

OUTDOORS

CALENDAR

Today

Tulsa Bird Dog Club: 8 a.m. weekly shooting clays on Lakewind Avenue between 66th and 76th Street North. Call Ray Marshall (918) 835-5016.

Monday

NWTF Women in the Outdoors: Registration deadline for National Wild Turkey Federation Women in the Outdoors at Tenkiller State Park. Open to women 14 and older. Contact Leann Bunn, (918) 489-5641, e-mail lbunn@oklahomaparks.com.

Tuesday

Oklahoma Striped Bass Association: 7 p.m. monthly meeting. Fun Day location to be decided. At ZEBCO, 6101 E. Apache St.

Saturday

Youth Waterfowl Hunting Days: Oct. 25-26 for Duck Zone 2 (includes Tulsa area). For children 15 and younger. State wildlife department offers guided opportunity for youth without mentors. See page 14 of the waterfowl regulations booklet or check online at tulsaworld.com/wildlife.

Duck Zone One (Northwest) Waterfowl Season opens: Oct. 25-Nov. 30

Sandhill Crane Season opens: Oct. 25 - Jan. 25, 2009, west of I-35 only.

Deer Muzzleloader Season opens: Oct. 25-Nov. 2
Oxley Nature Center: 10:30 a.m. - Noon, "Wildflower Walk." No charge, no registration. All ages welcome. See the range of colors in the grasses, vines and trees. Meet at Oxley.

Tulsa Red Castle Gun Club: 2 p.m., Military 200 Yard Off-Hand Match. Contact Allen Hill, 744-7819 or Richard Kelley, 743-1092.

Tulsa Red Castle Gun Club: 9 a.m., high-power range, progressive distances. Contact Gene Goodenberger, 342-0999 or e-mail redcastlemba@sbcglobal.net.

Oklahoma Striped Bass Association: Fun Day. Location TBA. Contact Steve Carroll 706-5824.

Halloween Bass Pro Style: 3 p.m. Oct. 25-26. Kids costume parade, trick-or-treating, pumpkin painting, bobbling for apples and making Halloween masks.

Oct. 26

Redbud Valley Nature Preserve: 1-2:30 p.m., "Spiders Secrets." Discover some good things spiders accomplish as they spin through life. Redbud Valley Nature Preserve, 16150 Redbud Drive, Catoosa. Not handicap accessible. \$2 for general public. Advance registration.

Contact Oxley Nature Center, 669-6644, oxley@ci.tulsa.ok.us or tulsaworld.com/oxleynaturecenter

Oxley Nature Center: 1-2:30 p.m., "Hobo Hike." All ages. Bring a cracker-and-juice snack, tie it up in a bandana and set out for adventure. Oxley Nature Center, \$3 for general public and \$1 to members of Friends of Oxley. Advance registration. Contact Oxley Nature Center, (918) 669-6644, oxley@ci.tulsa.ok.us or tulsaworld.com/oxleynaturecenter

Send calendar listings and announcements to kelly.bostian@tulsaworld.com, fax (918) 581-8352 and follow up by phone at 581-8357. Be sure to include time and address or directions to your event and phone number and e-mail contact information.

THIS WEEK'S BEST TIMES

| Solunar tables from U.S. Naval Observatory. Shows best times for fishing and/or hunting. Those with an asterisk are the best days. | | MAJOR | MINOR |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|------------|-------|
| SUN* | 5:10 a.m. | 5:40 p.m. | |
| MON* | 6:10 a.m. | 6:40 p.m. | |
| TUES* | 7:10 a.m. | 7:35 p.m. | |
| WED | 8 a.m. | 8:25 p.m. | |
| THU | 8:50 a.m. | 9:10 p.m. | |
| FRI | 9:35 a.m. | 9:55 p.m. | |
| SAT | 10:20 a.m. | 10:40 p.m. | |
| SUN | 11:05 a.m. | 11:35 p.m. | |

McClatchy-Tribune Services

tulsaworld.com ONLINE

Hear muzzleloader deer season tips from Jack Morris. tulsaworld.com/outdoors

MUZZLELOADER TIPS

Pre-rut behavior that sometimes gives an advantage to hunters during the muzzleloader season probably will not be so obvious this season.

The weather has been relatively mild and, barring a real cold snap between now and the opening on Saturday, hunting over green forage or areas where the deer have found mast likely will be most productive.

For those who haven't considered it, the muzzleloader season offers another option for hunters who may be limited on time. Hunters frustrated so far during the archery season may be able to turn to a muzzleloader to take deer that have been just outside bow range.

The season also offers a jump on the gun season, which opens Nov. 22.

While new muzzleloaders can be extremely powerful and accurate, hunters need to be sure to get out their gun well in advance and get both hunter and gun tuned up for the season to come.

Now, too, is the time to fertilize food plots, make sure your deer feeders are full and operating properly, and to set trail cameras and positioning stands for the coming season.

By Kelly Bostian with Jack Morris



A covey of bob white quail emerges from dense cover to feed in a more open area in the evening at the Kiamichi-Link Ranch near Antlers. The quail are part of an enhancement project on the ranch that covers 650 acres but has spread to cover more ground with broods nesting naturally in the area. Watch a video to see more birds and tour the project at tulsaworld.com/video KELLY BOSTIAN/Tulsa World

Helping quail thrive

KIAMICHI-LINK RANCH — Between darkness and daylight, after the barred owls quiet themselves for the day and before the crows squawk at the harsh reality of morning, there are a few moments of soft light and gentler sounds that have not been common in this piece of southeast Oklahoma for some time.

From the deep grasses and low brush come soft whistles, a scattered melody of peeps and trills, and occasionally two-note statements that soothe an Oklahoman's heart. "Bob-White."

Locals say quail have been scattered and rare in this piece of southeast Oklahoma for years, but a game bird restoration project at the Kiamichi-Link Ranch, only in its second year, has the birds repopulating not only an intensely altered piece of ranch land, but dispersing from there to nest on their own and re-inhabit some old haunts.

"Neighbors have told us they've been seeing the

KIAMICHI-LINK GAME BIRDS

By the numbers

| | |
|----------|------------------------------------------------|
| 2: | years |
| 650: | Core acres of prime quail and pheasant habitat |
| 6: | Miles of predator-proof fencing |
| 141,000: | Plum trees |
| 80: | Acres of ragweed and croton |
| 8: | Surrogators and game bird feeders |
| 35: | Clutches of quail hatched on their own |
| 25: | Clutches of pheasant hatched on their own |
| 500: | Pheasants |
| 1,500: | Quail |

quail again on surrounding property," said Tucker Link, owner of the 13,000-acre ranch. "People have stopped us in town to tell us."

The project, so far unknown to anyone outside those directly involved, is one that its manager thinks may be of use in the future to public agencies or other private landowners who want to see both quail and pheasant thrive.

"People across the U.S. have lost 77 percent of their game birds, in most areas, and they're struggling to turn that around. We've been able to prove, by maintaining control of predators inside a given area, that you can deal with that," said Greg Koch, a hunting club consultant and developer of the Surrogator, a self-contained field unit designed to rear game birds. For Link, the ranch project

is more a matter of a legacy of hunting he wants to create for his children and grandchildren on this slice of Kiamichi Country heaven. This is not a commercial hunt club, but he does want to create a lasting and highly productive hunting area for family and friends.

"He told me he wanted the best quail hunting in the world," Koch said of his first contact with Link. "I didn't know about the best in the world, but I thought we could create a great hunting area."

Together the men have embarked on a quail- and pheasant-restoration project on a scale that few hunting clubs could afford and beyond the scope any government agency could get past a red-tape test.

Koch's plan focused on 650 acres surrounded by roughly 6 miles of predator-proof

fencing. The fence is 2-inch steel mesh that is 4 feet tall. It's topped with barbed wire and supplemented with two lines of electrified wire on the outside and a 2-foot swath of steel mesh on the ground to prevent animals from digging under.

The keys are creating good habitat to feed and shelter the birds, controlling predation, offering supplemental feeding, and using Surrogators to rear birds. The project includes 80 acres of ragweed and croton, strips of corn and sorghum, and hedgerows of plum trees.

"We've gone from zero birds two years ago — and this is just on the 650 acres — zero to 65 coveys, conservatively, possibly up to 70 or 80 coveys," Koch said. "We had 35 clutches of quail and 25 clutches of pheasant this year — that we know of for sure — that hatched on their own."

The project still is new, but Koch eventually wants to invite state biologists and other experts to the area to see what they think of it. "I think we've proven already that it can be done," he said. "But it's still a little bit early in the project."

For Link, wider application of the plan is just an added plus. "If we develop something that ends up being useful for others, then that's just an added bonus," he said.

SEND US YOUR PHOTOS

Got a photo of a kid hunting or fishing you want to see in the Tulsa World? Send them to kelly.bostian@tulsaworld.com



Ainsley McFarlin, 6, caught this 7-pound catfish at Grand Lake over the Labor Day weekend with her mom, Stacie McFarlin, and fishing buddy Kris Konkler.

STACIE MCFARLIN/Courtesy

WORLD AROUND YOU

A closer look at something you might see every day

Think of it as an annual reminder of our nation's trip from Shakespeare to Hitchcock. In scenes reminiscent of Hitchcock's 1963 thriller, "The Birds," one of America's most visible and plentiful transplants, European starlings, are flocking to area power lines as they migrate from the north.

They are simply migrating at this time of year and, like waterfowl and other migrating birds, gather in flocks on these trips as a defense against hawks and other predators. "There is a safety in numbers factor involved," said Dan Reinking, senior biologist at the Sutton Avian Research Center in Bartlesville. They roost where they feel safe, he said. So apparently the corner of 31st Street and Memorial Drive presents little threat — as well as many other urban areas where power lines provide handy roosting places.

Starling numbers are bolstered by other black birds who don't mind an urban environment, common grackles. Common grackles are the larger ones with longer bills and long tails. Look closely among the flocks and you might pick out a great-tailed grackle. The males are much larger than the common and have exceptionally long tails. Females are closer in size and appearance to the common. If you get close, you'll know a grackle by its bright yellow eyes.

The prolific starling is not a blackbird. It is more closely related to a mynah bird — they can learn to mimic — and are not native to North America. "They were released into New York City by someone who thought it would be cool to introduce all the birds that were mentioned in Shakespeare," Reinking said. "The rest is history."

Reinking offered some starling trivia. The musculature in their bills gives them great strength in opening their mouths, but not so much in closing them.

Other blackbirds are flocking at this time of year. If you see waves of blackbirds near wetlands it may be red-winged blackbirds. If you are in an agricultural area, there is a chance you're seeing brewer's blackbirds. Locally, people also might find numbers of rusty blackbirds, which like moist, forested areas, Reinking said. Recently there is growing concern for the rusty, which seems to be declining in number, he said.



Starlings and grackles flock to the power lines at the intersection of 31st Street and Memorial Drive just before sunset on Oct. 14. KELLY BOSTIAN/Tulsa World

By Kelly Bostian, World outdoors writer