

The Voice of Outdoor Kansas

**November-
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Jury finds occupier of Oregon wildlife refuge not guilty

**The ruling could galvanize more
anti-federal actions on public lands**

By Tay Wiles
High Country News

On Oct. 27, a jury found seven defendants not guilty of charges filed against them for their part in the 41-day armed occupation of Oregon's Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in January and February. Ammon Bundy, Ryan Bundy and five others were charged with conspiracy to prevent federal employees at the refuge from doing their jobs by intimidation, threats or force.

Some of the defendants were also charged with having firearms at a federal facility; the 12-person jury acquitted the occupiers of those charges as well. One defendant, Ken Medenbach, was even acquitted of the charge of stealing federal property, although he admitted in court to using a government vehicle. The verdict is a shock to attorneys and observers on all sides of the high-profile case, which lasted six weeks in U.S. District Court in Portland.

Many critics of the occupation fear the verdict will embolden people in Western states who dislike the federal government to use violence or threats to try to force land agencies to bend to their will. "People are going to get killed because of this verdict because this jury has just given militias the green light to go after federal facilities with rifles," Kieran Suckling, executive director of the Center for Biological Diversity, told the Los Angeles Times.

The Bundys and their supporters say federal lands are mismanaged and should be turned over to state or local control. In early January Ammon Bundy led a small group to occupy the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge that lasted 41 days. At its peak, the occupation grew to include a few dozen people, who lived in and around refuge facilities. They bulldozed new roads in the refuge, handled tribal artifacts stored in the refuge headquarters and prevented federal employees from returning to work for weeks, as they argued for the refuge to be turned over to local control. The arrest of the Bundys and several other occupiers in February was a setback to their cause, but the new acquittal gives it a shot in the arm.

Observers are speculating that the prosecution failed to provide enough compelling

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Protecting the Land... Passing on Our Traditions



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President's Message

As many are looking to the skies eagerly awaiting the geese and ducks to fly overhead for the take, or are calling in that impressive tom, or busy getting the bird feeders stocked and ready for the winter bird checklist, I am excitedly looking forward to the spring. Not because I am not looking forward to those events as well, but due to the fact that for the first time in several years, the Kansas Wildlife Federation Annual Meeting will be all about being outdoors in the Kansas spring.

The date has been set! Friday, April 7th to Saturday, April 8th are the dates to save!

The location has been reserved! Acorns Resort at Milford Reservoir is the place to be!

The list of "lets-get-the-family-outdoors" activities to participate in is being planned! There will be numerous things to do outside and will be led by some of our very own KWF outdoor enthusiasts!

The Annual Meeting Committee has been hard at work planning a new look and feel for this 66th annual event. Each and every KWF board member has a definite passion for some aspect of the outdoors. It is safe to say that every single board member wants to share that experience and introduce as many people to the glory of Mother Nature. This new annual meeting will be the perfect opportunity



for young and old alike to join and celebrate the great outdoors. Look to future newsletters for a full itinerary of activities that will be available at the meeting.

The KWF Annual Meeting would not be complete without the Conservation Achievement Program awards set for the banquet the evening of the April 8th. As always, if you know of someone that stands up for conservation amidst today's dynamic environment, please nominate them to be recognized amongst their peers and supporters.

In the meantime, from our Kansas Wildlife Federation households to yours, we hope you have a joyous Holiday season and the best of luck in all of your outdoor adventures!



NWF decries 'Outrageous' outcome of Malheur trial

O'Mara: Acquittal in armed occupation threatens public employees, lands

A jury in October acquitted participants in last January's armed takeover of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge. Collin O'Mara, the National Wildlife Federation's president and CEO, released the following statement:

"This outcome is simply outrageous. All Americans watched in horror for nearly six weeks as domestic terrorists occupied one of America's great national wildlife refuges by force and terrorized the refuge's dedicated public servants,

their families, and local residents. This was not a peaceful protest; this was occupation by gunpoint and it assaulted the very foundation of our democracy, our Constitutional principles, and our shared public lands heritage," O'Mara says.

"These criminals prevented Americans from enjoying the wildlife that belong to all of us, destroyed refuge infrastructure,

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National Audubon weighs in on Malheur verdicts

Officials with the National Audubon Society expressed disappointment with the not-guilty verdicts handed down by a federal jury in Oregon for seven defendants, who led the 41-day armed standoff at the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge earlier this year. The defendants had been accused of conspiring to prevent federal employees from doing their jobs through intimidation, threat or force.

"Wild lands belong to all of us, not the people who hold them at gunpoint," said Audubon President and CEO David Yarnold (@david_yarnold). "This outrageous verdict undermines the rule of law and puts people, birds and other wildlife in danger."

Although the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge became a focal point for anti-government rhetoric during the siege, it has a

storied history of bird and wildlife protection dating back decades. Audubon was involved in its founding, helping highlight its importance to more than 300 species of Pacific Flyway birds.

"Some places are so special—because of their value, because of their beauty, because of their history, because of the wildlife they sustain—that they truly belong to all of us," said Yarnold. "Birds depend on public lands. Public lands are nurseries and wintering grounds and staging sites during migration for millions of birds that wouldn't survive without them."

Yarnold added that the takeover of Malheur sent the wrong signal about the importance of public lands not just to wildlife, but to the American people who share them.

American Bird Conservancy statement on Malheur verdict

American Bird Conservancy respects the judicial process but is deeply troubled by the outcome of the Malheur case.

Armed occupation of public lands sets a dangerous precedent. It puts our ecologically valuable wildlife at risk and disrespects the men and women charged with protecting our natural resources.

"The occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge was an affront to the millions of Americans who love birds and the public lands that provide bird hab-

itat, and to federal employees for trying to do their jobs," said ABC President George Fenwick. "National Wildlife Refuges are important for birds and other wildlife, and for the nearby communities that benefit from tourism generated by wildlife watching, hunting, and fishing. We need to honor these lands, and the public servants that act as our stewards, and make every effort to prevent small groups of armed extremists from taking them over for themselves what belongs to all Americans."

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The Kansas Wildlife Federation promotes hunting and fishing opportunities and associated recreation for the benefit of all hunters, anglers and conservationists.

KWF supports the sustainable use and management of fish and wildlife and their habitats through education, partnerships, outreach and policy oversight.

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Please send your mailing label and new address, clearly printed. Allow 2 to 6 weeks for the change to be made. Send to:

Kansas Wildlife Federation Newsletter

P.O. Box 771282

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2016 Conservation Achievement Program Awards

You know someone who has volunteered countless hours towards a particular wildlife project or someone who has devoted themselves beyond normal expectations for conservation. It is important for conservationist to give credit to those who deserve it. It demonstrates that we hold these activities in high regard and gives some appreciated recognition to folks who work very hard for something they love. Do your part and consider those you work with or know who have performed beyond the call of duty, someone who deserves to be recognized for their contributions to Kansas' wildlife. Let's not let them go unrecognized for their dedication and sacrifices.

Please make an effort to identify folks who have made special efforts for wildlife in 2015. Those who have received Conservation Achievement Program (CAP)

awards in the past can attest to the pride they felt in being bestowed such a noteworthy recognition. Do your part and make certain we recognize those most deserving at the CAP banquet in February, 2017.

To nominate someone simply e-mail a nomination of 400-500 words (more or less) to info@kswildlife.org. Make sure you put full contact information for yourself and the nominee, including mailing and e-mail addresses and phone numbers. Do it now! E-mail me if you'd like a cyber copy of the form. Thanks for your help with this very noteworthy program for wildlife conservation in Kansas. **Get your nominations to us by November 20.**

Steve Sorensen

CAP Chair

info@kswildlife.org

Ph. 316-214-3001

Official Entry Form 2016 Kansas Wildlife Federation Conservation Achievement Award (CAP)

The Kansas Wildlife Federation CAP awards recognize outstanding accomplishments in Kansas's conservation fields. Nominations should be made for efforts worthy of state recognition. The accomplishment should reflect a long-time commitment to natural resources in Kansas with a significant effort during the past year. Awards are presented in 13 categories to capture the wide range of efforts that benefit wildlife and the cause of conservation. Past year's winners are not eligible for nomination in the same category for three years. Current KWF officers are not eligible.

- **Wildlife Conservationist.** For outstanding achievement in fish or wildlife resource management. Nominees should have demonstrated leadership in management, restoration, or research of habitats or wildlife species.

- **Water Conservationist.** For outstanding achievement in water pollution control, conservation, and protection of rivers and wetlands, prevention of degradation of water quality through effective planning and management or other activ-

ity aimed at maintaining or improving water standards.

- **Land and Soil Conservation.** For outstanding achievement in watershed protection, wetlands development, erosion control, habitat improvement or other management practices that improve land so as to benefit wildlife.

- **Conservation Education.** For outstanding achievement in educating others in conservation. The process may be formal or informal. The nominations may be for leadership, which by example of demonstration, aids in the environmental/wildlife education of others.

- **Forest Conservation.** For outstanding achievement in forest and woodlands management, including reforestation, preservation of wilderness areas and wildlife habitat development.

- **Conservation Communicator.** For outstanding conservation achievement in effectively conveying the conservation message and creating public awareness of conservation issues in the news and other

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CAP Nomination Form

To make a nomination, send this form with attached write up to Steve Sorensen, CAP Chairman, info@kswildlife.org. Nominating write-ups should be approximately 400-500 words, and should list the accomplishments of the nominee, especially those accomplishments during the award period (2016). The deadline for nominations is November 20, 2016. Any questions, contact: Steve Sorensen webforbs@cox.net or 316-214-3001.

Name of nominee _____

Address _____

Phone(s) _____ e-mail(s) _____

Award Category _____ (please specify one of the categories, above)

Nominator's name _____

Address _____

Phone(s) _____ e-mail(s) _____

Steve Sorensen
CAP Chair
info@kswildlife.org
Ph. 316-214-3001

CAP

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media.

• **Youth Conservationist.** For outstanding conservation efforts for someone under 21 during the contest year. Winners should have demonstrated ability and accomplishment in some phase of conservation. Youth groups are eligible as well.

• **Conservation Organization.** For outstanding achievement by an organization for work in some phase of conservation during the contest period. May include

civic clubs, conservation groups, garden clubs, sportsman's clubs, businesses, professional organizations and others.

• **Stream Team or Stream Monitor.** For outstanding efforts by a group of citizen volunteers or individual in monitoring and contributing to the protection of our state's waterways. Nominees should have demonstrated leadership in stream monitoring, protection and educational efforts.

• **Conservation Legislator.** For outstanding achievement by a legislator in conservation legislation that took place in or culminated in the contest year. Competition is open to state or federal legislators and their staff members.

• **Farmer/Rancher Wildlife Conservationist.** This award is to recognize special efforts of a farmer and/or rancher who has made extra efforts towards conserving wildlife.

• **Outdoor Skills Instructor.** This award recognizes wildlife, nature, shooting, and outdoor instructors for their superior involvement in educating others.

• **Conservationist of the Year.** The Conservationist of the Year will be selected from all the nominations submitted in all categories. This award will be based on exemplary service to Kansas's fish, wildlife and environmental conservation efforts.

VERDICT

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degraded wildlife habitat, and desecrated archeological treasures. In a democracy, disagreements must be resolved through collaboration, debate or the courts, not by brute force. The danger is this decision will embolden vigilantes who take the law into their own hands and threaten the safety of the dedicated employees who manage our public lands. We stand with the women and men of the U.S. Fish and

Wildlife Service and strongly encourage the Department of Justice to appeal this decision if possible. We call upon Congress to stiffen the penalties for illegal occupations of our public lands and strengthen protections for public servants managing them."

At its annual meeting in June, the National Wildlife Federation recognized Chad Karges, Malheur manager, and his staff with a National Conservation Special Achievement Award. NWF honored the refuge staff for facing the volatile situation and defending our public lands with

"unwavering professionalism."

The Malheur National Wildlife Refuge near Burns, Ore., is part of a vital network of public lands that supports birds and other wildlife across North America. It is crucial stopover habitat for migrating birds and provides food, nesting and shelter for ducks, geese, sandhill cranes, coots, terns and pelicans. The refuge is also home to elk, antelope, mule deer, mountain lions and river otters.

Visit the National Wildlife Federation Media Center at NWF.org/News.

2016 Tuttle Creek Lake Assisted Deer Hunt Summary

By Steve Prockish

The 14th annual youth/handicap Tuttle Creek Lake Assisted Deer hunt is now in the books. The hunt was held September 10th and 11th. Thirteen Kansas youth, including one disabled youth, 11 through 16 years of age and thirteen adult Kansas residents with a certified disability participated in this hunt. Fifteen of the twenty-six hunters harvested a deer. None of the youth hunters and several of the disabled hunters had harvested a deer prior to this hunt.

In addition to the two days of hunting in September, hunt participants were also required to attend a firearm & hunting safety presentation and rifle sight-in at the Fancy Creek Shooting Range on August 21st. The Friends of Fancy Creek Range provided NRA certified Range Safety Officers to staff the shooting range during the rifle sight-in.

A meal was provided to the hunters, guides, Range Safety Officers, and other volunteers after the safety presentation and rifle sight-in. Breakfast was also provided on both mornings of the hunt to all hunters and guides.

The Riley County Fish and Game Association, Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT), and the Corps of Engineers at Tuttle Creek Lake are coordinators of this event. Additionally, several other groups, businesses, and organizations contributed to this hunt such as the Kansas State Rifle Association, Friends of Fancy Creek Shooting Range, Tuttle Creek Lake Association, Kansas City Chapter of Safari Club International, BIG&J Attractants, Orschelns-Manhattan, Dick's Sporting Goods, and Midway USA. GTB Custom Meats of Riley, the Clay Center Locker, and the Alta Vista Locker each provided basic processing of

harvested deer free of charge.

Participants were furnished a Kansas hunting license (if needed), and all were furnished a deer permit by our participating sponsors. If participants did not have a rifle or ammo for the hunt, these items were provided. These rifles are provided by the Riley County Fish & Game Association and KDWPT's Pass It On Program. Each hunter was paired with an experienced hunter who served as volunteer guide. Other items provided for this hunt include accessible hunting blinds, hunting locations, hunter orange hats and vests, and transportation to the field. Public land surrounding Tuttle Creek Lake, including park areas normally closed to hunting, as well as private land nearby was utilized for the hunt.

Ed. Note: We want to thank the sponsors who support this hunt.

Deer-vehicle crashes increase in fall

Mating season and the quest for more secure habitat have deer on the move at this time of year, increasing the chances of vehicle collisions.

Typically, the greatest number of deer-vehicle crashes is in mid-November when the rut, or mating season, peaks. In addition to the rut, deer are also on the move in mid-fall seeking new food sources and shelter as crops are harvested and leaves fall from trees and shrubs, leaving them less secure than in their summer habitats. Summer rains have added a new wrinkle, too.

"We have just experienced a summer rainfall pattern that has produced excellent growth of deer habitat," said Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism biologist Lloyd Fox. "Unlike the years of drought, we should expect more fawns this fall. Young animals of all species are prone to making mistakes. That includes mistakes crossing roads. Be extra careful."

According to the Kansas Department of Transportation, 9,982 (16 percent) of the 60,340 vehicle crashes reported in 2015 were deer-related (crashes in which a deer and vehicle actually collided or the presence of a deer was a contributing circumstance). Although crashes involving deer occur throughout the year in every Kansas county, the highest number of crashes typically occur where there are the most vehicles. Sedgwick

MOTOR VEHICLE CRASH SUMMARY Statewide Deer Crashes

	Total	CRASHES		PDO*	PEOPLE	
		Fatal	Injury		Deaths	Injuries
2011	10,159	2	436	9,721	2	527
2012	9,739	4	475	9,260	4	556
2013	9,168	9	428	8,731	9	527
2014	9,612	2	447	9,163	2	534
2015**	9,982	7	456	9,519	8	527
2016**	5,421	4	287	5,130	4	342
Total	54,081	28	2,529	51,524	29	3,013

*PDO- Property Damage Only Crashes

**Data are incomplete and unofficial at this time

County had 374 deer-vehicle crashes in 2015, the most of any county, while Butler County followed with 356 deer-vehicle crashes.

The Kansas Highway Patrol cautions drivers to refrain from making exaggerated maneuvers to avoid a deer in the road, lest a bad situation become even worse.

"If you are unfortunate enough to have a deer enter the highway in front of your car, it is best to hit the animal and not swerve to avoid it," said the KHP's Lt. Adam Winters. "Often we find more serious crashes occur when you swerve to miss the deer, potential-

ly losing control of your vehicle, leaving the road or veering into oncoming traffic."

Other tips to avoid deer collisions include:

- Be especially watchful at dawn and dusk when deer are particularly active.
- Watch for more than one deer, as they seldom travel alone.
- Reduce speed and be alert near wooded areas or green spaces such as parks or golf courses and near water sources such as streams or ponds.
- Deer crossing signs show where high

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Animal-rights group ties gambling laws to Kansas coyote hunt

By Michael Pearce
The Wichita Eagle

An animal-rights group has stopped a coyote-calling and hunting contest in western Kansas by tying it to the state's gambling laws.

The Animal Legal Defense Fund, based in San Francisco, filed a lawsuit against the organizers of the WaKeeney hunt. Jordan Bleske, one of the organizers, said the suit was settled by agreeing to not hold it again and paying the organization \$2,000 in legal fees.

The Jan. 9 hunt was the only one held by Bleske and two friends. He would not say how many hunters entered or how many coyotes were shot.

"It's been resolved," said Bleske, 24. "I've moved on."

Sarah Hanneken, a lawyer for ALDF, said they cited Kansas' gambling laws to say that the calling contest was a game of chance. Entrants paid \$80 to participate in the one-day event. The grand prize of \$500 went to whoever killed the most coyotes that day.

"As a general matter, anytime you have to pay to participate to win a prize that is largely based on chance, that is going to fall within the definition of gambling," Hanneken said.

Her group represented Western Plains Animal Refuge in Hays.

"These contests are not welcome in Kansas," said Brendon McCampbell, the refuge's director. "We are happy this horrible event has been canceled, and we hope others like it will also be ended soon."

A call to the refuge was not returned.

Coyote calling usually involves hunters using mouth-blown or electronic callers that mimic the sounds of a wounded rabbit, songbird or fawn to attract coyotes looking for an easy meal. Contests have been held across the western half of the United States for decades.

One of the largest, the Midwest Coyote Calling Event, was held in St. Francis in extreme northwest Kansas. The hunt's Facebook page said its 2016 hunt was the last after 20 years. Hunters came from many states for the hunt. Landowners in at least three states volunteered their property, hoping to reduce the local coyote population.

The Facebook page said 1,700 two-man teams had participated in the event over the 20 years. It also said 4,300 coyotes had been shot.

Those familiar with hunting coyotes argue it takes more than luck. Many rate coyotes one of the most challenging animals to hunt in North America.

Charles Lee, a Kansas State University extension service wildlife biologist, has hunted coyotes for more than 50 years. First, as a ranch kid growing up in western Kansas. Professionally, he does it to help ranchers incurring damages to sheep, goats and calves from coyotes.

"I don't know of any outdoors activities that are luck," said Lee. "People with the most experiences always tend to do better at coyote hunting and most things outdoors."

Lee said skills involved include knowing how to spot good coyote habitat, and have the ability to sneak into the area without being seen, heard or smelled by coyotes. The animals are, by nature, extremely cautious, especially once they've been called to and hunted. Shots are often long and at swiftly moving targets.

Lee said he's seeing increased interest in predator calling in Kansas and across America. The equipment now is better than ever. But America's coyotes must be getting smarter than ever, too.

"My observations and information would tell me (coyotes are) increasing statewide, year after year, and have been since the '80s, and probably before that," said Lee, who averages one or two complaints per week from

livestock growers. "They're just extremely adaptable, and really don't have any other predators other than people in Kansas."

Hanneken said her group has have ended contests in other states, citing gambling laws. She doesn't think any of the cases have gone to trial and instead have been settled out of court.

Chris Tymeson, Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism attorney, said neither Bleske nor his lawyer contacted the agency, seeking advice before the matter was settled.

Tymeson said he wasn't familiar with the Smoky Hill Calling Contest or the legal action that ended it. After reading state regulations, he thinks hunters would win if such a case went to court in Kansas.

"It does take skill (for hunting and fishing)," said Tymeson, an avid hunter and angler. "Gambling is pure chance. You can't control the card that will be dealt or what color something will land on. A contest is a determination of skill. You have to have skills to hunt coyotes, or about anything."

Editor's note: Kansas voters are going to the polls while this newsletter is going to print with the option of accepting a proposed amendment to the Kansas Constitution regarding Question 1 The right of public to hunt, fish and trap wildlife (see the following). The above article is a prime example as to why the amendment should be passed.

§21. Right of public to hunt, fish and trap wildlife. The people have the right to hunt, fish and trap, including by the use of traditional methods, subject to reasonable laws and regulations that promote wildlife conservation and management and that preserve the future of hunting and fishing. Public hunting and fishing shall be a preferred means of managing and controlling wildlife. This section shall not be construed to modify any provision of law relating to trespass, property rights or water resources.

DEER

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levels of deer/vehicle crashes have occurred in the past.

- Use your bright lights to help you detect deer as far ahead as possible.

- Always wear a seat belt and use appropriate child safety seats. Even if you are waiting in your car, it is best to wear your seat belt, and have your children in car seats.

If you do hit a deer, here are some additional tips:

- Slow down, pull onto the shoulder and turn on the emergency flashers.

- Don't worry about the animal. Law enforcement will arrange to have the animal removed from the road when they arrive. Tell the dispatcher if the deer is still in the road when you're calling for help.

- If possible, remain buckled up in your vehicle, protecting yourself in the event there is a secondary crash involving another vehicle.

- If you must be outside your vehicle, stand as far off the road as possible; make sure hazard lights are activated; don't stand between your vehicle and another vehicle; and make sure children are kept properly restrained in your vehicle.

To report a crash on Kansas highways from a cellular phone, call *47 (*HP) for a highway patrol dispatcher or *582 (*KTA) for assistance on the Kansas Turnpike. The crash can also be reported by dialing 911.

Fishing, archery part of curriculum at Dodge City High

By Michael Pearce
The Wichita Eagle

Jairo Coca learned something new in his freshman physical education class last month. And he liked it.

"I've never seen a fish in person before now, for real, anyway," Coca said as he admired a palm-sized bluegill that he reeled in. "This is my first fish. It's pretty cool."

Fifteen minutes, and three more bluegill later, it wasn't just the fish that were hooked. Coca was baiting his hook and unhooking fish with ease, and said he would go fishing again. Most of the dozen classmates who shared his side of a two-acre pond said the same.

The pond is called Demon Lake, after the Dodge City High School's mascot, and sits on the west side of the campus. Administrators say it's as important as any classroom.

"The pond has been a great thing for our kids, really," said principal Jacque Feist. "It's such a great opportunity for the kids. There just isn't a lot of access to (recreational) water around Dodge City."

Demon Lake is the brainchild and ongoing project of Dave Foster. He's the school's football and track coach, plus strength and conditioning instructor. He's also a lifelong hunter and angler. He immediately knew fishing opportunities were few when he took the job in 2010. But he saw potential.

"I saw kind of marshy area as a place where kids might someday be able to fish," Foster said, as he helped Coca and others fish for bass, bluegill and chan-

nel catfish. "I also knew the chances of (development) happening would be much higher if the school didn't have to spend a lot of money." They did not.

Foster spent about three years getting grants for the project, with the help of the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism. The pond was completed and full for the first time in 2014. A local group, the Ford County Sportsman's Club, helped pay to get the pond stocked in the spring of 2015. This year, run-off from the school grounds has kept the pond full. If needed, Foster said they can divert cleaned sewage water from a nearby line to help keep the pond full.

Every student enrolled in a physical education gets to fish the pond at least three days per semester. All of the equipment is furnished, including the 6,000 worms students have already used this school year. Students are exempt from needing fishing licenses during school hours. Foster said physical education teachers are all certified under the Fishing's Future program and guidelines.

But fishing is one of several outdoors-related activities offered to Dodge City's high school students.

With Foster's help, the Archery in the Schools program became part of the physical education curriculum in the fall of 2013. The school also has an archery team, which Feist quickly bragged of winning the state championship the last two years.

Foster said 175 kids sign up to take hunter education classes at the school annually. The local sportsman's group hosts the graduates, and provides an opportunity to shoot some clay targets. About 40

of the kids are scheduled to be taken on a supervised pheasant hunt.

Raised in Claflin, a small central Kansas town with ample opportunities for fishing and hunting, Feist said she had no problems backing all the programs.

"We may be a rural community, but the majority of the kids don't have any rural experience," she said. "A large number of our students are Hispanic, and that's often not a culture that's had a lot of experience (with things like fishing and shooting). If we don't provide these things, many might never get the chance."

Feist said high school teachers use Demon photography. Foster said the school wants to use a patch of prairie he estimates to be 33 acres, also on school grounds, for educational and recreational uses.

Feist and Foster said students have quickly taken ownership in what they have.

"It's pretty cool out here because we know we're one of the only high schools in the state to have their own lake for fishing and stuff," said Cedric Rosales, a freshman. "I think a lot of people like learning some new things, and getting a chance to be outdoors. It's different than other classes."

Foster said the outdoors clubs and classes give kids who may not be into sports something they can do together. He's sure they do it because they like it.

"You know, I don't think I've ever had a kid late for archery (team) practice,"

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KWF to accept newsletter ads

Is your business or organization interested in advertizing in the Kansas Wildlife Federation's newsletter? If so, contact us at info@kswildlife.org. The newsletter is printed six times a year. Rates are as follows:

Ad size	Annual	6 mos.
Business Card	\$100	\$50
1/4 page	\$200	\$100
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Wildlife Appreciation Days



The Bluestem Farm and Ranch Supply of Emporia conducts a Wildlife Appreciation Days event in early September. Conservation groups set up booths to promote their efforts to enhance wildlife habitat in Kansas. KWF was present and President Angela Anderson was there to represent the organization.

Trout stocking discontinued at Cedar Bluff stilling basin

For more than 40 years, trout have provided winter fishing fun in select Kansas waters, and the Cedar Bluff stilling basin has been a part of that program from the beginning. However, the stilling basin below Cedar Bluff Dam won't be stocked with trout in 2016. Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism Fisheries Division staff considered several factors before making the decision to discontinue stocking trout at the Cedar Bluff location.

Poor water quality has been a hindrance to trout welfare in the stilling basin for many years. Recently, the problem has become more acute due to lack of flow. Late seasonal turnover, brought about by prolonged warm

weather in the fall, delays water quality improvement and limits the basin's ability to provide a suitable environment for trout.

Economics also played a role in this decision. In the last two years, the cost of trout increased from \$1.50/lb. to \$4.00/lb. Revenues from trout permit sales did not keep pace with this increase, necessitating a statewide reduction in the number of trout stocked.

To maintain acceptable angler catch rates in the face of this reduction, it will be necessary to reallocate trout regionally. Some trout, originally destined for Cedar Bluff, will go to Webster stilling basin, which receives nearly twice as much trout angling pressure

as Cedar Bluff.

For more information, contact district fisheries biologist, Dave Spalsbury, at (785) 726-3212, or visit www.ksoutdoors.com to learn where trout will be stocked this fall. The trout season opens Nov. 1, and more than 30 locations across the state will receive regular stockings until the season ends April 15, 2017.

Anglers 16 and older are required to have a \$14.50 Trout Permit, in addition to a Kansas fishing license. The daily creel limit, unless posted otherwise, is five per day. Anglers 15 and younger do not need a trout permit, but they may only keep two trout per day.

ARCHERY

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he said. "Most times they're there well ahead of time. It's not like that with most school activities."

The area around the pond is also seeing increased use by other members of

the Dodge City community. Fishing is open to all, if school is not in session. It's catch-and-release angling. Feist said the public does a good job of policing each other at the lake. All segments, from elderly residents walking their dogs to a family fishing with young children, seem to find some good from the lake.

"It's nice to see so many people using it. We have a young man who has au-

tism, and he struggles in about all facets of life," she said, "but when he's casting a fishing pole he's as good as anybody else. This place gives him maybe his only opportunity to be like others.... That's pretty cool."

Editor's note: Dave Foster is a Director at Large on the Kansas Wildlife Federation Board of Directors.

LPCI conservation practices boost Lesser Prairie-chicken occupancy

From News from the Lek Lesser Prairie-chicken Initiative

Habitat conservation practices make a difference for lesser prairie-chickens. That's the finding of a recent scientific study—the first part of a multi-year study—described in a new report from the Lesser Prairie-Chicken Initiative (LPCI).

LPCI, led by USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), works with partner organizations and ranchers to improve habitat and address threats to the bird. Since 2010, more than 1 million acres of habitat in the southern Great Plains have been restored on working lands.

NRCS works with partners to monitor the outcomes of targeted assistance to private landowners, which helps determine if LPCI's conservation practices are making a difference. However, accurately estimating wildlife populations be challenging with uncommon, widely dispersed species like the lesser prairie-chicken.

A recent study identified a new model for assessing lesser prairie-chicken populations, and it shows encouraging evidence that NRCS-recommended conservation practices through LPCI are working and that large blocks of intact prairie are important to prairie-chicken conservation.

The study assessed one year of data from the annual aerial survey of lesser prairie-chicken lek sites conducted by the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, and it looked at four factors that might impact site occupancy—patch size of native vegetation, percent of land cover managed with prescribed grazing; percent of land cover enrolled in the USDA's Conservation Reserve Program (CRP); and density of primary roads. The research team intends to continue with a multi-year study that assesses additional variables.

Lesser prairie-chickens face many threats, including habitat loss and fragmentation from row-crop agriculture, fire suppression, unmanaged grazing, development, and drought. The species currently occupies just 16 percent of its historic range.



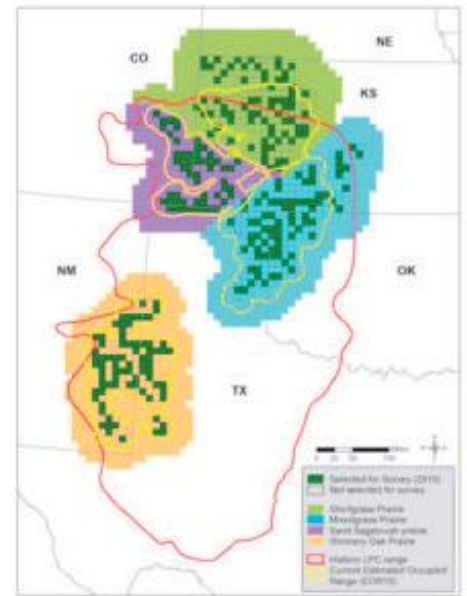
But in western Kansas, lesser prairie-chickens have reoccupied portions of their historical range and have even moved into areas outside that historical range. The range expansion coincides with former croplands enrolled and maintained as grasslands through CRP, as well as native grasslands managed using LPCI prescribed grazing practices.

A team of researchers tested whether there was a quantifiable link between land managed with prescribed grazing or enrolled in CRP and the likelihood of prairie-chickens occupying a landscape. Their results indicate that these habitat conservation efforts are working.

After developing an expanded model for assessing lesser prairie-chicken populations, the team found that occupancy increases as prairie patch-size increases, as well as in landscapes with ongoing conservation practices. Specifically, the results indicate that when lands are using prescribed grazing or enrolled in CRP, the likelihood of lesser prairie-chickens occupying that habitat increases significantly.

The report's management recommendations include:

- Enrolling acreage within the lesser prairie-chicken active range in prescribed grazing or CRP.
- Maintaining large blocks of native prairie across the range through sustainable ranching.
- Identifying potential landscapes with willing landowners to develop conservation easements, particularly if combined with prescribed grazing and other proven habitat conservation practices.
- Implementing prescribed grazing on dispersed patches throughout large blocks of rangeland.
- Cultivating diverse stands of CRP-



Map of current and historical range of the lesser prairie-chicken, showing sites surveyed during the 2013 range-wide aerial survey. The data from this survey was repurposed to assess LEPC habitat occupancy.

enrolled grasslands that serve as connective tissue to larger patches of native prairie.

- Retaining CRP acreage as grasslands after contract expiration.

Lesser prairie-chickens benefit from LPCI prescribed grazing. The study showed strong positive relationship between percent prescribed grazing and probability of occupancy.

NRCS outlined its three-year plan for lesser prairie-chicken conservation in its Lesser Prairie Chicken Initiative FY16-18 Conservation Strategy report, which encourages adoption of many of the above practices—such as prescribed grazing, using easements to protect key habitat corridors, and providing assistance to convert expiring CRP lands to grazing—on 500,000 additional acres.

Learn more about these findings by downloading the new Science to Solutions report. This report is part of the Science to Solutions series offered through NRCS, LPCI and the Sage Grouse Initiative.

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KWF CAP Award winner, Denise Scribner, recently named the 2017 Janet Sims Memorial Teacher of the Year by the Kansas Foundation for Ag in the Classroom

Denise Scribner, biology, ecology and forensic crime science teacher at Eisenhower High School in Goddard, Kan., was recently named the 2017 Janet Sims Memorial Teacher of the Year by the Kansas Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom (KFAC).

The KFAC Janet Sims Memorial Teacher of the Year award recognizes Kansas teachers who instill a passion for learning about agriculture within their students. The Foundation honors one teacher annually who has successfully integrated agricultural education into his or her preexisting curriculum. Scribner will be honored with the award at the Bookmark Art and Teacher of the Year celebration during Kansas Ag Month in March 2017 in Topeka, Kan.

Scribner has been involved in youth education for a total of 40 years.

She spent 31 years as a staff member with the Girl Scouts of the USA, where she emphasized support for STEM (science, engineering, technology and mathematics). For the last nine years Scribner has been employed at Eisenhower High School, teaching ecology, biology and forensic crime science to students in grades nine through 12.

After school Scribner is the sponsor of the Science Club, as well as coach for the Eco-Meet team and Science Olympiad team. She recently received the Presidential Award of Excellence for Math and Science Teachers and the International Congress of Entomology President's Prize for Outstanding Teaching at the Secondary

Level.

Scribner noted the importance of taking the time to fill out applications and paperwork in order to help showcase the good work of her school, school district and students. "I don't need another certificate on the wall, but I want to showcase the school district and students," Scribner said.

Scribner said the image most kids have of agriculture includes a farmer in a pair of overalls with a piece of wheat sticking out of his mouth. However, Scribner wants to change that stereotype in the eyes of her students.

"Agriculture is the number one conservation tool, which is not only responsible for feeding the world, but also for conservation of our ecosystems," Scribner said.

Scribner is proud that her curriculum and implementation of agricultural concepts reach every student in her school. She takes agriculture education beyond the agriculture based elective classes and uses cross curricular adaptation so each student receives a dose.

"Before taking my classes, where I apply real world concepts of agriculture into my lessons, my students saw agriculture only in terms of narrow stereotypes; a farmer, a cow, a tractor, with the stereotypical farmer only visualized as an old man wearing bib overalls and chewing on a piece of straw," Scribner said. "My students represent the future leaders of society, the people we will depend on to support, regulate, and advocate for agriculture."

Scribner focuses on exposing trending issues like sustainable farming and natural resources and energy to help her students start focusing on ways to advocate agriculture in their chosen career fields, for a better life through agriculture.

She believes the cultivating of agricultural interest among youth can lead to a more agriculturally aware society, as well as, a more knowledgeable workforce to help support future agricultural practices.

"I am thrilled to share how I have ramped up ag in the classroom's elementary materials for the high school curriculum," Scribner said. By taking agricultural ideas into the high school curriculum, Scribner notes that it helps showcase agriculture careers.

"We need those ag chemists, people focusing on GMOs and people looking into alternative fuels and ways to feed the populations," Scribner said. Scribner believes in educating her students on agriculture in the environment because it translates to more applications and helps her students understand different concepts introduced in class.

As KFAC's Teacher of the Year, Scribner will have the opportunity to attend the National Agriculture in the Classroom (NAITC) conference, which will be held in Kansas City, MO, June 2017.

The Janet Sims Memorial Teacher of the Year award is named in honor of Janet Sims, who passed away in June 2007 from Lou Gehrig's disease. Sims, an educator herself, had served on the KFAC board from November 2005 until her death.

Can you tell a snood from a wattle? Let's talk turkey about our favorite bird



A Male Wild Turkey showing wattle, snood and beard
© <http://www.naturespicsonline.com/>

By eNature

It's about Thanksgiving and many of us are thinking about our annual feast and the turkey that's often at the center of it.

But how much do you know about the creature that many folks think is our REAL national bird?

Turkeys are interesting birds—they're large, colorful and hard to miss when they're in a demonstrative mood. Many researchers have devoted their entire career to studying them and their complex social structure.

A Bird For All Americans

As recently as a generation ago, folks rarely encountered Wild Turkeys. Hunting pressure had eliminated them from much of their original range. But extensive reintroduction efforts brought the turkey back from the brink and just about every state in the continental US now has populations of wild turkeys, some in the tens of thousands. You can see from the range map to right how widely distributed turkey's now are.



Close-up of Turkey's snood

Snoods, Wattles and Beards

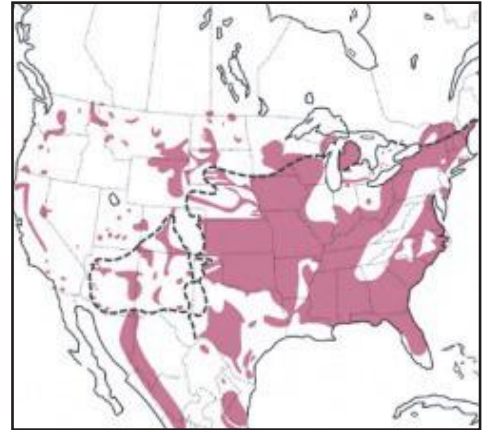
So what exactly is a turkey's snood? Male, or tom, turkeys have a number of features that experts believe are intended to attract female turkeys (hens). These include the familiar fleshy red wattles on its neck and throat as well as a fleshy mass over their beak known as a snood. As turkeys are polygamous and happy to mate with as many hens as they can attract, it seems reasonable to conclude that a more spectacular wattle and snood will result in more breeding success.

A tom's plumage follows the same principles. Bright colors and unique features rule the day. His feathers have areas of green, copper, bronze, red, purple, and gold iridescence. Most males also have a beard; in reality a group of specialized feathers growing from the center of his breast. The photo to the above right clearly shows many of the tom's irresistible (to hens at least) qualities.

Strutting Their Stuff

Males attract hens by a behavior known as "strutting", in which they display for females by puffing out their feathers, spreading out their tails and dragging their wings. Gobbling, drumming or booming and spitting as signs of social dominance are also techniques toms use to attract females.

Sounds a bit like highschoolers at a Friday night football game!



Range of Wild Turkey

Overcoming Adversity

Wildlife managers estimate that the entire population of Wild Turkeys in the United States was as low as 30,000 in the early 20th century. By the 1930s, they were almost totally extirpated from Canada and found only in remote pockets within the US. Populations have rebounded spectacularly since programs across the country were put in place to protect and encourage the breeding of surviving wild populations. The rebound has reached the point where hunting has been legalized in the lower 48 states and current estimates place the entire Wild Turkey population at over 7 million.

Wild Turkey or Bald Eagle?

It's not your bartender taking your order, but rather an interesting bit of American history. In the early days of the republic, Benjamin Franklin strongly objected to the choice of the Bald Eagle as our national symbol, preferring the Wild Turkey.

Franklin thought the Bald Eagle's habit of stealing prey caught by other birds, particularly ospreys, an inappropriate quality and wrote, "For the Truth the Turkey is in Comparison a much more respectable Bird, and withal a true original Native of America".

We tend to agree with Ben—the turkey, a uniquely North American bird, is an American original and worthy of our respect.

10 things you can do to ensure the future of hunting

By Keith Wood
Petersen's Hunting Magazine

We live in an extremely fluid world where public perceptions and opinions on issues can change by the hour.

Just because hunting has been around for 90 percent of human history doesn't mean that it will be around for the next 50 years. We cannot take our rights for granted. Preaching to the choir will not save hunting; we must influence others outside our circle to further our message.

If we want to preserve the proud traditions of hunting for future generations, we must expose and mentor those generations to the most basic of human behaviors. Here are a few places to start.

1. Become a Hunting Mentor

Though I spent lots of time at the shooting range as a kid, I grew up without exposure to hunting because there was no one to take me out and teach me the ropes. Not every child has a parent who hunts or has the time to be a good mentor.

Whether you mentor your own children or grandchildren, nieces or nephews, or just a family friend or neighbor, you can do your part in passing along your knowledge and enthusiasm to another generation of hunters. Taking someone hunting just once could be life-changing for that individual—and you'll never know whether they're interested if you don't ask.

My own kids are too young to take hunting at this time, but I still bring them along when I'm scouting for sign or checking trail cameras. They enjoy the time spent with Dad and are gaining an understanding of the connection between the outdoors and the food on their plates.

Can't find a kid in your area to mentor? You can become a digital mentor through an app called "Powderhook." The app allows new hunters to ask questions and gain insight through anonymous interactions with more-experienced mentors. In just a few minutes per week, you can help guide the next generation.

This free app is made possible through a partnership with Cabela's Outdoor Fund and Pass It On—Outdoor Mentors and can be used on your iPhone, iPad, iPod Touch, or Android device.

2. Get a Kid Started in Archery

When Americans left the farms and the small towns for the cities and the suburbs,



we lost entire generations of hunters. Not everyone has the real estate to teach a child how to shoot a firearm, but almost every living arrangement allows for archery.

Thanks in part to the influences of popular culture, archery has seen resurgence among America's youth—capitalize on that popularity by mentoring a young boy or girl as an archer.

Youth recurve bows sell for less than \$50, and archery basics can be taught in

tiny suburban backyards, public recreation areas, and even indoors. My friend turned his small backyard in crowded Southern California into a 3-D archery range and raised an outdoors-obsessed huntress as a result.

3. Teach Them About Our Public Land Heritage

What better way to introduce young Americans to hunting than by taking the family on a hunting vacation in one of our nation's wild public lands? We live in one of the few nations on earth where the people own much of the hunting land.

Load up the kids and spend a few days camping and hunting in a backcountry wilderness area. No matter where you live, there's a spot within a day's drive. Take your kids where their phones don't work and show them what it's like to live

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HUNTING

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off the land, to make a fire, to hunt and fish for dinner.

Sitting around the fire is an ideal time to teach them how our public lands came to be. It will be an experience they'll never forget.

4. Become a Youth Shooting Instructor

Generations of Americans first learned to shoot in youth programs offered by NRA, 4-H, or the Boy Scouts of America.

Quality shooting instructors will ensure that new shooters find success quickly, which drives the enthusiasm to continue learning. Teaching the next generation of hunters to handle firearms safely and kill game cleanly are among the noblest of goals.

Completing one of the many NRA instructor certification programs offered across the country is a great step—qualified instructors are always in-demand.

5. Become a Hunter Education Instructor

To this day, I can remember the lessons taught by my hunter education instructors more than 25 years ago.

Those volunteers made a positive impression on me and taught principles of hunting safety and ethics that I still apply today. Nearly every state has some sort of hunter education requirement, and many states have a limited number of training sessions that fill up quickly.

In order for would-be hunters to participate, we need to ensure that hunter education does not become a barrier to access. Volunteering your time as an instructor will help shape future generations and will help ensure that new hunters are not lost due to a lack of available classes.

6. Donate Your Old Gear

Raise your hand if you have an old bow, pack, or hunting jacket that is collecting dust. Not only is that gear doing you no good sitting in your closet or garage, but also it's not doing anyone else any good, either.

To a young person looking to get into hunting, your bow from 2005 could be the difference between tagging a deer and staying home this fall. Ask around town or at work to find a worthy individual or put an ad up on the sporting goods section of craigslist.

Hold a mini essay contest via email



to pick the best candidate. If they're too lazy to write a paragraph on why they're deserving of your free gear, keep looking.

7. Volunteer to Help a Landowner with Kids in Tow

We talk a lot about getting access to private lands, but we rarely mention the act of repaying that landowner's kindness and generosity.

Keeping a piece of land maintained as viable hunting habitat is a time-consuming and costly exercise that is probably appreciated by few who haven't done it. Helping that landowner with year-round land improvements is a good way to en-

sure access to the property, and it teaches the next generation of hunters respect for the hard labor that goes into land ownership.

Helping the landowner maintain fences, plant supplemental feeding crops, or simply spraying for weeds can go a long way in changing the land-owning public's perception of hunters.

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iSportsman daily hunt permits

Kansas hunters should be aware that iSportsman Electronic Daily Hunt Permits are required on 24 wildlife areas (check the 2016 Kansas Hunting and Furharvesting Regulations Summary or kdwpt.isportsman.net for a list). The electronic permit system has been in place for two years, and is normally fast and efficient. However, the software company that manages the host servers experienced technical difficulties this week that slowed the check-in procedure. Hunters utilizing iSportsman may

experience slow processing or may find the system entirely down for the next few days.

iSportsman replaces the old paper permits and allows hunters to conveniently check in and out using a telephone, smartphone or home computer. As with the old paper system, information gathered helps area managers tailor management practices specific to an area and hunter preference. The paper system was inconvenient for hunters and labor intensive for managers. However, hunters who experience diffi-

culties this weekend with iSportsman are encouraged to check wildlife area offices and kiosks and use paper forms where available.

Repairs should have the iSportsman system fully functional soon, and KDWPT staff want all hunters to enjoy hunting this weekend. If technical problems persist, KDWPT encourages hunters to go hunting but keep trying to check in with iSportsman or check with area offices and kiosks for paper cards.

HUNTING

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8. Teach Them about Politics

Whether we like it or not, hunting and gun ownership have become inextricably linked to public policy. If our children and grandchildren are to be afforded the same hunting opportunities as we have now, they must understand the importance of voting their sport.

Passionate and articulate hunters who can be good ambassadors to politicians and the non-hunting public are our best tools against the erosion of our rights. Before the next election, sit down with your child and research the candidates' positions on hunting-related issues, including gun rights, access to public lands, and conservation topics.

Help a young person craft a letter or an email to an elected official and urge them to support a pro-hunting or conservation cause.

9. Take Kids to Clean Up a Public Land Shooting Area

When I worked for NRA, the most common complaint I heard from the shooting public involved a lack of accessible and safe places to shoot.

Many of the public ranges around the country are abused and neglected by inconsiderate shooters who shoot up signs, leave trash on the range, and show a lack of appreciation and respect for the range.

Taking a group of young people to clean up a shooting area not only helps mitigate the damage done by the mouth-breathers, but also teaches the next generation to preserve and respect our public lands, which will help ensure continued access for shooters. New hunters need to understand that the hunt starts long before the season begins.



10. Lead by Example

The single most important thing you can do to influence aspiring hunters is to walk the walk yourself. Be ethical, be respectful, be enthusiastic...be the kind of hunter that will inspire others to seek the outdoors themselves.

We can't expect fair treatment from the media and popular culture, so we shouldn't do the other side's work for them through our own irresponsible conduct.

We live in a digital world, and the younger the generation, the more apt they are to be influenced by digital media. Platforms such as Facebook can be an effective outreach tool but only if used appropriately and responsibly.

Is your social media post going to attract prospective hunters or turn them away? Use these tools to be an inspiration to the young hunters you may touch without even realizing it.

CRP is working

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) helps America's farmers, ranchers, and forest owners to voluntarily conserve environmentally sensitive land. Introduced in the 1985 Farm Bill, CRP once supported 37 million acres devoted to conserving soil, water, and wildlife habitat. But Congress has reduced the size of the program to just 24 million acres in the current Farm Bill, and today the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is turning down thousands of

CRP applications from those who want to enroll millions of acres of private land in conservation. Habitat loss continues to be one of the greatest threats to hunting and fishing in this country, so this loss of CRP lands could pose a terrible risk for upland birds, waterfowl, deer, sage grouse, and freshwater fish.

Wildlife conservation is one of the three main goals of the Conservation Reserve Program, and it's not hard for sportsmen to see that CRP works. By

incentivizing private owners to repurpose their land, CRP has helped restore wildlife habitat and improve thousands of stream miles since the program's inception. In fact, CRP acres in the northern plains states make up a vital share of nesting habitat for more than half of North America's waterfowl. And CRP is helping landowners to voluntari-

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POLICY

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evidence of the defendants' criminal intent, or that they could have had more success with lesser charges. A juror who spoke with the Oregonian Friday said, "It should be known that all 12 jurors felt that this verdict was a statement regarding the various failures of the prosecution to prove 'conspiracy' in the count itself – and not any form of affirmation of the defense's various beliefs, actions or aspirations."

Tung Yin, a law professor at Lewis & Clark Law School in Portland, Oregon, said the verdict was surprising and may reflect the broader political environment. He drew a parallel to pollsters' failure to identify Donald Trump as a viable candidate during the Republican primaries. Yin said the Malheur verdict "suggests that there's something going on that most of the observers like me must be missing.... The mood of the electorate was some kind of simmering anger that Trump was able to channel. Maybe something like that that is resonating at a level that is subconscious to the legal doctrine."

On Thursday night, supporters of the occupiers celebrated outside the courthouse and welcomed several of the defendants as they exited the building after the verdict was announced. Twitter and Facebook were alight with celebratory statements from members of the so-called Patriot movement around the country.

Yet many rural Westerners had more mixed responses. Tom Collins, a rancher and former commissioner of Clark County, Nevada, calls the occupation leaders "a bunch of radical Mormons left over from the John Birch Society." Collins is friends with the father of Ammon and Ryan Bundy, Cliven Bundy, who in 2014 led an armed standoff with BLM employees at his Nevada ranch after they tried to impound his cattle over unpaid grazing fees. But Collins did

not approve of that standoff, and when asked whether he supported the armed occupation of the wildlife refuge, Collins said he appreciated the fact that it had drawn national attention to issues with federal land management. "I will not say that I disagree with the outcome of the jury," he added. "I would not have liked the Tea Party if they had not had been successful and created a revolution."

During the trial this month, defense attorney Matthew Schindler said the Bundys were "protesting the death of rural America" by occupying the refuge. It's true that many Western communities are struggling: Rising costs for small businesses and market consolidation in agriculture threaten rural lifestyles; environmental regulations, growing populations of wild horses, and bureaucratic dysfunction in some federal offices pose challenges for ranchers. But now, on top of those challenges, misinformation — such as the claim that it's illegal for the federal government to own land in the West — is likely to polarize the issues further.

Critics of the Bundys say their actions have distracted from real rural issues. Land Tawney, the head of the Montana-based Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, released a statement Thursday night saying the organization is "profoundly disappointed in the jury's decision... The jury's decision flies in the face of the basic principle that America's national wildlife refuges and other public lands belong to all Americans."

The verdict may make problem-solving around public lands even more difficult. Earlier this year, ranchers in at least two other states vowed to renounce their federal grazing permits in solidarity with the Bundys and to support the claim that the feds have no place on public lands. (State and federal employees told HCN those ranchers did not follow through with those statements and their grazing fees are, in fact, paid off.) In June, Utahn William Keebler was apprehended by FBI for allegedly attempting to blow up a Bureau of Land Management facility in Arizona; a federal complaint stated Keebler

hoped to create a confrontation similar to the 2014 Bundy standoff.

In an all-staff email, Bureau of Land Management Director Neil Kornze wrote: "While we must remain respectful of the jury's decision, we must also be clear-eyed about the potential impacts of yesterday's verdict."

Secretary Sally Jewell also sent an email to all Department of Interior employees: "While we must respect the jury's decision because we believe in the rule of law and our system of justice, I am profoundly disappointed in this outcome and am concerned about its potential implications for our employees and for the effective management of public lands. Deputy Secretary Mike Connor and I visited Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in March to meet with employees impacted by the occupation. It was painful to hear from employees who had devoted entire careers to public service and were worried about their safety as they carried out their important missions on behalf of the American people.... As we digest the jury's verdict, our foremost priority continues to be the safety, security, and well-being of people who comprise the Federal family and those visiting America's public lands."*

In addition to Ammon and Ryan Bundy, the defendants acquitted Thursday were Shawna Cox, David Fry, Ken Medenbach, Jeff Banta and Neil Wampler. The Bundy brothers, who remain in custody, will next join Cliven Bundy and their brother Dave to be tried for their actions in the 2014 Nevada standoff. Legal experts say there's a chance government prosecutors may consider lessening charges in order to not risk another acquittal. That trial is slated for February 2017 in Las Vegas, Nevada.

This story has been updated to include internal communications from the Department of Interior and Bureau of Land Management that were provided to HCN.

Tay Wiles is associate editor at High Country News. She can be reached at taywiles@hcn.org

A once-proud conservation group has lost its way

By Dave Stalling

Opinion
High Country News

Recently, the family of Olaus J. Murie demanded that the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation cancel the organization's Olaus J. Murie Award. The surprising reason? The foundation's "all-out war against wolves is anathema to the entire Murie family."

I sympathize with the family's position for several reasons. In 1999, while working for the Elk Foundation, I created the Olaus J. Murie Award, with the coordination and the approval of the Murie family. The award recognized scientists working on behalf of elk and elk habitat and was given in the name of Olaus J. Murie because he is widely considered the "father" of modern elk research.

Murie, who did groundbreaking work at the National Elk Refuge in Jackson Hole, Wyo., in the 1940s, also wrote *Elk of North America*, the first comprehensive and scientific treatise on elk and elk management.

During most of its 28-history, the Elk Foundation and its more than 185,000 members, who are primarily hunters, avoided controversy. Instead, the group focused on its mission: "To ensure the future of elk, other wildlife and their habitat." Most of the foundation's leaders had solid backgrounds in wildlife biology, ecology and wildlife management, and they resisted the occasional pressure from hunters to get involved in issues such as gun rights or wolf reintroduction.

"We are not a hunting organization supporting conservation; we are a conservation organization supported by hunters," former foundation director Gary Wolfe used to say.



Photo by Ron Wolf

But starting in 2000, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation's board of directors changed, many staff members were fired, and the nonprofit group went through a string of short-term directors. Then in 2007, the foundation board hired David Allen, a former marketer for NASCAR and the Pro Rodeo Cowboys Association, as its director. At first, it seemed that Allen would follow a path similar to former leaders.

"We are not a hunting club. We don't intend to be a hunting club. We are a membership organization that has an overwhelming number of hunters ... but we're not doing wildlife conservation to improve our hunting," Allen said when he took on the job. That approach did not last long.

"Wolf reintroduction is the worst ecologi-

cal disaster since the decimation of bison herds," Allen said recently, as he claimed that wolves are "decimating" and "annihilating" elk herds. "To keep wolf populations controlled, states will have to hold hunts, shoot wolves from the air and gas their dens," he said.

When asked about the utility of predator-prey relationships, Allen explained, "Natural balance is a Walt Disney movie. It isn't real." Under his leadership, the Elk Foundation recently offered the state of Montana \$50,000 to contract with the federal Wildlife Services agency to "aggressively" kill more wolves. "And the next step is the grizzly bear," he said. "We've got bear issues with elk calves

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Have returning wolves really saved Yellowstone?

Researchers fear that some damage can't be undone

By Warren Cornwall
High Country News

Some come for the geysers and grizzlies, but I've traveled hundreds of miles to Yellowstone National Park simply to stand in the drainage of Elk Creek, stooped over a stunted willow bush. Tan branches, tinged with red, just reach my thighs, and narrow pale-green leaves blend into the wheat-like stalks of timothy grass and smooth brome filling this humdrum meadow.

Nearby, David Cooper, a Colorado State University ecologist, inspects one willow like a doctor examining a patient. The diagnosis isn't good. "This plant has obviously got a lot of problems," Cooper says. "It's just stuck." This willow could be 30 years old and should be 12 feet tall, but it looks as if I could uproot it with one swift jerk. It's a clue to the mystery that drew me to the park: Have wolves saved Yellowstone?

National Geographic, Scientific American, countless newspaper articles, documentaries, even a TED talk, have all marveled at the transformation wrought by the re-introduction of wolves to Yellowstone in the mid-1990s. The story goes like this: After a 70-year absence, returning wolves put elk on the run, depleting their numbers and scattering the remainder. Freed from relentless browsing, the region bloomed with fresh vegetation, inviting songbirds, beaver



Wolves were reintroduced into Yellowstone in the 1990s, giving researchers the chance to study the predators' effects on the ecosystem, such as providing food for scavengers, after a long absence. Photo by Dan Hartman

and other animals. Wolves were bringing Eden back from the brink.

It's a lovely tale, but researchers like Cooper warn that the reality is more complicated. For him and fellow Colorado State professor Tom Hobbs, Elk Creek is key to understanding north Yellowstone's ecosystem, and to telling a truer story, one of an older, more vibrant landscape that may already be lost, perhaps irrevocably.

Cooper, who is stocky and has a trim

white beard, has spent his career as a plant ecologist, tracing water and its role in Western landscapes from the Sonoran Desert to the Rocky Mountains. Hobbs, lanky and loquacious, specializes in mathematically modeling how large mammals shape ecosystems. In 2000, the duo came to Elk Creek, drawn by talk of intriguing

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POLICY

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in the spring -- both grizzly and black bear. We can't have all these predators with little aggressive management and expect to have ample game herds, and sell hunting tags and generate revenue."

This approach has not gone over well with some conservationists. Ralph Maughan, director of the Western Watersheds Project and the Wolf Recovery Foundation, said that foundation director "Allen has not only taken a strongly anti-wolf position, but he has done it taking an 'in your face' way to traditional conservation organizations such as those supported by Olaus Murie, which he now calls 'extremist.'" "Allen has also expressed contempt for many of the concepts

of ecology, as he seems to be moving the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation toward a single species, single value of elk (hunting) approach."

There has been a lot of good, solid research on elk and wolf interactions, some of it funded by the Elk Foundation in years past. Most of it that shows that when wolves are restored to an ecosystem, both habitat and elk herds improve. Allen's claims are not backed by science.

"Mr. Allen and his anti-wolf rhetoric has alienated him and his organization from many of the very organizations that have helped the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation — in subtle and profound ways — garner the successes it has over the years," said Bob Ferris, a 30-year wildlife researcher who was involved in bringing wolves back to the Yellowstone ecosystem.

The family of Olaus J. Murie, the "father" of modern elk research and management, agrees with these criticisms. A foundation that once understood the complex relationship between elk and wolves has succumbed to the pressures of hunters who don't like wolves.

Note: the opinions expressed in this column are those of the writer and do not necessarily reflect those of High Country News, its board or staff. If you'd like to share an opinion piece of your own, please write Betsy Marston at betsym@hcn.org.

Dave Stalling is a contributor to Writers on the Range, a service of High Country News (hcn.org). He is an elk hunter, fisherman and wildlife conservationist and lives in Missoula, Montana.

Shrubs for bees

By Scott Vogt
Dyck Arboretum

A well-designed garden has many different forms, colors, heights, bloom times and textures. Plants are integrated in ever-changing combinations that should be appealing to us and the wildlife we are trying to attract. Obviously, pollinators depend on diversity of plants and being able to find the food they need. Shrubs are an important nectar source for many different pollinators, particularly for bees. By including just a few of these in your own landscape, you can have a beautiful and productive garden that makes a difference in their survival. Here is a list of shrubs for bees to feast upon.

Small Deciduous Shrubs (1-3 feet tall)

Black Chokeberry—*Aronia melanocarpa*—The tiny white blooms of this ornamental shrub attract many different types of bees. The black fruit is a bonus to be eaten fresh or left for wildlife. Look for varieties like ‘Autumn Magic’, ‘Iroquois Beauty’ or ‘Viking’ to add to your garden.

Western Sand Cherry—*Prunus besseyi* ‘Pawnee Buttes’—This wonderful, easy to grow landscape plant has an abundance of sweetly scented flowers in the spring followed by black cherries in the summer. The glossy green leaves turn shades of red and purple in the fall. It only grows to 18 inches tall by 4-6 feet in spread making it a fantastic ground cover.

Coralberry—*Symphoricarpos* sp.—This is a shrub that is grown for its ornamental berries. However, the tiny blooms are gladly used by bees. The summer’s flowers swell into pinkish white pearls along arching stems. The fruit is persistent well into winter. “Candy™” or ‘Galaxy™’ are forms with great fruit clusters.

Lead Plant—*Amorpha canescens*—This is a great butterfly bush alternative. The purple flower spikes in late spring atop the silvery gray foliage are extremely attractive. Bees cover these plants while blooming. It is a native wildflower that thrives in a sunny spot.

Medium to Large Deciduous Shrubs (4-10+ feet tall)

Buttonbush—*Cephalanthus occidentalis*—The unusual, fragrant flower balls of this native shrub are magnets to a host of pollinators. I have seen up to two dozen swallowtail butterflies on one plant when in bloom. ‘Sugar Shack®’ is a shorter form that works well in the landscape.

Elderberry—*Sambucus canadensis*—As you drive the highways in summer, this shrub is everywhere. The creamy white blooms pop out of the landscape especially



Black Chokeberry



Buttonbush

against the glossy green foliage. These flat topped clusters of flowers make great landing pads for bees. The fruit is tasty and very high in antioxidants. ‘Adams’ and ‘York’ are native forms selected for their larger fruit. Other non-native forms like ‘Black Lace’ and ‘Lemony Lace’ are more refined alternatives for the landscape.

Spicebush—*Lindera benzoin*—We have had success growing this as an understory shrub. The tiny yellow flowers attract bees and the leaves have a spicy smell when crushed. Plants develop a nice yellow fall color.

Viburnums—There are too many of these shrubs to mention, but I will highlight our native to Kansas varieties, which have beautiful white flowers in the spring followed by clusters of purplish fruit that develops later in the summer. *Viburnum prunifolium* has smaller oval leaves that develop reddish-purple fall color. *Viburnum rufidulum* has shiny leaves that turn burgundy-purple fall color. Each of these shrubs can grow to 12 feet tall.

Certainly, there are other shrubs for the



Lead Plant



Elderberry



Blackhaw Viburnum-Viburnum prunifolium

landscape such as Beautyberry- *Callicarpa americana*, sumac (*Rhus* sp.), Roughleaf Dogwood- *Cornus drummondii*, American plum- *Prunus virginiana*, Clover Currant- *Ribes odoratum*, and serviceberry (*Amelanchier* sp.) that deserve more use in landscapes. Many of these shrubs have been pushed aside for ornamental varieties that are nice to look at, but offer nothing to wildlife because the flowers are sterile. By strategically choosing plants that are both beautiful and alluring to bees and other wildlife, your garden will become a haven for pollinators.

How's this sound for Thanksgiving dinner? Slugs, grubs, and a side of Poison Ivy!

By eNature

As we sit down to big Thanksgiving meals this time of year, it's also fun to think a bit about what's on the table of various species of wildlife.

Taken as a whole, the animals of our world eat just about every conceivable thing imaginable, from juicy berries and fresh-caught fish to the poisonous, the slimy, the stinging, and the prickly.

Here's a quick look at the dining habits of wildlife, including what foods our birds and mammals eat, where they store their food, and what they do to prevent other animals from taking and eating it.

Picky Eaters

Some animals will eat a wide variety of foods, while others are specialists, concentrating on one or two items. In an extreme example of specialization, the teddy-bear-like Koala of Australia eats, exclusively, the leaves of certain kinds of eucalyptus trees and eats them only at certain seasons when the trees are producing specific oils.

Pandas are specialists too, confining their diet to bamboo. Arctic Foxes are so dependent upon lemmings for food that the two species follow cyclical variations in population, the fox population increasing or decreasing a year after the lemming population does so.

A Matter of Taste

Some animals eat the same foods as humans, such as fish, fruits, and mushrooms. Birds eat blueberries, raspberries, and, if they can get to them, all manner of nuts. Chipmunks eat pine nuts, coveted by human cooks as an ingredient in pesto sauce. It is said that native peoples of the Northeast learned to harvest maple sap by watching squirrels. Red Squirrels harvest sugar by biting into a maple's surface, letting the sap ooze out, and returning when the water in the sap (which when fresh is only 2 percent sugar) has evaporated and the sugar content is about 55 percent.

But many animals consume items that most of us wouldn't think to put into our mouths.

Leatherback sea turtles eat mainly jellyfish; backward-projecting spines in the turtle's mouth and throat help keep its slimy prey from slipping away. Pallid Bats eat scorpions, and Fishers (mink-like creatures) eat porcupines. Red Squirrels



Loggerhead Shrike



Leatherback Sea Turtle

eat Amanita mushrooms, some of North America's deadliest fungi (to humans). Countless species eat grubs, earthworms, and carrion. Least Shrews will enter a beehive—to dine. Many birds, including the Wild Turkey, routinely eat poison ivy berries, and deer and other mammals browse on the very leaves that cause susceptible humans so much misery.

Food Storage

Humans have grocery stores, pantries, and refrigerators, but animals have to be more creative with their food collection and storage methods. Some small mammals simply store food in underground burrows. The Yellow-pine Chipmunk stuffs its cheek pouches with food and carries it to its subterranean cache. One such cache was inventoried and found to contain nearly 68,000 items, including more than a dozen different kinds of seeds and a partially eaten bumblebee. One Eastern Chipmunk was observed collecting a bushel's-worth of chestnuts, hickory



Arctic Fox

nuts, and corn kernels over three days. A Harris's Antelope Squirrel was found carrying 44 mesquite beans in its cheeks. Southern Flying Squirrels may store up to 15,000 nuts in a season.

An individual Eastern Gray Squirrel spends the late summer and fall picking and burying hundreds of acorns and nuts. It buries each nut individually, digging the hole and then tamping the soil down carefully to hide the nut from others. Studies have shown that these squirrels recover about 85 percent of the nuts they bury, and that they probably find them by scent, rather than memory. Many of the remaining nuts germinate and eventually grow into trees.

Foiling the Competition

Acorn Woodpeckers drill holes in trees and fence posts and then wedge acorns and nuts in, too tightly for a squirrel or other competitor to pull out. Loggerhead Shrikes impale their prey (smaller birds, mice, or insects) on thorns or barbed wire, and often leave it there to save for later. Grizzly Bears store the remains of large kills such as an Elk or Moose in a shallow depression covered with branches, dirt, and leaf litter, returning to the cache until its meal has been consumed. Mountain Lions, wolves, and foxes will hide their uneaten kills for later consumption as well. The Wolverine doesn't waste much time hiding its cached food, it simply sprays it with a foul-smelling musk to keep others away.

You Are What You Eat

In some cases the cliché is true. Marine creature called sea slugs or nudibranchs feed on sea anemones and their kin, and incorporate the anemones'

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Pumpkin bird feeder makes a happy harvest for birds

Provide a seasonal feast for the birds in your area with this DIY activity

By Avery Cullinan
National Audubon Society

Halloween, harvest festivals, and general autumnal celebrations lead to an abundance of everyone's fall favorite: pumpkins. While you partake in pumpkin spice lattes and jack-o-lantern carvings, why not share some gourd indulgences with the birds? This bird feeder is the perfect use of an extra or post-

trick-or-treat pumpkin.

Materials:

- Small to medium sized pumpkin, up to 10 pounds
- Small sticks
- Twine or rope
- Birdseed

Steps:

1. Cut the pumpkin in half.
2. Scoop out the seeds, leaving a hollow

inside with 1/2-inch thick shell wall.

3. Insert two sticks across the open pumpkin to create perches for the birds.

4. Knot two lengths of rope together at the center and tack the knot to the bottom of the pumpkin feeder. Hang the other ends of the rope in your chosen feeder location.

5. Fill with birdseed.

Holiday Gifts to Help Birds

From The Birding Wire

Looking for that last-minute gift for someone who cares about birds? The experts at American Bird Conservancy have a suggestion that can help solve that gift-giving dilemma and make a real difference for the thousands of bird species that call

the Americas home.

Catios: There are 84 million owned cats in the U.S., and at least 35 million of them are let outside to roam. Unfortunately, in the course of roaming, those owned cats—as well as at least another 50 million feral cats—are devastating bird populations, killing about 2.4 billion birds annually.

The good news is that cat owners who wish to allow their cats outdoors without the worry of their pet either killing wildlife or getting injured from a variety of other predators have an alternative. It is called a “catio,” and it comes in a variety of configurations available in various sizes and finishes.

DINNER

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protective stinging cells into their own bodies, discharging them into the mouth of any unlucky predator that comes along. Hawksbill sea turtles eat toxic sponges, which in turn can make the turtle's flesh

toxic.

There doesn't seem to be any danger of the toxin in poison ivy being retained in the flesh of a turkey that has dined on it, and then passed to those who eat the turkey. However, those of us who eat Thanksgiving turkeys might consider this: Some native American peoples truly believed that you are what you eat, and

didn't eat turkey for fear of inheriting qualities they perceived in the species, including cowardice and stupidity.

There's something to think about during your post-feast stupor!

What are animals in your neighborhood feasting on this Thanksgiving?

We always enjoy hearing your stories and experiences.

CRP

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ly restore and supplement sage-grouse habitat across the West, providing a much needed boost to a species in decline. Whitetail deer, black bears, pheasants, quail, wild turkeys, and countless other species have also been rebounding thanks to the conservation of millions of acres of grasslands and buffers through CRP.

CRP's impact on water quality is especially notable. Through smart land management decisions, like the installation of waterway buffers, CRP protects more than 170,000 stream miles with

trees and grasses. This improvement means cleaner drinking water and better fish habitat near CRP fields and downstream.

If that weren't enough, many farmers, ranchers, and forest owners also open CRP acres to hunters and anglers in their communities.

Sportsmen all over the country want to maintain resilient fish and game populations, and CRP is one of the most successful conservation programs for private lands. Unfortunately, there's little room left in CRP for private landowners who want to help, and so fish and wildlife are also at risk of being crowded out. Year after year, the acreage cap placed on CRP has been reduced and sportsmen and women need to be concerned about

this downward trend—for the sake of fish, wildlife, and our sporting heritage.

According to Pheasants Forever, 83% of farmers hunt at least one day per year; 46% hunt more than 10 days a year.

87% of farmers agree that it is important to develop wildlife habitat that will improve hunting opportunities.

Since 1985, CRP has restored 2.7 million acres of wetlands; thanks to CRP, duck populations in the Prairie Pothole Region have increased by 1.5 to 2 million birds per year.

CRP reduces nitrogen and phosphorus in agricultural runoff by 95% and 85%, respectively, helping to ensure clean water in streams, rivers, wetlands, and even in the Gulf of Mexico.

Boone and Crockett: Ballot initiatives are hurting wildlife

By Morrie Stevens
President of Boone and Crockett

Those of us who care about the conservation of wildlife can no longer afford to ignore the challenges voter ballot initiatives are exerting on the decision-making authority of federal and state wildlife agencies and legislators. The Boone and Crockett Club believes some of these ballot initiatives actually harm wildlife populations, as they place at risk the most successful system of wildlife conservation in the world that is directly responsible for the abundant and thriving wildlife populations everyone values.

The history of American conservation rose out of crisis after the Era of Extinction and began with the acknowledgment that a new human-natural resource relationship was needed. By the end of the 1800s, a few concerned citizens, mostly sportsmen, began to organize. One group that was formed was the Boone and Crockett Club, founded by Theodore Roosevelt in 1887. Roosevelt and the members of this new coalition of sportsmen promoted a new concept they called conservation and defined it as, "wise and prudent use without waste."

For more than a century, sportsmen have worked alongside government agencies and scientific groups to establish the principles and mechanisms of conservation. This system was entirely new and built from the ground up to include laws, legislation, and the regulated use of wildlife through public hunting that were in line with wildlife recovery and sustainability. The science of wildlife management was added to direct critical decision-making. Expert agencies with trained wildlife professionals were also needed to oversee and manage our wildlife, which remains a public trust resource.

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service emerged, as did state fish and wildlife agencies. These agencies of government were entrusted to use the best science to manage our wildlife resources and regulate their use. The results were the greatest reversal of fortune man has done for the natural world. Wildlife, many species of which were teetering on the brink of extinction, recovered to robust populations even in the midst of rapid habitat loss to human development.

Wildlife management-maintaining sustainable populations within the capacity of available habitats and to levels people

will tolerate-is normally handled as an expert process administered by wildlife professionals. Scientists provide technical understanding, data, expert judgment and predictions of the outcomes for alternative scenarios. Citizens contribute their values, interests, and preferences in informal settings and through administrative channels. Wildlife biologists and managers then strive to make sensible decisions based on some acceptable-though changing-combination of science, economic feasibility, and social/political acceptability.

Some people who have emotional qualms about wildlife being managed, relocated, trapped or hunted under these programs are increasingly attempting to use the ballot process to stop these activities. By taking decision-making power out of the hands of professional wildlife managers, well-meaning voters often produce unintended results that do not benefit wildlife or people.

Making decisions that truly benefit wildlife requires knowledge of science, ecosystems, historical context and public policy. Voters rarely get the accurate information they need, and instead, are swayed by emotional arguments and sound-bite science. Consequently, it is common for voters to vote on initiatives that are based on emotion and easily package into a campaign but-in practice-are counterproductive, reactionary measures that ultimately block the conservation of wildlife. Ballot initiatives are inherently easily abused, creating an avenue for strategic manipulation by groups looking to promulgate their agenda through uninformed voters.

A good example is an initiative on the November ballot in the Club's home state of Montana. Voters are being asked to decide to prohibit all trapping on public land, which represents nearly 40 percent of Montana's total area. Those promoting I-177 are telling voters that Montana's hunting tradition calls for "Fair Chase" and respect for animals, something the Club is very familiar with because it established this code of ethical hunter conduct and has promoted it for the past 129 years. The voter's pamphlet goes on to read that, "trapping has no fair chase" and therefore is an activity that should be banned. Trapping is not hunting. The motivations, purpose, and benefits of trapping are different, as are its principles, laws, and ethics. This language in the pamphlet is misleading and confuses voters by trading on Montana's broad pub-

lic support for fair-chase hunting.

Many ballot initiatives also ignore the ecological realities of wildlife management. Wildlife managers seek to strike a balanced ecosystem, which includes keeping animal populations within the carrying capacity of a given area. Uninformed voters do not understand the intricacies of managing an ecosystem and only see an opportunity for more animals, which they see as a positive. In reality, an overabundance of animals in a given area is more destructive than too few.

With the belief that wildlife would be better off left to fend for itself and the goal of ending the public use of wildlife or its management by government agencies, some animal-rights and anti-hunting groups are setting emotional traps for the public. Many of these organizations are nothing more than political machines that raise and spend their significant budgets on time-consuming litigation and political action, not on actual animal welfare. They have directly or indirectly taken on the task of undermining many constructive and useful wildlife management programs, especially those that involve hunting. Whether deliberately or through ignorance, these groups distort the intent and objectives of wildlife management and discredit the accomplishments of the conservation movement.

A significant portion of the funds used by agencies to conserve wildlife is derived from hunters. Ballot initiatives that ban hunting or a form of hunting, or other method of population management will not save animals from the certainty of death but will remove a substantial amount of the funds for managing wildlife and habitat. Wildlife managers will still be required to keep wildlife populations within the limits of their habitats and at socially acceptable levels-it will just be with smaller budgets and through other lethal means.

The ability for people to hunt, fish and trap, if they choose, creates an advocacy state for wildlife from those who enjoy these activities. Hunters, anglers, and trappers benefit from healthy wildlife populations and habitats, and work to maintain the status of each. In addition, these people are consistently in the outdoors and provide valuable observation-based input to wildlife managers. A resource people can use is a valued resource, which is conservation at its core. Besides these contributions to con-

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BALLOT

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servation, these activities also satisfy basic human needs such as procuring healthy food, sharing this food and an outdoor tradition with family and friends, and active

participation in the natural world, which humans are a part of.

Ballot initiatives—not because wildlife populations are being threatened, but because some people do not like seeing wildlife managed, used, trapped or hunted—threaten to unravel more than a century of successful conservation. The science of wildlife management administered by our

expert agencies has a proven, successful track record. Rather than blocking proven wildlife management programs through ballot initiatives, organizations and citizens concerned with the welfare of wildlife should focus their efforts on funding habitat conservation and educational/outreach activities that enhance wildlife conservation.

WOLVES

Continued from Page 18

changes rippling through the ecosystem as wolf packs grew. They wondered what was happening in the smaller streams that lace the area, particularly to the willows that are the linchpin to their health.

“It’s not like the wolves came in and everything has readjusted to normal,” Cooper says. “Some sites may recover more quickly, others may never recover.”

Much of north Yellowstone falls away from the park’s high central plateau in a series of broad valleys, steep canyons and rolling sagebrush hillsides. Its lower elevation and drier climate make it a winter haven for elk. In the wolves’ absence, plants like willow and aspen declined, as expanding elk herds browsed on them in winter.

On a hot summer day, there’s little sign of elk in the creek named after them. Cooper lets go of his stubby willow branch, strides down to the stream and points to a wall of dirt carved away by the water, revealing layers of fine-grained gray and brown sediment, the traces of vanished ponds. Less than a century ago, we would have been underwater. “This was a pond environment for thousands of years,” Cooper says. “This whole valley was just full of beaver dams.”

In fact, in the early 1920s, a naturalist named Edward Warren spent two summers here, photographing and cataloguing beaver colonies near the Yellowstone River. On Elk Creek’s North Fork, Warren counted 17 dams, the largest a 350-foot-long bulwark worthy of a medieval castle. In all, he guessed there were more than 200 beaver in the streams he surveyed. Back then, the concern was that too many beaver, with too few predators, were devouring too many plants. Today, in those same places, there are no beavers at all.

Populations of the flat-tailed rodents naturally ebb and flow in a creek. Nature’s engineers, the beavers gnaw down aspen and willow, move on to other places when they’re gone, then return

when new plants grow in the soft, moist soil created by the abandoned dams. As we walk downstream, Cooper and Hobbs explain that the loss of wolves appears to have short-circuited this natural cycle in places like Elk Creek. Exploding elk numbers destroyed the willow and aspen, driving the beaver away. Over time, the creek eroded into a steep-banked gully, lowering the water table. A wet meadow became a dry valley, inhospitable to plants like willow, even after wolves returned and elk numbers fell.

This became clear in experiments the two have run at Elk Creek and several other streams. They built dams in the creeks to simulate beaver and fenced off patches of willow to keep elk out. In most cases, the willows only rebounded when they were fenced off and grew near the dams, where the ground was moist. In other words, without the dams, it didn’t matter about the elk — or the wolves that might have chased them.

Cooper thinks Elk Creek and similar streams have undergone such profound changes that recovery might require the return of both the wolf and the beaver. But it’s not that simple, either. “Until there’s enough willow that the beavers can come back, it’s going to be stuck,” he says. “So the question is, what’s it going to take for the engineers to come back?”

For Doug Smith, the head of Yellowstone’s wolf reintroduction program and the park’s main beaver biologist, Elk Creek is a sobering reminder that some of the damage wrought in the wolves’ absence might never be repaired — that Eden may never fully return. “This has changed to a site that can’t go back,” he says later, when I take him to the creek. “There’s no water.”

But there is another story unfolding elsewhere, he says: Go to the West Fork of Blacktail Deer Creek.

If Elk Creek is Exhibit A for the wolf skeptics, Blacktail Deer Creek, just nine miles to the west, is a shining example for wolf champions. Slightly bigger than Elk Creek, it’s hidden in a forest of willows, which sway in the breeze like

seaweed in the tide. Over the last 13 years, Robert Beschta, an Oregon State University hydrologist, and his colleague, ecologist William Ripple, have used this creek to document what they see as a wolf-driven revival of north Yellowstone.

Before the predator’s return, Blacktail Deer’s willows looked much like those in Elk Creek. But by 2003, a growth spurt had begun: The tallest willows were roughly six feet longer than in 1997. As these tallest plants grew, the number chomped by animals fell from 100 percent to 55 percent or less. In the last few years, beaver have begun making summer forays into the creek. “Come back in 15 years and ask the question, ‘Where are the beaver?’ and I bet you they’re going to be everywhere,” Beschta tells me.

I drive Cooper to Blacktail Deer Creek. We walk a mile up its West Fork, through sagebrush punctuated by fledgling aspen groves. This section of stream has witnessed some of the most dramatic growth. “If you’re wondering why the plants here look so different,” Cooper says, “we’re wondering that, too.”

Were these willows simply more resilient when the elk reigned, and therefore poised to rebound? Or was the ground here simply wetter? What lessons do this creek and Elk Creek hold for the broader region?

For Smith, the conclusion seems to hinge partly on where scientists decide to look. After two decades at the park, he’s convinced he sees real improvements in some larger streams and rivers. And he credits wolves for playing an important part. “Elk are key, but so are site characteristics,” he says. “You need both.”

Yet Yellowstone is a massive ecosystem, and we don’t know everything about it. Some of its watersheds could be blossoming out of sight, even as others languish, never to return. Yellowstone is recovering. And Yellowstone is stuck. There is more than one Yellowstone, and more than one story it can tell us.

Hearing check-up?

From The Birding Wire

Are you failing to hear Blackpoll Warbler's high-pitched "tsit, tsit, tsit, tsit" while your field colleagues are picking up that sound? Are you hearing only "pieces" of some birdsongs?

This should be a signal to you that it's time to get your hearing checked.

Hearing loss can develop so gradually, that you may not even realize that it's

happening. A hearing-care specialist such as an audiologist or hearing instrument provider can perform an in-depth assessment to determine the treatment that is best for you. And you should seek an audiologist who appreciates that for you at least, hearing birds is very important.

The good news is that hearing aids have progressed so well over the past decade that some folks have come to regard them as prosthetic ears. These are not your

mother's or grandfather's hearing aids. Today's devices are much smaller - virtually invisible - with a microcomputer that is significantly more sophisticated in responding to sounds in the environment than their early predecessors.

In any case, it's a good idea to have an annual hearing examination to measure the level of your auditory capacity, especially if you've been exposed to repeated loud noises, or if you are over 50 years of age.

Public lands takeover

How is this still a thing?

By Chad Love
NWF Sportsmen

One day this past summer during a family trip to the mountains of Colorado, my son and I parked at a trailhead, slipped into our backpacks, grabbed our fly rod cases, and began a seven-mile hike to a small, isolated subalpine stream high in the Rocky Mountain backcountry, into a land that seemed worlds away from our home landscape on the Oklahoma prairie. The goal — ambitious by our non-resident, flatlander standards — was to catch (and immediately release) native cutthroat trout.

But we were not there just to catch fish.

We were also there to cast our lines into the current of history, to slip our hands into the cold, rushing water and take possession — however briefly — of a potent, living symbol of unadulterated wild America and the storied public land legacy it represents. We were there to partake in the kind of experience that is, by any measurable definition, priceless, but an experience to which every single one of us has entry paid in full. Every footstep we took on that hike, every tree under which we passed, every mile of stream we fished, all belonged to us.

It didn't matter that we had driven 600 miles from the plains of Oklahoma. It didn't matter that we'd never laid eyes on this place, or walked its trails, or cast a line on its waters. It was ours, in all its glory, and without a fence or locked gate or a no trespassing sign to be found anywhere; just mile after mile of heartbreaking beauty sitting there waiting to be discovered. It was ours because we're Americans, and public lands define the essence of who we are.

We would not be the people we are today, we would not be the nation we are today, without the concept of public space, public freedom, public lands; free for all to

use, to love, to enjoy, to wander across, to wonder about, to hunt, fish and hike on; to climb, paddle, bike, swim, or just be in.

I ask you, what is more American than that? Our public lands, our collectively-owned natural resources, are the physical manifestation of who we are, what we aspire to be. But there are forces hard at work trying to take them away, to "give them back" as they like to claim. Give them back to whom, exactly? The last time I left dusty boot prints on some lonely, windswept high plains prairie as I followed my dogs in search of birds, I already held title to the land I was hunting, just by being an American.

So I'm not sure who they're talking about when they say they're going to "give it back," but I am pretty sure they don't mean you, or me.

The forces working to "divest" or "return" or simply steal the 640 million acres you and I already own don't see public land in the same light we do. What we see as a cherished public trust, to be protected, enjoyed by all, and passed on for future generations, they see as something to be exploited, now, for the benefit of the few.

I shot my first bobwhite quail on a patch of public Oklahoma prairie. My first sage grouse came on a piece of windswept Montana BLM land. My first trout was hooked in a northern New Mexico stream. I have chased birds and dogs and fish and dreams across dozens of states. I have experienced wonders and made memories untold. And the only way I have ever been able to do that, and continue to be able to do that, is due to the existence of our public lands.

And I am not alone.

There are only two types of Americans: those who already have cherished public land experiences, and those who still have the opportunity to make them. Let's make

sure we will always have both.

This is not a liberal versus conservative issue. It is not a Republican versus Democrat issue. It is, at its core, American ideals versus anti-American ideals issue. It is the calculated and cynical trashing of the concept of public lands held in the public trust for the public good. It is an all-out assault on the egalitarian principles that have fundamentally shaped who we are as Americans. And it is an absolutely existential threat to the future of hunting, fishing and other public land recreation as we know it and enjoy it today.

If you want to buy into a future espoused by the proponents of privatization, a future where you and I are locked out of what we, as Americans, once owned, and indeed what helped define us as Americans, there's really not much I have to say, other than I fervently hope your vision of America loses.

But if you don't buy into it, if you think our public lands are an integral part of who we are and are worth saving, then fight for them. Vote. Speak up. Raise hell. Call out falsehoods when you see them. Call out liars when you hear them. Ask your candidates to sign the pledge that the National Wildlife Federation and over 40 other conservation, hunting, fishing, and outdoors trade groups have already signed and are urging candidates to sign as well.

What is this pledge? It is a simple, straightforward document that states, in unequivocal terms, whoever signs is committed to opposing any large-scale efforts to sell or transfer ownership or management of our federal public lands to state, local, or private interests. In short, it's a promise to keep our public lands public. And if a candidate refuses to sign something as simple as that, perhaps we need to

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Prevent the loss of a National Wildlife Refuge in the Everglades

Don't let the state of Florida eliminate the Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge

The State of Florida is attempting to take back one of America's National Wildlife Refuges. The Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge provides critical habitat to 250 species of birds, including the largest wading bird colony in the Everglades with more than 7,000 active nests.

But now, in an effort that has long been encouraged by the sugar industry, Florida has begun the process of evicting the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This move will eliminate federal wildlife protections on the 144,000 acre Refuge, one of the last remnants of the historic Everglades.

Please send a letter to Florida's Governor

Rick Scott and urge him not to close down the Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge.

The State of Florida is using the management of an invasive plant as a pretext to cut ties with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and take away the Refuge. Under U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service stewardship, the Refuge has flourished into some of the healthiest Everglades habitat.

Florida's attempt to take back the Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge is the latest effort in a nationwide movement to eliminate federal protections from our most treasured public lands. For years, the sugar industry dumped dirty water into the Refuge until the U.S. Department of Justice enforced water

quality laws and ordered them to clean up their act to protect the Refuge's vital wildlife habitat. Eliminating the Refuge will weaken legal protections for habitat for threatened Wood Storks and endangered Everglades Snail Kites.

Evicting the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will not solve the challenge of controlling and combating invasive species in the refuge—it's a misguided ploy to get rid of one of our National Wildlife Refuges and would set a dangerous precedent for other protected places around the country.

Email Governor Scott today and tell him not to eliminate the Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge.

KID'S WILDLIFE FRIENDS

What makes bats, spiders and owls so scary?

By eNature

As we sit down to big Thanksgiving meals this time of year, it's also fun to think a bit about what's on the table of various species of wildlife.

Taken as a whole, the animals of our world eat just about every conceivable thing imaginable, from juicy berries and fresh-caught fish to the poisonous, the slimy, the stinging, and the prickly.

Here's a quick look at the dining habits of wildlife, including what foods our birds and mammals eat, where they store their food, and what they do to prevent other animals from taking and eating it.

Picky Eaters

Some animals will eat a wide variety of foods, while others are specialists, concentrating on one or two items. In an extreme example of specialization, the teddy-bear-like Koala of Australia eats, exclusively, the leaves of certain kinds of eucalyptus trees and eats them only at certain seasons when the trees are producing specific oils.

Pandas are specialists too, confining their diet to bamboo. Arctic Foxes are so dependent upon lemmings for food that the two species follow cyclical variations in population, the fox population increasing or decreasing a year after the lemming population does so.

A Matter of Taste

Some animals eat the same foods as



Barn Owls are commonly found throughout North America and Europe © Peter Trimming

humans, such as fish, fruits, and mushrooms. Birds eat blueberries, raspberries, and, if they can get to them, all manner of nuts. Chipmunks eat pine nuts, coveted by human cooks as an ingredient in pesto sauce. It is said that native peoples of the Northeast learned to harvest maple sap by watching squirrels. Red Squirrels harvest sugar by biting into a maple's surface, letting the sap ooze out, and returning when the water in the sap (which when fresh is only 2 percent sugar) has evaporated and



The Brazilian Free-tailed Bat is found throughout Texas © Ron Groves



Tarantula in burrow © Xoque

the sugar content is about 55 percent.

But many animals consume items that most of us wouldn't think to put into our mouths.

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These sage-grouse hens hatched 862 chicks; within two months, 700 were dead

**By Darryl Fears
The Washington Post**

For nine years, a team of researchers studied Greater Sage-grouse hens in Nevada and basically watched their chicks die.

"They just disappear," said Dan Gibson who led a study of sage-grouse. The researchers caught females, put tracking collars on them, followed them to the areas where they built nests and checked on them nearly every week for observations that ended in 2012. "You see a female and her brood and she'll have seven chicks with her. A week later, she'll have five. Then three. Until slowly it goes to zero."

This is the state of play in much of the vast sage brush sea that covers 11 Western states where sage-grouse live. Once there were millions of them in Wyoming, Utah, Oregon, California, Idaho, Montana, Washington, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico and Nevada. Now the federal government estimates that there are about 400,000. Here's the government's controversial plan to save them: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2015/05/28/ranching-and-mining-has-scattered-sage-grouse-to-the-wind-heres-the-governments-plan-to-stop-it/?tid=a_inl&utm_term=.bfed01aceaa6

Gibson's study, published in the *Condor: Ornithological Applications* journal, is one of a few that details how the demise is happening. Long story short, rampant energy excavation and large gold mining operations have torn up the bird's natural habitat, and hens haven't adjusted well in their search for nests.

Anyone who has ever read anything about sage-grouse may know how they mate. It's the first thing that most observers mention. The males perform a dance that borders on the ridiculous to attract females — strutting, puffing out their chests and sometimes getting into vicious fights with other males on stages called leks. The ladies choose, there's a puff of mating dust and she then flies away.

The researchers tracked the birds' collars to 411 nests in eastern Nevada. Subtracting abandoned nests, they counted



A male and female sage-grouse in the mountains near Reno, Nev. The strutting male grouse sound like coffee percolators. (Kim Toulouse/Nevada Department of Wildlife/AP)

350 with activity. Slightly more than a third were successful. They counted 862 chicks from about 100 hens. About 700 of the chicks died less than two months after hatching.

It appeared that the farther away from a breeding lek that hens flew, the better chance chicks had to survive. That could be because predators are attracted to leks by the concentration of sage-grouse that are there, and because many leks are disturbed by nearby development where human activity and booming sounds frighten birds.

Chicks rely on insects and flowering plants called forbs to survive. Gibson said there are not enough for chicks to eat. And there are not enough to eat because the insects and vegetation the birds rely on are no longer abundant. Why? Because of mines and hordes of grazing livestock let loose by ranchers that trample the landscape that once supported birds.

On top of that, Western states such as Nevada have experienced 10 years of various levels of drought. Climate predictions for the region, which include a possible 30-year megadrought in the Southwest brought on by uncurbed greenhouse gas emissions, don't bode

well for grouse food and habitat.

A civil war has broken out across the west over the fate of sage-grouse. Wildlife biologists call the chicken-like bird an indicator species because its health reflects the health of the entire 167 million-acre sagebrush sea. The brush is nasty and even toxic to humans but it supports herds of antelope, elk, rabbits and birds.

Conservation organizations, public officials, energy executives and ranchers have squared off in a battle over whether to protect the birds or protect development that brings tax dollars to states. Their war is being fought with lawsuits, legislation, and federal rules and regulations that are criticized as too weak or too strong, depending on which angry side is talking.

The Obama administration announced about this time last year that it would not list sage-grouse as threatened or endangered, dashing the hopes of conservation groups and ending the fears of state officials and ranchers who didn't want federal oversight over large portions of the sage brush that would have followed a listing.

Sage-grouse meddling again

Last month marked a year since the USFWS decided that the Greater Sage-Grouse did not require protection under the Endangered Species Act, as long as strong and effective conservation plans were implemented on federal and state lands. On that one-year anniversary, federal agencies released a report detailing accomplishments to date, and the Sage-Grouse Initiative also summed up its contributions. Another \$360 million has been committed by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS - USDA) and other agencies toward sage-grouse conservation through 2018, implementing memos have been released, mitigation policies are beginning to be formulated, and the proposed mineral withdrawal Draft EIS is expected out in early 2017. Parties are sincerely and

effectively pursuing common conservation goals.

Yet, even as these serious steps are being taken, some lawmakers are moving to meddle with success.

Some voices in Congress want to force federal agencies to use only state-developed plans by attaching legislation to the only things seemingly moving through Washington - national defense funding and key spending bills. This can scuttle the entire conservation process. Part of the problem is that individual state plans cannot stand alone to address the plight facing sage-grouse, and many of the plans are based on voluntary efforts, with weak assurances that they will be fully implemented.

If allowed to be enacted, this potential

Congressional meddling could reverse years of land management policies and would undo years of negotiated cooperation, squandering millions of taxpayer dollars already invested in these efforts. Any such action would also delay conservation and management efforts that are currently needed without bringing sage-grouse any closer to a secure future.

One would hope that Congress - and especially a lame-duck Congress - would respect the tremendous conservation efforts already taken and give them a chance to succeed.

At the same time, there are also parallel conservation efforts afoot to resist other anti-ESA/wildlife riders attached to legislation through the upcoming lame-duck Congress.

SCARY

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Leatherback sea turtles eat mainly jellyfish; backward-projecting spines in the turtle's mouth and throat help keep its slimy prey from slipping away. Pallid Bats eat scorpions, and Fishers (mink-like creatures) eat porcupines. Red Squirrels eat Amanita mushrooms, some of North America's deadliest fungi (to humans). Countless species eat grubs, earthworms, and carrion. Least Shrews will enter a beehive—to dine. Many birds, including the Wild Turkey, routinely eat poison ivy berries, and deer and other mammals browse on the very leaves that cause susceptible humans so much misery.

Food Storage

Humans have grocery stores, pantries, and refrigerators, but animals have to be more creative with their food collection and storage methods. Some small mammals simply store food in underground burrows. The Yellow-pine Chipmunk stuffs its cheek pouches with food and carries it

to its subterranean cache. One such cache was inventoried and found to contain nearly 68,000 items, including more than a dozen different kinds of seeds and a partially eaten bumblebee. One Eastern Chipmunk was observed collecting a bushel's-worth of chestnuts, hickory nuts, and corn kernels over three days. A Harris's Antelope Squirrel was found carrying 44 mesquite beans in its cheeks. Southern Flying Squirrels may store up to 15,000 nuts in a season.

An individual Eastern Gray Squirrel spends the late summer and fall picking and burying hundreds of acorns and nuts. It buries each nut individually, digging the hole and then tamping the soil down carefully to hide the nut from others. Studies have shown that these squirrels recover about 85 percent of the nuts they bury, and that they probably find them by scent, rather than memory. Many of the remaining nuts germinate and eventually grow into trees.

Foiling the Competition

Acorn Woodpeckers drill holes in trees and fence posts and then wedge acorns and nuts in, too tightly for a squirrel or other competitor to pull out. Loggerhead Shrikes

impale their prey (smaller birds, mice, or insects) on thorns or barbed wire, and often leave it there to save for later. Grizzly Bears store the remains of large kills such as an Elk or Moose in a shallow depression covered with branches, dirt, and leaf litter, returning to the cache until its meal has been consumed. Mountain Lions, wolves, and foxes will hide their uneaten kills for later consumption as well. The Wolverine doesn't waste much time hiding its cached food, it simply sprays it with a foul-smelling musk to keep others away.

You Are What You Eat

In some cases the cliché is true. Marine creature called sea slugs or nudibranchs feed on sea anemones and their kin, and incorporate the anemones' protective stinging cells into their own bodies, discharging them into the mouth of any unlucky predator that comes along. Hawksbill sea turtles eat toxic sponges, which in turn can make the turtle's flesh toxic.

There doesn't seem to be any danger of the toxin in poison ivy being retained in the flesh of a turkey that has dined on it, and then

LAND

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start asking why.

If you care about public land, and believe they're a fundamental, vitally important part of our national character, then

you better get ready to fight for them, because it doesn't matter if they're tiny little state parks, state or national forest lands, national grasslands, BLM, or the city park at the end of the block: if it belongs to all of us, you can bet there's someone out there trying their hardest to make it belong to none of us.

Take the pledge for public lands, and ask your candidates to do the same, at www.nwf.org/pledgeforpubliclands

Chad Love is an Oklahoma-based bird-hunter and freelance writer specializing in outdoors, natural resource, and conservation.

Canadian wind farms kill tens of thousands of bats

The Birding Wire

Each wind turbine in Canada kills an average of 15.5 bats per year, adding up to a death toll that could someday threaten populations, according to new research. In Canada's first comprehensive analysis of wind farm casualties, researchers found that turbines were killing about 47,000 bats per year in 2013. That number will only rise as Canada's investment in wind energy increases.

"We have about 50 percent more turbines now, so, as of 2016, somewhere around 70,000 bats are being killed in Canada per year," said Ryan Zimmerling, a wildlife biologist with the Canadian Wildlife Service and first author of a recent study in the *Journal of Wildlife Management*. "It is possible that those levels of mortality, if they're not already causing impacts to some species now, could be causing impacts into the future."

Wind energy companies in Canada are required to monitor bat mortality at newly built wind farms, regularly searching the area under turbines for carcasses. The companies report these data as part of post-construction monitoring, but until now, no one had combined them into a single nation-wide analysis. To see the big picture, Zimmerling

and his colleagues analyzed carcass counts from 64 wind farms in nine provinces, using statistical corrections to estimate how many carcasses the surveyors missed.

The results varied widely by region. Hardly any bats died in New Brunswick and Manitoba, both because those provinces don't have many wind farms and because each turbine there killed fewer than one bat per year. In contrast, Ontario's 1,270 turbines each killed an average of 24.5 bats per year, accounting for two thirds of the whole country's death count. It's not clear why turbines are more dangerous in certain places, though the answer could have something to do with bat migration routes, says Zimmerling.

Multiple studies have found that migratory species are especially vulnerable to wind farms, and the new study showed that Canada's bats are no exception. The species killed most often were the three that migrate long distances: hoary bats (*Lasiurus cinereus*), silver-haired bats (*Lasionycteris noctivagans*) and Eastern red bats (*Lasiurus borealis*). Researchers aren't sure why migrating species are more at risk, but they have a few guesses, says Zimmerling. Migrating bats fly at higher altitudes, which could put them at the same height as the turbine blades. Additionally, the animals might mistake turbines for the tall

trees they like to roost in.

The seven hibernating species in the study were less frequent victims, accounting for fewer than a quarter of carcasses. But even low mortality rates could cause problems for these species, because they are the ones suffering from the disease known as white-nose syndrome. White-nose fungus (*Pseudogymnoascus destructans*) grows on bats while they hibernate, and it has decimated species such as the little brown bat (*Myotis lucifugus*). The researchers estimate that up to 1.4 percent of the remaining little brown bats in eastern Canada are killed by turbines each year.

That estimate rests on several assumptions, and researchers need more data on bat population sizes to really understand the impact of wind farms, says Zimmerling. Indeed, little brown bats were one of only two species in the study for which any population estimates existed.

"We feel fairly confident that we have a good handle on how many bats are going to be killed in the future," he said. "That missing link is: Is it having an impact right now, or is it likely to have an impact into the future? And without population data for bats, we just don't have a clue."

Communication tower owners change lighting to protect birds

From The Outdoor Wire

New guidelines for communication tower lights spell out how tower operators can save birds and energy without sacrificing safety. Put in place by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the guidelines strongly encourage tower operators to turn off or reprogram steady-burning red or white lights in favor of flashing lights, which are less harmful to birds yet still alert pilots to the towers' presence.

As of late October, operators of more than 750 tall towers nationwide had already updated their lighting systems under the new guidelines. Making the switch saves energy, reduces operating costs, and reduces bird collisions substantially.

Steady red or white lights on communi-

cation towers attract or disorient migratory birds flying at night. As many as seven million birds a year die in collisions with towers and the guy wires that support them.

"By extinguishing the non-flashing lights on towers, we can reduce nighttime bird fatality rates by as much as 70 percent," said Dr. Christine Sheppard, American Bird Conservancy's Bird Collisions Campaign Manager.

"We wish to thank the operators of the 700-plus towers that have already switched their lighting to help reduce mortality of birds," Sheppard said. "But there are still some 15,000 tall towers across the U.S. with outdated lights that are dangerous for birds. We are asking all tower operators to make this cost-saving and life-saving switch to help migratory birds."

The new guidelines explain how owners of towers taller than 350 ft. above ground level (AGL) and built before 2015 can use a series of easy steps to end the use of non-flashing lights. The FCC and FAA are expected to release specifications for flashing lights on towers 150 to 350 ft. AGL soon.

The FAA is calling on owners to eliminate the use of non-flashing lights on all towers. "New tower lighting schemes should now follow the revised guidance, and operators of towers with the old lighting system should submit plans explaining how and when they will transition to the new standards," the agency said in a news release.

Visit ABC's website (www.abcbirds.org) for more information about communication towers and birds.

KID'S WILDLIFE FRIENDS

What's the difference between the white and dark meat of a Thanksgiving turkey?

By eNature

While we come together as friends and families at Thanksgiving gatherings, once at the table, many of us divide into two separate and oppositional camps: those who prefer the legs and thighs of our traditional bird for their dark meat, versus those who opt for the whiter breast meat.

We may know which kind of meat we like best, but few of us know the reason for the difference.

It's A Question Of Fibers

The muscles of all birds possess several types of fibers. In fact, each muscle usually has a mixture of these fibers. Because red ones predominate in the leg and thigh muscles of birds like turkeys and chickens, the tissue there appears dark. The breast tissue, meanwhile, is composed mostly of white muscle fibers. Why? Because the breast muscles of these birds serve a different purpose than their leg and thigh muscles.

Turkeys and chickens, remember, are ground-dwelling birds that spend all of their waking hours walking, running, and scratching for food. The muscles in their legs are adapted for constant use and do not fatigue easily. The individual red fibers are very fine and contain an abundance of compounds that make them efficient at aerobic respiration. These tissues are also high in both fat and sugar, which



Male, or Tom, Wild Turkey

act as fuel for aerobic metabolism. Small songbirds, by contrast, can fly efficiently for hours at a time because they have a predominance of red fibers in their flight muscles.

So Can Turkeys Fly?

While turkeys can fly, they aren't capable of sustained flight. The large muscles that we call "white meat" are adapted for explosive bursts of power—such as when one of these heavy-bodied birds is surprised by a predator and must escape in a flash of speed (turkeys have been clocked at 55 miles per hour). These muscles are



Wild Turkey hen with poults

powered by anaerobic metabolism and tend to fatigue quickly.

The opposite is true of ducks and geese. These birds are long-distance fliers, and their large breast muscles consist of dark meat that's high in fat content.

Yet the birds with the greatest concentration of red muscle fibers in their flight muscles are not the ones that make the longest migratory flights. No, it's the birds that utilize the highest number of wing beats during sustained flight.

And which birds are those? Hummingbirds, of course.

Since their populations have recovered throughout much of the US, turkeys are common sights in many regions. Have you encountered Wild Turkeys? They can make quite a racket as they crash through the trees and underbrush.

We need a new Civilian Conservation Corps

By Gundars Rudzitis
High Country News

Thirty-three years ago, I co-wrote a story for Environment Magazine that highlighted the "irreversible damage" being done to our national parks, according to a growing chorus of concerned park superintendents. As we take a close look at our nation's parks and monuments during this year, their centennial, it is apparent that the maintenance and upkeep problems have gotten worse, even as the park system has expanded.

Protected federal lands are essential to the West's economy: They attract inno-

vative companies and workers and are a powerful component of the region's competitive advantage. Increasingly, entrepreneurs and families who work remotely relocate to places based on their quality of life. So I'd like to propose a solution for the Park Service's maintenance difficulties. I can't claim credit for inventing it, because it's not a new idea: President Franklin D. Roosevelt pioneered the way when he created the Civilian Conservation Corps during the economically desperate 1930s.

In 2011, I was one of over 100 economists who concluded that a new Civilian Conservation Corps was needed, so we wrote a letter to President Obama, urging

him to revive the program. His administration moved fast, proposing a \$1 billion effort that also aimed at helping veterans returning from the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. I naively thought that both Democrats and Republicans would support such a worthwhile program, given the historical fondness for the old Conservation Corps, which helped so many families during the Great Depression. Boy, was I wrong. The presidential election was coming up, and a party-line Republican vote defeated Obama's proposal.

Now we're in another election year,

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The conservation legacy of Theodore Roosevelt

U. S. Department of the Interior

President Theodore Roosevelt was one of the most powerful voices in the history of American conservation. Enthralled by nature from a young age, Roosevelt cherished and promoted our nation's landscapes and wildlife. After becoming president in 1901, Roosevelt used his authority to establish 150 national forests, 51 federal bird reserves, four national game preserves, five national parks and 18 national monuments on over 230 million acres of public land.

Today, the legacy of Theodore Roosevelt is found across the country. There are six national park sites dedicated, in part or whole, to our conservationist president. Along with others like John Muir and Rachel Carson, Roosevelt's words and actions continue to affect how we approach and appreciate the natural world. In honor of his birthday, check out some great Roosevelt stories and quotes below.

A Life Long Passion

As the only president born in New York City, it may seem odd that Theodore Roosevelt is remembered as a nature enthusiast. Roosevelt was bookish and sickly as a child, but quickly discovered a passion for the outdoors. His favorite activities included hiking, rowing, swimming, riding, bird-watching, hunting and taxidermy. Creating a vast collection of specimens, he filled his boyhood home and adult estate with insect collections and mounted animals. Some are on display today in the Smithsonian.

The Power of Nature

"There is a delight in the hardy life of the open. There are no words that can tell the hidden spirit of the wilderness that can reveal its mystery, its melancholy and its charm. The nation behaves well if it treats the natural resources as assets which it must turn over to the next generation increased and not impaired in value."

- Speech by Theodore Roosevelt in Osawatimie, Kansas, August 31, 1910.

Working Together

One of the most celebrated camping trips in American history occurred in 1903 when President Roosevelt spent several days exploring Yosemite with renown naturalist John Muir. Finding common ground on their passion for nature, the two men discussed the importance of preserving unique landscapes and wildlife. Energized by the experience, Roosevelt worked to make Muir's Yosemite dream a reality by eventually adding Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove to Yosemite National



Roosevelt's library at his Sagamore Hill estate in New York displays many nature scenes, mounted animals and books on many topics. Photo courtesy of Audrey C. Tiernan Photography



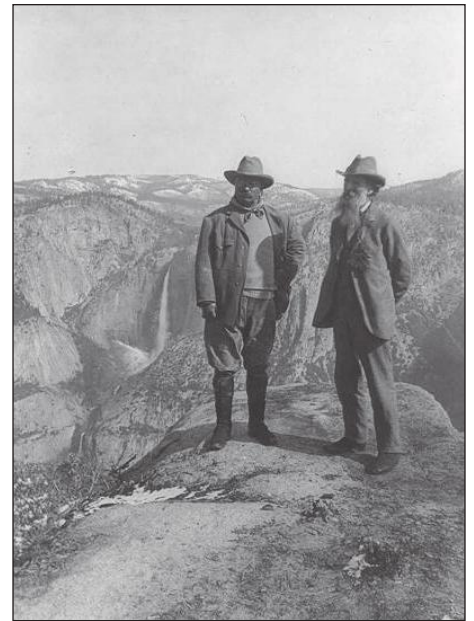
The park that bears his name. Photo of Theodore Roosevelt National Park in North Dakota by Gary Anderson, National Park Service

Park.

A Conservation Commandment

"I want to ask you to keep this great wonder of nature as it now is. I hope you will not have a building of any kind, not a summer cottage, a hotel or anything else, to mar the wonderful grandeur, the sublimity, the great loneliness and beauty of the canyon. Leave it as it is. You cannot improve on it. The ages have been at work on it, and man can only mar it. What you can do is to keep it for your children, your children's children, and for all who come after you, as one of the great sights which every American if he can travel at all should see."

- Speech by Theodore Roosevelt at the Grand Canyon, May 6, 1903



President Roosevelt and John Muir at Yosemite National Park in 1903. Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress

A New Age

In the late 1800s, the whims of fashion dictated that women's hats would be decorated by bird feathers. To meet this need, poachers hunted many species of exotic birds to the brink of extinction. To address this crisis, President Roosevelt set aside

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The incredible views of Grand Canyon National Park are enjoyed by millions every year. Photo by Darren Barnes (www.sharetheexperience.org)

ROOSEVELT

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Pelican Island in Florida as a federal bird reservation in 1903. More protected areas followed and the National Wildlife Refuge System was born.

National Treasures

"The Yellowstone Park is something absolutely unique in the world, so far as I know...The scheme of its preservation is noteworthy in its essential democracy... This Park was created, and is now administered, for the benefit and enjoyment of the people... The only way that the people as a whole can secure to themselves and their children the enjoyment in perpetuity of what the Yellowstone Park has to give is by assuming the ownership in the name of the nation and by jealously safeguarding and preserving the scenery, the forests, and the wild creatures."

- Speech by Theodore Roosevelt at the laying of the cornerstone for the Gateway to Yellowstone National Park, April 24, 1903.

A Legacy of Cute

Did you know that the Teddy Bear was invented in honor of President Roosevelt? While on a bear hunting trip in Mississippi, Roosevelt's hunting party cornered a Louisiana black bear, tied it to a willow tree and suggested that the President shoot it. Viewing this as extremely unsportsmanlike, Roosevelt refused to kill the bear. Political cartoonist Clifford Berryman heard the story and drew a cartoon celebrating the President's decision. A Brooklyn candy shop owner by the name



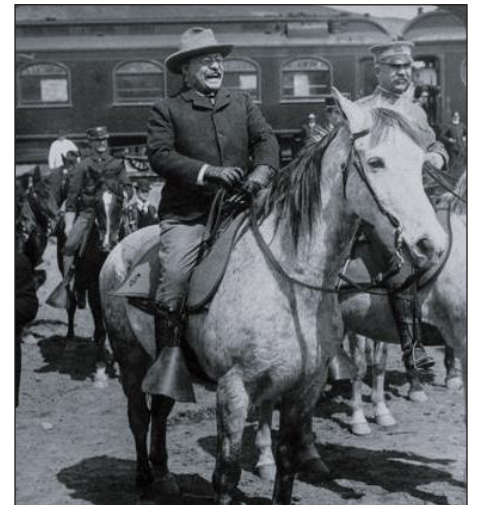
A glossy ibis at Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge in Florida. Photo by Keenan Adams, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



Louisiana black bears in the wild. Photo courtesy of Louisiana Department of Wildlife.



The badlands were one of Roosevelt's favorite places to explore. Photo of Badlands National Park in South Dakota by Harlan Humphrey (www.sharetheexperience.org)



President Roosevelt arriving at Yellowstone National Park in 1903. Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress

of Morris Michtom saw the cartoon and decided to create a stuffed toy bear and dedicate it to the president who refused to shoot a bear. He called it Teddy's Bear and children have been enjoying them ever since.

Follow the Path

Are you inspired by Theodore Roosevelt's example? Learn more about his conservation legacy or just spend some time in nature. Teddy would approve!

Tell Congress to increase the number of federal wildlife officers to keep staff and visitors safe!

By National Wildlife Refuge Association

On October 27th, a federal jury found the seven armed occupiers who took over and occupied the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon to be not guilty of conspiring to impede federal workers from doing their jobs during those 41 days in January and February this year.

This decision leaves us stunned, outraged and extremely concerned for the safety and welfare of staff and visitors on national wildlife refuges across the nation.

The message this verdict sends to others who would challenge the right of dedicated Refuge staff to do their work and provide for their families is chilling. While we hope this decision is not interpreted as license for others to disregard the public interest and

occupy national wildlife refuges or other public lands across the country, we know this concern was on the minds of thousands of Refuge System employees and their families this morning as they went to work.

The employees of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have dedicated their careers to public service that benefits each and every American. But who among us would willingly risk going to work knowing that armed occupiers can, without consequence, take over any and every desk, compromise careful research collected over years of field seasons, and urge others nationwide to join them?

The verdict came on the 158th birthday of President Theodore Roosevelt, who designated the first national wildlife refuge in 1903. President Roosevelt would never have stood by if something like this happened and nor can we.

The Refuge Association, a non-profit organization devoted to promoting the Refuge System as the world's largest network of protected wildlife and habitat, calls upon Congress to immediately provide the Refuge System with the number of Federal Wildlife Officers needed to keep staff and visitors safe. Congress must ensure that all Americans can freely enjoy our public lands without the danger of encountering armed occupiers claiming the authority to restrict public access.

Please join us by signing this petition, which will be delivered to every member of Congress when they return after the election. To read and sign the petition, go to: <http://www.thepetitionsite.com/700/521/709/tell-congress-to-increase-the-number-of-federal-wildlife-officers-to-keep-staff-and-visitors-safe/>.

CONSERVATION

Continued from Page 29

but this time, both presidential candidates are eager to promise that they would spend on the order of \$275 billion (Hillary Clinton) to over \$500 billion (Donald Trump) on various public projects to “fix” our national infrastructure. Still, this is a drop in the bucket compared to the estimated \$4 trillion that the American Society of Civil Engineers says the country needs.

Proposals from the candidates to repair our national parks, however, are either inadequate or entirely absent. Earlier, Bernie Sanders was the exception; he co-sponsored the Rebuild America Act of 2015, which would set aside \$3 billion a year to improve both our national parks and other public lands.

As for Clinton, she proposes replacing the Land and Water Conservation Fund with an American Parks Trust Fund and roughly doubling its funding. The average annual appropriation for the Land and

Water Conservation Fund, which gets its money from offshore oil and gas drilling, has been a paltry annual \$40 million for federal lands, and that money is often diverted by Congress to other uses. In any case, the public-land need is in the billions, with the Park Service alone facing a \$12 billion backlog of deferred maintenance projects.

Neither candidate's proposal is necessarily benign: Clinton says she wants to increase oil and gas production, as well as renewable energy, on public lands, and Trump's Republican Party has been at the forefront of proposals to either turn federal land over to the states, or to privatize the public lands.

Both candidates say that they will work hard to put people back to work, especially the “angry” people who say they feel forgotten, or discounted. If so, there's a ready-made solution for such people, especially our returning war veterans: Put them to work repairing roads, bridges and buildings in our national parks and on our other public lands. This would give veterans a chance to transfer their hard-earned skills from military war zones to peaceful

public purposes. The program could also be expanded to help workers displaced by jobs going overseas, something that politicians often promise but seldom achieve.

Our public lands generate ecological, social and economic benefits that last for decades, if not centuries, and they need to be funded by long-term debt. These lands were not set aside to become cash registers, and relying on the free market to monetize them is fruitless. It is long past time that we drop the austerity policies that keep failing our public lands.

What can we do as Election Day draws near? We can put the candidates on the spot by asking if they support a Civilian Conservation Corps along the lines of the one proposed by President Obama. Our national parks, forests and rangelands and our prized fishing, hunting and hiking areas have all been neglected. We say we cherish our wideopen spaces; well, it's time we made them healthy again.

Gundars Rudzitis is professor emeritus of geography at the University of Idaho; his next book is the forthcoming *The Ongoing Transformation of the American West*.

**Kansas Wildlife Federation
P.O. Box 771282
Wichita, KS 67277-1282**

The Kansas Wildlife Federation is Working to Preserve a Way of Life for Kansas!

Conservation of the state's natural resources means . . .

- Public awareness of our state's wonderfully diverse advantages and a determination to keep and improve them for wise use now and in future years.
- Proper safeguards—within the bounds of wise use—for the state's soil, water, forests and wildlife, to assure proper balance, use and advancement of our state's entire economy!

How You Can Help:

- * **Youth Membership:** As a Youth member (for ages 8-17 as of January 1), your \$10 dues provide you with 6 electronic issues of the KWF newsletter, a personalized KWF Youth membership card and access to KWF Youth social media site (no voting privileges regarding regular membership matters).
- * **Basic Membership:** As a Basic member, for \$30 you'll receive 6 issues of the KWF newsletter packed with the latest information on wildlife resources, events and issues around the state. You also have voting privileges at the KWF Annual Meeting.
- * **Expanded Membership:** When you send in your Expanded member dues of \$75, you receive the basic membership benefits and a complimentary ticket to the KWF Annual Meeting and CAP banquet.
- * **Kansan:** For an annual fee of \$150, you receive all the benefits listed above plus an additional complimentary ticket to the KWF Annual Meeting and CAP banquet.

Here's How to Join:

**Complete the form on Page 17 and mail with your membership fee to:
Kansas Wildlife Federation, P.O. Box 771282, Wichita, KS 67277-1282**