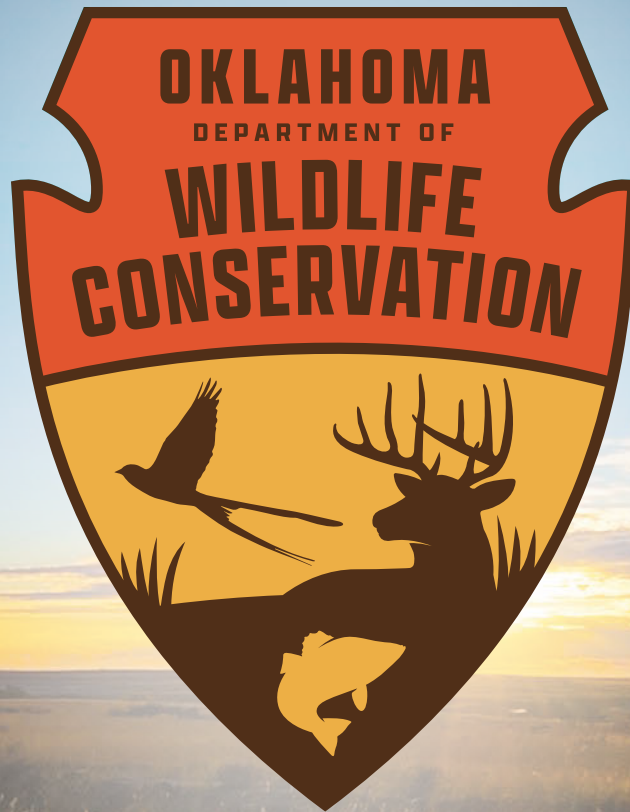


Outdoor Oklahoma

MAY / JUNE 2022 — ONLY \$10 A YEAR



A New Look To The Future

INSIDE

Bass Anglers'
New Tagline:
"Catch & Keep"

The Secret Lives
of Department's
Management Areas

Shotgun Tourneys
Take Loads
of Preparation

ODWC OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION



PANORAMAS



J.D. Strong



OKLAHOMA
DEPARTMENT OF
**WILDLIFE
CONSERVATION**

Nearly three years ago, an exciting initiative bubbled up in ODWC's strategic planning process: unifying and updating the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation's brand. It seemed simple enough when written in a few lines in the strategic plan. But the execution was far from simple.

Lasting about eight months, the project was

as challenging as it was rewarding. The resulting effort, with a new logo as its centerpiece, has been met with

an overwhelmingly positive response.

We launched this project with a select team of highly skilled and motivated ODWC employees from across the state to lead us through the process. This committee undertook an extensive search for an expert partner to help guide us through. After a competitive bidding process, we landed with Idea Ranch, a Tulsa business with a large outdoor-oriented clientele nationwide.

Through extensive surveys and focus groups, Idea Ranch helped us determine that ODWC didn't have the brand recognition we'd hoped for, and it was a good time to streamline and modernize the brand to reflect the full mission of the agency.

While the logo gets most of the attention, a brand is made up of so much more. This new branding allows us to present a consistent

"look" using colors, imagery, typefaces and more. We are so proud to serve all Oklahomans, and I am confident this effort demonstrates the great respect we have for our wildlife resources and our outdoor-loving constituents.

We didn't make any of these choices in a rush, and we are not going to implement it in a rush, either. Many things can be done with a few keystrokes, such as changing the website or social media profiles. Others are going to take some time to reflect the new branding, like all the boundary signs on the back-40 of wildlife management areas. Much of it will happen through attrition, such that any expense would have been necessary anyway.

When I see our new symbol and reflect on the hard-working men and women it represents, I feel a great sense of pride. I hope you are as proud of our new look as we are, because "we are YOUR Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation!" 🍷

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "J.D. Strong". The signature is stylized with large, flowing loops.

J.D. Strong, Director

Outdoor Oklahoma

MAY/JUNE • VOLUME 78 • NUMBER 3

Published by the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation
1801 N. Lincoln Blvd, Oklahoma City, OK 73105
P.O. Box 53465, Oklahoma City, OK 73152

STATE OF OKLAHOMA
J. Kevin Stitt, Governor

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Leigh Gaddis, Ada — Chairman
James V. Barwick, Edmond — Vice Chairman
Rick Holder, Creta — Secretary
Bill Brewster, Marietta
D. Chad Dillingham, Enid
Jess Kane, Bartlesville
Bruce Mabrey, Okmulgee
John P. Zelbst, Lawton

OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

J.D. Strong, Director
Wade Free, Assistant Director of Operations
Amanda Storck, Chief Financial Officer
Ken Cunningham, Chief, Fisheries Division
Bill Dinkines, Chief, Wildlife Division
Nathan Erdman, Chief, Law Enforcement Division
Nels Rodefeld, Chief, Communication and Education Division

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

CONTRIBUTING STAFF

Kelly Adams, Jennifer Benge, Brandon Brown, Tony Crawford,
Danae Davenport, Jena Donnell, Kristen Gillman, Rick
Grundman, Whitney Heskett, Darrin Hill, Micah Holmes, Corey
Jager, John Rempe, Cliff Sager, Smokey Solis, J.D. Strong.

PHONE
(405) 521-3856

WEBSITE
www.wildlifedepartment.com

E-MAIL
donald.brown@odwc.ok.gov

Art direction by Stroud Design, Inc.
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Copyright ©2022 by the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation. Reproduction in whole or in part without permission is prohibited. Outdoor Oklahoma (ISSN 0030-7106) is published bimonthly by the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, P.O. Box 53465, Oklahoma City, OK 73152. Periodicals postage paid at Oklahoma City, OK, and additional mailing offices. Notification of address change must include both old and new addresses and ZIP codes, with six weeks' notice. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Outdoor Oklahoma, P.O. Box 53465, Oklahoma City, OK 73152.

This program receives federal assistance from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and thus prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, disability, age and sex (gender) pursuant to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (as amended), Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and Title II of the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990. To request an accommodation or informational material in an alternative format, contact Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, (405) 521-3851. If you believe you have been discriminated against in any program, activity or service, contact U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office for Diversity and Workforce Management, 5275 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, VA 22041.

 Printed on recycled, recyclable paper.

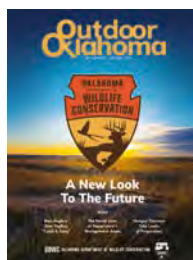
SUBSCRIBE ONLINE

www.tinyurl.com/GetOutdoorOklahoma
for online credit card orders

Subscriptions are \$10 per year; \$18 for 2 years; \$25 for 3 years. Single copies \$4. Production and distribution costs not covered by subscription fees are borne by Oklahoma sportsmen and sportswomen through hunting and fishing fees.

ACCOUNT QUESTIONS

or bill-me-later orders: Call (800) 777-0019



ON THE COVER:
A new symbol now represents the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation! The arrowhead shape is a tribute to the Sooner State's rich Native American history. The colors named sunset orange, cardinal shiner and bark reflect hues commonly seen in Oklahoma's outdoors. And silhouette images recognize the Department's mission to conserve the state's fish and wildlife, game and nongame species. Learn more about ODWC's rebranding effort in Panoramas, preceding page. (Photo by Jeremiah Zurenda)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

OFF THE BEATEN PATH 2

FOOD FOR THOUGHT 10

Scent of a Snack Can Lead to Human-Bear Conflict

By Kelly Adams, Supervisor, Communication and Education

"CATCH-AND-KEEP" IS THE NEW LINE FOR BASS ANGLERS . 16

Rule Change Coming To Promote Harvest Of Smaller Fish

By Don P. Brown, Specialist, Communication and Education

LANDOWNER ENHANCES POLLINATOR HABITAT WITH STATE, FEDERAL HELP 20

By Jena Donnell, Specialist, Communication and Education

CONSERVATION FOR KIDS 24

Pages Providing Learning and Fun for Youngsters

READY! SET UP! FIRE! 26

Loads of Preparation Keep Shotgun Tourneys on Target

By Don P. Brown, Specialist, Communication and Education

THE SECRET LIVES OF WMAs 34

Plenty of Opportunities, Activity on These Areas During "Off-Season"

By John Rempe, Wildlife Biologist

OKLAHOMA ARTIST EXPLORES NATURE WITH PENCIL, PAPER . 40

By Jena Donnell, Specialist, Communication and Education

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION FOUNDATION SPOTLIGHT 44

OUTDOOR STORE 46

WATCHABLE WILDLIFE 48

The Fork-Tailed Bush Katydid

By Danae Davenport, Education Intern

 facebook.com/OkWildlifeDept  instagram.com/OkWildlifeDept

 outdooroklahoma  @OkWildlifeDept  @OkWildlifeDept



OFF THE BEATEN PATH

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

GREAT PLACE TO CREATE NEW ANGLERS IS ...

THE NEIGHBORHOOD FISHING POND

Story and Photos By Sam Stroder



Fishing is a favorite outdoor activity of many Oklahomans, especially when sharing the fun with kids and grandkids.

The state is full of fishing destinations, with more than 200 lakes and all kinds of rivers feeding them. However, the water bodies most convenient for introducing the next generation to the sport are likely in our backyards.

In the Oklahoma City metro area, many subdivisions have a stocked pond or two available to residents and family and friends. And they are full of hungry sunfish, catfish, and bass. Come spring and warmer water, the fish are easily hooked with a lure or fly. But few things seem to beat a nightcrawler suspended from a youngster's bobber.

The challenge seemingly resides less in the catching and more in the attention — the net, the casting, and the bait itself is often a bigger draw to the younger fishermen than the actual quarry. But the memory is made regardless. ♡





Gathered for a donation to begin Tiger Bass stocking at Grand Lake are, from left, OWCF Director Raegen Siegfried, pro angler Kevin VanDam, Nicholas VanDam, OWCF Director Tess Maune, and ODWC Director J.D. Strong.

DONATIONS TO BRING TIGER BASS TO GRAND LAKE

Thanks to several generous donors, a Tiger Bass stocking program will soon begin at Grand Lake O' The Cherokees.

During Major League Fishing's REDCREST Championship in late March at Grand Lake, professional angler Kevin VanDam and the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Foundation each donated \$5,000 to the Wildlife Department's Fisheries Division Northeast Region to begin the stocking effort.

Also jumping aboard were Flying Squirrel Farms with a \$10,000 gift, and the Swank Family Foundation, Whiskey Point at Grand Lake, and Southstone Construction, each giving \$5,000. OWCF Director Raegen Siegfried secured an additional \$10,000 for the project, and the City of Grove has also indicated its willingness to contribute financially.

Tiger Bass is the trademarked name given to the F1 hybrid produced from crossbreeding Florida largemouth bass and northern largemouth bass. Northeast Region Fisheries Supervisor Josh Johnston said this strain of bass has the cold-weather tolerance and genetic potential to survive and thrive in Grand Lake. "This stocking study will draw national attention, especially if the fish grow out like we want them to."

They are fast-growing and aggressive fish, and they will create an opportunity to increase the population of larger bass in the lake. Plans call for stocking two fish per acre, which is double the normal stocking rate seen in other parts of the country.

The VanDam Foundation also gave \$7,500 to create and place fish structure in Grand and Eufaula lakes. And ODWC received a sizable donation of habitat structure from Mossback Fish Habitat. 🐟

Tiger Bass is the trademarked name given to the F1 hybrid produced from crossbreeding Florida largemouth bass and northern largemouth bass.

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.

MAY 2022

- 1 "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
- 5 Oklahoma City Free Fishing Day, no city permit required.
- 8 "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
- 9 Ask An Angler: Catfish, virtual class, register: license.
gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/EventsHome.aspx.
- 13 Ask An Angler: Sunfish, virtual class, register: license.
gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/EventsHome.aspx.
- 14 OKC Spring Catfish Roundup, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., Dolese Park, all ages, register: www.okc.gov/departments/parks-recreation/calendar.
- 15 "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
- 22 "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
- 23 Ask An Angler: Nongame Fish, virtual class, register: license.
gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/EventsHome.aspx.
- 27 Ask An Angler: River Bass, virtual class Register: license.
gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/EventsHome.aspx.
- 29 "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
- 30 Memorial Day (state offices closed).
- ODWC Free Fishing Clinics set in Mustang, May 6; Stratford, May 14; Jenks, May 17; Jenks, May 19; Harrah, May 21; Jenks, May 24; Jenks, May 16; Jenks, May 31. Register: license.
gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/EventsHome.aspx.
- Ducks Unlimited events set in Norman, May 5; Vian, May 6; Weatherford, May 13; Bixby, May 13. Info: www.ducks.org/Oklahoma/events.
- Friends of NRA event set in Enid, May 21. Info: www.FriendsOfNRA.org.
- National Wild Turkey Federation event info: www.nwtf.org/events.

JUNE 2022

- 4 Oklahoma City Free Fishing Day, no city permit required. Youth Hooked on Fishing, ages 5-15, 9 to 11 a.m., Metro Tech, register: www.okc.gov/departments/parks-recreation/calendar.
- 4-5 Oklahoma Free Fishing Days.
- 5 "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
- 6 Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commission meeting, 9 a.m., Oklahoma City.
- 12 "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
- 14 Flag Day.
- 18 Youth Hooked on Fishing, ages 5-15, 9 to 11 a.m., Metro Tech, register: www.okc.gov/departments/parks-recreation/calendar.
- 19 Father's Day.
"Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
- 26 "Outdoor Oklahoma" TV, 8 a.m., OETA.
- ODWC Free Fishing Clinics set in Jenks, June 2; Jones, June 4; Norman, June 4; Jenks, June 7; Jenks, June 9; Newcastle, June 11; Jenks, June 14; Jenks, June 16; Yukon, June 17; Blanchard, June 18; Jenks, June 21; Jenks, June 23; Jenks, June 10. Register: license.
gooutdoorsoklahoma.com/Event/EventsHome.aspx.
- Ducks Unlimited events set in Stillwater, June 18; Oklahoma City, June 23-24. Info: www.ducks.org/Oklahoma/events.
- Friends of NRA event info: www.FriendsOfNRA.org.
- National Wild Turkey Federation events set in Claremore, June 11; Tulsa, June 18; Bethel Acres, June 25. Info: www.nwtf.org/events.

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

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.



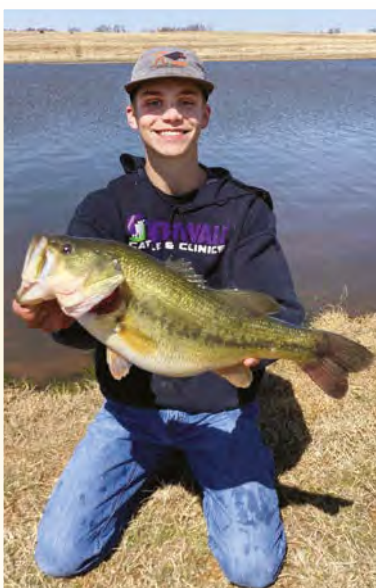
NEW STATE RECORD!
Jarrett Sinclair, river carpsucker, 8 lbs 11 oz, March 18, 2022, Canton Lake.



Tim A., black bass, April 3, 2022, Rogers County.



Aiden Casaz, rainbow trout, Feb. 19, 2022, Blue River.



Blake Jannsen, black bass, March 26, 2022, Grady County.



Brian Martin, hybrid striped bass, March 19, 2022, Lake Hefner.



Camryn Kelley, hybrid striped bass, April 3, 2022, Oologah Lake

WILD ABOUT COOKING

THE BEST BIGMOUTH BASS RECIPE

By Joseph Murchison, Cooking

All good fishermen keep at least one meal from every fishing trip. This is the best largemouth bass (or smallmouth bass) recipe you will ever try. On my last fishing trip, I kept two 5-pound bass about 20 inches long.

Filleting: For perfect boneless fillets, start by cutting the skin at the anal vent along the belly to the head. Remove the innards.

Make the second cut up the side of the fish, behind the fin and gill, to the top of the back. Then make the third cut alongside the spine to the tail. Fold the loose side of the fish back over the tail to reveal a fillet of meat with rib bones.

Hold the fish's head, then pass the knife between the skin and meat, working outward from the tail. This produces a skinless fillet. Finally, remove the ribcage from the bottom of the fillet to make it boneless.

Repeat the same cuts on the other side of the fish to get the second fillet.

Leaching: Before cooking, leach the blood out of the fillets to prevent tainting the flavor of the fish. Refrigerate the fillets in a bowl of water and check every few



hours. When the water is bloody, rinse the fillets with clean, cold water and soak some more. Repeat until the water no longer gets bloody. Then cut the fillets into single servings. If you feel any lateral line bones, cut out a thin strip to remove them.

Preparing: Cooking fish fillets only takes about 10 minutes from preheat to cooked.

INGREDIENTS

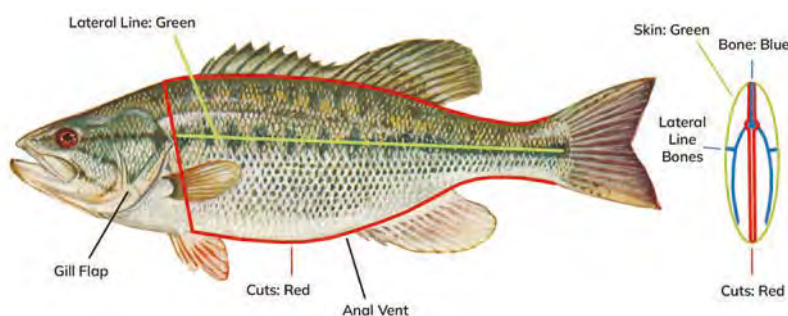
Black pepper
Garlic powder
Paprika
Butter

Griddle or large frying pan. (I like an electric griddle for its regulated even heat.)

DIRECTIONS

- Preheat electric griddle or pan to 450 degrees.
- Place fillets on a plate or tray. Sprinkle fillets with black pepper, garlic powder, and paprika.
- When griddle is hot, add butter and spread it around.
- Place fillets spiced side down on griddle and sprinkle the unspiced side of fillets with black pepper, garlic powder, and paprika.
- When fillets go from opaque to white halfway through, flip fillets to put uncooked side down.
- When fillets go from opaque to white all the way through, the fillets are cooked. This should only take about two minutes per side. ♡

FILLET DIAGRAM



GAME WARDEN'S JOURNAL

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



Game Warden Shane Fields with seized venison.

In March, Game Warden **Shane Fields**, based in Pittsburg County, received a call concerning some deer legs hanging on a skinning pole near Daisy in southeastern Pittsburg County. Fields responded and

found a vehicle parked at a gate with an empty trailer attached. Nearby were the carcasses of three adult doe deer. Game Warden **Jay Harvey**, based in Atoka County, a Pittsburg County sheriff's deputy, and a Choctaw Tribe officer joined Fields at the property.

The officers heard several volleys of gunshots from inside the property. At dark, two men drove up on a utility vehicle. Officers secured four firearms from the vehicle. The two men said they were nonresidents,

and they owned the property, and therefore could hunt deer anytime. Officers quickly told the men they were in violation of Oklahoma law. The men were

issued five citations each, three deer were confiscated, and firearms were held as evidence. The men were released. Total fines, costs, and restitution may approach \$14,000.

On Jan. 19, Game Warden **Larry Green**, based in Kay County, was alerted about three duck hunters whose boat had capsized while on Kaw Lake. Green immediately readied a boat and requested an ambulance. The weather was becoming worse, with wind gusting to 30 mph and temperatures falling into the low 30s.



Game Warden Larry Green

Green met with Corps of Engineers Ranger **Aaron Brown**, and they launched the boat into waves up to 4 feet high. Green, recognized among ODWC's most accomplished boat operators, piloted the boat to reach the three hunters, who were showing signs of hypothermia from being in the water for an extended period. The hunters were returned successfully to the boat ramp where the ambulance was waiting.

Green and Brown put their lives on the line by braving the harsh conditions to rescue the three hunters.

On March 10, a sportsman's tip led Game Wardens to illegal snares on Fobb Bottom Wildlife Management Area. The snares had no stops and posed extreme risk to hunters or hounds. Wardens combed the area for other illegal snares to remove, but the presence of thick brush might have left some undiscovered.

Fobb Bottom WMA is only open to live box traps, dog-proof traps, and water sets. Anyone with information on these or other illegal snares is urged to contact Game Warden **Trey Hale**, based in Marshall County, at (580) 320-2951 or call anonymously to Operation Game Thief, (800) 522-8039. 🐾

(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.

IT'S THE LAW: PUBLIC LAND SHOOTING RANGES

Anyone using a firearm on any Wildlife Department management area is required to possess an Oklahoma hunting or combination hunting/fishing license (unless exempt). This includes anyone using a WMA shooting range. Designated shooting ranges exist at 11 Wildlife Management Areas. The discharge of firearms on any WMA is permitted only for hunting and on designated shooting ranges. Target shooting is not permitted on WMAs except at designated shooting ranges. For more, scan the code. 🐾



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,

Mr. Martin, a resident of Oklahoma Memory Care Institute in Tulsa, has been an avid hunter for years. Actually, his lifetime hunting and fishing license is No. 85. Martin was concerned about hunting in Tulsa County without a valid doe or buck tag. I reached out this morning to Game Warden **Brandon Fulton** and told him of Martin and

his concerns. Without hesitation, Fulton, based in Tulsa County, agreed to visit the facility and present Martin with a certificate we made. This was not just a quick presentation; he stayed and visited with him and the family and even spoke to another fisherman in our care. I can't tell you how much this meant to the resident, his family, and to us to be able to witness it. Fulton is a true public servant at heart.

*Sincerely, Kelli A. Ludinich, BSN, RN, DCS,
Oklahoma Memory Care Institute, Tulsa*

Dear Wildlife Department,

I've been an Oklahoma resident, hunter and fisherman all my life and just felt compelled to send this email to thank all the hard-working men and women of ODWC. All of you work very hard, and without a lot of monetary compensation. From the people who answer the phones, the division heads I've spoken with, and the Game Wardens I've met over the years, you all do a tremendous job with a passion for wildlife that shows in how well wildlife is managed in our state. Now it's the end of deer season in Oklahoma I'd like to express my thanks for the way you structured limits. My family eats mostly venison throughout the year, and the ability to put more doe meat in the freezer was great. I, like all other deer hunters, are already looking forward to next year.

I'm seeing deer shift more of their movement until after dark. I don't see a need for raising limits but maybe running the season to the end of January or the middle of February would help.

Jim Kelly



Game Warden Brandon Fulton visits a resident at Oklahoma Memory Care Institute.



Ken Cunningham

FORMER ASSISTANT PROMOTED TO FISHERIES CHIEF

Kenneth Cunningham has been named Chief of the Fisheries Division of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation. He follows Barry Bolton, who retired in early 2022 after a 43-year career with ODWC.

As Chief, Cunningham oversees four state fish hatcheries, a research laboratory, and regional biologists and technicians.

"It is a real privilege to be given the opportunity to serve the sportsmen and sportswomen of Oklahoma in my new role," he said.

He became Assistant Chief of Fisheries in April 2014, after working six years for the New Mexico Department of Fish and Game as its Assistant Chief of Fisheries Research.

Cunningham earned a bachelor's degree in wildlife conservation from Southeastern Oklahoma State University in 1986, and a master's degree in fisheries ecology from Oklahoma State University in 1991.

He began his professional career in 1990 when he was hired as a Fisheries Biologist by ODWC. In 2002, he went to the Ohio Division of Wildlife to serve as Fisheries Management Supervisor.

Cunningham and his wife, Susie, reside on a hobby farm east of Noble, where they enjoy fishing, gardening, chicken husbandry, dancing, and spending time with their five children and two grandchildren. 🐾

2021 CREATIVE WRITING COMPETITION

"THE ONE THING I DISTINCTLY REMEMBER"

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 senior category female winner Kira Hatlestad, 15, a 10th-grader from Bartlesville High School.



HUNTING: SHARING THE HERITAGE

By Kira Hatlestad

"Some of the best memories are made in the deer stand" as my dad likes to say. He tells me stories of his friends and him when they were younger and spent time in the woods with his Dad. My first memory of hunting was when I was about 6 years old. I went hunting with my dad, Papa, and Pops. I remember going in the early morning, decked out in camo overalls and a bright orange beanie. I was not a morning person, so my 6-year-old self took a nap in the deer stand. I remember being woken up to Pops firing his gun.

I woke up immediately wondering what happened; they brought me out in the field to the deer and told me to stand by it and take a picture. We then loaded up and headed home for lunch.

"Some of the best memories are made in the deer stand" as my dad likes to say.

When we pulled into the drive, I ran inside as fast my little legs could move to tell Grandma, Mom and Gigi that "we" got a deer. Grandma got her camera, and everyone ran outside. Pops sat me on Papa's flatbed pickup right next to the deer. I examined the buck closely. I looked at his antlers, his nose, then his body. But the one thing I distinctly remember is his tongue hanging out of his mouth. While I didn't say anything that year, from that point forward I always thought when something died, its tongue would hang out. Playing cops and robbers with my friends or WWE Smackdown with my cousins, when I fell victim, my tongue hung out.

The next couple years, I continued to take the best naps in the deer stand. When I turned 10, I told my dad I wanted to shoot my own deer. He told me the first

thing I had to do was take the hunter safety course. We signed me up for an online class, and I got to learning about what proper equipment to bring, what to wear, how to communicate properly, how to be safe, and how to be a good steward of our land and resources. I passed the class and got my hunter safety card. Over the next year, I continued to learn more about hunting and proper safety. Through my 4-H public speaking project, I prepared a display board on tree stand safety as well as a presentation on general hunting safety. The presentation included survival tips, tree stand safety, and gun safety. I had the opportunity to share this information at 4-H speech contests at the local, county, district, and state levels. My display board was also on display at both our county fair and the Tulsa State Fair. Not only was I able to educate the public about safety tips but share the memories and experiences that can be made and handed down through generations through the hunting hobby.

The next year I went, it was early but I didn't sleep. I was excited to try and shoot my first deer. While I never got the perfect shot that season, I was determined to try again the next year. Then next year hunting, I laid eyes on the perfect buck. I took my first shot with my shaky hands and missed.

In the summer of 2019, Papa was diagnosed with lung cancer. He battled that with surgery and hospital stays. With COVID-19 being a new thing in 2020, we didn't want to risk health issues with Papa so missed the 2020 time in the stand. This year, Pops has had some heart troubles, so we haven't been able to hit the deer stands yet, but still have two weeks left, and I'm excited for the opportunity.

While I haven't got my own first deer yet, I still look forward to the next hunt spending time with my family and making memories in the stand. It would be funny if I shot my first antelope before my first deer, and I can bet you its tongue will hang out, too! 🍖



NO LICENSE NEEDED JUNE 4-5 FOR FREE FISHING DAYS

Would you like to try fishing but don't have a state fishing license? Don't worry; you'll have a chance June 4-5, 2022, during Oklahoma's annual Free Fishing Days.

"Free Fishing Days gives people a chance to just 'test the waters' and see if they would enjoy the sport," said Ken Cunningham, Chief of Fisheries for the Wildlife Department.



JIM GALLOP/BEE

Oklahoma was the first state to offer Free Fishing Days about 40 years ago and has since been followed by dozens of other states that have established similar days.

Urban areas across the state offer angling opportunities through the Wildlife Department's Close to Home Fishing Program (www.wildlifedepartment.com/fishing/wheretofish/cth), which provides quality fishing opportunities that many people can find right near their own neighborhood. Anglers also have access to hundreds of public lakes, rivers, and streams across the state.

People who just don't know where to start can turn to the "Where to Fish" map (www.wildlifedepartment.com/fishing/wheretofish).

While Free Fishing Days allows anyone to fish without a state fishing license, anglers still must abide by all other fishing regulations including daily bag limits and size restrictions. Participants should note that local fishing permit requirements may still apply to specific fishing areas June 4-5.

And, if you want the latest about where they're biting, you can sign up to receive ODWC's weekly Oklahoma Fishing Report. Compiled by Wildlife Department personnel and independent reporters, the report reveals inside information on the best places to go fishing, when the fish are biting, and what baits they are hitting the most. Subscribe at www.wildlifedepartment.com/fishing/fishingreport to have the report sent to your inbox.

Note that all of Lake Texoma will be open for free fishing June 4, but free fishing will only apply to the Oklahoma portion of the lake June 5. ♡



Nels Rodefeld



BUY A HUNTING OR FISHING LICENSE, SAVE A LIFE

The Wildlife Department has joined with LifeShare of Oklahoma, the nonprofit organization dedicated to saving lives through organ, eye and tissue donation, to give hunters and anglers the chance to register to become an organ and tissue donor when they get a hunting or fishing license.

Oklahoma is one of the first states to adopt this new way to register to be an organ and tissue donor.

"Many years ago, someone chose to check the organ donor box, and their family's loss saved my father's life through a heart transplant," said Nels Rodefeld, Chief of Communication and Education for the Wildlife Department. "Without that transplant, we would have never gone on another deer hunt or even made another fishing trip together.

"When you check the box, you could not only be giving the gift of life to someone, but also the gift

of comfort to your family — knowing that a part of you may live on if something tragic ever happened."

LifeShare hopes this new option to register as a donor increases the number of people registered across the state. About 600 Oklahomans are waiting for a lifesaving donation, and about 108,000 people are on the current organ transplant wait list across the nation.

Hunters and anglers in Oklahoma can get their licenses online and in person at license dealers across the state.

In 2020, 214 people in Oklahoma gave the gift of life by becoming an organ donor, and they saved 508 lives, according to LifeShare. The organization works closely with three transplant centers and 145 health care organizations in Oklahoma to facilitate donation. For more information about LifeShare, go to www.LifeShareOK.org. ♡

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Scent of a Snack Can Lead to Human-Bear Conflict



By Kelly Adams,
Supervisor, Communication
and Education

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) made international news earlier this year when it announced plans to locate, trap, and possibly euthanize a 500-pound black bear seen in neighborhoods near South Lake Tahoe. The “severely food-habituated bear” was believed to have caused extensive property damage to more than 30 homes.

However, DNA evidence collected over several months proved at least three bears were responsible for the many break-ins, prompting CDFW to enlist the community’s cooperation to keep bears away.

Similar situations can and do happen in parts of Oklahoma.

Altered behavior and decreased fear of people among bears have resulted from human encroachment and access to human food sources in some areas where bears naturally occur. This can put people and bears at risk of injury and even death. Although the chances are slim, those outcomes are possible when people and bears cohabitate.

Oklahoma is not immune to human-bear conflicts. People living in south-eastern and east-central Oklahoma should be aware of the hazards of living in “bear country.” And, as sightings are occurring farther west in Oklahoma, biologists with the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation warn this may lead to more conflicts between people and black bears.

“In early summer, we usually see an increase in reported bear sightings,” said Jeff Ford, Senior Wildlife Biologist with ODWC. “And confirmed black bears sightings have gotten closer to the Oklahoma City metro over the years. These bears are likely young males traveling long distances, up to 80 miles one way, in search of females. So, whether you live in bear habitat or in the western reaches of their range, it is important to be bear wise.”

With a few simple steps, the chances of a bear encounter can be reduced and bears can remain wild.

Black bear sightings peak during Oklahoma’s hottest days. The once plentiful springtime food sources such as berries and grasses soon diminish and dry out in summer’s heat.

During summer, bears consume an impressive 5,000 calories per day. That caloric intake quadruples in the fall to nearly 20,000 calories as they prepare for winter torpor (their hibernation-like state). Easy high-calorie supplements such as bird seed, pet food, and even garbage become irresistible. When bears find easy access to these human-sourced foods, bear sightings may easily become conflicts.

Typically, bears are wary of human spaces and will visit at night. However, these nighttime visits may become daytime occurrences if the bear is rewarded by food sources. A bear becomes food-conditioned when it prefers to search out human food. Food-conditioned bears lose their natural fear of people and



A black bear cub digs into a convenient bird feeder for a snack.



Human-bear encounters can happen in unexpected places.



Be BearWise
AT HOME

Six At-Home BearWise Basics



Never Feed or Approach Bears

Intentionally feeding bears or allowing them to find anything that smells or tastes like food teaches bears to approach homes and people looking for more. Bears will defend themselves if a person gets too close, so don't risk your safety and theirs!



Secure Food, Garbage and Recycling

Food and food odors attract bears, so don't reward them with easily available food, liquids or garbage.



Remove Bird Feeders When Bears Are Active

Birdseed and grains have lots of calories, so they're very attractive to bears. Removing feeders is the best way to avoid creating conflicts with bears.



Never Leave Pet Food Outdoors

Feed pets indoors when possible. If you must feed pets outside, feed in single portions and remove food and bowls after feeding. Store pet food where bears can't see or smell it.



Clean & Store Grills

Clean grills after each use and make sure that all grease, fat and food particles are removed. Store clean grills and smokers in a secure area that keeps bears out.



Alert Neighbors to Bear Activity

See bears in the area or evidence of bear activity? Tell your neighbors and share information on how to avoid bear conflicts. Bears have adapted to living near people; now it's up to us to adapt to living near bears.



Learn More:
BearWise.org

Helping People Live Responsibly with Black Bears

BearWise® CREATED BY BEAR BIOLOGISTS, SUPPORTED BY STATE WILDLIFE AGENCIES





RTBIRDWAN/BEARWISE.ORG

become habituated to people. The South Lake Tahoe bears are extreme examples of habituated bears.

"Research indicates that bears become progressively more likely to visit homes and campsites unless they encounter negative stimuli," Ford said.

Although bear attacks on people are rare, they do happen. Bears are unpredictable wild animals with the ability to cause significant damage to people and property.

To avoid bear encounters and possible conflicts, prevention is key. Bears are scent-driven and have an extremely developed sense of smell. It is estimated a black bear can smell a food source from more than a mile away.

Food attractants are typically at the root of human-bear conflicts and include deer corn feeders, pet and livestock food, fruit trees, bird seed and birdfeeders, unsecured garbage, chickens and other small livestock, and beehives or apiaries. It is important these attractants are secured or put away.

In eastern Oklahoma there are two separate and distinct black bear populations. The larger population is found in southeastern Oklahoma, where biologists estimate about 2,500 black bears reside. The smaller population lives

This black bear might have smelled something in the back of this pickup and jumped up to investigate.



WILDLIFEDEPARTMENT.COM

Landowners and hunters most anywhere in the eastern half of the state shouldn't be surprised if images of a black bear turn up on their game camera. Males are currently searching for females, some females are busy raising cubs, and all bears are busy searching for food.



Be BearWise OUTDOORS

Six Outdoor BearWise Basics



Stay Alert & Stay Together

Pay attention to your surroundings and stay together. Walk, hike, jog, or cycle with others when possible. Keep kids within sight and close by. Leave earbuds at home and make noise periodically so bears can avoid you.



Leave No Trash or Food Scraps

Double bag your food when hiking and pack out all food and trash. Don't burn food scraps or trash in your fire ring or grill. *Leaving scraps, wrappers, or even "harmless" items like apple cores teaches bears to associate trails and campsites with food.*



Keep Dogs Leashed

Letting dogs chase or bark at bears is asking for trouble; don't force a bear to defend itself. Keep your dogs leashed at all times or leave them at home.



Camp Safely

Set up camp away from dense cover and natural food sources. Cook as far from your tent as possible. **Do not store food, trash, clothes worn when cooking, or toiletries in your tent.** Store in approved bear-resistant containers OR out of sight in locked vehicle OR suspended at least 10 feet above the ground and 10 feet from any part of the tree. Local regulations vary.



Know What To Do If You See a Black Bear

If you see a bear before it notices you, don't approach. Stand still, enjoy, then quietly move away. **If a bear sees you**, back away slowly. Never run; running may trigger a chase response. **If a bear approaches**, hold your ground, wave your arms and yell "Hey Bear" until it leaves. Stay with your group. **If it keeps approaching**, use bear spray. **If a black bear makes contact with you**, do NOT play dead; fight back aggressively.



Carry Bear Spray & Know How To Use It

Bear spray is proven to be the easiest and most effective way to deter a bear that threatens you. It doesn't work like bug repellent, so **never** spray your tent, campsite or belongings.



Learn More:
BearWise.org

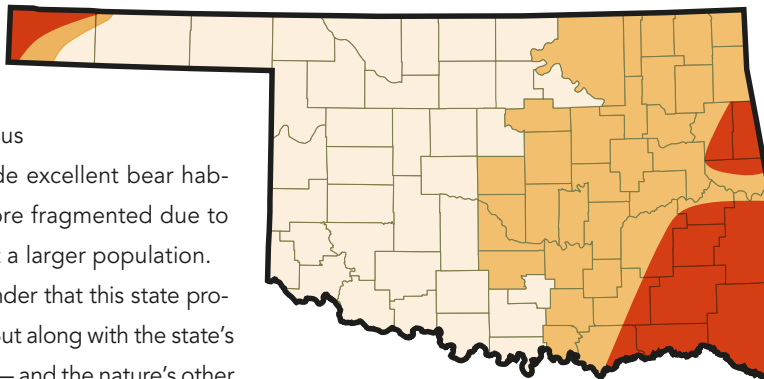
Helping People Live Responsibly with Black Bears
BearWise® CREATED BY BEAR BIOLOGISTS, SUPPORTED BY STATE WILDLIFE AGENCIES



in the Ozark region of northeastern Oklahoma and includes about 100 bears.

The main difference between the two populations is the habitat in which they live. Large, contiguous stretches of forest in southeastern Oklahoma provide excellent bear habitat. The landscape in the northeastern region is more fragmented due to human development, making it less likely to support a larger population.

The presence of black bears in Oklahoma is a reminder that this state provides some of the most diverse habitat in the country. But along with the state's natural blessings comes a responsibility to keep bears — and the nature's other creatures — wild. That's why everyone must do his or her part while living in, or visiting, Oklahoma's bear country. 🐾



Black bears inhabit the areas shown in red, but occasional bear sightings have occurred in the dark tan areas.



Scan code to learn how to report a nuisance bear.

FOUNDATION DONATES TRANQUILIZER RIFLES

The Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Foundation recently worked with ODWC and Senior Wildlife Biologist Jeff Ford to help better equip and train Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation staff members who work with black bears to ensure they are using the most-current wildlife chemical immobilization techniques.

The Foundation recently bought six state-of-the-art pneumatic tranquilizer dart guns, along with training from Dr. Mark Johnson, founder of Global Wildlife Resources, who specializes in humane and respectful capture and handling of bears and other free-ranging wildlife for wildlife professionals. These resources were presented to the Wildlife Department in February.

Ford and ODWC employees welcomed the needed equipment. "I want to thank the Foundation again for its assistance in getting our Nuisance Bear Coordinators better equipped and trained to do our jobs more effectively."

Oklahoma's black bear population continues to grow at roughly 6 percent per year, making opportunities for bears and



The OWCF donated five tranquilizer dart guns to ODWC biologists. From left are Southeastern Region Wildlife Supervisor Eric Suttles, Wildlife Technician Matt Hensley, Wildlife Technician Tres Phipps, ODWC Director J.D. Strong, OWCF Executive Director Rick Grundman, and Senior Wildlife Biologist Jeff Ford.

people to cross paths more common. Biologists respond to reports of bear-human conflicts every year.

Foundation Executive Director Rick Grundman said, "The Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Foundation wanted to ensure that we were helping to protect these magnificent animals and supporting the wildlife stewards at the ODWC with the best equipment and training available. We believe these contributions will help the ODWC Bear Team to continue to address these situations safely and humanely.

"Judging by the feedback from the team after they received the training and dart guns, I think we were successful," he said. 🐾

—Rick Grundman, OWCF Executive Director

Learn more about the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Foundation and how to contribute in the "OWCF Update" on Pages 44–45 or by scanning the code.





KELLY ADAMS/ODWC

Starting in September, Oklahoma's anglers can harvest six bass daily statewide, with only one being longer than 16 inches.

“CATCH & KEEP”

Is the New Line For Bass Anglers

Rule Change Coming To Promote Harvest Of Smaller Fish

By Don P. Brown, Specialist,
Communication and Education

was raised in northeastern Oklahoma in the 1970s. I was fortunate to enjoy a middle-class upbringing in a two-parent home, always a roof over our heads and always plenty to eat. Food security is what they call it these days. And an important part of my family's food security was what Oklahoma's outdoors would provide.

Thanks to Dad's love of hunting and fishing, Mom always had several containers of frozen game in the freezer. Quail and fish were the mainstays — especially fish, and mostly black bass. Mom would "make sure the oil was really hot" and fry up a mess of cornmeal-coated bass filets for dinner on a regular basis.

Back then, seems like most anglers practiced a philosophy of "keep what you can eat, and throw back the little ones."

Then the philosophy began to change, especially among bass anglers. In 1972, the fledgling Bass Anglers Sportsman Society initiated a "Don't Kill Your Catch" program that evolved over the years into today's **catch-and-release ethic** practiced by most bass anglers. With B.A.S.S. leading the way, bass fishing tournaments became very popular, and the organization's tournaments became catch-and-release only.

During the past four decades, the often self-imposed practice of catch-and-release for largemouth and smallmouth bass has become **deeply rooted in fishing culture**. It has been touted as a greatly successful fisheries management tool. However, during an Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation study in the 1990s, up to 43 percent of fish released after being caught in fishing tournaments died within six days.

The Wildlife Department developed a statewide black bass management plan in 1991. Long-range management goals with specific objectives were set, including the eventual implementation of the 14-inch minimum length limit on smallmouth and largemouth bass. At that time, less than



Black bass harvest rules will change statewide in September, and anglers will be encouraged to keep more and smaller fish to help balance sizes within populations.

10 percent of bass fishing lakes sampled were considered to be a "quality" bass fishery. The regulation was heavily supported by anglers.

Since then, Oklahoma has become a top destination for bass fishing. So popular in fact, B.A.S.S. selected Oklahoma as the host state in 2013 and 2016 for the Bassmaster Classic at Grand Lake O' the Cherokees.

Oklahoma fisheries biologists are now concerned that **catch-and-release has possibly gone too far**.

"Currently, we are considering ways in which bass management in Oklahoma could be improved," said Cliff Sager, Senior Fisheries Biologist with the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation.

"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," Sager said.

Biologists have noted **slowing growth rates and skewed size structures** in black bass populations (see QR code). This is concerning because they not only manage the state's fisheries resources so that natural reproduction will sustain populations, but also manage these resources to create as many angling opportunities as possible.

Bass Sizes Statewide

To view data showing the abundance of bass by length in 13 state lakes from 2016-20, scan the code.



"While much has been done by the Wildlife Department to promote fishing, including bass fishing, in recent years, the adjustment of management strategies aimed at influencing quality bass fisheries has been limited."

Sager said biologists' management plans are often dictated by the concept of carrying capacity. Carrying capacity is the number of individuals in a population that the resources in the habitat can support. While catch-and-release may have benefits under a narrow set of conditions, harvest of smaller, more-abundant bass may be needed to sustain a healthy habitat, thus providing anglers with a quality black bass fishery.

Oklahoma's current general fishing regulations allow anglers to possess six smallmouth or largemouth bass

Food Safety and Oklahoma's Fish

Some people are concerned about eating fish caught in Oklahoma waters. The state Department of Environmental Quality encourages Oklahomans to go fishing and enjoy eating the fish they catch. However, some fish pose a risk of mercury contamination. The general population, including men older than 15 and women beyond child-bearing age, faces little risk in consuming Oklahoma fish. These groups may to eat a variety of fish, including predators such as black bass, as part of a healthy diet. DEQ offers these general guidelines:

- Eat smaller, younger fish.
- Eat more varieties of fish.
- Eat fewer meals of predator fish such as bass, flathead catfish, walleye, and saugeye.
- Women of child-bearing age and children 14 and younger should consume no more than one meal per week of predator fish, which includes largemouth, smallmouth, spotted, white, striped or hybrid bass, walleye, saugeye, and flathead catfish.

For complete details on fish consumption from DEQ, scan the code.



The abundance of smaller black bass in Oklahoma's waters was a factor in liberalizing harvest rules for fish under 14 inches statewide.

over 14 inches. So, anglers can only keep bass over 14 inches. But on average, seven of every 10 largemouth bass in Oklahoma lakes is less than 14 inches, limiting anglers' opportunity to keep bass.

Data from more than 100 Oklahoma lakes shows, on average, 82 percent of largemouth bass are **shorter than 16 inches**. While reduced harvest of large bass is beneficial, harvesting bass under 16 inches may improve some fisheries by reducing competition among bass, so individuals grow faster and larger.

With an abundance of smaller bass, there is often no need for a minimum length limit.

In February, the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Commission approved a Fisheries Division request to change the largemouth, smallmouth and spotted bass regulations. The **new rule will allow anglers to keep smaller, more abundant bass**, while limiting the harvest of larger bass.

Starting in September, anglers will be allowed to keep six bass daily, with only one of those longer than 16 inches.

Along with the new harvest rules, a black bass **tournament exemption** was established. An angler who possesses a tournament exemption authorized by the Wildlife Department may keep bass over 16 inches until weigh-in, and then the fish must be released. Instructions to apply for a tournament exemption will be provided in the Oklahoma Fishing and Hunting Regulations and on the ODWC website.

Fisheries Chief Ken Cunningham said the exemption process **allows bass tournaments to proceed** while also potentially allowing ODWC to collect more and better data about Oklahoma's black bass resource.

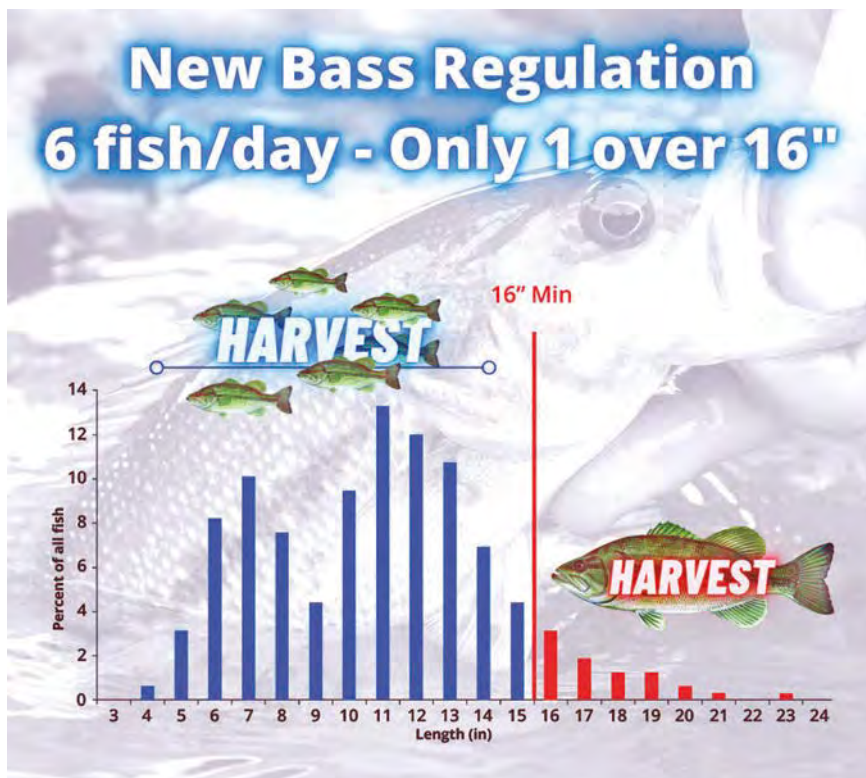
Now **it's up to the state's bass anglers**. Fisheries biologists are hoping the catch-and-release mind-set can be softened and that anglers will choose to harvest the smaller black bass. In addition to charting a course for improved fishing in the future, it's also a great way to enjoy Oklahoma's natural resources and store away some food security in your freezer. 🐟

CONTRIBUTING: Kelly Adams, Supervisor, Communication and Education Division.



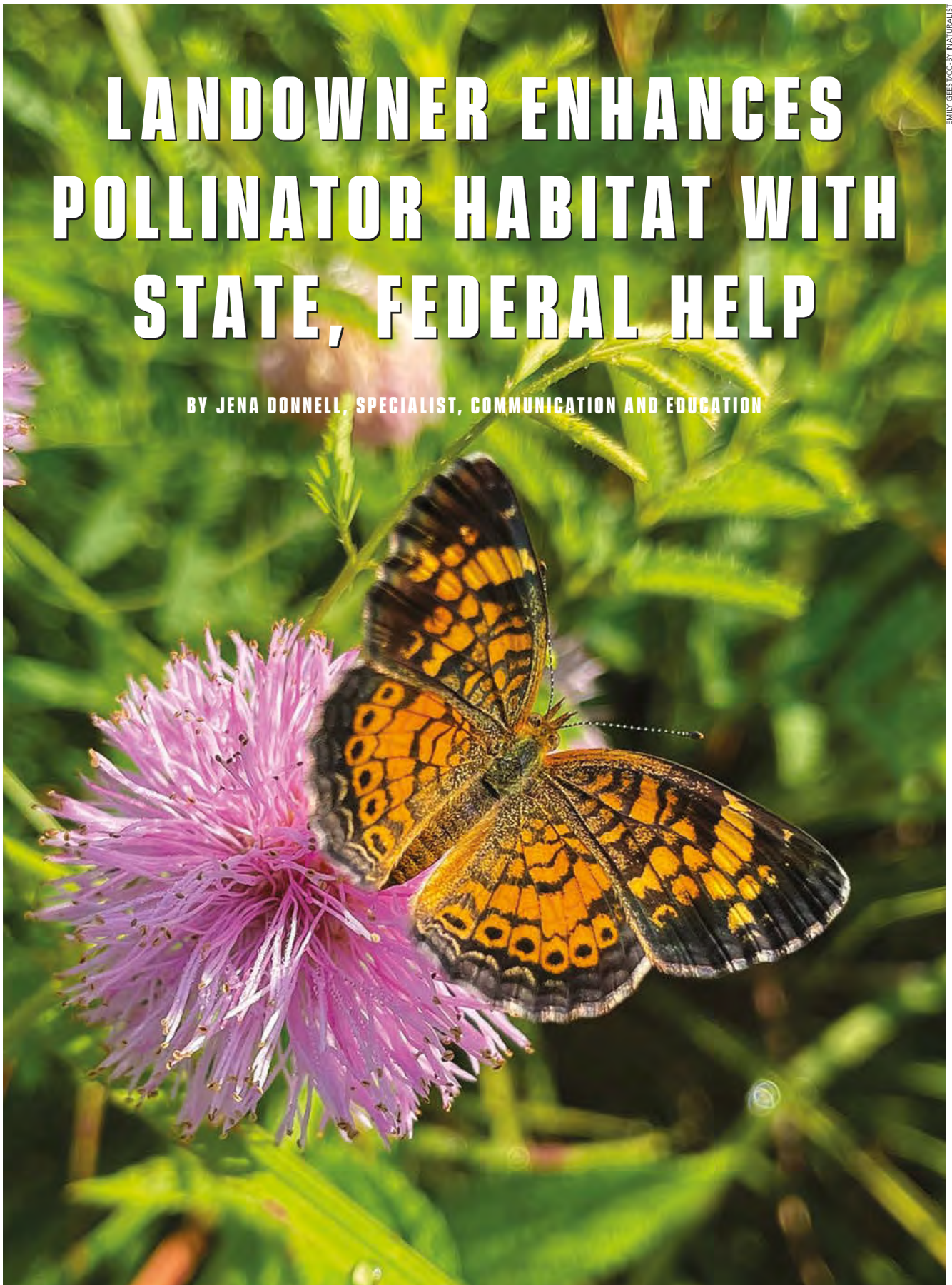
COREY JAGER/ODWC

Largemouth and smallmouth bass of 14 inches and less may be harvested statewide under new harvest rules that begin in September.



LANDOWNER ENHANCES POLLINATOR HABITAT WITH STATE, FEDERAL HELP

BY JENA DONNELL, SPECIALIST, COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATION



EMILY GIBBS/CC BY/NATURALIST

Pearl crescent butterfly observed during a survey of Colin Berg's Osage County property.

Colin Berg has spent his 28-year career with the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation sharing his passion for hunting and fishing. In addition to teaching various outdoor skills, Berg also shares the importance and value of quality wildlife habitat to Oklahomans of all ages. And when he bought some property in Osage County in 2011, he started putting those teachings into practice.

"It's a lot of hard work, but it's been really rewarding to see the results of all the habitat management practices from the last 10 years," said Berg, Education Section Supervisor with the Wildlife Department.

He's been able to put his wildlife-driven plans for his property into action with landowner partnerships offered through the Wildlife Department, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Natural Resources Conservation Service.

"I've been able to put in fencing to help with grazing rotations, build fire-breaks, and conduct small prescribed burns through the available cost-share programs," Berg said. "I even planted a couple of acres to a native wildflower seed mix with the help of a special monarch habitat project that started a few years ago."

Berg started the monarch habitat project on the first day of spring in 2018. It was 44-degrees with a brisk north wind, but his thoughts were on flowering plants and the vibrant orange-and-black butterflies that depend on them.

"I'll be planting about three acres of wildflowers for monarchs today," Berg said. "Ten butterfly-friendly wildflowers were chosen for the seed mixture, and they'll be planted in long, narrow strips next to stands of native grass."

On the property's north side, Berg was planting several butterfly strips next to an area that was burned a few weeks earlier.

"It will be interesting to compare the butterfly strips planted next to a recently burned area to strips that are planted next to an area that was burned last year," Berg said.



Landowner Colin Berg plants a wildflower mix on his Osage County property in 2018, kicking off a habitat improvement project for monarch butterflies and other pollinators. State and federal agencies offer wildlife habitat improvement programs to landowners wanting to improve their properties.



David Berman and Emily Geest, Ph.D. candidates at Oklahoma State University, establish a transect while surveying pollinator habitat on Osage County property of Colin Berg.

Fast-forward to 2022. After years of lending a helping hand to monarchs through the NRCS's Monarch Butterfly Habitat Development Project, Berg and five other enrolled landowners are now lending a hand to scientists researching monarchs and their habitats.

"I've been putting in all of these different practices. I've burned, changed the grazing routine, and planted a native seed mix. I want to know if it's working. And

I want to know which practices I should keep doing to make the most impact for monarchs and other pollinators."

To answer those questions, the NRCS has partnered with Oklahoma State University to monitor the project's conservation outcomes.

Researchers Emily Geest and David Berman, both Ph.D. candidates in OSU's Department of Integrative Biology, were recently tasked with conducting milkweed and blooming plant surveys on each of the study's cooperating properties.

"We're looking at how different management practices affect the growth and density of milkweed and other flowering plants," Geest said.

"We'll be documenting how many

milkweed stems are growing here; if they're vegetative, flowering, or in the seed pod stage; and what other plants are blooming within our transects."

While surveying, Geest and Berman stretch a tape measure up to 100 meters from a series of randomly chosen points across the properties, and then uses a 1-square-meter quadrat made from PVC pipe to assess the plant community on each side of the tape measure every five meters along the transect.

The monitoring portion of the project began in summer 2021, and the researchers were excited by the diversity they encountered.

"I really enjoy looking across a grassland and seeing the diversity in plant communities and landscapes. But when we start looking at a fine scale — within 1 square meter of that grassland — we get to see so many different species of plants and insects living their life," Berman said.



Emily Geest and David Berman record species they observe during a survey of Colin Berg's property in Osage County.



David Berman records species found in a square-meter area during a survey of Berg's property in Osage County.



Dun skipper on green milkweed during a survey of Berg's property.

"We've already spotted four different species of milkweed on this property in just a few hours and a handful of transects," Geest said. "I think the diversity of plants and butterflies we've seen today is a great start in showing that landowners' management actions and choices can make a positive difference for pollinators and other wildlife."

This past January, Berg received preliminary findings from the milkweed survey that confirmed his habitat-enhancement practices were paying dividends.

"Having actual research to back up things that you do is great. I think this research shows the benefits of years' worth of projects that I've completed with assistance from NRCS, ODWC, Pheasants/Quail Forever, Partners for Fish and Wildlife, and the GRIP program with the Joint Venture. Past projects are impacting my management, which ultimately is benefiting monarchs."

Among the survey findings about Berg's property:

- The area had very good flowering plant availability for monarchs (scoring Excellent in nectaring habitat).
- Five types of milkweed recorded.
- Butterfly species encountered totaled 25, including some uncommon skippers such as an arogos skipper.
- Four types of bumblebees were recorded, including American bumble bees and black and gold bumble bees.

"I'm happy to see the variety of plant species as well as insects that they documented while conducting their transect surveys. You always kind of wonder if your efforts are working. Glad to see the benefit to monarchs and all of the other species listed here." ♡

For more about the Wildlife Department's habitat improvement programs in your area, scan the code:



A monarch caterpillar was documented on a survey of Berg's property.



Clearwing moth photographed during a survey of Berg's property.



Green comet milkweed during a survey of Berg's property.



This uncommon arogos skipper butterfly was observed during a habitat survey of Berg's property.

Conservation

Get Outdoors!

Plan an outing to learn about creatures that are active after sundown! Find a dark and quiet area where you and your parents or friends can sit under the stars and simply listen. You will hear all sorts of sounds that you don't hear during the daytime. How many birds, bugs or animals can you identify that are making these sounds in the dark?

for Kids!

Word Search: Snakes in Oklahoma

Hunting Tip

As summer begins, hunters can take some time to prepare for next fall. Some off-season activities include shooting practice with firearms or archery gear; scout areas you will be hunting; search for new hunting areas; maintain any gear that needs attention; or break-in new gear you'll be using soon.

Fishing Tip

If you are a state resident 15 or younger, you are exempt from needing a fishing license in Oklahoma. But, on June 4 and 5, everyone can fish in Oklahoma without needing a fishing license. Those are the annual Free Fishing Days, so make sure to ask someone new to go fishing with you!

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

Find and circle these words associated with snakes found in Oklahoma:

Rattles	Ratsnake	Kingsnake
Shedding	Gartersnake	Coachwhip
Venomous	Scales	Fangs
Copperhead	Pygmy	Cottonmouth

Some COOL FACTS about the Western Diamond-backed Rattlesnake:

- It is one of seven venomous snake species in Oklahoma.
- It has dark, diamond-shaped dorsal blotches edged in white.
- A light line runs from the eye back to the corner of the mouth.
- It has large rattles at the end of the tail.
- It is active day and night during milder weather, but only at night during summer.
- It hibernates in large numbers in dens.
- The female gives birth to live young.
- The young are born venomous.
- It prefers to live in dry areas with rocky outcrops or bluffs.
- It is an ambush hunter, waiting for prey to come to it.
- Rodents, rabbits, lizards, and ground-dwelling birds make up most of its prey.
- When disturbed, it will curl up and shake the rattle on its tail.
- It will avoid confrontation, but can become aggressive and strike.

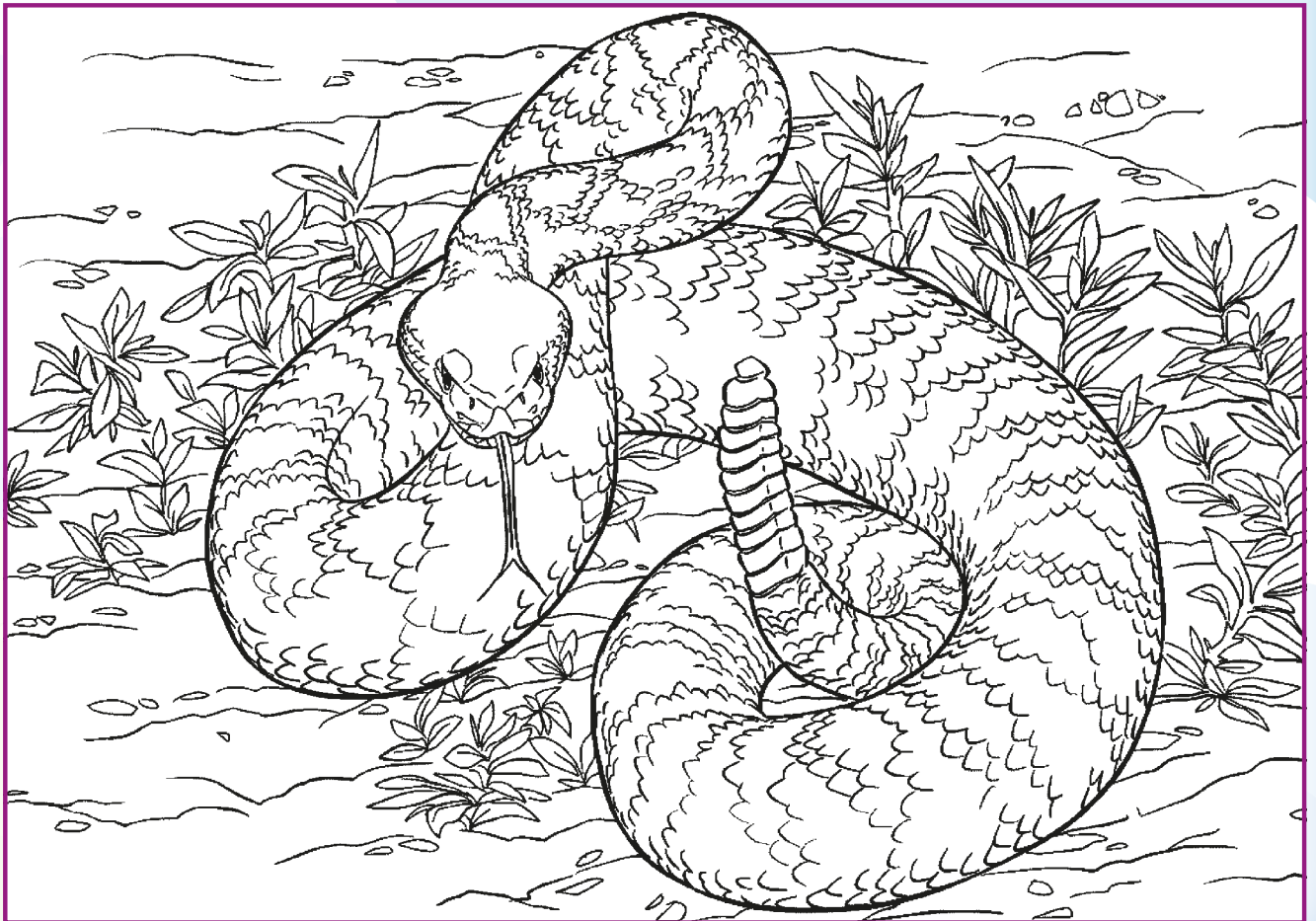


GREG SILVA READERS PHOTO SHOWCASE 2020



JEREMIAH ZURENDA

Color a Critter: Western Diamond-backed Rattlesnake



READY!

SET UP!

FIRE!



**LOADS OF PREPARATION KEEP
SHOTGUN TOURNEYS ON TARGET**

BY DON P. BROWN, SPECIALIST,
COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATION





DANIEL GRIFFITH/ODWC

Above: Various trophies are ordered ahead of time so they can be presented at the end of each event.

Below: Awards for top shooters are ordered ahead of time, including 3-D plaques such as this one.



DANIEL GRIFFITH/ODWC

For several thousand high school and middle school students across Oklahoma, it's a matter of pride for them to be able to shoulder their shotguns and give it their best shot at earning a state championship title.

These student-athletes are participants in the Oklahoma Scholastic Shooting Sports Program (OKSSSP), one of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation's suite of educational curriculums designed for school students.

Coordinator Damon Springer, a Senior Education Specialist in the Communication and Education Division, has been in charge of OKSSSP since it began in 2013. The first year, 50 schools were recruited to the new program. Each year has seen more schools sign up, and now about half of Oklahoma's 400 or so high schools are involved.

"OKSSSP gets a lot of praise and thanks for what it's done," Springer said. "This is the kind of sport you don't have to be an athlete to be really good and excel in."

Schools incorporate OKSSSP in various ways. Many of them use it as a part of a yearlong outdoor skills class, where students also participate in the ODWC's other education programs including Oklahoma Archery in the Schools, Explore Bowhunting and Hunter Education.

In OKSSSP, students learn proper firearms handling and safety, and they are usually using their own shotguns to participate in trapshooting. Coaches are required to attend training sessions with ODWC before they are certified to teach OKSSSP.

It's a competitive sport, and each spring ODWC holds four regional tournaments and one state finals event. More than 1,600 youths participate in those events.

A large part of conducting regional and state shoots falls on Education Specialist Jason Smith, OKSSSP's assistant coordinator.



The OKSSSP furnishes all of the clay targets used for its events. With each five-person team served 125 clays per round, thousands of targets are thrown during the course of the day.



Each shooter on winning teams receives a wooden disc simulating a clay target.



OKSSSP assistant coordinator Jason Smith, seated, and coordinator Damon Springer look over the status of registrations for an upcoming regional shooting competition. Recordkeeping is an important part of conducting the statewide program that involves more than 100 schools.





DON F. BROWN/OWC

He is in charge of preparing most everything needed to operate the ODWC events, getting it all to the sites, setting up, keeping everything running as smoothly as possible, then tearing down and hauling it back to prep for the next event.

Much of his job involves inventory and maintenance. ODWC furnishes all of the shotshells and clay targets for the competition shooting events. So before each shoot, Smith calculates how many boxes of targets and ammo will be needed for the expected number of shooters. Based on the number of teams registered, he determines how many trapshooting fields must be open so all of the youths can shoot in a day.

Smith said he begins preparing everything in January for the first regional tournament in March. All the while, he's stashing the necessary gear in OKSSSP's custom-designed 25-foot trailer, which he hauls to each event.

On the trailer are five American Trap Association target throwing machines, nearly 12,000 clay targets, 100 cases of shotshells, about two dozen shotguns, barricades, signage, and supply bins for each field that include vision and hearing protection for all shooters, first aid, ammo pouches, and scoring supplies.

Smith, along with other ODWC employees in the Education section, arrives on site the day before a scheduled shoot. He and the crew then work to set up all of the trap fields that will be used early the next morning. "Basically we have everything ready to just turn the switch on and start shooting."

During the shoot, Smith is sometimes serving as a field judge, or floating around to handle any glitches that arise. Sometimes machines or equipment will break down, and Smith will evaluate to decide whether to try to make repairs or move the team to a different field.



Assistant coordinator Jason Smith loads shotshells into the OKSSSP trailer that goes to each event hauling all the necessary items for holding a successful competition.



Jason Smith loads a target thrower into the OKSSSP trailer.



Preparing scorecards and checking in teams at registration are among the clerical tasks handled during an event.



Event workers keep the target throwers filled with clay targets throughout the day.

Below: OKSSSP shooters grab vision and hearing protection along with a box of shotshells right before heading to the pad.





Wildlife Department employees from all divisions are offered the chance to volunteer to help conduct OKSSSP shotgun events. Here, Game Warden Shay Loudermilk, based in Hughes County, keeps score during the shoot.



ODWC employees and sometimes outside volunteers will serve as staff to conduct the regional and state shoots. They work as judges, scorers, target pullers, registrars and score tabulators.

Springer has prepared for the shoots by ordering the 700 or so awards that will be divided out to the top teams and shooters.

Over the years, the shooting events have become a well-oiled machine: School buses shuttle in and out all day long, and scores along with team and individual placings are posted through the day and on the Outdoor Education Facebook page within hours.

It's a lot of work to operate OKSSSP, not just during the spring shooting events but throughout the year, Springer said. "If I'm not getting phone calls, I'm worried!" But it also brings a great deal of reward.

"I'm part of getting to introduce them to firearms and shooting, a longstanding thing that they are going to be able to use the rest of their lives. You know, go out hunting or just go out shooting. Some of these kids have probably never seen a firearm. OKSSSP allows them to learn about them correctly, in a safe environment, and they get to represent their schools."

Smith added that the students get much more out of OKSSSP than the chance to shoot shotguns. They learn proper firearms handling, teamwork, shooting etiquette, cooperation, and respect of authority, among other things. And they learn that safety is the No. 1 priority.

"We're from Oklahoma, and 99 percent of youths are going to be exposed to firearms at some point," he said. "One thing about my job is the make sure that exposure is positive and safe."

But he also enjoys seeing the youths have a good time.

"Seeing these kids enjoy their day, and the teamwork and camaraderie they feed off each other with, it's really nice. I wish they had programs like this when I was in high school, because I would have absolutely loved it!" 🛡️



Banners are installed and ready before the shooting begins.



ODWC employees are assigned to score and judge at each trapshooting field during regional and state OKSSSP shotgun competitions.

Signage reminds everyone of the safety rules during an OKSSSP shotgun event.



All of the day's scoresheets are tallied, stacked and bundled at the end of another successful shoot.



The Secret Lives of WMAs

Plenty of Opportunities, Activity On These Areas During “Off-Season”

By John Rempe, Wildlife Biologist



Summertime fishing fun is an option at Doc Hollis Lake on the Sandy Sanders WMA in southwestern Oklahoma.

People who know about the Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) across the state most likely think about them as hunting or fishing spots. Most sportsmen and sportswomen who visit their favorite WMAs to enjoy the outdoors by hunting are using those areas from September to January each year. Some of them return during spring turkey season in April and May.

But it's only during that six-month period each year when most people visit WMAs. Truth is, there's a lot happening on these Wildlife Department areas during the other six months of the year.

WHAT ARE WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS?

All lands owned, leased, or under the management of the Wildlife Department are referred to as WMAs to accurately reflect the overall objectives for these lands and the results of the management activities conducted there.

Depending on the specific management objectives, all or parts of any particular WMA may be designated as a public hunting area (PHA), game management area (GMA), waterfowl refuge portion (WRP), wetland development unit (WDU), conservation and education area (CEA) and public fishing and hunting area (PFHA).

In addition to the ODWC-owned WMAs, the Department also works with other state and federal agencies to maintain public access on their areas. The McAlester Army Ammunition Plant (AAP) and the Camp Gruber Joint Maneuver Training Center (JMTC) are both owned and operated by the U.S. Department of the Army. National recreation areas and the national wildlife refuges are owned and managed by the U.S. Department of the Interior. All of these areas provide some hunting and fishing opportunities.



WHITNEY HESKETT/ODWC

Wister WMA and Lake Wister offers plenty of "off-season" opportunities for outdoor adventure.



TONY CRAWFORD/ODWC

Aerial application of herbicides is sometimes needed to accomplish management objectives on WMAs.

WHY ARE THERE WMAs IN OKLAHOMA?

The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation's mission is 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.

In ODWC's 2021 Game Harvest Survey, hunters were asked, "How important is public land to you for your hunting?" More than eight of 10 hunters said it was "very important."

Of those who said they were active hunters, 29 percent had hunted on public lands in 2020, and 8 percent relied exclusively on public land for hunting.



JENNIFER BENGE/ODWC

Cattle grazing leases are a way that WMAs can return revenue for ODWC's wildlife conservation and management activities.



Many WMAs are great locations for birdwatching, as this group experiences at Hackberry Flats WMA in southwestern Oklahoma.

WMAs offer more than just hunting and fishing opportunities. They are also used for outdoor events such as bird watching and educational tours, camping, boating, horseback riding, mountain biking, and hiking.

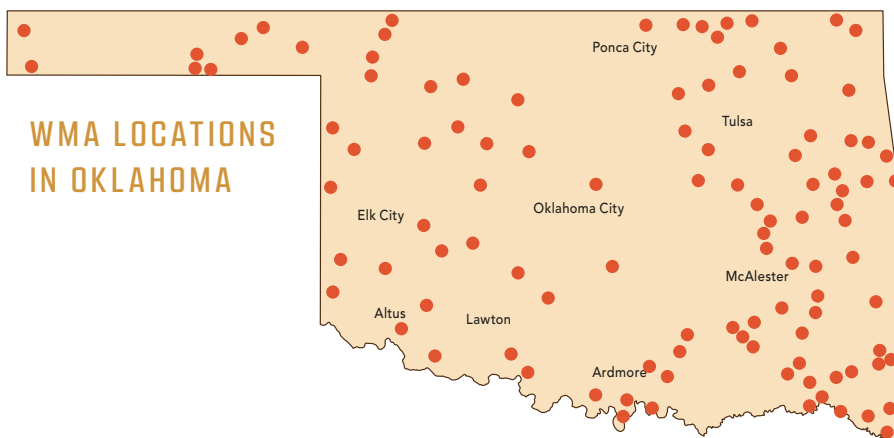
The survey asked licensed hunters if they visit WMAs for reasons other than hunting, and about four out of 10 said they had visited a WMA for nonhunting-related activities. Consequently, about 60 percent of surveyed hunters had not visited a WMA for reasons other than hunting, which represents a sizable opportunity for ODWC to share with more license holders the wide array of activities available on WMAs.

In recent years, hunters have cited a lack of access to land for hunting. The survey asked licensed hunters, "How has your access to private land for hunting changed over the last five years?" Responses showed that 31 percent said they had less access, while 47 percent had about the same level of access.

WHERE ARE WMAs FOUND?

The Wildlife Department manages 102 public hunting and fishing areas across the state, ranging from Rita Blanca National Grasslands in Cimarron County to the McCurtain County Wilderness Area in McCurtain County. Among those areas are 83 WMAs and 13 ODWC-owned fishing lakes. WMAs can be found in at least 55 of the state's 77 counties, and some counties contain multiple WMAs.

The Department's WMAs reflect how Oklahoma is blessed with a wide range of wildlife habitats. Habitat ranges from shortgrass prairie to tallgrass prairie, from pine forest to desert areas in the southwest, and river bottoms, hill country, cross timbers, sloughs and wetlands.



HOW ARE WMAs MANAGED?

A key in properly managing the land is choosing how to use it wisely. Each Department WMA has a management plan on how best to protect, enhance and use the area. Each WMA has its own particular wildlife species and habitat to manage.

Habitat and wildlife management go hand in hand. Habitat management may include prescribed burning, herbicide applications, agriculture or grazing leases, timber thinning, and mineral or surface rights leasing.

The top priority for public use of WMAs is for hunting, fishing, trapping, running dogs for sport, and associated activities. Lesser priorities, in order, are:

- Other wildlife-oriented activities (nature observation or photography, conservation education, etc.).
- Non-wildlife related activities, when they don't conflict with wildlife management objectives (hiking, backpacking, picnicking, horseback riding, short-term camping, etc.)
- Large group activities.

The Department uses leases as a management tool to benefit wildlife by providing supplemental food and cover, creating edges, maintaining openings, promoting various habitat changes to meet area management goals, and demonstrating publicly the compatibility between management practices and wildlife habitat improvements. Leases also generate funds for other management area activities.

Currently, there are 233 agriculture-related leases. Just

shy of \$1 million in revenue was generated by these leases in fiscal year 2021.

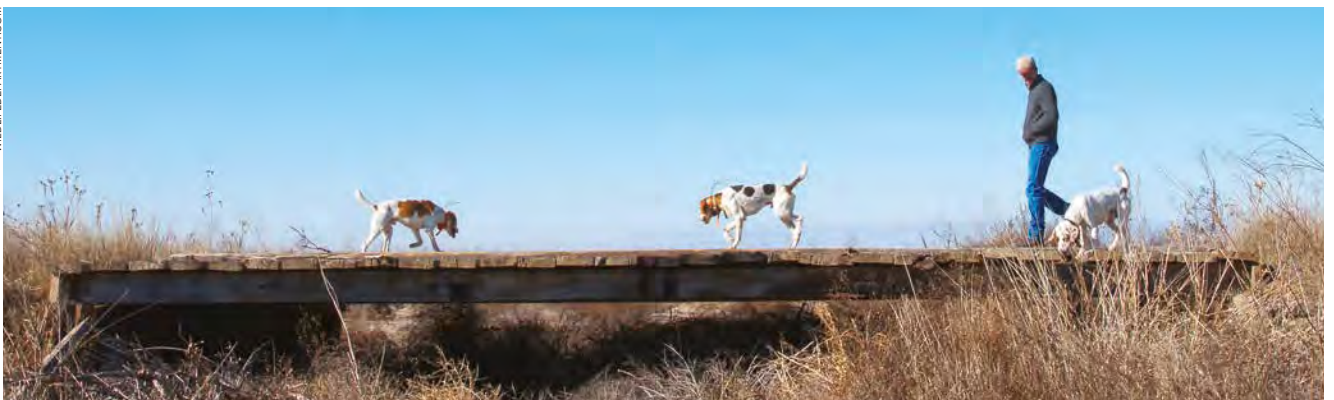
Along with managing for the wildlife and habitat, some areas also manage for human visitation to the area. A common way this is done is by closing some WMAs for a certain type of hunting, or holding only controlled hunts on the area.



Off-season prescribed burning is an important habitat management practice on WMAs across the state.



Nature photography can be quite rewarding during the off-season at Department WMAs.



Training of personal hunting dogs is an activity available on WMAs from Sept. 1 to May 30 annually.

IS THE ODWC BUYING MORE LAND?

Yes, the ODWC does look for opportunities to add more public access areas to its holdings. The Department is especially interested in acquiring acres that are adjacent to existing WMAs. However, in the past five years, several new WMAs have been added: Neosho Bottoms, Sans Bois, Sandhills, Arbuckle Springs, Barren Fork, and Thomas A. Bamberger Sr.

Here's a breakdown of the Wildlife Department's holdings:

- ODWC owns 346,790 acres in WMAs along with 3,814 acres of surface water.
- ODWC manages 312,549 acres under license from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation.
- ODWC is under agreement or leases to manage 720,570 acres from the U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, state Commissioners of the Land Office, and several timber companies.



Mulching is a habitat management practice at many WMAs.

In all, these lands under management by ODWC provide 1,339,708 acres that are accessible for hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation by the public.

Regulations require anyone entering a WMA to possess a hunting or fishing license (unless otherwise exempt) or a Wildlife Conservation Passport,



Designated shooting ranges are found at 11 WMAs across the state, and more are in the planning stages.



KELLY ADAMS/ODWC

Hiking and wildlife watching are among many "off-season" outdoor pursuits visitors can enjoy at areas like Sandy Sanders WMA.

offered for public users of Department-owned areas who decide they do not want hunting or fishing privileges. Since 2008, ODWC has used Conservation Passport revenue to buy additional public access land.

ODWC's public hunting and fishing areas not only give people places to enjoy the outdoors, but they also contribute to local economies. In some cases, farmers and ranchers count on public land leases to operate every year. WMA users buy fuel, food, lodging and gear when they visit the areas.

All in all, ODWC's public lands keep giving back in so many ways to the people and the wildlife that call Oklahoma home. 🏡

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: John Rempé has served with the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation for 25 years. He is an outdoor enthusiast who grew up on a family farm. Working the land, farming and ranching, and promoting wildlife habitat is a passion he enjoys daily. He's currently a wildlife biologist for the Copan, Hulah and Osage WMAs in northeastern Oklahoma.

CONTRIBUTING: ODWC Lands and Minerals Coordinator Kristen Gillman contributed to this article.



JOHN REMPE/ODWC

A combine harvests milo on a WMA agricultural lease area.

Oklahoma Artist Explores Nature With Pencil, Paper

BY JENA DONNELL, SPECIALIST, COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATION



"Crosstimbers" plein air (on location), pencil and pastels on toned paper.

Artist Debby Kaspari may have grown up in northern California, but her early years were linked to Oklahoma through a childhood hero, George M. Sutton. Sutton, a legend in the bird world for both his research and artwork, spent his final three decades in Oklahoma studying our bird life. Kaspari's eventual move to Norman, the city Sutton had called home, was purely coincidence when she met and married future University of Oklahoma biology professor Mike Kaspari. But her current home serves as yet another connection to her early hero.

As in Sutton's artwork, birds are the primary subject of Kaspari's sketches. And while she's traveled extensively for her work, Kaspari also finds artistic inspiration in the native plants and animals found in and around her Norman neighborhood.

"I was able to start a new project (recently), drawing visiting Mississippi kites, without leaving my yard," Kaspari said. "The kites would preen and hunt for frogs and insects from a nearby tree that had multiple bare branches. I probably have more than 150 sketches of those birds. I was just drawing for hours."

To better view and capture the birds' gestures and poses, Kaspari set up a scope in her front yard.

"When you draw, you need to take in all the little details. The scope helps me see so many elements that I may miss with the naked eye."



Debby Kaspari sketches visiting Mississippi kites from life in her Norman front yard.



Mississippi kite drawing, made through a scope, left, and finished "Kite in the Wind" oil on canvas, based on life-sketches.



"Round Robins," life-sketches through window during the February 2021 deep-freeze. The birds appeared to be trying to stay warm by puffing out their feathers like down jackets.

"When you draw, you need to take in all the little details. The scope helps me see so many elements that I may miss with the naked eye."

Kaspari's initial sketches are often done quickly, and are considered more "gesture drawings" than "measured drawings" that may not always accurately reflect the bird's proportions or dimensions. Once she has the foundation of the sketch, she then fills in the finer details, and often refers to field guides, photo reference, and drawing tutorials, like those from John Muir Laws, or Tim Wootton. She's even visited the Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History to learn from the bird skins collected by George M. Sutton.

To attract her sketchbook subjects, Kaspari leans heavily on the habitat found in her yard and neighborhood.

"We have native wildflowers, shrubs and trees in our yard, and the birds and other wildlife use those tangles to

"You really don't need anything more than a sketchbook and pencil .Just get outside and explore anything that catches your eye .Use the time with your sketchbook to improve your hand-eye coordination and to get a better sense of whatever it is that you choose to draw ."



Sunflowers




"Kiamichi River Headwaters in Southeastern Oklahoma" plein air, pastels.

hide, eat, and even nest. We also have a low-flow bird bath dripper; the sound of water really draws in the birds."

For aspiring artists, Kaspari recommends practice.

"You really don't need anything more than a sketchbook and pencil. Just get outside and explore anything that catches your eye. Use the time with your sketchbook to improve your hand-eye coordination and to get a better sense of whatever it is that you choose to draw."

Kaspari's work has been featured in *Oklahoma Today* and *Bird Watcher's Digest*, and displayed at the Sam Noble Museum. Connect with her, browse her sketchbooks, and check out her blog at drawingthemotmot.com. 

EDITOR'S NOTE: This article first appeared in the *Wild Side*, an e-newsletter of the Wildlife Department's Wildlife Diversity Program. Sign up for monthly updates about Oklahoma's nongame species and conservation efforts at wildlifedepartment.com.



Old Bison Bull, Wichita Mountains

OKLAHOMA WILDLIFE CONSERVATION FOUNDATION SPOTLIGHT



Oklahoma Wildlife
CONSERVATION FOUNDATION

FOUNDATION MISSION

Oklahomans dedicated to conserving, preserving and promoting our wildlife, wild spaces and outdoor heritage, for current and future generations

WHY SHOULD I SUPPORT THE FOUNDATION?

- » Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC) receives no appropriated state tax dollars to fund operations and is funded by licenses, fees and your donations
- » Resident license prices haven't increased in almost 20 years and are set by the legislature
- » OWCF is a 501 (c) (3) charitable organization, specifically a Type 1 supporting organization tied to the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation under IRC Section 509 (a) (3)
- » Donations support ODWC and bring more wildlife and outdoor projects, programs and resources to Oklahoma
- » Foundation donations expedite and increase the number and size of ODWC projects
- » Foundation contributions can leverage federal programs to bring \$3 to \$1 and even \$9 to \$1, matching funds to Oklahoma

OKWILDLIFEFOUNDATION.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.OKwildlifefoundation.org or www.facebook.com/OKWildlifeFoundation or email Rick Grundman at rgrundman@okwildlifefoundation.org, or call (918) 323-5566.

Ethan House, Board of Directors



House is originally from Houston. He is married to Wendy House, and they have a daughter, Hadley. He and his family now reside in Oklahoma. He is the vice president for business development at EnergyNet Inc., where oil, natural gas, and other commodities are auctioned.

He earned his bachelor's degree in marketing, advertising and public relations from West Texas A&M University. He joined the Oklahoma Wildlife Conservation Foundation as an original member in 2018 after a colleague introduced him to Wildlife Commissioner James V. Barwick. After some discussion about OWCF, he was eager, without hesitation, to join the board. He loves the outdoors and the mission the Foundation was setting out to accomplish.

House is encouraging others to support the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation through OWCF so all can enjoy the wildlife and wild spaces Oklahoma has to offer. By joining the Foundation, he can actively ensure that future generations have the space to enjoy their outdoor pursuits.

He believes that there are several projects that ODWC has identified that need to be focused on, and they vary greatly. He understands the differences in updated fish hatcheries across the state and assisting Game Wardens with updated gear and equipment. "Both are integral to the future of the outdoors in Oklahoma," he said. House is confident that OWCF will be able to assist with the goals of the Department for the betterment of sportsmen and sportswomen as well as the employees of ODWC.

Other boards and groups House is involved with include:

- The Petroleum Alliance of Oklahoma.
- Acquisition, Divestment & Mergers (ADAM-OKC).
- Oklahoma Youth Hunting Program.
- Wes Welker Foundation.

"I have been hunting and fishing most of my life," House said. "It has grown and expanded into variations and has taken me all over the U.S. and other countries. The experiences are incredible, as are the people you meet along the way. The best part about it is that you have a story to tell later and inspire others to experience the outdoors."

House enjoys any outdoor activity. Anything that gets him out-



House enjoys fly fishing on a mountain stream.

side makes him happy, even if it's just mowing the grass. If he had to choose an all-time favorite outdoor activity, it would have to be fishing, he said. "Whether you are fly fishing a river in the mountains or out on the flats in the bay, you get to experience a slice of the outdoors that the majority never get a chance to see," he said.

He considers himself fortunate to not only get to experience the outdoors himself, but he has the opportunity to share it with his friends and family. He tries to get his family into the outdoors at every opportunity. Whether it's a fishing excursion, hiking, biking or simply going for a walk in the woods, he just enjoys experiencing it with his family. "I wish it were all day every day. There is so much to learn just watching the natural world," he said.



Fishing is among House's many outdoor pursuits. Here, he proudly shows off a nice lunker bass.

"I ask two things from everyone who reads this: 1. Support the OWCF in any way you can. Every dollar counts! 2. Introduce someone to the outdoors this year — a family member, friend, or colleague. Find something you can both do, and create some fond memories." 🍷



House, right, and hunting buddy after a successful Argentinian dove hunt.

OUTDOOR STORE

license.GoOutdoorsOklahoma.com

Sign in or shop online as a guest. Items also available in person at ODWC headquarters 1801 N. Lincoln Blvd. in Oklahoma City.

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



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



**SOON TO BE
COLLECTOR'S ITEMS**

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



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

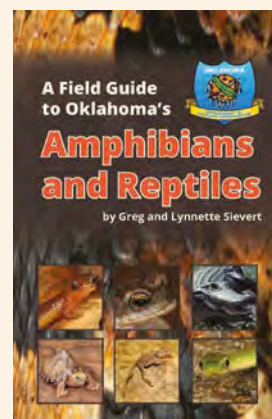
This updated edition has topographical maps of Wildlife Management Areas and now includes Department-owned fishing lakes across Oklahoma. At almost 100 pages, the atlas presents maps showing where to access areas, adds lands that have been acquired since 2010, and shows special features at each area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

NEW EDITION!

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



Give the Gift that keeps on Giving All Year Long!

"OUTDOOR OKLAHOMA" MAGAZINE

Start enjoying a full year (six big issues) of hunting, fishing, natural history, camping and much more when you subscribe to "Outdoor Oklahoma" magazine or give as a gift!

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

For bill-me-later orders for the magazine, call (800) 777-0019.

Order online at license.GoOutdoorsOklahoma.com, then click "Shop."

THE FORK-TAILED BUSH KATYDID

WATCHABLE WILDLIFE • BY DANAE DAVENPORT, EDUCATION INTERN

The fork-tailed bush katydid (*Scudderia furcata*) is a medium-size insect found in northern Central America, southern Canada, and in all parts of the United States and Mexico.

Fork-tailed bush katydids can be found in nearly any habitat from grasslands to forests. Their main source for nutrition comes from grasses, leaves, and some flowers, which allows their habitat range to stretch across many different biomes.

Six species in the genus *Scudderia* have been identified in North America, with the fork-tailed bush katydid being the most prevalent.

All six species share similar characteristics. The only way to differentiate the fork-tailed bush katydid from the others is by the adult male's dorsal

process, a hornlike feature that protrudes from the top of the abdomen at the rear. The dorsal process is pronged, like a fork, which is what inspired this katydid's name.

Adult female fork-tailed bush katydids measure 2.5 to 3 inches long. The male katydid is often smaller than the female, about 1.5 inches long.

Female katydids possess a long, thick, hook-like structure at the rear of their abdomen called the ovipositor. Near the end of summer, the female uses the ovipositor to lay her eggs on the underside of leaves in tight, overlapping

rows. The eggs look similar to tiny pumpkin seeds in both shape and color. The female lays one clutch, usually consisting of around 20 eggs, only once in her lifetime, as the lifespan of most katydids is less than one year.

The eggs hatch in spring. The insects then go through five or six nymphal instars, or periods between molting. In these instars, the nymphs have a similar body shape to the adults, although much smaller and with no wings. They are brightly colored with light green and red bodies, dark legs, and slender black-and-white-banded antennae.

As the nymphs continue to molt through spring, they grow in size and lose their color variety, becoming a single shade. Adult katydids are mostly bright green with a leafy pattern on their forewings, which helps them blend in with vegetation. During late summer into early fall, the color variety in the adults expands to include dark green, light brown, red-brown, or even pink-red. All katydid species have long, thin antennae as adults and nymphs.

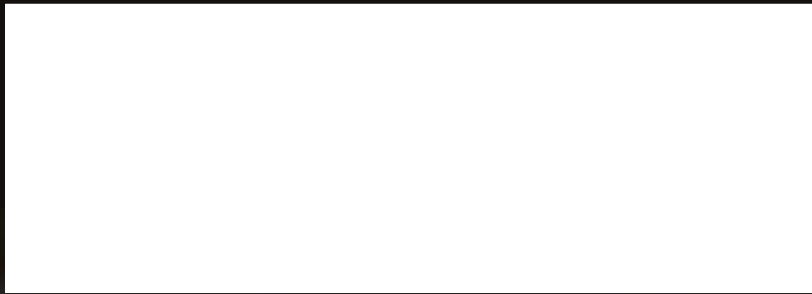
Katydids have excellent eyesight and often hide from predators on the underside of leaves before they can be seen. They are much easier to hear than to see, and they are particularly recognizable by their chirps. Unlike crickets, both male and female adult katydids produce noise. Each species of katydid has some specific identifiable sounds, but all six species share a common call that sounds like the insects are saying "katy-did" and "katy-didn't." Often sung in a chorus, the calls can most often be heard toward dusk into the twilight hours. ♡

Katydids have excellent eyesight and often hide from predators on the underside of leaves before they can be seen.



JIM JOHNSON/NATURALIST CC-BY/NC

Female fork-tailed bush katydid .
Inset: male fork-tailed bush katydid .



KELLY ADAMS/ODWC



The state's Wildlife Management Areas are busy with hunters during the colder months of the year. But what about spring and summer? Actually, plenty of activities are under way during the "off-season" on these public lands. Learn about the secret lives of WMAs inside this edition of Outdoor Oklahoma.

Outdoor Oklahoma

ODWC OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

