

Outdoor Oklahoma

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2021 – ONLY \$10 A YEAR



Slammin'!

Introducing Oklahoma
Slam and Super Slam for
Big Game Hunters



A PUBLICATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

Panoramas

For those of us who love the outdoors, our hope is to leave Oklahoma in even better shape than when we first took steps into the woods, the prairies, creeks and hills. I'm proud to be able to say our state's leadership, in concert with the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC), are doing just that through a unique national program aimed at mitigation for polluted environments: the Natural Resources Damage Assessment and Restoration program (NRDA).

NRDA is the legal process that federal agencies, with the states and American Indian nations, use to evaluate — and mitigate — the environmental impacts of oil spills, hazardous waste sites, and ship groundings on natural resources.

Oklahoma has eight contaminated sites resulting from the release of sewage, mining waste, refinery waste and other hazardous substances. Fines from damages to the resources, received through litigation, were put into a fund administered by my office at the Oklahoma Secretary of Energy and Environment.

Working alongside state and federal agencies, we recently developed the first Statewide Comprehensive Restoration Plan to begin putting these settlement funds to good use. The plan outlines the goals and processes to rehabilitate those injured areas or to acquire the resource equivalent for the services they provide.

In 2018, ODWC submitted its first project proposals for NRDA funding, in most cases leveraging 3-to-1 federal grant funding to yield millions of dollars for fish and wildlife restoration. These projects received approval, and ODWC went to work on projects including:

- Rehabilitating existing water supply reservoirs, roadways and fencing at Durant State Fish Hatchery and replacing water

control structures at Schooler Lake and Lake Watonga Dam. NRDA funds are also being used to replace the antiquated main water pipeline to the hatchery and pump station at J.A. Manning State Fish Hatchery at Medicine Park.

- Acquiring and using equipment to remove cedar trees, and tractors, ATVs and other equipment to improve fencing and fireguards to conduct more prescribed burns and facilitate beneficial grazing across the state.
- Improving wildlife habitat on numerous WMAs to include vegetation control, wetland restorations, and other infrastructure improvements.

Most notably, NRDA funds were leveraged to acquire 7,602 acres in Haskell County, resulting in the new Sans Bois WMA; 239 acres for Atoka WMA; 557 acres in McCurtain County adjacent to Grassy Slough WMA; and 124 acres for Drummond Flat WMA. These properties will be perpetually open to the public for hunting and fishing and represent critical habitat for fish and wildlife.

The work is not yet complete. We are now

partnering on several exciting projects in northeastern Oklahoma, including one that would permanently restore and protect (and guarantee future public access to) a portion of one of our state's most pristine Ozark streams in the Illinois River watershed.

Our state is truly one of the best places in the world to live, fish, hunt, or enjoy outdoor activities. And I am proud to say through this program and others, we are making a lasting difference. I hope to see you soon out there enjoying Outdoor Oklahoma.



Kenneth Wagner

Kenneth Wagner

Kenneth Wagner

Secretary of Energy and Environment

State of Oklahoma



Inside

Off the Beaten Path. 2

Lawmakers Getting the Lowdown 10

Liaison's Main Goals Are to Inform, Educate

By Corey Jager, Legislative Liaison

**Controlled Hunts Strategy Mixes
Knowledge and Luck. 14**

Apply Wisely and Selection Chances Improve

We Be Slammin' 22

Oklahoma Big Game Hunters Have New Cy Curtis Quests

By Don P. Brown, Information Specialist

Conservation for Kids 24

Pages Providing Learning and Fun for Youngsters

Bowfishing in Oklahoma 26

Enjoyment, Sustainability, Long-term Public Benefit

Become Major Goals in a Management Strategy

By Jason Schooley, Senior Fisheries Biologist

Operation Jersey: Anatomy of a Wildlife Sting 38

How Teamwork Between State, Federal Game Wardens

Led to Largest Financial Wildlife Penalty in State History

By Carlos Gomez, Retired Oklahoma Game Warden

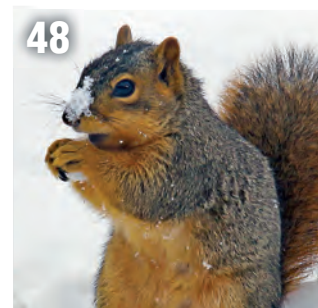
Wildlife Conservation Foundation Spotlight. 44

Outdoor Store 46

Watchable Wildlife 48

The Fox Squirrel

By Justin Veach, Education Intern



ON THE COVER: Realizing the tremendous hunting opportunities offered in Oklahoma, Brandon Adams of Prague set out in 2018 to complete an Oklahoma Big Game Super Slam. He became the first known hunter to accomplish such a feat. Inspired by Adams' great story, the Wildlife Department has added statewide recognition awards to its Cy Curtis Awards Program. Learn more on Page 22.

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Off the Beaten Path

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

ODWC SOCIAL MEDIA WEEKLY EDITOR'S CHOICE PHOTO LINEUP

By Sarah Southerland, Information Specialist

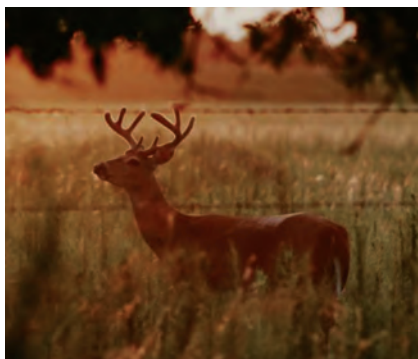
At the beginning of the weekly Editor's Choice Photo Lineup, a photography contest the ODWC holds on social media, there was a simple call for photos of the wild. It has since evolved into a true showcase of skill, talent, and a passion for the outdoors.

These photographers have shared with fellow Oklahomans their obsession, and we hope the readers of Outdoor Oklahoma enjoy their work as much as we do!



Jerry Spears first dropped into the ODWC social media inboxes and immediately left an impression. Jerry says of his work, "What was once a hobby has now become an obsession. I'd rather take pictures than anything else now. Wildlife is my favorite thing to take pictures of, and if any of my photos are special, I would say I like specializing in getting up close and personal."

Randi Campbell is among many skilled photographers who have thrown their



work in the ring for our weekly contest. Campbell loves to face challenges head on. Strenuous hikes and Oklahoma weather can't keep her from getting outside and behind the lens. It's all part of the "job."

"Although the wildlife photography world is mostly male-dominated, it doesn't stop me from getting out and hiking long distances, carrying heavy equipment, and withstanding adverse weather conditions to do what I love. I'm not sure what it looks like to live life and not photograph animals!"



If you're looking for an illustration of the spirit of adventure that lives within our state, look no further than **Aaron Iker**. Hunter and photographer, Aaron will be shooting no matter the circumstances. When contacted for a comment about his incredible shot of friend Cody Wainscott with his buck, he replied, "I'm in the woods taking photos now. Let me get better service."

After he marched out of the woods and back into decent cell service, Iker said, "Photography for me, it's being a part of that moment that gets all of us out here hunting or fishing. I try to find that moment that got me excited and capture it with hopes someone sees it and maybe it could change their mind and think 'Wow, that's amazing.'"

Iker is now on the hunt for some shots of the elk herd that roams the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge.

For a stylistic photographer who captures the diversity of Oklahoma's wildlife, get acquainted with the work of **Holly Lackey White**. Her eye for color and composition has led to

impressive close-ups of animals large and small.

Outdoor photography is more than a hobby for White; it serves as a way for her to connect with her family and friends.

"I love to bring the outdoor wildlife indoors for the people who are not in good enough health to get out and enjoy it themselves. I have family members who are ill who really enjoy seeing the pictures. From the tiniest hummingbird to the bison out of the Tall Grass Prairie, there's always something worth keeping your eye out for in the great state of Oklahoma!"



To enter your photographs in the Weekly Editor's Choice Photo Lineup contest, share your photos on ODWC's social media pages inboxes. Each Thursday, the editor's favorites will be shared with our audience. And thanks to all for the great views of Outdoor Oklahoma! ..x

Outdoor Calendar

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

NOTICE: Events listed were still scheduled at press time; events are subject to cancellation due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

JANUARY 2021

1	New Year's Day (state offices closed).
3	"Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
7	Public Hearing on ODWC Rule Change Proposals, 7 p.m., 1801 N. Lincoln Blvd., Oklahoma City. Info: www.wildlifedepartment.com/public-meeting .
10	"Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
11	Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commission meeting, 9 a.m., Oklahoma City.
17	"Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
18	Martin Luther King Jr. Day (state offices closed).
19	Okla. Striped Bass Assn. meeting, 7 p.m., Zebco, Tulsa, (918) 639-8114. Ask An Angler: Pre-spawn Bass Tips virtual fishing course, 1-3 p.m., register at license.GoOutdoorsOklahoma.com/events.aspx .
24	"Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
31	"Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.

- **Ducks Unlimited** event set in Kingfisher, Jan. 23. Info: www.ducks.org/Oklahoma/events.
- **Friends of NRA** event info: www.FriendsOfNRA.org.
- **National Wild Turkey Federation** events in Hydro, Jan. 16; Hulbert, Jan. 22. Info: www.nwtf.org/events.

FEBRUARY 2021

1	Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commission meeting, 9 a.m., Oklahoma City.
7	"Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
14	"Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
15	Presidents' Day (state offices closed).
16	Okla. Striped Bass Assn. meeting, 7 p.m., Zebco, Tulsa, (918) 639-8114.
21	"Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
23	Ask An Angler: Crappie Fishing Tips virtual fishing course, 1-3 p.m., register at license.GoOutdoorsOklahoma.com/events.aspx .
27	RMEF Big Game Banquet, 5:30 p.m., Tulsa Fairgrounds, www.rmeff.org/events or (918) 630-8557.
28	"Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.

- **Ducks Unlimited** event set in Eufaula, Feb. 20. Info: www.ducks.org/Oklahoma/events.
- **Friends of NRA** event info: www.FriendsOfNRA.org.
- **National Wild Turkey Federation** events set in Stillwater, Feb. 6; Claremore, Feb. 20; Durant, Feb. 27. Info: www.nwtf.org/events.

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

2021-22 STATE WATERFOWL STAMP

TO DISPLAY IDAHO ARTIST'S WIGEON

An Idaho artist's painting collected the most votes in this year's Oklahoma Waterfowl Stamp art competition. Kelly Kadlec's depiction of a pair of American wigeon earned first place and will be featured on Oklahoma's waterfowl stamp for the 2021-22 hunting seasons.

This 40-year-old art contest is open to any artist nationwide regardless of residency, and the winner is selected using votes received online from the public and from internal Wildlife Department judging. Kadlec's painting was among 15 entries received in the most recent content.

Artists who received honorable mention for their entries are Chris Goins, Sheridan, Ark.; Dennis Arp, Culberson, Neb.; and Buck Spencer, Junction City, Ore.

The Oklahoma waterfowl stamp program began in 1980 and was designed to ensure quality habitat for the hundreds of thousands of ducks and geese that migrate through the state each year. The design competition 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 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: Kelly Kadlec, Eagle, Idaho.

The new stamps featuring the American wigeon will go on sale around July 1 in the Outdoor Store at license. GoOutdoorsOklahoma.com, or in person at the Wildlife Department headquarters in Oklahoma City. ❖❖



Honorable Mention: Buck Spencer, Junction City, Ore.



Honorable Mention: Dennis Arp, Culberson, Neb.



Honorable Mention: Chris Goins, Sheridan, Ark.



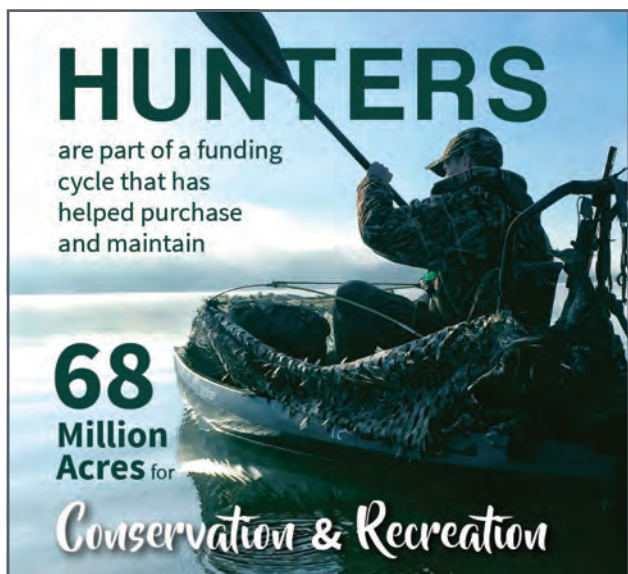
JUNIOR DUCK STAMP ART CONTEST SEEKS ENTRIES

Any young artists from kindergarten through 12th grade are invited to enter the Oklahoma Junior Duck Stamp Art Contest. It's fun, educational and free.

Every year, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service conducts the Junior Duck Stamp contest across all 50 states and U.S. territories. This program is a great way to learn about waterfowl species through art and tap into the creativity of Oklahoma students.

Submissions are due by March 1, 2021, to Sequoyah National Wildlife Refuge (107993 S. 4520 Road, Vian, OK 74962). The Best of Show winner in the Oklahoma contest will advance to the national art contest. Last year, a painting of goldeneye ducks by London Peterson of Eufaula placed in the Top 10 nationally.

For more information about the Junior Duck Stamp Program, go to <https://www.fws.gov/birds/education/junior-duck-stamp-conservation-program.php>. ☕





Game Bag

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

Dear Wildlife Department,

I would like to recognize Game Warden **Dru Polk** for going above and beyond the call of duty.

This past summer, we went camping with some friends at Talimena State Park. My teenage son decided to go on a short motorcycle ride on the ATV trails from the park, while another group of us went hiking on some of the hiking trails.

Riding by yourself is not a smart idea; riding by yourself in unknown territory is a terrible idea. My son found that out last summer. When we came back from hiking two hours later and my son wasn't back, we knew something had happened.

Thankfully before I could hop on another motorcycle to go look for him, Game Warden Dru Polk and another ODWC employee (please forgive me for not catching his name) drove up with my son in the back seat. Turns out he got lost 20 minutes after he left and ended up on the other side of the mountain where he came across the two ODWC employees and sheepishly approached them for help.

Aside from a broken footpeg, no harm was done. And since he had a GoPro, he got a great video of a bear crossing 40 yards in front of him while on the motorcycle.

Please recognize these two, employees as this event could have turned out really badly without their help. Thank you.

Tim Dowty

Dear Wildlife Department,

I am a walleye fisherman who uses Lake Hefner. I really appreciate the population that has been established and maintained at that lake. I wanted to let you know I am thankful for the resources and efforts that have gone toward that species of fish, and I hope the population is maintained in the future. Thank you!

Carl

Dear Wildlife Department,

Ally, age 12, took a nice doe for her controlled hunt at the Washita National Wildlife Refuge. Huge thank you to Levi and all that he does out there. It was an awesome evening. Thank you to the ODWC for offering these opportunities to our youth!

Jessica Kimble, via Facebook

Dear Game Wardens,

Thanks for doing all that you do. I hunt state land, and your management in Oklahoma is awesome! Every year, I see more and more game. It makes a great outdoors adventure when presence of game becomes abundant. Of course, I still have to venture for it to be able to see it! My hat is off to you always!

Dan Gray, via Facebook



Game Warden's Journal

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



Game Wardens across the state are busy working around the clock to protect your wildlife resources!

Games Wardens in McCurtain County, **Lt. Dru Polk**, **Kenny Lawson** and **Mark Hannah**, captured an amazing eight groups of spotlighters in less than a week! These would-be thieves are facing several thousand dollars' worth of fines and potential equipment forfeitures as well as hunting license revocations.

One of the suspects was using a thermal scope to commit his crimes. For another suspect in a different group, it was his third time being caught hunting illegally at night.

Legal sportsmen and women are our eyes and ears. If you know about or suspect wildlife crime in your area, please contact your local Game Warden. A directory is online at www.wildlifedepartment.com/law/game-warden-directory.



Recently, **Jaylen Flynn**, Game Warden based in Carter County, investigated a report from a landowner near Wilson who had found a deer that had died from an apparent rifle wound.

After checking with several neighbors, Flynn learned that 13-year-old Zoey Murphy was hunting with her grandfather on a neighboring property and had shot the deer the first evening of youth deer gun season. While trying to track the animal, they lost the trail in some tall grass and thought the deer was gone forever.

Fast forward three days, and Zoey was all smiles when the Game Warden delivered her long lost trophy.

.....



Tulsa area Game Wardens were busy during the recent deer muzzleloader season, but not just with hunters.

Acting on information from concerned sportsmen, Rogers County Game Wardens **Travis Garrett** and **JD Stauffer** were assisted by **Lt. Paul Welch** to investigate illegal activities on the Oologah



Wildlife Management Area.

The three officers found several subjects unlawfully camped on the WMA using a stolen travel trailer, possessing large quantities of marijuana, methamphetamine, and drug paraphernalia. Numerous charges were filed, and the three suspects were booked into the Rogers County jail.

Also, Game Warden **Carlos Gomez**, based in Tulsa County, located two stolen trucks while on routine patrol during the last weekend of the season.

These encounters illustrate how a Game Warden's work is rarely routine and not always just about hunting and fishing.



No two days are the same for the members of the Thin Green Line! That was definitely true recently for Game Warden **Lt. Max Crocker**, based in Texas County.

Crocker was notified of a black bear cub that had climbed a power pole in the Felt area of Cimarron County. The Wildlife Department worked with Tri County Electric to get the electricity turned off. Then they were able to use a bucket truck to coax the young bear from top of pole back to ground. Crocker reported that the cub hit the ground running!

(Reports from the Oklahoma Game Wardens Facebook page.)

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



WHY IT'S THE LAW

"It shall be unlawful to place and/or hunt over bait on lands owned or managed by the Department of Wildlife Conservation, including Corps lands. ... 'Bait' shall mean the placing, exposing, depositing, distributing, or scattering of shelled, shucked or unshucked corn, wheat or other grain or other feed."

2020-21 Oklahoma Hunting and Fishing Regulations Guide, page 78.

If you are a deer hunter, you've no doubt seen that monster buck that was taken under a corn feeder on private land. So, you're wondering, can I use bait on public land?

The answer is NO.

We see the question all the time on social media: Why can't we bait on public land when it's perfectly legal on private land? Some may think it has to do with chronic wasting disease (CWD). Others may think that ODWC just doesn't want them to have a successful hunt, or that the agency is just mean-spirited. Not so. Bait on a public area is more of a "person" issue than an "animal" issue.

Imagine you dragged a feeder out to the spot you've been scouting on public land. You did the work. Scouted. Waited. Bought the feed. Saw many happy animals at your feeder. This has become "your spot."

Then, on opening morning you arrive at "your spot" to find someone else hunting at the feeder you worked hard to maintain. Imagine what could happen next? You and the other hunter could get into an altercation — not smart when firearms are around.

This regulation helps curb the likelihood of hunters claiming a specific spot on public land as theirs only.

Another aspect of this regulation is that it is unnatural. ODWC's mission includes managing habitat for the benefit of the wildlife. **Jerry Shaw**, Programs Supervisor for the Department, said artificial bait piles are not a natural part of deer feeding behaviors. Bait concentrates animals unnaturally, leading to social stresses within the deer population. Bait also attracts more predators and serves as a concentration point for animals, making the transfer of diseases and external parasites easier. Simply put, baiting is not part of the natural ecosystem and runs counter to proper habitat management.

ODWC wants to keep public land as natural as possible and minimize the possibility of hunter altercations.

Smokey Solis, Information Specialist

2020 CREATIVE WRITING COMPETITION

"WE NEED TO KEEP THE HERITAGE ALIVE"

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 pronghorn hunt in the Texas Panhandle, and winners in the 11-14 age category receive a hunting trip with Rack Attack Outfitters (or similar) and a scholarship to the Outdoor Texas Camp. In this issue, Outdoor Oklahoma honors senior category male winner Tanner Young, 15, from Boone-Apache High School.



OKLAHOMASTATIONSOCI.ORG

SHARING THE HERITAGE OF HUNTING

By Tanner Young



Hunting has been around for many generations and holds a place in many family traditions.

My Papa took me on my first turkey hunt when I was eleven and that is a memory I will never forget. This hunting trip had a pretty awesome twist.

We got the turkey back to the house on the property and set it on the porch. As I was admiring the beard of the turkey on that lovely spring morning, I noticed it was separating. So I split the hairs apart and they split into three pieces, two smaller pieces and one large one. At first, I thought it was a fault in the turkey, but I was still as excited as I could be. When he came back, I asked Papa about it and showed him the three beards. I have never seen someone get so excited, so quickly in my life. He later explained that three beards is very rare and highly praised. That is what hunting is all about, making and passing down mem-

ories, as well as tools and knowledge.

That is not the only thing hunting is about. It is about population control, land management, as well as moral obligations. We have to take care of and manage the land and hunt to control the wildlife population, so that it can be passed down for generation after generation to enjoy.

In current times the younger generations have become so involved in electronics. Many have forgotten what skills are needed to provide for your basic necessities. Hunting is also one of the few activities where everyone, regardless of ability or background, has the same opportunity to enjoy their hunt along with the harvest.

From a personal perspective, the opportunities I've had to take my younger sister hunting have brought us closer as a family and helped us overcome situations and work together. It is a very good way to meet new people and build relationships, furthermore gaining new perspectives. I feel like hunting has built my character up and allowed me to flourish in life. Hunting will surely change as generations pass, such as laws and regulations, but the memories you make will never change so make them good ones and share them with others. ..x

Wild About

◆ COOKING ◆



SPICY THREE-BEAN VENISON CHILI

By Smokey Solis, Information and Education Specialist

If you're looking for a chili recipe to spice up these cold winter months, this recipe is just for you! Don't be scared though; the heat is meant to warm you a bit, not burn your tongue off. For this recipe, I used a Ninja Foodi Pressure Cooker. You can use any pressure cooker or pot, just adjust the techniques and cooking time accordingly.

More than 59,000 deer were harvested in Oklahoma last year, and there are thousands of ways to make chili. Most swear by their own version, but put down your box of chili spice and let's get to cookin'.

Ingredients

1 lb ground venison
2 poblano peppers, deseeded and diced
4 garlic cloves, finely chopped
1 medium yellow onion, diced
1 can crushed tomatoes
1 can diced tomatoes
1 can black beans
1 can chili beans
1 can Ranch Style Beans
1 can chipotle peppers in adobo sauce
1 T ancho chili powder, or to taste
1 T ground cumin
Salt and pepper to taste
2 cups chicken broth
4 T avocado or vegetable oil

- To a heated pressure cooker on saute setting or a pot, add 2 T of oil and heat up for about 30 seconds.
- Add onions and poblanos. Cook until they begin to soften and onions look translucent.
- Add ancho chili powder and ground cumin, and stir until onions and peppers are coated with spices. (Be careful not to burn spices.) Transfer mixture to a bowl and set aside.
- Still on saute setting, add 2 T of oil and heat. (No need to clean your cooker or pot.)
- Add ground venison. Use a spoon to break meat into smaller pieces for even cooking and start browning the meat.
- Add salt and pepper to taste.
- Some fat drippings may collect after meat is browned. Draining the fat or keeping it is a personal choice, as fat adds to flavor.
- Add peppers and onions to the meat and mix. Add the cans of beans and tomatoes.
- Add 1 to 3 chipotle peppers, finely chopped, according to your preference for heat.
- Add chicken broth and thoroughly mix all ingredients. Pressure cook for 15 minutes, or simmer 45 minutes in a pot, simmer 45 minutes and stir occasionally.

You're all done! Dress your chili with sour cream, tortilla chips, cheese or whatever else you enjoy with it! Chili is a great way to warm up on a cold night. Enjoy with friends and family, and freeze the extra for later. And don't forget: The Outdoors Are Always Open! ♦♦♦

(The MeatEater YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/user/MeatEaterTV) provided inspiration this recipe.)

Lawmakers Getting the Lowdown



Liaison's Main Goals Are to Inform and Educate



Knowledge is the name of the game in making high-level decisions. So, the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation's legislative liaison, Corey Jager, works to inform lawmakers about ODWC's activities. Formerly a human dimensions specialist, Jager shares some insights about her current role.

What is a legislative liaison?

The point person between the State Legislature and the agency. A liaison offers guidance to legislators on how bills might impact an agency, its employees or constituents. Liaisons also help coordinate responses to legislative requests, such as constituent questions, provide testimony at legislative hearings, and help communicate legislative changes back to the agency for implementation.

Why is the State Legislature a consideration for the Wildlife Department?

Because the Wildlife Department's overarching powers are defined by the Legislature, in Title 29 of the Oklahoma State Statutes. Legislators may create, modify or repeal laws, including laws within Title 29. While the majority of bills filed are related to things like education, health, and the budget, there are always a handful of bills that can impact ODWC, its employees and constituents. During the 2020 legislative session, there were over 2,000 bills filed, of which about 30 were proposed changes to Title 29. In particular, Title 29 houses all of ODWC's licensing language — types of licenses, fees, exemptions, penalties, etc. As the primary source of funding for our agency, we must work with the Legislature to ensure licensing changes are not detrimental to hunter and angler participation, as well as wildlife conservation funding. Additionally, the Legislature often has various oversight duties for state agencies. State laws require that ODWC, as well as other agencies, report on activities within the agency, our budget, and topics of importance to the Legislature.

Do other state agencies have liaisons?

All state agencies have either a designated legislative liaison or have staff tasked with coordinating legislative activities in some capacity. This ensures that all state agencies are responsive to the Legislature, and have the capacity to advance legislative initiatives for their agencies when needed.

Has the Wildlife Department always had a liaison?

Yes and no. The Wildlife Department in recent history has tasked agency leaders with duties to liaise with the Legislature. While this got the job done, ODWC was lacking a coordinated effort with our legislative communications and legislative initiatives. The Wildlife Department created a dedicated legislative liaison position about four years ago, and I've filled the position since its creation. Having one person serve as the liaison helps streamline communications with legislators, ensure requests receive timely responses, and most importantly that there is a person assigned to lead legislative initiatives from start to finish.

What are some topics that you might address with Legislators?

One of the biggest misconceptions about the Wildlife Department is that we receive appropriations from the Legislature (state tax dollars). The Wildlife Department is one of a few state agencies that receives ZERO state tax appropriations. In fact, the Wildlife Department remains almost entirely funded through the sale of hunting and fishing licenses and excise taxes on hunting and fishing equipment. Because most of our revenue is directly tied to license sales, I often speak with legislators about the impact of legislative proposals that change licensing, whether it be adding or removing licenses, adding exemptions or discounts, or altering fees.



Newly elected state legislators hear ODWC Director J.D. Strong speaking during a Wildlife 101 presentation at the State Capitol.

COREY JAGER/ODWC



Attending a ribbon-cutting for the new Sandhills Wildlife Management Agency are state Sens. Casey Murdock of Felt and Roland Pederson of Burlington, along with state Rep. Carl Newton of Cherokee.

Another prevalent topic of discussion is the concept of public trust resources, particularly when they exist on private lands. The Wildlife Department in Oklahoma is tasked with managing fisheries and wildlife resources for the benefit of all Oklahomans. With most of Oklahoma in private hands, there are often discussions about how landowners may use wildlife resources on their properties. I discuss with legislators how we aim to achieve management of public resources that occur on private property, which includes our efforts to assist landowners in managing healthy wildlife populations and habitat, as well as prevent or reduce conflict with wildlife on their properties. Ultimately, our agency – our state – must rely on the stewardship of private landowners for wildlife to thrive so that all Oklahomans can continue to enjoy these resources for generations to come.

What are some ways that legislators can learn more about the Wildlife Department?

In a given year, legislators review, modify and/or vote on hundreds of bills across a multitude of topics ranging from state government, to insurance, to wildlife. Most legislators are not experts on topics related to wildlife, and they are not expected to be. As a legislative liaison, one of my primary duties is to provide legislators with information about wildlife-related bills. Although this is often achieved with brief sit-down conversations at the State Capitol, we prefer to be a little more proactive in teaching legislators about the Wildlife Department by inviting them into the field with our staff to see the work we do on the ground. We are fortunate that our work often involves being in the outdoors and/or participating in hands-on wildlife experiences. We invite legislators to join us on research trips, like bear den research visits and fisheries sampling projects; ride along with game wardens; and join us at significant

events in their districts such as ribbon cutting ceremonies. Additionally, we coordinate several events specifically for legislators that give us an opportunity to provide them with in-depth information about our agency's mission, wildlife conservation funding, and our constituents.

What are some ways that you directly help the sportsmen and women of Oklahoma?

I've focused a lot of my efforts on communications with stakeholders and staff. If there's one thing I've learned, it's that the legislative processes can be overwhelming and confusing, and a lot can happen during the four-month legislative session. Prior to the start of the session, I meet with partner organizations to discuss upcoming legislative matters, go over bills that have been filed, and



State Rep. Scott Fetgatter of Okmulgee, center, joins Game Wardens Jeremy Bersche, J.D. Stauffer, David Robertson and Jordan Toyne on a poaching investigation.

brainstorm group events that will help bring legislators face-to-face with sportsmen. During the session, I distill what happens each week into an email for our employees, Wildlife Conservation Commissioners, and partners that have asked to stay informed on legislative matters. The emails provide updates on what bills have been filed that might impact sportsmen, if and how those bills are moving through the process, and any other pertinent information about Capitol happenings. ODWC's Director and I often attend organization meetings to talk directly with constituents about legislative matters, providing more details about why certain bills might have been proposed and what we anticipate the outcomes to be. Mostly, I try to be available if people want to engage in the legislative process but have questions and concerns. I hope to make the process a little less intimidating in this way.

What is the most satisfying aspect of your job?

Perhaps it is when I can encourage sportsmen to get more involved in the legislative process, and then they are able to see the results of their participation. I think many people are surprised when a legislator responds to an email or picks up the phone to call a constituent back, and even more surprised when a legislator votes favorably on a bill they were contacted about.

Although I feel honored to and enjoy representing ODWC and sportsmen at the Capitol, I think it's just as important for individuals to be involved in the legislative process and stay tuned in to what is happening at the Capitol. Many people assume legislators won't receive or read their emails or respond to their calls, and so they choose to avoid getting involved in the legislative process altogether, aside from voting. However, legislators are a lot more receptive to constituent feedback than people tend to think, and sometimes just one constituent email



State Rep. Dell Kerbs of Shawnee and State Rep. Zack Taylor of Seminole catch saugeyes while learning about ODWC's saugeye production and stocking program.

can change a legislator's perspective on an issue, and maybe even sway a vote. I try to encourage sportsmen to take some time to contact their legislators and let them know what issues are important to them and why.

What are some major legislative issues you anticipate in the coming year?

There is really just one major legislative issue that we anticipate in the coming year, as a request from our agency. The current system of establishing the ODWC licenses and fees by legislation has resulted in a confusing and overcomplicated license structure, including more than 150 individual licenses. This current system also results in large fee increases after long periods of time that drive down hunter and angler participation due to the size of the increase necessary to offset rising costs.

During the coming legislative session, ODWC wants to work with the Legislature to propose a bill that removes hunting and fishing licensing from the legislative process, and instead authorizes the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commission to establish the types of licenses and fees by administrative rule. The process of administrative rules is much more flexible. It is the process ODWC uses to set season dates and bag limits. The administrative rules process requires us to follow an extensive internal and external vetting process for any rule change. This process includes a public review and comment period, and approval by the Wildlife Commission, the Legislature and the Governor. While it's a more flexible process for us, it effectively increases the necessary checks and balances for our customers.

As a user-pay, public-benefit agency that receives zero state-appropriated tax dollars, the ODWC has a vested business interest in developing a licensing structure and setting fees that generate sufficient revenue to sustain its work, while ensuring continued growth in license sales and in hunting and fishing participation. Ultimately, we plan to use this process to simplify our license structure, adding value to each license option, and providing our customers with the confidence in knowing that they're buying the right license. 🌿



Sen. Roland Pederson of Burlington gets some hands-on experience in goose banding.



Controlled Hunts Strategy Mixes Knowledge and Luck

Apply Wisely and Selection Chances Improve

Hunting in Oklahoma is truly a first-rate experience, whether on private property or on a public hunting area. But any hunter who has experienced the luck of the draw and participated in one of the state's most-sought-after hunts will tell you it's a worthwhile pursuit.

With the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation's controlled hunts program, it definitely helps to have luck on your side. But that's not the only factor that can increase the odds of having your name drawn for one of these unique hunts.

For the 2020-21 controlled hunts program, about one out of every 25 applicants had his or her name drawn. Hopeful hunters turned in 147,325 applications for one of the 5,711 individual hunt permits available last year. Many of those applicants will apply again this year when the 2021-22

controlled hunts applications are made available this spring. And while it might seem obvious, the most important thing a hopeful hunter can do is to submit an online application each year.

Controlled hunts applications will be submitted online at GoOutdoorsOklahoma.com, <https://quotahunt.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Hunts/CustomLookup.aspx>. The application period will open

around April 1 and will close in mid-May. The application process is easy, and your application will not be accepted online unless it has been completed correctly, so you have the assurance that your application was successful and that your name will be in the drawings.

Aside from making sure to apply, the large number of hunters hoping to draw a hunt can do a few things to increase their chances of being drawn for what could be the hunt of a lifetime. Winners of controlled hunts are randomly selected through a computerized process that draws applications from the pool of those that applied. But hunters have the option to apply for several hunts, which increases one's chances of being selected for a hunt.

Also, if you are not drawn for a hunt category for which you applied, you gain a preference point in the drawings held in future years, as long as you apply in the same hunt category. Not only that, but some hunt categories allow you to apply with a group of other hunters, which boosts chances of being drawn.

This article is designed to provide some insights into how the controlled hunts program works, insights that might give you the edge you need to get your name drawn for a hunt that you won't forget.

**2020-21
Overall Odds Of
Being Drawn:
1 in 25.8**

Oklahoma is rich in outdoor opportunities, and the Wildlife Department's controlled hunts are just one more way you might be able to add to a successful year afield. Don't miss your chance to take part in these special hunts that oftentimes deliver big memories. And make sure to gather a few friends to apply as a group with you in those designated categories. We all know that when it comes to hunting, the only thing that makes being in the woods better is being there with friends and family.

ABOUT CONTROLLED HUNTS

Controlled hunts are offered for deer, elk, pronghorn and turkey. They are held in areas where unrestricted public hunting would pose safety concerns or where overharvest might occur. 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 will most likely 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 with disabilities.

Getting drawn for a controlled hunt is a matter of odds, and if you continue to apply year after year, it's likely you'll get at least one chance to enjoy a controlled hunt with the Wildlife Department.

How do I participate? You start by submitting a simple, easy-to-complete application online. This gives you a chance to be drawn for one of the hunts for which you applied. Choices include opportunities such as hunting for a bull elk at the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge, hunting for pronghorn in northwestern Oklahoma, 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.

Even though getting drawn is a matter of odds, you can still increase your chances of getting drawn by doing some research first. And we've done a lot of the hard research work for you in this article. If you will study the data here and determine which hunts you want to apply for based on the information provided, you can sway the odds in your favor.

For example, you might see that two controlled hunts will be held in the WMA you are hoping to hunt. You notice the selection odds are greater for one of the hunts, so you might decide to apply for that hunt.

Every time you apply and do not get selected, you earn a preference point in that category for the drawings in the future.

So, when you apply the next year, it's like getting your name put in the hat an extra time for the drawing. So, 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.

HELPFUL TIPS

To increase your chances of being selected, one of the best things you can do is to make sure you apply each and every year. Each preference point you earn acts like an extra application the next time you apply.

If you have been applying for the controlled hunt of your dreams for five years straight without having been selected, then you will have five "tickets in the hopper" compared to a first-time applicant, who will only have one. Those who say they have stopped applying because they never get drawn are actually giving you an advantage as long as you just keep on applying.

Although preference points increase your odds of selection, they do not guarantee that applicants with the most points will get drawn for a hunt. What is guaranteed is that their odds improve. First-time applicants with no preference points can and do get drawn when hunters who have many preference points miss out being selected. This is because names are selected randomly from the entire pool of applicants. The pool size related to the number of hunt permits also affects one's chances of being selected.

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 four hunters apply together — one with no points, one with two points, and the other two with three points each — the group's preference points will be two, which is

the average of all four hunters on the application. If not drawn in that category, each applicant in the hunt group will earn a single preference point that carries forward to future drawings.

Once you are drawn for a hunt, all preference points that you have built up in that hunt category are cleared. This is why it is so important to make sure you apply for hunts on dates that you are sure you can attend. You can begin building preference points with next year's application again, but it would be disappointing to apply year after year only to lose your points because you forgot you had to be out of town on your hunt date!

Regardless of whether you've been drawn, it's important to keep applying, if for no other reason than to gain preference points.

Here are some other tips to consider:

- Rather than looking at the number of permits available for each hunt, it could be in your favor to consider the ratio of

NEW! RAFFLE EXCURSIONS!

Coming this spring, check out a new way to win a special hunting or fishing trip! Raffles will be held by the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Foundation; proceeds will help the Wildlife Department. Stay tuned!

WATCH A VIDEO

Learn about the controlled hunts process in an online video at www.wildlifedepartment.com/hunting/controlledhunts.

permits to applicants before deciding which hunts you think will give you the best chance.

- By designating additional choices, you increase your overall odds of being selected for at least one of the choices, so make as many selections as a category allows (five in the deer category, for example), rather than just three, two or one.
- You can increase your odds of being drawn when you apply for hunts that happen on key dates of the regular statewide seasons, such as the opening weekend of muzzleloader or gun season. Many hunters may skip those dates because of already-planned hunts.
- For those locations that offer multiple hunts in the same category, the second or third hunts (the later hunts) are often easier to draw than the earliest hunts offered at that location.

- You cannot submit more than one application form per category. Since applications are completed and submitted online, you will receive confirmation that your application was completed correctly. This system helps to minimize mistakes, so make sure you receive confirmation of your application. If you do have any issues, call the toll-free help line listed at the bottom of the webpage, (833) 457-7285, or send email to HelpDesk@goooutdoorsoklahoma.com.
- Hunts that are considered by some to be less desirable, such as antlerless deer hunts, may be just the right choice for a meat hunter looking to raise his chances of getting to hunt at a premier location.

(Compiled by the Outdoor Oklahoma Staff)



KELLY ADAMS/ODWC

2020 DEER HUNTS

- Total applicants (includes first, second, third, fourth and fifth choice preferences): 73,972
- Total permits available: 4,046
- Overall odds of getting drawn for any one permit: 1 in 18.3

2020 DEER HUNTS FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

- Total applicants (includes first, second and third choice preferences): 283
- Total permits available: 115
- Overall odds of getting drawn for any one permit: 1 in 2.5

2020 YOUTH DEER HUNTS

- Total applicants (includes first, second and third choice preferences): 3,748
- Total permits available: 881
- Overall odds of getting drawn for any one permit: 1 in 4.25

DEER HUNT APPLICATION TIPS

- Antlerless-only hunts traditionally see fewer applicants compared to buck-only or either-sex hunts.
- Archery hunts are historically easier to draw on average than muzzleloader or gun hunts.
- Areas in the northeast like Cherokee, Cookson Hills, Gruber and Spavinaw WMAs typically have higher numbers of applicants. Consider applying for hunts in other parts of the state.
- Controlled hunts held during the regular muzzleloader and gun seasons, especially those held during the 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 their hunting plans in place for those dates.
- Steer clear of 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. If you avoid these, your odds go up for getting drawn.
- Scouting is key to the success of a hunter in bringing home game.
- Finding sign such as tracks, rubs, scrapes or even heavily used trails and feeding areas help hunters locate areas where they may have the best chance of seeing game.

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	10/23/20	10/25/20	Either Sex	1,937	50	1 in 38.74	64
Beaver River WMA, McFarland Unit	3006	Muzzleloader	10/24/20	10/25/20	Either Sex	524	10	1 in 52.4	71
Beaver River WMA, McFarland Unit	3007	Gun	11/21/20	11/22/20	Either Sex	869	5	1 in 173.8	83
Beaver River WMA	3008	Gun	11/21/20	11/22/20	Either Sex	808	15	1 in 53.87	73
Candy Creek WMA	3020	Muzzleloader	10/24/20	11/1/20	Either Sex	246	12	1 in 20.5	44
Candy Creek WMA	3021	Gun	11/21/20	12/6/20	Either Sex	343	12	1 in 28.58	53
Canton WMA	3030	Gun	11/21/20	11/22/20	Either Sex	1,311	75	1 in 17.48	43
Cherokee GMA	3044	Gun	11/14/20	11/14/20	Either Sex	1,634	50	1 in 32.68	56
Cherokee GMA	3045	Gun	11/14/20	11/14/20	Antlerless Only	182	25	1 in 7.28	21
Cherokee GMA	3046	Gun	11/15/20	11/15/20	Either Sex	1,120	50	1 in 22.4	46
Cherokee GMA	3047	Gun	11/15/20	11/15/20	Antlerless Only	135	25	1 in 5.4	16
Cookson WMA	3060	Muzzleloader	11/7/20	11/8/20	Either Sex	1,274	13	1 in 98	79
Cookson WMA	3061	Muzzleloader	11/7/20	11/7/20	Antlerless Only	114	23	1 in 4.96	13
Cookson WMA	3062	Muzzleloader	11/8/20	11/8/20	Antlerless Only	57	23	1 in 2.48	3
Cookson WMA	3063	Gun	11/14/20	11/15/20	Either Sex	1,813	13	1 in 139.46	82
Cookson WMA	3064	Gun	11/14/20	11/14/20	Antlerless Only	137	18	1 in 7.61	23
Cookson WMA	3065	Gun	11/15/20	11/15/20	Antlerless Only	97	18	1 in 5.39	15
Cross Timbers WMA	3071	Gun	12/5/20	12/6/20	(2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either	1,261	50	1 in 25.22	52
Deep Fork NWR	3080	Muzzleloader	10/12/20	10/18/20	Only 1 Antlered	1,097	50	1 in 21.94	45
Deep Fork NWR	3081	Archery	11/2/20	11/30/20	Only 1 Antlered	737	300	1 in 2.46	2
Four Canyon Preserve	3090	Muzzleloader	10/23/20	10/24/20	Antlerless Only	12	4	1 in 3	6
Four Canyon Preserve	3091	Muzzleloader	10/23/20	10/24/20	(2) Either Sex	161	2	1 in 80.5	76
Four Canyon Preserve	3092	Gun	11/13/20	11/14/20	Antlerless Only	38	4	1 in 9.5	29
Four Canyon Preserve	3093	Gun	11/13/20	11/14/20	(2) Either Sex	386	2	1 in 193	84
Fort Gibson WRP	3110	Archery	10/20/20	10/20/20	Only 1 Antlered	597	50	1 in 11.94	31
Fort Gibson WRP	3111	Muzzleloader	10/21/20	10/21/20	Antlerless Only	204	50	1 in 4.08	11
Fort Gibson WRP	3112	Muzzleloader	11/3/20	11/3/20	Antlerless Only	159	50	1 in 3.18	7
Fort Gibson WRP	3113	Muzzleloader	11/4/20	11/4/20	Either Sex	1,159	25	1 in 46.36	70
Fort Gibson WRP	3114	Muzzleloader	11/4/20	11/4/20	Antlerless Only	93	25	1 in 3.72	8
Grady County WMA	3120	Muzzleloader	10/24/20	11/1/20	Either Sex	160	10	1 in 16	38
Grady County WMA	3121	Gun	11/21/20	11/29/20	Either Sex	342	10	1 in 34.2	58
Grassy/Red Slough WMAs	3130	Gun	11/14/20	11/15/20	Either Sex	174	10	1 in 17.4	42
Lexington WMA	3150	Gun	11/14/20	11/14/20	(2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either	881	135	1 in 6.53	18
Lexington WMA	3151	Gun	11/15/20	11/15/20	(2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either	522	135	1 in 3.87	9
Lexington WMA	3152	Gun	11/18/20	11/18/20	(2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either	396	135	1 in 2.93	5
Lexington WMA	3153	Gun	11/19/20	11/19/20	(2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either	348	135	1 in 2.58	4
Little River NWR	3160	Gun	11/6/20	11/8/20	Either Sex	1,112	30	1 in 37.07	62
Little River NWR	3161	Gun	11/13/20	11/15/20	Either Sex	738	30	1 in 24.6	51
McAlester AAP Physically Challenged	3170	Archery	10/9/20	10/11/20	Only 1 Antlered	151	100	1 in 1.51	1
McAlester AAP	3171	Archery	10/16/20	10/18/20	Only 1 Antlered	1,842	275	1 in 6.7	19
McAlester AAP	3172	Archery	10/23/20	10/25/20	Only 1 Antlered	2,422	275	1 in 8.81	28
McAlester AAP	3173	Archery	10/30/20	11/1/20	Only 1 Antlered	3,640	275	1 in 13.24	35
McAlester AAP	3174	Archery	11/6/20	11/8/20	Only 1 Antlered	4,713	275	1 in 17.14	41
McAlester AAP	3175	Archery	11/13/20	11/15/20	Only 1 Antlered	4,464	275	1 in 16.23	39
McCurtain County WA	3190	Gun	11/6/20	11/8/20	Either Sex	842	16	1 in 52.63	72
McGee Creek WMA	3200	Muzzleloader	10/23/20	10/25/20	Either Sex	944	75	1 in 12.59	32
McGee Creek WMA	3201	Gun	10/30/20	11/1/20	Either Sex	1,756	75	1 in 23.41	47
Neosho WMA	3203	Muzzleloader	11/14/20	11/15/20	Either Sex	185	6	1 in 30.83	55
Oka'Yanahli Preserve	3206	Gun	12/12/20	12/12/20	(2) Antlerless Only	91	7	1 in 13	34
Oka'Yanahli Preserve	3207	Gun	12/13/20	12/13/20	(2) Antlerless Only	55	7	1 in 7.86	24
Okmulgee GMA	3210	Gun	11/14/20	11/15/20	Only 1 Antlered	1,330	30	1 in 44.33	66
Osage-Western Wall WMA	3220	Muzzleloader	11/12/20	11/15/20	Either Sex	1,046	10	1 in 104.6	80
Pontotoc Ridge Preserve	3223	Gun	10/3/20	10/3/20	(2) Antlerless Only	48	5	1 in 9.6	30
Pontotoc Ridge Preserve	3224	Gun	10/4/20	10/4/20	(2) Antlerless Only	27	5	1 in 5.4	17
Pontotoc Ridge Preserve	3225	Gun	10/17/20	10/17/20	(2) Antlerless Only	25	5	1 in 5	14
Pontotoc Ridge Preserve	3226	Gun	10/18/20	10/18/20	(2) Antlerless Only	23	5	1 in 4.6	12
Pushmataha WMA	3230	Muzzleloader	12/11/20	12/13/20	Either Sex	1,724	50	1 in 34.48	59
Salt Plains NWR	3240	Archery	11/30/20	12/3/20	Only 1 Antlered	346	25	1 in 13.84	37
Salt Plains NWR Wilderness Area	3241	Archery	11/30/20	12/3/20	Only 1 Antlered	286	12	1 in 23.83	49
Salt Plains NWR	3242	Muzzleloader	11/2/20	11/4/20	(2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either	869	25	1 in 34.76	60
Salt Plains NWR Wilderness Area	3243	Muzzleloader	11/2/20	11/4/20	(2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either	542	12	1 in 45.17	67
Salt Plains NWR	3244	Gun	11/9/20	11/11/20	(2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either	2,255	25	1 in 90.2	77
Salt Plains NWR Wilderness Area	3245	Gun	11/9/20	11/11/20	(2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either	1,432	12	1 in 119.33	81
Salt Plains NWR	3246	Gun	11/16/20	11/18/20	(2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either	1,569	25	1 in 62.76	74
Salt Plains NWR Wilderness Area	3247	Gun	11/16/20	11/18/20	(2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either	1,087	12	1 in 90.58	78
Sandy Sanders WMA	3270	Muzzleloader	10/26/20	11/1/20	Either Sex	1,172	50	1 in 23.44	48
Sans Bois WMA	3275	Muzzleloader	10/23/20	10/25/20	Either Sex	159	12	1 in 13.25	36
Sans Bois WMA	3276	Gun	11/6/20	11/8/20	Either Sex	543	12	1 in 45.25	68
Sequoyah NWR	3280	Archery	11/9/20	11/13/20	Only 1 Antlered	903	30	1 in 30.1	54
Sequoyah NWR	3281	Muzzleloader	10/28/20	10/30/20	(2) Antlerless Only	262	30	1 in 8.73	27
Sequoyah NWR	3282	Muzzleloader	11/18/20	11/20/20	(2) Antlerless Only	238	30	1 in 7.93	25
Sequoyah NWR	3283	Muzzleloader	12/2/20	12/4/20	(2) Antlerless Only	219	30	1 in 7.3	22
Sequoyah NWR (Refuge Islands)	3284	Archery	11/9/20	11/13/20	Only 1 Antlered	182	4	1 in 45.5	69
Sequoyah Resort Park	3286	Archery	12/5/20	12/6/20	(2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either	782	20	1 in 39.1	65
Spavinaw GMA	3290	Gun	10/24/20	10/25/20	Either Sex	1,458	20	1 in 72.9	75
Spavinaw GMA	3291	Gun	10/24/20	10/25/20	Antlerless Only	208	30	1 in 6.93	20

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	12/10/20	12/11/20	(2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either	770	20	1 in 38.5	63
Washita NWR	3320	Gun	11/9/20	11/10/20	Antlerless Only	85	10	1 in 8.5	26
Waurika WMA & COE Public	3330	Muzzleloader	11/9/20	11/11/20	Either Sex	547	15	1 in 36.47	61
Waurika WMA & COE Public	3331	Muzzleloader	11/9/20	11/11/20	Antlerless Only	101	25	1 in 4.04	10
Wichita Mountains WR	3340	Gun	11/17/20	11/19/20	Antlered Only	7,831	20	1 in 391.55	85
Wichita Mountains WR	3341	Gun	11/17/20	11/19/20	Antlerless Only	666	40	1 in 16.65	40
Great Salt Plains SP	3350	Archery	10/19/20	10/22/20	Only 1 Antlered	328	10	1 in 32.8	57
Great Salt Plains SP	3351	Archery	12/7/20	12/10/20	Only 1 Antlered	239	10	1 in 23.9	50
Tishomingo NWR	3370	Archery	11/18/20	11/20/20	Only 1 Antlered	387	30	1 in 12.9	33

2020 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	10/31/20	11/1/20	Either Sex	43	40	1 in 1.08	2
Cookson WMA	4010	Gun	10/31/20	11/1/20	Either Sex	35	14	1 in 2.5	7
Copan COE Parks	4015	Gun	12/4/20	12/6/20	(2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either	25	6	1 in 4.17	10
Deep Fork NWR	4020	Muzzleloader	10/26/20	11/1/20	Only 1 Antlered	7	5	1 in 1.4	3
Fort Gibson WRP	4025	Muzzleloader	12/5/20	12/6/20	Only 1 Antlered	24	10	1 in 2.4	6
Oologah Lake COE	4040	Gun	11/13/20	11/15/20	(2) 1 Doe, 1 Buck	52	8	1 in 6.5	12
Salt Plains NWR	4050	Muzzleloader	11/2/20	11/4/20	(2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either	8	2	1 in 4	9
Salt Plains NWR	4051	Gun	11/9/20	11/11/20	(2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either	18	2	1 in 9	13
Salt Plains NWR	4052	Gun	11/16/20	11/18/20	(2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either	12	2	1 in 6	11
Sequoyah NWR	4060	Archery	11/9/20	11/13/20	Only 1 Antlered	2	2	1 in 1	1
Sequoyah NWR	4061	Muzzleloader	11/18/20	11/20/20	(2) Antlerless Only	4	2	1 in 2	5
Sequoyah Resort Park	4070	Muzzleloader	12/19/20	12/20/20	(2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either	20	12	1 in 1.67	4
Tishomingo NWR	4080	Gun	11/5/20	11/6/20	(2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either	33	10	1 in 3.3	8

2020 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	10/16/20	10/18/20	Either Sex	117	50	1 in 2.34	9
Arbuckle Springs WMA	5004	Gun	11/21/20	11/22/20	(2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either	78	15	1 in 5.2	29
Beaver River WMA, McFarland Unit	5006	Gun	10/16/20	10/18/20	Either Sex	110	15	1 in 7.33	34
Camp Gruber Cantonment	5009	Muzzleloader	11/27/20	11/29/20	(2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either	125	40	1 in 3.13	12
Cherokee GMA	5010	Gun	11/7/20	11/8/20	Either Sex	165	50	1 in 3.3	14
Cookson WMA	5020	Gun	10/24/20	10/25/20	Either Sex	154	31	1 in 4.97	26
Cross Timbers WMA	5025	Gun	11/21/20	11/29/20	Antlerless Only	18	30	1 in 0.6	2
Deep Fork NWR	5030	Muzzleloader	10/19/20	10/25/20	Only 1 Antlered	41	25	1 in 1.64	7
Fort Cobb WMA and SP	5040	Muzzleloader/ Shotgun	10/17/20	10/18/20	Antlerless Only	34	40	1 in 0.85	3
Fort Gibson WRP	5050	Muzzleloader	11/7/20	11/7/20	Only 1 Antlered	87	20	1 in 4.35	22
Heyburn COE	5053	Gun	12/18/20	12/20/20	Only 1 Antlered	47	2	1 in 23.5	42
Kaw Lake COE	5055	Gun	11/13/20	11/15/20	(2) 1 Either-Sex, 1 Doe	124	5	1 in 24.8	43
Hugo WMA	5060	Gun	10/9/20	10/11/20	Either Sex	128	25	1 in 5.12	28
Hugo Lake COE (Kiamichi Park)	5061	Gun	10/9/20	10/11/20	Either Sex	89	8	1 in 11.13	36
Hugo Lake COE (Kiamichi Park)	5062	Gun	12/11/20	12/13/20	Either Sex	61	10	1 in 6.1	32
James Collins WMA	5070	Gun	10/16/20	10/18/20	Either Sex	201	40	1 in 5.03	27
James Collins WMA	5071	Gun	10/23/20	10/25/20	Either Sex	232	40	1 in 5.8	31
Keystone COE	5080	Gun	12/11/20	12/13/20	Only 1 Antlered	118	9	1 in 13.11	38
Little River NWR	5085	Gun	10/30/20	11/1/20	(2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either	37	15	1 in 2.47	10
McAlester AAP - Doe	5090	Shotgun	11/27/20	11/29/20	McAlester AAP - Doe	34	25	1 in 1.36	5
Neosho WMA	5095	Muzzleloader	10/24/20	10/25/20	Either Sex	14	6	1 in 2.33	8
Neosho WMA	5096	Gun	11/7/20	11/8/20	Either Sex	20	6	1 in 3.33	15
Okmulgee GMA	5110	Gun	10/31/20	11/1/20	Only 1 Antlered	71	20	1 in 3.55	19
Okmulgee GMA	5111	Gun	11/7/20	11/8/20	Only 1 Antlered	64	20	1 in 3.2	13
Pine Creek WMA	5130	Gun	11/13/20	11/15/20	Either Sex	56	12	1 in 4.67	24
Pine Creek COE (Physically Challenged)	5131	Gun	11/13/20	11/15/20	Either Sex	2	4	1 in 0.5	1
Pushmataha WMA	5140	Gun	10/23/20	10/25/20	Either Sex	123	35	1 in 3.51	18
Pushmataha WMA	5141	Gun	11/13/20	11/15/20	Either Sex	166	35	1 in 4.74	25
Salt Plains NWR	5150	Gun	10/30/20	11/1/20	(2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either	158	25	1 in 6.32	33
Sequoyah NWR	5160	Muzzleloader	10/16/20	10/18/20	Only 1 Antlered	160	30	1 in 5.33	30
Sequoyah Resort Park	5170	Muzzleloader	12/12/20	12/13/20	(2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either	168	12	1 in 14	39
Skiatook COE	5175	Gun	12/11/20	12/13/20	Only 1 Antlered	74	4	1 in 18.5	41
Spavinaw GMA	5180	Muzzleloader	10/31/20	11/1/20	Either Sex	45	40	1 in 1.13	4
Spavinaw GMA	5181	Gun	11/6/20	11/8/20	Either Sex	148	40	1 in 3.7	20
Tenkiller COE	5190	Gun	11/6/20	11/8/20	Only 1 Antlered	80	10	1 in 8	35
Texoma COE (Burns Run)	5200	Gun	11/13/20	11/15/20	Only 1 Antlered	72	6	1 in 12	37
Texoma COE (Lakeside)	5201	Gun	11/6/20	11/8/20	Only 1 Antlered	86	6	1 in 14.33	40
Tishomingo NWR	5210	Gun	10/15/20	10/16/20	(2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either	83	20	1 in 4.15	21
USDA Grazinglands R.L.	5220	Gun	11/6/20	11/7/20	(2) Antlerless Only	30	20	1 in 1.5	6
USDA Grazinglands R.L.	5221	Gun	12/11/20	12/12/20	(2) Antlerless Only	31	10	1 in 3.1	11
Washita NWR	5240	Gun	10/2/20	10/3/20	Antlerless Only	46	10	1 in 4.6	23
Washita NWR	5260	Gun	11/6/20	11/7/20	Antlerless Only	34	10	1 in 3.4	16
Waurika Lake COE	5270	Gun	11/7/20	11/8/20	Antlerless Only	17	5	1 in 3.4	17



2020-2021 ELK HUNTS

- Total applicants (includes first, second and third choice preferences): 39,942
- Total permits available: 423
- Overall odds of getting drawn for any one permit: 1 in 94.4
- Cow hunts offer much better odds of being selected than bull hunts.
- Several new walk-in hunts might draw fewer applications, increasing your odds of being drawn.
- Elk controlled hunts are once-in-a-lifetime draws; make sure you can attend on hunt day(s).

ELK HUNT APPLICATION TIP

Hunt Location	Hunt Number	Hunt Type	Begin Date	End Date	Permit Type	Applicants	Permits Allowed	Draw Ratio	Rank
Cookson WMA	1001	Gun	10/24/20	10/25/20	Either-Sex	3,026	1	1 in 3026	11
Wichita Mountains WR	1020	Gun	12/1/20	12/3/20	Bull	10,710	25	1 in 428.4	10
Wichita Mountains WR	1021	Gun	12/1/20	12/3/20	Cow	1,557	65	1 in 23.95	5
Wichita Mountains WR	1022	Gun	12/15/20	12/17/20	Bull	10,211	25	1 in 408.44	9
Wichita Mountains WR	1023	Gun	12/15/20	12/17/20	Cow	1,005	65	1 in 15.46	4
Wichita Mountains WR	1024	Gun	1/5/21	1/7/21	Bull	8,827	25	1 in 353.08	8
Wichita Mountains WR	1025	Gun	1/5/21	1/7/21	Cow	813	65	1 in 12.51	3
Wichita Mountains WR	1030	Gun	11/9/20	11/13/20	Either-Sex (walk-in only)	1,528	20	1 in 76.4	6
Wichita Mountains WR	1031	Gun	11/9/20	11/13/20	Cow (walk-in only)	391	56	1 in 6.98	2
Wichita Mountains WR	1040	Gun	1/11/21	1/15/21	Either-Sex (walk-in only)	1,579	20	1 in 78.95	7
Wichita Mountains WR	1041	Gun	1/11/21	1/15/21	Cow (walk-in only)	295	56	1 in 5.27	1

2020 PRONGHORN HUNTS

- Total applicants (includes first and second choice preferences): 15,018
- Total permits available: 105
- Overall odds of getting drawn for any one permit: 1 in 143

PRONGHORN HUNT APPLICATION TIP

- Pronghorn controlled hunts are once-in-a-lifetime draws; make sure you can attend on hunt day(s).
- The best odds are obtained when you put in for both the buck and doe hunt.



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2020 Pronghorn Hunts									
Hunt Location	Hunt Number	Hunt Type	Begin Date	End Date	Permit Type	Applicants	Permits Allowed	Draw Ratio	Rank
Cimarron County	2001	Gun	9/3/20	9/6/20	Either-Sex	6,865	20	1 in 343.25	3
Cimarron County	2002	Gun	9/7/20	9/16/20	Doe Only	1,618	50	1 in 32.36	2
Texas County	2010	Gun	9/3/20	9/6/20	Either Sex	5,884	10	1 in 588.4	4
Texas County	2011	Gun	9/7/20	9/16/20	Doe Only	651	25	1 in 26.04	1

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the Controlled Hunts program?

This annual Wildlife Department program awards hunting opportunities to applicants selected in a random drawing. These controlled hunts are held in places where unrestricted hunting would pose safety concerns or where overharvest might occur, such as in a wildlife management area of a smaller size. There were 5,711 controlled hunts permits offered last year for deer, elk, pronghorn and turkey.

Who can apply?

Any resident or nonresident who possesses a valid hunting license or who is otherwise exempt may apply for controlled hunts. A full of listing of valid hunting licenses is available online at wildlifedepartment.com. Applicants must purchase the license prior to applying for controlled hunts. Applicants who are eligible for, and possess, apprentice-designated hunting licenses may also apply (although some hunts require hunter education certification by the date of the hunt.)

What does it cost?

All hopeful hunters (including lifetime license holders) must pay a \$5 application fee to enter the controlled hunts drawing. This fee is paid only once per person per year, regardless of the number of categories entered. You may pay the application fee with a Visa or MasterCard debit or credit card. If drawn, additional license and user fees may apply for specific hunts.

Can I keep accumulating points indefinitely?

Yes, until your name is drawn or if you do not apply in a given category for five consecutive years.

If I apply for controlled hunts long enough, am I guaranteed to be drawn?

No; drawings are random from the entire pool of applicants. But your odds get better every year you submit an application because you earn preference points in subsequent drawings.

If I can't attend my controlled hunt, do I get my preference points back?

No. Once selected, your points in that category are reset to zero.

Can I apply with a group of friends for a hunt?

Yes, but since one person submits the group application, make sure all of the information for each group member is correct or your group could be disqualified.

If I apply with a group of four for a hunt, how are our preference points calculated?

Example: One person has 1 preference point, one has 2, one has 3 and one has 4. The total for the group is 10 preference points. The group total is averaged for each member, which equals 2.5 points each, which is then rounded to 3 points. The group is assigned 3 preference points.

What if I have an email address change after I apply?

Simply make any changes in your online Go Outdoors Oklahoma account. All postal mail correspondence with drawing participants moved online several years ago.

If I am a nonresident hunter, can I apply for a controlled hunt?

Yes! Go to wildlifedepartment.com for more information.



2021 SPRING TURKEY HUNTS

- Total applicants (includes first, second and third choice preferences): 12,997
- Total permits available: 80
- Overall odds of getting drawn for any one permit: 1 in 162.5

SPRING TURKEY HUNT APPLICATION TIPS

- In areas that offer two hunts, the hunts offered later in the season are usually easier to draw.
- The hunts at the McAlester Army Ammunition Plant have some of the highest application rates and are some of the hardest spring turkey hunts to draw.

2021 YOUTH TURKEY HUNTS

- Total applicants (includes first, second and third choice preferences): 1,365
- Total permits available: 61
- Overall odds of getting drawn for any one permit: 1 in 22.4

YOUTH TURKEY HUNT APPLICATION TIP

- Hunts with low permit numbers may be harder to draw than other hunts, even though more youngsters applied for the other areas.

2021 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	4/6/21	4/10/21	Tom	2,418	10	1 in 241.8	8
Cross Timbers WMA	6001	Shotgun	5/2/21	5/6/21	Tom	1,419	10	1 in 141.9	3
Deep Fork NWR	6010	Shotgun	4/12/21	5/6/21	Tom	2,110	10	1 in 211	6
Four Canyon Preserve	6020	Shotgun	4/2/21	4/3/21	Tom	569	2	1 in 284.5	9
Four Canyon Preserve	6021	Shotgun	4/9/21	4/10/21	Tom	360	2	1 in 180	4
Little River NWR	6040	Shotgun	4/16/21	4/18/21	Tom	1,729	20	1 in 86.45	1
McCurtain County WA	6060	Shotgun	4/9/21	4/11/21	Tom	1,581	16	1 in 98.81	2
Sequoayah NWR	6070	Shotgun	4/16/21	4/25/21	Tom	543	3	1 in 181	5
Tishomingo NWR	6080	Gun	4/8/21	4/9/21	Tom	1,194	5	1 in 238.8	7
Wichita Mountains WR	6090	Shotgun	4/19/21	4/21/21	Tom (walk-in only)	1,074	2	1 in 537	10

2021 Spring Youth Turkey Hunts

Hunt Location	Hunt Number	Hunt Type	Begin Date	End Date	Permit Type	Applicants	Permits Allowed	Draw Ratio	Rank
Hugo COE (Kiamichi Park)	7000	Shotgun	4/3/21	4/4/21	Tom	109	4	1 in 27.25	7
Washita NWR	7010	Shotgun	4/9/21	4/11/21	Tom	110	5	1 in 22	6
Deep Fork NWR	7020	Shotgun	4/3/21	5/6/21	Tom	164	10	1 in 16.4	3
James Collins WMA	7030	Shotgun	4/10/21	4/11/21	Tom	201	10	1 in 20.1	5
Little River NWR	7040	Shotgun	4/9/21	4/11/21	Tom	59	5	1 in 11.8	1
McGee Creek WMA	7070	Shotgun	4/10/21	4/11/21	Tom	195	10	1 in 19.5	4
Atoka WMA	7071	Shotgun	4/10/21	4/11/21	Tom	140	10	1 in 14	2
Salt Plains NWR	7075	Shotgun	4/16/21	4/25/21	Tom	118	2	1 in 59	9
Sequoayah NWR	7080	Shotgun	4/2/21	4/11/21	Tom	182	3	1 in 60.67	10
Wichita Mountains WR	7096	Shotgun	4/9/21	4/11/21	Tom	87	2	1 in 43.5	8

We Be Slammmin'!



Oklahoma Big Game Hunters Have New Cy Curtis Quests

Are you a big game hunter? Just how good of a hunter are you? The Wildlife Department is setting forth a new challenge just for you.

Introducing the **Oklahoma Slam** and **Oklahoma Super Slam** for big game hunting!

Those who can claim these titles will be recognized as being among the most accomplished hunters in Oklahoma.

The Slam and Super Slam are two new categories being

added in the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation's Cy Curtis Awards Program, which recognizes the state's notable big game animals and the hunters who harvest them.

These new Slam categories take the state's official record book and amp it up a notch or two.

The individual big game categories recognized in the Cy Curtis Awards Program are for white-tailed deer, mule deer, elk, pronghorn and black bear. Now, the program is recognizing top-tier hunters who know about Oklahoma's diverse harvest opportunities and who have successfully harvested at least one of each.

A hunter who has taken each of the five big game animals is eligible for the Oklahoma Slam Award. Those harvests can be from various years and using any of the various legal methods of take.

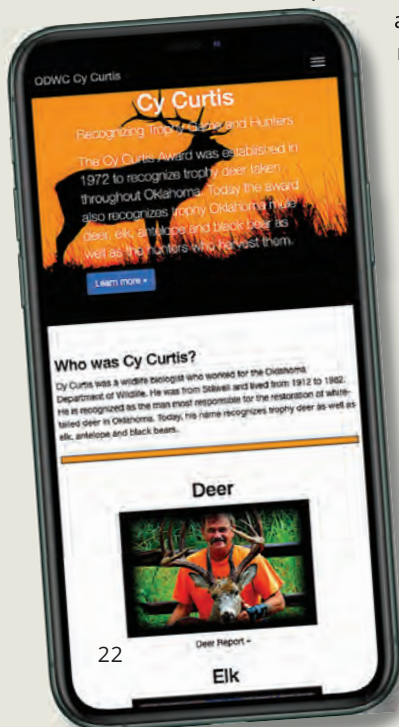
A hunter who is able to harvest all five big game animals in Oklahoma during the same annual season will become an Oklahoma Super Slam Award winner, as well as an Oklahoma Slam Award winner. Again, any legal method of take, mixed or matched, will qualify.

"There are probably some people who have already done the Slam," said Nels Rodefeld, Chief of Information and Education for the Wildlife Department. "We won't know until we open it up for applications."

We know there is at least one Oklahoma man who qualifies for both awards: Brandon Adams of Prague. Adams was the inspiration for the creation of these new Slam awards.

Applications for the Slam and Super Slam will be available on the Wildlife Department's Cy Curtis Awards page at www.wildlifedepartment.com sometime early in 2021. Applicants will submit information about each of their harvests, such as date taken, method of take, and location of their hunt. The applicant will be encouraged to submit photos of them with each of their harvests. There is no cost to apply for any Cy Curtis Award.

Those who are certified as Slam or Super Slam award winners will be recognized with a listing in the official Oklahoma Cy Curtis Record Book, a certificate, a congratulatory letter from the Department Director, and recognition on the ODWC website and in Outdoor Oklahoma magazine. 🍷



The Inspiration Behind the Slam Awards

By Don P. Brown, Information Specialist

Brandon Adams (age) shares his story on his My World Outdoors website. He was raised in Prague, where he grew up juggling farm responsibilities and participating in school sports. His father, Homer Adams, introduced him to hunting at an early age.

Through trial and error and shooting competitive archery, Adams improved his hunting skills. Since harvesting his first deer at age 10, Adams has harvested mature bucks and big game animals across the country.

Since first entering the outdoors industry in 2006, Adams has traveled across the country for hunting adventures, but he's always thought of his home state as a "hidden gem" in regards to hunting opportunities. He realized that anyone in Oklahoma could buy the required hunting licenses over the counter and harvest all five of the state's big game animals. "How cool would it be to do this all in one year, if you could?" he asked himself.

So, that became his quest in 2018-19 seasons.

At the time, Adams had more than 10 years of field production experience. He's been producing and editing outdoor television shows since 2010 including "Buckventures" and "Major League Bowhunter." And over the years, he's learned many things about the art of filming outdoor adventures. His favorite part of the process is putting the hunts together and telling a story in post-production, he wrote.

It was just natural that as Adams set out on his quest for Oklahoma's Big Five, he would document his experience on video.

Adams networked with various sources to line up hunting opportunities, including people with the Wildlife Department.

Adams ended up harvested mule deer, white-tailed deer, elk, pronghorn and black bear, all with a bow. It is believed that he is the first hunter to complete such a quest, which will make him the first Oklahoma Slam and Oklahoma Super Slam hunter to earn recognition in the Cy Curtis Awards Program, the official record book of the



Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation.

Wildlife Department Assistant Chief Wade Free said that he and many colleagues he's asked have never heard of anyone taking all of Oklahoma's big game animals in one year, especially doing so with only archery equipment.

For his amazing feat, Adams was invited to the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commission's August 2020 meeting in Oklahoma City. Commissioners approved a resolution honoring Adams for completing his quest in 2018 and for his promotion of hunting in Oklahoma.

In part, the resolution states that Adams "has proven to be a distinguished ambassador for hunting in Oklahoma and across the nation ... and showcased Oklahoma as a diverse big game destination for thousands of hunters across the nation."

Commission Chairman Bruce Mabrey of Okmulgee knew about Adams' goal early on. "I know he's worked very hard to get this accomplished. To do it with a bow is just unbelievable, and to do it in one year is even a greater accomplishment."

Commissioner John P. Zelbst of Lawton suggested that the Department look into creating a way to recognize anyone who has completed a big game slam in Oklahoma. Beginning early in 2021, the Cy Curtis Awards Program will welcome applicants for the Oklahoma Slam honor and the Oklahoma Super Slam honor.

Later, Adams said he was "humbled to have had the success, and even moreso for the support from ODWC."

After learning about the Oklahoma Slam awards that he inspired (while deer hunting in Missouri), Adams said, "I truly appreciate the recognition and am honored to have had the opportunity to chase them in our great state!"

Asked if he was going after another Slam in Missouri, Adams said, "No, not in Missouri. But next year, in Texas, I may have something up my sleeve."

To watch Adams' video account of his Oklahoma quest, "Slammed: Oklahoma's Big 5 Game Animals/One Year With a Bow," go online to <https://youtu.be/bvnR9dDQOtc> or www.myworldoutdoors.com.

Adams and his wife, Brianne, have been married since 2009 and have two daughters, Addison Rae and Brooke Kaylynn. 🌿



Conservation

Get Outdoors!

Whenever it snows, look around a park or in the woods to find evidence of wildlife. Things you might find are tracks in the snow, food leftovers, or animal droppings. See if you can identify which animals left any tracks you can find.

for Kids!

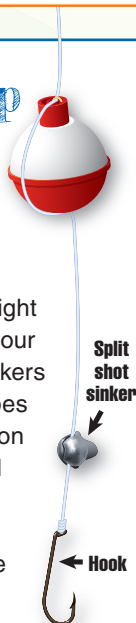
Word Search: Oklahoma Waterfowl

Hunting Tip

A successful hunt takes preparation. Some things you can do are study the laws, scout where you are going, practice using your gun or bow, and make sure to have the correct licenses. You can ask someone older to help you with these things.

Fishing Tip

Use a sinker to hold your bait down in the water, because the hook and fishing line are not heavy enough. The extra weight also helps in casting your bait into the water. Sinkers come in different shapes and sizes. One common type of sinker is called a split shot, which is a round ball of metal with a groove in it. The fishing line is placed in the groove, and the sinker is squeezed together to grip the line. But not too tight!



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

Find the names of these waterfowl that can be seen in Oklahoma:

Gadwall	Pintail	Gallinule	Goldeneye
Rail	Wigeon	Mallard	Canada goose
Canvasback	Bluewing teal	Bufflehead	Snow goose
Scaup	Redhead	Egret	Heron
Grebe	Coot		

Some COOL FACTS about Bald Eagles:

- Became the national bird of the United States in 1782.
- The only eagle unique to North America.
- Main diet is fish that they catch or find dead.
- Normally found around bodies of water.
- Eye is about the size of a person's, but its vision is four times better than people's.
- Juvenile bald eagles have brown and white mixed feathers.
- Does not sweat, so they prefer colder climates.
- Can live past 45 years in captivity, but its lifespan in nature is 15 to 20 years.
- Was removed from the list of endangered and threatened species in 2007 after almost 30 years.
- Most bald eagles migrate south in the winter and back north in the summer.
- Builds a large nest of sticks, called eyries, that can be 5 feet wide.



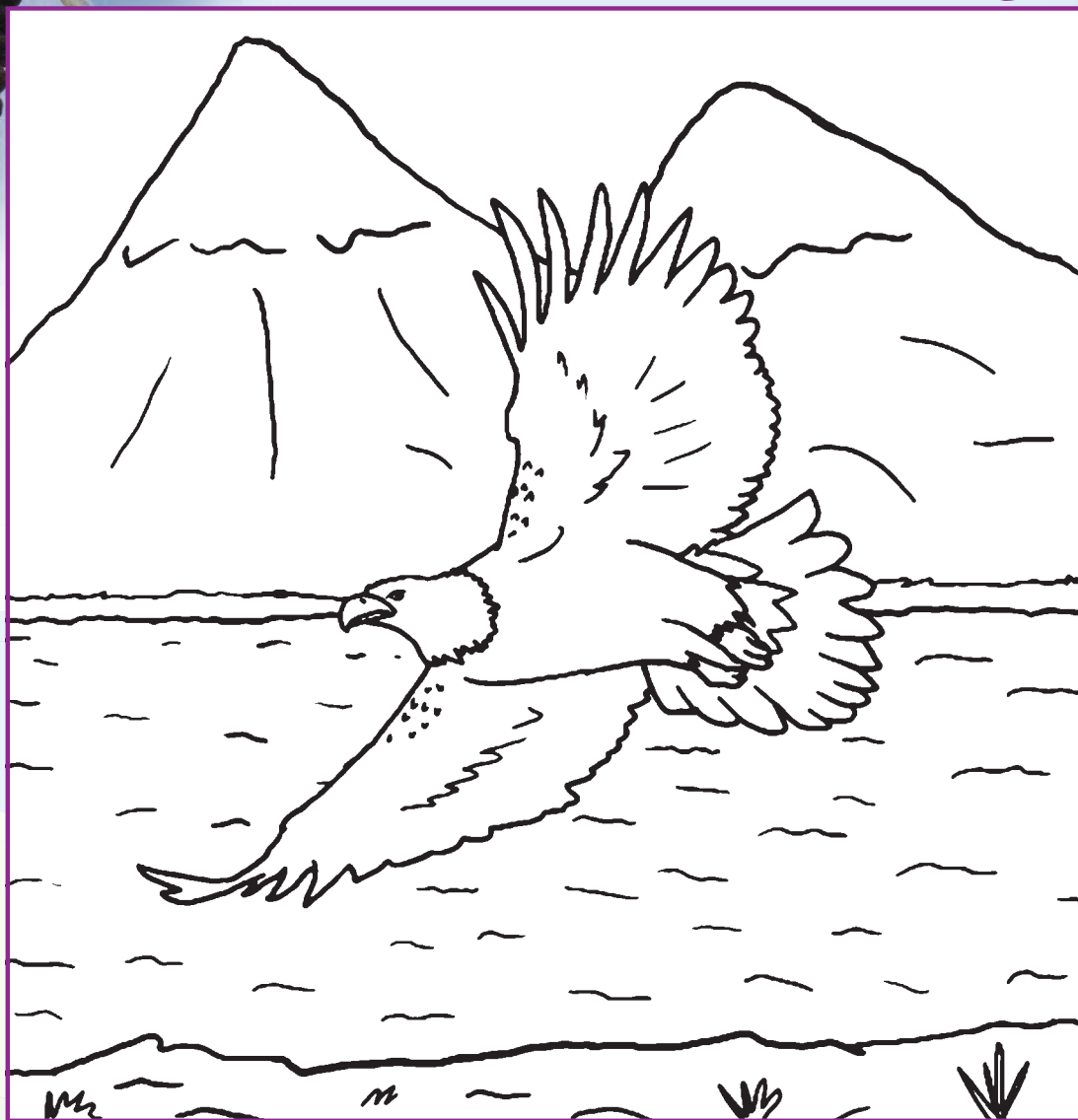
HAROLD MILLER/PPS 2018



ANDY WRATHMELL/FLA FISH&WILDLIFE

Here's an eagle's nest

Color a Critter: Bald Eagle



HEATHER DEL MORAL/ONIC



Gars are among the most commonly targeted fish by bowfishers.



bowfishing in Oklahoma

Enjoyment, Sustainability, Long-term
Public Benefit Become Major Goals
in a Management Strategy

By Jason Schooley, Senior Fisheries Biologist

Bowfishing — the taking of fish with a bow and arrow or a crossbow — is among the fastest-growing types of sportfishing in the United States. It is much like archery hunting for game animals except that the arrow is connected to a string, and the string is connected to a retrieval mechanism similar to a typical fishing reel.

In Oklahoma and nearly all other places, bowfishers specifically target nongame fishes. Examples from Oklahoma include nonnative and invasive carps (common carp, Asian carps, grass carp) and native species such as gars, buffalofishes, carpsuckers, and occasionally paddlefish or flathead catfish. Bowfishing can be practiced at all hours but is commonly practiced at night using boats equipped with lights.

Gaining in Popularity

Any online search quickly shows the passion and fervor that bowfishers have for their sport. Growth in archery participation, including youth archery programs, has been accompanied by numerous technological advances, increasing sales of bowfishing equipment, and increases in the number of tournaments.

In addition to bowfishing's recreational benefits of being out on the water and interacting close-up with fish and wildlife, archery is well known for providing relaxing and therapeutic benefits to its participants.

Many bowfishing tournaments for all ages and skill levels take place in Oklahoma waters. The Youth World Bowfishing Championship held its 16th annual event on Fort Gibson Lake in August 2020. High-profile tournaments for adults such as the 2018 Bass Pro® U.S. Open Bowfishing Championship have been held on Oklahoma reservoirs, drawing competitors and spectators from throughout North America.



Youths attending the Department's Wildlife Expo have a chance to experience bowfishing.

Non-tournament opportunities also abound. Many Oklahomans and visitors to the state participate in bowfishing year-round in a leisurely, non-competitive way.

Although bowfishing in Oklahoma is not new, the expansion of the sport and improvements in technologies in the past few decades have resulted in more efficient take and more satisfied bowfishers of all ages. Along with this success comes the need for the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, as trustees of the public's fishery resources, to ensure that the sport is not only providing bowfishing opportunity but benefiting ODWC's conservation mission and efforts at sustainably managing native fishes for long-term public benefit.

ODWC seeks to provide sustainably managed bowfisheries in the same way that it does for other fisheries and fishing methods such as rod-and-reel, jug-lining, or noodling. It also sees opportunities for bowfishing to aid in efforts to reduce impacts of non-native invasive species while providing plentiful targets for bowfishers.

Bowfishers are a valued component of the state's recreational stakeholders, and ODWC seeks to ensure that bowfishers are heard, understood, and given opportunities to participate in the sport where these opportunities can be provided responsibly and sustainably.

Almost No Management

Many articles and exciting videos on bowfishing exploits have been created in the past decade, but almost no management plans or articles have been written by wildlife agencies nationwide on how bowfisheries can and should be managed for different species. This was the conclusion in a recently published scientific paper titled "Bowfishing in the United States: history, status, ecological impact, and the need for management" (<https://bit.ly/33jglBX>) written by Jason Schooley, senior fisheries biologist with ODWC, and Dennis Scarnecchia, University of Idaho professor.

One important consideration in bowfishing that emerged immediately in our review was the need to decide, based on both human values and on scientific evidence, how different species should be managed for the benefits of bowfishers and the broader public. With the exception of paddlefish, alligator gar, and flathead catfish, the nongame fishes targeted by bowfishing have no daily size or bag limits and have historically been held in low social regard. However, the nongame fish can be subdivided into two groups: natives such as gars, buffalo, and carp, and non-natives such as bowfin, black drum, and striped bass.

Alligator Gar



Common Carp



Black Buffalo



Shortnose Gar



Bowfishing in the United States



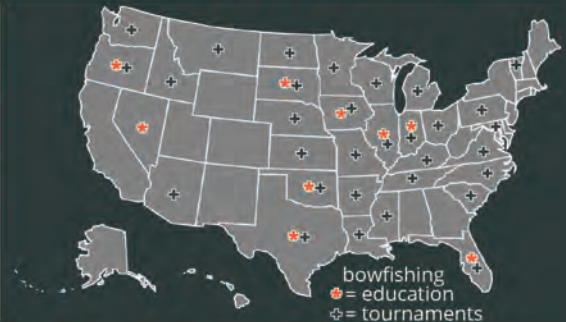
History, status, ecological impact, and a need for management

D.L. Scarnecchia & J.D. Schooley. 2020. Transactions of the Kansas Academy of Science 123(3-4):285-338.

Executive Summary

- Bowfishing is an expanding sport, legal in all 50 states
- No states have specific management plans for bowfishing
- Only nine states have bowfishing education programs (*)
- Most states (31) reported bowfishing tournaments (+)
- Most states (34) do not monitor bowfishing or bowfishers
- Management concerns are shared by many states
- Numerous native and invasive species are targeted
- There is selective take of large female fish
- Take should be limited on native fishes

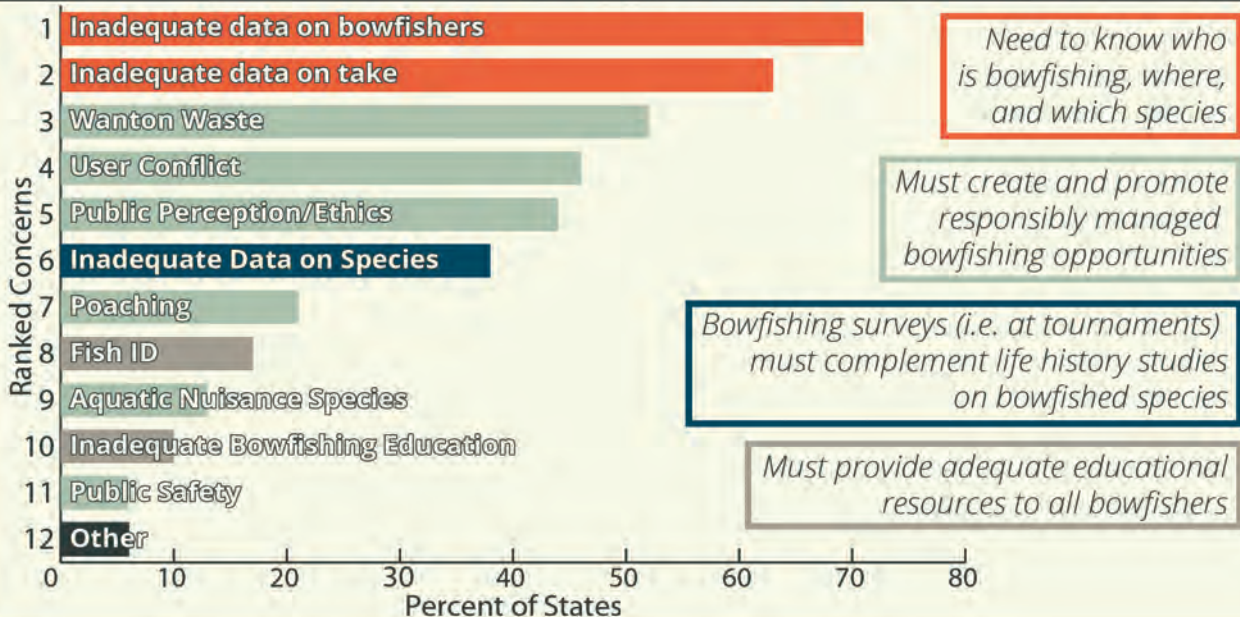
State Survey Findings



Species Often Targeted by Bowfishers

		NATIVE	INVASIVE	LONG-LIVED	REPRODUCTIVE RATE	A significant difference was evident between verbal survey results and observed take at a large bowfishing tournament...	
						% STATED PREFERENCE	% SHOT IN TOURNAMENT
Gars	longnose, alligator ¹ , shortnose, spotted	✓	✓	LOW		50	25
Buffalo	smallmouth, bigmouth ²	✓	✓	LOW		12	55
Carps	common, grass, bighead, silver ³ , black		✓	HIGH		36	17
LIFE HISTORY DATA						TOURNAMENT DATA	

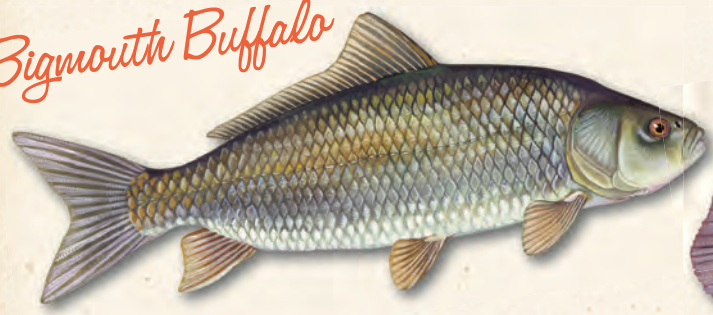
Management Concerns and State Agency Solutions





Nighttime is when many bowfishers prefer to engage in the sport.

Bignmouth Buffalo



Freshwater Drum



Silver Carp



DAN O'KEEFE/MICHIGAN SEA GRANT

Bighead Carp



USFWS



WILDLIFEDEPARTMENT.COM

A boy practices bowfishing while attending a past Wildlife Expo.

non-native invasive species such as common carp, Asian carps, and grass carp.

Studies nationwide have shown that the non-native species, although edible, have typically seriously disrupted the balance of fish communities and ecology in invaded waters (including in Oklahoma) to the detriment of native species and people. To fisheries managers and recreational anglers, their poor reputation is understandable.

Native species paint a different picture. Even though the wanton eradication of the nongame fishes was advocated by many state wildlife agencies for decades under the assumption that it benefited game fishes, modern scientific studies have shown that species such as buffalofishes and gars play important, positive roles that add to the healthy ecosystems supporting vibrant game fish populations and sport fisheries.

Native, nongame fishes also serve as valuable forage for predator game fishes, limit the excessive growth of

aquatic vegetation, compete with invasive species, and recycle nutrients. Gars, for example, provide checks on overpopulation growth of other nongame or invasive fishes. Although often perceived by sport anglers and bowfishers as abundant nuisances, gars are top preda-



USGS

A U.S. Geological Survey employee holds a bighead carp, which is a non-native invasive in Oklahoma.



Biologists capture an alligator gar as part of research. In Oklahoma, alligator gar are a species of special concern and harvest is limited.



JASON SCHOOLEY/ODWC

ODWC Fisheries Division intern Jeffrey Colvin and Oklahoma State University graduate student Maeghen Wedgeworth hold bigmouth buffalos. Bigmouth buffalo are not carp, but are in the sucker family and hold the record for the longest-lived freshwater fish in the U.S.



BRANDON BROWN/ODWC

Spotted gars are non-native, nongame fish species that bowfishers commonly target.



tors and aid in the balance needed for good sport fishing. They are much less abundant than they often appear to be, in part a result of their loitering or gulping air at the water's surface.

Similarly, buffalofishes can often be seen in groups as they browse for food on rocks near the water's edge or at the surface. In reality, the abundance of these fishes is also typically far lower than appearances would indicate.

All of these native species are highly edible if prepared well.

Based on accumulated ecological evidence, a reasonable management approach has been to favor sustainable native species and eliminate, or at least control, the non-native invasives. Both natives and non-natives are popular with bowfishers, which has created different management approaches.

Longer Lifespans

A key finding from reviewing studies of the past two decades is that several of the most popular native species targeted for bowfishing have much longer lifespans than formerly realized. A 2019 study on bigmouth buffalo, a species often viewed as a rough fish, found individuals with confirmed ages up to 112 years, perhaps double their previously assumed lifespan and setting the record for the longest-lived freshwater fish species. The aging technique, called Bomb Radiocarbon Dating, used on fish inner ear bones has also confirmed the presence of very old smallmouth buffalo and alligator gar, two other Oklahoma native species popular with bowfishers. It is highly likely that the ages of other suckers and gars have been underestimated as well.

Paddlefish are also known to have long lifespans, with the oldest Oklahoma paddlefish estimated at 29 years. We now know that these native species, as well as the others that are also popular bowfishing targets, grow more slowly, are less productive and are more easily depleted, requiring many more years to rebuild than formerly realized. This recognition requires more conscientious management from ODWC and other agencies.

A second finding is that reproductive success of many of these long-lived native species is not guaranteed every year but is often episodic, occurring strongly in one year but more commonly weakly or not at all in most other years. These species may require specific spawning and rearing conditions (like high spring river flows allowing a spawning migration to a certain habitat) for a strong reproduction year. These optimal conditions are not met in most years. But because they live a long time, they can persist even with only occasionally or irregularly having a successful reproductive year. All of the native nongame species described here typically fall into this category. It was often assumed that these fishes reproduced successfully in most or all years. Now we know that management must consider the potential-

ly limited addition of young fish into these populations.

Another finding is that in all native fish species targeted by bowfishers, the largest individuals are females. And the females mature later and outlive the males on average, making the largest and oldest fish predominantly females. The males of these bowfished species do not compete for spawning with females, so they don't have to grow larger. Larger females benefit from delaying their maturity, growing larger and having more eggs.

The bottom line is that bowfishers targeting the largest fish of a species will unfortunately be taking females, a much less sustainable occurrence than if they were targeting males, as hunters often do with deer, elk, and turkeys. And unlike those land-based species, where, for example, antlers identify the sex, there are no reliable ways for bowfishers to identify female fish from males before they are shot and killed, other than by size.

This pattern of taking larger, older female fishes has a detrimental effect on a population's harvest sustainability. Therefore, it is important to somehow limit the removal of these older, larger females, which have been shown in other fish species to be important to the long-term reproductive success and health of the fish population.



People attending the Department's Wildlife Expo have a chance to experience bowfishing.



A bowfisher enjoys the sport in the Cimarron River in Kingfisher County.



Few states have bowfishing education programs.



NICK BLOOMFIELD/USFWS

A technician holds a large grass carp, a non-native species that offers plenty of opportunities to Oklahoma bowfishers.



WILDLIFEDEPARTMENT.COM

River redhorse



Bowfishing tournaments provide great opportunities for wildlife agencies to learn more about the sport.

Because larger, older females are perhaps all selectively removed by bowfishing, ODWC, as a management goal, would not support shortening the life of these bowfished species.

Invasives Equal Opportunities

These findings about native, nongame fishes indicate that managers here and nationwide need more information on population numbers and management practices. Unfortunately, with few exceptions including paddlefish and alligator gar, the native nongame species have no harvest restrictions in Oklahoma. Too little is known of their abundance, status, ecology, or biology.

Bowfishing for these native, nongame fishes requires responsibly managed fisheries. Some native species and local populations will be candidates for sustainable bowfishing under regulations, and others will not. The native species are not good candidates for high or unlimited bag limits. And for those species, bowfishing regulations may need to be developed similar to those for more valued bowhunted species on land.

For non-native invasive species, opportunities for abundant bowfishing are much more favorable. These species offer plentiful targets with few if any bag limits, which popular media indicates is a scenario desired by many bowfishers. Many opportunities exist for bowfishers to assist in fisheries conservation by helping reduce non-native invasives and their competition with native species.

The common carp and grass carp serve as ideal targets for abundant bowfishing. On a larger scale, and with potentially greater ecological benefit, the selective taking of silver carps and bighead carps from Oklahoma waters

and beyond would be an ideal opportunity for bowfishers seeking nearly unlimited targets. The startled jumping behavior of silver carps adds an element of challenge and excitement for bowfishers.

If bowfishers selectively target the largest fish of these species (the females), it would be especially beneficial to the native, nongame species competing with them for space and resources. And ultimately, removing non-natives would also benefit game fishes.

Fortunately, silver carps and bighead carps have not successfully invaded most of Oklahoma at this time. Bowfishing opportunities for these species are found in several of the lower Red River tributaries in southeastern Oklahoma. And clearly, native game and nongame species would clearly benefit if the non-natives do not spread.

ODWC is also seeking a better understanding of the state's bowfishers. Although our statewide surveys indicate that bowfishers make up only a small fraction of Oklahoma fishing license buyers (perhaps 5 percent to 8 percent), it is likely that they are under-represented in our angler surveys. Targeted bowfisher surveys will likely be required to better describe the demographics, abundance, habits, needs, and impacts of bowfishers. ODWC intends to work with bowfishing tournaments as a cost-effective way to learn more about Oklahoma's bowfishing and bowfishers.

A Need for Management

Bowfishing in Oklahoma and across the country is changing. The sport is expanding and evolving rapidly. Sustainable management of bowfisheries has lagged, and the need for management to catch up to the fisheries is clear.



JIM MULHAUPT/FICKR CC-BY-NC-ND 2.0

In our review paper's survey of all 50 state fish and wildlife agencies, we found that bowfishing is legal in all 50 states, but that no states reported having any articulated bowfishing management plans, goals, or philosophies. State managers noted concerns with bowfishing related primarily to inadequacies in data on bowfishers, on bowfishing harvest, and on the species harvested.

Less than 20 percent of states reported having bowfishing education programs. Fortunately, Oklahoma is a leader in bowfishing education, with ODWC's vibrant Archery in the Schools program, which includes a bowfishing curriculum. ODWC has also taken an active role in research relevant to native, nongame species biology, ecology, and bowfishing management.

The challenge for ODWC, under the Public Trust Doctrine, is to fulfill its mission to protect and enhance our state's natural resources for present and future generations. Under the North American Model of Fish and Wildlife Conservation (see here), fish and wildlife are a public resource to be managed responsibly and should not be killed for frivolous reasons or wasted (for example, shot and discarded).

ODWC also has a mission to provide enjoyable recreational angling opportunities for our fishing license buyers. Managed fisheries that are good for bowfishers and not detrimental to the native fishes often targeted by the sport are good for Oklahoma.

By working with bowfishers, monitoring

the native species for sustainability, and encouraging bowfishers to harvest invasive species, ODWC can better meet the challenge to provide ample bowfishing opportunities while managing bowfisheries as it does all fisheries — as instruments of species conservation, of public benefit, and of sound, long-term public policy. 🌿



JOSH HAMPTON/READERS' PHOTO SHOWCASE 2015

Bowfishing regulation and management across the nation is uncommon.

OPERATION JERSEY

How Teamwork Between State, Federal Game Wardens Led to

Largest Financial Wildlife Penalty in State History

BY CARLOS GOMEZ, OKLAHOMA GAME WARDEN



It had only been a year earlier, at one of the regular district meetings, when District 1 Capt. Jeff Brown shared some odd information with the 16 Game Wardens he supervises.

Brown and the other seven statewide district chiefs in the Law Enforcement Division of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation hold a monthly staff meeting at headquarters to receive relevant information to be shared with the troops in their charge. Also attending the most recent staff meeting was Oklahoma's only U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Special Agent in Charge Matt Bryant.

Bryant had a request to make. Affectionately referred to as "the fed," Bryant worked well with Oklahoma's Game Wardens and often beamed about the quality inter-agency relationship he enjoyed when working with Oklahoma's wildlife law division.

Occasionally, Bryant attended these staff meetings to discuss the more serious, large-scale wildlife crimes afoot in our state, crimes that were typically interstate or even international in scope. And wardens always seemed a bit more perked-up whenever such information was given to them because they knew it was typically about something bigger.

"If anyone sees box turtles crossing the roads during your morning patrols, grab up a few for the feds. They're needing some for some kind of a commercial case they're working on," Capt. Brown shared with his charges.

Several wardens glanced at each other, perhaps feeling a little puzzled or even let down. Turtles? Box turtles? The kind that every little kid captures and keeps as a temporary pet at some point during childhood? How could this be something big?

Small, harmless, and easy-to-catch critters have always served as outdoor primers for beginning wildlife enthusiasts. Introducing and connecting them to the wildlife world around us perhaps helps foster budding curiosities and the appreciation we all should have for all things natural.

That was the sort of turtle issues wardens might have initially thought of. This news lacked the sound of anything big, organized, or meaty — the sort of wildlife plot that Game Wardens like to sink their teeth into.

These Game Wardens may have been expecting to hear about impactful, large-scale, poaching schemes sometimes discovered by other Game Wardens, tip calls on the Department's Operation Game Thief hot line, or someone's undercover operation. Those cases are the type that give a



Carlos Gomez



Lt. Jamie Cole



Karlin Bailey

Game Warden extraordinary satisfaction. Their daily lives are pledged to do whatever is needed to preserve our state's natural resources. But perhaps there's a bit more buzz when they know they're helping fight the global war on wildlife.

There has been other work with federal officers on

"If anyone sees box turtles crossing the roads during your morning patrols, grab up a few for the feds. They're needing some for some kind of a commercial case they're working on"

major investigations over the years. One such recent case, "Operation Red Snag," successfully corralled an international ring of poachers who'd been pillaging paddlefish populations in northeastern Oklahoma. A caviar black-market had destroyed the world's European sturgeon populations



CARLOS GOMEZ/ODWC

County roads near Mannford in northeastern Oklahoma were getting scoured in the early morning by collectors looking for box turtles for international buyers.

and was setting its sights on the prehistoric spoonbill as the next source for a caviar replacement. The multi-state crime-ring with international connections was engaged in netting and snagging for the larger, egg-producing females of that species, and the illegal operation was shut down by Game Wardens from numerous states in a well-coordinated, nationwide effort led by USFWS agents.

When Game Wardens begin their career, they hope to make a difference that contributes to a greater cause. Joining the A-team to protect our state's fish, wildlife and other natural resources means signing up to serve on the front lines with ODWC. But Game Wardens' efforts and contributions are generally thought of on a local scale, not internationally. Game Wardens combat poaching at every turn but usually focus on fishing and hunting activities. Those species commonly pursued by sportsmen not only receive much of the consumptive pressure from people but also the corresponding regulatory and publicity attention.

So, along comes this discreet, little, unassuming species *Terrapene carolina triunguis*, the three-toed box turtle, crawling along, minding its own business. Like many other thousands of nongame wildlife species, it quietly and without fanfare fills its niche in nature's web of life. Since learning about the feds' interest in turtles at that meeting, the District 1 wildlife officers hadn't had much luck capturing nearly enough "undercover turtles" to help initiate a sting operation. And with all the other activities that consume a Game Warden's time and attention, this request had sort of fallen off the radar.

Then something helped change that. An incidental phone call from a suspicious motel manager in Mannford would lead to what might be the largest financial wildlife penalty ever imposed on a poacher in Oklahoma's history.

Over several days, the motel manager noticed how an Arkansas man had been covering the tab for another man and his family also staying there in another room. Throughout

An incidental phone call from a suspicious motel manager in Mannford would lead to the largest financial wildlife penalty ever imposed on a poacher in Oklahoma's history.



their stay of several days, the solo tenant had politely requested housekeeping not enter their rooms. But finally, after most of a week, the manager needed to check on their rooms condition.

While the rooms were unoccupied, the innkeeper peeked inside. Disheveled rooms were common to see, but she couldn't help but notice the stacks of large, clear-plastic containers and lids. Bags of wood shavings were also piled up in another corner. Then, suddenly, something moved.

Startled by eerie scratching noises, the manager's attention was drawn to a stack of tubs with holes cut in them. Turtles, lots of turtles, were struggling to move about within the clear covered boxes.

The manager knew nothing about wildlife laws, but she knew this wasn't right and promptly called a local police officer.

The police officer knew Karlin Bailey, the local Game Warden for Creek County, and gave him a call. Bailey gathered initial information from motel staff and police then surveyed the motel layout and considered his surveillance options. He also realized he might have just lucked into an illegal, commercial-size trafficking operation and decided to call for assistance. He knew his Game Warden neighbor in Tulsa County, Carlos Gomez, had investigated a couple of turtle traffickers in the Tulsa



Mannford motel manager became aware of multiple storage tubs of captured box turtles being held captive in a motel room, and officers were notified of the discovery.



KARLIN BAILEY/OWWG

Game Warden Carlos Gomez prepares a cargo of seized turtles in plastic boxes for transport after he and two other Game Wardens spent hours investigating, interrogating and collecting evidence.

area and thought he might have a head-start in dealing with this unusual situation.

There had been instances of crudely taped-up and perforated boxes containing live box turtles being shipped via common parcel carriers in recent months. Vigilant cargo handlers had realized something wasn't right and had called Gomez to investigate. But, carefully scripted recipient information allowed wardens to only trace the cargo back to the turtle senders: the "small fish." No critical information could be recovered that would implicate the interstate buyers behind these commercial-sized wildlife traffickers. So, the "big fish" would remain anonymous simply by using low-level people to retrieve the living cargo from big-city shipping hubs.

Within an hour of arriving at the Mannford motel, the two Game Wardens were joined by a third, supervising Lt. Jamie Cole, based in Pawnee County. The three quickly formed a plan, backed away from the motel, and waited. When the tenants finally arrived back at their rooms, the Game Wardens moved in. Suspects were read their Miranda warning rights and interrogated. Having been caught so red-handed likely contributed to their cooperation as voluntary consent statements and searches were obtained. That information provided a trove of vital documents and digital information.

Cole maintained a perimeter allowing Bailey and Gomez to safely move about searching, documenting, and seizing evidence. After several hours, more than 200 turtles and critical commercial-trafficking details — including a direct line to the suspected interstate kingpin — was gathered.



CARLOS GOMEZ/OWWG

More than 200 turtles were rescued from their cramped boxes held by traffickers in Mannford just a day before they were to be shipped to New Jersey. Game Warden Carlos Gomez's family jumped in to secure food and supervision for the crawling cargo until they could become a part of the sting operation.

It was the major link that was desperately needed to shut down a nationwide organized-crime operation.

In previous years, these Arkansas men had encountered Game Wardens in other states under similar circumstances, but they had been lucky enough to escape with only state citations resulting in minor fines. The primary suspect stated he knew this was probably going to happen someday. He likely knew that when animals, shipping documents, vehicles, and supplies were all seized, photographs taken, and cash counted, this time was going to be different.

As it turned out, the primary suspect had just shipped a load of turtles a day prior to his arrest that netted him more than \$4,000. But at that moment, his freedom, vehicles, and some very big fines would hinge on cooperation with

the feds. Gomez contacted Bryant and shared the details recovered at the motel.

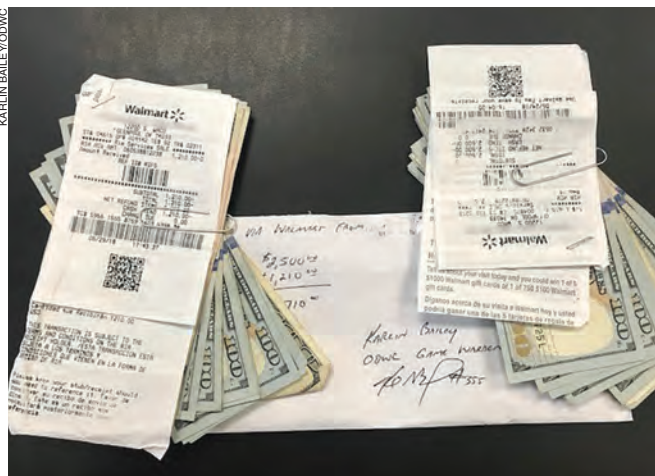
Bryant and his federal team would take over the case, working closely with excellent prosecution from the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Oklahoma. A passionate prosecutor for wildlife violations, Assistant U.S. Attorney Ryan Roberts served as a critical piece of the puzzle all too often missing in wildlife cases. Agents only had a few days to arrange a transaction using this new information leading to the suspected kingpin buyer in New Jersey, and they had to move quickly to not arouse suspicion. Game Warden Bailey handled state charges in Creek County and supervised local cash transactions between the Arkansas middleman and his New Jersey buyer.

Then, there was the minor detail of housing and feeding 200 freshly seized turtles. They'd have to be kept healthy for days to come, waiting and ready to go "for when duty called."

Law enforcement families are familiar with sacrifice; Game Wardens are equally supported by their families. Sometimes that means long hours apart or holding dead evidence in the family freezer. And sometimes it involves rescuing an orphaned or injured critter.

Gomez's wife and daughter saw the need in this case. After an online search, they reached out to the local grocer for outdated produce. They found themselves turtle-sitting several days for a very rambunctious bunch of terrapins that had gained new energy after being served up a fruit and vegetable buffet on the family's confined back patio.

A plan involving multiple agencies and states was coordinated. It included Game Wardens from the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife, who assisted with surveillance and search



Overseen by Game Warden Karlin Bailey, monetary transactions between a turtle trafficker in Oklahoma and his New Jersey buyer were monitored and collected as evidence.



A surveillance photo shows a box of turtles being picked up at a delivery office. Standard shipping boxes containing "undercover turtles" were conspicuously marked so federal and New Jersey surveillance agents could readily identify them and the recipients, who would then be tracked and identified.

warrants on their end. Using special agents in New Jersey, the destination FedEx hub was observed for whoever picked up the specially marked boxes of live cargo. Every step was documented, and photographic evidence taken.

Eventually, collected through search warrants, the same Oklahoma turtles would be re-seized and identified for evidence for the prosecution in federal court. The kingpin's defense team would be astonished and perplexed to learn that each, individual turtle from Oklahoma had been carefully tagged. There would be no doubt on the size and scope of this operation and the inhumane damage it was inflicting to Oklahoma's wildlife.

Americans sometimes enjoy exotic or other unusual pets originating from foreign lands. Similarly, affluent families in China are buying three-toed and western box turtles there as food and as pets — a sign of prosperity. Five dollars paid to a Creek County turtle collector would turn into \$25 for an Arkansas middleman. Then, \$100 was paid to the New Jersey businessman, while his overseas buyers could receive \$500 each.

The final Chinese consumer was paying as much as \$1,000 to \$2,000 for each select animal fortunate enough to survive the smuggling journey. Some buyers in China have reportedly paid up to \$10,000 per turtle.

It is believed that world wildlife smuggling generates \$19 billion annually, ranking it fourth behind guns, drugs and human trafficking.

For his smaller role, the Arkansas man was convicted in Creek County District Court and ordered to pay more than \$10,000 for state crimes. He continues to assist the feds



VIRGINIA STATE PARKS

An ornate box turtle serves as a high-end "product sample" of the most expensive turtles sought after by Asian buyers. Some have reportedly sold in China for as high as \$10,000 each.

with ongoing investigations. Also, charges are pending or cases being closed on numerous suspects in numerous states throughout the southeastern United States.

In Tulsa, appearing in United States Federal Court, the 'kingpin' in this case, William T. Gangemi, 27, of Freehold, N.J., pleaded guilty to violating the federal Lacey Act, which makes it a felony to move any unlawfully taken or possessed wildlife across any state lines. He was ordered to pay \$100,000 in restitution to the USFWS for investigative and wildlife damages and \$250,000 in restitution to the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation for damages to the state's wildlife. At sentencing in January 2020, Gangemi

was given three years' probation (to settle his debt) or face incarceration, something he was desperate to avoid.

And finally, it was a happy ending for those most critically important players in this complex victory. After helping prevent the possible loss of their kind in Oklahoma, the "undercover turtles" were processed through a licensed wildlife rehabilitation facility on the East Coast and returned to Oklahoma in good health. 🌿

He was ordered to pay \$100,000 in restitution to the USFWS for investigative and wildlife damages and \$250,000 in restitution to the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation for damages to the state's wildlife.



CARLOS GOMEZ/ODWC

Confiscated turtles are temporarily gathered in a fire ring in Game Warden Carlos Gomez's backyard.

Editors Note: Game Warden Carlos Gomez recently retired after 41 years of service, and was assigned to Tulsa County since 1986. For nearly 20 years, he has been the editor of Oklahoma Game Wardens Magazine and advertising manager for International Game Warden magazine.

The Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Foundation

The Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Foundation (OWCF) is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization created to support the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation and its activities in managing the state's fish and wildlife resources and habitat.

The Wildlife Department receives no general state tax appropriations; ODWC operates primarily with license sales and federal matching grants. The Foundation is Oklahomans dedicated to conserving, preserving and promoting our wildlife, wild spaces and outdoor heritage for current and future generations.

All donations are tax-deductible. For more information, go to www.OKwildlifeconservation.org or www.facebook.com/OKWildlifeFoundation.



This girl is having a great time fishing at the first Fostering Outdoor Oklahoma Families event.



ODWC Fisheries Biologist Keith Thomas helps a boy in foster care take a sunfish off the hook at the first Fostering Outdoor Oklahoma Families event in September.

OWCF Update

Exciting things are happening with the Foundation. Several projects were kick-started in 2020, with more planned for this year! Here's a sample of what has been accomplished:

- Assisted with the purchase of a new fishing dock at South Lakes Park in Oklahoma City.
- Last summer, the OWCF partnered with Elk Valley Brewing Co., with a portion of each Tenkiller Pilsner 12-pack sold going directly to the Foundation.
- The Foundation raffled an Argentinian dove hunt selling more than 1,800 tickets and raising \$33,000.
- About 25 children in foster care and their families got together for a fun day of fishing to kick off a new partnership program involving the Oklahoma Department of Human Services, the OWCF and ODWC. The Fostering Outdoor Oklahoma Families (FOOF) partnership will expand across the state. The Foundation provided rods, reels and tackle boxes to the kids and offered free annual fishing licenses to attending foster parents so they can continue to enjoy catching fish with the children in the future. Another FOOF event was held at Perry CCC Lake.
- The Foundation sponsored another foster families and children event at the ranch of OWCF Board member Blake Shelton's ranch. Rods, reels and tackle were purchased and given to the kids as well as all of the supplies for a shore lunch fish fry.
- The Foundation is procuring outdoors-related trips for ODWC to raffle off in the future. Several trips already are set, but OWCF is looking for more.

OWCF
www.okwildlifeconservation.org

Foundation Donates for Youth Hunts

To help the Wildlife Department set up a new youth doe hunting opportunity in partnership with farmers in Beckham County, the Foundation donated blinds, chairs and other equipment to make sure the youths participating in the new controlled hunts had what they needed for a successful hunt.

Executive Director Rick Grundman

On July 1, Rick Grundman became the first executive director of the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Foundation (OWCF) after a 24-year career as an executive in the natural gas utility and mid-stream industries.

During his career, Grundman spent time in Oklahoma City, Tulsa and Austin, Texas, where he was actively involved in bringing people and resources together to achieve common goals.

His belief in servant-based leadership led him to serve on the boards of numerous charitable and community organizations including the executive board of the State Chamber of Oklahoma, where he was awarded the OK2030 Leadership Award; the Alzheimer's Association as chairman; and the Tulsa YMCA. He currently serves on the executive board of the Parent Child Center of Tulsa, which focuses on ending abuse, neglect and bullying of children.

Grundman and his wife, Susan, reside in Tulsa. He is a lifelong, avid outdoorsman and began fishing before his second birthday. He helped fund his college expenses by guiding duck, goose and mule deer hunts, and took time off from college to participate in billfish tournaments in the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean.

During his college years, he helped co-found the first university-based Ducks Unlimited chapter in the country. He loves traveling and hiking, and he especially enjoys hunting quail, pheasant, waterfowl, deer and elk, as well as bass fishing, fly fishing for trout and redfish, and offshore fishing.

Grundman's initial focus with the OWCF is to increase the visibility and awareness of the Foundation in a larger effort to raise more funds to support projects that benefit the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation and all Oklahomans. He urges anyone who cares about Oklahoma's fish, wildlife and habitat to consider helping ODWC conduct its mission by supporting the Foundation by making a donation, becoming a sponsor, setting up a trust, or giving a gift.

To learn more about the Foundation, go to the website www.okwildlifeconservation.org or contact Grundman at rgrundman@okwildlifeconservation.org or (918) 323-5566. 🌿



Grundman proudly hugs the paddlefish that he boated after a memorable battle on Fort Gibson Lake.



Foundation Executive Director Rick Grundman, right, had a chance to do some fishing recently with country music superstar and Foundation board member Blake Shelton in southern Oklahoma.



Members of Leadership Oklahoma Class 31 celebrate a successful sandhill crane hunting trip near Cherokee. From left are Jodi Cline, Edward Jones Investments, Ponca City; Rick Grundman, OWCF director, Tulsa; Leigh Gaddis, Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commissioner, Ada; Samantha Davidson Guinn, SVP, Healthcare Highways Inc., Oklahoma City; and Scott Thompson, executive director, Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality.

The Outdoor Store

OUTDOOR STORE items are sold in person at the Oklahoma City headquarters, 1801 N. Lincoln Blvd. or online at license.GoOutdoorsOklahoma.com. Create or sign into your account, or just click on "Shop."



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Oklahoma Habitat Donor Window Decals

Show your support of the Wildlife Department's Land Acquisition Fund with these striking window decals. All proceeds are earmarked to help provide hunting and fishing access to the public. — \$10 each



Outdoor Oklahoma Caps

These sharp, colorful fabric caps feature the "Outdoor Oklahoma" logo. Available selections may vary from those shown here (subject to availability). — \$20



Oklahoma Waterfowl Hunting Stamp

Oklahoma "duck stamps" are always popular with collectors and hunters. While each year's stamp features a different handsome design sure to add appeal to any stamp collection, funds from stamp sales are used for many kinds of waterfowl management projects. Specify year when ordering. — \$10

***Prices listed on these pages do not include \$3 online ordering convenience fee.*



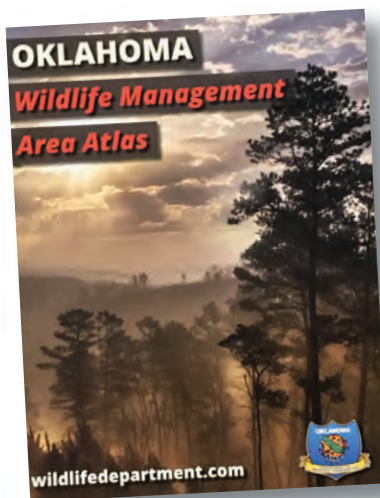
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Oklahoma Wildlife Management Area Atlas

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

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Watchable Wildlife

THE FOX SQUIRREL

BY JUSTIN VEACH, EDUCATION INTERN

The Eastern fox squirrel (*Sciurus niger*) is the largest of the tree squirrels, with a body length of 17 to 27 inches and a tail length of 7 to 13 inches. These rodents weigh from 1 to 3 pounds. Their native range is throughout the United States and Canada.

The fox squirrel gets its name from its yellowish-red coloration that closely resembles that of a fox. The animal's hair is burnt orange or grizzled brown on the extremities and gray on the back.

Fox squirrels prefer habitat with open forests and little understory vegetation. During summer, they are more likely to live in leaf dens, which are just a platform of sticks high up in trees. During winter, they will live in hollowed-out tree dens. They build dens about 30 feet aboveground

in deciduous trees. These animals prefer to live alone, but cohabitation is not uncommon in their nests, which are used mainly as shelters and places to raise offspring.

Eastern fox squirrels communicate with scents and vocalizations. They use a wide variety of barks as well as chattering and will sound a warning signal when danger approaches. Eastern fox squirrels are omnivores; their diet includes acorns, hickory nuts, insects, berries, seeds and bark.

Fox squirrels mate in December or early January and again in June, producing two litters a year. Gestation lasts about 45 days with an average litter size of three. The pups are born blind and without fur. They won't open their eyes until around four weeks old. The young are able to care

for themselves after 16 weeks. Females can start to mate after a year.

The maximum life expectancy for Eastern fox squirrels is 12 years, but the mortality rate before adulthood is high in the wild.

Fox squirrels have very flexible ankle joints, allowing them to rotate their feet 180 degrees to help them climb down trees. They also are very skilled at jumping.

They can jump 15 feet in horizontal leaps and have been observed free falling as much as 20 feet to land on a limb.

An interesting fact is that fox squirrels have four long front teeth that never stop growing. So, to keep these teeth filed down, they have to continuously find something to gnaw on.

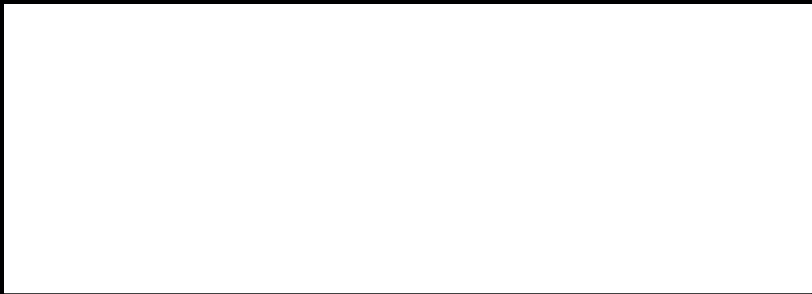
An interesting fact is that fox squirrels have four long front teeth that never stop growing. So, to keep these teeth filed down, they have to continuously find something to gnaw on.

Fox squirrels and Eastern gray squirrels are important small game animals in Oklahoma. Gray squirrels are found in the eastern parts of Oklahoma, while fox squirrels can be found throughout the state except for the far western Panhandle.

Traditionally, many youngsters are introduced to hunting with trips into the woods in pursuit of squirrels. Hunting season runs annually from May 15 to Jan. 31. The current daily limit is 25 fox or gray squirrels combined.

Not only do squirrels provide great hunting opportunities, but they also make fine table fare. Fried squirrel with gravy, squirrel stew, and squirrel and dumplings are time-honored favorites. 🌿





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