

# Outdoor Oklahoma

SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2025 — ONLY \$10 A YEAR



A PUBLICATION OF THE OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION





# PANORAMAS



Autumn arrives very soon. Cooler breezes arrive from the north, and trees begin changing to reds and golds. And September is when our hunting seasons kick off in Oklahoma.

A lot of people enjoy being outdoors in the fall. And if we all aren't careful, accidents could happen. So here's a stern reminder: A responsible hunter always thinks of safety first.

The International Hunter Education Association emphasizes four basic rules of firearms safety:

- Assume that every gun is loaded.
- Control the direction of the muzzle; always point the gun in a safe direction.
- Keep your finger off the trigger until ready to fire.
- Be certain of your target and of what's behind it.

The person holding a gun is responsible for the safe handling of that firearm. It is imperative that you make sure no one would get injured (or worse) if the gun is loaded and accidentally discharges.

Make sure the firearm is unloaded before picking it up or accepting it from another person. Never use drugs or alcohol before or during shooting. And make sure you have the correct ammunition for the firearm you're using.

The gun's safety switch or safety button is meant to prevent the trigger, or firing pin, from moving, thereby preventing the gun from firing. A careful hunter always knows where the safety button is located on the gun before loading or firing. But a safety switch is a mechanical device, and it can fail. Just because you have the safety engaged doesn't guarantee the gun won't fire. Safety buttons should never be used as a substitute for safe gun handling and the observance of all gun safety rules.

Before it's time to head afield, every hunter should develop a personal code of ethics and follow it unflinchingly.

Did you know it's illegal and unsafe to transport a loaded firearm? Every gun should always be unloaded and cased before being placed in a vehicle.

Wear hunter orange as required. Big game firearms hunters must wear it, and most other

hunters during any open big game season must wear it. The safest color to wear while hunting is solid hunter orange.

Upland game bird hunters (quail, pheasant, etc.) should wear at least a hunter orange vest or head covering. Turkey, dove, crow, sandhill crane and waterfowl hunters should wear at least a hunter orange vest or head covering when moving to and from their hunting areas.

You've parked and are getting your gear. Never lean a firearm against a tailgate or any other part of a vehicle, or any other object. The gun can easily slide and hit the ground, causing it to fire.

Practice safety if you must cross a fence or other obstacle. If alone, point the gun's muzzle away from you and put the gun on the ground on the other side of the barrier before you cross. If two people are hunting, both should unload their guns and one person holds both guns while the other person crosses. Then the guns are handed across, muzzle up, over the obstacle to the second person, then the first person crosses.

If you take a fall, always unload your firearm and examine the barrel. Clean out any dirt, mud or snow before firing.

Don't use telescopic gunsights as a substitute for binoculars. Never take a shot unless you are aware of your target and what is behind it. Never point your firearm at something you do not intend to shoot. And don't shoot at water or hard objects such as rocks or metal.

If a hunting buddy refuses to follow the rules of safe gun handling or game laws, immediately tell them your concerns and discontinue hunting with them unless the rules are followed.

Finally, something hunters don't always consider as part of firearms safety is to clean your firearm after every use to be sure it functions safely and efficiently the next time. 🛡️

A handwritten signature in orange ink that reads "Pake Wise". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "P" and "W".

**Pake Wise,**

Communication and Education Specialist

# Outdoor Oklahoma

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER • VOLUME 81 • NUMBER 5

Published by the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation  
1801 N. Lincoln Blvd, Oklahoma City, OK 73105-4908  
P.O. Box 53465, Oklahoma City, OK 73152-3465

**STATE OF OKLAHOMA**  
J. Kevin Stitt, Governor

**WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION**  
Rick Holder, Creta — Chairman  
D. Chad Dillingham, Enid — Vice Chairman  
Mark Mabrey, Okmulgee — Secretary  
James V. Barwick, Edmond  
Eric Chapman, Mannsville  
Tim Diehl, McAlester  
Jess Kane, Bartlesville  
John P. Zelbst, Meers

**OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION**  
Wade Free, Director  
Nels Rodefeld, Assistant Director  
Andrea Crews, Chief, Administration  
Ken Cunningham, Chief, Fisheries Division  
Bill Dinkines, Chief, Wildlife Division  
Nathan Erdman, Chief, Law Enforcement Division  
Micah Holmes, Chief, Communication and Education Division  
Don P. Brown, Managing Editor

**CONTRIBUTING STAFF**  
Dallas Barber, Heather Del Moral, Jena Donnell, Colter Fluman, Lydia Gearhart, Darrin Hill, Kara Miner, John Rempe, Nels Rodefeld, Paxton Smith, Smokey Solis, Kayleen Sugianto, Amanda Thomas, Joe Williams, Mike Williams.

**PHONE**  
405-521-3856

**WEBSITE**  
www.wildlifedepartment.com

**E-MAIL**  
donald.brown@odwc.ok.gov

Art direction by Stroud Design, Inc.  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Copyright ©2025 by the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation. Reproduction in whole or in part without permission is prohibited. Outdoor Oklahoma (ISSN 0030-7106) is published bimonthly by the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, P.O. Box 53465, Oklahoma City, OK 73152. Periodicals postage paid at Oklahoma City, OK, and additional mailing offices. Notification of address change must include both old and new addresses and ZIP codes, with six weeks' notice. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Outdoor Oklahoma, P.O. Box 291981, Kettering, OH 45429.

This program operates free from discrimination on the basis of political or religious opinion or affiliation, race, creed, color, gender, age, ancestry, marital status or disability. A person who believes he or she may have been discriminated against or would like further information should write: Director, Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, P.O. Box 53465, Oklahoma City, OK 73152, or Office of Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Interior, 1849 C St. NW, Washington, DC 20240.

## ACCOUNT QUESTIONS

Call (800) 607-4410

## SUBSCRIBE ONLINE

Tinyurl.com/GetOutdoorOK for online credit card orders

Subscriptions are \$10 per year; \$18 for 2 years; \$25 for 3 years. Single copies \$3+fee online at ODWC Outdoor Store.

Production and distribution costs not covered by subscription fees are borne by Oklahoma sportsmen and sportswomen through hunting and fishing fees.

12



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**OFF THE BEATEN PATH..... 2**

**2024-25 BIG GAME HARVEST REPORT..... 12**  
**Hunters Winning the Game in a Big Way**  
**“Take a Doe” Takes Off in State’s 2nd-Best Season Ever**  
 By Dallas Barber, Wildlife Biologist

**CONSERVATION FOR KIDS ..... 24**  
**Pages Providing Learning and Fun for Youngsters**

**ODWC’S SHOOTING RANGE PROJECTS LEAD NATION IN PROVIDING MORE PUBLIC ACCESS ..... 26**

**MISSION: MULEYS ..... 28**  
**Knowledge of Mule Deer Getting Lift From Research**  
 By Don P. Brown, Communication and Education Specialist

**JUST WHAT DOES A WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST DO? ..... 34**  
**Research? Yes. Data. Yes. But So Much More**  
 By John Rempe, Wildlife Biologist

**CHASING RAINBOWS ..... 40**  
**Can Raising, Stocking Trout Find Success in Oklahoma?**  
 By Don P. Brown, Communication and Education Specialist

**OUTDOOR STORE..... 46**  
**Now available: Outdoor Oklahoma T-shirts!**

**WATCHABLE WILDLIFE..... 48**  
**Cicada Killer**  
 By Lydia Gearhart, Game Warden



### ON THE COVER:

A white-tailed deer buck awaits his chosen doe in this dramatic image taken during the craziness of the rutting season in the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge. Photographer Richard Taylor of Lawton said the refuge is among his favorite places to capture nature at its best.

- facebook.com/OkWildlifeDept
- instagram.com/OkWildlifeDept
- @OkWildlifeDept
- @OkWildlifeDept
- @OkWildlifeDept



OKLAHOMA



# OFF THE BEATEN PATH

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

## WILDLIFE COMMISSION WELCOMES RANCHER ERIC CHAPMAN



Eric Chapman

Mannsville rancher Eric Chapman, 61, has joined the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commission in the District 4 seat, replacing Leigh Gaddis of Ada, who served 10.5 years.

"It's important that we take care of the wildlife ... and just try to do what's right," he said.

Chapman's Rock Prairie farming and ranching business is a family operation on about 20,000 acres. "Most of it is pretty hands on." He also markets hunting leases on most of the ranch.

He grew up hunting and fishing in the same area where his ancestors have lived for four generations. "We've been in that area over 100 years." And he enjoyed the chance to raise his children on the land.

After graduating from Ardmore High School, he

furthered his education at Oklahoma State University and also studied ranch management at Texas Christian University. He is on the board of directors of the National Livestock Producers Association, has served for decades on the board of the Arbuckle Conservation District (NRCS), and is active in the Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association.

Chapman said among his concerns is ensuring a good future for the next generation.

He and his wife, Tracie, have a son, two daughters, and four grandchildren.

The Wildlife Commission's District 4 includes the counties of Creek, Lincoln, Okfuskee, Seminole, Pottawatomie, Pontotoc, Hughes, Johnston, and Coal. ♡

# Memories Made Here



Want to learn more  
about hunter education?

Visit our website at: [wildlifedepartment.com/  
education/hunter-ed](http://wildlifedepartment.com/education/hunter-ed)

or scan this QR code to get started!





# MOUNTAIN LION KITTENS CONFIRMED AT 2 SITES IN STATE



LANDOWNER PROVIDED

The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation has authenticated two separate observations of mountain lions with kittens in different regions of the state.

Photographic evidence captured in October 2024 in Osage County shows an adult mountain lion with two half-grown kittens, and photographic evidence captured in December 2024 in Cimarron County shows an adult with three smaller kittens.

"It's our first piece of evidence that mountain lions may be breeding in Oklahoma, a key indicator the population is becoming established. That two female mountain lions have established at least part of their territories in Oklahoma is a direct reflection of a healthy ecosystem," said Jerrod Davis, Wildlife Biologist for the Wildlife Department.

"While exciting and interesting, these sightings are just one small piece of the puzzle needed to better understand this species. It could open the door for potential research.

"We've been confirming sightings through our online reporting process for more than 20 years and may deploy more intensive camera arrays. Our first focus should be evaluating the abundance and distribution of mountain lions in the state. Depending on those surveys, further research may be possible."

These family groups represent the first ODWC-confirmed instances of possible reproduction of mountain lions within the state, but the Wildlife Department has confirmed 85 sightings of individuals since 2002, with an uptick in confirmed sightings in 2023. It's important to note that some of these sightings could actually be of the same individual. This upward trend also has been observed by states in the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

Before this recent photographic evidence of lion kittens in Oklahoma, biologists concluded that all previous confirmations of lions in the state were of transient individuals. The closest established populations are in Texas, New Mexico, Colorado, and Nebraska.

Mountain lion sightings may be reported at [wildlifedepartment.com](http://wildlifedepartment.com). Photographs of tracks are most easily identified when a ruler or size reference is placed next to the track for scale.

In Oklahoma, mountain lions have been classified as a game species with a closed hunting season since 1957. But a 2007 law allows for the killing of mountain lions depredating livestock or when people are threatened. To date, only one mountain lion has been killed under this provision. In the event a mountain lion is taken, a Wildlife Department employee must be notified immediately and the intact carcass, including the hide, must be presented within 24 hours for collection of biological information.

— Jena Donnell, *Communication and Education Specialist*

*This authenticated image of an adult mountain lion and three lion kittens was captured by a game camera in Cimarron County.*



LANDOWNER PROVIDED

*This authenticated image of an adult mountain lion and two lion kittens was captured by a game camera in Osage County.*



DON P. BROWN/ODWC

After being rounded up into a pen, these Canada geese are removed one at a time to receive a coded metal band around a leg.

## MORE THAN 1,500 RESIDENT GEESE BANDED THIS YEAR

This past summer, ODWC staff and volunteers captured and placed leg bands on 1,571 resident Canada geese at seven sites across Oklahoma.

Migratory bird biologists nationwide and their counterparts in the U.S. Geological Survey have led the way in developing models that use banding and recovery data to predict the impacts of harvest and other take, as well as develop an understanding of environmental factors that drive migratory bird populations. Banding data are instrumental in setting annual waterfowl hunting regulations.

If you have found or harvested a banded bird, please report it at [www.reportband.gov](http://www.reportband.gov); ignore any toll-free phone number on the band. You'll get a certificate and can keep the band. And sometimes there will be a reward.

A very important use of banding data is calculating harvest rates. We need to make sure that the harvest of migratory game birds is sustainable, so that bird populations remain healthy, and that the hunting tradition can be continued by future generations.

Some people falsely believe that if they report a band, it could lead to more restrictive hunting regulations. In fact, the more band reports we get, the more confident we can be of our data, and this allows us to set seasons that allow more harvest opportunity, while ensuring that the harvest is sustainable. ♡

— Paxton Smith, Wildlife Biologist

# OUTDOOR CALENDAR

FOR THE LATEST UPDATES, GO ONLINE TO LICENSE.  
[GOOUTDOORSOKLAHOMA.COM/EVENT/EVENTS.ASPX](http://GOOUTDOORSOKLAHOMA.COM/EVENT/EVENTS.ASPX)

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

## SEPTEMBER 2025

- 1** Labor Day (state offices closed).
- 6** OKC Free Fishing Day, no city permit required.  
 OKC's Youth Hooked on Fishing, 9-11 a.m., Edwards Park. Register: [www.okc.gov/departments/parks-recreation/lakes-and-fishing/fishing-regulations](http://www.okc.gov/departments/parks-recreation/lakes-and-fishing/fishing-regulations).  
 City of Choctaw Fishing Derby, 8-11 a.m., Ten Acre Lake. Register: [license.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/ViewEvent.aspx](http://license.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/ViewEvent.aspx).  
**New Waterfowler Field Day**, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., Kaw WMA shooting range. Register: [license.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/ViewEvent.aspx](http://license.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/ViewEvent.aspx).
- 6-7** **Oklahoma Free Hunting Days.**
- 7** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
- 7-9** Reel Recovery Retreat, fly fishing for men with cancer, Beaver's Bend Lodge. Register: [license.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/ViewEvent.aspx](http://license.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/ViewEvent.aspx).
- 8** **Okl. Wildlife Conservation Commission** meets, 10 a.m., Roman Nose State Park, Watonga.
- 14** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
- 21** "Outdoor Oklahoma" Deer Season Preview Show, 8 a.m., OETA.
- 27** National Hunting and Fishing Day.
- 28** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.

- **Hunter Education** class locations (date) in Norman (6), Jones (6, for adults), Okmulgee (13), Antlers (13), Granite (20), Wayne (27).
- **Ducks Unlimited** events (date) in Stillwater (5), Edmond (11), Guthrie (13), Claremore (18), Beggs (19), Muskogee (25). Info: [www.ducks.org/events](http://www.ducks.org/events).
- **Friends of NRA** events (date) in Blair (11), Enid (13), Tahlequah (18), Vinita (20). Info: [www.friendsofNRA.org/events](http://www.friendsofNRA.org/events).
- **Quail Forever** events (date) in Atoka (11), Guthrie (20). Info: [events.pheasantsforever.org/events](http://events.pheasantsforever.org/events).
- **Delta Waterfowl** event in Oklahoma City, Sept. 27. Info: @OklahomaDeltaWaterfowl on Facebook.
- **National Wild Turkey Federation** events (date) in Loveland (5), Bristow (13). Info: <https://your.nwtf.org/members/events>.

## OCTOBER 2025

- 4** 4: OKC Free Fishing Day, no city permit required.  
 OKC's Youth Hooked on Fishing, 9 a.m., Dolese Youth Park. Register: [www.okc.gov/departments/parks-recreation/lakes-and-fishing/fishing-regulations](http://www.okc.gov/departments/parks-recreation/lakes-and-fishing/fishing-regulations).
- 5** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
- 6** **Okl. Wildlife Conservation Commission** meets, 9 a.m., Oklahoma City. Livestream: [YouTube.com/@Okwildlifedep](https://www.youtube.com/@Okwildlifedep).
- 12** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
- 13** Columbus Day.
- 18** H.B Parsons Fish Hatchery Open House, 11 a.m.-2 p.m., Oklahoma City. Register: [www.okc.gov/departments/parks-recreation/lakes-and-fishing/fishing-regulations](http://www.okc.gov/departments/parks-recreation/lakes-and-fishing/fishing-regulations).
- 19** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
- 25** New Waterfowler Field Day, Okmulgee WMA. Register: [license.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/ViewEvent.aspx](http://license.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/ViewEvent.aspx).
- 26** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.

- **Hunter Education** class locations (date) in Blanchard (11), Sallisaw (11), Enid (16).
- National Wild Turkey Federation event (date) in Miami (31). Info: <https://your.nwtf.org/members/events>.
- **Ducks Unlimited** events (date) in Enid (2), McAlester (3), Yukon (9). Info: [www.ducks.org/events](http://www.ducks.org/events).
- **Friends of NRA** events (date) in El Reno (2), Dewey (4), Idabel (11), Norman (30). Info: [www.friendsofNRA.org/events](http://www.friendsofNRA.org/events).
- **Quail Forever** event (date) in Pocasset (4). Info: [events.pheasantsforever.org/events](http://events.pheasantsforever.org/events).

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



# 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 73152-3465, or send e-mail to [donald.brown@odwc.ok.gov](mailto:donald.brown@odwc.ok.gov).

**Dear Wildlife Youth Camp Game Wardens & Staff,**

Thank you for giving your valuable time and your years of knowledge during another great week of Wildlife Youth Camp. My daughter, Kyah, had an amazing week. She came back full of fun stories of what the wardens did to instill interest and information about wildlife conservation into our next generation. This camp concentered her love for the outdoors, exposed her to new outdoor experiences, and it renewed her interest in pursuing a wildlife degree in college in the near future.

As a mama bear, I also appreciate what a great job you all did using PhotoCircle, the orientation meeting, phone availability, and other means of communication to keep us informed and make us feel comfortable about leaving our kiddos in your care. It was clear that this group of ODWC employees not only loved to have fun, and had a passion for wildlife conservation, but they also cared about our kids.

Five Stars to all involved! Thank you for giving up a week of your time to teach others. I really cannot believe that you did all this at no cost to these families of these kids! What a blessing you all and the ODWC have been to my daughter, my family, and many others as you continue to impact the youth of our state through Wildlife Youth Camp.

**Sarah Holmes**

.....  
**Dear Wildlife Department,**

One of my first deer hunts was under an orange Oklahoma sky over Lake Eufaula, with leaves trembling in a dozen colors and the hallowed "caw" of a crow carrying clear across the Checotah Creek corridor. Determined to bring in a monster buck, I overused estrous scent — a rookie mistake — and the smell nearly made my cousin and me sick, but we laughed the whole time.

These days, I spend more time planting food plots, filling feeders and taking youth hunters afield than I do harvesting deer. Hunting is about giving back, respecting the game and keeping Oklahoma's wild places wild. Thanks to ODWC Law Enforcement District 2 for keeping our woods safe and our traditions strong.

**Harry Gatewood, Checotah**

.....  
**Errata**

In our July/August 2025 issue's Readers' Photography Showcase, we overlooked labeling the photos that were finalists for our cover shot. Congratulations to the three runners-up shown at right.



*J.D. Miller of Collinsville*



*Maria Perkins of Fort Worth, Texas*



*Sherman Barr of Edmond*



# 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](http://wildlifedepartment.com/hunting/tailgate) or scan the code:



Clay Benton, Rio Grande wild turkey, Jackson County.



Ben Fletcher, northern bobwhite, Dec. 21, 2024, Packsaddle WMA.



Colby Webb, white-winged dove, Oct. 6, 2024, Blue River Public Fishing and Hunting Area.

## CONTINENT'S BIGGEST FALCONRY EVENT COMING TO ENID

VIA FACEBOOK



Phil Silvati is co-chairman of the 2025 NAFA North American Field Meet in Enid.

The largest falconry meet in North America is coming to Enid on Nov. 9-14 as the Oklahoma Falconers Association will host the North American Falconers Association (NAFA) 2025 Field Meet.

The annual NAFA field meet is, for many falconers, the highlight of the year, and with good reason. Falconers from across the United States, Canada and even overseas will gather to celebrate the sport's shared heritage and the passion they have for their birds.

Event co-chairman Phil Silvati said for the first time, the public will be invited to the event. It will be an unforgettable opportunity to meet a broad range of falconers and to learn from some of the best about the sport and the birds.

Registrants will be able to engage in some excellent hawking on public and private lands around Enid during the day, and take in a full program of speakers and workshops in the evenings. There will also be a great variety of vendors selling art and equipment, along with a nightly raffle.

The North American field meet was last held in Oklahoma at Quartz Mountain State Lodge in 2021. Before that, field meets were held in Elk City in 2016 and Woodward in 2009.

For more information, go to the "2025 NAFA Field Meet" Facebook page.



# GAME WARDEN'S JOURNAL

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



It was sunfish and smiles at the recent Cops and Bobbers event in Moore. Several ODWC game wardens had a blast partnering with the Moore Police Department for the event. Seeing kids reel in fish and create lasting memories is what it's all about.

Game wardens are always proud to support events that bring law enforcement and the community together in Outdoor Oklahoma!



PROVIDED

Oklahoma game wardens joined officials with the City of Enid and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to conduct the annual Enid fishing clinic at Meadowlake Park.

On hand were Eighth District game wardens **Phillip Cottrill, Blake Cottrill, Tristian Leonard, Lt. Stephen Paul** and **Marshall Reigh**. Everyone had a good time.

*(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:

**NONRESIDENT GAME BIRD PERMIT:** Any nonresident of any age entering or using Wildlife Department-owned or -managed lands in pursuit of any game bird must possess a valid WMA game bird permit. The nonresident game bird permit was added to license requirements in June 2025, and the permit price was set at \$100. Nonresident game bird hunters must also possess one of these base licenses whether hunting on public or private land (unless exempt): nonresident annual hunting license (\$209), or nonresident five-day hunting license (\$75, not valid for waterfowl or turkey), or nonresident annual youth super hunting license (\$151), or nonresident 5-day youth super hunting license (\$76). Also, nonresident hunters 18 and older who are pursuing turkey on public or private land in Oklahoma must possess a turkey license (\$10). Nonresident hunters 18 and older who are pursuing waterfowl on public or private land in Oklahoma must possess an Oklahoma waterfowl license (\$31). ♻️



PROVIDED



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



Jacob Hayes, largemouth bass, June 28, 2025, Lake Nanih Waiya.



Carly Curtis, white crappie, July 2, 2025, Lake Thunderbird.



Sierra Polk, smallmouth bass, June 18, 2025, Broken Bow Lake.



Hailey Schaefer, striped bass, July 27, 2025, Oologah Lake.



Klay Goode, green sunfish, June 1, 2025, Lake Thunderbird.



Earl H., flathead catfish, June 18, 2025, Hugo Lake.





HEATHER DEL MORAL/ODWC

Serving up good food at ODWC's annual Legislative Fish Fry at the State Capitol are Tyler Howser, Gabby Hood, Mark Walker, Amanda Thomas and Tammy St. Yves.

## PROMOTING OUTDOORSMEN'S VOICE TO LEGISLATORS

Nearly a decade ago, the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation launched an initiative that's grown into a meaningful outreach effort: annual legislative fishing trips and a legislative fish fry at the State Capitol.

These outings aren't just about fishing. They're about building relationships. The time on the water creates a relaxed, hands-on experience where conversations flow naturally, far from the formalities of office walls and policy briefings.

Whether we're jug lining, paddle fishing or swapping stories while cleaning fish, these moments open doors to genuine, productive dialogue.

What makes these trips truly powerful is how they connect lawmakers to the people we serve. Lawmakers see firsthand the rich diversity of Oklahomans who rely on and enjoy our natural resources — families sharing time outdoors, lifelong anglers lost in

their favorite pastime, and even the occasional old-timer fishing with nothing but a beer can and some fishing line — yep, true story!

Lawmakers leave with a deeper understanding of ODWC's work, from habitat and fisheries management to public access and recreation.

This initiative is a reflection of who we are: passionate stewards of Oklahoma's wildlife, committed to connecting with the people who shape its future. By showing — not just telling — our story, we make sure the value of conservation isn't lost on our legislators. ♡



AMANDA THOMAS/ODWC

State Sen. Spencer Kern lands a paddlefish.



HEATHER DEL MORAL/ODWC

State Rep. Ty Burns and his son haul in another catfish while on a juglining trip hosted by ODWC at Kaw Lake.



AMANDA THOMAS/ODWC

After a successful juglining trip to Kaw Lake are, from left, ODWC Assistant Director Nels Rodefeld, state Rep. John Waldron and his son, state Rep. Ty Burns and his son, and ODWC Director Wade Free.



# WILD ABOUT COOKING

## BAKED DOVE BREASTS WITH APPLES

With the arrival of September comes dove hunting season. This recipe combines dove and apples in a delicious main dish for fall.



KENTUCKY NUTRITION EDUCATION PROGRAM

Apples add a crisp flavor to the baked dove breasts.

### INGREDIENTS

- 12 dove breasts, cleaned
- 2 cups buttermilk
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 1½ teaspoons smoked paprika
- 1 Tablespoon vegetable oil
- 2 medium apples, diced
- 1 large onion, diced
- 2 celery stalks, sliced
- 1 cup orange juice

### INSTRUCTIONS

- In a covered container, soak dove breasts in buttermilk overnight in the refrigerator.
- Remove breasts and discard buttermilk. Pat breasts dry with a paper towel. Pre-heat the oven to 350 degrees.
- Stir together salt, pepper and paprika. Rub mixture onto breasts. Place breasts in shallow greased baking dish and brush with oil. Add diced apples, onions and celery. Add ½ cup water to the pan and cover tightly.
- Bake for 1 hour 15 minutes. After 45 minutes, pour orange juice over breasts and baste.

**Note:** Removing skin before cooking can lower fat content. This might also reduce “wild” flavor.

Nutrition facts per serving: 320 calories; 17g total fat; 4.5g saturated fat; 0g trans fat; 130mg cholesterol; 370mg sodium; 15g carbohydrate; 2g fiber; 11g sugars; 28g protein; 0% Daily Value of vitamin D; 4% Daily Value of Calcium; 40% Daily Value of Iron; 10% Daily value of Potassium

SOURCE: Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service via Kentucky Nutrition Education Program



CAYLA BENDEL/ARISECLEARINGHOUSE





# 2025/2026

# HUNTING SEASONS

**DEER & ELK\*** ARCHERY ..... OCT. 1 - JAN. 15  
 YOUTH GUN ..... OCT. 17 - 19  
 MUZZLELOADER ..... OCT. 25 - NOV. 2  
 GUN ..... NOV. 22 - DEC. 7  
 HOLIDAY ANTLERLESS ..... DEC. 18 - 31

**BEAR\*** ARCHERY ..... OCT. 1-19  
 MUZZLELOADER ..... OCT. 25 - NOV. 2

**ANTELOPE** ARCHERY ..... OCT. 1-14  
 MUZZLELOADER ..... DRAWING ONLY

**DUCKS** PANHANDLE ..... (REGULAR SEASON)  
 OCT. 4 - JAN. 7  
 (YOUTH, VETERAN, ACTIVE MILITARY)  
 SEPT. 27 & JAN. 31  
 ZONE 1 & 2 ..... (REGULAR SEASON)  
 NOV. 8 - 30 & DEC. 6 - JAN. 25  
 (YOUTH, VETERAN, ACTIVE MILITARY)  
 NOV. 1 & JAN. 31

**TURKEY** YOUTH SPRING ..... APRIL 11 - 12  
 SPRING ..... APRIL 16 - MAY 16  
 FALL ARCHERY ..... OCT. 1 - JAN. 15  
 FALL GUN ..... NOV. 1 - 21

**QUAIL** ..... NOV. 8 - FEB. 15      **SQUIRREL** ..... MAY 15 - FEB. 28  
**PHEASANT** ..... DEC. 1 - JAN. 31      **RABBIT** ..... OCT. 1 - MARCH 15  
**DOVE** ..... SEPT. 1 - OCT. 31      **FURBEARER** ..... DEC. 1 - FEB. 28  
 & DEC. 1 - 29

\* Bear Muzzleloader and all statewide elk seasons are quota hunts. Check quotas at [wildlifedepartment.com](http://wildlifedepartment.com) before hunting. The Special Southwest Zone for elk has season dates that vary from the regular statewide season dates listed above. Consult the most current Oklahoma Fishing & Hunting Regulations Guidebook for the Special Southwest Zone dates.

DISCLAIMER: Equal Opportunity Statement - This program operates free from discrimination on the basis of political or religious opinion or affiliation, race, creed, color, gender, age, ancestry, marital status or disability. A person who feels he or she may have been discriminated against or would like further information should write: Director, Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, P.O. Box 53465, Oklahoma City, OK 73152, or Office of Civil Rights U.S. Department of the Interior 1849 C Street, NE Washington, D.C. 20240

Photo by: Reagan Renfroe



2024-25 BIG GAME HARVEST REPORT

# HUNTERS WINNING THE GAME IN A BIG WAY



"TAKE A DOE"  
TAKES OFF  
IN STATE'S  
2ND-BEST  
SEASON EVER

BY DALLAS BARBER,  
WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST



The 2024-25 big game hunting season in Oklahoma showcased another year of remarkable success for hunters across the state. Again, favorable environmental and habitat conditions played crucial roles, creating optimal circumstances for wildlife and the people pursuing them.

Coupled with robust and healthy wildlife populations, those factors contributed to a substantial combined deer harvest of 128,375 — a figure that underscores the continued vitality of Oklahoma’s big game resources.

That number ranks this past deer season as No. 2 most-successful in terms of number of animals harvested. The highest harvest for an Oklahoma deer season was 134,158 combined in all 2022-23 deer seasons.

Equally noteworthy was the continued active participation and conscientious effort put forth by deer hunters to support responsible wildlife management practices.

A particularly significant highlight in 2024-25 was the high percentage of antlerless deer harvested, which made up 48% of the total take. This marks a new record for the proportion of antlerless deer in the overall harvest, indicating a widespread understanding among hunters of the importance of managing herd dynamics to prevent overpopulation and ensure ecological balance. And it’s likely that the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation’s “Hunters in the Know ... Take a Doe!” public awareness campaign helped generate those results.

Of the state’s 77 counties, 70 of them reported at least 40% antlerless deer harvest. The goal is a harvest of between 40% and 45% antlerless deer.

The seven counties that fell short of 40% antlerless harvest were primarily in the far northwest part of the state, where deer densities are lower and hunting season structures limit antlerless harvest.

In short, more hunters made more good deer herd management decisions this past season.

This deliberate focus on harvesting antlerless deer is more than just a statistic — it reflects a strategic approach aimed at preserving the long-term health and sustainability of Oklahoma’s deer population. By reducing pressure on food sources and helping to maintain stable buck-to-doe ratios, such practices are essential to sustaining thriving wildlife populations for future generations of hunters and outdoor enthusiasts alike.

For a look at total deer harvest from 2004 to the present, see **Figure 1**.

Oklahoma’s various firearms hunting seasons played a dominant role in the overall success of the 2024-25 deer harvest. Together, the state’s firearm seasons — which include the 16-day modern gun season, the youth gun season designed to engage and educate young hunters, and the holiday antlerless season focused on strategic population control — contributed



Boone Bishop took a white-tailed buck in McCurtain County.

PROVIDED BY THE BALGATE

Figure 1: Harvest Totals 2004-Current

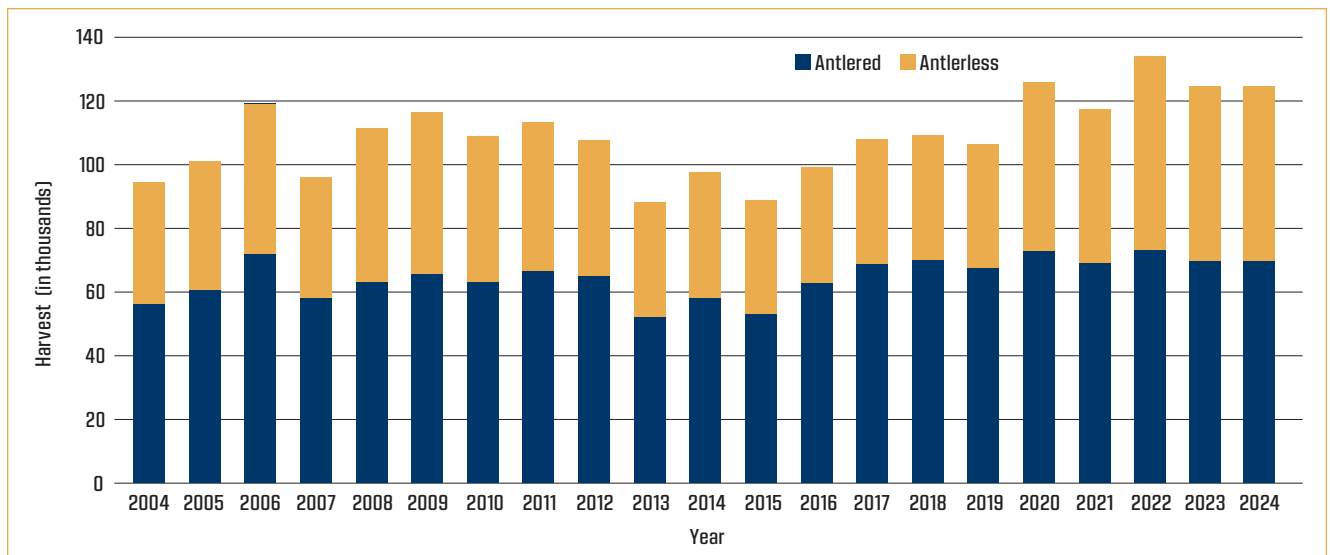




Table 1: Harvest by County, Sex, and Method

County	Archery		Gun		Muzzleloader		Total
	Antlerless	Antlered	Antlerless	Antlered	Antlerless	Antlered	
Adair	170	160	399	303	53	166	1,251
Alfalfa	131	177	428	407	35	39	1,217
Atoka	377	361	668	722	82	179	2,389
Beaver	13	33	95	251	8	21	421
Beckham	149	169	644	667	52	55	1,736
Blaine	62	109	305	456	21	19	972
Bryan	256	262	521	473	30	53	1,595
Caddo	225	344	698	965	53	73	2,358
Canadian	130	202	377	369	34	28	1,140
Carter	202	268	462	604	28	44	1,608
Cherokee	386	371	647	541	86	194	2,225
Choctaw	282	272	402	450	58	93	1,557
Cimarron	8	11	8	79		15	121
Cleveland	295	316	397	328	46	72	1,454
Coal	227	271	416	453	30	77	1,474
Comanche	128	158	242	290	33	37	888
Cotton	74	103	190	211	20	22	620
Craig	238	264	477	556	40	70	1,645
Creek	354	423	795	705	65	116	2,458
Custer	63	106	335	447	11	22	984
Delaware	355	399	562	476	81	149	2,022
Dewey	76	114	408	585	37	28	1,248
Ellis	52	103	293	467	15	36	966
Garfield	91	161	420	482	29	40	1,223
Garvin	226	295	544	646	42	70	1,823
Grady	258	337	716	764	71	69	2,215
Grant	190	248	792	660	59	62	2,011
Greer	56	82	246	279	16	30	709
Harmon	53	68	194	183	11	21	530
Harper	14	56	124	264	1	28	487
Haskell	168	157	389	325	47	109	1,195
Hughes	222	260	441	596	37	106	1,662
Jackson	133	155	260	320	19	31	918
Jefferson	158	221	329	314	22	53	1,097
Johnston	144	204	347	413	14	51	1,173
Kay	140	180	499	538	35	43	1,435
Kingfisher	119	173	464	412	16	39	1,223
Kiowa	91	118	238	318	14	32	811
Latimer	132	149	164	207	26	112	790
Le Flore	298	296	561	471	99	189	1,914
Lincoln	346	352	1,011	879	69	87	2,744
Logan	390	448	762	636	48	82	2,366
Love	130	147	192	254	9	13	745
Major	83	155	384	513	23	40	1,198
Marshall	82	87	104	144	5	9	431
Mayes	299	305	559	482	62	114	1,821
McClain	192	221	344	380	25	34	1,196
McCurtain	554	408	930	723	136	259	3,010
McIntosh	167	155	283	308	29	67	1,009
Murray	75	141	175	274	15	19	699
Muskogee	214	235	376	413	29	69	1,336
Noble	136	181	561	576	47	53	1,554
Nowata	198	189	518	596	34	54	1,589
Okfuskee	137	185	336	398	34	51	1,141
Oklahoma	424	521	423	396	26	33	1,823
Okmulgee	176	225	395	407	33	80	1,316
Osage	567	687	1,535	1,687	111	152	4,739
Ottawa	208	270	447	423	44	91	1,483
Pawnee	261	248	817	625	55	84	2,090
Payne	324	383	888	752	47	60	2,454
Pittsburg	463	493	714	737	96	279	2,782
Pontotoc	299	392	637	664	59	117	2,168
Pottawatomie	393	438	722	767	78	120	2,518
Pushmataha	469	419	656	594	101	212	2,451
Roger Mills	70	143	538	630	32	49	1,462
Rogers	580	565	800	724	76	97	2,842
Seminole	216	259	527	526	44	97	1,669
Sequoyah	239	264	563	482	70	191	1,809
Stephens	213	332	485	538	22	55	1,645
Texas	5	12	10	96		6	129
Tillman	123	168	249	290	25	15	870
Tulsa	281	304	306	270	20	32	1,213
Wagoner	333	327	540	433	48	75	1,756
Washington	209	220	460	520	31	39	1,479
Washita	44	65	260	302	14	19	704
Woods	79	149	346	517	22	48	1,161
Woodward	101	159	334	559	17	39	1,209
<b>County Total</b>	<b>15,826</b>	<b>18,408</b>	<b>35,684</b>	<b>37,512</b>	<b>3,112</b>	<b>5,634</b>	<b>116,176</b>
<b>OLAP Total</b>	<b>433</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>820</b>
<b>WMA Total</b>	<b>1,873</b>	<b>1,676</b>	<b>2,010</b>	<b>1,762</b>	<b>807</b>	<b>660</b>	<b>8,788</b>
<b>Tribal Total</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>846</b>	<b>815</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>2,591</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>18,465</b>	<b>20,804</b>	<b>38,540</b>	<b>40,089</b>	<b>4,010</b>	<b>6,467</b>	<b>128,375</b>



a combined harvest total of 79,008 deer. These seasons continue to be the most productive periods for deer hunting in the state, thanks to their accessibility and broad participation among hunters of all experience levels.

The muzzleloader season, which spans nine days and appeals to those who prefer traditional black powder firearms, also proved fruitful. Hunters using this method harvested 10,580 deer. Meanwhile, archery season, which offers the longest hunting window and a more solitary, challenging experience, yielded a significant total of 38,787 deer. This reflects both the growing number of bowhunters in the state and the effectiveness of archery as a method of harvest when practiced with skill and patience.

Together, these seasonal breakdowns highlight the diverse range of hunting opportunities available in Oklahoma and emphasize the contributions of all methods in achieving a balanced, sustainable harvest across the state.

**Figure 2** presents success rates by hunting method. **Figure 3** illustrates each method's proportional contribution to the total harvest.

Oklahoma distinguishes itself among landlocked states with an impressive range of ecological diversity that few others can match. Spanning from the lush, swampy pine forests of the southeastern corner to the windswept, sagebrush-dotted shortgrass prairies of the northwest, the state's varied landscapes create a mosaic of habitats that support a wide array of wildlife. For deer hunters, this means an equally diverse set of hunting experiences — from stalking white-tailed deer through dense bottomlands to glassing open plains for deer movement at long range.

This rich variety in terrain directly influences deer distribution and hunting opportunities across the state. Habitat type, food availability, climate, and land use all contribute to variations in local deer populations, which in turn affect harvest rates from one county to the next.

Furthermore, access to public hunting lands, including but not limited to Oklahoma's wildlife management areas (WMAs), also plays a significant role in shaping hunting success.

To provide a clearer picture of how

deer harvests differ by region, **Table 1** presents county-level harvest totals, specifically excluding deer taken on public lands such as WMAs. This focus on private-land harvest data offers a more localized perspective on deer abundance and hunting pressure.

The top-three counties by total deer harvest during the 2024-25 season were:

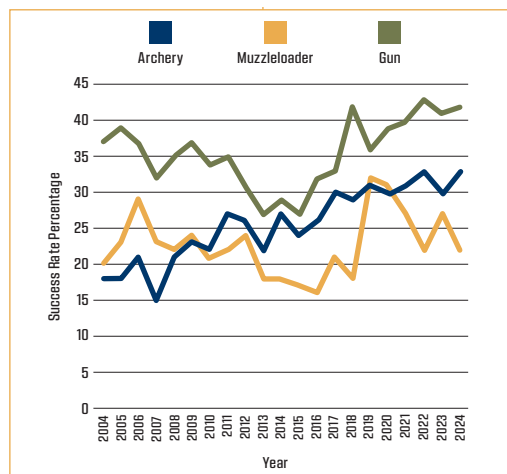
- Osage County, leading with a total of 4,739 deer harvested, continuing its long-standing reputation as one of the state's premier deer hunting areas.
- McCurtain County, yielding 3,010 deer, a testament to the productivity of south-eastern Oklahoma's forested habitats.
- Rogers County, with 2,842 deer, which reflects both a strong local deer population and active hunter participation.

### PUBLIC LAND CONTRIBUTION TO DEER HARVEST

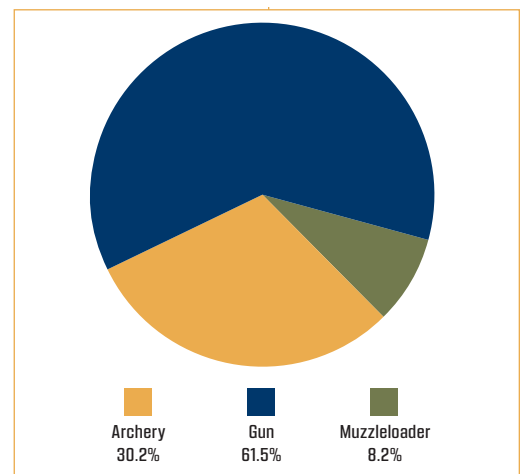
Although lands managed by the ODWC — including WMAs and other public properties — make up only about 3% of Oklahoma's total land area, their contribution to the state's overall deer harvest is significantly greater than their size might suggest. These public lands serve as vital access points for hunt-



**Figure 2: Hunter Success Rates 2004-Current**



**Figure 3: Harvest by Method 2024-25**





ers who may not have private land available, and they are managed with a focus on habitat quality, wildlife conservation, and hunter opportunity.

Despite their relatively limited footprint, WMAs and other ODWC-managed properties accounted for an impressive 6.9% of the total statewide deer harvest during the 2024–25 season. This disproportionately high contribution

highlights the effectiveness of public land management strategies and the value these areas provide to Oklahoma’s hunting community.

Many of these lands feature diverse habitats, active wildlife management practices such as prescribed burns or food plot development, and

regulated hunting pressure, all of which contribute to their productivity. In addition, the accessibility of these areas helps ensure that hunting remains an inclusive and equitable outdoor pursuit, regardless of land ownership.

Comprehensive data on deer harvests from public lands are presented in **Table 2**, offering a closer look at the performance of individual WMAs and illustrating the important role these public resources play in the state’s broader wildlife management goals.

## ARCHERY SEASON OVERVIEW

Archery hunters again demonstrated strong performance during the 2024-25 deer season, harvesting 38,787 deer. Although this number did not surpass recent record-setting years, it remains a significant contribution to the overall harvest and continues to reflect the growing presence and impact of bowhunters in Oklahoma’s hunting community.

Importantly, archery hunters maintained a meaningful role in population management



Table 2: WMA Harvest by Sex and Method

WMA Name	Archery		Gun		Muzzleloader		Total
	Antlerless	Antlered	Antlerless	Antlered	Antlerless	Antlered	
Arcadia Lake WMA	32	12	2	0	0	2	48
Altus-Lugert WMA	24	25	0	5	14	9	77
Arbuckle Springs WMA	14	20	4	8	0	0	46
Arkansas River Coe	1	3	4	2	0	1	11
Atoka PHA	2	5	10	12	6	4	39
Atoka WMA	18	17	13	4	0	3	55
Bamberger WMA	0	1	1	2	0	0	4
Barren Fork WMA	0	0	4	4	0	0	8
Beaver River (McFarland Unit)	1	1	1	8	0	1	12
Beaver River WMA	4	6	1	11	4	2	28
Beavers Bend Sp (Golf Course)	1	2	1	2	0	0	6
Black Kettle WMA	21	25	153	143	38	11	391
Blue River Public Hunting & Fishing Area	19	17	6	7	0	0	49
Broken Bow WMA	5	3	4	6	2	3	23
Burtschi PFA	4	4	1	1	0	2	12
Candy Creek WMA	14	10	0	2	0	1	27
Canton WMA	48	25	9	42	25	4	153
Canton WRP	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
Cherokee WMA (GMA Portion)	27	34	11	17	1	0	90
Cherokee WMA (PHA Portion)	16	23	4	30	21	29	123
Chickasaw National Recreation Area	38	21	23	22	7	8	119
Cimarron Bluff WMA	1	2	0	0	0	1	4
Cimarron Hills WMA	2	2	1	0	0	0	5
Cookson WMA	31	29	5	8	1	0	74
Cooper WMA	4	0	0	40	1	2	47
Copan Coe Parks	5	4	5	3	1	0	18
Copan WMA	20	30	32	44	8	5	139
Cross Timbers WMA	40	63	14	4	0	0	121
Deep Fork NWR	11	21	2	2	19	8	63
Deep Fork WMA	7	11	26	24	11	13	92
Dewey County WMA	3	2	1	0	1	1	8
Drummond Flats WMA	7	6	0	0	0	0	13
Ellis County WMA	7	5	7	25	6	3	53
Eufaula WMA	40	51	48	41	18	17	215
Fobb Bottoms WMA	7	3	13	13	3	0	39
Fort Cobb State Park	0	1	2	2	3	0	8
Fort Cobb WMA	23	20	9	7	13	7	79
Fort Gibson Coe	27	22	6	7	6	2	70
Fort Gibson Waterfowl Refuge	0	0	0	0	19	13	32
Fort Gibson WMA	161	92	27	88	50	36	454
Fort Sill	59	46	59	44	42	19	269
Fort Supply WMA	23	17	7	23	10	1	81
Four Canyon Preserve	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Ft. Gibson WRP	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
Gary Sherrer WMA (Bolen Hollow)	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
Gist WMA	1	0	0	0	0	0	1



WMA Name	Archery		Gun		Muzzleloader		Total
	Antlerless	Antlered	Antlerless	Antlered	Antlered	Antlered	
Grady Co. WMA	1	1	0	5	0	0	7
Grassy Slough WMA	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Great Salt Plains State Park	7	3	2	1	0	0	13
Gruber (CGTC)	17	14	13	59	52	47	202
Hackberry Flat WMA	1	6	0	1	2	9	19
Heyburn Coe	0	1	5	1	3	1	11
Heyburn WMA	10	17	24	15	3	7	76
Hickory Creek WMA	5	6	10	10	2	3	36
Honobia WMA	15	18	47	31	12	30	153
Hugo Lake Coe	22	10	23	8	3	1	67
Hugo WMA	35	31	54	38	16	17	191
Hulah WMA	28	31	79	103	24	14	279
James Collins WMA	28	39	6	11	0	0	84
Jap Beaver PFA	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
John Dahl WMA (Osage)	0	0	6	5	1	2	14
Kaw Lake Coe	22	26	29	22	7	9	115
Kaw WMA	45	45	169	93	45	33	430
Keystone Coe	35	19	21	7	1	1	84
Keystone WMA	64	41	70	27	19	14	235
Lake Thunderbird State Park	59	43	0	0	0	0	102
Lexington WMA	32	32	43	4	22	36	169
Little River NWR	9	6	25	9	0	0	49
Love Valley WMA	3	2	37	27	4	3	76
Lower Illinois River WMA	1	0	5	0	0	0	6
Major County WMA	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
McAlester Army Ammunition Plant	73	72	7	0	0	0	152
McClellan-Kerr WMA	19	17	27	20	4	12	99
McCurtain Co. WA	6	4	12	21	0	3	46
McGee Creek WMA	8	22	0	4	0	0	34
Mountain Park WMA	14	5	0	0	12	5	36
Neosho WMA	11	10	0	2	0	2	25
Okmulgee WMA (GMA Portion)	4	5	9	10	1	0	29
Okmulgee WMA (PHA Portion)	6	4	3	2	2	5	22
Oologah Lake Coe	30	18	46	25	9	5	133
Oologah WMA	61	41	101	60	25	8	296
Optima National Wildlife Refuge	0	0	0	3	0	0	3
Optima WMA	5	5	3	10	0	1	24
Osage WMA - Rock Creek	1	4	2	11	5	3	26
Osage WMA - Western Wall	21	26	2	0	0	0	49
Ouachita WMA (Cucumber Creek)	1	2	1	1	1	1	7
Ouachita WMA (McCurtain Unit)	11	14	32	20	12	27	116
Ouachita WMA LeFlore	13	7	38	40	16	20	134
Ozark Plateau NWR	0	2	1	0	0	0	3
Ozark Plateau WMA	1	0	1	2	1	0	5
Packsaddle WMA	2	7	10	63	6	4	92
Pine Creek Coe	0	0	4	1	1	0	6
Pine Creek WMA	8	3	15	14	5	4	49
Pontotoc Ridge Preserve	0	0	19	0	0	0	19
Pushmataha WMA	23	44	16	13	1	8	105
Red Slough WMA	31	30	1	0	0	0	62
Rita Blanca WMA	0	0	0	1	1	0	2
Salt Plains National Wildlife Refuge	1	3	55	21	21	4	105
Salt Plains NWR Wilderness Area	0	1	10	4	4	1	20
Sandhills WMA	3	9	0	0	0	2	14
Sandy Sanders WMA	2	15	1	5	9	4	36
Sans Bois WMA	4	5	7	3	1	5	25
Schultz WMA	1	0	0	1	0	0	2
Sequoyah NWR	8	11	0	0	31	5	55
Sequoyah NWR (Refuge Island)	1	4	0	0	4	0	9
Sequoyah Resort Park	8	2	0	0	14	7	31
Skiatook Coe	5	4	5	5	1	1	21
Skiatook WMA	7	3	33	19	1	2	65
Sparrow Hawk WMA	2	1	2	1	0	0	6
Spavinaw WMA (GMA Portion)	27	17	12	18	2	3	79
Spavinaw WMA (PHA Portion)	0	2	9	7	2	9	29
Stringtown WMA	0	2	3	2	1	4	12
Tenkiller Coe	12	7	18	7	1	5	50
Tenkiller-B-Cabin WMA	1	3	3	1	1	2	11
Texoma Coe	38	37	42	24	5	8	154
Texoma Coe (Burns Run)	10	5	1	3	0	0	19
Texoma Coe (Lakeside)	17	8	5	2	0	0	32
Texoma/Washita Arm WMA	8	7	10	12	0	0	37
Three Rivers WMA	35	20	111	60	31	39	296
Tishomingo National Wildlife Refuge	0	7	31	16	0	0	54
Tishomingo WMA	4	4	7	9	1	0	25
USDA Grazinglands RL	2	0	24	6	0	0	32
Vanderwork PFA	0	2	0	2	2	2	8
Verdigris River Coe	19	9	1	0	1	0	30
Washita NWR	0	0	11	2	0	0	13
Waurika Lake Coe	8	8	4	0	0	0	20
Waurika WMA	65	45	5	0	4	3	122
Webbers Fall WMA	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Wichita Mts NWR	3	4	1	1	1	0	10
Wister WMA	21	12	55	25	20	10	143
Wister WRP	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Yourman WMA	3	2	5	2	0	1	13
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1,873</b>	<b>1,676</b>	<b>2,010</b>	<b>1,762</b>	<b>807</b>	<b>660</b>	<b>8,788</b>



efforts. Antlerless deer made up 47% of the total archery harvest, underscoring a continued commitment to balanced herd dynamics. This emphasis on harvesting does is a key aspect of sustainable deer management, helping to regulate population growth and maintain healthy habitat conditions across the state.

Participation in archery season remained strong, with an estimated 109,830 hunters taking part — the highest number recorded since 2021, according to data from ODWC’s annual Game Harvest Survey (GHS). The GHS is a scientifically designed, long-standing monitoring effort to track hunter activity and harvest outcomes across all seasons and methods.

The archery season, offering the longest continuous window for deer hunting, ran uninterrupted from Oct. 1 through Jan. 15, giving hunters over three months of opportunity. The season’s bag limit allowed for the harvest of up to six deer, with no more than two antlered deer, providing flexibility while still aligning

with overall management goals.

To offer additional insight, **Figure 4** illustrates long-term trends in archery harvest and hunter participation, highlighting how the season has evolved over time. **Figure 5** breaks down the archery harvest by week, offering a closer look at activity peaks and seasonal patterns in deer movement and hunter success.

Figure 4: Archery Hunters and Harvest 2004-Current

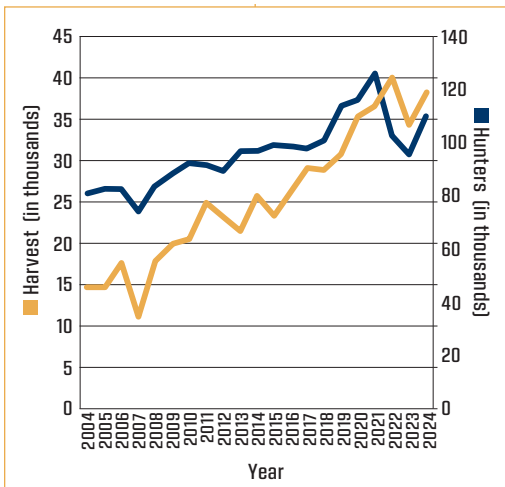
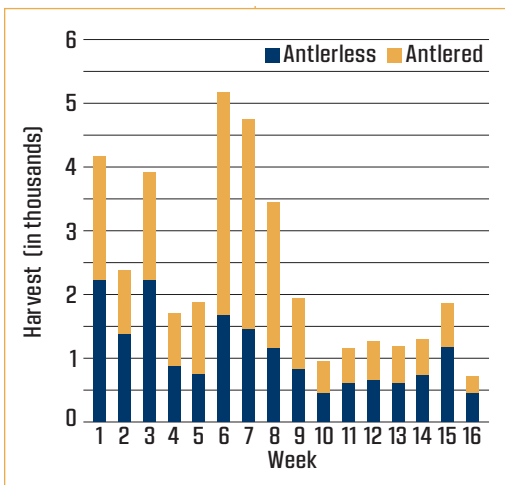


Figure 5: 2024-25 Archery Harvest by Week



## MUZZLELOADER SEASON HIGHLIGHTS

The 2024-25 muzzleloader deer season in Oklahoma spanned nine days, from Oct. 26 through Nov. 3. This season appeals to hunters who enjoy the unique challenge of using black powder firearms, and it continues to play a key role in the state’s overall deer management strategy.

Hunters were allowed to harvest up to four deer, with regulations limiting the take to no more than one antlered deer. To further support population control and ensure ecological balance, enhanced bag limits were implemented in several designated antlerless deer zones. These measures were intended to encourage increased harvest of does in areas with higher deer densities. The boundaries and specific regulations for these zones are illustrated in **Figure 11**.

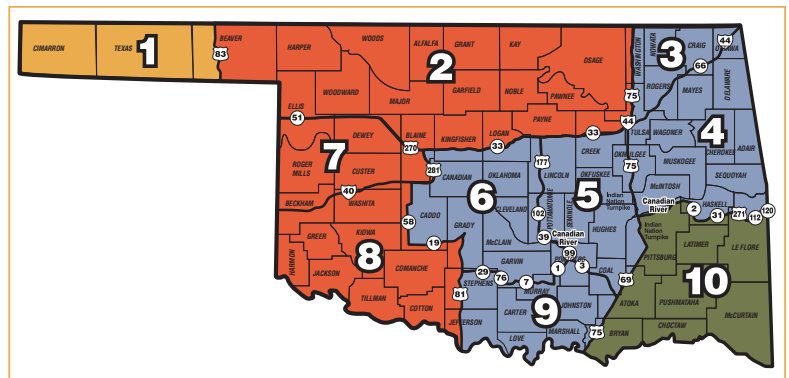
Compared to previous years, participation and harvest figures showed some fluctuation. According to the GHS, 70,677 hunters participated in the muzzleloader season. These hunters collectively harvested 10,580 deer.

To provide additional insight into hunter activity and harvest trends, **Figure 6** presents a daily breakdown of deer harvested throughout muzzleloader season. The data help identify peak harvest days and can inform future management decisions. **Figure 7** offers a historical perspective, charting muzzleloader harvest trends dating to 2004, allowing for long-term comparisons and analysis of participation patterns and harvest success over time.

## OVERVIEW OF DEER GUN SEASON

Oklahoma’s 16-day deer gun season continues to be a highlight of the hunting calendar. Last year, from Nov. 23 to Dec. 8, hunters were allowed to take up to four deer, with a restriction of one antlered deer, consistent with previous regulations.

Figure 11: Deer Antlerless Zones



The combined gun seasons saw hunters harvest 79,008 deer, with antlerless deer making up 40% of the total. In addition, the youth deer gun season resulted in 4,736 deer harvested, while the holiday antlerless deer gun season added another 10,057 deer to the overall harvest.

Detailed daily harvest data and long-term trends are illustrated in **Figure 8** and **Figure 9**, and **Figure 10** tracks the harvest history of the holiday antlerless season since 2015.

## ASSESSING DEER AGE STRUCTURE

To effectively monitor the age composition of Oklahoma's deer herds, ODWC relies on a variety of data sources that provide insight into the biological structure of the harvested population. These sources include voluntary participants in the Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP), a cooperative program designed to assist landowners and managers in achieving habitat and deer management goals. Additional age data are collected through local meat processors, taxidermists, ODWC-controlled hunts, and public submissions through the department's "Age My Deer" online tool — an accessible platform that allows hunters to submit photos and information to help determine the age of their harvested deer.

This multi-source approach provides a broad and representative sampling of deer from across the state, allowing wildlife biologists to evaluate the age distribution and overall condition of antlered and antlerless segments of the herd. Understanding the age structure is critical for assessing herd

health, identifying management needs, and ensuring the sustainability of the deer population over time.

The information gathered is analyzed to track trends in herd maturity and to evaluate the effectiveness of current harvest strategies, particularly in promoting a balanced age structure with sufficient numbers of older, mature deer. These insights help guide future policy

Figure 6: 2024 Muzzleloader Season Harvest by Day

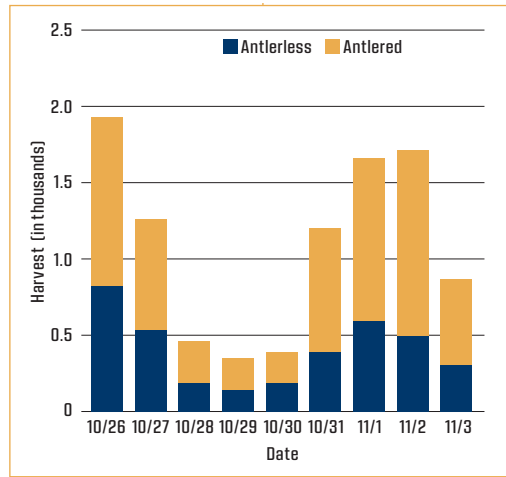


Figure 7: Muzzleloader Hunters and Harvest 2004-Current

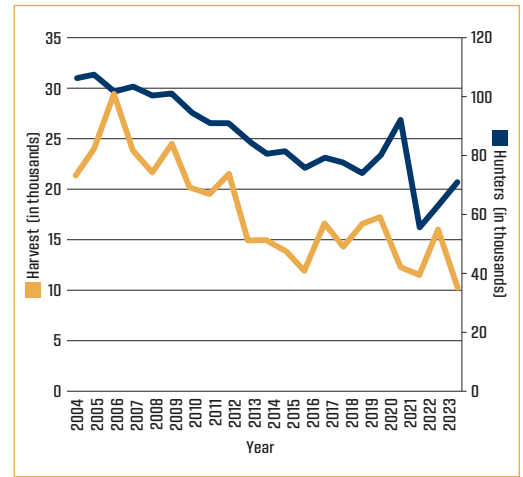


Figure 8: 2023 Gun Season Harvest by Day

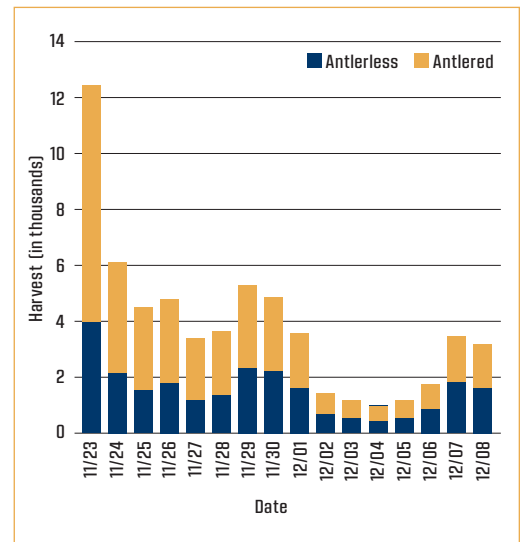


Figure 9: Gun Hunters and Harvest 2004-Current

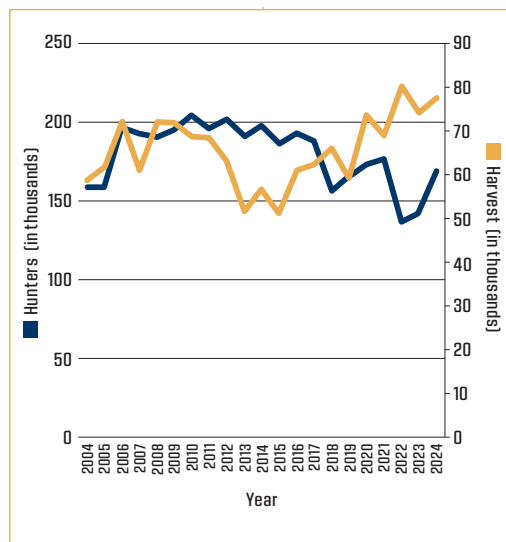
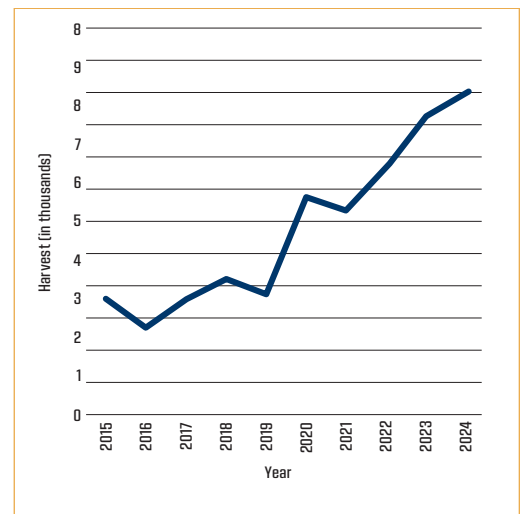


Figure 10: Holiday Antlerless Deer Gun Season 2015-Current





decisions and harvest recommendations.

**Figure 12** and **Figure 13** illustrate the age breakdown of antlerless and antlered deer, respectively, harvested during the 2024-25 season. These figures provide a visual summary of the distribution across different age classes and offer valuable context for understanding the demographic makeup of Oklahoma's deer herd.

### MULE DEER

Oklahoma's varied landscapes support a wide range of wildlife, and for deer hunters heading west, that includes the chance to pursue mule deer. These animals are scattered across the westernmost counties of the state, and locating one can be a real challenge. During the 2024-25 season, hunters harvested 209 mule deer — a decrease from the previous year.

In response to varying mule deer populations, ODWC has launched a groundbreaking research initiative. Using GPS collars and partnering with university researchers, managers are aiming to better understand mule deer behavior, fawn survival and movement in Oklahoma. Stay tuned for updates.

Mule deer harvest numbers are shown in **Table 3**.

### ELK SEASON HIGHLIGHTS

Oklahoma's elk populations continue to show steady growth, both in terms of overall herd

size and the geographic range they occupy. While the most substantial concentrations of elk remain in well-established strongholds, such as areas in the southwestern part of the state, sightings and successful harvests are now being reported in counties where elk presence was once rare or even historically absent. This expansion reflects the species' adaptability and the success of ongoing habitat management and conservation efforts.

Elk hunting opportunities in Oklahoma are structured to ensure sustainable harvest while providing a unique hunting experience. Statewide elk hunting is permitted on private lands, provided hunters obtain written consent from the landowner, a requirement that helps manage elk-human conflicts and protects landowner rights. In addition to private-land opportunities, the department offers drawings for controlled hunts, which take place on select public lands and are designed to carefully regulate hunting pressure and maintain healthy elk populations.

During the 2024-25 season, hunters harvested a total of 812 elk statewide. The majority of the harvest occurred in the Southwest Zone, which includes Kiowa, Comanche and Caddo counties — areas known for having the most established elk herds and consistent hunting opportunities. But the presence of elk in new areas of the state underscores the species' ongoing range expansion and highlights the importance of monitoring efforts.

For a more detailed look at elk harvest data, including county-level breakdowns, sex of harvested animals, and harvest method (e.g., archery, muzzleloader or firearm), see **Table**

**4**. This summary provides valuable insight into the distribution and dynamics of elk hunting across Oklahoma, supporting data-driven wildlife management decisions.

### PRONGHORN SEASON SUMMARY

Oklahoma's remarkable ecological diversity not only supports abundant deer and elk populations but also sustains a marginal population of pronghorn (*Antilocapra*


For a recap of the 2024-25 big game seasons and some thoughts about this year's hunting prospects, tune in at 8:30 a.m. Sept. 21 2025, on the OETA network. To watch scores of other "Outdoor Oklahoma" episodes on the show's YouTube page, scan this code. 

Figure 12: Doe Age at Harvest 2024-25

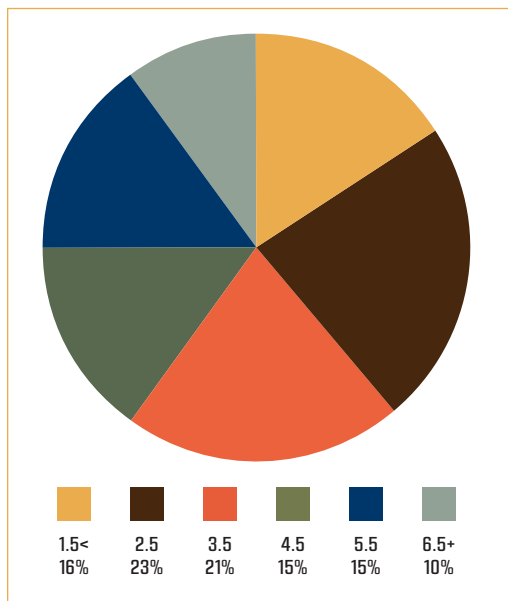
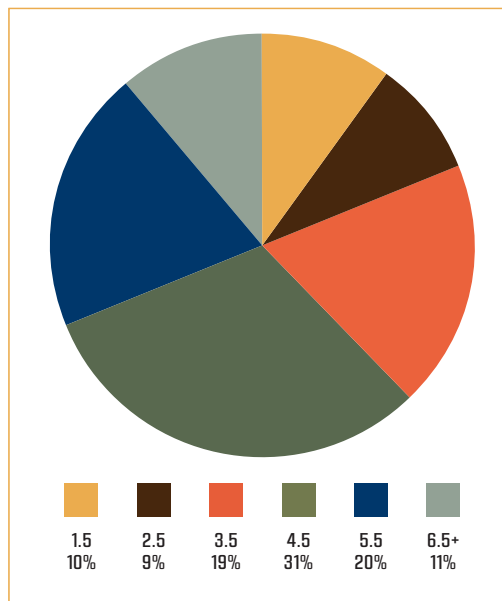


Figure 13: Buck Age at Harvest 2024-25



**Table 3: Mule Deer Harvest by County, Sex, and Method**

County	Archery		Gun		Muzzleloader		Total
	Antlerless	Antlered	Antlerless	Antlered	Antlerless	Antlered	
Beaver	4	6	2	46	1	4	63
Cimarron	8	3	0	56	0	10	77
Ellis	0	2	0	7	0	0	9
Harper	0	2	0	8	0	4	14
Roger Mills	0	0	0	3	0	0	3
Texas	1	3	0	35	0	1	40
Woodward	0	0	0	3	0	0	3
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>209</b>

*americana*), a species typically associated with the expansive grasslands of the western United States. In Oklahoma, pronghorn are primarily found in the wide-open rangelands of the Panhandle, which is the easternmost edge of their native range. Their presence here reflects the resilience of the species and the importance of maintaining open prairie ecosystems.

Due to the limited size and ecological sensitivity of Oklahoma’s pronghorn population, harvest opportunities are highly regulated to ensure the species remains sustainable within the state. Hunting is permitted through a three-pronged management system: over-the-counter archery permits for those seeking a challenging, low-impact method of take; controlled hunt drawings administered by ODWC, which allocate a small number of tags to applicants selected at random; and landowner-issued permits, which allow private landowners within designated pronghorn zones to participate directly in managing localized populations.

During the 2024-25 season, hunters harvested 89 pronghorns in the northwestern areas of the state. While modest in number, this harvest aligns with long-term management goals and reflects the careful balancing act between providing hunting opportunity and preserving a stable, regionally unique population of this iconic plains species.

**Table 5** offers a detailed breakdown of pronghorn harvest data, categorized by county, hunting method, and sex, providing insight into the spatial and demographic dynamics of pronghorn hunting in Oklahoma.

### CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE (CWD) UPDATE

The 2024-25 big game hunting season marked the second consecutive year in which hunters in Oklahoma navigated new challenges following the detection of chron-



STEPHEN OFSTHUN

**Table 5: Pronghorn Harvest by County, Method, and Sex**

County	Archery		Gun		Total
	Cow	Bull	Cow	Bull	
Cimarron	5	12	20	19	56
Texas	1	11	12	9	33
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>89</b>

**Table 4: Elk Harvest by County, Sex, and Method**

County	Archery		Gun		Muzzleloader		Total
	Cow	Bull	Cow	Bull	Cow	Bull	
Adair	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
Beckham	0	2	2	0	0	0	4
Bryan	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Caddo	0	3	25	16	0	0	44
Carter	0	4	0	0	0	0	4
Cherokee	2	1	2	2	0	0	7
Cimarron	0	12	3	15	4	9	43
Coal	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Comanche	28	25	364	151	7	4	579
Dewey	0	4	0	0	0	0	4
Ellis	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Grady	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Greer	0	0	0	3	0	0	3
Johnston	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
Kiowa	2	1	60	41	0	0	104
Muskogee	0	1	0	6	0	0	7
Noble	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Texas	0	1	0	1	0	1	3
Washita	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>457</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>812</b>



ic wasting disease (CWD) within the state's native wild deer populations. Initially identified in Texas County, and shortly thereafter confirmed in Woodward County, these developments prompted immediate concern among wildlife managers and the hunting community alike, given the serious implications CWD poses for deer health and population sustainability.

In response to this threat, ODWC implemented a series of additional regulations focused primarily on the northwestern region of the state, where CWD detections were concentrated. These regulations centered on restricting the movement of deer carcasses — a critical pathway for the potential spread of the prion disease — to reduce the risk of transmission to unaffected areas. Hunters in the affected counties were required to strictly adhere to specific carcass transportation guidelines, including prohibitions on transporting certain parts of harvested deer outside designated zones, thereby helping to contain and slow the spread of infectious material.

To further support ongoing disease monitoring and early detection efforts, ODWC established a network of voluntary CWD testing sites, with five freezer drop-off locations strategically placed within Selective Surveillance Areas (SSAs). These sites provided convenient options for hunters to

submit samples for CWD testing. During the 2024-25 season, several hunters took advantage of this opportunity, submitting samples that were all ultimately confirmed not detected for CWD, offering cautious optimism about the disease's current prevalence in these areas.

Looking ahead, the carcass movement restrictions and testing programs are set to continue in SSAs for the 2025-26 season, reflecting a proactive and adaptive approach aimed at safeguarding the health and sustainability of Oklahoma's deer herds. These efforts, combined with hunter cooperation and ongoing scientific monitoring, are essential components in managing this serious wildlife health issue.

## CONCLUSIONS

As I reflect on this report, one message remains consistent: Oklahoma's deer hunting community is thriving. Hunters are increasingly embracing their role as active managers of the deer population, particularly through sustained efforts to harvest appropriate numbers of antlerless deer. For the fifth consecutive year, the state met its management objective for antlerless harvest, supporting healthy and balanced deer populations.

Additionally, the average age of harvested bucks continues to indicate that hunters are adopting management strategies such as the "Hunters in the Know ... Let Young Bucks Grow" philosophy. The quality of Oklahoma's deer herds has improved markedly, with bucks now regularly featured in prominent hunting publications — a remarkable shift from times when simply encountering deer tracks was noteworthy. These achievements are largely the result of education and voluntary stewardship rather than increased regulation.

Looking ahead, challenges such as urban expansion, disease, overpopulation, and a declining hunting population will require ongoing attention. However, Oklahoma hunters have historically demonstrated resilience and a commitment to responsible wildlife management.

To those preparing for the 2025-26 season, consider mentoring new hunters and sharing knowledge. Remember, every decision made in the field impacts the health and sustainability of the local deer population.

Best wishes for a successful and enjoyable hunting season. 🍀



Mason and Blaine Matray contributed to antlerless deer harvest in Pittsburg County.

PROVIDED ON THE TAILGATE

# HUNTERS TAKE 77 BLACK BEARS DURING 2024 SEASONS

BY MATT HENSLEY, WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST

Black bear hunters had a great hunting season in 2024, taking a total of 77 (49 male and 28 female) bears, nine fewer than the year before.

Archery hunters took 74 black bears, while muzzleloader hunters bagged three bears in the bear hunting zone that includes all or portions of 12 counties in southeastern Oklahoma.

Choctaw Nation wildlife authorities conducted bear check-in for tribal members, accounting for seven (all archery) of the total 77 bears harvested.

The 2024 season was the first year that lifetime license holders were exempt from the purchase of a bear license. Of the 77 bears harvested, 44 were checked in by lifetime license holders. According to the cementum age analysis on premolars collected at check-in, the average age of bears harvested in 2024 was observed to be about 3.5 years old.

In a testament to Oklahoma being a popular bear hunting destination, hunters from six other states took a black bear last year: 14 from Texas, one from South Dakota, one from California, four from Louisiana, one from Mississippi, and one from Kansas. Oklahoma hunters took 55 bears.

Bear hunters can expect this fall's season to be similar to last year's. Hunters who hunt over bait may find themselves competing with a good mast crop during the upcoming fall season. However, if predictions of extremely hot and dry late-summer weather are correct, a shortage of natural soft-mast food sources could lead to an increase in preseason bait site activity and consequently drive up harvest numbers in 2025.


Wildlife biologists offer these tips for increasing your chances of taking a black bear:

- Locate an area with fresh bear sign and stay there; you might have to sit all day or hunt multiple days.
- Start hunting as early in the season as possible.

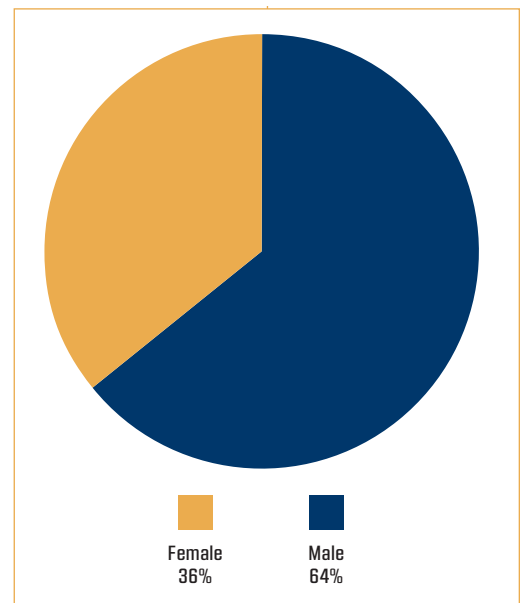
- Stay weather-aware. Cold and wet conditions make bears less active.
- If the weather is hot, consider hunting near a water source.
- Bears will return to whatever food source is helping them gain the most weight. Acorns, especially from white oaks, are preferred by bears in non-bait areas.
- Start scouting for hunting spots in September.

All hunters wanting to pursue a black bear must buy either an archery or muzzleloader bear license before the opening dates of each season unless exempt. Archery bear season dates are defined in statute, as running from Oct. 1 until the third Sunday in October. In 2025, archery bear season will close at last legal shooting light on Oct. 19. Archery bear season has no harvest quota.

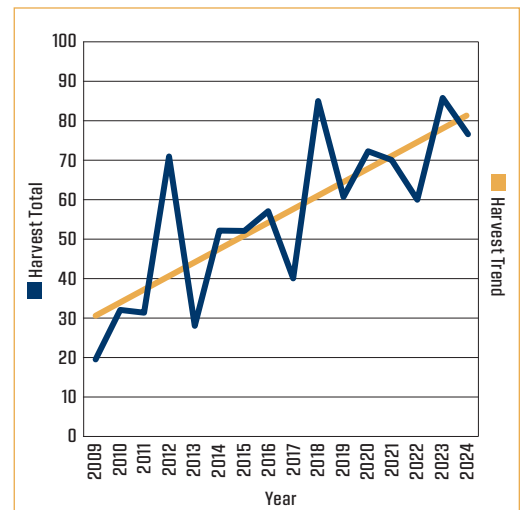
Muzzleloader bear season will open Oct. 25 and run through Nov. 2 or until the quota of 20 bears is reached. Before hunting, muzzleloader hunters must call for the latest bear quota information at 1-(888) 901-3256.

For more on black bear hunting, consult the Oklahoma Fishing and Hunting Regulations online, in the Go Outdoors Oklahoma mobile app for Apple and Android, or in print free at license dealers statewide. 

2024 Bear Harvest Male/Female %



2009–2024 Bear Harvest Trend



## 2024 Oklahoma Bear Harvest

County	Archery		Muzzleloader		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
LeFlore	25	18	1	1	45
Latimer	9	2	0	0	11
Pushmataha	8	4	1	0	13
McCurtain	3	3	0	0	6
Pittsburg	2	0	0	0	2
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>77</b>





# Conservation

## Fun Outdoors!

Create your own backyard volcano! Get an empty plastic water bottle and use sand or clay to build your "mountain" around the standing bottle. Pour baking soda and red paint into the container in the volcano. Add some water and a drop of dishwashing liquid, then stir. When you are ready for your volcano to erupt, add a little vinegar. Baking soda and vinegar create a rapid chemical reaction, releasing water, salt and carbon dioxide, and driving gas bubbles upward to create simulated lava.

## Hunting Tip

Dove hunting season opens Sept. 1 in Oklahoma. If you are 17 or younger and you will be going dove hunting, you won't need to register for HIP (Harvest Information Program) certification. But if you will be hunting waterfowl later this year, you do need to register for the HIP program. HIP certification involves answering a survey about your hunting practices and harvests, which provides data for biologists to best manage migratory bird conservation. HIP certification is free for anyone at [license.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com](http://license.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com).

## Fishing Tip

Fall brings cold fronts, and water bodies begin cooling off. One tactic that can yield fishing success is to try your luck in the early evening along rocky banks or riprap. This is because the rocks hold heat from the sunshine of the day, and fish might be drawn to that heat source as the water temperature drops.

# for Kids!

## Word Search: Creatures of the Night

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

Find and circle these things you might encounter after sunset in Oklahoma.

- |                |         |          |
|----------------|---------|----------|
| Owl            | Bat     | Coyote   |
| Fox            | Cricket | Firefly  |
| Moth           | Raccoon | Opossum  |
| Whip Poor Will | Beaver  | Nightjar |



MARIA PERKINS/RPS 2025

## COOL FACTS About Owls:



- Not all owls hoot. Barn owls make hissing sounds, the eastern screech-owl whinnies like a horse, and saw-whet owls sound like a whetstone sharpening a saw.
- North America is home to 19 species of owls.
- Their tube-shaped eyes are completely immobile, providing binocular vision that fully focuses on prey and boosts depth perception.
- Owls can rotate their necks 270 degrees. A blood-pooling system collects blood to power the brain and eyes when neck movement cuts off circulation.
- Owl pellets are the undigested parts of its prey, such as hair or bones, which are regurgitated through the beak. Students often dissect them to find out what different owls eat.
- Owls are known as silent fliers. Broad wings easily allow quiet gliding, and special flight feathers dampen the sound of whooshing air.
- Barn owls eat up to 1,000 mice each year.
- The northern hawk owl can detect — primarily by sight — a vole to eat up to a half-mile away.
- A group of owls is called a parliament. This originates from C.S. Lewis' description of a meeting of owls in "The Chronicles of Narnia."

## Color a Critter: Great Horned Owl



HTTPS://IMAGEMAGICK.ORG



MARY PHILLIPS/RPS 2020



DEBBIE PECK/RPS 2018



# ODWC'S SHOOTING RANGE PROJECTS LEAD NATION IN PROVIDING MORE PUBLIC ACCESS



DARRIN HILL/ODWC

*The new shooting range at Kaw WMA opened in 2023 with two rifle ranges, a pistol range, and an archery range.*

Since 2015, the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC) has undertaken significant efforts to enhance public shooting opportunities across the state. Through a combination of new range construction and extensive renovations and expansions on wildlife management areas (WMAs), ODWC is ensuring hunters and recreational and competitive shooters have safe, accessible places to enhance their skills.

With federal funding assistance through the Wildlife Restoration Program and its Public Target Range subaccount, ODWC has completed nine range projects since 2017, with more than a dozen additional sites set for upgrades or new development through 2029 and beyond.

Amanda Thomas, shooting range coordinator for ODWC, said all of the projects, both completed and planned, reflect ODWC's commitment to meeting a growing demand for public shooting access in Oklahoma and across the nation.

"These ranges play a vital role in supporting Oklahoma's hunters, as well as recreational and competitive shooters, and we're proud to be making these resources available to more Oklahomans than ever before."

Each new and renovated facility will include covered metal shooting stations with benches and tables, target stands, side berms, backstops, ADA access, fenc-

ing, gates, and parking areas. Depending on the site, additional features may include restrooms and ranges for long-distance rifle shooting beyond 100 yards, pistol, archery and/or shotgun shooting.

“Thanks to the Public Target Range program, we’re able to recover up to 90% of planning and construction costs. That allows us to stretch our dollars and make sure that whether you’re in the Panhandle, eastern Oklahoma, or anywhere in between, you have access to a quality public shooting facility.”

In the past two years, new shooting ranges have opened at Packsaddle, Kaw and Atoka WMAs. Another new range is set to open later in 2025 at Copan WMA.

“We’re aiming to wrap up construction at Copan WMA just in time to deliver a big Christmas present to the public,” Thomas said.

Also planned for completion in 2025 are renovations at Lexington and Optima WMAs.

Whether a range site is being renovated, expanded, or newly built, most projects must go through environmental assessment, engineering, then construction. 🍷



The rifle range at Atoka WMA offers targets at up to 100 yards.

HEATHER DEL MORAL/ODWC

## COMPLETED PROJECTS

Location	Type	Completion Year
Cherokee WMA	Renovation/Expansion	2017
Lexington WMA	Renovation/Expansion	2017
Pushmataha WMA	Renovation/Expansion	2019
Beaver WMA	Renovation/Expansion	2019
Okmulgee WMA	Renovation/Expansion	2021
James Collins WMA	Renovation/Expansion	2021
Packsaddle WMA	New Construction	2023
Kaw WMA	New Construction	2023
Atoka WMA	New Construction	2024

## FUTURE PROJECTS

Location	Type	Environmental Clearance	Engineering	Construction
		Year(s)	Year(s)	Year(s)
Pushmataha WMA	Expansion	N/A	2025	2025-2026
James Collins WMA	Expansion	N/A	N/A	2025-2026
Beaver WMA	Renovation/Expansion	N/A	2024-2025	2025-2026
Texoma-Washita WMA	Renovation/Expansion	2024-2025	2026	2026-2027
Hickory Creek WMA	Renovation/Expansion	2024-2025	2026	2026-2027
Optima WMA	Renovation	2022-2023	2024-2025	2025
Fort Supply WMA	Renovation/Expansion	2023-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027
Canton WMA	Renovation/Expansion	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
Copan WMA	New	2019-2021	2024-2025	2025
Sandy Sanders WMA	New	2024-2025	2026	2026-2027
Fort Gibson WMA	New	2023-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027
Hulah WMA	New	2024-2025	2026	2027-2028
Keystone WMA	New	2025-2026	2027	2028-2029
Waurika WMA	New	2024-2025	2026	2027-2028
Lexington WMA	Renovation/Expansion	N/A	2024-2025	2025
Cherokee WMA	Renovation/Expansion	N/A	2025-2026	2026-2027





# MISSION: MULEYS

## KNOWLEDGE OF MULE DEER GETTING LIFT FROM RESEARCH

THE STACCATO CLAPPING OF SPINNING ROTORS BECAME **STEADILY LOUDER**, SIGNALING TEAM MEMBERS TO EXPECT THE ARRIVAL OF **ANOTHER STUDY SUBJECT...**

BY DON P. BROWN, COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATION SPECIALIST

**A**nxious eyes scanned the horizon to locate the tiny black speck that slowly grew into the shape of a helicopter approaching the team's research site. Hanging 20 feet below the chopper in a sling was an orange tarp wrapped around a special cargo: an Oklahoma mule deer.

This scene played out scores of times during the winter months of 2024 and 2025 in western Oklahoma and the Panhandle as part of the first comprehensive scientific study of the state's mule deer population.

The live cargo is gently lowered to the ground as research team members rush in to carry the animal to the processing area, where team members stand ready. The deer is already hooded to reduce stress, and its legs are bound together to keep them calm.

Mule deer are an understudied species in Oklahoma with unknown population dynamics. Several years ago, biologists estimated about 2,000 mule deer reside in western Oklahoma, which is the farthest east the species is found. They are found in pockets now, mostly on private property.

Marcus Thibodeau, Wildlife Biologist for the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC), said the state saw a need to take a deep dive into assessing the mule deer population. Little data exist on mule deer in Oklahoma, aside from hunting harvest records.

"We don't know what great mule deer habitat looks like; we don't know the biggest limiting factors," he said. "Learning these things will help us manage the resource better and encourage growth in the population."

Hunter interest in harvesting mule deer has been growing in recent years. Oklahoma hunters harvested 209 mule deer last year.

"With harvest starting to rise, we want to make sure we are serving the resource to full potential, whether through regulations or habitat management."

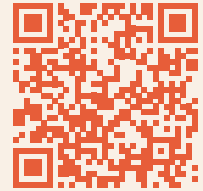
The mule deer research team is composed of faculty and graduate students from the Oklahoma State University Ferguson College of Agriculture and the Caeser Kieburg Wildlife Research Institute at Texas A&M University-Kingsville.

Field research began in February 2024 and will wrap up in 2026. A final report is expected in summer 2027.

The team is involved in capturing deer in late winter and summer. In winter, adult does

## WATCH A CAPTURE

Scan the QR code to see what a mule deer capture by helicopter looks like!



ODWC Wildlife Biologist Marcus Thibodeau and OSU doctoral student Molly Koeck are seen with a newborn radio-collared mule deer fawn.



# TEAM MEMBERS SCRAMBLE AS THE HELICOPTER GENTLY PLACES A CAPTURED MULE DEER ON THE GROUND.



DON P. BROWN/ODWC



DON P. BROWN/ODWC

Team members carry a mule deer to a clearing away from the data collection site before the animal is released.



DON P. BROWN/ODWC

Team members make final checks before releasing a mule deer doe.





and bucks are captured using a helicopter crew that specializes in animal research. Biological samples collected including blood, feces, hair, tissue and saliva. Fat deposition is assessed using ultrasound to take measurements. Ultrasound is also used to check whether a doe is pregnant; if so, a special transmitter is placed in the doe that will signal researchers at the time of a birth.

The animals are weighed and measured. Then they receive ear tags and are fitted with a GPS/VHF collar so movement and survival can be monitored. And before being released, all captured deer get a patch of orange spray paint on their back so the helicopter crew won't recapture the same deer. And it all happens in 15 to 20 minutes.

The first round of captured mule deer in state history was reassuring because all the does looked really healthy, Thibodeau said.

"Of the 69 does caught in the first five days, we collected more data than what has ever been collected before on mule deer in Oklahoma history," he said.

During summer, mule deer movement patterns are followed. When a tagged female gives birth, the inserted transmitter with light and temperature sensors will activate to alert researchers. To allow for maternal bonding time, researchers wait a minimum of four hours before tracking down the mother deer by foot.



In the summer research season, two newborn mule deer fawns tagged, collared and ready to go.



The team quickly works to collect samples and place tracking devices on two mule deer does.





DON P. BROWN/DWIC

A researcher takes a blood sample from a mule deer doe.



DON P. BROWN/DWIC

An adult mule deer doe with ear tag and radio collar.



DON P. BROWN/DWIC

TAMU-Kingsville student Parker Triflettie prepares mule deer blood samples for later examination.



LEVI HEFFELINGER/TAMUK

Releasing a mule deer doe after data collection and radio tagging.



Locating the collared doe and the expelled transmitter is the first step in trying to find newborn fawns. Antennas are used to pick up signals and hone in on a radio collar.

When the doe is located, team members begin searching in a grid pattern to locate newborn fawns. When found, the fawns are hooded and biological samples are taken. A VHF collar is placed on the fawn that can communicate to the maternal doe's collar using Neolink technology similar to Bluetooth. After just 15 minutes, the fawns are released in the same location where they were encountered, and their survival is monitored through summer via the doe's collar.

The following winter, researchers will try to recapture deer from the previous year to assess any changes that might have occurred.

Doctoral students Molly Koeck of OSU and Calvin Ellis of TAMU Kingsville are the student leads on the research team, and both are no strangers to wildlife field research.

"It's extremely exciting to be on the team that initially collared any mule deer in the state. We actually collared the first fawns, does and bucks in the state of Oklahoma," Koeck said. "I'm pleasantly surprised by the technology we are using. We are able to get to birth sites within hours and get fawns collared."

"The information we provide will be invaluable in managing a population that determines the limit of the mule deer's range."

Ellis said the experience has "been super cool. It's really neat to be able to work with a lot of the private landowners as well as the agency on something that will hopefully see direct management applications come in the next few years."

Thibodeau said it has been interesting to get a feel for how many mule deer reside in western Oklahoma, and how they move on the landscape.

He said it vitally important for ODWC to partner with universities for research, "so we can use latest technology to study animals, and use that 'living science' of habitat management."

"The hardest but most rewarding part of this research is answering the unique questions that have never been asked before and watching the students conduct the project successfully," Thibodeau said.

"The way we manage wildlife is not the same as we did 10 years ago. It's always trying to get better." 🍷

Oklahoma's mule deer population evaluation project is supported by State Wildlife Grant F23AF01689.



Researchers prepare to weigh a mule deer doe in a sling.



And away she goes! With transmitters in place, this mule deer doe is all set to continue helping with research next spring.



# JUST WHAT DOES A WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST DO?

RESEARCH? YES.

DATA? YES.

BUT SO MUCH MORE



## BY JOHN REMPE, WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST

While I'm working in my job for the Wildlife Department, I'm frequently asked, "Are you a game warden?" I usually respond jokingly with, "No, I work for a living. I am actually a wildlife biologist for the state of Oklahoma and I can also answer your questions."

Most times this prompts the question, "What does a wildlife biologist do?"

What if I were to ask you the question, "What does an Oklahoma wildlife biologist do?" Would you picture an individual dressed in a white lab coat looking through a microscope? Or an individual sitting at a computer entering biological and statistical data?

Would you also picture an individual wearing firefighting gear, working a controlled burn that is part of a prescribed fire plan? Or maybe an individual flying in an airplane or sitting in a pickup looking out the window with binoculars to survey animal populations and animal distribution across the landscape?

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Rempe has devoted 28 years to ODWC, starting as an intern at Canton WMA before serving as a technician at Beaver WMA, where he was named Technician of the Year in 1999. He has been the wildlife biologist at Hulah WMA the past 20 years and now manages nearly 35,000 acres at Hulah, Copan and Osage WMAs. This year, he was honored as Wildlife Biologist of the Year.



ODWC's Wildlife Biologist for big game measures a set of antlers during the annual Rack Madness scoring event.

SMOKEY/SOLIS/ODWC





ODWC wildlife biologists record information about a turtle during a field survey.

If your answer was yes to any of these, then you are correct. But these are just a few examples of the vast responsibilities and tasks that an Oklahoma wildlife biologist handles.

When you look up the definition of a wildlife biologist, it says “a professional who studies wild animals and their interaction with their environment.”

The Human Resources staff at the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC) has considered the question and has separated the profession into 10 different types of Oklahoma wildlife biologists.

Here are those 10 types, with brief descriptions of what that biologist is in charge of and the unique job tasks and responsibilities assigned to them.

The number of biologists for each type currently employed by ODWC is shown in parentheses.

- **Wildlife Diversity Biologist (2):** Provides management and research recommendations and guidance regarding species of greatest conservation need. Also provides biological, ecological and taxonomic expertise regarding management and conservation actions benefiting rare and declining species. Conducts audio and visual wildlife surveys by day and night, and accurately observes, records and analyzes scientific data, and prepares and submits detailed reports.
- **Wetlands and Waterfowl/Migratory Birds Biologist (1):** Plans, develops and guides statewide management of migratory bird programs including waterfowl and other migratory game birds as well as plans, develops and permits wetland habitat projects. Works directly with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the international Central Flyway Council to direct research and regulations including bag limits and season dates within the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act framework.
- **Big Game Biologist (1):** Plans, develops and guides statewide management of big game programs focused on white-tailed deer, mule deer, elk and pronghorn. Manages collection of population and harvest data to develop and implement short- and long-range management needs across various habitats and species and formulates regulations including bag limits and season dates.
- **Upland Game Biologist (1):** Plans, develops and guides statewide management of upland game birds program and manages data collection to develop regulations and guidance including bag limits and season dates, provides hunting season forecasts and other outreach items to the public.

## WORK FOR WILDLIFE

Interested in applying for a position with the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation.



Current openings are listed on the ODWC website. To find out about open positions, scan the code above.

Want to learn more about the Wildlife Department and its mission and activities? Scan this code:





- **Research Biologist (1):** Develops, plans and conducts scientific research projects using currently approved resource management methodology, including accurately collecting and analyzing data, formulation of statistically sound conclusions, presenting findings to stakeholders and at technical meetings, and disseminating research through the peer-review publication process.
- **Oklahoma Land Access Program (OLAP) Biologist (1):** Develops and implements access program goals, objectives and habitat/hunt quality evaluation protocols for OLAP. Purchases and maintains signage, supplies and equipment, and conduct routine maintenance on properties. Develop program outreach materials and conducts landowner outreach and solicitation through direct mailings, online news releases, public meetings, door-to-door contacts and referral processes.
- **Private Lands Biologist (5):** Works extensively with private landowners, other partners, and interested public to provide technical guidance, wildlife and habitat management recommendations and plans, and interpret habitat management specifications and policies. Serves as agency representative or



SMOKEY SOULS/ODWC

*During a black bear survey, this ODWC Wildlife Biologist peeks out of a den.*



SMOKEY SOULS/ODWC

*An ODWC Wildlife Biologist scouts a recent addition to the program before placing signs for the public.*



liaison on one or more technical committees, organization, and/or special emphasis programs/projects.

- **Furbearer Biologist (1):** Plans, develops and guides statewide management of the agency fur bearing species program, manages data collection to develop regulations and guidance including bag limits and season dates, manages all mountain lion sighting reports including field investigations, confirmations, and necropsy of collected cats. In addition, manages all aspects of the state falconers permitting and regulatory process and ensures agency compliance with federal falconry regulations.
- **Threatened and Endangered Species (T&E) Biologist (1):** Assists in establishing project goals and participates in the development of the Wildlife Diversity section objectives. Administers the agency's Section 6 Grant Program and works with partners to develop and complete relevant Section 6 projects. Coordinates agency comments and official position letters in response to Federal Register notices related to threatened and endangered species.



JENA DONNELL/ODWC

And finally my favorite type:

- **Wildlife Management Area (WMA) Biologist (31):** Has primary responsibility for the management of and is the primary point of contact for the WMA(s) assigned to him or her. Proactively manages wildlife and native plant communities, and operates and maintains facilities, equipment, infrastructure and lands, including wetlands/wetland development units and shooting ranges within assigned WMA(s). Serves as burn boss for WMA prescribed burning program, Designs, implements and monitors agriculture, grazing, hay and/or timber leasing or harvest programs.

In addition to those responsibilities described

An ODWC Wildlife Biologist uses a net in a pond during a species inventory.



above, most of the positions require the biologist to prepare and submit annual project budgets including salaries, equipment, supplies, maintenance, etc. for assigned projects; supervise full-time and temporary employees; use GIS for data entry, management and analysis, and for monitoring, planning and reporting management activities and results; draft and review State Wildlife Grants and Wildlife Restoration Grant package components and opportunities. Wildlife biologists also help draft and review Oklahoma hunting rules and regulations.

Most importantly, biologists work with the public face-to-face, answering a wide variety of questions in a wide

variety of situations and venues, from interactions on the WMAs, to interactions in communities at the local gas stations or at one of ODWC's many outreach educational events.

You might have noticed from the descriptions above that some positions have only one person serving the entire state of Oklahoma. That makes it critical for all Oklahoma biologists to work together and assist each other to accomplish their respective job duties.

Across the state of Oklahoma, there are only 45 wildlife biologist positions within ODWC. They all have to meet specific requirements and require a wide range of knowledge.

So, what does a wildlife biologist do? It's a little more than just wearing a white lab coat. ♡



*A hunter chats with an ODWC Wildlife Biologist during a controlled hunt.*



# CHASING RAINBOWS



## CAN RAISING, STOCKING TROUT FIND SUCCESS IN OKLAHOMA?

BY DON P. BROWN, COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATION SPECIALIST

Going against the flow.

Swimming against the current.

Those are fitting ways to describe the task assigned to Colter Fluman, Fisheries Assistant Hatchery Manager at the Byron State Fish Hatchery for the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC).

The task was to accomplish something never tried before: starting from eggs and producing

stockable-size rainbow trout at an Oklahoma fish hatchery.

It was an idea that grew out of concerns about the rising costs for the Wildlife Department to maintain trout fisheries in the state.

"Prices have risen," Fluman said. "On a whim, the question was posed: Why can't we raise our own?"

"And can we even do it?"

### NOT A NATURAL FIT

The rainbow trout really doesn't belong here. The species is native to the cold streams west of the Continental Divide, but rainbows have been introduced in many areas nationwide.

Before 1958, Oklahoma anglers did not have the privilege of fishing for trout in the Sooner State. But that year, the Wildlife Department decided to increase angler opportunity and fishing diversity by stocking trout in the Lower Illinois River below



A close-up view of eyed rainbow trout eggs.





Lake Tenkiller dam, where the water was cold enough to allow trout to survive.

Now, catchable-size rainbow and brown trout are stocked year-round at two designated trout fishing areas: the Lower Illinois River and the Lower Mountain Fork River (LMFR) below Broken Bow Reservoir. At other seasonal sites across the state, catchable-size rainbow trout are trucked in and stocked during the winter months. In most Oklahoma waters, trout can only survive about six months of the year. Then the water becomes too warm for them to survive.

Trout truly are “bonus fish” in Oklahoma, a non-native species that offers angling action during the winter months when most native species are less active.

## DIVING IN

The project was green-lighted on short notice in fall 2023. But Oklahoma had no dedicated cold-water trout hatcheries, unlike its

neighbors in Missouri, Arkansas, Colorado and New Mexico. Even so, the Byron hatchery was the obvious site to attempt the trial project.

Of the state’s four fish hatcheries, Byron is the farthest north in the state and enjoys cooler weather for more days each year than the other sites.

It’s also the only hatchery that derives its water supply from pumped well water and artesian water. Trout won’t live if water temperature is 70 degrees or higher. But Byron’s well-water temperature is a constant 62 degrees year-round — cool enough to allow trout to survive.

*The Lower Mountain Fork River is the stocking site for all ODWC hatchery-raised trout because it offers the habitat to support the fishes’ growth.*



*After hatching, the alevin with yolk sacs still attached lie motionless on the bottom of a holding tank as they continue to develop.*





Rainbow trout eggs are kept in tall jars of oxygenated 62-degree water until they hatch. The white eggs in the jar won't hatch.

Byron is also the hatchery that handles most of the fish egg culturing for ODWC, which is done annually for hybrid striped bass and wall-eye/sauger.

The learning curve was steep for Fluman. He began researching how to raise trout, and he learned that rainbows are produced around the world. And while he said it's fairly easy to raise trout, there's a lot more man-hours involved compared to the species he's used to raising.

The process began in October 2023 when the Byron hatchery received about 30,000 fertilized trout eggs from the Erwin National Fish Hatchery in Tennessee. The eggs were held in incubation jars and required continuous oxygenation in water about 62 degrees. The eggs hatched about seven days after they arrived.

Once hatched, the alevin still with yolk sacs were poured into tanks containing well water. The alevin lay on the bottom without moving for several days as they developed. About two weeks after hatching, the alevin reach a point called "swim up" when they rise into the water column.

They are then given food powder to start, and as they grow, food pellets increase in size. At this point, the young trout are called fry.

"They grow very quickly in the first several weeks," Fluman said. This requires daily care from hatchery workers to keep tanks clean, feed, sample water, sort and divide fry numbers into new tanks when overcrowding occurs.

"It's a seven-day-a-week deal, because you know fish don't take the weekends off."

### SHARING THE SALMONIDS

As the fry began to outgrow the tank space at Byron, it was time to enlist help from other hatcheries. About 15,000 trout were sent to the Holdenville State Fish Hatchery in the first year.

It was midwinter when the fish were divided up, so the water temperature at the other





MICHAEL WILLIAMS/ODWC

ODWC hatchery-raised rainbow trout fry.



COLTER FILIMAN/ODWC

Once they absorb the yolk sac, the fry will swim up into the water column.



COLTER FILIMAN/ODWC

A feeding tray holding food pellets is suspended above a tank holding rainbow trout fingerlings at the Byron Hatchery.



hatchery was acceptable for holding the fish while they were grown.

Joe Williams, Fisheries Hatchery Manager at the Holdenville hatchery, said feeding and growing the trout was a straightforward process. In late January 2024,, Holdenville received about 15,000 fry from Byron.

Fluman said his goal was to grow the trout to a size of 4 to 6 inches long, and then stock

them into the LMFR, where the water is cool enough all year long for trout survival and where biologists have documented natural spawning of rainbow trout. The Lower Illinois River is not a viable stocking location for small trout, as there are too many predators in that ecosystem.

As water temperature approached 70 degrees at the Holdenville Hatchery, the

trout were pulled from the tanks and loaded onto a truck bound for McCurtain County. Williams said about 12,200 rainbow trout of 3 inches or longer were released into the LMFR on April 9, 2024. A similar number were delivered and stocked from the Byron Hatchery.

The trout project had shown great success in its first year. Now it was on to 2024-25.

## SEEMINGLY SWIMMINGLY

Fluman said the second round of trout production began in October 2024. The success of the previous year was inarguable. Fish mortality was quite low: starting with 30,000 eggs, and 25,870 fish were stocked in the LMFR.

And ODWC's fisheries biologists and technicians proved that trout eggs and fry could be hatched and grown in Oklahoma hatcheries.

"We are having a blast



Trout production has proven successful at the Byron State Fish Hatchery. These tanks are full of growing fingerlings.



ODWC fisheries technicians use siphon tubes during daily cleaning of tanks holding trout alevin.



up here learning to do things. We've had great success. You see how well they are doing, and it's kind of fun to see."

But the trout process still needs some fine-tuning, he said.

After going through similar processes this year, the Byron, Holdenville and Durant hatcheries produced about 30,000 trout and released them into the LMFR in March and April. Those fish averaged 3.5 inches long.

Since starting the project, biologists have included a way to evaluate the effectiveness of homegrown trout stocking.

When the young trout reached stocking size, hatchery workers "marked" them in harmless ways so they can be identified as Oklahoma-raised trout. The first year, the trout's adipose fin was cut off. The second year, the trout's right pelvic fin was cut off. The marked fish will provide insights into survival as the trout grow and potentially become similar in size.

Fisheries Biologist Mike Williams is following the project's results. In May, just a month after stocking, he conducted electrofishing surveys at the stocking sites on the LMFR. The Oklahoma-raised trout were now averaging about 5 inches long.

"They doubled in size (and weight) from when we stocked them in March." Clearly, it seems, some of the trout are surviving and growing at a fast pace.

And those fish are beginning to show up in angler's hands, too. "All the anglers talk about seeing them."

Surveys of LMFR anglers in recent months are hinting at increases in fishing pressure in the area.

Trout anglers asked for their opinions about the state raising and stocking trout seem to support the project's goal to enhance fishing opportunity and increase the number of trout in the LMFR while also helping to contain ODWC's expenses to import trout for stocking.

Trout anglers have also said that allowing young trout to acclimate and grow in the river creates a "more natural" stream and delivers a more meaningful trout fishing experience, Williams said.

ODWC's trout production effort is working so far. As surveys and data collection continue, Williams said it's possible the effort will continue into the future. ♡



MICHAEL WILLIAMS/ODWC

At 3 to 4 inches long, ODWC hatchery-raised trout are ready to be taken to the Lower Mountain Fork River for stocking.



PROVIDED

Anglers at the Lower Mountain Fork River are beginning to catch ODWC hatchery-raised rainbow trout, which can be identified by a clipped adipose fin or right pelvic fin.



# OUTDOOR STORE

license. [GoOutdoorsOklahoma.com](http://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.**



## 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

## 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



## 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



## 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 separately from other Outdoor Store items) — \$140.00

## YUKON LUNCHBOX COOLER

Keep your cool with an ODWC-logo lunchbox with four pockets and a welded thermal foil liner that is antimicrobial and leak-resistant. It will hold eight cans and is 12.5 inches long. — \$27

## RIVERSIDE DRY BAG

This handsome high-capacity dry bag sports the ODWC shield. Measuring 28 by 15 by 9 inches, it has four pockets and a rugged exterior shell. — \$80





## 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 \$41.60 (original or replacement) 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/wildlifetag](http://tinyurl.com/wildlifetag).



## OUTDOOR OKLAHOMA T-SHIRTS

Show that you support ODWC's magazine and TV show with these logo tees! These Bella unisex soft shirts are machine-washable and come in two designs: white with logo, and black with angler and logo. — \$25.

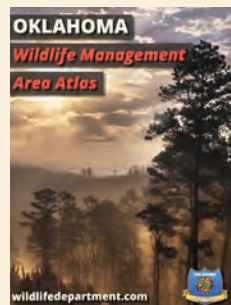
## ODWC LOGO WATER BOTTLE

Made of high-grade 18/8 (304) stainless steel, this ODWC-logo 32-ounce bottle is highly durable and corrosion-resistant. With copper plate insulation and double-wall vacuum seal, it keeps beverages cold for 24 hours or hot for up to 6 hours. Includes Sip 'n Chug Leakproof Lid. — \$27



## 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



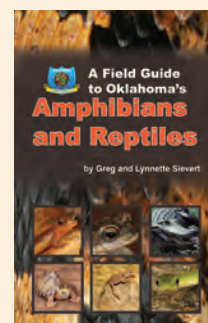
## OKLAHOMA WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA ATLAS

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

### 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. Your field guide purchase comes with a bonus one-year subscription to the award-winning *Outdoor Oklahoma* magazine. — \$20



## OKLAHOMA WATERFOWL HUNTING STAMP

Oklahoma "duck stamps" are always popular with collectors and hunters. While each year's stamp features a different handsome design sure to add appeal to any stamp collection, funds from stamp sales are used for many kinds of waterfowl management projects. 2025-26 stamp on sale in August. — \$21 or \$31



Give the Gift that keeps on Giving All Year Long!



## OUTDOOR OKLAHOMA MAGAZINE

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!

1 year — \$10, 2 years — \$18, 3 years — \$25

ORDER ONLINE:  
[www.wildlifedepartment.com/OutdoorOK/magazine](http://www.wildlifedepartment.com/OutdoorOK/magazine)

Order online at [license.GoOutdoorsOklahoma.com](http://license.GoOutdoorsOklahoma.com), then click "Shop."



# CICADA KILLER

BY LYDIA GEARHART, GAME WARDEN

The cicada killer (*Sphecius speciosus*) is a large wasp that can be recognized by its overall black or rusty color with yellow bands on the abdominal segments and orange-tinted wings. Adult cicada killers can be up to 2 inches long. Females are usually bigger than the males.

Eastern cicada killers are found east of the Rocky Mountains. These wasps are mostly solitary and do not sting unless provoked. Female cicada killers dig burrows in sandy areas with plenty of sunlight. The burrows are dug about 6

inches deep before they turn and extend the burrow another 6 inches or more. Their tunnels are usually branched into many different cells.

Males defend the female nests by flying around as a warning to unwanted visitors.

Males are incapable of stinging. They do have a pointy projection on the tip of the abdomen that acts like a false stinger. They will use their false stinger against their enemies in self-defense.

The adults feed mainly on flower nectar. But the cicada killer gets its name because it preys on cicadas. Once the female has dug a tunnel, it hunts for a cicada. First, the female will attack,

sting and paralyze a cicada. Then the female will drag the cicada or carry it in flight back to the burrow. The female will stock its nest with one or two cicadas in each cell.

After the cicada killer inserts a cicada into the burrow, the female cicada killer lays an egg and seals off the chamber. It takes 2-3 days for the egg to hatch. Once hatched, the larvae burrows into the cicada carcass. The larvae begin to eat the paralyzed but still-living cicada from the inside out. The cicada killers finish growing within a month. The cicada killers stay in the burrows until the next summer.

During the winter months, the larvae stay in the burrows because the weather is not suitable for them. Once the larvae has grown into an adult, it produces a protective cocoon for protection from harsh winter conditions. Once the summer heat arrives in June, cicada killers emerge from their burrows as adults. Males usually emerge before females and begin to establish territories. The females emerge from their burrows shortly after and go to work building their own burrows for their young.

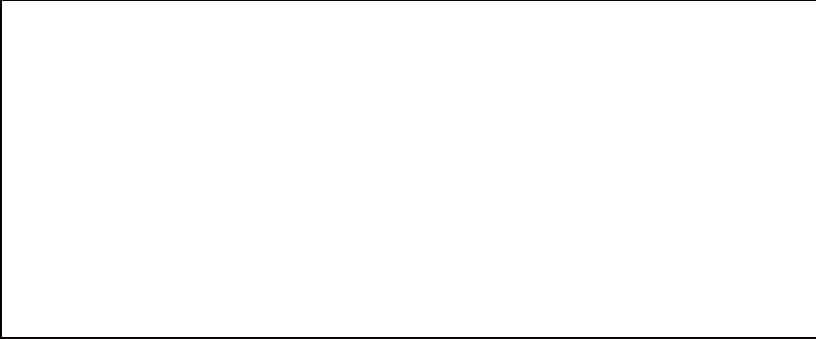
In Oklahoma, these wasps can be seen from June through September, often in residential areas of cities and towns.

Homeowners might think of these insects as pests because they sometimes disfigure lawns with their burrows. But this can help rainwater soak into the soil. ♡

*Males defend the female nests by flying around as a warning to unwanted visitors. Males are incapable of stinging. They do have a pointy projection on the tip of the abdomen that acts like a false stinger.*







A.G. ROSALES/PEXELS.COM CCO

Canada geese are a common sight in Outdoor Oklahoma, and waterfowlers have a special early opportunity to harvest these impressive giants of the sky. The state's resident Canada goose season is Sept. 13-22 this year, and hunters are allowed eight birds daily. Don't wait until Nov. 1 for the regular dark goose season; get your licenses and enjoy some goose hunting earlier without the icy water and frozen toes.

# Outdoor Oklahoma

