

2026 Oklahoma Natural Resources Conference



Hosted by the Oklahoma Chapters of The Wildlife Society, Society for Range Management and Oklahoma
Division Society of American Foresters

April 9-10
Oklahoma City, OK
Metro Tech Conference Center

MEETING SCHEDULE

Thursday, April 9

- Registration (South Lobby) 8:30 am to 9:00 am
Plenary session (Main Room (GHI)) 9:00 am to 10:40 am
- Poster Session/Break (South Lobby) 11:00 am to 12:00 am
- Lunch - Main Room (GHI) 11:30 am to 1:00 pm
Presentations
- Main Room (GHI)..... 1:00 pm to 2:00 pm
 - Room J 1:00 pm to 2:00 pm
- Poster Session/Break 2:00 pm to 3:00 pm
Presentations
- Main Room (GHI) 3:00 pm to 3:45 pm
 - Room J..... 3:00 pm to 3:45 pm

Friday, April 10

- Registration (South Lobby)..... 8:30 am to 9:00 am
Presentations
- Main Room (GHI)) 9:00 am to 10:15 am
 - Room J 9:00 am to 10:15 am
- Poster Session/Break (South Lobby) 10:15 am to 10:45 am
Presentations
- Main Room (GHI) 10:45 am to 11:30 am
 - Room J..... 10:45 am to 11:30 am
- Lunch - Main Room (GHI) 11:30 am to 12:30 pm
- OKTWS Chapter Mtg (GHI) 12:15 pm to 1:15 pm
Adjourn 1:15 pm

2026 OKNRC Planning Committee:

Kristen Gillman – TWS	Colter Chitwood – TWS	Brittney Tayrien – Gathering Place
Mark Turner – TWS	Jack Tidwell - SRM	Will Childress – U.S. Dept of Ag
Jennifer Minton – Stantec	Steven Smith - TWS	Bryan Murray – SAF

TWS = Oklahoma Chapter of the Wildlife Society

SAF = Society of American Foresters

SRM = Society for Range Management

Plenary Speakers

Pete Herron: Managing Expectations; the concept of Oklahoma's first Residents Only WMA

Pete Herron was born, raised, and lives in the timberlands of Southeast Oklahoma where he is the Vice President of Herron Family Tree Farm, L.P., Oklahoma's largest and oldest family-owned forest. Pete is the fourth generation of his family since the business's inception in 1944 to manage the families 31,000 acres of loblolly pine timberlands. Pete received a B.S. in Business Management with a Marketing minor from Oklahoma State University in 2012, marking him as a 4th generation OSU graduate. Pete is husband of 15 years to wife Katie and dad to 4 children.



Pete maintains his family's strong commitment to volunteerism and philanthropy. His current volunteerism includes The Oklahoma Forestry Association, The Oklahoma Forest Heritage Center Museum Board, The Idabel Industrial Development Authority Board Member, Southeastern Oklahoma State University, McCurtain County Campus Advisory Board Member, and The Herron Foundation Inc. Board Member,

Pete Herron's notable achievements have been;

- In 2025, received the Citizen of the Decade Award from the Idabel Chamber of Commerce & Ag
- In 2025, Pete was elected to the Idabel City Council
- In 2023, received the Outstanding Young Alumni Award from the Oklahoma State University Spears School of Business
- In 2021, received the Idabel Citizen of the Year Award from the Idabel Chamber of Commerce & Ag
- In 2020, received the Next Generation Landowner of the Year Award from the Forest Landowners Association

Robert (Bob) Nairn: Bridging Ecology and Engineering: Why Natural Resources are Infrastructure

Robert W. Nairn, PhD, BCES, is an Environmental Scientist with more than 35 years of professional experience. He serves as the Robert W. Hughes Centennial Professor of Engineering, David L. Boren Professor, and Viersen Family Presidential Professor in the University of Oklahoma (OU) School of Civil Engineering and Environmental Science (CEES), Director of the Center for Restoration of Ecosystems and Watersheds (CREW), a Director of the Water Technologies for Emerging Regions (WaTER) Center, and as adjunct professor of Biological Sciences. He holds a BS from Juniata College (Huntingdon, PA) and a PhD from The Ohio State University (Columbus, OH), both in Environmental Science. He has been on the CEES faculty since 1997, where his CREW research team emphasizes the understanding of naturally occurring biogeochemical and ecological processes in natural infrastructure applications addressing water challenges.

Chris Gabbard: Keeping The Wonder Alive

Chris Gabbard is the Horticulture Director at Gathering Place, a Level II accredited arboretum. With 41 years in the green industry, Chris's experience spans arboriculture, greenhouse and nursery production, public gardening and zoological horticulture. He is an ISA Certified Arborist and TRAQ qualified, specializing in the stewardship of complex landscape ecosystems. Throughout his career, Chris has maintained a passion for the outdoors and remains dedicated to inspiring connections with nature across our diverse communities.

2026 OKNRC Oral Presentations

Thursday, April 9, 2026

Plenary Session	Resilience and sustainability in Natural Resources Conservation
9:00	Welcome and Introduction – Moderators – Colter Chitwood
9:10 – 9:40	Peter Herron - Managing Expectations; the concept of Oklahoma's first Residents Only WMA
9:40 – 10:10	Robert (Bob) Nairn - Bridging Ecology and Engineering: Why Natural Resources are Infrastructure
10:10 – 10:40	Chris Gabbard - Keeping The Wonder Alive
10:40-11:00	Questions
11:00 -12:00	Poster Session (South Lobby)

Poster Presentations (presented during breaks)

South Lobby – Thursday, April 9, 2026

Author(s)	Title
<i>E. V. Zaimes, S. Roberts, T. Zhang, J. Yang and C. Zou</i>	Fire, Water, and Woody Encroachment: Can Prescribed Fire Mitigate Climate-Driven Water Scarcity in Ecosystem Transition Zones?
<i>C. Sweet*, K. Gurin and Dr. N. Gilbert</i>	Do Raccoons Follow the Moon? Investigating Raccoon Activity in Response to Lunar Illumination”
<i>E. Wright* and V. Jackson</i>	A Morphological Analysis of Hairs for Identification of Oklahoma Species
<i>S. Hollrah and C. King</i>	Diamonds in the Rough: Discovering Old Growth Trees in a Degraded Cross-Timbers Ecosystem
<i>B. Bhusal, C. Meek, B. Heineman, O. Joshi and A.Dixit</i>	Evaluating Differences in Field Survival and Performance among Loblolly Pine Families at the Range Edge
<i>E. Kubicki*, V. Jackson, C. King, and J. Messick</i>	Determining most suitable release sites for 5 raptors in the South-Central Great Plains
<i>N. Butler*, R. C. Lonsinger, R. D. Elmore, and M. C. Chitwood</i>	Effect of Supplemental Feeding on Mammalian Nest Predators and Potential Implications to Wild Turkey
<i>O. Prichard, Dr. R. DeSantis, Dr. C. Zou and J. Weir</i>	Implications For Wildfire Behavior in the Cross Timbers Ecoregion of Oklahoma
<i>K. Hwang, B. Bachelot, R. DeSantis, S. D. Fuhlendorf and L. Zhai</i>	Direct carbon benefits of woody plant encroachment are offset by losses in structural and species diversity in Western United States drylands
<i>Cassandra Meek, Ryan DeSantis, Lu Zhang, Aalap Dixit and Bob Heinemann</i>	History, cultivation and containerized production practices for Oklahoma
<i>Chad King, Marie Stone</i>	Selman Living Laboratory Field Station – Research, Education, and Outreach in the Cimarron Gypsum Hills

<i>A. D. Bradley*, M. M. Koeck, C. C. Ellis, L. J. Heffelfinger, A. K. Moeller, R. C. Longinger, W. S. Fairbanks, M. J. Cherry and M. C. Chitwood</i>	Variation in Resource Selection of Mule Deer Surrounding Parturition
<i>B. Baker, C. Meek, B. Heinemann, R. DeSantis, B. K. Chim and A. Dixit</i>	Biochar-Based Growing Media to Meet Regional Planting Need
<i>T. Fox*</i>	Camera Trapping in Riparian Corridors within Pearl Jackson Crosstimbers Preserve
<i>M. Hines* and V. Jackson</i>	Spatial analysis of cheetah occurrence points to predict rangewide habitat suitability
<i>J. Brown, and J. Bradley, K. Hwang, K. J. Dooley and T. Ridley</i>	Tracking the fate of overtopped eastern redcedars and hardwoods in evergreen and deciduous Oklahoma forests
<i>M. Robell</i>	Working With Oklahoma National Wildlife Refuges to Fill in Research Gaps
<i>S. Roberts and C. Zou</i>	Effects of a Wind-driven Wildfire on Water Yield and Erosion in Cross Timbers Landcovers
<i>B. Crick*, R. Sutherland, S. Fuhlendorf and B. Hamilton</i>	How Does an Invasive Species Influence Grassland Bird Nest Site Selection?
<i>J. Ienzi, O. Joshi, C. Davis, D. Dvoretz, B. Tramell, S. Gilmer, and M. Woods</i>	Understanding landowner perceptions of wetlands and wetlands conservation programs in Oklahoma
<i>A.L. Gonzalez, S. Hubler, B.A. Kleeberg, J.M. Humm, C.N. Dotterweich, C. Huffstetter, L. Zhai, R.C. Lonsinger, and W.S. Fairbanks</i>	Comparison of black bear diets in eastern and western Oklahoma
<i>C. Biehler, B. Boston, J. Clark, K. Tatsch, E.L. Kjaer</i>	Tradeoffs in Prairie Restoration: Herbicide Effects on <i>Sericea Lespedeza</i> and Native Seedbank Emergence
<i>R. Jacoby, J. King, A. Logan, J. Wallace, E.L. Kjaer</i>	What Lies Beneath: Effects of Fire, Fungi, and <i>Sericea Lespedeza</i> on the Native Seed Bank of the Crosstimbers Ecosystem
<i>K. Lane*, K. Harris, and D. G. Rocha</i>	Species Richness Patterns of Oklahoma Mammals Along Environmental and Anthropogenic Gradients

* Students competing for the TWS Student Poster Award

2026 OKNRC Oral Presentations – Thursday April 9, 2026

Room	Main Room (GHI)	Room J
11:30-1:00	Lunch	
Moderator	Steven Smith	Mark Howery
1:00	<p>**Factors Influencing Eastern Wild Turkey Nest Survival <i>N. Butler, C. Bedoian, R. D. Elmore, K. Andersson, M. Barrett, Dr. C. A. Davis, S. D. Fuhlendorf, E. P. Tanner, R. DeYoung, and M. C. Chitwood</i></p>	<p>**The Role of Grazing in Shaping Native Bee Communities: Comparing Land Management Strategies in South-Central Oklahoma <i>B. Turnley, J. Hung, G. McElhaneey, A. Hill and Jacob Castro</i></p>
1:15	<p>**Variation in tree cover selection by female wild turkeys across reproductive stages in the southeastern forests and southwestern rangelands of Oklahoma <i>C. Griffin, N. De Filippo, C. Bedoian, M. Barrett, K. Andersson, R. DeYoung, E. Tanner, D. Elmore, C. Chitwood, S. Fuhlendorf and C. A. Davis</i></p>	<p>**Oklahoma’s Sand Dunes Harbor Unique Hymenoptera and Coleoptera Communities <i>J. Wingert, A. Hill and K. J. Hung</i></p>
1:30	<p>**Wild turkey populations retain high genetic diversity and connectivity amid regional declines in the Edwards Plateau Ecoregion of Texas <i>C. Molina, Dr. W. Conway and A. Gregory</i></p>	<p>**Estimating Thermal Niche in the Wild: A Big Data Approach to Bumble Bee Foraging Ecology <i>D. Premathilake and J. Hung</i></p>
1:45	<p>**Is nest predation random? Using camera traps as a proxy for wild turkey nests <i>C. Bedoian, N. Butler, C. Griffin, M. Barrett, K. Andersson, R. DeYoung, E. Tanner, S. D. Fuhlendorf, C. A. Davis, R. D. Elmore, and M. C. Chitwood</i></p>	<p>Replacing turfgrass with pollinator gardens enhances urban ecosystem multifunctionality <i>L. Rosenfelt, T. Gentry, I. Lugo, J. Thomas, M. Hulseley, K. J. Hung and L. Souza</i></p>
2:00	<p>**Evaluating the Spatiotemporal Patterns of Hunting Activity and Effects of Anthropogenic Noise on Northern Bobwhite <i>J. McCauley, C. A. Davis, S. Fuhlendorf, Dr. B. Luttbeg and A. Tanner</i></p>	<p>Monarch Migration Through Oklahoma: Patterns, Mysteries, & Conservation <i>P. H.C. Crawford, J. Fellows, I. Ferguson, S. Santhanaraj, and A. Yousuf</i></p>
2:00-3:00	Poster Session/Break (South Lobby)	
Moderator	Mark Turner	???

3:00	**Evaluation of cougar predation and black bear kleptoparasitism in northern New Mexico <i>M. Marwin, R. C. Lonsinger, C. G. Kruse, L. J. Bernal, M. C. Chitwood and J. W. Cain III</i>	**Stocking rate influences fire disturbance associations of grassland breeding birds <i>R. Sutherland, S. Fuhlendorf, C. A. Davis, S. Loss, B. Luttbeg and R. Hamilton</i>
3:15	**The role of night length in modulating activity-timing responses of nocturnal mammals to urbanization <i>K. Gurin and N. A. Gilbert</i>	**First assessment of factors influencing greater roadrunner occupancy in southwestern Oklahoma <i>D. N. Brosend, E. N. Burkholder, R. C. Sutherland, C. P. Griffin, B. P. Murley, and R. C. Lonsinger</i>
3:30	**Estimating elk abundance while accounting for daily activity patterns <i>J. M. Grosso, M. C. Chitwood, R. C. Lonsinger, P. M. Lukacs and A. K. Moeller</i>	Woody Plants Can Support Important Ecological Functions in Rangelands Critical for Sustainable Management <i>L. K. Neumann, P. A. M. Leite, S. D. Fuhlendorf, C. A. Davis and B. P. Wilcox</i>

2026 OKNRC Oral Presentations – Friday, April 10, 2026

Room	Main Room (GHI)	Room J
Moderator	???	???
9:00	**Interspecific effects of white-tailed deer on mule deer at the edge of current mule deer range <i>M. M. Koeck, C. C. Ellis, R. C. Lonsinger, L. J. Heffelfinger, A. K. Moeller, W. S. Fairbanks, M. J. Cherry and M. C. Chitwood</i>	**A scoping review on decision-support tools: An evaluation of their use in natural resource management and conservation planning <i>N. Becker, S. Loss, C. A. Davis and M. Belotti</i>
9:15	**Fire intensity influences deer response to large-scale wildfire <i>R. Tanner, O. Prichard, R. Desantis, M. C. Chitwood and M. Turner</i>	Non-Industrial Private Forest Landowner Willingness to Participate in Carbon-Based Improved Forest Management in the Marginal Lands in Oklahoma <i>C. Raper and O. Joshi</i>
9:30	**Estimating density of wild turkey hen and nest predators using an unmarked model <i>C. Bedoian, N. Butler, C. Griffin, M. Barrett, K. Andersson, R. DeYoung, E. Tanner, S. D. Fuhlendorf, C. A. Davis, R. D. Elmore, and M. C. Chitwood</i>	Understanding the Drivers of Local-Scale Inaccuracy in Global Forest Aboveground Biomass Maps <i>D. Chu and L. Zhai</i>
9:45	A Decade of Prescribed Fire: The Oklahoma Prescribed Burn Association's Impact to Oklahoma Lands <i>G. Bastin and J. Weir</i>	Musket Mountain State Forest: Leveraging Partnerships for People, Planet and Prosperity <i>G. Moore</i>

10:00	Fifteen years of prescribed fire and prescribed grazing at the Cross Timbers Wildlife Management Area; a review of impacts to wildlife habitat and hunting opportunity <i>J. Pennington</i>	Habitat Improvements on The Nature Conservancy's Pontotoc Ridge Preserve <i>H. Bloomquist and J. Lackey</i>
10:15 -10:45	Break (South Lobby)	
Moderator	???	???
10:45	The Grand River Dam Authority: A Natural Resource Steward of Eastern Oklahoma <i>D. A. Browning, A. W. Roper, S. J. Nikolai, J. E. Smittle, and D. E. Townsend II</i>	Butterfly Diversity and Community Dynamics Among Three Gardens in an Urban Zoo <i>E. A. Geest and R. J. Snyder</i>
11:00	Wildlife Health at the Tribal Scale: CWD Surveillance in the Choctaw Nation Reservation <i>J. Grotts, M. Gamble and L. Taylor</i>	Burn Season Modifies Relationships Between Sericea Lespedeza and Native Tallgrass Grasses and Forbs <i>K. G. Moss, L. E. Goodman, R. D. Elmore, R. J. Ansley and K. L. Kauffman</i>
11:15	<i>Increasing abundance of an invasive graminoid has varying influences on ecological organization traits in a mixed-grass prairie</i> <i>E. L. Rust, H. McCarthy, C. Hodges, X. Xiao and L. Souza</i>	Linking Grassland Canopy Structure and Function to Experimental Drought Across Seasons and Years <i>M. Encarnacion, L. Souza, X. Xiao, E. U. Nguyen</i>
11:30 -12:30	Lunch	
12:30	Oklahoma Chapter of The Wildlife Society Annual Mtg	
12:45		

* Students competing for the TWS Student Poster Award

** Students competing for the TWS Student Presentation Award



METROTECH DISTRICT CENTER

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