

Outdoor Oklahoma

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2020 – ONLY \$10 A YEAR

OUR
75TH
YEAR

In This Issue:

The Quest To Get HIP

The More Things Change...
When Bird Hunts Were Boss

Covering Our 75th Birthday



A PUBLICATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

Panoramas

Laura McIver hunts quail every fall in Oklahoma, and this year she had more places to do that. McIver is one of more than 1.4 million hunters and anglers who spend more than \$3 billion across the state each year pursuing their outdoor passions.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation have worked closely together as part of a nationwide effort to expand hunting and fishing opportunities on federal public lands.

In southwestern Oklahoma, 53,000 acres in Wichita Mountains National Wildlife Refuge is now open to waterfowl, coyote, wild turkey and feral hog hunting for the first time.

Sequoyah National Wildlife Refuge, in eastern Oklahoma, provides wild turkey and feral hog hunting for the first time on more than 16,000 acres. Also in eastern Oklahoma, Tishomingo National Fish Hatchery formally opened fishing on Pennington Creek.

And there are new or expanded opportunities at five other national wildlife refuges across the state including goose hunting at Deep Fork NWR, youth turkey hunting at Little River NWR, deer hunting at Ozark Plateau NWR, turkey hunting at Salt Plains NWR and dove hunting at Washita NWR.

In many ways, these expansions represent a symbol of gratitude to hunters and anglers. In 1903, Theodore Roosevelt — an avid outdoorsman — created the National Wildlife Refuge System, now a network of

567 parcels across more than 150 million acres set aside to conserve the nation's fish and wildlife.

As the 26th president said, "We have fallen heirs to the most glorious heritage a people ever received, and each one must do his part if we wish to show that the nation is worthy of its good fortune."

For generations, this heritage has been safeguarded in a conservationist ethic championed by outdoorsmen and women. Hunters and anglers have long been the biggest supporters, by far, of programs to help maintain wildlife populations and protect their habitat.

And we know their participation will remain essential to bolstering the "glorious heritage" of our nation's rich wildlife legacy. It is our hope that the new expansion of these activities encourage more people to become involved in outdoor activities.

There's no better way for you to take part in this heritage than to get outside with your shotgun or a fishing rod. Now Oklahomans have more opportunities than ever before thanks to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation.



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J.D. Strong". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

J.D. Strong
Director, Oklahoma Department
of Wildlife Conservation

Outdoor Oklahoma

JANUARY/FEBRUARY • VOLUME 76 • NUMBER 1



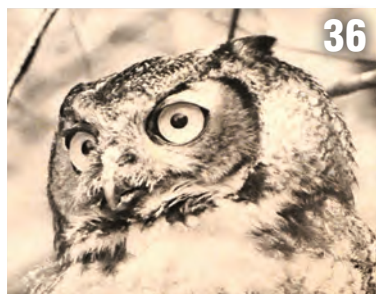
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ON THE COVER: Hunting buddies Aaron Milligan and Anthony Mackey watch over their decoy spread, hoping to get a shot at one of the birds for their HIP quest. See story, Page 12. (Photo by Don P. Brown/ODWC)

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Off the Beaten Path

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

CATOOSA BUSINESSMAN NAMED 2019 LANDOWNER OF YEAR

By Carlos Gomez,
Oklahoma Game Warden

The 2019 Landowner Conservationist of the Year Award winner is Gerald A. Choate of Catoosa.

Choate acquired 325 acres near the North Canadian River near Dustin. With his investment in knowledge, working within tight budgets and sweat equity, he's transformed his property into a wildlife oasis in just 12 years.

Choate has used all the conventional equipment including brush hog, disk, tree-pincher, four-wheelers, broadcasters and chainsaws. But he's also put in the time to study and strategize existing openings, maximize the periodic benefits of fire, and leverage neighboring landowner alliances.

One beneficial nugget has been his use of a 60/40 mix of wheat/rye grains (not grass) mixed with prescribed seeding



Gathered at the presentation of the 2019 Landowner Conservationist of the Year Award are, from left, J.D. Strong, Director of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation; Research Supervisor Russ Horton; honoree Gerald A. Choate of Catoosa; Bill Dinkines, Assistant Chief of Wildlife; Game Warden Carlos Gomez; and Wade Free, Assistant Director.

To landowners like Choate who possess a sportsman's passion, helping wildlife flourish is reward in itself. But sharing the fruits of his labor may be the most gratifying reward of all. He fully understands that wildlife is a renewable resource that can provide plenty for many.

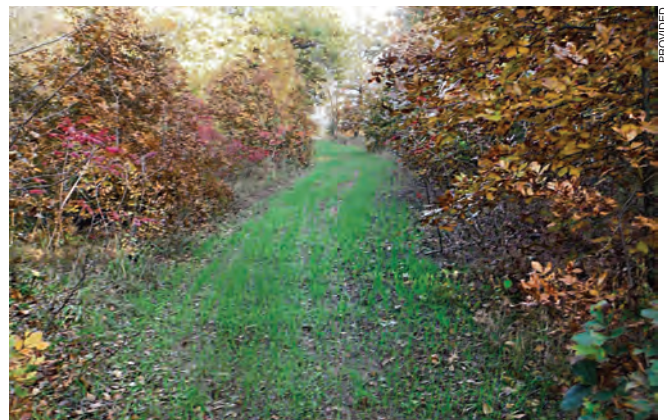
Through his local National Wild Turkey Federation chapter in Tulsa, Choate consistently shares the results of his wildlife management efforts. By donating hunts on his property for fundraising purposes, he's been directly responsible for many thousands of dollars dedicated to NWTf-supported programs in Oklahoma benefiting untold numbers of sportsmen. ♦♦♦



This whitetail buck captured on camera on Gerald Choate's property is testament to how his conservation practices have created a wildlife oasis.

densities of brassicas (turnips), rapeseed (cabbages) and clovers, planted all together in early fall. The wheat provides early-season food, brassicas produce a late-season food, and the rye serves as both a natural, inexpensive fixator of nitrogen (fertilizer) and "weed-reducer."

Maintaining 10 percent of his total acreage in food plots, Choate strives to keep them connected where possible using mowed, disked, and seeded openings following the naturally occurring travel lanes. Then, with strategically timed and rotating controlled burns, he has transformed good land into great land.



To improve habitat, Gerald Choate disks and seeds open areas with a wildlife-friendly mix of wheat, rye and clover, following natural travel lanes.

ARTWORKS UNVEILED FOR NEW LICENSE HARD CARDS

Oklahoma hunters and anglers play hard. But that doesn't mean they need to worry about damaging their paper hunting or fishing licenses in the field. The Wildlife Department's collectible hard cards are the answer!

These stylish collectibles allow you to carry up to nine licenses on one long-lasting card that fits in your pocket. To get one, log on to the Wildlife Department's Go Outdoors Oklahoma license system at license.GoOutdoorsOklahoma.com. Even lifetime license holders can order one of these classy cards.

The new cards for 2020 will depict artwork by Oklahoma artists Carolyn Mock of Bartlesville and Lauren Florence of Oklahoma City.



"Strutters Ball" by Carolyn Mock

Mock is "proud to be an Okie through and through." Raised near Claremore, Mock spent significant time around wildlife and farm animals. "There was no question what I would paint when I started my fine art career," she said. Mock's artwork has been featured in the popular NatureWorks Art Show and Sale in Tulsa.

Her artwork titled "Strutters Ball" depicts three tom turkeys. It was an easy choice for the next Wildlife Department hard card, as the iconic image is sure to resonate with sportsmen across the state.

Knowing that hunting and fishing license sales are key to habitat management and restoration, Mock sees her featured artwork as a way of giving back to the wildlife she's painted through her career. While her website is under development, sportsmen can see more of her stunning wildlife artwork at Sunset Ridge Gallery in Pawhuska. She also can be reached at cmockart@aol.com.



"What a Catch!" by Lauren Florence

The other new hard card for 2020 features Florence's "What a Catch!" inspired by an old family photo hanging in her home.

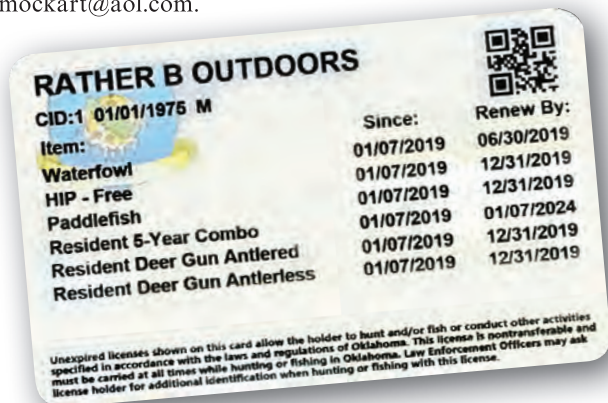
"The photograph is of four brothers — one of whom is my husband's grandfather — and it was taken near Watonga about 1935 in the middle of the Dust Bowl," Florence said.

"My father-in-law tells me that those fish weren't for fun; they were for dinner. His folks didn't leave during the Dust Bowl. They made do. I'm really excited about these guys getting to tag along on a bunch more Oklahoma fishing trips. I think they would get a real kick out of that. I'm also excited about a Dust Bowl-era image helping to support future conservation efforts in Oklahoma."

Florence has spent the last seven years in Oklahoma City, but she grew up in Bartlesville and found inspiration during her childhood from the wildlife and art collections at places such as Woolaroc Museum and Wildlife Preserve in northeastern Oklahoma. She earned a fine arts degree at the University of Kansas.

Connect with Florence and view more artwork at www.LaurenFlorence.com or follow Lauren Florence Art on Facebook and Instagram.

The new cards are expected to be available in early 2020. All sportsmen and sportswomen — especially lifetime license holders and returning customers — should log in to the Go Outdoors Oklahoma online system to update their information and complete their profile. New users are invited to create a profile. ♦♦×



Michael Bergin, Senior Information Specialist

INDIANA ARTIST'S WORK WILL GRACE 2020-21 STATE WATERFOWL STAMP

An Indiana artist's painting collected the most votes in this year's Oklahoma Waterfowl Stamp art competition. The depiction of a pair of Canada geese by Noblesville, Ind., artist Anthony J. Padgett earned first place. Padgett's artwork will be featured on Oklahoma's waterfowl stamp for the 2020-21 hunting seasons.

The entry was among 35 eligible artworks submitted last summer by hopeful artists from across the nation. Oklahoma's contest is open to any artist regardless of residency, and the winner is selected based on internal Wildlife Department judging and online voting by the public.

Artists who received honorable mention for their entries are Payton Christensen, Spanish Fork, Utah; Justin Madding, Danville, Ark.; and Buck Spencer, Junction City, Ore.

The Oklahoma waterfowl stamp program was designed to ensure quality habitat for the hundreds of thousands of ducks and geese that migrate through the state each year. The program began in 1980 and features portraits of the state's diverse waterfowl species by some of the nation's best artists.

The program generates funding for waterfowl conservation projects through the sale of waterfowl licenses, which are required of waterfowl hunters, and stamp sales, many of which are purchased by collectors. The new stamps will go on sale around July 1 in the Outdoor Store at license.GoOutdoorsOklahoma.com.

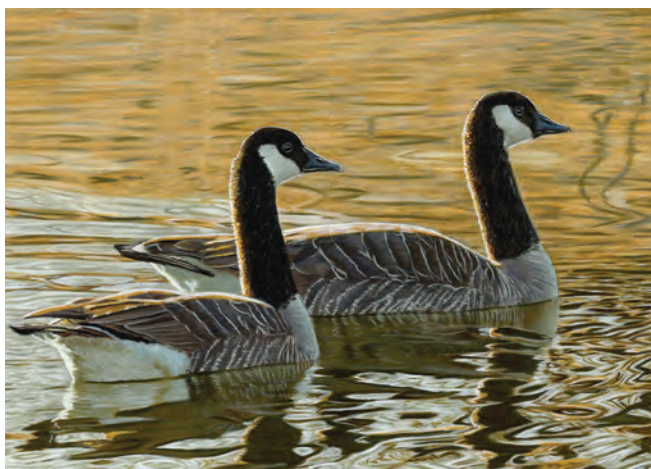
The waterfowl stamp program has funded the purchase of nearly 12,000 wetland acres along with the enhancement, creation, restoration and maintenance of thousands of additional acres of critical waterfowl habitat. Wetland development units such as Hackberry Flat Wildlife Management Area in southwestern Oklahoma and Red Slough WMA in McCurtain County have benefited from state duck stamp funds. ♦♦



Winner: Anthony J. Padgett, Noblesville, Ind.



Honorable Mention: Justin Madding, Danville, Ark.



Honorable Mention: Buck Spencer, Junction City, Ore.



Honorable Mention: Payton Christensen, Spanish Fork, Utah.

2019 CREATIVE WRITING COMPETITION

"I REALLY WANT TO GO HUNTING NOW"

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 Circle P Pogue Ranch (or similar) and a scholarship to the Outdoor Texas Camp. In this issue, Outdoor Oklahoma honors junior category female winner Lydia Holt, 13, from Owasso 8th Grade Center.



OKLAHOMASTATIONSOCI.ORG

ARCHERY: WHAT I LIKE ABOUT ARCHERY IN THE SCHOOLS AND BOWHUNTING

By Lydia Holt



I love and respect animals and their environments, but I never considered hunting until my Dad started hunting. I thought it was cool and all but never really took an interest in it. When it came time to pick my classes I wanted to take the Outdoor Education class because I thought it was an outdoor class where I could learn about animals. I soon realized the class was actually about hunting safety, archery, fishing, what game wardens do, and hunting rules. I was really not happy. Soon after that my teacher, Mr. Blair, said that we would be doing a unit on archery.

I was first introduced to archery at summer camp. After learning and practicing it, I came to really appreciate the sport. The idea of getting to study it every day at school sounded like paradise to me. I especially enjoyed getting to do archery at the expo. It was so cool and so much fun. Although, everyone in my group found it a little weird that I liked the recurve bow more than the

compound bow. After I explained that I like the recurve bow more because it allows me to rely on my own strength and abilities, they did not think it was so weird. Compound bows are nice but they do half of the work for you and I don't like that. However my dad says that compound bows are easier to hunt with. I love that the Outdoor Education class lets kids in the 8th grade experience and enjoy archery. It is especially fun to be able to try, see, and use the few different types of bows.

I really want to go hunting now that I have had a little bit of experience using bows. I really like them over guns. Guns are too heavy, difficult for me to move with, and I do not like the smell of them. I really hope my dad will take me bowhunting now especially since I have learned so much about archery and bow safety. I even have my hunter safety card. Even if I don't get to go hunting I am happy that I got to do archery in my Outdoor Education class.

I love archery because it is fun, but most of all I love it because it is a way for me to connect with my dad. It is so fun being able to come home and tell my dad all about my class and how well I am doing. He always tells me how proud he is of me. It is also cool that it is something that just him and I share in our family since my mom and siblings do not know anything about archery. Archery is a great subject to talk about with my dad. Now we both know so much about it. Sometimes, I even know more than he does! This gives me so much pleasure. Being able to connect with my dad over archery is the best. ♦♦×



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 Director J.D. Strong,

I am a Colorado hunter, and a former wildlife officer for Colorado Parks and Wildlife. So, after doing my best to piece together information about your regulations, I called your Woodward office and was referred to Game Warden Mark Reichenberger. I wanted to let you know he was friendly, helpful, and professional. He answered my questions and didn't stop there. He went on to explain how I could get the most from my deer license and my hunt. A lot of folks would have stopped when they had done their job. He makes me feel better about my upcoming hunt and your agency. Thank you, and thanks, Mark!

Patricia Dawn Dorsey

.....

Dear Big Game Biologist Dallas Barber,

Gentlemen,

Regarding the controlled hunt at Fort Reno and USDA Grazingland Research Lab on Nov. 9: I cannot thank you enough for the opportunity to bring my son to this controlled hunt. For him, this was his first opportunity to go deer hunting. Your ground brought him the chance to see, not just one or two deer, not just deer along the side of the road, but to watch many deer interacting with their environment. He learned a lot about both buck and doe behavior. We had the opportunity to observe a lot of wildlife, including falcons hunting, coyotes howling, and, naturally deer. My son did not successfully bring home a deer from this hunt, but his excitement only ramped up with each deer that stepped into view. This controlled hunt helped me make a deer hunter out of my son, hopefully for life.

The staff from the USDA and from the Oklahoma Wildlife Department were courteous, helpful, knowledgeable and approachable. They provided a great in-briefing, including a fantastic safety brief that helped cement the hunting and firearms safety lessons I have been teaching my son.

Several of the youth on this hunt did bring home deer. I know the USDA Grazingland Research Lab has to contend with and control the local deer herd both to keep the herd healthy and to keep the herd from damaging the research being done. Using the controlled youth hunt is an outstanding program to accomplish this. It shows a synergy so rarely seen anymore in government programs.

I am truly grateful for the opportunity for myself and my son, and will be applying again next year with great hope for my daughter to get the same experience.

Chris Stoner, Oklahoma City

Outdoor Calendar

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

JANUARY 2020

1	Oklahoma City free fishing day, no city permit required.
4	"Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, Ismat's Goose Hunt, 8 a.m., OETA.
6	"Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, Duck Prep/Hydrodipping, 8 a.m., OETA.
12	"Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, HIP Quest, 8 a.m., OETA.
20	Okla. Striped Bass Assn. meeting, 7 p.m., Zebco, Tulsa, (918) 639-8114.
21	"Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, Quail Research, 8 a.m., OETA.
26	"Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, Ismat's Goose Hunt, 8 a.m., OETA.

- **ODWC Classroom Hunter Education** set in Alva, Nov. 9; Blanchard, Nov. 9; Mustang, Nov. 9; Edmond, Nov. 16; Omega, Nov. 16. Register: <https://license.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/Events.aspx>.
- **Ducks Unlimited** events set in Chandler, Jan. 11; Kingfisher, Jan. 18. Info: www.ducks.org/Oklahoma/events.
- **Friends of NRA** events info: www.FriendsOfNRA.org.
- **National Wild Turkey Federation** events info: www.nwtf.org/events.

FEBRUARY 2020

1	Oklahoma City free fishing day, no city permit required.
2	"Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, Governor's Bear Hunt/Lt. Governor's Bear Research, 8 a.m., OETA.
7	Trout Fishing Clinic, Putnam City High School, OKC Parks and Recreation, ages 10+, 7:30-9 p.m. Register: (405) 297-1426.
9	"Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, Duck Prep/Hydrodipping, 8 a.m., OETA.
11	Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commission meeting, 9 a.m., 1801 N. Lincoln Blvd., Oklahoma City.
12-13	Oklahoma National Archery in the Schools West Tournament, State Fair Park, Oklahoma City.
16	"Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, HIP Quest, 8 a.m., OETA.
18	Okla. Striped Bass Assn. meeting, 7 p.m., Zebco, Tulsa, (918) 639-8114.
19-20	Oklahoma National Archery in the Schools East Tournament, Expo Center, Tulsa.
21-22	Illinois River Fly Fishing School, Tenkiller State Park, \$145, (405) 613-6520.
23	"Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, TBA, 8 a.m., OETA.
25	Rack Madness! Measuring Event, Wildlife Department headquarters, Oklahoma City, 9 a.m.-7 p.m. Must register
29	Fly fishing clinic, Arcadia Conservation Education Area, 9 a.m.-noon. Register: https://license.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/Events.aspx .

- **Ducks Unlimited** events set in Edmond, Feb. 1; Owasso, Feb. 7; Stillwater, Feb. 15; Mustang, Feb. 20; Oklahoma City, Feb. 28. Info: www.ducks.org/Oklahoma/events.
- **Friends of NRA** events info: www.FriendsOfNRA.org.
- **National Wild Turkey Federation** events set in Enid, Feb. 1; Edmond, Feb. 8; Ardmore, Feb. 8; Miami, Feb. 20; Elk City, Feb. 21; Talihina, Feb. 21; Holdenville, Feb. 22; Hydro, Feb. 22; Atoka, Feb. 28; Dewey, Feb. 28; Norman, Feb. 29; McAlester, Feb. 29. Info: www.nwtf.org/events.

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

FOLLOW THE TRAIL TO TROUT FOR **YOUR GRAND SLAM**

Within the first two months after the June 18, 2019, kickoff of the Oklahoma Fishing Trail, seven anglers had completed the Trail's Grand Slam challenge.

The Oklahoma Fishing Trail promotes the great fishing opportunities found in Oklahoma and highlights 39 lakes and rivers across the state that are divided into six regional loops and is a joint project between the Oklahoma Tourism & Recreation Department and the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation.

"We have been so excited about the response to the Oklahoma Fishing Trail," said Lt. Governor Matt Pinnell, who is also Oklahoma's Secretary of Tourism and Branding. "With some of the best and most diverse fishing available in America, Oklahoma is a Top Ten fishing state. We want people to get out and complete the Oklahoma Fishing Trail Grand Slam and earn bragging rights over their fellow anglers."

Muskogee native Gaberiel Davison, 22, was the first to complete the Grand Slam, which is designed to highlight the incredible diversity of fish species found in Oklahoma lakes and rivers. To complete the Grand Slam, anglers must catch five different species of fish found in Oklahoma, snap a picture of each one and then submit the images at www.FishinOK.com.

The five types of fish required in the Grand Slam are bass, catfish, crappie, sunfish and a bonus fish that can be any other species found in Oklahoma, including trout. For more details, anglers can visit FishinOK.com.

Right now, from January through March, is an ideal time for anglers to catch that Grand Slam "bonus fish" at the Wildlife Department's designated trout fishing areas. Each year, the Department stocks trout at six seasonal trout fishing areas across the state, beginning Nov. 1 and continuing into March or April. Those areas are Perry CCC/Lake Perry Park, Robbers Cave, Blue River, Lake Watonga, Medicine Creek and Lake Carl Etling.

In addition to these "cold weather" trout fisheries, the Wildlife Department also operates two year-round trout fisheries in the Lower Mountain Fork River below Broken Bow dam and in the Lower Illinois River below Tenkiller Ferry Dam. Trout are normally stocked in these areas every week or two, as long as water conditions are favorable for trout survival.



Try catching some trout and count it as your "bonus fish" for the Grand Slam challenge on the Oklahoma Fishing Trail. These guys reeled in a rainbow to be proud of while fishing at the Blue River Public Fishing and Hunting Area near Tishomingo, a seasonal trout stream stocked by the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation.



Trout, both rainbows and browns, are introduced species to Oklahoma. They thrive in colder waters and make excellent table fare. Using ultralight fishing gear with 4- to 6-pound test line and small hooks can lead to some thrilling action. But anyone can catch trout using regular angling gear with small jigs or spinners, prepared bait or live bait.

Trout fishing is also available from Dec. 1 to Feb. 28 at two Close to Home Fishing locations in major urban areas: Oklahoma City's Dolese Youth Park Pond and Jenks' Veterans Park Pond.

Trout anglers must carry a resident or nonresident fishing license while fishing.

In addition, trout anglers at Dolese Youth Park Pond must have an Oklahoma City fishing permit.

The Oklahoma Fishing Trail's first Grand Slammer, Davison, is stationed at Fort Sill Army Post near Lawton.

Everyone completing the Slam receives an Oklahoma Fishing Trail hat, shirt and sticker in addition to the exclusive Grand Slam window decal. Davison said he learned about the fishing trail from a friend.

"I think it's pretty cool because a lot of people don't know what there is to do in Oklahoma," Davison said.

Davison said his favorite Oklahoma lakes are Lake Eufaula and Tenkiller, but while at Fort Sill he frequently fishes at a pond on post.

To learn more about the Oklahoma Fishing Trail or get a free Oklahoma Fishing Trail brochure, visit FishinOK.com. ❧❧❧

DEPARTMENT STANDOUTS HONORED **NATIONALLY, LOCALLY**

Several Wildlife Department employees and programs have earned notable recognitions recently.

The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC) received the 2019 Diversity Outreach and Education Award from the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (SEAFWA). The Department was recognized for forging fruitful partnerships to introduce students from diverse backgrounds to the outdoors through fishing.

“At a time when young people in cities are increasingly disconnected from nature and the outdoors, especially those from diverse backgrounds who may lack access or opportunity for time in nature, the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation is providing a model for many other organizations facing similar challenges across our nation,” said J. D. Strong, ODWC Director.

In 2017 the Department partnered with the Paul George Foundation to help introduce the Oklahoma Fishing in the Schools Program into more urban classrooms. In addition to being a professional basketball player (formerly with the Oklahoma City Thunder), George is also an avid angler. Since 2011, the Fishing in the Schools Program recruited nearly 400 schools, and George saw a way to use this established platform to reach more diverse urban audiences.

The Department and the foundation picked 13 new schools in the Oklahoma City metro area to be part of the new PG13 fishing program. Teachers received training to teach the Fishing in the Schools Program in their classrooms. The partnership grew in 2018-2019, with the foundation providing \$8,000 to cover transportation costs for participating schools.

Additionally many of those kids will have a new opportunity for fishing access, thanks to a partnership with the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, the Paul George Foundation, the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Foundation and the City of Oklahoma City Parks and Recreation Department. This partnership is leveraging \$50,000 to build an accessible fishing dock for South Park Lake in Oklahoma City.

The Department has since secured equipment grants for the 2019-2020 school year to add up to 40 new schools to the program in urban areas.

SEAFWA presented Rhonda Hurst with a special recognition. Hurst is the Executive Assistant to the Director of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC). She also serves as coordinator of the ODWC Wildlife Expo, one of the largest wildlife expos in the nation.

“Rhonda lives and breathes for sharing her love of the outdoors with friends, family and neighbors across Oklahoma,” said Chuck Sykes, SEAFWA President.

Hurst began her career with ODWC in 1992 as a secretary for the agency's Information and Education Division. She transferred to the agency's Wildlife Division in 1996 and was promoted to the role of Administrative Assistant in 1999. Since 2013, Hurst has served as Executive Assistant to the ODWC Director.

In 2005, Hurst took on the challenge of serving as ODWC's first Oklahoma Wildlife Expo Coordinator. That first expo unexpectedly drew more than 45,000 visitors. Under her leadership, the Expo has become a key public relations and outreach event for



SEAFWA AWARDS: Executive Assistant Rhonda Hurst, SEAFWA Special Award; Department Director J.D. Strong; OKFITS Coordinator Daniel Griffith, SEAFWA 2019 Diversity Outreach and Education Award.



FISHERIES PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR AWARD: Fisheries Assistant Chief Ken Cunningham; Wildlife Department Director J.D. Strong; honoree Senior Biologist Jason Schooley; Assistant Director Wade Free.

ODWC with an annual attendance of between 40,000 and 60,000.

“I’ve had the privilege of working directly and daily with Rhonda over the past three years,” said ODWC Director J.D. Strong. “During that time, Rhonda has been an invaluable asset to me, the Department, and particularly in her role as our Expo coordinator. She is the kind of person whose commitment to our outdoor heritage and lifestyle shines in everything she does.”

In addition to her duties with ODWC, Hurst is a certified hunter education instructor and certified National Bowhunter Education Foundation instructor. She has also served as an instructor for numerous workshops and programs designed to introduce others – especially women – to the outdoors. Among those are such programs as the Oklahoma and Texas Becoming an Outdoors Woman programs, Becoming an Archery and Bowhunting Enthusiast, Project Eagle Outdoors Woman, Outdoors Woman One-Day workshops and many more.

The ODWC Fisheries Division selected Senior Biologist Jason Schooley as the 2018 Fisheries Professional of the Year. He is heavily involved in operation and maintenance of ODWC's Paddlefish Research Center near Miami, Okla., and conducts constant research focused on paddlefish in Oklahoma. In 2018, Schooley received the Professional of the Year Award from the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. ♦♦♦

OPERATION GAME THIEF MARKS 40 YEARS

Oklahoma Game Wardens have been nabbing poachers with your anonymous tips to the Operation Game Thief (OGT) phone line since 1979. Call OGT toll-free at (800) 522-8039 from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. weekdays and you could receive a cash reward if your information leads to a conviction.

OGT is a 40-year-old program of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation designed specifically to stop illegal killing of the fish and game that belong to everyone, whether you're a sportsman or not.

"Our average Oklahoma Game Warden covers about 750 square miles, and most counties are only assigned one Game Warden," said Marni Loftis, operations manager and Operation Game Thief coordinator for the Department's Law Enforcement Division. "We can't be everywhere in the county, so we really depend on the public's help to gather information about wildlife violations."

Anyone can call the local Game Warden anytime they suspect a wildlife violation, but tips about a known violation are especially helpful. "Maybe you see someone spotlighting, see a poached animal, or even overhear a conversation about a poaching incident — we want to hear from you."

Loftis recently worked an OGT case that started with an



The Oklahoma Wall of Shame is displayed inside the Wildlife Department's Operation Game Thief trailer. It contains examples of wildlife stolen by poachers and seized as evidence by state Game Wardens.

overheard conversation at someone's workplace. "Not only did the violator brag about shooting a deer from the road, but they also mentioned the crossbow used in the violation was hidden in an attic. When we interviewed the suspect, we found the poached deer on the property and were able to get a full confession before gathering the bow for evidence. I would not have made the case without getting that initial phone call."

Sometimes small details can help lead to a conviction. "If a vehicle was used, knowing the license plate or vehicle color can help. But oftentimes the reporting party is too far away to see the license plate. Details like any decals, broken windows or taillights can give the Game Warden enough clues to start their investigation."

"Tips from the public are extremely helpful, but we don't want anyone to jeopardize their safety to help us get information. Sharing any detail you can safely observe is more than enough."

Donations to OGT make rewards possible. Reward payments are made so that no one will ever know who received the payment — not even the officer who answers the phone. To make a tax-deductible donation, send a check payable to Operation Game Thief to Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, Operation Game Thief Fund, P.O. Box 53465, Oklahoma City, OK 73152.

To contact your local Game Warden, go to <https://www.wildlifedepartment.com/law/game-warden-directory>. Learn more about OGT at <https://www.wildlifedepartment.com/law/operation-game-thief>.

"As Game Wardens, our main goal is to make sure we have fish and wildlife for future generations. We're passionate about Oklahoma's natural resources and our hunting and fishing traditions. We cannot express how much we appreciate the sportsmen and sportswomen who help us with that goal." ♦♦×



OPERATION GAME THIEF

1-800-522-8039

You Make the Call...the Wildlife Department Makes the Catch

<h3 style="margin: 0;">1979</h3> <p style="margin: 0; font-weight: bold;">OGT Phone Line Installed</p> <hr style="width: 50%; margin: 10px auto;"/> <p style="margin: 0; font-size: small;">Wildlife Crimes can be Reported Anonymously</p>	<p style="margin: 0; font-weight: bold; color: red;">OGT Evens the Odds</p> <div style="background-color: red; color: white; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <p style="margin: 0; font-weight: bold; color: white;">1 Warden: 746 mi²</p> </div> <p style="margin: 0; font-size: small;">Your Tips Help Game Wardens Solve Cases</p>	<p style="margin: 0; font-weight: bold; color: red;">OGT CLOSED : 89 CASES</p> <p style="margin: 0; font-size: x-small;">(2004-2019)</p> <p style="margin: 0; font-size: small;">... in addition to cases closed when tips were reported directly to local Game Wardens</p>
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Game Warden Directory at [wildlifedepartment.com](https://www.wildlifedepartment.com) and in the Oklahoma Hunting and Fishing Guide.





Game Warden's Journal

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



Game Wardens John Grellner (based in Canadian County), Blake Pearson (Kingfisher County), and Phillip Cottrill (Major County) worked several nights this winter to catch a suspected serial poacher.

Area Game Wardens received and investigated reports of multiple deer with heads removed west of Hennessy along Turkey Creek. A break finally came when Grellner observed a vehicle driving erratically at high speed across wheat fields chasing a coyote. Grellner followed the vehicle, but muddy roads interfered. The suspect continued to an oil lease road. Pearson and Grellner apprehended the suspect leaving the lease road.

Five deer heads were seized, along with syringes, methamphetamine, a rifle and a pistol. Multiple charges were filed, and the suspect was jailed.

Many thanks to all the citizens who took the time to report these crimes. Game Wardens need your eyes and ears!

found the bird was still warm, and blood was still trickling out. A quick search produced evidence of a shotgun blast near the bird.

Harrison checked a game camera that caught a person littering last year in the same spot. It produced pictures of a suspect vehicle. Harrison was able to match vehicle description and tire tracks at the scene to the suspect vehicle. After locating the vehicle, the occupants were cited for illegally taking a protected nongame bird, and a shotgun was seized as evidence.

Game Warden David Clay (Nowata County) reported that several anonymous tips from concerned citizens resulted in discovery of multiple deer being shot, heads removed, and bodies left to waste. The lengthy investigation in northeastern Oklahoma led to suspects with prior felony convictions. Using the Department's new Go Outdoors Oklahoma Licensing System, Clay discovered that one suspect had e-checked three deer in the previous two seasons as taken with a gun license. A search warrant was served on the suspect's residence.



Game Wardens and local law officers uncovered multiple illegal deer, wildlife, firearms, and drugs. Two suspects were arrested and jailed. Charges filed included illegal possession of wildlife (multiple counts), possession of firearms after previous felony convictions, and possession of controlled and dangerous substance.

Clay gave thanks to others assisting with the investigation: Nowata County Sheriff's Office, Nowata Police Department, Game Wardens Capt. Jeff Brown (Nowata County), Lt. Joe Alexander (Washington County), Austin Jackson (Craig County), Riley Willman (Delaware County).



On Nov. 22, Game Warden Cannon Harrison (McIntosh County) received a call from a Wildlife Department biologist who found a dead great blue heron in a ditch on a Wildlife Management Unit near Checotah. Harrison

On Thanksgiving morning or the night before, a cow elk was shot at Camp Gruber. The rifle bullet struck the animal's rear near the spine. The elk was found, initially alive but paralyzed, just north of Little Green Leaf Lake at the first Camp Gruber gate on the east side of the road.

Anyone with information about this crime can remain anonymous and is asked to contact Game Warden Josey Branch (Muskogee County) at (918) 625-4873. Information leading to an arrest can result in a cash reward.

NEW CHIEFS IN LAW, WILDLIFE, ADMINISTRATION

Col. Nathan Erdman, Chief of Law Enforcement

Game Warden Nathan Erdman has been promoted to Chief of the Law Enforcement Division. Erdman previously served as Assistant Chief of the division since 2016.

The Law Enforcement Division is responsible for upholding the laws and regulations that protect Oklahoma's wildlife resources. Game wardens are certified peace officers sworn to protect wildlife and the public's interests in the outdoors.

As Chief, Erdman oversees the division of about 120 people, the largest of the Department's five divisions.

"I'm just lucky I've got 117 of the finest employees that I could ever want," he said. "I'm up here to work for them; trying to make sure that they have everything that they need."

Erdman said he knew early in his life that he wanted to work as a game warden. "I grew up in the country, hunting and fishing."

Erdman earned a fish and wildlife management degree at Northeastern State University, and was hired as a game warden shortly after he graduated. His first assignment was in Beaver County in the Panhandle, where he spent 13 years. He then transferred to his home Okfuskee County in 2007. A year later, he was promoted to Supervisor in District 4, where he worked until becoming assistant chief in 2016. He has worked for the Wildlife Department for 24 years.



Amanda D. Storck, Chief Financial Officer and Chief of Administration

Amanda D. Storck has joined the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation as the Chief Financial Officer and Chief of Administration.

"I am pleased to come back to work for the citizens of the great state of Oklahoma supporting the staff operations of the servants at ODWC that manage and protect fish and wildlife, along with their habitats." Fifteen years of her state career have been focused on the State's natural resources. "I'm thankful for the opportunity and look forward to addressing some of the top initiatives the



Department has in enhancing fish and wildlife resources to ensure there are resources for future generations."

Storck graduated from Shawnee High School. She attended Oklahoma State University and majored in finance with minors in accounting and Japanese. She started her career at the Office of State Finance as a budget analyst for Natural Resources and subsequently for Common Education, Higher Education and Career Tech. She then joined the Oklahoma Department of Tourism and Recreation where she was Director of Policy and Planning. While there, she completed her Master's in Business Administration from OSU with a focus in Human Resources, Business Law and Accounting. She then transitioned to Director of Policy and Communications for the Secretary of Environment and then Chief of Administration, CFO at the Oklahoma Water Resources Board. Recently she was with YMCA of Greater Oklahoma City.

Bill Dinkines, Chief of Wildlife

Bill Dinkines has been promoted to Chief of the Wildlife Division. He previously served as Assistant Chief of Wildlife since 2000.

The Wildlife Division has about 90 technicians and biologists who are responsible for management, maintenance, research and conservation activities on more than 100 Wildlife Management Areas. They also provide assistance to landowners in managing wildlife.

"It is an honor and a privilege to work with and for the great employees we have in Wildlife Division. We have accomplished many things in my 29 years with ODWC, and I'm excited to see what we can do in the years to come not only conserving wildlife and but also ensuring future generations have the same opportunities to enjoy the outdoors as we have," Dinkines said.

Born and raised in Oklahoma, he developed an appreciation for the outdoors from childhood experiences hunting, fishing, camping, and time spent outdoors with his father. He knew at a young age he wanted to work for the Wildlife Department.

After earning bachelor's and master's degrees in wildlife ecology at Oklahoma State University, he joined the Department in 1991 doing telephone surveys. Six months later, he was hired as the Southeast Region Wildlife Biologist. In 1996, he became Southeast Region Wildlife Supervisor.

"I have always said this really isn't a job, it's a passion, and a blessing to get to do what we do!" ♦♦✕





HMP Hip Hooray!

Hunting Buddies Find Success In Quest for All Birds on Permit

By Don P. Brown, Associate Editor

Setting a goal and finally making it happen is a satisfying experience. Especially when the goal is something unconventional. But for hunting friends Anthony Mackey, 46, of Noble, and Aaron Milligan, 58, of Norman, they've got "unconventional" in the bag.

The game bag, that is.

These two set out on a quest in 2014. Their hunting goal was to harvest a bird from every category listed on the federal Harvest Information Program permit, an annual federal survey required to be filled out by most migratory bird hunters across the nation.

That means they would need to take duck, goose, dove, woodcock, rail/gallinule, and snipe/coot. And they wanted all of it to occur in Oklahoma.

"Not everyone will understand, think this is a big deal or even care," Mackey wrote on Facebook. "But to us, this is.

"Well it started in 2014, with two snipe. I'd only seen snipe in a book. I'd been 'snipe hunting' as a kid in Boy Scouts. Then I'd always thought to myself, 'I'm going to get one of those snipes I've seen in a book' — I actually know it exists."



"Well it started in 2014, with two snipe..."

"Not everyone will understand, think this is a big deal or even care, but to us, this is."



While Anthony and Aaron shared the goal of completing their HIP quest, they also had the chance to spend time together in the outdoors and deepening a valued friendship for each of them.



Another successful and satisfying hunt for the guys and for Mazie, Milligan's chocolate Labrador retriever.

So, on a duck hunt that fall, on a small public lake, the two men happened to get within range of a pair of snipes. Each of them fired and bagged a bird.

Since they first met at their workplace in 2009, the two have been on some interesting hunts, Milligan said. "One thing I've found about hunting: It's not always easy to find somebody who likes to hunt the way you do and hunt the things that you do. And this little adventure we went on is kind of a case in point. A lot of people would not want to participate in something like that.

"We are always up for something different, some kind of adventure. I've always been interested in variety. I like to catch fish I haven't caught. I like to hunt things and go places I haven't been."

So, Milligan decided after getting the snipe, he would pursue a rail.

"You're not going to find much if you Google 'rail hunting in Oklahoma.' But you can talk to the folks at the Wildlife Department, and you can get some real information."

State biologists suggested a successful rail hunt could be had at Hackberry Flats Wildlife Management Area. So the two men headed to southwestern Oklahoma in September 2015. They took seven sora rails that day.

"We started calling it the HIP quest or the goony bird slam."





Watch It on TV!

Watch Anthony Mackey and Aaron Milligan on a waterfowl hunt as they try to complete their quest to bag one bird in each of the categories listed on the federal Harvest Information Program permit. Tune in to Outdoor Oklahoma at 8 a.m. Sunday, Jan. 19, 2020, on OETA. Watch episodes online anytime at youtube.com/OutdoorOklahoma.



DON P. BROWN/DWIC



Anthony hauls in a few of the decoys after a hunt.



Aaron celebrates another success with common gallinule in hand at Red Slough WMA.



Anthony Mackey and Aaron Milligan decided in 2014 to try to harvest an example of each bird that is listed on the federal Harvest Information Program permit. They called it their HIP quest, and they finally claimed success in 2018. They are holding mounts of a Wilson's snipe, sora rail and common gallinule.

During the drive home from Hackberry, the men began talking about the birds listed on the HIP. Each had already taken ducks, geese, coots, snipes, rails and doves. It was then they decided to make it their goal to be able to check every category on the survey, and what they needed was gallinule and woodcock. "We started calling it the HIP quest or the goony bird slam."

Next on the list was gallinule, but the timing wasn't right and they had to wait until 2016. With tips from the biologist at Red Slough WMA, the hunters drove nearly four hours to the public hunting area that seems out of place in Oklahoma. They encountered fire ants, angry wasps, cottonmouths and alligators. But within 15 minutes, each of them had bagged a common gallinule, Mackey said.

"So we got the rails, got the snipe, got the gallinules. We were still kind of in disbelief that we'd done it and fairly easily to that point. And then came the woodcock. And that's when things kind of really slowed down."

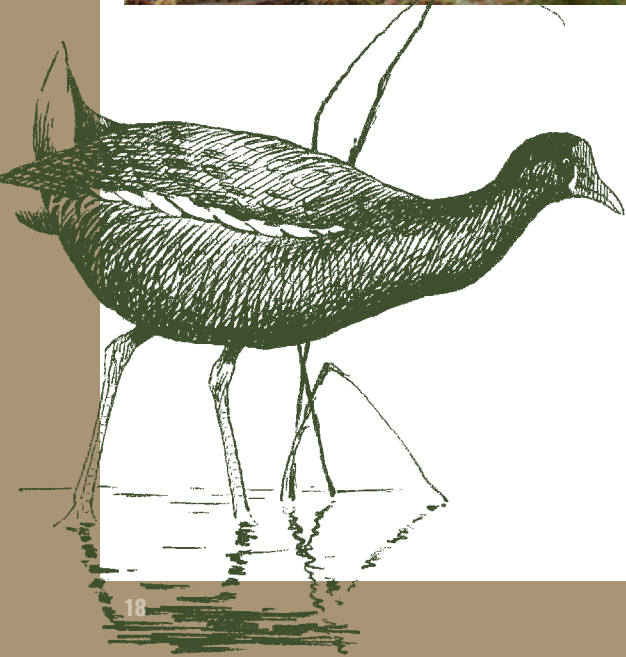


"Honestly I was starting to think maybe the woodcock just wasn't going to be."



Aaron Milligan and Anthony Mackey wait in the duck blind hoping to wrap up their quest by bagging a goose. This hunt turned out to be an unsuccessful goose chase.

DON P. BROWN/ODWC



“You are never going to get it done if you don’t go try.”

They hunted five times for woodcock over the next two years, with no luck.

Milligan said, “Honestly I was starting to think maybe the woodcock just wasn’t going to be. You’d think with all the miles we’d walked that we’d kick one up eventually. I guess we are just easily entertained.”

But Mackey said each encouraged the other. “You are never going to get it done if you don’t go try. We figured it was going to be a lot of work.”

Finally they heard some talk of woodcocks being seen at Heyburn WMA. In late November 2018, they made the trip. Walking through a forested thicket, a woodcock flushed into the air. And neither man fired a shot.

“It was probably because we were both flabbergasted” by actually seeing a woodcock, Mackey said.

They followed the bird, flushed it again, but both of them missed.

After several more rounds of walking in the woods, Milligan was heading back to the truck and he caught sight of a woodcock ahead of him. The bird jumped up and BOOM! The HIP quest came to a successful end for Milligan. The next week, Mackey took his first woodcock, finishing the quest for himself.

One of each of the various HIP birds taken for this first quest will end up in a mounted display, Mackey said. As for the rest of the birds, Milligan said, “All these birds make fine table fare.”

He said they had to educate themselves a lot during their quest. “It took us a lot of places, places we probably would have never hunted. We talked to a lot of people we probably would have never talked to.

“You always come home with memories. You never know what you’re going to see. It’s all the other things in between the shooting that make the story, that make the memory.

“It was an adventure. A lot of people think it is maybe kind of goofy. But we thought it was great. We were a little bit persistent, a lot lucky, and we had a lot of help.” Mackey agreed.

“We lamented our misery,” he quipped, “But it was really a lot of fun.

“And to make it even more special, we did it all on public land, and all in Oklahoma. And we did it together.”



The elusive American woodcock was one of the toughest takes on the quest, but one finally was harvested at Heyburn WMA.



Hunting for Success

Stack the Odds in Your Favor For Getting a Controlled Hunt

Success is often determined by putting the odds in your favor.

That's true of many of life's scenarios. But it can also be true for a hunter who dreams of taking a majestic bull elk in the Wichita Mountains.

Those dreams come true for several lucky hunters whose names are drawn in the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation's controlled hunts program.

While getting your name drawn for any one of about 5,600 hunts depends on being lucky to some extent, that's not the only factor in winning one of these unique hunts. Many times, you can up your odds if you know important details ahead of time and act on them to improve our chances.

This past year, about one application out of every 22 was selected for the various elk, deer, antelope and turkey hunts available in the controlled hunts program. Hunters submitted 124,373 applications for the 5,622 individual hunt permits available across the state this year. Many of those applicants who weren't selected will apply again when the 2020-21 controlled hunts applications are made available this spring. And by doing so, they will increase their chances of being selected.

The most important thing an applicant can do to increase his or her chances is to submit an online application each year (so that your preference point total builds), and choose to apply for the specific hunts that historically have fewer applicants. This article will help you determine what strategy might result in your name being drawn for a 2020-21 controlled hunt.

Controlled hunts applications usually become available around April 1 through your profile at license.GoOutdoorsOklahoma.com. The deadline for submitting all applications is normally in mid-May.

The application process is easily completed online. Your application won't be accepted if it has not been completed correctly; in this way, you have the assurance that your application was successfully submitted and that your name will be included in the drawing.

So, besides the obvious of submitting an application, what else can you do to increase your chances of being selected for what possibly could be the hunt of a lifetime?

By reading this article and studying last year's statistics, you'll likely gain some insights into how the controlled hunts program works — insights that could give you a slight edge in getting drawn for a hunt that you won't forget.

Applicants need to understand that the winners of controlled hunts are randomly selected through a computerized process that selects winners from the pool of all applications submitted.

With just one low application fee of \$5, hunters may apply for several different hunts across various categories. The more hunts applied for, the better your chances of being selected for a hunt.

What about those applicants who aren't selected? Within the hunt category for which you applied, you will gain a preference point toward future years' drawings. Not only that, but some hunt categories allow you to apply with a group of other hunters. Both of these features can increase your odds of being selected.

Oklahoma is rich in outdoor opportunities, and the Wildlife Department's controlled hunts program is just one more way hunters can add to a successful year afield. Don't miss the chance to take part in a hunt you won't forget. You can apply yourself, and you can gather a few friends to apply as a group with you. Because when it comes to hunting, the only thing that makes being in the woods better is being there with friends and family.

**2019-20
Overall Odds Of
Being Drawn:
1 in 22**

About Controlled Hunts

Controlled hunts are offered for deer, elk, antelope and turkey. These hunts are held in appropriate locations selected by wildlife biologists. Hunters wishing to go on one of these controlled hunts must submit an application, which goes into the running with all other applications. Names are selected through a random computer drawing for a range of hunting opportunities across the state.

Several of the controlled hunt choices are highly sought after and often have many times more applicants than available permits. To date, many thousands of hunters have enjoyed unique adventures through the controlled hunts program, including youth hunters and people who are physically challenged.

If you keep applying year after year, your chances of being drawn increase depending on the total number of applications you've made for a particular hunt. Applicants who submit faithfully each year are more likely to get at least one chance to enjoy a controlled hunt offered through the Wildlife Department. But getting drawn is not guaranteed because of the true random method used to select the winners.

Participation is easy. You start by going online to license. GoOutdoorsOklahoma.com. You either sign on to your profile, or create your profile if you don't already have one. Then just click on the "Controlled Hunts" link to begin the application process.

Hunt choices include opportunities such as hunting for a bull elk at the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge, hunting for pronghorn antelope in the Oklahoma Panhandle, or hunting for deer at one of many wildlife management areas across the state, often with exclusive privileges not offered at other times of the year.

You can increase your chances of getting drawn by doing a little research first. And we've done a lot of the hard work for you in this article. All you have to do is study the data here and decide which hunts you want to apply for.

Every time you apply and do not get drawn, you earn a preference point for future drawings. So, when you apply the next year, it's like getting your name put in the hat an extra time. Therefore, your odds of being drawn improve if you apply again the next year.

By submitting an application year after year, you can build your chances far more than those who don't continue to apply and who eventually lose their preference points. Additionally, some hunt categories allow you to apply with a group of other hunters, so that if one of the group is drawn, the entire group gets to hunt.

Helpful Tips

Increase your chances of being selected by applying each and every year like clockwork. Again, your odds of being drawn for a controlled hunt improve each year you apply because each preference point you earn acts like an extra application the next time you apply.

Those who say they have stopped applying because they never get drawn are actually giving you an advantage, as long as you just keep applying.

Although hunters with more preference points have greater odds of being drawn, it is not guaranteed that those with the most points will be drawn for a hunt. What is guaranteed is that their chances improve. First-time applicants with no preference

points can and do get drawn over those with many points, because names are drawn randomly from the entire pool of applicants.

In some categories, hunters may apply in groups of up to four people. For group applications, the preference points of each hunter in the group will be averaged. If not drawn in that category, each applicant in the hunt group will be given a single preference point to carry forward.

Once you are selected for a hunt category, all preference points that you have built up in that category are cleared. That is why it is important when you fill out an application to ensure you are available to participate in your chosen hunt on the specified dates. If you cannot attend, you not only lose the chance to participate in a great hunting experience, but you also lose the preference points you earned by applying over the years.

Here are some other points to keep in mind.

You can submit an application in each category available to you, and within each category you can apply for more than one hunt in many cases. All of this for one \$5 application fee.

You could apply for the controlled hunts that are to be held on key dates during the regular statewide seasons. This could increase your odds because others may already have plans to hunt elsewhere on those dates, resulting in fewer applicants and better odds for you.

Consider the draw ratios that are shown for each hunt. These ratios can be used to up your chances of getting a controlled hunt.

Normally your odds increase if you apply for a hunt later in the season, as the earlier hunts tend to be more popular.

If you are just looking to stock the freezer with deer meat, you will be in better shape by applying only for the antlerless deer hunts.

And bear in mind that since the Wildlife Department transitioned to the Go Outdoors Oklahoma online license system, all of the controlled hunts application process and drawing notifications are done online and by email. Winners who get an email notice telling them they were selected must then go back online to claim their hunt and to download the hunt information they need to participate. If winners fail to claim their hunt by the deadline in the email notice, they could end up losing out on their hunt.

By Wildlife Department Staff

EDITOR'S NOTE: The tables with this article break down how applicants fared for the 2019-20 controlled hunt drawings. To see results of the 2018 controlled hunts, go to <https://www.wildlifedepartment.com/controlledhunts/2018-success>.



LINDELL PILLOWREADERS PHOTO SHOWCASE 2019

2019-2020 Deer Hunts									
Hunt Location	Hunt Number	Hunt Type	Begin Date	End Date	Permit Type	Applicants	Permits Allowed	Draw Ratio	Rank
Atoka WMA	3001	Gun	10/25/2019	10/27/2019	Either Sex	1,499	50	1 in 29.98	62
Beaver River WMA, McFarland Unit	3006	Muzzleloader	10/26/2019	10/27/2019	Either Sex	347	10	34.70	65
Beaver River WMA, McFarland Unit	3007	Gun	11/23/2019	11/24/2019	Either Sex	504	5	100.80	80
Beaver River WMA	3008	Gun	11/23/2019	11/24/2019	Either Sex	521	15	34.73	66
Beavers Bend State Park (River Bend)	3015	Archery	1/3/2020	1/5/2020	Antlerless Only	143	15	9.53	32
Beavers Bend State Park (Golf Course)	3016	Muzzleloader	1/3/2020	1/5/2020	Antlerless Only	176	15	11.73	35
Candy Creek WMA	3020	Muzzleloader	10/26/2019	11/3/2019	Either Sex	148	12	12.33	38
Candy Creek WMA	3021	Gun	11/23/2019	12/8/2019	Either Sex	271	12	22.58	52
Canton WMA	3030	Gun	11/23/2019	11/24/2019	Either Sex	1,076	75	14.35	43
Cherokee GMA	3044	Gun	11/9/2019	11/9/2019	Either Sex	1,443	50	28.86	58
Cherokee GMA	3045	Gun	11/9/2019	11/9/2019	Antlerless Only	199	75	2.65	9
Cherokee GMA	3046	Gun	11/10/2019	11/10/2019	Either Sex	1,040	50	20.80	51
Cherokee GMA	3047	Gun	11/10/2019	11/10/2019	Antlerless Only	101	75	1.35	2
Cookson WMA	3060	Muzzleloader	11/9/2019	11/10/2019	Either Sex	891	18	49.50	73
Cookson WMA	3061	Muzzleloader	11/9/2019	11/9/2019	Antlerless Only	76	35	2.17	7
Cookson WMA	3062	Muzzleloader	11/10/2019	11/10/2019	Antlerless Only	55	35	1.57	3
Cookson WMA	3063	Gun	11/16/2019	11/17/2019	Either Sex	1,444	18	80.22	78
Cookson WMA	3064	Gun	11/16/2019	11/16/2019	Antlerless Only	125	35	3.57	14
Cookson WMA	3065	Gun	11/17/2019	11/17/2019	Antlerless Only	63	35	1.80	5
Cross Timbers WMA	3070	Muzzleloader	10/26/2019	10/27/2019	2 (1st Antlerless, 2nd Either Sex)	503	50	10.06	33
Cross Timbers WMA	3071	Gun	12/7/2019	12/8/2019	2 (1st Antlerless, 2nd Either Sex)	1,158	50	23.16	54
Deep Fork NWR	3080	Muzzleloader	10/14/2019	10/20/2019	Antlerless Only	657	50	13.14	40
Four Canyon Preserve	3090	Muzzleloader	10/25/2019	10/26/2019	Antlerless Only	7	4	1.75	4
Four Canyon Preserve	3091	Muzzleloader	10/25/2019	10/26/2019	2 (Either Sex)	112	2	56.00	75
Four Canyon Preserve	3092	Gun	11/15/2019	11/16/2019	Antlerless Only	26	4	6.50	21
Four Canyon Preserve	3093	Gun	11/15/2019	11/16/2019	2 (Either Sex)	310	2	155.00	82
Fort Gibson WRP	3110	Archery	10/22/2019	10/22/2019	2 (Only 1 Antlered)	450	50	9.00	28
Fort Gibson WRP	3111	Muzzleloader	10/23/2019	10/23/2019	Antlerless Only	160	50	3.20	12
Fort Gibson WRP	3112	Muzzleloader	11/5/2019	11/5/2019	Antlerless Only	139	50	2.78	10
Fort Gibson WRP	3113	Muzzleloader	11/6/2019	11/6/2019	Either Sex	982	25	39.28	70
Fort Gibson WRP	3114	Muzzleloader	11/6/2019	11/6/2019	Antlerless Only	87	25	3.48	13
Grady County WMA	3120	Muzzleloader	10/26/2019	11/3/2019	Either Sex	122	10	12.20	36
Grady County WMA	3121	Gun	11/23/2019	12/1/2019	Either Sex	246	10	24.60	56
James Collins WMA	3140	Gun	11/23/2019	11/24/2019	Either Sex	1,466	50	29.32	60
Lexington WMA	3150	Gun	11/16/2019	11/16/2019	2 (1st Antlerless, 2nd Either Sex)	707	135	5.23	17
Lexington WMA	3151	Gun	11/17/2019	11/17/2019	2 (1st Antlerless, 2nd Either Sex)	421	135	3.12	11
Lexington WMA	3152	Gun	11/20/2019	11/20/2019	2 (1st Antlerless, 2nd Either Sex)	331	135	2.45	8
Lexington WMA	3153	Gun	11/21/2019	11/21/2019	2 (1st Antlerless, 2nd Either Sex)	279	135	2.07	6
Little River NWR	3160	Gun	11/8/2019	11/10/2019	Either Sex	731	30	24.37	55
Little River NWR	3161	Gun	11/15/2019	11/17/2019	Either Sex	468	30	15.60	45
McAlester AAP	3170	Archery	10/11/2019	10/13/2019	Either Sex	119	90	1.32	1
McAlester AAP	3171	Archery	10/18/2019	10/20/2019	Either Sex	1,624	275	5.9	18
McAlester AAP	3172	Archery	10/25/2019	10/27/2019	Either Sex	2,283	275	8.30	26
McAlester AAP	3173	Archery	11/1/2019	11/3/2019	Either Sex	3,491	275	12.69	39
McAlester AAP	3174	Archery	11/8/2019	11/10/2019	Either Sex	4,130	275	15.02	44
McAlester AAP	3175	Archery	11/15/2019	11/17/2019	Either Sex	3,880	275	14.11	42
McCurtain County WA	3190	Gun	11/1/2019	11/3/2019	Either Sex	569	16	35.56	68
McGee Creek WMA	3200	Muzzleloader	10/25/2019	10/27/2019	Either Sex	688	75	9.17	29
McGee Creek WMA	3201	Gun	11/1/2019	11/3/2019	Either Sex	1,379	75	18.39	48
Neosho WMA	3203	Muzzleloader	11/16/2019	11/17/2019	Either Sex	120	6	20.00	50
Oka'Yanahli Preserve	3206	Gun	12/14/2019	12/14/2019	(2) Antlerless Only	65	7	9.29	31
Oka'Yanahli Preserve	3207	Gun	12/15/2019	12/15/2019	(2) Antlerless Only	32	7	4.57	16
Okmulgee GMA	3210	Gun	11/16/2019	11/16/19	2 (Only 1 Antlered)	736	60	12.27	37
Okmulgee GMA	3211	Gun	11/17/2019	11/17/2019	2 (Only 1 Antlered)	372	60	6.20	19
Osage-Western Wall WMA	3220	Muzzleloader	11/7/2019	11/10/2019	Either Sex	989	25	39.56	71
Pushmataha WMA	3230	Muzzleloader	11/8/2019	11/10/2019	Either Sex	1,378	75	18.37	47
Salt Plains NWR	3240	Archery	12/2/2019	12/5/2019	2 (Only 1 Antlered)	270	25	10.80	34
Salt Plains NWR	3241	Archery	12/2/2019	12/5/2019	2 (Only 1 Antlered)	274	12	22.83	53
Salt Plains NWR	3242	Muzzleloader	11/4/2019	11/6/2019	2 (1st Antlerless, 2nd Either Sex)	774	25	30.96	63
Salt Plains NWR	3243	Muzzleloader	11/4/2019	11/6/2019	2 (1st Antlerless, 2nd Either Sex)	530	12	44.17	72
Salt Plains NWR	3244	Gun	11/12/2019	11/14/2019	2 (1st Antlerless, 2nd Either Sex)	1,736	25	69.44	77
Salt Plains NWR	3245	Gun	11/12/2019	11/14/2019	2 (1st Antlerless, 2nd Either Sex)	1,434	12	119.50	81
Salt Plains NWR	3246	Gun	11/18/2019	11/20/2019	2 (1st Antlerless, 2nd Either Sex)	1,241	25	49.64	74
Salt Plains NWR	3247	Gun	11/18/2019	11/20/2019	2 (1st Antlerless, 2nd Either Sex)	999	12	83.25	79
Sandy Sanders WMA	3270	Muzzleloader	10/28/2019	11/3/2019	Either Sex	869	50	17.38	46
Sequoyah NWR	3280	Archery	11/11/2019	11/15/2019	2 (Only 1 Antlered)	815	28	29.11	59
Sequoyah NWR	3281	Muzzleloader	10/30/2019	11/1/2019	2 (Antlerless Only)	232	25	9.28	30
Sequoyah NWR	3282	Muzzleloader	11/20/2019	11/22/2019	2 (Antlerless Only)	203	30	6.77	22
Sequoyah NWR	3283	Muzzleloader	12/4/2019	12/6/2019	2 (Antlerless Only)	195	25	7.80	25
Sequoyah NWR	3284	Archery	11/11/2019	11/15/2019	(2) Only 1 Antlered	142	4	35.50	67
Sequoyah Resort Park	3286	Archery	12/7/2019	12/8/2019	2 (1st Antlerless, 2nd Either Sex)	712	20	35.60	69
Spavinaw GMA	3290	Gun	10/26/2019	10/27/2019	Either Sex	1,197	20	59.85	76
Spavinaw GMA	3291	Gun	10/26/2019	10/27/2019	Antlerless Only	194	30	6.47	20

2019-2020 Deer Hunts (continued)									
Hunt Location	Hunt Number	Hunt Type	Begin Date	End Date	Permit Type	Applicants	Permits Allowed	Draw Ratio	Rank
Tishomingo NWR	3300	Gun	12/12/2019	12/13/2019	2 (1st Antlerless, 2nd Either Sex)	642	20	32.10	64
Washita NWR	3320	Gun	11/12/2019	11/13/2019	Antlerless Only	85	10	8.50	27
Waurika WMA & COE Public	3330	Muzzleloader	11/12/2019	11/14/2019	Either Sex	402	15	26.80	57
Waurika WMA & COE Public	3331	Muzzleloader	11/12/2019	11/14/2019	Antlerless Only	93	25	3.72	15
Wichita Mountains WR	3340	Gun	11/19/2019	11/21/2019	Antlered Only	6,716	30	223.87	83
Wichita Mountains WR	3341	Gun	11/19/2019	11/21/2019	Antlerless Only	548	40	13.70	41
Great Salt Plains State Park	3350	Archery	10/21/2019	10/24/2019	2 (Only 1 Antlered)	296	10	29.60	61
Great Salt Plains State Park	3351	Archery	12/9/2019	12/12/2019	2 (Only 1 Antlered)	197	10	19.70	49
Texoma COE (Burns Run)	3360	Gun	1/10/2020	1/12/2020	Doe Only	55	8	6.88	23
Texoma COE (Lakeside)	3361	Gun	1/10/2020	1/12/2020	Doe Only	59	8	7.38	24

2019 Deer Hunts—Physically Challenged									
Hunt Location	Hunt Number	Hunt Type	Begin Date	End Date	Permit Type	Applicants	Permits Allowed	Draw Ratio	Rank
Cherokee GMA	4001	Gun	10/26/2019	10/27/2019	Either Sex	37	40	1 in 1	1
Cookson WMA	4010	Gun	11/2/2019	11/3/2019	Either Sex	36	25	1.4	3
Copan COE Parks	4015	Gun	12/6/2019	12/8/2019	2 (Only 1 Antlered)	19	6	3	6
Deep Fork NWR	4020	Muzzleloader	10/28/2019	11/3/2019	(2) Only 1 Antlered	26	5	5.2	9
Fort Gibson WRP	4025	Muzzleloader	12/7/2019	12/8/2019	(2) Only 1 Antlered	41	10	4	8
Hugo Lake COE	4030	Gun	12/13/2019	12/15/2019	2 (Code P)	4	11	1	1
Oologah Lake COE	4040	Gun	11/15/2019	11/17/2019	2 (1 Doe, 1 Buck)	9	8	1.1	2
Salt Plains NWR	4050	Muzzleloader	11/4/2019	11/6/2019	2 (1st Antlerless, 2nd Either Sex)	7	2	3.5	7
Salt Plains NWR	4051	Gun	11/12/2019	11/14/2019	2 (1st Antlerless, 2nd Either Sex)	3	2	1.5	4
Salt Plains NWR	4052	Gun	11/18/2019	11/20/2019	2 (1st Antlerless, 2nd Either Sex)	2	2	1	1
Sequoyah NWR	4060	Archery	11/11/2019	11/15/2019	2 (Only 1 Antlered)	21	2	10.5	10
Sequoyah NWR	4061	Muzzleloader	11/20/2019	11/22/2019	Antlerless Only	34	2	17	11
Sequoyah Resort Park	4070	Muzzleloader	12/21/2019	12/22/2019	2 (1st Antlerless, 2nd Either Sex)	10	12	1	1
Tishomingo NWR	4080	Gun	11/7/2019	11/8/2019	2 (1st Antlerless, 2nd Either Sex)	25	10	2.5	5

2019 Youth Deer Hunts									
Hunt Location	Hunt Number	Hunt Type	Begin Date	End Date	Permit Type	Applicants	Permits Allowed	Draw Ratio	Rank
Atoka WMA	5001	Gun	10/18/2019	10/20/2019	Either Sex	127	50	1 in 2.54	16
Arbuckle Springs WMA	5004	Gun	11/23/2019	11/24/2019	2 (1st Antlerless, 2nd Either Sex)	64	15	4.26	27
Beaver River WMA, McFarland Unit	5006	Gun	10/18/2019	10/20/2019	Either Sex	71	15	4.73	30
Camp Gruber Cantonment	5009	Muzzleloader	11/29/2019	12/1/2019	2 (1st Antlerless, 2nd Either Sex)	91	25	3.64	24
Cherokee GMA	5010	Gun	11/2/2019	11/3/2019	Either Sex	145	50	2.9	19
Cookson WMA	5020	Gun	10/26/2019	10/27/2019	Either Sex	102	45	2.26	13
Deep Fork NWR	5030	Muzzleloader	10/21/2019	10/27/2019	2 (Only 1 Antlered)	41	25	1.64	6
Fort Cobb WMA and State Park	5040	Muzzleloader/ Shotgun	10/18/2019	10/20/2019	Antlerless Only	25	40	1	1
Fort Gibson WRP	5050	Muzzleloader	11/9/2019	11/9/2019	2 (Only 1 Antlered)	88	20	4.4	28
Kaw Lake COE	5055	Gun	11/15/2019	11/17/2019	(2) 1 Either Sex, 1 Doe	97	4	24.25	38
Hugo WMA	5060	Gun	10/11/2019	10/13/2019	Either Sex	55	25	2.2	11
Hugo Lake COE	5061	Gun	10/11/2019	10/13/2019	Either Sex	49	8	6.125	33
James Collins WMA	5070	Gun	10/18/2019	10/20/2019	Either Sex	188	50	3.76	25
James Collins WMA	5071	Gun	10/25/2019	10/27/2019	Either Sex	166	50	3.32	21
Keystone COE	5080	Gun	12/13/2019	12/15/2019	2 (Only 1 Antlered)	49	9	5.44	32
Keystone SP Physically Challenged	5081	Muzzleloader	12/13/2019	12/15/2019	Either Sex	119	2	59.5	40
Little River NWR	5085	Gun	11/1/2019	11/3/2019	2 (1st Antlerless, 2nd Either Sex)	34	1	34	39
McAlester AAP	5090	Shotgun	11/29/2019	12/1/2019	Antlerless Only	27	25	1.08	3
Neosho WMA	5095	Muzzleloader	10/26/2019	10/27/2019	Either Sex	5	6	1	1
Neosho WMA	5096	Gun	11/9/2019	11/10/2019	Either Sex	13	6	2.16	9
Okmulgee GMA	5110	Gun	11/2/2019	11/3/2019	2 (Only 1 Antlered)	78	24	3.25	20
Okmulgee GMA	5111	Gun	11/9/2019	11/10/2019	2 (Only 1 Antlered)	52	24	2.16	9
Packsaddle WMA	5125	Gun	10/11/2019	10/12/2019	Antlerless Only	16	10	1.6	5
Pine Creek WMA	5130	Gun	11/8/2019	11/10/2019	Either Sex	43	12	3.58	22
Pushmataha WMA	5140	Gun	10/25/2019	10/27/2019	Either Sex	110	50	2.2	11
Pushmataha WMA	5141	Gun	11/1/2019	11/3/2019	Either Sex	118	50	2.36	15
Salt Plains NWR	5150	Gun	11/1/2019	11/3/2019	2 (1st Antlerless, 2nd Either Sex)	133	25	5.32	31
Sequoyah NWR	5160	Muzzleloader	10/18/2019	10/20/2019	2 (Only 1 Antlered)	136	30	4.53	29
Sequoyah Resort Park	5170	Muzzleloader	12/14/2019	12/15/2019	2 (1st Antlerless, 2nd Either Sex)	131	12	10.9	37
Spavinaw GMA	5180	Muzzleloader	11/2/2019	11/3/2019	Either Sex	58	40	1.45	4
Spavinaw GMA	5181	Gun	11/8/2019	11/10/2019	Either Sex	145	40	3.63	23
Tenkiller COE	5190	Gun	11/1/2019	11/3/2019	2 (Only 1 Antlered)	73	10	7.3	34
Texoma COE (Lakeside)	5200	Gun	11/8/2019	11/10/2019	2 (Only 1 Antlered)	76	8	9.5	36
Texoma COE (Burns Run)	5201	Gun	11/15/2019	11/17/2019	2 (Only 1 Antlered)	59	8	7.38	35
Tishomingo NWR	5210	Gun	10/17/2019	10/18/2019	2 (1st Antlerless, 2nd Either Sex)	79	20	3.95	26
USDA Grazinglands Research Lab	5220	Gun	11/8/2019	11/9/2019	2 (Antlerless Only)	39	20	1.95	8
USDA Grazinglands Research Lab	5221	Gun	12/13/2019	12/14/2019	2 (Antlerless Only)	27	10	2.7	17
Washita NWR	5240	Gun	10/4/2019	10/5/2019	Antlerless Only	27	10	2.7	17
Washita NWR	5260	Gun	11/8/2019	11/9/2019	Antlerless Only	23	10	2.3	14
Waurika Lake COE	5270	Gun	11/9/2019	11/10/2019	Antlerless Only	9	5	1.8	7
Skiatook COE	5290	Gun	12/7/2019	12/9/2019	2 (Only 1 Antlered)	0	4	—	—



LATISHA RICHARDSON/READERS' PHOTO SHOWCASE 2019

2019-20 Deer Controlled Hunts

- Total applicants (includes first, second, third, fourth and fifth choice preferences): 62,249.
- Total permits available: 4,094.
- Overall odds of getting drawn for any one permit: 1 in 15.

2019 Deer Controlled Hunts For Physically Challenged People

- Total applicants (includes first, second and third choice preferences): 274.
- Total permits available: 137.
- Overall odds of getting drawn for any one permit: 1 in 2.

2019 Deer Controlled Hunts For Youths

- Total applicants (includes first, second and third choice preferences): 2,988.
- Total permits available: 893.
- Overall odds of getting drawn for any one permit: 1 in 3.3.

Application Tips For Deer Controlled Hunts

- Up your odds of getting drawn by staying away from the most popular hunts, such as the Wichita Mountains buck gun hunt, the Sandy Sanders buck gun hunt and Salt Plains NWR hunts that allow either-sex hunting.
- Fewer people apply for antlerless-only hunts, which can help your chances of getting drawn.
- Consider applying for archery hunts instead of muzzleloader or gun hunts, as they normally attract a smaller pool of applicants.
- The number of youth deer controlled hunts has been increased, so the kids who apply now have greater odds of winning a hunt.
- Areas in the northeast like Gruber, Cherokee, Spavinaw and Cookson Hills WMAs typically attract more applicants. Consider hunts in other parts of the state where your odds of selection may be better.
- Controlled hunts held during the regular muzzleloader and gun seasons, especially those during season-opening weekends, often offer better odds of getting drawn than those held outside the regular statewide season dates since many would-be applicants already have hunting plans in place for those dates.
- If you get an email notifying you that you've been drawn, make sure to go back online to claim the hunt by the deadline listed in the notice!

2018 Controlled Hunts Summary

ELK: 203 hunters harvested 141 elk.

PRONGHORN: 67 hunters harvested 50 pronghorn.

DEER: 3,147 hunters harvested 735 deer.

YOUTH DEER: 678 hunters harvested 347 deer.

TURKEY: 73 hunters harvested 29 turkeys.



HUNTER LITTLE/READERS' PHOTO SHOWCASE 2019

2019-20 Elk Controlled Hunts

- Total applicants (includes first, second and third choice preferences): 35,264.
- Total permits available: 233.
- Overall odds of getting drawn for any one permit: 1 in 151.

Application Tips For Elk Controlled Hunts

- Want to increase your odds of getting drawn for an elk hunt? Apply for one of the cow hunts instead of the highly popular bull hunts; the odds are much more in your favor.
- Be sure you can attend the elk hunt you apply for on the date of the hunt, as you will not be given a second chance. Controlled hunts for elk are once-in-a-lifetime opportunities, and the person selected cannot transfer the hunt to someone else.
- If you get an email notifying you that you've been drawn, make sure to go back online to claim the hunt by the deadline listed in the notice!



Hunt Location	Hunt Number	Hunt Type	Begin Date	End Date	Permit Type	Applicants	Permits Allowed	Draw Ratio	Rank
Cookson WMA	1001	Gun	10/26/2019	10/27/2019	Either Sex	2,533	1	1 in 2,533	7
Wichita Mountains WR	1020	Gun	12/3/2019	12/5/2019	Bull	10,466	23	455	6
Wichita Mountains WR	1021	Gun	12/3/2019	12/5/2019	Cow	844	29	29	2
Wichita Mountains WR	1022	Gun	12/17/2019	12/19/2019	Bull	10,335	25	413	5
Wichita Mountains WR	1023	Gun	12/17/2019	12/19/2019	Cow	1,037	65	16	1
Wichita Mountains WR	1024	Gun	1/7/2020	1/9/2020	Bull	9,182	25	367	4
Wichita Mountains WR	1025	Gun	1/7/2020	1/9/2020	Cow	867	65	133	3

Controlled Hunts FAQ

What are controlled hunts?

Controlled hunts are hunting opportunities awarded to applicants who are selected in random drawings. Controlled hunts are held in places where unrestricted hunting would pose safety concerns, such as in small wildlife management areas, or where overharvest could occur if open hunting were allowed. Controlled hunt categories include elk, pronghorn, deer and turkey. Applications are accepted each spring at license.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com.

Are there any fees?

All applicants pay a \$5 application fee to enter the controlled hunts drawings. This fee is paid just once per person per year, regardless of how many hunt categories (elk, deer, turkey, antelope) the applicant decides to enter. The application fee is paid online with a VISA or MasterCard debit or credit card. Hunters drawn for a controlled hunt might be responsible for additional license and user fees that are required for some hunts, such as those held on federal areas.

Who can apply?

Any resident or nonresident who possesses a valid hunting license or who is otherwise exempt from needing the license may apply. Applicants who don't possess a license must buy a license before they can submit applications. People who possess a valid apprentice-designated hunting license may also apply, although specific hunts require some hunters to become hunter education-certified before the actual hunt.

Can groups submit applications?

Some controlled hunts allow groups to apply, but the information required on the application must be correct and complete for every group member; discrepancies can result in disqualification.

Is it guaranteed that I will be drawn if I apply long enough?

No, but your chances of being drawn in the same hunt category get better each year you apply because you earn preference points for future drawings in that category.

Can I lose preference points?

When an applicant is drawn, all preference points in that category are forfeited. Also, any applicant who doesn't apply in that category for five consecutive years will lose all preference points for that category. But applicants who continue to submit applications at least every five years retrain their preference points going forward.

If I apply with a group of three hunters, how are preference points calculated?

Example: One person has 5 preference points, one has 3, one has no points. The total for the group is 8 preference points. The group total is averaged for each member, which equals 2.6 points apiece, which is then rounded up to 3 points each. So, each member of the group then gets 3 preference points in the drawing.

Something came up and I missed my hunt. What now?

Once your name is selected, your preference points in that category are reset to zero and cannot be restored if you miss the hunt. Controlled hunt permits are assigned to only the selected hunter. Hunt permits cannot be transferred. Some controlled hunts are limited to once-in-a-lifetime selections, and hunters selected for these hunts will not be eligible to apply for them again in the future.

What if some of my application information changes after I apply?

Hunters who are drawn for controlled hunts are now notified by email. The Wildlife Department no longer sends controlled hunt documents using postal mail. If changes are needed, simply log in to Go Outdoors Oklahoma and update your profile information or notify the Wildlife Department's License Section by calling (405) 521-3852 weekdays.

How To Apply For Controlled Hunts: A Step-By-Step Guide

The annual controlled hunts application period opens in April and runs until mid-May. The entire process occurs online at www.wildlifedepartment.com and at license.GoOutdoorsOklahoma.com. There is a one-time application fee of \$5 paid at the time you submit the application, regardless of how many hunt categories you apply in.

STEP 1. All applicants (residents and nonresidents) must possess or purchase a valid Oklahoma hunting license for the current calendar year of the drawing. Licenses are sold online at license.GoOutdoorsOklahoma.com and are valid immediately.

STEP 2. Go online and review all the hunt locations at www.wildlifedepartment.com before starting your application. You may apply for several hunt locations within each category. There are seven categories: elk, pronghorn, deer, youth deer, deer for physically challenged; spring turkey, youth spring turkey. Write down the hunt location numbers you want to apply for.

STEP 3. Gather information for each hunter: driver's license and Social Security number (DL not required for youths); date of birth; name; address (city, state and ZIP code); phone number.

STEP 4. Log in or, if a new customer, create an account at license.GoOutdoorsOklahoma.com. Click on "Controlled Hunts" and "Apply." Fill out the application with required information. Please double-check personal information to make sure it is entered correctly so your application will not be disqualified.

STEP 5. Applications are submitted one category at a time; upon submitting one application and saving/printing the confirmation page, you will have the opportunity to choose to submit another application in a different category. Repeat the process to submit additional applications in as many categories as you desire. Be sure to complete and submit all of your applications in one session because you will lose information if you close the internet browser window.

STEP 6. A \$5 application fee is required of each person on the application. If you apply for a group, you will pay the fee for each person in the group at one time. You will be required to enter your credit/debit card information. Only VISA, Discover or MasterCard are accepted.

STEP 7. Submit application and payment, then print/save your confirmation page so you have a record of the hunts you applied for. If you applied as a group, the confirmation will list all group members on the application. If you discover any discrepancies, contact the Wildlife Department immediately for assistance at (405) 521-3852.

STEP 8. Print/save your payment confirmation page. You can also print confirmation pages after you apply by clicking "Verify Controlled Hunts Applications."

STEP 9. If you receive a notice that payment was not received, click on "Verify hunter information" to check accuracy, then return to payment information.

FOR ASSISTANCE:

The following Wildlife Department phone numbers are staffed from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. Or you may use the contact form online at www.wildlifedepartment.com/controlledhunts.

- For general information regarding the controlled hunt application process or to report an address change for successfully drawn hunters, call (405) 521-3852 or write to Wildlife Department License Section, P.O. Box 53465, Oklahoma City, OK 73152-3465.
- For information about required licenses and permits, or to make corrections to online applications, please call the License Section at (405) 521-3852.
- For problems with the online application and for technical assistance, call the GoOutdoorsOklahoma Help Desk at (833) 457-7285.
- For information about specific areas and specific controlled hunts, call the Wildlife Division at (405) 521-2739.

OTHER INFORMATION:

- **Customer Accounts** — Go Outdoors account holders already have their information, including licenses they hold, on file and will not have to fill in that part of the controlled hunts application. The controlled hunts link is found at the top-right side of the Go Outdoors Oklahoma homepage. Once clicked, you can check your preference points and apply as an individual or create a party or join a party.
- **Party Hunts** — Creating or joining a party for controlled hunts is easier via use of party numbers. When applying, you are provided with a party number that serves as a code for others to use when joining your group. If you know the people you want to add at the time you apply, you can add them. But if you are not sure who's in or out, you can always provide the party number to anyone who wants to join before the application deadline. In addition, anyone can manage their controlled hunts application to update hunt choices or choice order at any time before the application deadline.
- **Electronic Notifications** — Applicants may log in to their Go Outdoors Oklahoma account at any time to view or print their application confirmation. Email will be sent to applicants when they apply to a category as proof of application. In addition, party leaders (the person who creates the party application) will be notified anytime someone joins the group.
- **Drawing Notifications** — Applicants who are selected for a controlled hunt will be notified ONLY BY EMAIL and will be required to log back in to claim their hunt. (The Wildlife Department will no longer mail paper forms prior to controlled hunts.)



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2019 Pronghorn Controlled Hunts

- Total applicants (includes first and second choice preferences): 11,885.
- Total permits available: 105.
- Overall odds of getting drawn for any one permit: 1 in 113.

Application Tips For Pronghorn Controlled Hunts

- Submit applications for both buck and doe hunts and you will increase your odds of going pronghorn hunting.
- The controlled hunt for pronghorn is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Ensure you can attend on the hunt dates for which you apply because there is no second chance and hunts cannot be transferred.
- If you get an email notifying you that you've been drawn, make sure to go back online to claim the hunt by the deadline listed in the notice!



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2019 Pronghorn Hunts									
Hunt Location	Hunt Number	Hunt Type	Begin Date	End Date	Permit Type	Applicants	Permits Allowed	Draw Ratio	Rank
Cimarron County	2001	Gun	9/5/2019	9/8/2019	Either Sex	5,503	20	1 in 275	3
Cimarron County	2002	Gun	9/9/2019	9/18/2019	Doe Only	1,168	50	23	2
Texas County	2010	Gun	9/5/2019	9/8/2019	Either Sex	4,665	10	467	4
Texas County	2011	Gun	9/9/2019	9/18/2019	Doe Only	549	25	22	1

Our Partners In Controlled Hunts

Oklahoma's controlled hunts program is greatly enhanced by valuable partnerships with the following state, federal and private organizations:

- National Wildlife Refuge System
- Deep Fork NWR
- Little River NWR
- Salt Plains NWR
- Sequoyah NWR
- Tishomingo NWR
- Washita NWR
- Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
 - Copan USACE
 - Hugo Lake USACE
 - Kaw Lake USACE
- Keystone Lake USACE
- Oologah Lake USACE
- Skiatook Lake USACE
- Tenkiller Lake USACE
- Texoma Lake USACE
- Waurika Lake USACE
 - McAlester Army Ammunition Plant
- Camp Gruber Cantonment
- Oklahoma State Parks
- Beaver's Bend State Park
- Fort Cobb State Park
- Great Salt Plains State Park
- Keystone State Park
- Sequoyah Resort Park
- The Nature Conservancy
- Four Canyon Preserve
- Oka'Yanahli Preserve
 - U.S. Department of Agriculture
- USDA Grazinglands Research Lab

2020 Spring Turkey Controlled Hunts

- Total applicants (includes first, second and third choice preferences): 10,810.
- Total permits available: 110.
- Overall odds of getting drawn for any one permit: 1 in 98.

Application Tips For Spring Turkey Controlled Hunts

- Application rates for hunts at the McAlester Army Ammunition Plant are usually high and are among the toughest spring turkey hunts to be drawn for. Consider applying for other areas to increase your odds.
- In areas where two hunts will be held on different dates, applying for the later-season hunt will usually increase your chances of being selected.
- If you get an email notifying you that you've been drawn, make sure to go back online to claim the hunt by the deadline listed in the notice!



LARRY E. SMITH/FICKR CC-BY2.0

2020 Spring Turkey Controlled Hunts For Youths

- Total applicants (includes first, second and third choice preferences): 903.
- Total permits available: 50.
- Overall odds of getting drawn for any one permit: 1 in 18.

Application Tips For Spring Turkey Controlled Hunts For Youths

- Check the draw ratios from last year for each of the hunts offered to get an idea of which hunt gives you the best odds of being selected.
- More youth spring turkey controlled hunts are being added, so kids who apply this year might have better odds than in past years.
- If you get an email notifying you that you've been drawn, make sure to go back online to claim the hunt by the deadline listed in the notice!



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2020 Spring Turkey Hunts

Hunt Location	Hunt Number	Hunt Type	Begin Date	End Date	Permit Type	Applicants	Permits Allowed	Draw Ratio	Rank
Cross Timbers WMA	6000	Shotgun	4/8/20	4/12/2020	Tom	1,727	10	1 in 172	7
Cross Timbers WMA	6001	Shotgun	5/2/20	5/6/2020	Tom	1,137	10	113	6
Deep Fork NWR	6010	Shotgun	4/13/20	5/6/2020	Tom	1,114	10	111	5
Four Canyon Preserve	6020	Shotgun	4/3/20	4/4/2020	Tom	580	2	290	9
Four Canyon Preserve	6021	Shotgun	4/10/20	4/11/2020	Tom	367	2	183	8
Little River NWR	6040	Shotgun	4/17/20	4/19/2020	Tom	1,217	20	61	1
McAlester AAP	6050	Shotgun	4/10/20	4/12/2020	Tom	1,224	20	61	1
McAlester AAP	6051	Shotgun	4/17/20	4/19/2020	Tom	1,796	20	90	3
McCurrian County WA	6060	Shotgun	4/10/20	4/12/2020	Tom	1,648	16	103	4

2020 Spring Youth Turkey Hunts

Hunt Location	Hunt Number	Hunt Type	Begin Date	End Date	Permit Type	Applicants	Permits Allowed	Draw Ratio	Rank
Washita NWR	7010	Shotgun	4/10/2020	4/12/2020	Tom	134	5	1 in 27	5
Deep Fork NWR	7020	Shotgun	4/4/2020	5/6/2020	Tom	181	10	18	4
James Collins WMA	7030	Shotgun	4/11/2020	4/12/2020	Tom	180	10	18	3
Little River NWR	7040	Shotgun	4/3/2020	4/5/2020	Tom	172	5	34	6
McGee Creek WMA	7070	Shotgun	4/11/2020	4/12/2020	Tom	132	10	13	2
Atoka WMA	7071	Shotgun	4/11/2020	4/12/2020	Tom	104	10	10	1

A photograph of a man in an orange shirt and cap, holding a rope, with a dog standing next to him. The man is wearing glasses and a harness. The dog is a brown and black speckled breed with its tongue out. The background is a clear blue sky.

Boom & Bust

Longtime Quail Hunter Recalls When Full Limit Was a Sure Bet

By Don P. Brown, Associate Editor

Passenger pigeons

once thrived in the United States.

Millions upon millions darkened the sky during their nomadic migrations across the eastern and central United States in the early 1800s. But only a century later, the passenger pigeon was extinct.

The sad story resonates with Logan County resident Keith Knipp, 73, not only as the lamentable loss of a species because of irresponsible human activities, but because Knipp can see similarities today with another bird species: the northern bobwhite.

An avid quail hunter since the mid-1950s, Knipp has personally experienced the highs and the lows of this upland game bird's existence in Oklahoma.

"I don't think we'll ever see it again like it used to be," he said of the bobwhite's populations in Oklahoma and in its traditional range across the eastern and southeastern United States.

Knipp recalls hunting birds in the late '50s and early '60s.

"There were so many birds. The hunting was unbelievable," he said. "There were so many birds, nobody could have foreseen then that quail were going to go through these up and down cycles like they've done."

"It's kind of like what I picture the passenger pigeon must have been like back then."

The Hunting Lifestyle

Knipp was born in 1946 and was raised in southwest Oklahoma City. He thinks he must have been 8 or 9 when he first began shooting with shotguns.

"Back then, everyone hunted and fished. We'd go to the crawdad hole and catch crawdads. We were poor but just didn't realize it."

So hunting and fishing was more than just sport. It put food on the table.

"A kid down the street ... was a couple of years older than me. And we'd get together with our shotguns and we'd shoot squirrels, rabbits, quail if we were lucky enough to get them. And we killed one goose in eight or nine years" of hunting together, he recalled with a chuckle.

It was about 1957 when Knipp went on his first serious quail hunting trip.

"When I really started bird hunting was my first trip out to western Oklahoma. You'd thought you had died and went to heaven, with as many birds as we saw crossing the roads. You'd be driving down Highway 3, and the birds would just be getting up, flying in coveys across the road."

The quail hunting was good then. The typical hunt Knipp went on would have four or five hunters spread out at the edge of the field in a line. They would walking out in a row and then walk back, flushing coveys along the way.

"There were so many birds, nobody could have foreseen then that quail were going to go through these up and down cycles like they've done."



BILL HORN

The bobwhite's legacy in Oklahoma is undeniable, but as wildlife managers have noted in the past several decades, this gamebird's population has seen great fluctuations based primarily on weather and habitat conditions.



Most years of his adult life Knipp made a trip north to enjoy some pheasant hunting.

“Once I learned to shoot, I’d get a limit just about every time I went. My mom would cook ’em up for breakfast with biscuits and gravy and quail. Not only would she cook them, she’d clean them! Pretty hard to beat!”

“And they’d land on a hillside, and you’d head out towards them. And before you could get there, your dog had pointed a third covey.

“It was really easy to limit out.”

Knipp went quail hunting every chance he could get, and he’d take vacation time scheduled around hunting. As a pipeline worker, he had jobs across the country, and he was able to learn how hunters in other states pursued quail.

Dogs and Decline

When he was about 10, Knipp was given a hunting dog called a “dropper,” which is a half-pointer and half-setter. “And that’s when I really got into it. All I really wanted to do was mess with that dog and watch him hunt quail.

“Even if we didn’t get any birds, as long as I was following my dog, I was happy.”

At the height of his “dog days,” Knipp was caring for 27 dogs (counting two fresh litters). “It’s a lot of work, but that way you don’t wear down dogs; you can always change out dogs.”

In the good days of the 1960s and early 1970s, Knipp’s dogs got plenty of work. But then the number of birds started dwindling. Quail hunting was slow in

He said the bag limit back then was 10 birds a day.

“Once I learned to shoot, I’d get a limit just about every time I went. My mom would cook ’em up for breakfast with biscuits and gravy and quail. Not only would she cook them, she’d clean them! Pretty hard to beat!”

The 1970s also brought quality quail hunting, Knipp recalled.

“You could find places out in western Oklahoma where you’d come up behind your dog on point, the birds flush and you shoot. They fly out across the terrain, and about halfway across there, they’d pick up another covey that would just get up and go with them.



Knipp enjoys most all types of hunting. He once took two turkeys with one shell.



PROVIDED

the '80s, and by 2000, it was really tough, he said. He could only recall one year since when bird hunters had a pretty good season.

"I was thinking they need to do something. A lot of hunters thought we should go back to quail days," he said, referring to the earlier years he hunted when the regulations specified that quail could only be taken on certain days of the week. However, research shows that hunting quail really doesn't affect overall populations.

Every veteran quail hunter seems to be sure of what has caused quail numbers to drop. Some of the common culprits they suspect are parasitic eyeworms, or greater numbers of predators such as hawks and coyotes.

Knipp said he suspects agricultural chemicals and big changes in habitat share some of the blame. The days of the smaller farms, when quail thrived, are now gone in most places. Instead, large-scale corporate farming has plowed the land from bar ditch to bar ditch, Knipp said, eliminating a lot of the habitat quail rely on.

As the downward trend in bobwhite numbers continued into the 2010s, the Wildlife Department began ramping up research to learn more about the situation. The Department launched several research projects in cooperation with the Oklahoma Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit to study various aspects of bobwhite ecology. Also, the Department joined Operation Idiopathic Decline with the Rolling Plains Quail Research Ranch, Texas A&M, TAM-Kingsville and Texas Tech to jointly conduct intensive research on environmental and disease factors. Some of the most cutting-edge quail research in the world continues today at Oklahoma wildlife management areas such as Packsaddle and Beaver River.

Results from the past decade indicate loss of habitat and unfavorable

For a time, Keith Knipp and his dogs were often the guests of Compression Systems Inc. founder Johnny Warren, who would provide flights on his company plane for quail hunting trips across the country.

“Some of the best hunts I’ve ever had in my life have been on public ground.”

weather have the greatest effect on the boom-and-bust nature of quail populations. When the weather is good, habitat is also good and quail numbers rebound in many areas of Oklahoma.

Knipp said a friend of his from New Jersey told him that he was very lucky to still have quail in the wild. Populations have disappeared in the Southeast, and many hunters from those areas are now coming to Oklahoma when they want to hunt quail.

The Future

Knipp is committed to keeping and training his dogs. And he’s committed to keep hunting as long as he is able. Going after wild turkey, pheasant, chucker, Hungarian partridge and sharp-tailed grouse takes him on several trips every year.

He also committed to keeping the hunting tradition alive for future generations. He knows there are fewer hunters nowadays, but the hunters now are more serious about the sport and have better trained dogs, which is better for the resource.

He estimated that he’s taken about 30 youngsters on their first hunts over the years. And really all you need to quail hunt is a good pair of boots, a shotgun, and a place to go. And while most private landowners have over the decades become more reluctant to allow hunting on their property, it’s still worth knocking on the door and asking permission.

But he hunts on public lands all the time. “Some of the best hunts I’ve ever had in my life have been on public ground.”



A shot of Knipp and one of his dogs while hunting blue quail.

Knipp volunteers regularly at youth shooting events, many held at Silverleaf Shotgun Sports near Guthrie, that draw 50 or more at a time. “I tell them if you don’t ever shoot a gun the rest of your life, if you learn to handle a gun safely — and you have to do it one time in your life — all your efforts out here are worth it.”

Today, Knipp has as many hunting dogs as he has great-grandchildren: eight. “And I’ve given every one of them to opportunity, if they wanted to learn to hunt and handle guns, to do it.”

His advice to kids who want to start hunting: Get involved in conservation groups such as Quail Forever, National Wild Turkey Federation and Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and participate in those groups.

“I don’t think we’ll ever see it again like it used to be,” he said. “I’m glad to see outfits like Quail Forever that are doing things for habitat. It’s a drop in the bucket, but it’s making some headway.”

For Knipp, hunting is not about bagging game. It’s about watching his dogs, seeing sights like a mature buck running across a field, and simply being outdoors. 🌿



DON P. BROWN/ODWC



PROVIDED

Watch It on TV!

Hear veteran hunter Keith Knipp talk about the good ol’ days of quail hunting on the Outdoor Oklahoma TV show set to air in the near future on OETA. Watch Outdoor Oklahoma online anytime at youtube.com/OutdoorOklahoma.

“I’m glad to see outfits like Quail Forever that are doing things for habitat. It’s a drop in the bucket, but it’s making some headway.”

Oklahoma GAME and FISH

NEWS



PUBLISHED MONTHLY
BY
GAME AND FISH COMMISSION
STATE
OF OKLAHOMA



The Wildlife Department's first magazine, January 1945.



DIAMOND ANNIVERSARY!

Outdoor Oklahoma's 75th Naturally Worth Celebrating

By Don P. Brown, Associate Editor

Like many folks raised in Oklahoma, I had wonderful times enjoying the outdoors. Mom and Dad took us kids camping and fishing often. And when I got old enough, I was gifted my first Remington pump shotgun and got to tag along on quail and duck hunting trips. Those were the days.

But if I had to name one thing that fueled my appreciation for this state's great natural resources through my formative years, it was Dad's copies of the latest Outdoor Oklahoma magazine that was always there on the coffee table.

This magazine has been a part of my life, well, almost all of my life (54 years). This month, it's been a part of the Oklahoma scene for 75 years.

Just as hunting, fishing and respect for nature are near and dear to the hearts of so many Oklahomans, the same can be said of the flagship publication of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation.

This magazine was born in January 1945. It was called **Oklahoma Game & Fish News** and was among the first public education efforts of the newly created Information & Education Division within the state Game & Fish Department.

In those initial years, each issue was 16 black-and-white pages. Monthly, 5,000 copies were printed and mailed free to people who wanted it, along with a request to circulate the magazine among their friends.

That first issue contained details about the new deer trap-and-transplant effort, articles on basic conservation principles, reports on biologists and game wardens, and a passionate editorial that envisioned the end of World War II (to come later that year) and the happy days that would follow.

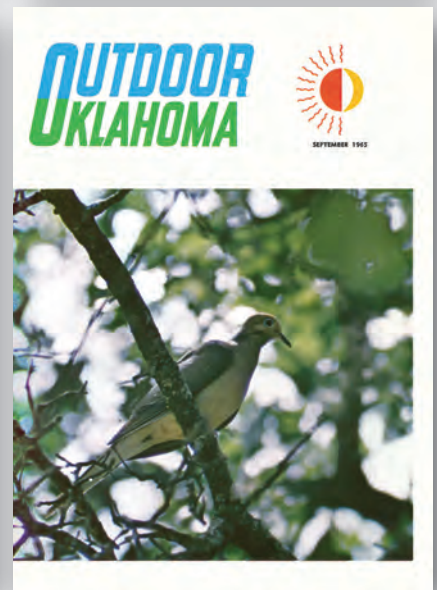
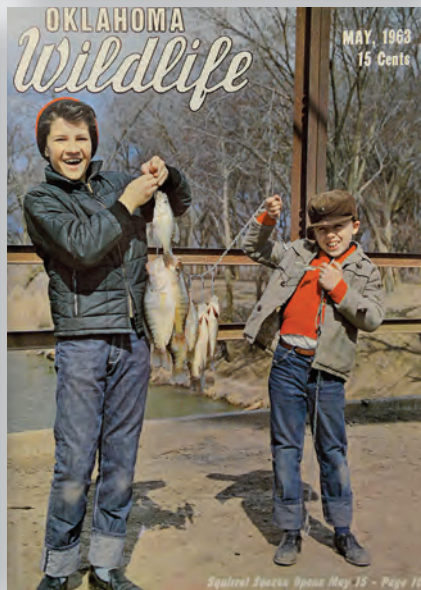
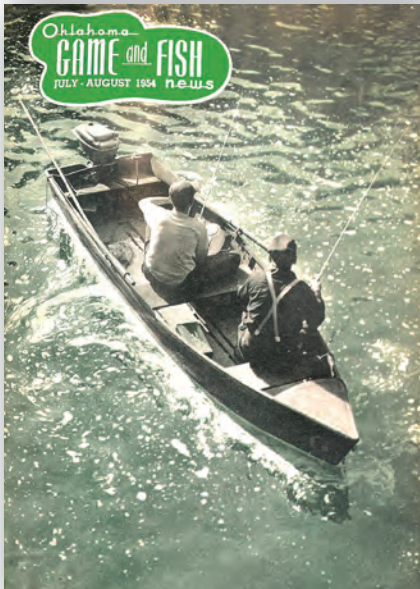
By 1946, the Southwestern Association of Industrial Editors recognized Outdoor Oklahoma as the most widely-read publication in Oklahoma, with a circulation of 7,500. Ten years later, the magazine was reaching 31,000 people, and a subscription fee was needed to help with production and mailing costs. Subscriptions were \$1.50 per year.

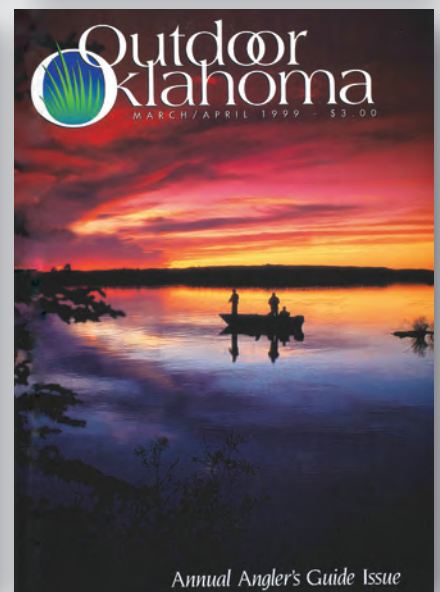
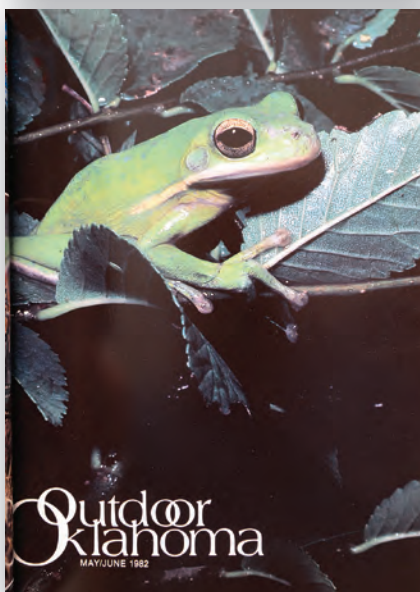
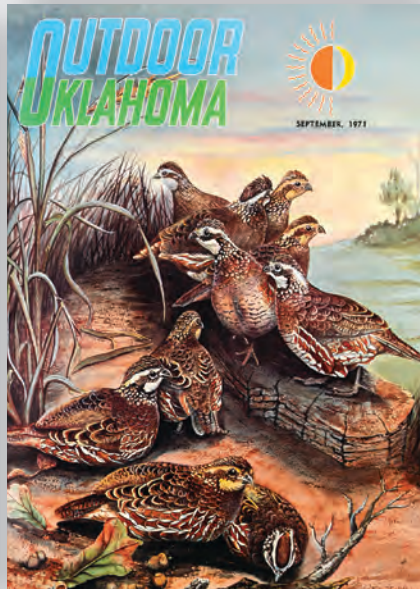
In September 1957, the magazine adopted a new look, with full-color throughout, and a new name: **Oklahoma Wildlife**. But just eight years later, in September 1965, the name changed again — to **Outdoor Oklahoma**.

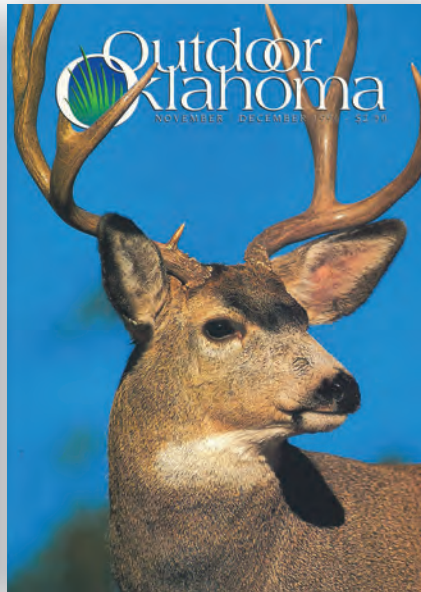
In 1980, the magazine trimmed publication to six issues per year but increased the number of pages. That's basically how Outdoor Oklahoma remains today.

Now, Outdoor Oklahoma has a circulation of about 8,500 copies for each 52-page issue. And our goal remains the same as it has for 75 years: to inform sportsmen about their wildlife agency.

Join us in celebrating our diamond anniversary with an entertaining trip down memory lane as we republish some of the magazine's covers on the following pages. 🦋







Getting to Know You!

Just who are the people who read this magazine? The one in your hands right now. Over the years, it's easy to lose track of just who Outdoor Oklahoma is aiming to educate, entertain, educate and amuse.

This past summer, we decided to find out.

From July through September 2019, members of the Information Section of the Wildlife Department worked with Betsey York, Human Dimensions Specialist with the Department, to conduct the first survey of Outdoor Oklahoma subscribers in more than 20 years.

If you were one of the subscribers to return our survey, we sincerely appreciate your input.

We randomly selected about 3,000 readers to give us their thoughts. We asked about things such as what activ-

ities our readers actively participate in, what magazine content they like and do not like, what they want to see in the future, and how they think Outdoor Oklahoma magazine stacks up against other Wildlife Department communication tools.

Some of the information we collected is shared here. We will take the information you told us about yourselves and use it to become more creative and more responsive to what you desire to see in Outdoor Oklahoma magazine.

Again, we offer our thanks to the 42 percent of our survey group who sent us their responses.

Whenever you receive a survey from the Wildlife Department and provide your feedback, you have a hand in the future of management of wildlife and wild places in Oklahoma. 🐾

2019 Survey Results

Reader Demographics



91% subscribers are male



89% subscribers hold a hunting license

95% subscribers hold a fishing license



47% have subscribed for over 10 years



65 Average age of subscribers

Top three activities in the last year



Fishing



Hunting



Bird Watching

Fishing was also the top activity in the 1997 survey, with 82% of readers participating.

Feelings on magazine content



Subscribers are **MOST SATISFIED** with the magazine's photographs



Subscribers **MOST OFTEN READ** "Watchable Wildlife"

In the future...

We asked our readers what article topics would interest them. These results will help us better meet the needs and wants of Outdoor Oklahoma subscribers.

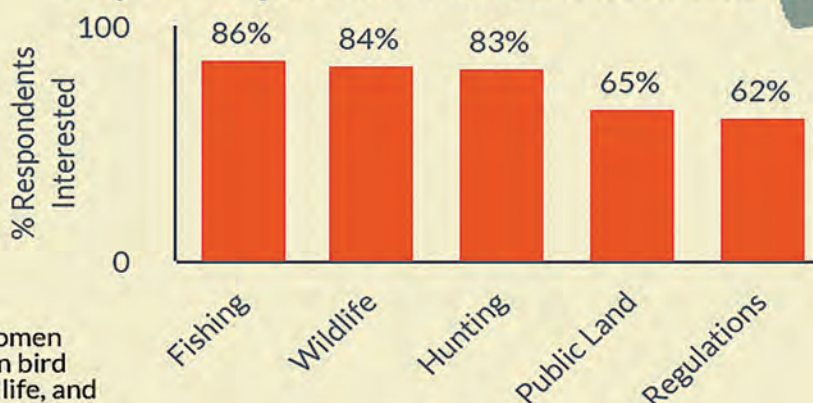


Compared to men, women are more interested in bird watching, hiking, wildlife, and fishing



Compared to long-term subscribers, new subscribers are more interested in boating, hiking and camping

Top 5 Topics of Most Interest



To read the full report please visit wildlifedepartment.com/outdoor-oklahoma

Going With the Flow

Research Projects Show Water Flow Vital to Stream, River Conservation

By Kurt Kuklinski, Research Supervisor, Oklahoma Fishery Research Laboratory



While small and unassuming, the prairie chub is a tough fish. Adapted to survive the volatile conditions of Oklahoma's prairie rivers, it can overcome natural drought, flooding and high salinity levels. However, the prairie chub has disappeared from much of its former range.



Barren Fork Creek

As Oklahomans, we are blessed to have a diverse landscape complemented by flowing rivers and streams that host a variety of plants and animals. Not only do these streams add to our strong outdoor culture and tradition, but they also provide Oklahomans with clean flowing water that contributes to a robust quality of life.

The conservation of our streams and rivers is a priority at the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, and much of our investment in aquatic research is directed toward instream flow, or the amount of water that flows in a river or stream. Maintaining and improving the ecological health of our flowing waters is critical to providing a legacy of sustainable outdoor recreational opportunities for future generations.

In collaboration with many talented in-state university researchers, the Wildlife Department is actively working to conserve and protect our streams and rivers. These partnerships, along with our own internal research efforts at the Oklahoma Fishery Research Laboratory, are providing data and answering key research questions that enable the Department to support scientifically sound management practices that benefit all Oklahomans.

This article highlights some of the ongoing research efforts focusing on our rivers and streams and the species that live there.

Project T-104-R-1: Movement and Flow-recruitment Relationships of Prairie Chub: An Endemic Great Plains Cyprinid.

Project Leader: Shannon Brewer, Oklahoma State University.

The prairie chub is one of 20 species of fish currently listed as a Tier 1 Species of Greatest Conservation Need in Oklahoma. Despite being a conservation priority, very little research has been done that explores how the amount of flowing water in its environment affects this fish.

With increasing tension over water allocation and the threat of more droughts in the Great Plains, it is imperative to understand how prairie chubs use water flow and how changing flow patterns affect their survival. This study aims to understand just that while also estimating the current population of prairie chubs in the upper Red River.

Ultimately, this study will help the Wildlife Department understand the

flow needs of this species and provide sound data for future stream flow management practices. To date, project investigators have tagged 933 prairie chubs and are tracking their movements.



KELLY ADAMS/ODWC

Project T-100-R-1: Targeted Surveys for the Peppered Shiner in the Kiamichi, Little, Glover and Mountain Fork Rivers.

Project Leader: Daniel Allen, University of Oklahoma.

The peppered shiner is a rare species only found in a few rivers in the south-central United States. To better conserve this species, there is a clear need to know where and how many peppered shiners exist within its Oklahoma range.

This project is working to estimate the distribution and abundance of the peppered shiner in the Kiamichi, Little, Glover and Mountain Fork Rivers by field surveys. Habitat characteristics are also being examined to better understand this sensitive species' habitat requirements.

Results from this research project will provide the Wildlife Department with updated distribution and population data for peppered shiners in Oklahoma. Following the first season of field sampling at more than 60 stream sites, just one peppered shiner has been collected, reinforcing just how rare these fish are in southeastern Oklahoma.

Project F-106-R-1: Black Bass Angler Harvest and Opinions in Relation to Stream Size, Access, and Fish Diversity.

Project Leader: James Long and Omkar Joshi, Oklahoma State University.

Through extensive creel surveys, this study aims to determine fishing pressure in an area, how many fish are caught, how many fish are har-

In the last 29 years, not a single peppered shiner has been collected during field surveys until recently. Little is known of this rare species, however researchers hope to learn more.



KELLY ADAMS/ODWC

Streams and rivers provide habitat to a variety of fish species while also extending recreational opportunity to anglers. Monitoring how many anglers fish in Oklahoma's stream and rivers, and estimating how many fish they catch helps ODWC evaluate current management practices and make better management decisions.



Streams and rivers provide habitat to a variety of fish species while also extending recreational opportunity to anglers. Monitoring how many anglers fish in Oklahoma's stream and rivers, and estimating how many fish they catch helps ODWC evaluate current management practices and make better management decisions.

and economic data will allow an estimated value to be placed on Oklahoma stream fisheries, which is important in making stream flow decisions.

Project investigators continue to survey anglers (more than 100 surveyed to date) and collect data from tagged bass being reported by anglers. Tagged bass reports have been low; only three anglers reported harvesting a tagged bass.

vested, and overall satisfaction of Oklahoma stream anglers. In addition, researchers will be able to better understand eastern Oklahoma stream anglers.

Understanding the quality of a fishery as it relates to angler effort, catch of sport fish, overall catch rates, species variety, and harvest numbers is needed to better manage these resources while also meeting angler demands.

Project results will help the Wildlife Department provide sustainable fishing opportunities for stream anglers,



The river herring is one of several suckers found in Oklahoma's rivers and streams. It specializes in eating freshwater clams, mussels, and snails which it "vacuums" off the bottom. It is also one of six North American fish that will eat invasive zebra mussels.

sustainability of sucker gigging while protecting sensitive aquatic systems.

This study focuses on learning more about what habitats are most important for adult fish during the spring spawn, and what habitats are used by young fish. Project investigators will also determine the population size, age structure and total mortality rate for common sucker species.

This information is important for the Wildlife Department to better understand sucker populations of northeastern Oklahoma. Study results will inform a sustainable recreational fishery approach to better managing the ecological health of Ozark streams. Sucker tagging for mark-and-recapture population estimates is ongoing in this river system. Project investigators are spending many hours processing otoliths (bone-like structures of the ear) for estimating ages of the various sucker species collected during gigging tournaments.

Project F-100-R-1: Effects of Sucker Gigging on Fish Populations in Oklahoma Scenic Rivers.

Project Leader: Daniel Shoup and Shannon Brewer, Oklahoma State University.

Many species of suckers are ecologically and recreationally important despite not being considered sport fish in most states.

Gigging suckers is a popular and culturally significant pastime in the Ozark Highlands. However, the effect gigging has on population dynamics of suckers is not well understood. Therefore, research is needed to determine safe levels of sucker harvest in order to ensure



WILDLIFEDEPARTMENT.COM

Project F-50-R-26: Estimating population and exploitation of Alligator Gar (*Atractosteus spatula*) in Lake Texoma.

Project Leader: Richard Snow, Oklahoma Fishery Research Laboratory (ODWC).

The alligator gar is among four species of gar in Oklahoma. They are mostly found in Lake Texoma, the upper Red River and its tributaries.

Stream flow is a critical factor in the life cycle of these large fish, as they need enough flowing water to access spawning habitat in the Red River above Lake Texoma. As the number of people who bowfish for alligator gar increases, so does the concern regarding potential effects on the population of this ancient species. But before biologists can identify any potential angling impact, they must first have quality population data that includes population total estimates, age structure and sex ratios.

Currently, more than 250 alligator gars have been tagged in this study. Project investigators have also collected aging structures (otoliths) from 23 of 25 alligator gar reported as harvested by anglers. Additionally, biologists are working to determine the survival rate of alligator gars that are caught and released, and how many alligator gars are harvested by anglers annually. Results of this work will provide much needed data for the Wildlife Department to better manage Oklahoma's largest, most ancient fish, while providing the most opportunity for anglers.

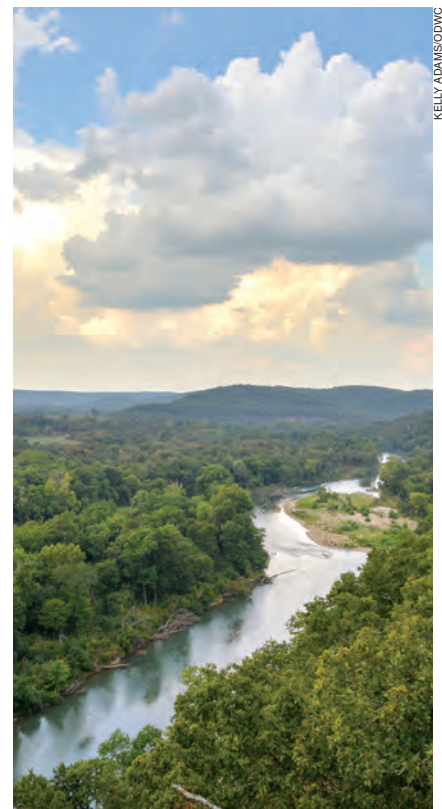
Alligator gars are the largest freshwater fish species in Oklahoma and the third-largest in North America, making them popular with sport anglers. Their toothy, threatening appearance in conjunction with the misconception that they prey primarily on sportfish have given them a bad reputation. However, these creatures play a critical role in maintaining an ecological balance.

These research projects highlight the importance of stream flows for fisheries diversity across Oklahoma. From the smallest of fish such as the prairie chub or peppered shiner, all the way up to our largest fish, the alligator gar, the health of the state's fish populations depends on flowing waters.

Managing and conserving these stream resources provides benefits to Oklahoma anglers and to conservation-minded citizens. Good stewardship of our streams will leave a legacy of conservation that can be enjoyed by future generations of Oklahomans.

(Information and Education Specialist Kelly Adams contributed to this article.)

EDITOR'S NOTE: Many conservation research projects are completed each year by the Wildlife Department. For a partial listing of recent projects and final reports from those efforts, go www.wildlifedepartment.com/wildlife/wildlife-diversity/research/swg.



KELLY ADAMS/ODWC

Instream flow of water is of primary concern to researchers studying conservation of Oklahoma's rivers, like the Illinois River in eastern Oklahoma.

The Outdoor Store

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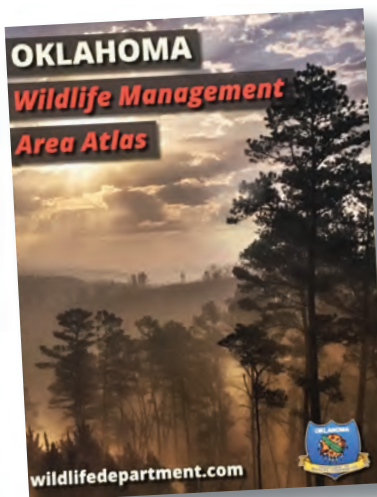
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Watchable Wildlife

THE RING-NECKED PHEASANT

BY DON P. BROWN, INFORMATION AND EDUCATION SPECIALIST

The ring-necked pheasant is familiar to Oklahomans as this state's most colorful game bird.

Pheasants are native to the Old World, mainly the Asian countries. The Chinese ring-necked pheasant, and hybrids with other races, were successfully introduced into the United States in the 1880s. Through natural and artificial reproduction and release, the birds have established and expanded their range.

Unlike some exotics, pheasants have thrived in this country with no ill effects on native wildlife. The pheasant has been most successful in areas where extensive cultivation and clean farming practices have made it difficult for other game to survive.

The typical cock pheasant has a blue-green head and distinctive white collar that gives the ring-necked pheasant its name. The rest of the cock's plumage is a varied pattern of iridescent colors: blue, green, red, burnished copper, yellow and white. The gold-hued tail feathers are quite long, pointed and barred with black.

The hen is smaller, averaging slightly more than 2 pounds compared to the cock's average of 2.75 pounds. The hen's plumage is a mixture of brown, buff and black. She also has pointed tail feathers, but they are not as long as the male's.

When alarmed, the well-camouflaged hens generally choose to remain hidden. Cocks depend on escape by running or flying, their takeoff accompanied by a loud whirring of wings.

In fall and winter, pheasants are found in flocks that may consist of cocks, hens or both. Flocks break up in early spring as the cocks disperse and establish crowing territories. An inconspicuous patch of bare reddish skin around the cock's eyes begins to enlarge. By mating season, both sides of the head are covered with a brilliant red wattle.

Individual boundaries of crowing territories are not exact or permanent, but each cock regards a particular area as private property

and defends it from trespass by other males. Hens are free to come and go at will and are courted by the males as they enter territories.

Cocks harvested during hunting season do not affect the reproduction in a pheasant population because one male can easily manage a harem of a dozen or more females. Even when numbers of each sex are nearly equal, there are usually several hens to a cock, but some males remain single.

Crowing is the territorial call of the male. The call may attract

The pheasant has been most successful in areas where extensive cultivation and clean farming practices have made it difficult for other game to survive.

hens and warn other males against trespassing. It is comprised of two syllables: a long note followed by a short one. The call is followed by six to eight wing claps that can be heard a short distance away. When the cock courts the hen, it struts in front of the hen with short rapid steps, displaying its colorful plumage.

Cock pheasants are not the least bit interested in family life. The hen hatches and rears the young alone. She builds a nest on the ground in fields of hay or grain, fencerows or other suitable cover. It is simply a slight hollow in the ground, scantily lined with vegetation. Up to 15 brownish-olive eggs are laid and incubated from 23 to 25 days.

Newly hatched pheasant chicks are active as soon as they are dry. The female leads them away from the nest, and they begin learning to find food. By the time they are two weeks old, they have some wing feathers and can fly short distances.

In five or six weeks the chicks are fully feathered. By late fall, the young pheasants have traded juvenile feathers for their first winter plumage and are nearly adult in appearance.

Grain, weed seed, wild fruits and berries make up the bulk of a pheasant's diet. Also included in the bird's fare are some insects and vegetative materials.

Oklahoma is on the southern fringe of the pheasant's range. The birds are found in western and northwestern counties, especially in the intensively farmed areas of the Panhandle. 🌿





Oklahoma is one of the nation's best places to hunt quail, even as bobwhite numbers decline. Back in the day, a limit easily could be had in just an hour or two. Find out how a longtime bird hunter remembers those glory days in this issue of *Outdoor Oklahoma*.

Outdoor Oklahoma

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