



OK. DEPT. OF WILDLIFE
CONSERVATION

Hackberry Flat

Update, 2009



Frederick, Oklahoma

August, 2009

Special points of interest:

- Hackberry Flat Center Dedicated
- A Peek Inside the Center
- Wildlife Management Update
- Events in 2008 & 2009
- Hackberry Flat Day
- Future Plans

Staff at Hackberry Flat

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Hackberry Flat Center Dedicated

Standing as the centerpiece of a 15-year project, the new Hackberry Flat Center, surrounded by 3500 acres of restored wetlands and 3600 acres of uplands, is an example of how successful individuals, private businesses, conservation organizations and government agencies can be when they are committed to a project. The 4,600 square foot building was officially dedicated in September, 2008 with partners and supporters of the Hackberry Flat project joining Oklahoma's Lieutenant Governor Jeri Askins in acknowledging the success of this conservation effort. An historical perspective was provided by President Theodore Roosevelt in a rousing speech about the importance of conservation efforts such as Hackberry Flat. Guests also had the opportunity to acknowledge the original "architects" of the restoration project which has become known nationally as one of the

most successful wetland restoration projects. Thank you Edgar Hamm, Howard Oxford's family and Bill and Carol Crawford for having the vision and perseverance to "see it through".



Bill Crawford, Mrs. Howard Oxford and Edgar Hamm represent the original individuals who had a vision to reclaim an important part of the natural and cultural heritage of their area.

Lt. Gov. Jeri Askins acknowledged the importance of outdoor experiences for creating treasured family memories.



President Theodore Roosevelt, re-enacted by David Byland, reminded us of the importance of natural resource conservation for the health and well-being of all Americans.

Take A Peek at the Hackberry Flat Center

With the completion of the Hackberry Flat Center, this wetland area now offers wetland classroom experiences for school children, meeting facility for workshops, programs and presentations and a place to offer skill development workshops such as waterfowl identification, bird identification and hunter education classes. The

Center has a reception area and a large meeting room that can be divided into 2 smaller



rooms. The large meeting room can seat 100 and with tables can accommodate 60. Internet, an LCD projector, screens and laptop are available for facility users.

The facility has an area for caterers and includes serving hatches, sink, dishwasher and refrigerator.

Check out the Hackberry Flat website at:
www.wildlifedepartment.com/hackberry_flat.htm

The state-of-the-art wetland classroom was designed to provide students with a hands-on experience of the wetland plants and animals. The main feature is the white table in the center of the classroom that has 2 sinks on either end. Students place their collected wetland "critters" in the sinks to watch their movements and to learn how they survive in their watery habitat. The table has an hydraulic system that allows the table to be positioned for easy viewing in the sinks no matter what size the students.

Classrooms that have visited Hackberry Flat, Sept. '08 - June '09:

- Bishop Elementary, Lawton (80)
- Davidson Schools (50+)
- Frederick Schools (60+)
- Outdoor Classroom for 5th graders in Tillman County (97)



Watching wetland "critters" in one of the sinks can be mesmerizing...watching whirligigs whirling, diving beetles making an air bubble and water boatman rowing through the water.



Throughout the Center, visitors can enjoy many hands-on items, interpretive panels and exceptional taxidermy displays.

Some taxidermy mounts were donated but most of the mounts were created by Andy Campbell of Wyandotte, Oklahoma.



The Hackberry Flat Center is open on every second Saturday of the month and for scheduled events. Restrooms are available year-round and a pavilion, provided by the Hackberry Flat Foundation, offers a shady place to have a picnic.

On the back porch the visitor will find the Hackberry Flat booklet which includes a map of the area, the driving route and the official checklist of birds. Additionally, Hackberry Flat visitors can record what they saw on the area on a message board.



Events and Meetings at Hackberry Flat

Since the dedication of the Hackberry Flat Center the facility has been used for various events, meetings and trainings. The number in parenthesis indicates number of attendees.

- Tillman County School Superintendent's Monthly meeting (9)
- Hackberry Flat Family Fun Day (400)
- OK Chapter of The Wildlife Society & OK Sec. of the Society for Range Management, Fall Meeting (45)
- H₂O Festival (698)
- Project WebFoot (first workshop held in OK) (34)
- Ducks Unlimited Media Workshop (20)
- Project WET Facilitator Training (24)
- State 4-H WHEP Contest (45)
- Grand National Quail Quarterly Board Meeting (16)
- Hackberry Flat Day (100) (see more about Hackberry Flat Day on next page)



Wildlife Management on Hackberry Flat—May, 2008– July, 2009

The new year started off dry as a reflection of the past summer and fall. Very little rain fell on Hackberry Flat last spring and that made it look dull and lifeless. Evaporation was extreme on the shallow water awaiting migrating waterfowl due to lack of rain, mild temperatures and high winds. Wetland habitat was minimal throughout the winter even with the water available in the reservoir and the pipeline, only about 300 acres was maintainable. With the ebb and flow of Hackberry's annual cycles, extended dry periods can be very beneficial to the wetland. It provides additional time for managing undesirable vegetation. The abundant water during the spring of 2007 left us with several hundred acres of cattail, saltmarsh aster and saltcedar, all plant species undesirable for wetland management. The extended dry period from May-April allowed us to control a big portion of the undesirables, prepare for the next growing season, await the rain and reset the clock on succession.



And the rain came! In May and June approximately 11-12 inches of rainfall completely filled the reservoir and flooded an additional 1200 acres of wetland. A good portion of the wetland that was plowed to reset succession came up in wild millet, pigweed and other desirable wetland plants. Although the timing of the rain came right on the heels of the spring shorebird migration, there were good numbers of shorebirds represented and it was perfect for waders, waterfowl and other marsh birds that spend the spring and summer here. Hackberry Flat had an abundance of birds nesting including American Avocet, Black-necked Stilt, Snowy Plover, Wilson's Phalarope, Pied-billed Grebe, Common Moorhen, American Coot, King Rail, Mallard, and Blue-winged Teal. We had a sighting of the Least Bittern, which is considered an excellent observation for southwest Oklahoma. Over several years, shorebird surveys have been conducted on Hackberry Flat. The occurrence of 26 shorebird species recorded in one day reflects successful management for the resource.

So the cycle continues. Wetland units are rejuvenated, crops are planted, and water is stored as we prepare for the next migration here at Hackberry Flat.



“Birders of all ages enjoy birding at Hackberry Flat during the spring migration”

Plans for 2009-2010

- **Develop nature trail at Center**
- **Install split rail fence**
- **Plant trees at Center**
- **Install unit name signs within wetland units**
- **Remodel bird blind**
- **Asphalt drive and parking lot at Center**
- **Construct a bird blind trailer for birding tours**

Friends of Hackberry Flat

The Hackberry Flat Foundation and the Friends of Hackberry Flat were established to promote the Hackberry Flat Project and insure the promise of continued excellence in conservation, education, and recreation. The support of the Friends of Hackberry Flat allows the OK Dept. of Wildlife Conservation to offer events and undertake projects that might otherwise be difficult to achieve. To find out more about the Friends of Hackberry Flat contact Karen Caldwell: 580-335-2168 or write:

Friends of Hackberry Flat
110 W. Floral, Suite B
Frederick, OK 73542

Hackberry Flat Day— May 9, 2009

Though drizzly, overcast and very windy, exhibitors, ODWC employees and Friends of Hackberry Flat were ready to offer visitors to Hackberry Flat a memorable experience. Inside the Center, the Friends of Hackberry Flat were ready to greet visitors. Charlotte McPherson had wetland “critters” ready to observe in the wetland classroom and in the meeting room area hands-on activities from bats, bison, and birds were set up and ready to go! Outside the Center, the archery and shotgun areas were waiting and the bird watching van was parked at the front doors. Under the pavilion, more Friends of Hackberry and high school members of the FFA were ready to help visitors put together a bird house to place on their properties. The wetlands were at their best thanks to a 6 inch rainfall the week before and bird song and frog calls could be heard resounding all over the area. Approximately 100 visitors from all over Oklahoma enjoyed their visit to Hackberry Flat. Over 60 bird species were observed during the birding tours and the creating and consuming of edible wetlands in a cup was particularly enjoyed by the younger visitors. Exhibitors are already planning on Hackberry Flat Day, 2010 scheduled for May 8.

A Special Thank You to the Hackberry Flat Foundation for providing snacks, drinks, and boxed lunches for all the exhibitors and volunteers!



Thank You to the following for making Hackberry Flat Day a Success!

Lou & Mary Truex
Kurt & Sharon Meisenthall
Red River Transport
OK Conservation Commission
Alabaster Caverns State Park
Quartz Mountain Nature Park
Desiree Webber
Washita Battlefield National
Historic Site
Carol & Dennis Stayer
Frederick Chamber of Commerce
FFA, Tillman County
Friends of Hackberry Flat
ODWC Employees

