



OKLAHOMA
DEPARTMENT OF
**WILDLIFE
CONSERVATION**

WILDLIFE-O-GRAM

January 2024



CONTENTS

- **Paddlefish & Nongame Research & Management**
- **Boating Access Update**
- **Where to Hunt**
- **Farewell to Jim**
- **Welcome baby Harriet**
- **Seeking Input from Biologists and Naturalists**
- **Business Cards**
- **StressStop Program for State Employees**
- **Shout Outs**
- **Game Bag**
- **ODWC New Employees**
- **Wildlife Marketplace**
- **HR Corner**
- **Directors Report & Commission Summary**
- **Birthdays**
- **Reelin' in the Years**

Around the Department





Matt Pallett holds the great white paddlefish captured on R.S. Kerr Lake.



Caleb Taylor holds a nice size freshwater drum from R.S. Kerr Lake.



Colby Gainer braves a thunderstorm at the end of a netting day on R.S. Kerr Lake.



Left to right: Jason Schooley, Brent Gordon (retired), and Grace Carter show some of the healthy mid-sized paddlefish that dominate the age and size structure in the Kaw Lake population.



Left to right: Colby Gainer, Caleb Taylor, Brent Gordon (retired), Jason Schooley, and Matt Pallett display some of the large bigmouth buffalo bycatch on upper Kaw Lake.



We attached accelerometers (essentially FitBits) to paddlefish tails on Grand Lake to assist with a PhD student's project. The fish was released but remained tethered to a small float so we could recover the movement data after an hour of swimming.



We don't typically carry a centrifuge on our netting boat, but this study required extra equipment to process the blood samples.



We attached small floats to the Grand Lake paddlefish affixed with accelerometers, but we tested the feasibility of keeping one fish attached to a fishing line. It was an interesting experience, but not likely a technique we'd use.



Eric Brennan (left) assists University of Illinois PhD student Shasta Kamara with drawing blood from a Grand Lake paddlefish to check stress hormones. This study is relevant to the management of commercially fished stocks in Illinois, where the fate of under-limit paddlefish released from gillnets is not understood.

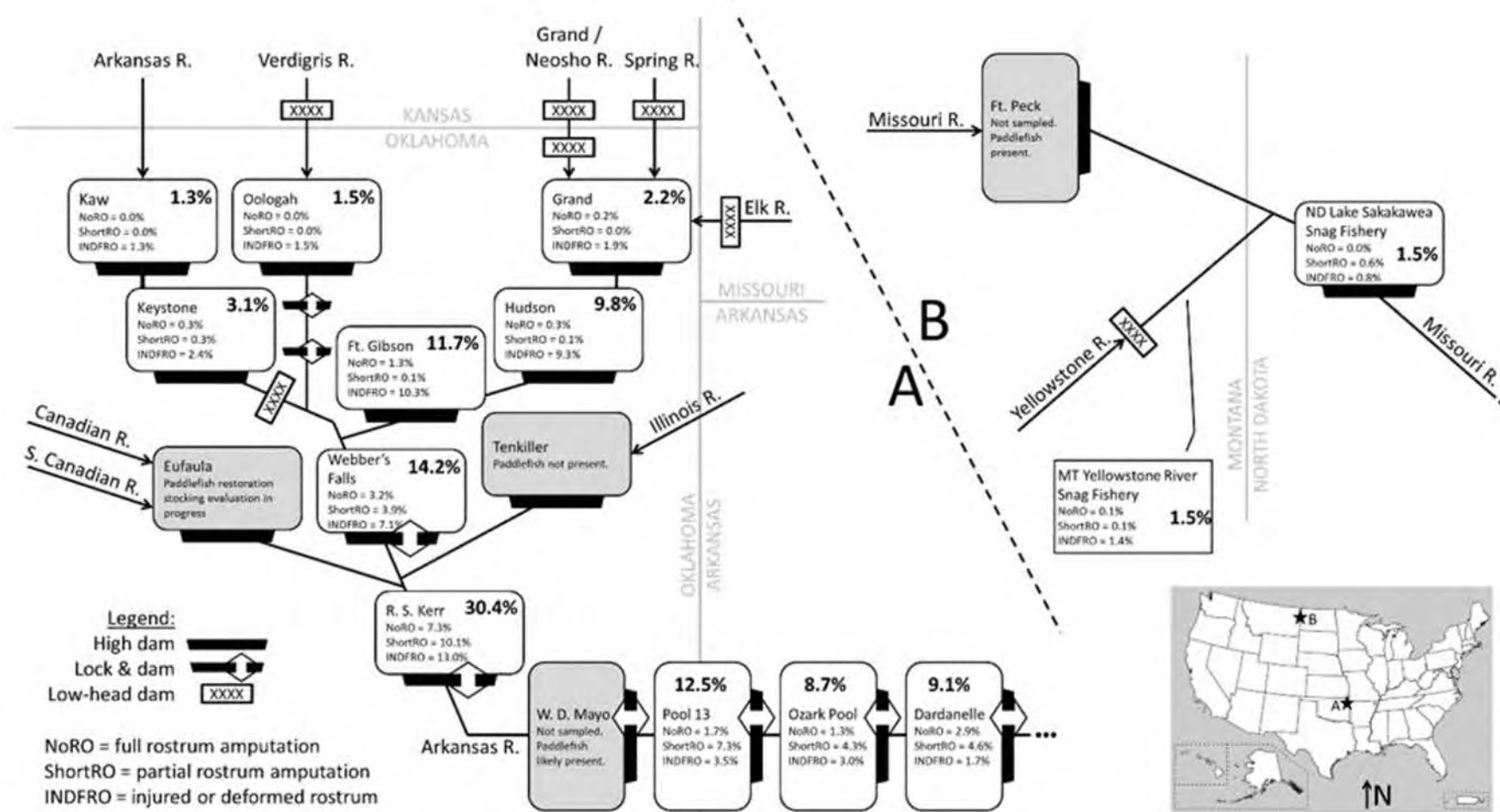
Paddlefish & Nongame Research & Management

Activities Update for Winter 2023-2024

By Jason Schooley

Winter is always a busy time for the paddlefish crew and this season has been no different. While much Oklahoma fisheries management work takes a hiatus during the cold months, that's when we kick into high gear with big nets and (hopefully) fair winds. This winter we checked in on our paddlefish stocks in R.S. Kerr, Kaw, Grand, and Eufaula. Here are a few highlights:

- With the expansion of our program in 2023 by hiring two technicians (Matt Pallett and Caleb Taylor), our netting crew doubled in size! This meant that the need for assistance was significantly reduced, so we're sorry if you missed out on the opportunity to join us for some paddlefish wrangling. Thanks so much to all of you who have assisted this winter and in the past.
- The paddlefish population in R.S. Kerr is always interesting because it's a reservoir comprised of fish from multiple major watersheds (Neosho, Canadian, Arkansas, and Verdigris). Also, as part of the McClellan-Kerr navigation system, we see a higher frequency of injuries to fish from barge traffic, boat strikes, dam passage, and other stressors. Patterns in downstream increases of rostrum injury are clear in Oklahoma. One exceptional observation was the capture of a white paddlefish, which we have never seen.
- Kaw Lake paddlefish are clearly on a rebounding trajectory. Once considered low-abundance with little/failed recruitment post dam construction in 1976, this lake was stocked in the 1990's but largely regarded as a restoration failure due to the lack of natural recruitment. All of that changed in 2017 when the paddlefish had a massive spawn (and potentially again in 2019). Thus, our catch on Kaw primarily consists of these two year classes and the fish are all robust and healthy. We caught >600 paddlefish in four days. We were also fortunate to get 40 large bigmouth buffalo as bycatch on Kaw and these fish will be valuable in learning more about the life history of this species whose lifespan is known to exceed 120 years in other states.
- With the closure of the Paddlefish Research Center on the Grand/Neosho River in 2023, we will be taking a step back from the intense management of this stock and expand our focus to others that we haven't been able to examine as closely. Therefore, our netting efforts on Grand were reduced this winter, however we tested some methodologies for a future project by collaborating with a PhD student from the University of Illinois. We netted paddlefish, drew blood for stress hormone analyses, and externally affixed accelerometers (essentially a FitBit) to the tail so we could collect data on their post-release response. These data are not yet available to share any details, but we hope to employ some similar techniques for snagged and released fish to examine their post-release response over a range of reservoir temperatures. This work will inform future decisions on whether the expansion of snagging into summer months (when water is warmer) has any concerning effects on release mortality.
- As I'm writing this Jan 2nd, our efforts on Eufaula are still a week away, so there's no catch info to share here. Like Kaw, Eufaula is also a restoration reservoir and our evaluation of those stockings (which ended in 2017) is still ongoing. At this point in 2024, if we catch any teaspoons or tablespoons, we'll be certain that they are the product of natural recruitment and a sign of restoration success. Although all the hatchery-origin fish received a tiny piece of wire with numbers etched on it in the tip of their rostrum, tag loss does occur. Therefore, we can't fully rely on the presence or absence of a coded wire tag to indicate hatchery or wild fish, respectively. These tags have been valuable in our long term age validation project for Oklahoma paddlefish and we look forward to a new batch of snoots from Eufaula to add to this database.



Frequency of rostrum injuries generally increases downstream in a series of dams/reservoirs. R.S. Kerr contains the highest incidence of these injuries in Oklahoma. (Figure includes preliminary data from an unpublished manuscript on rostrum injuries.)



Jon West holds a “gonzo” paddlefish that has suffered (but healed) from a rostrum injury in R.S. Kerr Lake.

Boating Access Update

By Nathan Copeland (Fisheries)

Southwest Oklahoma boaters have cause for celebration as ODWC is pleased to announce the addition of a new courtesy dock at Fort Cobb Reservoir. Measuring 8 feet by 26 feet and including a 64-foot gangway, this dock will improve the boating experience for both locals and guests.

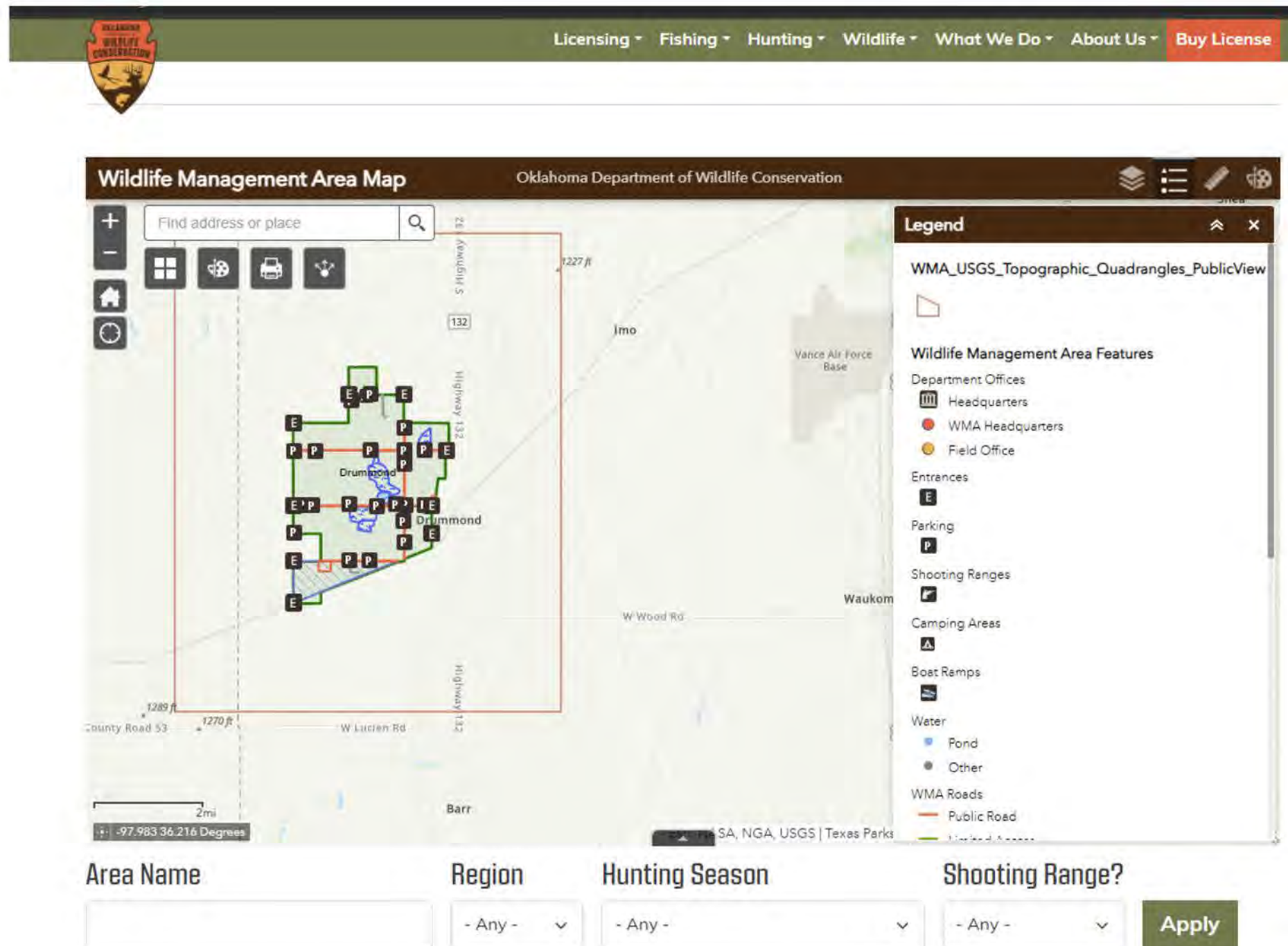
Located at the Fly Inn 2 access area, the new courtesy dock can accommodate multiple boats at once, cutting down on wait times and improving the overall experience for constituents. A 64-foot gangway makes it easy for boaters to dock, even in the event of fluctuating water levels, and the project aims to make the Fort Cobb Reservoir a welcoming destination for boaters of all skill levels.

Fort Cobb Reservoir is a popular fishing and recreational destination, and the addition of this courtesy dock confirms our dedication to providing exceptional amenities for all who enjoy the beauty of our state's natural resources. We look forward to seeing boaters take advantage of this new amenity.



Photo by Nathan Copeland (F)

Where to Hunt



A new feature on our website is the ability to search our WMAs by hunting season to determine what WMAs are open for the season that you choose. You can also search by region, area name, and whether or not there is a shooting range. The page displays all of the areas on a map. In the past when a constituent would call to ask what areas were open for deer gun season, for example, we would have to flip to the back of the regulations guide to provide an answer. This is a very needed tool to help our constituents decide where to hunt. Thank you to Kara Gardner (C&E) for implementing this update!

Farewell to Jim

Employees celebrated Jim Burroughs for 36 years of untiring service and dedication to wildlife conservation and the sportsmen and women of Oklahoma. Jim's career consisted of serving the anglers, of the state solving problems, achieving milestones, coffee breaks, office pranks, and many, many friendships. Thank you for your excellence in professionalism, open and honest communication, and work ethic, Jim! You will be missed!



Anthony Rodger (F) presenting Jim with a crappie mount.



Ken Cunningham (F) and Richard Snow (F) presenting Jim with a plaque and thanking him for all of his years of service.



Jim with his wife Sheila celebrating retirement!



Employees listening to stories of Jims career.



Malakai Harriet is the new baby boy of game warden Jacob Harriet and wife Oklahoma R3 coordinator Kasie Harriet. He is also the new grandson of property technician Kelli Joyner. Congratulations you all, we know he will be so loved!

Seeking Input from Biologists and Naturalists

Priscilla Crawford, Oklahoma Biological Survey (OBS) conservation biologist and former BioBlitz! OK coordinator, is taking on a big goal this year! She is writing a book about Oklahoma's natural history. Each chapter will represent a region in Oklahoma covering the habitats and some of the organisms found there. Her plan is to write one chapter a month until December 2024.

After 25 years working in Oklahoma, Priscilla knows a lot about the state, but not everything. So, she is seeking input from amateur and professional biologists and naturalists. If you want to be involved in this book project, fill out her quick survey. Click the link below.

[The Naturalist's Guide to
Oklahoma Book Project](#)

Business Cards

Employees can now conveniently visit their respective division's section on the TOAD to request new business cards. This replaces the previous universal form. This change aims to address past confusion regarding names, titles, addresses, etc., and to bring clarity and consistency to the process of ordering business cards.

To facilitate access, we have incorporated links as buttons in your division's pages on the TOAD, as opposed to having one main button on the C&E page. Click the links below to take you there. To navigate there from the TOAD go to the home page>forms>your division.



[Click Here](#)



[Click Here](#)



[Click Here](#)



[Click Here](#)



[Click Here](#)



[Click Here](#)



[Click Here](#)

StressStop Program for State Employees

“My Stress Tools” is a web platform designed to instruct users in a variety of stress-reduction techniques, including meditation, mindfulness, deep breathing exercises, visualization methods and stress reduction strategies.

Brought to you by Thrive State Employee Wellness, the program will be offered as a free tool for all state employees to utilize. With busy employee schedules in mind, the program is designed for convenience. Using the program for even just five minutes a day can lead to increased productivity and reduced stress, and new program offerings are as short as two minutes for a quick, easy session.

Register today and get ready to take advantage of this resource beginning Jan. 3!

StressStop Tool

SHOUT OUTS!

Colonel Nathan Erdman received the letter below from the Fort Worth Police Department Homeland Security Unit, regarding Emily Long's work on some cases out of Ft. Worth regarding the investigation and recovery of stolen animal mounts. Excellent work, Emily!



FORT WORTH POLICE DEPARTMENT
HOMELAND SECURITY UNIT



December 5, 2023

Emily Long
Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation
Ref: Recovery of big cat and big horn sheep mounts

I wanted to take a moment to commend you for your outstanding work on the recent investigation and recovery of stolen animal mounts. Your dedication and thoroughness throughout the entire process have not gone unnoticed.

Your commitment to locating and recovering the property and returning it to its rightful owner is truly impressive. The meticulous attention to detail and perseverance you exhibited in handling the investigation reflects your professionalism and department.

I know Richard was heartbroken when he realized what had happened to him. Your efforts have not only returned years old stolen items, it brought a peace of mind to the victim.

Thank you for your exceptional work and tireless dedication. Your contributions make a significant difference, and I feel privileged to have worked with someone as dedicated and skilled as you.

Warm Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jared Cockerham".

Officer Jared Cockerham
Fort Worth Police Department
Homeland Security Unit

Constituent David Cash sent this email: 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. By the way, the magazine is excellent!

Chief of Wildlife Bill Dinkines reply to Mr. Cash:

Mr. Cash,

Thank you for taking the time to send this. I will proudly share with our staff. Chris is a great employee, and we are fortunate to have him on our team. We are also grateful for our talented staff that work on the Outdoor Oklahoma magazine.

Thanks again and we appreciate your support!

Bill Dinkines
Chief-Wildlife Division

Wildlife Department,

We wanted to extend a thank you to Lauren Johnson and Josh Richardson for their efforts and assistance with the restoration of our land. They are knowledgeable and friendly and are great ambassadors for OWDC. We look forward to working with ODWC again.

Stephen + Emma Clayman

The letter below was sent in by the Del City Assistant Chief of Police regarding Capt. Gary Emmons and Lt. Casey Young. Way to lead as an example fellas!



City of Del City POLICE DEPARTMENT

4517 SE 29th Street
DEL CITY, OKLAHOMA 73115
Phone (405) 671-8841
FAX (405) 670-3039



To: Interim Director Wade Free, Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation
Colonel Nathan Erdman, Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation
Lt. Col. Wade Farrar, Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation

From: Austin Slaten, Assistant Chief of Police, Del City P.D.

Reference: Letter of Appreciation

On behalf of Chief Loyd Berger and myself, I wanted to take a moment to thank all of you for sending Capt. Gary Emmons and Lt. Casey Young to assist in teaching multiple LASER active shooter classes in the Metro of Oklahoma City. During these classes, 94 officers from 34 different agencies participated and completed this class. This was a huge effort and the officers that attended greatly benefitted from being trained by such an experienced group. I have taught with Capt. Emmons and Lt. Young for many years and admire the passion, experience, and hands on approach they bring when teaching such an important class as this one.

Capt. Emmons and Lt. Young are tremendous assets, and your department is blessed to have them.

If I or my department can be of service, please let me know.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "L. Berger".

Loyd Berger
Chief of Police

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Austin Slaten".

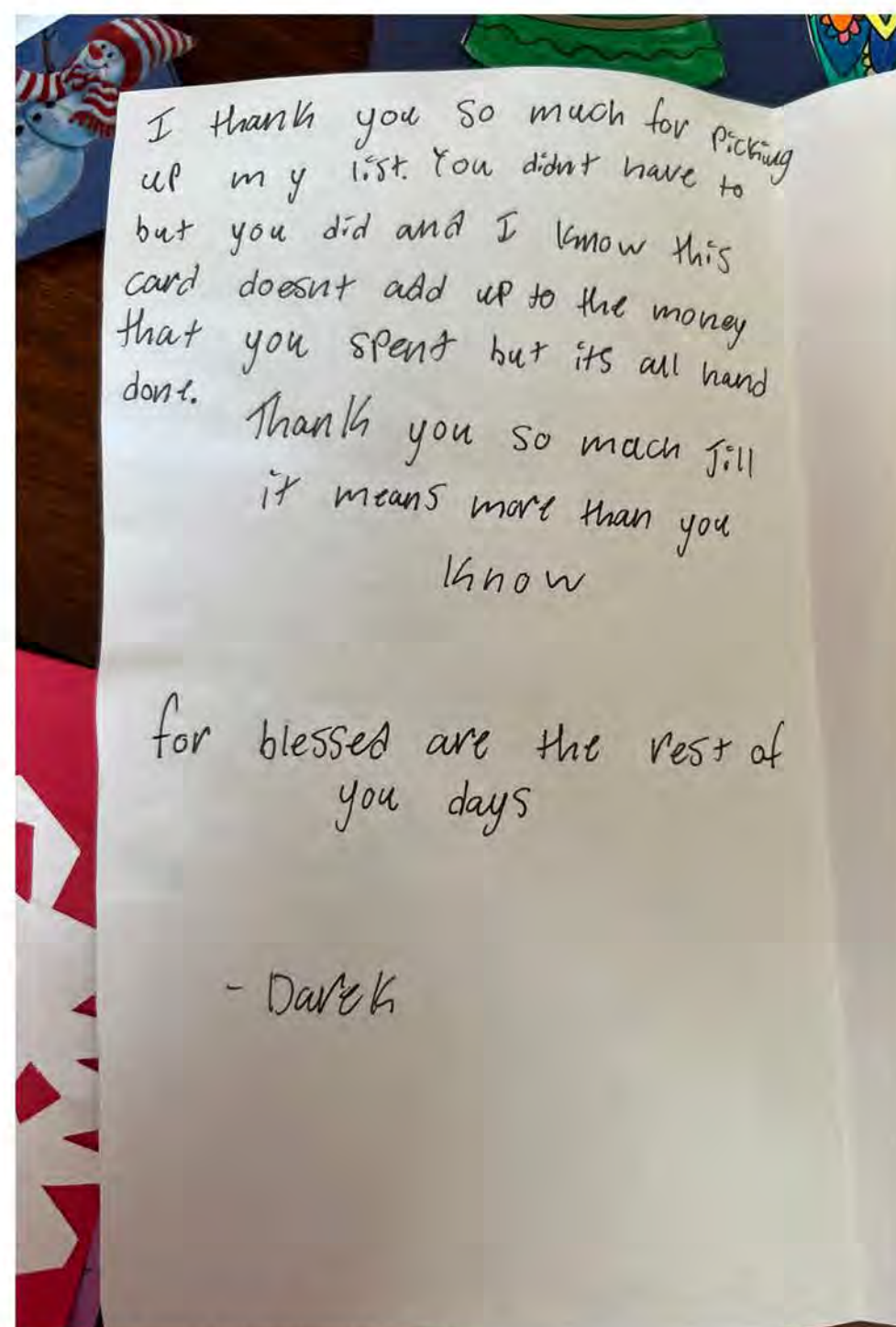
Austin Slaten
Assistant Chief of Police

ODWC family,

Thank you to everyone who donated body wash for the boys home in Norman. This year we were able to provide 38 young men with body wash in addition to the gifts they received as part of a Christmas effort that Leslie Liddell puts together. She works to adopt out lists so that these boys have items such as a hoody or sweatshirt, new socks and undies, a favorite snack and drink, body wash, and a new tooth brush and toothpaste. Every year I tell myself that I am not going to ask for body wash from my ODWC family because it just feels like it does not make that much of a difference. But then I go to the boys home party and it never fails, the body wash is one of the main things that the boys talk about! I am not exaggerating. They open the bottles and talk about how good it smells, how happy they are to have received it etc. Who knew that something as simple as picking up a bottle of body wash could make someone else so very happy.

Thank you for each person who donated from the bottom of my heart!

-Heather Del Moral (C&E)



This is a homemade card from one of the boys we provided gifts for.



Game Bag

Photo by: Debbie Peck

“This is my son, Copper (yes spelled correctly), killing a doe over the holiday antlerless season. Fun times! And a proud moment.”

-David Garrett, Game Warden Adair County



“This is my daughter Millie Allen’s first ever whitetail deer, harvested during rifle season.
She harvested it with the rifle she helped pay for and build.”
-Curt Allen, Sr. Wildlife Biologist



Cherokee Strip Quail Forever and Pheasants Forever hosted a “Buffalo Gals Pheasant Hunt” event at the end of December at Big Fork Ranch. Over 40 pheasant were harvested. Jason Grace (brother of Spencer Grace (LE)), Stephen Paul (LE), Marshall Reigh (LE) along with several other guides and dogs made this memorable day afield possible.



Heather Del Moral (C&E), Marshall Reigh (LE), Amanda Thomas (C&E), Gabby Robinson (F), Jennifer Benge (C&E)



Buffalo Gals with their harvest of pheasants.



“Thankful for Stephen Paul (LE) for helping my daughter’s best friend shoot a shotgun for the very first time! This is a video of her shooting.”
-Heather (C&E)



Amanda’s pup Tripp is on point!



A beautiful harvest.



Pheasant dinner for New Years Day!

“A tradition that Amanda Thomas (C&E), Gabby Robinson (F) and I started a few years ago is to go holiday antlerless hunting on New Year’s Eve. We dubbed the tradition “deers over beers” haha. I was not able to attend this year but they made some memories and went home with a doe!” -Heather Del Moral (C&E)



Gabby with her doe. Woo hoo!



Making memories on New Year's Eve!



The girls were sweet enough to make a dummy of me with extra hunting clothes to make it look like I was there with them. LOL!



ODWC NEW EMPLOYEES

Photo by: Steve Webber

Kamdyn VanDorn
Aquatic Nuisance Species Technician
Fisheries



Kamdyn is a recent graduate of Oklahoma State University, where she earned a bachelor's degree in Natural Resource Ecology & Management, with a concentration in Wildlife. She started her fisheries journey working as an intern at the North Central Fisheries Office and took part in the last season at the PRC this past spring. Outside of work, she enjoys spending her weekends fishing, embroidering, sitting by a bonfire, and taking care of her cat, Captain Cheddar Bob, with her fiancé. Welcome to the ODWC family, Kamdyn!

Waylon DePasse
Invasive Carp Technician
Fisheries



Waylon is our very first Invasive Carp Technician! Having graduated from Foyil Public Schools, he went on to earn a bachelor's degree in environmental science from Rogers State University. Before joining the Wildlife Department, Waylon gained valuable experience through internships with The National Park Service and Oklahoma State University. He also interned at the PRC for two consecutive years, 2020 and 2021. Waylon engages in a variety of outdoor activities such as hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, and photography. He also has a passion for local history, old cars, and culinary pursuits.

We are so happy to have you, Waylon! Welcome!



Wildlife Marketplace

Welcome to the Wildlife Marketplace, a space where ODWC employees can connect to buy, sell, and trade items related to our shared passion for the outdoors. Whether you have extra camping gear, wildlife books, camo, etc. this is the place to share your listings with fellow employees. Send pictures and information to heather.delmoral@odwc.ok.gov



Photo by: Smokey Solis

UPDATES AND REMINDERS

DEADLINES

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

TIME KEEPING TIPS

JANUARY HOLIDAYS: Don't forget that January 1 and 15 are state holidays. 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.

PERFORMANCE REVIEWS IN WORKDAY

SUPERVISORS: You should have an Inbox Task in Workday to review the content of the 2023 Year-End Performance Review. This is the first step in the Final Review of 2023 PMPs.

ALL EMPLOYEES: Step-by-step instructions for completing the Final Review of 2023 PMPs are available on the TOAD (under Admin > HR > Performance Evaluation) as [HR Toolkit Fact Sheet 6A3 – Annual Performance Review in Workday](#) and as [ODWC PMP Part Four – Final video](#). Please follow the steps outlined in the instruction materials. Contact Karla Beatty in HR if you need assistance.

Instructions for Setting the Content of the 2024 Annual Performance Review are also available on the TOAD as [HR Toolkit Fact Sheet 6A1 – Set Content for Annual Performance Review in Workday](#) and [ODWC PMP Part Two – Set Content video](#). For current employees, Workday should pull the content from the 2023 Annual Review into the 2024 Annual Review. You will need to review and update the Responsibilities, Goals, and Competencies as needed.

UPDATING CONTACT INFORMATION IN WORKDAY

The beginning of the new year is a great time to review your personal and work contact information in Workday. You can update your PERSONAL CONTACT INFORMATION; click here for instructions: [HR Toolkit Fact Sheet HR3A3](#).

Any changes to your WORK CONTACT INFORMATION must be done by HR. Please submit these requests via the [ODWC Issues Form](#) on the homepage of the TOAD.



DIRECTOR'S REPORT & COMMISSION SUMMARY

[VIEW DIRECTOR'S
REPORT](#)

[COMMISSION
SUMMARY](#)



Charles Cowell (A)
recognized for 35 years



Scotty Webb (W) recognized for 35 years at a recent meeting at the Wichita Mountains. (Marcus Thibodeau (W) pictured on the left and Scotty Webb (W) on the right.

BIRTHDAYS

- BADLEY, JASON 1/4
- PORTER, CLAYTON 1/4
- HANDKE, JESSE 1/5
- CARTWRIGHT, TOM 1/6
- JUDKINS, TELL 1/6
- COX, SCOTT 1/7
- KUKLINSKI, KURT 1/7
- ROWER, JAMES 1/7
- ZENTNER, DOUGLAS 1/8
- ONEAL, MICKI 1/12
- SOUTHERLAND, SARAH 1/12
- ARNOLD, ZANE 1/15
- JENKS, CLINTON 1/17
- VELEY, ANGELA 1/17
- BAILEY, KARLIN 1/18
- COOPER, ALEXANDER 1/18
- PARKER, CHRIS 1/18
- STAUFFER, JD 1/20
- COX, ERIC 1/22
- WELCH, PAUL 1/22
- JOHNS, ABIGAIL 1/23
- SMITH, WILLIAM 1/23
- BAKER, GREGORY 1/27
- COTTRILL, BLAKE 1/27
- JOYNER, KELLI 1/27
- MARROW, VERLIN 1/27
- WILCOX, GARY 1/27
- BAKER, BRANDON 1/29
- BARBER, DALLAS 1/31
- CLARK, EMILY 1/31



REELIN' IN THE YEARS

- ADAMS, KELLY 13
- ALLEN, JOHN CURT 19
- BARNES, CLAY 21
- BRADFORD, RUSSELL 7
- COPELAND, NATHAN 6
- DUCK, JEREMIAH 10
- GILLMAN, KRISTEN 23
- GOOD, DILLON 6
- GRAGG, BOBBY 4
- HALE, TREY 7
- JOHNSTON, BRADLEY 15
- KOKOJAN, CHASE 8
- MORGAN, BRENT 19
- MORRIS, CODY 7
- MURRAY, DAVID 5
- NEALIS, ASHLEY 16
- PERRY, RUSSELL 21
- PHIPPS III, CLINTON 13
- POLK, DRU 24
- PRIEST, STACEY 5
- REDDEN, HUNTER 6
- RICHARDSON, JOSHUA 17
- RUNYAN, TY 7
- RYAN, KRISTIN 1
- SMITH, WILLIAM 10

