

George
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Sutton
AVIAN RESEARCH CENTER



The

SUTTON

NEWSLETTER

Volume 50, Summer 2018



Going Wild!



Cover: Captive bred greater prairie-chickens from the Sutton Center take flight after a successful release into the Nebraska prairies. Photography by Steve Sherrod. Inset: Sutton's captive bred greater prairie-chickens sparring on a wild booming ground in Nebraska. Note necklace transmitter and leg band on jumping chicken. Photography by Bryan Young.



The Sutton Newsletter

*Summer 2018
edition*

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Dear Sutton Center Friends,

Thank you for your help in making 2018, the Year of the Bird, very special! Your loyal support keeps us going, and as Dan Reinking points out in his article, birds are *always* on our minds. A question pondered in the January issue of *National Geographic* is "Why Do Birds Matter?" Notwithstanding their utility for food, pollinating, seed spreading, sanitation, and controlling insect and rodent populations, can you imagine what the world would be like without birds? Even though we curse when they make deposits on our windshields or get to our gardens right before we are ready to pick those perfectly ripe berries, what they teach us as environmental barometers, and the beauty and entertainment they provide, far outweigh the occasional nuisances.

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act was signed into law 100 years ago, and it incentivizes best practices to protect birds. Recent efforts, however, are threatening this law, and these are politics about which we are very concerned. We cannot be indifferent to these most spectacular and beautifully adapted, "living dinosaurs." Plainly stated, we must not let them suffer consequences directly related to a bottom line dictated simply by the dollar but without moral responsibility and long-term sustainability. We need to ask ourselves and our lawmakers how that can be justified.

Now with regard to this newsletter, it was difficult to fit everything you supporters have made possible on the limited number of pages. Our story on returning greater prairie-chickens to Nebraska engaged everyone, and those of us who experienced these birds flying free after first caring for their parents and then starting the next generation as eggs, will never forget it! Thank you to all who made this possible! Experiences with wild creatures can be life changing. Sutton Center intern Meg Gilliland from Bartlesville High School decided to become a conservationist after her biology teacher shared the sound of the single male Kaua'i 'o'o bird singing his heart out but with none of his kind left to hear his efforts. If you Google his song, be prepared to cry.

Oklahoma lost four outstanding individuals in April 2018, and as a result, we have heavy hearts at the Sutton Center. Dwight Boesiger was flying when his heart said "this is it," then Penny Williams and Tom Sears followed, surrounded by love. We later found out that former BEST volunteer Wingo Miller lost his fight with cancer April 14. Although we miss them terribly, we cherish their memories and the legacies they left behind. Penny had asked that memorial donations be made to the Sutton Center in lieu of flowers, and her spirit continues to care for the Sutton Center. We are especially grateful for all that our supporters have provided, and we will continue our mission to save endangered species and to educate our youth with your dedicated commitment.

Thank you for all your support,

Lena Larsson, Ph.D.
Executive Director



IMMEDIATE NEEDS... CAN YOU HELP?

Updated Software - Technology is crucial to the efficiency of an organization. We have several software needs in the areas of database management and desktop publishing. These programs are cloud-based and require a subscription. **A recurring \$250 donation per month would underwrite these needed updates and bring us into the 21st century!**

BIRDS, BIRDS, BIRDS! Our conservation efforts are limited without a live bird education program. We have identified an expert who has educational birds and the capacity to not only rebuild what was lost, but expand our education efforts into the art community, civic groups, youth camps and more. **JOIN THE HONOR ROLL FOR EDUCATION TO SUPPORT A NEW PROGRAM! From \$15 and up; all levels of support are needed.**

With funding for kitchen upgrades provided by Carl and Nan Reinking, we have been able to improve our hospitality for groups! Thank you to the Reinkings!



2018 | YEAR OF THE BIRD

*Story and Photography
by Dan L. Reinking*

Sandhill Cranes come in to an evening roost on the Platte River. This annual spring crane migration through Nebraska is one of the great wildlife spectacles in the world.

A broad coalition of bird conservation organizations named 2018 as the “Year of the Bird.” Led by the National Audubon Society, Birdlife International, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and the National Geographic Society, and joined by over 200 additional organizations including the Sutton Center, we all wish to raise awareness of problems facing bird populations as well as everyday solutions people can participate in to help birds and the environment.

Of course, every year since our 1984 inception has been a “year of the bird” at the Sutton Center. Our focus has always been on research and conservation of endangered or declining birds, as well as educating the public about their plights. Among the many achievements we have realized over the years are the goal-exceeding recovery of nesting Bald Eagle populations in Oklahoma, groundbreaking research and conservation for prairie-chickens (which is continuing with our latest efforts in captive breeding program advancements), large-scale ecological studies of declining grassland birds, conducting the two largest and most intensive statewide bird surveys ever completed in Oklahoma, providing scholarship opportunities for nascent conservation artists, and a decade-long education program of the highest caliber delivered to Oklahoma middle schools.

The work of the Sutton Center and the many other “Year of the Bird” participating organizations is more important than ever, with over 1,300 bird species threatened worldwide, and about 200 that are critically endangered. The Sutton Center is currently working with two of the most endangered birds in North America, and helps monitor others that are poorly studied or may be declining. Indeed, the need for research and conservation of declining birds far exceeds the capacity of the governmental agencies tasked with their study and protection, as any biologist with state or federal wildlife agencies will tell you. Private organizations such as the Sutton Center fill a critical gap in monitoring, research and conservation of birds, along with a vital role in educating the public about the problems and needs of bird populations.

The capacity of the Sutton Center to succeed on behalf of more declining species is directly related to our available resources, both in terms of skilled staff and project funds available for research, conservation and education. To many people (primarily those NOT already reading this newsletter!), birds might merely be a pleasant distraction, or something taken for granted and not much thought about during our busy lives. We want to move more people to better understand or care more deeply about birds. The Sutton Center has long used the phrase “environmental barometer” to describe birds. Despite sounding both clinical and rather dull, it accurately describes one important role birds play as indicators of overall environmental health. Declining bird populations result from changes in the environment, changes which can ultimately affect humans in negative ways. In the end, it does not matter whether someone loves birds because of their beauty and songs, or whether they understand the role birds play in the ecosystem we all depend upon (or both!), as long as they become active participants in maintaining healthy bird populations and a sustainably livable environment. Please help the Sutton Center make 2018 and every year a “Year of the Bird!”



Simple things you can do to help birds:

- **Incorporate native plants into your landscaping. They provide valuable food and nesting locations for birds.**
- **Keep cats indoors. The numbers of birds killed by cats in the United States is estimated to be between 1.3 billion and 4 billion PER YEAR.**
- **Get involved! Participate in local bird counts and volunteer with local bird clubs and conservation groups.**
- **Support the Sutton Center, a local organization with a national impact for birds!**



Releasing captive raised greater prairie-chickens back into the environment so they will survive is more complicated than taking cages into the field and turning the birds loose. They need to be raised “wild” and well nourished, and they must be fit to sustain flight for dispersal and to escape predators. That is why we raised these birds in large, netted grass fields at our facility. Our strategy was to return our precious progenies to where they originate and to where wild prairie-chickens still thrive. The wild

birds may serve as mentors teaching the freed prairie-chickens where to feed, loaf, roost, flee and escape from predators. It is our understanding that this was the first-time captive raised prairie-chickens were to be released in late autumn. The reason was to avoid the peak of raptor migration (which occurs in mid-October).

The original eggs were collected on veterinarian Rich Lackaff’s 40,000 acre Nebraska cattle ranch, and he has been most cooperative in allowing access and in helping with our work. It is about a 10 hour drive from the Sutton Research Center. Leon Sloan’s Greenhouses of Kingston, Oklahoma brought parts for two 62’x30’ arched greenhouses and a hard working crew of three to help start the construction. The Sutton crew joined in working six long days to

RETURNING CAPTIVE RAISED GREATER PRAIRIE-CHICKENS TO THE NEBRASKA SANDHILLS

by Ryan Christensen, Audra Fogle, Bonnie Gibson, Brandon Gibson, Rebecca Krasa, Lena Larsson, Dan Lipp, Lee Maxey, Rusty Rogers, Steve Sherrod, John Toepfer, Leah Zebovitz



get the two acclimation pens set up. That included an outside cover of green shade cloth to keep out raptors, an inside pen of soft netting to contain the prairie-chickens, and both vertical and horizontal wire fencing along the outside bottom, accompanied by electric fencing to keep out digging mammalian predators (coyotes, badgers, weasels, skunks, raccoons, and yes, even chewing kangaroo rats). The enclosures were also furnished with cedar boughs to break up the habitat, and to discourage ‘grouching’ among the prairie-chickens. The plan was for the Oklahoma raised prairie-chickens to be transported to Nebraska and acclimate inside the enclosures prior to release.

A lot of preparation was underway concurrently at the breeding facility. A permit to transfer live birds between states included confirming that they were not *Salmonella* carriers and having a clean certified veterinary bill of health in the last 30 days. All birds had blood sampled and were inspected by Dr. Huckaby and her staff from Bent Arrow Veterinary Clinic. The protocol also included de-worming within three weeks of release, administered both orally and subcutaneously.

Transfer day meant very early rising. Catching and crating had to be conducted efficiently to minimize stress on the birds and to get everything



and everyone loaded for a 6am departure. Taking turns driving, we travelled through all of Kansas and most of Nebraska until reaching the release site. With dusk approaching, we let the chickens out of their crates into the acclimation pens before day's end.

Once safely on site, the birds were allowed to acclimate to the new environment for 10-14 days. The first set was guarded by field techs Brandon Gibson and Dan Lipp, while interns Rebecca Krasa and Leah Zebovitz guarded the second group by taking turns sleeping in a tent or vehicle ~50 yards from the pens in the cold of November. We wanted to be certain that no predators were breaching our security systems.

Being alone, at least three miles from the nearest person, they were able to really take in the calm. Being out there during the night, surrounded by only stars, cows, the prairie-chickens, and very cold air was a pretty cool situation. Leah doesn't think she had ever experienced such quiet (aside from the occasional or not so occasional moo), and she had definitely never seen so many stars. They slept in increments, getting up every two hours to take a walk in the pitch black around the pens to make sure everything looked good. Once it started to get light, the morning routine included checking signals from the birds' transmitters (making sure they were all present and moving), then refilling food, water, and giving the prairie-chicken some extra snacks (frozen veggies).

More staff traveled up to help with the releases, a process beginning at dawn. The electric fences were turned off and the clamshell pen ends were raised so that the prairie-chickens could fly off without injury. The birds congregated out in front of the pens after a person wearing the familiar camo shroud slowly walked through the pens to herd them out. The first set was initially hesitant, but they suddenly flew off together. Shortly after, they returned to fly back overhead, but their numbers had increased. Apparently they had already picked up some wild birds. It was surreal to see the birds that had been hatched in captivity, raised, caught, transported, and monitored, fly free. We don't think we'll ever forget watching them lift off as a flock and fly out much further than they had ever been able to fly before. We watched them in awed silence for as long as we could see them, and then all we could do was hope that we had done our job well enough that they would survive in the wild. Time would tell, as our field technicians were about to start the next phase of the project – following them in the wild.

After the release of 48 captive raised prairie-chickens, a majority of them resided in a ~2 miles range from the release site, with many commonly returning to the pens where they had access to feed. This flock contained a blend of females and males. Birds exceeding 3 miles dispersal would generally not return and seemed to suffer a higher mortality rate compared to birds that stayed close to the release site. Exceptions included a released bird that ended up about 5 miles away after snowfall, then travelling back to the release site within 48 hours.

Brandon muses how the opportunity to follow a flock of birds throughout a winter season was a highly interesting and rewarding experience. Being in the proximity of the birds, you're able to observe the obstacles that come in many shapes and sizes, such as adapting to a new environment, withstanding harsh weather conditions, or staying alert among an abundance of predators.

Common predators of prairie-chickens include a variety of raptors. Especially dangerous are great horned owls with a significant advantage – their ability to see and hunt in the dark. Even keeping a sharp eye on the sky isn't enough for a prairie-chicken to thrive. Ground predators, such as coyotes, badgers, bobcats, or weasels are also threats, and these animals can detect prairie-chickens' scent.





Above: Released as well as wild greater prairie-chickens “hang out” on top of the pen mid-winter in Nebraska.



Above from left to right: Leah Zebovitz, Rebecca Krasa, Bonnie Gibson, Dan Lipp, and Brandon Gibson took shifts guarding the prairie-chickens against predators.

If a prairie-chicken is found being fed upon by any predator, the latter is not necessarily the killer. It is not uncommon for a predator to partially eat a carcass before moving on, and then an entirely separate predator may come along and feed as well. Or, a predator may even come across a carcass and cache the remains under ground; two released birds were discovered that way. A prairie-chicken may have met its end by colliding with a fence, before its carcass was discovered by a scavenging predator. The exact cause of mortality for any specific bird cannot be certain unless actually witnessed by an observer.

The cold winter season in addition to the plethora of predators makes surviving in Nebraska an even more daunting task. Low temperatures combined with high winds create frigid and icy conditions, often dangerous for humans under prolonged exposure without proper clothing. Captive raised birds also seem to react to certain highly hazardous weather, such as snow white-outs. Typically, a flock of released birds that stayed relatively close to each other ended up somewhat separated after a blizzard. Perhaps some of them got separated while attempting to fly during low visibility conditions. After the harshest snowfalls of this last winter, it wasn't uncommon to discover some that did not make it alive, with the worst being a loss of two birds following a winter storm.

And still, the resiliency of prairie-chickens manages to shine through the burdens of living in the wild. At the beginning of spring a mixture of released and wild prairie-chickens were seen booming in a combination of rain and sleet with a 40+mph wind. The winds were intense enough that a hand held tracking antenna was bending from the force. Water from a nearby pond was being sloshed over the entirety of the booming ground from the strongest gusts of winds, and still the males continued to display and chase each other on the booming ground. The orange coloring of the inflated air sacs provided a stark contrast through the mist.

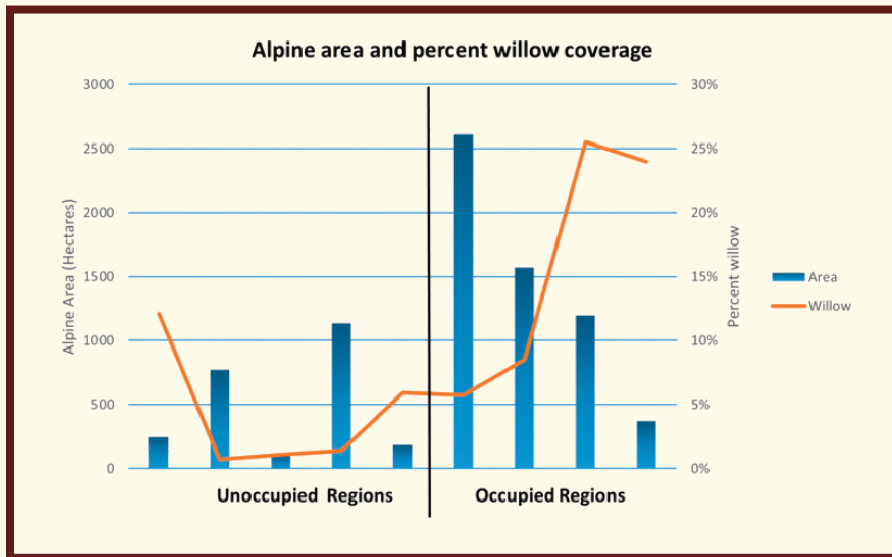
The spring season began March 20th when 14 released birds (7 females and 7 males) still resided in the ~2 miles range of the release site. Six of the seven hens began to leave the next day. One hen was detected almost 7 miles away just two days after leaving. It isn't easy finding hens after dispersal. Three settled into new areas ranging from about 6 miles to over 10 miles away. Finding the other three will likely require airplane tracking. As of May 3rd, only one released hen was still in the vicinity. These captive raised hens seem to have an innate sense or need to disperse as mating season commences. Interestingly enough, none of the 7 cocks within the ~2 miles release site range left the area during this same time span and remained close to the nearby active booming ground.

Following these birds since their release back in November has been a highly challenging, yet enriching, adventure. A full winter provides many occasions for these captive raised birds to succumb, which, unfortunately, many have. Despite that, it's fascinating to follow and watch these birds on booming grounds while knowing their story regarding how they managed to get to where they are. Daily tracking of released and wild birds has provided an intimate knowledge of the similarities and differences of the behavior and movement of these birds, while also endearing a newfound respect for the entirety of the species and nature as a whole.

The Wind and the Willows

Story and Photography by Don H. Wolfe

This is not a review of the famous children's book by Kenneth Grahame. Rather, it is a brief overview of alpine willow distribution in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains of northern New Mexico. In February 2018, we submitted a final report to New Mexico Department of Game and Fish on willow survey efforts from 2011 through 2017. As our readers know, we have been conducting systematic surveys for White-tailed Ptarmigan in New Mexico for over a decade, as well as attempting to identify the factors limiting their abundance and distribution. What it comes down to is that without willows, there are no ptarmigan. Basically,



in addition to their high-elevation requirements (typically above 12,500 feet) and the need for thermal refugia in the form of rifts or boulder fields, ptarmigan also need large expanses of alpine habitat that include willows present on at least 6% of the area. Ptarmigan were not present in alpine areas that were either less than 370 hectares (1.4 square miles) or had willow cover of less than 6%. With warming trends in the mountains, willow distribution may also decline, and ptarmigan declines will likely follow. In addition to the numerous technicians and volunteers who have helped collect this data, we are greatly indebted to Chris Hise with The Nature Conservancy for his assistance in quantifying willow distribution and developing habitat maps. If any of our readers want to see the full report, we are happy to share.

MASKED BOBWHITE UPDATE

by Don H. Wolfe



Our Masked Bobwhite kids shown on the cover of the last *Sutton Newsletter* are no longer kids. In fact, we now have them paired in anticipation of breeding. Chicks produced this summer will be released on Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge in southern Arizona during July and August. We have also had some personnel changes. Emily Curci left in February to pursue other outdoor wildlife opportunities. Although we were sorry to see her go, we are excited to welcome our new aviculturist, Brittney Tayrien who is featured on page 11. We have also been extremely fortunate to have a high-school senior, Meghan Gilliland, interning here the past few months as part of a new internship program developed by Bartlesville High School. We have been so impressed with Meg that we have offered her a summer internship as well, until she begins her college career at Oklahoma State University in August. A second summer intern, Emily Collier, is also helping from mid-May until mid-August. The “new” Emily is a student at Drury University in Springfield Missouri, and ultimately plans to go into marine biology (although maybe we can convince her to change that to birds over the next few months). Anyway, we are very pleased with how things have progressed in the Masked Bobwhite effort. The newly-renovated quail house is very nice, and is well-suited for our needs. The bobwhite seem to like it as well. We are also excited about going into our first breeding season and making progress toward the recovery of this critically endangered species.



Greater prairie-chicken cock booming (left) and a hen (right). Cocks have long pinnae while hens' are short. Prairie-chickens have buff and brown barred body feathers, brown bill, square tail, orange air sac and eye combs. Prairie-chickens are also referred to as pinnated grouse.



Sharp-tailed grouse cock dancing: Black bill, pointed tail, no barring, white spotted body feathers, purple air sac, yellow orange eye combs and no pinnae.



Hen sharp-tailed grouse: Black bill, white belly, white and brown spotting, no barring or pinnae and no exposed eye combs.



Prairie-chicken X sharp-tailed grouse hybrid cock in Minnesota. He has a black bill, brown broken barred body feathers, purple air sac with an orange center, yellow orange eye combs, short pinnae and wedge-shaped tail. The two center tail feathers are a half inch longer than rest.



Greater prairie-chicken X sharp-tailed grouse hybrid cock, black bill, brown and buff broken barred body feathers, yellow eye combs, short pinnae and longer center tail feathers.

HALF AND HALF

by John E. Toepfer

Photography by Steve Oehlenschlager

A very intriguing aspect of grouse ecology is hybridization between different species. Grouse, pheasants, and quail are all in the Pheasant family and so-called “intergeneric hybrids” among these species are not unusual where ranges meet or overlap. North American grouse hybrids include sharp-tailed grouse X greater prairie-chicken, sage-grouse X spruce grouse, sage-grouse X dusky grouse, and greater prairie-chicken X lesser prairie-chicken. The latter are called “guessers.” The “guessers” are not uncommon where the lesser’s range overlaps the greater’s range in Kansas. The ring-necked pheasant also hybridizes with prairie-chickens and grouse in North America, as well as black grouse and Capercaillie in Eurasia.

The sharp-tailed grouse has the best opportunity to hybridize since its large geographic range is adjacent to or overlaps most of the North American grouse species. Greater prairie-chicken and sharp-tailed hybrids are hard to identify except when cocks display. Pure greater prairie-chickens have buff barred body feathers, pinnae (ear feathers), a square tail, and short feathers on their tarsus and feet. In contrast, sharp-tails appear white or grey with a pointed tail, purple air sacs, long feathers on their tarsus, and feathered feet. Hybrids have half the characteristics of prairie-chickens and half of sharp-tailed grouse. Their darker color and very short pinnae make them look like prairie-chicken hens. However, their breast feathers are partially barred, their tail is wedged shaped and the two center feathers are conspicuous and about a half inch longer than the rest. Their air sac color varies.

Hybrid cocks on a display ground are easily identified by their odd display behavior and not seeming to fit in well. They display their very short pinnae that resemble “Mickey Mouse ears.” They often attempt to mimic the display postures of the species they are displaying with and are very aggressive, tending to dominate.

I have seen many greater prairie-chicken X sharp-tail hybrids in Wisconsin, Minnesota, South Dakota and Nebraska, and captured both cocks and hens. Although difficult to recognize in the field, it is apparent once in hand that something is different with the incomplete barring on the breasts and tails. The diagnostic feature is the two center tail feathers, which are about half an inch longer than the rest in both cocks and hens. I have tracked hybrids, which tend to be more mobile than non-hybrids. A second-generation hybrid, or a “back-cross,” has $\frac{3}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{4}$ characteristics with the diagnostic feature again being the two center tail feathers that are only one quarter inch longer than the rest.

Sutton Center Loses Very Good Friends

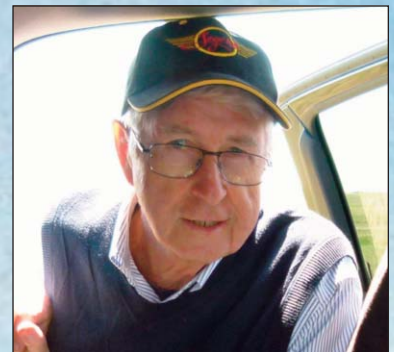
We are especially sorry to report that recently the Sutton Center lost very dear friends who had played significant roles in our conservation mission. Penny Williams had served not only as Oklahoma State Senator for some 23 years, but she also served as Chair of the Board of Directors for the Sutton Avian Research Center. She was a champion for public education and equal rights for women, and she was committed to wildlife conservation as illustrated by her home found in a natural setting on Lake Keystone. She was an icon in the Sooner State, a force to be reckoned with, and a lady of first class moxie. We loved Penny with all our hearts!



Tom Sears was prominent within the Chemical Division of Phillips, and he was one of the father figures of Bartlesville. His initial term of duty with the Sutton Board began in 1987 at the request of Phillips Chair, Bill Douce, but Tom continued his board presence for the long term, later becoming Sutton Board Chair and then for an extended period as Board Treasurer. Like Penny, Tom was a voice of wisdom to whom the Sutton Center looked for valued guidance. Tom was well known and active in the Bartlesville community where he served as chair of the annual Mozart Festival and offered anonymous care to those less fortunate. He had a love for the arts with a fine collection of paintings that he liked to share with others of similar interests. What a huge loss to us all!



Dwight Boesiger spent 30 years with Phillips Petroleum in Research and Development, and he was a true friend of the Sutton Center. As an experienced pilot and flight instructor, we had asked for his help many times in locating various birds that we needed to find and track from the air by means of radio telemetry. He also helped us by flying fertile, developing prairie-chicken eggs back from Nebraska to Bartlesville in order to start a breeder flock. Dwight was always up for a challenge. A master craftsman in the shop, he was quick to join his buddy Brian Albert in order to construct specially padded prairie-chicken transport boxes on short notice. His other shop creations including wooden replicas of Native American basket weavings and ornate rocking chairs were simply works of art! And that doesn't include his photographic expertise that captured our Sutton facilities in images from the air. A man of integrity and character, and a great friend, Dwight will be sorely missed.



The Bald Eagle Survey Team also lost Wingo Miller after an extended battle with cancer. Wingo lived in Bache, Oklahoma and helped us with monitoring of many bald eagle nests in Pittsburg and Haskell counties. Fellow BEST member Karla Boggs remembers Wingo: "He was a good man...as good as they come!"

Saving Lilly

by Rusty Rogers, Ryan Christensen, Bonnie Gibson, Rebecca Krasa, and Leah Zebovitz

A typical Monday at the prairie-chicken breeding facility in early March turned into an urgent mission for the staff. Rusty Rogers returned from lunch with a seriously injured large female dog. With the help of others, they immediately took the red lab mix to a nearby veterinarian. It turned out that she had been shot in the right front leg. The veterinarian advised amputation for a good chance of survival. Not wanting to make that call, an urgent search began for the rightful owner. The dog was chipped, however it was not registered to anyone. While the veterinarian cared for the animal with antibiotics and sedation, the team went to work to find her owner. Interns as well as other helpers (Tamra Rogers, Rachel Tutskey and Vickie Godbehere) began a cyber-investigation. The unregistered chip number being their only clue, the team focused on it for further information. It was discovered that the chip was issued by SPCA of Washington County and, they could provide an owner's name. However, it turned out that the owner had passed away. This wonderful animal obviously belonged to someone, but to whom? Tenacity, that's how! Obituary columns can be helpful for sleuths. More phone calls resulted in the information we needed to contact a nearby neighbor who was frantic to find "Lilly"! We are happy to report that she is adapting very well from her amputation. GREAT JOB TEAM!



Left to Right: Rory Stall and her mother, dog owner Jennifer Stall thank Rusty Rogers and the rest of the APC team with dog bone shaped cookies and puppy chow. Lilly is happy at home and recovering well.

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In An Image-Driven World, “Sutton Award” Students Tell Powerful Stories

by Audra M. Fogle

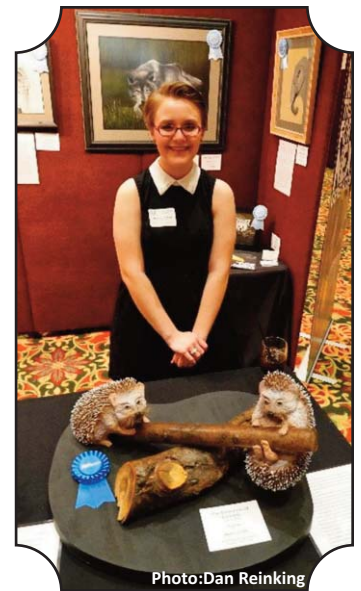
Because people must know about something to care, EDUCATION is crucial to all of our conservation efforts. As an added challenge, we know that many young people have few opportunities to interact directly with nature and continue to be more and more disconnected from our natural world.

Celebrating its 14th year, the Sutton Center, along with NatureWorks, forges new enthusiasm for wildlife conservation by hosting a statewide art competition inviting high school students to tell the conservation story through art and essay. At the show in January, it was exciting to watch students come alive as they eagerly shared their newfound passion for a wide array of conservation issues. From luna moths to Philippine eagles, through sculptures to pastels, these students have intriguing stories to tell. The Sutton Award is free to enter and open to all Oklahoma high school students. Today, as schools struggle to afford enrichment programs like the arts, it is exciting to be able to connect our conservation mission with schools to provide significant scholarships for students and the teachers who work so hard to run their programs on shoestring budgets.

With 127 entries from 27 different high schools, it takes a village to organize all the moving parts to make this an exceptional show.



Above Left: 3rd Place Winner, Rebecca Gilliam, Victory Christian School. **Center:** 2nd Place Winner, Brienne Bolks, Victory Christian School, and **Right:** 1st Place Winner, Rebecca Gilliam, Metro Christian Academy.



Above: Congratulations to People's Choice winner, Madeline Fyffe, 11th Broken Arrow HS.

We express deep appreciation to: the **Jenks Chamber of Commerce** and **The Hive Gallery** for outstanding hospitality and for hosting our show; **Jan McKay, Barbara Bates, Warren Harden, Kirby Lehman, Michael and Gary Linsky** for helping organize and hang the artwork. Thanks to your efforts, everything looked professional. Our judges: **Ms. Barbara Bates**, Sutton Avian Research Center Board Member and art enthusiast; **Mr. David Nunneley**, artist and NatureWorks Emeritus Board Member; **Ms. Cindy Williams**, University of Tulsa Design and Art History professor; **Mr. David Maxwell**, UCO Art Department Chair. With the exceptional student talent, your job was most difficult! A hearty thank you goes to **Nothing Bundt Cakes, Nouveau Chocolates, Groggs Green Barn** and **The Sutton Staff** for helping to make the reception exceptional. **Charlotte Suttee**, Jenks Film Student, for the well done video highlighting the awards; **Grant's Frames** for making our winning student's work shine for the NatureWorks show; **Dan Reinking** for preserving the artwork and show in photos; **Karen Kilbourne** for many hours of administrative support and organizational memory; **Oklahoma Center for Arts Education at UCO, Ines Burnham and Debra Gallegher**, for collecting art from the OKC part of the state and happily driving it all the way to Tulsa, and for your organizational wizardry; **Barbara Bates, Jan McKay and Peggy Grant** for your enthusiastic support through the entire Sutton Award process; and finally, to the **NatureWorks Board** for their financial support and creative vision.

Educating young people to appreciate the beauty of diversity and to tell a story that will inspire others to preserve it aids Sutton in our central mission of protecting the natural world for the next generation. The Sutton Award and education programs are much needed and have a proven long-term impact, but your financial support is needed in order for them to continue. For as little as \$15 per month, you can be a member of the Honor Roll for Education. Go online to our donate page to support Sutton Center Education Programs or call Audra Fogle for more information.

Staff Update: Meet Brittney

Hello, I am Brittney Tayrien, the new masked bobwhite aviculturist at Sutton Center. I've always had a passion for wildlife with the goal to make a difference. My passion for wildlife started when I was little. I spent my childhood swimming in Spring Creek by Locust Grove, OK collecting crawdads, fishing, and exploring. My family would travel to North Carolina every summer to camp, hike, play in waterfalls and search for salamanders. When I was twelve years old I started volunteering at a wildlife sanctuary, where I discovered that I wanted to pursue a degree in wildlife. I got the opportunity to learn food preparation, cage maintenance, and animal enrichment for all kinds of animals. In high school I was offered a job at Bent Arrow Veterinary Hospital as a kennel technician. While my main job was to care for the pets boarded at the hospital, I also gained experience in assisting with medical care and native wildlife rehabilitation. I spent my free time volunteering with local wildlife rehabilitators, Animal Rescue Foundation, and with Sutton Center's education program.

I received my Bachelor's degree with a focus on wildlife management in May 2017 from Oklahoma State University. While in college I volunteered to work on graduate projects including eastern bluebird nesting box monitoring, bird window collisions, gizzard shad electrofishing, and amphibian testing for chytrid fungus. I was then offered a temporary job on a graduate project studying habitat suitability for Oklahoma black bears. We surveyed vegetation and collected arthropods. I also helped trap black bears in the Ouachita National Forest for population analyses and data collection. I fell in love with the bears and sought out every way to help with this ongoing project. During my senior year I worked in the lab at OSU sorting through scat samples from black bears for a dietary study. After graduating, I have seasonally worked as a Lead Research Technician trapping black bears in the Ozark National Forest.

I started working for Sutton in February 2018. I'm honored to be a part of the Sutton Center team to help save the endangered masked bobwhite quail. I will do all I can to make sure this project is successful.



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