

Outdoor Oklahoma

NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2024 — ONLY \$10 A YEAR

Veterans Get Call to Action In Deer Woods

Wildlife Habitat Calendar
For 2025 Inside This Issue

New Executive Director
Joins Wildlife Foundation

A PUBLICATION OF THE OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION



PANORAMAS



Kelly Adams

The most-pursued game animal in Oklahoma is the white-tailed deer. We estimate about 200,000 hunters take part in one or more of the various deer hunting seasons offered each year.

This year, those hunters should like hearing the news that deer hunting just got a lot easier in Oklahoma, as far as licenses are concerned. That's because a new hunting license structure has reduced license requirements for deer hunters during archery, muzzleloader and gun seasons.

Now, resident and nonresident adult hunters only need a base annual hunting license and a single season license for whatever season they will participate in. Youths younger than 18 only need a youth annual super hunting license and they are all set. And lifetime hunting license holders already are covered for all the deer hunting seasons.

In the past, hunters were required to have a separate deer license for each deer hunted. It used to get a bit confusing — and expensive — sorting it out when considering a limit of six deer for all seasons combined, separate bag limits for each season, and separate firearms licenses for antlered and antlerless deer.

Here's the good news: The average resident hunter who wants to partake of deer gun season is now only required to have the base annual hunting license (\$36) and the deer gun season license (\$36). Those two licenses allow the hunter to take the entire gun season bag limit of four deer (one of which can be antlered), plus two bonus antlerless deer during the holiday gun deer season in late December.

A resident bowhunter with an annual hunting license and a single deer archery season license can harvest the full archery limit of up to six deer (two may be antlered).

And if you are really into stocking up the freezer, a resident hunter can spend a total of \$108 and end up legally taking eight deer! That works out to \$13.50 for each deer harvested, not accounting for the other hunting privileges that are part of the base annual hunting license.

Deer managers with the Wildlife Department are hoping that hunters will embrace opportunities to harvest more does, as this results in many benefits to overall deer herd health. The new license structure not only makes it simpler to do so, but more cost-effective as well.

Hunters are urged to take advantage of the more liberal bag limits and more open days for antlerless harvest. The most notable benefit is a more even buck-to-doe ratio. Healthier deer, better hunting, and better antler development all begin with a more even buck-to-doe ratio.

Remember: "Hunters in the Know ... Take a Doe!"

Nonresidents will need a license for whatever season they are hunting (\$501) along with the nonresident base annual hunting license (\$209).

These changes resulted from the state legislature's passage of the Oklahoma Wildlife License Modernization Act, a bill that condenses about 50 hunting and fishing licenses to about 14.

Deer archery season opened Oct. 1. Deer muzzleloader season runs from Oct. 26 to Nov. 3, and deer gun season will open Nov. 23. Holiday antlerless season is set for Dec. 18-31. 🍂

Kelly Adams

Kelly Adams,

Communication and Education Supervisor

Outdoor Oklahoma

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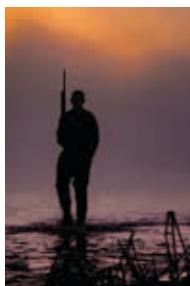


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ON THE COVER:

A chilly dense fog persists over an eastern Oklahoma lake as the sun rises during a December duck hunt. Dust off your decoys and wade out for some waterfowl action during this winter's duck season from Nov. 9-24 and Nov. 30-Jan. 26, 2025, statewide except for the Panhandle. (Photo by Aaron Iker/Readers' Photo Showcase 2021)

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OKLAHOMA



OFF THE BEATEN PATH

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



FOUNDATION NAMES SEAN MCCABE AS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Foundation has selected Sean McCabe as its new executive director. With extensive experience in fundraising, leadership and program development, McCabe will lead OWCF in its mission to enhance wildlife conservation efforts across the state.

McCabe brings experience in development roles focused on growth and support. His track record includes transforming programs to national notability and fostering community engagement.

"Being from Oklahoma and growing up in the outdoors, I feel like this is a dream opportunity to promote

McCabe's aim is to increase awareness, support and engagement in OWCF's wildlife conservation efforts.

FOUNDATION GIFT HELPS VETERANS

Thanks to a \$15,000 donation from the foundation, eligible veterans and select family members are able to continue to receive hunting and fishing licenses at no cost to them through ODWC's Stars & Stripes License Project.

The S&S Project pays for hunting and/or fishing licenses for Oklahoma residents who are eligible veterans and those holding Gold Star lapel buttons and Next of Kin Deceased Personnel lapel buttons. The number of licenses awarded each year depends on the total amount of donations received. Since 2016, nearly 1,500 veterans or family members have benefited from this donor-funded program.

"We are grateful for this generous donation from the foundation," said ODWC Director Wade Free. "Many people may not realize the Wildlife Department receives no state-appropriated funds, so this donation helps us continue to show appreciation to our veterans while maintaining revenue that supports important wildlife conservation in the state."

To apply for a license through the S&S Program, log in to Go Outdoors Oklahoma and select "Purchase Licenses," then select the Stars & Stripes application from the catalog.

If you'd like to make a donation or learn more about OWCF, go to okwildlifeconservation.org.

CALL OF THE WILD GALA SET FOR FEB. 28

Save the date of Feb. 28, 2025, for an unforgettable evening dedicated to conserving and protecting Oklahoma's rich wildlife and natural habitats. This year's Call of the Wild gala will be held at the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City and will honor Larry and Brenda Potterfield, owners of MidwayUSA and founders of the MidwayUSA Foundation. For a formal invitation to the gala, email Rhonda Hurst at rhurst@okwildlifeconservation.com. ♡



Sean McCabe is the new executive director of the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Foundation.

our diverse habitat as well as conservation efforts to ensure that future generations can share in those same experiences," he said. "I am looking forward to helping enhance the work of the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Foundation in its mission to showcase this great state and get more individuals and families outdoors to experience all that Oklahoma has to offer."

McCabe is an avid outdoorsman and said he believes in OWCF's critical mission.

"We are excited to have Sean leading the foundation and growing our outreach and impact," said OWCF President Raegen Siegfried.

NATIONAL RAVES TARGET STATE'S DEER HUNTING

BY MICAH HOLMES, ASSISTANT CHIEF, COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATION DIVISION

In the past decade, Oklahoma has developed a well-founded reputation as a go-to state for hunting. With sound management and cooperation from conservation-minded hunters, the deer hunting offered here is becoming well-known across the country. Here's what some national media outlets have been saying about the outstanding deer hunting in Oklahoma.

National Deer Association

- Oklahoma has the ninth-highest success rate for deer hunting in the nation.
- "In total, 25 of 37 states (68%) shot more antlerless deer in 2022 than their five-year average, with Oklahoma increasing its harvest 35%, and Maine jumped by 59%." — **2024 National Deer Association Deer Report.**
- "Deer Hunter Success Varies Widely by State. Southeast Hunters Punch Tags While Northeast Hunters Eat Tag Soup" — **Outdoor Life via msn.com.**
- Oklahoma is ranked in the top five nationally in these categories: lowest percentage of yearling bucks in the harvest (No. 2); highest percentage of 3.5-plus-year-old bucks in the harvest (No. 3); highest percentage of 3.5-plus-year-olds in the antlerless harvest (No. 4).

Field & Stream

"With over 100 P&Y nontypicals — the top 10 of which were all killed since 2000 — and a state-record buck as good as they come (Travis Ocker's 245-2/8-inch whopper, tagged in 2016), the Sooner State is a bowhunter's dream." — **"Best Deer Hunting States for Big Whitetails"** by Scott Bestful, April 27, 2023.

Oklahoma Ranked No. 4 in Nation: "Bordered by more famous neighbors Texas and Kansas, Oklahoma flew under everyone's radar for many years — until it became impossible to ignore. Overall management is excellent, as the NDA reports 83 percent of harvested bucks are 3½ years old or older — a stat that leads the nation in that category. Even more exciting is the amount of public land opportunities, which include state WMAs (some managed for quality deer), national forests, and Army Corps of Engineers' ground." — **"The 12 Best Deer Hunting States to Bag a Monster Whitetail."**

A-Z-Animals.com

"With over 700,000 white-tailed deer and nearly a million acres of public hunting land, Oklahoma easily ranks among the states with the best deer hunting." — **"The 15 States with the Absolute Best Deer Hunting"** by Joyce Nash, December 2023

"Typically, most states begin their deer hunting season either in the middle of September or early October. Oklahoma's archery season begins Octo-

ber 1st. But instead of closing at the end of the year like many states, Oklahoma's archery extends until January 15th." — **"The Top 6 Reasons Oklahoma is the Best State for Deer Hunting"** by Claire Wilson, Oct. 26, 2023.

Realtree

Grade: A. "We know, it's surprising to see such an overlooked state receive an A grade. But that's exactly why it does, among other reasons. Licenses and tags are affordable, deer populations are abundant, trophy potential abounds, hunter numbers are pretty low, and there's even some good public land to hunt." — **"Deer Hunting in Oklahoma."**

onX Hunt

"With nearly 3.9 million acres of accessible land and just under 200,000 deer hunters, finding seclusion in a tree stand in Oklahoma should be very doable. ... Harvest success rates of bagging at least one deer came in at 53%, and the state's deer hunting mantra, "Hunters in the know... let young bucks grow!" led to 66% of the bucks harvested aging out at 3.5 years or older." — **"Hunt: The Five Top White-tail States That Aren't on Your Radar."**

North American Whitetail

"Ask most people what they think of when someone mentions Oklahoma, and the answer is likely to include college football or Broadway musicals. But that's only because most people aren't serious whitetail bowhunters. Although somewhat off the radar for hunters outside the region, the Sooner State really is one of the best places for chasing big deer." — **"Oklahoma Hunting Can Be Top Notch"** by Gordon Whittington, May 4, 2017.

"You're probably well aware that Oklahoma is part of an ongoing record book rewrite currently taking the deer hunting world by storm." — **"Oklahoma Hunter Tags Top-5 Typical Whitetail"** by Bryant Buck, Jan. 27, 2020.





NICK DICK/PIXELS COO

WINTER FEEDING GIVES BIRDS A BOOST

Birds benefit most from feeding during the cold winter months.

Many bird species are in the landscape during winter months, but it can be challenging for them to find the nourishment they need. Putting out birdfeeders will help these feathered creatures make it through the cold season.

Feeding birds is a great way to brighten

a drab, dreary day. Plus, birds at feeders are fun to watch.

"We have about 50 species of winter birds that regularly use backyard feeders, including many time-honored favorites," said Jena Donnell, wildlife diversity communication specialist with the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation. "Cardinals,

goldfinches, juncos, and woodpeckers are all reliable visitors to winter bird feeders, even in towns and cities."

"Insects are harder to find in the winter, so seeds begin to play a more significant role in the bird's diet," Donnell said. "Birds are still able to find the food they need in a natural setting, but it's easier for them to get their fill at a backyard feeder," she said.

The best overall choice for birdseed is the small black-oil sunflower seed. Many smaller species of birds such as chickadees, nuthatches and titmice prefer it. The thin shell is easy to crack open, and the high oil content is good for them. Small birds also

like thistle. Larger birds such as blue jays and cardinals like striped sunflower seed.

Don't stick with just birdseed. Fruit feeders loaded with wedges of oranges, apples and bananas will attract orioles, bluebirds, towhees, woodpeckers, tanagers, brown thrashers, catbirds and robins.

Suet is a food that is particularly useful to certain birds during winter because of its high energy content. It's a great option for woodpeckers and nuthatches. Many people enjoy making "suet cakes" using recipes found online.

Usable water is vital for birds in winter, not only to drink but to keep their feathers clean. Clean feathers better insulate against cold weather. Be sure to keep your birdbath clean and filled with fresh water.

Keep birdbath water from freezing by using an immersion water heater designed specifically for outdoor use in birdbaths.

Protect food from inclement weather, as wet, moldy grain is unhealthy for birds. And don't neglect cleaning feeders and ground areas underneath them regularly to ward off potential diseases. 🛡️



JENA DONNELL/ODWC

Suet cakes give birds extra energy during bitter cold snaps.



611CATBROS

Keep water from freezing by using a bird bath heater.



AARON J. HILL/PIXELS COO

Supplemental feeding helps birds when snow or ice can cover naturally occurring foods.

GAME WARDEN'S JOURNAL

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



After a months-long investigation, Oklahoma game wardens in September charged three people with bear-baiting and illegally hunting bears with dogs in the Honobia and Three Rivers Wildlife Management Areas. The people used barrels to bait bears, capturing images on trail cameras. Congratulations go to the dedicated team of game wardens Thomas Gillham, Jim Gillham, Zach Hanson, and Mark Hannah for their tireless efforts, sharp investigative skills, and unwavering commitment to protecting wildlife.



Vandals struck Cherokee Management Area in October, stealing signage that included a 4-by-8-foot sign at the Qualls entrance along with road name signs in the area. Anyone with information on the vandalizing or stealing of signs is asked to call or text game wardens Cody Youngblood, based in Cherokee County, at (918) 431-2552 or David Garrett, based in Adair County, at (918) 431-2539. Tips can also be made anonymously on the Operation Game Thief Hotline at (800) 522-8039.

Game Warden Jerry Henry, based in Sequoyah County, received a report of anglers over the limit on trout from concerned citizens on the Lower Illinois River trout area. The citizens reported watching the two anglers bagging fish into plastic sacks and putting them in their carry pack. Game wardens arrived and observed two anglers matching the description. They found the individuals to be in possession of 20 trout, which is 14 over their combined daily limit. Multiple citations were issued. Thanks to concerned citizens who made the call and helping game wardens protect wildlife.

Game wardens Lt. Casey Young, based in Murray County, Jaylen Flynn based in Carter County, and Ty Runyan, based in




Garvin County, taught a Stop the Bleed course at the Oklahoma Natural Gas annual employee Safety Days Event last summer in Ardmore. The course covered techniques for controlling massive bleeding and airway complications. The skills practiced today can make a huge difference in saving lives when seconds matter.

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

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

IT'S THE LAW:

OLAP NOW REQUIRES LAND ACCESS PERMIT

The Oklahoma Land Access Program (OLAP) enrolls private lands to allow public access for hunting, fishing, stream access and/or wildlife viewing. OLAP properties aren't owned by the wildlife department; instead, ODWC pays the owner a lease price annually. Money to pay OLAP leases has come primarily through a federal grant, secured by ODWC with matching funds from a supplemental source. The supplemental source ended last year. A Land Access Permit is now required to access all OLAP properties. Revenue from the permit will be used as required match for the federal funding grant. The same permit is also required for anyone wanting to use Honobia and Three Rivers wildlife management areas (also leased lands). The permit costs \$100 for residents and \$200 for nonresidents, is valid Jan. 1 to Dec. 31, and is required for anyone ages 18-63 (including lifetime license holders). 

WELCOME TO THE TAILGATE!

Is the hunting good? You bet! Step up to **The Tailgate** and check out some great harvests during recent seasons by hunters in Oklahoma. Here's a few we thought you would enjoy! To submit your photo of a successful hunting trip, or to see what others have harvested, go to wildlifedepartment.com/hunting/tailgate or scan the code:



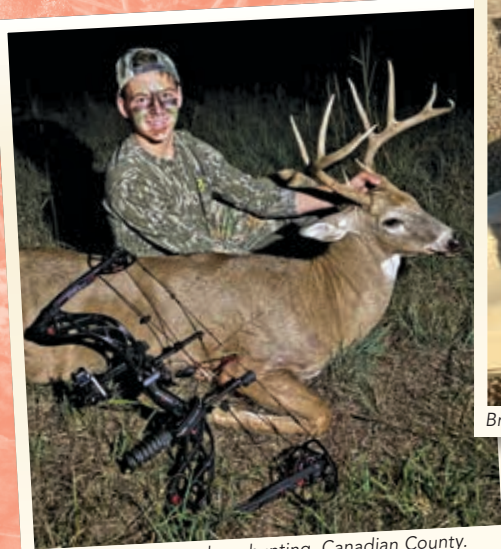
Jennifer Rupe, dove hunting, Osage County.



Emilee Ringwald, first deer, Beckham County.



Montie Blair, pronghorn, Cimarron County.



Tate Homer, deer archery hunting, Canadian County.



Bryan Hedrick, beaver trapping, Stephens County.



Tripp Mason, dove hunting, Haskell County.

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,

My son and I were recently in Cimarron County on my controlled antelope hunt. I was fortunate to be successful. I wanted you to know that the gentlemen I made contact with (game wardens **Jason Badley**, based in Harper County; **Stephen Paul**, based in Noble County; and **Mike Baker**, based in Beaver County) were very polite and professional, not to mention extremely helpful and knowledgeable about the game and the area. I learned that the game wardens from surrounding counties were there to ensure the controlled pronghorn hunts as well as dove opener went smoothly. I have to really give it to those guys. Having just driven through and around in that region, it is so vast and isolated. But I saw the game warden was stationed for the day usually every morning or throughout the day, making the presence of law enforcement known. I know their job and yours is probably tiresome, stressful, and very often thankless. You and the rest of the department are doing a great job to ensure both the resources we are blessed with and the people of this state get to enjoy that wonder and beauty for generations to come. I want to say a huge "thank you" and I see the hard work.

Brandon Gryder, Okmulgee County



Jason Badley



Stephen Paul



Mike Baker

Dear Outdoor Oklahoma TV show,

I love this TV show. I have already watched a few episodes since finding the YouTube channel this morning. Thanks y'all, from a guy that lives near Fort Smith, Ark. I have not visited Oklahoma very often. Looks like a great place to live, and because of the scenes in these videos, I have decided to make Oklahoma part of my area. Looking to visit soon and often, particularly Oklahoma City and Sallisaw areas as well as Tulsa. Will I be hunting there? Likely not, but I also do not hunt much in Arkansas, either. I will leave the bears to young fellows like (the one on the TV show), who have the courage and bravery to slay the bear. I personally will enjoy shopping at the malls in Oklahoma City. Just to say thank you for the epic, awesome video content that is selling your state to me and others like me who thought Oklahoma was all just red dirt and flat land. I have really learned a lot from these videos about the landscape.

Cody Davis, western Arkansas



EDITOR'S NOTE: Hundreds of Outdoor Oklahoma television episodes are available for viewing on YouTube. Just scan the code.

OUTDOOR CALENDAR

FOR THE LATEST UPDATES, GO ONLINE TO LICENSE.
GOOUTDOORSOKLAHOMA.COM/Event/Events.aspx

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

NOVEMBER 2024

- 2** Oklahoma City Free Fishing Day, no city permit required.
 - 3** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
 - 6** "Learn to Hunt: Upland Birds" online seminar, noon. Register: license.
gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/EventsHome.aspx.
 - 7** Public hearing on ODWC rule change proposals, 7 p.m., 1801 N. Lincoln, Oklahoma City. Info: wildlifedepartment.com/public-meeting.
 - 8** Ridin' Shotgun Clay Shoot for Turning Point Therapeutic Riding Center, Silverleaf Shotgun Sports. Register: license.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/EventsHome.aspx.
 - 10** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
 - 11** Veterans Day (state offices closed).
 - 15** Full Moon Walk, 8 to 11 p.m., Hackberry Flat WMA. Register: license.
gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/EventsHome.aspx.
 - 17** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
 - 20** "Learn to Hunt: Deer Rifle" online seminar, noon. Register: license.
gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/EventsHome.aspx.
 - 24** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
 - 28** Thanksgiving Day (state offices closed Nov. 27-28).
- **Hunter Education Classes** (date) in Jenks (9); Omega (16). Register: license.
gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/EventsHome.aspx.
 - **Quail Forever** events (date) in Pocasset (2); Guymon (5); Enid (16). Info: <https://pfqf.myeventscenter.com>.
 - **Ducks Unlimited** events (date) in Tulsa (7); Roland (9); Durant (12); Bixby (14); Ardmore (21); McAlester (21). Info: www.ducks.org/events.
 - **National Wild Turkey Federation** events in Vian (2); Vian (6). Info: <https://your.nwtf.org/members/events>.

DECEMBER 2024

- 1** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
 - 4** "Learn to Hunt: Trapping" online seminar, noon. Register: license.
gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/EventsHome.aspx.
 - 7** Oklahoma City Free Fishing Day, no city permit required.
 - 8** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
 - 12** Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commission meeting, 9 a.m., Oklahoma City. Livestream: [YouTube.com/OutdoorOklahoma](https://www.youtube.com/OutdoorOklahoma).
 - 22** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
 - 25** Christmas Day (state offices closed Dec. 24-25).
 - 29** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
- **National Wild Turkey Federation** events in Hulbert (20); Erick (27). Info: <https://your.nwtf.org/members/events>.

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

WELCOME TO THE DOCK!

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:



Donald Martin, saugeye, Oct. 3, 2024, Lake Ellsworth.



Joshua Vera, blue catfish, Sept. 3, 2024, Lake Wister.



Roman Bintz, flathead catfish, Sept. 29, 2024, Lake Ponca.



Kyle Pfau, paddlefish, Oct. 5, 2024, Keystone Lake.



Ron Miller, largemouth bass, Sept. 18, 2024, Skiatook Lake.



Jeremy Renfro, smallmouth bass, Sept. 7, 2024, Lake Tenkiller.



TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

WE WANT TO KNOW THE
OPINIONS OF OUR READERS!

Please scan the QR code to provide feedback
about Outdoor Oklahoma magazine.



2023 CREATIVE WRITING COMPETITION

"I HAVE LEARNED TO DO MY PART"

EDITOR'S NOTE: 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 senior category male winner Coy Davidson, 17, from Elgin High School.



By Coy Davidson

Hunting is not just a recreational activity but also a way to connect with our ancestral roots and preserve traditions. For those who have hunted their whole lives, it holds a special place in their hearts. Fred Bear said it best: "A hunt based on trophies taken falls far short of what the ultimate goal should be." Way too many people nowadays take for granted the excitement and joy that is involved in the outdoors. Too many people hunt only for trophies or public recognition when there is way more to be gained from the sport.

I've had the opportunity to grow up in a family that cherishes the outdoors. I am so grateful that this awesome sport we call hunting has been passed down through many generations in my household and is now upon me. The tradition started with my great-grandpa, who passed the tradition on to my grandpa, and he, in turn, passed it on to my father. Then my dad took it upon himself to teach me and my two brothers the importance of hunting and the greatness involved in God's creation. Now, after 17 years of my life following in my father's footsteps and learning the true meaning of hunting, I have learned to do my part in passing along the traditions.

Over the past two years, I've taken on the noble mission of introducing as many people as possible to their first hunting experience. It all started when I took one of my friends from school, John, on his first deer hunt. I took John to a feeder I set up, and I still remember the exact time the deer walked out. It was 8:03 a.m., and a mature doe walked to the feeder. John hit the deer right on target. After seeing the smile on John's face after shooting his first deer, I was hooked. I was more excited at that moment than I had ever been shooting a deer for myself. Right then, I realized I wanted to do this forever.

Following that deer season, I began actively seeking more avenues to share the rich heritage of my beloved pastime. After just a couple of weeks,

I was approached by a group from the Southwest Delta Waterfowl Chapter, and they asked me to join their team. After attending a couple of meetings, I knew this was the place for me. I was promoted to the position of youth coordinator. I plan all the youth and veterans' activities, and prepare for the youth hunts we put on twice a year. This position has given me opportunities to share my true passion for the outdoors, and I am grateful.

As of now, I have put on three youth hunts and have had a total of 20 youths and seven veterans participate. I won't forget any of the youth hunts, but none will ever compare to the first hunt. We had four youths and two veterans. I searched for over a week before the hunt to find the best spot. I learned something in this process: It did not matter how many ducks we shot, but what mattered most was the fellowship with the hunters. On the morning of the hunt, we shot 17 ducks and two geese. The joy reflected on the face of a young boy named Cash is a memory that will stay with me forever. The novice hunters learned the importance of hunting and got to experience the natural beauty of the outdoors.

By sharing my knowledge and expertise, I am not only teaching others the skills necessary for hunting, but I am also passing on a legacy that has been cherished for generations. Through these experiences, I am instilling a deep appreciation for nature, wildlife, and the importance of conservation. Hunting is not just about the thrill of the chase but also about understanding the delicate balance between humans and the natural world.

By passing on the heritage of hunting, I am ensuring that this tradition continues to thrive. I am creating hunters who not only respect the land and wildlife but also understand the importance of sustainable hunting practices. Through my efforts, I am contributing to the preservation of our natural heritage and the conservation of our wildlife. 🦌



WILD ABOUT COOKING

RABBIT CACCIATORE OVER PESTO ORZO

This dish is traditionally served with chicken, but it just so happens that it's also delicious prepared with rabbit. After all, cacciatore does mean "hunter" in Italian. Plan on 2.5 hours of preparation time. Recipe makes four servings.



R3 CLEARINGHOUSE/CAHSS



R3 CLEARINGHOUSE/CAHSS



R3 CLEARINGHOUSE/CAHSS

INGREDIENTS

1½ pounds of rabbit
Kosher salt
Freshly cracked pepper
¼ cup all-purpose flour
3 T olive oil, separated
1 medium onion, chopped
8 oz mushrooms, sliced
2 large cloves garlic, minced
½ cup chardonnay or Chianti wine
3 cups diced ripe tomatoes
2 sprigs fresh thyme
1 sprig fresh rosemary
Pinch saffron
1 bay leaf
2 cups reduced-sodium chicken broth
1 T capers
Chopped parsley
1 box orzo pasta
Basil pesto, prepared or homemade

INSTRUCTIONS

- Cut rabbit in serving-size pieces. Pat dry with paper towels. Sprinkle with salt and pepper to taste. Lightly dredge seasoned rabbit in flour, shaking off excess.
- In oven-safe skillet on stove, heat a tablespoon of oil to medium high. Brown rabbit pieces on both sides. Set aside.
- Lower heat to medium. Add onion and pinch of salt to skillet; add more oil if necessary. Cook onion 5 minutes, stirring occasionally, then add mushrooms with pinch of salt. Brown mushrooms on both sides, about 5-7 minutes. Add garlic, thyme, rosemary and bay leaf, and cook for 30 seconds. Do not allow garlic to brown.
- Pour wine into skillet with saffron. Allow wine to simmer until mostly evaporated.
- Add diced tomatoes to skillet then top with rabbit pieces. Add enough chicken broth to submerge the rabbit halfway.
- Cover skillet with aluminum foil and fit lid onto skillet as tightly as possible. Place skillet in 325-degree oven for about 2 hours, or until rabbit is tender. Check halfway through to ensure sufficient liquid remains; add more broth if needed. After baking 1.5 hours, remove foil to allow steam to escape to thicken sauce.
- Cook orzo according to package directions. Drain and return to pan. Toss with olive oil, salt, pepper and pesto to taste.
- Spoon rabbit cacciatore over orzo, garnish with parsley and capers, and serve.

Recipe from Jenny Nguyen-Wheatley, founder of the "Food for Hunters" website and co-author of "Hunting for Food: Guide to Harvesting, Field Dressing and Cooking Wild Game."

(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.)

2025 OKLAHOMA WILDLIFE HABITAT MANAGEMENT CALENDAR



Outdoor
Oklahoma

SPECIAL PULLOUT SECTION





DUCK DECOYS AT SUNRISE.

JANUARY 2025

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Operation Game Thief: Anonymously report game and fish law violations by calling toll-free (800) 522-8039.			New Year's Day 1	2	3	4
5	6 ☾	7	8	9	10	11
12	13 ◯	14	15	16	17	18
19	Martin Luther King, Jr. Day 20	21 ☾	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29 ☾	30	31	

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



MANAGING FOR TURKEY ROOST SITES

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



Scan the QR Code for details.

JANUARY 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.

JANUARY 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.



CANADA GEESE (*Branta canadensis*)

FEBRUARY 2025

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: Jason Smith, (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	Presidents' Day 17	18	19	20 ☾	21	22
23	24	25	26	27 ●	28	

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



PRESCRIBED BURN ASSOCIATIONS

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



Scan the QR Code for details.

FEBRUARY 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 red cedar trees.

FEBRUARY 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.



DOUG CARTER/RS-2011

FLY FISHING ON THE LOWER MOUNTAIN FORK RIVER IN SOUTHEASTERN OKLAHOMA.

MARCH 2025

SUNDAYMONDAYTUESDAYWEDNESDAYTHURSDAYFRIDAYSATURDAY

For free technical assistance on wildlife and habitat management, landowners may call:

Northwest Region: Brett Cooper, (405) 740-9830

Southwest Region: Jason Smith, (405) 397-1599

Central Region: Kyle Johnson, (405) 590-2584

Northeast Region: Lauren Johnson, (918) 607-1518

Southeast Region: Leah Lowe, (405) 206-7720

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					

Daylight Saving Time Begins

St. Patrick's Day

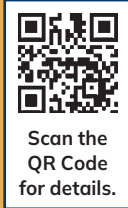
Operation Game Thief:
Anonymously report game and fish law violations by calling toll-free (800) 522-8039.

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



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.



MARCH HABITAT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

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

MARCH POND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

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



WILD TURKEY (*Meleagris gallopavo*)

APRIL 2025

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



FARM POND PROGRAM

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



Scan the QR Code for details.

APRIL HABITAT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- If conditions permit, disc 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.



WILD TURKEY (*Meleagris gallopavo*)

MAY 2025

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

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: Jason Smith, (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
Mother's Day 11	12 ○	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20 ☾	21	22	23	24
25	Memorial Day 26 ●	27	28	29	30	31



KYLE JOHNSON/DWAC

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.

MAY 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.

MAY 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.



JUNE IS NATIONAL GRASSLANDS MONTH.

JUNE 2025

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2 🌙	3	4	5	6	Oklahoma Free Fishing Days 7
Oklahoma Free Fishing Days 8	9	10	11 ◯	12	13	Flag Day 14
Father's Day 15	16	17	18 🌙	Juneteenth 19	Summer Begins 20	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 2025							July 2025						
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		



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.

JUNE HABITAT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- Strip disc 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.

JUNE POND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

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



Scan the
QR Code
for details.



GROWING-SEASON PRESCRIBED BURNING AT SKIATOOK WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA.

JULY 2025

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



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.

- ### JULY 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.

- ### JULY 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.



WILD TURKEY (*Meleagris gallopavo*)

AUGUST 2025

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: Jason Smith, (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 ☾						

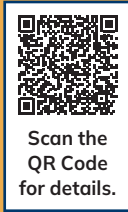
July 2025							September 2025						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5	6
6	7	8	9	10	11	12		7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19		14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26		21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31				29	30				



KYLE JOHNSON/ODWC

EDGE HABITAT

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



AUGUST HABITAT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES.

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

AUGUST POND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

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



MOURNING DOVE (*Zenaida macroura*)

SEPTEMBER 2025

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

August 2025							October 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	
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.

SEPTEMBER HABITAT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- Strip disc 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.

SEPTEMBER POND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- Remove trees from pond dams and spillways. Check spillway for erosion and repair if needed.
- Use cut eastern red cedar 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.



WHITE-TAILED DEER (*Odocoileus virginianus*)

OCTOBER 2025

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

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



MANAGING NATIVE WILDFLOWERS FOR MONARCH BUTTERFLIES

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

Scan the QR Code for details.

OCTOBER HABITAT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

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

OCTOBER POND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

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



NORTHERN BOBWHITE (*Colinus virginianus*)

NOVEMBER 2025

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: Jason Smith, (405) 397-1599

Central Region: Kyle Johnson, (405) 590-2584

Northeast Region: Lauren Johnson, (918) 607-1518

Southeast Region: Leah Lowe, (405) 206-7720

Daylight
Saving Time
Ends

2

3

4

5



6

7

1

9

10

Veterans Day

11



12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20



21

22

23

24

25

26

Thanksgiving
Day

27

28



29

30

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

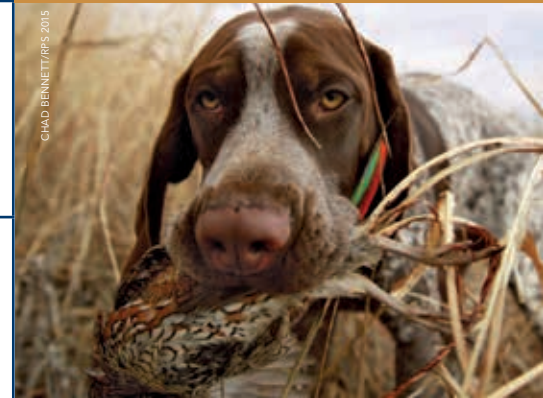
October 2025

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 2025

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/RPS 2015



GAME BIRD HABITAT IMPROVEMENT IDEAS

November through early February is the best time to strip disc for game birds including dove and quail. It will create brood-rearing habitat and food sources the following summer. Plowing or discing turns the ground and stimulates growth of forbs or weeds quail love and need. Discing 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 red cedars 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.



SANDHILL CRANES (*Antigone canadensis*)

DECEMBER 2025

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 2025							January 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1				1	2	3	
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
23	24	25	26	27	28	29	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
30													



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 red cedars.
- 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.

ODWC'S LANDOWNER CONSERVATIONIST FOR '24 IS RANDY MALSON

By Marcus Thibodeau, Northwest Region Senior Biologist



Cindy and Randy Malson accept the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation's 2024 Landowner Conservationist of the Year Award at the August meeting of the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commission.

Farmer-rancher Randy Malson of Roger Mills County was named the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation's 2024 Landowner Conservationist of the Year.

Malson manages 4,560 acres consisting of an array of mixed-grass prairie and rolling sandhills to red shale hills with wooded bottomlands. For over 25 years, Malson has worked to restore the land that, after the Dust Bowl ravaged western Oklahoma, many thought would be barren forever.

Malson is an advocate of prescribed fire and uses it frequently. He applies prescribed fire in the dormant season to reset plant succession, and in the growing season to reduce woody encroachment. He's a member of the Roger Mills County Prescribed Burn Association, where he encourages and assists other landowners with prescribed burns. He is also the chief of the Crawford Volunteer Fire Department and uses his prescribed burning experience to "fight fire with fire" when given the opportunity. This was critical when fighting the Smokehouse Creek Fire in

February 2024, which burned over 1 million acres.

Through an intense rotational grazing regime, cattle are moved frequently, resulting in forb production and bunch grass quantities that create amazing wildlife habitat. Malson is involved in a grazing peer group so he can educate others on his practices and can learn new strategies himself. He's also addressed the most limiting habitat factor in western Oklahoma: water. In areas without live water, he has placed solar wells with overflow ponds to address cattle needs while benefiting wildlife, and installed rain-filled water guzzlers specifically for wildlife.

Soil conservation is critical in the operation. He engages in 600 acres of no-till farming. In early summer, he plants a cover-crop blend of millet, sorghum, cowpeas and sunflower. In the fall, he plants a crop mix of rye, triticale, vetch, and winter peas. Roughly 75% of both crops are allowed to go to seed annually. He combines this practice with his grazing regime to enhance soil microbe diversity and health.

Malson's recent focus has been restoring about 200 acres of riparian habitat. Due to woody encroachment, roost tree availability is the biggest limiting factor to Rio Grande turkey populations in western Oklahoma. Seeing his turkey numbers take a dramatic decline in 2017, he began efforts to remove eastern red cedars by combining mechanical removal and prescribed fire in riparian areas. Rising turkey numbers is yet another success story on Malson's property.

The Malson property has also created great outdoor memories for many people. Malson doesn't only allow family and friends to hunt, trap and fish his property, he's also opened it to Unlimited Outdoor Adventures, a local nonprofit organization that takes youths with terminal illnesses on hunting trips.

The red shale hills of Roger Mills County are unique in that they provide ample resources for wildlife in a seemingly unforgiving terrain. Northern bobwhites, white-tailed deer, and Rio Grande turkeys flourish on Malson's property through his conservation-focused ranching and agricultural practices.



Malson is working to revive riparian areas on his property..



Clearing eastern red cedars has helped turkey numbers rise on Malson's land.



Malson checks on one of the solar water wells in his land.



DEPLOYMENT TO THE DEER WOODS

Nonprofit Operation Freedom Outdoors
Repays Veterans with Outdoor Therapy

By Don P. Brown, Communication and Education Specialist

The mission was clear for McIntosh County landowner David deMontigny. As a U.S. Army and Army National Guard veteran, he was fully aware of the objectives. And he stepped up to enlist his services when he learned about Operation Freedom Outdoors (OFO).

"We are not a hunting club, and there is no membership fee, our trips are paid for in advance by the extraordinary service (the clients) have given to our country."

OFO is a nonprofit group formed in 2016 with a mission to serve those who serve others, namely active military members and

community first responders, and ultimately build relationships through outdoor therapeutic activities.

Those activities include hunting, fishing and camping trips provided to selected applicants with little or no expense to them. The trips are also meant to help those in service who need to find a source of brotherhood or camaraderie.

OFO founder and President Cody Smith of McAlester said OFO's goal is to make a posi-

tive difference in their clients' lives. "Through these relationships and creating a sense of belonging, we can assist our veterans and first responders with various challenges.

"We are not a hunting club, and there is no membership fee," he said. "Our trips are paid for in advance by the extraordinary service (the clients) have given to our country."

MUSTERING THE TROOPS

In December 2023, five guest hunters and eight OFO volunteers gathered at deMontigny's 900-acre ranch for the chance to bag two white-tailed deer apiece during Oklahoma's holiday antlerless deer season. Each had seen the opportunity on OFO's Facebook page or heard about it from friends, and they put their names into a drawing for this hunt.

The winners in the random drawing have all served or are serving in various branches of the U.S. military. **Steve Orman** of Blanchard is a Navy veteran. **Eddie Valenzuela** of Pryor and **Aaron R. Smith** of Oklahoma City were both deployed in



OFO officers, volunteers, guest hunters and the landowner gather for a group photo.

the Army. **Austin McDowell** of Yukon was a Marine who served in Cuba. And **Harry Gatewood** of Bixby was a chaplain in the Air Force Reserve.

Smith would be going on his first-ever hunt. For Valenzuela, this would be only his third time afield.

The OFO website and Facebook page are the main avenues for veterans to apply for the outdoor therapy activities.

Orman said he first heard about OFO while painting lines on a football field and he heard a few other men talking about the group. "That evening, I signed for a few hunts."

Gatewood, who worked with many vets affected by PTSD while stationed in Georgia, ran across the Facebook page. "I was able to put in online. Luckily I was a winner!"

Valenzuela, who served as an ammunition specialist in Iraq, was told about OFO by a high school buddy. And Smith, who was deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan, knew about OFO through his service as District 7 commander in the Oklahoma Veterans of Foreign Wars.



OFO President Cody Smith, left, gets some map pointers from landowner and hunt host David deMontigny.



The OFO gang swaps stories while enjoying lunch after the morning hunt.

DEPLOYED FOR ACTION

The hunters dutifully assembled at the ranch before opening day and were assigned barracks and spent time getting acquainted. The OFO volunteers and deMontigny went over the next day's order of battle, which would

begin before sunrise.

The men would have the option to hunt both Saturday and Sunday, and each could take two antlerless deer. And while meat in the freezer is a great prize, the experienc-

es and bonding were the real takeaways.

McDowell said his first morning was full of challenges. Still in darkness, he fell and then got lost for a bit hiking into his hunting site. He found his blind, but when daylight came, he noticed the feeder had been knocked over by feral hogs. And after sitting all morning, "the only thing I saw was a blue jay."

McDowell grew up as a bird hunter, but hadn't hunted deer until 2019 when his father-in-law took him. It was opening day of deer gun season, and five minutes after sunrise he

downed his first deer. "It's not going to be this way every time," his father-in-law told him.

It was the same story for Valenzuela, who arrived at his ground blind 20 minutes before sunrise. He didn't see any deer all morning.

Orman, a Montana native who's been hunt-



Driving out to the deer blind.



Guest hunter Harry Gatewood climbs into his tree stand.



One of the guest hunters heads out for hunting in the afternoon.

ing big game for 30 years, took his place in a tree stand. About 9:30 a.m., he spotting a doe coming out of the trees. But the deer stayed behind trees and never presented him with a clear shot. "It was probably five seconds total that I had eyes on it."

Gatewood, an experienced hunter, was looking to put meat in the freezer. He climbed into a tree stand and about mid-morning, he got his chance as an antlerless deer walked through the nearby clearing. "He dropped as soon as I hit him," he said.

First-timer Smith learned that experience doesn't always equate to success. He climbed his stand before first light and "got comfy up there. But I made a rookie mistake and let my bag fall down. Luckily I had a rope on it!"

Minutes later, about 8 a.m., he heard rustling in the woods; it was a doe. "She came out, and I got a good shot." He saw another deer but chose to pass because he wasn't certain it was antlerless.

GROUP COMMANDERS

OFO President Smith said the group has six board members and is trying to expand to offer events statewide. Volunteers are vets and patriots who have families and work full-time jobs, but devote time and energy to the non-profit group's activities.

OFO has no administrative fees or payroll, and all proceeds from donations or fundraising goes directly toward the mission, he said.

"Serving those who serve us has been our life's work — giving back to Oklahoma veterans one hunting, fishing, or outdoor expedition at a time. We've grown from a two man team to a small volunteer staff and continue to add members to our ranks who are on the same mission in life and strive to leave their towns, cities, communities, and the world better than we found it.

"Although we all share a passion for the outdoors and wildlife, our goal is to make a positive difference in someone's life. We believe one small act of kindness can cause a ripple effect."



One of the hunting veterans sits in a tree stand watching over a nearby feeder.

One of OFO's largest annual fundraisers is the Save the 22 Gala. According to the Operation Freedom Outdoors website: "Every day, 22 veterans lose their battle with post-traumatic stress. This battle loss leaves families without sons, daughters, husbands, wives, mothers and fathers. The pain in our communities is real, and the loss is unacceptable. Operation Freedom

Outdoors (OFO) seeks to eliminate the loss of our fallen heroes by connecting and reconnecting them with those who need to find a source of brotherhood and camaraderie."

OFO is able to help about 450 veterans and first responders each year with outdoor experiences at little or no cost, said group Vice President Dan Mabery of Tahlequah. About 70 people applied for this antlerless hunt, but only five could be selected by random drawing.

"This is an opportunity for me as a civilian to give back and provide something to those that have protected our great country. If a veteran is in need — not just for some outdoor therapy — but if they have something else going on and just need somebody else to talk to, to listen ... that's one of the things we are passionate about is just being here."

"This is an opportunity for me as a civilian to give back and provide something to those that have protected our great country."

MISSION DEBRIEF

After the first morning's hunt, the hunters and volunteers gathered to enjoy a group lunch, talk about the morning's experiences, and prepare for hunting in the afternoon.

Gatewood said the hunt was a great way to get outdoors and enjoy the fellowship with other vets. "To talk, enjoy some coffee, and be at ease — it brings back old memories.

"I needed to get some meat in the freezer. I have a mother-in-law in need. So, I'm thankful that I was able to harvest, and I'm looking forward to enjoying this venison."

And not to brag, but Gatewood said he would be preparing for a controlled hunt for

a cow elk in the Wichita Mountains. "I must be doing something right," He quipped.

McDowell said he fell in love with hunting since he took his first deer. "It's all I want to do now."

Valenzuela summed up his morning: "It's been fun and cold!" And he enjoyed the chance to hang out around other veterans. "If you are into hunting and you miss that camaraderie being around veterans, this is the way to go."

Aaron Smith took a day off work to go on his first hunt, and he was happy he did. "It was really cold. And I got real excited" when his first deer went down. "I can't wait to have some of that venison."



DON P. BROWN/OWC

Guest hunter Harry Gatewood uses his mobile phone to E-check his antlerless deer as the ATV backs in to haul out his prize.

Smith said when he was young, he tried hunting with his uncle. But he never had enough patience then. Asked whether he would consider becoming a regular deer hunter, Smith was open to the idea. "Yeah, I've got some time and money invested now, so I might as well."

OFO's Cody Smith said his group is always looking for donations of all kinds to keep the outdoor adventures going. Hunting areas, fishing trips, cash, food and outdoor products are welcomed.

Mabery said OFO is also wanting to build up its volunteer corps of like-minded folks who are committed to giving back to veterans and first responders. Donors and volunteers are able to get hooked up on OFO's website.

DeMontigny, an Oklahoma game warden based in McIntosh County and operator of Sunrise 2 Sunset Outfitters on his ranch, said this likely won't be the only OFO event he hosts. He had only learned about the group three months before he hosted this doe hunt, and he's already thinking even bigger. "I want to do a big squirrel hunt and have 100 people.

"It's a win," he said. "Even if we didn't kill anything, we've had a lot of fun."

He was thrilled that one hunter harvested his first-ever deer. "Maybe we've turned him into a lifelong hunter. And that's what it's all about." 🍖

Scan the code to learn more about Operation Freedom Outdoors, make donations, or help as a volunteer.



Harry Gatewood grins as the OFO team unloads his harvest.



Two antlerless deer were harvested during the first morning of the hunt.



OFO Vice President Dan Mabery talks with successful guest hunter Harry Gatewood for a social media video.

Conservation

Fun Outdoors!

Is there a lake, pond or creek nearby? If so, you can have plenty of fun when you “explore the shore.” Make sure to get permission from your parents first, or ask them to join you. Slowly walk along the water just to see what you might find. Look for signs of animal life, like tracks or burrows. See if you can spot any fish in the water. Collect cool rocks, and watch all the birds. Maybe even find something valuable!

Hunting Tip

Part of being an ethical hunter is making sure your firearm is in good condition. Regular gun cleaning ensures reliability and accuracy. Experts recommend cleaning your shotgun or rifle after every hunt, whether you took a shot or not. The more you shoot a firearm, the more often it should be cleaned and oiled. Even guns kept in a gun safe all year should be cleaned and oiled once a year at minimum to guard against rust and corrosion.

Fishing Tip

Most anglers put away the topwater lures during the winter months. But during the right conditions, tossing a topwater can bring success when it starts getting cold, as long as the water temperature is above 50 degrees. Try it on one of those sunny afternoons when the water has been warming all day but the breeze is a bit chilly.

for Kids!

Word Search: Winter Hunting Seasons

T	I	L	M	M	I	E	U	Y	A	I	U	L	G	S	P
S	I	C	X	A	D	W	S	M	S	S	N	M	G	Y	A
K	Q	B	S	J	U	A	V	Q	U	J	K	A	D	T	W
C	M	T	B	I	V	F	U	X	I	H	T	J	J	B	W
U	H	F	A	A	X	I	X	E	V	B	R	Y	T	Q	G
D	Q	Q	F	O	R	O	W	B	Y	Q	S	E	U	P	J
R	K	E	N	R	G	O	O	S	E	W	H	A	E	B	X
Z	P	H	E	A	S	A	N	T	K	S	I	L	R	D	P
P	K	L	G	X	Y	O	U	K	R	L	C	L	E	H	H
C	Z	J	Y	U	W	X	B	R	U	A	V	C	U	L	G
C	A	Z	T	P	C	O	Y	O	T	E	L	K	C	K	X
D	B	R	M	X	O	F	A	I	P	B	Z	E	Z	K	X
Q	R	L	N	E	S	Y	I	C	T	E	F	V	G	S	X
L	X	E	X	B	I	A	B	A	R	A	C	C	O	O	N
V	L	E	Z	Z	B	R	P	O	V	E	E	Z	H	K	A
C	J	D	D	J	X	G	L	O	P	P	G	I	P	V	T

Find and circle the names of these things commonly seen at deer camp.

Rabbit
Coyote
Elk
Squirrel

Duck
Quail
Turkey
Gray Fox

Goose
Deer
Pheasant
Raccoon

COOL FACTS About Eastern Cottontail Rabbits:

- They can run as fast as 18 mph to escape from predators.
- They can be seen anytime year-round day or night, but they usually keep hidden during the day.
- They often run in a zig-zag pattern to avoid being caught.
- Cottontails have a brown and white color that helps them blend in with their environment.
- Cottontails' front teeth, or incisors, never stop growing, allowing them to gnaw on plants and tree bark.



CALLAN WANG/PEKELS CO

Color a Critter: Eastern Cottontail Rabbit



- Cottontails have a great sense of smell, with about 100 million scent receptors in their noses. They can twitch their noses between 20 and 120 times per minute to sniff out danger.
- Cottontails eat a variety of plants, including buds, sprouts, shoots, clover, peas, beans, grass, dandelions, and garden plants. In winter, they eat tender parts of trees like apple, birch, maple, and willow.
- Cottontail babies are born deaf and blind, with flattened ears and little fur. Their proper name is kittens or kits.
- Oklahoma's current hunting season for cottontails opened Oct. 1, 2024, and will close March 15, 2025. The daily bag limit is 10.



SARAH SIMER/IPS 2014



DATTEN BRUSH/IPS 2020

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 conservation efforts with these striking window decals. — \$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. — \$21 or \$31



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 supporter of the Wildlife Department's conservation efforts. Wearing this hat means you care about future generations and the great hunting and fishing tradition. — \$20



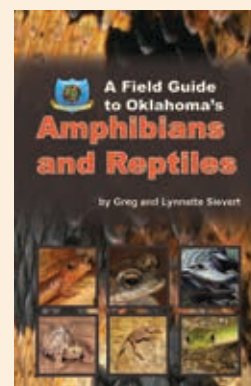
OKLAHOMA WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA ATLAS

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

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WESTERN MEADOWLARK

BY MEGAN MOORE, ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Western meadowlarks have a rich, flute-like call pattern with a jumble of notes typically descending the scale, whereas the Eastern meadowlarks have a more simple, whistling call.



Scan the code to listen to the Western meadowlark.

If being chosen as the state bird by multiple states is any indicator of popularity, then the Western meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*) must be extremely well-liked. The Western meadowlark is the state bird of Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oregon, and Wyoming. These birds have a wide habitat

range and can be found nearly state-wide in Oklahoma, though there are fewer reported sightings in eastern Oklahoma.

This bird's typical habitat is grassy fields and pastures, prairies, meadows, old orchards, weedy fields, croplands, and grassy roadsides. This variety of habitat compatibility contributes to their presence in many states.

Anyone wanting to attract Western meadowlarks to the yard should consider stocking a bird feeder with some of the bird's favorites such as cracked corn, millet, and black-oil sunflower seeds. When not near any feeders, they will forage on seeds and waste grain, which constitute about one-third of their annual diet, especially during fall and winter. In spring and summer, their diet will mainly include insects such as grasshoppers, caterpillars, crickets, ants, and beetles, as well as spiders and snails.

As a member of the blackbird (icterid) family, meadowlarks rely on a feeding method known as "gaping," using their surprisingly strong muscles that open their beak. They will insert their beak into the

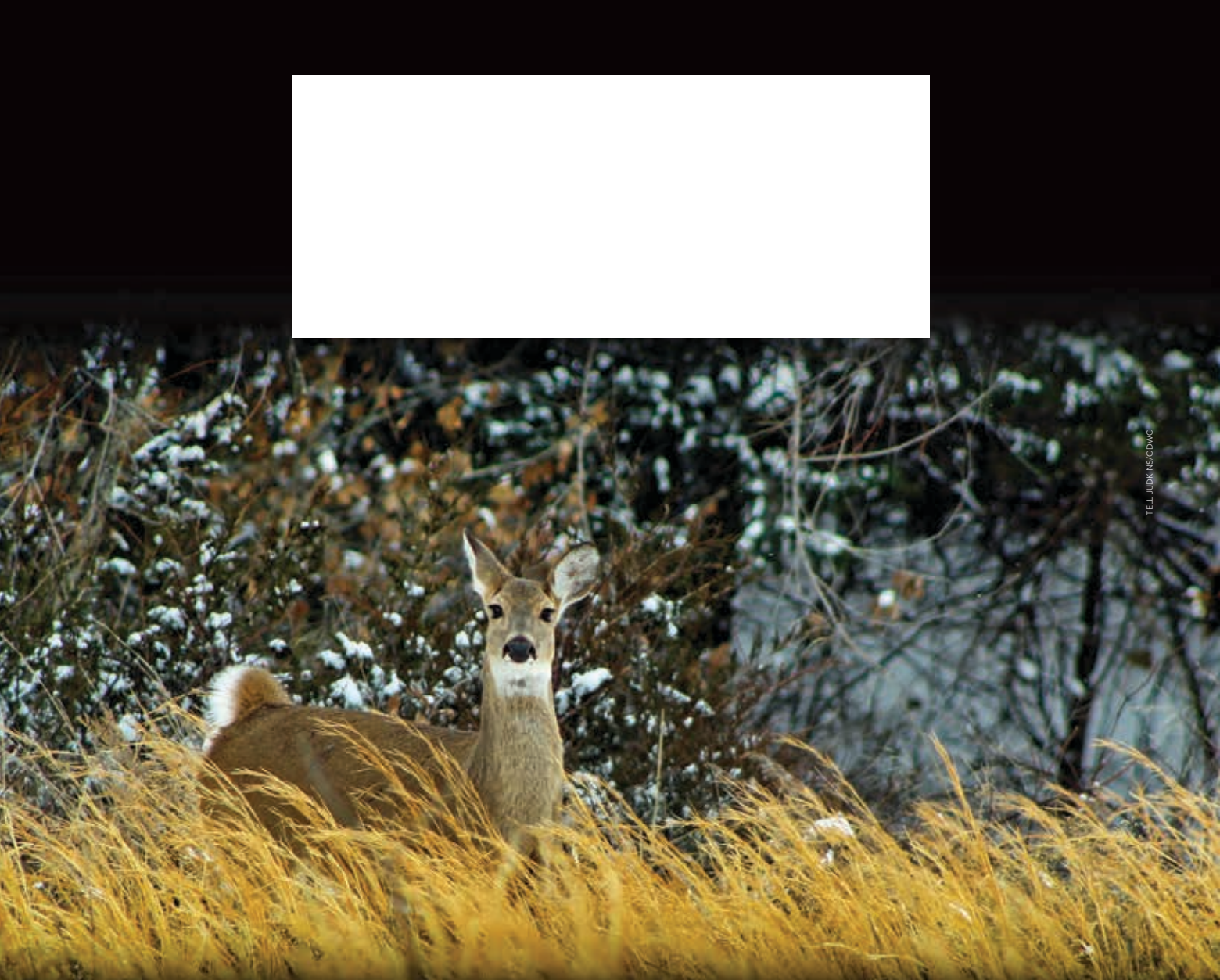
soil, then force it open to create a hole, which provides access to insects or grains that most other birds cannot reach.

Female meadowlarks do most of the work tending to the next generation. They do all the incubating (lasting about two weeks), as well as most of the feeding of the young. During breeding season, the female lays three to seven eggs, which are white but heavily spotted with brown and purple. The female will also prepare for the breeding season by building a well-camouflaged nest out of grass stems woven among the surrounding growth, created a dome-shaped structure with a side entrance on the ground in a hollow or depression.

About the size of an American robin (about 8 inches long and a wingspan of 14 inches), much of their coloring is brown, tan, and white. Identifying features which make these birds easily recognizable are their yellow breast with a black V shape at the neck. They have nearly black head stripes, a sharply pointed beak. Their short tail with white outer tail feathers are most visible during takeoff and landing. It can be difficult to differentiate between the Eastern and Western meadowlarks only by sight. An easier way to tell them apart is by their song, however singing is not a common occurrence during winter months.

Western meadowlarks have a rich, flute-like call pattern with a jumble of notes typically descending the scale, whereas the Eastern meadowlarks have a more simple, whistling call. Males will tend to perch atop fenceposts, shrubs, and powerlines as they sing during breeding season. They will also use their call to defend their nesting territory. ♡





TELL JUDKINS@ODWC

Deer hunters, don't put up your rifle at the end of gun season. Instead, make a positive impact on the state's deer herd management strategy by taking two bonus deer during the Holiday Antlerless Deer Gun Season. It improves herd health and fills your freezer (or feeds others through ODWC's Hunters Against Hunger or Oklahoma Deer Share programs). Remember: "Hunters in the Know ... Take a Doe!"

Outdoor Oklahoma

