



Outdoor Oklahoma

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2022 – ONLY \$10 A YEAR

In This Issue:

**NAFA Event
Is Raptors'
Delight**

Understand Your
Odds of Winning
A Controlled Hunt

Alva Woman
An Ambassador
For Hunting



A PUBLICATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

Panoramas

There's no feeling quite like being part of a successful team. Pulling together to generate the best outcomes is something I find very rewarding.

One of the benefits of a team is that it brings to the table the various viewpoints of everyone involved in reaching for a goal. By its very nature, teamwork requires collaboration. This is how I view much of what we do here at the Wildlife Department, even though we won't compromise on fulfilling our mission: to manage and protect fish and wildlife, along with their habitats, while also growing our community of hunters and anglers, partnering with those who love the outdoors, and fostering stewardship with those who care for the land.

The bottom line is that ODWC works with others outside the agency to do what's best for everyone in accomplishing the Department's mission. We work with the State Legislature, other government agencies, nongovernmental conservation groups, and of course our core constituents — all of the anglers, hunters, landowners, and outdoor enthusiasts who largely make our efforts possible.

This year, ODWC will continue an effort to overhaul its licensing structure. The Department's goal is to simplify our license system for our constituents, add value to each license option, and provide constituents with the confidence in knowing that they're buying the proper licenses before going afield or afloat. Currently ODWC sells some 200 types of licenses. It's a confusing array of options that creates uncer-

tainty for the thousands of conservation-minded anglers and hunters who only want to do the right thing to support wildlife conservation. Worse yet, imagine the number of potential new anglers and hunters that simply give up after

trying to choose from the complicated menu of license options.

To make license modernization happen, we need the Legislature to team up with us. We've done the groundwork on how to best simplify and consolidate our fishing and hunting license system to grow hunter and angler participation while maintaining sufficient revenue to sustain the agency's conservation mission.



J.D. Strong

So, during this year's legislative session, we will be seeking support at the Capitol from our elected lawmakers to allow the Wildlife Conservation Commission to do what's best for Oklahoma's outdoor lovers and its treasured wildlife resources. We will be sharing how license modernization will be a big improvement over the cumbersome current system. And we look forward to teaming up with our Senators and Representatives so we can collectively hit this one out of the park for all our constituents!

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J.D. Strong'.

J.D. Strong,
ODWC Director

Inside

Off the Beaten Path2

Working Together for Wildlife10

State Legislators Go Afield With ODWC, Witness Conservation in Action
By Corey Jager, ODWC Legislative Liaison

Birds of a Feather.....16

Falconers Land at Quartz Mountain for 60th National Field Meet
By Don P. Brown, Communication Specialist

Conservation for Kids24

Pages Providing Learning and Fun for Youngsters

Play Your Numbers Right To Score Controlled Hunt.....26

Check These Odds and Improve Your Chances
Compiled by the Outdoor Oklahoma Staff

A Woman's Passion34

Alyssa Bowen Inspires Love of Outdoors As She Lives It

Large Study of Stream Smallmouths Leads

Bios to New Age, Growth Tools40

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

Wildlife Conservation Foundation Spotlight44

Outdoor Store46

Watchable Wildlife48

The Eastern Bluebird

By Rylee Rolling, Education Intern



ON THE COVER: A red-tailed hawk makes a majestic approach to the arm of its master after a hunting flight during the 2021 Field Meet of the North American Falconers Association in November near Lone Wolf. Check out more from the event starting on Page 16. (Courtesy of Jerry Spears Photography)



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Off the Beaten Path

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

NEW BLACK BASS RULES PROPOSED FOR 2022

By Kelly Adams,
Communication Supervisor

This year, as part of the Wildlife Department's annual review and revision of fishing and hunting regulations, the Fisheries Division has proposed a change to allow anglers to keep smaller, more abundant largemouth and smallmouth bass, while limiting the harvest of larger bass.

The proposal aims to remove the 14-inch minimum length limit from lakes and reservoirs, and would allow anglers to keep only one bass greater than 16 inches daily. If approved, biologists anticipate a positive impact on the overall quality of Oklahoma's black bass populations.

The bass length limit changes will be considered for approval by the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commission during its scheduled meeting Feb. 7, 2022.

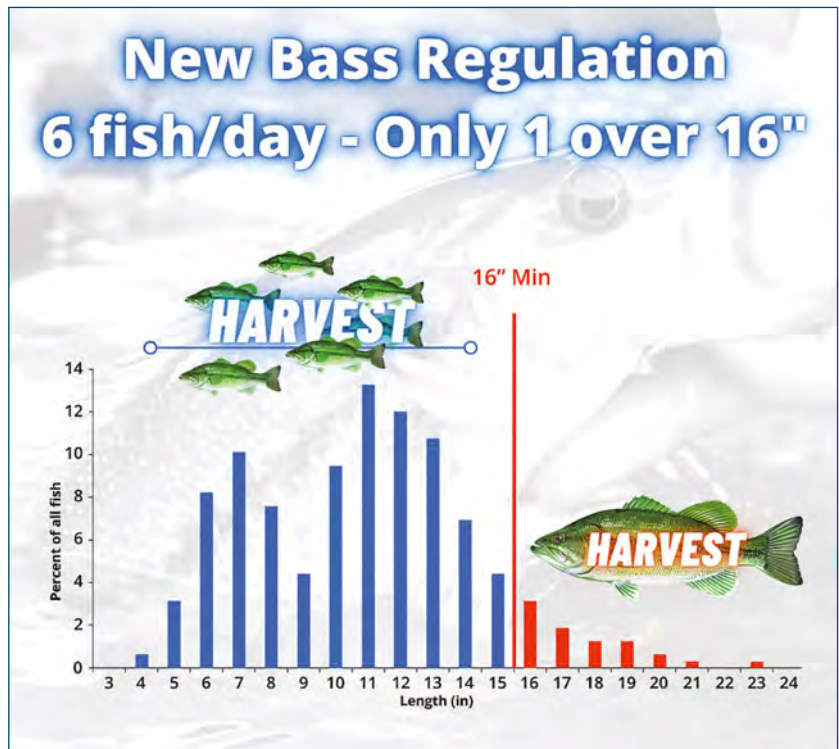
Cliff Sager, Senior Fisheries Biologist with the Wildlife Department, said the proposal is designed to give anglers a better chance to catch larger bass.

"Catch and release has become very ingrained with bass anglers. In the most recent survey of Oklahoma anglers, 69 percent of bass anglers returned all, or nearly all, the bass they caught back to the water. The popularity of the sport combined with the cultivated practice of catch-and-release of smaller bass has impacted ODWC's ability to increase the abundance of larger bass."

Using data from more than 100 Oklahoma lakes, fisheries biologists have found that about 80 percent of largemouth bass in Oklahoma lakes are shorter than 16 inches. While reduced harvest of large bass is beneficial, harvesting bass under 16 inches can improve fisheries by reducing competition among bass, so individuals grow faster and larger.

Josh Johnston, Northeast Region Fisheries Supervisor, said many anglers have asked him why slot limits are not being proposed. "Most studies on slot limits show the angler still sees it as a minimum length limit, meaning they only keep fish above the slot. The current proposal addresses the problem with slot limits and encourages harvesting smaller fish."

The proposed rule change comes with a black bass tourna-



The intent of the proposed regulation change is to increase harvest of the smaller, more abundant fish.

ment exemption, which will allow bag and size limits to deviate from those in the Oklahoma Fishing and Hunting Regulations. Tournament anglers who possess a free exemption from ODWC may then keep bass longer than 16 inches until the tournament weigh-in, after which the fish must be returned to the water.

To maintain focused oversight of these species, the Wildlife Department created a Centrarchid Committee of 10 fisheries biologists with specialties ranging from reservoirs to hatcheries. Together, they have more than 160 years of experience in fisheries management. The Centrarchidae (sunfishes) are a family of North American native freshwater fish and include smallmouth and largemouth bass, bluegill, and crappie. Biologists will continue to survey and monitor population trends, and develop management practices that better meet the needs and expectations of Oklahoma anglers. ❧

To see the size structure of largemouth bass in 13 popular bass-fishing lakes in Oklahoma, check out electrofishing data by scanning the code:





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.



Kody Young, rainbow trout, Nov. 13, 2021, Blue River Public Fishing and Hunting Area.



Kenzi B., black bass, Dec. 3, 2021, Oklahoma County.



Franklin Cook, rainbow trout, Nov. 29, 2021, Lower Illinois River.



Sarah and David Routledge, striped bass, Oct. 12, 2021, Lake Texoma.



Manuel Rivera, largemouth bass, Oct. 3, 2021, Ouachita Le Flore Unit.



Dustin Williams, catfish, Nov. 5, 2021, Lake Texoma.

STATE ARTIST WINS '22-'23 WATERFOWL STAMP DESIGN CONTEST



Mikel Donahue of Broken Arrow

Oklahoma artists made a strong showing in this year's state waterfowl stamp art competition.

Broken Arrow artist Mikel Donahue was selected the winner. Donahue's artwork depicting a male bufflehead will be featured on Oklahoma's waterfowl stamp for the 2022-23 hunting seasons.

Donahue's artwork was among 17 entries submitted this year by hopeful artists from across the nation.

Artists who received honorable mention are London Peterson of Eufaula; Shea Meyer of Stratford; and Gregory D. Fritz of Davenport, Iowa.

The Wildlife Department has held the Oklahoma waterfowl stamp art contest annually for 41 years. The program was designed to fund activities to ensure quality habitat for the hundreds of thousands of ducks and geese that migrate through the state each year. Oklahoma's art contest features portraits of the state's diverse waterfowl species by some of the best wildlife artists throughout the nation.

The program generates funding for waterfowl conservation projects through the sale of waterfowl licenses, required of most waterfowl hunters, and the sale of stamps, many of which are purchased by collectors. The state duck stamp formerly served as Oklahoma's waterfowl hunting license.

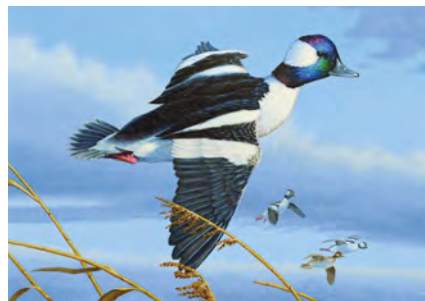
The program has helped the Department acquire more than 12,000 wetland acres and to enhance, create, restore and maintain critical waterfowl habitat. Wetland development units such as Hackberry Flat Wildlife Management Area in southwestern Oklahoma and the Red Slough Wildlife Management Area in McCurtain County have benefited from state duck stamp funding.

Next year's art contest will feature the green-winged teal. Entries will be due Aug. 1, 2022. For complete rules, go to www.wildlifedepartment.com.

To support waterfowl habitat conservation in Oklahoma, buy an Oklahoma duck stamp in the online Outdoor Store at <https://license.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Shop/Inventory>. ❖❖❖



Gregory D. Fritz of Davenport, Iowa



London Peterson of Eufaula



Shea Meyer of Stratford

MINNESOTA ARTIST WINS 2021 FEDERAL DUCK STAMP ART CONTEST

After two days of competition, James Hautman of Chaska, Minn., was named the winner of the 2021 Federal Duck Stamp Art Contest with his painting of a pair of redheads floating in the water. The announcement was made via live stream at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Headquarters in Falls Church, Va.

Hautman's acrylic painting will be made into the 2022-2023 Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, or "duck stamp", which will go on sale in late June 2022. The Service produces the Federal Duck Stamp, which sells for \$25 and raises about \$40 million in sales each year. These funds support critical conservation to protect wetland habitats in the National Wildlife Refuge System for the benefit of wildlife and the enjoyment of people.

This year, the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission approved the allocation of more than \$111 million from the



fund, made up partly of duck stamp dollars, to support the acquisition of lands from willing sellers for the refuge system. The new areas provide additional access to the public to some of the most spectacular places available for hunting, fishing, birdwatching, hiking, and other outdoor activities.

Since it was first established in 1934, sales of the duck stamp have raised more than \$1.1 billion to conserve over 6 million acres of habitat

for birds and other wildlife and provide countless opportunities for hunting and other wildlife-oriented recreation on our public lands.

Waterfowl hunters 16 and older are required to purchase and carry the current federal duck stamp. Many non-hunters, including birdwatchers, conservationists, stamp collectors, and others also purchase the stamp in support of habitat conservation. Additionally, a current federal duck stamp can be used for free admission to any national wildlife refuge that charges an entry fee. **✕



Ronald Jones of Tucumcari, N.M., submitted this winning photo taken near Kenton, Okla., in the 2019 Readers' Photo Showcase contest.

PHOTO SHOWCASE ENTRY PERIOD OPENS JAN. 1

Imagine the pride you will feel when you open the July/August issue of Outdoor Oklahoma to show your friends the remarkable photograph that you took! If you would like the chance for your work to be published in a high-quality magazine, we invite you to enter the annual Readers' Photography Showcase competition!

Entries will be accepted online starting Jan. 1, and every entry is included in the judging. We ask you to share up to four of your best original photos, preferably all taken in

Oklahoma in recent years.

April 15 is the deadline for entries, so there's still plenty of time to get those images in Outdoor Oklahoma.

The Readers' Photo Showcase issue is always the most popular Outdoor Oklahoma magazine of the whole year! And you can be a part of it just by going online, uploading your digital photos, and hitting the "submit" button. It's easy!

Go to the entry page online at www.tinyurl.com/enterRPS. **✕



Game Warden's Journal

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



Poaching is not only unethical but can also be very dangerous. On Nov. 29, officers responded to a report of a gunshot fired into a house. The bullet had gone through a window and missed hitting a person by only a few feet.

Game Wardens Mike France, based in Pottawatomie County, and Zach Paulk, based in Cleveland County, were called. An investigation determined that a poacher twice fired a firearm at a deer from a county roadway. One of the bullets hit the deer, and the other went into the house. A suspect was charged in Lincoln County with reckless discharge of a firearm, hunting without landowner consent, illegal take of white-tailed deer, and shooting from a public roadway.



Waterfowl carcasses were illegally dumped on or about Dec. 9, 2021, along Adobe Road southwest of Newkirk in Kay County. The breasted-out birds included a pintail drake, a mallard drake, a ring-necked duck, two lesser Canada geese, eight green-winged teal drakes, and 13 gadwalls.



Game Warden Spencer Grace, based in Kay County, said photos have possibly circulated on social media that might tie this crime to individuals.

It is illegal to dispose of wildlife in this manner, but it happens every year during waterfowl seasons. Grace is asking for the public's assistance to help put a stop to it.

The minimum fine for illegally disposing of wildlife is \$500 plus court costs. It also carries mandatory revocation of hunting rights for a year minimum. If you have any information on this crime, please call Grace at (580) 761-6565.

(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. **✕



FURBEARER EXEMPTION

Sometimes an exemption from the regular hunting or fishing regulations is provided. Such is the case with the taking of furbearers, in specific circumstances. On page 76 of the Oklahoma Fishing and Hunting Regulations, it states: "Nothing in this regulation prevents the killing of furbearers actually found destroying livestock or poultry. In addition, nothing in this regulation prevents the running or chasing of coyote, bobcat, fox or raccoon with dogs for sport only, except on those public lands where such activity is prohibited. Bobcats and foxes taken with this exemption cannot be removed from the property. Only furbearers taken within season and with a fur license may be sold or removed from property." **✕

— Smokey Solis, Communication Specialist



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 have hunted for over 40 years and in several states and countries. I've met many biologists, officers/wardens, field techs, and other people that are responsible for, and represent, their programs.

Although I have met many that are competent, none have risen to the level of what Weston Storer (ODWC Wildlife Biologist) displayed during my two interactions with him. His knowledge, professionalism, work ethic, and willingness to invest in his role as area biologist were remarkable.



Wildlife Biologist
Weston Storer



Wildlife Technician
Cody Crisswell

I know that in my line of work, people will readily share with me complaints about my subordinates, but it takes extraordinary interactions to spark positive comments. Storer was definitely extraordinary in his actions and words.

I cannot express how amazed I am with his willingness to assist us in any way he could. This includes after business hours and prior to the season when I called seeking information to help settle on a hunt location.

I must also mention that Cody Crisswell (ODWC Wildlife Technician) was very friendly, informative and helpful as well.

Kudos to you for assembling such a fine crew, and especially to Storer and Criss-

well for representing your agency in such an outstanding manner.

Yes, my buddy and I were both successful in taking fine white-tailed bucks, but I assure you, my opinion would have remained the same and been shared if that were not the case.

To all of you, keep up the great work.

Undersheriff Mike Larsen
Allegan County Sheriff's Office, Michigan

SUNDAY MORNING

Outdoor Calendar

FOR THE LATEST UPDATES, GO ONLINE TO LICENSE.
GoOUTDOORSOKLAHOMA.COM/Event/Events.aspx

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

JANUARY 2022	
1	New Year's Day. Oklahoma City Free Fishing Day, no city permit required.
2	"Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
3	Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commission meeting, 9 a.m., Oklahoma City.
6	Public Hearing on ODWC Rule Change Proposals, 7 p.m., 1801 N. Lincoln Blvd., Oklahoma City. Info: www.wildlifedepartment.com/public-meeting .
9	"Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
15	Lower Illinois River Trout Clinic, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., near Gore, register: https://license.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/EventsHome.aspx .
16	"Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
17	Martin Luther King Jr. Day (state offices closed).
23	"Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
29	Blue River Trout Clinic, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., near Tishomingo, register: https://license.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/EventsHome.aspx .
30	"Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ducks Unlimited event set in Chandler, Jan. 8. Info: www.ducks.org/Oklahoma/events. Friends of NRA event info: www.FriendsOfNRA.org. National Wild Turkey Federation events info: www.nwtf.org/events. 	
FEBRUARY 2022	
5	Oklahoma City Free Fishing Day, no city permit required.
6	"Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
7	Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commission meeting, 9 a.m., Oklahoma City.
12	Edwards Park Pond Trout Clinic, 1 to 3 p.m., Oklahoma City, register: https://license.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/EventsHome.aspx .
13	Route 66 Park Pond Trout Clinic, 1 to 3 p.m., Yukon, register: https://license.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/EventsHome.aspx . "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
21	Presidents' Day (state offices closed).
26	Veterans Park Pond Trout Clinic, 1 to 3 p.m., Jenks, register: https://license.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/EventsHome.aspx . RMEF Tulsa Chapter Banquet, 5:30 p.m., Tulsa Fairgrounds, RSVP to https://events.rmef.org/shop/tulsa3 or (918) 630-8557.
27	"Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ducks Unlimited event set in Collinsville, Feb. 4; Weatherford, Feb. 5; Edmond, Feb. 12. Info: www.ducks.org/Oklahoma/events. Friends of NRA event info: www.FriendsOfNRA.org. National Wild Turkey Federation event set in Idabel, Feb. 26. Info: www.nwtf.org/events. 	
<p>** FOR HUNTING SEASON DATES, GO TO www.wildlifedepartment.com/hunting/seasons **</p>	

Wild About

◆ COOKING ◆



QUAIL CRUNCHY WRAP POCKETS

By Lukas Leaf

Sometimes you just need to mix it up and have some fun in the kitchen. What's better than re-creating a fast-food favorite at home? Enter Quail Crunchy Wrap Pockets. One of these handheld wonders checks all the boxes: messy, entertaining, another way to use the meat from quail or any other gamebird.

By the way, napkins and your favorite hot sauce are must-haves.

Slow-cooker dishes are fantastic for using up those last couple of birds in the freezer. And the versatility of a Crunchy Wrap is a definite

upside. There's nothing wrong with substituting another wild game for the quail in the Tinga (shredded meat in chili sauce). Other upland gamebirds, duck or goose, steak from elk or deer, and ground meat of any kind all come to mind as fine substitutes for quail.

Feeling a little adventurous? Pop those quail in a smoker before adding the meat to the slow-cooker for an added layer of flavor.

Lunch, dinner or party time, these Quail Crunchy Wrap Pockets have got you covered.

Cook time: 3 hours. Serves 6.

Ingredients for Pulled Quail Tinga

- 4-5 whole quail breasts
(or equal amount of other wild game meat)
- 1 can chipotle peppers in adobo sauce
- 1 medium yellow onion, sliced
- 1/2 cup wild game or chicken stock
- 2 teaspoons cumin
- 2 teaspoons oregano
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt

Ingredients for Crunchy Wraps

- Pulled Quail Tinga
- 6 large burrito-size flour tortillas
- 6 crunchy tostadas
- 1 bag shredded cheese of choice
- 2 cups shredded lettuce of choice
- 1 can nacho cheese sauce
- 2 Roma tomatoes, diced
- 1 can refried beans
- 1 cup sour cream
- Hot sauce of your choice
- 2 tablespoons canola oil

Lukas Leaf is lead chef at Modern Carnivore (modcarn.com) when he's not hunting, fishing or working for Sportsmen for the Boundary Waters as executive director.

Recipe courtesy of Quail Forever: Gamebird Gourmet

Directions

- Puree all Tinga ingredients smooth except for quail and sliced onion. Add quail breasts and sliced onion to the slow-cooker. Pour Tinga mixture over quail and lightly mix everything. Cook on high for 2-3 hours or until tender. Remove from heat and let cool.
- Shred quail meat by hand and discard bones. Mix Tinga sauce and shredded quail together and place in a saute pan. Cook Tinga on medium heat for 5-10 minutes until sauce begins to thicken. Set aside to slightly cool.
- Prepare ingredients to assemble Crunchy Wraps: cut vegetables and open containers so everything is easily accessible.
- To assemble: Heat a tortilla in the microwave for only 20 seconds so it doesn't break when you fold it around the Crunchy Wrap filling. Start by putting an even, thin layer of refried beans in the center, add a layer of Quail Tinga over the beans, drizzle some nacho cheese over Tinga, and finish with diced tomato and shredded lettuce. Spread sour cream over tostada and place the sour cream side down over the filling. Drizzle with more nacho cheese and add some shredded cheese. Fold the outside of the tortilla over the center, creating folds as you go until completely sealed. Press down and set aside for finishing on stovetop.
- To finish: Heat a saute pan or cast-iron skillet to medium-high on stove. Add a small amount of canola oil and use a paper towel to wipe the pan so it is thinly coated with oil. Place Crunchy Wrap folded side down in the pan. With slight pressure, press down on Crunchy Wrap so it comes in complete contact with the pan. Cook for 30 seconds or until tortilla is fully sealed and crispy brown on the outside. Repeat on the other side. Serve immediately with your favorite hot sauce and accompaniments.
- Tip: Save the breasted quail carcasses to make a flavorful stock to add to soups, stews and braised meats.

2021 CREATIVE WRITING COMPETITION

“DRAWN TO THE WOODS”

EDITOR'S NOTE: Each year, the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation and Oklahoma Station Chapter Safari Club International join to sponsor a creative writing competition for Oklahoma middle and high school students. A boy and a girl from two age divisions are selected winners. Students were required to write essays using the theme “Hunting: Sharing the Heritage” or “Archery: What I Like About Archery in the Schools and Bowhunting.” Winners in the age 15-17 category receive a guided antelope hunt in the Texas Panhandle, and winners in the 11-14 age category receive a hunting trip with Rack Attack Outfitters of Fairview (or similar) and a scholarship to the Outdoor Texas Camp. In this issue, Outdoor Oklahoma honors junior category female winner Dixie Mae-Leigh Hill, 13, an eighth-grader from Justus-Tiawah School.



By Dixie Mae-Leigh Hill

I have grown up around firearms. I remember being really little, probably 2 or 3. During hunting season, as soon as I woke up, I would run to the bathroom to look out the window to find the oak tree that my dad was hunting in. I was always excited whenever there was a gunshot.



About five years ago, I asked my dad to go hunting, but he said that I would need to use a rifle and that I was still a little small. I have to admit, I'm a pretty cautious kid, so anything that could hurt me, I've been wary of using. Finally this summer I learned to use a shotgun. How hard the gun kicked was really what I've been afraid of, and since I had never used a gun that kicked, I kind of backed down and was shy about trying. Dad finally convinced me this summer that ALL guns kick, but they don't bruise if you hold them correctly.

I was about 10 years old when I first used an AR-15. We were at my grandparents' house, and my dad asked me to try out the AR. When I said "no," he said "yes." After a couple of shots, I was addicted.

The thought of hunting tickled at the back of my mind. I knew that you used a rifle to hunt deer. When I found out that AR stood for ArmaLite rifle, I asked dad to go hunting again when we got home. He said I wouldn't get to hunt, but I could go with him. In fact, he took all of us individually — my younger sister, younger brother, and my mom — into the woods. I loved sitting

there watching squirrels and hanging out with my dad, looking for the flash of movement that might be a deer.

My parents have always challenged me to step out of my comfort zone a little. They have made me get up, put a smile on my face and dance, even though I didn't want to. People complimented me afterward. My dad "highly encouraged" me to shoot a shotgun so I would face my fears and know it was actually fun. I have always been grateful afterward. I look back at the times my parents have encouraged me out my comfort zone and I realized it is their way of telling me that I can do anything. My parents tell me that often.

This year, my dad and I went to Atwoods and got myself a youth hunting license. We spent upwards of 14 hours in the woods over the span of the three days of youth hunting season. When deer rifle season starts, we are going to go back into the woods. My dad told me deer hunting is the most "un-fun" hunting there is. I have to say that I disagree. I love just sitting out there.

I am not an expert hunter. I am not an advanced hunter. I am not even a beginner hunter. I am an amateur who wants America to be great again; who wants to make her family proud and keep stepping out of her comfort zone. I want to be an Oklahoman who keeps her heritage and her beliefs alive. And I want to prove to all those people who say, "You're a girl, you can't do that," that I can. And believe me, I will. --X



State Sen. Darcy Jech and his great nephew Sam learn about ODWC fishing opportunities at American Horse Lake.



State Rep. Anastasia Pittman and Game Warden Jaylen Flynn pose for a photo at the 2021 Capitol Fish Fry.



State Rep. Mark Vancuren and his wife, Sheila, had a chance to learn about paddlefishing.

WORKING TOGETHER FOR WILDLIFE

**State Legislators Go Afield With ODWC,
Witness Conservation in Action**

Often when people think about the work of Oklahoma's legislators, they may think about education, tax, or health care legislation. However, legislators also spend time on wildlife legislation. In fact, each year the Oklahoma Legislature typically considers a handful of bills that directly impact either the management of the state's fish and wildlife, the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation that oversees that management (ODWC), or the Department's constituents (often hunters and anglers).

Bills are proposed for a variety of reasons, sometimes by ODWC and sometimes by legislators or their constituents who ask them to propose legislation.

Regardless of who asks for a bill, all bills first filter through subject-specific committees before being considered by the full chambers. These committees help divide the work of reviewing what could amount to thousands of pieces of legislation.

Although the subject-specific committees are often composed of people with a background or an interest in the committee subject, that is not always the case. Of the 149 Oklahoma legislators, there are many who can provide expert-level knowledge on many topics such as education, health care, etc. However, there are often a small minority, if any, who are experts on wildlife management.

Many of the appointees who fill the wildlife committees have experience as ODWC constituents, spending their time hunting and fishing. And often many have experience with habitat management on their personal properties. Few, though, have in-depth knowledge of the critical and unique funding model of the Wildlife Department, landscape-level wildlife management, and management of populations vs. individual animals.

While non-experts offer helpful perspective and dialogue, it's also important to provide legislators with context for legislation they propose or vote on, and an understanding of ODWC's operations for determining the impact of proposed legislation.

The Wildlife Department takes this task to heart by inviting legislators into the field to directly experience the work that the Department does. These activities vary, from participating in long-term research projects to experiencing wildlife resources — just as ODWC's constituents — by hunting or fishing.

Often, these opportunities provide legislators with an opportunity to see ODWC work taking place in their legislative districts, meet local staff, and learn about local issues. Most importantly, it provides the opportunity for ODWC staff to share more about the mission of the Department away from the distractions of the State Capitol.

During 2021, the Wildlife Department hosted several legislators for educational experiences.



By Corey Jager
ODWC Legislative Liaison



ODWC's Directors, Chiefs and employees and state Wildlife Conservation Commissioners host a fish fry at the State Capitol to meet and greet state legislators.

COREY JAGER/ODWC



State Rep. Ty Burns hoists a specimen collected during a 2021 catfish survey.

Kaw Catfish Sampling

- House Wildlife Committee Chairman Ty Burns joined ODWC Fisheries staff for an electrofishing survey of catfish on Kaw Lake. This opportunity was part of a multiday effort to collect data on blue catfish by shocking them to the surface for collection.

Goose Banding and Research

- Some legislators and staff helped with ODWC's goose banding efforts that take place during early summer.
- "Please extend a thanks to James (Morel, Migratory Bird Biologist) and everyone for having us today. It was a great experience. Nice to do something other than the policy and politics occasionally. The Speaker's leadership team had a blast, too. I appreciate how patient they all were with how clueless we can be. It's good for us to see what the agencies do." — Caitlin Lee, legislative assistant to Reps. Dick Lowe and Kenton Patzkowsky.
- "We had the opportunity to help with the banding of some Canadian Geese at Fort Cobb State Park this week. We learned a lot and had a great time. Thank you to the state Wildlife personnel for the invite!" — Rep. Dick Lowe.
- "As an Agriculture and Wildlife Committee member, it's important to me to work with our wildlife and the people who conserve it. It was a pleasure to lend a hand to Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC) in banding geese this morning in Purcell. Thank you to ODWC for all that you do for our state and our valuable natural resources. Their efforts provide valuable insight into the facts, data collection, and decision-making processes that drive wildlife management in our great state. Banding helps ODWC understand demographics, harvest rates, movement and distributions, and more. This information is used to influence their regulatory strategies and helps protect Oklahoma wildlife. This, in turn, provides abundant and quality opportunities for our hunters, fishermen, and outdoor enthusiasts." — Sen. Blake Stephens.

Fisheries Management

- ODWC hosted Sen. Darcy Jech at American Horse Lake in Blaine County, part of Jech's senatorial district. The lake is among 16 Wildlife Department-owned lakes and is a destination on the Oklahoma Fishing Trail.

Paddlefishing

Not everyone knows about this prehistoric species, let alone that they are a lot of fun to catch. In certain years, ODWC will invite legislators to tour the nationally known Paddlefish Research Center in Miami, Okla., to learn about Oklahoma's tremendously successful paddlefish management program, and to try their luck snagging for one of these big fish.



State Sen. Micheal Bergstrom Sr. experiences the thrill of snagging a paddlefish.

Catfishing and Fish Fry

- ODWC took legislators and their staff members to help jug-line for catfish to supply the annual State Capitol fish fry event. The fish fry was started to showcase Oklahoma's fisheries and provide an opportunity for legislators to speak with ODWC staff and Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commissioners on site. For some, this year's excursion was a first-time experience catching fish!

Sportsmen's Caucus

- The Oklahoma Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus was created to bring together legislators interested in issues related to hunting, trapping, fishing, and wildlife management. The caucus provides an opportunity for these legislators to dive into these topics with dedicated policy forums, regular meetings, and a National Summit that attracts legislators from all 50 states.
- In 2021, members of the Oklahoma and Texas Legislative Sportsmen's Caucuses converged on the Durant State Fish Hatchery and the city of Durant for a reception and policy forum. This unique opportunity provided elected officials with a chance to tour the Durant hatchery and join state and federal fish and wildlife management officials in a discussion about aquatic invasive species.



State Sen. Blake Stephens lends a helping hand in a Canada goose banding session.

BROCKLYN BLOOMFIELD/ODWC INTERN

2022 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY: LICENSE MODERNIZATION

The Wildlife Department's focus for 2022 will be to advance a major overhaul of the existing hunting and fishing license structure. But first, some background is necessary.

The 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. Title 29 specifically houses ODWC's licensing language — types of licenses, fees, exemptions, penalties, etc. Since license sales are the primary source of funding for ODWC, the agency must work with the Legislature to ensure licensing changes are not detrimental to hunter and angler participation and wildlife conservation funding.

License statutes over time have become numerous and complicated as licenses have been added and altered. At the same time, few changes to the fees have been made, failing to allow ODWC to keep pace with the increasing costs of managing the state's fish and wildlife resources.

In 2018, ODWC contracted Southwick Associates to help review the agency's license structure and develop a modernized and streamlined structure



Several lawmakers watch how fish are fed during a tour of the Durant State Fish Hatchery.

COREY JAGER/ODWC



Hunting and Fishing License Modernization Act

A Legislative Priority for 2022

OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

This proposal will allow ODWC to develop rules for legislative consideration that would streamline licenses, set prices, establish exemptions, and provide for discounts, all with the goal of increasing hunting and fishing interest in Oklahoma.

- The current system of establishing ODWC's 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 larger increases necessary to offset rising costs.
- 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 prices that ensure continued growth in hunting and fishing participation, while ensuring sufficient revenue to sustain the Wildlife Department's conservation activities.
- Hunting and fishing are economic engines for Oklahoma. Modernizing ODWC's licensing system will ensure Oklahoma continues to be a Top 5 state for growing participation in these activities while bringing more dollars to our communities, particularly in rural Oklahoma.

IMPROVED APPROACH AND INCREASED OVERSIGHT

- Under ODWC's proposal, a new license structure and fees would be determined by the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commission and established by administrative rule, which requires an extensive internal and external vetting process. This process includes a public review and comment period, and approvals by the Wildlife Commission, the Legislature, and the Governor. Increasing the opportunity for public scrutiny of ODWC's actions, while at the same time affording the flexibility to remain current with the times, will result in a win-win for all who enjoy Oklahoma's outdoors.
- This bill will repeal the **150-plus license options** in order to modernize ODWC's license structure.
- ODWC's proposal will retain penalties for license violations in statute.
- This landmark legislation also affords ODWC more flexibility to allocate funds toward priority needs such as maintaining existing public lands, as opposed to mandating that certain funds be dedicated to land acquisition.
- A popular feature of ODWC's proposal is the creation of **365-day licenses**. Popular with hunters and anglers, these licenses are valid for 365 days from the date of purchase and will provide a greater value for our constituents.

to better meet the needs of hunters and anglers, ODWC, and the resources. Southwick Associates is the leading expert in fisheries and wildlife license analyses. This organization is adept at the scientific processes involved in revising license options, but also focuses its work on state fish and wildlife agencies, so Southwick's analysts understand the ins and outs of how conservation departments operate.

After a rigorous review of ODWC's current license structure and a survey of licensed hunters and anglers, ODWC has developed a proposed new license and fee structure. Because any changes to licensing requires legislative approval, this proposal will be ODWC's priority during the 2022 legislative session.

The general proposed changes include:

- Transitioning to licenses that are valid for 365 days from the purchase date and eliminating calendar-year and fiscal-year licenses.
- Creating one inexpensive youth hunting license that covers all requirements for children younger than 18, or otherwise provides exemptions for species that will not require a license.
- Transitioning to season-based deer licenses that provide the whole bag limit for each season under one license and eliminating the license-per-deer concept currently in use.
- Switching multi-year licenses from five years to three years.
- Including the bear hunting license in the lifetime hunting licenses, applied retroactively so all current lifetime license holders will no longer need to buy a bear license.
- Consolidating all "fishing trip" licenses to one-day licenses.
- Creating nonresident pricing for the state waterfowl stamp, turkey license, and conservation passport.

It's important to note that what appears above is simply a list of proposals. Actually getting these proposals approved and implemented will require a lengthy process.

Rather than pursuing these consolidation and modernization proposals by changing many state statutes, ODWC is proposing to move all licensing language into the administrative rules process. This is the procedure whereby most hunting and fishing regulations are already made.

The administrative rules process allows the Wildlife Department to have more flexibility with changing or creating licenses, but importantly also ensures that hunters and anglers have direct input in the process with a 30-day public comment period on all rule change proposals.

The earliest any licensing changes would take effect, if approved, would be November 2022. 🌿



Staff at the Durant State Fish Hatchery tell legislators about the process of producing fish for stocking across the state.

COREY JAGER/ODWC

COURTESY JEREMAH ZURENDA/NORTH FORK OUTDOORS

Birds of a Feather

Falconers Land at Quartz Mountain for 60th National Field Meet

By Don P. Brown, Communication Specialist

For a week in mid-November at Quartz Mountain State Lodge, being able to get a room was for the birds. Literally.

That week, more than 300 people — and the hundred or so raptors they keep — flocked there for the North American Falconers Association's (NAFA) annual field meet.

"It's like a big family. We are from all walks of life, but falconry is what brings us together," said Robert Huber of Stillwater, NAFA's central director and the co-chairman of the 2021 event.

Falconry is a hunting sport that dates to at least 4000 B.C. Sometimes referred to as "the sport of kings," it is simply the harvest of wild quarry in its natural habi-





Becky Rouner holds a Aplomado falcon at the NAFA field meet. Rouner, administrative assistant with the Wildlife Department, oversees the falconry licensing for Oklahoma.

tat using a trained raptor. NAFA was founded in 1961 to encourage the proper practice of falconry and the wise use and conservation of birds of prey. It is the largest membership falconry organization in the world with about 2,000 members, some from Canada, South America and Europe.


NAFA is no stranger to Oklahoma. For quite a while, the group has been holding its annual field meets on a rotational basis in Texas, Nebraska, Kansas and Oklahoma. The two most recent meets in the Sooner State were in Elk City in 2016 and Woodward in 2009.

“Really, we have very high-quality falconry in Oklahoma,” said Huber, who has been active in the sport about 50 years.

For about 20 years, Administrative Assistant Becky Rouner has coordinated falconry testing and licensing for the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation. She says the hunting sport has gained in popularity over the



Robert Huber of Stillwater, vice president of NAFA, returns his falcon to the weathering yard after an educational program for elementary students.

A photograph of a young woman with a ponytail and a feather tattoo on her neck, wearing a blue hoodie. She is holding a brown and white speckled hawk on her gloved hand. The background is a soft-focus landscape with mountains under a sunset sky.

Oklahoma has about
130 licensed falconers.
It's estimated about
50 of those are
considered active.

A falconer holds
her hawk during
a presentation to
schoolchildren.

COURTESY, JOSH NEWBERRY/BEAULDEAUXPHOTO

years, especially during the time when the “Harry Potter” movies were a hot topic.

Oklahoma has about 130 licensed falconers. It’s estimated about 50 of those are considered active.

“There is quite a process to becoming a licensed falconer,” she said. The process usually involves studying the sport at first to decide whether the daily commitments are something realistic. There is spending time with a licensed falconer, learning bird care and regulations, arrange an inspection by a Game Warden of bird facilities, finding a sponsor, and testing to become an apprentice for two years. After that, the apprentice can apply for a general falconry license, she said.

Falconers are afforded alternate hunting season dates in Oklahoma because they are using natural predators for taking game, and it’s such a small group practicing the sport that there is virtually no impact on game populations.

But Rouner points out that falconers are hunters and conservationists, as they are required to buy a hunt-



Portrait of a red-tailed hawk.

DON P. BROWN/OWC



COURTESY JERRY SPEARS

CHRIS KARR/OKFALCONRY SOCIAL MEDIA

It’s teamwork in action when the dog flushes a rabbit for the falcon to pursue.

ing license in addition to the falconry license. And license revenues are a large funding resource for the fish and wildlife conservation activities of the Oklahoma Wildlife Department.

The annual NAFA field meet draws people from across the nation, from California to Maine. Attending the meet this year were Julie Springfield and her husband, Billy, members of the Texas Hawking Association. They teamed with Francie Forrester of Elm Grove, La., to take their Harris' hawks hunting near Altus.

The common method for hawking is for several people to form a team of "pushers" that walks through a field to flush game for their raptors to pursue. It's great exercise for the birds and the people, too, Julie said.

She's been a falconer for 13 years. "I do this for myself and for the birds," she said. "It's hard to describe.

"I enjoy seeing the birds flying, doing what they do naturally. I love how they fly, and how they hunt, and how they use their wings to navigate. And it's really neat how they work with their owner."

The Springfields were flying a tiercel Harris' hawk that was still rather new to the whole situation. Forrester brought

her two veteran Harris' hawks, Nova and Tirzah, to the meet. But she didn't bring her husband of nearly 50 years.

"He's home taking care of the others birds — and the dogs, and all the mice I raise," she quipped, citing the many responsibilities and time commitments required when one is a falconer. "They say, 'One bird, one wife; two birds, no wife,'" she said with a chuckle.

Huber said the Quartz Mountain meet turned out to be one of larger meets NAFA has conducted. He credited the excellent remodeled lodge and the hunting areas available within



A NAFA member visits with other field meet attendees while holding his raptor.



Students from Granite Elementary School get a lesson from NAFA members and an up-close look at some of the raptors.

“I enjoy seeing the birds flying, doing what they do naturally. I love how they fly, and how they hunt, and how they use their wings to navigate. And it’s really neat how they work with their owner.”

DON P. BROWN/ODIG



Julie Springfield releases a Harris' hawk at the beginning of a hunt near Altus.



COURTESY JOSH NEWBERRY/READEAU PHOTO

Ornate hoods are sometimes used to calm raptors and to acclimate them to being around people and unnatural sounds.

“It’s about watching the birds. It’s about being part of the bird.”



A Harris' hawk in flight.



Francie Forrester carries her 26-year-old Harris' hawk named Nova while “hawking” for rabbits near Altus.

DON P. BROWN/DWIC



COURTESY JEREMIAH ZURENDA/NORTH FORK OUTDOORS



The spoils of the hunt.

NAEA SOCIAL MEDIA

an hour's drive, which include Altus-Lugert, Hackberry Flat, and Sandy Sanders Wildlife Management Areas.

In addition, Huber spent many hours knocking on doors to gain permission for falconers to hunt on 20,000 private acres in the area. "It's about opportunity; you've got to have places to go."

Huber is quite active in the state falconry group. It's a passion that began for him more than 50 years ago, when he was a curious 12-year-old and saw an episode of "Wild Kingdom." Trying to discourage the boy, Huber's dad gave him a book about falconry, but that plan backfired. "Every cent I had after that went to buy more falconry books!"

Two years later, Huber got his first raptor — a red-tailed hawk — before falconry was a regulated sport.

"It's about watching the birds. It's about being part of the bird."

Huber hunts every chance he can get, at least three days a week. He estimates his falcon takes about 20 ducks in a season, but success is sporadic.

"While the birds are not pets, they become part of you. They are highly prized.

"If one of my birds gets hurt or sick, I worry about them almost more than I worry about my kids." 🌿



Members of the North American Falconers Association gather for a group photo during the group's 2021 Field Meet at Quartz Mountain State Lodge near Lone Wolf.

COURTESY JOSH NEWBERRY/BEAUDEAUXPHOTO

Conservation

Get Outdoors!

Wintertime is a great time for a nature scavenger hunt! Ask Dad or Mom to create a list of items that can be found outside in the area around your house or in a park. Then it's your job to find one of each item on the list and collect it. Once you complete your hunt, take some time to study about the things you've collected.

for Kids!

Word Search: Oklahoma's Furbearers

Hunting Tip

Many hunting seasons begin to wrap up in January and February, but there are still plenty of opportunities. Archery deer, elk and turkey seasons close Jan. 15. Duck season is open through Jan. 30 in Zones 1 and 2. Pheasant and squirrel hunting will close Jan. 31. Light geese and dark geese (except white-fronted) may be hunted through Feb. 13. Quail season continues through Feb. 15. And furbearer seasons will close Feb. 28. Rabbits are fair game all through January and February.

Fishing Tip

When the fishing action cools down in the winter, why not spend some time organizing your tackle box? Empty out everything and sort things that are similar into various groups. If baits or lures are dirty, clean them up. Maybe some need to be touched up with paint. Then decide on how to arrange everything in your tackle box. Put the most used items where they will be the easiest to access. Now you're ready for some fishing fun!

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

Find and circle these names of furbearing animals in Oklahoma:

Badger

Beaver

Bobcat

Coyote

Mink

Muskrat

Nutria

Opossum

Raccoon

Red Fox

Striped Skunk

Weasel

Some COOL FACTS about the Coyote:

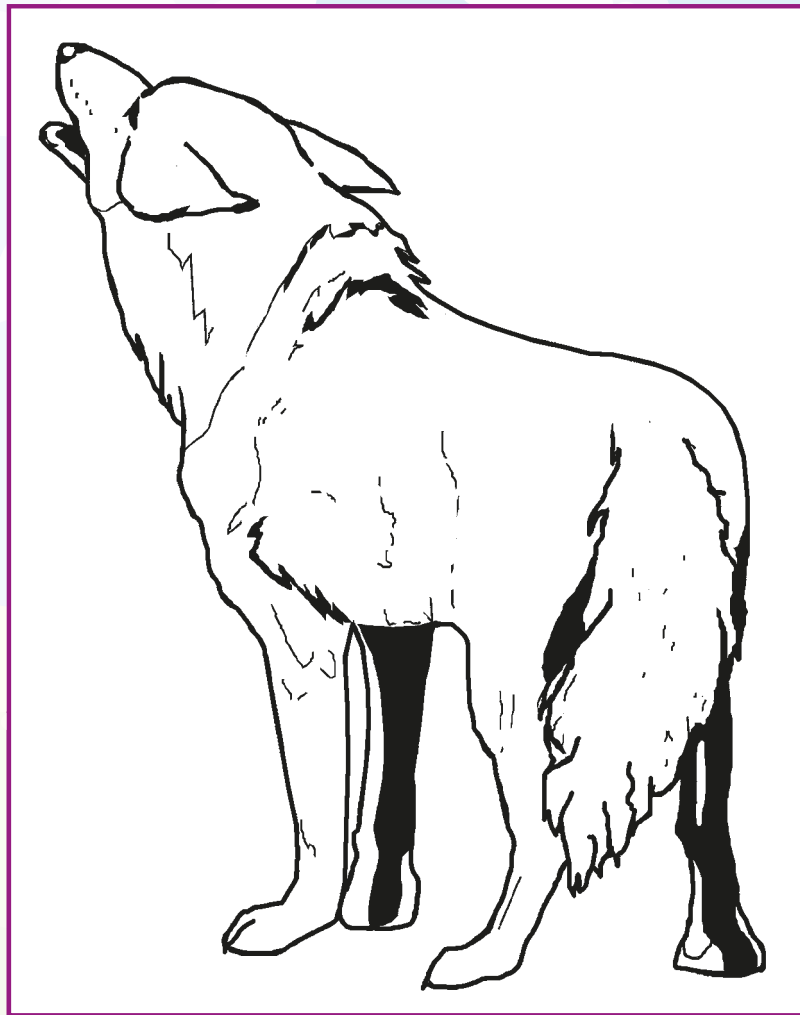
- They run up to 40 mph when chasing prey, which is faster than a roadrunner!
- They have among the widest ranges of vocalization of all American mammals; they growl, bark, wail, huff, yelp, squeal, and howl.
- They live about 14 years in the wild.
- Their coats vary in color from gray to brown to red.
- A group of coyotes is called a pack.



DAVID STROZDAS/READERS PHOTO SHOWCASE 2019

- They run with their tails held down; dogs run with tails up normally.
- They are digitigrades, meaning they walk on their toes.
- They eat rabbits, rodents, frogs, deer, antelopes, lizards, birds, plants, and carcasses.
- In suburban areas, they prefer hunting at night and might attack smaller pets.
- In the wild, they are active in the day and sleep at night.
- They have 42 teeth.
- They are territorial and mark their area with urine.
- They are monogamous animals, meaning they mate for life.

Color a Critter: Coyote



BILL FARRAR/READERS PHOTO SHOWCASE 2020



MARK A. CONKLIN SR./READERS PHOTO SHOWCASE 2019

Play Your Numbers Right To Score Controlled Hunt



BOB BOWSER/READERS' PHOTO SHOWCASE 2019

Check These Odds and Improve Your Chances

The odds can swing in your favor in the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation's controlled hunts program — if you know how to play the numbers.

This article is offered to give applicants some insights into how the controlled hunts program works, insights that might give you an edge to having your name drawn for a hunt you won't forget.

In last year's controlled hunts program, about one out of every 35 applicants had his or her name drawn. Hopeful hunters turned in 151,437 applications for one of the 4,310 individual hunt permits available last year. Many of those applicants will apply again this year when the 2022-23 controlled hunts applications are made available. Of course, the most important thing a hopeful hunter can do is submit an online application each year.

Controlled hunts applications will open **April 1, 2022**, online at GoOutdoorsOklahoma.com, <https://quotahunt.gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Hunts/CustomLookup.aspx>.

**2021-22 OVERALL
ODDS OF BEING
DRAWN:
1 in 35.1**

The deadline to submit applications is May 20. The application process is easy, and applications will not be accepted by the online system unless they are completed correctly, assuring you that your application was successful and that your name will be in the drawings.

Winners of controlled hunts are randomly selected through a computerized process that draws applications from the pool of those who applied. But hunters have the option to apply for several hunts, which increases one's chances of being selected for a hunt.

Those not drawn in a hunt category will gain a preference point for 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.

Don't miss your chance to take part in these special hunts that often deliver once-in-a-lifetime memories.

ABOUT CONTROLLED HUNTS

Controlled hunts are offered for deer, elk, antelope 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 for that hunt. Hunters are selected through a random drawing.

Many controlled hunt choices are highly-sought-after and have many times more applicants than available permits. Getting drawn for a controlled hunt is a matter of odds. If you keep applying year after year, it's likely you'll get at least one chance to enjoy a controlled hunt.

How do I participate? Simply submit an easy-to-complete application online through your GoOutdoorsOklahoma account. Applications are no longer accepted via wildlifedepartment.com or in person.

You can increase your chances 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 increase your odds.

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 in anticipation that this year's odds remain about the same as last year's odds.

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.

Additionally, some hunt categories allow you to apply with a group of other hunters, so that if one of the group is drawn, the entire group gets to hunt.

If you are selected, you will receive instructions about your hunt via the email attached to your online application.

HELPFUL TIPS

If you want extra assurance of not losing your preference points just in case something unexpected comes up, you might consider adding **PointGuard** to your application. This "insurance" option is designed to protect your points in the event you are drawn but for some reason you won't be able to go on your hunt. Read an article about PointGuard elsewhere in these pages.

Each preference point you earn acts like an extra application for the next year. But if you know you cannot hunt this year and still want to earn a preference point, you can now choose to mark your application as Preference Point Only. This allows you to earn a point this year that carries over to next year, but will keep your name out of the drawings for this year. The PPO option is included as part of the applicant's \$5 initial entry fee.

Your chances of selection only get better each year you apply. If you've applied 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 have one.

Although preference points increase your odds of selection, they do not guarantee that applicants with the most points will get drawn. What is guaranteed is that their odds improve. First-time applicants with no preference points can and do get drawn, while hunters who have many preference points can miss out being selected. 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 up to four people. An average of the total preference points of all hunters is used for each hunter in the group. If not drawn in that category, each applicant in the group will earn a single preference point that carries forward with the rest of their points to future drawings.

Once you are drawn for a hunt, all preference points that you have built up in that hunt category are cleared. You can begin building preference points with next year's application again.

Here are some other tips to consider:

- Consider the ratio of permits to applicants to help you decide which hunts might give you the best chance.

WATCH A VIDEO

Learn about the controlled hunts process in an online video. Scan the code:



WHAT'S THE COST?

A \$5 application fee allows multiple applications in five controlled hunt categories, including Preference Point Only options. PointGuard insurance is available for an additional \$5 fee.

The screenshot shows the 'Apply for Controlled Hunts' web application. At the top, there's a green header with a logo on the left and a 'MENU' button on the right. The main heading is 'Apply for Controlled Hunts'. Below this, a box titled 'Welcome to the Online Controlled Hunt System' contains a 'Login to:' section with three options: 'View and Apply for Open Controlled Hunt Events' (with a trophy icon), 'Update Your Application and Hunt Choices Online' (with a pencil icon), and 'View and Manage Your Customer Account' (with a person icon). There is a green 'Login' button and a link for 'Help Logging In'. Below a horizontal line, it says 'If you are a new customer / have never purchased a license from OK' with a grey 'Enroll Now!' button. At the bottom, there is contact information for the Help Desk and copyright notices for 2021 Go Outdoors Oklahoma LLC and the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation.

- 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.
- You cannot submit more than one application 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@gooutdoorsoklahoma.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)

2020–2021 Youth Deer Hunts									
Hunt Location	Hunt Number	Permit Type	Hunt Type	Begin Date	End Date	Applicants	Permits Allowed	Draw Ratio	Rank
Atoka WMA	5001	Either Sex	Gun	10/15/2021	10/17/2021	147	50	2.94	10
Arbuckle Springs WMA	5004	(2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either	Gun	11/20/2021	11/21/2021	72	15	4.8	23
Beaver River WMA, McFarland Unit	5006	Either Sex	Gun	10/15/2021	10/17/2021	134	15	8.93	34
Camp Gruber Cantonment	5009	(2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either	Muzzleloader	11/26/2021	11/28/2021	88	40	2.2	8
Cherokee GMA	5010	Either Sex	Gun	11/6/2021	11/7/2021	166	50	3.32	14
Cookson WMA	5020	Either Sex	Gun	10/23/2021	10/24/2021	151	30	5.03	25
Cross Timbers WMA	5025	Antlerless Only	Gun	11/20/2021	11/28/2021	11	30	0.37	1
Deep Fork NWR	5030	(2) Only 1 Antlered	Muzzleloader	10/18/2021	10/24/2021	45	25	1.8	6
Fort Cobb WMA and SP	5040	Antlerless Only	Muzzleloader/ Shotgun	10/16/2021	10/17/2021	33	40	0.83	3
Fort Gibson WRP	5050	(2) Only 1 Antlered	Muzzleloader	11/6/2021	11/6/2021	79	20	3.95	19
Heyburn COE	5053	(2) Only 1 Antlered	Gun	12/10/2021	12/12/2021	44	2	22	42
Kaw Lake COE	5055	(2) 1 Either-Sex, 1 Doe	Gun	11/12/2021	11/14/2021	133	6	22.17	43
Hugo WMA	5060	Either Sex	Gun	10/8/2021	10/10/2021	104	30	3.47	15
Hugo Lake COE (Kiamichi Park)	5061	Either Sex	Gun	10/8/2021	10/10/2021	83	8	10.38	36
Hugo Lake COE (Kiamichi Park)	5062	Either Sex	Gun	12/10/2021	12/12/2021	57	10	5.7	29
James Collins WMA	5070	Either Sex	Gun	10/15/2021	10/17/2021	234	40	5.85	30
James Collins WMA	5071	Either Sex	Gun	10/22/2021	10/24/2021	225	40	5.63	28
Keystone COE	5080	(2) Only 1 Antlered	Gun	12/10/2021	12/12/2021	130	9	14.44	39
Keystone State Park	5081	Either Sex	Muzzleloader	12/10/2021	12/12/2021	23	2	11.5	37
Little River NWR	5085	(2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either	Gun	10/29/2021	10/31/2021	33	15	2.2	8
McAlester AAP	5090	Doe	Shotgun	11/26/2021	11/28/2021	35	25	1.4	4
Neosho WMA	5095	Either Sex	Muzzleloader	10/23/2021	10/24/2021	9	6	1.5	5
Neosho WMA	5096	Either Sex	Gun	11/6/2021	11/7/2021	27	6	4.5	20
Okmulgee GMA	5110	(2) Only 1 Antlered	Gun	10/30/2021	10/31/2021	64	20	3.2	11
Okmulgee GMA	5111	(2) Only 1 Antlered	Gun	11/6/2021	11/7/2021	66	20	3.3	13
Pine Creek WMA	5130	Either Sex	Gun	11/5/2021	11/7/2021	49	15	3.27	12
Pushmataha WMA	5140	Either Sex	Gun	10/22/2021	10/24/2021	127	35	3.63	17
Pushmataha WMA	5141	Either Sex	Gun	11/12/2021	11/14/2021	167	35	4.77	22
Salt Plains NWR	5150	(2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either	Gun	10/22/2021	10/24/2021	170	25	6.8	32
Sequoyah NWR	5160	(2) Only 1 Antlered	Muzzleloader	10/15/2021	10/17/2021	151	30	5.03	25
Sequoyah Resort Park	5170	(2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either	Muzzleloader	12/11/2021	12/12/2021	120	20	6	31
Skiatook COE	5175	(2) Only 1 Antlered	Gun	12/10/2021	12/12/2021	68	4	17	41
Spavinaw GMA	5180	Either Sex	Muzzleloader	10/30/2021	10/31/2021	32	40	0.8	2
Spavinaw GMA	5181	Either Sex	Gun	11/5/2021	11/7/2021	142	40	3.55	16
Tenkiller COE	5190	(2) Only 1 Antlered	Gun	11/5/2021	11/7/2021	87	10	8.7	33
Texoma COE (Burns Run)	5200	(2) Only 1 Antlered	Gun	11/5/2021	11/7/2021	91	6	15.17	40
Texoma COE (Lakeside)	5201	(2) Only 1 Antlered	Gun	11/12/2021	11/14/2021	81	6	13.5	38
Tishomingo NWR	5210	(2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either	Gun	10/14/2021	10/15/2021	96	20	4.8	23
USDA Grazinglands R.L.	5220	(2) Antlerless Only	Gun	11/12/2021	11/13/2021	36	20	1.8	6
USDA Grazinglands R.L.	5221	(2) Antlerless Only	Gun	12/10/2021	12/11/2021	96	10	9.6	35
Washita NWR	5240	Antlerless Only	Gun	10/1/2021	10/2/2021	54	10	5.4	27
Washita NWR	5260	Antlerless Only	Gun	11/5/2021	11/6/2021	46	10	4.6	21
Waurika Lake COE	5270	Antlerless Only	Gun	11/6/2021	11/7/2021	19	5	3.8	18

2020–2021 Deer Hunts									
Hunt Location	Hunt Number	Permit Type	Hunt Type	Begin Date	End Date	Applicants	Permits Allowed	Draw Ratio	Rank
Atoka WMA	3001	Either Sex	Gun	10/22/2021	10/24/2021	2,243	50	44.86	58
Beaver River WMA	3008	Either Sex	Gun	11/20/2021	11/21/2021	1,133	15	75.53	68
Beaver River WMA, McFarland Unit	3006	Either Sex	Muzzleloader	10/23/2021	10/24/2021	645	10	64.5	65
Beaver River WMA, McFarland Unit	3007	Either Sex	Gun	11/20/2021	11/21/2021	1,067	5	213.4	81
Candy Creek WMA	3020	Either Sex	Muzzleloader	10/23/2021	10/31/2021	241	12	20.08	35
Candy Creek WMA	3021	Either Sex	Gun	11/20/2021	12/5/2021	439	12	36.58	48

2021-22 DEER HUNTS

- Total applicants (includes first, second, third, fourth and fifth choice preferences): 73,062
- Total permits available: 2,615
- Overall odds of getting drawn for any one permit: 1 in 27.9
- NOTE: Your odds go up if you 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.

2021-22 DEER HUNTS FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

- Total applicants (includes first, second and third choice preferences): 341
- Total permits available: 117
- Overall odds of getting drawn for any one permit: 1 in 2.92
- NOTE: Areas in the northeast like Cherokee, Cookson Hills, Gruber and Spavinaw WMAs typically have higher numbers of applicants. Consider hunts in other parts of the state.

2021-22 YOUTH DEER HUNTS

- Total applicants (includes first, second and third choice preferences): 3,825
- Total permits available: 895
- Overall odds of getting drawn for any one permit: 1 in 4.27
- NOTE: 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.



2020–2021 Deer Hunts (continued)									
Hunt Location	Hunt Number	Permit Type	Hunt Type	Begin Date	End Date	Applicants	Permits Allowed	Draw Ratio	Rank
Canton WMA	3030	Either Sex	Gun	11/20/2021	11/21/2021	1,334	75	17.79	33
Cherokee GMA	3044	Either Sex	Gun	11/13/2021	11/13/2021	189	50	37.94	52
Cherokee GMA	3045	Antlerless Only	Gun	11/13/2021	11/13/2021	197	25	7.88	19
Cherokee GMA	3046	Either Sex	Gun	11/14/2021	11/14/2021	1,301	50	26.02	42
Cherokee GMA	3047	Antlerless Only	Gun	11/14/2021	11/14/2021	132	25	5.28	14
Cookson WMA	3060	Either Sex	Muzzleloader	11/6/2021	11/7/2021	1,378	12	114.83	74
Cookson WMA	3061	Antlerless Only	Muzzleloader	11/6/2021	11/6/2021	119	23	5.17	13
Cookson WMA	3062	Antlerless Only	Muzzleloader	11/7/2021	11/7/2021	70	23	3.04	3
Cookson WMA	3063	Either Sex	Gun	11/13/2021	11/14/2021	2,105	12	175.42	80
Cookson WMA	3064	Antlerless Only	Gun	11/13/2021	11/13/2021	168	18	9.33	22
Cookson WMA	3065	Antlerless Only	Gun	11/14/2021	11/14/2021	110	18	6.11	15
Cross Timbers WMA	3071	(2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either	Gun	12/4/2021	12/5/2021	1,494	50	29.88	45
Deep Fork NWR	3080	Only 1 Antlered	Muzzleloader	10/11/2021	10/17/2021	1,046	50	20.92	36
Deep Fork NWR	3081	Only 1 Antlered	Archery	11/1/2021	11/30/2021	737	300	3.05	4
Four Canyon Preserve	3090	Antlerless Only	Muzzleloader	10/22/2021	10/23/2021	15	4	3.75	5
Four Canyon Preserve	3091	(2) Either Sex	Muzzleloader	10/22/2021	10/23/2021	205	2	102.5	72
Four Canyon Preserve	3092	Antlerless Only	Gun	11/12/2021	11/13/2021	40	4	10	24
Four Canyon Preserve	3093	(2) Either Sex	Gun	11/12/2021	11/13/2021	435	2	217.5	82
Fort Gibson WRP	3110	Only 1 Antlered	Archery	10/19/2021	10/19/2021	658	50	13.16	27
Fort Gibson WRP	3111	Antlerless Only	Muzzleloader	10/20/2021	10/20/2021	226	50	4.52	8
Fort Gibson WRP	3112	Antlerless Only	Muzzleloader	11/2/2021	11/2/2021	199	50	3.98	6
Fort Gibson WRP	3113	Either Sex	Muzzleloader	11/3/2021	11/3/2021	1,306	25	52.24	62

2020–2021 Deer Hunts (continued)									
Hunt Location	Hunt Number	Permit Type	Hunt Type	Begin Date	End Date	Applicants	Permits Allowed	Draw Ratio	Rank
Fort Gibson WRP	3114	Antlerless Only	Muzzleloader	11/3/2021	11/3/2021	113	25	4.52	8
Grady County WMA	3120	Either Sex	Muzzleloader	10/23/2021	10/31/2021	214	10	21.4	37
Grady County WMA	3121	Either Sex	Gun	11/20/2021	11/28/2021	408	10	40.8	57
Great Salt Plains SP	3350	Only 1 Antlered	Archery	10/18/2021	10/21/2021	366	10	36.6	49
Great Salt Plains SP	3351	Only 1 Antlered	Archery	12/6/2021	12/9/2021	265	10	26.5	43
Hugo WMA (Lyndol Fry)	3131	Either Sex	Gun	11/6/2021	11/7/2021	471	10	47.1	60
Lexington WMA	3150	(2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either	Gun	11/13/2021	11/13/2021	906	135	6.71	16
Lexington WMA	3151	(2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either	Gun	11/14/2021	11/14/2021	546	135	4.04	7
Lexington WMA	3152	(2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either	Gun	11/17/2021	11/17/2021	395	135	2.93	2
Lexington WMA	3153	(2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either	Gun	11/18/2021	11/18/2021	317	135	2.35	1
Little River NWR	3160	Either Sex	Gun	11/5/2021	11/7/2021	904	30	30.13	46
Little River NWR	3161	Either Sex	Gun	11/12/2021	11/14/2021	742	30	24.73	40
McAlester AAP Physically Challenged	3170	Only 1 Antlered	Archery	10/8/2021	10/10/2021	146	9	16.22	31
McAlester AAP	3171	Only 1 Antlered	Archery	10/15/2021	10/17/2021	1,591	24	66.29	66
McAlester AAP	3172	Only 1 Antlered	Archery	10/22/2021	10/24/2021	1,899	24	79.13	69
McAlester AAP	3173	Only 1 Antlered	Archery	10/29/2021	10/31/2021	2,881	24	120.04	76
McAlester AAP	3174	Only 1 Antlered	Archery	11/5/2021	11/7/2021	3,833	24	159.71	79
McAlester AAP	3175	Only 1 Antlered	Archery	11/12/2021	11/14/2021	3,651	24	152.13	77
McCurtain County WA	3190	Either Sex	Gun	11/5/2021	11/7/2021	990	16	61.88	63
McGee Creek WMA	3200	Either Sex	Muzzleloader	10/22/2021	10/24/2021	1,033	75	13.77	28
McGee Creek WMA	3201	Either Sex	Gun	10/29/2021	10/31/2021	1,844	75	24.59	39
Neosho WMA	3203	Either Sex	Muzzleloader	11/13/2021	11/14/2021	179	6	29.83	44
Oka'Yanahli Preserve	3206	(2) Antlerless Only	Gun	12/11/2021	12/11/2021	74	7	10.57	26
Oka'Yanahli Preserve	3207	(2) Antlerless Only	Gun	12/12/2021	12/12/2021	33	7	4.71	11
Okmulgee GMA	3210	Only 1 Antlered	Gun	11/13/2021	11/14/2021	1,423	30	47.43	61
Osage-Western Wall WMA	3220	Either Sex	Muzzleloader	11/12/2021	11/15/2021	1,165	10	116.5	75
Pontotoc Ridge Preserve	3223	(2) Antlerless Only	Gun	10/2/2021	10/2/2021	50	5	10	24
Pontotoc Ridge Preserve	3224	(2) Antlerless Only	Gun	10/3/2021	10/3/2021	25	5	5	12
Pontotoc Ridge Preserve	3225	(2) Antlerless Only	Gun	1/8/2022	1/8/2022	36	5	7.2	18
Pontotoc Ridge Preserve	3226	(2) Antlerless Only	Gun	1/9/2022	1/9/2022	23	5	4.6	10
Pushmataha WMA	3230	Either Sex	Muzzleloader	12/3/2021	12/5/2021	1,621	50	32.42	47
Salt Plains NWR	3240	Only 1 Antlered	Archery	11/29/2021	12/2/2021	430	25	17.2	32
Salt Plains NWR Wilderness Area	3241	Only 1 Antlered	Archery	11/29/2021	12/2/2021	367	12	36.7	50
Salt Plains NWR	3242	(2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either	Muzzleloader	11/1/2021	11/3/2021	977	25	39.08	56
Salt Plains NWR Wilderness Area	3243	(2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either	Muzzleloader	11/1/2021	11/3/2021	633	12	63.3	64
Salt Plains NWR	3244	(2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either	Gun	11/8/2021	11/10/2021	2,487	25	99.48	71
Salt Plains NWR Wilderness Area	3245	(2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either	Gun	11/8/2021	11/10/2021	1,588	12	158.8	78
Salt Plains NWR	3246	(2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either	Gun	11/15/2021	11/17/2021	1,733	25	69.32	67
Salt Plains NWR Wilderness Area	3247	(2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either	Gun	11/15/2021	11/17/2021	1,126	12	112.6	73
Sans Bois WMA	3275	Either Sex	Muzzleloader	11/5/2021	11/7/2021	276	12	23	38
Sans Bois WMA	3276	Either Sex	Gun	10/22/2021	10/24/2021	455	12	37.92	51
Sequoyah NWR	3280	Only 1 Antlered	Archery	11/8/2021	11/12/2021	1,154	30	38.47	54
Sequoyah NWR	3281	(2) Antlerless Only	Muzzleloader	10/27/2021	10/29/2021	299	30	9.97	23
Sequoyah NWR	3282	(2) Antlerless Only	Muzzleloader	11/17/2021	11/19/2021	250	30	8.33	20
Sequoyah NWR	3283	(2) Antlerless Only	Muzzleloader	12/1/2021	12/3/2021	255	30	8.5	21
Sequoyah NWR (Refuge Islands)	3284	Only 1 Antlered	Archery	11/8/2021	11/12/2021	188	4	47	59
Sequoyah Resort Park	3286	(2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either	Archery	12/4/2021	12/5/2021	919	24	38.29	53
Spavinaw GMA	3290	Either Sex	Gun	10/23/2021	10/24/2021	1,674	20	7.03	17
Spavinaw GMA	3291	Antlerless Only	Gun	10/23/2021	10/24/2021	211	30	83.7	70
Texoma COE (Burns Run)	3360	Doe Only	Gun	1/7/2022	1/9/2022	122	8	15.25	30
Tishomingo NWR	3300	(2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either	Gun	12/9/2021	12/10/2021	772	20	38.6	55
Tishomingo NWR	3370	(2) Only 1 Antlered	Gun	11/17/2021	11/19/2021	586	30	19.53	34
Washita NWR	3320	Antlerless Only	Gun	11/9/2021	11/10/2021	130	5	26	41
Wichita Mountains WR	3340	Antlered Only	Gun	11/16/2021	11/18/2021	8,448	20	422.4	83
Wichita Mountains WR	3341	Antlerless Only	Gun	11/16/2021	11/18/2021	606	40	15.15	29

2020–2021 Deer Hunts (Nonambulatory, Vehicle)									
Hunt Location	Hunt Number	Permit Type	Hunt Type	Begin Date	End Date	Applicants	Permits Allowed	Draw Ratio	Rank
Cherokee GMA	4001	Either Sex	Gun	10/31/2021	10/31/2021	47	40	1.18	1
Cookson WMA	4010	Either Sex	Gun	10/30/2021	10/31/2021	43	12	3.58	6
Copan COE Parks	4015	(2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either	Gun	12/4/2021	12/6/2021	27	6	4.5	9
Deep Fork NWR	4020	(2) Only 1 Antlered	Muzzleloader	10/25/2021	10/31/2021	9	5	1.8	2
Fort Gibson WRP	4025	(2) Only 1 Antlered	Muzzleloader	12/4/2021	12/5/2021	33	10	3.3	5
Oologah Lake COE	4040	(2) 1 Doe, 1 Buck	Gun	11/12/2021	11/14/2021	61	8	7.63	13
Salt Plains NWR	4050	(2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either	Muzzleloader	11/1/2021	11/3/2021	9	2	4.5	9
Salt Plains NWR	4051	(2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either	Gun	11/8/2021	11/10/2021	15	2	7.5	12
Salt Plains NWR	4052	(2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either	Gun	11/15/2021	11/17/2021	12	2	6	11
Sequoyah NWR	4060	Only 1 Antlered	Archery	11/8/2021	11/12/2021	8	2	4	7
Sequoyah NWR	4061	(2) Antlerless Only	Muzzleloader	11/17/2021	11/19/2021	6	2	3	4
Sequoyah Resort Park	4070	(2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either	Muzzleloader	12/18/2021	12/19/2021	30	16	1.88	3
Tishomingo NWR	4080	(2) 1st Antlerless, 2nd Either	Gun	11/4/2021	11/5/2021	41	10	4.1	8



2021-22 ANTELOPE HUNTS

- Total applicants (includes first and second choice preferences): 16,005
- Total permits available: 105
- Overall odds of getting drawn for any one permit: 1 in 152.4
- NOTE: Pronghorn controlled hunts are once-in-a-lifetime draws.

2021-22 ELK HUNTS

- Total applicants (includes first, second and third choice preferences): 42,220
- Total permits available: 400
- Overall odds of getting drawn for any one permit: 1 in 105.6
- NOTE: Elk controlled hunts are once-in-a-lifetime draws.

Pronghorn hunting

2020-2021 Pronghorn Hunts

Hunt Location	Hunt Number	Permit Type	Hunt Type	Begin Date	End Date	Applicants	Permits Allowed	Draw Ratio	Rank
Cimarron County	2001	Either-Sex	Gun	9/2/2021	9/5/2021	7,266	20	1 in 363.3	3
Cimarron County	2002	Doe Only	Gun	9/6/2021	9/15/2021	1,727	50	34.54	2
Texas County	2010	Either Sex	Gun	9/2/2021	9/5/2021	6,373	10	637.3	4
Texas County	2011	Doe Only	Gun	9/6/2021	9/15/2021	639	25	25.56	1

2020-2021 Elk Hunts

Hunt Location	Hunt Number	Permit Type	Hunt Type	Begin Date	End Date	Applicants	Permits Allowed	Draw Ratio	Rank
Cookson WMA	1001	Either-Sex	Gun	10/23/2021	10/24/2021	4,008	1	1 in 4,008	11
Wichita Mountains WR	1020	Bull	Gun	11/30/2021	12/2/2021	10,095	25	403.8	10
Wichita Mountains WR	1021	Cow	Gun	11/30/2021	12/2/2021	1,180	58	20.34	5
Wichita Mountains WR	1022	Bull	Gun	12/7/2021	12/9/2021	9,587	25	383.48	9
Wichita Mountains WR	1023	Cow	Gun	12/7/2021	12/9/2021	867	65	13.34	4
Wichita Mountains WR	1030	Either-Sex (walk-in only)	Gun	11/22/2021	11/26/2021	5,693	20	284.65	8
Wichita Mountains WR	1031	Cow (walk-in only)	Gun	11/22/2021	11/26/2021	349	54	6.46	1
Wichita Mountains WR	1040	Either-Sex (walk-in only)	Gun	12/13/2021	12/17/2021	5,034	20	251.7	7
Wichita Mountains WR	1041	Cow (walk-in only)	Gun	12/13/2021	12/17/2021	466	56	8.32	2
Wichita Mountains WR	1051	Cow (walk-in only)	Gun	1/3/2022	1/7/2022	488	56	8.71	3
Wichita Mountains WR	1050	Either-Sex (walk-in only)	Gun	1/3/2022	1/7/2022	4,453	20	222.65	6

APPLY FOR CONTROLLED HUNTS

From April 1 to May 20, 2022, at GoOutdoorsOklahoma.com.



2021-22 SPRING TURKEY HUNTS

- Total applicants (includes first, second and third choice preferences): 14,570
- Total permits available: 120
- Overall odds of getting drawn for any one permit: 1 in 121.4
- NOTE: Odds are tougher for hunts at McAlester Army Ammunition Plant.

2021-22 YOUTH TURKEY HUNTS

- Total applicants (includes first, second and third choice preferences): 1,414
- Total permits available: 58
- Overall odds of getting drawn for any one permit: 1 in 24.38
- NOTE: Better odds come with later-season hunts.

2020-2021 Spring Turkey Hunts

Hunt Location	Hunt Number	Permit Type	Hunt Type	Begin Date	End Date	Applicants	Permits Allowed	Draw Ratio	Rank
Cross Timbers WMA	6000	Tom	Shotgun	4/16/2022	4/20/2022	1,999	10	1 in 199.9	7
Cross Timbers WMA	6001	Tom	Shotgun	4/30/2022	5/4/2022	1,260	10	126	4
Deep Fork NWR	6010	Tom	Shotgun	4/16/2022	5/6/2022	1,624	10	162.4	5
Four Canyon Preserve	6020	Tom	Shotgun	4/1/2022	4/2/2022	561	2	280.5	10
Four Canyon Preserve	6021	Tom	Shotgun	4/8/2022	4/9/2022	385	2	192.5	6
Little River NWR	6040	Tom	Shotgun	4/15/2022	4/17/2022	1,251	20	62.55	1
McAlester AAP	6050	Tom	Shotgun	4/15/2022	4/17/2022	1,846	20	92.3	4
McAlester AAP	6051	Tom	Shotgun	4/22/2022	4/24/2022	1,579	20	78.95	3
McCurtain County WA	6060	Tom	Shotgun	4/8/2022	4/10/2022	1,189	16	74.31	2
Sequoyah NWR	6070	Tom	Shotgun	4/15/2022	4/24/2022	614	3	204.67	8
Tishomingo NWR	6080	Tom	Shotgun	4/7/2022	4/8/2022	1,082	5	216.4	9
Wichita Mountains WR	6090	Tom (walk-in only)	Shotgun	4/18/2022	4/20/2022	1,180	2	590	11

2020-2021 Youth Spring Turkey Hunts

Hunt Location	Hunt Number	Permit Type	Hunt Type	Begin Date	End Date	Applicants	Permits Allowed	Draw Ratio	Rank
Hugo COE (Kiamichi Park)	7000	Tom	Shotgun	4/2/2022	4/3/2022	88	4	1 in 22	5
Washita NWR	7010	Tom	Shotgun	4/8/2022	4/10/2022	124	2	62	9
Deep Fork NWR	7020	Tom	Shotgun	4/6/2022	5/6/2022	150	10	15	2
James Collins WMA	7030	Tom	Shotgun	4/2/2022	4/3/2022	241	10	24.1	6
Little River NWR	7040	Tom	Shotgun	4/1/2022	4/3/2022	55	5	11	1
McGee Creek WMA	7070	Tom	Shotgun	4/2/2022	4/3/2022	210	10	21	4
Atoka WMA	7071	Tom	Shotgun	4/2/2022	4/3/2022	156	10	15.6	3
Salt Plains NWR	7075	Tom	Shotgun	4/22/2022	5/1/2022	96	2	48	7
Sequoyah NWR	7080	Tom	Shotgun	4/1/2022	4/10/2022	167	3	55.67	8
Wichita Mountains WR	7096	Tom (walk-in only)	Shotgun	4/4/2022	4/6/2022	127	2	63.5	10

Hunter Adds PointGuard, Now Has Second Chance

By Don P. Brown, Communication Specialist

Sometimes things don't always work out as planned. That was the case recently for hunter Andy Collins of Welch.

But this past summer, things were working out really well for him.

Collins, 39, bought a lifetime hunting license two years ago and began applying for controlled hunts. This past spring, he submitted applications in four categories: deer, turkey, pronghorn and elk. As luck would have it, his application was selected for a controlled hunt for a cow elk at the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge. Elk and pronghorn controlled hunts have always been once-in-a-lifetime selections — one and done — until last year.

"What I had planned on happening wasn't what happened," he said.

The fortunes of life changed between April and November for Collins and his family. His employer was only offering partial weeks, and his vacation time from work dwindled. "When it came down to it, I didn't have the money for the fuel and hotel.

"Finally, I was like, 'It kills me,' but I had to make that decision between paying bills and going on the hunt. At least with PointGuard, I was able to reinstate my points."

A new option last year, PointGuard protects a winning hunter's preference points and eligibility for Controlled



Andy Collins

Hunts drawings in future years in case the hunter cannot attend the hunt he or she has won. PointGuard costs an additional \$5. The insurance can be claimed anytime before midnight on the day before the winner's scheduled hunt.

Collins only learned about PointGuard when he was applying online for controlled hunts drawings. "It was something new. It was five bucks. What the heck," he said. So, he decided to add PointGuard to his application. "It's definitely worth the money if anything comes up."

When he finally chose to use his PointGuard insurance, he found the process was

simple. "It's as easy as going online, and you are able to use it." To claim the PointGuard protection, the user only needs to log on to GoOutdoorsOklahoma and follow the same procedure as if buying a license. The claim is then submitted to the Wildlife Department anytime prior to the day of the controlled hunt, and the user will then have all preference points reinstated and become eligible again for future drawings in that hunt category.

"It's pretty cheap insurance," Collins said. "It saves you from missing out."

For more information, scan the QR code.



Frequently Asked Questions

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 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.) Check the website for more information.

How do I pay to apply?

You may pay the one-time \$5 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, in each category until your name is drawn, or if you do not apply 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, unless you buy PointGuard insurance policy during the application period. You can claim your PointGuard insurance anytime before the day of your hunt.

What if I have an address change after I apply?

Notify the Wildlife Department's License Section by calling (405) 521-3852.



A Woman's Passion

Alyssa Bowen Inspires Love of Outdoors As She Lives It

Many of us grew up hearing the label “outdoorsman” to describe someone who loves being in the outdoors, in nature, perhaps hunting and fishing and hiking. These days, the term “outdoors enthusiast” is preferred. In Oklahoma now, more than any other time, more people from more diverse backgrounds are embracing outdoor pursuits.

Alyssa Bowen of Alva is one of those people. At 30 years old, she’s truly an outdoors enthusiast in the fullest sense. In fact, she’s Oklahoma’s only ambassador for Artemis, a National Wildlife Federation organization that helps build strong communities of women who love the outdoors and believe that hunting, fishing, and conservation make a complete sportsperson.

Oh, did we forget to mention that last year, she harvested the second highest-scoring typical white-tail for muzzleloader hunters in Oklahoma’s Cy Curtis state records program? That buck, which scored 175 7/8, is also believed to be the highest scoring whitetail taken in Oklahoma by a woman — ever.

To say she’s passionate about the outdoors would be an understatement. Her enthusiasm is contagious. Here, in her own words, Bowen give us a taste of what it means to her to be the complete sportsperson:

“I grew up loving the outdoors, but my family didn’t hunt. I had always wanted to try it and never had anyone to take me until I met my husband, Ryan. I loved it immediately for a lot of reasons — spending time in the outdoors, sharing a hobby with my significant other, putting delicious food on the table when I was a poor college kid.

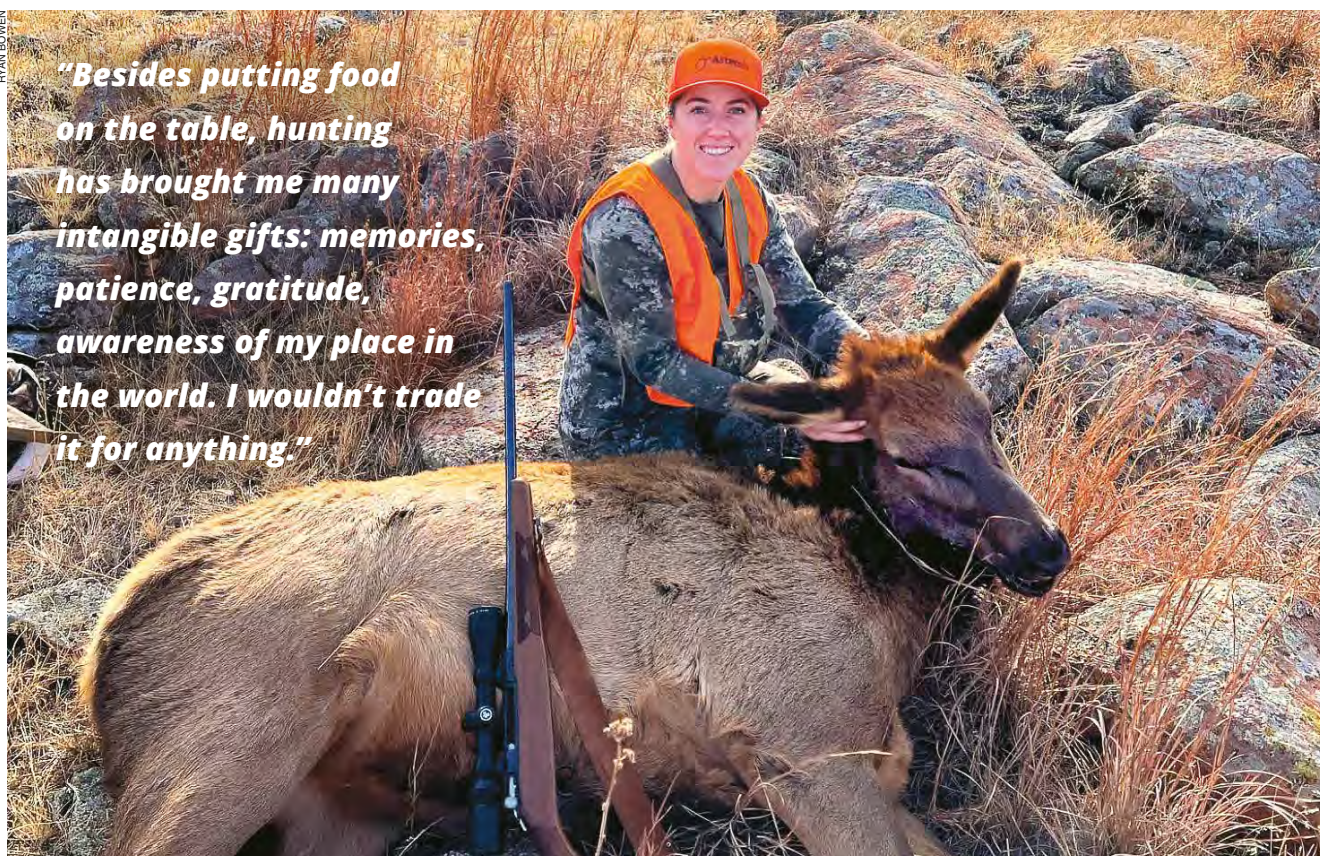
“My true passion for hunting began when my husband and I moved to northwestern Oklahoma. We no longer had private land to hunt on and were forced to begin learning the ins and outs of hunting public land. ... I threw myself into the physical and emotional challenges of hunting public land. ... It lit a fire inside of me for public lands and conservation.”





"The biggest portion of public lands we hunt are the OLAP (Oklahoma Land Access Program). I believe this program opened the same year we moved to Alva, and we began taking advantage immediately for bird and deer (bow) hunting. It is without a doubt some of the most beautiful land in the state, and I love being out there just for the view.

I love hunting on private land, too. In a part of the state that has been rampant with hunting leases to out-of-staters, we have been blessed with hunting permission on two parcels of land near where we live. These men, who we did not know well when first granted access, put their trust in us to be good stewards of their land and



"Besides putting food on the table, hunting has brought me many intangible gifts: memories, patience, gratitude, awareness of my place in the world. I wouldn't trade it for anything."

all the animals living there, the ones that are wild and the ones that are branded. We do not take that lightly and are so very grateful."



"I like the 'noise' of it, the noise of the quiet. The rustling of leaves, the peeping of birds waking up in the trees, and the honking of geese as they take to the sky, squirrels barking as they hop from tree to tree, and every once in a while, the grunt of buck on a different kind of hunt. Even the human noise is nicer from the field where nature removes the busyness of a train passing in the distance or the planes overhead or the ranchers signaling to the cattle it's time for food. There's a lot of world that melts away when you don't burden it with talk. There's a lot of peace in the noise of the quiet."



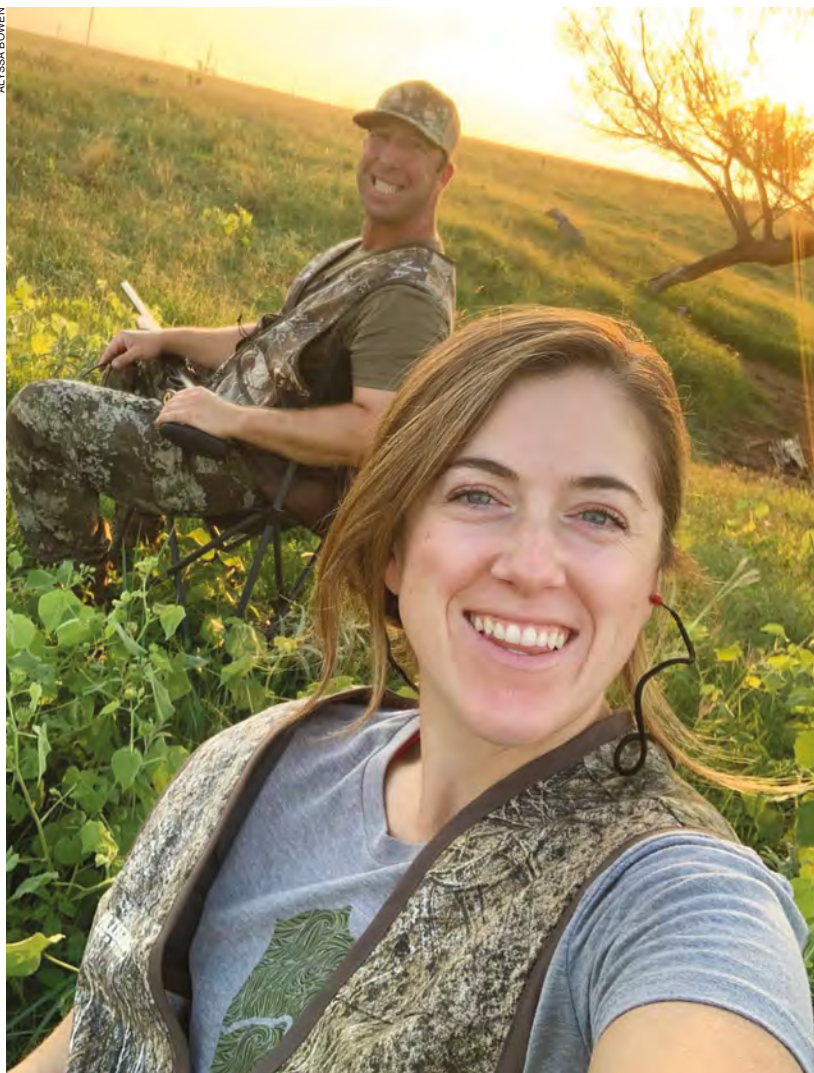
"Because I love hunting so much, I wanted to make friends who loved hunting, too. Artemis is a place where women can talk about hunting and conservation with other women, where we are free to get help or ask questions without fear of being judged. Adult-onset hunters, especially women, aren't always welcomed and treated kindly at outdoor stores or gun ranges or hunting clinics. You're frequently talked down to, and instead of feeling excited or inspired, you leave feeling like none of your questions were answered, and now you're unsure if hunting/angling is for you.

"My husband is an amazing mentor and guide and fellow hunter, but his experience is different than mine



RYAN BOWEN

"I didn't truly start gaining confidence in my own skills until I started doing things myself. Trust yourself! You are fully capable!"



"I go hunting for a lot of reasons, but watching the sun set is pretty close to the top."

because he's been hunting all his life and because he's a man. He can't truly say if this backpack will size down to fit me well because I'm a foot shorter than him, but my Artemis friends can. I at least have someone to turn

to for help who is patient with me, but for women who want to hunt but have no family or friends who do, we can help or connect them with someone who can. Building a community of women who can support one another with this and help each other learn and have fun together in the field is what it's all about. Check it out at <https://artemis.nwf.org>."



"Another extremely important thing to me and part of the mission for Artemis is conservation. We know from America's history that we haven't always been good at conserving wild animals or wild places. Thankfully, we've rebuilt in the last century what was almost entirely lost, but we still have a long way to go.

"We need to take individual ownership and learn things we can do, however small they may seem, to foster this for the future. Conservation needs evolve and

change as the world has changed and as science better understands the world, so it's our job to address the changes when we understand better. We know hunters are doing more financially to support conservation than any other group, and we can do other things to support our goal of passing a healthy outdoors on to the next generation."



"I love hunting because it's fun. The memories you make in the outdoors, especially with your family, are so precious, and those are things we might not have



"Some girls get flowers and jewelry for their anniversary; others get high-powered rifles and good glass."

without hunting. My husband is my best friend, and one of our favorite things to do together is hunt. Our anniversary is in November, and we always go on a hunting date and sit together. Life gets so busy, but when we're hunting, we can leave that all behind and relax. It's also a way to connect with people.

"I love hunting so much, I want other people to love it too. It takes a lot for people to reach out and say, 'Hey, I want to learn something new.' Women have to be involved. We need women, we need people of color, we are connected to each other. Things like this are why organizations like Artemis and conservation are important, to make sure we keep the outdoors alive and pass these opportunities onto generations to come." 🌿



To watch Alyssa Bowen talk about her role as an Artemis ambassador, go to <https://youtu.be/l27LXewvXxc> or scan the QR code.

Large Study of Stream Smallmouths Leads Bios to New Age, Growth Tools

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



ODWC Fisheries
Biologist Anthony
Rodger holds two
smallmouth bass
taken for research at
the Illinois River in
eastern Oklahoma.

OK COOP FISH WILDLIFE RESEARCH UNIT

ANGLERS APPRECIATE the arrowy rush of a smallmouth bass taking off with a streamer on a 5wt, ripping a twitching stickbait, or tugging on fat night crawler. No matter the bait, the tussle is nearly always the same: a hard strike followed by multiple midair head-shaking leaps.

And part of the marvel is that the fight is bigger than the fish, like the hammer of a bantamweight's punch. A 10-inch smallmouth, angled from an eddy in the water that is pillowing around a boulder, has no problem impressing your senses.

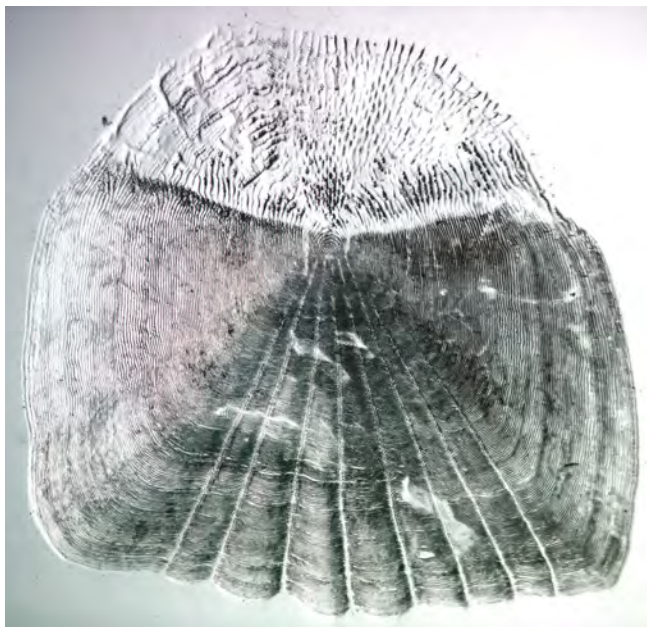
To make better sense of how well stream-dwelling smallmouths grow over time, two Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation stream biologists took a deep dive into the data.

Trevor Starks and Anthony Rodger know Oklahoma's stream fisheries. But they took a look beyond the confines of the state line to learn more about smallmouth bass age and growth in flowing waters. What they learned they shared with other fisheries scientists in a paper published in the North American Journal of Fisheries Management.

Predictive models of age and growth have existed for lake-dwelling smallmouth bass for some time, but not so for those swimming in streams. Predictive growth models help biologists determine population status, compare fisheries, and inform potential fishing regulations.

Relying on a Sport Fish Restoration Program grant, the biologists sought to fill the void. These grants are derived from excise taxes paid by fishing tackle manufacturers and on motorboat fuel.

The two biologists made cold calls and email queries to smallmouth bass biologists in 12 other states. They asked for age and growth information from smallmouth bass ear bones and scales. Biologists



WILDLIFEDEPARTMENT.COM

This enhanced view of a smallmouth bass scale clearly shows the age rings. Two-thirds of the scale is embedded in the skin of the fish.



OK COOP FISH WILDLIFE RESEARCH UNIT

Fisheries Biologist Trevor Starks holds a smallmouth with a floy, or anchor tag, with a unique ID in place below the soft-rayed dorsal fin.

Fisheries Technician Donnie King and Fisheries Biologist Trevor Starks hold smallmouth bass collected for study.



typically use measurements of growth rings from those two parts of the fish's anatomy to determine the age of the fish.

Each method has its shortcoming: ear bones require sacrificing the fish. Scales lack some reliability at certain fish sizes and can lead to misreading.

Starks and Rodger amassed more than 11,000 data points — the ages and growth records of smallmouth bass swimming in streams from Minnesota to New York to North Carolina — along with smallmouths from Oklahoma streams.

With that immense amount of information from measurements of ear bones and scales, the biologists developed mathematical models for both aging methods whereby biologists can predict fish size at a particular age and the estimated time required to reach a specific size.

With these models, biologists charged with managing stream smallmouth bass have another reliable tool to inform management decisions for improved fisheries and fishing.

This industry excise tax-supported research is among hundreds of management and research grants related to black bass species across the country. Sport Fish Restoration Program grants fund various research projects from commonplace annual population assessments of largemouth, smallmouth and spotted bass to the leading-edge work that recently identified new species of black bass in the southeastern United States. 🌿

(Craig Springer is a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service public affairs specialist in Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Programs and Fisheries. He is based in New Mexico and writes about fish and wildlife in the Southwestern United States, including Oklahoma.)

Each method has its shortcoming: ear bones require sacrificing the fish. Scales lack some reliability at certain fish sizes and can lead to misreading.



OK COOP FISH WILDLIFE RESTORATION UNIT

OKLAHOMA WILDLIFE CONSERVATION FOUNDATION SPOTLIGHT

Inaugural Hall of Fame Gala a Tremendous Success

The Foundation held its first fundraising gala and Oklahoma Conservation Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony on Oct. 29, 2021, in Oklahoma City. Several hundred people attended, and more than \$400,000 was raised to further the OWCF's mission to help fund conservation activities of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation. OWCF Director John D. Groendyke, who served 44 years on the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commission, was the first inductee to the Hall of Fame. Here are some views from that memorable evening.



Don Armes with Armes Auctioneer Services kicks off the live auction.



Foundation Executive Director Rick Grundman helps out with the live auction.



John Groendyke proudly displays the 1750 Italian fowling gun he received as the first inductee into the Oklahoma Conservation Hall of Fame. From left are Foundation Executive Director Rick Grundman, mistress of ceremonies Tess Maune, and Foundation board member Jim Johnson.



Oklahoma Falconers Association members Phil Salvati, Tim Jessell, and Robert Huber brought raptors to thrill the gala attendees.



OWCF Board Member Tess Maune, co-anchor with Tulsa's News on 6, served as the gala's emcee.

John P. Zelbst, OWCF Board of Directors Member

John P. Zelbst of Meers was a member of the original board of directors of the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Foundation when it was formed in 2018. He is one of three Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commissioners who serve on the Foundation board.

He earned his bachelor's degree from Cameron University in Lawton, then attended The University of Tulsa's College of Law, where he earned his Juris Doctorate degree. He is currently senior partner in the Zelbst, Holmes and Butler Law Firm of Lawton and Oklahoma City.

He is married to Cindy Rowe Zelbst and has a son, Clay Rowe Zelbst.

Zelbst also owns and operates the U2 Ranch, and working livestock is his favorite activity. Hunting, fishing and angling are very important to him and his family. "My life would not be complete and full without these activities," he said.

For many years, Zelbst was an advocate for establishing a foundation to be able to help the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation to accomplish its goals. "The Foundation



John P. Zelbst

allows us to provide financial and educational resources to the Department that the Department cannot always provide," he said.

"The wildlife in the state of Oklahoma belongs to the citizens of this state. We as the people are more enriched when we have a vibrant outdoor and wildlife environment. Each citizen should realize that federal aid dollars need state match dollars to help enriching our outdoors, and that through OWCF, we can make great leaps and bounds and improve our outdoors, specifically as the donors request. That means we can develop hiking trails, bird watching, butterfly habitat, ducks and geese habitat, large game habitat, premiere fishing, and conservation of all these."

Specific areas that Zelbst would like the Foundation to focus on are the restoration of Hackberry Flat Wildlife Management Area, "a true national treasure located outside of Frederick, Oklahoma," and refurbishing the Durant Fish Hatchery, one of the largest in the United States.

Other groups or boards that Zelbst is affiliated with include Comanche County Memorial Hospital in Lawton, Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association, Gerry Spence Trial Lawyers College in Wyoming, Oklahoma Association for Justice, American Association for Justice, ABOTA Foundation, Oklahoma Superlawyers, and Best Law Firms in Oklahoma.



Zelbst on a trout fishing trip.



John P. Zelbst, right, with fellow Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commissioner Bill Brewster, enjoying some striped bass fishing.

OWCF
www.okwildlifeconservation.org

THE OKLAHOMA WILDLIFE CONSERVATION FOUNDATION (OWCF) is the nonprofit organization formed to work exclusively alongside and provide added financial support to the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation and its activities in managing the state's fish and wildlife resources and habitats. The Wildlife Department receives no general state tax appropriations; ODWC operates primarily with license sales and federal matching grants. OWCF provides supporters an outlet to show their passion for the outdoors by investing their time and money in projects that will make a difference for generations to come.

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

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The Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Foundation is a charitable organization through AmazonSmile, a program that donates 0.5 percent of your eligible purchases on Amazon to a charity of your choice. Just start your shopping at smile.amazon.com. The donation is made at no extra cost to you, and you can choose from nearly 1 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](https://www.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.*



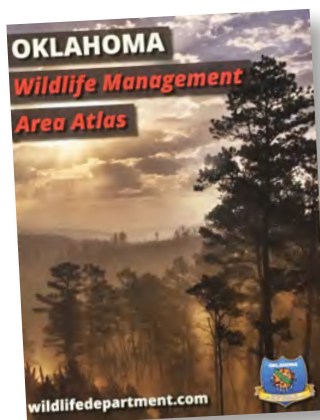
Wildlife License Plates

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



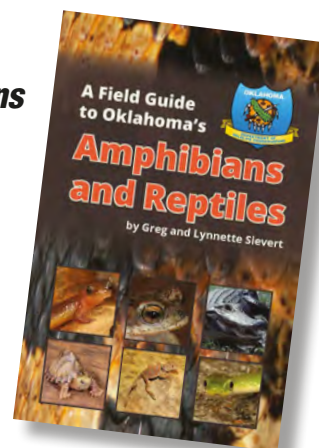
Oklahoma Wildlife Management Area Atlas

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

EASTERN BLUEBIRD

BY RYLEE ROLLING, EDUCATION INTERN

The eastern bluebird (*Sialia sialis*) is a medium-size bird that can be seen throughout Oklahoma anytime of the year. They are permanent residents of the eastern United States, but they also reside from southern Canada all the way south to Nicaragua. Bluebirds are classified as part of the thrush family, or *Turdidae*, because they are ground foragers.

The eastern bluebird's body length ranges from 6 to 8.5 inches, and an average bluebird weighs about 1 ounce. It has a wingspan ranging from 10 to 12 inches.

The adult male's head, wings and tail are dark blue, with a reddish breast and underwing. The female and juvenile have lighter coloring compared to the male. The adult female has a gray head, light blue wings and tail, and a rusty-orange breast.

To attract a female, a male bluebird's mating display includes selecting a hole in a tree and fluttering

in and out with nesting materials, as well as perching above it. Its beak remains closed as it sings, flutters, and spreads its wings around the female. Male eastern bluebirds can sing 1,000 songs an hour while courting the female.

When breeding, bluebirds establish pair bonds and will usually stay together for several breeding seasons. The female will lay three to seven eggs per brood. The pair will produce two or maybe three broods per year. If nesting is successful, there is a greater chance that mating pairs will remain together for the next breeding season.

These birds are commonly seen in open areas with scat-

tered trees, such as in farmlands, roadsides, forest clearings, and suburban lawns. Eastern bluebirds prefer to live in nest boxes, or cavity nests, that have a small entry hole. These can be manmade bluebird boxes or a hole in an old oak or pine tree.

Female bluebirds design a nest by weaving pine needles and grasses. The female will occasionally add feathers, horse hair, and other found materials to improve the stability of the nest. Nests can take about 10 days to finish.

Bluebird boxes and bluebird trails have increased in popu-

larity throughout the United States as ways to assist in population management species monitoring. A bluebird trail consists of an array of bluebird boxes in a selected management area.

Birds in the thrush family are ground-feeding birds. Common foods are insects and softened fruits. Eastern bluebirds perch on low branches or wires to scan the

ground for food items. More than 60 percent of the bluebird's diet consists of spiders, mealworms, grasshoppers, crickets, and other small insects. An eastern bluebird can spot its prey from as far as 50 yards away. They typically forage by fluttering over their food and grabbing it, instead of landing.

In the colder months, they will perch on trees to feed on ripening fruits and berries.

Eastern bluebirds benefit ecosystems across Oklahoma by maintaining insect populations, especially in agricultural areas. Their voracious appetite for insects helps protect crops from infestations. 🌿

Eastern bluebirds benefit ecosystems across Oklahoma by maintaining insect populations, especially in agricultural areas. Their voracious appetite for insects helps protect crops from infestations.





SHI ANN INGALLS/READERS' PHOTO SHOWCASE 2019

Winter's frigid grip again wraps Outdoor Oklahoma in a layer of ice and snow. Soon, the promise of new beginnings will be evident as the abundance of the land begins to reveal itself. We wish you all the best in a new 2022!

Outdoor Oklahoma

A PUBLICATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

