



Dear Wildlife Enthusiast,

One of my fondest memories was when my Meme, mother and aunt took my cousins, sister and me to Robber's Cave State Park in southeastern Oklahoma. We hiked, looked for critters and had picnics for a whole weekend. It was very special!

I encourage you to build these memories with friends, grandchildren or other family members this spring. Whether it's spending time on your back porch birdwatching, planting flowers or taking hikes, get outdoors and make tomorrow's memories today!

Don't forget to [Facebook](#) or [Tweet](#) us with your favorite springtime photos and memories! We love to see them.

Enjoy,

Rachel Bradley
Wildlife Diversity Information Specialist



From left: Meme, little cousins (Clay and Paige), my mother and my younger self at Robber's Cave. Photo by Karen Girdner.

Get Batty this Summer!

Each year Oklahomans go batty to see millions of Mexican free-tailed bats soar from the Selman Bat Cave near the small town of Freedom in northwestern Oklahoma.

The Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation purchased the area around the bat cave around 1996 because of its ecological importance to the Mexican free-tailed bat. Enter for your chance to see this spectacular experience.

[Learn More...](#)



Map of the Bats and Bluffs Loop of the Great Plains Trail of Oklahoma. Click on the map to learn more about the Great Plains Trail of Oklahoma.

Preserving the Mussel

By Curtis Tackett, Aquatic Nuisance Species Biologist

Freshwater mussels are some of the most diverse, yet endangered, groups of aquatic wildlife in North America. A status review of U.S. freshwater mussels by the American Fisheries Society in 1993 found that 97 of the 292 species that occur here are considered endangered. Population declines are also occurring worldwide and a total of 35 species are thought to have gone extinct.



A live mussel displaying some shell wear from the elements of the river environment. Photo by Curtis Tackett.

In Oklahoma alone, there are three mussel species listed as federally endangered. The winged mapleleaf (*Quadrula fragosa*), the scaleshell mussel (*Leptodea leptodon*) and the Ouachita rock pocketbook (*Arkansia wheeleri*) unfortunately share this title.

There are some critical factors, mostly related to human activity, that play into the conservation of freshwater mussels. These include water pollution, habitat alteration, invasive species,

overharvest, stream flow, predation, etc. Now that wastewater discharges are regulated by state and federal agencies, the water pollution factor has been somewhat reduced in recent years. Habitat alteration and flow requirements seem to be the current leading issues with mussel conservation in Oklahoma, and research is currently being done to address these factors.

The unique biological traits of mussels help biologists make informed decisions about managing aquatic ecosystems. Mussels also have a commercial importance in the pearl industry that helps to boost economies and secure jobs. Due to the extensive research community that surrounds these sensitive species, conservation of freshwater mussels is extremely significant to this nation, as well as Oklahoma.

For more information about Oklahoma's mussels, call (405) 521-3855 to purchase the March/April issue of *Outdoor Oklahoma* for \$3.



Two heelsplitter mussels collected during a mussel survey. Photo by Buck Ray.

A Different Kind of Hunting

Since about mid-March until mid-April, you may notice people hunting weaponless for a species with no legs or wings.

Morels, an edible genus of mushrooms, are being sought out in Oklahoma. This mushroom looks like a cross between a honeycomb and a spearhead.



Morels in the woods. Photo taken by Steve Webber.

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In Other Words

-Sign up for Project Noah, the ultimate FREE wildlife social networking app, and share your Oklahoma wildlife photos with wildlife enthusiasts across the globe! [Learn More...](#)

-Get ahead of schedule and plan your wild summer activities with the help of the Wildlife Department's Outdoor Calendar. [Learn More...](#)

-Participate in a Great American Clean Up around Oklahoma this spring to help improve habitat and outdoor areas near you. [Learn More...](#)

-New! Great Plains Trail road map is now available through the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation. [Learn More...](#)



The WildSide e-newsletter is a project of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation's Wildlife Diversity Program. The Wildlife Diversity Program is dedicated to all species in Oklahoma that are not hunted or fished. It is primarily funded by the sales of Wildlife Department license plates, publication sales and private donors.

Visit wildlifedepartment.com for more wildlife diversity information and events. For questions or comments, please email info@odwc.state.ok.us.

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Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation | PO BOX 53465 | Oklahoma City | OK | 73152