

# The Grapevine

Volume 37 • Number 1



## Remarks from the Wild Side

Message from the president



Its spring now. Those of us who have the privilege of living close to the outdoors wake up to the sounds of Rio Grande turkeys gobbling from the cottonwoods. At dawn, we enter the office by stepping outside. The dickcissel on the fence line, the blooming redbuds on the breaks, and the smell of a rare rain shower remind us that the days are getting longer. This time of the year, sportsmen and women emerge pulling fishing boats to the lake or disappear into the timber in search of morel

mushrooms. We all have our own personal favorite pastimes, but what we share is our love of the great outdoors.








Where did you get your passion for wildlife? Was it squirrel hunting with dad? Was it watching hummingbirds from the porch? Regardless of your initial introduction to wildlife, the connection you felt with the outdoors stayed with you in some way. This year, I challenge each of you to make that very same connection for one of our youth.

Its been a few months since our last meeting at the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve. We got to see how proper management and prescribed fire benefit plant communities and wildlife. Student presentations were excellent and featured a lot of the work that was actually being done on the Preserve. We toured the bison handling facility and watched some of our state's largest herbivores in their native habitat.

In an effort to accommodate professionals active in multiple organizations and further promote exchange of information and ideas, I proposed an idea for the 1st Annual Oklahoma Natural Resource Conference (ONRC).

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Remarks From the Wild Side Continued.

This would be a multidisciplinary conference bringing together professionals managing natural resources in Oklahoma to share research, information, and ideas, and encourage continued cooperation. The conference could feature a mix of professional and informal forums to promote information exchange, networking, a sense of community regarding Oklahoma's natural resources, and recognize achievements of dedicated individuals and groups. A portion of the conference could be interdisciplinary in nature and include keynote speakers that demonstrate the importance of organizational collaboration to protect our native resources. Another portion could be designed to give each individual organization a time to present new research, ideas, and conduct business within each discipline. The ONRC would provide opportunity for professionals to attend all organizational meetings (in which they are active members) in a single conference. I feel that a natural resource conference and collaborative efforts that come from an opportunity to network can truly benefit our natural resources and the people managing them.

I polled many of the professional organizations in Oklahoma and received mostly positive feedback. They agreed that one big conference would reduce the individual work load associated with planning meetings and that the opportunity for students and professionals to network would be greater than they had attending separate meetings. Putting together the full ONRC this year may be difficult because some of the other professional organizations have already set their annual meeting dates, but in an effort to accommodate multiple organizations into the future, we have decided to push our 2013 annual meeting back to a late winter/early spring time frame. Our next Oklahoma Chapter of The Wildlife Society meeting is tentatively scheduled for January 30-31, 2014 in Oklahoma City. Please plan to join us in Bricktown.

## 2013 Wildlife Expo Cancelled

The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation will be hosting a SEAFWA conference in October of 2013. The ODWC has decided to suspend the Wildlife Expo until 2014 in order to not take away from the Expo experience.

## From the Editor's Stand...

By: Blayr Gourley

The trees are budding out and hints of green are showing up across the state as we enter spring.

My house looks out onto a beautiful burn that is greening up nicely. Adjacent to the burn, on the neighbors piece of land, sits a wheat field. Each morning and evening I get to watch the wildlife, they seem to spend much more time on the burn rather than the wheat field.

White-tailed deer, turkey, and many other birds flock to the burn, munching away at the lush green plants and picking at the ground for insects.

Sometimes it is easy to forget about the drought when everything is greening up in the spring. This time of year I get the boat ready for the lake, fishing tackle organized, make sure camping equipment is together, and the greenhouse is

full of garden veggies and flowers.

Even though the boat hasn't seen much lake time, gardening has been difficult the past few years, and the recent extreme heat makes camping miserable during the summer. The ray of hope when we get spring rains and enjoyable temperatures sure is nice.

# Minimize Wildlife Consumption of Mycotoxins

Courtesy of The Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation, By: Mike Porter

Many people feed wildlife so they can more easily see animals. This is a common purpose of feeding quail, turkey, deer, and backyard songbirds. Some people also feed wildlife to increase the abundance or size of the animals.

Although well meaning, many of these folks are not aware of the potential harm that can be caused by foodstuffs contaminated with mycotoxins, which are toxins produced by fungi. Mycotoxins can be produced in seeds while growing, during handling and storage, and while waiting to be consumed in feeders or on the ground. Many different mycotoxins are produced by several different fungal species. Aflatoxins, produced by *Aspergillus* fungi, are some of the better-understood and common fungal toxins in seeds, but many other mycotoxins also exist. Stress during growth tends to encourage fungal infection, and therefore mycotoxin production. Some examples of stress during growth include drought, insect damage, and overly wet conditions. Moisture in or around seeds while stored, handled, or fed tends to encourage fungal growth and mycotoxin production.

Mycotoxins are known to negatively affect mammals, birds, and fish. Relatively high levels of some mycotoxins cause acute death, while relatively low levels appear to cause no problems. Intermediate levels can cause several relatively insidious effects, such as liver damage, cancer, anemia, tissue necrosis, immune suppression, decreased milk production, decreased egg production, reduced conception, reduced ovulation, poor fetal development, abortion, reduced feed consumption, reduced feed conversion, and gastrointestinal disturbances.

Susceptibility to various mycotoxins differs among species. For example, adult mallards are killed by levels of aflatoxin that appear to have no effect

on adult bobwhite or adult white-tailed deer. However, even bobwhite and deer succumb when aflatoxin levels become high enough. Susceptibility varies with age. Young of most species are generally much more susceptible than adults.

Wildlife probably tend to be less susceptible to mycotoxin poisoning than domesticated animals because wild animals usually consume enough natural foods to dilute any mycotoxins in foods provided by humans. However, due to reduction of natural foods caused by drought, wildlife in southern Oklahoma and northern Texas probably will be attracted to and consume feed provided by humans more than usual this fall and winter. To compound the risk, some of the grain produced this year might have higher levels of mycotoxins due to drought related stresses during seed production.

People who feed wildlife should use the following good management practices to minimize mycotoxin problems.

- Only feed seeds or foodstuffs approved for livestock or human consumption. If unsure about feed quality, either have the feed tested for some locally common mycotoxins, such as aflatoxins, or do not use it.
- Make sure the moisture content of seeds or grain is relatively low, such as, no higher than 13% in corn.
- When possible, avoid placing feed on the ground. Properly designed, covered, hopperstyle feeders with covered troughs should minimize moist feed problems. If feed is placed on the ground, provide only an amount that will be consumed quickly.
- Regularly clean feeders, disposing of any old or moldy feed.

- Regularly move feed locations to minimize mycotoxin and fecal accumulation at feed sites. Many diseases and parasites are transmitted through feces.
- Keep feed dry while stored or waiting to be fed.

With proper management and precautions, feeding wildlife can be an enjoyable practice that does not harm wildlife.



# Deer Management Is A Year-Round Process

Courtesy of The Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation, By: Ken Gee



By: Blayr Gourley

Interest in deer management usually increases during September with the onset of shorter days and cooler nights. It continues to build throughout the fall until the hunting seasons are exhausted.

Unfortunately, during the long, hot days of summer, interest in deer management often takes a back seat to fishing, boating, vacations, etc. However, people interested in deer need to keep in mind that deer management is a year-round process. Ticks, chiggers and heat may not make this the most pleasant time to be in the field and deer woods, but it is often a very good time to evaluate deer food availability.

Even though habitat requirements must be met during all seasons of the year, winter is often thought of as the



By: Dwayne Elmore

most stressful season for deer due to limited food availability. In the Foundation's service area, however, vegetative communities, especially the food component of habitat, are often severely impacted by the hot and dry conditions that are typical during the summer. This can create stressful situations for deer populations, particularly in August and early September. An evaluation of desirable deer forages available during the summer can be very informative. Much of the warm-season herbaceous vegetation remains available and can be identified, and existing woody vegetation is usually identifiable. Many cool-season herbaceous plants will not be encountered during the summer and should be monitored

during spring. The key characteristics to look for are: presence (Is it there or not?), abundance (How much?), diversity (How many different species?) and distribution (Are they widely distributed?). These characteristics relative to desirable deer forages are strong indicators of habitat quality.

So, what plants do you look for? Several years ago, we conducted a deer food habits study at the Noble Foundation Wildlife Unit. The results were published in *White-tailed Deer — Their Foods and Management in the Cross Timbers*. Thanks to the efforts of Scott McNeill in the Communications Department, that information is now available online at [www.noble.org/Ag/](http://www.noble.org/Ag/)



By: Dwayne Elmore

Wildlife/deerfoods. The online version contains all the information presented in the publication, including photos of "important" deer food plants. We hope this site will aid in your deer management efforts.

# TWS Student Chapter

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Jennifer Drooby

Senior studying NREM with an option in wildlife ecology and management

## Vice President

Emily Gardner

Senior studying NREM with an option in wildlife biology and preveterinary sciences

## Treasurer

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Junior studying NREM with an option in wildlife ecology and management and a minor in botany

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## Webmaster

Kaitlin Haase

Senior studying NREM with an option in wildlife ecology and management

# Oklahoma Prescribed Burn Assoc.

Courtesy of The Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation, By: Adam Calaway

The Noble Foundation entered into a strategic relationship with the Oklahoma Prescribed Burn Association (OPBA) to advance the use of prescribed fire as a safe, economical and effective land management practice in Oklahoma.

To recognize the importance of land stewardship and the role of prescribed fire, the OPBA, the Noble Foundation and this strategic relationship were recognized in a special ceremony on the floor of the House of Representatives as part of the annual Conservation Day activities at the State Capitol in Oklahoma City.

The OPBA and the Noble Foundation, the largest independent nonprofit agricultural research organization in the United States, agreed that the Noble Foundation would provide essential support (resources and personnel) to enable the conduct of OPBA operations and programs. As part of this support, Russell Stevens, Noble Foundation wildlife and fisheries consultant, will serve as coordinator and acting head of the OPBA.

“The goals of the OPBA align with the Noble Foundation’s mission to promote responsible stewardship of the land,”

said Bill Buckner, president and CEO of the Noble Foundation. “Prescribed burns are vital to ensuring the health and vitality of our native rangeland and farmlands, and Oklahoma is now poised to provide a comprehensive resource to our landowners.”

The OPBA was formally established as a nonprofit in early 2013 after two years of statewide meetings to gauge interest and garner support from all key organizations. The OPBA will establish, educate and assist a statewide network of local burn associations across Oklahoma. The new nonprofit will also serve to educate the public and policymakers about the need to use prescribed fire and the safety of this management practice.

“The formation of the OPBA is one of the most important steps to help landowners reclaim the Oklahoma landscape naturally,” said John Weir, research associate with Oklahoma State University Department of Natural Resource Ecology and Management. “The OPBA will provide landowners with a clearinghouse of information, training and funding opportunities to help them safely and effectively apply fire to their lands.”

## SAVE THE DATE!

October 13-16, 2013

The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation invites you to the 67th Annual Conference of the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies at the Renaissance Hotel, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The Fisheries and Wildlife Sessions will include:

### Call for Presentations

1. Oral presentations of manuscripts to be published in the peer-reviewed Journal of the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.
2. Presentations submitted for oral presentation only, no publication requirement.
3. Poster Presentations.

Deadline for peer-reviewed manuscripts: May 15, 2013

Deadline for non-peer reviewed presentations: July 1, 2013

# Student Chapter Update

By: Jennifer Drooby

This past year the student chapter of The Wildlife Society has participated in a plethora of events. In the fall we helped with the Oklahoma State University natural resource ecology and management department booth and volunteered for other events at the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation's (ODWC) Wildlife Expo. We had several field days to practice skills that we learn in class out in the field, such as orienteering, telemetry, quail trapping, and different survey methods to measure density and abundance. Also as an end of the semester/Christmas party, we had an invasive species costume party, people were very creative with costumes we even had a dog dressed up.

This spring had been even busier we started off with helping with the

national Society for Range Management meeting in Oklahoma City. In February we had our annual wild game dinner, Beastfeast, as a fundraiser for the chapter. We partnered with the Natural Resource Ecology and Management department and the Oklahoma Fish and Wildlife Cooperative Unit to host internationally known wildlife photographer Tom Ulrich, for a presentation of this work from the past year. The chapter had a booth set of that the Relay for Life event in Stillwater, this past April.

The student chapter has also been a part of two different surveys. The first is the deer browse survey at Lake McMurry, to provide information to Lake McMurry Friends as to whether or not the deer population could handle hunting pressure. Our data found that

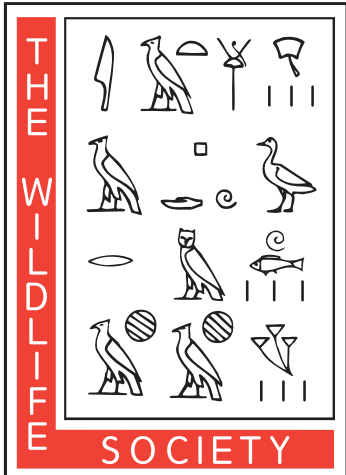
the population is at or just above carrying capacity. The second survey that we are helping to conduct is for Greater Prairie Chickens in Osage county, this is in partnership with the ODWC and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The new officer team is beginning to plan for next year and one to the exciting things we are looking forward to be going to the Southeastern Regional Wildlife Conclave, a competition of wildlife clubs throughout the region. It's been an exciting year and we are looking forward to another one.

## Upcoming Events

-  5th Annual Red Slough Birding Convention  
 May 4-7, [www.redsloughconvention.com](http://www.redsloughconvention.com)
-  ARS Grazinglands Research Laboratory Field Day  
 May 10, Fort Reno
-  Pond Management Workshop  
 May 14, Ardmore, OK
-  Wildlife Conservation Field Day for Landowners, Foresters and Sportsmen  
 May 18, Wister, OK
-  Selman Bat Watch Registration Begins  
 May 28
-  State Wildlife Habitat Education Program Contest  
 June 1, Stillwater, OK
-  Wetland At Night  
 June 8, Frederick, OK (Hackberry Flat)
-  Alabaster Caverns State Park Science Camp  
 June 10-14, Freedom, OK
-  Basic Ag Managing Wildlife on Small Property Tour  
 June 21, Madill, OK
-  Selman Bat Watches  
 July 5&6, 12&13, 19&20, 26&27, Selman Ranch
-  National WHEP Contest  
 July 21-24, Trafalgar, IN
-  Bat-stravaganza  
 July 25, Freedom, OK (Alabaster Caverns)
-  67th Annual Conference of the Southeastern Fish & Wildlife Agencies  
 October 13-16, Oklahoma City
-  Oklahoma Chapter of The Wildlife Society Meeting  
 January 30-31, 2014, Oklahoma City, OK

# Membership in the Oklahoma Chapter of

# The Wildlife Society



Please print,  
complete and mail  
this page with your  
check to:

Josh Richardson  
OCTWS Treasurer  
Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation  
P.O. Box 53465  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73152

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Email address (Important to receive newsletter)

- Regular Membership (\$10 per year)
- Student Membership (\$5 per year)
- Supporting Membership with Numbered Certificate (\$100 per year)