNSON/ODWG



BLUE-WINGED TEAL (*Spatula discors*)

SEPTEMBER 2024

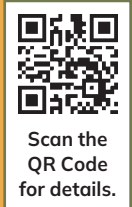
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Labor Day 1	2	3	4	5	6	Oklahoma Free Hunting Days 7
Oklahoma Free Hunting Days 8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Autumn Begins 22	23	24	25	26	27	National Hunting and Fishing Day 28
29	30	Operation Game Thief: Anonymously report game and fish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

August 2024							October 2024							
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	
				1	2	3				1	2	3	4	5
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
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	31	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.



BIGHORN SHEEP (*Ovis canadensis*)

OCTOBER 2024

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	12
	13	Columbus Day 14	15	16	17	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	Halloween 31		

September 2024

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

November 2024

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10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30



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.

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).



Scan the QR Code for details.



MULE DEER (*Odocoileus hemionus*)

NOVEMBER 2024

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
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					1 ●	2
Daylight Saving Time Ends 3	4	5	6	7	8 ●	9
10	Veterans Day 11	12	13	14	15 ○	16
17	18	19	20	21	22 ●	23
24	25	26	27	Thanksgiving Day 28	29	30

October 2024

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		

December 2024

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				

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.



RING-NECKED PHEASANT (*Phasianus colchicus*)

DECEMBER 2024

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	Winter Begins 21
22 ●	23	Christmas Eve 24	Christmas Day 25	26	27	28
29	30 ●	New Year's Eve 31	Operation Game Thief: Anonymously report game and fish law violations by calling toll-free (800) 522-8039.			

November 2024							January 2025						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2				1	2	3	4	
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	26	27	28	29	30	31	



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.

SUSAN BERGEN HONORED AS '23 LANDOWNER OF YEAR



Susan Bergen

The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation honors Oklahoma rancher Susan Bergen as its 2023 Landowner Conservationist of the Year. Bergen owns and manages cattle on 12,777 acres of tall-grass and mixed-grass prairie over three tracts in portions of Cleveland, Johnston, Pontotoc, and McClain counties. The core of her ranching operation is an 11,500 acre property in the Arbuckle Plains that her family bought in the late 1990s. Historically, this property was managed in a conventional way with continuous grazing and periodic herbicide application to control broadleaf forbs and shrubs. In 2012, Bergen embarked on a new approach to grazing and land management, using restorative grazing to improve the structure and moisture retention of the soil, enhance plant diversity, and eliminate pesticide use.

Drawing on technical expertise collaborators including the Noble Foundation, OSU Extension, and ODWC, she has developed and implemented a heavily monitored, rapid rotational grazing program. Her cattle are moved between grazing units every three to seven days, and the cattle are shifted to a new unit as soon as the vegetation has been grazed to an average height of 8 to 10 inches. Each grazing unit is then rested for three to five months depending upon rainfall and plant growth. This frequent rotation provides for longer post-grazing recovery time for the prairie grasses and more closely mimics the historic grazing pattern of the mixed-grass and tallgrass regions. By maintaining taller vegetation, the grasses and forbs can sustain a greater root mass, which places more organic material in the soil to

improve soil structure, retain moisture, and increase rainwater infiltration.

Her system provides abundant cover for wildlife year-round and reduces competition between wildlife and cattle for forage and seeds. No herbicides have been applied on the ranch in 11 years, and its forb diversity is continually increasing. Most forbs and grasses are able to flower and set seed each year, so although there are no food plots on the ranch, every unit is producing seed and wildlife food. The ranch supports Northern bobwhite, black-tailed jackrabbits, and prairie-dependent birds such as dickcissel, grasshopper sparrow, and Eastern meadowlark.

The ranch encompasses a portion of the headwaters of the Blue River on the east side and Pennington Creek on the west side. Water quality protection in both watersheds is extremely important to Susan. She's proud her ranch doesn't contribute pesticides, fertilizers, or sediment into either watershed. Rather than allowing pond access to her cattle, she pumps pond water and hauls it to large tanks that are moved with the cattle.

In riparian areas, she selectively thins or removes prolific woody species such as Eastern redcedar, elms, and honey locust, while retaining mast trees such as post oak, chinkapin oak, and pecan. These areas support resident birds such as wild turkeys, as well as tropical migrants including painted buntings, white-eyed vireos, and yellow-billed cuckoos.

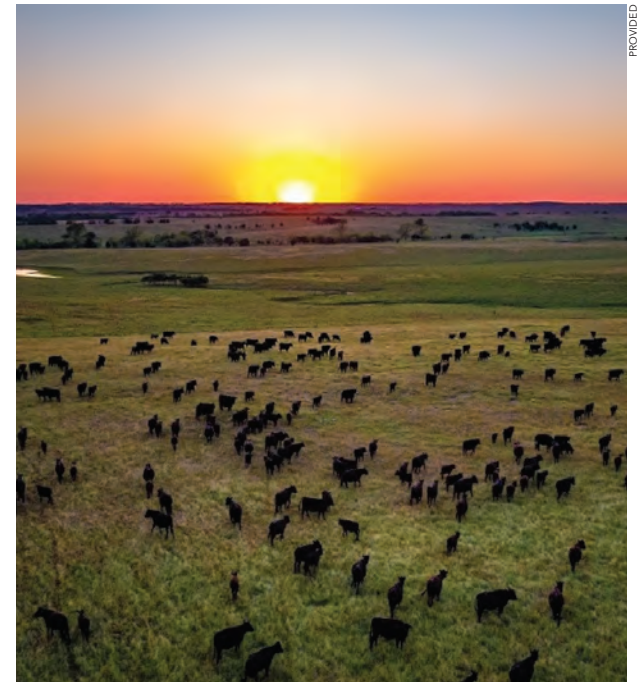
She is restoring native prairie habitat to some previously farmed tracts.

The Bergen ranch is a model for sustainable ranching that benefits the full spectrum of grassland and riparian wildlife while maintaining economic viability for the family.

— **Mark Howery, Wildlife Biologist,**
and Zachary Paulk, Game Warden



No-till drilling is earth-friendly and puts nutrients back into the soil.



Carefully managed native grassland provides a food source for cattle on the Bergen Ranch.



IAN KIRK/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS CC-BY2

This unfortunate mallard ended up with a “plastic necklace” thanks to the litter left behind outdoors by a careless person.

LEAVE NO TRACE

CAMPAIGN URGES HUNTERS, ANGLERS TO RESPECT NATURAL RESOURCES

By Darrin Hill, Communication and Education Specialist

As a Leave No Trace advocate in the Scouting organization, I often wonder how this set of principles and ideals fits in with my love of hunting and fishing. Oftentimes I hear they don't work together. But as I review the principles and “rules,” I realize they do coexist.

Leave No Trace (LNT) was born of a joint effort of the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management to combat the negligent use of public lands and to teach ways for users to leave no evidence of their visit to any area. A core concept of conservation is “the wise use of.” By fol-



A Game Warden's quick visit to the area below the dam at Oologah Lake yielded a full trash bag of litter. Leave No Trace by picking up your trash and taking it out when you leave.

lowing LNT principles, users can ensure our lands are used wisely.

Public land is a shared resource, offering anyone — including hunters, anglers, hikers, and other outdoor lovers — a place to enjoy the great outdoors. For hunters and anglers, this means adopting a set of ethics that sustains wildlife populations and preserves the environment. An effective way to do this is by adhering to the LNT principles.

LNT principles are designed to encourage conservation while in the outdoors. Initially developed for backpackers and campers, these principles are also applicable to hunters and anglers. They stress respect for nature and other users, and they provide strategies for lessening human impact on the environment.



Don't be that distasteful angler who tosses used gear aside. Make it a goal to Leave No Trace.

LNT PRINCIPLES FOR HUNTERS AND ANGLERS

1. Plan Ahead and Prepare:

- Research the area in which you plan to hunt or fish. Know the regulations, seasonal considerations, and wildlife habits.

- Ensure you have the right equipment, including biodegradable or pack-out waste systems.
- Familiarize yourself with the species you're hunting or fishing, their habits, and the best methods to hunt or fish for them ethically and legally.
- Let someone know where you are going and when you plan to be back.
- Pay attention to weather and local fire bans before you head out.

2. Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces:

- Stick to established trails and campsites.
- If you must go off-trail, avoid areas that are easily damaged or are showing signs of wear. Users tend to go the way of least resistance, but this isn't always the best practice. When a hiker goes around a puddle of water on a trail, the hiker may just be widening the puddle; just hike right through the water.

3. Dispose of Waste Properly:

- Pack out all trash, leftover food, and litter. Bury your poop and pack out or bury the used toilet paper.
- Field dress animals away from water sources and trails. Bury organic waste or pack it out; not only is this ethically sound, but it's the law.

4. Leave What You Find:

- Preserve the environment by not picking plants, disturbing wildlife, or removing rocks or especially historical artifacts. If historical artifacts are discovered, please report them to the area manager.
- Avoid making permanent camps or structures. Nobody needs to build a makeshift "cabin" on public land.
- If you put up a tree stand, do so with minimal impact to the area. Make sure to pack out your stand at the end of the season.

5. Minimize Campfire Impact:

- Use a camp stove for cooking instead of making a fire. Small isobutane stoves are highly efficient, and larger ones work great when feeding everyone at deer camp.



Members of Scouting Troop 77 in Edmond recently built and installed trash bag boxes at ODWC's Blue River Public Fishing and Hunting Area. These young people are putting the Leave No Trace philosophy into practice.

- If fires are permitted, use established fire rings, keep fires small, and burn only small sticks and twigs.
- Watch and pay attention to fire bans, wind direction, and wind strength (review rule No. 1).

6. Respect Wildlife:

- Observe wildlife from a distance. Do not feed or approach wild animals.
- Hunt responsibly. Stay within ethical shooting distances, ensure clean kills, and retrieve all game.

7. Be Considerate of Other Visitors:

- Keep noise levels down.
- Yield the trail to nonhunters.
- Wear legally required hunter orange, especially during hunting seasons, to ensure safety for all.
- Share the space on public lands.



Spent shotgun shells leave an unwanted trace when waterfowl hunters neglect to pick them up before they leave the hunting area.



HUNTERS' AND ANGLERS' ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITY

Beyond the LNT principles, hunters and anglers have an ethical and legal responsibility to:

- **Follow all regulations:** This includes obtaining the necessary permits, hunting only during designated seasons, and respecting bag limits. Know the law by reading the latest Oklahoma Fishing and Hunting Regulations before you go.
- **Practice marksmanship:** A clean, humane kill is the goal. This reduces the animal's suffering and ensures that the meat is of the highest quality.
- **Educate others:** Share the principles of LNT and ethical hunting and fishing with others, especially newcomers.

Our rights to hunt and fish are treasures. Hunters, and anglers, like all outdoor enthusiasts, have a role to play in outdoor ethics and conservation. By adhering to LNT principles and maintaining a strong ethical code, outdoor users can ensure that these lands remain healthy and vibrant for future generations. Whether you're tracking elk through the Wichita Mountains or waiting for waterfowl along the Arkansas River, remember that you're a steward of the land, and your actions have a lasting effect. ♡

Hunters are reminded that if you pack it in, make sure you pack it out when you are done for the day.

To learn more about the Leave No Trace campaign and get useful outdoor tips, scan the code:



MORE CWD ZONES AFFECT DEER HUNTERS THIS FALL

Three Selective Surveillance Areas (SSAs) have been designated this fall in response to wild deer that were confirmed with chronic wasting disease (CWD). All three SSAs are in northwestern Oklahoma, and all three add restrictions on the transport of harvested deer out of those areas.

Dallas Barber, Big Game Biologist for the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, said the SSAs, each roughly 75 square miles in area, are in Texas, Woodward, and Cimarron counties.

CWD is an always-fatal neurological disease caused by malformed prions that affects the brains of deer, elk, moose, and other members of the cervid family, creating holes resembling those in sponges. It was first discovered in the 1960s in Colorado and has been spreading into other states since.

"CWD has found its way into Oklahoma and is something that hunters should be aware of," he said.

"The goal of the regulations pertaining to SSAs is to mitigate the spread of unnatural movement (of CWD). Think Woodward County, back home to Tulsa County via the back of your pickup truck."

CWD is spread naturally by deer-to-deer contact via body fluids.

"The requirements for transporting deer out of an SSA ensure that the highly infectious materials found in the spinal column and brain are left in the area that already has CWD within the herd, instead of bringing those prions home to the Back 40."

Once introduced to a new area, the prions that cause CWD can remain active in the soil for decades and be taken up by deer frequenting the area.

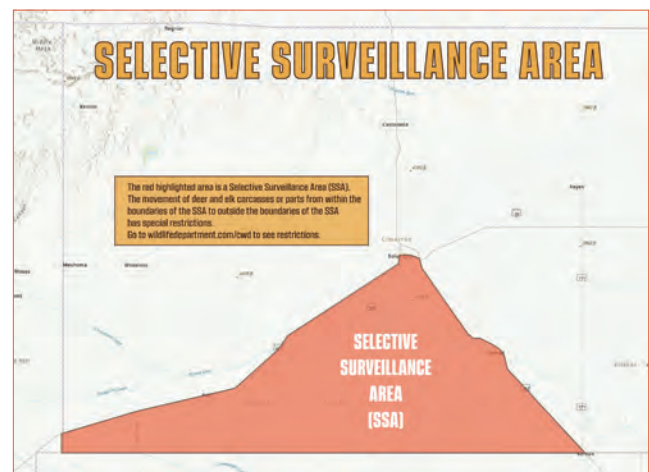
TESTING FOR CWD

Voluntary testing sites are available in all three SSAs in northwestern Oklahoma. Testing is being performed initially to gather information such as location and prevalence rates within those local deer herds.

For complete information on CWD and the regulations applying to the SSAs, scan the code below.



Processing of deer or elk harvested within a CWD Selective Surveillance Area must be completed within the SSA. Meat free of any spinal material can then be taken out of the SSA.



Any hunter taking a deer within an SSA may choose to drop off the animal's head in freezer units situated in each SSA. Instructions are provided at the drop-off sites in Woodward, Mooreland, Boise City, Hooker, and Hardesty.

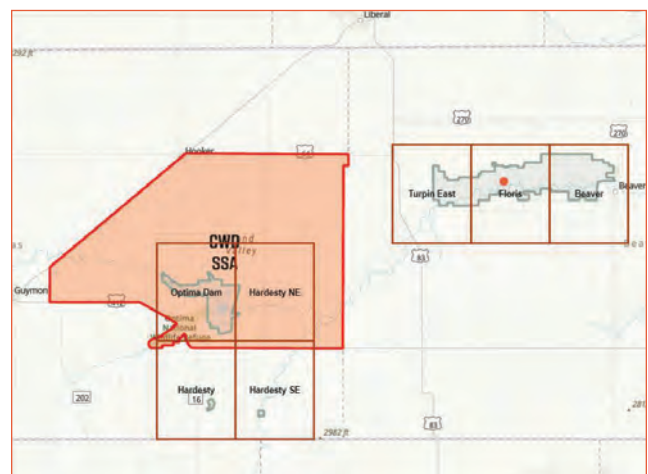
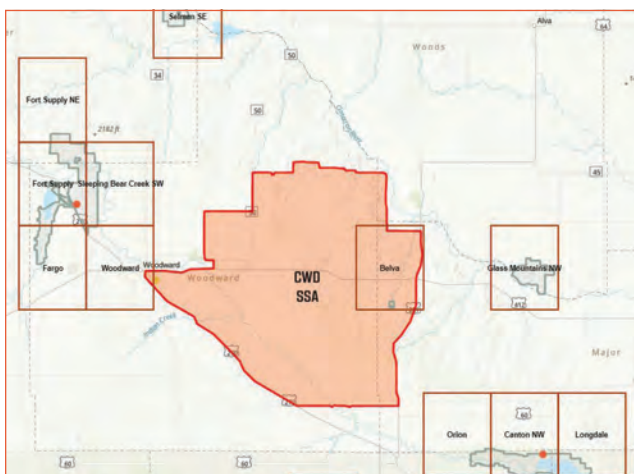
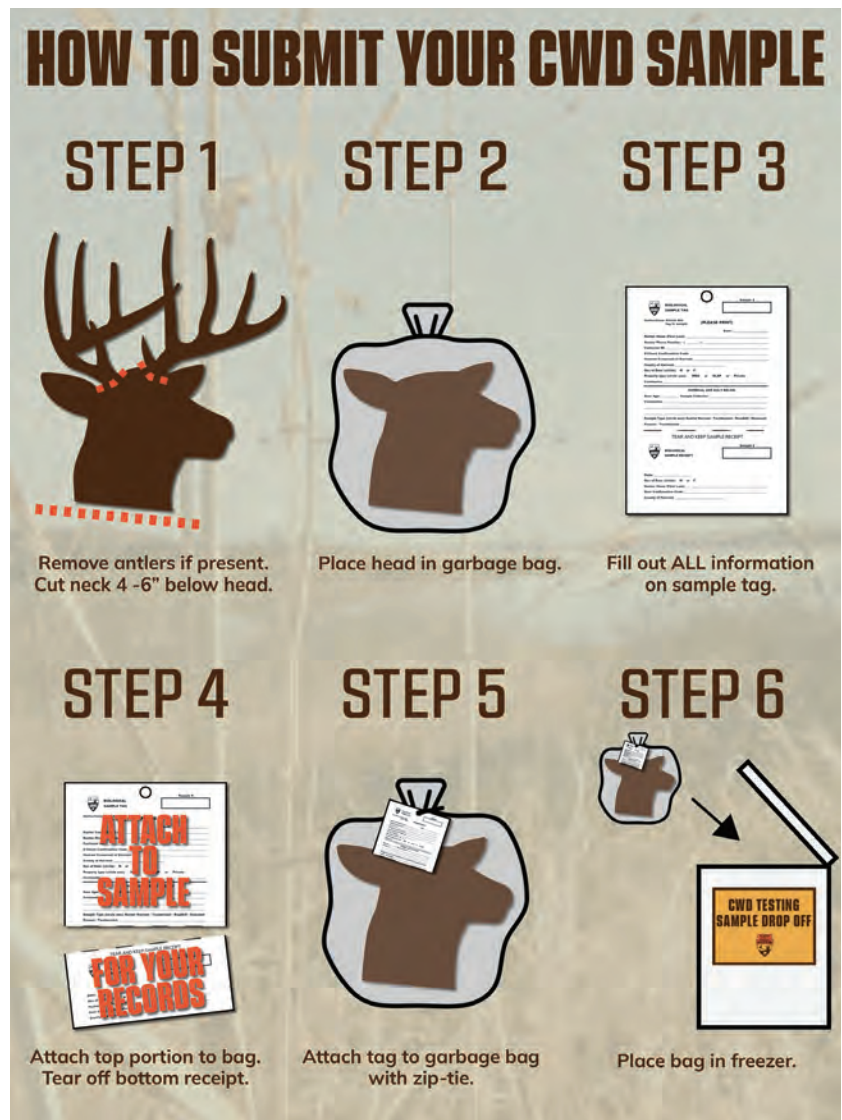
"While we are not human health experts, we do know that there has never been a confirmed case of CWD in human beings. With that being said, it is recommended out of caution to have your deer tested before consumption if you harvest a deer from an area known to have CWD," Barber said.

The Wildlife Department will continue monitoring for evidence of CWD within Oklahoma's borders and will release additional information as necessary, including ways deer and elk hunters can help with detection and mitigation.

TIGHTER SSA REGULATIONS

The more stringent SSA regulations require hunters who harvest a deer or elk within the SSA to process those animals before leaving the SSA and disposing of the carcass properly within the SSA. The only items allowed to be transported out of the SSA after processing are:

- Antlers detached from the skull plate, and antlers attached to a clean skull plate or cleaned skulls (all tissue removed).
- Animal quarters containing no spinal materials.
- Meat with all parts of the spinal column removed.
- Cleaned teeth.
- Finished taxidermy products.
- Hides or tanned products. 🚫



Conservation

Fun Outdoors!

It's good for our physical and mental health to spend time outdoors in winter. A big benefit is that our skin absorbs Vitamin D from the sunshine. Vitamin D is required for bone health and disease prevention. Being outdoors when it's cold doesn't lead to sickness. So bundle up and get outside in the cold; it is more beneficial than staying inside.

for Kids!

Word Search: Sights in Winter

Hunting Tip

Plan ahead for your comfort during a cold-weather hunting trip. Will you be walking or hiking? Sweaty feet are no joy in cold weather. It's preferred to wear waterproof, insulated boots that also have a breathable membrane to release moisture. Avoid cotton socks; choose wool or wool-blend instead. And take an extra pair of socks in a sealed plastic bag so you can swap out when needed. Your feet will thank you!

Fishing Tip

During winter, crappie are lethargic. A "dead stick" approach might be most effective. Drop your jig to the desired depth and let it sit idly. Occasionally pop your rod tip upward without reeling and let the jig fall back down. The current in the water will create subtle movement to your jig.

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Find and circle these things we often see during winter in Oklahoma.

Cardinal

Chickadee

Fog

Frost

Geese

Hunter

Icicle

Mallard

Rabbit

Santa

Snow

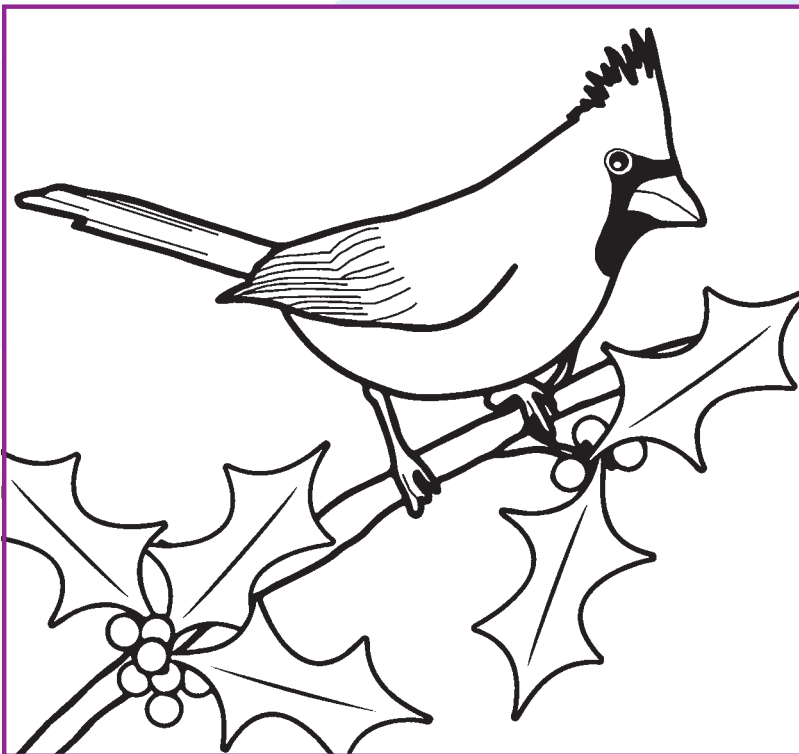
Stratus Cloud

COOL FACTS About the Northern Cardinal:

- They have a head crest, a thin black “mask” around the bill and eyes, and a thick, red-orange bill.
- No other Oklahoma bird has the cardinal’s thick, orange-red bill.
- It is common in urban and residential neighborhoods with trees and large shrubs for cover and nesting.
- Cardinals are found year-round in Oklahoma except the western Panhandle.
- The male’s plumage is bright red overall; the female’s plumage is reddish on the tail, wings and head crest, but warm grayish brown otherwise.
- They are about 8 inches long when mature.
- They visit all types of feeders and will take seeds (especially sunflower seeds) scattered on the ground.
- They forage for a variety of seeds, some insects and some berries.



Color a Critter: Northern Cardinal





Janice Johnson of Indiahoma has become an accomplished trapper after learning about the activity while helping her husband on his trapping trips.

TRAPPING CAPTURES WOMAN'S INTEREST, PROVIDES CONNECTION WITH NATURE

By Elise LeRoi

A passion for trapping has taken Janice Johnson of Indiahoma on a journey of discovery and exploration of the natural world.

Johnson's love for the outdoors started when she began going with her husband to help carry traps. She quickly realized that trapping was something she wanted to do herself.

Johnson's enthusiasm for trapping led her to acquire traps of her own, and the couple began trapping together. Over the years, Johnson has become a skilled trapper, honing her craft through trial and error, and learning from her experiences.

Despite the challenges that come with trapping, such as harsh weather and the unpredictability of animal behavior, Johnson remains committed to the activity. Her love for trapping is not just about capturing animals; it's about being in nature and appreciating the beauty and resources that Oklahoma has to offer.

Among Johnson's favorite animals to trap is skunks, and her husband has built her no-spray skunk traps that she uses to capture the animals. Johnson also extracts the essence from the skunks, which she uses for various purposes. Her commitment to use all parts of the animal shows her respect for nature and her appreciation for the resources it provides.

Johnson's dedication to trapping has not only given her a way to connect with nature but has also made her a respected member of her community. She encourages young people to take up the activity, seeing it as a way to learn about the land and the environment.

Johnson's story is one of perseverance, passion, and love for the outdoors. Her dedication to trapping and her community highlights the importance of preserving Oklahoma's natural beauty and resources for future generations. She is an inspiration to those who want to connect with nature. ♡

Wild Excitement Abounds at Foundation's Largest Fundraiser

Hundreds of wildlife supporters gathered Sept. 29 at the Omni Hotel in Oklahoma City for the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Foundation's Call of the Wild Gala and Hall of Fame Induction fundraiser.

Highlights of the evening were the induction of **Sean Trauschke**, chairman, president and CEO of OGE Energy Corp., into the Oklahoma Conservation Hall of Fame; a visit from local falconers and some of their birds of prey; live and silent auctions; and a wild game-inspired plated dinner.

Trauschke serves as chairman of The Greater Oklahoma City Chamber and on the boards of the State Chamber of Oklahoma, United Way of Central Oklahoma, Oklahoma State Fair, Myriad Botanical Gardens, and other local community organizations.

Trauschke has been CEO of OG&E since June 2015. He has been president of OG&E since July 2013 and president of OGE Energy since August 2014 and was named as chairman of the board in December 2015. From 2009 until 2013, he held the position of vice president and chief financial officer of OGE Energy and OG&E.

He earned a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, a master of business administration degree from the University of South Carolina and has completed the Advanced Management Program at the Harvard Business School.

Preservation sponsor for the Gala was OG+E. Founder sponsors were BOK Financial, Choctaw Nation, Dallas Safari Club-Oklahoma Chapter, and Chickasaw Nation.

Founder sponsors were BOK Financial, Choctaw Nation, Dallas Safari Club-Oklahoma Chapter, and Chickasaw Nation.



2023 Oklahoma Conservation Hall of Fame inductee Sean Trauschke stands with OCWF Executive Director Rick Grundman.



The auctioneer talks up the bidding during the Gala's fund-raising auction.

OWCF Thanks Bass Tournament Reporters with Gift Card Drawings

The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation's Bass Tournament Exemption and Reporting Program has reached the one-year mark since it began. The program allows bass fishing tournament organizers to apply for an exemption to state regulations that now limit the number of larger bass that can be caught and kept at Oklahoma lakes.

In this first year, more than 300 tournament directors applied for exemptions and submitted more than 1,400 summary reports spanning 90-plus waterbodies! This information is greatly helping ODWC's fisheries biologists with current data about the bass



populations in Oklahoma's lakes.

As a "thank you" to the tournament community that has supported the program, the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Foundation donated five \$100 Bass Pro Shops gift cards to be given away in a random drawing from all of the participants who completed exemption applications and submitted reports. Each report serves as a drawing entry.

Winners were Bill Kokendoffer, Paralyzed Veterans Bass Tournament; Todd Renfro, OK Bass Chasers; Ryan Walters, South Central Bass Anglers; Katherine Crouch, Lake Eucha Tuesday Night Bassin; and Misty Riley, Le Flore County Bass Club.



THE OKLAHOMA WILDLIFE CONSERVATION FOUNDATION (OWCF) is engaged in a five-year program to raise \$5.2 million to further the strategic mission of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation.

Since the Wildlife Department has operated on a limited budget for more than 100 years and doesn't receive appropriated state tax dollars, funds raised by the Foundation are among the best methods to more rapidly advance the Department's strategic plan. Because many ODWC projects qualify for a 3-to-1 or 9-to-1 federal dollar match, donations to OWCF can be multiplied and bring more and better projects to Oklahoma more quickly.

Funds raised by OWCF support wildlife research and management, multi-year conservation projects, community outreach programs, and outdoor recreation projects. OWCF's mission cannot be achieved without the support of community partners, philanthropic foundations, and donations from individuals who want to make a difference for future generations.

All donations are tax-deductible. To learn more about OWCF and how to help, go to www.OKwildlifeconservation.org, www.facebook.com/OKWildlifeFoundation, or email Grundman at rgrundman@okwildlifeconservation.org, or call (918) 323-5566.



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.

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



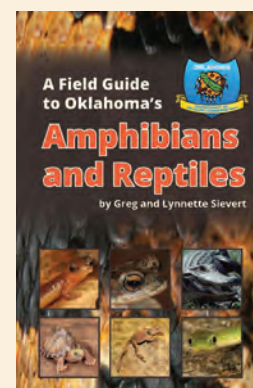
OKLAHOMA WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA ATLAS

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



Give the Gift that keeps on Giving All Year Long!

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Start enjoying a full year (six big issues) of hunting, fishing, natural history, camping and much more when you subscribe to "Outdoor Oklahoma" magazine or give as a gift!

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Order online at license.GoOutdoorsOklahoma.com, then click "Shop."

ALLIGATOR SNAPPING TURTLE

BY MAGGIE WOOD, EDUCATION INTERN

The alligator snapping turtle is the largest turtle found in Oklahoma and is North America's largest freshwater turtle. The shells on mature turtles can reach up to 2 feet in length, and the turtles can weigh up to 250 pounds. Typically the mature turtles weigh between 155 and 175 pounds.

The lifespan for this species is typically 11 to 45 years, but there have been many individuals with recorded ages much longer than that. This species has a hooked

beak, smooth tail, and 3 prominent ridges on its shell.

They are typically found in lakes, rivers, and wetland areas, but they live a solitary life.

These turtles are important for their environment

because of their predatory abilities and because they are also scavengers. Diet consists of fish, mussels, mammals, birds, crayfish, and other reptiles and amphibians.

This turtle is an opportunistic feeder, using its tongue to lure its prey. The tongue has a wormlike structure that is used like a fishing bait. When a fish or other animal moves in to investigate the "worm," the turtle uses its powerful jaws to snap down on the meal.

Alligator snapping turtles can hold their breath and stay underwater for up to 50

minutes. Their bite force can be up 1,000 pounds per square inch. Because of their aquatic life and ability to stay still under the water for extended periods, they often have algae growing on them. The algae can help them blend in with the algae-covered rocks and sticks in the water.

These turtles are dangerous to people because of their strong bite, quick movement ability, long neck, and sharp nails. The neck can be up to two-thirds the length of the shell. And the claws can be sharp, although they are usually filed down naturally in the turtle's habitat.

Alligator snapping turtles reach sexual maturity around 11 to 13 years old. Mating takes place in early spring, and females lay a clutch of eggs two months later. Nests are normally at least 50 yards from the edge of the water to ensure that they don't get flooded.

The clutch of 20 to 50 eggs will hatch about 100-140 days later. The sex of the new hatchlings is determined by how warm the eggs are during incubation. Warmer temperatures will produce females, and cooler temperatures will produce males. The hatchlings receive no care from their parents and have to survive on their own.

Alligator snapping turtle eggs and hatchlings are easy prey for raccoons, snakes, birds, and other predators, but the adults have only one predator: man.

Harvest of alligator snapping turtles is prohibited in Oklahoma. 🐢

The shells on mature turtles can reach up to 2 feet in length, and the turtles can weigh up to 250 pounds. Typically the mature turtles weigh between 155 and 175 pounds.



JENNY RISH/CAHS



Passing along hunting's heritage might be as easy as inviting someone along on a traditional rabbit hunt. It's engaging, less intimidating, and exciting. Best of all, you'll experience the wonders of nature always found in Outdoor Oklahoma!

Outdoor Oklahoma

