George Miksch Sutton Avian Research Center

The SUTTON NEWSLETTER

"finding cooperative conservation solutions for birds and the natural world through science and education"

Volume 48, Spring 2017

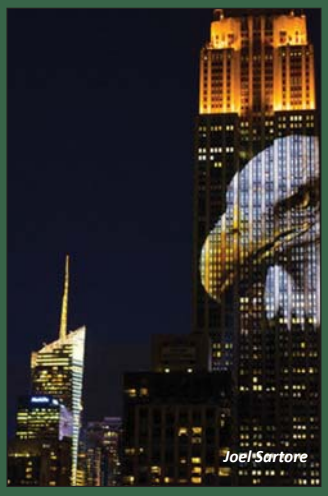
FIRE!

Timely airdrops. *Cover Photo and Insert by Dan Reinking.*

The Sutton Newsletter

Spring 2017 edition

Below: Sutton eagle projected on the Empire State Building.



Dear Sutton Center Supporters,

May 25 was the final day of the school year here in Bartlesville. The last assignment for some Tri County Tech students was a Community Service project to hang a new entry sign at the Sutton Center. The sign is 10 ft x 4 ft with the Sutton Center logo and mission statement greeting all visitors. Thank you so much to Johnnie Parks, Susan Peterson, and the TCT students who created the sign! It looks fabulous.

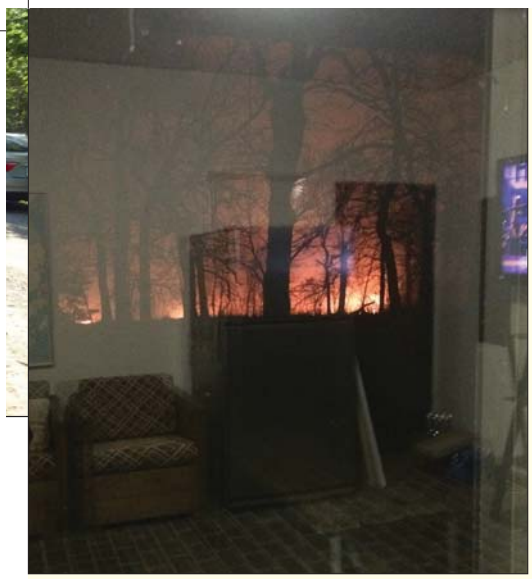
The chicks are hatching away at the prairie-chicken breeding facility, and this means round-the-clock work for the crew. As usual in construction, the buildings that are supposed to house these chicks are taking longer to finish than anticipated, and the abundant spring rainfall did not keep our project "in mind." Nevertheless, we can barely wait to get access to the new structures. Although scheduling can be difficult, we have been excited to "share" the facility with several special guests. Some visits are described in this newsletter.

Two months have passed since a huge wildfire threatened the Sutton Center. We still shiver just to think of the potential catastrophic consequences, and we are so grateful that we came out of it relatively unscathed. The plentiful rains of April and May greened up the blackened surroundings, and we desperately need to replace the mower that was destroyed in the fire! We had a good visit with the Department of Emergency Management after the fire was put out. They recommended that we thin the surrounding forest to make it easier fighting fires. The best time to cut down selected trees will be in the late summer and fall, so we could use help from people good at handling chainsaws and clearing brush!

Speaking of volunteers, the Wild Brew committee dedicates a lot of their time and talent to organize a super fun event! It couldn't be done without them, and we are so very grateful. We sure hope you will be able to support and attend the event August 12. Did you also know that "doing good is good for you"? Different studies show that positive acts, such as giving and volunteering, lead to happiness, decrease stress, increase life expectancy, and make us happier. We are smiling when we say we want to help you be happy, and we know your generous contribution to the Sutton Center will help accomplish that goal for you as well as help accomplish our mission. But in all seriousness, we get a lot of satisfaction out of the work we do, and being recognized as an Oklahoma Nonprofit of Excellence also tells us that we are doing good. Thank you for being one of our supporters!

Lena C. Larsson, Ph.D.
Executive Director

Steve K. Sherrod, Ph.D.
Executive Director Emeritus



This picture was taken from inside the kitchen of the main building.

CLOSE CALL ...

Story and Photography by Lena C. Larsson

We are so relieved that the Sutton Center wasn't consumed by flames on March 21, 2017. The fire was likely started by someone burning vegetation in the northern part of Circle Mountain, and became a wildfire several days before it reached us. Very dry conditions and increasing winds from the northeast spelled disaster.

Dan Reinking was listening to the radio Monday evening and heard that the flames were approaching our closest neighbors, Roger and Angela Box. Their lovely off-the-grid cabin is located less than 400 yards along the ridge from Sutton Center's nearest structure, "the chick lab" (where bald eagle chicks were once raised). Roger and Angela were out of town, so Dan asked Don Wolfe and John Toepfer for help. They ended up spending the whole night there, keeping the flames from consuming the cabin. Washington County firefighters took a much needed rest during the graveyard shift, and there was hope that they could get the fire under control the next morning.

However, the wind shifted and an older gentleman carelessly tossed a cigar from his porch, starting a fire from a different direction and diverting firefighting attention. By 1 pm the flames were approaching as the wind was picking up. A five-person crew from the prairie-chicken facility, Sutton Center board treasurer David Delahay, as well as our neighbors to the south, Alex Doubt and Stacy Dilldine, all came over to help. This included raking leaves away from structures, dousing buildings and the ground with water, and creating fire breaks. Don Wolfe was able to make the most impact by running the tractor with a box blade, creating roads among the trees. One of the firefighters greeted Don as he was coming out of the smoke, "You are the best thing I have seen all day." The smoke got so thick that one of the firefighters was overcome by it and the area around the chick lab had to be evacuated. We heard loud noises accompanied by billowing thick smoke, and thought "there goes the building." However, it was the storage shed with bird cages and education equipment that burned, and the heroic efforts of the firefighters saved the chick lab.

Fire crews came from all over to help. Washington County Emergency Management, Bartlesville Fire Department, as well as rural volunteer firefighters from Copan, Nowata, Ochelata, Oglesby, Ramona, and perhaps others that we missed identifying in the smoke are our heroes. A crew also came from Caney, Kansas, to take over in the dark.

The ground fighting in the heat and smoke was intense, so luckily, a blessing came from the sky. It is my understanding that the aerial support came from the Oklahoma Forestry Service; we had airplanes dousing fire repellant and helicopters went back and forth to the oxbow below our ridge to fill up on water. This aerial support, which had previously been out west fighting deadly fires burning hundreds of thousands acres in the panhandle, came just in time. The flames were just feet away from our main building and updrafts were aided by the strong easterly winds as hillside trees were consumed. We were cheering on the airdrops from inside the building, with some rooms being too filled with smoke for occupancy. Outside was even worse. Although invited to come inside, a news crew was braving the smoke and fire repellant falling from the sky. Live footage, including some of the airdrops can be seen at http://www.newson6.com/story/34966850/washington-county-crews-battle-wildfire-near-bartlesville.

The first night was intense with embers pelleting the chick lab and a wall of fire lighting up the sky scarily close to the main building. We continually monitored the buildings and wetted the exterior of the chick lab every hour. As the day broke, some cleanup could start. A small metal shed burned partly and has been completely dismantled by our staff and volunteers. The zero-turn mower is history with melted plastic parts and cracked gas tank. There is nothing left of the wooden storage shed except for jumbled shapes of metal. An estimate of things lost in the fire is upwards of $20,000, but we are so relieved that it wasn't worse.

Due to the risk of flare-ups, since trees and logs burned for days, we set up night watches for two more nights. John Toepfer volunteered for the graveyard shift (12-4am) since he is used to tracking and trapping prairie-chickens at night. Fire crews kept on checking on us as well, and we are still standing. Thank you to all who helped save the Sutton Center!

Grouse News...

Wild Production:
Counting GPC Chicks

by John E. Toepfer

The purpose of my 2012-2016 greater prairie-chicken (GPC) study was to compare the ecology of a large stable population in Nebraska with a small isolated fragment population in northwestern Minnesota. So far, the data have documented a dramatic difference in production and a remarkable difference in mobility or seasonal movements. This article will cover production, and I plan to report on mobility later.

The two study areas were selected because of their differences. The northwestern Minnesota study area is an agricultural landscape dominated by plowed ground with scattered patches of undisturbed grassland in close proximity. In stark contrast, the Nebraska site is just the opposite and is comprised of a grassland landscape dominated by rangeland in the Sandhills with hayfields and a few scattered corn and soybean fields. Nebraska has more grassland (32 million acres), hence considerably more GPC than Minnesota – many hundred thousand versus 2,500.

The average clutch size for GPC and sharp-tailed grouse (STG) is about 12 (number of eggs per nest) and about 85-90% of the eggs will hatch from a successful nest in the wild. Preliminary results indicate that radio-marked hens in Nebraska are twice as productive as radioed hens in Minnesota. This despite the fact that overall average nest success (hatching of young) is 10% higher in Minnesota (50.7%) than in Nebraska (40.3%).

So how is it that hens in Nebraska are more productive than hens in Minnesota if nest success in the Cornhusker State is lower? That is because although nest success is critical, it is just the first stage in the production of young. How many hens fledge chicks? A chick is considered fledged at six weeks of age when they can survive without their mother. Nebraska hens fledge about 20% more young than in Minnesota (50.1% versus 29.6%). Also, Nebraska hens fledge 2.2 more chicks than Minnesota prairie-chicken mothers (4.7 chicks/hen vs. 3.5 chicks/hen). Combining these results with nest success gives an estimate of 42 young per 100 hens in Minnesota, or less than half of those in Nebraska (97 young/100 hens). A similar analysis in Wisconsin for 2006 in a landscape similar to Minnesota produced 41 fledged chicks/100 hens.

I recently examined some of the Hamerstrom's field notes for the first brood survey they conducted on the Buena Vista Marsh in Wisconsin in 1949. They observed 17 brood hens in August with chicks at least three-quarters grown – the average was a gigantic 8.9 chicks/hen, which is about two and a half times more than we observed in Wisconsin 1996-2003. Peterson and Silvy (1996) reported 6 chicks/hen in a review of historical literature 1929-1995 on GPC production. That is 1.3 more chicks/hen than we found in Nebraska.

There are some very disturbing trends in brood sizes of sharp-tailed grouse and Minnesota GPC. There is a long-term decline in average brood sizes from 9.0 to 5.9 chicks per hen for STG during the past 44 years (1963-2006) in North Dakota, and from 4.9 to 3.4 chicks/hen for GPC in Minnesota over the past 25 years (1992-2016). It has also been noted that GPC hens with more than six fledged chicks are now a rarity in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Yet, larger broods of 6-14 chicks are still regularly observed in Nebraska.

I also examined the Nebraska GPC brood sizes 1955-1974 (Nebraska Game and Parks Commission Brood Surveys). The average number of chicks/hen was 6.9, and the range averaged 5.3-8.7. This is more than what we observe now, so the prairie-chickens are just not raising as many chicks as in the past. Why? We are not sure. It is obvious that the number of chicks fledged/hen is in long-term decline throughout the range, and that chick production, especially in fragmented grasslands in agricultural landscapes, is lower than in rangeland landscapes. A decline in average brood sizes has also been documented in the non-native ring-necked pheasant. Warner et al. (1999) reported that chick survival based on average brood sizes in pheasants has declined from 7.7 to 4.4 chicks/hen from the early 1950's to the early 1990's. I suspect that the declines are caused by a reduction in insects, the main food of young chicks. This decline, which is most obvious in agricultural landscapes, is likely related directly or indirectly to our use of more and new chemicals and pesticides.

The differences and declines seen in production, both historically and contemporarily, between brood sizes in agricultural landscapes and rangeland landscapes are very real and should give us great cause for concern. We are seeing at least a 33% decline in average brood sizes. The decline in the number of chicks fledged per hen over time throughout the range tells me that envi-

Grouse News...

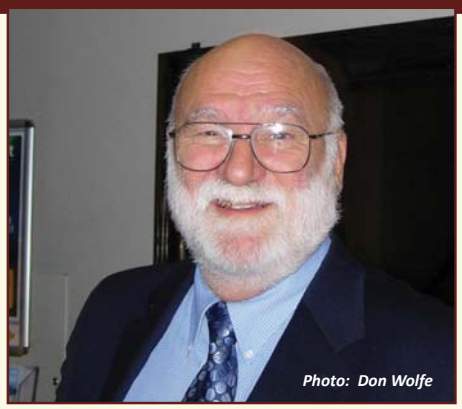


Photo: Don Wolfe

ronmental factors other than just habitat loss are negatively influencing prairie-chickens, sharp-tailed grouse, pheasant, and probably bobwhite quail production. This concerns me a lot! The exact same pattern of widespread decline in production of game bird young has been observed before and parallels that seen during the widespread use of DDT. The use of DDT led to a precipitous decline in the peregrine falcon and the bald eagle. Their eggs were not hatching due to eggshell thinning. The subsequent recovery of these two species from being federally endangered was associated with the elimination of DDT. Now we have to save our game birds!

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Peterson, M. J. and N. J. Silvy. 1996. Reproductive stages limiting productivity of the endangered Attwater's prairie chicken. Conservation Biology10:1164-1276.

Warner, R.E., P. C. Mankin, L. M. David and S. L. Etter. 1999. Declining survival of ring-necked pheasant chicks in Illinois during the late 1900s. Journal of Wildlife Management 63:705.


Don Wolfe

Sonoran grasslands of Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge, Arizona. Scattered shrubs, such as ocotillo, and acacia provide necessary cover for Masked Bobwhite.

Masked Bobwhite Update

by Donald H. Wolfe

The Sutton Center has recently received a commitment from the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service to renovate our existing and now vacant quail building to house and breed Masked Bobwhite quail. Renovations will start soon, and if completed on time, we will be receiving eggs from Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge in August that will become the start of our breeding population. Additionally, a small release (about 200 birds) will be attempted at Buenos Aires NWR in September from the breeding facility at BANWR, the first release in nearly a decade. Don Wolfe, along with BANWR personnel and others from the Masked Bobwhite Recovery Team have been attempting to identify the best release sites on the refuge, as well as recommending management to improve those and other portions of the refuge.


Don Wolfe

Alpine vegetation of Jicarita Peak, Sangre de Cristo Mountains, New Mexico. Shrub willows near or above the tree line, above 12,000 feet, provide year-round food and shelter for White-tailed Ptarmigan.

White-tailed Ptarmigan Update

by Donald H. Wolfe

The Sutton Center has received another contract with New Mexico Department of Game and Fish to complete vegetation mapping of alpine willows, typically associated with White-tailed Ptarmigan distribution. Another 300 + vegetation ground-truth points will be recorded. Chris Hise, with The Nature Conservancy, will be assisting with mapping, using high-resolution, multi-spectral land-sat imagery to comprehensively map alpine willow distribution. Four trips are planned over the summer, once a month from June through September.

We are Busy Busy at the Attwater's prairie-chicken breeding facility

by Eric R. Lynch, Lena C. Larsson and Steve K. Sherrod

Photography by Steve K. Sherrod and Eric R. Lynch

Spring has sprung and so have April showers, May flowers, and plenty of greater prairie-chicken eggs! As of April, last year's chicks had grown up and entered into their first breeding season. After only four weeks there were nearly 300 eggs – 100 more than we collected during the entire 2016 breeding season! With the number of eggs growing each day, we at the Attwater's Prairie-Chicken Breeding Facility are gearing up for a wild summer! Since last October, we made great progress toward the expansion of our breeding efforts including those with greater prairie-chickens (GPCs), as well as the eventual switch to the endangered Attwater's prairie-chickens (APCs) planned for 2018.

After balancing last summer between breeding GPCs and the ongoing construction in the headquarters building, this is the first breeding season during which we'll be able to use our facility as originally envisioned. Headquarters is now stocked with office and lab equipment, additional incubators, cabinetry, and stainless steel tables, allowing us to operate with a seamless workflow. Each room has specific purposes, designed for careful handling of eggs that are moved throughout the building to produce newly hatched chicks. Young birds raised as breeders will have homes in our breeder barns. Currently taking up residence in the first breeder barn are a selection of individuals hatched in 2015 and 2016. They have adapted well to their enclosures, are successfully breeding, and, by our current counts, are producing just as many fertile eggs as the GPCs in the outdoor flight pen. A second breeder barn is in construction with a third to follow!

Thanks in large part to two new employees dedicated to ongoing construction projects, we are also making great strides towards building two additional prairie fields (our 300-foot-long outdoor flight pens) with some design modifications intended to reduce mortalities by collisions. The current prairie field is home to another breeding population of GPCs, and the two new prairie fields will allow us to develop methods for raising young naturally before releasing them into the wild. Specifically, some of the chicks hatched later this summer will be transitioned to a prairie field where they can forage naturally and interact socially while wearing the transmitters necessary for tracking individuals once released. Finally, the broody hen house mentioned in the Winter 2016 newsletter has been completed. Domestic hens have been laying eggs for several months, and some began incubating prairie-chicken eggs for us on May 1. As expected, the domestic hens are proving to be committed egg matrons! By the time you receive this newsletter, we will have hatched our first GPC chicks of the season, with more on the way! Thankfully, we have also hired our first intern to aid us through these hectic times. Our APC team keeps growing!

The 2017 breeding season is sure to teach us many valuable lessons. Our driving goals this year are to cement our methodologies for raising imprinted birds, performing artificial insemination using a copulation dummy hen with imprinted males, preparing other birds for release into the wild, and selecting the most effective incubators. Though there is still much to do, we are happy to report that Dr. Frederic Launay from Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund and Ian Davidson from National Fish and Wildlife Foundation visited in mid-April and seemed satisfied with the progress we have made since their visit last year. After this season, we hope to find new homes for most of our GPCs so that we can finally initiate the namesake objective of our project: hatching and raising the breeder population of Attwater's prairie-chicken. Their descendants will be our first to contribute for release into the wild so we can bring this remarkable bird back from the edge of extinction.

CAPE GRIFFONS
— *Then and Now* —

by Don Wolfe

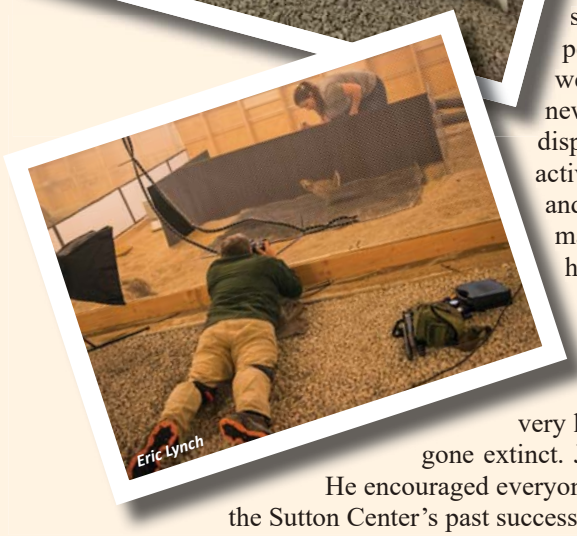
Before there were prairie-chickens at the Sutton Center, and even before there were Bald Eagles at the Sutton Center, there were griffons. No, not the mythical creatures with lion bodies and eagle heads, but Cape Griffons, one of the elegant Old-World vultures, these being from southern Africa (also called Cape Vultures, *Gyps coprotheres*). Griffons, like all Old-World vultures, are more closely related to eagles than to the New-World vultures such as Turkey Vultures and California Condors. In fact, it may be more accurate to say that they are "specialized eagles." Anyway, in 1984, four Cape Griffons were delivered to us after being used for a nutritional study by Dr. Pat Benson, with the idea that they could become part of a captive-breeding program. At that time, Cape Griffons had been experiencing huge declines in the wild, due to electrocutions (imagine a bird with a nine foot wingspan on a transmission tower), accidental poisoning, and from what was assumed to be calcium deficiencies due to less available bone fragments left behind in carcasses by hyenas. The reason for this theory was that many young birds were observed with deformed wings. As it turned out, it was later determined that most of these deformities were due to mishandling by bird banders rather than a lack of calcium. Our four griffons were part of a larger study of dietary calcium, but since these birds were hand-reared, they could not be released. Over the ensuing years, these young griffons became sexually mature at seven years of age, and eventually produced two offspring while in our care. One of the young produced was attacked and severely injured by a second adult male in their group enclosure, and had to be euthanized. In 1995, due to a change in focus of our research and conservation efforts and to scale back on the cost and time necessary for care of captive birds, the five griffons were transferred to the Los Angeles Zoo following a short stint at the Milwaukee Zoo.

That was not the end of the story, however. In February of this year, we received an email from the current Bird Curator at L.A. Zoo, who thought it was a long-shot, but wanted to know if anyone here could provide additional information on the origin and parentage of these birds. Fortunately, Steve Sherrod and I still had good recollections spanning over 20 years (at least regarding these birds), and were able to provide the requested information. In exchange, we were provided updates on the past 22 years from L. A. Zoo. The five birds that were transferred to L.A. Zoo eventually received studbook numbers SB-8, SB-9, SB-10, SB-11 (adults), and SB-13 (juvenile offspring of SB-8 and SB-9). Apparently, the same pair of adults (SB-8 and SB-9) that produced young at Sutton continued to breed, producing 14 young in L.A., ten of which are still alive, and that pair is still alive and together after over 30 years. The second pair of adults (SB-10, SB-11) never reproduced. While here, the second (unmated) female always seem to prefer human companionship to that of the second (unmated) male. Jenny Schmidt, from the L.A. Zoo confirmed that this female continued to be that way. According to Jenny, the unmated male (SB-11) who attacked and injured the second juvenile produced at Sutton, eventually fostered a young bird, and was ultimately transferred to Alligator Park in Florida. Also, SB-13, the young female produced here, hatched five young, three of which are still alive and contributing to the overall USA population. As electrocutions and poisonings are still threats to the wild vulture populations in much of Europe, Africa, and Asia, the descendants of the original Sutton griffons may again fly over the rugged canyons of southern Africa.

I want to express a special thanks to Mike Maxcy, bird curator at the L.A. Zoo, and Jenny Schmidt, studbook keeper at the L.A. Zoo for reaching out to us, and for providing the updates on these magnificent birds.

PHOTO SHOOTS WITH JOEL SARTORE

by Bonnie L. Gibson



We had the pleasure of hosting world-renowned National Geographic photographer Joel Sartore here at the Sutton Center twice in the span of two months! Joel is in the middle of a huge project called *Photo Ark* in which he is attempting to photograph every species of animal in the world that is currently in captivity. To ensure a viewer's undivided attention to each animal, these photographs are taken with either a plain white or black backdrop. Joel hopes to draw attention to the importance that every species plays in our world no matter how big or small they are. One of the species Joel had yet to photograph in captivity was the greater prairie-chicken. We hoped that our state of the art prairie-chicken breeding facility would provide the opportunity for Joel to capture a greater prairie-chicken in full breeding display.

After getting his start with National Geographic in 1991 by photographing bald eagles that were raised at the Sutton Avian Research Center, Joel is always happy to return to Bartlesville for a visit. Joel came back at the end of March to add photos of our spectacular booming prairie-chickens to his growing *Photo Ark*. Prior to Joel's arrival, we prepared for the photo shoot by making solid black backdrops and placing them inside the enclosures, hoping that the birds would grow comfortable with changes to their pens. Although these birds are at ease around those who take care of them, we were concerned that the presence of a new person (Joel), his camera, and a new structure in their enclosure could make them nervous and keep them from displaying. Unfortunately March 30 was a rainy, gloomy day and few birds were actively booming. Weather affects the birds' behavior; males will often not boom and instead hunker down to wait for rain to stop. This was bad luck for Joel. The males were just not in the mood for displaying and shied away from Joel when he laid down directly in front of them. It was better to try again another day.

Joel spoke to a packed crowd at the Tulsa Town Hall meeting the following day. His speech focused on the fact that we are currently in the sixth mass extinction of Earth's history. He showed images of species large and small that he has photographed for his *Photo Ark* project, many of which are the very last of their kind. Since Joel captured these images, some of the animals have gone extinct. Joel asked the audience to become an active part of conservation solutions. He encouraged everyone to recycle, to buy local, and also to support the Sutton Center. He spoke of the Sutton Center's past successes and praised our new prairie-chicken breeding program. It was an inspiring speech punctuated by breathtaking photographs---many of which he had taken of our staff and animals!

Joel returned for a second photo shoot on April 29th. We had more preparation time and kept the backdrops up, fed birds on the backdrops, and even placed a mannequin in the same prone position Joel would assume during the photo shoot. We began to affectionately call the mannequin "Joel" and moved it among enclosures on a daily basis to make the birds used to "his" presence. This seemed to work and when the end of April rolled around we were far more confident Joel was going to get his photos.

Joel returned April 29th and set up for his photo shoot. Having a good sense of humor, he laid down next to mannequin "Joel" and let us take some pictures of the two of them together. The breeding season was in full swing and our birds were booming stridently. The tricky part was getting the male to ignore the female he was housed with, stand centered on the backdrop, and to boom in place! I ended up going into the enclosure to let him "compete" with me over the female he was courting. It worked! I stationed myself just behind the backdrop and "boomed" at the male, and he would boom right back. Joel could capture some incredible photos and even a short video clip for the National Geographic website! In the video you get a glimpse of me encouraging this male to boom, and you get to see the his beautiful breeding display: https://www.instagram.com/p/BUuMeyzjjMt/?taken-by=natgeo

After our successful photoshoot, Joel thanked us for once again hosting him and promised he would be back for a visit in the future. We are so pleased with the images he captured of our amazing birds and are looking forward to Joel's return. We want to encourage everyone to check out the *Photo Ark* project and to follow our friend on Instagram @joelsartore. You can also take a look at some of Joel's incredible photos at www.joelsartore.com.

VISIT BY DEVOTED CONSERVATIONIST

by Greg Septon

Dr. Archibald "dances" with Tex, the Whooping Crane.

In April, world-renowned Dr. George Archibald visited the Sutton Avian Research Center and generously shared his organizational expertise and captive propagation experiences with the staff as well as several board members.

While working with cranes during his Ph.D. studies at Cornell University, George developed the groundwork for his life's work – to help save the world's 15 species of cranes, many of which are threatened or endangered.

As a result, Dr. Archibald founded the International Crane Foundation (ICF) in 1971. During the ensuing years he developed highly sophisticated captive propagation techniques and traveled the world successfully spreading conservation efforts and programs for the world's cranes.

With his vast knowledge of captive-rearing techniques combined with his talent for fundraising George was able to grow ICF into a world-class facility that now serves as an international hub for crane research and conservation efforts.

With the Sutton Center at a crossroads and with a future focused on captive production of endangered grouse and quail for recovery efforts, George's insights and recommendations shared during his visit were much appreciated and provided valuable information that will aid in our efforts as we move forward. Thank you again George!

Dr. Archibald meets the APC crew and several board members. From left to right: Russell Rogers, Eric Lynch, John Toepfer, Steve Sherrod, Lee Maxey, David Delahay, George Archibald, Lena Larsson, Bonnie Gibson, Ryan Christensen, and Warren Harden.

Author and Sutton Board member Greg Septon.

Powerful wind storm kills and injures bald eagles

by BEST Member Neil Garrison

Every so often, actors will dress up and personify Mother Nature. They'll have a smile on their face, and their hair will be festooned with a garland of colorful wildflowers. All is well and perfect with the world. Which ill explains why I am now writing this column with reddened eyes and tear-stained cheeks. Mother Nature can be a life-affirming and benevolent entity, but every so often, Nature can be a mother that eats her own children.

Here of late, I have been volunteering for the George M. Sutton Avian Research Center in Bartlesville. I monitor the bald eagle nests that are in central Oklahoma. The powerful wind storm that came through Oklahoma City on April 29 did much more than knock down the Centennial Arch at State Fair Park as well as flatten the Devon historical oil derricks on the grounds of the Oklahoma Historical Society. These same winds took three of my bald eagle nest trees and blew them to smithereens. One baby eagle was injured and had to be taken to a special wild animal hospital. Ditto for one of the parent birds. Two of my other baby eagles seem to have been tossed into the raging floodwaters of a storm-angered river, never to be found.

It was a bitter pill to swallow. I am expected to be an emotionless scientist who has been well-armored to take life's slings and arrows with not a wince of pain. The problem is this: I am human. The loss hit me hard, and it wracked my inner being with heartfelt sorrow. Time will heal all things, of course. Eventually, the pain will recede to insignificance. For now, however, I am in a deep state of grief.

Above: **1st Place - Claire Holloway - *"Want versus Need"* - The size of this drawing is 5"x33" and drawn with an ink pen. The basic concept of *"Want versus Need"* is a comparison of trophy hunting and natural hunting by lions.**

SUTTON AWARD 2017

Left: **2nd Place - Yebin Kim - *"I will wait for you"* - A Sierra Nevada red fox painted in acrylic expresses the loneness of the rarest of mammals.** ***Above:*** **3rd Place (Tie) - Kathryn McGaha- *"Lone Wolf"* - A red wolf is depicted to bring attention to the fact that this species was almost brought to extinction and its habitat is being destroyed.** ***Right:*** **3rd Place (Tie) - Vi Huynh - *"Paper Work"* - emphasizes recycling.**

by Karen A. Kilbourne

The Sutton Award scholarship program is in its thirteenth year and we continue to see outstanding talent from the students of Oklahoma! In 2016 we had 107 entries from schools across the state. Debra Gallagher with the Oklahoma Center for Arts Education at the University of Central Oklahoma was a great help this year. She added a drop off and pick up point for artwork in the Oklahoma City and western Oklahoma areas. With her help the Sutton Award became more accessible to students across the state!

The Sutton Award competition is open to Oklahoma students grades 10-12. Entrants create and submit a presentation piece that tells an intriguing story about a current conservation topic. Entries are accompanied by an essay explaining why students chose their project and what impact, if any, the project may have on conservation. Judging 107 entries is a lot of work! We want to thank the judges: Ms. Barbara Bates, Sutton Avian Research Center board member; Mr. Mark Waller, Managing Partner of Waller Jorgenson Warzynski, PLLC. and talented artist; Mr. David Nunneley, artist and NatureWorks Emeritus Board Member; and Ms. Hillary Parkhurst, Director of Development at Arts & Humanities Council of Tulsa - Hardesty Arts Center. We truly appreciate all of their effort, time and expertise!

We would also like to thank Rachel, Rhonda, and Rick Wimpey. They have welcomed the Sutton Award into the Willow-brush Studio + Gallery and have provided a wonderful location in which the students can showcase their art. They have been very generous with their time and attention.

The Sutton Award would not be possible without our sponsors. This was the 13th year partnering with NatureWorks and we are extremely appreciative of this collaboration. Thank you also to Ms. Barbara Bates, Mr. Lee Holcombe, Dr. Steve Sherrod, Nothing Bundt Cakes of Tulsa, and Miss Christine Joseph, owner of Nouveau Atelier De Chocolat in Broken Arrow. Christine is the mother of one of our past winners. She was so impressed with the event that she donated gifts of free Beligian chocolates to all of the judges this year.

Congratulations to all of the winning students and the teachers who support them!

Sutton Center received ONE Award!

THE TENTH ANNUAL ONE
OKLAHOMA NONPROFIT EXCELLENCE AWARDS

The Oklahoma Center for Nonprofits held its tenth annual Oklahoma Nonprofit Excellence (ONE) Awards April 29 in Tulsa, honoring 24 nonprofits from throughout the state for superior leadership and exceptional service to their constituents and communities. The Sutton Center was nominated in The Chickasaw Nation Open Category, and was awarded a $5,000 grant. Out of almost 19,000 nonprofits statewide, only 24 were named finalists. For over 30 years, the Sutton Center has been dedicated to fulfilling its mission of *"finding cooperative conservation solutions for birds and the natural world through science and education."* Eagles, grouse, and many other bird species have benefitted from the Center's research and conservation work, and generations of Oklahomans have learned from, assisted with, and taken pride in Sutton Center educational and conservation projects. It is gratifying to have been selected as a finalist for the ONE Award. Many Oklahoma nonprofit organizations do great work, and we are honored to be singled out for our efforts on behalf of wildlife.

Dr. Steve Sherrod accepts the finalist award for the Open Category from representatives of The Chickasaw Nation and the Oklahoma Center for Nonprofits.

Welcome to our new Director of Development!

The Sutton Center is very excited to welcome Audra Fogle to the staff starting in July. Audra brings 25+ years of experience in vision casting, strategic planning, creative programming and managing large volunteer teams. She was most recently employed as the Director of Welcoming Ministries at Boston Avenue United Methodist Church in Tulsa, Oklahoma and is looking forward to the opportunity to share her passion for birds and the conservation of our world with others! Audra will bring her social-oriented management skills to the job along with a great enthusiasm for the Sutton mission. She has a strong background in community leadership and is familiar with the Center and its history…her daughter is a former Sutton Award winner! As Audra works to get acclimated to her new position, she would love the opportunity to know you. You can send her a note of welcome to afogle@suttoncenter.org.

Wild Brew voted best in Tulsa!

The Sutton Center's Wild Brew fundraiser was recently voted "Best Nonprofit Event" in Tulsa, and was featured in the June issue of TulsaPeople magazine! Thank you to the Wild Brew Committee and all who have supported us through Wild Brew! Wild Brew is August 12 this year and tickets are on sale: www.wildbrew.org #suttoncenter #wildbrew

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