

George  
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AVIAN RESEARCH CENTER



*The*

**SUTTON**

**NEWSLETTER**

*Volume 28, Summer 2007*



*“Home Sweet  
Home”*

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*Photography by M. Alan Jenkins*



When the eagles' nest tree at Sooner Lake fell down, OG&E had already provided an alternative structure for the nesting pair to use. *Photography by M. Alan Jenkins.*

# Sooner Lake, Oklahoma

by M. Alan Jenkins

In the winter 2004 edition of *The Sutton Newsletter*, I reported the construction and placement of an artificial Bald Eagle nesting platform in Sooner Lake, which is between Ponca City and Stillwater, Oklahoma, and which is the cooling water source for Oklahoma Gas and Electric's (OG&E) Sooner Power plant there. The platform, placed at the Sutton Center's suggestion, was intended to serve as a replacement nest substructure for the pair of eagles that has nested on Sooner Lake since 1995. This eagle pair's natural nest was in a drowned and dead tree in the lake itself, and we were sure it wouldn't last many more seasons before falling over. In the course of a year, a small number of Oklahoma's Bald Eagle nests are blown out of their

trees by thunderstorm winds, or fall to the ground from the weight of ice left by one of our frequent ice storms, or are toppled over along with their supporting tree owing to age, erosion, or wind. Usually this doesn't present an insurmountable problem to the eagles; they simply build a new nest, either in the same tree or another one. The one factor prompting us to suggest that an artificial platform be placed in this pair's territory was the lack of any other obvious, suitable nest tree or structure to support their bulky and heavy stick home. Additionally, this pair was one of the most productive in the state (Note to fishermen: good Bald Eagle productivity = good sport fishing!), so we were especially desirous of maintaining an active eagle territory there. From 1996 through 2006 this pair nested successfully every year, producing a total of 17 young during those 11 years.

After we suggested to OG&E that they build an artificial nest platform, they took the ball and ran with it. Erv Warren of OG&E took plans we provided and adapted them to the conditions in Sooner Lake. After he was inspired by a seeing a volleyball pole standard he happened to pass one day, he constructed the nest platform to be a single vertical shaft which was mounted at the bottom to a used, cement-filled tractor tire and guyed to 55-gallon drums filled with more cement; no way this would blow over, even here in Tornado Alley. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service gave OG&E a grant to cover most of the cost of building the nesting platform, and a crew of OG&E service technicians and their heavy construction equipment put up the platform in the winter of 2004. Pictures and details of this are in the winter 2004 issue of *The Sutton Newsletter*.

As predicted (Murphy's Law was against the eagles, but on our side), the nest tree fell over sometime late last year. The adults, who had been seen perching on the artificial platform, soon had their stick nest built there and then laid 3 eggs. About mid-March all three eggs hatched. However, the last egg to hatch yielded a much younger, hence smaller, chick that didn't survive beyond about 1 month; it was only about one quarter the size of the other two eaglets and probably succumbed to the competition for food within the brood. This is not an unusual occurrence with Bald Eagles and many other birds; it is thought that a surplus of eggs or young is produced as "insurance" (to be anthropomorphic about it) in case some young or eggs fail to survive. That way it is more likely that some of the adults' progeny will survive.

As part of our ongoing Internet nest camera project, we chose this artificial nest at Sooner Lake to place the camera. We reached this decision after first placing a camera on another pair that decided to nest in yet a different tree; they are now happily producing young out of sight of prying Internet cameras. OG&E again called out their bravest and finest linemen, who expertly and quickly put the camera atop a 40' tall pole on the hillside near the nest. While this nest is still active, you can view the live eagle nesting behavior by logging on to the Sutton website, [www.suttoncenter.org](http://www.suttoncenter.org), and following the link near the top of the page to the nest camera page.

This year's nest camera had to be 100 yards from the nest platform and atop a 40' pole. So, the video can be shaky when the wind blows (as if it ever stops in that part of the state), and because the camera is at its maximum telephoto focal length, and any pole movement makes the picture tremble somewhat, despite the guy wires, the video is not as intimate or clear as last year's, but it's still intriguing, especially since it documents the unusual use of an artificial nest platform.



M. Alan Jenkins

OG&E's hard working line crew erects the internet nest camera and pole (above). An adult eagle accepts our offer of a tall perch (below).



M. Alan Jenkins

# A Few Words from the Executive Director...

We first met at the Windmill Museum in Shattuck, OK, a once sleepy little town south of the mouth of the Panhandle. Then we drove out to a deserted area almost twenty miles away and continued to look for the designated intersections, one with plastic fence markers on both sides of the road, and another without such markers. I was sitting there on the tail gate, listening to a meadowlark singing, and thinking about how much I enjoyed being out in the country. It seems like I spend most of my time any more putting out brush fires from behind a desk; no, I do spend most of my time there. But the Sutton research team continues to work on ways to keep Lesser Prairie-Chickens from disappearing from the Oklahoma countryside, and our earlier studies have shown, without doubt, that collisions with fences account for at least 40% of the chicken mortalities. We are hoping that the method we have developed of marking these fences for greater visibility to the chickens is helping prevent collisions, and we are trying to test this.

The key above is “at least 40%.” Actually, we not only suspect but know, to some degree, that a higher percentage, probably a much higher percentage, of chicken mortalities is due to fence collisions. You see, this species tends to hug the ground when it flies, and especially when it flees predators. That is because, as a fast flying raptor pursues them, the chickens are trying to speed away, at least until they can dump into the nearest patch of heavy, brushy cover within which they can disappear. Simply put, this low flight and escape style results in collisions with fences, objects with which, of course, this species did not evolve. And, thus, we are trying to evaluate the effectiveness of our marking system by comparing how many collisions occur on stretches of marked fence to stretches of unmarked fence.

So, back to the subject of why I was sitting on the tail gate. Dwayne Elmore, an OSU Extension Agent who had shown up to meet me at the Windmill Museum and who has spent many hours with sage grouse in the high desert, and I were about to run our dogs along 8 miles of specified fence in a hopeful effort to find additional Lesser Prairie-Chickens that had collided with fences. (on alternate weeks, Wade Free of ODWC had agreed to run his dogs in order to help us avoid that weekly six hour drive just to get there, as well as the same six hour drive back.) Well, I mean we did not really want to find dead grouse, but then again, we were looking, if you know what I mean. These grouse often are flying around 50 miles per hour when they hit fences, an act that can decapitate, de-wing, or de-leg birds in some instances. Others hit the fences, keep on going, and die later of internal impact trauma. For example, our field workers have found fence-injured birds dead over a hundred yards from the

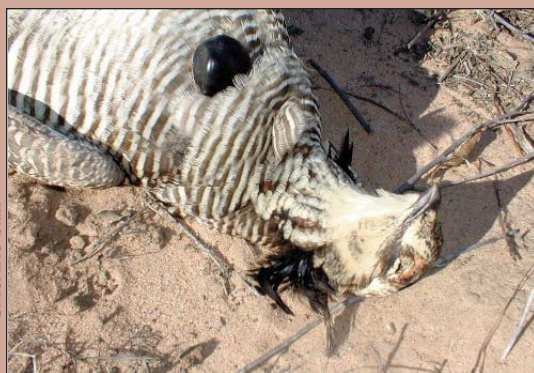
fence that killed them, as well as hens that were dead on nests sporting fresh fence collision wounds. Our director of research, Dr. Michael Patten, had worked with Dwayne and Don Wolfe to structure a search plan for these additional birds, but finding them on foot is extremely difficult unless they are wearing transmitters. Here is where the bird dogs are useful. Naturally, they have a much greater ability to find birds, even dead birds, than mere mortals searching on foot.

But the problems with such a plan are many, even so. The same exact search techniques with the same dogs must be used each time, and the exact same areas must be examined each time. Wind direction plays a key role as do humidity levels, both of which significantly affect scenting ability by the dogs. And the dogs should have some experience with chickens, a species that many dogs do not readily scent when compared to Northern Bobwhite quail, for example. Searching must be done at least once per week since carcasses disappear to other predators/scavengers within a short time after death. To top this, last year was one of the driest on record, a condition that resulted in little grouse reproduction, hence few chickens to fly over fences this year. Determining the number of fence collisions in which the grouse end up farther away from the fence than in the immediate area, through the use of bird dogs, is reasonable in areas where perhaps 15-20 birds are on leks, and where collectively 75-100 birds



Many prairie-chickens plummet 20-30 yards or more after colliding with a fence. Note invisibility of fence in background.

GMSARC Staff



While some collision injuries are obvious, such as this broken neck, other fatal injuries like fractured bones, internal hemorrhages, or even broken wings are not as easily identifiable, especially for those birds that do not die immediately from their injuries.

The radio transmitter visible on this bird's breast facilitated finding the carcass and determining cause of death.

GMSARC Staff

*Continued on page 5*

# Tales from the Oklahoma Winter Bird Atlas Project

by Eric J. Beck

As I sit at my desk I find it relatively easy to recall my time on the 2006/07 Winter Bird Atlas project. Mostly because even though it is mid-April, we have been gripped by a small cold snap. This miserable weather is a good reminder of most of my days on the winter atlas: cold, wet and windy. When Dan Reinking asked me if I would be interested in helping out this past winter on the project, I never even considered the “mild” Oklahoma winters. Coming from the north and having spent most of my winters knee deep in snow, shoveling sidewalks, I thought I was prepared for anything. What a mistake that was. All the same, how could I turn down the offer? It’s not every day that you are asked to go watch and count birds and get paid to do it. It sounded like a dream job, and bad weather aside, that’s what it turned out to

be. So the only question is, what stories should I use to describe my adventure on the county roads and through the small towns of Oklahoma?

Do I describe my brush with one of the worst blizzards to grip the Panhandle in many years? Heading west on my way to Beaver County, I was listening to public radio, trying to decide just how bad was the storm that was heading my direction. I stopped for the night at Beaver State Park and camped in the back of the truck, much like I had done many nights before. It was raining as I pulled in, which usually puts me to sleep. However, I didn’t sleep much that night as the winds were so high my truck rocked back and forth with each gust. When I woke early in the morning, much of the storm had blown out, or so I thought. I decided to head west and try to get to my Cimarron County blocks, fully aware that some roads were closed because of heavy snow and downed power lines. So after miles and miles of downed power lines, roads of complete ice, and one Sutton truck stuck three feet deep in a snow drift in Boise City, I questioned my decision. I spent the very cold (-18F) night in the back of the truck, and welcomed a tractor the size of a small house in the morning. The kind farm hand pulled me out of the snow drift, and I pulled my tail between my legs and headed back east.

Maybe instead of describing the bad times, I should instead reminisce about feeling the warmth of the Christmas season with complete strangers—that sounds a little cozier.

It was Christmas week and I had been working pretty hard; I was finally able to give myself a chance to check the Lake of the Arbuckles. Checking lakes was a great way to break up the monotony of the seemingly endless task of counting junco and White-crowned Sparrows on a block. I was able to chase loons around the lake with a retired fisherman, whom I had waved down and paid ten dollars to provide me with a short tour and loon chasing service. After the loon chasing I was pretty hungry and tired of cooking soup out of a can. So I found a little hole in the wall with a name like Mama’s and headed inside the smoky bar/restaurant; I found that the only thing Mama had to offer was a bowl of beef vegetable. I’m not sure if it was the homemade soup or just the fact that I didn’t have to cook it, but it was the best bowl of soup I’d had in quite a while. Not only did I get a good bowl of soup, but I had some interesting conversation with a few of the locals and was invited to the Christmas lunch the next day, which, by the way, was on the house. Not one to turn down a free meal, I took her up on the offer the next day after finishing a block in the morning. I met Mama’s grandchildren and told them what I was doing and talked about birds with them for a little. Feeling the warmth of the season, before I left I gave them my field guide and a list of birds in the area. As I left, the



Among the many wildlife species encountered during winter bird atlas-ing was this porcupine. Not nearly so sleek and soft as a bird's feathers, porcupine quills offer substantial protection from predators. Photography by Eric Beck.



Dan Reinking



Eric Beck

**Top:** Spotted Towhees are present throughout most of Oklahoma in the winter months. Their red eyes and distinctive, rufous flanks are helpful in identifying them, as is their habit of hop-scratching with both feet in fallen leaves using their strong legs. **Above:** Common Loons occur on Oklahoma's larger lakes in winter, sometimes in large numbers on Lakes Tenkiller and Texoma. Unlike many ducks, they require long, rapid paddling to take flight from the water.

*Continued from page 4*

two of them were running around the yard, flipping through pages and pointing. It made me feel good, kind of like Johnny Appleseed.

I should get to the point, though, and talk about the birds. When I said yes to this position, I hadn't really given too much thought to having to sift through hundreds and thousands of juncos, sparrows, gulls, loons, geese and every other bird that comes to Oklahoma during the winter. Let me tell you, it was difficult and sometimes very frustrating; if only they would just sit still! But I made it through, and, by the end of the project, added a few birds to my "life list."

There was the Northern Goshawk in Harper County. I had finished eating a lunch at the Selman Ranch and had only driven about 200 yards when I noticed it. I spent the next twenty minutes in pursuit, jumping over sand-plum bushes, running up bluff walls and hopping through and around obstacles, trying to get a clear photo so I would have some proof that in fact it was a goshawk (I'm glad nobody saw me, I probably looked a little crazy). The only photo I was able to get was a heavily shaded shot of the bird, just a very large, accipiter-shaped silhouette. For this reason, my photography skills have now become infamous at the Center. Then there were the rare Pacific and Red-throated Loons on Lake Texoma. I was able to get photos of these as well, though whether or not the photos really depict birds might be questionable; fortunately, I have good, detailed descriptions to back all of these up or else I might be in trouble. From this point it just gets worse.

The last day of the atlas season, I was determined to get to Canton Reservoir. I knew the lake was especially full of waterfowl and gulls and really wanted to get a survey done before the project was over. There was about a -13F wind-chill, 25 mph hour winds, and snow, not great weather for observing birds. But, I took my time and located 4 Glaucous Gulls, and one bird that has been called a possible Iceland or maybe a Thayer's. Nobody's really sure, and the photos aren't clear, so that one gets tossed into the better-luck-next-time category. All in all, it was an exciting journey, and it left me with many entertaining stories and memories.

Thanks to the Sutton Center for the opportunity they provided me; I look forward to next year's season. Oh, and Dan, I'm still waiting for the photography equipment you supposedly sent off in December. To be honest, I don't think you really sent it off at all!



Bill Horn



Eric Beck

**White-tailed deer are well known to nearly all Oklahoma residents (above), though it is typically only duck hunters and bird watchers who can correctly identify a Ring-necked Duck (top).**

*Continued from page 3*

sail over fences daily. But in low population years such as this one, where only 5-6 cocks show up at gobbling grounds, the research results can be meager. Still, we keep working. In our first search, we did get a point on one chicken, and three others were flushed from the opposite side of the road. On the second search, Wade's dogs found one dead chicken, in a significant state of decay, next to an unmarked fence. It will take a season or two of this work to show results, and we will keep you posted.

We always hope that the results of our work are bigger than Oklahoma, and they are. Others working with declining galliformes, such as Greater Sage-Grouse, Greater and Lesser Prairie-Chickens, and Sharp-tailed Grouse are starting to recognize just how important fence collisions are to the grouse in their regions. Don Wolfe, Sutton Center grouse expert, reports that he has conversed with or sent fence marking samples to some twenty grouse aficionados in different parts of the U.S. including seven involved with Greater Sage-Grouse, two with Attwater's Prairie-Chicken, three with Greater Prairie-Chicken, five with Lesser Prairie-Chicken, two with Sharp-tailed Grouse, and the others regarding grouse in general. Kent Christopher contacted us recently about fence marking methods and reported that his group had found some 25 collisions by sage grouse along a mere 2 miles of fence in Idaho. Joe Terry in Utah and Wyoming, along with Steve Chindgren, both ardent sage-grouse fans, have been marking fences for several years in collision-prone areas by hanging aluminum cans along the barbed wire strands; of course these allow flying sage-grouse, a species that also can become a ground hugger when hard pressed by raptors or when landing near a strutting ground, to better see the fences which become almost invisible against the high desert horizons.

Fences are not going away, but recognizing the problem that they pose to grouse and other large birds flying at high speeds is a first step. Marking fences in problem areas can be significant toward reducing such mortality. We continue to search in an effort to solve this problem. Thank you for supporting our efforts.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve Sherrod".

Steve Sherrod, Executive Director

# Latest News on Prairie-Chickens

by Don H. Wolfe

**“In the environment,  
every victory is  
temporary, every  
defeat permanent.”  
– Thomas Jefferson**



Yet another prairie-chicken rockets away after receiving a radio transmitter. Notice the elevation of the bird's flight; fortunately, there was not a fence nearby. Photography by Joel Sartore.

We are now into our ninth year of researching Lesser Prairie-Chickens in Oklahoma. For most of that time, we were also conducting prairie-chicken research in New Mexico. The report containing results of our seven year's research in New Mexico is available at the publications page of our web site ([www.suttoncenter.org](http://www.suttoncenter.org)). Although we have had articles in several previous Sutton Newsletters on our research and conservation efforts, I felt it was time to give a summary of accomplishments thus far and the challenges yet ahead of us. First of all, the past two hot, dry summers have dealt a huge blow to Oklahoma prairie-chickens. Reproduction last year was exceptionally low, and adult mortality, probably due in part to the heat the past two summers, has been exceptionally high. Many gobbling grounds that had 15 to 20 cocks two years ago now have 4 to 8 cocks displaying, and others are not even active this year. Of course, there is little that any of us can do about the weather. But we are continuing to analyze the data, publish the results, and develop and implement sound conservation measures.

To date, seven manuscripts on our Lesser Prairie-Chicken research have been published, with two more currently in press, and three more in review. Additionally, the methodology we developed for fence marking to improve visibility and reduce collisions is available on our web site, and is also being used to reduce grouse collisions in several other places as well. We have now removed nearly 20 miles of unnecessary fences, and have marked nearly 50 miles of fences surrounding gobbling grounds and other high fence collision risk areas. Perhaps the reduced chances of collisions will greatly help the wild population of prairie-chickens persist through this recent period of severe climatic conditions. The largest challenge of all is simply the extent of fencing in western OK, typically 6 linear miles per square mile. Realistically, we could never remove or mark more than a small percentage of the fences; but, the previous 8 years of research have shown us that the overwhelming majority of collisions have occurred within a mile of an active gobbling ground, and, thus, we are attempting to concentrate our efforts in those areas. The other challenge is convincing the landowners, whether private individuals or state or federal agencies, just how important this issue is, as well as the resulting need to mark the fences on their properties. Some landowners remain skeptical simply because they have never witnessed a prairie-chicken colliding with a fence. But, others have witnessed it, or even if they haven't, readily want to do all that they can for the conservation of the species.

In recent months, there have been popular articles on Lesser Prairie-Chickens appearing in widely circulated magazines such as *Shooting Sportsman* and *Birder's World*, and at least two other magazines, both with much greater circulations, are also considering articles on this species. These magazines can potentially reach many times more people than all of the scientific journals combined. The *Birder's World* article emphasizes some of what ranchers have done and are continuing to do to benefit prairie-chickens. In particular, Mr. Kenny Knowles, a rancher in Ellis County, OK, was spotlighted in the article for his tireless and selfless efforts to aid the bird that he so dearly loves. Joel Sartore, friend of the Sutton Center and photographer for *National Geographic* (see the Sutton Natural History Forum article on page 9), photographed Lesser Prairie-Chickens at our study site again this spring. It seems likely that magazine articles on Lesser Prairie-Chickens will be appearing in the near future with Joel's photographs included.

# Species Profile:

## Sandhill Crane

by Dan L. Reinking

The Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis*) is one of 15 crane species worldwide, and one of two regularly occurring crane species found in North America. At over three feet tall and with a wingspan of over six feet, it is one of our larger birds, and its tendency to occur in flocks while migrating makes its stately appearance all the more impressive. Sometimes confused with herons, especially the Great Blue Heron, Sandhill Cranes can be distinguished by their red crown and darker bill. Aside from their red crown and pale face, the plumage of Sandhill Cranes is mostly gray, though juvenile birds and adult birds in breeding plumage show extensive and variable rusty coloration.

Their feet are anisodactyl, meaning they have three front toes, and a hallux, or rear toe, in the back.

The hallux is both vestigial and elevated, meaning that Sandhill Cranes cannot grip branches or perch in trees like herons or egrets, and when not flying are instead seen standing only on the ground or in shallow water.

There are a number of subspecies of Sandhill Cranes, some of which, like the Florida Sandhill Crane, are non-migratory. Most subspecies that occur in the central and western U.S. are migratory, and make up the bulk of the overall Sandhill Crane population, which is estimated to be about 700,000. In one of the greatest wildlife spectacles in North America, over 80% of the mid-continent population of Sandhill Cranes stages in a relatively small area along the Platte River in south-central Nebraska for several weeks each spring during migration. At the peak time in mid-March, hundreds of thousands of cranes can be observed on a given day, arriving at the river to roost at sunset and departing to feed on waste grain in area fields at sunrise, their resonant, rolling bugle calls echoing in the twilight. Organized tours are available, including time spent in a blind near the river at sunrise and sunset, though even drivers passing through the area on nearby Interstate 80 will see many cranes in March. Maintaining adequate water flow and natural roosting habitat along the Platte River is vital to the Sandhill Crane population given its heavy annual reliance on this area. The nearby Rainwater Basin area of Nebraska is also a fantastic place to view large numbers of ducks and geese in March, making southern Nebraska the place to be for birders in early spring!

Migratory populations of Sandhill Cranes nest across much of Canada and Alaska, as well as parts of the western U.S. and the Great Lakes region. Pairs mate for life and lay two eggs each summer, but typically only successfully raise one chick each year. Incubation takes about 30 days and is shared by both sexes during the day, while the female incubates at night. After hatching, family groups remain together for 9-10 months. The age at which young cranes first breed varies widely with subspecies, but is generally between two and seven years. The oldest known cranes in the wild lived for about 20 years.

In Oklahoma, migrant Sandhill Cranes stop at Salt Plains National Wildlife Refuge in spring and fall. Lucky observers might also catch a distant glimpse of an endangered Whooping Crane passing through Oklahoma, which is conveniently located between the Whooper's winter home on the Texas coast and its breeding grounds in Canada. Hackberry Flat in southwestern Oklahoma has also become a good location to observe migrant cranes, and Sandhill Cranes can even be found wintering in western Oklahoma.



A March day draws to a close on Nebraska's Platte River, where Sandhill Cranes gather to roost en route to their breeding grounds.

Dan Reinking



Bill Horn



Dan Reinking

The Sandhill Crane's red crown (top) helps distinguish it from herons. Roosting cranes prepare for a foggy morning departure to feed in nearby fields and wetlands (above).

# Sutton Education Program's Newest Addition

by Ryan A. VanZant



Dan Reinking

*It's All About Birds!* has had some new acquisitions over the past several months: a Greater Roadrunner, Common Raven, and, as far as we know, the only Sandhill Crane to perform in free flight bird programs in the country. Another exciting addition is the customization of our Dodge Sprinter van. I'm sure that many of you are thinking, "what!? You have all of these amazing birds and you think an exciting addition is a van?" To that I respond that this is not just any van. It's one of the most important aspects of our education programs. Without it we would not be able to move our birds safely and comfortably or haul the A/V equipment and props. Not to mention, the mobile advertising that it brings our education efforts, but more on that later.

Most Dodge Sprinters are destined to become the modern delivery vehicle of choice for major shipping companies, but the Sutton Center had bigger ideas when we purchased it new off the lot back in the fall of 2005. We needed a vehicle that was reliable, could handle the load that we would put on it, and that could be as eco-friendly as a large vehicle can be. So we chose the Sprinter with its 473 cubic feet of cargo space, 4,531 pound payload capacity, and 2.7 liter in-line five-cylinder Turbo Diesel engine manufactured by Mercedes-Benz.

This van needed some modifications before it could be used for the transporting of birds. As we all know, Oklahoma has some really hot summers, as well as winter temperatures that get down well below freezing. So we needed a system that could keep the temperature inside the van at a comfortable level even in the unlikely event that we were broken down on side of the road in the middle of nowhere.

First we had a heater/air-conditioner unit, similar to what one would see on a RV, and a generator added to the Sprinter at a local RV repair shop. The generator fits in a custom box inside the van that is sealed on the inside to prevent fumes from entering the cabin. It not only provides the power for A/C but it also gives us several standard 120v power outlets in which we can power multiple other devices such as our A/V equipment if there is not a power source readily available at a venue. The A/C/heater unit has a digital thermostat that is attached to the wall of the cargo area to control the temperature, and it can be powered not only by the generator but by plugging into a standard wall outlet if the situation allows. Also, a second tank was added onto the van because the generator runs on gasoline, and attaching it to the primary fuel source (diesel) was not an option.

Recently, the finishing touches have been added to our Sprinter. What was once a plain white cargo van, has now been transformed into a mobile advertising unit, with initial donated help from artist and designer, Tim Jessel. It features the *It's All About Birds!* logo and most of the birds that star in our programs flying along with us, not to mention that it also allows space to feature the programs biggest sponsors' logos. As I drive it down the highway I rarely see a head that is not turned to catch a second glimpse of the mass of birds that appear to be flying alongside their vehicle.

Now what's next for our newest vehicle? New advertisements? Converting the diesel engine to also run on biodiesel? Well, only time will tell. For now though, we are very happy with the use and outcome of our Dodge Sprinter. It provides a comfortable way to move our birds, great advertisement, and most importantly it gets us where we need to go!



# The 2007 Natural History Forum Series and Sutton Award

by Margie T. Nolan

This year marks the fifth anniversary of the Sutton Avian Research Center's Natural History Forum! In those five years, we have brought to our community highly-qualified professionals who have shared their observations on pressing conservation and environmental issues through their work in photography, videography and film. Therefore, we thought it fitting to invite back our very first presenter, *National Geographic* photographer Joel Sartore. Joel has been a contract photographer for *National Geographic* for over 15 years and has covered a wide variety of subjects including Alaska's North Slope, grizzly bears, and Bolivian national parks as well as the Endangered Species Act and our own Bald Eagle program. In fact, Joel's first story in *National Geographic* appeared November 1992 and documented Sutton's complicated but highly successful eagle reintroduction effort. His work has also appeared in *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *Sports Illustrated* and has been featured on CBS Sunday Morning and PBS.

When Joel kicked off the Forum in 2002, he set a very high standard for the quality of speakers we have continued to provide. Joel's program is honest, straightforward, and very engaging. He brings his humor and passion to sharing his own environmentally-related experiences worldwide for the past 20 years, and, in doing so, he is able to educate many regarding the dynamic and often fragile conditions in the world around them. Periodically we receive letters from various students,

often graduates, who relate how our Natural History Forum speakers such as Joel made an impact on their lives.

In addition to speaking to over 6,000 students at five area schools (Sand Springs, Marquette, Union, Monte Cassino, and Booker T. Washington) and the Bartlesville Community Center, he gave his presentation to the public at the Sam Noble Museum in Norman and the Monte

Cassino Performing Arts Center in Tulsa. Joel and his work were also featured at the F&M Bank and Trust Company's annual benefit for the Sutton Center on Thursday, March 8. This event always features our Natural History Forum presenters and gives our supporters a chance to meet and talk to them in a less structured environment. Once again this year, in addition to having the opportunity to meet Joel, guests were treated to an incredible array of food and wine at the F&M Bank, prepared by their private chef. Guests also bid on a variety of silent auction items provided by our very generous supporters.

This year NatureWorks (see article on page 10) added to the support of the F&M Bank, and we were able to offer up to \$35,000 in U.S. savings bonds scholarships to Oklahoma students and their instructors through the Sutton Award. These scholarships have been awarded annually to junior and senior high school students who demonstrated the ability to communicate conservation issues in a most artistic, dramatic, and/or compelling manner. This year we had a very fine group of 24

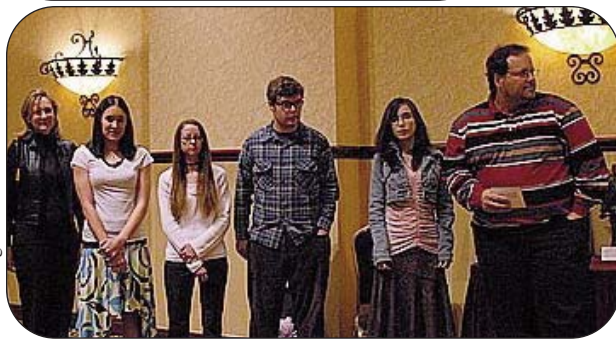
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Joel Sartore speaks to group of students at Union High School in Tulsa, Oklahoma (top). From left to right: *National Geographic* representatives Barbara Martin, Kay Laake and Donna Bigbee pose with students Courtney Spears, Connor Tate, Peyton Wiess, and Samuel Gonzalez. Joel Sartore is in the middle (above).  
*Photography by Richard Day.*



Margie Nolan

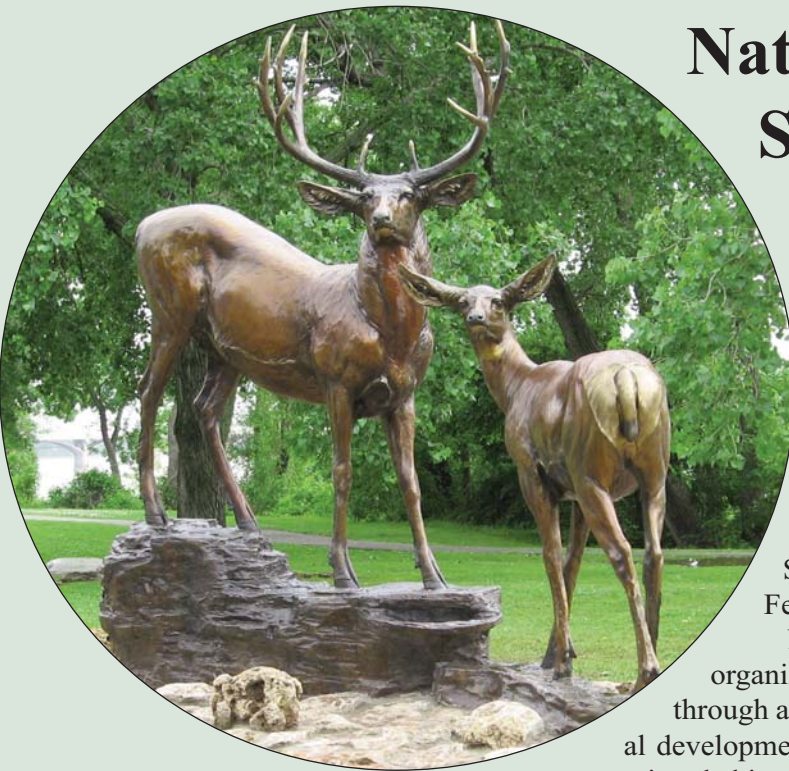


Margie Nolan

This pen and ink rendering of a Fennec Fox done by Elizabeth Mather is an example of the fine entries received for the scholarship award (top). From left to right Ruth Vesanen (teacher), Michele Baker, Elizabeth Mather and Thomas Shahan (winners), C.C. Stone (honorable mention) and Kelly Persinger (teacher) (above).

# NatureWorks Honors Sutton Center

by Steve K. Sherrod



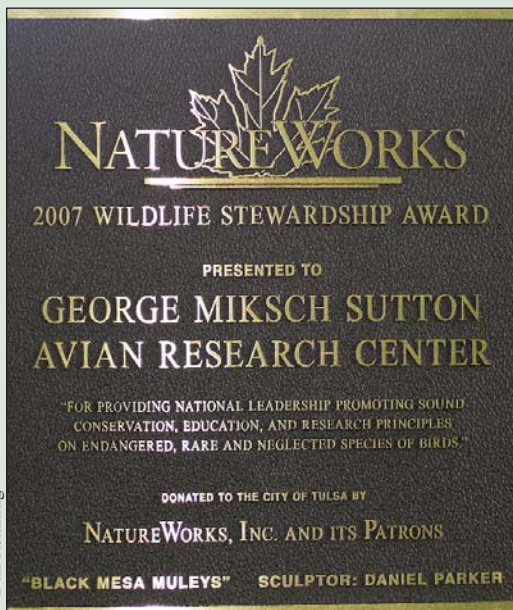
Dan Reinking

We are proud to report that in recognition of the conservation and education work conducted by the Sutton Avian Research Center over the past 23 years, the Center is the recipient of the 2007 NatureWorks Wildlife Stewardship Award. To announce this award and to unveil the representative bronze monument, "Black Mesa Muleys", sculpted by Daniel Parker, NatureWorks and its Patrons provided a most delicious Stewardship Dinner attended by some 200 people on February 8 at Southern Hills Country Club in Tulsa.

NatureWorks, based solely in Tulsa, OK, is a non-profit organization that recognizes and sponsors wildlife art, and through associated activities assists in local, statewide, and national development of wildlife preserves, re-introduction of wildlife into appropriate habitats, and provision of educational opportunities for adults and children on the values of sharing our homeland with wildlife.

On May 3, through the generous support of NatureWorks Patrons, the larger-than-life Bronze of two Mule Deer was dedicated and given to the City of Tulsa in a ceremony beneath a tent sheltering the crowd from spring showers. Sixteenth in a series, "Black Mesa Muleys" was placed along the River Parks at Riverside and Galveston. Following the dedication, a reception for all attendees took place at the home of Sam and Mary Lou Daniel.

The Sutton Center joined with NatureWorks at the latter's annual art show opening on March 2 at the Renaissance Hotel by manning a booth about the Center's conservation and education work accompanied by a live Great Horned Owl and educational staff, National Geographic photographer Joel Sartore, live and in person, and with winning artwork of 2007 Sutton Award Scholarship winners, supported by both F&M Bank and NatureWorks. The Center is especially proud to join NatureWorks in combined efforts to promote wildlife, wildlife conservation, wildlife education, and quality art recognizing the wonders of the natural world.



Dan Reinking

The Sutton Center is extremely proud to have been recognized by NatureWorks for finding cooperative conservation solutions for birds and the natural world through science and education. We would like to thank the following patrons of the "Black Mesa Muleys" monument: Hal & Barbara Allen, Bill & Ann Atherton, Jim T. Roy & Ty Renner Barnes, The Biery Family, David & Sheila Bond, John & Donnie Brock, Dick & Leslie Bushaw, Joe & Patty Cappy, John & Lori Cowen, Sam & Mary Lou Daniel, Steve & Ruthie Duenner, Donald & Becky Gallemore, Ray & Linda Goldsmith, Gary W. Goss, Mrs. Jack Graves, Greg & Connie Kach, Gary Kuck & Elise Kilpatrick, Richard & Joan Link, Don & Lonna Lockhart, Bob & Roxana Lorton, Richard & Veltetta Madden, John & Julie Nickel, Bob & Cissy Parker, Jim & Tollie Prall, John & Leigh Reaves, Ken Selby, Mazzio's Corp., Ian, Maureen & Thomas Shahan, Stephen L. & Melody Smith, Patrick & Caty Smith, Harold C. Stuart, Michael & Lynda Swenton, The Frank G. Weimer Family, Edwin H. Wienecke, Fred N. & Randi S. Wightman, Joseph H. Williams, John & Kay Wilson (above). Cheryl Jackson and Ryan VanZant brought Timber, our Great-horned Owl to the NatureWorks art show. People had to look twice to notice that he was the real thing (right)!  
Photography by Dan Reinking.





The well attended Stewardship Dinner honored the Sutton Center. From left to right: Joe McGraw, David Riggs, Carol McGraw, and Steve Adams. Front: Steve Sherrod. Photography by Linda Sherrod.



Come rain or shine, the dedication ceremony was not to be missed. The statue was placed along the River Parks in Tulsa at Riverside and Galveston. Photography by Dan Reinking.



Executive Director of River Parks, Matt Meyer, describes the contributions NatureWorks has made to River Parks while John Reaves (center) of NatureWorks and Steve Sherrod (right) of the Sutton Center look on. Photography by Dan Reinking.



# Wild Brew 2007!

Mark your calendars! Wild Brew 2007 will be held on Saturday, August 18 from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00p.m., with a Patrons-Only Hour starting at 4:00 p.m.

Once again, we will be in the cool, air-conditioned Exchange Center One at the Tulsa Expo Square where beer vendors will be pouring samples of over 40 of the finest beers in the country. And in case gourmet beers aren't enough, some of the area's finest restaurants will serve up their favorite dishes to tempt your taste buds. Back by popular demand, perennial favorites Mid Life Crisis will be sure to keep you dancing. Shelby Eicher and Mark Bruner will also be on hand to entertain.

This year's event is again organized by a dedicated, all-volunteer Wild Brew committee led by Event Chair Tom Byers and Honorary Chairs Vicki and Steve Adams. Other committee heads are Dana Box, Jennifer Cravens, Kari Culp, David Ernst, Toni Garrison, Robin Johnson, Marshall Lind, Ping McBride, David Neff, Carl Raynes, and Lisa Riggs.

Tickets are still only \$40 and must be ordered in advance. No tickets will be sold at the door, and no one under 21 will be admitted. Contact Margie Nolan at 918-581-6187 or mnolan@riggsabney.com for any other information or if you did not receive an invitation last year or want to add someone to the mailing list for this year. And remember, you or your business/organization can support Wild Brew at a Patron Level! For more information and the benefits of becoming a Patron, contact Vicki Adams at 918-746-0707 or vicki@relationsinc.com. See you in August!

## Continued from page 9

entries from 10 schools. These entries included works in photography, pen and ink, pastels, watercolors and PowerPoint presentations. The judges chose 4 finalists who each received a \$2,500 savings bond and 5 honorable mentions who received a \$1,000 in savings bonds each. The finalists were honored at the NatureWorks breakfast on Sunday, March 4, and at the F&M Bank event on the following Thursday. In addition, their work, along with that of the 5 honorable mentions, was exhibited at the NatureWorks Art Show in Tulsa for the entire weekend of the show. Several teachers of winning students also received grants to help with purchasing art supplies.

Our finalists this year were: Elizabeth Mather, Bartlesville High School; Thomas Shahan, Jenks High School; Kayla Short, Broken Bow High School; and Michele Baker, Metro Christian Academy. The honorable mentions were: CC Stone, Broken Bow High School; Joshua Gill, Tulsa Memorial High School; Juan Rueda, East Central High School, Alexander Drummond, Metro Christian Academy; and Stacey Turner, Bartlesville High School.

The Sutton Center would like to offer our most sincere thanks to our sponsors for this event: The F&M Bank and Trust Company of Oklahoma; NatureWorks, Public Service Company of Oklahoma; Riggs, Abney, Neal, Turpin, Orbison, and Lewis Law Firm, Frisco Title Services, the Holmes Organisation, Intervest Properties and Acron USA Management.



Joel Sartore congratulates Thomas Shahan, one of this year's Sutton Award winners.

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