



Conservation Message of Hackberry Flat:

- understanding that sportsmen & women pay for wildlife conservation
- understanding the values of wetlands & wetland restoration
- understanding the wet and dry management techniques of the wetland
- understanding the wildlife dependent on this wetland and how they use the habitats created
- understanding the historical events associated with Hackberry Flat



Mr. Campbell created 10 tabletop mounts, 2 pedestal exhibits, 1 wall mount display, 14 in flight ceiling mounts and 10 study skins.

Staff at Hackberry Flat

Kelvin Schoonover
Wildlife Biologist,
Hackberry Flat WMA

Bret UMBER
Technician,
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Melynda Hickman
Wildlife Diversity Biologist,
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Maintenance,
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Charlotte McPherson
Wetland Classrooms,
Hackberry Flat Center

Hackberry Flat Annual Report, July 2009—June 2010

Frederick, Oklahoma



New Exhibits enrich Hackberry Flat Center

It's one thing to read about animals and use your imagination, but a full body mount really helps draw a better picture of what an animal is like in its natural setting and helps a person comprehend the unique adaptations the animal has that helps it "make a living" in its habitat.

A migratory bird permit (#MB179590-0) allowed for the possession of many waterfowl, shorebird, and marsh bird species. ODWC was fortunate to be able to contract Andy Campbell from Wyandotte, OK to create these dynamic and educational exhibits. School children can really see the duck bill's tiny "strainers" on the edge of their beaks, admire the sharp, spear-like beak of the snowy egret, and measure the different bill lengths of shorebirds that allow these birds to forage for food side-by-side without competing.



Andy Campbell captured the nuptial flight of the Northern Pintail and a pair of American Wigeons taking flight.



Visitors stop in their tracks when they look up and see a mixed flock of Cinnamon and Blue-winged Teal in flight above their heads.

Enhancements at the Center

With the completion of the Center last year, efforts turned to improving the area around the Center. Through a grant received by the Tillman County Commissioners, the drive, parking lot and portions of the county road were paved and striped. Visitors and bus drivers have

expressed their appreciation for this improvement. ODWC recognized, Joe Don Dickey, County Commissioner in charge of the project at the December, 2009 Wildlife Commission meeting in Oklahoma City.





Fledged Scissor-tailed Flycatchers from nest in newly planted trees at Center.

Enhancements con't.

Once the asphalt paving project was completed, the eye-catching entrance sign was installed.

The Hackberry Flat Foundation funded the planting of 7 Cedar Elm trees around the pavilion. This spring, a pair of scissor-tailed flycatchers constructed their nest in one of the trees and successfully fledged 3



young scissortails. This particular type of elm produces flowers in mid-summer with

seeds available in the fall for quail. Other enhancements included the construction of a

wash-out area for students to sit and wash wetland muck off their boots before taking their wetland collection of "critters" into the wetland classroom. Lake Maintenance crew helped this winter in leveling the area leading down to the nature trail which helped with the increased drainage coming off of the paved parking area. The Hackberry Flat monument acknowledging all of the partnerships in the restoration of Hackberry Flat was moved to a more prominent location within the driveway.

Maintenance and Upkeep

- Fertilized & herbicide lawn around Center
- 3 AC Units repaired
- Front Door & Receiving Door repaired
- Light Fixtures in outside bathrooms replaced
- Outside bathrooms cleaned once a week; Center cleaned once a month
- Lawn mowed as needed & flower

Wildlife Management on Hackberry Flat July, 2009– June, 2010

Hackberry Flat once again came to life as dove hunters with thundering echoes from their shotguns said goodbye to summer, gaining hope that cooler weather was just around corner. Abundant May/June rains brought forth hundreds of acres of native vegetation (wild millet, Pigweed, & toothcup) providing food for thousands of waterfowl were soon to come. Wetland units with native vegetation were manipulated and prepared for flooding. Approximately 1800 -2000 acres were flooded gradually during waterfowl season as winter progressed so that food was available during migration peaks. 33,000 geese and 20,000 ducks were counted during the Midwinter Waterfowl Survey, conducted the first week in January.



As waterfowl season closed some wetland units were drained to combat cattail invasion and to control saltcedars, as well as providing areas for Milo plantings.

Residual water provided mudflats for the upcoming spring migration. Numerous species of shorebirds, waterfowl and marsh birds stopped at Hackberry Flat during their northward trek to feed and rest before continuing their journey. Insects flourished creating an invertebrate "gumbo" in the sticky mud supplying all that is required to encourage nesting activity for species such as American Avocet, black-necked stilt, king rail,

snowy plover, common nighthawk, common moorhen, American coot, sora, American bittern, least tern, Pied-billed grebe, ruddy duck.

The first day of summer brought high temperatures and strong winds sucking the life from the remnants of water left from the late winter rains...and the wet-dry cycle continues. The end!



Wetland Classroom Visitations

Despite our concerns that school budgets would probably not allow for field trips, the wetland classroom was used by several school groups during the 2009-2010 season.

-8th grade Science classes from Frederick Schools learned about the grassland biome (50)

-PreK—1st graders from Frederick Schools learned about crayfish (18)

-Lawton Christian Home School Association, grades K—

High School participated in the wetland classroom activities, learned about the importance of wetlands for migration stop-over areas and made edible wetlands. (32)

-5th graders from Grandfield, Frederick and Tipton attended the Outdoor Classroom hosted by OSU Extension at Hackberry Flat Center (68)

-1st—4th graders from Walters School collected wetland critters and examined them in the classroom. Also learned about Bird Migration and the

importance of wetlands as stop overs for “refueling” through a very interactive activity. (30)

-4 & 5 year olds from Tipton Headstart participated in a wetland scavenger hunt and then made edible wetlands (18)

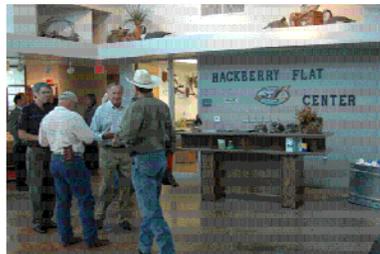
- Pre-collegiate Biology Field class from OU Biological Field Station had a tour of the Center and learned about the management of the wetlands at Hackberry Flat. (22)



Events and Meetings

The Center continues to be used by various conservation organizations.

- Ducks Unlimited banquet (62)
- Oklahoma Ornithological Society Spring Meeting (75)
- Oklahoma Wildlife and Prairie Heritage Alliance Quarterly Meeting (18)
- NRCS Burn School Meeting (15)
- Hackberry Flat Day (100+)



Hackberry Flat Center was open on the second Saturdays of each month. Hunters and birders alike stop by to see the Center and to ask questions.

Two Friends of Hackberry Flat meetings were also held at the Center.

“06-13: Here’s a list of the fantastic birds we saw here. We stopped here on our way from Pennsylvania. Great place!”

Message left on message board located on the back patio.

Birding and Birding Tours

Traditionally, formal birding tours at Hackberry Flat are offered during the annual Hackberry Flat Day. However, Lou & Mary Truex, members of the Friends of Hackberry Flat from Lawton, by request, will provide informal birding tours throughout the year. Of note, the Truexs also conducted 3 guided birding tours during the OK Ornithological Society Spring Meeting that met at Hackberry Flat. This year the Truexs conducted 10 informal

birding tours for visitors from Yukon, Lawton, Amarillo, Norman, Tulsa and Wichita Falls.

Many birders visit Hackberry Flat during the winter for waterfowl, raptor, and occasionally Bald Eagle sightings. The most visitation however occurs during spring migration.

Though there is no accurate method at this time to determine how many birders visit Hackberry Flat, monitoring the Oklahoma Bird Listserve pro-

vides an understanding through the postings that birders are visiting on a regular basis.

Birders also leave a list of the notable birds observed on the message board at the Center.

To make it easier for visitors to share their information on sightings, wetland units were named and sign posts were posted this year in the corner of the units alongside the main roads.



Plans for 2010—2011

- **Modify bird blind on Nature Trail**
- **Post benches on nature trail**
- **Install split rail fence around Center**
- **Install interpretive signage on nature trail**
- **Build bird blind trailer to use on scheduled birding tours**
- **Begin scheduling some Saturday morning programs for the Center**



This young man's mother sent us this picture of her son proudly holding his just built bird house.



A couple of weeks later, Mom sent a picture of the bluebirds that moved into his bird box!



Hackberry Flat Day—May 8, 2010

Though the wind was whipping, the weather was perfect for Hackberry Flat Day, 2010. 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, high school members of the FFA were ready to help visitors put together a bird house to place on their properties. The hayride trailer was all set for its hourly tours into the wetland. The wetlands were at their best and bird song and frog calls could be heard resounding all over the area. Well over 100 visitors from all over Oklahoma enjoyed their visit to Hackberry Flat. Over 60 bird species were observed during the birding tours with 26 shorebird species recorded in one day (previous record was 27 species in one day), and the creating and consuming of edible wetlands in a cup was particularly enjoyed by the younger visitors. The young man pictured at left put together a bird house during Hackberry Flat Day. A couple of weeks later, an email was received with a photo attached showing that the bird house was already occupied by a pair of bluebirds!

Many partners helped make Hackberry Flat Day a success. First, we appreciate our ODWC employees: Justin Marschall, Jena Donnell, Kelli Murrah, and Scotty Web. Alabaster Caverns State Park, Quartz Mountain Nature Park, Washita Battlefield National Historic Site, OK Wildlife and Prairie Heritage Alliance and the OK Conservation Commission provided fun, interactive exhibits. The Friends of Hackberry Flat acted as hosts to the visitors and the Frederick Chapter of the FFA helped visitors build bird houses. The Hackberry Flat Foundation provided refreshments and lunches for all the volunteers and exhibitors! THANK YOU one and all!!!!

Shorebird Surveys

Since 1999, Lou and Mary Truex have been participating in the International Shorebird Survey program of the Manomet Bird Observatory for Hackberry Flat. These surveys are necessary in order for Hackberry Flat to be considered for a designation through the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network. ODWC is able to provide mileage reimbursement to the Truexs through State Wildlife Grant T-9-P which involves activities related to the North American Bird Conservation Initiative. In 2010, the Truexs conducted 18 surveys between March 14th and June 13th. Thirty-one (31) shorebird species were recorded which included the uncommon ruddy turnstone, sanderling, and short-billed dowitcher.



Wildlife Expo 2009

Hackberry Flat had a very popular exhibit at Wildlife Expo 2009. Visitors had the opportunity to build an edible wetland in a cup and then eat it! Whether for the free food or for the novelty of learning about the different layers that make up a wetland, the line was always a long one. Over 3,000 edible wetlands were made and consumed and hopefully visitors had a renewed appreciation for the complexity of Oklahoma's wetlands.

Charlotte McPherson, the wetland classroom coordinator for the Hackberry Flat Center and her husband, Joe and son, Jay really got "mucky" with chocolate pudding during Expo. Children that visited the exhibit also got to stamp the foot print of a wetland bird on paper and sign their name. These tracks are proudly displayed at the Center.

