

# Outdoor Oklahoma

MARCH/APRIL 2019 – ONLY \$10 A YEAR

## In This Issue: 2019 Anglers' Guide

Re-creating Artifacts  
The More Things Change...

A PUBLICATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION



# Panoramas

An exciting new era began Jan. 7 for the Wildlife Department and for almost everyone who does business with the Department. That's when our state-of-the-art license management system went online. Many of us were here in the office in the wee hours of that Monday morning, including License Supervisor Mike Chrisman and technicians from the system's provider, to make sure everything launched smoothly.

And the transition has gone remarkably well. We've seen a few small snags, but these are being addressed as they happen.

The new state-of-the-art system is called Go Outdoors Oklahoma, and our customers can access the system through the "License" tab at the Department's website, [www.wildlifedepartment.com](http://www.wildlifedepartment.com). They can also download the free mobile application for their Apple or Android devices, which truly gives users all the benefits of the new system.

This is a major step forward compared to how the Department has interacted with customers for decades. Now, all of a customer's information will be together under a single customer ID number. With the customer ID, a sportsman can buy a license, check in a harvest, apply for draw hunts, and even enroll in an education course.

The new system is a customer-driven, user-friendly, one-stop shop. The users are the ones who log in and maintain their accounts. For the first time, a customer can enroll his or her licenses in auto-renew so that they don't find themselves with an expired license. And the mobile app showing your licenses is legal proof in the field in the event you are checked by a Game Warden.

Go Outdoors Oklahoma really allows us to better serve our customers with many new features and conveniences. For example, customers will be able to buy needed hunting or fishing licenses online or through the mobile app. But the system will offer License Activity Packages tailored to



your account, so that you will know which licenses are required for a specific activity. The user might click a link for the "Waterfowl Hunting Package." The new smart system will then add all of the needed items to the customer's cart. No more guessing about whether you should buy this or that. The new streamlined system is also easier to use by our license dealers statewide to sell licenses.

Customers can also access The Outdoor Store where hats, atlases, magazine subscriptions and other merchandise are sold.

In addition to License Activity Packages, other features include the ability to apply for lifetime licenses and commercial permits online; to purchase collector cards, featuring Oklahoma artwork, on which all of a person's licenses can be loaded; and to allow Game Wardens to check sportsmen's data in the field.

The new Go Outdoors Oklahoma system has been years in the making, from the initial decision to modernize our procedures to bidding out the system to actually going online. We have successfully imported records from more than 5 million sportsmen and sportswomen, who we can now communicate with on a regular basis. Our goal is to make buying a license as easy as possible.

We hope you will log on to the license system to check your account and then make use of all the different features that are now available to you. Giving our customers better service and convenience is what this is all about, and we couldn't be happier about it.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melinda Sturgess-Streich".

Melinda Sturgess-Streich  
Assistant Director of Administration and Finance



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*THIS PAGE: The wild turkey was a rare sight in Oklahoma during much of the 20th century. But reintroduction efforts primarily during the 1960s and '70s has resulted in an outstanding success story for wildlife conservation. A longtime Oklahoma turkey hunter shares his memories of how things have changed starting on page 40.*

*ON THE COVER: Any time you go fishing is a great time to introduce someone new to the sport or to take someone who hasn't been fishing in a while. We focus on building participation in one of America's favorite activities in our annual Anglers' Guide starting on page 16. (Courtesy of Take Me Fishing)*

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**CALL (800) 777-0019**



# Off the Beaten Path

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

## BREWSTERS HONORED WITH DSC'S CAPSTICK AWARD

Bill and Suzie Brewster were honored Jan. 19 with the Peter Hathaway Capstick Hunting Heritage Award at the annual Dallas Safari Club convention and expo.

The award honors people who have shown long-term support and commitment to the hunting heritage through various avenues such as education, humanitarian causes, hunting involvement and giving. The award pays tribute to the late Peter H. Capstick, whose love of hunting and respect for wildlife fueled his desire to promote a hunting legacy that ensured the conservation of our wildlife resources.

Since 2015, Bill Brewster has served as the District 3 representative on the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commission, the eight-member governing board of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation.

Wildlife Department Director J.D. Strong said, "No one has



done more to protect and introduce new people to our hunting heritage, whether in Oklahoma or abroad, than Bill and Suzie Brewster. It therefore makes abundant sense that this formidable team earned Dallas Safari Club's prestigious Capstick Award, and we are proud and fortunate to call them part of our ODWC team."

The Brewsters, who are married and live in rural Love County, set fine examples as stewards of the hunting heritage. Together, they have taken

hundreds of youths on first hunts from deer and turkey to doves and geese, and even took 10 people to Africa for their first time. They have successfully owned and managed ranches for wildlife conservation in Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico and Maryland, developing food plots, marshes and a 20-acre lake for habitat conservation. Both are extremely experienced hunters in their own right. ••✕

## FISHERIES HALL OF FAME INDUCTS ODWC VETERAN

Gene Gilliland of Norman was recently inducted into the American Fisheries Society's Fisheries Management Hall of Excellence. Currently employed with B.A.S.S. as its national conservation director, Gilliland spent 32 years with the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, retiring in 2013 as assistant chief of the Fisheries Division.

Hall of Excellence (HOE) inductees are selected for their significant contributions in fisheries management, research, administration, education or the promotion of fisheries resource conservation and protection. Gilliland is the 61st inductee for what is recognized as fisheries management's highest honor.

"Being inducted into the Hall of Excellence is a humbling honor, and I am very appreciative of this recognition," he said. "Many of the early inductees were men whose books I used in college. Others were my advisers and the mentors who guided my career. Still others are colleagues that I work with in my current position with B.A.S.S. I count many of them as close personal friends."

Gilliland was a research biologist and fisheries management supervisor earlier in his Wildlife Department career. He developed and evaluated black bass length limit regulations, formalized the



Gene Gilliland

Department's Florida largemouth bass stocking program and helped develop a statewide Black Bass Management Program. He published numerous manuscripts and became a leader in black bass management across the southeastern United States.

He has always been an avid angler, becoming a member of B.A.S.S. in 1969. His work as an agency-angler liaison was recognized in 2004 with

the AFS Excellence in Fisheries Public Outreach Award and by the Fisheries Management Section's Award of Excellence in 2005.

His research on improving survival of bass released following fishing tournaments led to his co-authoring the booklet "Keeping Bass Alive" with Dr. Hal Schramm, a fellow HOE inductee. This publication has become the defining document for modern tournament fish care.

Gilliland now oversees the activities of 47 B.A.S.S. Nation chapters, serves on numerous national boards and councils, including the Reservoir Fisheries Habitat Partnership, the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies, and the Sport Fishing and Boating Partnership Council. ••✕

(Bassmaster.com)



# GRAB YOUR ANTLERS, IT'S MADNESS TIME!

## ODWC'S FREE SCORING EVENT SET FOR MARCH 5

Ever wonder how that deer, elk, pronghorn or black bear you bagged might stack up against the best of the state's Cy Curtis Award winners? You'll have a chance to find out if you have your antlers, horns or skulls professionally scored during March Rack Madness!

For the third year, this free public scoring event is returning bigger and better than ever at the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation's headquarters, 1801 N. Lincoln Blvd. in Oklahoma City.

For the first time, prize drawings will be held for those who bring items for scoring. The grand prize will be an Oklahoma Lifetime Combination Hunting and Fishing License valued at \$775, provided by the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Foundation.

March Rack Madness will run from 1 to 8 p.m. March 5. Attendees will also find free informative seminars, food concessions, Operation Game Thief trailer, a free fish fry and great camaraderie among fellow sportsmen and sportswomen!

Scoring will be handled on a first-come, first-served basis. There is a two-item limit per person. Each person who brings items for scoring will be registered for the event, and will receive a free subscription to Outdoor Oklahoma, the official magazine of the Wildlife Department. Anyone bringing items will also receive one entry into the prize-drawing hopper. Prize drawings will be held each hour, with the grand prize drawing at 6 p.m. Winners must be present to claim prizes. Grand prize winner must be eligible to hold a lifetime license and will have an option to transfer the license to someone else who is eligible.

Walk-ins are welcome, but anyone with items to score must



*One of last year's March Rack Madness attendees discusses his monster buck with a Wildlife Department scorer.*

have a customer ID through the Go Outdoors Oklahoma license system at <https://license.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com>. Attendees are urged to pre-register through their online account, which could quicken the pace for scoring. To pre-register, log into your account and click "Events."

Free seminars will be offered: 1 p.m. – DIY Deer Rack Scoring; 3 p.m. – Deer Aging; 5 p.m. – Field Trophy Care.

Food trucks will set up beginning at noon. Those that have confirmed are Oh My Gogi, Coits and Phil Me Up Cheesesteaks.

Don't miss the "Wall of Shame" exhibit in the Operation Game Thief trailer. You'll see various wildlife stolen by poachers from the law-abiding sportsmen and sportswomen of the state. Game wardens will be on hand to chat with visitors.

The Wildlife Department will prepare a fish fry starting at 5 p.m., free for all attendees. The grand prize drawing will be at 6 p.m. And there will be other activities as well.

Of course, the centerpiece of the Madness is the scoring. A team of certified scorers will be working nonstop until 8 p.m. Those who arrive too late to have items scored will have an option to leave their items to be scored later.

To qualify, antlers must both be attached to the skull plate whether mounted or unmounted. In addition to white-tailed and mule deer antlers, scoring will also be available for elk antlers, antelope horns and bear skulls.

Hunters whose items meet the minimum required scores will be eligible to enter the Department's Cy Curtis Awards Program, which recognizes trophy Oklahoma mule deer, elk, antelope and black bear as well as the hunters who harvest them. The program began in 1972 and is named for a former Department wildlife biologist who is recognized as the person most responsible for the restoration of white-tailed deer populations in Oklahoma. ♦♦✕

**MARCH 5, 2019**

**MARCH RACK MADNESS**

ODWC Headquarters  
1801 N. Lincoln Blvd.  
Oklahoma City, OK 73105

March 5, 2019  
1 p.m. to 8 p.m.



# 2018 CREATIVE WRITING COMPETITION

## “DO I WANT TO GO HUNTING?”

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Each year, the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation and Oklahoma Station Chapter Safari Club International join to sponsor a creative writing competition for Oklahoma middle and high school students. A boy and a girl from two age divisions are selected winners. Students were required to write essays using the theme “Hunting: Sharing the Heritage” or “Archery: What I Like About Archery in the Schools and Bowhunting.” Winners in the age 15-17 category receive a guided antelope hunt in the Texas Panhandle, and winners in the 11-14 age category receive a hunting trip at the Chain Ranch and a scholarship to the Outdoor Texas Camp. In this issue, “Outdoor Oklahoma” honors junior category female winner Annie Brannon, 14, from Chandler High School.



### HUNTING: SHARING THE HERITAGE

By Annie Brannon

“Wake up, it’s time to go.” Confused thoughts entered my mind: Go where? I don’t want to go anywhere. Can’t I just sleep?



“Papa and your dad are getting ready. I have your coats in the kitchen.” Oh, right. Hunting. I had decided last night that hunting sounded like the greatest thing in the world, but right now, at 5 a.m., I was definitely not feeling that way. So, I went back to sleep, or tried to. I laid there in agonizing deliberation. Do I want to go hunting? Will I get in the way?

Finally, after what seemed like hours to a 10-year-old, I got up and went to my grandmother’s living room and curled up on her couch. I was hoping someone else would make the decision for me.

“Well look who’s bright-eyed and bushy tailed!” I heard Papa chuckle. My glasses were cold and askew in front of my half-closed eyes, and the only thing bushy was my hair.

“Are you coming?” Just the simple question gave me my answer. Fifteen minutes later, I was hit with a blast of cold air as the garage door opened, making me doubt

my choice once again, but not for long. I curled up in the front seat of my dad’s truck and started to feel excited on the short drive over to what my family calls the Fish Farm.

We walked over to my dad’s deer blind, and I did my best to stay out of the way while my grandpa helped dad get ready in the ground-level blind. I followed Papa along the curving tree line in the pre-dawn light, stifling many questions. I almost ran into my grandpa as he stopped and abruptly turned around to show me how to climb the tree blind safely. As I stepped into the little white box, I found that Papa had placed two buckets with pads on the lids to serve as our seats. He followed with our things and revealed his “secret” stash of snacks from one of his many pockets. We sat on our buckets and watched the opposite tree line, our breath rising in sparkling clouds.

Silently shivering, I stared at the trees, willing something, anything, to move. Papa handed me a blanket, rough and worn from staying in the blind all the time, and scanned the trees behind us before settling back to stare in front again.

I watched him now, losing interest in the statue-like trees, and took note of how comfortable he was. He fit there like gears in a clock. His eyes moved across the field, following a well-worked path. His cracked, tough hands held the gun loosely, but ready to fire at any moment. The posture of an experienced hunter was obvious as he sat there, completely relaxed, without a care in the world.

We didn’t kill a deer that day, but I didn’t mind. The memory will forever be with me. ••✕



# Game Bag

**A COLLECTION OF LETTERS TO THE WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT**  
*We'd like to hear from you! Send your letters to Outdoor Oklahoma Letters, P.O. Box 53465, Oklahoma City, OK 73152, or send e-mail to donald.brown@odwc.ok.gov.*

**Dear Wildlife Department,**

Congratulations on the building remodel! You did the right thing in using Oklahoma people in all aspects of the project. For that, as a lifelong Oklahoman and sportsman, I applaud you.

**Steve Grogan of Bartlesville, via email**

**Dear Outdoor Oklahoma,**

I enjoy reading the Oklahoma wildlife magazine. But I never see anything about wolves or coyotes.

As a teenager growing up on a cotton farm back in 1956 and '57 in eastern Muskogee County, near Webbers Falls, I would ride my bike to a country school (Neff School) each morning, and on my way I would go by and check my "wolf traps" I had set. I caught a few back then. I believe that was the best years of my life as a teenager.

**Bobby Lipe**

**Dear Wildlife Department,**

What a trip on my morning crew! Made a move and hit four big fish in 45 minutes with one being a TANK! Thank you to all the Game Wardens out there! I give away a trip every year to the Three-State Game Warden Convention, and my good friend Jason Badley won it and brought his son and his friends with him. Jason is a state Game Warden WAY out in Harper County by the Panhandle. Make sure to thank a Game Warden. Because they protect our resources, we get to have the great fisheries that our great state of Oklahoma provides for us! ... It's getting BETTER and BETTER!!

**Rusty Pritchard, via Facebook**



RUSTY PRITCHARD/FACEBOOK

**Dear Wildlife Department,**

From the briefing, to them showing us our hunt area, to them taking us out to hunt — a special thanks to Dan McDonald, his staff (at Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge) and the many employees from the Department of Wildlife Conservation. It was very professional, informative and well done. This group of people was outstanding and made us hunters feel welcome and wanted us to be successful. All of them did a great job and made many sacrifices coming from different parts of the state to assist us. Two gentlemen from the state helped me bone out my cow elk and pack it to the road. I cannot thank them enough. From the beginning to end, this was an example of the professional people who represent the Department of Wildlife Conservation. Everyone did a great job and needs a pat on the back for a job well done above and beyond. Thanks to all of you.

**Edward J. Burt, controlled elk hunt participant**

**Dear Director J.D. Strong,**

I am writing to you to express my sincere appreciation for your staff's assistance with The Last Bass fishing tournament. I would especially like to acknowledge Keith Thomas, Michael Hollie and David Bogner. Your staff was very helpful, knowledgeable, and I could count on their advice. Thank you for assisting us in having a great bass tournament this year.

**Jeff Saxton**

**Dear Director J.D. Strong,**

I wanted to let you know that we had a great time on my son's controlled hunt to Beaver River WMA. It was due, in large part, to your staff. Weston Storer, Cody Crisswell and Mike Baker were all very helpful. They fed us as the meeting, gave us great information and helped us get the deer ready to take home. Weston told us in the meeting that if we shot a deer far from the truck to let him know. That turned out to be a life-saver because we were about a mile from the truck. Weston also took the photo and it is one of my favorite pictures of Hayden. He smiled like that for the entire four-hour drive back home. Cody gave us multiple tips on how to store and prepare the meat. I always process my deer and have been doing it for a while, but he knew so much more than me, and he is a great teacher. He has a lot to offer others and is eager to share his knowledge. Weston and Cody even help me bread down the deer and get it in the cooler. It is very apparent that these guys are passionate about their jobs and were very good with the kids. I can't say enough good things about the way they handled everything.

After experiencing the youth controlled hunt, I believe it is a very important program. It allowed me to teach Hayden a lot about deer hunting, and it was a great environment. He learned some very good lessons that day, and I appreciate the opportunity the Wildlife Department and its staff gave us. It is a very special day that I will never forget. Please share this with anyone involved in these programs; they are greatly appreciated.

**Richard O. Starks**





# PANHANDLE STATE HOLDS GROUNDBREAKING FOR SHOOTING SPORTS FACILITY



**Supporters turn dirt during a groundbreaking. From left are Texas County Commissioner Jack Strain, Panhandle State Foundation President David Petty, Oklahoma A&M Regent Tucker Link, Oklahoma A&M Chairman Calvin Anthony, OPSU President Tim Faltyn, Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commissioner John Groendyke, Oklahoma A&M Regent Doug Burns, Wildlife Department Director J.D. Strong, Oklahoma A&M Regent Joe Hall, Chris Hinchey, OPSU Vice President of Outreach Ryan Blanton.**

Work is underway on a state-of-the-art shooting sports complex near Oklahoma Panhandle State University in Goodwell. The construction phase was kicked off with a recent groundbreaking ceremony attended by Oklahoma A&M Regents, OPSU staff and faculty, students, and representatives from the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation and OPSU Foundation.

OPSU President Tim Faltyn announced that the centerpiece building at the complex would be named the John D. Groendyke Wildlife Conservation Center, honoring the longtime member of the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commission who made a generous donation to cap a fundraising campaign for the building.

"The OPSU shooting sports complex would not be happening if it had not been for the tireless support and generosity of John D. Groendyke," Faltyn said.

"This range is going to teach people that this part of our heritage ... is something to be proud of, and it can make us all better if we use it right." The new complex will be a tool to educate about shooting and firearms but also to illustrate safe and responsible use.

OPSU recently added shooting sports teams — archery, rifle, shotgun and pistol — to its athletics lineup.

The Wildlife Department was able to leverage federal Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration funding to help with project costs. The Department will be able to use the complex for educating the public about safe firearms use, responsible hunting practices and more. The complex will also be open for use by student groups such as FFA and 4-H, and the community at large.

Groendyke is currently chairman of the Wildlife Conservation Commission and chairman of the board of Groendyke Transport, among the nation's largest motor carrier companies.

Wildlife Management Areas. Other renovations are now underway at Pushmataha and Beaver River WMAs.

Set for future renovation are shooting ranges at James Collins, Okmulgee, Canton, Fort Gibson, Fort Supply, Hickory Creek, Texoma-Washita Arm and Optima WMAs. And new shooting ranges are to be built at Atoka, Kaw, Copan, Hugo, Packsaddle and Sandy Sanders WMAs.

These and other similar projects are funded with grants from the federal Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program. Anglers, hunters and outdoors enthusiasts pay an excise tax when they buy goods related to outdoor activities. That tax revenue is distributed back to the individual states. So each time an Oklahoman buys a license or outdoors-related merchandise, he or she is supporting important conservation efforts such as installing boat ramps or increasing hunting access. \*\*X

*(Panhandle State Campus Communications assisted with this article.)*

His father was a 1931 alumnus of OPSU, then known as Panhandle Agricultural and Mechanical College. He said the shooting complex "will do great things for Oklahoma Panhandle State University, and it will do a lot of great things to support the hunting, fishing, archery shooting and all of the outdoor sports that the Wildlife Department, and a lot of the youth that are out here today, support."

The Wildlife Department is several years into a campaign to build or renovate existing shooting ranges on its public use areas across Oklahoma. Renovated ranges are open at Lexington and Cherokee



**Wildlife Conservation Commissioner John D. Groendyke speaks during the groundbreaking ceremony for Panhandle State University's shooting sports complex. The facility's building will be named in his honor to recognize his generous donation.**





# Game Warden's Journal

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



We'd hoped to be ringing in 2019 a little differently, but our work goes on. Game Warden Mike Baker, based in Beaver County, needs your help.

This white-tail buck was shot with a rifle sometime the last three days in December about a mile west of Turpin and 5.5 miles north. All of the meat was left but the antlers were removed.

Please contact Baker at (580) 651-9135 if you have any information for this investigation. Or you can remain anonymous and be eligible for a cash reward by calling Operation Game Thief at (800) 522-8039.



This trophy buck was illegally taken from the sportsmen and sportswomen of Oklahoma. Now, Game Warden Phillip Cottrill, based in Major County, needs your help.

At least four people participated in the event. The driver stayed in the truck while three individuals got out of truck to retrieve deer. The poachers were spooked by a man who was legally hunting on the farm. The suspects fled on foot.



The suspects' vehicle is believed to be a dark-colored pickup, probably a diesel, with a flatbed and cake box.

This poaching occurred the evening of Nov. 28, 2018. The buck was shot from the road. The location was southeast of Ames near the Major-Garfield county line.

If you have any information about this case, please contact Cottrill at (580) 227-0393. Or you can remain anonymous and call Operation Game Thief at (800) 522-8039. You could receive up to \$500. If you know, make the call!

Game Warden Ryan Walker, based in Osage County, needs your help. He is investigating an illegal disposal case on County Road 5101 south of Pawhuska. These animals were dumped sometime in the night Jan. 2-3. Two does had been shot and left unprocessed along with three other deer and a hog that were processed and dumped on the side of the road.

If you have any information that might help with this investigation, please call Walker at (918) 440-9880.



*(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.



# Outdoor Calendar

FOR NEW UPDATES TO THE OUTDOOR CALENDAR,  
PLEASE VISIT THE DEPARTMENT'S  
WEBSITE: [WWW.WILDLIFEDEPARTMENT.COM/CALENDAR.HTM](http://WWW.WILDLIFEDEPARTMENT.COM/CALENDAR.HTM)

## MARCH 2019

1-3	NatureWorks Art Show and Sale, Renaissance Tulsa Hotel & Convention Center, <a href="http://natureworks.org/art-show">natureworks.org/art-show</a> .
2	Oklahoma City free fishing day, no city permit required.
3	"Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, TBA, 8 a.m., OETA.
4	Crow hunting season closes.
5	March Rack Madness free public scoring event, 1-8 p.m., ODWC Headquarters, Oklahoma City.
7	Public hearings on Title 800 rule change proposals, 7 p.m., Oklahoma City and McAlester, <a href="http://www.wildlifedepartment.com/public-meeting">www.wildlifedepartment.com/public-meeting</a> .
8-9	Oklahoma Quail Forever state habitat meeting, <a href="http://oklahomaquailforever.org">oklahomaquailforever.org</a> .
10	"Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, TBA, 8 a.m., OETA.
15	Rabbit season closes.
16	Turkey Hunting 101, Canadian Valley Technology Center, El Reno, fee for course, (405) 262-2629.
17	"Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, Using Fire with Jack Waymire, 8 a.m., OETA.
19	Okla. Striped Bass Assn. meeting, 7 p.m., Zebco, Tulsa, (918) 639-8114.
23	Women in the Outdoors, Three Rivers Limbhanglers NWTF, Sapulpa, (918) 688-8097.
24	"Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, Elmer Thomas bass fishing, 8 a.m., OETA.
25	Okla. Wildlife Conservation Commission meeting, 9 a.m., Oklahoma City.
30	Conservation Order Light Goose Season closes.
30-31	Youth spring turkey hunting season (except SE area).
31	"Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, Early Spring Catfish, 8 a.m., OETA.

- **Ducks Unlimited** events set in Oklahoma County, March 1; Wagoner, March 9; Miami, Okla., March 23. Info: [www.ducks.org/events](http://www.ducks.org/events).
- **Friends of NRA** events set in Guymon, March 2; Weatherford, March 23; Ada, March 28. Info: [www.FriendsOfNRA.org](http://www.FriendsOfNRA.org).
- **National Wild Turkey Federation** events set in El Reno, March 1; Seminole, March 2; Tulsa, March 3; Poteau, March 7; Claremore, March 8; Dewey, March 8; Tulsa/Glenpool, March 9; Durant, March 9; Ada, March 9; Muskogee, March 14; Wilburton, March 15; Tahlequah, March 16; Wagoner, March 22; McAlester, March 23; Tishomingo, March 28; Pryor, March 28; Oklahoma City, March 29; Idabel, March 29; Duncan, March 30. Info: [www.nwtf.org/events](http://www.nwtf.org/events).

## APRIL 2019

6	Oklahoma City free fishing day, no city permit required. Spring turkey hunting season opens (except SE area).
7	"Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, Ponca City Fly Fisherman, 8 a.m., OETA.
9-11	OKSSSP state shoot
14	"Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, Using Fire with Jack Waymire, 8 a.m., OETA.
15	Entry deadline, Outdoor Oklahoma magazine Readers' Photo Showcase, <a href="http://tinyurl.com/EnterRPS">tinyurl.com/EnterRPS</a> .
16	Okla. Striped Bass Assn. meeting, 7 p.m., Zebco, Tulsa, (918) 639-8114.
20-21	Youth spring turkey hunting season (SE area).
21	"Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, Lake Lawtonka Survey, 8 a.m., OETA.
22	Spring turkey hunting season opens (SE area).
28	"Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, Early Spring Catfish, 8 a.m., OETA.

- **Friends of NRA** events set in Wilburton, April 13; Claremore, April 20. Info: [www.FriendsOfNRA.org](http://www.FriendsOfNRA.org).
- **Ducks Unlimited** events set in Ponca City, April 4; Tulsa, April 5. Info: [www.ducks.org/events](http://www.ducks.org/events).
- **National Wild Turkey Federation** events set in Woodward, April 5; Cushing, April 27. Info: [www.nwtf.org/events](http://www.nwtf.org/events).

**\*\* FOR HUNTING SEASON DATES, GO TO  
[WWW.WILDLIFEDEPARTMENT.COM/HUNTING/SEASONS](http://WWW.WILDLIFEDEPARTMENT.COM/HUNTING/SEASONS) \*\***



TERRY BRUNHOLTZ

## IT'S A SNAP TO ENTER YOUR SHOTS FOR 2019 READERS' PHOTO SHOWCASE ISSUE

Attention shutterbugs! Most of you have an awesome photo you've taken in Oklahoma's outdoors. How about having it published and admired by thousands of people?

That's what will happen if your photo is selected as one of the "best of the best" in Outdoor Oklahoma magazine's annual Readers' Photography Showcase competition. So have your camera ready just so you don't miss getting that special shot when nature offers up another spectacular sight.

The entry period is open now through April 15, 2019. Go to [www.tinyURL.com/EnterRPS](http://www.tinyURL.com/EnterRPS) and follow the instructions to enter your images.

Outdoor Oklahoma's July/August issue showcases photos of wildlife, landscapes, scenic and other outdoor imagery captured by sportsmen and wildlife enthusiasts from across the state. The "Readers' Photography Showcase" issue is always among the most popular each year!

Each participant may submit up to four original digital images. The photographer will be asked to rename the entries and add information about each image: photo description, location taken, photographer's name and hometown, and brief description of what you had to do to get the right shot. Photos must be in sharp focus, and image resolution should be at least 300 dpi (dots per inch) for magazine printing.

After the entry period closes, a panel of Outdoor Oklahoma editors and Wildlife Department staff members will select the "best of the best" to be published. So why not give us a shot — or your best four shots? Thanks for participating, and good luck! 🐾🌿

# APPLY BY **APRIL 12** FOR 21ST WILDLIFE YOUTH CAMP



KELLY ADAMS/ODWC

A week full of fun outdoor activities, conservation education and camaraderie is in store for up to 35 lucky teens selected to attend the 21st annual Wildlife Youth Camp. Applications are now being accepted for this summer's once-in-a-lifetime event.

"Campers will get a better understanding of wildlife and fisheries management and conservation law enforcement, while at the same time learning some fun outdoor activities," said Game Warden Capt. Wade Farrar, youth camp coordinator. "If you are interested in hunting, fishing or a career with the Wildlife Department, then this camp is for you."

The camp will be June 23-28 at the University of Oklahoma Biological Station at Lake Texoma. Game Wardens, wildlife and fisheries professionals, and dedicated hunters and anglers will be conducting the camp and supervising activities.

Activities will include archery, wildlife identification, rifle/shotgun shooting, fishing, ropes course, self-defense, wildlife law enforcement scenarios, wildlife and fisheries management education, and deer/turkey/waterfowl law enforcement techniques.

And thanks to the support of generous sponsors including the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, it's all free for the campers.

Applicants must be Oklahoma residents who will be 14 to 16 years old as of June 23, 2019. Prospective campers must fill out an application form and write a 75-word essay describing why they want to attend the camp, why they should be selected, and what they expect to learn. Also, they must furnish a letter of recommendation from someone other than a family member, and a recent photograph showing the applicant participating in an outdoor-related event or activity.

The application form is online at [www.wildlifedepartment.com/education/youthcamp.htm](http://www.wildlifedepartment.com/education/youthcamp.htm). The page also includes additional information about the camp and photos from previous years. Applications must be submitted by 4:30 p.m. April 12, 2019. ❖❖❖

*Campers wake up early on the first day for an eventful morning of guided striped bass fishing on Lake Texoma.*



JOE ALEXANDER/ODWC

*Archery is among the outdoor hands-on skills that youths get to experience at the Wildlife Youth Camp.*





Hunters harvested 85 black bears total for the 2018 seasons in Oklahoma, setting a new annual harvest record since bear hunting was first allowed in 2009.

## RECORD **85** BEARS, OVER **100K** DEER HARVESTED

Hunters harvested a record number of black bears in Oklahoma's most recent bear hunting season, while the harvest total for the 2018-19 deer hunting seasons is similar to the number taken the previous year.

Black bear harvest was 85 combined for both archery and muzzleloader seasons. That number was composed of 47 boars and 38 sows.

Only seven bears (of a 20-bear quota) were taken during muzzleloader season, with the rest harvested during the bear archery season.

All bear hunting in Oklahoma is limited to the southeastern corner of Oklahoma in Latimer, Le Flore, McCurtain and Pushmataha counties. However, a rule change proposal is being considered to open additional areas in the southeast to bear hunting later this year, if approved by the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commission and the governor.

In the 10 years that Oklahoma has offered bear hunting, 467 animals have been harvested. Oklahoma's population of black bears is stable at about 2,000, biologists have said.

For the 2018-19 deer hunting seasons, a total of 105,277 deer were reported harvested to the Wildlife Department's online E-check system. While this number is preliminary and subject to change because of duplicate reports, it represents the second consecutive year that the state's deer harvest has exceeded 100,000 animals.

The final deer harvest for the 2017-18 hunting seasons was 107,914, the largest total since 2012.

Notable from the recent deer seasons was that archery hunters set a record for the number of deer taken for archery season: 29,094. Also, participation in muzzleloader season is trending upward.

Dallas Barber, big game biologist for the Wildlife Department, said that harvest statistics show that many hunters are continuing to pass up younger bucks, which is allowing for a healthier age structure in the state's overall deer herd.

"Biologists are starting to see great things in regards to age structure and trophy potential," he said. "Oklahoma is slowly making a name for itself regarding hunting opportunity as well as trophy buck opportunity."

For hunters wishing to plan ahead, here are the dates for the 2019-20 deer hunting seasons as specified in Title 800 of Oklahoma's statutes:

- **Deer Archery:** Oct. 1, 2019 to Jan. 15, 2020.
- **Youth Deer Gun:** Oct. 18-20 (designated as the Friday, Saturday and Sunday of the weekend before muzzleloader season).
- **Deer Muzzleloader:** Oct. 26 to Nov. 3 (designated to open the fourth Saturday in October and lasting nine days.]).
- **Deer Gun:** Nov. 23 to Dec. 8 (designated to open the Saturday before Thanksgiving and lasting for 16 days).

For black bear, Title 800 specifies the archery season and muzzleloader season dates. For 2019, these seasons will be:

- **Bear Archery:** Oct. 1-20 (designated to open Oct. 1 and close the third Sunday in October).
- **Bear Muzzleloader:** Oct. 26 to Nov. 3 subject to quota if one is set (designated to run concurrently with deer muzzleloader season).

For complete hunting license requirements and regulations, consult the current Oklahoma Hunting and Fishing Regulations Guide found online at [www.wildlifedepartment.com](http://www.wildlifedepartment.com), in the free Go Outdoors Oklahoma mobile app for Apple or Android users, or in print across the state anywhere hunting and fishing licenses are sold. ••✕



## BOATERS: “CLEAN, DRAIN, DRY” TO STOP INVASIVE SPECIES

Clean, Drain, Dry is a simple three-step process that boaters can follow every time they move from one body of water to another. When boaters take action every time they leave the water, they can stop the spread of harmful aquatic invasive species.

Cleaning removes visible plants, mud and large-bodied organisms that are attached to, or in, watercraft, trailers or recreational equipment. Draining removes water that hides small and nearly invisible invasive organisms such as zebra mussel larvae (veligers). Drying is necessary to ensure that living biological material is not being moved, as many organisms can survive in small amounts of standing water.

Together, these three steps are effective at preventing the spread of aquatic invasive species.

**CLEAN** off visible aquatic plants, animals, and mud from all equipment before leaving water access

- Rinse equipment and boat hulls (with high pressure, hot water when possible)
- Rinse interior compartments of boats with low pressure, hot water (120°F)
- Flush motor with hot water (120°F) for 2 minutes (or according to owner's manual)

**DRAIN** motor, bilge, livewell, and other water containing devices before leaving water access.

**DRY** everything for at least five days or wipe with a towel before reuse.

If you are an angler, also **DISPOSE** of unwanted bait, worms and fish parts in the trash. When keeping live bait, drain bait containers and replace with spring or dechlorinated tap water. Never dump live fish or other organisms from one water body into another. \*\*X



## HELP OKLAHOMA'S WILDLIFE ON YOUR STATE TAX RETURN!

Tax season is upon us, and this year's tax return can help our nongame wildlife! Oklahomans who are getting a refund for tax year 2018 may check the box on the form to contribute some or all of their refund to the Wildlife Department's Wildlife Diversity Fund. These donations can nearly triple in value when combined with federal wildlife funds! Please consider donating for wildlife this year. \*\*X





# Go Outdoors Oklahoma System Opens New Era in Customer Service

By Don P. Brown, Information and Education Specialist



DON P. BROWN/DWC

*A sportsman buys a license at the attractive license service desk at the renovated Oklahoma City headquarters of the Wildlife Department.*



**Go Outdoors Oklahoma**, the state-of-the-art license management system and mobile app, launched in early January. It will allow the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation to better serve those who interact with the Wildlife Department.

Mike Chrisman, license supervisor for the Wildlife Department, said the new customer-based system is a “one-stop” shop that focuses on being user-friendly while better serving the customer, license dealers and the Department. For the first time, hunters and anglers are able to carry all of their license privileges in one place on their mobile device or on an optional durable card without having to carry separate paper licenses in the field or on the water.

Melinda Sturgess-Streich, Assistant Director of Administration and Finance for the Wildlife Department, said the public rollout of the new license system was the culmination of a years-long specifications and bidding process. Brandt Information Services was awarded the contract to create the system and provide customer service. The company has provided other state conservation agencies with similar license management systems.

The system will streamline the Department’s ability to provide service and communicate with customers while making it easier for people to conduct business with ODWC.

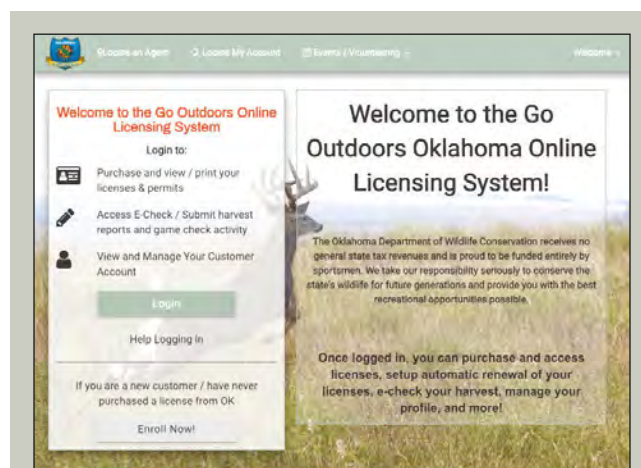
Some of the features offered with the new system and app include License Activity Packages that will include all required licenses for the specific activities such as waterfowl hunting or deer hunting; the ability to select auto-renew for certain licenses and permits; optional collector cards featuring Oklahoma artwork, on which all of a person’s privileges can be loaded; applying for lifetime licenses online; mobile E-check of harvest regardless of internet connectivity; and convenient entry into controlled hunt drawings.



Sturgess-Streich said in preparing to transfer to the new system, more than 5 million customer names and more than 13 million transaction records had to be imported to Go Outdoors Oklahoma. In addition, more than 300 license dealers across the state had to be familiarized with using the system to continue making local sales.

Criswell said within the system’s first 24 hours of going live, 2,787 users signed on, 354 new customer accounts were created, 1,635 mobile apps were downloaded, 1,789 products were bought, and the first-ever online application for a lifetime license was submitted.

The public can access the system through the “Licensing” link on the Department’s website at [www.wildlifedepartment.com](http://www.wildlifedepartment.com). The free mobile app is avail-



## Sign On to Check Your Account

The Wildlife Department is asking everyone who has conducted business with the Department in the past — including lifetime license holders — to go online and check his or her account page on the Go Outdoors Oklahoma license management system. We want you to ensure that the correct information has been imported into your new account from the existing databases.

Checking your information is easy. Just go online to [www.wildlifedepartment.com](http://www.wildlifedepartment.com), then click the “Licensing” tab near the top of the page. To access the new system, click on the link near the top of the page that says “Click Here to apply for Annual, Lifetime and Specialty Licenses.” A new window opens with a Welcome box on the left. Now, either click “Login” or “Enroll Now!”

Once you have made sure your account information is accurate and complete, the system will ask you to certify your information. Then you are ready to interact with the Wildlife Department! Thank you!

If you should hit a snag, call the Help Desk at (833) 457-7285 from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. weekdays or 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. weekends, or email [HelpDesk@GoOutdoorsOklahoma.com](mailto:HelpDesk@GoOutdoorsOklahoma.com).



able for download for Apple and Android devices. It replaces the Department's previous Pocket Ranger app, which is no longer supported by the app's creators.

**All lifetime license holders and returning customers are being asked to sign in to Go Outdoors Oklahoma to complete their existing customer account.** New users will set up a new account. Each account holder will have a customer ID number, and all licenses and other transactions with the Department will be organized using that customer ID.

The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation receives no state tax revenues and is proud to be funded entirely by sportsmen and sportswomen. Every time you buy a hunting or fishing license in Oklahoma, you are helping fund wildlife conservation in the state. Buying licenses helped bring back the wild turkey to populations not seen since 1900. It has helped bring fish species to our state that our fathers could only dream of including striped bass, saugeye, trout and hybrid stripers. 🎣

# Go Outdoors Oklahoma Frequently Asked Questions

**Q: If I have a lifetime license, do I need to set up an account?**

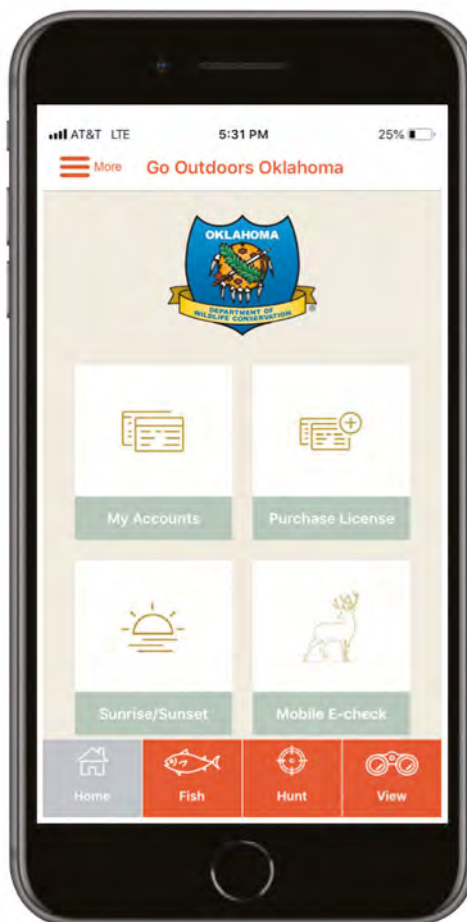
**A:** Lifetime license holders already have a customer account in the new system. **But everyone is being asked to sign in and verify the account information for accuracy.** Log in by going to [www.wildlifedepartment.com](http://www.wildlifedepartment.com) and choosing the "Licensing" tab or the "Purchase a License" Quick Link. From there, you can log in to the Go Outdoors Oklahoma system to get additional permits, manage your profile, e-check your harvest and more.

**Q: Will I still be able to purchase at a license dealer location?**

**A:** Yes. Most license dealer locations have agreed to continue to sell ODWC licenses. We suggest you call ahead before visiting a license dealer to make sure that dealer is ready to sell you a license.

**Q: How do I log in?**

**A:** Go to [www.wildlifedepartment.com](http://www.wildlifedepartment.com) and choose "Purchase a License" from the Quick Links. From there, you can log in to buy a license, manage your profile, e-check your harvest and more. You'll be required provide your date of birth, last name, and last four digits of your Social Security number to log in or to create a new customer account. If you have bought an Oklahoma fishing or hunting license before, your customer home page should display. If you are new to the system, you will need to cre-



ate an account by completing the customer information form. Once complete, you will be redirected to your customer home page.

**Q: What is a customer ID?**

**A:** An ODWC customer ID is a unique number that will be assigned to you when you first log in. You may locate this number on your customer home page and may use it for future log-ins. This number is unique to you and will identify all of your transactions so you can find all of your information and history in one location.

**Q: How do I buy a license?**

**A:** Once logged in, click on the "Purchase Licenses" tab. This will take you to the License Catalog, where you can add multiple items to your cart and check out. Once purchased, your licenses and permits will be shown in your customer account.

**Q: What is auto-renew?**

**A:** When you buy a license or permit, you may be given an option to sign up for auto-renew. This new feature can help ensure that you are never caught in the field or on the water without the proper license! If you choose to participate, the system will automatically renew applicable licenses and permits when they are about to expire using your stored payment method. You will receive an email 10 days before your license expires notifying you that your eligible licenses are set to auto-renew. You may adjust your



auto-renew settings (including stored payment) any time before your license(s) expires through your customer profile.

**Q: What is a collector's card or hard card?**

**A:** When you buy a license or permit through the system, you may be asked if you would like to upgrade to a durable card for \$5. This optional, durable card is a valid form of proof of purchase that will not be damaged by water, sun, dirt or regular wear and tear like a traditional paper document. The card is made of credit card-like material that contains your customer and license information on one side and features artwork from Oklahoma artists on the other side. ODWC is proud to feature "Dragon Slayer" by Dave Whitlock and "Snow Bound" by Carolyn Mock as the first official hard card artwork options.

**Q: Is my old lifetime license card still valid?**

**A:** Yes. Existing lifetime license hard cards will remain a valid form of proof of purchase. If you would like to reprint your lifetime license on the new card design, you may do so for \$5 through the new system.

**Q: How do I e-check my harvest?**

**A:** You may report a harvest using your customer account online, which you can access either by computer or mobile device.

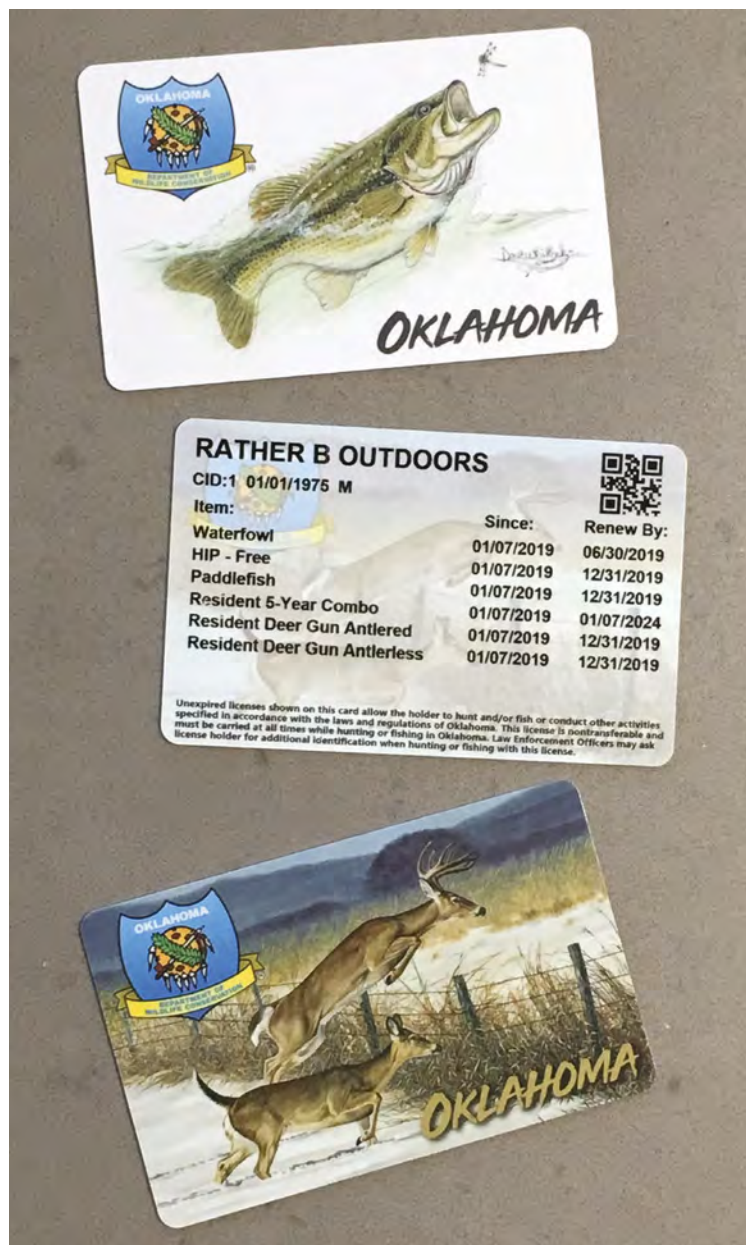
**Q: Why do I need to provide the last four digits of my Social Security number?**

**A:** Pursuant to federal law, we are required to collect this information for the purposes of child support collection enforcement and interstate wildlife violation enforcement. ODWC license buyer information is protected by state statute. Your information is secure and confidential, and may be used by ODWC for official purposes related to customer service and wildlife management. ODWC or any outside license dealers won't collect full Social Security numbers.

**Q: What is the mobile app?**

**A:** The Go Outdoors Oklahoma mobile app is available for iPhone and Android devices. The app allows you to purchase, access and store your license information, no matter where you are. It is also a legal means of carrying your licenses in the field. In addition, you are able to complete e-check forms through the app, regardless of whether there is a cellular connection. The app will automatically sync when service resumes. The Go Outdoors Oklahoma app is a free download on the App Store or on Google Play. 📱

**Durable collector's cards are available to carry as legal proof in the field, listing all of the license holder's privileges.**



**ATTENTION:** Please go online to check your account information or create an account in the new ODWC license management system.

**[www.GoOutdoorsOklahoma.com](http://www.GoOutdoorsOklahoma.com)**

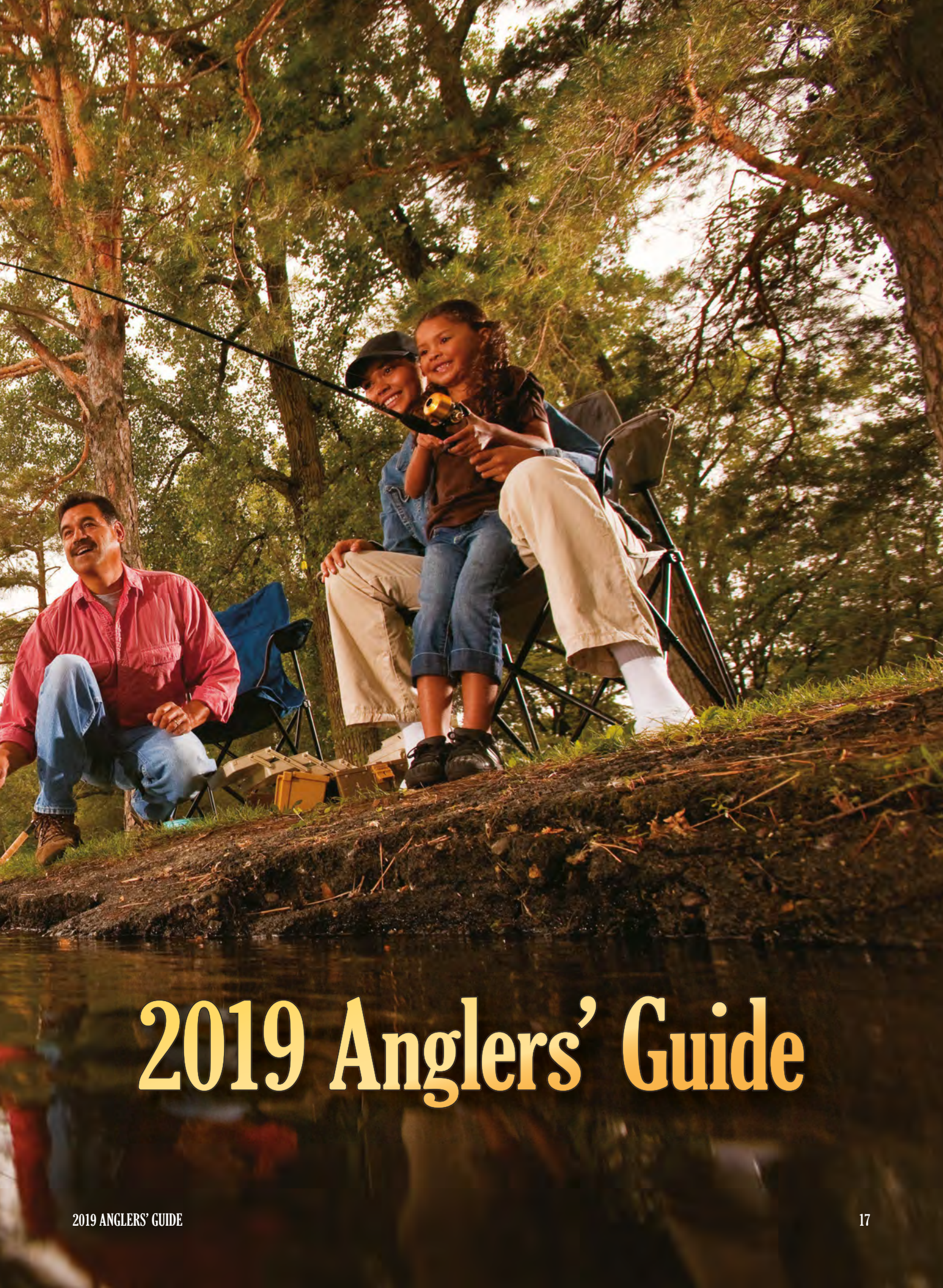


# An Angler's Journey Never Truly Ends

A young boy in a white t-shirt and blue jeans is standing on a rocky shore, holding a fishing rod. A small fish is on the line, and another fish is visible in the water. The background shows a calm lake with trees and a cloudy sky. The title "An Angler's Journey Never Truly Ends" is written in large, yellow, outlined letters across the top.

By Skylar St.Yves, Information & Education Specialist





# 2019 Anglers' Guide



## From the first time I felt a tug on the end of a line, I was hooked.

I was 4 years old on a family camping trip. My dad, uncle and grandpa were headed out on the lake for a day of boat fishing, but not before setting us kids up at the lakeshore campsite with worms and bobbers, and Mom supervising. We couldn't wait for the day that we would be old enough, and patient enough, to venture out on the boat. But a warm summer morning and an ample supply of sunfish would do for now.

We laughed and tangled lines more times than we could count. A bobber would bounce on the water's surface, and we'd all attempt to set the hook, forget-

ting who the bouncing bobber belonged to. Every fish was documented with Grandma's old Polaroid camera, and we'd wait anxiously at the boat ramp for the adults to return so we could show off our triumphs.

Memories like these are what set us on our paths as anglers. But more than the memory, it was the introduction to the sport that now resonates so strongly with me. Recently becoming a father myself, I look forward to passing along this fishing heritage to my daughter someday.

Unlike traditional hobbies and sports available to

children and adults alike, hunting and fishing take introduction and mentorship. There aren't teams, coaches and sign-up sheets to recruit the next generation of outdoorsmen and women. It's up to those of us who enjoy these outdoor pursuits to pass these skills along, and fishing is a perfect place to start.

In Oklahoma, residents under age 16 are exempt from a fishing license, and the equipment to get them started is relatively inexpensive. A basic rod, reel, line and tackle setup to get someone started can cost as little as \$25. And with more than 10,000 miles of shoreline within Oklahoma, you're never far from a place to fish. The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation's Close to Home fishing program offers plentiful fishing opportunities in Oklahoma's largest metro areas and is a great resource for those new to the sport.

However, there's more to creating a new angler than simply taking them fishing for the first time.

This year's Angler's Guide will share some best practices to introduce someone new to fishing, the challenges of staying engaged in the sport, and reactivating someone's interest in it, as well as tips and tricks to make your next fishing trip a success.



*Engaging anglers at a young age can have a lasting impact on their future as fishermen. The experience is rewarding for angler and mentor alike.*



## The Basics

There's a reason it's called fishing and not catching. While we've all heard the saying "A day of fishing is better than a day of anything else," that sentiment is not always shared with first-time anglers. Success is important, and that success is a result of good preparation, proper technique, know-how and a little luck sprinkled in. The nuances enjoyed from a day on the water come with time and appreciation of the sport. In order to get someone to that point, we must first look at what got us to that point.

A first catch. There's nothing better than seeing the marvel on a new angler's face when he or she reels in that first fish, but there's nothing more frustrating than watching a new angler fidget with impatience. That's why it's best to start someone off with the basics: bobber, bait and a productive time of year. In Oklahoma, that's late spring, summer and early fall.

Those times of the year are when most Oklahoma fish species are actively feeding near shore. Bass, sunfish and catfish all patrol the near-shore areas of lakes and ponds during the warmer months. A worm and a bobber fished near structure, such as logs or rip-rap, can yield great results. The fishing is usually fast and furious, which is perfect for beginners. The thrill of seeing a bobber bounce around almost immediately after hitting the water keeps new anglers actively engaged in the experience. It also teaches those anglers where to look for fish, which is extremely important as they venture further into the sport.

For this type of fishing, a light- to medium-action rod (5-1/2 to 6-1/2 feet) with a spincasting or spinning reel, light line (4 to 6 pounds) and small tackle is best. Traditionally, small round bobbers are used when fishing with a worm, but for new anglers I recommend using small stick-shaped bobbers. They create less friction with the water's surface. Small fish and small bites do not always allow for the round bobber to fully submerge, making it more difficult for novice fisherman to know when to set the hook. This can lead to frustration, which may result in a bad experience. The stick-shaped bobbers also help eliminate some of the slack caused from a fish strike, making it easier to set the hook and ultimately reel in the fish.



*Fishing clinics conducted by the Wildlife Department are fantastic opportunities to introduce someone new to fishing. These clinics teach the basics of casting, reeling, knot tying and fish identification — all musts for first time anglers.*

It's important to provide encouragement when a bite is missed. A target-rich environment allows a new angler the opportunity to make mistakes while still having success.

This is where a small body of water, such as a Close to Home lake or farm pond, comes in handy. A large reservoir or stream can be overwhelming for a new angler. Keep it small, from water size to fish. Panfish are an excellent start for new anglers. They're easy to hook and easy to reel in. We live for the excitement of fighting a fish, but we didn't learn to accomplish that feat by starting off with monsters. Remember that learning to cast, reel and set a hook are paramount to an angler's success. Those skills are perfectly honed on summer sunfish.

Sometimes we get so amped up fishing that we forget that people new to the sport need the most basic of guidance. What's old hat for you are the first steps for a newbie. Patience is as important for the mentor as it is for the student.



Oklahoma City Thunder star Paul George and his foundation have partnered with the Wildlife Department's Aquatic Education Program to help foster a fishing culture within the community. Most of the participants are first-time anglers and catch their first fish while on outings like this one at Arcadia Farms.





Start by teaching them about the equipment they will be using and how to get it rigged up. Simple knots such as the improved clinch and Palomar are great for first-timers. Every craftsman takes pride in his or her work, and reeling in a fish is the result of that dedication, so don't skip these steps. They will instill confidence in the new angler and eventually lead to the ability to do it on his or her own, which is ultimately the goal that can sometimes get lost in the pursuit of simply catching fish.

This also means encouraging a new angler to bait his or her own hook. If a new angler is hesitant to touch a worm or some other type of "yucky" bait, start out with a crappie nibble. These work great for panfish, cost about the same as a cup of worms, and a full cup can last much longer since they keep without refrigeration. I personally use crappie nibbles exclusively when panfishing. There's less mess, and I don't have to worry about forgetting them in a pack on a hot day.

If you don't have the availability to get a first timer out during the warmer months, don't despair. These same basic principles can be applied to any one of Oklahoma's winter trout fisheries. Just ditch the bobber for a swivel and slip sinker (1/8th ounce usually does the trick). Dolese Pond in Oklahoma City and Veteran's Park Pond in Tulsa are great starting spots for those in the state's major metros, but there are trout areas throughout the state: Perry CCC (near Stillwater), Blue River (near Ada), Medicine Park (near Lawton), Mountain Fork River (near Broken Bow), Watonga (near Woodward), Carl Etling (near Boise City) and Lower Illinois River (below Tenkiller Lake).

As opposed to watching a bobber for indication of a fish strike, trout anglers using Powerbait and a slip sinker watch the tips of their rod for a bite. Because of the cooler weather during trout-stocking season, I would recommend only taking those first-time anglers who are really hyped about going. Poor weather conditions and longer wait times between bites can be turnoffs for those just getting started with fishing. It's important to know the type of person you'll be taking.

Once your new angler gets the hang of the cast-and-wait (or visual fishing) technique, you're ready to move on to cast-and-retrieve methods. I can't stress



*Neighborhood ponds can be perfect places for new anglers to hone their skills and share the fun of fishing with family and friends.*

the importance of making sure your angler has a firm grasp of casting and reeling when deciding to upgrade to lures. The variables for success increase dramatically at this stage, so it's best to stick with the same basic rod and reel setup and use small, steady retrievable lures such as rooster tails and beetle spinners. And now the dreaded snag is in play.

I love rooster tails. They are versatile and have successful hook-set rates due to a rear treble hook that stays horizontal when retrieved. I prefer a 1/16-ounce olive Worden's vibric rooster tail. It's an excellent spring and fall lure for all pond species because, at a medium retrieve speed, it usually avoids hazards by staying in the middle of the water column. It's easy to sense a strike, and the tension from the retrieve is usually enough to set the hook, making it the perfect starter lure for a new angler. Another good starter lure is an 1/8-ounce black or orange beetle spinner.

These two lures introduce the basic principles needed when anglers begin to explore larger bodies of water with heavier crankbaits and spinners. They teach new anglers how to really set a hook on a striking fish. There's something instinctual about feeling





*Youth fishing tournaments help keep young anglers engaged in the sport. They teach anglers respect for resource and appreciation of fishing.*

the tug against the tension of a steadily retrieved line and setting the hook.

Now that you've got a new angler "hooked" on fishing, let's recap the basics. Take a new angler fishing during good weather conditions on small bodies of water at the most productive times of year. Keep the equipment simple: bait and bobber, or small, steady retrievable lures. Teach your new angler to be self-sufficient: how to tie knots, bait a hook, cast and reel. Provide encouragement during moments of failure. From the most elite BASS Series anglers to the first-timer, everyone will miss catching a fish that should have been caught. Remember to stay patient and positive. Reinforce good experiences by taking new anglers out as often as possible. Every learning curve will be different. A self-sufficient angler can be molded in as little as a summer or as long as a lifetime. The most important aspect is that we're passing along a heritage.

## Keeping At It

Introducing someone new to fishing is easy. Creating a fisherman is a challenge. Many factors contribute to keeping us away from the water. For kids, it's school activities, sports, video games, and a plethora of other interruptions that can quickly detract from the desire to go fishing. For the mentors, it's a matter of making time available for them and the children to go fishing. As we get older, work, financial obligations and other distractions keep us off the water. Like all hobbies, fishing takes passion to stay engaged. Anglers are the reason many of us even have access to the resource in today's world.

Anglers drive fisheries management, public access and conservation efforts. Every time someone buys a new lure or a fishing license, he or she is ensuring that the next generation will have access to the resource. As anglers, we are as dependent on the fish as they are on



you. This is why it takes more than simply introducing someone new to fishing. For those who take an interest in the sport, it is vital that they remain engaged, so that one day they can instill the same passion in a new angler just as you have done with them.

Each angler is equally important, from the most devout to the occasional summer camper. It's easy to find excuses not to go fishing. I have been guilty of neglecting my fishing urges over the years, and I consider myself a devotee. One thing that can maintain interest in fishing is to try something new!

Like most, I got my start with bait and bobber as a child. But as I became an adult, hitting the same farm pond day after day became stale. For the lucky few, an exotic fishing trip or traveling the country can keep things fresh. But you don't have to be wealthy to reinvigorate your passion for fishing. Something as simple as going after a new species or perhaps a different type of fishing could keep you coming back for more.

I grew up in Washington state and spent my formative years fly fishing for trout, salmon and steelhead. I attended Central Washington University because it was the only college in the state situated on a blue ribbon trout stream. But by the time I graduated and migrated to Oklahoma, fishing was becoming an afterthought. That all changed one Friday night early at a neighborhood pond. I hadn't used a spinning rod in several years but decided to dust off an old Ugly Stik from my childhood and test the waters. By the end of the weekend, I was in a checkout line at a local sporting goods store reinventing a gear bag that had been full of flies, streamers and fly line for the past decade.

Nearly 10 years later, and I now fish more days a year than I did in the previous 20. And it's because I'm constantly switching it up. Oklahoma is an angler's playground. I still bust out my trusty 6-weight fly rod occasionally for some pond popper action or stream smallmouth, but it was rediscovering my love for simply catching a new fish in a pond that has kept me engaged.

It will be different for every angler, but I can assure you that when fishing boredom strikes, trying a new species, new type of fishing or new body of water will go a long way to keeping the passion alive.



DON P. BROWN/DWG

*A simple invitation for a fishing trip can yield plenty of memorable surprises. Dale Miller of Panama, Okla., caught the state-record largemouth bass during a trip to Cedar Lake in 2013. Miller was not an avid angler but received an invitation for the day, and it certainly paid off.*



DANIEL GRIFFITH

*White bass are a great starter fish for new anglers. They are easy to catch and provide great table fare.*



*Going after unfamiliar species such as trout can help an angler's passion last a lifetime.*



WILDLIFEDEPARTMENT.COM

## Relearning It

I've covered how to introduce someone new to the sport, and how to keep an angler engaged. Now I'll discuss a truly difficult aspect of continuing the fishing heritage: reactivating an angler who has lost the passion.

There are many reasons why people stop fishing. Sometimes life just gets in the way. The biggest key to getting someone interested in fishing again is understanding why they quit in the first place. They can usually be categorized into three groups.

The first group are those who never made it past the introduction stage. They were either unsuccessful and did not enjoy the experience so they chose not to continue, or they no longer had access to the sport. Like any activity, fishing cannot be forced on someone; the joy must come from within. Something as simple as extending an invitation to someone who has not fished in a while can go a long way toward

reigniting that passion, especially if a lot of time has passed between his or her last fishing experience. Fortunately with this group, there is usually a basic understanding of fishing principles, so getting the fishing fire started can happen as suddenly as one trip to the lake. Always be on the lookout for someone who might be interested in wetting a line again.

The second group are those who were unable to stay engaged. There are many reasons this can happen. Try introducing them to a species they've never fished for or a new type of fishing. You may have a family member, friend or work colleague who fits this description. It never hurts to ask them to tag along on your next trip. Oklahoma allows for several different types of fishing and has liberal creel limits for those seeking table fare. Snagging for paddlefish or juglining for blue catfish could have someone coming down with the fishing bug before they know it.



The last group is unfortunately the hardest to reintroduce to the sport. They are those who have stopped because they simply didn't enjoy it. Fishing isn't for everyone, but it doesn't mean that they shouldn't have the opportunity. We ought to extend invitations when a time presents itself. Anglers such as these are best suited for hot spots on a local pond or a thick white bass run. One successful fishing trip could have a major effect on a person's outlook on fishing. They may not become actively engaged anglers, but the experience might help spark an interest in a child of their own someday. Just having the skills to be able to fish and pass that knowledge along to the next generation is invaluable to the sport and the resource, even if that person does not become an avid angler.

The next generation of anglers carries the wisdom of those who came before them, and in this spirit an angler's journey never truly ends. 🌿



MATT MALICKOWICZ

*Oklahoma waters provide ample opportunities for new and seasoned anglers alike. Species such as alligator gar can give a veteran angler quite a thrill.*



WILDLIFEDEPARTMENT.COM

*Wet-wading a local stream is a great way to beat the summer heat and have a little fishing fun.*

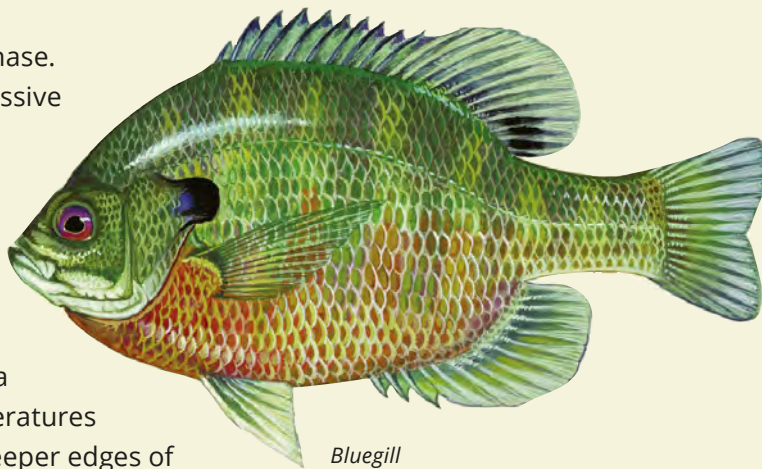


## Tips and Tricks

Here are some tips and tricks to help with success for your upcoming fishing season!

### Panfish

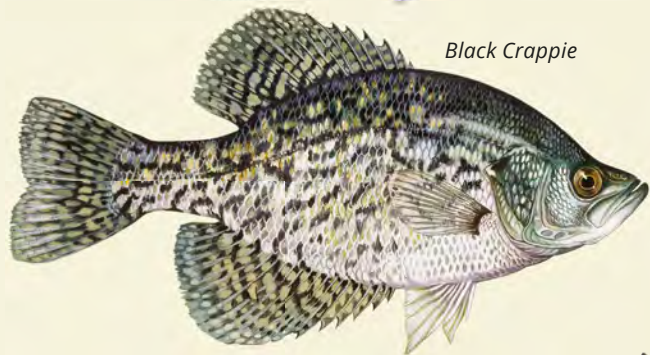
Target big bluegill during the prespawn phase. Bluegill and other panfish congregate in massive numbers during the spawn. Depending on location, spawning beds numbering in the hundreds can be found in condensed areas. The biggest fish will usually situate near outer rims around structure in these bedding areas and can be caught in bulk. Generally, peak spawning in Oklahoma occurs during May but warmer water temperatures can move it up a couple weeks. Work the deeper edges of these spawning beds with any one of your favorite panfish baits. The last two weeks of April are a great time to start targeting the biggest fish. Once the spawn begins, you are more likely to catch smaller males defending beds, so the two weeks prior to peak spawn are your best chance to catch trophy fish over 10 inches.



*Bluegill*



*White Crappie*



*Black Crappie*

### Crappie

Add a crappie nibble to your hook. The most experienced crappie anglers know how finicky these fish can be even at the best times of year. One day it will be one color, and the next day it will be another. Sometimes the bite just turns off. Try adding a chartreuse crappie nibble to the tip of your hook. They're scented and glow, and sometimes just that little extra added to your bait can increase your success.



*White Bass*

### White Bass

Try a crankbait. A Model A Bomber with blue back, an orange stripe and silver or white underbelly can be just the ticket for schooling and running white bass. The medium divers that run seven to nine feet deep make perfect weapons at the mouth of creeks and streams. It's also effective when trolled, which can create fast action when the white bass are running. Trolling allows the angler to cover a lot of water in a short time.



*Largemouth Bass*



*Smallmouth Bass*



## **Bass**

Slow roll something small. Remember you are not the only one fishing a pond, lake or stream. Fish see a lot of lures, many of which are reactionary lures meant to disrupt. When the bite slows on traditional crankbaits, jigs or topwaters, try something more subtle. A small bait moving at a snail's pace can entice the largest of fish, especially around structure. For largemouth, try a 2-inch storm-eye shad. For stream smallmouth, try a 1/16-ounce olive with black and red flake tube.

## **Striped Bass**

It's all about depth control. When using live bait for schooling striped bass, good electronics and depth control are essential. Make a mark on your rod one foot from where the line exits the reel. When you have the stripers dialed in on your depth finder, open your bale and make as many hand pulls to that one foot mark as it takes to get your bait to the exact depth of the school. This is a simple and effective way to control your bait depth and put you on more fish.

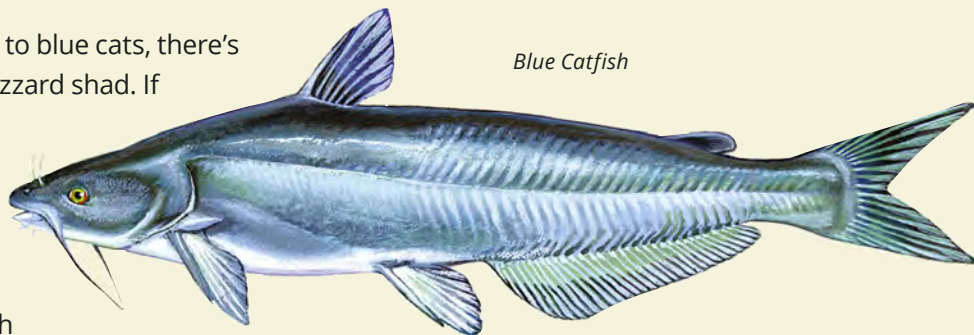
*Striped Bass*



## **Catfish**

Slice the bait. When it comes to blue cats, there's really no substitute for fresh gizzard shad. If a traditional tail, body, or head chunk isn't getting the job done at your catfish hotspot, try using the whole shad hooked behind the eyes under the hard part of the snout. With scissors or a knife, make a few small incisions on the belly of the shad allowing for more scent to drift in the current.

*Blue Catfish*







Emily Clark, big game technician with the Wildlife Department, demonstrates how she creates buckskin during a recent Wildlife Expo. When the Ponca City Indian Museum called the Wildlife Department, Clark volunteered to provide some handcrafted artifacts similar to the tools and items produced by American Indians centuries ago.





DON P. BROWN/OWWG

*Wildlife Department technician Emily Clark re-created these scraping tools and the buckskin thongs.*

# JUST THE 'FACTS

## Wildlife Tech Crafts Traditional Items for Museum

**By Don P. Brown, Information and Education Specialist**

Call it a labor of love for Emily Clark, a big game wildlife technician for the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation. But to her, it's not really labor; she creates by choice and out of pure enjoyment.

Clark is a craftsman of her own teaching. And while her skills might be rare these days, they are nothing new. And recently she had the opportunity to share her talents with the Cultural Center and Indian Museum at Marland's Grand Home in Ponca City.

Clark is a buckskin maker and, by extension, a tool-maker. Just like the native peoples of centuries ago, Clark uses the natural resources around her to create items

of everyday use. And some of her "artifacts" are now on display in the Ponca City museum.

In 2014, Clark was hired by the Wildlife Department. Her existing interest in traditional crafting was only stoked when she began working daily to help manage Oklahoma's deer populations. And through research and a how-to book, she taught herself the process to create buckskin from deer hide.

"It's very rare to find people that do this, that do buckskin," Clark said. "It's very time-intensive." She spends about a week working on each hide, not counting the time spent to harvest the deer in the first place. "Not a lot of people want to do this – just us crazy people!" she quipped.





Emily Clark, big game technician with the Wildlife Department, discusses a framed deer skin with Jayne Detten, assistant director of the Marland Grand Home in Ponca City.



From left: bow string from tendon thread, thread from tendon, deer tendon.



Soon, Clark would become a benefactor of the Ponca City museum. In late 2016, museum manager and curator Jayne Detton made a call to the Wildlife Department.

"I called her inquiring about helping us obtain some deer parts. I needed the parts to put together a display on how the American Indians of the 1800s utilized a deer — or buffalo or any animal — without waste creating their tools, clothing, etc. We had a few pieces, but there were a lot of pieces missing.

"Emily was full of ideas of things she could gather or make for us. Without Emily and her donations, our exhibits on American Indian hide preparation and tools would not have been possible. We are so very grateful," Detton said.

Since that phone call, Clark has been re-creating artifacts that the Indians would have created. In addition to buckskin in various states of processing, she also donated tools made of bone and other materials gleaned from deer. They include sewing needles, hair ornaments, arrowhead, a fish hook, various hide flesher or scraper tools, bowstring and sewing thread, and a buckskin handbag.

"These items are very appropriate to this area," Detton said. "The goal was to re-create items and tools out of deer and buffalo, which were the Indians' sustenance. It's definitely provided us with teaching tools. Students can visit and see that every part of the animal was used to good advantage."

For Clark, trying her hand at tool-making was a natural extension of her buckskin hobby. She said her interest in helping the museum was her way of helping educate others about those cultures in America's past.



*A flesher that was handmade by Emily Clark.*



*Deer Bone Arrow Point*



*Emily Clark demonstrates how a bone scraper would be used to removed hair from a deer hide.*





*Marland's Grand Home in Ponca City houses the Ponca City Cultural Center and Indian Museum.*



*One of the rooms housing the Ponca City Indian Museum where Emily Clark's artifacts are on display.*



*From left: deer bone fish hook, bone hair ornament, bone sewing needles.*



*This scraping tool was handmade from a bison rib by Emily Clark.*





DON P. BROWN/OWC

Jayne Detten, assistant director of Marland's Grand Home in Ponca City, talks with Emily Clark, big game technician with the Wildlife Department, about the deerskin bag she created for the Ponca City Indian Museum.

"I enjoy learning how Native Americans lived and the various skills they used because it's not only fun, but I feel I can honor my Native ancestry through understanding their way of life and passing on those skills so they're not lost to the ages."

Not only did she re-create the artifacts, she had to be sure they were functional. "After I made all the tools, I used them to authenticate them. I actually tried out the fish hook and caught a fish!" She also uses her traditional talents to create useful items for herself. She's used buckskin to create an arrow quiver and moccasin boots that she wears. She's working on buckskin pants and jacket right now.

But Clark's creations are more than just artifacts, said Detten, a former public school art teacher. "Emily is very artistic and exacting with her work. What she ended up producing is very finely done, and there is some skill there. She's so knowledgeable for a young person."

Wildlife Department Programs Supervisor Jerry Shaw, who works closely with Clark in deer management, described the young wildlife tech as a truly unique person. "She has developed a set of primitive crafting skills long forgotten by the majority of modern society. She elevates many of those crafts to the level of art."

"She is selfless in her willingness to share knowledge with others. Emily is a fantastic ambassador for the

Department and we are proud to have her."

Clark's skins and artifacts may be seen at the Marland Grand Home museum in Ponca City. Detten said three rooms in the home house oilman E.W. Marland's personal collection of American Indian items, mostly dating from the late 1800s and early 1900s. He gave his collection to the city in 1926. The museum at 1000 E. Grand Ave., is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays, and admission is \$3 for students and \$5 for adults. Visitors will also see exhibits about the 101 Ranch and oil industry history, along with period furnishings from the early 1900s.

Clark can normally be seen in her booth at the annual Wildlife Expo, presented by the Wildlife Department each September at the Lazy E Arena near Guthrie. She demonstrates the process of making buckskin from deer hide for Expo visitors.

But don't make the innocent mistake of assuming that buckskin comes only from a buck deer. "That's a common misconception," she said. Most any animal with a workable hide can yield buckskin; the term refers to part of the process to produce it when the hide is soaked in an alkaline solution, called bucking, to make removal of hair and the top skin layer easier.

She's not only a craftsman and artist, but a teacher as well. 🌿





*Jeremiah Zurenda*



*Least sandpiper at Hackberry Flat WMA.*



# Going Behind the Lens

## Shutterbug Biologist Stalks Sandpipers

**By Jena Donnell, Wildlife Diversity Specialist**

Each year, sandpipers fly more than 2,000 miles from their South American wintering grounds to their high-Arctic breeding grounds. Along the way, they must take short breaks to rest and refuel on small aquatic crustaceans.

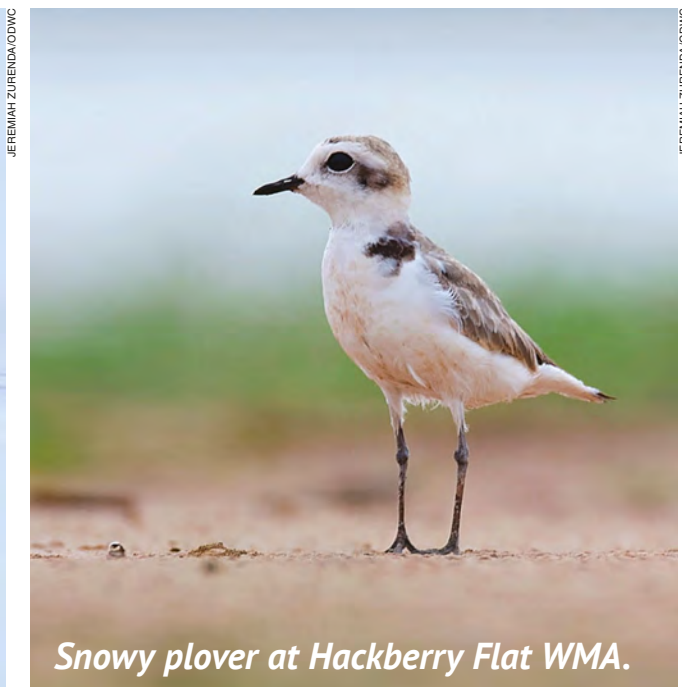
Hackberry Flat Wildlife Management Area in southwestern Oklahoma is a stopover for many of those sandpipers.

Area biologist Kelvin Schoonover recently pointed out a mass of the small shorebirds frantically probing the exposed mud to fellow biologist and photographer Jeremiah Zurenda, who saw an opportunity to combine his love for the outdoors and his passion for photography.

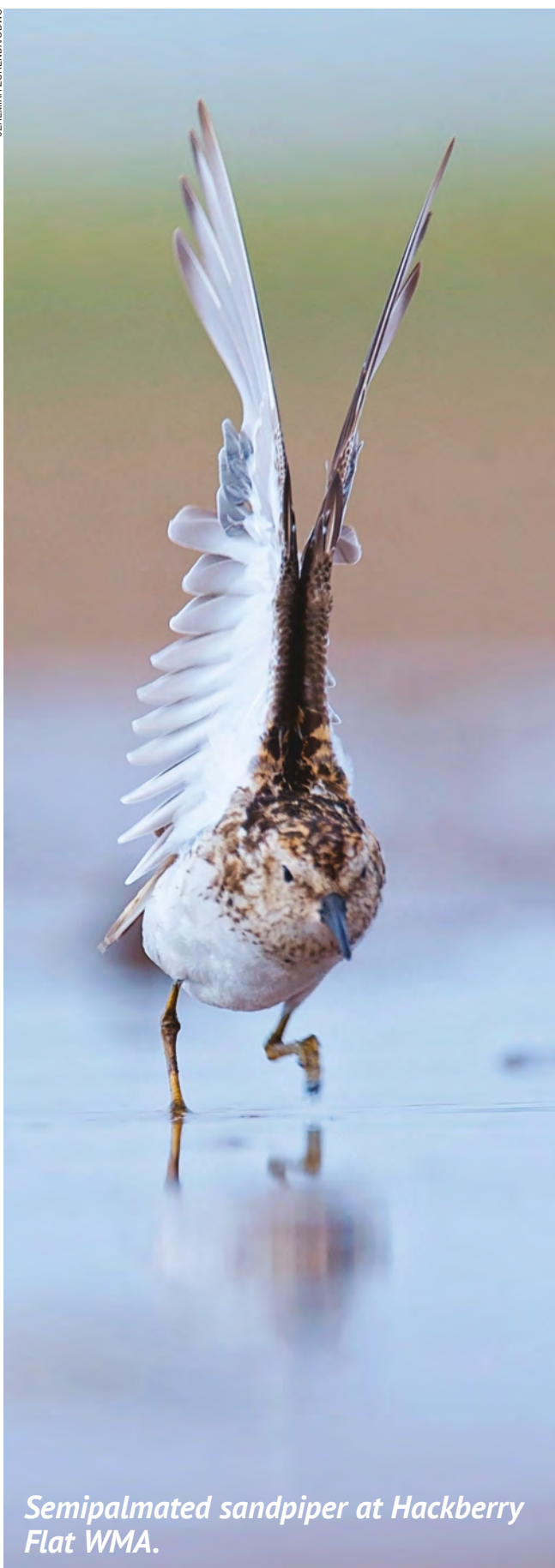
"Oklahoma has a lot of exceptional places to watch — and photograph — nature, and Hackberry Flat WMA is a great example. The flooded wetlands attract a large number of shorebirds and wading birds during the spring and fall migrations. Because of that, it has become a really popular bird watching and wildlife photography spot," Zurenda said.

After years of honing his skill, Zurenda has learned location is one key to getting high-quality nature photos.

"Spending time in areas with a lot of wildlife and a lot of photo opportunities will significantly increase your chances







*Semipalmated sandpiper at Hackberry Flat WMA.*

of success. On this particular day, the sheer number of birds on the mudflat meant there were a lot of chances to get a photo I was happy with."

For most photos, Zurenda says another story can be told from behind the lens.

"When I look at a photo I've taken, it pulls me right back to the memory of getting the shot. I can tell you if I was standing knee-deep in water, had to wade through tall grass, or if I ended up with chigger bites after getting the shot I was hoping for."

For his series of sandpiper photos, Zurenda remembers the challenge of approaching his subjects without disturbing the flighty birds.

"We were on a lunch break when we first spotted the sandpipers about 300 yards away. I grabbed my camera and facemask to blend in with the landscape and started walking toward the mudflat. When I was 75 yards from the birds, I started crawling on hands and knees. Forty yards out, I started belly crawling in the mud until I got to the water's edge. By then, the birds were only about 25 yards away."

Zurenda waited in the hot sun as the birds continued feeding closer.

"I laid there long enough that sweat was getting in my eyes under the mask I was wearing. But it was worth it. The birds kept coming and some eventually got so close that my camera couldn't focus on them; they were closer than 7.6 feet!"

"After a few shots, I noticed one of the birds would jump a few inches out of the water when I would hit the shutter release. So I spent some time with the camera focused on that bird. It took a little bit of patience, but I was finally able to time the shot just right." 🌿



*Semipalmated sandpiper at Hackberry Flat WMA.*





*Least sandpiper at Hackberry Flat WMA.*



*Semipalmated sandpiper at Hackberry Flat WMA.*



*Snowy plover at Hackberry Flat WMA.*





American avocets at Hackberry Flat WMA.

# Birders' Paradise: Hackberry Flat WMA

Celebrating its 20th anniversary in 2015, Hackberry Flat Wildlife Management Area, near Frederick in southwestern Oklahoma, offers 7,120-acres of wildlife recreational opportunities.

The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, along with many conservation-minded partners, restored this legendary wetland, creating a vast mosaic of wetland habitats for prairie waterfowl, shorebirds and other wetland-dependent birds.

Upland areas of native sunflowers and cultivated fields interspersed with mesquite have become one of the state's premier dove-hunting destinations.

Open for scheduled events, the modern Hackberry Flat Center offers interpretive guidance for wildlife enthusiasts, students and educators.

Hackberry Flat is a premier destination for bird-watchers. More than 225 species have been identified during surveys. From thousands of doves descending on a sunflower field, to less common species such as the black-necked stilt, stilt sandpiper and snowy plover, sheer numbers of birds from eastern and western Oklahoma

make this area a paradise for birding.

With the completion of the Hackberry Flat Center, this area offers wetland classroom experiences for schoolchildren; a meeting facility for workshops, programs and presentations; and a place to offer skill development workshops such as waterfowl identification, bird identification and hunter education classes.

In recent years, several free public tours and activities have been offered at Hackberry Flat:

- Duck, Goose and Hawks
- Chicken Hawks and Hoot Owls Program and Tour
- Prairie and Wetland Tour
- Bird Migration Tours
- Breeding Bird Tour
- Nature at Night Star Party
- Wetland Tour
- Monarch Watch
- Winter Wonders

Go online to [www.wildlifedepartment.com](http://www.wildlifedepartment.com) and search "Hackberry Flat" to learn more. 🌿





BILL HORN/PROVIDED

Hackberry Flat Wildlife Management Area is home to thousands of migrating birds each year



DON P. BROWN/OWC

Spring migrating bird tours hosted by natural resource biologist Melynda Hickman, along with several other theme tours, are offered several times each year at Hackberry Flat WMA.



JENA DONNELLO/OWC

Geese taking flight at Hackberry Flat WMA.



JEREMY ZURENDA/OWC

The white-faced ibis is among many interesting avian species that stop over at Hackberry Flat WMA during migration flights.





# The More Things Change...

Longtime Turkey Hunter Recalls Lean Early Days

By Don P. Brown, Information and Education Specialist



# After nearly 40 years

as an avid turkey hunter, Audrey Balentine has definitely seen some changes in the sport. These days, most turkey hunters want to wear a tricked-out vest, carry an assortment of calls, tote a special “turkey only” gun with a screw-in choke, and rest their behind on a cushy ground seat or hide in a pop-up blind.

“Of course, now everybody’s got a vest and they tout having a truckload of calls with you,” Balentine said. “Back then, there wasn’t any vest. I would just wear a dark shirt and blue jeans and a cap.” And he’d simply grab his box call and trusty ol’ shotgun as he headed out to the woods.

Balentine, who has lived in the Wister area all of his life, was born in 1943. “I’ve hunted ever since I’ve been big enough to hunt.” He sat down recently to share some of his memories about those earlier days as a way to let today’s hunters learn about how things used to be.

In his childhood, deer and wild turkeys were pretty much unheard of in his neck of the woods. “Now back when I was a kid, if you saw a deer track, that was big news.” As for turkeys, Balentine said there were always a few birds in the woods of southeastern Oklahoma, but they were rarely seen or heard.

For him, it was quail hunting where he cut his teeth. “A neighbor, who was an older man, used to take me hunting and fishing. On Saturday morning, a lot of times I’d be down there knocking on his door.”

Balentine’s father was school superintendent at Fanshawe and did not participate in hunting until later in life. But the boy’s two uncles were avid quail hunters, “and I used to go with them and carry my BB gun and walk all day with them.”

For Balentine, a hunting trip was pretty much a quick walk across the road. “Here, we are blessed with public land, and that’s where I started hunting.” As he grew older, he started hunting for rabbits, squirrels, ducks and crows. “Along about 1960, we started having deer.”

He began deer hunting in the mid-1960s. And it wasn’t until he was about 25 years old when



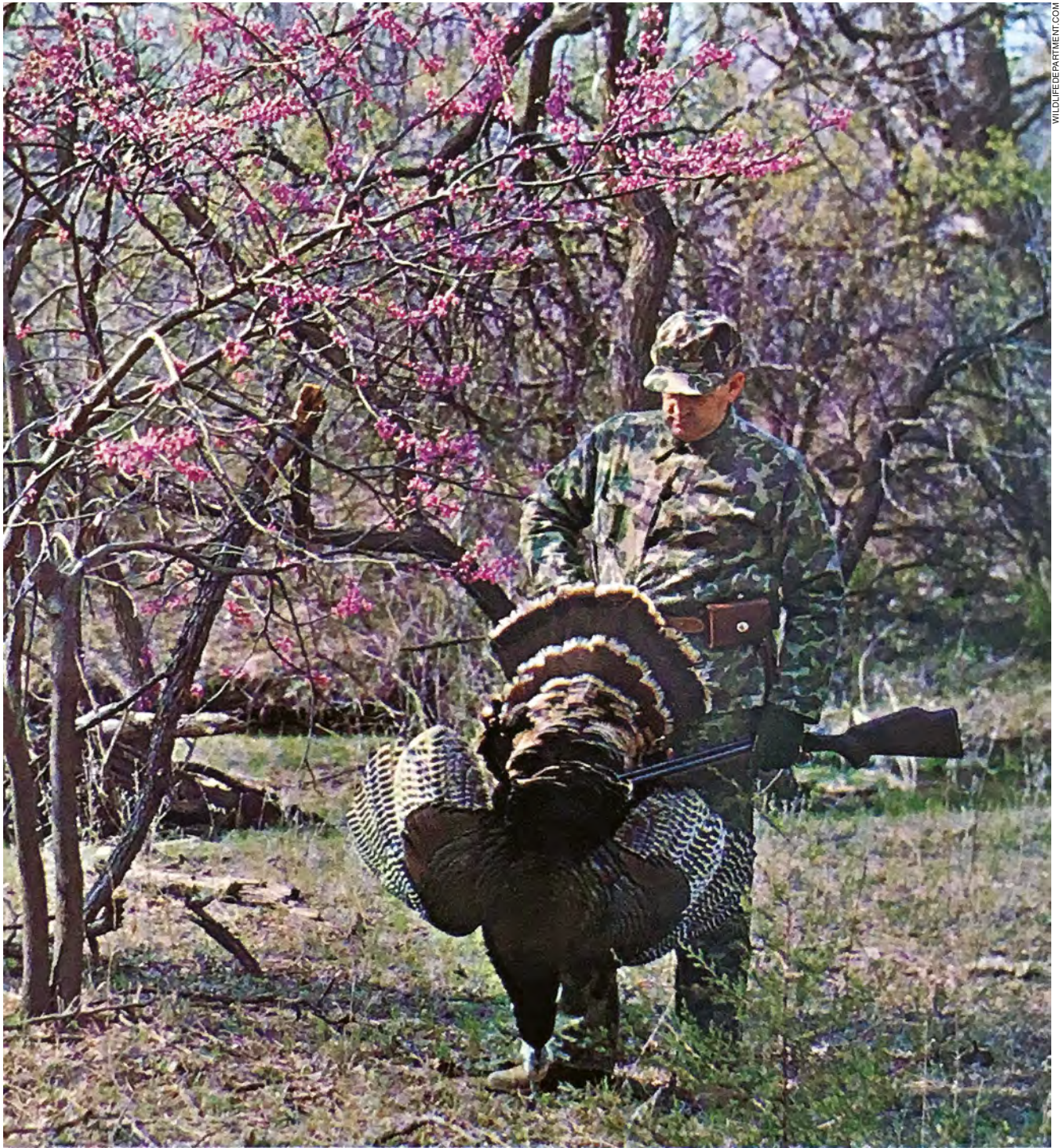
*Camouflage clothing for turkey hunters has advanced over the years, from basic military-like printed patterns on cloth to ghillie suits that blend into the surrounding habitat.*



*Longtime turkey hunter Audrey Balentine has been saving spurs from his harvested birds for years and created a string of spurs as a reminder of his hunts.*

“Back then, there wasn’t any vest. I would just wear a dark shirt and blue jeans and a cap.”





WILDLIFE.DEPARTMENT.COM

*Oklahoma's first modern spring turkey hunting season was held in 1965.*

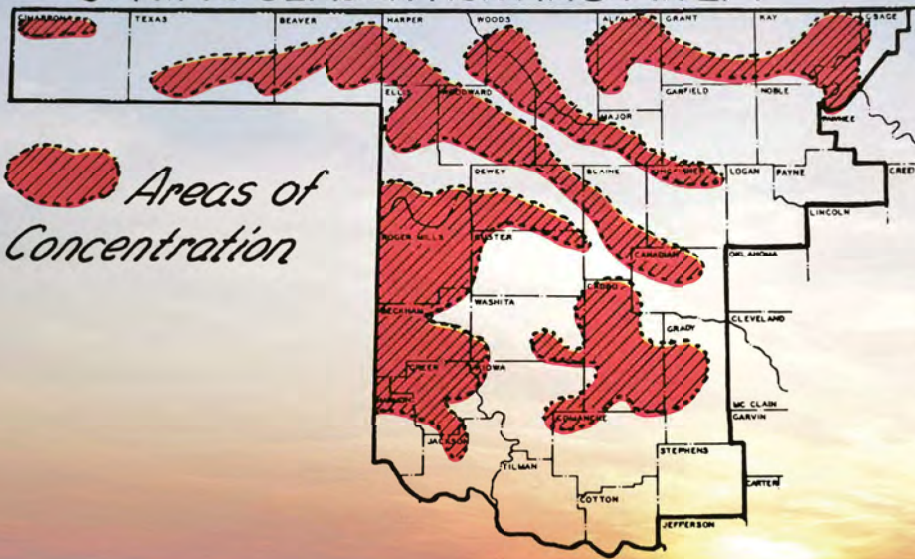


JEREMIAH ZUREK/OWWG

*A sight such as this would have been extremely rare in the 1960s in Oklahoma.*



## SPRING SEASON HUNTING AREA



This map was released by the Wildlife Department to give hunters an idea of where to hunt for wild turkey in the first modern spring turkey season in 1965.

Western Oklahoma is the land of the Rio Grande wild turkey. Longtime hunter Audrey Balentine never fails to hunt his favorite spot out west each spring turkey season.





*Oklahoma's first modern fall turkey hunting season was in 1960, when about 400 birds were harvested.*

“Before light, something really loud came out of the tree right over my head, and it about scared me to death!”

Balentine would actually see a wild turkey for his first time.

“I was out deer hunting in a very remote area,” he said. He had gotten into the woods very early, before sunrise, and the woods were still pitch black. “Before light, something really loud came out of the tree right over my head, and it about scared me to death!” Of course, he had managed to get himself under a roost tree. Later, the morning light revealed a small flock of wild turkeys in the clearing below him, and he figured out that he’d heard the sound of the birds flying off the roost.

In 1960, Oklahoma held its first modern fall turkey season, and a spring season was first held in 1965. Most of the turkey hunting in those days was done west of Interstate 35, where most of the birds were found.

It wasn’t until the late 1970s when huntable numbers of turkeys could be found in Balentine’s area. “No one really knew anything about how to turkey hunt. It was a totally new experience.” Around 1980, as Balentine hunted squirrels along the Fourche Maline River bottom, he occasionally would hear a gobbler. So he decided to try hunting for turkey.

That year, he managed to call a gobbler while hiding behind a fallen cedar tree in a ravine. It was his first successful turkey hunt. Since then, turkey hunting has become his favorite sport, and he’s barely missed hunting a season since. In recent decades, he has pursued turkeys in several states each spring. And in 2014, Balentine was able to complete a grand slam, harvesting the four subspecies of wild turkey found in North America all in one year.

There have been many changes over the years. Balentine noted the shift to the leasing of hunting lands, which he said takes away a lot of opportunity for hunting with landowner permission and, therefore, possibly shrinking the number of people hunting. But he also noted the availability of public lands.

Guns and ammunition have evolved over the years. “What once was a 25-yard sport is now a 50-yard sport.”

#### Audrey Balentine’s 2014 Grand Slam



*Eastern wild turkey tail and cape.*

*Merriam's wild turkey tail and cape.*

*Rio Grande wild turkey tail and cape.*

*Osceola wild turkey tail and cape.*



Calls have gone from basic slates and boxes to high-tech “moisture proof” mouth calls. Decoys came into vogue, and camo clothing can now become virtually invisible against a wooded background. But he still likes to hunt turkey the old way, sitting with his back against a tree with his trusty shotgun and his favorite call.

In the 1970s and ‘80s, Balentine witnessed the restoration of deer and turkey populations across Oklahoma. Turkey trapping and transplanting became a great conservation success story as the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation and partner groups such as the National Wild Turkey Federation worked to build the resource. These days, biologists say there are more wild turkeys (and deer) in Oklahoma than at any time in modern history.

“In Oklahoma, the partnership between NWTF and the Oklahoma Wildlife Department has been a win-win situation.” He was president of the first NWTF chapter in southeastern Oklahoma, and then served 18 years as treasurer of the Le Flore County Longbeards chapter.

In his years, Balentine has seen turkey hunting grow from its infancy to a popular pastime. But he thinks the number of turkey hunters is on the way down these days. “It’s not because of the lack of game; we’ve got more now than we’ve ever had. The interest is just not there like it was when I was a kid. And I don’t think it bodes well for our wildlife.

“The youngsters are playing the electronic games, and they are not getting the outdoor experiences like I did. When I was a kid, we all hunted. The value of that experience is immeasurable. The experience is a lot more wholesome than what you are running across on the Internet.

“I think you learn to appreciate the things that God has put here for us to appreciate. In a sense, you learn to appreciate life, too. You learn to appreciate what it’s all about, and you learn to contemplate that.

“I feel like a lot of the values I learned in life, I learned in the woods.” 🌿



*A successful hunt in 2001.*

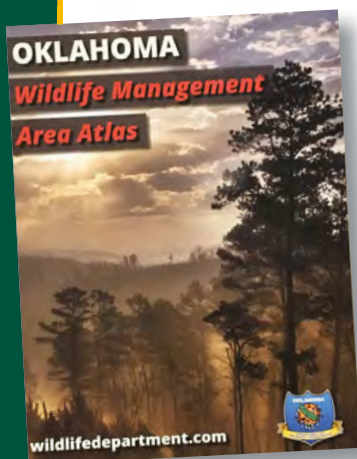


*Aud Balentine with one of his most recent harvests, a fine Eastern wild turkey gobbler from southeastern Oklahoma, in 2018.*

“The youngsters are playing the electronic games, and they are not getting the outdoor experiences like I did. When I was a kid, we all hunted.”



# The Outdoor Store



## Oklahoma Wildlife Management Area Atlas

This updated edition has topographical maps of Wildlife Management Areas and now includes Department-owned fishing lakes across Oklahoma. At almost 100 pages, the atlas presents maps showing where to access areas, adds lands that have been acquired since 2010, and shows special features at each area such as parking sites, camping areas and food plots. Your atlas purchase comes with a one-year subscription to the award-winning "Outdoor Oklahoma" magazine.

Item OS-8 — \$25

CREDIT CARD ORDERS: Online at [www.GoOutdoorsOklahoma.com](http://www.GoOutdoorsOklahoma.com), "License Catalog," "ODWC Merchandise."



## Oklahoma Waterfowl Hunting Stamp

Oklahoma "duck stamps" are always popular with collectors and hunters. While each year's stamp features a different handsome design sure to add appeal to any stamp collection, funds from stamp sales are used for many kinds of waterfowl management projects. Specify year when ordering.

Item OS-7 — \$10

CREDIT CARD ORDERS: Online at [www.GoOutdoorsOklahoma.com](http://www.GoOutdoorsOklahoma.com), "License Catalog," "ODWC Merchandise."



## Outdoor Oklahoma Caps

These sharp, colorful fabric caps feature the "Outdoor Oklahoma" logo. Available color selections may vary.

Item OS-11 — \$18



## Oklahoma Habitat Donor Window Decals

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

Item OS-13 — \$10 each



**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!

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

CREDIT CARD ORDERS: Online at [www.GoOutdoorsOklahoma.com](http://www.GoOutdoorsOklahoma.com), "License Catalog," "ODWC Merchandise."





## Habitat Donor Caps

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

Item OS-6 — \$18

## Donate to the Wildlife Diversity Program

Your tax-deductible donation to the Wildlife Department's Wildlife Diversity Program can help wildlife for years to come. Just indicate the amount you wish to donate in the "subtotal" column on the order form on this page.



## 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 \$38 (original or replacement) or \$36.50 (renewals) above your regular annual registration fee with proceeds going to Oklahoma's Wildlife Diversity Program. For a free application form, check Item WD-13. The forms are also available at local tag agencies, or online at [tinyurl.com/WildTags](http://tinyurl.com/WildTags).

Item WD-3 Application Form — FREE

Outdoor Store Mail-In Order Form				
Item	Description	Price (Includes s/h)	Quantity	Subtotal
OS-5	<b>Habitat Donor Patches (check patch choices)</b> <input type="checkbox"/> 1986-Quail and Bass <input type="checkbox"/> 1987-Deer <input type="checkbox"/> 1988-Turkey <input type="checkbox"/> 1989-Raccoon <input type="checkbox"/> 1990-Wood Duck <input type="checkbox"/> 1991-Squirrel <input type="checkbox"/> 1992-Dove <input type="checkbox"/> 1993-Elk <input type="checkbox"/> 1994-Bass <input type="checkbox"/> 1995-Quail <input type="checkbox"/> 1996-Bobcat <input type="checkbox"/> 1997-Crappie <input type="checkbox"/> 1998-Canvasback <input type="checkbox"/> 1999-Deer <input type="checkbox"/> 2000-Brown Trout <input type="checkbox"/> 2001-Antelope <input type="checkbox"/> 2002-Pheasant <input type="checkbox"/> 2003-Wild Turkey <input type="checkbox"/> 2004-Mallard Duck <input type="checkbox"/> 2005-Striped Bass <input type="checkbox"/> 2006-Scaled Quail <input type="checkbox"/> 2007-Bobwhite Quail <input type="checkbox"/> 2007-Rainbow Trout <input type="checkbox"/> 2008-Canada Goose <input type="checkbox"/> 2009-Mule Deer <input type="checkbox"/> 2010-Paddlefish <input type="checkbox"/> 2011-Northern Pintail <input type="checkbox"/> 2012-Pronghorn Antelope <input type="checkbox"/> 2013-White Bass <input type="checkbox"/> 2014-Black Bear	\$10 each		
OS-6	<b>Habitat Donor Caps — check choice of color and design:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Camo Bass <input type="checkbox"/> Camo Deer <input type="checkbox"/> Orange Bass <input type="checkbox"/> Orange Deer	\$18		
OS-7	<b>Current Waterfowl Hunting Stamp</b>	\$10		
OS-8	<b>Oklahoma Wildlife Management Area Atlas</b>	\$25		
OS-10	<b>"Outdoor Oklahoma" Magazine</b> 1-Year Subscription 2-Year Subscription 3-Year Subscription	\$10 \$18 \$25		
OS-11	<b>Outdoor Oklahoma Caps (check style and size where applicable)</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Lime/Mesh Back    One size fits all    \$18 <input type="checkbox"/> Pink/Mesh Back    One size fits all    \$18 <input type="checkbox"/> Weathered Olive Unstructured    One size fits all    \$18 <input type="checkbox"/> Weathered Navy Unstructured    One size fits all    \$18 <input type="checkbox"/> Orange Camo    One size fits all    \$18 <input type="checkbox"/> Camo/Mesh Back    One size fits all    \$18 <input type="checkbox"/> Olive/Mesh Back    One size fits all    \$18			
OS-13	<b>Oklahoma Habitat Donor Decal</b> <input type="checkbox"/> 2015-Whitetail Buck <input type="checkbox"/> 2016-Largemouth Bass	\$10 each		
WD-13	<b>Wildlife Conservation Plates Application Form</b>	FREE	—	
	<b>Your Donation to the Wildlife Diversity Program</b>			



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 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

All prices include postage and handling. Make checks payable to ODWC, fill out form, clip and mail to ODWC, P. O. Box 53465, Oklahoma City, OK 73152. Please allow three to four weeks for delivery.

To order WMA Atlas, magazine or waterfowl stamp securely with a credit card, go to [www.GoOutdoorsOklahoma.com](http://www.GoOutdoorsOklahoma.com), "License Catalog," "ODWC Merchandise."



# Watchable Wildlife

## THE COTTONTAIL RABBIT

BY JUSTIN VEACH, EDUCATION INTERN

Among the most easily recognized species in the Americas is the cottontail rabbit. With a reputation for being one of the most lovable critters in the animal kingdom, it is often used as a character in many cartoons and children stories and it is usually depicted as an adorable and quick animal.

Cottontails are certainly no strangers to Oklahoma's outdoors. They can be found in any part of Oklahoma. They have brownish fur with large hind feet that help them gain speed to escape predators. They have white undersides and a white stubby tail that looks like a cotton ball, which is where the name comes from.

The average weight of the cottontail rabbit is 2.6 pounds. The cottontail's lifespan in the wild is 15 months, with the oldest ever recorded being 5 years old. Predation is the cottontail's greatest cause of mortality. Just about any carnivorous critter that is bigger than the cottontail is a predator.

This rabbit's speed creates a fair challenge in hunting them. This has led to greater popularity of rabbit hunting. The cottontail is the most commonly hunted small game animal in North America.

Cool and wet summers can lead to a major uptick in the cottontail population, as they will continue to breed throughout summer. Harsh weather can curtail breeding.

Breeding can start by February and will continue through August. The average gestation period is 28 days. The long breeding period and short gestation period can allow a female to produce six or more litters each year, with up to 12 bunnies, also called kits, in a litter.

Cottontails are born with a fine coat of brownish fur, with a white blaze on their forehead that will soon disappear. Bunnies begin opening their eyes after four days, and the litter will disperse about six weeks later. The female does not stay with the litter during the first six weeks but will usually return twice a day to nurse.

Cottontails run in a zigzag pattern when being chased. They prefer a habitat where cover is always nearby so they can easily hide from predators. They do not dig their own burrows but often use burrows previously made by animals such as groundhogs.

Cottontails can be seen any time of the day, but they are most active at night. They are more likely to be seen on dreary, rainy or foggy days than during bright sunny days.

The cottontail's diet is mostly vegetarian. It will eat a wide range of plants but also arthropods. When snow covers the ground, it will eat twigs and the bark of woody plants. 🌿

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BILL HORN

A flock of shorebirds in flight is a remarkable sight common at Hackberry Flat Wildlife Management Area. Read about one photographer's quest to capture sandpiper images at this WMA inside this issue of Outdoor Oklahoma.

# Outdoor Oklahoma

A PUBLICATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

