



Outdoor Oklahoma

MAY/JUNE 2019 – ONLY \$10 A YEAR

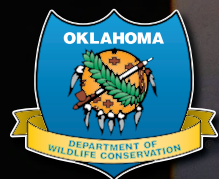
In This Issue:

PG13's Passion

**Teddy's Game Preserve
Now a Big Draw for Elk**

**The More Things Change...
Bass Fishing's Evolution**

A PUBLICATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION



Panoramas

It might be a coworker. Maybe a friend from church or from school. Could be a cousin or niece or nephew. Chances are you know someone nearby who has never been fishing. Why not do something about it this year?

The perfect time to introduce someone new to the joys of fishing is coming up. On June 1-2, no one will be required to have a state fishing license. It's our annual **Free Fishing Days**.

Chances are you're familiar with the rewards you can get from a fishing trip: the relaxation of being outdoors, the beauty of nature surrounding you, the unwinding from the stresses of our everyday lives, and the occasional excitement of feeling your fishing line go tight. A day out fishing is always a good day!

I was reading the 2018 Special Report on Fishing produced by the Outdoor Foundation and the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation, and I noticed one of the findings was that more than 80 percent of adults who currently fish were introduced to fishing during their childhood. And they grew up with good memories of times spent around the water with family and friends, baiting a hook and watching that bobber.

On the flipside, once a kid reaches age 12, it is much less likely he or she will try fishing, the report said. Take them when they are younger, and you might be doing your part to recruit a future angler who can take your place whenever you decide to hang up your pole.

It's important to maintain or grow participation in fishing because the money that is spent is a driver in the economy. In Oklahoma each year, more than 1 million people spend more than \$800 million related to fishing. The industry supports an estimated 11,300 jobs in the state.

When we help people become anglers, we are supporting conservation and helping fund better fishing in the future.

An increase in participation means more customers for fishing-related businesses, more fishing licenses, increased tackle

and equipment sales, and more funds for states to protect the fisheries they sustain through fish stocking, aquatic habitat management, fish research and surveys, boat ramp management, courtesy docks, shoreline access and more.

Of course, not everyone will be able to take advantage of Free Fishing Days. But don't let that stop you! Fishing is easy and affordable any time of the year. For starters, any resident youth 15 or younger does not require a fishing license at any time. And no fishing license is required for any nonresident youth 13 or younger.

There are also nominally priced short-term licenses available for people who may only want to try fishing before they decide whether to dive into the deep end. We now offer a two-day resident fishing license and a one-day nonresident fishing license that can be purchased instantly online with our new licensing system at www.GoOutdoorsOklahoma.com.

And if you have not checked out the new Go Outdoors Oklahoma, I urge you to do so right away. All sportsmen and sportswomen – especially lifetime license holders and returning customers – are urged to sign in to update their information and complete their account setup. Updating is necessary for future interactions with the Wildlife Department, including obtaining licenses and permits, using E-check, applying for controlled hunts and more. New users are invited to create a new account.

Your Wildlife Department thanks you for supporting its mission to manage and protect fish and wildlife, along with their habitats, while also growing our community of hunters and anglers, partnering with those who love the outdoors, and fostering stewardship with those who care for the land.



Nels Rodefeld, Editor

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THIS PAGE: With warmer weather, rattlesnakes are out and about. Four of the seven species of venomous snakes found in Oklahoma are types of rattlesnakes. The western diamondback rattler, seen here, is one of them. Be alert outdoors and watch where you put your hands and feet. For more information, go to www.tinyurl.com/SnakePoster.

ON THE COVER: A mayfly finds a spot to rest during its brief remaining life. Sensitive to the environment, mayflies and caddisflies are indicators of water quality, and they were central to recent studies by teams partnering with the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation. See page 30. (Bob A. Fox/Flickr CC BY2)

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ACCOUNT QUESTIONS

Call (800) 777-0019

Off the Beaten Path

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

DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR **ELECTED CHAIRMAN** OF HUNTING, SHOOTING SPORTS COUNCIL

Director J.D. Strong of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation was recently elected Chairman of the Board of Directors of The Council to Advance Hunting and the Shooting Sports.

Established in 2009, the Council was formed to ensure support for and active participation in hunting and the shooting sports. In the past decade, the Council has evolved as a leader in a national movement to recruit, retain and reactivate (R3) more hunters and target shooters.

Strong has served on the Council's Board of Directors for the past two years. Before elected Chairman, he was actively engaged in the Executive Committee of the Board.

"What an honor to serve alongside this great group of board members. I have long been impressed by this Council's forward-thinking initiatives to grow the community of hunters and shooting sports enthusiasts, and I am very excited about what we can accomplish together in the coming years."

John Frampton, CEO and President of the Council, said, "The Council's Board of Directors plays a key role in the Council's success. It was their vision that helped to establish this organization



J.D. Strong

just a few years ago, and they continue to fuel our growth and steadfast commitment to ensuring a bright and prosperous future for hunting and shooting sports in America."

Strong is also active in a number of other national capacities, including:

- Executive Committee Member and Budget & Finance Committee Chairman, Western Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA).
- Lesser Prairie Chicken Initiative Council Chairman, WAFWA.
- Executive Committee Member, National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative.
- Fisheries and Water Resources Policy Committee Chairman, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA).
- Member of President's Task Force on Recruitment, Retention and Reactivation in Angling, AFWA.
- Audit Committee Chairman, Southeastern Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies (SEAFWA).

Strong has been the Wildlife Department Director since 2016. He is an active sportsman and a fifth-generation Oklahoman from Weatherford and earned a degree in wildlife ecology from Oklahoma State. **X



OKLAHOMA WILDLIFE FOUNDATION LAUNCHES WEBSITE

The Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Foundation's new website was to be up and running by the time this magazine arrived in mailboxes. To see the site, go to www.OKwildlifefoundation.org.

The charitable foundation was created last year to provide additional support for the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation and its activities in managing the state's fish and wildlife resources and habitat. Anyone wishing to

financially contribute to the foundation is encouraged to visit the new website.

Also, country music star Blake Shelton, a member of the foundation's Board of Directors, plans to perform benefit concerts in late May at his Ole Red restaurant and music venue in Tishomingo. Shelton said he will donate proceeds from those shows to the foundation. **X

CHANDLER STUDENT WINS ODWC SPECIAL AWARD AT SUTTON ART SHOW

Celebrating its 15th year, the Sutton Avian Research Center along with NatureWorks Inc. is creating new enthusiasm for wildlife conservation by hosting a statewide art competition. High school students are invited to tell the conservation story through art and essay.

At the student art show, students come alive as they eagerly share their new-found passion for a wide array of conservation issues. From honeybees to Texas horned lizards, from sculptures to pastels, the creations of these students have intriguing stories to tell.

For the first time this year, the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation sponsored a special award. This award went to Brooke Navarro of Chandler High School.

Established in 2003, the Sutton Student Art Award recognizes high school students who demonstrate the ability to communicate current conservation topics in compelling ways. The show is free to enter and open to all Oklahoma high school students. The award is funded up to \$20,000, which is distributed to winning student submissions and their instructors as determined by the selection committee.

The first-place winners this year are:

- Madeline Fossett, Broken Arrow High School — 2-D artwork.
- Rachel Atherton, Broken Arrow High School — 3-D artwork.
- Lexi Petka, Oklahoma Bible Academy, Enid — Photography.

“Today, as schools struggle to afford enrichment programs such as the arts, it is exciting to be able to connect our conservation mission with schools to provide significant scholarships for students and the teachers who work so hard to run their programs on shoestring budgets,” said Audra Fogle, development director for the Sutton Center in Bartlesville.

The next Sutton Award competition will open in September. ♦♦✕



Brooke Navarro

COURTESY AUDRA FOGLE

2018 CREATIVE WRITING COMPETITION

"HUNTING IS A LIFE-CHANGING OPPORTUNITY"

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 Bow-hunting." 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 senior category male winner Colby Webb, 15, from Stuart High School.



HUNTING: SHARING THE HERITAGE

By Colby Webb



Hunting is an enjoyment as well as a part of my heritage. To be able to go hunting in the woods with my family is an extraordinary feeling. Hunting is a life changing opportunity and a great memory maker. For me, it's not just about the kill. It's about family friends and fun.

One thing I like more than rifle hunting with my family is bow hunting. Bow hunting presents more of a challenge to me.

With bow hunting, you have a lot more to take in than just pulling the trigger. You have to take many things into consideration. For example, the wind and types of arrows you use.

Bow hunting is just so much more fun than hunting

with a gun. Your fun and curiosity does not end when you hit the target. It continues to compel you as you enjoy the relaxing benefits of the woods.

Since that first hunt and with every hunt thereafter, I have been able to become more in tune with nature and my heritage as I step out of the hustle and bustle of life and into the great outdoors. By bow hunting, I am involved in conservation and giving wildlife a better habitat.

Whether you want to enjoy a good hunting trip with friends or family or you are hunting for something to eat, you can almost always obtain what you need from another hunter. This is part of what makes hunting so great and amazing.

Above all, I believe my favorite thing as a hunter is being able to go hunting with my family. By sharing this sport, we are able to make memorable moments and connect with my heritage, whether in the woods or around the campsite. I hope this family tradition will not have to end when I have to hang up my gun for the last time, but it will continue on for further generations of family. ••x

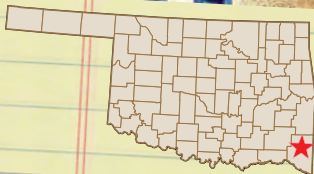
BROKEN BOW LARGEMOUTH NEARLY A STATE RECORD

New state- or lake-record fish have been added to the Wildlife Department's official database in recent weeks. Here is a snapshot of the big ones that didn't get away!



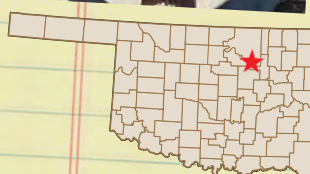
Broken Bow Record Largemouth Bass

Weight:
14 pounds, 13 ounces.
Length:
27 3/32 inches.
Girth:
21 27/32 inches.
Angler:
Gary W. Cox of Sallisaw.
Method of Catch:
Rod and reel.
Date Caught:
March 29, 2019.
Area Caught:
The Narrows.



Lake Keystone Record Striped Bass

Weight:
31 pounds.
Length:
41 inches.
Girth:
27.5 inches.
Angler:
Robin Carpenter Schwerts of Sand Springs.
Method of Catch:
Rod and reel.
Date Caught:
Feb. 17, 2019.
Area Caught:
NA.



Lake Keystone Record Striped Bass Hybrid

Weight:
11 pounds, 6 ounces.
Length:
27.25 inches.
Girth:
20.5 inches.
Angler:
Mackenzie Owens of Tulsa.
Method of Catch:
Rod and reel.
Date Caught:
March 1, 2019.
Area Caught:
NA.



Lake Texoma Record Spotted Bass

Weight:
5.3 pounds.
Length:
21.75 inches.
Girth:
15.25 inches.
Angler:
Marco Vaca of Ardmore.
Method of Catch:
Rod and baitcast reel.
Date Caught:
Feb. 3, 2019.
Area Caught:
Caney Creek.



What's the biggest fish you've ever caught? A 7-pound largemouth, a 2-pound crappie or a 45-pound blue catfish? While your fish might not be a new state record, it possibly could be the biggest fish ever caught from your favorite lake. Thanks to a network of record-keepers at lakes across the state, your next trophy could qualify as a lake record.

The Lake Record Fish Program was established as a way to serve anglers and recognize big fish and the lakes they come from. To find out more, go online to www.wildlifedepartment.com/lake_records2. --X





Game Warden's Journal

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



In August 2018, Game Warden Ty Runyan, based in Pontotoc County, was contacted by a concerned sportsman stating that two men from the Ada area had “found” a large whitetail buck in Coal County. Runyan contacted the main suspect, who stated the buck was hanging in a tree in Latta. The suspect said he and his friend had gone out to hunt hogs at night and the first thing they saw was the big buck. The suspect used a thermal device and shot the buck. Runyan seized the thermal scope and gun used to kill the buck as evidence. Capt. Tom Cartwright, District 4 Chief and an official Boone and Crockett measurer, scored the buck at 203 inches. In March 2019, both men accepted a plea deal on charges of possession of wildlife not legally taken and hunting with the aid of motor vehicle. The primary suspect was fined



\$2,989 and ordered to pay \$3,000 in restitution, loss of rifle, loss of hunting privileges for three years, and ordered to serve 20 hours of community service. The accomplice was fined \$3,989, ordered to pay \$2,000 in restitution, loss of thermal device, and loss of hunt-

ing privileges for three years.

(Report 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.

SOME WILL WIN HUNT OF A LIFETIME; **APPLY NOW**

Hunters have until May 22 to apply for the Wildlife Department's controlled hunt opportunities for 2019-20. All applications must be submitted through your Go Outdoors Oklahoma system account; log in at www.wildlifedepartment.com/ControlledHunts.

The Controlled Hunts Program offers a variety of highly desirable hunts through random drawings. Controlled hunt opportunities include hunts on Department- or government-owned or managed lands where unrestricted hunting would pose safety concerns or where overharvest might occur.

“Sportsmen have more than 150 different quality hunts to choose from including elk, antelope, deer and turkey hunts,” said Melinda Streich, assistant director of administration for the Wildlife Department. “And more than 850 of these hunt permits are designated specifically for youths ages 14 and 15.”

All applicants, including lifetime license holders, pay a \$5 application fee to enter the drawing for controlled hunts. The fee is paid only once per person per year, regardless of the number of hunt categories entered.

“Every year that you apply, you earn preference points that increase your chances to be drawn for a controlled hunt,” Streich said. “It takes just a few minutes to apply online



Being selected in the drawing for a pronghorn controlled hunt is a once-in-a-lifetime event sought after by many Oklahoma big-game hunters.

through a secure application process.”

Hunts are offered in seven categories: elk hunts, antelope hunts, deer hunts, youth deer hunts, deer hunts for people with non-ambulatory or motor vehicle hunting permits, youth spring turkey hunts, and spring turkey hunts.

“You don’t want to miss out on these hunting opportunities, so mark your calendars to apply before the deadline of May 22,” Streich said. ☺



OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

OKLAHOMA'S TEN BEST "TOP 10"

1

Quail Hunting

More than 30,000 hunters afield last year, harvesting 439,000 quail.

2

Deer Management

QDMA Agency of the Year in 2016.

3

White-tailed Deer Hunting

Ranked third-best state to buy hunting land and to hunt white-tailed deer by Bowhunter magazine.

4

Wildlife Expo

Average of 41,000 people attend this free event every September.

5

Ecosystem Diversity

More ecoregions mile-per-mile than any other state; one of just two states with bighorn sheep and American alligators.

6

Inland Striped Bass Fishery

Lake Texoma hosts the best striper fishing in the nation; home to more than 100 striper guides.

7

Hunting License Sales per capita

One of only four states that are growing in the total number of hunters per capita.

8

Outdoor Education Programs

More than 500 schools participate in Wildlife Department Education Programs, reaching tens of thousands of youths.

9

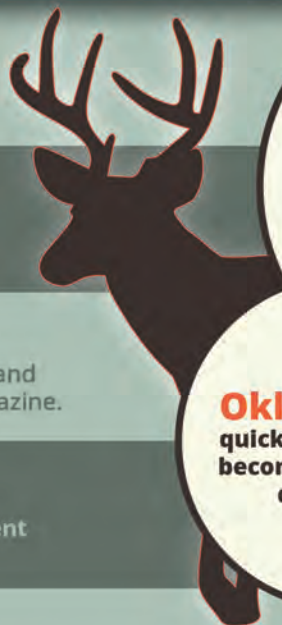
Largemouth Bass Fisheries

Two-time host of the BASSMASTER CLASSIC, bass fishing's equivalent to the Super Bowl.

10

Paddlefish Angling

Nation's top annual destination for paddlefish; anglers come from 55 states and provinces.



Quality Deer Management Association lists Oklahoma as one of the premier deer hunting destinations.

Oklahoma has quickly (and quietly) become a top trophy deer state.

Oklahoma is one of the top wild bobwhite quail hunting destinations in the country.



2,601 paddlefish harvested in 2018.

wildlifedepartment.com

Game Bag

A COLLECTION OF LETTERS TO THE WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT

We'd like to hear from you! Send your letters to Outdoor Oklahoma Letters, P.O. Box 53465, Oklahoma City, OK 73152, or send e-mail to donald.brown@odwc.ok.gov.

Dear Wildlife Department,

I had an opportunity to meet Craig County Game Warden Austin Jackson the other night. And though I was in the wrong, he was very polite and professional. Very stern as well, but rightfully so considering the circumstances.

These guys have a very tough but necessary job. And considering they'll mostly come in contact with people with loaded firearms, it definitely takes a special kind of person to do this job.

Officer Jackson, hopefully the next time I shake your hand won't be after a stern chewing out!

Blake Griffith, via Facebook



My great-granddaughter is competing in the National Archery in the Schools Program Oklahoma state competition today! Good Luck, A.

Big shout out to my favorite targets, Morrell Targets, for being one of the biggest promoters of NASP, along with Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC), National Wild Turkey Federation, OK Partners for Fish and Wildlife, Wildlife Restoration Program, Bowhunting 360, and @OkOutdoorEd for supporting and promoting the outdoors and archery to these youngsters in the schools.

Jimmy Houston, via Facebook



Dear Wildlife Department,

The ODWC has done an amazing job at protecting the wildlife, and giving hunters and anglers an opportunity to catch or harvest a trophy of a lifetime.

I have lived in Oklahoma for about 20 years now. I have never seen so many big bucks harvested than that has been posted online in 2018. There has been a great number of trophies harvested!

I enjoy hunting and fishing. ODWC does a great job protecting the resources of the state, and I highly commend their efforts. Thank you ODWC for a job well done! The photo shows the buck I harvested during muzzleloader season.

Dave Kennell, Edmond

Dear Wildlife Supervisor Jeff Pennington,

I just wanted to let you know what a great job Wildlife Biologist Matt Mattioda did during a field trip of my Wetland Ecology and Management class to the Cottonwood Creek Wetland Development Units. It was not exactly the best conditions for a field trip with the cold north wind, but it was still a good field trip.

Matt (and you prior to Matt) have always given generously of your time and knowledge to my students, and I greatly appreciate it. I know the students get a lot out of interacting with ODWC biologists and finding out what it is really like to be in the trenches of managing habitat.

**Craig A. Davis, professor and Bollenbach Chair
Department of Natural Resource Ecology and Management
Oklahoma State University, Stillwater**



HOW TO CHOOSE THE BEST FISHING KAYAK

Ultimately, the best fishing kayak is the one you can buy right now. You can spend days comparing every detail, but all that will do is keep you from getting out in nature and enjoying yourself. Decide on your budget and figure out what products are out there that are within your reach. Here are suggestions to help you with your choice.

- **LENGTH AND WIDTH:** Generally, the longer the waterline length, the faster the kayak will go. This means that if you anticipate having to paddle long distances to get to your favorite fishing locations, a 15- or 16-foot fishing kayak will get you there faster than a 10- or 12-foot kayak. A wider kayak offers additional stability, but can be more cumbersome to maneuver.
- **FISHING KAYAK TYPES:** The main thing separating a “kayak for fishing” from any other kind of kayak is the

rigging. When learning to fish from a kayak, experts say you need to start with very simple equipment. Learn to use this equipment and then add more equipment, as needed, later in your fishing career. Many of the kayaks marketed as fishing kayaks have built-in rigging. This is a good entryway into the sport. If a fishing kayak comes with the rigging already in place, it likely has 90 percent of everything you really need.

- **PADDLE VS. PEDAL:** There is debate among anglers over pedal-powered fishing kayaks vs. paddle-powered fishing kayaks. Some prefer the quiet, natural feel of paddling to pedaling like a bicycle. It is more serene, and some say it is easier. Pedal fishing kayaks are just like riding a bicycle. People who do not have as much upper-body strength may have an easier time pedaling. However, there should be a paddle on board either way.
- **SIT-IN VS. SIT-ON:** Many anglers prefer a sit-in style. The sit-in allows anglers to reach equipment a lot more easily. The downside of the sit-in version is that it is harder to get into and out of. So, if you plan on doing a lot of wading, where you would have to get in and out a lot, or have difficulty with mobility, then sitting on top might be better for you.
- **STABILITY:** When it comes to shapes, kayak designers do not have a one-size-fits-all mentality. There are slight variations that affect overall performance. Choose the design that is the easiest for you to use. If you are a beginner or you frequent rougher waters, consider a wider kayak, which is designed to be more stable. Upswept bows are designed to overcome waves. Regardless of the kayak you choose, safety should always come first. ♦♦✕

(Kayak Review and Necky Kayaks)

Outdoor Calendar

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

MAY 2019

3-4	Bird Migration Tours, Hackberry Flat WMA, reservations at (405) 990-4977.
4	Oklahoma City free fishing day, no city permit required.
4-7	Red Slough Birding Convention, Idabel, www.redsloughconvention.com .
5	“Outdoor Oklahoma” TV, Elmer Thomas Bass Fishing, 8 a.m., OETA.
6	Okla. Wildlife Conservation Commission meeting, 9 a.m., Oklahoma City.
12	“Outdoor Oklahoma” TV, Butterflies and Pollinators, 8 a.m., OETA.
19	“Outdoor Oklahoma” TV, Red Cockaded Woodpeckers, 8 a.m., OETA. Okla. Striped Bass Assn. meeting, 7 p.m., Zebco, Tulsa, (918) 639-8114.
22	Controlled Hunts application period closes.
26	“Outdoor Oklahoma” TV, Striped Bass Seining, 8 a.m., OETA.

- **Ducks Unlimited** events set in Norman, May 2; Wagoner County, May 11; Weatherford, May 17. Info: www.ducks.org/Oklahoma/events.
- **Friends of NRA** events set in Yukon, May 4; Durant, May 11; Ponca City, May 18. Info: www.FriendsOfNRA.org.
- **National Wild Turkey Federation** events set in Altus, May 11. Info: www.nwtf.org/events.

JUNE 2019

1	Oklahoma City free fishing day, no city permit required.
1-2	Oklahoma Free Fishing Days, no state license required.
2	“Outdoor Oklahoma” TV, American Burying Beetle, 8 a.m., OETA.
3	Okla. Wildlife Conservation Commission meeting, 9 a.m., Oklahoma City.
8	Breeding Bird Tour, Hackberry Flat WMA, reservations at (405) 990-4977. Women in the Outdoors, NWTF Heart of Oklahoma Struttin’ Hens, Arcadia CEA, (405) 390-9945.
9	“Outdoor Oklahoma” TV, Ponca City Fisherman, 8 a.m., OETA.
16	“Outdoor Oklahoma” TV, TBA, 8 a.m., OETA.
18	Okla. Striped Bass Assn. meeting, 7 p.m., Zebco, Tulsa, (918) 639-8114.
23	“Outdoor Oklahoma” TV, TBA, 8 a.m., OETA.
30	“Outdoor Oklahoma” TV, TBA, 8 a.m., OETA.

- **Friends of NRA** events set in McAlester, June 1; Norman, June 13. Info: www.FriendsOfNRA.org.
- **Ducks Unlimited** events set in Wagoner County, June 15; Oklahoma City, June 21. Info: www.ducks.org/Oklahoma/events.
- **National Wild Turkey Federation** events set in Ardmore, June 8; Sapulpa, June 15. Info: www.nwtf.org/events.

** FOR HUNTING SEASON DATES, GO TO WWW.WILDLIFEDEPARTMENT.COM/HUNTING/SEASONS **

PG13's

Passion for Fishing Leads to New Urban Dock

NBA All-Star Paul George is passionate about fishing and sharing his favorite pastime with others.



DARRIN HILL/OWC



DARRIN HILL/ODWG

NBA star Paul George and some happy schoolchildren celebrate the partnership between PG13's foundation and the Oklahoma Wildlife Department's OKFITS program during a launch event in 2017 at the Oklahoma River.

By Don P. Brown, Information and Education Specialist

Now into its second year, a partnership between the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation and the Paul George Foundation continues to inspire a new generation of young anglers in urban Oklahoma City.

This summer, the partners will be making their next big splash by opening a kids' fishing dock at South Lakes Park, 4210 S.W. 119th St.

It is no secret that George, the All-Star forward with the NBA's Oklahoma City Thunder, is a fishing fanatic. So during his initial basketball season in Oklahoma City, he reached out to the Wildlife Department through his philanthropic foundation, seeking to begin an outdoor initiative that involved youth and fishing.

An existing Department educational program called Oklahoma Fishing in the Schools (OKFITS) proved to be the perfect match.

"I wanted to give back to kids," George said at a recent fundraiser for the new fishing dock. "Because my dad was the one that actually

introduced me to fishing and got me outdoors. And now that's something like a lost art; moreso (they are) on Fortnite and video games all day. So I wanted to give back and reach back out to the younger generation and give them fishing, which is something I love to do."

The partnership kicked off in November 2017 with a fishing event at the Oklahoma River. Dozens of schoolchildren attended and got the chance to wet a line with the pro bas-



GOOGLE EARTH

This simulated aerial view of South Lakes Park in Oklahoma City shows the planned location of a new kids' fishing dock, a joint project of the Wildlife Department, Paul George Foundation and City of Oklahoma City. (Google Earth Image)



Avid angler Paul George takes time to help a budding fisherman get the hang of things.



DARRIN HILL/ODWC

Wildlife Department Director J.D. Strong offers some instruction to the young anglers at the Oklahoma River inaugural OKFITS event.

ketball star. The foundation introduced ODWC's (OKFITS) program to 13 new inner-city schools in Oklahoma City.

Several months later, the foundation gave an additional gift to the OKFITS program to support travel expenses for the 13 schools to fishing field trips. The fourth-graders use the Department's curriculum to learn about fishing and then get to visit a local fishing lake where they learn about safety and get hands-on experience fishing.

For many of these OKFITS students, it will be the first time they have ever held a rod and reel, and in some cases the first time to catch a fish.

ODWC Fisheries Chief Barry Bolton said the idea for a fishing dock originally came up in 2018. When George inked a three-year deal with the Thunder after his initial one-year contract, the partners forged ahead with the dock project.

"What's going to be different about this one is that the dock is going to be 15 by 30 feet, and on the surface they are going to paint the likeness of a basketball court." It won't be a real court with goals, but it will give props to the project partners.

The price tag will be around \$70,000, to be split by the Paul George Foundation, Wildlife Department and the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Foundation. Oklahoma City also jumped onboard to provide dirt work and concrete work for an Americans With Disabilities Act walkway from the parking lot along with engineering.



DARRIN HILL/ODWC

Preparing the fishing gear for the kids at the Oklahoma River is Daniel Griffith, OKFITS coordinator for the Wildlife Department.



Federal Grants Help State's Aquatic Ed

Federal grant funds go a long way in helping the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation provide aquatic education such as the fishing clinics and field trips that students have as part of its Oklahoma Fishing in the Schools (OKFITS) program.

The federal Aquatic Resource Education Program is part of the Sport Fish Restoration Program, overseen by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The funding through these programs is apportioned to state fish and wildlife agencies for projects that:

- Enhance the public's understanding of aquatic resources.
- Improve communication with anglers, boaters and the public on sport fishing and boating opportunities.
- Increase participation in boating and sport fishing.
- Advance the adoption of sound fishing and boating practices, including safety.
- Promote conservation and responsible use of aquatic resources.

The federal funds apportioned annually are derived from excise taxes on fishing equipment, motorboat and small-engine fuels, import duties, and interest collected in the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund.

The Sport Fish Restoration Program, also referred to as the Dingell-Johnson Act of 1950, is often called one of the most successful user-pays/user-benefits programs in the world. Industry, through its payment of dedicated excise taxes, provides the foundation for sport fish management programs, which in turn benefit anglers who buy equipment from those same manufacturers.

Sport Fish Restoration Program funds apportioned to the wildlife agencies each year are based on a formula that includes land area, number of paid license holders, minimums and maximums.

Sport Fish Restoration funds allocated to Oklahoma for Fiscal Year 2019 totaled \$7.9 million. On many of the eligible projects, these federal funds will cover 75 percent of the project costs, with the remaining funds from non-federal sources.

The Sport Fish program is under the umbrella of the overarching Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program (WSFR). Funds from all WSFR grant programs made up about 35 percent of the Oklahoma Wildlife Department's \$69.7 million budget for Fiscal Year 2017, or about \$24.5 million.

(U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service assisted with this article.)



Bolton said the South Lakes site was selected based on three criteria:

- The site needed to be close to neighborhoods.
 - The site needed to have fishable waters with an existing fish population.
 - The site needed to have some facilities already present.
- The dock should be in place by July.

Bolton said the pro player is an authentic angler through and through. "I think his love of fishing is very apparent. He is very comfortable with fishing equipment in his hands."

George said he is thrilled with the dock project. "I wanted to pair the two, between basketball and fishing, which are my two favorite hobbies you know, my two passions.

"I'm having my own fishing dock, which is pretty cool to me."

George and his foundation have held other events to support the partnership with OKFITS. This past summer, he gathered many of his Thunder teammates and put on a fishing tournament in California, his native stomping grounds. And this past fall, he invited fourth-graders to share an afternoon of fishing with him on a private lake near Arcadia.

Bolton said, "PG's efforts fit nicely with what we are trying to do at ODWC." Among other Fisheries priorities, the Department is giving its Close to Home fishing program a face-lift. These urban waters offer convenient



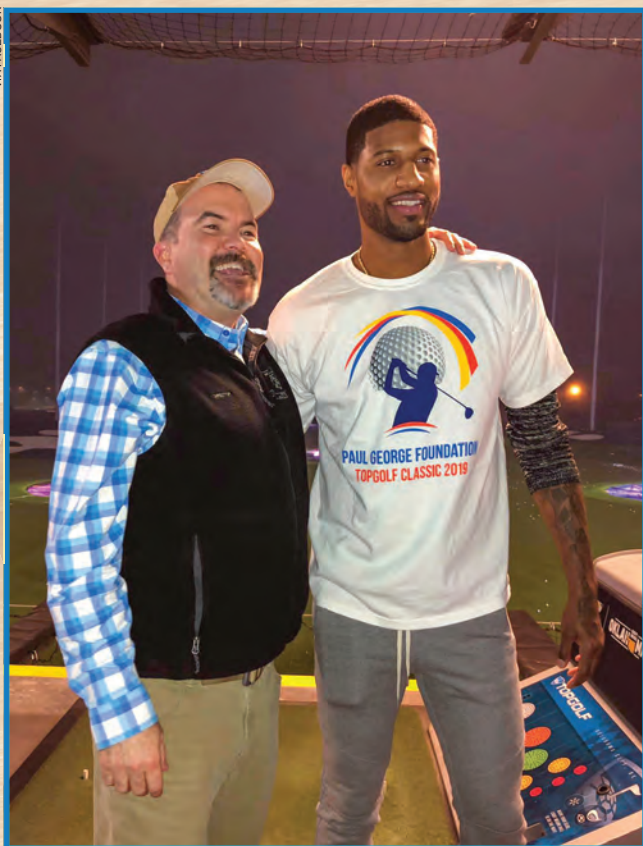
An OKFITS student tries to catch a fish under the watchful eyes of Paul George and his father in the background.



PG13 and some lucky fourth-graders fished from the boat during an enjoyable fall afternoon of fishing near Arcadia.



The fun of Fishing in the Schools is evident on the faces of these fourth-graders sponsored in the program by the Paul George Foundation.



Wildlife Department Director J.D. Strong and NBA star Paul George stand for a photo at a golf game fundraiser to help install a new kids' fishing dock at South Lakes Park.

opportunities for fishing locally, and they are geared for success because they are stocked with hybrid sunfish.

"If you've got a family that lives in the city, they may not want to drive all the way to Texoma. But if they can go catch fish a mile from their house, that's a different deal," he said.

The foundation's fishing initiative added 1,300 fourth-graders to OKFITS, a program that started in 2011 and has seen tremendous growth since.

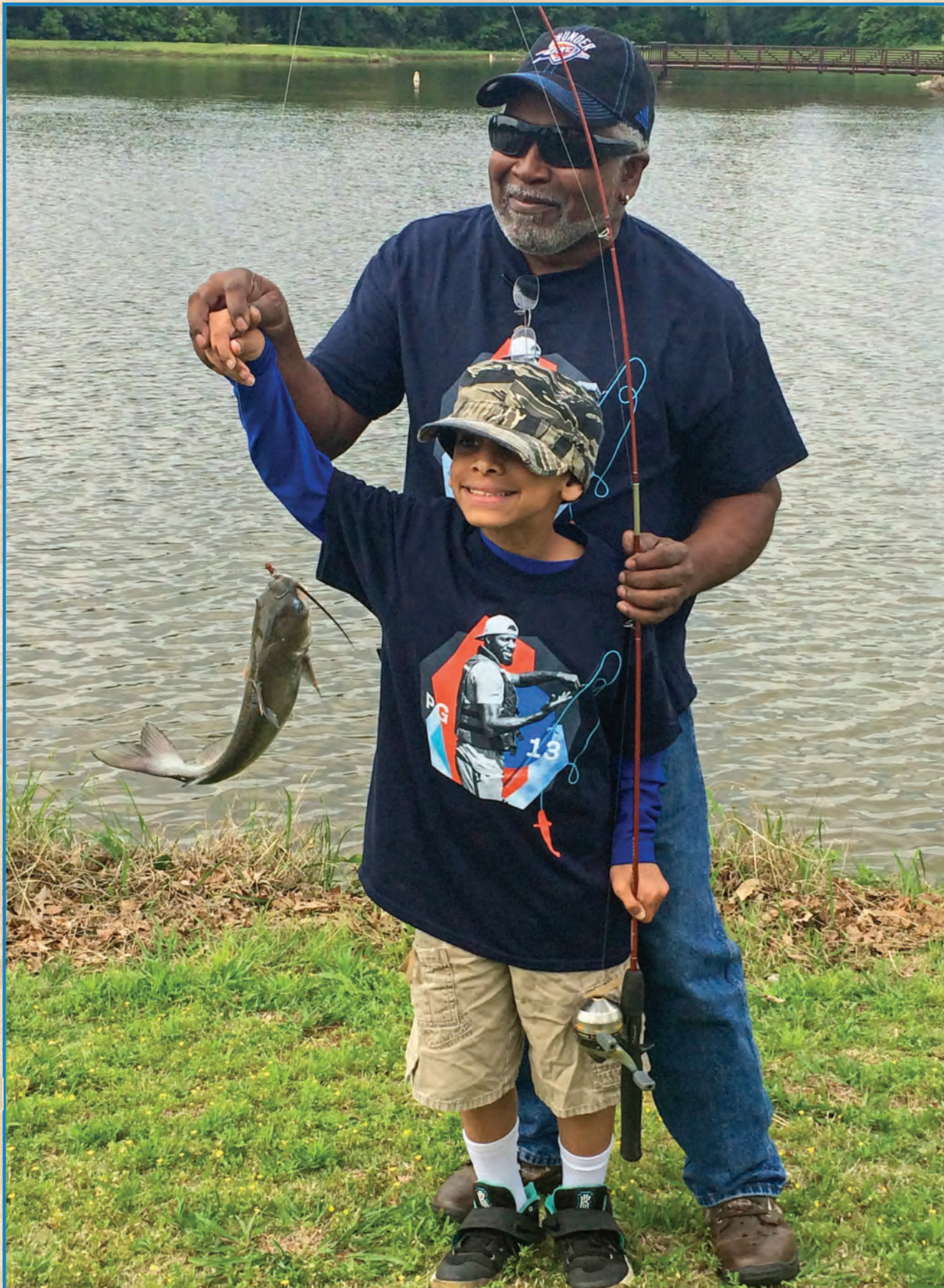
OKFITS has grown from 6,100 students at the start to more than 31,000 presently. More than 350 schools are active in the program statewide. OKFITS provides teacher training, Department-developed curriculum and fishing kits that include rods, reels and lures.

OKFITS is just one part of the Wildlife Department's suite of educational programs designed to acquaint people with outdoor recreational opportunities available to them in Oklahoma. Programs include the Oklahoma National Archery in the Schools (OKNASP), Oklahoma Scholastic Shooting Sports Program (OKSSSP), Explore Bowfishing, Explore Bowhunting and Hunter Education.

Bolton said the star power of this pro athlete is certainly helping to recruit the next generation of Oklahoma anglers.

"His (OKFITS) kids are very interested in Paul George, and he has a great rapport with young people. He's a great ambassador for us, and it's a good partnership.

"If Paul George will sign another three-year contract, we'll do one of these docks every year!" 🌿



DON P. BROWN/OWDC

The Paul George Foundation's support of OKFITS has helped numerous fourth-graders experience the thrill of catching their first fish.

A photograph of an older man, Bobby Bell, smiling and holding a fishing rod. He is wearing a camouflage-patterned shirt and a grey baseball cap with a blue mesh back and the 'MARTIN LAND & CATTLE' logo. The background is a clear blue sky with some light clouds.

The More Things Change...

Bass Fishing Becomes Big Business in a Lifetime

By Don P. Brown, Information and Education Specialist

At 76, Bobby Bell of Norman remains an avid angler and sneaks away for some bass fishing whenever he can.

Looking back

over more than a half-century, angler Bobby Bell of Norman recalls how a day of fishing used to be part of a much easier lifestyle. Considered the fishing coach of former OU Sooners coach Barry Switzer, Bell began regularly fishing for bass when he was about 10 years old.

He credits his grandmother for stirring his interest in fishing when he was just a toddler growing up in Seminole. “She would take me to this pond out in the back, and we would watch that cork go up and down.

“I was fishing before they ever built Sportsman’s Lake.”

He’s 76 now. And he’s lived the changes that have happened in the sport over the past 60 years.

“I love black bass. I think it’s a good eating fish. But I haven’t cleaned a bass in years,” Bell said.

“The way fishing has changed so much? We used to keep them all if they were big enough to eat. That’s what everybody did. We didn’t think we were hurting anything.”

He has photo upon photo of himself back in the day, holding up stringers loaded with 20 or 30 bass. Today, with more modest daily limits and slot limits on bass, full stringers of black bass aren’t seen anymore.

“If you caught a big string of fish, well, that would break your heart if you couldn’t take them and get a picture with them and show everybody.”

The days of keeping all of your fish stretched into the mid-1970s, until another big change began to alter the way bass anglers thought about the resource. Anglers, and fisheries managers, began touting the practice of catch-and-release. The philosophical shift accompanied a surge in competitive fishing tournaments after the founding of the Bass Anglers Sportsman Society, now just B.A.S.S., in 1968.

Bell began fishing in tournaments in the late 1960s. He became a two-time winner of the State Bass Fishing Championship, conducted by the Oklahoma

Wildlife Federation for just four years. In that time, B.A.S.S. grew to more than 10,000 members, and it began conducting catch-and-release fishing tournaments out of concern for the resource. The practice is de rigueur today.

“The tournaments have changed. Used to, we would put all the fish in big tubs (for weigh-in) and would keep them or donate them to the hungry. They fixed the tournaments to release the catch, and it’s helped them grow and get better.”

As the 1970s progressed, bass fishing tournaments



Bobby Bell and his grandmother circa 1955. She took the youngster on his first fishing trip around this time.

“The way fishing has changed so much? We used to keep them all if they were big enough to eat. That’s what everybody did. We didn’t think we were hurting anything.”



Seen here in the 1960s, Bell and a happy youngster show off their catch of the day.

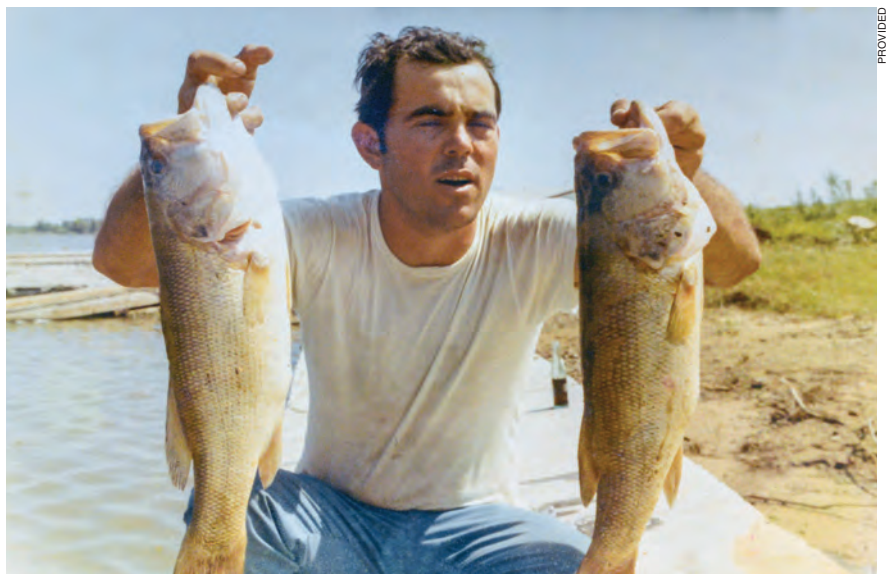


Bass angler Bobby Bell, left, and young friends Mike Vick and Keith Green after a great outing at Lake Thunderbird in 1972. Green would later become a fisheries biologist with the Wildlife Department.



Proudly holding his 1971 state bass fishing championship trophy, Bobby Bell is seen in his circa-1970 fiberglass bass boat equipped with a Jimmy Stick and modern bow-mounted trolling motor.

There was the kill switch, and then the Jimmy Stick, a device that allowed steering the boat from the front seat. “We thought that was the cat’s meow,” Bell recalls.



In the early 1970s, the promise of tremendous bass fishing lured many anglers, including Bell, south of the border to Mexico, where this photo was taken.

continued to grow. And fishing equipment began to evolve at a quickened pace.

“We didn’t used to have live wells in boats,” Bell recalls. That feature soon appeared as a standard fixture on many of the new low-profile fiberglass bass rigs designed for speed. Boat motors went from 15 horsepower to 70 hp in the ’70s. Today, professional bass tournament boats sport 250-hp motors.

“When we started fishing, we didn’t have nothing but oars!”

Progress continued. There was the kill switch, and then the Jimmy Stick, a device that allowed steering the boat from the front seat. “We thought that was the cat’s meow,” Bell recalls. But the innovation faded away as safety issues grew.

Perhaps the one thing that has changed bass fishing, and fishing in general, more than anything is the use and evolution of the depth finder, or fish finder, Bell said. “Those depth finders they have now, it’s darn near unbelievable!” Side-scan sonars, graphing units and GPS location marking and navigation all evolved from the Lowrance Fish Lo-K-Tor, the first recreational fishing sonar depth finder invented in Tulsa in 1958.

But before everyone had the electronic depth finders, Bell said he served as the depth finder by hanging the anchor over the side and feeling when it reached the bottom.

The bass angler’s investment has gone up over the years. In his day, a top-notch fishing boat and motor might cost \$4,000. “If you take a bass boat now, and it’s really rigged up, you’ve got \$75,000 in it.”

Fishing gear and tackle have evolved tremendously. Fishing rods went from bamboo and heavy fiberglass to graphite and even lighter materials used today. Monofilament line wasn’t something Bell had as a young man on the lake. And the high-end fishing reels of the past — the Ambassadors and Presidents — were large, heavy and prone to backlashes. The quality reels of today are way ahead in terms of reliability and price, he said.

As for lures, carved wooden Chugger Spooks and Lazy Ikes gave way to



Bobby Bell became the unofficial bass fishing coach of Barry Switzer shortly after the OU head football coach arrived in Norman in 1966.



Bell still has some original Heddon Chugger Spook lures that haven’t been out of their boxes. This topwater jerk bait was popular for decades and was among Bell’s favorites.



Bass angler Bobby Bell holds one of his two Oklahoma State Bass Tournament trophies while standing in front of other fishing trophies he won during his career.

deep-diving bill baits, jigs and eels, and all sorts of plastics.

In the 1960s, spinnerbaits became popular with bass anglers. “It was my favorite bait for years,” he said. By this time, Bell was working for Southwest Sporting Goods Co., supplying fishing tackle inventory for TG&Y stores across the state. It was natural that he developed and marketed his own spinnerbait: the Bobby Bell Buzzer. Its unique feature was having a colored blade.

And fisheries management has also evolved over the years Bell has been fishing in Oklahoma, which has led to trophy lunkers being caught now that could only be imagined back in the day.

“When I was growing up, if you caught a 7-pounder, that was a big sucker. Fish over 10 pounds just weren’t here back then.

“The Wildlife Department has done an unbelievable job of putting new types of fish like Florida bass in the lakes. I’m really proud of them for that,” along with solid fisheries management with the goal of improving the fishing while conserving the resources.

“Up until a few years ago ... as much as I’ve caught and as much as I’ve fished in Oklahoma, I had never dipped a 10-pounder.” This from a man who has been bass fishing in Oklahoma for more than six decades. “Two years ago, in a 15-minute period ... I caught two fish that together weighed over 20 pounds. If I had caught those in the ‘60s, I wouldn’t have taken a million dollars to throw them back! But I put them right back into the lake.”

Bell doesn’t go fishing from sunup to sundown these days, like he used to do. But what has stayed the same is the anticipation of getting out on the water. “I used to couldn’t sleep before I could go fishing.

“Some people enjoy going out and playing golf, and some people enjoy going out and trying to catch a fish. It’s the love of getting outside and the anticipation of catching a fish, or a big fish. I still get excited thinking about going and where I’m going.”

So what about bass fishing’s future? “By what I’ve seen over the last 60 years, I don’t see fishing doing anything but staying good or getting better.”

He pointed to the creation of high school and college fishing clubs these days as a great way to keep the momentum going. “If they would have had those clubs when I was in school, I never would have graduated!” 🌿



PROVIDED

By the early 1970s, Bobby Bell was fishing many days each week along with his job as a fishing tackle salesman.

“When I was growing up, if you caught a 7-pounder, that was a big sucker. Fish over 10 pounds just weren’t here back then.”



WILDLIFEDEPARTMENT.COM

Bass fishing has evolved over the years in both equipment, technique and cost.

Fishing Out



the Flies

Team Effort Studies Sensitive Aquatic Mayflies, Caddisflies

By Jena Donnell, Wildlife Diversity Information Specialist

"I think most everyone can agree that clean, healthy water is important."

Rickey Cothran, assistant professor at Southwestern Oklahoma State University, recently spent time surveying streams in southern Oklahoma and heard that sentiment firsthand when chatting with local residents. But his career of studying freshwater systems has taught him that clean and healthy water isn't only valuable to Oklahomans — it's also valuable to our fish and wildlife.

RICKEY COTHAN

Cothran and professor Peter Grant, with a team of undergraduate researchers from SWOSU, and Elizabeth Bergey and graduate student Kambridge (Brown) Stephens, with a team from the University of Oklahoma, recently partnered with the Wildlife Department to learn more about two groups of aquatic insects that are very sensitive to changes in water quality.

"Mayflies and caddisflies are both freshwater, aquatic insects. The immature forms are waterbound, but adults spend their time on land." While many Oklahomans may not readily recognize the aquatic lifeforms, they may be familiar with the swarms of the mature insects that can be seen flying over the landscape or clinging to windows in years with favorable hatch conditions.

These abundant insects are an important part of the food chain — feeding aquatic larval dragonflies and a number of fish while in the water; and terrestrial animals like bats and salamanders while on land. But mayflies and caddisflies are also feeding the scientific community information. These insects are considered indicator species and help biologists better under-

stand a stream or river's water quality. "They will be some of the first to drop out of the system if there is contamination, reduced water flows, or an increase in sedimentation. But there will be more species of mayflies and caddisflies in streams with high water quality — those streams that have low contamination, steady flows, and low sedimentation."

To update the current picture of where these important insects can be found, the research team spent two years splashing through streams and rivers in southeastern Oklahoma's Ouachita Mountains and south-central Oklahoma's Arbuckle Mountains. "Our surveys targeted six species of caddisflies and three species of mayflies. We focused on these nine species because there is little to no information about these specific species, or it has been decades since they have been documented in our state."

The partnering universities split the large study area by ecoregion: Team SWOSU focused on the Little and Kiamichi rivers in southeastern Oklahoma, while Team OU concentrated their survey efforts in a three-county area of the Arbuckle Mountains.

RICKEY COTHRAN



Student researchers look for caddisfly and mayfly larvae in a southern Oklahoma stream.



RICKEY COTHMAN

A student researcher uses a net to capture aquatic insects in a southeastern Oklahoma river.



RICKEY COTHMAN

During the day, team members walked in streams and collected samples that hopefully would produce mayflies and caddisflies.

Searching By Day and By Night

"Field work was a pretty grueling experience for the students. We would get out as early as we could and sample four to five sites a day for the aquatic life-forms," Cothran said. The teams spent two hours at each site collecting stream samples and taking habitat measurements like water clarity, substrate information and temperature.

"By the time we finished collecting our aquatic samples, it would be approaching dusk. That's when we would start sampling for the terrestrial adult mayflies and caddisflies." A series of small unmanned light traps that attracted insects into mesh-covered containers were set, and a larger light trap was set at the night's final site.

"We would have dinner, spread a white cloth on the ground, turn on a black light, and wait for insects to land on the cloth. After an hour and a half of collecting mayflies and caddisflies at the big light trap, we would retrace our steps and pick up the smaller light traps."

"It was a lot of fun, but the students were almost always asleep on our early morning drive to the sites, and were almost always asleep on our late night drives back to basecamp."



RICKEY COTHRAN

The teams set up larger light traps along streams to capture adult insects during the night.



RICKEY COTHRAN

Sorting through the insects that show up in the trap, the team members collect the mayflies and caddisflies and put them into jars for later research.



RICKEY COTHMAN

Student researchers sort through the insects collected from a southeastern Oklahoma stream.

Science: It Takes a Village

During scheduled breaks from the field, the researchers sorted through the aquatic samples at Oklahoma State University's Kiamichi Forestry Research Station near Idabel or the University of Oklahoma's Biological Station near Kingston. But finding the small mayflies and caddisflies hidden in the collected vegetation was a time consuming challenge. "A well-trained student could sort through the algae and other things collected in the water samples to find mayflies and caddisflies in one to three hours."

Those sorted samples would then be shared with the larger group.

"We were able to collect a tremendous amount of material during the project and had a great team working to identify the specimens — Peter Grant with SWOSU identified the collected mayflies, and Dave Ruiter of Oregon identified the caddisflies."

The project's results will be shared with the Oklahoma Natural Heritage Inventory to be included in the state's database. Biologists will be able to then use



RICKEY COTHMAN

A dobsonfly as seen in one of the light traps that were set up each night.

this information to update the status of these species in Oklahoma. The collections will also be shared with a natural history museum at Colorado State University. Having samples stored at this museum will allow people from all over the world to access the information collected during the project.

"You're not doing science unless you share the results."

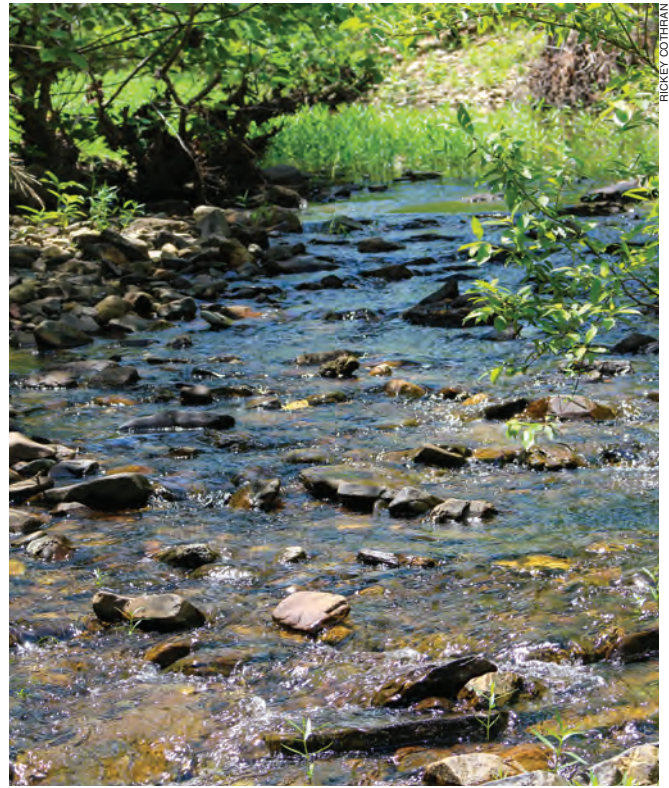
While Cothran was pleased with the project's outcomes, he was also thankful his students were able to gain valuable experience in the field.

"My students really enjoyed being in southeastern Oklahoma; seeing the trees, beautiful streams and mountains. It's a different kind of beauty than the prairie landscape they get to see around Weatherford."

"But what was most impressive to the students was the sheer biomass found in the samples — that's why I think every biology student should visit a light trap in southeastern Oklahoma. Those streams are so productive and have a tremendous amount of aquatic insect diversity. It's really cool to see that linkage between the aquatic and terrestrial.

"A lot of the energy flying around and becoming part of the food chain started out in the water." 🌿

(This project was funded in part by ODWC's State Wildlife Grants Program Grant F16AF01215, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Southwestern Oklahoma State University and the University of Oklahoma.)



The beautiful scenery of southeastern Oklahoma was a treat for many of the student researchers.



This photo shows the progression of sorting necessary to collect the aquatic insects. Starting with a raw stream sample at left, sorting eventually produced the aquatic insects, middle, and finally individuals of specific species, right.

Professor Peter Grant, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Southwestern Oklahoma State University, checks his net for caddisflies and mayflies.



Teddy's Game Preserve

Once Barren of Elk, the Wichita Mountains Refuge Affords Once-in-a-Lifetime Hunting Opportunity

Elk belong here — as much as white-tailed deer and bison and a litany of songbirds that arrive from the south to nest and leave when the Earth wobbles back toward the autumn season.

By Craig Springer, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service


To a mountain range, time ticks by unnoticed. The Wichita Mountains of southwestern Oklahoma stand steadfast, rising up like an island in a sea of prairie. These are old mountains — older than the mind can comprehend. Five-hundred million years, so say geologists. Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge conserves a parcel of the mountains, some 59,000 acres, and all its wild residents.

Granite, quartzite and sandstone lie atop of the craggy mountains, worn smooth by wind and rain and time. Oak and cedar stud the mountainsides and the ravines etched into the slopes. The land plays out in a soft immensity that belies the bouldered soil. Native sod is a stubborn thing, but this dirt was spared the plow because the earth's basement is too close to the surface. You'll know it walking overland. It's rough going.

That native soil abounds in native plants than reproduce unfettered, save for drought. That fact becomes self-evident when the spring rains awaken a profusion of flora. Come April, herds of gravid cow elk will drop their calves to be met with a medley of wildflowers that color the land like glass in a church window.

Garret Colwell harvested this elk at Wichita Mountains
Wildlife Refuge in December 2017.





**Wildflowers abound on
boulder-strewn slopes
at the Wichita Mountains
Wildlife Refuge.**



**Sunset's afterglow starts to burn in the sky over the
mixed-grass prairie at Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge.**

Elk belong here — as much as white-tailed deer and bison and a litany of songbirds that arrive from the south to nest and leave when the Earth wobbles back toward the autumn season. Autumn yields to winter, and a season of another kind starts. A robust population of elk allows hunters an once-in-a-lifetime chance to hunt one of the largest of big game.

Wildlife biologists keep tabs on the elk herds and the refuge land they inhabit. Elk numbers naturally fluctuate; this is known because at least every two years, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologists fly in helicopters on established routes over the refuge to count the herds. Flying the same routes at the same time over a span of years reveals the number of animals on the ground, and how many can be harvested by hunters to maintain a healthy herd.

In the 2017-18 elk season, 178 hunters harvested 137 elk from a total population numbering near 1,400 animals. Knowing bull-to-cow ratios informs how many hunt permits are available each season. Hunting permits are drawn by lottery, administered by the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation through its Controlled Hunts Program.

The success rate is high for hunters; over the long term, about 67 percent of hunters take an elk, well above typical harvest rates most anywhere.

Hunting is an important habitat management tool. And hunters take home the ultimate in natural, nutritious, free-range organic meat.

Wherever the trend in the number of elk goes on the refuge in the future, one must remember that it effectively started at zero. No elk. Unregulated commercial and subsistence harvest eliminated the animal from the Wichita Mountains and the present-day refuge by 1875. In 1901, President William McKinley declared much of the mountain range the “Wichita Forest Reserve.”

Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge Yields Another Quality Elk Hunt

Another elk-hunting season at Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge near Lawton is in the books. And true to form, the success rate was extraordinarily high.

“Few hunters were disappointed,” said David Farmer, acting refuge manager. “Of the 58 hunters who drew tags for bull elk, 49 of them were able to harvest an animal.”

Jim Speegle was one such hunter to earn a bull elk tag in this special-draw hunt, administered by the

Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation in partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

“It’s an once-in-a-lifetime hunt,” Speegle said. “Finally, after 19 years I drew a tag. It was an incredible experience. I saw bison and elk and, wow, the views from the ridge tops are something else. The refuge is a treasure.”

An additional 144 hunters pursued cow elk with 91 hunters harvesting an animal. Cows and bulls combined yielded a 69 percent hunter-success rate.

“Our harvest goals were met due to the high harvest success rate,” Farmer said. “The culling of the herd benefits the elk population; it provides high-quality habitat for the future, as well as a source of lean, natural protein for hunters and their families.”

Speegle said it took two people four trips to haul out his elk meat, and he has spread the wealth. “I’ve shared roasts and steaks and jerky with family and friends — and I had chicken-fried elk steak for breakfast this morning,” he said.

Visit the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation web sites to learn more about hunting and other opportunities for visitors.

—Craig Springer, External Affairs
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Southwest Region



Jim Speegle was selected in the coveted once-in-a-lifetime Controlled Hunt drawing by the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation for a bull elk hunt at the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge. Hunters average a 67 percent success rate.

The re-establishment of a bison herd on the southern plains is another wildlife conservation success story at the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge.





**The refuge conducts bugling elk
tours for the public each fall.**



W. MUNSTERMAN/USFWS BY PERMISSION

This bull elk is among a herd of about 1,400 elk at the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge near Lawton.

Apply Online for Controlled Hunts by May 22

The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation's popular controlled hunts program is open for online applications through May 22.

The controlled hunts program offers once-in-a-lifetime elk and antelope hunts, highly sought-after buck hunts, and a range of other quality deer and turkey hunting opportunities through randomized drawings that only cost sportsmen \$5 to enter. Opportunities offered through the program include hunts on Wildlife Department or other government-owned or managed lands where unrestricted hunting would pose safety concerns or where overharvest might occur.

The online application process **MUST** be completed through the hunter's account at Go Outdoors Oklahoma, the Wildlife Department's new online licensing website. Go to **www.wildlifedepartment.com/ControlledHunts**. Before applying, all applicants including lifetime license holders will be asked to log onto your Go Outdoors Oklahoma account and confirm your account status. If you have any difficulty with your account, please call the Help Desk at **(833) 721-1035** or email **HelpDesk@GoOutdoorsOklahoma.com**.

"You just can't beat \$5 for a chance at an Oklahoma big game or gobbler hunt in the unique areas offered through this program," said Melinda Streich, assistant

director of administration and finance for the Wildlife Department. "Whether you want to hunt a bull elk in the Wichita Mountains, an antelope in the Panhandle or a trophy buck at locations across the state like the McAlester Army Ammunition Plant, the controlled hunts program is one of the best things going in Oklahoma hunting."

All applicants, including lifetime license holders, must pay the \$5 application fee to enter the controlled hunts drawings. The fee is paid only once per hunter per year, not per the number of hunt category drawings entered.

Log on to **www.wildlifedepartment.com/ControlledHunts** for complete application instructions, including tips on enhancing chances of being selected as well as a full listing of available hunts for elk, deer, antelope and turkey.

2018-19 Controlled Hunts

More than 4,000 people had the opportunity to participate in a controlled hunt last year! Many of them experienced the hunt of a lifetime! Here are some numbers:

- Elk Hunts: 203 hunters harvested 141 elk.
- Pronghorn Antelope Hunts: 67 hunters harvested 50 pronghorns.
- Deer Hunts: 3,147 hunters harvested 735 deer.
- Youth Deer Hunts: 678 youth hunters harvested 347 deer.
- Turkey Hunts: 73 hunters harvested 29 turkeys.

White-tailed deer flourish at the southwestern Oklahoma refuge.



In 1905, the spectacled conservationist-in-chief, President Teddy Roosevelt, authored the book “Outdoor Pastimes of an American Hunter.” And he authored a decree that set the mountains on a different course: “... It appears desirable that the entire Wichita Forest Reserve be declared a Game Preserve,” Roosevelt penned in Presidential Proclamation 563. He further stated that the lands “... shall be recognized as a breeding place therefor, and that the hunting, trapping, killing or capturing of game animals and birds upon the lands of the United States within the limits of said area is unlawful, except under such regulations as may be prescribed from time to time.”

Today, science guides modern-day regulations for harvest. But it took quite some time to get here. Elk were reintroduced to the refuge in 1908 — a single bull from a zoo in Wichita, Kan. The remaining seed stock of 16 animals, cows and bulls, came from Jackson, Wyo., in 1911 and 1912. But 1969 marked the year that the herd could confidently withstand hunter harvest.

The fact that elk can be harvested where slightly more than a century ago there were none stands as a testament to scientific wildlife management.

Though time ticks on unnoticed by a mountain range, it is a place not forgotten. Its splendor and its wild residents will consume your senses and remind you that you are among the living. 🌿

(Springer is a writer with External Affairs, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Southwest Region.)

The fact that elk can be harvested where slightly more than a century ago there were none stands as a testament to scientific wildlife management.



L. HANCOCK/IPS BY PERMISSION

A black-capped vireo nests at Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge. The refuge has been important to the recovery of this formerly endangered bird.



This statue of a 1909 Boy Scout stands outside the Osage County Historical Museum.



Hornaday Awards are still bestowed to conservation-minded Boy Scouts today.

Blazing the Trail

Oklahoma Scouts Among First to Earn Conservation Awards

By Darrin Hill, Information and Education Specialist

Conservation and Scouting go hand in hand. Some things just seem to fit together, sort of like campfires and marshmallows, worms and hooks, cookies and milk. Well, you get the picture. Both visions were sparked around the same time, and it is only fitting that they have had a long history together.

Teddy Roosevelt established the U.S. Forest Service in 1906, along with setting aside national parks, game reserves and national forests (which would provide ample opportunities for future Scouts to enjoy the outdoors). Soon after, Robert Baden-Powell published "Scouting for Boys" in 1908. Baden-Powell and Roosevelt were both admirers of each other and even friends later on.

Baden-Powell was influenced and aided by a number of people when he wrote his book, but the influence of nature came from Ernest Thomas Seton, who had long admired with reverence the way American Indians had taught their boys through outdoor crafts and skills. Called the Woodcraft Indians, its themes of nature and woodcraft were rolled into the "Handbook for Boys" by

retired British Army officer Baden-Powell. Even more unique and surprising are both movements' historic roots here in Oklahoma.

During the early 1960s, Oklahoma was one of two states providing Conservation Awards to the Boy Scouts of America. Administered by the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, the award was given to any Scout upon completion of the necessary requirements. The award had existed prior to 1959 but was underutilized. So in conjunction with area Scout executives and ODWC supervisors and directors, the program was revamped around 1960. It offered three steps in achievements, each one requiring a little bit more effort as Scouts worked on their merit badges. These requirements were more than likely mirrored and replaced by the more recent award, called the World Conservation Award, which started in the mid-1970s.



Conservation Awards For Boy Scouts

A new series of conservation awards for boy scouts in Oklahoma has been announced. Sponsored by the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, the awards, of which there are three, will be known as "Scouting for Conservation." A similar award program has been in operation in Oklahoma for several years, but has not been fully utilized.

Recently a conference was held between regional scout executives from Dallas, Texas and wildlife department officials to discuss a new program. As a result, the award program has been completely revised, made more modern and brought up-to-date. It is based on merit badge work and closely follows the advancement procedure which is emphasized by the Boy Scouts of America. Under the new plan, scouts and explorers will be given a wider choice of merit badge subjects from which to choose. Heretofore, only specific merit badges were listed. When a scout has made his choice of subjects and completed the necessary work, he will then qualify for one or more of the awards. "The new program should be well received by the scout offices in Oklahoma since conservation is one of the main topics for boy scouts in the nation," according to Cloyse Bond, Chief of Information-Education of the wildlife department. "Merit badges, on which the boys will work, relate either directly or indirectly to some form of conservation or wildlife studies," Bond added.

The award to be given the qualifying scouts or explorers is in the form of a certificate suitable for framing. The certificate, each one a different color, was designed and printed by personnel in the information-education division.

An application blank has been prepared listing all of the merit badges available for the awards. These now are in the hands of all the scout council headquarters across the state. When a scout has completed the requirements for any of the three awards, he will be required to fill out the application blank with the assistance of his leader and return it to his council headquarters. After checking and approving, it will be forwarded to the information-education division of the wildlife department and the appropriate certificate will be prepared and then returned to the scout leader for presentation.

Each certificate carries a title and each one becomes progressively harder to obtain. The first certificate is "Scout Ranger." The second, "Oklahoma Wildlife Guardian" and the third, "Oklahoma Wildlife Conservationist." Each award must be obtained in order.

"It's quite possible there are many scouts and explorers in the state who will immediately qualify for one or more of the certificates because of merit badge work already completed," according to Bob Chaddock who has been in charge of the program revision for the wildlife department.

Any scout or explorer residing in Oklahoma is eligible for the awards.

The program itself is unique in that Oklahoma is one of only two states in the nation providing the conservation awards for scouts. The program was launched in Oklahoma, but a similar program has been instituted in Florida.

Complete information can be obtained from either the scout council headquarters at various locations in the state or by writing to the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, State Capitol, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.



With approving interest Gary Jacobson, 3028 N.W. 29th, and Steve Epperson, 500 N.E. 15th, Oklahoma City, inspect a new award certificate. The youths are explorer scouts.—Photo by Bob Chaddock.

In order for a Scout to achieve the World Conservation Award, the Scout must complete the Environmental Science merit badge, either the Soil and Water Conservation or the Fish and Wildlife Management merit badge, and the Citizenship in the World merit badge. All of these merit badges help make a more rounded citizen and have potential to spark interest into a new hobby or even a field of work.

It's more than likely that the Oklahoma conservation requirements resembled those, possibly also including either of the Fishing badges and Shooting Sports badge, Forestry, or even Citizenship in the Community and Citizenship in the Nation. If Oklahoma was one of the first to offer such a badge, then it is probably a safe assumption that the Wildlife Department and Oklahoma offered one of the first conservation-type awards in the world, because Scouting is a world movement and not something that only exists in the United States.

Most people are surprised when they learn Oklahoma was the first state to offer a Scouting program, which was in 1909. The north-central Oklahoma troop was founded just two years after Baden-Powell had started

his troop in England in 1907. The Rev. John F. Mitchell was sent to the St. Thomas Episcopal Church in Pawhuska by the Church of England. Mitchell had served as the chaplain for Baden-Powell's first troop and had a ton of Scouting spirit and knowledge to give to the Pawhuska community.

It was only a year later that the Boy Scouts of America was officially formed. Some of the stories that have been told of this first Scout troop in the U.S. are about the limited number of roads available to assist the elderly to cross the street and an attempted rescue of a stuck cat, which turned out to be a skunk, complete with a set of Scouts being sprayed.

Obtaining the rank of Eagle Scout has the same prestige as it did in the past, it being the highest rank a Scout can achieve, finished with a Scout completing a service project all on their own with only advisory roles filled in by adult mentors. Oftentimes these projects have an ecological role or are a conservation project in the outdoors and the environment.

Working alongside city parks or state parks or conservation agencies, hopeful Eagle Scouts build bird observation blinds and nest boxes, attack invasive species, and educate the public on conservation campaigns. These projects allow Scouts to create a vision and see it through all in the spirit of the Scout Law, Scout Oath, Scout Motto and especially the Scout Slogan, "Do a good turn daily."

While the Eagle Scout rank is sought after and known, an even harder award that tends to get overlooked and statistically has fewer awarded than the Eagle rank is the William T. Hornaday Award. Hornaday founded a number of iconic conservation organizations including the National Society of American Taxidermists, the Bronx Zoo, the National Zoo in Washington, the World Conservation Society, and the American Bison Society.

As a youth, Hornaday witnessed firsthand the overt slaughtering of the bison on the tallgrass prairie in southern Iowa. After the establishment of the National Zoo and through Roosevelt's support, he started propagating bison hoping to stave off their extinction. After the first large-game preserve in America was established in



DARRIN HILLODWC



Cooperation Helps Conservation

By BILL TROMPLER, Forestry Division
Planning and Resources Board

Proof that Boy Scouts, businessmen and townspeople of southwestern Oklahoma are accepting their share of the responsibility to help conserve our natural resources, was recently shown at the third annual Forestry and Conservation Camp. The site of the one and one-half day session was Black Beaver Council's Camp Thomas located eight miles west of Apache.

Co-operation made the camp possible and was the key to its success. Grocerymen helped by supplying food, businessmen gave money, while men of the 358 Field Artillery Battalion donated their cooking abilities. Agricultural technicians gladly offered their time and knowledge. Engineers and Soil and Moisture Conservationists with the Bureau of Indian Affairs came from Anadarko and Apache. Wildlife habitat technician Gerald Iams, with the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Department, came from Apache. Conservationists and engineers with the Soil Conservation Service attended from Lawton, Anadarko, and Ft. Cobb. Foresters from Chickasha completed the list of instructors.

Camp Deserves Attention

Camp Thomas justly deserves the attention of conservationists, both professional and laymen. The camp, lying at the base of the Wichita Mountains, is as rich in historical background as any in the Nation. Artifacts found

at the camp indicate that this area has been used by Indians as a camp ground for hundreds of years. Some historians say that Coronado passed through this general area during his trek through the Southwest. Excavations made by treasure seekers looking for two million dollars allegedly buried by Jessie and Frank James can be seen at the northeast corner of camp.

Many old timers believed that the only living witness to the hurried burial of the kettle of loot, is a tall cottonwood growing by the creek crossing. Trees are in the same category as dead men when the revelation of secrets are involved.

In 1935 pioneer cattleman George Thomas gave the land to the Black Beaver Council of Boy Scouts and from that date the area has served as a camp ground for thousands of boys from eleven counties.

The first afternoon scouts arrived in camp heavily laden with axes, shovels, camping equipment and other paraphernalia so vital to young outdoorsmen. When evening came scouts gathered around the council fire to sing ballads and spin yarns, whose origin and validity was questionable. Jim Smith of KSWO-TV and Radio was leading the group through the tenth verse of Ole McDonald, when Smokey the Bear strolled into the circle and inspected the fire. Smokey gave the boys stern but friendly advice about handling fire, then joined in singing the last

verse and left camp saying he was late for performance.

Evening Snack Helps

With the evening spent the scouts polished five gallons of hot chocolate and a small amount of cheese and crackers, then retired to their sleeping bags. Some, this first overnight camp brought the realization that camping meant the sacrifice of motion picture television, and the electric blanket.

Old Sol wasn't the first one up in camp. Adult leaders were still commenting on the amount of time required to spend a night in Camp Thomas when cooks were already dishing out "seconds" to the scouts at the dining lodge.

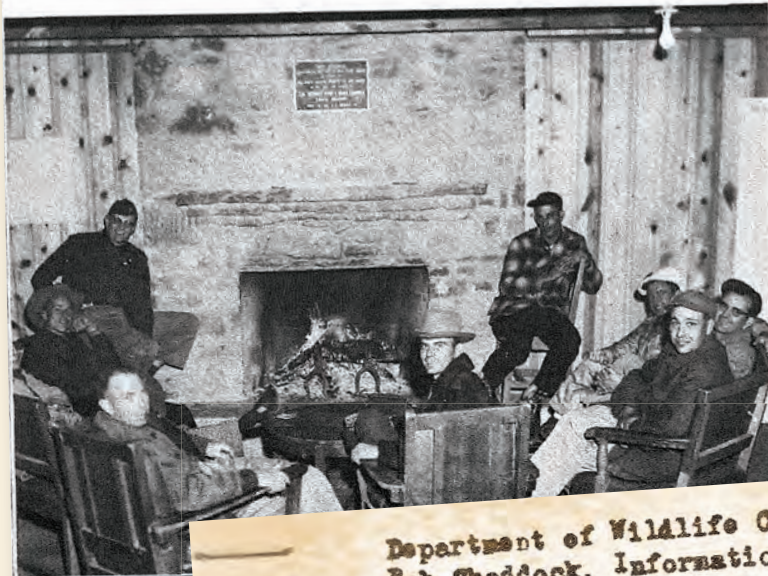
The day passed quickly, but not until the scouts had been planted, numerous wildlife shelters had been constructed, and most of the camp had been surveyed. Trees were planted for multiple purposes. They will provide cover for wildlife. Some will help protect the camp from wind while others will provide fence lines.

Wildlife shelters were constructed by planting desirable trees from overstocked stands. Saplings will eventually produce wildlife food as well as shade. Left standing. Thinning will encourage desirable trees while less desirable trees, when stacked as high as a boy can toss, will provide a welcome sign of a rabbit being pursued by a hungry hawk or

Surveying Is Interesting

Scouts displayed great interest in surveying. They learned the meaning of such terms as backsight, fore-sight, bench mark and that the level is a vital

Bill Trompler, farm forester and director



Staff for the Forestry and Conservation Camp left to right are: William Schumacher, District Scout Executive; Dale Karnes, Oklahoma Division of Forestry; Jim Smith, KSWO TV; Jim Fossey, Bureau of Indian Affairs; Bill Trompler, Oklahoma Division of Forestry; Ira McAnally, Soil Conservation; Wayne Condrey, Bureau of Indian Affairs; Jim Stotts, Winchester Arms and Ammo Co.; Gerald Iams, Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Department.



Department of Wildlife Conservation
Bob Chaddock, Information-Education Division
1-27-60

To Tom Daniels,
Commerce and Industry-

Little Known Facts About Oklahoma

Oklahoma is one of only two states in the nation providing Conservation to the Boy Scouts of America. Administered by the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, the award is given to any Boy Scout upon completion of the necessary requirements.

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In white cap, Jim Fossey, Bureau of Indian Affairs engineer, explains to the group the uses of a level.

conservationist.

After a lunch scouts watched marksman Jim Stotts demonstrate shooting and hunting safety. Mr. Stotts emphasized that hunting is more enjoyable when the hunter exercises safety precautions, respects private property and abides by the hunting regulations.

The conservation camp was a success. Scouts learned theory and gained experience in addition to completing most merit badge requirements for forestry, wildlife conservation, nature, surveying, soil and water conservation and camping.

Not all of the trees will live, the boys did not learn to be wildlife experts, nor did they become surveyors, but they did gain knowledge of conservation.



Awards
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1905 at the Wichita National Forest and Game Preserve in southwestern Oklahoma, Hornaday relinquished 15 bison from the Bronx Zoo herd for a reintroduction program and even hand-selected the area the bison would be released to at the Wichita refuge.

Hornaday initially created the medal, calling it the Wildlife Protection Medal. After Hornaday died in 1937, the award was renamed in Hornaday's honor and become a BSA Service Award. With more than 2.5 million young boys earning Eagle Scout rank in the past 80 years, only about 1,100 Hornaday medals have been awarded and are prized by those who receive them. The three levels of the Hornaday award are the Badge, Bronze Medal and Silver Medal, all with increasing levels of difficulty.

Around the Wildlife Department office, it's easy to spot a former Scout. They tend to lead with pride and often have the cheerful outlook on life that you would expect. Quick to laugh but even quicker to lead, one such former Scout, Dallas Barber, ODWC's big game biologist in the Wildlife Division said, "Not only did Scouting open my eyes to the various fields available in outdoor professions and recreation, but it taught me the importance of teamwork. There isn't a job in the country where you aren't a part of something bigger than yourself. Scouting helped me understand that.

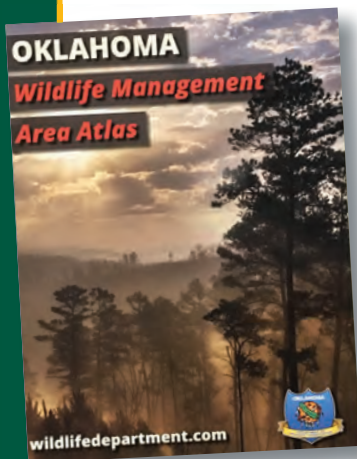
"It's not always about first aid and knots. Most people don't realize the deeper lessons you learn while participating in Scouting activities, until it has already sank in." It's a safe bet there are more Scouts working within the Department, and in other conservation agencies, who got a taste of leadership and conservation skills with their time spent in Scouting.

Jerry Shaw, programs supervisor in ODWC's Wildlife Division, said, "Scouting was an extension of my love to be outdoors. My father took me hunting, fishing and camping as a kid, and Boy Scouts was a way to further that outdoor education and experiences. Spending time outdoors, traveling to different areas of the state on camping trips, and seeing how diverse Oklahoma was helped me to fuel the fire of wanting a career that would allow me to remain a part of the outdoors.

"Scouting helped me learn to be a teacher and a communicator, both skills that would prove vital in my position with the Department.

"But perhaps most important is the Scout Oath, where I promised 'On my honor I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country ...' I feel that I am fulfilling that duty when I work at a profession that is dedicated by its very mission to manage, enhance and protect the wildlife of Oklahoma for not just today, but for young kids yet to be born, who like I was, are eager to be outside, curious about the natural world, and excited to learn more about what lies past the concrete. I feel that working to enhance resources that are there for everyone in the state to utilize and enjoy, I am achieving a small part of that promise." 🌿

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

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

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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.

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

CREDIT CARD ORDERS: Online at www.GoOutdoorsOklahoma.com, "License Catalog," "ODWC Merchandise."



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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.

Item WD-3 Application Form — FREE

Outdoor Store Mail-In Order Form				
Item	Description	Price (Includes s/h)	Quantity	Subtotal
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OS-6	Habitat Donor Caps — check choice of color and design: <input type="checkbox"/> Camo Bass <input type="checkbox"/> Camo Deer <input type="checkbox"/> Orange Bass <input type="checkbox"/> Orange Deer	\$18		
OS-7	Current Waterfowl Hunting Stamp	\$10		
OS-8	Oklahoma Wildlife Management Area Atlas	\$25		
OS-10	"Outdoor Oklahoma" Magazine 1-Year Subscription 2-Year Subscription 3-Year Subscription	\$10 \$18 \$25		
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Watchable Wildlife

THE BALD EAGLE

BY LAURA ECKART, INFORMATION INTERN

The bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) has been a symbol of the United States since 1782. Most Americans are familiar with this bird that appears on currency, logos and seals but know little about the bird itself.

Both male and female mature eagles have identical coloring and can be easily recognized by their white head and tail. Young eagles are almost completely brown, easily confusing them with a mature golden eagle, which is the only other wild eagle species found in the United States. Full-grown bald eagles can have a 7-foot wingspan and are among the largest birds of prey in the world. Mature birds stand 3 feet tall and can weigh 8 to 15 pounds.

Eagles are a part of the order Falconiformes, large groups of birds of prey that include hawks, eagles, falcons and vultures among others. Since predatory birds eat live animals for food, they are well equipped with a hooked bill and powerful claws.

Water plays a significant role in where bald eagles reside. Bald eagles mainly eat fish, so they are drawn to places where fish are easily accessible. They use their talons to snatch fresh fish out of the water, but they will eat dead fish that are accessible. The rest of a bald eagle's diet is made up of small animals, reptiles and birds, and depends on what is available at various times of the year.

Migratory movement of bald eagles varies in different areas of the country. Southern eagles migrate to the north at the end of summer and will return to the south when breed-

ing season starts in early winter. Most northern eagles will migrate south for the winter. In Oklahoma, bald eagles can be seen from October to April and spend winters at larger reservoirs. The biggest congregation of bald eagles can be found at the Great Salt Plains National Wildlife Refuge. Usually 70 or more will spend the winter either on or near that refuge. A few bald eagles can be spotted at Grand Lake, Fort Gibson, Texoma and Tenkiller lakes along with the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge.

Bald eagles mate for life and are known to return to the same nest every year. When they start building a nest, they will

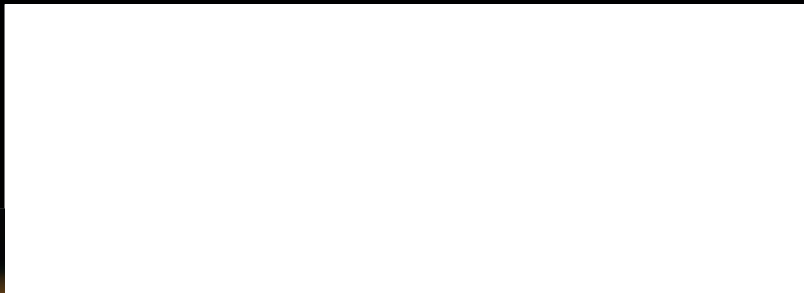
*Full-grown bald eagles
can have a 7-foot
wingspan and are among
the largest birds of prey in
the world.*

choose the tallest tree available to them that offers good visibility on both sides. In some areas where trees aren't available, bald eagles are known to build their sturdy nest on cliffs or pinnacles, the higher the better. Once their nest

is made, the female begins to lay eggs. This usually occurs in December and January for southern bald eagles and in spring for the birds in Alaska. The eggs will be incubated for about 35 days. The adult bald eagles will spend most of the day guarding their young, the only interruptions being to gather food.

When the eaglets are 5 to 6 weeks old, they will start to grow their rich brown feathers. The nest becomes a battle ring as they learn to fight and are able to develop their muscles and exercise regularly. As they grow older, they will start to venture farther away from their nest. Eventually they will set out on their own and not return to the nest. 🌿





WADE FREE/ODWC

Fishing is a constant over time, but the way people fish has evolved. Learn how profoundly bass fishing has changed over the past half-century inside this issue of Outdoor Oklahoma.

Outdoor Oklahoma

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