

Outdoor Oklahoma

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2021 – ONLY \$10 A YEAR

In This Issue:

2022 Wildlife Management Calendar

Okie Fly Gal Fishes “Like a Girl”

**Son’s 1st Deer Becomes Double
Reward for Dad**



A PUBLICATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

Panoramas

I'M SURE all of us deer hunters have heard it said before: "I won't shoot does; it just makes no sense to get rid of the fawn factories! Before long, there won't be any more deer."

It seems logical on the surface. But as a biologist who has devoted many years learning about our natural resources and how to best manage them, I can assure you it's pretty much the opposite. On-the-ground experience shows that a balanced buck-to-doe ratio in the deer population is the best strategy for maintaining a healthy herd.

There will always be plenty of skeptics because they've "been told their entire life that you don't shoot does." But here are the biological facts that support a robust antlerless harvest:

- A skewed buck-to-doe ratio where more does are present is detrimental to herd health.
- A more even buck-to-doe ratio means a more intense condensed rut, or breeding season, which helps bucks conserve energy and improves antler quality.
- A deer herd with an excess of does depletes the nutrition available in an area, which contributes to poor body condition and poor herd health for all deer.
- A balanced herd results in more fawns being born in a shorter period, actually increasing the odds that more deer survive predation.
- A more concise rut means fewer late-born fawns, which are often undersized and undernourished as they enter their first winter.

Last year, Oklahoma's hunters enjoyed liberalized opportunities to harvest antlerless deer. The Wildlife Department hoped that by liberalizing the antlerless deer limit, the harvest of does would fall into a range of 40 to 45 percent of total harvest. That target goal goes a long way toward correcting skewed buck-to-doe ratios in many areas of the state.

Well, hunters stepped up and did their part. Antlerless harvest made up 43 percent of the total deer harvest for the 2020-21 hunting seasons. That was the highest percentage since 2010, and an increase of 5 percent over the previous year.

Congratulations, hunters! Your efforts to take more antlerless deer worked, and the benefits will be felt in years to come.

"Hunters in the Know ... Take a Doe!" And hunters must keep taking does, in addition to bucks, if they want Oklahoma's deer herd to thrive and continue to be healthy.

This year, I hope hunters take advantage of the increased opportunities to harvest antlerless deer. Again, the holiday antlerless deer gun season will run for 14 days, from Dec. 18-31, and the limit will be two antlerless "bonus" deer, which means they do not count toward the regular seasonal harvest limit. The regular deer gun season runs Nov. 20-Dec. 5, allowing hunters to take up to four deer, with one of those being antlered.

As deer hunters, you are the boots-on-the-ground "wildlife managers" who are making the deer management decisions. Every time you decide to pull the trigger or release an arrow, you're making a deer management decision that impacts your local populations. The Department simply provides the regulatory framework and the biological expertise, but you decide the best way you can help manage the resource the most.

Doe harvest remains a top priority this year for ODWC, as well as a high-value tool for biologists like me working to optimize the health of the state's deer herd.



Dallas Barber

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dallas Barber". The script is fluid and cursive.

Dallas Barber,
Big-game Biologist,
ODWC

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by Rylee Rolling, Education Intern



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instagram.com/OkWildlifeDept



@OkWildlifeDept

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8



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ON THE COVER: "Hunters in the Know ... Take a Doe!" Antlerless harvest is a priority in managing for optimum deer herd health in Oklahoma. Hunters are asked to take advantage of increased antlerless harvest opportunities during this year's archery, gun and holiday deer hunting seasons. To learn more, see the Panoramas column on the preceding page. (Photo courtesy of Garrett Gabriel/Naturalist)

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Micah Holmes, Managing Editor
Kelly Adams, Managing Editor
Don P. Brown, Associate Editor

CONTRIBUTING STAFF

Dallas Barber, Brett Cooper, Whitney Jenkins,
Kyle Johnson, Kurt Kuklinski, Josh Richardson,
Kylee Rolling, Smokey Solis, RosaLee Walker.

PHONE

(405) 521-3856

WEBSITE

www.wildlifedepartment.com

E-MAIL

donald.brown@odwc.ok.gov

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Off the Beaten Path

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

DEPARTMENT STANDOUTS RACK UP PRESTIGIOUS HONORS

Several Wildlife Department employees have received recognition for outstanding service as recent award winners from various organizations.

Wildlife Biologist **Thad Potts** was selected as ODWC's Wildlife Biologist of the Year, a prestigious annual honor based on nominations from coworkers in the Wildlife Division. He oversees wildlife management at wildlife management areas scattered across six counties in northwestern Oklahoma: Canton, Dewey County, Drummond Flats, Major County and Sandhills. Among the many projects he works on, Potts has been collaborated with the U.S. Air Force to conduct bird surveys for restoration work at Drummond Flats WMA near Vance Air Force Base.

Wildlife Technician **Cody Crisswell** was named ODWC's Wildlife Technician of the Year. He splits his time conducting maintenance work at Beaver, Optima, Rita Blanca, Schultz and Shorb WMAs.

ODWC's Fisheries Division honored **Shane Lewis** as its Fisheries Professional of the Year. Lewis serves as assistant manager of the Durant Fish Hatchery, believed to be the largest freshwater fish hatchery in the United States. For the past several years, Lewis has worked to oversee extensive renovations at the hatchery.

Communication and Education Senior Specialist **Lance Meek**, hunter education



Thad Potts



Cody Crisswell



Shane Lewis

coordinator for ODWC, received a Special Recognition Award from the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies at the group's 75th annual meeting in Roanoke, Va. Meek was recognized for leading ODWC's innovations in hunter education.

"Lance Meek has proven to be a passionate and tireless advocate for providing the best possible education opportunities for hunters," SEAFWA President Paul Johansen said. "Over his two decades of service, no other state in the nation has implemented as many progressive changes as Oklahoma. As hunters' needs change and as technology evolves, Lance has championed bold steps to improve the customer experience, save money and, most importantly, keep hunters safe."

"Lance's contributions to the agency and to conservation in Oklahoma reach far beyond the hunter education program," ODWC Director J.D. Strong said. "His innovative and creative thinking have made Oklahoma a leader."

ODWC Communication Supervisor **Kelly Adams** was honored with the Mark Reeff Memorial Award for the outstanding young wildlife management professional under age 35 by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies during its annual awards ceremony in Providence, R.I.

AFWA said Adams has demonstrated extraordinary leadership skills and commitment beyond her job title to influence other state agencies, non-governmental organizations and others with a passion for conservation. **X



Lance Meek



Kelly Adams

STUDENTS, TEACHERS CAN WIN HUNTS, WILDERNESS TRIPS

Students ages 11 to 17 have a chance to "write their own ticket" to a great outdoor adventure next summer! Deadline is Nov. 19 to enter the 2021 Creative Writing Competition, co-sponsored by Oklahoma Station Chapter Safari Club International and the Wildlife Department.

The junior division first-place boy and girl will win a hunting trip at Rack Attack Outfitters in Fairview, Okla. (or similar) and get a scholarship to the Outdoor Texas Camp for hunting during summer 2022. The senior division first-place boy and girl will go on a guided

antelope hunt in the Texas panhandle (or equivalent) depending on availability.

Educators may also enter a contest for a Conservation Education Scholarship for an eight-day session at American Wilderness Leadership School (AWLS) at Granite Ranch near Jackson, Wyo.

For complete details on both contests, go to www.wildlifedepartment.com/education/youth-opp. **X



Wild About

◆ COOKING ◆

HUNTING BLIND BREAD

THE FAT TRUTH

Venison is naturally low in fat, like most wild game. This makes it ideal for cooking healthy meals. Venison is tasty as is, but if you want to add even more flavor you can mix in any kind of fat. Pork fat is a popular addition to wild game recipes because it is readily available, but any animal fat will add a rich flavor into your dishes.



By Smokey Solis, Communication and Information Specialist

These breakfast pockets are full of flavor, and they can be a great way to save time the morning of the hunt. Prepare them ahead of time, then freeze them in a plastic bag or vacuum seal them. As you are heading out for the hunt, pop them into the microwave for a minute or two, and take them along to enjoy when you get all set up in the blind.

Ingredients

- 2 refrigerated canned dough sheets
- 1.5 lbs venison breakfast sausage
- 1 white onion, chopped
- 1 Tbls butter
- 8 oz mozzarella cheese, shredded
- 8 oz cheddar cheese, shredded

Directions

- Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
- In a high-walled pot, sauté onions with butter. Once the onions begin to turn translucent, add sausage to pot.
- Brown sausage until it develops some crusty pieces. Remove from heat.
- Roll out dough sheets on a flat surface. Cut each sheet into quarters, yielding eight separate pieces of dough.
- Distribute portions of cheeses and sausage mix on each piece of dough.
- Fold dough edges together, making sure to fully close each fold by pinching tightly.
- Place each pocket, seam side down, on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper.
- Bake about 15 minutes, or until pockets are golden brown. Bake time can vary by oven.

When taking the pockets out of the oven, be careful; they will be scorching hot! Enjoy! And good luck hunting!

TULSA PONDS JOIN CLOSE TO HOME FISHING PROGRAM

KAMON JONES/ODWC INTERN



Hunter Park Pond

Three sites managed by the City of Tulsa Parks and Recreation Department are now part of the Wildlife Department's Close to Home Fishing program. They are:

- Hunter Park Pond, 5804 E. 91st St.
- Braden Park Pond, 5036 E. Seventh St.
- Mohawk Park Ponds, 5701 E. 36th St. N. (enter park from 36th St. N., turn right on Cherokee Drive just past the entrance gates to locate the two CTHF ponds.)

This marks the first time since ODWC started the Close to Home Fishing program 22 years ago that City of Tulsa parks have joined in the program. The added Tulsa fisheries will be stocked with hybrid sunfish and channel catfish regularly.



The CTHF program was designed as a partnership between the Wildlife Department and municipalities across Oklahoma to provide urban angling

opportunities. These small bodies of water are managed with special regulations, ensuring opportunities exist for anglers who may only have a little time on their hands and nowhere to go. More importantly, they offer urban dwellers an opportunity to frequently share their fishing heritage with others.

Several other CTHF sites are situated in the Tulsa metro area. They are:

- Turkey Mountain Park, 6800 S. Elwood Ave.
- Veterans Park Pond, East 101st St. and Elm, Jenks.
- Kelly Lane Park, 1151 S. Park St., Sapulpa.

For license requirements and daily limits on CTHF areas, consult the Oklahoma Fishing and Hunting Regulations at www.wildlifedepartment.com, on the Go Outdoors Oklahoma mobile app, or in print where fishing licenses are sold. ♡✕



Braden Park Pond



Mohawk Park Ponds

KAMON JONES/ODWC INTERN

KAMON JONES/ODWC INTERN

Outdoor Calendar

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

NOTICE: Events listed were scheduled at press time; events are subject to change.

NOVEMBER 2021

- 1** Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commission meeting, 9 a.m., Oklahoma City.
- 4** Waterfowl Hunting Tips, online event. Register: license.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/EventsHome.aspx.
- 5-7** Tenkiller WITO Event, Tenkiller State Park. Register: license.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/EventsHome.aspx.
- 6** Oklahoma City free fishing day; no city permit required.
- 7** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m. and 2:30 p.m., OETA.
- 11** Veterans Day; state offices closed.
Upland Game Hunting Tips, online event. Register: license.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/EventsHome.aspx.
Youth Hooked on Fishing, ages 5-15, 8-10 a.m., Kids Lake, Oklahoma City, free. Register: www.okc.gov/departments/parks-recreation.
- 14** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m. and 2:30 p.m., OETA.
- 16** Okla. Striped Bass Assn. meeting, 7 p.m., Zebco, Tulsa, (918) 639-8114.
- 21** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m. and 2:30 p.m., OETA.
- 25-26** Thanksgiving holidays; state offices closed.
- 28** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m. and 2:30 p.m., OETA.

- **Hunter Education Classes:** Nov. 6 in Dibble; Nov. 13 in Omega. Register: license.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/EventsHome.aspx.
- **Ducks Unlimited** events set in Tulsa, Nov. 4; Guthrie, Nov. 5; Blair, Nov. 9; Porum, Nov. 18; Ardmore, Nov. 18. Info: www.ducks.org/Oklahoma/events.
- **Friends of NRA** events info: www.FriendsOfNRA.org.
- **National Wild Turkey Federation** event info: www.nwtf.org/events.

DECEMBER 2021

- 2** Small Game Hunting Tips and Opportunities, online event. Register: license.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/EventsHome.aspx.
- 4** Oklahoma City free fishing day; no city permit required.
OKC Trout Fishing Derby, 10 a.m.-1 p.m., all ages, Route 66 Park. Register: www.okc.gov/departments/parks-recreation.
- 5** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m. and 2:30 p.m., OETA.
- 12** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m. and 2:30 p.m., OETA.
- 13** Doe Harvest: Where to Go and Why It's Important, online event. Register: license.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/EventsHome.aspx.
- 19** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m. and 2:30 p.m., OETA.
- 21** Okla. Striped Bass Assn. meeting, 7 p.m., Zebco, Tulsa, (918) 639-8114.
- 23-24** Christmas holidays; state offices closed.
- 26** "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m. and 2:30 p.m., OETA.
- 31** New Year's Eve; state offices closed.

- **Hunter Education Classes:** Check schedule and register: license.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/EventsHome.aspx.
- **Ducks Unlimited** events info: www.ducks.org/Oklahoma/events.
- **Friends of NRA** events info: www.FriendsOfNRA.org.
- **National Wild Turkey Federation** event info: www.nwtf.org/events.

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



COURTESY OF LINDY PETERMAN

The youths in the Kingfisher County 4-H group taught by Extension educator Lindy Peterman used back issues of Outdoor Oklahoma magazine to cut out photos of the state's animals and create a scrapbook for Junior Round-up Day at the county fair. We were proud to "make the cut" as the source for such a creative project!



Welcome to the Dock!

Are the fish biting? You bet! Step onto The Dock and take a gander at some remarkable catches made recently by Oklahoma anglers. Here's a few we thought you would enjoy! To see more or submit a photo of your catch, go to www.wildlifedepartment.com/fishing/the_dock.



Margo Johnson, Catfish, Oologah, September 5, 2021.



STATE RECORD RIVER CARPSUCKER
Bowfisher Jarrod Monroe of Choctaw, river carpsucker (unrestricted division), 11 pounds 2.8 ounces, Konawa Lake, Oct. 2, 2021.



Landon G., Crappie, Texoma, March 13, 2021.



Tammy and Dan Deyo, Walleye Saugeye Sauger, Altus-Lugert, June 21, 2021.



Brady McKenzie, Largemouth Bass, Oklahoma County, September 8, 2021.



Jude K., Rainbow Trout, Lower Illinois River, June 6, 2021.



Game Warden's Journal

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



A white-tailed buck was poached overnight Sept. 25 a few miles northwest of the three-way intersection of the Alfalfa, Grant and Garfield county lines, about 10 miles southeast of Jet. Three bullet holes were found on this buck. Anyone with information is asked to call Operation Game Thief, or Game Warden Lt. **Ben Bickerstaff** based in Alfalfa County at (580) 541-0820.



atook Lake engaged in shocking fish. Bersche watched and waited at the boat ramp for four hours until the boat returned well after dark. Bersche and Lt. **Paul Welch**, based in Osage County, discovered a shocking device attached to the boat under a console with a flip switch. The leads for the device were also hidden in the boat. Citations were issued to both people for the shocking and illegal means of taking game fish. The boat was seized and held for evidence.

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On Oct. 8, 2021, Game Warden **Jeremy Bersche** based in Osage County observed a man and woman in a boat on Ski-



Game Warden **David Clay**, based in Nowata County, spent opening weekend of archery deer season checking hunters from his paint horse named Sister at Oologah Wildlife Management Area. Clay and Sister found a high compliance rate and were able to enjoy the incredible weather.

(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. *~x



Hunter Orange (Daylight Fluorescent Orange) — Whether on public or private land, all hunters participating in any antelope, bear, deer or elk season using any firearm must wear both a head covering and an outer garment above the waistline, together totaling at least 400 square inches of hunter orange, clearly visible while in the field. Camouflage hunter orange is legal if the items total at least 400 square inches of hunter orange.

Antelope, bear, deer or elk hunters using archery equipment during any antelope, bear, deer or elk firearms season in any open hunting area (including public lands closed to firearms seasons) must conspicuously wear either a head covering or an outer garment above the waistline consisting of hunter orange. Camouflage hunter orange is legal.

All other hunters, including trappers (except hunters pursuing waterfowl, crow, crane or dove, or while hunting furbearing animals at night) must wear either a head covering or upper garment of hunter orange while hunting during any antelope, bear, deer or elk firearms season in any open hunting area (zone, county or area), including public lands closed to firearm seasons. Camouflage hunter orange is legal. *~x

— Smokey Solis, Communication Specialist



Outdoor adventure has become a Kuklinski family tradition, as seen here on a recent deer hunt with Kurt's youngest son, Rylan, grandfather Gary, older son Owen, and family friend Jacob.

Dad Finds Reward As Son's Friend Joins First Hunt

By Kurt Kuklinski, Wildlife Diversity Research Supervisor

"Dad, can Jacob come with us?"

That's how it all started, that very simple question posed by my 9-year-old son, Owen. It was early fall 2015, and I was planning and preparing for Owen's first deer hunting experience, the 2015 youth deer gun season.

Owen and I had been making plans to spend three days at Black Kettle National Grasslands, to participate in the youth season at Black Kettle Wildlife Management Area. Until then, I had never even considered inviting a friend to join us. I had high expectations of a father-son bonding weekend, spending three days in the beautiful setting of western Oklahoma canyon country, walking the wild prairie landscape in the hopes of an opportunity to harvest Owen's first deer.

I will admit that I was initially hesitant to include another youth hunter for this special occasion, my own son's first deer hunt. But seeing his desire to share the experience with his buddy Jacob opened my mind and my heart to one of the most rewarding experiences of my life.

I had no idea that Owen's simple question would increase my own love of the outdoors by adding another hunter/angler to the long list of Oklahomans who are passionate about our outdoor sports.

Jacob has been a family friend since Owen's first days in school. They are classmates, have played on many sports teams together, and have formed a strong bond as friends. Jacob's family is not what you would categorize as an outdoor-oriented family. There isn't a family history of hunting and fishing.



KURT KUKLINSKI/ODWC

Owen with his whitetail buck harvest. He continues to enjoy growing up with outdoor experiences just like his father before him.



KURT KUKLINSKI/ODWC

Friend Jacob, left, was invited by Owen Kuklinski, right, on his first deer hunt, and after Owen's dad, Kurt, agreed, both were able to harvest a deer using the same rifle.



Jacob shows off a spotted bass he caught at Lake Texoma.



Kurt Kuklinski is an outdoor enthusiast who grew up hunting and fishing with his family in central Wisconsin. He has pursued his love of fish and wildlife from coastal waters to rolling prairies and mountain streams, often with his beloved dogs. Kurt has worked as a researcher with ODWC for 20 years, studying both fish and wildlife. He now supervises the Wildlife Research and Wildlife Diversity Programs. When not guiding his sons (and Jacob) to new fishing and hunting adventures, Kurt and his wife, Heather, enjoy traveling and watching their sons compete in athletics.

Jacob's family isn't opposed to hunting or fishing; the family just hasn't had the experience of enjoying these outdoor recreational opportunities.

It's also important to note that firearms and a lack of familiarity with guns was not an obstacle for Jacob to participate in hunting, as one of his parents works in the law enforcement field. Jacob was supported by his family in completing his hunter education curriculum, and he joined us for his first hunting experience in October 2015.

The shared youth deer hunt that fall was an incredibly enjoyable and memorable trip for all three of us. The morning of Oct. 18, Owen and Jacob harvested their first deer within a minute of each other. After Jacob made a perfect shot, he passed the 7mm-08 youth rifle to Owen, who quickly followed by connecting with a great shot.

Two "first deer" taken. A story woven between friends, never to be forgotten. And a very excited and proud dad!

During the past five-plus years, we've continued to include Jacob in our hunting and fishing adventures. I've added my younger son, Rylan, another young outdoor enthusiast, into my hunting family. (And Jacob is absolutely a part of this family.)

When the number of youth hunters increased to three with the addition of Rylan, I asked my father if he was interested in joining his grandsons and Jacob on our annual deer hunts. My dad jumped at the opportunity and has loved every minute of his time hunting with us the past four years.

My dad brings an incredible amount of experience and wisdom to our hunts. And all three boys soak up that knowledge, hanging on every word when Grandpa Gary shares one of his hunting or fishing stories. My dad thanks me for welcoming him to mentor these young men, and for adding "another grandson" in Jacob, whom he loves like all of his other grandchildren.

Since that first hunt in 2015, Jacob has immersed himself in outdoor recreation. He now has his own deer rifle, a Christmas gift from his family, so he is able to continue his hunting lifestyle. Jacob spends his own money acquiring hunting gear and fishing tackle. He subscribes to hunting and fishing magazines and online content. He will soon earn the independence of a driver's license, which no doubt will open the doors even wider to his outdoor world.

We have shared countless hunting and fishing adventures together during the past five years. Each experience is made better by having Jacob there to share in it with my family. As I reflect on this history, I am almost embarrassed to admit an initial feeling of reluctance to reach out to Jacob and include him in my family's outdoor story.

What if I had been too selfish to share this with Jacob? How much enjoyment and growth would he have missed out on? How much enjoyment and growth would my father and I have missed out on?

Yes, including another youth in our outdoor experiences takes extra planning, extra coordination, and some added expense. But listening to Owen back in 2015 and inviting Jacob to be a part of our hunt were among the best decisions I ever made.

I'm proud to know that Jacob will continue to be a passionate and ethical hunter and angler. It warms my heart that he can tell his family and friends that he has provided protein for the dinner table.

My advice is to go ahead and take the chance if it's ever presented. Make the offer to include a new recruit in the wonderful experiences provided by outdoor recreation. 🌿

2022 Oklahoma Wildlife Habitat Management Calendar



SPECIAL PULLOUT SECTION





Mallards, Canada geese, snow geese and American wigeons take to the air.

January 2022

December 2021							February 2022						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4			1	2	3	4	5
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
26	27	28	29	30	31		27	28					

SUNDAY MONDAY TUESDAY WEDNESDAY THURSDAY FRIDAY SATURDAY

Operation Game Thief:
Anonymously report game and fish law violations by calling toll-free (800) 522-8039.

New Year's Day **1**

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Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

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For free technical assistance on wildlife and habitat management, landowners may call:
Northwest Region: Brett Cooper, (405) 740-9830
Southwest Region: Lauren Johnson, (405) 397-1599
Central Region: Kyle Johnson, (405) 590-2584
Northeast Region: Biologist, (918) 607-1518
Southeast Region: Leah Lowe, (405) 206-7720



KYLE JOHNSON/DWC

TIMBER STAND IMPROVEMENT (TSI)

Although a TSI project can sound daunting, it simply involves removing undesirable trees, thinning to relieve overcrowding, and using prescribed fire to rejuvenate the habitat and maintain the open canopy. Desirable deer and turkey foods are already hidden within the soil in the form of roots and seeds. All that is required is sunlight to stimulate their emergence.



Scan the QR Code for details.

JANUARY HABITAT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- Strip disk to encourage native food resources.
- Prepare ground for tree/shrub plantings for wildlife cover.
- Mow to remove brush encroachment as needed.
- Half-cut trees for loafing cover as needed for small game species.

JANUARY POND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- Consider a winter drawdown to control excessive aquatic vegetation.
- Check pond overflow pipe to make sure it is clear of debris.



American woodcock (*Scolopax minor*)

February 2022

January 2022							March 2022						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1			1	2	3	4	5
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
23	24	25	26	27	28	29	27	28	29	30	31		
30	31												

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1 Groundhog Day	2	3	4	5
6	7	8 ☾	9	10	11	12
13	Valentine's Day 14	15	16 ○	17	18	19
20	President's Day 21	22	23 ☾	24	25	26
27	28	For free technical assistance on wildlife and habitat management, landowners may call: Northwest Region: Brett Cooper, (405) 740-9830 Southwest Region: Lauren Johnson, (405) 397-1599 Central Region: Kyle Johnson, (405) 590-2584 Northeast Region: Biologist, (918) 607-1518 Southeast Region: Leah Lowe, (405) 206-7720				



BAT BOXES

Bats are extraordinary insect eaters that feast on moths, beetles, and even biting insects like mosquitoes using echolocation, a mixture of active sonar and special ear features that allow bats to “see” with sound. While some of the insects hunted by bats are considered a mere nuisance, others can cause damage to crops or landscapes. With the “free pest control” bats can offer, many landowners install bat boxes to welcome bats to their properties.



Scan the QR Code for details.

FEBRUARY HABITAT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- Strip disk to encourage native food resources.
- Plant native trees and shrubs as needed for wildlife cover.
- Mow to remove brush encroachment as needed.
- Half-cut trees for loafing cover as needed for small game species.

FEBRUARY POND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- Remove trees from pond dams and spillways. Check spillway for erosion and repair if needed.
- Use cut eastern redcedar trees to create fish habitat. Attach concrete blocks to the trunk and sink the trees into your pond or lake.
- If turtles are a nuisance in your pond, build turtle traps and install them in the spring.
- Seek the advice of the Natural Resources Conservation Service on design and construction of new ponds or the renovation of old ponds and check if there is financial assistance available.



Black-tailed prairie dog (*Cynomys ludovicianus*)

March 2022

February 2022							April 2022						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4						1	2
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
27	28						24	25	26	27	28	29	30

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1	2 ●	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10 ●	11	12
Daylight Saving Time Begins 13	14	15	16	St. Patrick's Day 17	18 ○	19
Spring Begins 20	21	22	23	24	25 ●	26
27	28	29	30	31		



DAVID BANTA/COWC

EARLY SEASON WETLAND DRAWDOWN

A drawdown that is well-timed and of proper duration is one of the most effective tools in wetland management. It can allow a wetland manager to directly influence the composition and production of moist-soil plants, optimize food production, and provide a nutrient-rich habitat for the exhausted and depleted migrants come fall.



Scan the QR Code for details.

MARCH HABITAT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- Plant native grasses, forbs or legumes.
- Plan and monitor livestock grazing this month to prevent overuse. This will help ensure adequate nesting cover as spring approaches.
- Monitor/fluctuate water levels in wetland areas.

MARCH POND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- Start filamentous algae control with Cutrine Plus® if needed.
- Clean debris from around pond overflow structures.
- On muddy ponds, put out a small row of hay bales above your pond to trap and limit sediments from entering your pond during early spring rains.



Rio Grande wild turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo intermedia*)

April 2022

March 2022							May 2022						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
27	28	29	30	31			29	30	31				

SUNDAY MONDAY TUESDAY WEDNESDAY THURSDAY FRIDAY SATURDAY

Operation Game Thief:
Anonymously report game and fish law violations by calling toll-free (800) 522-8039.

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Easter

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Earth Day

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FARM POND PROGRAM

Need help getting your half-acre to 5-acre pond ready for family members and friends? Send an application to the Farm Pond Program by May 31 for a chance to receive fish. Applications received June 1 or later will be eligible for next year's program. Eligible ponds cannot have an existing fish population, the owner cannot charge a fee for fishing at the pond, and Game Wardens must be allowed to check for fishing licenses (if required) at that pond. Receiving fish from the program does not require the landowner to offer fishing access to the public.



Scan the QR Code for details.

APRIL HABITAT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- If conditions permit, disk wetland areas to promote moist-soil plants as needed.
- Plant native grasses, forbs or legumes.

APRIL POND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- Start harvesting undersized bass and bluegill and keep records (continue all season).
- If aquatic vegetation is a problem, initiate a control program; either chemical or biological (grass carp).
- Inspect the dam and spillway for washes and fill them with suitable material and compact it thoroughly.
- Create and sink artificial structure for fish attractors.

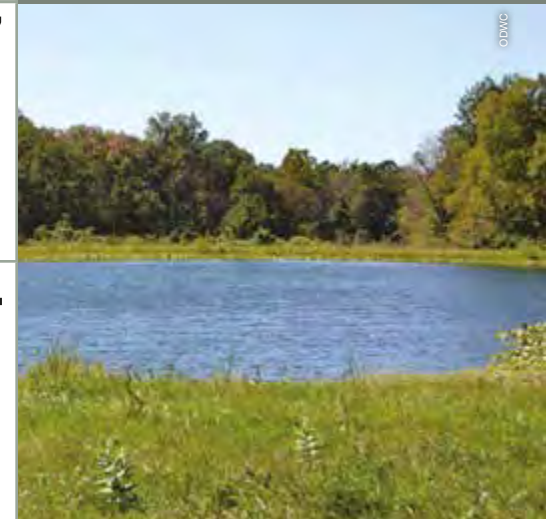


Monarch (*Danaus plexippus*)

May 2022

April 2022							June 2022						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2				1	2	3	4
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	26	27	28	29	30		

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mother's Day 8 ☾	9	10	11	12	13	14
15 ○	16	17	18	19	20	21
22 ☾	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	Memorial Day 30 ●	31	For free technical assistance on wildlife and habitat management, landowners may call: Northwest Region: Brett Cooper, (405) 740-9830 Southwest Region: Lauren Johnson, (405) 397-1599 Central Region: Kyle Johnson, (405) 590-2584 Northeast Region: Biologist, (918) 607-1518 Southeast Region: Leah Lowe, (405) 206-7720			



PREVENTING FISH KILLS

Adding some form of aeration to your pond can help with oxygen depletion issues. This can take the form of fountains, underwater diffusers, or agitators. Aeration not only provides an immediate supply of oxygen for fish, but also reduces stagnation, facilitates aerobic breakdown of organic materials on the pond bottom, and prevents wintertime freezing.



Scan the QR Code for details.

MAY HABITAT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- Monitor tree and shrub plantings.
- Control weed competition around new trees.
- Monitor livestock grazing program to provide nesting cover for next spring if needed.

MAY POND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- Inspect dams and dikes for leaks, seeps or animal burrows and repair as necessary.
- Add one round bale of hay per every 1-3 acres of water for slow release of nutrients in new ponds.
- Document fishing success in your pond by recording numbers, weights and lengths of fish caught. These records help biologists when you seek pond management recommendations.
- Inspect and clean out spillway, overflow tubes or pipes and remove any debris or blockages.



Scaled quail (*Callipepla squamata*)

June 2022

May 2022							July 2022						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7							1 2
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
29	30	31					24	25	26	27	28	29	30
							31						

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Operation Game Thief: Anonymously report game and fish law violations by calling toll-free (800) 522-8039.			1	2	3	4 Oklahoma Free Fishing Days
Oklahoma Free Fishing Days 5	6	7 	8	9	10	11
12	13	Flag Day 14 	15	16	17	18
Juneteenth and Father's Day 19	20 	Summer Begins 21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28 	29	30		



MANAGING FOR TURKEY ROOST SITES

Roost trees are as tall or taller than most surrounding trees. They have a number of large horizontal branches that make for good perches as they roost and the understory of these trees are thin. Shorter vegetation under and around roosting trees allows turkeys to identify threats or predators easier. A dense and taller understory can make a roosting turkey more susceptible to threats from below. As the understory around favorable roosting sites begins to fill in, these sites become less desirable to turkeys.



Scan the QR Code for details.

JUNE HABITAT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- Spot spray to control sericea lespedeza, an undesirable weed that competes with desirable grasses and forbs.
- Before mowing, walk out hay meadows to reduce wildlife mortality, and consider leaving unmowed strips.
- Spot spray salt cedar to restore riparian areas.

JUNE POND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- If your pond is lacking aquatic vegetation (less than 20 percent), June is the month to harvest and transplant aquatic vegetation. Consult a biologist for adaptable plant species for transplanting.
- If aquatic vegetation exceeds 20 percent of your pond, seek technical assistance on plant identification and recommended treatment method.



American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*)

July 2022

June 2022							August 2022						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4		1	2	3	4	5	6
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
26	27	28	29	30			28	29	30	31			

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Operation Game Thief: Anonymously report game and fish law violations by calling toll-free (800) 522-8039.					1	2
3	Independence Day 4	5	6 ☾	7	8	9
10	11	12	13 ○	14	15	16
17	18	19	20 ☾	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28 ●	29	30



KYLE JOHNSON/DWC

HEMI-MARSH

Simply put, a hemi-marsh is a patchwork of about 50 percent open water and 50 percent emergent vegetation or wetland plants. This ratio can fluctuate within and between years, but the goal is to manage for the mix to be about equal. The overall, simplified concept of hemi-marsh management is to manage the water for the highest quality and diversity of food plants for wildlife.



Scan the QR Code for details.

JULY HABITAT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- Seed Japanese millet along mud flats for ducks.
- Continue spot-spraying for sericea lespedeza, an invasive plant.
- Consider conducting a prescribed burn this month, during the growing season. It can encourage new growth leading into autumn, which can benefit wildlife.

JULY POND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- Check for fish at the surface of the pond at daylight or early morning. This could be the early sign of low dissolved oxygen that results in a fish kill. Contact local Wildlife Department office for assistance.
- Keep records on types and numbers of fish harvested by anglers. This information is helpful when considering fisheries management plans.

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For free technical assistance on wildlife and habitat management, landowners may call:
Northwest Region: Brett Cooper, (405) 740-9830
Southwest Region: Lauren Johnson, (405) 397-1599
Central Region: Kyle Johnson, (405) 590-2584
Northeast Region: Biologist, (918) 607-1518
Southeast Region: Leah Lowe, (405) 206-7720



Summertime fishing at sunset

August 2022

July 2022							September 2022						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2					1	2	3
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	25	26	27	28	29	30	
31													

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1	2	3	4	5 ☾	6
7	8	9	10	11 ○	12	13
14	15	16	17	18 ☾	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27 ●
28	29	30	31	<p>For free technical assistance on wildlife and habitat management, landowners may call:</p> <p>Northwest Region: Brett Cooper, (405) 740-9830</p> <p>Southwest Region: Lauren Johnson, (405) 397-1599</p> <p>Central Region: Kyle Johnson, (405) 590-2584</p> <p>Northeast Region: Biologist, (918) 607-1518</p> <p>Southeast Region: Leah Lowe, (405) 206-7720</p>		



EDGE HABITAT

The value of edge habitat for wildlife has been advocated for many years, but these transitions between two habitat types are not always suitable for quail and other species. All too often, the borders that exist between grasslands and woodlands or croplands and woodlands are abrupt and lack the diversity required to attract and hold wildlife.



Scan the QR Code for details.

AUGUST HABITAT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES.

- Complete wetland dike repair.
- Monitor grazing program to provide nesting cover for next spring.
- Before mowing, walk out hay meadows or install flush bars to equipment to reduce wildlife mortality, and consider leaving unmowed strips.

AUGUST POND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- Cut back or suspend supplemental feeding of catfish during the "dog days of summer" to reduce the chances of oxygen depletion.
- Check for fish at the surface of the pond at daylight or early morning. This could be the early sign of low dissolved oxygen that results in a fish kill.
- Stock fingerling catfish and bluegill, if desired.
- Consider supplemental aeration in August if visibility from green algae is less than 18 inches.
- Check sunfish and largemouth for black and yellow grub problems. If a problem exists, stock 3-4 inch redear sunfish for snail control.



American kestrel (*Falco sparverius*)

September 2022

August 2022							October 2022						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6							1
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
28	29	30	31				23	24	25	26	27	28	29
							30	31					

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Operation Game Thief: Anonymously report game and fish law violations by calling toll-free (800) 522-8039.				1	2	Oklahoma Free Hunting Days 3 
Oklahoma Free Hunting Days 4	Labor Day 5	6	7	8	9	10 
11	12	13	14	15	16	17 
18	19	20	21	Autumn Begins 22	23	National Hunting and Fishing Day 24
25 	26	27	28	29	30	



PRESCRIBED BURN ASSOCIATIONS

The Oklahoma Prescribed Burn Association (OPBA) was created in 2010 to support local burn associations and develop more across Oklahoma. The OPBA website has detailed information for landowners wishing to start a new burn association in their county or find information on existing associations to join. The website also has numerous resources that provide education and training on weather and smoke, local PBAs, laws and regulations, fire planning, and equipment vendors.



Scan the QR Code for details.

SEPTEMBER HABITAT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- Begin to flood wetland areas. Many water control structures require “boards” to be installed to prevent water from draining.
- Prepare ground and plant winter food plots if needed.
- Cut and remove eastern redcedar trees.

SEPTEMBER POND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- Spray cattails along pond banks now, before the first freeze.
- If feeding catfish, discontinue feeding when water temperatures fall below 65°F.
- Start fall drawdown if crowded bluegill conditions exist or summer vegetation problems occur.



Elk (*Cervus canadensis*)

October 2022

September 2022							November 2022						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3			1	2	3	4	5
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
18	19	20	21	22	23	24	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
25	26	27	28	29	30		27	28	29	30			

SUNDAY MONDAY TUESDAY WEDNESDAY THURSDAY FRIDAY SATURDAY

Operation Game Thief:
Anonymously report game and fish law violations by calling toll-free (800) 522-8039.

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Columbus Day

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Halloween

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MANAGING NATIVE WILDFLOWERS FOR MONARCH BUTTERFLIES

Whether traveling through Oklahoma during the spring or fall, monarch butterflies are in search of two primary things – plenty of milkweeds and plenty of wildflowers. Without them, few, if any, monarchs are likely to be seen. However, Oklahomans managing for an abundance of both are in for a treat each year when these fascinating insects pass through.

OCTOBER HABITAT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- Flood green-tree reservoirs only after the first frost.
- Begin planning for prescribed burn program.
- Plant wildflower seeds this month.
- Begin to flood wetland areas.
- Construct brush piles for winter cover as needed.

OCTOBER POND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- Stock new ponds with fingerling catfish (100/acre) and bluegill (200-500/acre).



Scan the QR Code for details.

ROSALIE WALKER/DWC



White-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*)

November 2022

October 2022							December 2022						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1					1	2	3
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
23	24	25	26	27	28	29	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
30	31												

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1 ☾	2	3	4	5
Daylight Saving Time Ends 6	7	8 ○	9	10	Veterans Day 11	12
13	14	15	16 ☾	17	18	19
20	21	22	23 ●	Thanksgiving Day 24	25	26
27	28	29	30 ☾	<p>For free technical assistance on wildlife and habitat management, landowners may call:</p> <p>Northwest Region: Brett Cooper, (405) 740-9830</p> <p>Southwest Region: Lauren Johnson, (405) 397-1599</p> <p>Central Region: Kyle Johnson, (405) 590-2584</p> <p>Northeast Region: Biologist, (918) 607-1518</p> <p>Southeast Region: Leah Lowe, (405) 206-7720</p>		



GAME BIRD HABITAT IMPROVEMENT IDEAS

November through early February is the best time to strip disk for game birds including dove and quail. It will create brood-rearing habitat and food sources the following summer. Plowing or disking turns the ground and stimulates growth of forbs or weeds quail love and need. Disking a few strips next to grasslands or low-growing shrubs mimics the once-abundant patchwork of small crop fields mixed with grassy and weedy strips that produced high numbers of upland game birds.



Scan the QR Code for details.

NOVEMBER HABITAT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- Flood green-tree reservoirs only after the first frost.
- Begin to flood wetland areas.
- Cut and remove invasive eastern redcedars to improve habitat.
- Evaluate forage resources and plan dormant season phase of grazing.

NOVEMBER POND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- Harvest crappie from farm ponds to ensure more balanced populations.
- Fence desirable fishing ponds to restrict livestock and build alternate livestock access points for a water source.
- Make repairs to fishing docks and boat ramp areas during drawdown.



Raccoon (*Procyon lotor*)

December 2022

November 2022							January 2023						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
27	28	29	30				29	30	31				

SUNDAY MONDAY TUESDAY WEDNESDAY THURSDAY FRIDAY SATURDAY

Operation Game Thief:
Anonymously report game and fish law violations by calling toll-free (800) 522-8039.

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Winter Begins

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Christmas Eve

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Christmas Day

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New Year's Eve

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FISH STRUCTURES FOR HABITAT

Shelter, or structure, is an important habitat component for fishing ponds or lakes. Artificial structures like tire reefs, wooden pallets, broken concrete, sections of large diameter pipe and PVC trees are all good substitutes [for natural structure]. You can construct your own artificial brush piles at low cost.



Scan the QR Code for details.

DECEMBER HABITAT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- Construct or inspect firebreaks around your property and evaluate areas that need a prescribed fire treatment in the near future.
- Continue to flood wetland areas.
- Begin planning for prescribed burn program.
- Cut and remove eastern redcedars.
- Evaluate forage resources and plan dormant season grazing program.

DECEMBER POND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

- To help clear a pond of muddy water, spread two bales of good hay per surface acre, every two weeks. No more than four applications per year and not during hot summer months.
- Trap any nuisance beavers.

Woods County Landowner Wins 2021 Conservation Honor



2021 Landowner Conservationist of the Year award presentation, from left, ODWC Private Lands Biologist Brett Cooper, Phyllis and RC Brown, ODWC Wildlife Division Chief Bill Dinkines.



RC Brown maintains an aggressive campaign to eliminate invasive eastern redcedars.



Prescribed burning is one of many conservation practices embraced by RC Brown on his Woods County ranch.

Woods County landowner RC Brown is Oklahoma's 2021 Landowner Conservationist of the Year. The Private Lands Section of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation's Wildlife Division selected Brown, who received an award at the September meeting of the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commission.

Private Lands Biologist Brett Cooper spoke about Brown's habitat improvement and land management activities on his 6,732 acres, including ambitious efforts to eliminate invasive eastern redcedars and regular prescribed burning.

Since 2010, Brown has initiated many conservation projects, including:

- Fireguards and a prescribed burning program.
- Actively participating in the Cimarron Range Preservation Prescribed Burn Association (Woods County).

- Cutting and removing or burning more than 3,000 acres of eastern redcedar.
- Improving habitat for lesser prairie-chicken and northern bobwhite as well as other upland species.
- Enhancing potential turkey roost sites through cedar removal and burning.

Since 2013, Brown has been enrolled in the Oklahoma Agricultural Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA) program and maintains an active wildlife management plan on his property.

He has installed grazing exclosures to follow the "take half, leave half" rule, providing spring nesting cover for the lesser prairie-chicken. His active Certificate of Inclusion in the CCAA allows him to continue current ranching and farming practices, including prescribed burning, in the event of an

Endangered Species Act decision affecting the lesser prairie-chicken.

And because of Brown's habitat and wildlife management plans, he has been able to enjoy and promote hunting on his land to the benefit of others.

ODWC has recognized a landowner conservationist each year since 1989 and continues to work closely with landowners by providing technical assistance and in some cases financial support for land practices that benefit wildlife. Projects may include fencing, brush management, timber thinning, wetland restoration and more.

For more information about the assistance available from Wildlife Department experts on fish and wildlife resource habitat management, go to www.wildlifedepartment.com and click on "Lands and Minerals" in the Quick Links section. 🌿

— Don P. Brown, Communication Specialist

Okie Fly Gal

By Kelly Bostian,
KJB Outdoors

Bridget Norris Kirk loved to fish from the time she was a little girl. But fly-fishing was not on her radar. “That was something other people did,” she said. “People in Colorado do that, right?”

But through chance, a determined nature, and strong influence from her grandfather “Papa” — who was always ready drop everything to help a little girl take a catfish off a hook — this woman from a little town north of Duncan found new life in fly-fishing in the space of only about 18 months.

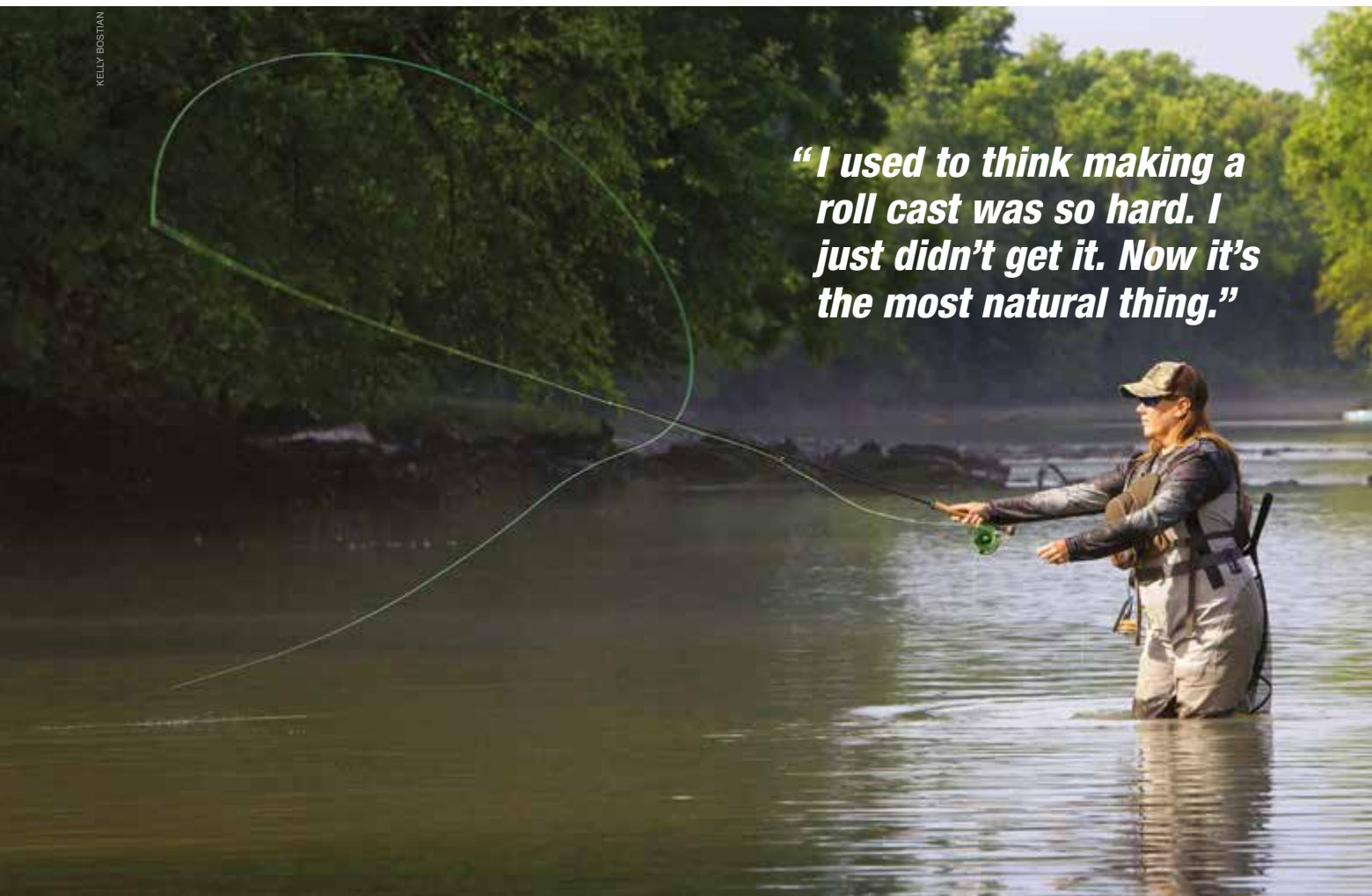
“My Papa had the greatest influence on me of anyone,” she said. “I still catch a good fish sometimes and say, ‘Papa would be proud.’”

Kirk is one of a growing number of fly-fishing anglers in the United States, which still is a small demographic. A Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation report on 2020 notes that anglers seeking new challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic spurred an increase of more than 100,000 new fly-fishing anglers, pushing participation to a record 7 million nationwide. Still, it is the least popular of fishing endeavors. And with men making up 70 percent of the crowd, it is the most male-dominated of fishing pursuits.

About 30 million people bought a fishing license in 2020, and close to 40 percent of those were women, according to the report.

With her fondest memories of being a little Texas girl who jumped off Papa’s tractor to spend the day at a “tank,” to catch a grasshopper in order to catch a “perch” in order to catch a catfish, Kirk was a prime candidate to get bitten by the fly-fishing bug.

In September 2020, she took home the champion’s trophy in the All Fish All Oklahoma Fly Fishing Challenge organized by Oklahoma Trout Unlimited Chapter 420. Dubbed “The 15-by-15,” it’s a challenge to catch 15 different Oklahoma fish



“I used to think making a roll cast was so hard. I just didn’t get it. Now it’s the most natural thing.”

species on a fly in the 15 weeks between Memorial Day and Labor Day. The winner is drawn from the relatively short list of anglers who actually complete the challenge.

She also started the Okie Fly Gal Facebook page and brand, under which she creates designs and vinyl stickers that adorn truck windows, rod lockers, tumblers and coolers seen on waters from Tishomingo to Tenkiller.

She had become a regular at Scotty's Blue River One Stop. When owner Jason LaFevers said he needed a logo for the shop, she told him she would design one. His first batch of stickers at the store sold out in a day. A new favorite sticker shows a hand with bright-red fingernails grasping a fly rod with the words "Fish Like a Girl."

Getting to this point was not without its challenges, however.

It all started at Blue River Public Fishing and Hunting Area on Valentines Day 2019 with her good friend Jason Bryant.

"I thought that catching a trout was like an impossible feat," she said. "I caught my first one that day on a white rooster tail right above the Highway 7 bridge. I probably took 50 pictures of that trout, I was so excited."

Bryant used a fly rod that day, and it was Kirk's first exposure to the sport. He offered to let her use an extra rod and to teach her, but she only gave it a little try later that day.

"I just didn't know anything about it," she said. "It seemed like something that was so beyond what I could learn."

Still, she decided if her friends were going to do this kind of fishing that she would get her own gear.

"I got a \$38 Martin combo with bright orange fly line, and it came with a selection of flies. I thought, 'Oh ... this is so cool!' ... The first thing I caught was a perch."

Every sunfish was still "a perch" back then, she said.

"Now I'm the worst critic on calling out people who call a bluegill a perch," she said with chuckle. "I'm a fly-fishing snob."

YouTube videos provided "fly-fishing 101 for girls who don't know anything about fly-fishing," she said.

With that first bluegill under her belt, she felt ready to try the Blue for rainbow trout on a fly rod.

"I caught my first one that day on a white rooster tail right above the Highway 7 bridge. I probably took 50 pictures of that trout, I was so excited."



Stickers designed by Bridget Norris Kirk on the window of an SUV.

KELLY BOSTIAN

“So, there I was with my fly rod and jigging with Power Bait, thinking I was fly fishing!”

“That was going to be the ultimate, right?” she said with a laugh. “I asked around about what to use, and my daughter’s youth pastor, who fishes the Blue River a lot, told me to use Power Bait. ... So, there I was with my fly rod and jigging with Power Bait, thinking I was fly fishing!”

It didn’t work. In fact, she failed time and again.

“I just didn’t know what I was doing,” she said.

Things turned around one weekend after she posted a question about fishing the Lower Mountain Fork River at Beavers Bend to a Facebook group.

“People said a guide, Donovan Clary, was going to be out there, and I was like, ‘Whoa, he is way out of my price range. I am not going to ask him anything.’ ”

But when she went to the river, she ended up bumping into Clary and the couple he was guiding anyway. They struck up conversation, as anglers do, and before she knew it, Clary was ready to show her how to catch a trout by Euro-nymphing — a style of fly fishing she knew nothing about.

“I had my Martin rod at the car, and Donovan was like, ‘We can just leave yours here.’ ”

A couple of lessons on reading the water, where trout like to hold and where to toss the line for the right drift, and she was on-track.

“I think on my third drift I caught my first trout,” she said. “That lit the fire.”

She devoted herself to fly-fishing during COVID-19 shutdowns. She completed the 15-by-15, which meant learning that “perch” were not perch but were bluegill, longear, redear and green sunfish. She also learned the difference between a spotted and largemouth bass, and the differences between white bass, striped bass and hybrid striped bass.

Competitors post selfies on the contest Facebook page to confirm their catches, and one educational part of the event is when entrants post selfies with incorrect fish IDs.

“I was down to where all I needed to complete the challenge was a striped bass, and (tournament organizer) Scott Hood became my enemy,” she said, laughing. “I kept posting pictures with ‘striped bass’ and he’d just reply, ‘hybrid, nope, hybrid, hybrid.’ I got so frustrated!”

Nowadays, she’s the one to out-fish most and to pass along advice, even



“He’s so cute!” Norris said of a small channel catfish that took her fly on the Lower Illinois River.



Lands and releases a rainbow trout

though she says she doesn't feel qualified. One day, she advised a group of men, befuddled as they'd caught nothing for hours. She walked up and started catching fish after fish.

"I got to feel big-headed for a little bit," she said. "That was when I got the idea for the Fish Like A Girl sticker."

When she's at Scotty's at Blue River these days, she's on a first-name basis with just about everyone. The same goes for the crowd on the Lower Illinois River any given weekend. Clary is a good friend, as is the couple she met that day on the Mountain Fork.

"There are so many people that I love and that are (like) family now, and I only knew one, Jason (Bryant), a year ago," she said. "The greatest thing I've gained from fly fishing is lasting friendships. I'm blessed beyond measure."

That's a mighty catch. Papa surely would be proud. 🌿

(Kelly Bostian has been an outdoor editor and writer for 35 years at newspapers in Fairbanks, Alaska, and Tulsa, Okla. He now operates KJB Outdoors, writing articles about conservation and outdoor recreation.)



KELLY BOSTIAN

Bridget Norris Kirk fishes for trout on the Lower Illinois River.

Try Your Skills Fly-fishing for Trout

Many anglers in Oklahoma look forward to these cooler months of the year for some rewarding seasonal trout fishing. Going after some rainbows and browns is also the perfect way to hone your fly-fishing talents, or develop some if you've never tried the technique.

Trout anglers are reminded that new daily harvest limits are in effect

in 2021: three trout per day of any size. But anglers may catch and release as many trout as they wish each day.

Around Nov. 1, the Fisheries Division of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation stocks trout at six designated seasonal trout fishing areas across the state, in addition to the two continuous trout stocking sites at the Lower Illinois River and the Lower Mountain Fork River.

The seasonal areas are Perry CCC/Lake Perry Park, Robbers Cave, Blue River, Boecher Lake, Medicine Creek and Sunset Lake in Guymon. Regular stocking will continue at these sites until March 15 or March 31, 2022. This year, stocking was moved from Watonga Lake to Boecher Lake at Roman Nose State Park. For more details, go to www.wildlifedepartment.com/fishing/trout-information.

Residents of the state's two largest urban areas can also get in on some trout fishing at Close to Home Fishing locations. Veterans Pond in Jenks is a trout stocking site. And new this year, Edwards Park and Route 66 Park are trout stocking sites in the Oklahoma City area. These Close to Home Fishing areas will be stocked from Dec. 1 to Feb. 28, 2021.

Trout anglers must carry a resident or nonresident fishing license while fishing. In addition, trout anglers at the Oklahoma City Close to Home sites must have an Oklahoma City fishing permit, and municipal permits may be required at other seasonal sites.

Trout fishing regulations, including daily and size limits, restricted areas and site maps, can be found in the current Oklahoma Fishing and Hunting Regulations found online at wildlifedepartment.com, on the Go Outdoors Oklahoma free mobile app, or in print across the state wherever hunting and fishing licenses are sold. 🌿

— Don P. Brown,
Communication Specialist



TODD BENTON/READERS SHOWCASE 2014

Conservation

Get Outdoors!

Have you been birdwatching? The colder winter months are great for birding. You often see types of birds that are here only during the colder days because they migrate from the north. You will also see the species that stay year-round. Make a checklist of winter birds, then go outside to try to find them.

for Kids!

Word Search: Let's Go Deer Hunting!

Hunting Tip

Are you going deer hunting? If so, you can harvest two bonus antlerless deer during the holiday antlerless deer season from Dec. 18-31, 2021. Think of it as a holiday present for hunters, because these two deer don't not count against your seasonal limit! That's more meat for your family's freezer, or maybe for donating to help hungry people through ODWC's Hunters Against Hunger or Deer Share programs.

Fishing Tip

When wintry weather arrives, most anglers store away their rods, reels and tackle. But there is still some fun fishing available in Oklahoma in November and December. It's trout season! Even though rainbow and brown trout are not native to the state, you can catch a few at several places where trout are stocked by the Wildlife Department. Find out where in the fishing regulations at www.wildlifedepartment.com.

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Q	Y	H	E	H	U	N	T	E	R	O	R	A	N	G	E

Find and circle these words that are related to deer hunting in Oklahoma:

Antlers
Bowhunting
E Check
License

Apprentice
Buck
Field Tag
Rifle

Archery
Doe
Hunter Orange
Tree Stand

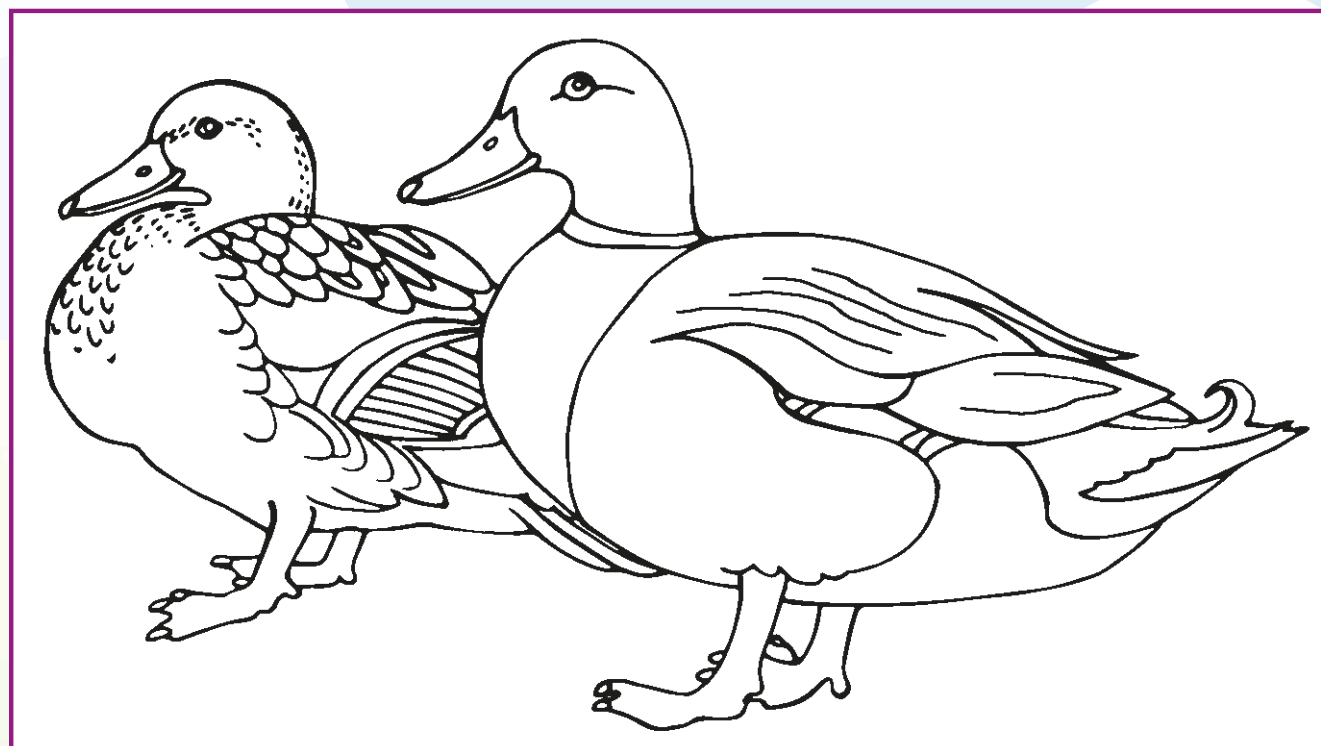
COOL FACTS about the Mallard:

- The mallard is widespread in most of the world's Northern Hemisphere, including Europe, Asia and North America.
- The male mallard is easily recognized, with a bright green head, yellow bill, and white ring around the neck.
- A male mallard is called a drake or greenhead; a female is called a hen or Susie; the young are called ducklings.



- Hen mallards are tan with brown mottling and have orange and black bills. They look similar to hens from other duck species.
- Mallards are dabbling, or puddle, ducks, and do not dive to feed. Instead, they tip head-down with tails up in the air when feeding.
- About two-thirds of the mallard's diet consists of plant materials; they also eat snails, worms, small fish and insects.
- Adult mallards have dark blue patches rimmed with white stripes on the trailing edge of their wings.
- While some mallards become localized, most are migratory. They breed in the northern areas of their range, and migrate to the south during winter.
- The outer layer of feathers is waterproof thanks to a gland near the tail. Under the top layer is a soft, warm layer of fluffy feathers called down.
- Mallards molt twice a year, losing their primary flight feathers. For several weeks during the molt, the birds are grounded until new flight feathers grow in.
- Mallards can weigh up to 3.5 pounds, grow as long as 2 feet, and can have wingspans approaching 3 feet across.

Color a Critter: Mallard Drake and Hen



Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Foundation Update

The OWCF is launching a five-year program to raise \$5.2 million to further the strategic mission of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation.

Since the Wildlife Department has operated on a limited budget for more than 100 years and doesn't receive appropriated state tax dollars, funds raised by the Foundation are one of the best methods to more rapidly advance the Department's strategic plan and bring more outdoor projects and programs to Oklahoma more quickly. Because many ODWC projects qualify for a 3-to-1 or 9-to-1 federal dollar match, donations to the Foundation can be multiplied and bring more and better projects to Oklahoma more quickly.

Funds raised by the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Foundation support wildlife research and management, multi-year conservation projects, community outreach programs, and outdoor recreation projects. The mission of the Foundation cannot be achieved without the support of community partners, philanthropic foundations and donations from individuals who want to make a difference for future generations.

All donations are tax-deductible. To learn more about the Foundation and how to help, go to www.OKwildlifeconservation.org, www.facebook.com/OKWildlifeFoundation, or email Grundman at rgrundman@okwildlifeconservation.org, or call (918) 323-5566.

James V. Barwick, OWCF Board of Directors Member

James Barwick grew up in Akron, Iowa. He was an attorney for more than 42 years in private practice and public service, including 22 years of in-house corporate practice on the executive team of various Fortune 100/500 public companies. His public service included 12 years as the general counsel for the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation through the state Attorney General's Office.

He is the executive vice president and general counsel for Jones Public Relations Inc., an integrated communications and public relations agency with worldwide partners.

He earned his bachelor's degree in criminal justice at the University of South Dakota and his Juris Doctor degree from the Oklahoma City University School of Law. He is married to Brenda, and they have two daughters, Hilary and Jamee, son-in-law Sean Jamieson, and granddaughter Blakely Jamieson.

In 2018, Barwick became a founding director and incorporator of the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Foundation. He was eager to join because he felt the need to inform Oklahoma citizens about the benefits of outdoor recreation and to provide an avenue for them to directly become involved with wildlife conservation by donating their time and/or money to help the Foundation achieve its goals and objectives in support of the Wildlife Department.

"There are always a myriad of projects that need funding for the Department, but land acquisition — providing additional places for outdoor recreation to be enjoyed by the sporting public — should be at the top of the list," Barwick said.

He is involved in many other boards and groups, including:

- Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commission, representing District 5.



James V. Barwick on a hunting trip with his daughters Hilary and Jamee.

- The Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.
- Oklahoma Youth Hunting Program.
- Life member of the NRA, Pope & Young Club, Bowhunting Council of Oklahoma (BCO), Safari Club International, and Pheasants and Quail Forever.

OKLAHOMA WILDLIFE CONSERVATION FOUNDATION SPOTLIGHT

- Oklahoma Bar Association.
- Oklahoma County Bar Association.

"At a very early age, my dad introduced me to hunting and fishing in the upper Midwest. He was a John Deere dealer, so farm hunting access was no problem, contrary to the case today, which is why the need for more public land." He remembers pheasant hunting with his dad and brothers, and said those times were some of his best while growing up.

After moving to Oklahoma in 1975, he focused on big-game hunting, mainly bowhunting white-tailed deer. Then he expanded his hunting efforts worldwide, taking a large variety of animals, including the Super Ten of North American Big Game. Most of those he took with a recurve bow and wood arrows.

Barwick enjoys everything the outdoors has to offer. He likes hunting, fishing, hiking, scouting stand sites, shed hunting, touring state and national parks, landscaping and golf. He said if he had to choose one that he could not live without, it would be archery.

"Seeing the flight of a true, spinning arrow streaming toward your mark is one of the most pleasant sights to experience in the outdoors. Archery soothes the mind and, with practice, provides an unwavering sense of accomplishment. It is something that can be enjoyed by the entire family and, with safety in place, can be performed right in your own backyard."

Barwick became so enamored with shooting his recurve bow in his younger days that he participated in archery tournaments almost every weekend in the 1980s and '90s,

achieving six BCO state championships (traditional class), along with four gold and four silver medals in the Sooner State Games.

Experiencing the outdoors with his family and friends is very important to the well-being of Barwick and his family. "There is a stability in the outdoors that provides a sense of belonging to nature. The dependability of the sun rising and setting every day, along with the seasons



James V. Barwick, seen here with a black bear archery harvest, is passionate about big-game hunting.



Jim Barwick and his wife, Brenda, are seen here hunting on the island of Hawaii.

always changing each year, illustrates Mother Nature's commitment to us and instills a sense of calmness that you surely cannot experience from a computer screen. It's a feeling not enjoyed unless in the outdoors. Who doesn't feel better after a walk in the woods?"

Barwick believes that people have a perpetual responsibility to wildlife that we must fulfill; that ancient man would not have survived without the bounty of nature, most specifically animals and fish. "We would not be here without the successes of ancient man made possible by wildlife."

Barwick is passionate about the fact that the Foundation provides people with the vehicle to help achieve wildlife sustainability through the funding of Department programs and projects that promote conservation. Not only does conservation help ensure the preservation of wildlife, it also provides people with the opportunities to experience the thrill of the hunt and the bending of the rod. These are traditions that embrace history and must continue for future generations, he said.



The Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Foundation is now set up as a charitable organization through AmazonSmile.

AmazonSmile is a program that donates 0.5 percent of your eligible purchases on Amazon to a charity of your choice. All you need to do is start your shopping at smile.amazon.com. The donation will be made at no extra cost to you, and you can choose from nearly a million public charitable organizations.

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."



Get Your Durable Collectible Card

Upgrade your license to this durable card on custom art by a local artist and support the next generation of conservationists.

Buy online at License.GoOutdoorsOklahoma.com — \$5



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.*



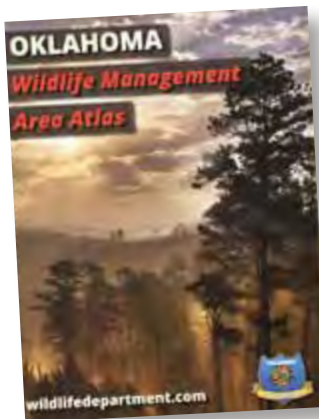
Wildlife License Plates

Dress up your vehicle while showing your support of our great state's wildlife resources by getting a wildlife license plate. Nine Wildlife Conservation Plates are available to serve as your regular, rear-bumper license plate. The plates cost just \$40 (original or replacement) or \$36.55 (renewals) above your regular annual registration fee with proceeds going to Oklahoma's Wildlife Diversity Program. The forms are available at local tag agencies, or online at tinyurl.com/WildTags.



Habitat Donor Caps

Top-quality, American-made caps display the Habitat Donor Patch of your choice, which designates you as a contributor to the Department's Land Acquisition Fund. Wearing this hat means you care about future generations and the great hunting and fishing tradition. Specify hat style on order form. — \$20



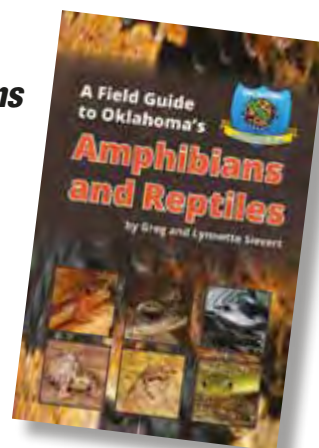
Oklahoma Wildlife Management Area Atlas

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

camping areas and food plots. Your atlas purchase comes with a bonus one-year subscription to the award-winning "Outdoor Oklahoma" magazine. — \$25

A Field Guide to Oklahoma's Amphibians and Reptiles

Get an introduction to Oklahoma's 140 species of salamanders, frogs, turtles, lizards, snakes and alligator in the 4th edition of our guide to the state's amphibians and reptiles. Six species accounts have been added and range maps have been updated throughout the guide. — \$20



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Watchable Wildlife

THE EASTERN MOLE

BY RYLEE ROLLING, EDUCATION INTERN

The eastern mole, also known as the common mole (*Scalopus aquaticus*), has the most extensive range throughout the United States of any species of mole. They can be found east of the Rocky Mountains to the East Coast and range from southern Ontario to northern Mexico. “Scalopus” is Greek for blind rat, while the Latin name “aquaticus” means water-dwelling.

This species of mole averages 6.25 inches long with a 1.25-inch tail, and they have velvet-like fur and large sharp claws. Moles have large spade-like front feet, used to maneuver through dirt and

burrow deep underground. They lack external ears, but their ear openings are covered with a thin layer of skin, allowing them to detect sound and vibrations. Due to their lack of sight, the common mole relies on smell and touch to navigate, identify, and familiarize itself

with its environment. Primarily located on their thinly pointed nose, Eimer’s organs are epidermal sensory organs in the form of bumps surrounded by hairs. These help in detecting substances and prey.

The eastern mole is a solitary mammal until mating season. The mating season is from February to March. The female gestation period is 45 days, resulting in a litter of two to four pups born between mid-April to June. The pups become independent at about 4 weeks old.

An eastern mole’s tunnel system can range up to three acres, and the burrows are complex with two separate purposes. When the tunnel is directly below the surface, they are temporary tunnels, or feeding tunnels, used to catch prey and go above the surface to gather resources. Moles can consume 60 to 100 percent their body weight every day by foraging under the surface for worms, insects, beetles, grubs, and other insects. Once a tunnel is exhausted of food resources, the mole creates more tunnels in search of new food sources.

Moles can consume 60 to 100 percent their body weight every day by foraging under the surface for worms, insects, beetles, grubs, and other insects.

Tunnels deep in the ground are used for nesting and sleeping. Eastern moles are active year-round and do not hibernate during winter. Nests are built from vegetation and are primarily placed deep underneath logs or boulders. They are abundant in areas where soil is well-drained and loose. They

tend to avoid clay dirt, rocks, and exceedingly wet soils. Yards, fields, meadows, and open woodland areas are all common mole habitats.

Eastern moles are abundant throughout Oklahoma. They are not commonly observed, however their tunnels are easily identifiable. These creatures get a bad reputation due to their tunneling systems commonly found in lawns and gardens. But they have a positive influence on ecosystems by aerating the soil and feeding on a wide variety of insects. 🌿





Dig those claws! The eastern mole is a common critter across Oklahoma, but you may never see one in person. Learn more about this subterranean specialist in the regular Watchable Wildlife feature inside this issue of Outdoor Oklahoma.

Outdoor Oklahoma

A PUBLICATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

