

Arkansas Chapter of the Wildlife Society

Newsletter

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Mike Coker, 1951-2015

Michael Earl Coker went to be with his Heavenly Father in the early hours of Thursday July 2, 2015. Mike graduated in 1974 from Arkansas Tech University with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Wildlife Biology, minoring in botany. Within months of graduation, he was employed by the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission. Mike's career spanned 34 years, eventually retiring as the Regional Wildlife Supervisor in Brinkley, where he supervised management practices on thousands of acres of public land in Eastern Arkansas.

Mike loved his community. He served on the Clarendon School Board for six years and often remarked that one of the highlights of that service was presenting his son's high school diploma. Mike was a 32nd degree Scottish Rite Mason and member of Euclid Lodge 130 in

Stuttgart. He was past master of Cache Lodge in Clarendon. In the 1990's, Mike had the honor of being appointed the position of District Deputy Grand Master of lodges in Eastern Arkansas, of which he held for two years.

Mike loved the Lord. He became a member of



Gideon's International, serving many years as secretary of the Brinkley Camp, where he participated in distributing the word of GOD. He was an active member of Clarendon First Baptist Church where he loved to sing in the choir and worshipped his Lord and Savior for over

thirty years.

Michael leaves his lovely wife Glenda Coker of Clarendon, and his parents, Thomas and Evelyn Coker of St. Charles. Mike's children survive him: his son Jereme Michael Coker and wife Sylvia of Portland, Oregon; Mike's daughter Misty Derrick and husband Chris of Conway. Mike has two brothers and one sister: his brother Darrell Coker and wife Natalie of Little Rock, his brother Paul Coker and wife Stacey of Mayflower, and his sister Cathy Palomo and husband David of San Antonio, Texas. Mike has one beautiful granddaughter, Madalyn M. Derrick, also of Conway. He leaves a host of great friends and a wonderful church family.

The Nature Conservancy Buys Property Adjacent to Pinnacle Mountain State Park

The Nature Conservancy in Arkansas recently purchased 247 acres of fields and woods, breathtaking views of Pinnacle Mountain and 1.7 miles of Little Maumelle River frontage adjacent to The Ranch neighborhood. The property, valued at \$4.45 million, was sold to the Conservancy at significantly discounted rate of \$1 million by Ranch Property Inc. (RPI).

“We are very appreciative of Belinda, Rob, and Cathy Shults, Gene Pfeifer and Ed Willis for working with The Nature Conservancy on a conservation outcome for this property that benefits Arkansans. RPI’s \$3.45 million donation made it possible and we are very thankful. We look forward to the positive conservation outcomes for our new neighbors and the people of central Arkansas,” stated Scott Simon, Director of The Nature Conservancy in Arkansas.

Conserving the property will add to the conservation lands already in Little Rock and Pulaski County while protecting a part of the view shed of Pinnacle Mountain State Park and the river corridor that so many people enjoy for fishing and canoeing. The Conservancy is working on the future use and management of the property with the neighbors of The Ranch, Arkansas State Parks and other partners.

“Donating this land to conservation was important to all of the RPI partners. Over the years, we have watched our children discover nature here and want that experience to continue for future generations. We are fortunate to have found the ideal owner and manager of this beautiful property in The Nature Conservancy” stated Belinda Shults.

Plans for the use of the property and partners in the project continue to develop. Once finalized, partners, neighbors and future plans will be celebrated at a dedication later in 2015.

Endowed Research Fund To Honor The Late Dr. Robert H. Burch, Jr.

Family, friends and colleagues of the late Dr. Robert H. Burch, Jr. have begun a campaign to create a waterfowl research endowment in the University of Arkansas at Monticello Foundation Fund.

The fund honors the late Dr. Robert H. Burch, Jr., of Monticello, a dentist, waterfowl enthusiast and avid duck hunter who died January 30, 2015. Funds generated by the endowment will be used for waterfowl research and waterfowl-related academic activities, with first preference given to undergraduate or graduate research. Examples might include undergraduate scholarships, graduate assistantships or stipends, expenses for travel and conference participation, or equipment.

Funds will be allocated by a committee chaired by Dr. Christopher Sims, a biology professor on the UAM faculty and a close friend of the late Dr. Burch. The committee will include representatives from both the School of Forestry and Natural Resources and the School of Mathematical and Natural Sciences.

Dr. Burch began his dental practice while serving in the United States Army and was actively involved in Ducks Unlimited. A graduate of Monticello High School and Hendrix College, he earned a doctorate of dental surgery degree in 1985 from the University of Tennessee Center for Health Sciences and graduated from two general practice dental residencies during his 12 years of active military service.

He returned to Monticello in 1998 to take over the dental practice of his late father, Dr. Robert H. Burch, Sr. In addition to his dental practice, he served 10 years on the Monticello School Board, including two terms as president.

Dr. Mick Harvey, 1934-2015

Dr. Michael (Mick) Joseph Harvey, 80, of Cookeville, TN died June 30, 2015 at Cookeville Regional Medical Center. He was born September 23, 1934 in Chicago, IL to the late Wallie John and Pearl Kathryn Klupa Harvey.



Dr. Harvey in 2003

Dr. Harvey was Professor Emeritus and former Chairman in the Department of Biology at Tennessee Technological University. He also served at the University of Memphis as Biology faculty. His graduate work was Zoology/Animal

Biology, in which he received a Ph.D. degree (University of Kentucky, 1967) and a M.A. degree (Stephen F. Austin State University, 1962). His B.S. degree (Botany/Plant Biology) was received in 1958 from Eastern Illinois University.

Dr. Harvey had many interests in his field, particularly endangered bats. Along with research on bats, he studied reptiles, amphibians, and mammals, as well as various aspects of biospeleology. He has authored or coauthored numerous publications, including "Arkansas Bats: A Valuable Resource (1986), "Bats of the Eastern United States" (1992), and "Bats of the United States and Canada" (2011). Prior to university service, he taught and coached at the high school and junior high school levels.

He was a member of St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church, the Knights of Columbus, and numerous professional organizations. He is survived by his wife of 54 years, Lora Conley Harvey (whom he married June 2, 1961 in Flora, IL); two sons and daughters-in-law, Doug and Ami Harvey, Rick and Julie Harvey, all of Franklin, TN.

Spring Meeting Minutes 9 April 2015 UA Cooperative Extension Service Auditorium, Little Rock AR

The meeting began at the Bufflehead Bay Trail Head, Maumelle Wildlife Management Area. Martin Blaney and Steve Burgess from the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC) and Stephanie Hymel from Central Arkansas Water led a discussion on the development of the Maumelle Wildlife Management Area and the partnerships required for it to be successful. They discussed how the lake provides drinking water to many Little Rock residents and how carbon inputs into the lake react with the chlorine treatment of the water to create carcinogenic compounds. Multiple partnerships have been necessary to establish prescribed burning regimes and timber thinning to reduce carbon inputs as well as to allow recreational use of the lake while still providing safe drinking water. After the discussion, attendees had time to explore the area before lunch.

Following lunch, the group convened at the University of Arkansas (UA) Cooperative Extension Service Auditorium in Little Rock for the plenary session and business meeting. Allison Fowler, President, opened the session by welcoming everyone and thanking Dr. Becky McPeake, UA, for securing the venue. A detailed agenda for the afternoon session is included.

Brent Taylor from Texas A&M – Corpus Christi was the first presentation of the plenary session. His presentation discussed the use of LiDAR to quantify current land use in bottomland hardwoods that have become degraded in the Mingo Basin, Missouri. Brent's presentation included conceptual models to depict sediment and nutrient loads and models to identify focal areas of private land that would be suitable for land acquisition and future restoration efforts.

Ron Redman, President of Mitigation Surveying Services spoke next on new techniques that may make locating new caves easier than the traditional on-foot approach. His presentation exemplified how he has been assessing the use of locating caves using color infrared and thermal imaging. Ron concluded that these techniques were promising but there are still

several obstacles to overcome for them to become reliable.

Cory Gray, the AGFC Deer Program Coordinator, provided attendees of an overview of the changing management and population dynamics of white-tailed deer in Arkansas. Cory summarized 77 years of harvest data, 34 years of biological data, 13 years of heard health data, and 4-11 years of observation data garnered from hunters. Currently, Cory explained that the age structure of the Arkansas deer population is more diverse than in the past, there are more entries than ever in Boone and Crockett and hunters have observed a 2.5 doe to 1 buck herd structure and 7.6 deer are seen on the stand per hour. Cory ended his presentation explaining he is concerned with decreasing number of hunters, commercialization and privatization of land, nuisance urban deer, and disease management in the population.

Ben Batten, the Community Fishing Program Coordinator of AGFC spoke last before the business meeting. Stemming off of Cory's presentation, Ben showed a figure of the increasing Arkansas population overlaid with a decreasing trend line of hunters and anglers in the state. Ben stated that currently in Arkansas the average age of a hunter is 37.7 years old, 83.5% of hunters are male, and 73% live in rural areas. Arkansas hunters are also more consistent in purchasing licenses than Arkansas anglers on a yearly basis. Ben continued on to explain the Locavore Pilot Program through the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) that AGFC participated in during Fall 2015. Arkansas' program, as a subset of the AFWA program, focused on people interested in food with little to no hunting experience. They selected 12 participants out of 104 competitive applications and the participants went through hunter-education training, gun safety and target practice, a big game and a small game hunt. Ben described this program as a successful method to increase recruitment of non-traditional hunters and explained that future directions will involve regional hunts.

The business meeting was led by President Allison Fowler. Dr. Becky McPeake, UA, announced a save the date for the Wildlife Habitat Restoration on Private Lands Conference in Batesville, AR 2-6 May 2016. To receive e-mail announcements and updates about

the conference, members can sign up at arprivatelands.eventbrite.com.

Dr. Rachael Urbanek, Secretary-Treasurer, presented the fall meeting minutes; the minutes were approved by the attendees. Rachael reviewed the chapter financial report and membership report and these reports were also approved. Rachael also explained the new Student Professional Development Fund that was created by the Board at the executive meeting in December 2014. See the Fall Newsletter that included the details regarding this fund. Student chapters should note that there is still \$700 for professional development activities for the year 2015 and proposals can be sent to Dr. Rachael Urbanek at rurbanek@atu.edu.

Geoffrey Payne, President of the student chapter of Arkansas State University (ASU) was next to report updates for his chapter. The chapter currently has 43 members and they participated in conclave and finished 11th place overall. Geoffrey also mentioned they are continuing to maintain their 1-mile stretch of road for trash clean-up and that members participated in an ASU Earth Day exhibit, a clean-up at the ASU biological station, and a sports show.

J. D. Baldwin reported that the Arkansas Tech University (Tech) student chapter had approximately 50 members. The chapter continues to conduct service at Bearcat Hollow and they sold out of 150 tickets to their 3rd annual Beast Feast in which they raised \$13,000. The chapter members also have decided that they will no longer participate in a highway trash pick-up and instead are seeking to cooperate with the Army Corp of Engineers to maintain a trash pick-up at Bona Dea Sanctuary, an urban wetland complex park adjacent to Tech. Tech students also participated in conclave in which they placed 12th overall and had 4 individual winners in the obstacle course, drawing, poetry, and goose calling.

After the student chapter updates, President Allison Fowler explained the bylaws change to be voted on at the meeting. Currently, the bylaws state that there must be a minimum of 2 regular meetings per year and 26 members at the spring meeting voted to change the wording to

minimum of 1 regular meeting per year (26 for, 0 opposed). Allison explained prior to the vote that changing these bylaws will produce greater flexibility and allow ARTWS to have occasional multi-day meetings once a year instead of 2 one-day meetings.

Members attending the meeting also elected a President-Elect and Secretary-Treasurer. Dr. Tom Risch from ASU ran uncontested for President-Elect and all 26 votes were in his favor. Similarly, Clint Johnson from AGFC ran uncontested for Secretary-Treasurer and all 26 votes were in his favor. Dr. Risch will become President in Spring 2017 and Clint will take over Dr. Rachael Urbanek's responsibilities of Secretary-Treasurer in July 2015. Clint will be assuming his officer role early because Rachael has accepted a new job and will be leaving the state of Arkansas.



Dr. Tom Risch, President-elect

Blake Sasse, chapter Historian and webpage manager informed attendees that if they have been trying to use the old webpage to pay their dues it will not work. Members that want to pay dues online can go to <http://drupal.wildlife.org/arkansas/> for ARTWS updates and can pay for Chapter dues via the parent society portal.

After the business meeting, Clifton Jackson, the Small Game Program Coordinator for AGFC began the second half of the plenary session. Clifton explained that quail populations have been on the decline due to lack of good habitat and he described a project that partnered with the National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative that involved a landscape approach to restoring quail populations across 25 states. Clifton further described a cooperative agreement with

the National Park Service on Pea Ridge National Military Park that is a part of this quail program and explained that habitat restoration and monitoring of quail population will occur over the next 10 years.

Ted Zawislak, an AGFC Private Lands Biologist, next spoke about a project aimed at restoring historical early successional habitat at the Fred Berry Education Center in Yellville, AR. Ted explained that prescribed burns, herbicide application, cedar removal, planting of native warm season grasses, and the creation of a pollinator patch were the main management components of project.

Clint Johnson, another AGFC Private Lands Biologist, then described AGFC's new program that provides instruction for private landowners on small-scale (<20 ha) prescribed burns. Clint explained that prior to the program the Arkansas Forestry Commission and other federal programs existed for landowners as resources to learn prescribed burns but these programs were only meant to establish the practice of landowners prescribe burning, but not to maintain the practice. The new AGFC program called Fire on the Forty-One is modeled after a program in Mississippi that combines classroom teaching and hands-on practice implementing small scale prescribed burns. It is a 4-hour program that teaches the fundamentals and the first program was in Jan 2014 which sold out. Since the first program, Clint has continued to improve the instruction based on participant feedback and he has had 11 classes in the last 15 months with 230 landowners. His biggest challenge is being able to time the hands-on experience for the landowners and currently uses a video that exhibits how to implement a burn when the weather does not cooperate.

Dr. Becky McPeake from the UA Cooperative Extension Service was the last speaker of the day. Her presentation described the feral hog "culture" in Arkansas and the education efforts she leads to educate Arkansas residents about feral hogs. The extension offers a multitude of written media, workshops, meeting presentations, trapping demonstrations, individual instruction, and county agent training. Dr. McPeake also explained that research and evaluation of these education program is also being conducted in the form of evaluation surveys at workshops and a master's project by a

county agent that surveyed the perception of feral hogs by Arkansas landowners. Future work will include collaborative education efforts with the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

President Allison Fowler adjourned the meeting at 4:30PM.

**ATWS Executive Committee
Meeting
June 30, 2015
AGFC Headquarters, Little Rock,
AR**

A meeting of the Arkansas Wildlife Society Executive Committee was held on June 30, 2015 at the Little Rock AGFC office in the downstairs conference room.

Present were:

Clint Johnson- Secretary/Treasurer
Tom Risch- President Elect
Blake Sasse- Newsletter Editor
Allison Fowler- President
Keith Weaver- Member at Large
Tom Nupp- Past president
Rachael Urbanek- exiting secretary/treasurer
Allison called the meeting to order at 10:07

Tom Nupp mentioned he had just completed an audit of TWS finances, which was emailed to executive committee members on 6-29-15. It was presented to Allison. Tom said the audit was accurate and made very easy, thanks to Rachael's impeccable record keeping. Blake agreed to perform the 2016 audit since his is in the same office as Clint.

Blake discussed the status of committees and that most were currently inactive. Most current committee action is ad hoc, after a need arises. An example is the activation of an informal conservation committee with the political turmoil around conservation legislation in Arkansas last year. Blake recommended that a conservation committee be a priority. Tom N. recognized the need of forming a meeting committee since we are changing to a more complex meeting that may need more work than the president can handle. Allison stated she would investigate reforming some committees as necessary and will work on soliciting for

committee chairs. As part of making our annual meeting a more significant event, Blake recommended we form an award committee to recognize outstanding biologists. Allie appointed him chair of this committee. Blake will use existing documentation, like nomination forms for Biologist of the year in AGFC WMD, to select recipients.

The committee had some discussion on the best timing for our annual meeting and there was consensus that summer is a bad time. January, February and March were identified as good times. Blake and Rachael recommend investigating annual joint meetings with Arkansas AFS, but Tom N. advised that AFS has a standing rotation of joint meetings with neighboring states and it would be difficult to fit into their rotation. The group narrowed down to the last week of February or the first week of March. Allie recommended a Thursday and Friday for the meeting and the group agreed. A starting time of 10 am on Thursday was tentatively chosen.

February 25-26 and March 3-4 were identified as possible dates. Allison recommended the 4H center in Little Rock and presented a cost list for lodging and food. Double occupancy for one night, meeting space, and food for two days was quoted at a very reasonable \$95 per person. Other venues that were brought up were Lake Degray State Park, Petit Jean State Park, and WinRock Conference center. Allison agreed to investigate venues further. The group chose to investigate the 4H center further, including the minimum number of people to secure the group rate and their alcohol policy. The group decided this should be a top priority to secure a date and Tom R. agreed to help Allison.

Allison began discussion of the structure of the meeting, perhaps with half a day of presentations on Thursday, a social Thursday night and another half day of presentations or a field trip on Friday. The final structure will depend on how many presenters we will have. The group agreed that we should hold a call for abstracts, rather than invite speakers as in years past. Rachael recommended calling for both titles and abstracts and talking up the new meeting format when the call was made. Tom asked about a deadline for abstract submission and January 8 was tentatively chosen. The group decided that a preliminary announcement for the

new structure and abstract call should be released sometime around Thanksgiving, but no specific date was decided upon. When the call for abstracts is made, someone should look into sending invitations to other agencies and companies that are not currently represented at meetings. We could also get contact information for parent society members living in AR that are not members of the AR society. Neighboring states doing research in AR and AWAP/SWG contacts are other possibilities.

Allison recommended that we put quite a bit of thought into the social activities as a way to spur interest in the meeting. Rachael recommended a quiz bowl tournament between schools, and possibly even professionals. Tom N. cautioned to be careful not to allow quiz bowl to take over the meeting. The group agreed that university advisors would take the lead in securing quiz bowl equipment and questions and for the structure to be similar to Conclave. Tom R recommended putting together a social game with a traveling trophy, perhaps pairing students with professionals. Tom R. will be in charge of the social. Allison will look into AGFC sponsored activities, like the interactive archery trailer used by Education Division. Keith recommended a student photo contest similar to that at Conclave. It was decided that awards from these activities should be given at the very end of the meeting to encourage participants to stay until the end. Tom recommended we add a keynote speaker for the social and agreed to find one.

Rachael stated that our current balance available to fund a meeting was \$1,800. Blake said ATWS usually made a profit from meeting registration. Tom R recommended selling t-shirts as a fundraiser and Rachael recommended letting students design the t-shirt as a way to increase involvement. Rachael wanted to increase the number of meeting participants that were members of the Arkansas TWS Society since many people who attend never pay dues and aren't members. Blake recommended to include membership in the registration price. Clint recalled that for many AFS meetings, registration including membership was at a reduced rate compared to registration without membership.

Rachael recommended Clint look back into notes to see where we stand in our Student

Activities fund. Clint will remind students in September to apply and it was decided the deadline for application should be in the first week of December. Rachael recommended looking into student grants for the national TWS meeting if we have excess student development funds. This funding should be restricted to students presenting talks or posters.

The meeting was adjourned by Allison at 11:24. After the meeting, Clint and Rachael completed transferring financial information and changed all bank contact information to Clint.

Awards

Mike Widner, retired AGFC turkey program coordinator, was recently inducted into the Arkansas Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation Hall of Fame for his work with turkeys in the state.

David Covington was named the AGFC Wildlife Biologist of the Year and Craig Davis was named the Wildlife Technician of the Year.

Dr. Doug James, of the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, recently received the William and Nancy Klamm Service Award from the Wilson Ornithological Society for over 60 years of participation in the society including service as President in 1977 and chairing numerous committees

Dan Brown, field technician with the Ouachita



National Forest, received the Shug and Luvois Red-cockaded Woodpecker Conservation

(RCW) award at the Arkansas Audubon Society (AAS)/Oklahoma Ornithological Society (OOS) joint spring meeting held in Fort Smith earlier this month. Bill Holimon, Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission (ANHC) chief of research, who nominated Brown for the award, presented the award to Brown at the meeting.

Cody Standifer, of Mena, was named the Outstanding Wildlife Student by the Arkansas Tech University College of Natural and Health Sciences for the 2014-2015 Academic Year.

Geoffrey Kevin Payne of Doniphan, Missouri, was named the outstanding graduate in wildlife ecology and management at Arkansas State University.



Dr. Joy O'Keefe and Daniel Istvanko

ASU graduate student Daniel Istvanko won the Best Bat Paper Award for his work on evening bats at the Southeastern Bat Diversity Network annual meeting in February.

Personnel Changes

Doug Fletcher, Chief of Stewardship for the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission, retired in January. Brian Mitchell, formerly of the Arkansas Military Department, succeeded him in this position.

Hunter Johnson was hired as the new technician for the Steve N. Wilson Raft Creek WMA. Paul Dunham was hired as the new technician for the Ed Gordon Point Remove WMA. Kiah Gardner, wildlife technician in AGFC's Region 8, retired in June.

Janet Greenwood, the AGFC's lead assistant in the Wildlife Management Division headquarters retired in July.

David Long, AGFC Private Lands Supervisor retired at the end of September.

Rhea Whalen, U.S. Forest Service district biologist in Ozark, transferred from Arkansas in June.

Arkansas Publications (send citations to newsletter editor)

Connior, MB, LA Durden, and CT McAllister. 2014. Natural history notes and records of vertebrates from Arkansas. *Journal of the Arkansas Academy of Science* 68: 140-145.

Doggett, JW. 2015. Assessment of northern bobwhite survival and fitness at Felsenthal National Wildlife Refuge, Arkansas. Masters Thesis, Grand Valley State University.

Everitts, JL, TJ Benson, JC Bednarz, and NM Anich. 2015. Effects of prescribed burning on Swainson's warbler home-range size and habitat use. *Wildlife Society Bulletin*

Fowler Neal, JA, and VA Rolland. 2015. A potential case of brood parasitism by eastern bluebirds on house sparrows. *Southeastern Naturalist* 14(2): 31-34.

Istvanko, DM. 2015. Sex-specific foraging and roost characteristics of the evening bat (*Nycticeius humeralis*) in an intensively-managed forest in north-central Arkansas. Masters Thesis, Arkansas State University.

Lee, DN, RC Stark, WL Puckette, MJ Hamilton, DM Leslie Jr., and RA Van Den Bussche. 2015. Population connectivity of endangered Ozark big-eared bats (*Corynorhinus townsendii ingens*). *Journal of Mammalogy* 96(3): 522-530.

Perry, RW and VL McDaniel. 2015. Temperatures below leaf litter during winter prescribed burns: implications for litter-roosting bats. *International Journal of Wildland Fire* 24(4): 544-549.

Ronke, EM and DG Krementz. 2015. Changes in distribution of Canada geese nesting in Arkansas. *Human-Wildlife Interactions* 9(1): 101-109.

Sasse, DB, ML Caviness, MJ Harvey, JL Jackson, PN Jordan, TL Klotz, PR Moore, RW Perry, RK Redman, TS Risch, DA Saugey, and JD Wilhide. 2014. New records and notes on the ecology of the northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*) in Arkansas. *Journal of the Arkansas Academy of Science* 68: 170-173.

Upcoming Meetings

Ozark Summit (natural resources conference,
Oct. 6-8, John Brown University, Siloam
Springs.
<http://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/ev>

[ent?oeidk=a07eb5pfy1733cb1d56&llr=xxjiebua
b](http://www.naturalareasconference.org)

Natural Areas Conference, Nov. 3-5, 2015.
Little Rock.
<http://www.naturalareasconference.org>