

George
Miksch
Sutton

AVIAN RESEARCH CENTER



The
SUTTON
NEWSLETTER

**Reaching New Heights
for Recovery!**

VOLUME 51 | WINTER 2018

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



TABLE OF CONTENTS:

- 2 Letter from Executive Director
- 3 NestCam Update
- 4 Dr. John E. Toepfer Memorial
- 6 WILD BREW 20 Year Anniversary
- 7 What the Heck is a Lek?
- 8 Masked Bobwhite Hatched
- 10 Update on Prairie-Chickens
- 11 Merit Award Winner Dan Reinking
- 11 Kirby Lehman Inducted Into the OK Educators Hall of Fame
- 12 The International Grouse Symposium
- 13 Have Mission Will Travel
- 13 The Sutton Award
- 14 Recent Publications
- 14 Recent Presentations
- 14 Loyal Supporters!

ON THE COVER:

Mutual acceptance between captive-raised Masked Bobwhite chicks and their just-introduced foster dad provides the chicks with a better chance for survival after being released into the wild. This technique and other innovations are being applied by the Sutton Center and other partners involved in conserving this endangered species.
Photo by Dan Reinking.

A Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Sutton Center friends,

Thank you for your enduring support. The due date for staff to submit articles for this newsletter was October 8. John Toepfer submitted "What the Heck is a Lek" as his contribution, and he wanted our board member Nop Paothong's beautiful photographs for illustrations. We are so sad to tell you that John died suddenly following a routine hip replacement surgery. I spoke with John the afternoon after the surgery, which was performed October 9th. He said that he felt fine, and that the doctors already wanted him to walk. He also said that I could visit, which I was planning to do the next day. But, early Thursday morning, John's brother Paul called with terrible news. John had been joking with the nurses, started laughing, and then his heart stopped. We are still reeling from the shock.

We are not the only ones mourning, there are many heartbroken researchers, wildlife professionals, and students who will miss his advice. If you would like to contribute in John's memory, donations may be sent to the Sutton Center marked "STCP." We aim to use the funds towards a prairie grouse research repository, where all the data and specimens collected by John and his colleagues can be used to extend our knowledge about this special order of birds. We will also accept gifts to help establish a John Toepfer Prairie Grouse Research Scholarship. The latter was first suggested by Dr. Dan Svedarsky, who has known John since he was a graduate student in 1973.

While mourning; we also want to celebrate. There are so many things for which to be thankful. Knowing that what John has done and what you and I do will continue to have a positive effect in the future. We are finding ways to increase survival of very young prairie-chickens. We are releasing captive raised prairie-chickens, that in turn are raising chicks in the wild. At this moment, there are more masked bobwhites in the wild than there have been in decades. The outlook for this quail is brighter than ever. We also monitored the most bald eagle nests ever recorded in the state of Oklahoma this past breeding season.

Thank you too for a record setting 20th Wild Brew - it raised almost double the funds for Sutton Center's conservation and education causes compared to the previous recent years! We are so grateful to all of you who help us in so many ways and share our passion for wildlife conservation. John was a champion. And while we mourn the loss of our friend, we celebrate his life and the passion he shared for the wild. We remember the twinkle in his eye as we work to preserve his mountain of life-long research and can hear his reminder, "if you want to save prairie-chickens, you have to know where they sleep and what they eat!" In other



words, nature will not be saved by staying near a screen. So, to honor John, go outside and enjoy the wonderful world around you. We have much to do to preserve this land and the creatures within it.

Thank you for being part of the mission,

Lena Larsson, Ph.D.
Executive Director

NestCam Update

by Dan Reinking

The Sutton Center's popular "eye in the sky" Bald Eagle nest camera is up and running again at Sequoyah National Wildlife Refuge (at least as of press time!). A premature camera failure last spring deprived online viewers of seeing nest activities leading up to fledging of the young eagles. Oklahoma's frequently severe weather takes a toll on electronic equipment, especially when it is mounted near the top of a large cottonwood tree where strong winds, lightning, moisture and extreme temperatures are common! We are keeping our fingers crossed that the new camera and its video will remain functional throughout the 2018-2019 nesting season, which for Oklahoma eagles is approximately November through June. Our camera provides the opportunity to witness the sequence of events that take place each season at an eagle nest. Starting with nest repairs and additions in the fall, viewers can then see egg laying, incubation, hatching, brooding, feeding, and fledging activities over a period of several months. Even when eagles have used an alternate nest site or have had a nest fail, viewers during prior seasons have been treated to Ospreys landing on a nest, and Great Horned Owls borrowing the nest for their own use. To view the live nest video, click the "Watch" link at the top of our website at suttoncenter.org.



The Sequoyah Bald Eagle nest as viewed from the ground below. *Photo by Dan Reinking.*



An adult Bald Eagle from the Sequoyah nest camera pair of eagles visits the nest in September, shortly after the new camera was installed.

Photo by Dan Reinking.



A repair crew on its way up to the Sequoyah Bald Eagle nest. *Photo by Dan Reinking.*

The Foremost Expert on Greater Prairie-Chickens is no longer with us

Dr. John E. Toepfer 1948-2018



John loved to fish but refused to eat them!



Lena Larsson: It was a punch in our hearts when John's heart stopped working two days after hip surgery. Although John often used to joke about his passing, we really thought that there would be many more years of him sharing his incredible knowledge about everything related to prairie-chickens. I know of no other person that has spent as much time in the field researching prairie grouse as John. He lived and breathed prairie-chickens. There was no lack of stories, and John was a true researcher who never stopped asking questions. He left behind a treasure trove of data, specimens, over 20,000 slides, photos, videos, field notebooks, transmitters, the Hamerstrom van, and... the list goes on.

Now, John was adamant that to be qualified to analyze field data, you must have been in the field yourself. He also did not have high regards for geneticists, which is a category that I belong to. But we got along well since we share a love for the birds and for the prairie. John was a great mentor and inspired many more people than we know. He always offered to help in whatever capacity needed, even when his health was deteriorating.

John used to be an athlete, and he possessed unbounding energy, to the extent that he could wear out the hardest.

John worked as a field technician for, and became close friends with Fran and Frederick (Hammy) Hamerstrom, who in turn had been students of Aldo Leopold. Before Fran passed away, she asked John to take care of all their data. Otherwise burn it. He kept it. He also kept his graduate advisor Dr. Ray Anderson's research collection. These valuable and irreplaceable resources are now stored in four places here at the Center. John left us the task of organizing this. We will be grateful to all who can help. First it will be physical; second it will be sorting; then it will be digitizing; finally, there have to be some special minds with field knowledge for analyses. The goal is to create a special grouse repository, a dream of many biologists and conservationists, including John. John, we want to honor your memory and legacy with all our abilities!

Bonnie Gibson: In my career I have had the opportunity to work with a wide assortment of birds and other animals. I can honestly say that prairie-

chickens are a unique and challenging species that have completely humbled me. Until working with these birds, I did not realize how much there still is for me to learn.

When getting to know John, it only took a couple of days for me to realize that the depth of his knowledge about prairie-chickens was unlike that of any other person I have ever encountered. I very quickly became dependent on John to help answer my many questions about behaviors, health, breeding, radio collars, and tracking. There was not a single day that went by that we did not speak. Even on my weekends he would call me to chat. Of course with John, the conversation is all prairie-chickens all the time. He did not understand my desire for a day off from talking "birds," and would often tease me for suggesting that I needed such a thing. Today I am grateful for every second of those conversations with the man who became my biggest mentor.

On the afternoon before his passing, I called John at the hospital to check in, and to make sure he was planning to eat some dinner (John was notorious for skipping several meals a day).

After we spoke, I contacted the nurses' station on his floor to see if it would be ok for me to send him a pizza. They loved the idea. That night I had a meat lover's pizza and a Mountain Dew, his very favorite drink, delivered to John's hospital room. If you know John at all, you know there was rarely a moment when he did not have a Mountain Dew in hand! In hindsight I am so grateful I decided to send him some dinner, which ended up being his last meal. His passing was a huge shock, and a massive loss for all of us. In his wake he left behind a lifetime's worth of data and research that will live on as his legacy. In this way he can continue to be my mentor, and can continue teaching us all about the birds to which he dedicated his life.

Steve Sherrod: I first met John sometime in the 1990's when seeking advice about the most effective way to trap greater prairie-chickens for a research project here in Oklahoma. From the get-go, he was friendly, helpful, and chock-full of positive energy. We both became members of the Attwater's Prairie-Chicken Recovery Team in 2000, and this resulted in a lot of enjoyable discussions/debates about grouse related topics and ideas. There was no one more dedicated to prairie-chickens than John, and I can only believe that he counted greater prairie-chickens rather than sheep in his sleep. He often stayed up all night recapturing chickens, sometimes alone, spotlighting so that batteries or transmitters could be replaced. Once on the return trip to Oklahoma from Nebraska, John was awakened by a truck driver tapping on John's pickup window. John had fallen sound asleep at 3AM at a stop sign in a small town. And then there was the time when John and field tech Brandon Gibson were tracking prairie-chickens at night and rolled their Datsun pickup off a sand dune bluff, neither being too worse for wear.

I would introduce John as the person in North America most knowledgeable about greater prairie-chickens, and if you were going to talk to John at all, be prepared, because you were going to talk about prairie-chickens, and John would do most of the talking (I say with a smile). Of course he was interested in other things too including basketball (he had been on the state champion high school team, plus he became a passionate Oklahoma City Thunder fan), fishing (he loved to catch fish but refused to eat them), football (the Packers forever!), and baseball (Dodgers!!! so he would have been disappointed in the recent Series plus the 30 years prior.) That means you would have no problem conversing with John as long as you discussed prairie-chickens, basketball, prairie-chickens, fishing, prairie-chickens, the Packers, prairie-chickens, the Dodgers, and prairie-chickens ad infinitum.

After joining the Sutton Center staff as the Society for Tympanuchus Cupido Pinnatus/Hamerstrom Prairie Grouse Research Chair, John and I usually ate dinner together 2-3 times/week. Some of that time was spent trading jokes at each other's expense. John always had a twinkle in his eye and a ready chuckle to accompany his latest joke. There are many who grieve deeply, as do we, about the departure from this world of this kind soul. However, you can bet that if there are prairie-chickens in heaven, John will be riding across the clouds in an old beat up Datsun pickup with an extended antenna and a smile on his face, tracking them.



John and his very good friend Fran Hamerstrom



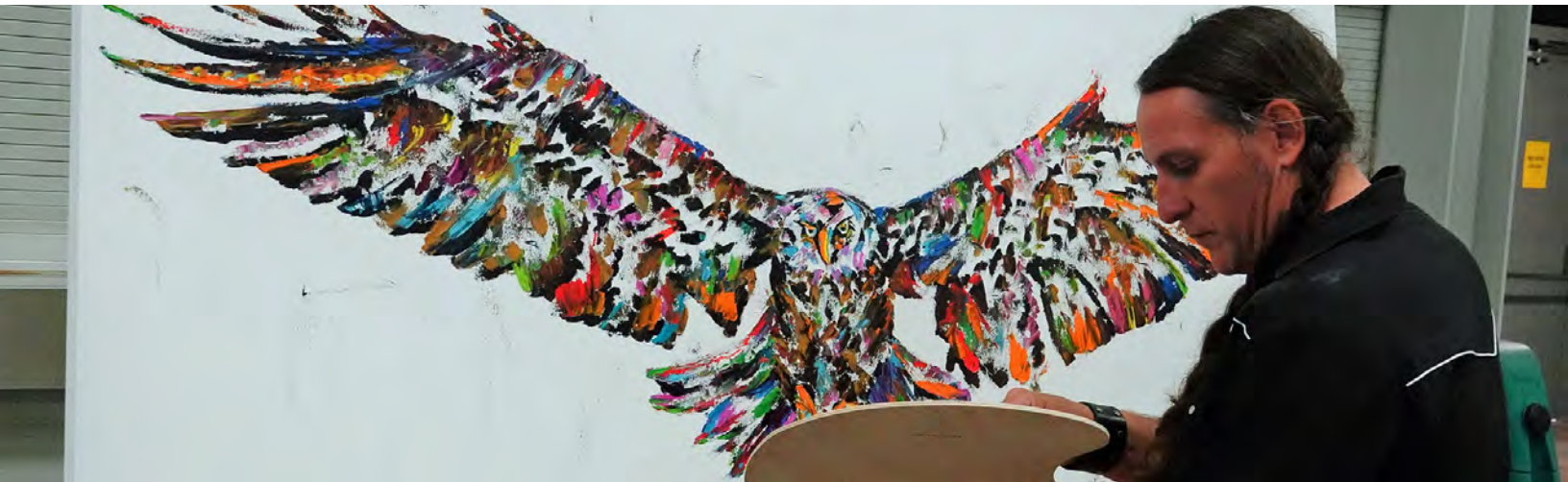
John night lighting for prairie-chickens



John adjusting tracking antenna on his Datsun field pickup

WILD BREW 20-Year Anniversary a Huge Success

by Audra Fogle



Artist Josh Stout created an eagle painting live during the event which was auctioned to support the Sutton Center.
Photo by Dan Reinking.

Special thanks to co-chairs Stephanie Williams and Coleman Miller, silent auction coordinator, Sandy Thompson and the entire Wild Brew committee for all their hard work in the success of our 20-Year Anniversary of Wild Brew on August 25th! Everyone worked tirelessly to make sure we celebrated 20 years with one of our best years ever!

The craft brewing industry is exploding in Tulsa, and we are especially thankful for all the breweries that treat us like family. With the addition of excellent samplings from Tulsa’s finest restaurants, Wild Brew stands out among other beer festivals, and we are grateful for not only our faithful supporters but for the new friends who joined us this year. We had to expand the dance floor with the return of the Fabulous Mid Life Crisis Band, and the patron hour would not be the same without the tunes of Shelby Eicher and Mark Bruner.

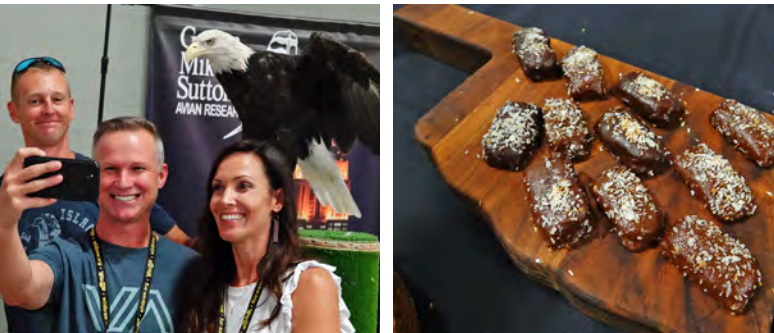
Guests enjoyed learning more about the wildlife conservation mission of the Sutton Center! Representatives from the Bald Eagle Survey Team (the “BEST”) were present and guests were able to measure their wingspans while visiting with Sutton staff about our current projects. Adding a sense of awe to the evening, BENSAR, the bald eagle hatched at Sutton Center 26 years ago, who is famous for being photographed by Joel Sartore and projected onto the Empire State Building as well as St Peter’s Basilica in Rome, posed for pictures with our guests. We are grateful to Ryan VanZant and the Hutchinson Zoo for making it possible.

Thanks to Sandy Thompson’s efforts \$9500 was raised through our silent auction. Items included

specialty beers, custom Corn Hole and Jenga games, private brewery tours, sports memorabilia including a signed Baker Mayfield helmet, and a live painting demonstration by local artist Josh Stout. Do you have tickets, access to a hunting cabin or something fabulous you would like to donate for next year’s Wild Brew? Your gift will make a difference to our fundraising efforts and is tax deductible. Contact the Sutton Center for more information.

Wild Brew is a great party, but it’s also the biggest fundraiser for the conservation work of the Sutton Center. Thank you to all of our patrons and sponsors not only for throwing a great party but for giving endangered species a fighting chance through the conservation work of the Sutton Center.

Follow us on Facebook for potential Wild Brew discounts, holiday deals and new sponsorship opportunities! You don’t want to miss next year’s event when “Wild Brew turns 21” on Saturday, August 24th in 2019! Find us on Facebook: Wild Brew Tulsa, and Twitter: #wildbrew, and download our app in the Apple or Android app stores by searching: Wild Brew. Visit wilddbrew.org for more info on the event, pictures, and the upcoming 2019 event!



Selfies with Sutton’s Bald Eagle and foods from many of Tulsa’s best restaurants, such as these R-bars from the R Bar & Grill are always popular. *Photos by Dan Reinking.*

What the Heck is a Lek?

by John E. Toepfer



A sharp-tailed grouse cock dancing on a dancing ground.
Photo by Noppadol Paothong.



Greater prairie-chicken cocks booming to a single hen on a booming ground. *Photo by Noppadol Paothong.*

Fran Hamerstrom used to chastise presenters when they used the term “lek” when they meant “booming ground.” What is the issue with the terms “lek” and “lekking?” The terms refer to the daily gathering of males at the same location (lek) during the mating season to engage in competitive displays (lekking) to attract females for breeding. These are broad, general categories of bird display. Using lek to refer to both the display behavior and the actual display ground is confusing and not specific enough; a wide variety of animals exhibit lekking behavior. Lek is also Albania’s currency. Lek counts are not unique to prairie grouse or even vertebrates. It can refer to money or over a hundred different animal species. Antelope, hammerhead bats, wasps, butterflies, spiders, frogs, hummingbirds, and even fish have leks. Confusing indeed!

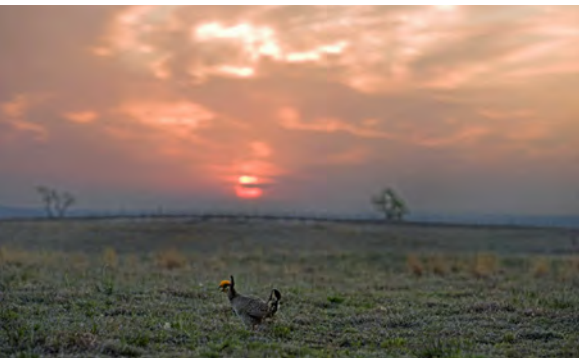
This argument about lek and lekking is not new and has been raised before by grouse researchers. Hjorth (1970) also indicated that using the term was confusing as “some authors use lek when talking about the place; others mean both activity and place.” In Swedish, from which the word is derived, lek (= play) always refers to the activity; “fish and frogs collect for lek.” If individuals involved “in play” is the lek, then after males leave the display ground, one could say the lek is finished.

Lumsden (1965) strongly emphasized that the displays and display grounds of the prairie grouse each have very unique names: greater prairie-chickens boom on a booming ground, lesser prairie-chickens gobble on a gobbling ground, sharp-tailed grouse dance on a dancing ground and greater and Gunnison sage-grouse strut on a strutting ground. All are lekking grouse and use arenas for their communal display to attract hens for breeding.

It is my opinion and concern that “lek” by itself is too generic and confusing a term, and that the terminology presented by Lumsden over 50 years ago is much more specific and should be used in place of the generic term “lek” for the prairie grouse species. I realize that I cannot make anybody change how they use the term “lek,” but I do hope you think about its usage. So be aware that the term “lek” or “lek survey” is not specific to prairie grouse and no one really knows what the heck a lek is until you mention the species. Please honor prairie grouse and use the established names for their displays and display grounds. After all,

the greater prairie-chicken is the only bird in North America that booms, and it does so on a booming ground.

Videos of the displays of the different prairie grouse species can be found on internet by searching: “sharp-tailed grouse dance,” “prairie-chicken dance,” “sage grouse dance,” “Postcard: Lesser prairie chicken,” and “Attwater’s prairie chicken dance.” However, be aware that some internet videos show the wrong species!



A lesser prairie-chicken cock on a gobbling ground. *Photo by Noppadol Paothong.*



Greater sage-grouse males strutting to one hen on a strutting ground. *Photo by Noppadol Paothong.*

Masked Bobwhite Hatched at Sutton Center are Released in Arizona

by Don Wolfe, Brittney Tayrien, Sarah Harren



Captive-raised chicks that hatched at the Sutton Center this past breeding season. They were paired with adult Masked Bobwhite foster dads. Photos by Dan Reinking.

As our readers may recall, we received a grant from the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in 2017 to start a captive breeding facility for the endangered Masked Bobwhite (*Colinus virginianus ridgwayi*). We are the second breeding facility in the United States that now raises this bird in captivity, with the other being the USFWS at Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge (BANWR) in southern Arizona. The Masked Bobwhite was first described in 1884, and by 1900 it was thought to have disappeared from the United States. Intensive livestock grazing in combination with drought contributed to their decline. USFWS, volunteers, and Sutton Center staff have been working hard on habitat restoration on the Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge. Some of the ubiquitous mesquite is being removed, and we have been spreading native plant seeds. We also use a technique known as “half-cutting” mesquite trees to provide better cover in areas near where quail have recently been released or where we are planning future releases.

In September 2017 we transferred eggs from BANWR to start our breeding flock, which now numbers 160 individuals. This past summer was our first year of production, which has been extremely successful. Our geneticist, Lena Larsson, chose breeding pairs with the most genetic diversity and least relatedness. Those birds chosen were paired up and placed in our 37 breeding chambers. Some pens had three birds; two female sisters, and one male. We did this to increase egg production while keeping track of the ancestry of our chicks. They

were paired up in May, and in July our birds started to lay eggs. Our aviculturist and interns collected eggs twice a day. Every egg was marked with a date and identification number, then placed in a cooler until we were ready to move them into the incubators. After 7 days of incubation, the eggs were checked for fertility and weighed. After 22 days of incubation the chicks were ready to hatch. About 600 of 800 laid eggs hatched.

In most quail species, the males do the majority of the parenting. We had surplus males that were not needed as future breeders, so they became foster dads. Chicks were paired up with their foster parents at around one week of age. The chicks were placed in a small pen with an adult, and within minutes these individuals started brooding the



The Masked Bobwhites were released into outdoor acclimation pens at BANWR to allow the birds to settle down from the long journey from Oklahoma and adjust to their new environment. Photo by Brittney Tayrien.

chicks. It was amazing to watch the foster parents taking care of the very lively little ones. A week later, these “family groups” were transported to Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge; 1200 miles makes for a long day’s drive. Upon arrival, the birds were acclimated in outdoor pens, both to allow them to settle down after the long journey from Oklahoma, and to adjust to their new environment. After a week in the acclimation pens, they were captured and placed in small wooden boxes. They were on their way to freedom!

Not much is known about the Masked Bobwhite’s historical habitat, but research was done to find locations that provide the three main necessities: food, water, and shelter. Several locations with the best available resources to support these quail were selected. The boxes with family groups were released in well covered spots. We took four sets of Masked Bobwhite chicks, over 550 total, to Arizona in July to September. Thirty family groups of Masked Bobwhite have been released on Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge this year. Of the 30 family

groups released, 12 were composed of Masked Bobwhite chicks adopted by Northern Bobwhite (*Colinus virginianus texanus*) males from Texas. These Northern Bobwhites were vasectomized so they cannot interbreed. Eighteen family groups were adopted by captive-raised Masked Bobwhite adults. All the adult bobwhite were radioed for tracking at least every other day. At the time of this writing, 20 of the family groups are still being tracked. This is exciting news for their recovery. Although we don’t know what obstacles we will be facing between now and next summer, we are extremely optimistic that we



Our four-week-old Masked Bobwhite chicks checking out the world for the first time! Photo by Brittney Tayrien.

will have surviving birds in the wild going into the next breeding season, are making small but significant steps toward recovery of this quail. We are also still getting reports of sightings near the areas where birds produced at BANWR were released in 2017. We are optimistic that our contributions, along with those of our partners, will be successful in saving the Masked Bobwhite.

Our captive breeding is over for the year, and we kept about 45 chicks to raise for future breeders and/or adopting parents. Although the hectic breeding season has passed, there is still much work to do. We are developing plans and seeking funding to add more breeding chambers so that we can increase numbers of releasable birds. This could result in doubling annual production or more.

We also want to welcome our newest aviculturist, Sarah Harren. Sarah is an Oklahoma State University graduate with a degree in Natural Resources and Wildlife Ecology Management. Sarah started here as an intern in August, and has shown the enthusiasm and dedication we are seeking for this important project. She spent two weeks this fall on the Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge to work alongside the head wildlife biologist. Sarah tracked our released birds and helped with habitat restoration work on the refuge. We are excited to have her on board.



Every bird is given an identification band to keep track of genetics. Photo by Dan Reinking.

Update on Prairie-Chicken Raising And Releasing

by Tayler Frazier, Bonnie Gibson, Brandon Gibson, Lena Larsson, Lee Maxey, Steve Sherrod, John Toepfer, Gary Tweedy, Cameron Wood

We shared our story about our first release of greater prairie-chickens in the Nebraska Sandhills in the last issue, but we want to keep you up to date with what has been happening since then. We are happy to report that five females released in 2017 made it through the nesting season, and we confirmed that one of them fledged 8 chicks! Some of our captive raised males kept busy on the Nebraska booming grounds, although the last “fighter” succumbed to predation by the end of May. Displaying is dangerous business and the time of highest mortality among males.

While field tech Brandon Gibson kept track of hens nesting in the wild and enjoyed the antics on the booming ground in Nebraska, the Bartlesville prairie-chicken crew had their hands full experimenting with eggs and chicks produced in captivity. Incubation and hatching went very well, but there is still a mystery regarding mortalities of some chicks less than 10 days old. Approximately half of the chicks were raised according to the Attwater’s prairie-chicken protocol, including the same type of housing in metal brooders and cages. The other set was raised in large, plastic stock tanks and fed a different diet. There was not a significant difference in survival between the groups, but young chicks need special, good bacteria in order to stay healthy. Some chicks seemed to lack such good bacteria, and thus had problems with harmful bacteria that are common in the environment.

Most of the chicks produced this year were again released in Nebraska. We want to compare possible differences in survival between birds being released earlier at a younger age versus in late fall. The advantage can be that poults released younger have more time to become accustomed to life in the wild before harsh winter weather sets in, although they may suffer higher mortality to predators since they are less physically developed.

Significant preparation is necessary before transporting young birds from Bartlesville to the acclimation/release site in Nebraska. To minimize stress when catching birds to move, we designed a simple, yet effective “catch tunnel.” Comprised of fine mesh net and held open with plastic rings, the tunnel narrows along its length, forming three chambers in which the chickens are captured and secured via drawstrings. Assembling the catch tunnel takes only minutes, and requires zip ties and a handful of clothespins.

We transported our first group of 2018-hatched prairie-chickens to Nebraska on August 31. Intern Cameron Wood was introduced to the breathtaking sandhills and

helped Brandon Gibson monitor the birds, which needed to recuperate from the transport and become used to their new environment in the greenhouse-style acclimation pens. These wide open spaces were quite different from Cameron’s native Georgia. She had not expected so much diversity such as pronghorn, small mammals, badgers, and an abundance of wildflowers. John Toepfer also introduced Cameron to tracking and night-lighting prairie-chickens.

This year, we tried an even softer release by luring the young birds from the pens with a mix of vegetables which they really like. It was very effective in keeping them calm during the release, and they walked rather than flew out of the pens. Although we did not get to see them take wing following this year’s initial release, this procedure minimizes the risk of aerial collision by young birds. The released prairie-chickens were soon returning to the acclimation pen area, and now do so regularly for grain and pellets that our field techs leave at feeding stations. The second release took place in early November, and by the time you read this we will be tracking all the released birds.



John Toepfer and Brandon Gibson adjusting straps before transporting captive raised prairie-chickens to acclimation pens.



Prairie-chicken entering the catch tunnel.

2018 Oklahoma Ornithological Society Merit Award Winner Dan Reinking

Senior Biologist, Sutton Avian Research Center
Editor *Oklahoma Breeding Bird Atlas* and
Author *Oklahoma Winter Bird Atlas*

by Audra Fogle

When the Oklahoma Ornithological Society (OOS) chose to recognize Dan Reinking with their most prestigious merit award, we were not surprised at all! Dan is well known for his outstanding contributions in wildlife and habitat conservation, especially those with direct bearing on native birds in Oklahoma.

Dan grew up in Iowa and has been a birder since age 12 when his uncle took him birding for the first time. He was intrigued enough by birds to pursue a career studying them. Since 1992, he has studied the ecology and distributions of birds. As a Senior Biologist, he has conducted extensive research on the breeding ecology of grassland birds. With the Breeding Bird Atlas Project, the groundbreaking Oklahoma Winter Bird Atlas Project, and his regular column in the Tulsa World, Dan is Sutton Center’s best expert on Oklahoma birds!

He is a former board member of the South Dakota Ornithologists’ Union and a past president of the Oklahoma Ornithological Society. Dan has served on a variety of state, regional, and national bird conservation committees, and is currently a Management Board member of the Oaks and Prairies Joint Venture, which works to study and conserve birds in parts of Oklahoma and Texas. He has worked on or supervised bird studies in Minnesota, South Dakota, California, Oklahoma, Texas, and Arkansas and has published his research work in a number of national and regional ornithology journals. Many of his projects involve songbirds and he has also worked extensively with waterfowl, shorebirds, rails, owls, and eagles. In his spare time, Dan is an avid cyclist. **CONGRATULATIONS DAN!!**



Dan Reinking receives a 2018 OOS Merit Award.

Sutton Center Board Member Kirby Lehman

Inducted Into the Oklahoma Educators Hall of Fame

by Audra Fogle

We are proud to announce that Sutton Center board member Dr. Kirby Lehman was recently inducted into the Oklahoma Educators Hall of Fame. Dr. Lehman spent 45 years in education serving in all roles from Teacher to Principal to Superintendent. He spent 23 of his many years devoted to education with Jenks Public Schools. He has served as the President of the United Suburban Schools Association, Legislative School Administrators, and numerous philanthropy and community committees and boards. Dr. Lehman is a sought-after public speaker nationally as well as internationally. He was named CCOSA Oklahoma Administrator of the Year in 2006 and received the lifetime Achievement Award in 2013. Dr. Lehman is a visionary in education and his powerful advocacy for better policy and funding has earned him the label of “champion for school children” by many fellow educators. We are so fortunate to have Kirby’s passion for education and dynamic leadership skills on Sutton Center’s board. Congratulations to Dr. Lehman for this prestigious award!



Attendees from Left to Right:
Warren Harden, Barbara Bates, Dr. Kirby
Lehman, Genny Lehman, and Audra Fogle.

The International Grouse Symposium 2018

by Lena C. Larsson, John E. Toepfer, Donald H. Wolfe



Photo by Don Wolfe.

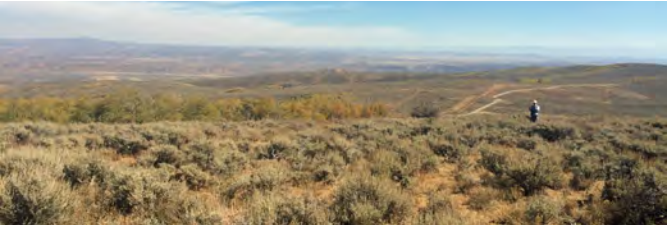
A fall week in Logan, Utah, gave us an opportunity to share some of what Sutton Center has done since the last International Grouse Symposium (IGS) in Iceland in 2015. It is a treat to meet up with fellow grouseers and exchange information. There were over 170 international participants, including those from Azerbaijan, Canada, Central Europe, Great Britain, Japan, and Scandinavia. Don Wolfe, John Toepfer, and Lena Larsson represented Sutton Center.

The conference consisted of oral presentations early morning to late. Don displayed our New Mexico white-tailed ptarmigan research at the Wednesday evening poster session. The Thursday field trip included visits to research and conservation projects in the area. It was a beautiful day with incredible vistas and fall colors. We even got to see sage-grouse! The Columbian sharp-tailed, ruffed and dusky grouse in the area didn't grant us the same privilege, but we got to see some ruffed grouse very close-up; some participants took advantage of the hunting season.

Lena presented twice, both on Sutton Center's prairie-chicken captive breeding as well as release experiments. John presented data from his Nebraska/Minnesota comparative study and the decline in sharp-tailed grouse and greater prairie-chicken brood sizes over time. There was great interest in the possibility of researching prairie-chicken gut microbes that may be necessary for transplanted and captive raised birds to adapt to local wild diet. It may be one of the reasons we struggle with chick survival - they don't receive the right bacteria to digest their food! Experiments have been done with the endangered rock ptarmigan in Japan, where they are now doing both wild and captive conservation.

The conference ended with a Friday evening banquet and a special invited guest speaker, Sutton Center board member Noppadol Paothong. He gave an excellent presentation, and we were just about moved to tears!

Poland has offered to host IGS in 2021. Special thanks goes to Dr. Dwayne Elmore (Oklahoma State University/Attwater's prairie-chicken recovery team member) and Dr. Dave Dahlgren with their team who did such an excellent job organizing this IGS. Thank you so much, and we look forward to seeing our fellow international grouseers in three years!



View of the Deseret Ranch where management techniques benefit the local sage-grouse population.



Can you spot the sage-grouse?

Have Mission Will Travel:

by Audra Fogle

The Sutton Center has work to do. Not only are we helping with the intense recovery efforts of two endangered species, the Attwater's Prairie-Chicken and the Masked Bobwhite quail, we are also witnessing the success of the recovery of the Bald Eagle in our state, we are the home to one of the largest - if not THE largest - collection of grouse data in the world, and the first organization to survey and publish atlases of both the breeding and winter birds in Oklahoma. We also have a mission to educate people about why the conservation of birds matters to all of us. In an effort to share our story, inspire change and maybe even laugh a little, the Sutton Center is taking our show on the road! Over the past few months we have shared our mission with thousands through booth presence and demonstrations at Rotary clubs in Claremore and Bartlesville, The American Business Club in Enid, retirement groups, the Youth Expo in Tulsa, Wild Brew, Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation's Wildlife Expo in Guthrie, Kristen Abramson's Bird of Prey Sculpting Workshop in Tulsa, Oklahoma Art Education Association Annual Conference in Oklahoma City, and The Wildlife Society's Annual Conference in Cleveland, Ohio. We've been 'hoppin.' But, it's been fun to spread hope by sharing our stories, laugh with children and families when they measure their "wings" to see what bird they resemble on the wingspan display, and invite others to join us in our mission.

Watching people's eyes widen when we share about all the work we have done is fun! Talking about wildlife conservation and ways people can help is rewarding. If you would be interested in becoming a Sutton Ambassador to work at a booth or speak at an event, training is available. **Contact Audra Fogle, afogle@suttoncenter.org or call 918-336-7778 for details.**



This grandfather and grandson duo having fun learning about eagles and the role the Sutton Center played in their recovery at the Wildlife Expo in Guthrie in September. More than 25,000 attended the event.



Madeline Fyffe wins the People's Choice Award for her sculpture of playful hedgehogs. Photo by Dan Reinking.

The Sutton Award:

Sparkling Conversation and Inspiring Students for Wildlife Conservation

by Audra Fogle

Established in 2005 the Sutton Award recognizes high school students who demonstrate the ability to communicate current wildlife conservation topics in compelling ways. The Sutton Award is comprised of up to \$20,000 in cash which is distributed to winning students and their instructors. In a day when young people are becoming further and further removed from our natural world, this award sparks conversation in the classrooms and encourages students to wrestle with issues of conservation in such a way that they learn THEIR OWN story as they work to inspire others.

This Sutton Center education program is transformational, and we want to make sure every Oklahoma student has an opportunity to enter! Thanks to the assistance of the University of Central Oklahoma, the Oklahoma Art Educators Association and the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, we are able to extend our invitation to even more students across the state. It is EXCITING to see students come alive while talking about the current conservation issue represented in their artwork!

We are already working closely with our partner, NatureWorks, to make this another memorable event for our students and their teachers through the show, reception, and opportunity to display winning artwork alongside world-renowned artists at the NatureWorks Show & Sale. Join us in promoting this unique award in Oklahoma through sharing the opportunity with high school students, making a donation, attending the reception or even purchasing a student's artwork. Visit www.suttoncenter.org for all the details and to download flyers and forms. **Contact Audra Fogle at afogle@suttoncenter.org or 918-336-7778 for more information or to make a donation.**

Sutton Center’s Recent Publications/Presentations

Sutton Center’s Recent Publications:

Langin KM, Aldridge CL, Fike JA, Cornman RS, Martin K, Wann GT, Seglund AE, Schroeder MA, Braun CE, Benson DP, Fedy BC, Young JR, Wilson S, **Wolfe DH**, Oyler-McCance SJ. (2018) Characterizing range-wide divergence in an alpine-endemic bird: a comparison of genetic and genomic approaches. Conservation Genetics. doi.org/10.1007/s10592-018-1115-2. (White-tailed Ptarmigan).

Morrow ME, Koutsos EA, and **Toepfer JE**. (2018) Nutrient profiles of wild and captive Attwater’s and Greater Prairie-Chicken Eggs. Journal of Fish and Wildlife Management. (In Press).

Reinking, DL. (2018) Book Review. Book of Texas Birds. Great Plains Research 28(2):217-218.

Sutton Center’s Recent Presentations:

Aldridge C, Langin K, Fike J, Cornman R, Martin K, Wann G, Seglund A, Schroeder M, Braun C, Benson D, Fedy B, Young J, Wilson S, **Wolfe DH**, Oyler-McCance, S. (2018) Characterizing range-wide population divergence in White-tailed Ptarmigan using genetic and genomic approaches. Oral Presentation. 14th International Grouse Symposium, Logan, UT, 28 Sept.

Gibson BL, Larsson LC, Lynch ER, Sherrod SK, Toepfer JE. (2018) Captive breeding and raising of prairie-chickens for release into the wild, with experimental methodologies potentially applicable for breeding other galliformes. Oral Presentation. 14th International Grouse Symposium, Logan, UT, 25 Sept.

Larsson LC, Sherrod SK, Toepfer JE, Gibson BD. (2018) Experimenting with methodologies for releasing captive raised greater prairie-chickens into the wild. Oral Presentation. 14th International Grouse Symposium, Logan, UT, 28 Sept.

Reinking DL. (2018) Distribution of Henslow’s Sparrows in Oklahoma. Oral Presentation. Oklahoma Ornithological Society fall meeting. Edmond, OK, 20 Oct.

Toepfer JE. (2018) Greater Prairie Chicken Production in Nebraska and Minnesota, 2012-2016. Oral Presentation. 14th International Grouse Symposium, Logan, UT, 28 Sept.

Wolfe DH, Hise C, Larsson LC, Seamster VA. (2018) Vegetation mapping and White-tailed Ptarmigan occupancy in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, New Mexico. Poster. 14th International Grouse Symposium, Logan UT, 26 Sept. and The Wildlife Society Conference, Cleveland, OH, 8 Oct.

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Special Thanks

To all of the breweries, restaurants, and distributors at Wild Brew.

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Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge is located on the southern border of Arizona and covers 118,000 acres.

Photo by Brittney Tayrien.

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