

## CONSERVATION UPDATE

**D**ucks Unlimited's conservation priorities in Oklahoma are the protection, restoration and enhancement of moist-soil marshes and associated habitats, particularly publicly managed wetland complexes. DU has a strong partnership with the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, together improving waterfowl resources on several wildlife management areas, including work at Drummond Flats, Waurika, Deep Fork and Cottonwood Creek WMAs. DU and ODWC partnered to hire Alan Stacey as a consultant to help develop on-the-ground project ideas and identify funding opportunities and strategies that help deliver conservation projects. Wetlands in Oklahoma provide critical stopover and refueling habitats for waterfowl in the Central Flyway, especially during spring migration. Since DU began conservation work in Oklahoma, nearly 38,000 acres of important wetland habitat have been conserved. These efforts benefit waterfowl, other wildlife and the people of Oklahoma.



## PARTNER SPOTLIGHT - CONOCOPHILLIPS

**I**n 1990, shortly after Playa Lakes Joint Venture (PLJV) was formed, ConocoPhillips joined the Management Board—helping to create the business foundation of PLJV operations and funding an annual grant program to support habitat conservation. Since the partnership began, nearly \$2.5 million in PLJV ConocoPhillips grants have been awarded to support more than 150 conservation projects throughout the PLJV region. With more than 6:1 partner match, those funds were leveraged to \$16 million. Cumulatively, the projects have affected over 68,000 acres of bird habitat—12,500 of which have been wetlands. The habitat projects have benefited 66 priority bird species, including whooping crane, greater and lesser prairie-chicken, mountain plover, least tern and northern pintail. The PLJV ConocoPhillips Grant Program supports habitat conservation for wintering, migrating and breeding birds in portions of Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas. This year, Ducks Unlimited will receive a \$13,000-grant towards further Drummond Flat acquisitions through the program.

## MAJOR SPONSOR REPORT

**O**klahoma's Campaign Committee worked to secure 10 new Life Sponsors, 14 upgrades and two new Feather Society commitments in 2016. Oklahoma sponsors understand that giving to Ducks Unlimited is the soundest investment they can make for the future of wetlands, waterfowl and waterfowl hunting.

Jared Cullison is one of OKDU's dedicated sponsors and volunteers. Jared and his wife, Melanie, are Life Sponsors. Jared is the chairman of the Cowboy Country chapter (Stillwater) and advisor to the Oklahoma State University chapter. He supports DU because "everything drinks water." As an avid outdoorsman, Jared understands the connections that wetlands have with all living things. "For the last 80 years DU has been on the front lines of conservation and restoration of our continent's wetlands. Why would I not want to be part of such an important organization?" he asked.

Though she's not big into hunting or fishing, Melanie has always encouraged him to follow his passion. "I think she enjoys the house being clean and quiet when I'm gone," Jared joked. "She has always encouraged and pushed me to be better in my endeavors no matter what they are, and I love her for that. She's made me a better person."

The knowledge that his support can make a difference with habitat and help positively influence and grow our youth into great stewards of our lands keeps Jared motivated to stay engaged with DU.



## PROJECT HIGHLIGHT - DRUMMOND FLATS EXPANSION

**A**lan Stacey, representing DU/Wetlands America Trust, continues to make progress on expanding Drummond Flats in north central Oklahoma. Drummond Flats Wildlife Management Area covers 4,653 acres in western Garfield County. It is a historic overflow basin at the confluence of Turkey Creek, Elm Creek and Salt Creek, and is predominately wetland habitat with some surrounding uplands. Last year we secured the only inholding at the Drummond Flats WMA, and this year we secured the only remaining parcels within the actual historic wetland basin that remained in private ownership. Securing these 125 acres from willing sellers ensures that future restoration activities can occur. These parcels will all go to ODWC, expanding the WMA and eliminating the potential for habitat disturbances inside this important waterfowl area.



## VOLUNTEER FUNDRAISING REPORT

**V**olunteers are the heartbeat of Ducks Unlimited, and Oklahoma has some of the best. Oklahoma boasts more than 7,700 members, including more than 660 volunteers who hosted 62 events in 2016, raising nearly \$660,000 to support DU's conservation mission. Those dollars enable DU to complete extensive conservation work in Oklahoma and on the breeding grounds that produce Oklahoma's waterfowl.

Scott Grubbs is a longtime OKDU volunteer. He is currently the Area Chairman of the Claremore Chapter, and he has done a great job of growing the chapter. They raised more than \$29,000 for the ducks in 2016.

"As an avid outdoorsman, I've volunteered for many organizations," Scott said. "DU, by far, has been the most gratifying. The camaraderie shared in all duck blinds carries over to the volunteer committees and their members. And the devotion that we as DU volunteers have for ducks shows just as much in the people who come and support our events. Without them, the chapters would dry up and wither away."



Scott and Tanner Grubbs.

When he's not volunteering, Scott works at the Cherokee Spur Ranch in Afton. In 2016 he worked with the Miami Chapter to host a great shooting event at the ranch. They taught several new shooters how to safely handle and shoot shotguns. Scott also serves as a volunteer mentor for the Sequoyah High School Varsity Chapter in Claremore. His son, Tanner, is the chairman of the Sequoyah HS Varsity Chapter, and they will hold their inaugural event in March.

Scott says the best part of volunteering for DU is seeing his son continue a tradition that's been in his blood for decades. "That is, after all, why most of us do what we do – to leave some sort of legacy. Mine is seeing Tanner get attached to ducks, love hunting and love serving something bigger. That something bigger is DU, which is why we started his varsity chapter. What's more gratifying than having your kids involved in and passionate about something we cherish so much?"

Ducks Unlimited conserves, restores, and manages wetlands and associated habitats for North America's waterfowl. These habitats also benefit other wildlife and people.



**SOUTHERN  
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