

# Arkansas OUT *of* DOORS

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## ARKANSAS WILDLIFE FEDERATION PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Winter is here or better said an Arkansas Winter is here. With winter upon us, there are many who flock to watch the winter birds come and go in the natural state. In this issue, Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission shares some information about the birds you may see while visiting one of their 76 natural areas across the state.

Winter also means that duck season is in full swing and I am grateful that I've been able to get out a few times. Not much success but hopefully I will manage to get some before the season goes out. However, the real fun for me is the opportunity to hunt with my kids. As I get older, I cherish the times that I have been able to hunt and fish with my children and introduce their friends to it as well. Steve Flipek takes a trip down memory lane sharing some great stories about his adventures with family.

As of this writing, deer season is winding down with only archery season left. As with many recent years, I did not harvest a deer. I think sometimes I'm jinxed as the only days I got to go the highs were in the 60's and the deer were not moving. Thank goodness my son is tagged out and we have deer meat.

Ashley Chance, the new Artemis Sportswomen program coordinator for the Southeast Region, shares some insights from a woman's perspective on hunting with the right equipment. We are excited that Ashley will be working closely with us to encourage more women to start hunting and fishing.

For many of us, the streams and rivers of Arkansas are a

part of our childhood memories. Johnny Sain is back with a great article about how the creeks and streams of Arkansas run through his veins.

If you get up to NW Arkansas in the next year, please take the time to visit the new Ozark Highlands Nature Center in Springdale. It's the newest AGFC nature center and its truly spectacular with so many great amenities for young and old.

In the News-of-Note section, we've shared some information about the importance of moving forward the North American Grasslands Conservation Act. Representative Bruce Westerman and Senator John Boozman serve in key committee leadership roles and we hope to work closely with them on moving this legislation forward over the next year.

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.

*"Never Apologize for being over sensitive and emotional when defending the welfare of wildlife. Let this be a sign that you have a big heart and aren't afraid to show your true feelings. These emotions give you the strength to fight for what is right and to be the voice of those who cannot be heard."* – PAUL OXTON

Charles S. Buckner, III (Trey)  
President

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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”

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# Partners for the Future of Conservation

Building the J.B. and Johnelle Hunt Family Ozark Highlands Nature Center

By Tabbi Kinion, Chief of Education, Arkansas Game and Fish Commission

***The hope of the future lies not in curbing the influence of human occupancy - it is already too late for that - but in creating a better understanding of the extent of that influence and a new ethic for its governance.***

- ALDO LEOPOLD, GAME MANAGEMENT

In December 2020, the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC) celebrated the grand opening of our 5th and largest nature center, the J.B. and Johnelle Hunt Family Ozark Highlands Nature Center. Located in Springdale, this 32,000 square foot facility on almost 62 acres will serve as the most visible presence the AGFC has ever had in the thriving northwest corner of the state. With a price tag right around \$20 million, the creation of this conservation education center serves as a monument to the importance of partnerships in the conservation field.

To be crystal clear, the AGFC did not and does not have the monetary resources to build a \$20 million facility on our own. Across the state, the agency struggles under the pressure of managing aging infrastructure, compensating for the ever increasing costs of doing business, and constantly needs to quickly and effectively address pressing and emerging fish and wildlife conservation challenges. At the same time, connecting and informing the public is a critical piece of being able to successfully manage our resources. The population of northwest Arkansas is rapidly growing and, many years ago, it became apparent that the AGFC needed to make an investment for the citizens in this part of the state through a conservation education center. It also became very apparent that the northwest Arkansas community was willing to help make this project a reality.

After some starts and stops, the pieces for the project





finally came together in 2016 when the City of Springdale donated the almost 62-acre plot of land to AGFC for a new nature center. The property was in a prime location in the heart of the I-49 corridor just south of Wagon Wheel road at 3400 N 40th Street. At the time of the donation, the land was appraised at \$3.2 million dollars. This partnership with the city was the foundational step towards making this conservation education vision a reality.

Arkansans are blessed to have an amazing conservation partner and advocate organization in the Arkansas Game and Fish Foundation (AGFF). The AGFF is a non-profit organization that was formed in 1982 to support the mission of

AGFC. Once the City stepped up, the Foundation came on board as the lead fundraiser for this project. AGFF President Deke Whitbeck spent hundreds of hours on the road talking with funding partners and ensuring that the center was funded by a consortium of committed conservationists.

Once the property ownership was transferred to AGFC, the Foundation and the City of Springdale approached the J.B. and Johnelle Hunt Family. The vision of a place that gets kids and families outside and excited about the outdoors was inspiring to Mrs. Johnelle Hunt and she committed \$5 million to make this project happen for her community. With the land donation and the commitment of the J.B. and Johnelle Hunt Family, the staff at AGFC realized that the vision of a Northwest Arkansas nature center would finally become a reality. It was a very exciting moment and the design process for the center and exhibits began.

As the process progressed, other funding sources were procured. A critical source was federal grant funding. For the Arkansas Game and Fish Foundation Marksmanship Center, the AGFC was able to secure a grant through the Wildlife Restoration program of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Excise taxes on firearms, ammunition, archery equipment, and arrow components are collected and appropriated from the Wildlife Restoration Account. These



*The first group of students that visited the center were from nearby TG Smith Elementary. Photo by Melodie Maynard.*



*The Arkansas Game and Fish Foundation Marksmanship Center will provide opportunities for students of all ages to hone their archery and BB-gun shooting skills.*

funds are apportioned to states by a formula that is based on the land area of the state, the number of paid license holders, and available funding. This program is the nation's oldest and most successful wildlife restoration program and is a successful user pay, user benefit program. For every hunting and fishing license sold in Arkansas, we are able to access more federal funding to support our conservation mission. The grant paid for the construction of the 7,000 square foot archery and BB-gun shooting facility.

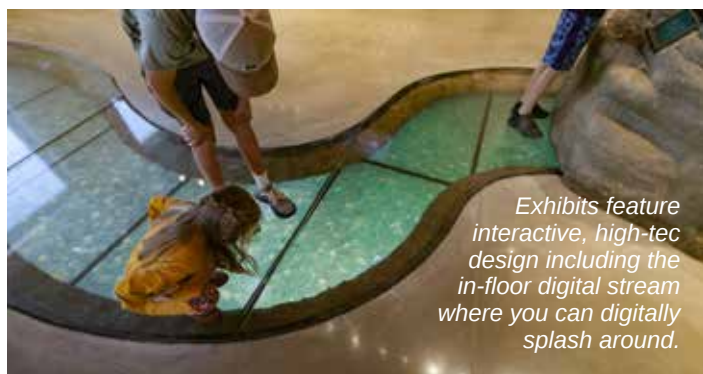
Additionally, the trails, sidewalks, signs, habitat restoration, pavilions, and outdoor amenities were funded by two grants. The first was a federal grant through the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), a program administered by the National Park Service and Arkansas State Parks. LWCF provides matching grants to state and tribal governments for the acquisition and development of public parks and other outdoor recreation sites. LWCF funding has been spent on projects in every county in the country, contributing to over 40,000 projects since the program's inception in 1965. Additionally, the Walton Family Foundation provided grant funding to restore 25 acres of tall grass prairie and

construct walking trails and boardwalks. The nature center proper will connect to the regional Razorback Greenway trail system in 2021, another foundation supported project. The Walton Family Foundation is responsible for making this nature center a welcoming destination for trail users.

Additional funding partnerships came in the form of donations. As of December 2020, the AGFF has secured funding from almost 40 contributors who have each committed between \$40,000 and \$1 million. We are all thankful to this group of people who see the potential for this center to be a conservation education hub that makes their community better. In all, between the grants and donations, more than \$15 million of the \$20 million price tag has been secured through outside sources.

When it comes to the remaining funding provided by the AGFC, about 50% of the remaining balance came from Arkansans who display their support for conservation on their license plate. The AGFC Conservation License Plate program proceeds are earmarked for conservation education. The license plate program funds

college scholarships, summer internships, and, for this project, the exhibits at the center. The high-tech exhibit hall fea-



*Exhibits feature interactive, high-tec design including the in-floor digital stream where you can digitally splash around.*



*The exhibits are designed to help visitors explore the Ozarks, including a short trek through the cave.*



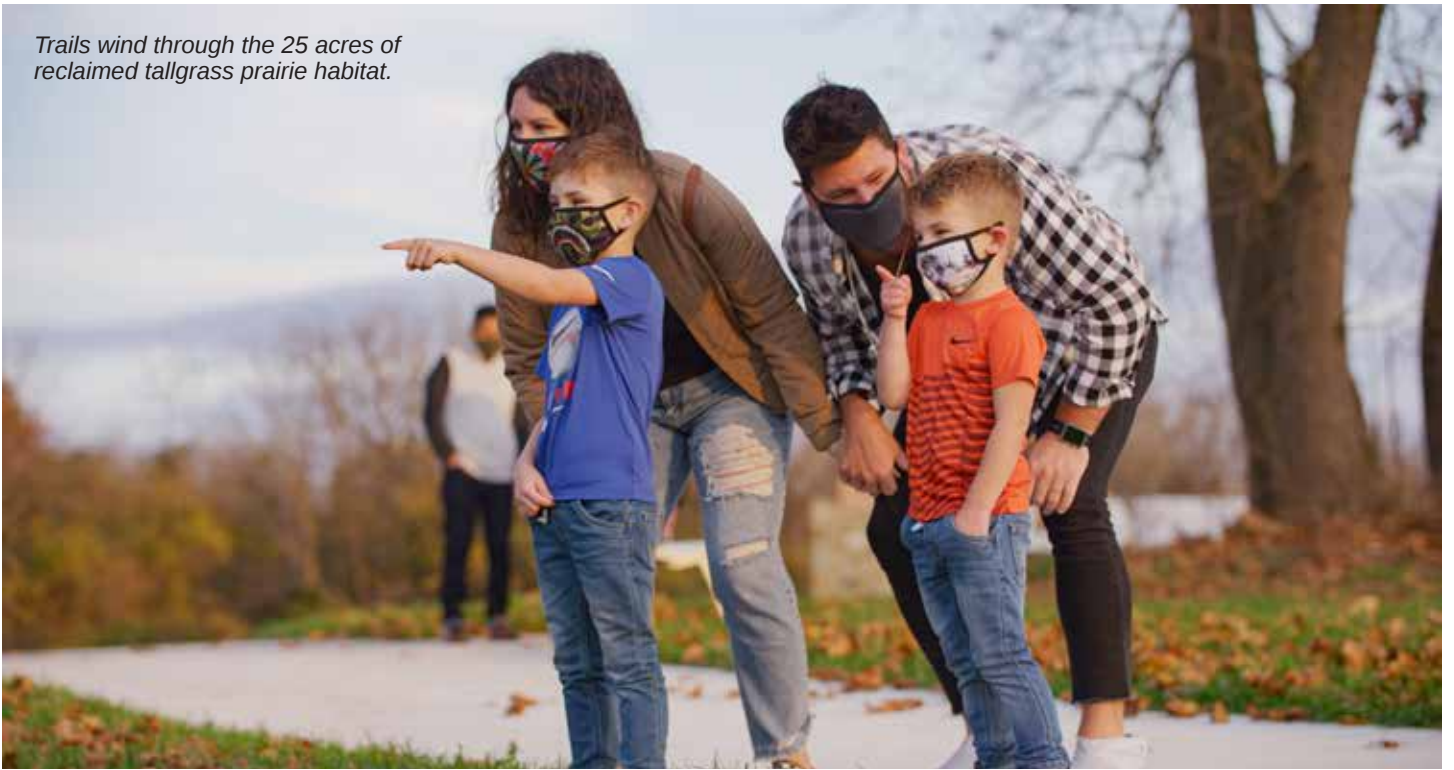
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*Trails wind through the 25 acres of reclaimed tallgrass prairie habitat.*



tures an interactive digital stream, live animals, fishing and hunting games, a cave to explore, an early childhood area, a hunting blind simulator, and a look at the Ozarks through the seasons. The hands-on exhibits are really fun, beautiful, interactive, and engaging.

Beyond funding the construction, partnerships are critical to being able to open and operate this center now and into the future. We are thankful that, since 2009, the Northwest Arkansas Master Naturalists have been working as volunteer educators, citizen scientists, and stewards of the environment striving to protect and preserve Arkansas' natural beauty. This talented team of over 400 individuals will be able to use the new center as home base while helping the staff of seven AGFC employees manage the facility, including the tallgrass prairie restoration project.

With an entire wing of the facility dedicated to class-

room-based learning, we look forward to providing a learning and meeting space for our conservation partners. We envision a space where members of our important partner groups like the Arkansas Wildlife Federation, Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, The Nature Conservancy, USDA Cooperative Extension Service, Arkansas State Parks, Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission, National Wild Turkey Federation, Ducks Unlimited, and Quail Forever can gather to pursue proactive solutions to conservation challenges. We anticipate a time when these groups gather to plan while elsewhere onsite there are groups of students exploring the outdoors, enjoying the hands-on interactive exhibit hall, and practicing archery in the Arkansas Game and Fish Foundation Marksmanship Center. We plan to provide a place for professionals to connect with other conservation professionals, provide a place where landowners learn how to manage wildlife habitat on their property, and a place for teachers to learn how to teach wildlife conservation and outdoor skills in their classrooms.

We look forward to welcoming you to the center! Thanks to the ongoing pandemic, visiting the center during the first weeks that we are open requires a timed reservation. Like all AGFC education centers, visiting the center is always free. You can reserve your time to visit and find out more information at [www.agfc.com](http://www.agfc.com) or on the center Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/JBJHFOHNC/](https://www.facebook.com/JBJHFOHNC/).



*Center Education Program Coordinator Steve Dunlap teaches the basics of archery in the Arkansas Game and Fish Foundation Marksmanship Center.*





# It's a Family Affair

*By Steve Filipek,  
AWF Region 4 Director*

HUNTING CAN BE A GREAT WAY TO GET YOUNGER PEOPLE MORE INVOLVED AND APPRECIATIVE OF OUR INVALUABLE NATURAL OUTDOOR RESOURCES HERE IN THE NATURAL STATE. We all know this but I'm going to share a few examples of utilizing these resources from a family perspective. As you might expect, I was introduced to hunting as a young child of around 10 years old. I'm the last of six kids, 3 girls and 3 boys, but there will be no reference of me being the "baby" of the family, you hear!

My dad took us fishing at a young age and Lake Conway got most of our effort. He was a good angler but not a huge hunter. He did enjoy the outdoors, however, and took the three boys rabbit hunting from time to time. This usually meant an interesting day down on the Arkansas River near what is now the I-440 bridge. The modus operandi of the hunt was for two of us to carry guns, my dad (38 revolver, he was a Fed), and one of my brothers (a bolt action,

yes, a bolt action 20 gauge shotgun bought with Gold Bond stamps). That meant two of us were the "dogs" of the trip, kicking brush piles on the sand bars and barking like beagles. You can guess what the youngest son did on those early trips but it was still exciting for me when a cottontail exploded out of the brush. Those family river hunts led me to 50 years of hunting in the Natural State. I now have 7 guns that I can hunt rabbits, squirrels, ducks, geese and deer with so I'm pretty well set for all the species of wildlife I'm interested in hunting and eating.

## The First Hunt

My oldest brother has a son that had never been hunting and so my middle brother and me told him we would take him hunting if he took AGFC's hunter education and passed the course. He did and we loaned him a 20-gauge pump and we took him squirrel hunting. Small game hunting is a good way to introduce new hunters into the hunting experience.

Unfortunately, we were not that productive and when my family's addition to the Christmas family banquet was delicious venison sausage, he asked if we would take him deer hunting.

My brother and I and some sons deer hunt in south Arkansas and are usually pretty successful getting from 1-4 deer per year. So, after some initial training on basic deer hunting and safety, he and I were going to use a "buddy" stand (ladder stand wide enough for two hunters). However, one of the other nonfamily brothers who hunts with us told me to use his large metal deer stand down in the bottoms. Its dimensions are 5' X 8' with a roof and chairs so I thanked him and took him up on his generosity.

After going over gun and deer stand safety again (minimize talking, gun muzzle control), he seemed ready for the next day. So, in the morning, nephew and I climbed the ladder into the stand in the dark and were ready for the deer by the time daylight eased into the creek bottoms. After a short time



with a few questions answered, a doe appeared and was feeding about 35 yards away. Nephew looked at me and I nodded that it was an acceptable shot. He fired and we watched the deer run off with its whitetail held high on its rear end. We waited 15 minutes before surveying where the deer had been and walked the path the deer had run off and made sure it was not hit and wounded.

I told my nephew "Welcome to the Club" and that nearly every hunter misses a deer at least once in their lifetime. Fortunately, not too long after that another deer slipped into our view and again, about 35 yards away. This time, nephew didn't look up at me for approval, raised his gun and waited for a good shot...and waited...and waited. I lightly tapped him and whispered "shoot". He finally shot, the deer ran off tail down and I said watch where she goes. He thought he had missed again but I didn't think so. After waiting 15 minutes again to not push the deer, we climbed down and the first thing nephew did was take his hunter orange hat off. I said, WHOA, get that hat back on! Don't you remember your hunter education class? After assuring me he had, we began searching for the impact spot and a blood trail. We found some blood so we began tracking it and I had to slow nephew down. We lost the trail for a while, found it again and nephew took his hat off again. That didn't sit well with me

at all and told him either the hat stays on or I'll not take him hunting again. He understood and we found the trail again and finally found the deer, about a 60- pound doe. We gave each other a high five and drug the deer back. That started him on deer hunting and he shot a buck the next year out of one of my ground blinds but that's another story.

### Buck, Buck, Buck

Ok, both of our sons have grown up fishing, canoeing, hiking, camping and so here's a couple of family hunting stories. Our younger son is a little more into deer hunting and our older son hunts deer too but he leans a little more into duck hunting. This season during muzzleloader week I saw zero deer from my creek bottoms and my piney woods stands. I was there that week and the time between that season and modern gun season, checking out family's tree stands, deer tracks and scrapes, etc. Saw deer driving to and from our lease but nothing while in my stand for hours on end. One of our deer camp members saw 5 deer from his stand, both bucks and does, but did not get a shot at a legal deer. But he saw some which I was wanting my two sons to at least see while they came down to hunt with me when the modern gun season started. Opening morning at dark:30 my younger son and I walked to his ladder stand at the junction of two



*Due to some good calling, the wind, and the field flooded just right, we met our limit by 7am!*

old logging roads. He was safely in his stand by 6:15 AM. I went to my ladder stand about a mile away.

I got into my ladder stand, harness on and secure to the tree, loaded my old 1944 Remington military 30-06 and settled in, ready to hunt. I had my cell phone with me but always on vibrate in the woods when our sons are up a tree.

*Continued on page 20...*



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

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A photograph of a creek with mossy rocks in the foreground and a dog in the background. The title "Through My Veins" is overlaid on the image in a large, white, serif font. The author's name "Story & photos by Johnny Carrol Sain" is in a smaller, italicized font to the right of the title.

# Through My Veins

*Story & photos by Johnny Carrol Sain*

"So what do the creeks mean to you, Johnny?"

My friend asked me this while we were standing on the banks of Big Creek in Newton County, Arkansas. The headwaters of Big Creek are just across Highway 7 from my family's store, Who-da-thought-it. The Sains have lived on that property since before 1950. Big Creek starts there and winds through the hollow down to Mt. Judea where my bloodlines run even deeper. In Mt. Judea I'm related to everyone, both those buried and those still above ground.

What do the creeks mean to me?

I told him I couldn't answer right now, that I wasn't sure if I could even put those feelings into words.

On the drive home, I thought about the question as I guided my truck down a dirt road, through switchbacks leading to Hurricane Creek or "Herrican" as it's known to the locals and those of local ancestry. At the end of a hidden side road barely big enough for my truck, there's a pool of water known to us as "Round Hole." It's where my dad learned to swim. I caught my first ever smallmouth bass in the riffle running into the pool. There's a boulder that's perfect for jumping into clear and always cool water. The swimming hole has a campground that's been used by folks all the way from the roots in my family tree to the outer branches. The camping area is on a jut of privately owned land surrounded by public, but the landowner doesn't mind sharing.

Most every camper that settles in here for a night or two leaves the place just like they found it. My uncle says it's been this way, the pool and the camping area, for as long as he can remember.

I took a fishing day-trip to the hills last July and found the swimming hole delightfully deserted after a morning of bronze bass action downstream. The pool shimmered under a noon sun as copper shallows plunged into aquamarine depths at the boulder's base. A school of smallmouth patrolled the pool's perimeter. Longear sunfish lurked near the shoal, waiting on hapless crayfish tumbling in the current. I shucked sweaty clothes and waded in up to my neck, wonderfully lost to the world of cellphones and traffic in this lonesome hollow. Immersion is the word but the word does not nearly capture the experience.

What do the creeks mean to me?

A few days later, I thought about that question again while standing on the banks of another Ozark creek. The cold, winter waters of the Illinois Bayou foamed white with subversive energy at a rocky shoal before plunging and transforming into the brilliant cyan of a deep pool. The pool's depth gave it an illusion of stoicism. Room to stretch does that to moving water. The creek seemed unmoving and unchanging, forever enduring with the dark rippling of quiet power at rest. But beneath the gentle surface, a fierce ener-





gy churned onward forever altering the channel with minute bites and subtle nudges.

Right here, at this very spot, the Bayou's course has changed dramatically just over the span of my lifetime. The main channel has moved at least 200 feet and the water has dissolved the four-foot shale overhangs that once provided some fantastic inner-tube rides. It was just below those rapids, on a tiny island that no longer exists, where my family would camp after hauling coolers, sleeping bags, lanterns, and whatever else we needed up the creek in a rubber raft. On summer day-trips the raft's cargo often included my grandmother. We would ride inner-tubes and jump from a nearby bluff. We would chug sodas while scarfing down cold sandwiches and chips. We fed bread crumbs to swarming schools of minnows.

As the summer sun gave up its relentless rule and sank below the hills, ringed dimples and v-shaped slashes punctuated by mini explosions in the water signaled that my favorite time of day was here. As everyone else prowled the banks for firewood, I flung cast after cast toward the dimples

and slashes.


What do the creeks mean to me?

The better question: What am I without the creeks? What am I without the memories and heritage of these sacred waters? What am I but a man shaped by heritage and memories? Just as the deer and squirrels of this land have nourished my body, so have the waters nourished my soul. These are my holy places.


What am I without the creeks?

I am not me.

The waters of Illinois Bayou darken as another winter day draws to a close. I dip my hand into the creek and feel the tingling chill, the wild and raw energy, the essence of this place that I call home. I feel the creek surging through my fingers. I feel the creek surging through my veins.



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# Hunting with the right equipment

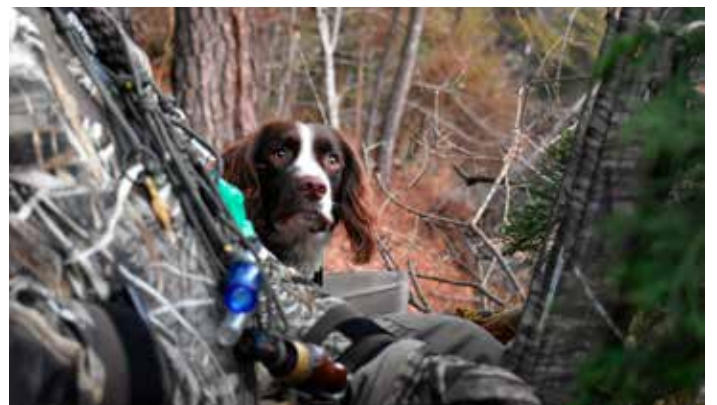
*By Ashley Chance, Artemis Southeast Region Coordinator*

AS SPORTSWOMEN we often end up using clothing and gear that are hand-me-downs from our male counterparts or men-centric items off the shelf that have been colored pink and marketed to us as ‘specialized’. Sometimes this works. Some women genuinely like pink, and sometimes hand-me-downs fit and are the right price! But other times using gear that doesn’t quite fit can have big consequences in the field. I learned this the hard way a couple of years ago.

I began hunting upland birds and waterfowl very casually in the latter part of high school. After borrowing a shotgun from my then boyfriend for a while, he decided I should have my own and bought me one as a birthday gift. I loved the idea of owning my very own gun and felt like it made me less of

an imposter in the field (that’s a topic requiring its very own blog post). This gun functioned and was special to me simply because it was mine. I shot a few pheasants with it, some geese, and over the next couple of years a handful of ducks.

I began duck hunting seriously when I met my (now) husband and fell hard. For the ducks that is. The first year we hunted together I did OK, but the second year marked the be-





ginning of my absolute worst dry spell ever. I couldn't hit a bird. I remember one particularly cold and painful morning on a public pond we liked to set up at. The pond itself was always hit or miss, but after arriving way early to beat other hunters and assess the wind, we decided to switch our plan at the last minute and brush in an impromptu blind on the far side of the water. After getting all setup and a little sweaty, three of us sat in the dark anxiously awaiting shooting light. About 15 minutes early a PILE of gadwall and ring necks landed right in front of us. They were well within range and having a pool party. To this day I've never seen water churn like that from birds. All of our blood pressure rose steadily as the clock ticked on and three minutes before legal light they all decided the other side of the pond was the place to be. We all had a good grumble about the situation and after a couple of very uneventful hours, a single ring neck landed out of range and swam into our decoys. This is the part of the story where equipment comes in.

The two people I was hunting with were both aware of my awful streak that season and told me to take the shot. It was close and easy and I was embarrassed that they recognized my need for this offering. I stood up, took about 4 seconds to aim (long time for those of you that don't duck hunt) and missed. Big time. Now up to this point I had tried really hard to end my streak. I mentally visualized myself hitting birds, assessed how far to lead a bird in different situations, worked on my shooting muscle memory, I even played a game involving a flashlight attached to the end of my gun barrel in the living room at night to make sure I was aiming where I meant to be when I pulled up. All of these efforts were to no avail. Luckily for me, this was also the year we began hunting with our new neighbor Paul.

Paul is short, maybe 5'2, and also addicted to duck hunting. After quietly witnessing a number of my failed attempts



at harvesting birds he wondered aloud if maybe my gun was a little too long for me? Surprised, I told him I'd been shooting it for years and had never really questioned if it fit me. It was after

all a 'normal' shotgun and I was a 'normal' person, right? He went on to explain that compared to average men he has pretty short arms and thus shoots a gun with a compact stock. The shorter stock caused the gun to meet his cheek at a place that allowed him to efficiently line up his sights and not contort himself to see down the barrel. Well, as you might imagine I was eager to blame my problems on equipment and jumped at the chance to shoot his gun on our next hunt.

*Continued on page 19...*

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live here too.**

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# Winter is for the Birds

By Ruthie Berryhill, ANHC

Winter is a season that is often unappreciated by those who enjoy the warmth of a spring or summer day when trees are full of green leaves, flowers are in bloom, and many animals are active throughout the day. However, winter is a season with its own merits.

With another mild winter forecast for this year, Arkansas nature lovers can enjoy the outdoors with cool (not cold) temperatures, less humidity, and fewer bugs. Now that leaves have fallen from the trees, birders (and other nature lovers) have a clearer line of sight for observing. Despite common misconceptions about birds leaving en masse for winter, several bird species call Arkansas home year-round, including northern cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) and most woodpeckers. Arkansas also has bird species that are only here in the winter, leaving with warmer temperatures in the spring, including yellow-bellied sapsuckers (*Sphyrapicus varius*), common loons (*Gavia immer*), horned grebes (*Podiceps auratus*), and a large number of duck species. True, you will miss neotropical migrant birds that have left for warmer places, but there are still plenty of birds to see in the winter that you might not otherwise have the opportunity to view.

Another advantage for the birder is that birds are often easier to see in the winter because they stay busy searching for food to maintain their body temperature due to colder temperatures and shorter daylength for finding food. Many birds also tend to occur in mixed flocks in the winter, providing more eyes for predators and less time each individual bird must search for threats and thus more time for foraging. These mixed flocks are great opportunities for birding.

Some birds store food in hiding places so that they can find food when other sources are limited, called “caching.” Species such as Carolina chickadees (*Poecile carolinensis*), tufted titmouse (*Baeolophus bicolor*), and all three of our wintering nuthatches (*Sitta* sp.) cache food in the crevices of tree bark. Others, like red-headed woodpeckers (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*) store food in the sides of utility poles, the cracks or cavities of dead trees, or on fence posts, while the blue jay (*Cyanocitta cristata*) caches seeds like acorns in open areas under things like leaves or in small holes they create in the ground. Watching a bird store or retrieve cached food is fun and can often be done from a home window or any well-concealed location.



To see a greater variety of winter birds than just those on your property, visit a natural area! The Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission (ANHC) manages a statewide system of 76 natural areas, many of which offer exceptional bird-watching opportunities. Henslow's Sparrow (*Centronyx henslowii*), a rare grassland bird, regularly winters in the saline barrens of Warren Prairie Natural Area (NA) in Bradley and Drew counties. A note of warning -- these





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birds can be tricky to spot because they take flight only with great reluctance, preferring to flee from threats by running through the grass. They are worth the wait with their olive-colored face and rusty-tipped feathers. While there, take a hike on our trail that begins in the parking lot and meanders through a pine flatwood and saline barrens, before splitting and looping back around. From the trail, birders can see open pine woodland species such as the brown-headed nuthatch (*Sitta pusilla*) and the highly imperiled red-cockaded woodpecker (*Dryobates borealis*), which was re-established at the area in October of 2010.

The diverse natural communities are an enjoyable sight, and the stands of dwarf palmetto will leave you feeling like you've been somewhere tropical.

Our tallgrass prairie remnants, such as H.E. Flanagan and Cherokee Prairie natural areas in Franklin County, are also good places to see rare grassland bird species. Look for LeContes' sparrow (*Ammospiza leconteii*) or sedge wrens (*Cistothorus platensis*) by flushing them from the thick grass until they perch on large grass stalks or the branches of a shrub.

*Continued on page 21...*

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# ARKANSAS WILDLIFE News-of-Note



## February squirrel hunt with Becoming an Outdoors Woman

Becoming an Outdoors-Woman (BOW) offers outdoor skill-building workshops, classes, and camps for women eighteen and older. Discover a variety of outdoor activities in BOW's supportive atmosphere and home skills that enhance the enjoyment of Arkansas's outdoors. BOW classes range from introductory level to advanced outdoor training. BOW will be hosting an all-day squirrel hunt at The Potlatch Conservation Education Center at Cook's Lake on February 20, 2020; registration is required. For more information contact BOW coordinator Lea White at [Lea.White@agfc.ar.gov](mailto:Lea.White@agfc.ar.gov).

Be in the know for upcoming BOW opportunities:

- Facebook: Becoming an Outdoor-Woman Arkansas (@BOWArkansas)
- Calendar: [www.agfc.com/bow](http://www.agfc.com/bow)

## Great win for wildlife!

Even with Congress as polarized as ever wildlife conservation continues to bring both sides of the aisle together. In September, the House and Senate passed America's Conservation Enhancement (ACE) Act with overwhelming support emerging in both chambers. The ACE Act is a comprehensive package of bills that empowers partnerships and work happening on-the-ground, and makes significant investments in wildlife conservation. From reauthorizations of programs like the North American Wetlands Conservation Act to the development of new, innovative programs to address emerging threats facing our nation's wildlife, the passage of the ACE Act represents a win for our nation's treasured fish and wildlife and outdoor heritage. To learn more, visit <https://blog.nwf.org/2020/10/americas-conservation-enhancement-act-is-a-bipartisan-win-for-wildlife/>

## Support for a North American Grassland Conservation Act

Farm Bill conservation programs are popular and effective programs that have done much to advance grasslands conservation. But they aren't enough. That's why the Arkansas Wildlife Federation is working with the National Wildlife Federation and other national partners to propose a new federal policy on grasslands. The North American Grasslands Conservation Act, modeled after the popular and effective North



*Becoming an Outdoors-Woman (BOW)*

American Wetland Conservation Act (NAWCA), would help to kickstart the protection and restoration of North America's grasslands and the livelihoods and wildlife that depend on them, and support ranchers and working grasslands. The North American Grasslands Conservation Act would include key provisions for grassland conservation planning, education and outreach, and interagency coordination around grasslands, as well as creating a new voluntary, incentive-based grant program to support ranchers and other private landowners, grazing groups, and other partner groups in their efforts to improve grassland management, conserve grasslands, and restore degraded grasslands. For example in Arkansas, this could provide much needed funding to support grassland projects at public Natural Areas such as:

- Glade/Savanna/Woodland restoration at Harold Alexander WMA and Rock Creek
- Restoring at scale in the Blackland Prairies
- Enhancing habitat for many rare species at the Cherokee and Flanagan Prairies in the Arkansas Valley
- Planting prairie/savanna sites and collecting native seeds at the Chesney Prairie and Devil's Eyebrow
- Sandstone Glade and Pine Savanna restoration on Sylamore Ranger District of the Ozark National Forest

## EPA reauthorizes use of dicamba

In October, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) made the decision to reauthorize the use of dicamba herbicides for another five years. This decision comes after a recent report was released by the National Wildlife Federation, Prairie Rivers Network and the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation detailing how dicamba herbicides pose serious threats to wild plants and the wildlife that depend upon them. The report, *Drifting Toward Disaster: How Dicamba Herbicides are Harming Cultivated and Wild Landscapes*, focuses on the far-reaching impacts of dicamba use.



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I shot three ducks that next morning and went out and bought the same gun that week. My husband and the rest of our hunting partners up to that point were all pretty much 'average' sized men and had never thought to question how well my gun fit me. I didn't know enough at the time to even consider it, and had decided long ago that the way to keep getting invited on hunts was to 'tough out' difficult situations. This whole experience was a big lesson for me and I've since put a lot of consideration into how the equipment I use functions, and why. If you're a woman that primarily hunts with men, it may not be intuitive for them, or even salespeople at outdoor stores to assess the specific fit between your frame and a piece of equipment. Think about this when you go shopping and more importantly, try to get experience with a wide variety of whatever item you're using. This will help you to know what is comfortable and productive for you as an individual and could save you a lot of heartache in the field.

Experiences like this one and a desire to build my own prowess in the field are what drew me to my new professional position with the Artemis Program. Artemis seeks to build and engage a community of connected sportswomen that feel confident in the field. In all my memories growing up I can only remember one woman that ever hunted with us, and she came along with her husband. When I became an adult, most of my hunting opportunities hinged on being invited as an add-on to my boyfriend's hunts. This sparked quite a few heated discussions between us and I felt like it was incredibly unfair that I didn't have any hunting 'buddies' that were just mine. My role as the Southeast Coordinator for the Artemis program means that I literally get to live my dream. I'll be working with affiliate organizations and individ-



uals across the Southeastern US to connect sportswomen to each other and bring them to new levels of independence in the field and on the water. The states I'll be working in to begin with are: Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma and Tennessee. I am so excited to undertake this challenge because of what it means to me personally, and because I know that more women afield equates to a better future for wildlife.

If you'd like to know more about the Artemis program or would like to become an Ambassador, connect with us at:

Website - [artemis.nwf.org](http://artemis.nwf.org)

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Safety first, muffled vibration second. Remember, it was opening of modern gun season in south Arkansas so when I heard a volley of shots at first light, I thought, that's not unusual but I wonder if one of those was my son. It was about 6:40 and I checked my phone and already had a text message. "I dropped a buck" it said. I texted back, "on my way". I unloaded my gun, got down and went to my son's stand. He was still in the stand and told me the buck was down about 25 yards from his stand. He had stayed up in his stand for two reasons that might surprise you. Anyway, he got down and we went over to the deer, an 8 point of about 160 pounds. Yes! My excitement was because this son had shot 6 and several 7 points but each 7 point had a tine broken off fighting or somehow so this 8 point was a big deal for him. Alright! He wanted to back walk the blood line to where he shot it so we walked back to the point of impact but guess what, no blood. He then deduced that since there was no exit wound, not too usual with a 130 grain 270 caliber bullet, it must have hit bone in the body, bounced around and did not pierce the skin. Sure enough, on the other side of the body there was a bulge where the bullet had stopped. Skinning the deer, the bullet went through the heart, the liver and the shoulder. When he dug it out, I had



never seen one like it in my 50+ years of hunting (above).

The two reasons our son had stayed up in his stand after shooting the 8-point buck; 5 minutes after the buck was shot, a spike buck walked into view along the same path the 8 point has come AND 15 minutes or so later, a 7-point buck walked the same path. Wow, 3 deer in 20 minutes...and then I took our older son on 2 deer hunts and he saw only one deer and two weeks later I finally saw my first deer during this year's seasons, and one was a 90 -pound doe which I shot, skinned, gutted and processed.

## Ducks by 7

About a week after our older son and I had been deer hunting and only saw one fleeting deer each a day through thick brush, he decided to go after game that can be a little more abundant and really fun to hunt. He and I have gone on a lot of duck hunts over the years and we've shot a lot of ducks together, often with one of our Labradors helping us. He often hunts with a bunch of buddies in mostly fields in eastern Arkansas. So, he went on a hunt with 3 buddies on a rice field and they had a nice spread of dekes out there and it was windy. Due to some good calling, the wind, the field flooded just right, and some cooperative ducks, the four duck hunters had their 4-duck mallard limit by 7:00 AM. Yep, 16 mallards by 7 AM (Fig. 3). Wow! Can't remember the last time I have been a part of duck hunt that did that. Last year, my duck hunting numbers were so far down, that my son's group shot more ducks in less than an hour than I did the entire season. But, I'm not giving up duck hunting.

I often duck hunt with a brother since we're both retired now and both love the feeling of wet waders and the sound of whistling wings in the morning. We have yet to go this first season but there's two more seasons to go and I'm sure we'll have some fun in flooded woods or fields. Hunting gets in your blood and it's more satisfying when it's a family affair.

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...continued from page 17.

These prairies are also good places to happen across a covey of northern bobwhite (aka quail, *Colinus virginianus*). Driving around one of these prairies at sunset or sunrise could give you the opportunity to see a short-eared owl (*Asio flammeus*) flying about as they are crepuscular and most easily seen at this time of day. If you visit at this time of day, you might also see a common owl, like the great horned (*Bubo virginianus*), that hunts open areas from nearby large trees or even the top of utility poles.

Many birders have the most luck spotting winter birds in Arkansas's bottomlands. Although winter rains can make these wetlands hard to access on foot, birders can easily access them by canoe. The bald cypress water-tupelo swamp at Benson Creek NA near Brinkley is one such place. Recent restoration at the area has increased grasses, sedges, and broadleaf plants, which provide much-needed food for wintering waterfowl. The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission's (AGFC) Bayou DeView Water trail is popular with winter birders who launch from an access point off Arkansas Highway 17. Benson Creek NA and the Bayou de View Water trail are part of the AGFC's Arkansas's Watchable Wildlife program, which encourages people of any age to get out and enjoy nature. If using the water trail, be sure to check river conditions and weather forecasts before paddling and tell someone where you're going and when you expect to return.

If you want to visit bottomlands but prefer to do so without getting your feet wet, Lorange Creek NA just south of Little Rock is an excellent choice. The natural area features a paved walking trail and a boardwalk that takes you into a bald cypress-water tupelo swamp. A large deck is situated near the end of the boardwalk with benches and interpretive signs, perfect to sit and stay awhile, looking for that "lifer" bird that you might have missed in the warmer months. Another natural area that takes you out onto a boardwalk in the swamp is the Louisiana Purchase NA, a cooperative project with Arkansas State Parks. The interpretive walk at the natural area ends at the boardwalk where you can view the stone marker commemorating the initial point from which land surveys of the Louisiana Purchase Territory began in 1815. With 76 natural areas and nearly 70,000 acres of land, the ANHC's System of Natural Areas is a fun way to explore nature this winter in Arkansas. Details on each natural area, including directions and trail maps, are available on our website at [www.naturalheritage.com](http://www.naturalheritage.com). Find your next winter birding destination!

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 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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# Arkansas Wild Kids

## Appreciating the Sounds of Nature

By Lola Perritt

*In the fall issue, we shared information about the importance of sound in understanding and connecting with nature. This article is a deeper exploration of nature's sound.*

All matter is capable of transmitting sound but some materials are better than others. Soft materials are often used to dampen or retard sound because the vibrations cannot travel very far since they lose their energy as they move from molecule to molecule. This comes in handy when we need to block or reduce harmful sounds. Rigid materials are more capable of transmitting sounds and allow the sound to travel farther and with less distortion. This comes in handy when we make musical instruments. There are a multitude of websites for finding out more about the physics of sound but kids can have a lot of fun learning about sound by experiencing it.

Animals are constantly listening for sounds that warn them of predators or prey: the flap of birds wings, animals walking nearby, a sudden splash of water or an animal call. Animals know and recognize these sounds. Observers of nature and hunters are aware of this and try to be as quiet as possible in their pursuits. A simple game to play with children is to place objects in containers and shake or drop them on a hard surface where the child can hear but not see the objects. What information the child can gather from hearing the object rattle or fall? Can they determine the material: wood, metal, plastic, rubber? How many objects? The size? Does it roll? With younger children, you can show them the objects familiar to them such as a coin, a pair of scissors, a rubber ball, etc. before you drop them and have them guess which object was dropped.

An important property of sound is pitch. Pitch is how fast the object is vibrating. Humans can only hear pitches within certain ranges while many animals can hear pitches that we cannot hear. The faster the vibration, the higher the pitch. This is evident in musical instruments: the keys on the left of a piano have a lower pitch than the keys on the right side; the large strings on a guitar have a lower pitch than the smaller

strings; a tuba has a lower pitch than a French horn. The pitch of an instrument can be lower or higher depending on the length of the vibrating object. Many musical instruments are played by changing the length of the vibrating object like the strings on guitar or violin or the length of the tube such as a trumpet or flute.

One of my favorite activities to do with students is to make Ambient Sound Resonators, a fancy name for a simple object. This device picks up the ambient sounds that are always around us and allows the listener to only hear a given pitch based on the length of the tube. Collect some cardboard tubes such as paper towel roll tubes. Make at least 4 tubes by cutting and taping the paper towel rolls together to make different length "pipes". Pipe one -  $\frac{1}{2}$  tube long; pipe two - 1 whole tube long, pipe three -  $1\frac{1}{2}$  tubes long; pipe four - 2 whole tubes long. Tape the rolls together side by side in ascending order making sure all the tubes are even with each other on one end creating an even base. Hold a pipe from the base end to your ear and move from pipe to pipe to hear the different pitches. If you have difficulty hearing a change in pitch, cover your opposite ear with your hand. Each length of tube only allows one to hear the pitch of the sound wave that corresponds to the length of the tube and sounds similar to the sound you hear when you put your ear to a seashell. Experiment with different diameter pipes of the same length or use different thickness or lengths of pipes.

Palm Pipes are very similar to the Ambient Sound Resonators but can be musically tuned and played. They are made by cutting lengths of PVC pipe into specific lengths and played by striking the end of the pipe on the palm of the hand. I have made several sets and have had children as young as 5 play songs. Just type "Palm Pipes" into your search engine and several sites will pop up. I like the Exploratorium site. The websites not only provide all the directions for making Palm Pipes but how to color code each pipe to its corresponding pitch and several simple songs that can be played.



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