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Wetland in a Box

We've boxed up learning resources from Outdoor Oklahoma into exciting activities for students! Four "Skins and Skulls" boxes are available for loan from our Oklahoma City and Jenks offices, and one "Wetland in a Box" is available from our Oklahoma City office.

Activity boxes will be loaned on a first come, first served basis and are available for up to a two-week check out.

If you'd like to reserve a Skins and Skulls or Wetland in a Box for a program, please call (405) 521-3855 or email Jennifer Benge (jennifer.benge@odwc.ok.gov).





Tax Refund Donations: A Five-Year Review The Wildlife Diversity Fund has received more than \$85,000 since being reauthorized to accept tax refund donations in Tax Year 2018.

For the past five tax seasons, Oklahomans receiving an income tax refund have had the

opportunity to support the Wildlife Department by donating all or a part of their refund

to the Wildlife Diversity Fund. The fund is associated with the ODWC's Wildlife Diversity

Program and was created for the purpose of preserving, protecting, perpetuating, and enhancing nongame wildlife in the state. On average, tax refund donations have generated more than \$17,000 for the fund each year, with total donations since 2018 exceeding \$85,000. Donations tend to peak twice, with early filers donating in February and deadline filers donating in April. While donation amounts have varied, the percentage received by the Wildlife Diversity Fund

has been loosely tied to the number of other donations on the return's schedule.

Wildlife **Donation** Diversity **Total Tax** Wildlife Diversity **Fund Donations** Fund Refund Opportuniti Tax **Donations Donations** % of Total Year es \$18,228.00 \$94,959.00 19% 2018 \$115,671.19 2019 \$15,614.00 13% 9 9% 11 2020 \$13,217.00 \$152,731.17

	2021	\$20,0 4 5.00	\$151,007.00	1470	0	
	2022	\$19,013.00	\$143,592.00	13%	8	
	Averag e	\$17,383.40	\$131,592.07	13%	9	
	Total	\$86,917.00	\$657,960.36			
The Wildlife Diversity Fund was the first to receive tax refund donations but was not included on the refund schedule in tax years 2014 through 2017. It was reauthorized by the Oklahoma legislature for four years in 2018 and 2022. The Wildlife Department will need to seek a third reauthorization in the 2025 legislative session.						
In the five years since the Wildlife Diversity Fund was reauthorized to receive tax refund						

were:

of annual donations, respectively.

Access Point website.

Court Appointed Social Advocates in Tax Year 2018, receiving 30% of donations. Public School Classroom Support in Tax Year 2019, receiving 20% of donations.

Regional Food Banks in Tax Years 2020, 2021, and 2022, receiving 29%, 32%, and 32%

donations, the organizations or programs receiving the highest proportion of donations

For the upcoming tax year, the Wildlife Diversity Fund is one of four programs eligible for donations. Donations will be posted monthly on the 9th, on the Oklahoma Taxpayer

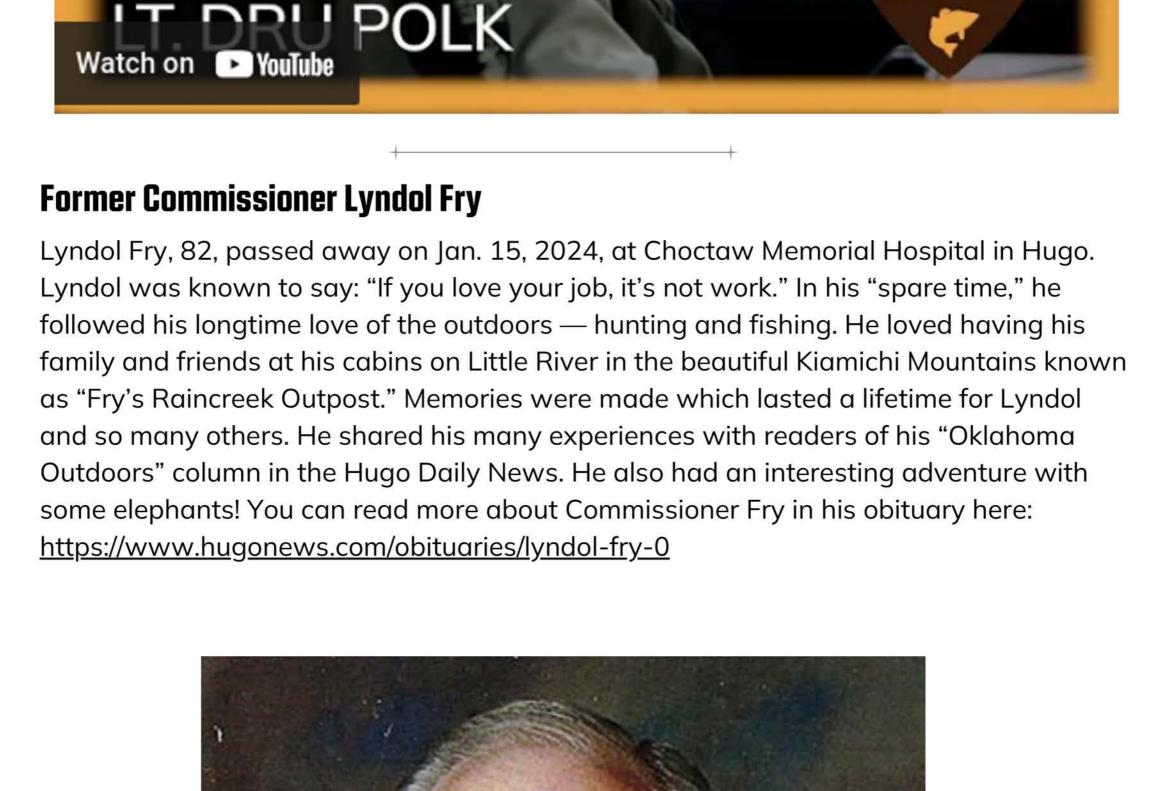
Ride Along with Dru Polk Join Darrin Hill for a laid-back ride-along capturing the essence of our dedicated law

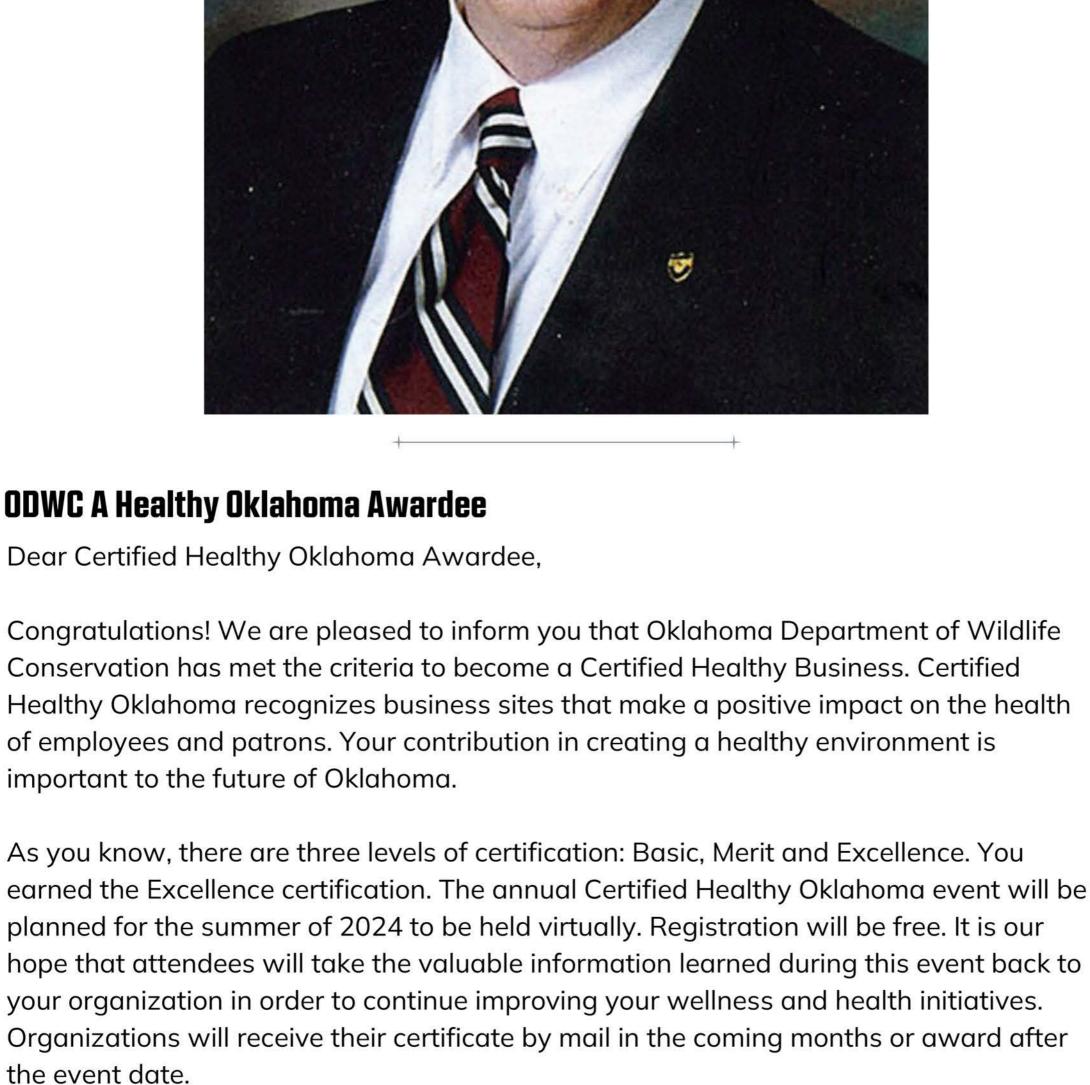
Game Warden Lt. Dru Polk Ridealong

VARDEN RIDE-A

<u>OKLAHOMA TAXPAYER ACCESS POINT</u>

enforcement. Stay tuned for more glimpses into the lives of our officers, bringing you closer to the heart of our law enforcement.





at OSU taught by Josey Branch.

Cathy Billings

you for applying to become a Certified Healthy participant. Your commitment to pursuing certification is a great step forward in helping Shape Our Future!

Director, Community Development Services, Oklahoma State Department of Health

Be on the lookout for registration information to be sent at a later date. Until then, thank



Northeast Region Supervisor Mike Plunkett Retires

Family, friends, and co-workers gathered last week to recognize and celebrate Mike Plunkett's retirement and wish Mike well (with a few friendly barbs thrown in) as he begins a new chapter in his life after a 42-year career with ODWC.

Mike began his ODWC career on November 1, 1981, when he was hired in Game Division as an Area Assistant I at Eufaula WMA. In January of 1984 he promoted to Area Assistant II, which was re-classified to Wildlife Technician I in January 1986 (for those who don't know, re-classified meant a title change with no promotion or pay raise), and then he transferred to Ft. Gibson WMA in 1989. On January 1, 1994, the technician chapter of Mike's career closed with his promotion to Wildlife Biologist I at Ft. Gibson WMA. Mike again promoted, to Senior Biologist, on January 1, 2000. Mike began the final chapter of his ODWC career with his promotion to NE Region Supervisor in October 2018, where he served until his retirement on December 31, 2023.

son) told at the celebration, that if the walls of the department house on Ft. Gibson WMA could talk, they could tell some pretty lively and interesting stories (IE skunks, dead and alive) about the years that Mike and his family lived there. Also to be noted and commended is Mike's lifelong example as a man of faith, including a number of church mission trips. A few interesting tidbits related to Mike's career: - Mike, in his own words describing why he wanted to work for ODWC wrote on his initial

I suppose, based in part on some of the stories that Michelle and Cody (Mike's daughter and

conservation of wildlife and wildlife habitat" (sic) - Back in the day (1983), an "Outstanding Evaluation Justification" stated "....his formal training as a welder and machinist put him on a level far above the standard.... He readily

application: "I like to work outside and I also have been a hunter and like to help the

- accepts a challenge and meets them with a common-sense approach." - Hands down, his favorite task was conducting the annual waterfowl blind drawings for the NE Region....well maybe not!
- Mike was commissioned as a Reserve Officer September 20, 1996 - He was recognized as the 2002 Wildlife Biologist of the Year - In his first (and last) experience as a group leader at the Wichita Mountains Wildlife
- Refuge elk hunt, Mike was a hands-down, unanimous winner of the (not so) coveted
- "Longhorn Award", for what was, in his words, "a minor oversight" of leaving a hunter in the field after dark.....

- He will long be remembered as being on a higher plane than his peers when it came to

large part due to his exemplary willingness to forego the "meeting" part of the Division Meeting, and show up, bird in hand, just about the time the noon meal was served each day. Mike's big smile, infectious laugh, and willingness to lend a hand whenever and wherever

harvesting an Eastern turkey (or two) during Division meeting. Rumor has it that this was in

needed, will be missed, but we all wish him the very best as he enjoys a well-deserved retirement.



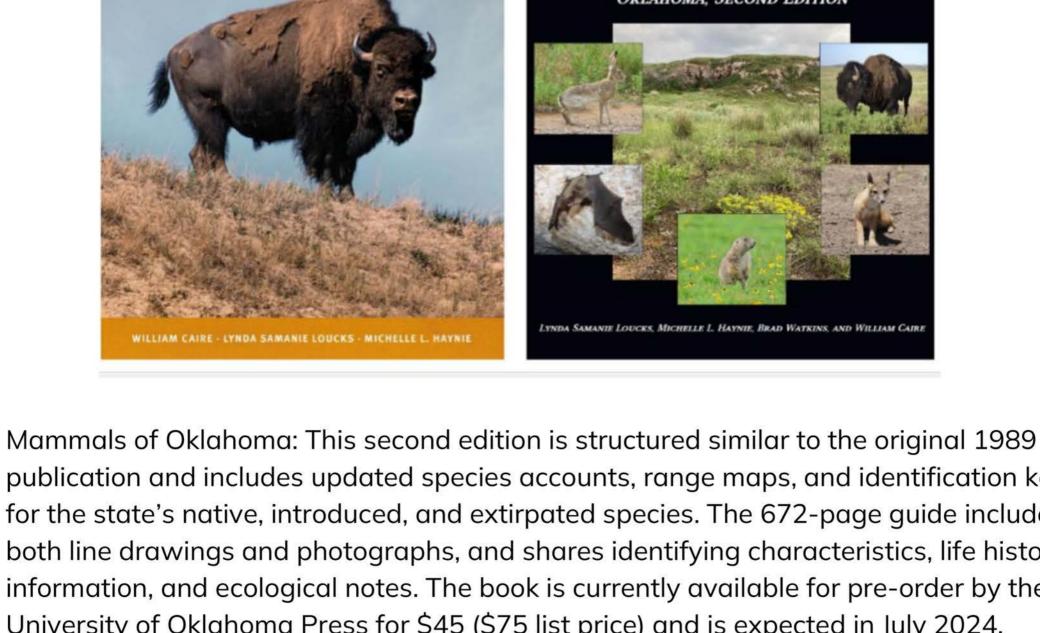




Ron Smith (W) presents Mike with a special award elk hunt award.

MORE PARTY PHOTOS

New Guides Feature Oklahoma's Mammals By Jena Donnell Oklahoma's 117 species of mammals are the focus of two new reference books created by staff at the University of Central Oklahoma.

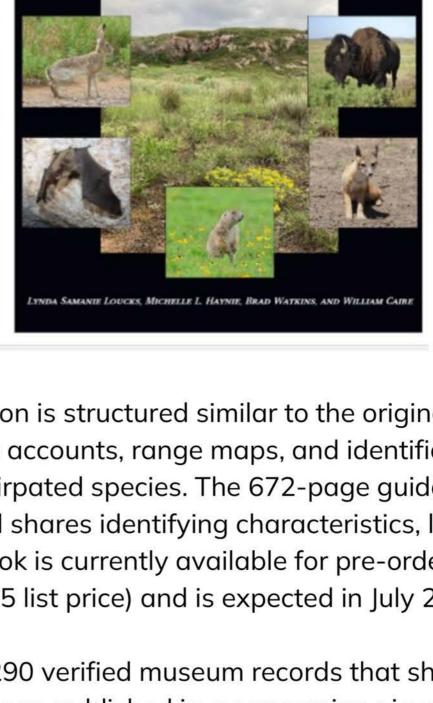


pdf) to share specimens,

Second Edition

MAMMALS

OF OKLAHOMA



MAMMALS OF OKLAHOMA RECORDS OF OCCURRENCE: A COMPANION TO MAMMALS OF OKLAHOMA, SECOND EDITION

Natural Science Research Laboratory

publication and includes updated species accounts, range maps, and identification keys for the state's native, introduced, and extirpated species. The 672-page guide includes both line drawings and photographs, and shares identifying characteristics, life history information, and ecological notes. The book is currently available for pre-order by the University of Oklahoma Press for \$45 (\$75 list price) and is expected in July 2024. Records of Occurrence: Notes on the 36,290 verified museum records that shaped the

updated "Mammals of Oklahoma" have been published in a companion piece by Texas Tech University. The number of museum specimens is summarized for each species, followed by a comprehensive list of each confirmed record's locality and corresponding museum location. This special publication is available as a free digital copy and bound copies can be purchased for \$20. Thirteen of the state's mammals are reported to have a statewide distribution, but only

location data – recorded for each county. Wildlife Department employees can use the records of occurrence publication to help fill gaps in the physical collection of Oklahoma's mammals. Coordinate with the collections manager at one of the state's 16 museums (pages 6 and 7 of the records of occurrence

one species, the hispid cotton rat, has a voucher specimen – an archived sample with



Trapping Workshop with Colby Farquhar (W) & JD Ridge (W)

"This past weekend I attended the ODWC sponsored Trapping Workshop at the Copan-Hulah WMA area. The purpose of this email is to recognize the two ODWC Biologists, Colby Farquhar and JD Ridge, who conducted this workshop.

First of all, the winter weather on Saturday, January 20, was brutally cold, temps in the morning were hovering around 7 degrees, and windchill temps well below zero. When we showed up at 8 a.m., a park pavilion had been tarped and propane heaters were set up to make conditions bearable. It was apparent that Colby and JD had been there for some time warming things up and checking trap sets prior to beginning the class. Their concern for the comfort of those attending the workshop was exceptional.

All aspects of the workshop agenda were delivered in a concise and professional manner. The agenda was comprehensive, and included topics on regulations, furbearer biology, and trapping techniques. Classroom demonstrations were followed-up in the field with demonstrations and opportunities for the participants to make live trapping sets. The participants ranged from folks with very little to limited trapping experience, and each of us were given every opportunity to ask questions and gain hands-on experience. The field trips were very helpful and resulted in the successful trapping of coyotes and coons. Demonstrations on skinning, hide preparation, and fur handling capped off the entire experience. It was very obvious that Colby and JD are extremely knowledgeable and passionate about trapping and the beneficial aspects it offers.

I personally am a small ranch owner in Woods County and have seen tangible benefits from trapping to control the coon and coyote population. Despite decreasing wild turkey and quail populations in other areas of the state, we now have an abundance of both. Hands-on classes such as this, provide an opportunity to educate people on the positive aspects of a sometimes controversial topic.

Please pass on my sincerest thanks to Colby, JD and the others that conducted this workshop for their dedication and hard work. Looking forward to more of these workshops."

Richard Macha Cedar Bend Ranch LLC Woods County Oklahoma

Jeremy Brothers (LE)

Tillman county game warden Jeremy Brothers (LE) received the NWTF Oklahoma State Game Warden of the Year Award from state board president Lynn Hagerman at the NWTF state banquet in Shawnee.

Warden Brothers received this award for his contributions during the 2023 spring turkey season where he had over 50 contacts with hunters, 4 investigations, and a case involving the illegal harvest of 5 wild turkeys.



Outstanding Service by Chris Robinson (W)

"I have been a lifetime combination license holder since 1978. Over the years, I have met several Oklahoma Department of Wildlife employees and they have all been very cordial and helpful, but I would especially like to recognize Chris Robinson, wildlife biologist with the ODWC. Chris was the hunt leader on my recent elk hunt sponsored by the ODWC. Not only was Chris friendly and informative, but he helped load elk for hunters and even helped one hunter drag an elk 200 yards. It was a pleasure to meet and get to know Chris. The ODWC is lucky to have such a dedicated employee."



Guided Youth Waterfowl Hunts

These guided hunts offer the opportunity to experience the joys of waterfowling to youths who don't have a mentor who hunts waterfowl. Jason Rockwell shares: "Pretty great kids and they are tough. A couple of our hunts were pretty iced up and temps in the single digits."





There is nothing better than an armful of ducks on a chilly morning. Making memories!





Joey McAllister's (W) twins, Levi and Grace, fishing. The cutest trout anglers ever!



Heather Gaylord R3/Aquatic Education Coordinator



Heather brings an impressive 22 years of experience to her role, having served as a Middle & High School ELA and outdoor education teacher and coach. Her extensive background in education and coaching makes her a valuable addition to our team.

Heather is an avid outdoors enthusiast. She finds solace in deer hunting with both bow and rifle, as well as enjoying bass fishing and hiking. These activities serve as her escape from the daily stresses of life, allowing her to connect with nature.

Heather takes great joy in watching her family's pursuits in sports and music. She has been happily married to Clint for 22 years, and together, they are raising three wonderful children: Eli (20), Peyton (18), and Autumn (13).

Heather's enthusiasm for teamwork shines through in her approach to work. She values the collaborative efforts of a team and is excited about contributing to the success of our organization.

Join us in welcoming Heather to our team, and we look forward to the positive impact she will undoubtedly make in her role as the R3/Aquatic Education Coordinator.



Deadlines

· FEBRUARY TIMESHEET DEADLINES: All employees (full-time and part-time) must have all February hours entered and submitted by noon on Friday, March 1, 2024. All supervisors must have all timesheets reviewed and approved by end of day on Friday, March 1, 2024.

Time-Keeping Tips

· FEBRUARY HOLIDAYS: Don't forget that February 19 is a state holiday. State Holidays are automatically loaded in Workday and will show 8 hours of HOLPP_holiday. If your timesheet does not have this system-generated entry, contact HR.

W-2s in Workday

· If you signed up for electronic tax documents in Workday, they are now available. To access your tax documents, scroll down to the Timely Suggestions box on the Workday Home Page.

Verify 2024 Benefit Information in Workday

· Please check your Workday Profile and your January payslips to verify your benefit elections for 2024 were recorded correctly and are being deducted from your paycheck accurately.

Payment Elections (or Direct Deposit) in Workday

· Did you know you can have your paycheck split and deposited into two accounts if the second account is with the Oklahoma's Credit Union (OKCU)? Contact HR for more information.

2024 Mandatory Supervisor Training (formerly HRDS)

· The clock/calendar for Mandatory Supervisor Training (MST) has reset for 2024. Be sure and watch your email for notices from the HR Officer about training opportunities and MST credit hours.

January Personnel Actions

New Hires

Heather Gaylord – C&E Specialist, Central Office, 01/02/2024

Joshua Porter – Fisheries Technician, OFRL, 01/02/2024

Promotions

Michael Baker – Warden, Beaver County to Warden Supervisor, D8, 1/1/24

Matt Mattioda – Wildlife Senior Biologist to NE Regional Supervisor, 1/1/24

Stephen Paul – Warden, Noble County to Warden Supervisor, D8, 1/1/24

Transfers

Chris Newkirk – Game Warden, Nowata County to Delaware County, 1/1/24

Resignations/Terminations

Luke Taylor, Hatchery Manager at Durant, 1/31/24



VIEW DIRECTOR'S REPORT

COMMISSION SUMMARY

Birthdays

- PRIEST, STACEY 2/1
- UMBER, BRET 2/1
- MAUCK, MATT 2/2
- ADAMS, KELLY 2/3
- HENSLEY, MATTHEW 2/4
- BARNES, CLAY 2/6
- RIDGE, JD 2/6
- WHISENHUNT, CHRIS 2/6
- GARRETT, DAVID 2/7
- KANNADY, CLAYTON 2/7
- KING, DONALD 2/7
- LATHAM, CURTIS 2/7
- FARRAR, BENNY 2/8
- CLEM, TUCKER 2/10
- MULLINS, KIMBERLY 2/10
- PENNINGTON, JEFF 2/10
- CRAIGHEAD, TODD 2/12
- FARRAR, WADE 2/12
- HANSON, ZACHARY 2/12
- BEAM, GARRETT 2/13
- REIGH, MARSHALL 2/13
- MESIS III, VINCENT 2/15
- CRISSWELL, CODY 2/16
- DUCK, JEREMY 2/16
- GRAY, SHELLI 2/18
- HULL, NATHANAEL 2/20
- GONZALES, CHEYENNE 2/21
- POWELL, BRIAN 2/21
- STRANG, CHAD 2/23
- BROWN, DON 2/24
- BOYER, KELLY 2/25
- CORNETT, JUSTIN 2/25
- COUCH, ALLEN 2/25
- MEEK, LANCE 2/25
- SAGER, CLIFTON 2/25
- SMITH, ZACKARY 2/28
- FREE, WADE 2/29
- PERRY, S JULIANE 2/29



REELIN' IN THE YEARS

- BEAM, GARRETT 4
- BERSCHE, JEREMY 14
- CRISSWELL, CODY 13
- DEMONTIGNY, DAVID 4
- DERRICK, RODNEY 25
- FOSTER, JIMMY 36
- GAINER, COLBY 4
- HOLLIE, MICHAEL 9
- HOWSER, TYLER 14
- KANNADY, CLAYTON 4
- KING, DYLAN 4
- LONG, EMILY 14
- MOORE, KODY 16
- NEWCOMB, AMY 1
- PERRY, JOHN 17
- ROBINSON, CHRISTOPHER 14
- RYSWYK, RYAN 16
- SCHOONOVER, KELVIN 29
- SHAY, JAIME 1
- SNOW, RICHARD 16
- STEGALL, DREW 7
- TACKETT, CURTIS 15
- WEST, JONATHAN 17
- WORKMAN, DWAIN 3
- ZENTNER, DOUG 2

