

The Grapevine

Volume 41

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Remarks from the President



Greetings, I hope everyone has enjoyed the great weather. The planning for the 2nd annual Oklahoma Natural Resources Conference is underway. The 2016 meeting will be held February 24-26 at the Renaissance/OKC Convention Center in Oklahoma City. The Oklahoma Chapter of The Wildlife Society is one of the hosts for OKNRC, along with the American Fisheries Society, Society for Range Management, Invasive Plant Council, Prescribed Fire Council and the Soil and Water Conservation Society.

The conference will have presentation topics on range, wildlife, fisheries, forestry and environmental sciences. One goal of this meeting is to increase awareness of what the difference societies, agencies and NGOs are doing, as well as foster future partnerships.

The OKNRC has a room block at the Renaissance downtown, conveniently located across the street from the conference. Visit the OKNRC website for instructions on reserving a room under the block, www.oknrc.com

We have received over 60 abstracts. Abstracts have been submitted by the OKC Zoo, OSU, OU, SWOSU, SEOSU, UCO, Cameron, 3 private companies, ODWC, USFWS, Noble Foundation, TNC, and the Gulf Coast Prairie LCC just to name a few. These abstract cover a wide range of topics.”

Registration for the 2016 OKNRC is now open. Please visit the website to register. We look forward to seeing you in February!

-Steven Smith, OCTWS President.

In This Issue:

- 🎯 **Remarks from the President**
Page 1
- 🎯 **2015 OKNRC Awards**
Page 2-4
- 🎯 **Upcoming Events**
Page 6
- 🎯 **Undergraduate Scholarship Application**
Page 7
- 🎯 **OCTWS Membership**
Page 8

2015 OKNRC Awards

We want to take this opportunity to update you on last year's annual meeting held during the 2015 Oklahoma Natural Resources Conference (OKNRC) and provide you information about the 2016 OKNRC.

In 2015, the OCTWS joined the Oklahoma Chapter of the American Fisheries Society to form the OKNRC. The first annual meeting was held in Tulsa during February. Approximately 200 professionals and students representing over fifteen different entities enjoyed presentations which encompassed a variety of topics. Numerous state and federal agencies and NGOs presented research and program updates. The diverse makeup of attendees and entities represented provided a unique networking opportunity for those involved.

During the 2015 OKNRC, the OCTWS presented several awards: Oklahoma Award, Private Land Management Award, Publication Award, Moser Award, and the Student Research Presentation Awards.

The Oklahoma Award

The Oklahoma Award was presented to Jontie Aldrich. Jontie has been very instrumental in wildlife conservation efforts during his 35 years in Oklahoma. As a result of Jontie's work and dedication, Oklahoma's natural resources have improved and flourished for future generations of sportsman to enjoy. Jontie has dedicated himself to working throughout the state of Oklahoma, developing long term partnerships with many agencies, schools, and landowners.

Jontie graduated from Michigan State University in 1976 with a Bachelor's of Science Degree in Wildlife Management. After briefly working for the Michigan Division of Natural resources, he came to work for the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation as a Waterfowl Biologist from 1980 to



Jontie Aldrich (left) being presented the Oklahoma Award.

1991. From 1991 to 2015, Jontie was employed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as the State Coordinator for the Partners for Fish and Wildlife program. He served as the acting Field Supervisor for the Tulsa Ecological Service Office until he retired.

Distinguishing Activities

In the 1980's, Jontie led a group of young boys across the Oklahoma landscape and then across the nation. During this time, Jontie's Explorer Post 637 was able to discover many types of ecosystems by walking, canoeing or by boat. He opened several young men's eyes to the wonderful outdoors and hunting and fishing.

Jontie's position as the waterfowl biologist at ODWC provided one of his largest contributions as a biologist: the giant Canada Goose Program. This program was a huge success story for the ODWC. Jontie coordinated this effort from the beginning until the final trip with geese was completed. This has provided sportsmen, bird watchers, photographers and outdoor enthusiasts a critter to enjoy in many ways here in Oklahoma.

Executive Board

President:

Steven Smith

President Elect:

Josh Richardson

Past President:

Dwayne Elmore

Treasurer:

Michael Sams

Secretary:

William Moseley

Board Members at Large:

John Hendrix, Blayr Gourley

In the 1980's, Jontie was working statewide to improve wetland habitat on public hunting areas, and was the first to deal with the Corps of Engineer on these projects along with other conservation organizations across the state. This effort was the start of thousands of acres enhanced and developed on public lands across the state in which sportsman are still enjoying today. During this time, Jontie was also instrumental in the very first stages of mapping out and attending meetings regarding the proposed Deep Fork National Wildlife Refuge. Eventually, this effort became a reality.

In 1991, Jontie was hired by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as the State Coordinator for the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program. Over the past 24 years, he has developed a working relationship between several state and federal agencies. The Partners program has played a role in various influential projects in Oklahoma such as Hackberry Flat, Grassy Slough and several wetland reserve program sites across the state.

Jontie is a leader in reaching young kids today. Over the past 24 years, he

Social Media

If you are on Facebook or Twitter, consider “liking” or “following” these social media presences.

Facebook:

- The Prairie Project
- Prescribed Fire eXtension CoP
- OSU Natural Resource Ecology & Management
- Managing Oklahoma Ponds - OSU Cooperative Extension
- Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC)
- Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation - Game Wardens
- The Wildlife Society
- Oklahoma State University Chapter of The Wildlife Society
- The Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation
- The Oklahoma Nature Conservancy
- Society for Range Management
- Feral Hogs

Twitter:

- @prairieproject
- @RxFireCoP
- @OKWildlifeDept
- @noblefoundation
- @wildlifesociety
- @Nature_OK
- @rangelands
- @FeralHogsCoP

Awards continued...

has coordinated and developed over 142 outdoor classroom projects designed to share with young school children the importance of all our natural resources. Oklahoma now has more outdoor classrooms projects than any other state. This is a great accomplishment! Jontie has been recognized by the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation and the Oklahoma Conservation Commission as a result of the partnerships that have been built between the agencies over the past 24 years. Jontie has developed agreements for prescribed fire with Oklahoma Conservation Commission as well as funding for the ODWC Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program. This was a first in developing these partnerships and kept Oklahoma on the leading edge for USFWS in Region 2.

Awards Received

- 1986:** Youth Conservation Organization of the Year Award, presented to Jontie’s Wildlife Explorer Post 637 by the Oklahoma Wildlife Federation, Conoco, Sears Roebuck and Company
- 1989:** Wildlife Professional of the Year Award by the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation
- 1993:** Chevron Conservation Award, in recognition of exceptional service in the cause of conservation, by Chevron Oil Company
- 1994:** Partners in Environment Excellence Award in appreciation for the leadership and commitment in the field of wetlands restoration and enhancement on private lands in Oklahoma, presented by the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts
- 1996:** Employee of the Year Award, presented by the Oklahoma Federal Executive Board
- 2011:** Award for work with Conservation Districts, presented at the Annual Association of Conservation

Districts meeting in Oklahoma City

Submitted By: John Hendrix,
USFWS Wildlife Biologist

The Private Land Management Award

The Bluestem Ranch was presented the Private Land Management Award. The Bluestem Ranch consists of 43,433 acres located twelve miles east of the town of Fairfax in Osage County, Oklahoma. The Bluestem Ranch was purchased by Turner Enterprises, Inc. in March of 2001. The ranch is managed by John Hurd.

Before Mr. Turner purchased this ranch, wildlife management was not a concern on the property and it was managed as a working cattle ranch. Deer hunting pressure was heavy and unregulated across the ranch. Quail and Rio Grande turkey populations were very low due to overharvest and high frequency burning. Herbicides were applied across the entire ranch each year for livestock (stocker) production. The pastures averaged around 320 acres in size at the time of purchase.

Mr. Turner introduced a new style of land management for this ranch. This ranch is now grazed with yearling buffalo that are shipped in from other Turner owned ranches. Most of the yearlings are grazed on this ranch for about 20 months with the heaviest stocking numbers present during the growing season. Fence removal and fence construction have increased pasture size on the ranch. Currently, the average pasture size on the ranch is estimated at around 900 acres. The ranch can sustain approximately 6,500 to 7,000 yearling buffalo but the ranch has been stocked at the rate of 5,000 yearlings for the past four years. The grazing style of the buffalo, introducing patch style burning, and reduced herbicide spraying has provided excellent habitat structure for bobwhite

Awards continued...

quail, deer, and other wildlife species. During the past two years, some cattle grazing was implemented to remove excess grass growth in some areas of the ranch.

A total of 14 new ponds have been constructed or rebuilt during the past 9 years. These ponds have been stocked with fish from the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC) with some additional fish purchased from Dunns Fish Farms.

Over the past 12 years, the Bluestem Ranch and the ODWC continue to bring a 2 ½ day youth doe deer gun hunt to the area. Youth who are drawn under the ODWC draw program are able to participate in a controlled youth deer doe hunt during the first weekend of October. The Bluestem Ranch is now the longest running private ranch in the state who continues to participate with ODWC in the youth hunt draw program. The Bluestem Ranch is also leased for hunting and fishing. For the past 12 years, the Ranch has also participated in the Deer Management Assistance Program through ODWC to increase the number of quality bucks on the ranch while harvesting enough does to maintain a good buck-to-doe ratio.

The Bluestem Ranch is a working ranch with bison and cattle grazing on parts of the ranch year-round. The rangeland across the ranch is in excellent condition. Each year the ranch will incorporate prescribed fire in areas of the ranch to control brush invasion and maintain wildlife habitat.

Mr. Hurd supports wildlife habitat improvements by good grazing management, proper use of prescribed fire, constructing food plots, constructing quail feeders, helping coordinate a wetland development construction project with contractors, providing bulk feed truck to fill quail feeders, continuing to control the expansion of the feral hog population on the ranch and helping to



John Hurd (left) being presented the Private Land Management Award

reduce wildlife poaching on the ranch.

Mr. Hurd has donated two to three bison each year to ODWC for the Wildlife Expo event at the Lazy E Arena. This past spring and summer, Mr. Hurd also supported the “Grassland Bird Monitoring in Focal Counties” which is an annual survey route that is conducted across the Bluestem Ranch to monitor grassland birds. This survey was supported and developed by the Oaks and Prairie Joint Venture with additional support from Oklahoma State University. Mr. Hurd participates in local FFA events and supports schools as needed in efforts and activities that involve ranching and outdoor issues that young kids can participate in.

Submitted By: John Hendrix,
USFWS Wildlife Biologist

The Publication Award

William A. Moseley and Steven G. Smith were presented the Publication Award for Common Aquatic Vegetation in the Southern Great Plains.

Common Aquatic Vegetation in the Southern Great Plains is a 124-page book created to provide basic plant identification and management options that will assist managers to achieve their goals. The book has high quality photos

of each plant and is spiral bound to assist users in the field.

Undergraduate Student Scholarship (\$500) presented to Elisa Elizondo.

Student Research Award

1st Moser Award – Ashley Unger, A Maximum Entropy Approach to Modeling Lesser Prairie-Chicken Habitat

2nd – Matt Carrol, Proximate Thermal Environments Constrain Diurnal Behavior of Northern Bobwhite (*Colinus virginianus*) Broods

3rd – Morgan Pfander, Preliminary demographic data from a Ouachita Mountains population of American black bears (*Ursus americanus*)

From the Editor's Stand...

By: Blayr Gourley

The first major cold front pushed through a few days ago, bringing high winds, multiple large-scale wildfires and migratory birds.

While sitting in a parking lot eating lunch, I watched a puff of smoke rise to the west, then to the east, and as those two fires blew up, two more followed to the northwest and a smaller to the southeast. Fire departments, landown-

ers, ranchers and farmers were stretched thin on Wednesday, November 11th. With the largest fire totalling 17,000 acres, others also totalled around 8,000 acres or more in size. Winter forage, baled hay, barns, homes and livestock were lost in the fires. While this is a community that is very pro-fire, it is still hard to watch wildfires run in 45 mph winds. They just couldn't catch the head fire.

The migratory birds took advantage of our first large front. This morning the lakes were covered with smoke on the water from fires still burning west of here, along with a great number of waterfowl. While the front brought devastation to many, it also provided a great opportunity for wildlife.



2016 Oklahoma Natural Resource Conference

The OCTWS is preparing for the 2016 OKNRC. The main goal of this conference is to increase interaction among the different professional natural resource societies in Oklahoma. We also want to increase awareness of what the different natural resource societies, agencies and NGOs are doing across the state, as well as to foster future partnerships. An additional benefit of this conference is to bring natural resource professionals from across Oklahoma to one location to share their experience, knowledge, and research updates, and to allow them the opportunity to network with familiar peers as well as create new connections. The OKNRC creates an opportunity for entities to send their employees to five different quality state level meetings while only having to attend one.

Make sure to register and reserve a room at the Renaissance **before February 1, 2016**; after this date registration and room prices go up. For more information, go to OKNRC.com.

As mentioned earlier the OCTWS has a few awards and scholarships we present at our meetings. We have included information about each one below if you would like to apply or know someone to nominate.

Oklahoma Award

The Chapter's most prestigious award, the Oklahoma Award recognizes individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the profession of wildlife management in the State of Oklahoma.

Harold C. Stuart Conservation Excellence Award

This award recognizes a lay person or group that has contributed significantly towards enhancing conservation stewardship and perpetuating a conservation ethic through activities in Oklahoma.

Private Land Management Award

The purpose of this award is to recognize exemplary contributions to natural resource management on private land. Nominations should include descriptions of the landowner's goals, property, and wildlife management practices. The nominator should be prepared to give a brief slide presentation about the recipient and the property at the annual meeting. Nomination letters can include photos, maps, and any other documents needed to support your nomination."

General criteria to be used for nominations for the Private Land Management Award, the Harold C. Stuart Conservation Excellence Award, and The Oklahoma Award :

1. A nominee should live or work in Oklahoma or have done so during period pertinent to the nomination.
2. A nominee may have received professional training or be a layman in the field of wildlife management.

3. A nominee is not required to be a member of The Wildlife Society or the Oklahoma Chapter.
4. A nominee's achievement need not have occurred in the 12 months prior to the date his accomplishments are recognized.

The information for nominations should include:

1. Name, title.
2. Education – place, degree(s).
3. Pertinent Employment – past and present, place and dates.
4. Distinguishing activities (may include papers).
5. Reason for which nomination is being made.
6. Signature of nominator.

*Entries are due by December 30, 2015. Submit nominations in writing via an electronic letter to Craig Davis (craig.a.davis@okstate.edu). For further information, contact Craig Davis.

Publication and Creativity Award

This award is presented to member(s) of the Oklahoma Chapter who, as individuals or members of a team, make outstanding contributions to natural resource management and conservation through books, technical articles, popular articles, videos, or other media or programs completed within the last 3 years, including the current year. This award is presented annually if a suitable candidate(s) is/are available.

Categories include:

1. Books
2. Electronic Media (i.e. websites, CDs, DVDs, listservs, or similar)
3. Peer-reviewed Scientific Articles (journal or peer-reviewed proceedings)
4. Popular Articles (published in magazines, newspapers, newsletters, or similar)
5. Technical Publications (reports, books, fact sheets, or similar)

Nomination should include: 1) a cover letter supporting the publication, and 2) four hard copies or a digital pdf. Send your nomination for the Publication and Creativity Award in the form of an electronic letter and any other documents needed to support your nomination to Craig Davis (craig.a.davis@okstate.edu, 008C Agricultural Hall, Stillwater, OK 74078). For further information, contact Craig Davis. Entries are due by December 30, 2015."

Student Research Competition

To recognize and reward undergraduate and graduate students who conduct outstanding research in natural resource ecology and management.

Awards (cash and plaque):

1st place: \$500

2nd place: \$200

3rd place: \$50


Eligibility: Graduate and undergraduate students are eligible. Students who have graduated since the last OCTWS or OKSRM meeting are eligible if they are members of OCTWS or OKSRM at the time of the annual meeting. Students must be the senior author of the abstract and oral presentation. The work being reported must be primarily that of the student. Research projects should be based on at least one season or year of data collection. Only students who are affiliated with an Oklahoma college or university at the time of research OR students who conducted field work in Oklahoma, but are affiliated with an out of state college or university, are eligible to compete. For more information see Call for Abstracts on the OKNRC website.

Executive Board Elections


If you are interested in serving on the OCTWS Executive Board, contact Josh Richardson josh.richardson@okwc.ok.gov. In 2016, open positions will include President Elect, Secretary and two Board Members at Large.

Upcoming Events

 **2016 69th Annual SRM Meeting**
January 31-February 4, Corpus Christi
www.rangelands.org/srm2016

 **2016 OKNRC**
February 24-26, Oklahoma City.
www.oknrc.com

 **2016 American Fisheries Society**
August 21-25, Kansas City

 **2016 23rd Annual TWS Conference**
October 15-19, Raleigh, North Carolina

Undergraduate Scholarship and Application

The Oklahoma Chapter of The Wildlife Society will be awarding a \$500 scholarship to an undergraduate student majoring in wildlife biology or management or a closely related field at its annual meeting. Send electronic files to Craig Davis (craig.a.davis@okstate.edu). For further information, contact Craig Davis. Entries are due by December 30, 2015. Return scholarship application to Craig Davis.

OKLAHOMA CHAPTER OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY
UNDERGRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP (\$500) APPLICATION

Name

Phone number

E-mail

Street address

City

State

Zip

University

Major

Hours completed

GPA

Name(s) of the TWS chapter(s) of which you are a member

Criteria that must be met to qualify:

1. Member of a chapter of TWS (if not a member, you may join using attached form)
2. Classified as a junior or senior (at least 60 semester hours completed)
3. Majoring in wildlife biology/management or a closely related field

Application materials:

1. A current resume
2. A current transcript (unofficial is acceptable) indicating total hours and grade point average
3. An essay (300–600 words, double spaced) on “What are the most important issues confronting wildlife conservation today?”

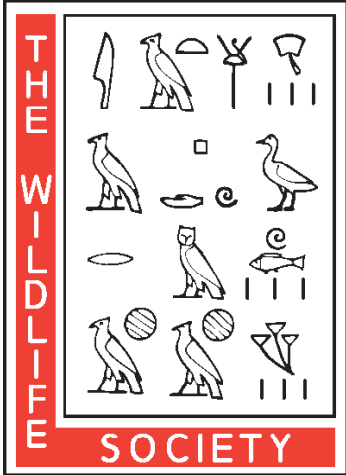
Scoring Criteria

Resume	Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 High
Transcript	Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 High
Essay	Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 High

Applications will be scored by a panel of judges at the annual meeting of the Oklahoma Chapter of The Wildlife Society. Judges will be the same as those for the Student Presentation Award. That panel includes at least 3 members selected on the basis of objectivity and experience.

Membership in the Oklahoma Chapter of

The Wildlife Society



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

Michael Sams
C/O TWS
347260 E. 830 Rd.
Stroud, OK 74079

Name

Affiliation (Agency, University, Company, etc.)

Address

City, State, Zip

Phone #

Email address (Important to receive newsletter)

_____ Regular Membership (\$10 per year)

_____ Student Membership (\$5 per year)

_____ Supporting Membership with Numbered Certificate (\$100 per year)