



To movie goers, this famous phrase inspired a dreamer to create a refuge for the restless ghosts of baseball's golden age. For those who remember the massive flocks of waterfowl that once winged across the skies of southwest Oklahoma's Tillman County, it has inspired visionaries to restore one of the state's most glorious natural treasures.

That treasure is Hackberry Flat Wildlife Management Area, a 7,120-acre wildlife oasis located southeast of Frederick. With the generous help of many partners, the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation has restored the legendary wetland to provide refuge for the restless wings of the prairie's waterfowl and recreation for people craving the outdoors.

Whether you want to enjoy the solitude offered by a fiery sunrise over shimmering wetlands or have your heart race with the anticipation of thousands of doves descending on a sunflower field, Hackberry Flat can satisfy your desires. After one visit, you'll be thankful to be blessed by such a place.

Old newspaper articles from the



Frederick Leader (circa 1903-1909) document the historic effort to convert Hackberry Flat into farmland.

Hackberry History

When pioneers arrived on the plains of southwest Oklahoma a century ago, they encountered clouds of waterfowl so thick that they darkened the skies over Frederick. At times, the noise from the birds from the winging overhead was deaf-



Among others, then President Theodore Roosevelt (standing far right), local rancher and "wolf" hunter Jack Abernathy (fourth from left) and the last Comanche Chief Quannah Parker (second from left) hunted coyotes near Hackberry Flat in 1905.

ening, and the noise created by the calls of so many species lasted from dawn until dusk. Initially, the area's abundant wildlife and rugged landscape drew the attention of one of America's most famous outdoorsmen, President Theodore Roosevelt. He visited and hunted near Hackberry Flat in what was known as the "Big Pasture."

In the early 1900s, local residents using hand shovels and mule teams drained the area by constructing a massive ditch, some four- miles long, 20 feet deep and 40 feet across. The layers of silt were fertile, but farming the flood-prone landscape proved exceedingly difficult.

Since then, we've learned that wetlands are not only extremely beneficial to wildlife, but they also serve as natural environmental purifiers. Unfortunately, Oklahoma has lost two-thirds of its wetlands to agricultural, industrial and residential development. The restoration of Hackberry Flat represents a significant effort to reclaim lost ground, so to speak, while reclaiming an important part of our natural heritage.

No wonder Hackberry Flat has been described as one of the most significant wet lands restoration projects ever completed in North America. And it's a natural treasure we can all enjoy.

"A heavy fog brings more than enough moisture to stick a tractor in Hackberry Flat"
- Common saying years ago among farmers in Frederick



The area provides to provide excellent educational opportunities for young outdoor enthusiasts.



Restoration efforts began in 1993 when Wildlife Department personnel began purchasing land from willing sellers. Ground was broken in August 1995 and the project was dedicated in May 1999. Strong local support and generous funding partners ensured that the project progressed rapidly. Levees, ditches, water control gates and an enormous water supply pipeline were constructed to provide optimum wetland conditions even during the driest of years. To provide an idea of the scope of the project, some key construction figures are outlined.

- 7,120 acres, purchased from 30 willing sellers
- 4,000 acres can be flooded, 2,000 of which is planned to be flooded at any one time
- 3,120 acres upland habitat
- 17-mile water delivery pipeline from Tom Steed Reservoir
- Pipeline delivers 2,800 gallons of water per minute
- 35 miles of dikes and canals
- 70 water control structures
- 32 wetland units
- 13,000 tons gravel used
- \$14 million cost, \$10 million of which came from private and public partners

Key Funding Partners

- North American Wetlands Conservation Council
- The Williams Companies, Inc.
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Wildlife Restoration
- City of Frederick
- Ducks Unlimited, Inc.
- Bureau of Reclamation
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Phillips Petroleum Co., Inc.
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
- Tillman County Commissioners
- First Southwest Bank
- Pioneer Trucking Company
- Wildlife Forever
- Arrow Trucking Company
- Oklahoma Station of Safari Club International
- Oklahoma City Sportsman's Club
- U.S. Geological Survey



Common at Hackberry, the American avocet is also one of the species that nests on the area.

Hunting

Since the area is a wetland, all shotgun hunting at Hackberry Flat is restricted to federally-approved non-toxic shot only.

Dove: The area offers some of the best dove hunting in Oklahoma, maybe even the country. On a good day, you'll see thousands of doves. If you're coming during the opening week of the season, plan ahead - area motels fill up quickly.

Waterfowl: Duck and goose hunting is perhaps Hackberry Flat's best draw. Southwest Oklahoma is known by serious waterfowlers as one of the nation's best-kept hunting secrets. Countless mallards, pintails, teal, Canada geese and other waterfowl descend on Hackberry every fall.

Sandhill Cranes: The wingshooter's big game, sandhill cranes use Hackberry and the surrounding agricultural fields throughout the fall migration. For first-time crane hunters, fully-equipped guides are available who hunt near Frederick.

Rabbits & Quail: There are so many rabbits here that some days you can see dozens just driving through the area! Quail hunting is also good at Hackberry Flat. An excellent mixture of upland cover and agricultural cropland produces habitat for both quail and rabbits.

Birdwatching

Hackberry Flat is a premier destination for birders. More than 120 species have been identified during surveys, with such rare and uncommon species as the black-necked stilt, stilt sandpiper and snowy plover being seen. Sheer numbers of birds make this area stand out as one of the best anywhere.

Birding Tips

Early morning and late evening are when birds are most active, so plan your birdwatching accordingly.

Be sure to bring bug spray, a good pair of binoculars or spotting scope and a selection of good field guides.

From any viewpoint you can observe a mosaic of wetland habitats, making the area unique among birding destinations.

The Frederick Chamber of Commerce can provide information on area birdwatching tours. Contact the Chamber at 580/335-2126 for more information.

Visting Hackberry Flat



With restoration complete, the Department now man-

ages the area to provide opportunities for all types of outdoor enthusiasts. Individual wetland units will be seasonally flooded, providing both migrating and resident wildlife with prime habitat. Most of the area will be open to public hunting, while some portions will be designated as refuge areas available for birdwatching and educational uses. Already nationally recognized for its outstanding hunting and birdwatching, Hackberry has something to offer both user groups.

Getting There

From Frederick, go south of town one mile on Hwy. 183, then turn east on Airport Road and go three miles. Follow the blacktop road south and go four miles. Watch for area signs, and enjoy!

Lodging/Camping

Primitive camping is available on the area, while motel rooms are available in Frederick, Altus or Lawton.

For More Information

Hackberry Flat Area Manager (Kelvin Schoonover)	580/335-5262
Wildlife Department's Southwest Office	580/529-2795
Frederick Chamber of Commerce	580/335-2126
Lawton Area Chamber of Commerce	580/355-3541
Altus Chamber of Commerce	580/482-0210



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