

# Arkansas OUT *of* DOORS

The Official Publication of the Arkansas Wildlife Federation | Vol. 49, No. 2, Spring 2021







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Cover photo of Flanagan Prairie  
Natural Area courtesy of William Dark  
See more of his work at  
[www.williamdark.com](http://www.williamdark.com)



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## ARKANSAS WILDLIFE FEDERATION PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Snowmageddon 2021 has come and gone. It was fun for a few days but I am glad it is over. With the snow behind us, it is time to start enjoying spring and spending more time outdoors. As my kids get older, I truly just love to get out in the wild with them. James and I got to fish the White River just above Sylamore Creek a few weeks ago and we had a great time. We caught and released 32 trout in about 2 hours. A fun stretch of river to fish and thanks to Richard Cross and his awesome Zig Jigs, catching fish seems easy.

Turkey Season will be on when this issue reaches you. I'm hoping to get a turkey this year as it has been a long time since I have harvested this great bird. I have fully enjoyed the times chasing what I believe to be one of the smartest birds on the planet. Jim Spencer is out with his second book "Bad Birds 2". Go pick one up. Please be careful out there and good luck.

Spring also means planning and planting your garden. To help with that, the AR Natural Heritage Commission has a great article about native plants and the importance they play in our ecosystem. And don't forget to certify your backyard wildlife habitat with National Wildlife Federation in partnership with AWF.

In Johnny Carrol Sain's article, he shares stories about exploring nature and simply saving the world through observation first. I can't tell you how many times I have gone fly fishing at Swinging Bridge and just sat on the big rocks in the river to watch the trout before I ever throw the first fly. There is nothing more magical than a group of mallards coming in thru the trees in Bayou Meto or that big buck easing through the woods in the dawns first light. I have let many birds go

and deer pass, simply sitting in awe viewing nature's wonder.

Lake Conway is a true Central Arkansas gem. My dad and I would occasionally fish there although I have to admit I remember the bait shop with the good cheeseburgers more than I do the fishing. But it was a good childhood memory nonetheless. Please check out the great piece about the creation of Lake Conway and the AWF contributions.

Cudos to the AGFC for getting out in front of the Chronic Wasting Disease crisis with a great plan on how to manage and study this truly terrible disease. You can review the revised plan at <https://www.agfc.com/en/hunting/big-game/deer/cwd/>

Have you ever been out on a night in our great state and looked up at the sky in search of the Milky Way? I'm guessing we all have done it once or twice. Guest author for Arkansas Wild Kids, Darcy Howard, shares some good information about searching the night sky for the great Milky Way.

Please check us out on Facebook for program updates and other great posts about finding wildlife around Arkansas.

*"There can be no greater issue than that of conservation in this country"* –THEODORE ROOSEVELT

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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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# “Wildlife of Arkansas”

## 2021 STUDENT ART CONTEST

*presented by*



## AR Wildlife Federation & Creative Ideas



AWF and Creative Ideas thank all the students (and teachers and parents for helping) for making the shift to our online submission process a success. Hundreds of incredible pieces of art were submitted through the [www.arwild.org](http://www.arwild.org) portal.

For eight years, the Wildlife of Arkansas Student Art Contest has encouraged students in grades K-12 to explore and celebrate Arkansas' wildlife. The shift to this online submission process allowed students, teachers and parents the ability to submit a photograph of the artwork online, rather than mail the original artwork in to be scored. This new process offered many benefits including expanding to new schools and areas of the state that may not have had the funding to mail the original artwork.

Thank you to the amazing judges for their time and knowledge in selecting the winners. And special thanks to AGFC for supporting the program through an education grant. Winners in each grade along with their artwork will be displayed in the summer issue of **Arkansas Out of Doors**.



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Bald cypress  
swamp scene on  
Dale Bumpers  
White River NWR

# ARKANSAS' NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES - PART 1

Story and photos by  
Keith Weaver

*This is the first of a two-part series about the National Wildlife Refuges found in Arkansas. The National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) System was founded by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1903. NWR are public lands and waters administered by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The NWR System is a diverse network of lands and waters dedicated to conserving America's rich fish and wildlife heritage. Refuges offer people access to a range of popular activities that depend on thriving fish and wildlife populations. These priority public uses include fishing, hunting, wildlife observation, photography, environmental education and interpretation. There are 568 NWRs in the United States (Green River NWR in Kentucky became the 568th last year). Arkansas is blessed with having 10 NWRs ranging from mountains to lowland wetlands. Part 1 in this series includes four NWRs in the southern half of eastern Arkansas.*

## Dale Bumpers White River National Wildlife Refuge

Dale Bumpers White River National Wildlife Refuge (NWR, refuge) was established in 1935 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt for the protection of migratory birds. This 161,000-acre refuge lies in the floodplain of the White River near its confluence with the Arkansas and Mississippi Rivers. Long and narrow, three to ten miles wide and almost 55 miles long, Dale Bumpers White River NWR contains one of the largest remaining bottomland hardwood forests in the Mississippi River Valley. The refuge's landscape is composed of fertile soils covered by extensive forests interlaced with streams, sloughs, bayous, and some 300 lakes. The resulting habitat is a haven for a myriad of fish, resident wildlife, and migratory birds.

Managing for quality fish and wildlife habitat is the primary goal and function of Dale Bumpers White River NWR. This goal is accomplished mainly through active management of forested and herbaceous wetlands. Forest management practices such as the selective harvesting of trees are implemented to create gaps in the overstory canopy allowing sunlight to reach the forest floor. This sunlight encourages the growth of young trees, shrubs and other small plants that are beneficial to fish (when flooded) and wildlife. Active wetland management practices such as water manipulation and soil disturbance are implemented to stimulate the establishment and growth of many desirable species of wetland plants. Wetlands and their plants provide an excellent home for crustaceans, insects, and mollusks all year long. During the winter months, these same plants provide an abundant food source for wintering waterfowl. The White River itself has its own version of water management, especially during the winter and spring months. In most years the White River floods 25%-75% of the Refuge during some portion of the winter and spring months. During the winter months, this flooded bottomland hardwood forest habitat provides an excellent place for many species of waterfowl to feed, loaf, and roost. During the spring months, these flooded areas become a nursery for millions of fish and other aquatic creatures.

The Refuge is home to what was the last remaining population of black bear native to Arkansas. During the early 2000s, a number of female bears and cubs were relocated to Felsenthal National Wildlife Refuge near Crossett, Arkansas to help reestablish this native population to its historic range. To find out more about Dale Bumpers White River NWR, please visit our website [http://www.fws.gov/refuge/white\\_river/](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/white_river/) or call the refuge office at (870)-282-8200.

## Felsenthal National Wildlife Refuge

Felsenthal National Wildlife Refuge is located within the West Gulf Coastal Plain in Ashley, Bradley, and Union Counties in southern Arkansas, about eight miles west of Crossett, Arkansas on U.S. Highway 82. Established in 1975 as mitigation for the creation of the U.S. Army Corps of En-

gineer's Ouachita and Black Rivers Navigation Project and Felsenthal Lock and Dam, this 68,000-acre refuge is named for the small Felsenthal community located at its southwest corner, and contains an abundance of water resources dominated by the Ouachita and Saline Rivers and the Felsenthal Pool.

Geographically, the refuge and surrounding area is located in what is known as the Felsenthal Basin, an extensive natural depression that is laced with a vast complex of sloughs,



Aerial view of  
Felsenthal NWR

bayous, and lakes. The region's two major rivers, the Saline and Ouachita, flow through the area. These wetland areas, in combination with the area's diverse forest ecosystem of bottomland hardwoods, pine forests, and uplands support a wide variety of wildlife and provide excellent fishing, hunting, boating, wildlife observation, and environmental education opportunities. Seasonally flooded bottomland forests, pine-dominated uplands, upland hardwoods, and various types of riparian and openland areas provide ideal habitat for many species of wildlife, including more than 200 species of birds, 40 species of mammals, 70 species of reptiles and amphibians, and 90 species of fish.

Felsenthal NWR is situated within the Mississippi Flyway—the "highway in the sky" used by vast numbers of migrating waterfowl, shorebirds, neotropical songbirds, and birds of prey. During the spring, summer and through early fall, this landscape is a haven for a variety of migrant birds. A myriad of songbirds and shorebirds stop briefly in the fall and spring to replenish energy reserves for the long journey to and from wintering areas in Central and South America,





Triangle Field at  
Overflow NWR

while other birds, such as northern parula, prothonotary warbler, and American redstart utilize the refuge for nesting.

In addition to the numerous hunting and fishing opportunities on the refuge, the refuge has three paddle trails, two hiking trails, numerous seasonal trails, one observation tower, and eight boat ramps available for wildlife dependent recreation. For more information, visit our website at <http://www.fws.gov/felsenthal> or call the refuge at (870) 364-3167.

## Overflow National Wildlife Refuge

Overflow National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1980, and encompasses 13,973 acres in southeast Arkansas in Ashley County. Overflow NWR is approximately five miles west of Wilmot, AR on Arkansas State Highway 8 and approximately 15 miles southeast of Hamburg, AR on Arkansas State Highway 8. Overflow NWR was established

to protect one of the remaining bottomland hardwood forests considered vital for maintaining mallard, wood duck, and other waterfowl populations in the Mississippi Flyway. The bottomland hardwood forest consists primarily of willow oak and overcup oak. The willow oaks produce small acorns that are an excellent source of food for mallards and wood ducks in the winter. Baldcypress and water tupelo occur along streams, channels, and sloughs throughout the refuge. The wetland complex on the refuge consists of seasonally flooded bottomland hardwood forests

and moist soil impoundments.

About 60 percent (8,650 acres) of Overflow NWR is bottomland hardwood forest, about 15 percent (2,020 acres) consists of reforested areas, and about 15 percent (1,500 acres) is wetland and beaver pond habitat. The remaining acreage of the refuge is comprised of about 800 acres of moist soil impoundments/early successional habitats, and about 200-300 acres of upland pine-hardwoods.

During the winter, a 4,000-acre greentree reservoir (GTR) is created when the bottomland hardwood forests are allowed to flood. During waterfowl hunting season, the GTR can be accessed on foot, on identified ATV/UTV trails, and by boat via two boat ramps. Hunting is allowed on the refuge for waterfowl, squirrel, rabbit, woodcock, quail, raccoon, opossum, white-tailed deer, and turkey. For additional information about Overflow NWR, please visit our website at <https://www.fws.gov/refuge/overflow/> or call our office at (870) 473-2869.



Bottomland hardwood forest  
habitat on Pond Creek NWR

## Pond Creek NWR

Pond Creek National Wildlife Refuge is the 501st refuge to be established in the National Wildlife Refuge System. It is located in the southwestern area of Arkansas in Sevier County, approximately 55 miles north of the city of Texarkana, Arkansas and 142 miles southwest of Little Rock. It protects the largest remaining tract of bottomland hardwoods along the Little River, and extends west from U.S. Highway 71 almost to the Oklahoma state line. Pond Creek, for which the refuge is named, bisects the refuge and flows from northwest to southeast where it intersects the Cossatot River. Virtually all of the refuge's local drainages flow into Pond Creek. The refuge was originally established under the name "Cossatot National Wildlife Refuge" in 1994, with an approved acquisition boundary of approximately 30,500 acres. The first 2,300 acres were acquired through a combination of donations and fee title purchases facilitated by The Conservation Fund. These initial lands were retained in a "caretaker" status until the passage of the Omnibus Parks and Public Lands Management Act of 1996 (Sec. 305, P.L. 104-333). This Act effected the transfer of 25,000 acres of Weyerhaeuser Company land to the

Service as part of the refuge. The refuge currently encompasses 28,260 acres.

The Refuge provides many outdoor recreational opportunities for visitors, including hunting, fishing, trapping, wildlife observation, photography, hiking, and boating. Facilities/destinations open year-round include: eight primitive campgrounds, 3.5 miles of walking trails, 14.5 miles of ATV trails, 49 miles of gravel road, an observation tower, two kiosk information structures, seven fishing lakes that encompass 53 acres, 31 miles of fishing on the Little River, one mile on the Cossatot River, and 42 miles on Pond Creek. Seasonal activities include use of ATV trails and hunting for various game species. A signed refuge brochure is required for hunting and can be downloaded from the refuge website or picked up from boxes at entry points to the refuge. More information about Pond Creek NWR is available on the refuge website [https://www.fws.gov/refuge/pond\\_creek/](https://www.fws.gov/refuge/pond_creek/) or by calling the refuge at (870) 289-2126.

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# Lake Conway

**AKA: Craig D. Campbell Lake Conway Reservoir**

Lake Conway, located three miles south of Conway (Faulkner County) on Interstate 40, is the largest lake ever constructed by a state wildlife agency and the first lake constructed by the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC). It is one of the state's most popular fishing spots due to its size, central location, and large populations of bass, catfish, crappie, bluegill, and redear.

As early as 1900, Conway residents wanted a fishing lake close to town. In 1940, Dr. James H. Flanagan Sr., a local dentist and a member of the Faulkner County chapter of the Arkansas Wildlife Federation (AWF), was asked by William D. Cole, president of the Conway Chamber of Commerce, to research the feasibility of constructing a lake close to town. The area that was chosen for the lake site was six miles of land between Saltillo (Faulkner County) and Mayflower (Faulkner County) along Palarm Creek, a stream that begins a mile north of Vilonia (Faulkner County) and flows southwest into the Arkansas River. The land was cheap because it was swampy and lacked good timber. Even though the land was only worth about fifty cents an acre, the Faulkner County chapter still had to seek out additional funding before purchasing the land and beginning construction.

At first, the Faulkner County chapter sought the help of

the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which rejected providing funds for the project because it wanted to construct a migratory bird refuge, not a fishing lake. The Faulkner County chapter then turned to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, who agreed to only two of three flood-control steps requested in the AWF's lake construction plan. The federation then turned to the residents of Faulkner County, who provided \$20,000 in voluntary contributions in order to purchase the land at the lake's proposed site.

However, the publicity resulting from the fundraising campaign caused the landowners around the proposed construction site to raise the price of their land, with prices in some cases going to \$100 an acre. Eventually, the Faulkner County chapter had to raise another \$45,000 in order to purchase the land, more than double the original price. Eventually, Flanagan, Cole, and William M. Apple, the state-level secretary of the AWF, turned to all Arkansas residents for funding. Under the leadership of Paul Litzke, a door-to-door fundraising campaign raised an additional \$45,000 from more than 50,000 contributors statewide. Compensation to individual landowners varied from one dollar to \$3,950. There were also many donations.

Thirty-five lawsuits from reluctant landowners and var-

ious businesses that had interests in the area—including the Magnolia Pipeline Company, Missouri Pacific Railroad, and the Federal Land Bank of St. Louis—were heard before construction on the lake could begin. These were eventually settled. Another obstacle was waste disposal. Stone Dam Creek had been used to dispose of Conway's sewage. This sewage would have emptied into Palarm Creek above the dam and subsequently polluted the lake. A modern sewage disposal plant was constructed at Stone Dam, allowing Lake Conway's construction to go forward.

A few landowners continued to hold out. The AWF sought the help of the AGFC, but the commission did not have the legal authority to take control of the land. A petition campaign to change the Arkansas state constitution, led by Litzke, proved successful. Amendment 35 was passed in 1945, allowing the AGFC to condemn land and acquire it for public use.

Construction began on the 6,700-acre lake in 1950. The R. W. Hammock Construction Company of Van Buren (Crawford County) constructed the concrete spillway and dirt dam about a mile downriver from the original construction site on Palarm Creek after it was determined that it was too deep to reach bedrock at the original location. The final project's cost varied between \$150,000 and \$196,000 due to legal



fees. The AGFC funded a majority of the construction once the land was purchased, but the commission continued to allow limited timber harvesting by former landowners and businesses during Lake Conway's early days in order to partially recoup construction costs.

Lake Conway was formally opened and dedicated on July 4, 1951. In 1968, a nursery pond was constructed on the east side of the lake, feeding fish directly into the lake. The

lake has an average depth of six feet, with a maximum depth of eighteen feet. Partially submerged stumps, log piles, and cypress trees provide cover for the sport fish, which forage on shad and small sunfish. Migratory birds often seek refuge on the lake and feed on the fish populations that concentrate near the submerged timber. Since the construction of Lake Conway, the AGFC has made it a policy to extend its ownership to land

around lakes, as the increased use of the lake in recent years requires more intensive conservation efforts on the part of government agencies.

In June 2011, the AGFC officially renamed Lake Conway the Craig D. Campbell Lake Conway Reservoir after outgoing commission chairman Craig D. Campbell.

Lake Conway was one of many Arkansas locations affected by the Flood of 2019.

## FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

"Lake Conway." Arkansas Game and Fish Commission. <https://www.agfc.com/en/zone-map/fishing-map/579/> (accessed September 18, 2019).

Meriwether, Robert W. "The Construction of Lake Conway." *Faulkner Facts and Fiddlings* 36 (Spring/Summer 1994): 9–24.

Poe, Deleta Jacqueline. "Lake Conway: Arkansas' Newest, Finest Playground." *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 12 (Summer 1953): 106–114.

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# Program Sows Seeds of Restoration

By Ruthie Berryhill

Photos courtesy of ANHC

When European explorers and early settlers first came to what is now Arkansas they encountered not an unbroken forest, but a diverse patchwork of dense forests, open woodlands, savannas, and treeless grasslands. Today, these naturally open grasslands have all but vanished, causing steep declines in many species of plants and animals that depend on them.

Historical records indicate that there were as many as two million acres of naturally open grassland habitat in Arkansas in the early 1800s. These open habitats have been generically referred to as “prairies” in the past, but actually include several distinct types of grasslands such as tallgrass prairies, blackland prairies, saline barrens, sand barrens, and many types of glades or open rock outcrop communities. The Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission (ANHC) is charged with the responsibility of protecting the best of the last remaining vestiges of the state’s natural communities, like these grasslands. The ANHC achieves this through its statewide System of Natural Areas, which is made up of lands specifically managed to preserve, and sometimes restore, natural communities that have become rare. Long-term viability of remnant natural communities requires science-based conservation through active and sound management.

In some cases, degraded portions of natural areas or other degraded lands must undergo restoration to improve their overall condition, which can include planting seeds of native vegetation that was common historically. As you can imagine, this type of restoration project requires large amounts



of locally adapted seeds of species native to a particular ecosystem. Historically, commercially available local native seed sources have been limited and out-of-state sources had to be used for restoration projects. Although the appropriate plant species were often used for these projects, there is evidence that genetic stock from far away, while well-adapted to the areas they were sourced from, may be poorly adapted to local growing conditions here. Local plants have unique adaptations to specific soils, phenology (timing of growth, flowering, and seed set), and climate conditions, giving them the best chance of survival. They benefit native wildlife, including pollinators and birds, as well as game species like quail and wild turkey. Native seeds also preserve an area’s natural heritage right down to the genetic level.

The Arkansas Native Seed Program (ANSP) was created to address this need for a large-scale supply of native Arkansas seed. ANHC staff had been working to encour-



age this type of program for many years, going back at least as far as the beginning of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ Grand Prairie Irrigation Project. The irrigation project is developing water delivery infrastructure to the Grand Prairie Ecoregion of the Mississippi Alluvial Plain in eastern Arkansas, building canals, pipelines, and pumping stations. This is resulting in over 3,000 acres of canal banks that needed to be revegetated, creating an opportunity for the use of native seed on a large scale. However, large-scale native seed sources were not available at the time, making it obvious to ANHC staff that the state needed a method to provide and





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deliver local genotype seeds for use in habitat restoration or habitat improvement plans.

In 2015, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management launched a national native seed initiative with the publication of the National Seed Strategy. Following their lead and incorporating many of their guidelines, the ANHC hosted the first meeting of the ANSP in 2016, inviting partners from federal, state, and local agencies, non-government organizations, and private organizations. Led by the ANHC, these partners now include the Department of Arkansas Heritage, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC), University of Arkansas, Arkansas Department of Transportation, Audubon Arkansas, The Nature Conservancy, Ozark Ecological Restoration, Inc., Quail Forever, Roundstone Native Seed, U.S. Forest Service, Arkansas Division of Forestry, Beaver Watershed Alliance, National Wild Turkey Federation, United States Department

of Agriculture/Natural and Cultural Resources Conservation Service, Arkansas Master Naturalists, Central Arkansas Water, and the Illinois River Watershed Partnership.

In 2018, the ANSP received funding from the AGFC through a USFWS Wildlife Restoration Program grant and additional funds from the ANHC to hire a program coordinator. Botanist Jennifer Ogle, now the Collections Manager at the University of Arkansas Herbarium, was hired as the coordinator and tasked with writing a strate-

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gic plan to provide a framework for encouraging the establishment of a locally sourced native seed industry in Arkansas, determining ecologically appropriate seed zones, developing a list of target species, determining current seed demand, and identifying research needs.

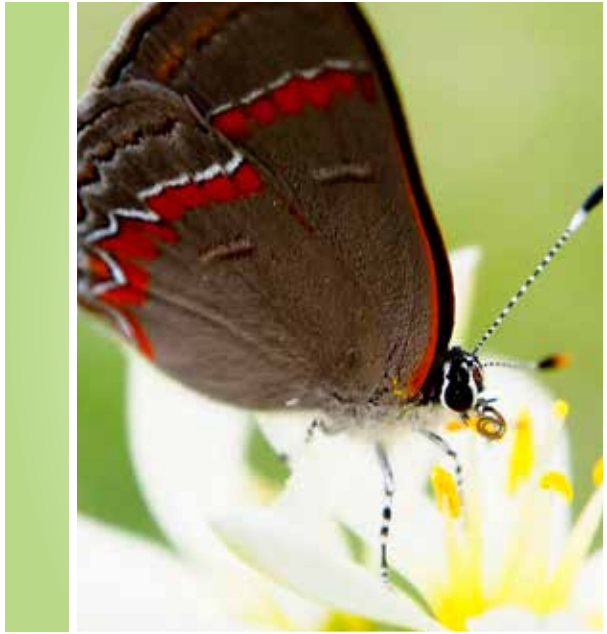
The funding for the ANSP project ended in June 2020. Much has been accomplished since the program was formed and much has yet to be done. Going forward, the ANSP will transition from an agency-funded effort under the umbrella of the ANHC to being managed by the Arkansas Native Seed Coalition (ANSC), a stand-alone non-profit organization guided by a variety of agencies and organizations that use native seed. The ANSC will work to incentivize the use of locally sourced native seed by agencies working in Arkansas, train volunteers to collect seed using established protocols, increase short-and long-term seeds storage capacity, and develop sustainable ecotypes of target species.

The ANHC, an agency of Arkansas Heritage, focuses on



science-based conservation to protect Arkansas's biological diversity and maintains a statewide System of Natural Areas made up of more than 70,000 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.

**Whether you have an apartment balcony or a 10-acre farm, a schoolyard or a business park, or anything in between, everyone can create a welcoming haven for local wildlife.**



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# ARKANSAS WILDLIFE News-of-Note



## Becoming an Outdoors Woman Weekend

Arkansas Game and Fish Commission will be offering a Spring Statewide Becoming an Outdoors Woman Weekend for April 9-11. These programs will allow women to learn skills and encourage participation in hunting, fishing, and other outdoor activities in a supportive atmosphere. Classes will range from basic archery to more advanced white-water kayaking on the Mulberry River. Each class will be limited to eight women, and all social distancing protocols will be strictly enforced. Registration is required. Acceptance will be first come, first serve. A list of classes and locations is posted on the AGFC website at [www.agfc.com/bow](http://www.agfc.com/bow). If you have any questions, call 501-676-6963 or email [agfcbow@gmail.com](mailto:agfcbow@gmail.com). To keep up with the latest information and upcoming class dates as well as stay in touch with women that have attended past workshops or ask the coordinators and participants questions, like our Becoming an Outdoors Woman Arkansas (@BOWArkansas) Facebook page. If you do not follow social media, we have an e-newsletter. To be added, send a request to [www.agfc.com/bow](http://www.agfc.com/bow).

## Mississippi River Restoration and Resilience Initiative

The Mississippi River has long been a vital ecological, cultural and economical resource. Despite this importance, the River is in a severe state of decline that is not being stemmed by current funding. A coalition of organizations has written a draft bill to create the Mississippi River Restoration and Resilience Initiative (MRRRI). Under this Initiative, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) would take the lead in developing and coordinating MRRRI and its implementing Action Plan in close coordination and consultation with other Federal agencies, States, Tribes, local governments and non-governmental organizations. MRRRI would strive to leverage existing Federal and State programs where appropriate, and would create important economic opportunities and well-paying jobs that by their very nature must remain local.

MRRRI would work to:

- Improve water quality in the Mississippi River and Gulf of Mexico by reducing the amount of polluted runoff, excess nutrients, and sediment entering the River system;

- Improve community resilience by restoring the ability of the Mississippi River and its floodplain, riverine wetlands, delta and coastal wetlands, and backwaters to minimize and ameliorate flood and storm risks;
- Protect and restore wildlife habitat in and along the Mississippi River and throughout the River corridor, including by preventing the spread of aquatic invasive species in the River system; and
- Prioritize these efforts to address disproportionate impacts to communities of color, rural communities, and economically disadvantaged communities caused by ecological degradation of the Mississippi River and its tributaries.

The MRRRI would fill a clear gap in our nation's regional restoration initiatives, highlighting and reinforcing the Mississippi River as an ecosystem of national importance and providing the vision and resources to improve the health and resilience of the River system for communities, wildlife, and the economy.

## National Wildlife Federation unveils Restoration and Resilience Plan

On March 4th, The National Wildlife Federation (NWF) unveiled an ambitious proposal to put roughly 3.5 million people to work restoring our country's lands and waters in order to safeguard clean air and water; protect communities from wildfires, hurricanes and flooding; and save wildlife. The National Wildlife Federation urged Congress to swiftly adopt the \$208 billion plan as part of an economic stimulus and recovery program.

The restoration and resilience plan calls for the following:

- Creating a 21st Century Civilian Conservation Corps, which will put Americans to work revitalizing our nations lands and waters
- Restoring national forests to mitigate wildfires, safeguard clean water, and increase nature's ability to store carbon
- Capping tens of thousands of abandoned oil and gas wells to protect groundwater and reduce methane emissions
- Cleaning up 140,000 abandoned hardrock mines and tens of thousands of abandoned coal mines which threaten human and wildlife health
- Funding for state, private and Tribal forestry programs to reduce the risk and severity of wildfires
- Restoring watersheds to protect coastal and floodplain communities to make them more resilient to extreme weather events and disasters
- Recovering more than 12,000 imperiled wildlife species through habitat restoration, natural infrastructure and research
- Repairing the sagebrush steppe and grasslands to reverse the downward spiral of bird populations, increase water resources, and improve carbon storage
- Investing in partnerships with farmers and ranchers to create habitat for wildlife, improve soil and water quality, and revitalize rural communities
- Increasing outdoor recreation opportunities to make access to parks more equitable, to expand access for hunting and angling, and to stimulate rural economies

To read the full plan, visit [https://www.nwf.org/-/media/Documents/PDFs/Press-Releases/2021/02-24-21\\_Jobs-Restoration-and-Resilience-for-the-21st-Century](https://www.nwf.org/-/media/Documents/PDFs/Press-Releases/2021/02-24-21_Jobs-Restoration-and-Resilience-for-the-21st-Century)

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[www.nwf.org/awfkidsgift](http://www.nwf.org/awfkidsgift)





Story and photos by Johnny Carrol Sain

For seven days and seven nights, the rain came in drizzles, downpours, and late-winter mist. When the sun finally appeared on the first of March, the golden rays summoned a dramatic transformation. Spring had been waiting just on the other side of those rains as the first wave of tentative green blanketed the neighbor’s horse pasture. Spring beauties and bluets had popped up in the yard as trout lilies glowed like an ethereal promise in the somber woodland behind our home. And from the freshened rivulets and filled forest potholes came the melody of frogs.

The spring peepers and cricket frogs just couldn’t wait until sundown to start their love songs, and one was singing in a tiny hole of water poured from a culvert in the corner of our yard. My two-year-old granddaughter Nixie heard the chirping and wanted to investigate, so we did. But I’ve never needed prompting to look for frogs in a mud hole.

Of course, the frog went silent as we neared. Despite their lusty calling, frogs don’t let the purple haze cloud their vigilance. So we stopped to wait and listen as Nixie’s serious blue eyes scanned the water and then looked into mine with a questioning expression. That’s when I noticed a soft, subtle, and sinuous ripple in the fresh tufts of flooded grass. It was a salamander. Salamanders aren’t slouches when it comes to alertness, either, and the little olive-colored amphibian scuttled into the culvert’s mouth as soon as I stood

up. But I knew where we could find more. They would be an easier catch and an excellent introduction to the Mason jar naturalist lifestyle for Nixie.

A Mason jar naturalist is as simple as the name implies. You get a Mason jar (it doesn’t have to be a “Mason” jar, any old jar will do) and that becomes your mini aquarium/terrarium for any creature that will fit in it. So I gathered a bait net and jar, and we set off behind the house with the gurgling waters of a wet-weather stream as our guide.

Soon we found exactly what we were looking for, a wide and relatively deep pool with several flat rocks in the riffles leading out. We didn’t even need to flip a rock for the first encounter as an Oklahoma salamander (*Eurycea tynerensis*) still sporting external gills ambled across smooth stones just where the waters gained momentum for a tumble down to the next pool. I planted the net behind the salamander and feigned a grab at it with my other hand causing the little amphibian to wriggle right into the webbing. Then I lifted it clear of the water for Nixie to have a look before we put it in the jar.

The next two salamanders came from expected hiding places underneath palm-sized flat rocks, and then we found another under a post oak leaf dropped this winter. We also uncovered a crayfish, which was the first I’ve found in this branch (and I hope indicative of better water quality), and an

aquatic sow bug. The fresh-water crustaceans went into the jar as well and then we settled into a sunny spot in the cool woods and watched through the glass in silence.

The jar and the water split clear white beams into a prism that danced on a brown carpet of leaves as the usually hidden life of this trickle watched us through the glass as well. After a few minutes of mutual observation, we set them back into the chilly waters where they belonged.

Forty-some-odd years ago, that was my grandpa and me.

I’m not sure how exactly how the magic happened, how those earliest memories of watching lizards, salamanders, crawdads, snakes, mice, spiders, shrews, and an assortment of various other animals through the jars instilled a deep appreciation, a reverence for the natural world. But it did. Who I am today — writer, environmentalist, hunter, angler, nature nerd — can be directly attributed to my grandpa starting me off with “critters under glass” from earliest memory. Sure, guns and fishing poles played a big part in that development as well. But I speak on behalf of the creeks and woodlands, for the wild things with a passion that doesn’t require an accoutrement. It’s unencumbered. I don’t need to protect a “resource,” and I don’t need to justify the protection of wilderness and water based on the arbitrary value our society places on them. I loved the crayfish, frogs, and lizards long before I learned the value of a dollar, and even then I loved them more.



Placing a monetary worth on the land and its inhabitants — though, I know, a necessary evil — still seems vulgar to me. How can I place a dollar sign next to creatures and places that possess qualities immeasurable? It’s a desecration of all that I hold dear. I can’t help but think that the reason I feel this way is because it’s more than creatures and places to me. It’s my heritage, a natural heritage interwoven with the warmest memories of someone who loved me and shared with me those tiny, fantastic secrets. Grandpa taught me that wonder is everywhere, and then he taught me how to

look for it.

I plan to show this little blonde girl that wonder is everywhere and where to find it. Soon enough, Nixie will have a fly rod in her hand and, before you know it, a shotgun. But her next steps, those that lead into hunting and angling, will come after my granddaughter has learned that the worth of wildness isn’t measured in bag limits, inches, accolades, or dollars.

We can teach our children about the economics of conservation, about how many dollars equals how much support, and how that might save some of our wild lands, wild waters, and wildlife. But industries crumble and markets crash. When we teach our children that the most precious riches are those with an intrinsic value and show them those wonders, which are utterly priceless... well, that’s how we save the world.

**Wilt Stephens Jr. Central Arkansas Nature Center**

**ARKANSAS Game & Fish Commission**

**602 President Clinton Avenue, Little Rock, AR**

**(501) 907-0636**





# Have You Seen the Milky Way?

By Darcy Howard,  
Mabelvale, Arkansas

**HAVE YOU SEEN THE MILKY WAY WITH YOUR OWN EYES?** You don't need a telescope or binoculars to see it, but you do need something we don't have much of any more: a dark sky. It might surprise you, but some people who live in big cities have never seen the stars. Here in Arkansas, we can see the brighter stars in the city sky at night, but the more lights around us at night that there are, the fewer stars we can see. That means that many people, especially young folks, have never seen the Milky Way. If you live in the city, you might have to go to a place out of town and away from lights to see it.

The Milky Way is the galaxy our sun and stars live in. Every star in the sky that we see is in the Milky Way, but the brightest part of the Milky Way is a band across the sky, made of many stars close together. Its name describes how we see it, so many stars they blur together, making a "milky" whitish appearance across the sky.

Our galaxy is a disc-shaped spiral galaxy, but from where we are inside it, we see the hazy band of the Milky Way when we are looking through the dense middle part, and we see fewer stars looking in the rest of the sky. The center of our galaxy is in the constellation Sagittarius, and it is amazing to look at if you do have a pair of binoculars.

The Milky Way can be seen before dawn in April and May, but early summer is best for seeing it when it is high in the evening sky. You will also need to pick a night when the moon is not up.

When you go outside after dark, take a blanket to lay on, or a chair to sit in. (Take bug spray too.) Let your eyes get used to the darkness. Fifteen or twenty minutes makes a big difference for your night vision to adapt, and you will be able to see the fainter stars. As the sky gets darker after sunset and your eyes get used to the dark, you will see more stars appear.

Look to the south, and you will see a band of stars from

the horizon to overhead. In a really dark sky you can see it all the way across the sky. But once you see the Milky Way in a dark sky, it will be captured in your mind, and you will miss it when you can't see it anymore.

You can use an app on your phone to find your way around the sky, but the light from your phone will interfere with your night vision. Look at your phone when you are in the light and get directions fixed in your mind before you go outside. A star chart is a good help. You can use a small flashlight and put a piece of red or amber plastic over the light to help preserve your night vision.

If you look on your phone for pictures of the Milky Way, you will see beautiful, colorful photos. Don't be disappointed that the sky doesn't look like the photographs. Cameras see the sky differently than our eyes do, and can catch more light and colors than our eyes. We can learn from the photos, but we can know how beautiful the Milky Way is from being outside with the stars above us.

The best places to see the Milky Way are far from city light pollution. In Arkansas some of the state parks have good dark skies, and star programs at night by the rangers. Buffalo River State Park is one of the best places. They have worked to make the park an International Dark Sky Park. They use special kinds of lights to protect the natural dark night sky. Visitors and campers can come and see the Milky Way. While you are there, you can also learn why we need to protect the sky from bright lights, and how you can help.

Perhaps you know a good place to go camping or fishing. Chances are there will be good skies there. Even if you can't make a trip, you can still go outside and look and see what you can. The night sky is magical, the Milky Way is enchanting. Try to see it before the end of summer!

Clear skies!



For a schedule of public star parties (when Covid permits) visit the Central Arkansas Astronomical Society online. [caasastro.org](http://caasastro.org)

# Arkansas Wildlife Membership Registration Form

Membership Classification - Please Check One: **YOU CAN ALSO REGISTER ONLINE AT [www.ARWild.org](http://www.ARWild.org)**

( ) Active AWF - \$25 ( ) Supporting AWF - \$50 ( ) Conservation Supporter - \$100  
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Receive your copy of Arkansas Out of Doors (Check One): ( ) USPS ( ) E-mail (email address required above)

Visa/MasterCard # \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. \_\_\_\_\_ CVV# \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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Mail check & form to the address above once complete. **(501) 414-2845**

Arkansas Wildlife Federation is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization.  
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**Arkansas Out of Doors** readers are active outdoor enthusiasts who love hiking, hunting, fishing, camping, biking, canoeing, boating and photography.

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### PUBLISHING SCHEDULE

**Spring:** March 1 **Autumn:** Sept. 1  
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### Full Color Ad Rates

Per Column Inch	\$28	\$26	\$24
¼ Page	\$195	\$183	\$172
½ Page	\$399	\$375	\$353
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Inside Front cover	\$925	\$870	\$817
Back Cover	\$1,135	\$1,067	\$1,003

**For Ad Placement Call 501-414-2845 or email [info@arwild.org](mailto:info@arwild.org)**

AWF is a non-profit 501 (c) 3 Conservation Organization Whose Mission is Advocating For Sustainable Use Of Arkansas' Wildlife Habitats and Natural Resources For Future Generations. Learn more at [www.ARWild.org](http://www.ARWild.org)

## Advertising & Sponsorship Packages

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4. Eight Prepaid One Year AWF Memberships that Sponsor may give to Banquet attendees, family and associates.

### II. Corporate Patron- \$2,000 (\$500/quarterly)

- Level I plus:
1. One year of ½ page ads in AOOD

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