

# Arkansas OUT *of* DOORS

The Official Publication of the Arkansas Wildlife Federation | Vol. 48, No. 4, Fall 2020





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Cover photo by Steve Bender,  
red-bellied woodpecker



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## ARKANSAS WILDLIFE FEDERATION PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Fall is finally here and I'm very ready for the cooler temperatures. With that comes opportunities to get outdoors whether that is through hunting, bird watching, hiking, fishing or all of them. In this issue of AOOD, we have some great articles to encourage you and your family to connect to the outdoors.

With the hunting seasons upon us, Chanel Pennington with AGFC shares information on getting your Hunter Education card and the Outdoor Skills Program. These are great ways to connect young and new hunters to the great outdoors through learning a variety of skills. We are very fortunate to have Johnny Carroll Sain contributing to our magazine. He is a nationally known author with a unique way of storytelling. This issue includes a fun piece about exploring the woods on the first fall hunt and celebrating the sites and sounds of fall. Clifton Jackson has a great article on fall squirrel hunting. My grandfather Ralph Vickers used to take me out with him when I was little. I did more looking for snakes than I did squirrels. But we always got a basket of muscadines for my grandmother to make jelly.

Arkansas deer season will be underway when you get this issue. AWF once again offered up a youth elk tag for auction. Thanks to AGFC for donating the tag to AWF to support our ongoing habitat enhancement work at Bearcat Hollow Wildlife Management Area. Congratulations to Brentt Tumey's seven year old son, Maxx, for winning the highest bid. Thanks also to past president, Wayne Shewmake, for his leadership on the nationally recognized Bearcat Hollow project and for assisting the young hunters each year on this once in a lifetime opportunity.

With everything else happening in the world right now, conservation seems to be one of the things that can bring folks together. The Great American Outdoors Act passed with great bi-partisan support, including good support from our Arkansas delegation. Read more about it and other policy and conservation efforts in the News-of-Note section.

The duck season dates have been set. I am excited to see this duck season and hopeful the weather will cooperate with rain in October and November. And when you buy your hunting license this year or renew your fishing license, please purchase a Quail Conservation Stamp. The Quail Initiative is working hard to get one of our greatest game bird numbers back up and purchasing a Quail Stamp is a great way to support the ongoing restoration efforts. Good luck to all the hunters this fall!

If you all are not following the AWF on Facebook, please do. Anita Montgomery is doing an excellent job of getting articles and pictures up on a weekly and sometimes daily basis.

*"I took a walk in the woods and came out taller than the trees"* – HENRY DAVID THOREAU

*"And into the forest I go to lose my mind and find my soul"* – JOHN MUIR

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Charles S. Buckner, III".

Charles S. Buckner, III (Trey)  
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### Arkansas Wildlife Federation Mission Statement

*To promote conservation, responsible management and sustainable use of Arkansas' fish, wildlife, habitat, natural resources and outdoor recreational opportunities through education and advocacy.*



## Arkansas OUT of DOORS

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ARKANSAS WILDLIFE FEDERATION

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# Fall for Birds

*Story by Dan Scheiman, Ph.D.,  
Bird Conservation Director, Audubon Arkansas*

*Photos by Dr. David Sloas*

It's fall, ya'll, and it's a wonderful time to be a birdwatcher. Honestly, it's always a good time to be a birdwatcher. If the increased online activity on sites like Facebook and eBird are any indication, a lot of people have recently discovered that actively watching and trying to identify birds is the perfect pandemic pastime. You can do it in quarantine at home, outdoors far from others, or even in a socially distanced small group. Wherever you choose to bird, if you're trying it for the first time this year, as an experienced birder and ornithologist, I have advice to offer.

Buy binoculars and a paper field guide. Yes, National Audubon and Cornell Lab of Ornithology have online guides and apps. True, you can post a photo online for an expert to ID. But there's no substitute for flipping through a book, puzzling out a new bird for yourself, while also getting a feel for what else is out there that you might see someday. By all means, ask for help, but after you've made an attempt at ID. Merlin is a free bird ID app, but don't accept its top pick without double-checking the field marks, habitat, and range first. Another must-have is the official checklist of Arkansas birds, downloadable at [www.arbirds.org](http://www.arbirds.org). In a compact format, it shows which species are expected, when, and how often.

The backyard is the ideal place to start building your birdwatching skills. There's nothing like sitting in the comfort of your own home and watching birds up close at the



feeder. Seeing these species daily and at length makes it easier to become familiar with them. From there expand your horizons to your city park, then state park, wildlife management area, national wildlife refuge, etc. Where are the birding hotspots near you? You can find birds and birding destinations in the “Explore” section of eBird ([ebird.org/explore](http://ebird.org/explore)) or you can ask other birders.

Get connected to our birding community. Join ARBIRD-L the email discussion group where people post sightings, announce events, and ask questions. Subscribe at [www.arbirds.org](http://www.arbirds.org). Join one of the many Facebook discussion groups for Arkansas birders. Join your local Audubon chapter or the statewide organization Arkansas Audubon Society; they may not be meeting in person now but that doesn't mean the lines of communication are down.

Fall is a time of transition in our avifauna. The presence of some species dwindle down to zero while others mass into flocks numbering in the millions. Some birds change color, others change their tune. By the end of September Mississippi Kites move out. These graceful gray birds of prey primarily eat insects, so they head to South America for the winter. If you hear their two-part whistle after September, don't be fooled by the Blue Jay's impressive imitation. Baltimore and Orchard Orioles also take a tropical vacation. After breeding but before migrating, Purple Martins and Chimney Swifts congregate in communal roosts each night numbering in the hundreds to thousands of birds; it is a spectacle



*“If you want to take part in birding, now is the time to try. The sooner you start, the sooner you'll fall in love with birds.”*

to behold, but please keep a respectable distance from the roost. Late summer and fall is when Ruby-throated Hummingbird numbers surge. Not only are young of the year out on their own, but birds breeding up north pass through too. No, feeding birds won't keep them from migrating. They need the nectar to fuel their little bodies over long distances. Keep your feeders full and clean until you no longer see any hummingbirds for two weeks.

In fall, other species migrate to Arkansas for the winter, joining their locally breeding brethren. Numbers of American Robins, Eastern Meadowlarks, Eastern Bluebirds, Bald Eagles, and Red-tailed Hawks are on the rise. Blackbirds are gathering into their massive winter flocks; look for





House Finch



Red-winged Blackbird

single- and mixed-species flocks of Red-winged Blackbirds, Common Grackles, Brown-headed Cowbirds, and the unrelated European Starlings. Scan carefully and you may find small numbers of recently arrived Rusty or Brewer's Blackbirds mixed in. Shorebirds—sandpipers and plovers—pass through en masse in fall. Look for them in areas of shallow water and mudflats – bare crop fields, drained fish ponds, and moist soil units managed for them such as at Bald Knob National Wildlife Refuge. Shorebirds are a tough group to master. There are many similar looking species, and in fall feather molt and wear change their appearance from what they looked like when heading north in the spring. Some warblers too, molt into a more drab plumage before migrating. Bay-breasted, Blackpoll, Black-throated Green, and Chestnut-sided Warblers lose much of their namesake

colors, which is why field guides refer to them as “confusing fall warblers.” On top of that they are no longer singing, making them more difficult to find in the first place.

Back in your yard, expect White-throated Sparrows to return by the first week of October. They'll wistfully sing about “Oh, sweet Canada Canada Canada” until they return to that country in May to breed. By the end of October, Purple Finches may join your resident House Finches at feeders. In some years they are more abundant than other years, depending on food availability further north. The key to separating these two species is in the face. Both male and female Purple Finches have a distinct ear patch, versus the plain, blended face of House Finches. In addition, male Purple Finches have purple streaks down the belly, whereas male House Finches have brown streaks emerging from the



White-throated Sparrow



Cedar Waxwing





Cooper's Hawk



Ruby-throated Hummingbird



Eastern Bluebirds

reddish chest. Bill shape and voice differ too.

Another pair to be aware of is Cooper's and Sharp-shinned Hawks. Cooper's Hawk is a widespread, permanent resident that breeds even in cities. It is the hawk most likely to pursue feeder birds, especially Mourning Doves. When Sharpies arrive in the fall they tend to be shyer and stay in wooded areas, but they are possible anywhere. There is a size difference, but color and shape are more reliable. Remember "Cooper's are capped, Sharpies are hooded" meaning an adult Cooper's gray cap contrasts with its light gray nape, whereas the Sharpie is evenly dark gray from head to back. The Cooper's tail tip is rounded, Sharpie's is squared.



Sharp-shinned Hawk

In flight, the Sharpie's head looks pushed-in compared to the leading edge of the wings. Immatures are more challenging. Not all birds can be positively identified to species, and being comfortable with letting a bird go unidentified is part of birding.

If you want to take part in birding, now is the time to try. The sooner you start, the sooner you'll fall in love with birds.

*Dr. Dan Scheiman is Bird Conservation Director for Audubon Arkansas, a state office of the National Audubon Society. He and his coworkers restore wildlife habitat, advocate for birds, and help Arkansans improve their local environments.*

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# Taking the First Steps: The Value of a Hunter Education Course

By Chanel Pennington

Hunting is a tradition and past-time for many Arkansans. Traditionally, firearm and hunting skills were learned from earlier generations within circles of family and friends. But not everyone looking to pursue hunting has had the guidance readily available. To a novice, the idea of trekking out into the woods with a lack of experience and gear needed can be intimidating and generally is not encouraged, which is understandable. Those looking to take the first step toward this new outdoor skill should attend an online or in-person hunter education course.

The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission offers hunter education programs statewide. They provide a strong foundation for beginners. The program strives to impart responsibility, advance knowledge and skills, and incite ethical behavior among beginner and seasoned hunters.

There are four main components to the hunter education course; responsibility, safety skills, knowledge, and involvement.

Responsibility, hunters are accountable for their behavior and they should embrace respect for others and the wildlife they hunt. They obey hunting regulations, respect land-owners, practice fair chase, and wait for a clean shot before shooting.

Safety Skills, these skills are usually obtained by direct training and practice. Seeking a hunting mentor is a great way to get started and learn new skills from someone who is experienced in the field.

Knowledge, it is important to understand how firearms operate before handling and hunting. Once a foundation of understanding has been established, the next step is to become familiar and confident with the firearm you will hunt with. When a hunter is comfortable and accustomed to their equipment, it makes it safer for others and improves their marksmanship skills.

Involvement, becoming involved in practices and efforts to sustain hunting as a tradition and valued pastime is encouraged by all hunters. This involvement comes in many forms



*Cleaning a pheasant from my first mentored hunt after attending a hunter education program.*

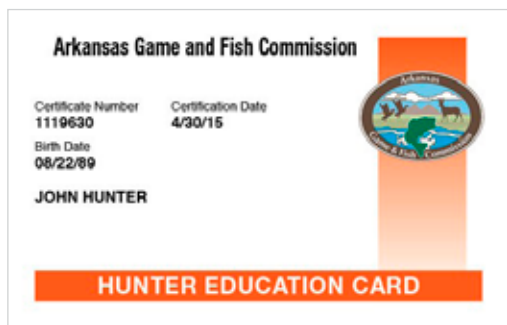
such as working with a fish and wildlife conservation organization and supporting conservation efforts. Experienced hunters are also encouraged to become a mentor for a new hunter by passing along their hunting ethics, experience, and tradition.

Hunting has no objections to who chooses to embrace the sport. Male, female, young or old, black or white, it is here for everyone. Hunting has helped me strengthen the bond with my family. I have made new friends and memories that will always stay with me. I look forward to the cold mornings in the woods that lay ahead and it all started with a foundation in awareness and education.

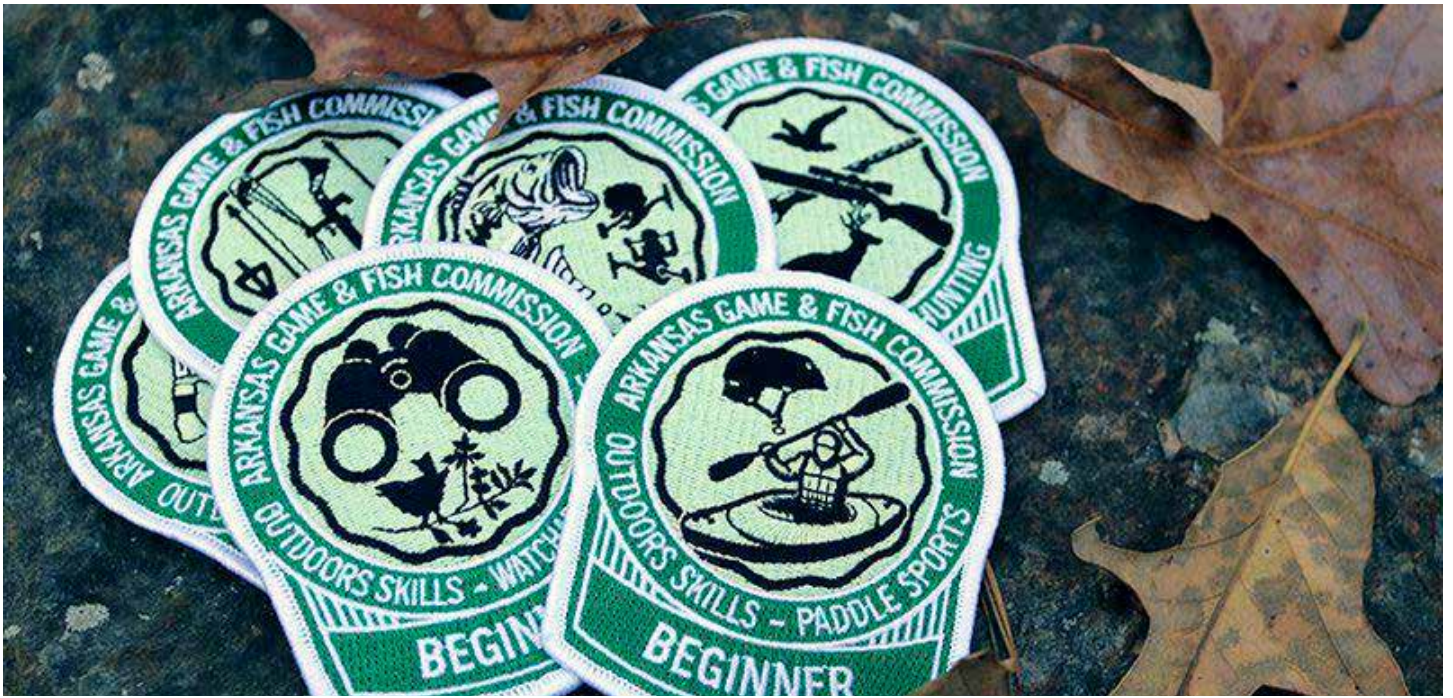
I can personally speak to the knowledge and insight gained from attending a hunter education course. As a novice hunter, I have only dipped my toes into the pool, but I can tell you that it has greatly enhanced my connection to our natural resources and understanding of the role I will play in conservation. By hunting and fishing, you are conservation.

To get more information about a hunter education course in your area, or online, visit <https://www.agfc.com/en/education/first-steps-outdoors/huntered/>.

*Chanel Pennington is an Education Program Specialist for AGFC based at the Witt Stephen's Jr. Central Arkansas Nature Center.*







# FIND YOUR OUTSIDE:

## Outdoors Skills Program

By Chanel Pennington

These days I see stickers on cars, coffee cups, laptops, cell phones, and other personal items. I get a sense of someone's interest from the logos or branding images they chose to display. Maybe they belong to a local bike or hiking association or they want to show their support of a national organization. Whatever the reason, they want others to know about it. I remember when I was a young girl and earned badges in our local scout's program. I was proud to show them off and let others know that I was learning a new skill. Now as an adult, I am learning new skills such as hunting and game calling. Thanks to the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission's Outdoors Skills Program, I earn patches for these new outdoor pursuits.

The Outdoors Skills Program has a variety of categories to help folks find their outside and learn a new skill. Interested in fishing or conservation leadership? There's a patch for that. Maybe you would like to learn more about paddling sports, archery, game-calling, shotgun, or rifle marksmanship. Enjoy

being outside and watching wildlife? There's a patch for those too.

The idea is to learn the basic knowledge and earn a beginner patch, then add a bar for each skill level you attain. Progress can be tracked by an AGFC staff member. The

idea earn rockers as you advance through the intermediate and advanced levels until you become an expert. Once you reach the advanced level, you will have the opportunity to become a mentor and help others learn the same skills.

It's easy to get started. You can visit a nature or education center in your region to see upcoming programs that could qualify for your beginner's patch in one of the outdoor skill areas. For more information, visit <https://www.agfc.com/en/education/first-steps-outdoors/outdoors-skills/>.

So go ahead and learn a new outdoor skill. Earn your patch and display it proudly!



Nora Pennington earned her beginner patch in conservation leadership by volunteering at the William E. Clark Presidential Park Wetlands cleanup in Little Rock, AR.

Chanel Pennington is an Education Program Specialist for AGFC based at the Witt Stephen's Jr. Central Arkansas Nature Center.





# SQUIRRELS: BRINGING GENERATIONS OF HUNTERS TOGETHER

By Clifton Jackson

**SQUIRREL HUNTING IN ARKANSAS IS A TREASURED TRADITION TO MANY HUNTERS.** Squirrels and squirrel hunters have seen many environmental and sociological changes over the past several decades. However, populations of squirrels remain robust and the pursuit of squirrels by novice and seasoned hunters is a fixture of hunting heritage in the Natural State. The simplicity of squirrel hunting has a lot of appeal to many hunters for many reasons.

Squirrel hunting was often the first hunting experience for several generations of hunters. Modern introductory hunts are more likely to target deer or game animals other than squirrels.

However, I feel certain that squirrel hunting is the best introductory hunting option. Simplicity and multiple opportunities to shoot a firearm are essential for young hunters. Watching a squirrel dog utilize its elite skills is quite fascinating to anyone that witnesses a good dog. I thoroughly enjoy pursuing any hunting option that nature has to offer, but as my hunting years have transitioned to hunting decades, squirrel hunting reigns supreme.

I often think of squirrel hunting as being the most accessible hunting opportunity with the highest probability of harvesting an exquisite dining experience. There are literally millions of acres of public lands that have bustling populations of squirrels. Overcrowding can be an issue with several other public land hunting opportunities. However, squirrel hunting opportunities are widely distributed and it's unlikely to encounter a forest that's covered-up with squirrel hunters. Private landowners are also more







**“The simplicity of squirrel hunting has a lot of appeal to many hunters for many reasons.”**

sas, there is a transcendence of hunting heritage that is rejuvenating. Squirrel camp is usually overflowing with all sorts of gravy smothered game meats and fresh fish obtained from the outdoor pursuits of camp attendees. A lot of stories and laughter accompany the meals of fish and wildlife, which add to the comradery of squirrel camp. Contemporary squirrel recipes are far beyond fried and dumplings and are frequently shared at squirrel camp.

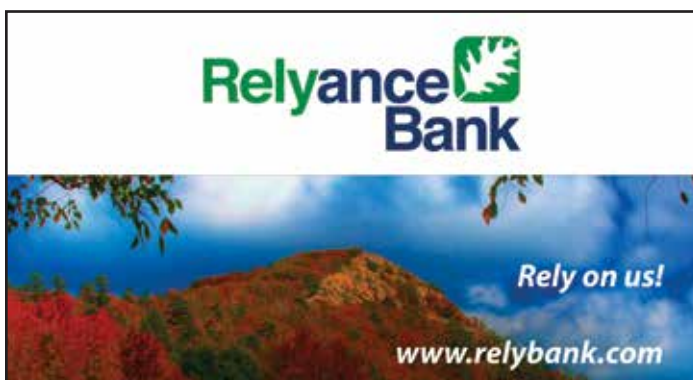
This year has certainly presented some unusual challenges for every Arkansan. Most hunters have gone squirrel hunting at some point. This season presents a great opportunity to introduce someone new to squirrel hunting. A visit to the squirrel woods will undoubtedly suspend the stress and the challenges of 2020. The simplicity of a good squirrel hunt will provide some much needed therapy sessions for squirrel hunting aficionados. Squirrel season in Arkansas opens every year on May 15th, and closes at the end of February. The limit is 12 squirrels per person per day. For more information on the regulations for this seasons squirrel hunting, visit [www.agfc.com](http://www.agfc.com).



likely to allow squirrel hunters to hunt their land as compared to waterfowl or deer hunters. The diversity of forested habitats that squirrels inhabit makes squirrel hunting both challenging and interesting for squirrel hunters. The experience of hunting squirrels in the mountains differs from squirrel hunting in bottomland hardwoods. The strategies and tactics gleaned from successful squirrel hunts in the various ecoregions and habitats in Arkansas will add diverse and adaptable set of skills. In short, it will make you a better hunter no matter what you hunt.

Squirrel camp truly embodies the essence of hunting heritage. When friends and families assemble for several days to convene the most simple and meaningful hunt in Arkan-

*Clifton Jackson is a Fisheries Biologist/Program Coordinator at Arkansas Game & Fish Commission.*





# A Diminutive Discovery at Taylor Woodlands Natural Area

*Story & photos by Dustin Lynch*

One of my most exciting recent discoveries happened this spring during my first survey of Taylor Woodlands Natural Area. This 137-acre natural area in Jefferson County on the southeastern outskirts of Pine Bluff has been part of the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission's (ANHC) System of Natural Areas since 1977, added only a few years after the creation of the ANHC. This site, which lies at the very edge of the Mississippi Alluvial Valley (or "Delta") near its boundary with the West Gulf Coastal Plain, protects a rare tract of old-growth bottomland hardwood forest, once widespread throughout the Delta, and now largely lost during the process of agricultural conversion. Much of the natural area is comprised of poorly drained soils that retain water. The swamps of Taylor Woodlands NA lie not far from the headwaters of one of Arkan-

sas's most iconic waterways, Bayou Bartholomew. Not only is Bayou Bartholomew famed as the world's longest bayou, but it has long been known as one of the most aquatically biodiverse systems in Arkansas.

On an evening in late March, I made my first visit to the natural area, where I deployed five baited aquatic traps made

from modified umbrella frames, among the cypress knees at the shallow edge of the swamp. When setting traps in the water, it is of the utmost importance to put them only in shallow water and anchor them responsibly so that air-breathing species that might enter the traps will not drown. I left my traps overnight and returned the following morning.

When I returned to retrieve my traps the next morning, I found quite an assortment of aquatic life awaiting inside. They were filled with such fascinating







*“Discovering one more population of this tiny, easily overlooked species thriving at one of the ANHC’s oldest natural areas was a very satisfying experience.”*

swamp-dwelling fish as Bantam Sunfish (*Lepomis symmetricus*), Banded Pygmy Sunfish (*Elassoma zonatum*), and Golden Topminnows (*Fundulus chrysotus*). There was a foot-and-a-half long Western Lesser Siren (*Siren intermedia* nettingi), a large swamp-dwelling salamander species with no hind legs and only rudimentary front legs, making it more closely resemble an eel than a salamander. There were a few brightly colored Central Newts (*Notophthalmus viridescens louisianensis*), another salamander species with one of the most complex and interesting life cycles of any

in Arkansas. There was a pair of Mississippi Mud Turtles (*Kinosternon subrubrum hippocrepis*), the smallest species of turtle native to Arkansas. There were fearsome-looking Water Scorpions (*Ranatra* sp.), Giant Water Bugs (*Belostoma* sp.), and Six-spotted Fishing Spiders (*Dolomedes triton*). And of course, there were crayfishes in most of the traps as well. Most of these were Red Swamp Crayfish (*Procambarus clarkii*), a large swamp-dwelling species abundant in the lowlands of southern and eastern Arkansas, familiar as the species most commonly consumed by humans.

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Near the very end of the survey, while removing one of the very last animals from my last trap, I pulled out what I first mistook as just another juvenile Red Swamp Crayfish until I noticed that it had a more intricate, mottled pattern on its flattened carapace and small, slender pincers. When I picked it up to examine it more closely, I was amazed to see that the minute crayfish, only around an inch in length, was a fully mature female “in berry,” i.e. carrying eggs.

A female crayfish carries her clutch of eggs within a membranous film, and within this membrane, each egg is individually attached to the female’s swimmerets by strands of glare (a membranous film secreted from glands in the tail). The female uses motion created by her swimmerets and telson (last segment of the abdomen) to aerate the eggs until hatching. Even after hatching, the female will carry the young crayfish attached to her swimmerets

for several molt cycles until they eventually start voyaging out on their own.

As soon as I saw that this tiny crayfish was in fact fully grown, I knew I was dealing with a very different species. I also knew that to identify it, it would be best to find and examine a male from the population, given that anatomical features of male crayfish are often the best way to make a definitive ID.

I returned to the natural area a few weeks later, along with Brian Wagner and Justin Stroman from the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC)

and Scotty Winningham from the ANHC. The four of us spent a few hours with our dip-nets surveying the swamp until we collected several male crayfish, as well as several more females in berry. Examination of the gonopods revealed this to



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## Award Winning & Competition BBQ

Having more than 10 years combined experience in competition bbq and catering, including participation in Memphis in May World Championships & KCBS sanctioned contests, Fowl Smokin Swine is one of the area's premier BBQ catering companies, serving clients from around the greater White Hall region; as well as, several places in Arkansas. From weddings and receptions to corporate events, we know what it takes to ensure your event is a smashing success.



be a population of one of the smallest crayfish species in Arkansas, the Swamp Dwarf Crayfish (*Cambarellus puer*), a lowland species associated with heavy aquatic vegetation in cypress swamps, slow-moving bayous, and small creeks.

Although the Swamp Dwarf Crayfish apparently ranges over a large area of southern and eastern Arkansas, the 20 or so known localities at which this species has been collected in the state are widely scattered, and its distribution here is poorly understood. Discovering one more population of this tiny, easily overlooked species thriving at one of the ANHC's oldest natural areas was a very satisfying experience.



*Dustin Lynch is the ANHC's aquatic ecologist. He has a doctorate in biological sciences from the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville and a master's degree in zoology from Oklahoma State University.*

*The ANHC, an agency of Arkansas Heritage, focuses on science-based conservation to protect Arkansas's biological diversity and maintains a state-wide System of Natural Areas made up of more than 65,000 acres. The ANHC's Arkansas Heritage Program biodiversity database tracks the location and status of rare animal and plant species, as well as natural communities in Arkansas.*

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# Hallelujah

Story & photo by Johnny Carol Sain

**THROATY HOOTS OF A GREAT HORNED OWL** echo through the trees as I swig the last lukewarm coffee and gently close the truck door. Hunting license — check. Shotgun — check. Pocketful of shells — check. Apple and water bottle — check. Keys slide into a front pocket and into the dark woods I go.

The forest floor is quiet walking. Last year's leaves have mostly melted into detritus, dissolving into nutrients that will feed the trees and wildflowers, and then the wildlife for decades to come. This year's leaves still grasp the slender limb tips. A few were ripped away by violent spring and summer thunderstorms, and a few have passed through the digestive tract of various critters, but most are still holding on.

I can't see leaves or trees or anything in any shade or depth right now, only blue-black silhouettes on this moonless predawn, but I imagine some leaves have already changed color. Sumac and black gum start anticipating autumn with brilliant scarlet splashes in late July. I'll have to wait on the sun for a visual on the sumac and black gum leaves, but night vision — a very cool near-super power, by the way, and one that hunters employ often — allows me to side step every obstacle in the woods except spider webs. Nothing like starting the day with a nice sticky web wrapped around your face. I fare pretty well, though. Perspective is important. It was a few moments of mild panic for me, but the spider lost its home.

I make it to the ridge top as darkness grudgingly submits. The first gray glow is unappealing to say the least. I prefer the tones of night to this austere color. It's the color of nothing. It's the color of everything. Maybe it's the color of creation, a malleable shade that can be



formed into anything, but if not for the promises it held I would hate it. Those promises soon unfold.

Sleepy petals of lavender and powder blue begin to bloom overhead as blushes of coral and apricot grow to meet them. While light is surging fast beyond the canopy, the woods, still full of foliage, are a shadow world. But I can make out bark patterns and leaf clusters now, and that's plenty to guide me to the hickories. Squirrels will be in the hickories.

Brilliant orange beams radiate from the eastern horizon as I reach my destination. A damp forehead and ragged breath prove it was a tough haul for an out-of-shape writer. I take off the camouflage cap and let the first cool air of the season caress my scalp. It's a refreshment I haven't enjoyed since probably April, and it triggers weird cravings. What I would give for a plate of biscuits and gravy right now. I know it's nostalgia. In my life, biscuits and gravy are paired with cool mornings like... well, like biscuits are paired with sausage gravy. How many times over the years have biscuits and gravy fueled these early season squirrel hunts? Too many to count, that's for sure. But with middle age comes certain concessions, and I plan to hunt this ridge for

another four decades at least.

Except for the crickets, it's very quiet. As late summer bleeds into autumn, the early morning forest hushes a bit more with every minute lost. The birds, so brash and loud just a few months ago, are mostly mute. Some have already left for parts south. However, a chattering Carolina chickadee and razzing pair of tufted titmice watch with bold suspicion as I settle next to a post oak in a stand of its relatives mixed with hickories. Now I can see the hickories are drooping with mast, limbs weighty with nuts. I press the back of my head against the post oak's rough bark and smile as a chorus of gray squirrels singing hallelujah for the bounty march through my imagination. And just in case squirrels really can't grasp concepts like gratitude and joy, I mutter a hallelujah on their behalf.

I close my eyes as a lone mosquito buzzes away. I wait and I listen.

Soon I hear the raspy scratch of tiny claws on bark, the swoosh of leafy boughs dancing under the weight of a something searching. I hear deliberate gnawing. It's the sound of incisors shaving away the green bonds of summer, unlocking autumn's bounty.

It's finally fall.

Hallelujah.





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## Cleburne County 18 and Under Fishing Championship and Scholarship Program

Greers Ferry Lake has a lot to offer everyone of all ages and a group of volunteers decided to turn that fishing opportunity into college scholarships. In the fall of 2019, The Cleburne County 18 and Under Fishing Championship Scholarship Program, a 501c3 non-profit organization, was established. The mission is to provide every child in Cleburne County and all adjoining counties the opportunity to earn a scholarship to the college of their choice simply by fishing in the lake that is in their backyard. The program gives youth in the area an opportunity to learn to fish, enjoy the great outdoors, improve on their skills, and earn funding for higher education. Organization president, Sean Blackburn, envisioned the fishing tournament and wanted to honor the late Mr. Willie Stone in the process. The Willie Stone Cup will be awarded in memory of a very fine gentleman who served Cleburne County as a Justice of the Peace, deacon of his



church, foster parent, employer, and volunteered on many non-profit boards. He loved his family, his church, helping folks, and teaching kids of all ages how to fish. His biggest passion was simply giving back to his community. Three teams of two youth will be awarded with a scholarship to be split between the teammates. The scholarship will be placed in a CD in their name with the option to grow the account until called upon by the college of the child's choice. The 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Willie Stone Cup will be held October 3<sup>rd</sup>. For more information about the tournament or to volunteer, visit [www.cleburnecounty18underfishingchampionship.com](http://www.cleburnecounty18underfishingchampionship.com).

## Wildlife conservation education grants for Arkansas schools

Each year the AGFC fines poachers and other people violating hunting and fishing laws. These fines are placed into a conservation education grant fund managed by the Arkansas Economic Development Commission Division of Rural Services. For 2020, school and conservation districts could apply for grants to promote wildlife education and improve school conservation programs. Total funds available for the fiscal year 2021 total more than \$735,000 and grants will be awarded in January. Annually, these grants fund projects such as starting archery, fishing and competitive shooting sports programs; purchasing educational materials, lab supplies and funding field trips to AGFC nature centers; and creating

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and enhancing outdoor classrooms at schools. Visit [www.arkansasedc.com/Rural-Services/division/grants/wildlife-education-grant](http://www.arkansasedc.com/Rural-Services/division/grants/wildlife-education-grant) for more information, including a complete list of award recipients and program narratives.

## National Conservation Policy update

As AWF president mentioned in his opening letter, there has been some positive movement in Congress to support conservation. Here are a few high priority conservation bills we are working on which are bringing both sides of the aisle together.

- *Great American Outdoors Act* - We were thrilled to see the successful passage of the Great American Outdoors Act which was signed into law on August 4th. This bill will improve maintenance on our public lands and fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Thanks to the majority of the Arkansas congressional delegation who stepped up to support this great conservation funding bill.
- *American Conservation Enhancement Act (ACE Act)* - On September 16th, the Senate passed the America's Conservation Enhancement Act. Co-sponsored by Senator Boozman, the overwhelming bipartisan support in the Senate on the ACE Act is a tremendous win for America's wildlife and sporting traditions. The bill invests in wetlands, fisheries, Chronic Wasting Disease research, and habitat restoration projects in the Chesapeake Bay and throughout the country. Our hope is that by the time you read this that the U.S. House of Representatives has followed suit and passed this important legislation.
- *Recovering America's Wildlife Act* - Recovering America's Wildlife Act continues to be a very high priority for Arkansas Wildlife Federation. On July 1<sup>st</sup>, the House of Representatives adopted the Recovering America's Wildlife Act as an amendment to the Moving Forward Act and we are hoping the Senate will take up a bill

before the end of the year. Under the Recovering America's Wildlife Act, Arkansas would receive roughly \$15 million annually to help more than 375 species of concern. The passage of the Great American Outdoors Act and support of the American Conservation Enhancement Act stand as a models for how Congress can take bipartisan, effective action on national conservation priorities. AWF continues to ask the Arkansas congressional delegation to build upon their bipartisan conservation momentum and support passage of the Recovering America's Wildlife Act.

## New report on the impacts of Dicamba use to non-target species

As the Environmental Protection Agency prepares to determine whether to renew dicamba product registrations for the 2021 growing season, a new report details how the herbicides pose serious threats to wild plants and the wildlife that depend upon them. The report from the National Wildlife Federation, Prairie Rivers Network and the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation, *Drifting Toward Disaster: How Dicamba Herbicides are Harming Cultivated and Wild Landscapes*, reviews the state of the science on the potential far-reaching impacts of dicamba use. Mounting evidence suggests that current dicamba products and uses are causing unreasonable adverse effects on the environment, even when used exactly as specified on the labels. The report advocates for diversifying weed management strategies to improve resilience, including choosing crop varieties that are competitive with weeds, adjusting planting dates and depths of crops to help get ahead of weed growth, and managing nutrients in ways that give crops the competitive edge. To learn more about the concerns and recommendations from the report, visit <https://www.nwf.org/Educational-Resources/Reports/2020/08-05-20-Drifting-Toward-Disaster>.



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## Helping children become conservationists

**H**elping children become conservationists requires that they develop an appreciation, understanding, and enjoyment of the bountiful natural resources available to them. So often, we all move through our lives without taking full advantage of the state's diverse beauty, often taking it for granted, thinking that things will never change. As I was sitting on my front porch listening to and enjoying the sounds of the summer night as I tried to think of a topic for this article, I began to think of how much I enjoyed the sounds of Arkansas. Every season and every region of the state is filled with the unique sounds of that particular time and place. As a science teacher I began to think of how important it is to teach students the physics of sound and hoped that this article would serve two purposes: conservation and science content.

Sound is caused by vibrations traveling in waves through a medium such as a solid, liquid, or gas. Vibrations are rapid back and forth movements. This can be demonstrated by holding a plastic ruler on a table with most of the ruler extending over the edge of the table and softly plucking it. The ruler will vibrate and make a sound. Have the children gently hold a hand across the front of their throats over their vocal cords and say "Sound is caused by vibrations," which will allow them to feel the vibrations as their vocal cords make sounds. The energy produced by sound can be "seen" by sprinkling some salt or grains of rice into an aluminum pie pan and holding the pan in front of a stereo speaker. The more you turn up the volume, the more energy is visible in the jumping grains of salt or rice. Since sound waves travel through matter by passing the vibrations from molecule to molecule, the more dense the matter the easier it is for the vibrations to move.

Sound travels better through water than through air and better through a hard solid than through water. This can be demonstrated by tapping a pencil on a table or desk and lis-

tening to the sound being produced as it travels through the air to the ear and comparing it to the same tapping sound when the ear is placed directly to the surface of the table or desk. Hearing through water is a little trickier but a simple way is to fill the bathtub with water, tap the side and listen through the air, tap and listen with the ear on the surface of the tub, then tap the tub while the ears are beneath the water. This phenomenon is also obvious when diving in a swimming pool or at the beach as you hear the sound of people wading through the water.

Animals use and depend on sound in a variety of ways. They make sounds to communicate with each other and other species. The sounds can relay warning signals, mating calls, distress calls, keep the group together, and help form bonds within the group to name a few things. Animals also listen for sounds to alert them to danger, prey or predators. Humans use the sounds to identify the animals and can mimic the sounds to communicate with the animals often attracting them as in using duck calls, turkey calls, clanking horns together or using grunts to bring in deer when hunting. Bird watchers use knowledge of the songs of birds to identify and locate them.

As we move through fall and winter take the time to not only listen and discuss the sounds of the animals, but the sounds of dried grasses, trees or fallen leaves being blown by the wind or rushing water in streams, rivers, and waterfalls. Listen to the quiet of the winter night, the crunch of walking on ice, snow, or frost on grass. Humans experience and learn about the world through their senses and we can learn a lot by listening to the world around us.

### Resources:

1. <https://kidskonnnect.com/science/sound>
2. YouTube: Animal Sounds for Kids: 34 Amazing Animals
3. <https://flypaper.soundfly.com/discover/5-unique-ways-animals-communicate-through-sound/>



# Arkansas Wildlife Membership Registration Form

Membership Classification - Please Check One:

**YOU CAN ALSO REGISTER ONLINE AT [www.ARWild.org](http://www.ARWild.org)**

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