G.M. Sutton Avian Research Center P.O. Box 2007 Bartlesville, OK 74005 918.336.7778 918.336.BIRD info@suttoncenter.org www.suttoncenter.org

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Photo by Jim Arterburn

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Your generous donation helps us with our mission of "finding cooperative conservation solutions for birds and the natural world through science and education."

Join us in protecting our natural heritage for the next generation!

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



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ON THE COVER:

An Attwater's chick explores its new outdoor enclosure at the Sutton Center facility. Photo by Tayler Harlow.

A Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Sutton Center friends,

Thank you for your support in making 2019 such a productive year! As the breeding season has ended, we can reflect on the results. Our first year of incubating and hatching Attwater's prairie-chickens was a success, with 33 of these highly endangered birds now at the Sutton Center preparing for breeding in the spring. The news from Texas is that 2019 was a productive year in the wild as well. Relief from hurricane disasters, floods, and droughts was certainly welcome in the realm of the Attwater's prairie-chicken.

The exciting news that masked bobwhites have been confirmed to reproduce in the wild is awesome. And the quail reproduced a lot for us here at the Sutton Center as well. The thousand-plus chicks transferred from Oklahoma to Arizona kept the staff and volunteers very, very busy. These achievements would not be possible without the joint efforts of so many people!

Sadly, in the midst of our conservation efforts, we hear news that reminds us of the importance of our work. That the North American bird population has diminished by almost a third since 1970 is disconcerting to say the least. The Tulsa World calls it a "Silent Spring moment." Additionally, the IUCN Species Survival Commission members call for urgent action to be taken in protecting species in danger of extinction. It is not only that these animals and birds will be gone if we do not act. Each creature is a vital part of a healthy ecosystem, feeding the soil, aiding in pest control, and sustaining our quality of life. The call is for society and individuals to take emergency measures to save species, tackle key threats, and massively increase resources invested in conservation and sustainable use. IUCN's pledge, which is very similar to Sutton Center's mission, is a commitment to provide knowledge, implement action for species conservation, and "pledge to bequeath the wonderful diversity of species to future generations."

There is hope. People care, and we can make a difference. A recent success story is the interior least tern that is a candidate to be taken off the endangered species list. It has recovered from fewer than 2,000 birds to more than 18,000 today. A 2019 report from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reveals that 53.6 million people visited wildlife refuges in 2017-2018, with trip-related spending generating \$3.2 billion and more than 41,000 jobs. The economic contribution is six times more than what was contributed by Congress to the refuges. Being in nature is of great value to people, and protecting it benefits all. The continuing value of our work is evident. We are so grateful to all of you who support in helping with the recovery of birds and sharing what we learn.

Thank you for being a part of our collective wildlife mission!



Lena Larsson, Ph.D. Executive Director

Photo by Tom Gilbert, Tulsa World

Lyon Foundation



Thanks to a generous gift from the Lyon Foundation, we met our goal of hatching and transferring 1000 masked bobwhite quail in 2019. Pictured from left to right: Sutton board chair, Warren Harden; Lyon Foundation board president, John B. Kane; and Lyon Foundation board member, David King.



Led by the Bartlesville Chamber of Commerce on June 5, several local leaders in the community gathered at the Sutton Center for a ribbon cutting to celebrate the completion of the fully remodeled Quail Building 2. This new space, which doubles our capacity, has already made a dramatic difference in the recovery efforts for the highly endangered masked bobwhite quail.

Sutton Center at Work in the Community

by Audra Fogle

The Sutton Center staff and volunteers continue to keep busy with outreach and education events. These include presentations or participation at the Alpha Rho Tau Civic Art Club in Tulsa, the Green Country Sierra Club, the Arvest Friday Forum, Bartlesville Rotary Club, the Owasso Gardening Club and even a group of girl scouts learning about birding. Education efforts for our internship programs have resulted in standing room only presentations with high school students in Bartlesville and garnered interest from the state FFA leadership.

Don Wolfe is now serving as the habitat coordinator for the newest chapter of Quail Forever, the Big Bluestem Chapter in Bartlesville, and recently spoke at the Tulsa Chapter banquet. Laura McIver, state coordinator for Quail Forever, was excited to participate in one of our first masked bobwhite transfers this summer.

We have shared our message of conservation with thousands this year through displays and presentations at the Claremore Home and Garden Show, Bartlesville's Sunfest and the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation's Wildlife Expo in Guthrie. Don Wolfe leads our education efforts to prevent wildlife lead poisoning and held shooting demonstrations for hundreds of students. We also exhibited at the attendance record breaking The Wildlife Society and American Fisheries Society's joint 2019 conference in Reno, Nevada.

Our conservation projects were featured on Channel 2 this summer and Tulsa World published a story on the success of the masked bobwhite recovery efforts, including a video that captured the fostering process. Promotions for Wild Brew and other events have resulted in sharing the Sutton Center's mission and our recovery efforts with hundreds of thousands. All said, our staff and volunteers have logged hundreds of hours advocating for wildlife conservation. We believe this is time well spent and look forward to more opportunities to teach people about the natural world.



Over 5,000 students visited the 2019 Wildlife Expo on student day. Our staff stayed busy measuring wingspans and sharing details about the conservation work that we do.



Over 4,300 attended The Wildlife Society and American Fisheries Society meeting in Reno, Nevada. The wingspan display is a great conversation starter for people of all ages.

Attwater's Prairie-Chickens are now at the Sutton Center!

by Bonnie Gibson, Tayler Harlow, Kevin Jarrell, Lena Larsson, Steve Sherrod, Gary Tweedy, Ariel Wapnick



Once they're old enough, Attwater's prairie-chickens enjoy sun, foraging, and outdoor living so they can become acclimated to "wild" conditions prior to being released.

Our very first Attwater's prairie-chicken (APC) egg hatched at our facility May 1, 2019. This momentous occasion signifies the Sutton Center reaching its goal of producing another highly endangered North American species for release. It has been both exhilarating and frightening to utilize what we have learned through the research and experimentation with our greater prairie-chickens (GPC). As the only breeding facility dedicated strictly to prairie-chickens, we are proud to see these efforts coming to fruition.

We transferred the eggs here from Houston Zoo, Fossil Rim Wildlife Center, and Caldwell Zoo, all in Texas. Every egg has a detailed record, so we can track genetic backgrounds, and the eggs were closely monitored until hatching. After our careful tending, we were pleased to see good hatch rates and comparatively good survival rates for the chicks.

Caring for the Attwater's Chicks

Attwater's prairie-chickens need a lot of dedicated, individualized attention to thrive. This year, we experimented with housing the chicks in larger cohorts, which worked very well. We discovered that they ate more regularly when surrounded by the extra activity and company.

As soon as our chicks were old enough, around two weeks of age, we brought them to our chick buildings, which are designed to keep them warm and comfortable until they develop the ability to thermoregulate. As the chicks grew,

they were transitioned into larger chambers that provide more natural temperature conditions.

When young prairie-chickens are fully feathered, they can withstand getting wet and being outside without a mother to keep them warm. At this point, they were given access to our prairie field. It is important that the APCs experience natural conditions, although we want to keep them safe from predators. Our prairie fields are enclosed with wire and electric fence for security. The area also features a double layer of netting, protecting the prairie-chickens from predators from all sides. Favorite prairie-chicken activities in the prairie field include sun bathing and foraging in the grass for wild insects.

Making Plans for Breeding Next Spring

Several members of our team attended a genetic pairings team meeting with the other facilities that are raising Attwater's prairie-chickens, as well as Attwater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge staff. We discussed this year's results and made plans for next year's breeding. All of the Attwater's prairie-chickens that hatched at our facility will stay here for breeding next season. We had our second breeder barn all set up for the young birds, so after receiving a physical exam and a clean bill of health, they were moved inside from the prairie field for the winter. That way, they will get used to this more controlled environment and feel at home when it is time to breed.



Our first set of Attwater's chicks were successfully hatched, and had very good survival rates.



Our second breeder barn is dedicated for the Attwater's and our 33 juveniles are now safely housed for winter.

We now have a new monitoring system which includes 60 cameras that display all our key areas. We can observe our birds and learn more about their behaviors without human interference. The cameras also provide excellent security for our barns and fields, ensuring we can keep close watch on how our birds are doing throughout each day. The system also records, so we can review footage and learn what has been going on if something seems amiss with a bird.

Greater Prairie-Chickens Doing Well

To aid our ongoing research and breeding efforts with the Attwater's, we test new methods and techniques first with the greater prairie-chickens. The GPCs are not endangered like the Attwater's, and since they are closely related and share many traits, they are very useful for determining effective breeding techniques.

Because this year was dedicated to raising Attwater's, we needed to wait until they finished hatching before we could incubate and hatch eggs from the greater prairie-chickens. The GPCs hatched this year will be integrated with the flock for next season's test, which may include parental care by hens. We are discussing our options, but raising the Attwater's take precedence.

Plans for Next Year

There is still much to be done ahead of next year's breeding season. We are currently designing a quarantine building. This sanitary building will provide separation and privacy for any birds in need of specialized care. We are also working on planning construction for new housing areas, which we will need as our flock grows larger. Next year, we will be raising Attwater's prairie-chickens for release!



Keeping our hatchlings together proved a good strategy, as the chicks ate regularly and enjoyed the stimulation from each other.

Leave a Lasting Legacy

We're so grateful for your giving!

Your donations make a difference with every pair of birds we breed, every egg we lovingly care for, every chick we hatch, every bird we study and every child we inspire. And there are so many ways to provide giving that goes hand in hand with your long-term financial planning.

We make it uncomplicated and transparent. Ask your financial advisor to include the gift you choose—whether it is a financial donation, stocks, life insurance benefits, or property—as a bequest to the Sutton Avian Research Center in your will. Or ask about establishing an annuity or remainder trust that benefits Sutton.

Our new partnership with the Tulsa Community Foundation, Green Country's experts in helping nonprofits make the most of long-term gifts, makes your legacy charitable giving easy and straightforward. Their expertise will help ensure what you give in your will is powerful and transformative for years to come.

With the rapid changes happening to our plants, insects and animals, our world needs us to lend a helping hand. When we all come together to protect our landscape and our wildlife, our planet will benefit for generations to come. Adding a charitable gift to your financial planning will help us ensure that your grandchildren and great-grandchildren can enjoy our beautiful and essential natural world.

Legacy giving is something anyone can do, for any amount. Every gift makes a difference!

For more information, please contact Audra Fogle at afogle@suttoncenter.org or by calling 918-336-7778.



Wild Brew featured more than 200 beers to sample. The loyalty of our brewers sets Wild Brew apart. Many of Tulsa's Brewers made their debut at our event. This year was no exception...welcome 1902 Brewery! Can't wait to see you again next year!



Albert G's BBQ goes WHOLE HOG for Wild Brew!



Pictured from left to right at the Dead Armadillo Brewery: Wild Brew Committee Co-chair, Kyle Riggs, Honorary Chairs, Kirby and Genny Lehman, and Mike and Debbie Baab, Wild Brew Committee Co-chair, Sam Dagnall and Dead Armadillo Master Brewer, Tony Peck.

21st Annual Wild Brew Sets Sutton Fundraising Record

by Audra Fogle

This year's Wild Brew set a new high, raising more funds than ever to support our mission of conservation and education. What a way to celebrate turning 21! It was definitely the greatest party ever hatched — due entirely to the generous support we received from patrons and brewers to sponsors and restaurants and every kind of donor in between to make the event successful.

Wild Brew drew 2,000 enthusiastic people to Tulsa's Cox Business Center on August 24 to sample over 200 local and national beers, as well as tasty food from 50 local restaurants. Tulsa brewery Dead Armadillo, which got its start at Wild Brew while they were still home brewers, partnered with us to brew our official Wild Brew beer and has already committed to brewing the beer for us again next year.

Attendees had opportunities to see birds up close and in real life; a falcon, a red-tailed hawk, and the former Sutton Center bald eagle BENSAR. (BENSAR is a very famous bird who has been filmed flying over Grand Canyon and whose image has been on the Empire State Building as well as St Peter's Basilica in Rome. He now resides at Hutchinson Zoo in Kansas.)

Renowned artist Josh Stout created a painting live, which sold at our silent auction for nearly \$2,000 after a good-natured bidding war—money he immediately donated to further our conservation efforts. The Fabulous Mid Life Crisis Band provided a fun musical soundtrack that kept everyone on the dance floor.

We are so thankful to everyone who made Wild Brew such a resounding success! Because of you, we'll be able to launch our ambitious Breeding Bird Atlas project to assess the health, breeding and movements of state bird populations. We couldn't have done Wild Brew without our honorary chairs, Mike and Debbie Baab and Kirby and Genny Lehman and our outstanding committee of 20 hardworking volunteers, generous sponsors, and our fantastic breweries and restaurants who donated beer, food, time, and enthusiasm. A special thank you to Phillips 66, this year's presenting sponsor, as well as our 21st anniversary sponsors, Mike and Debbie Babb, for their generosity and support.

Mark your calendars now for next year's Wild Brew — happening August 29, 2020 at the Cox Business Center. It will be bigger and better than ever. Look for even more ways to get to know our brewers, learn more about the wildlife conservation happening at Sutton, enjoy additional exclusive perks in the patron area, experience added live art demonstrations and meet our majestic beneficiaries...the birds! Tickets will go on sale in the spring of 2020 — we look forward to seeing you there!

The Sutton Center Says Goodbye to Wildlife Conservation Champion Sam Daniel Jr.

by Steve Sherrod



Sam was always up for an adventure, and here, he joined (left to right) Treak Tasker, NatureWorks, (Sam), Ryan VanZant, Sutton Staff, Paul Nicklen, National Geographic, and Steve Sherrod, Sutton Staff, for a morning of duck hawking with falcons.

On July 14, Sutton Board Member and close friend Sam Daniel, Jr., 86, departed this world. He was a notable attorney and valued advisor, avid bird hunter, committed outdoorsman, and enthusiastic wildlife conservationist.

I first met Sam in 1998 when he joined the Sutton Research Center Board of Directors. From the beginning, Sam was "all in" with regard to doing his part to fulfill our mission of "finding cooperative conservation solutions for birds and the natural world through science and education." As a duck and upland bird hunter, Sam was an invaluable, keen observer of the natural world. He asked relevant questions and posed potential solutions to conservation problems.

Sam was always "up and ready" for the next adventure, as long as it didn't interfere with his unique mounted collection of some 37 species of North American ducks that could be hunted legally. Formerly housed on a display shelf in his living room, this fine collection now has a special home at Woolaroc Museum and Wildlife Preserve. One duck, the spectacular and colorful king eider, is missing, and Sam wrote an entertaining book about the making of his collection including this specimen vacancy, entitled *The Last Duck*.

Sam's most contagious trait was his enthusiastic desire to learn more and do more. He could not wait to go out in the field with me to fly my falcons. He had a passion for bird dogs, as well as a boundless collection of stories and jokes, most of them pretty funny, too. Sam was small in stature but huge in heart!

Sam served as president and/or trustee of several nonprofits, including The Sutton Avian Research Center, the Tulsa Ballet, Woolaroc Museum, NatureWorks, and the Oklahoma Chapter of The Nature Conservancy. It goes without saying that our friend Sam will be dearly missed.

Billions and billions not being served

Story and photos by Dan Reinking



A giant swallowtail pauses at a 'Dark Knight' Caryopteris flower.

 \mathbf{I} wo point nine billion. Written another way, 2,900,000,000. The current number of social media users worldwide. The 2011 net profit of IKEA, in euros. The number of Dunkin' doughnuts sold annually. The 2018 selling price of London's Gatwick Airport, in pounds. In September of this year, that same number appeared virtually everywhere in the news once more, this time to quantify how many fewer birds there are in North America today compared to 1970. This is a 29% decline within 50 years. To those under age 50, that time period may seem long. To those over 50, not at all. To a student of natural history, or a weathered oak tree, or a sandstone outcrop, 50 years is almost inconsequentially short. To lose nearly a third of North America's birds in the span of five decades is a symptom that reflects poorly on our collective priorities and values, as well as our regard for those who will call us their ancestors.

The authors of this study describe a "pervasive and ongoing avifaunal crisis," with 57% of the 529 species studied showing declines, including many widespread and common species. This study did not delve into reasons behind declines, but other studies point to several major causes, all related to human activity. Feral and outdoor domestic cats kill about 2.4 billion birds per year in the U.S. Collisions with windows kill up to another billion each year, with low-rise buildings and residences

collectively killing more birds than the large, attention-grabbing, single-night kills at skyscrapers. Overuse or improper use of pesticides, especially neonicotinoids, has far-reaching impacts on birds and many other organisms in the environment. Climate change threatens some 389 North American bird species. Habitat loss continues to be a main driver of bird population declines. This is especially apparent when looking at the percentage of species declining in various species groups. Grassland birds have suffered the greatest declines, down 53% since 1970 as what little native grassland remains continues to be lost.

One thing that all of these major sources of bird population declines have in common is that they have occurred due to humans, and they can therefore be fixed by humans! A combination of personal responsibility and public policies can help solve each of these problems. We (collectively) know HOW to save wildlife, we (collectively) just have to prioritize and DO it. The recent study reporting on bird declines also highlighted the successes in conserving waterfowl and wetlands. These achievements resulted from concerted efforts by hunters and conservationists over decades, utilizing both the resources of the private sector as well as federal policies guiding agriculture and land stewardship.



Black swallowtail larvae such as these two are frequently found on fennel and other cultivated garden plants as well as several native plants.



Orange Gulf fritillary larvae also turn into bright orange butterflies common in sunny portions of the southern U.S.



This male sachem feeds at a coneflower (genus *Echinacea*).

As a bird conservation organization, the Sutton Center has contributed to the successful recovery of the once endangered bald eagle, and we are currently working with two of the most endangered birds in North America. We have long used the metaphor of birds as barometers for the health of the planet. Here in Oklahoma, we have spent many of our first 35 years as an organization working to monitor bird populations through the two largest bird surveys ever undertaken in this state. The first Oklahoma Breeding Bird Atlas project involved summer bird surveys in nearly 600 areas statewide from 1997–2001. The objective was to "capture" the distributions of Oklahoma nesting birds at that time for later comparisons. We followed that study with another, the Oklahoma Winter Bird Atlas project, which looked at the distributions of birds in the same areas during the winter months from 2003-2008. Bird atlas projects are designed to be repeated, and the Sutton Center is now launching Oklahoma's second Breeding Bird Atlas project. The results from the forthcoming five years of intensive statewide surveys will enable us to better understand how Oklahoma's breeding bird populations have changed over the past two decades, and help identify conservation needs.

Near the start of this article, I referred to bird declines as a symptom. With birds as a form of wildlife that is both widespread and relatively easy to identify, watch and count, their demise is a potent indicator of the overuse and stress humanity has placed on the natural world.

Most other groups of organisms including plants, insects, mammals, fish and more are facing similar challenges. One of the most striking features of our planet and its wildlife is resiliency. In many ways and in many places, abundant life remains or is poised to recover, if given a chance. Almost ten years ago, volunteers created two predominately native plant beds for us at the Sutton Center. Native wildflowers naturally thrive with minimal gardening effort, and our small beds attract a profusion of pollinators each spring, summer and fall. Please enjoy these accompanying photos, consider planting some native wildflowers, and reflect on other ways that you can help address the need for wildlife recovery through personal actions and support of policies that provide broader positive impacts.

Source

Bateman, B. L., L. Taylor, C. Wilsey, J. Wu, G. S. LeBaron, G. Langham. 2019. Risk to North American birds from climate change-related threats. bioRxiv 798694; doi: https://doi.org/10.1101/798694

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Active during the day, this snowberry clearwing moth was attracted to a late flowering 'Dark Knight' Caryopteris.



Bright orange and dramatically adorned Gulf fritillary larvae feed on passion vine (genus *Passiflora*).

Monument to Dr. John Toepfer Finds Its Home in Sight of Prairie-Chickens

by Aaron Pratt



Wisconsin State Historical marker 585 over John Toepfer at Buena Vista Marsh Wildlife Area. Photo by Peter Ziegler.



The Buena Vista Marsh Wildlife Area kiosk with John's monument to the left. Photo by Peter Ziegler.

Friends of the Sutton Center know how much our dear friend and staff member, Dr. John Toepfer, will be missed. As a world-renowned wildlife biologist, John's decades-long contributions to the study of prairie-chickens made a tremendous impact.

So, it was with great honor that we recently helped finance and see erected in John's native Wisconsin a monument in tribute to his life's work, about 50 years' worth, conducting scientific research on prairie chickens. Erected this August, the monument stands proudly in the Buena Vista Marsh, the grasslands of central Wisconsin, where prairie-chickens dwell and where John worked tirelessly for so many years.

The installation was overseen by one of the past presidents of the Society of Tympanuchus Cupido Pinnatus, Peter Ziegler, who tells us that after the monument was set in place, a prairie-chicken flew over the area, while big bluestem was waving in the wind. He called it "a very fitting tribute in the right location for a great researcher."

First Recipient of Toepfer Scholarship Announced

by Aaron Pratt

Over his lifetime, Dr. John Toepfer created a powerful legacy of knowledge, research, and impassioned support of conservation efforts. Always generous with his time, he loved to educate students and served as a mentor to many. Both students and fellow wildlife biologists have been influenced by John's passion, as well as his many innovative, pioneering field methods to help understand prairie grouse. In honor of this rich legacy of teaching and scholarly research, the Sutton Center, and a number of John's colleagues and friends, has established the *John Toepfer Prairie Grouse Research Scholarship* fund. The scholarship ensures ongoing support for graduate students studying prairie grouse.

John would use his photo of a prairie-chicken sunrise and the question, "Is the sun rising for the prairie-chicken...," as a springboard to challenge managers, conservationists, and students on whether their actions were creating a brighter future for the well-being of prairie-chickens. This award will be given in optimism that with future professionals such as the recipients of this award going forth into wildlife careers, then indeed "the sun is rising" on the future of prairie grouse.

This November, our first scholarship recipient was announced in conjunction with the biennial meeting of the Prairie Grouse Technical Council co-hosted by the Sutton Center. We're proud to award it to Geoffrey Gould, a PhD candidate in the Department of Ecology, Evolution and Organismal Biology at The Ohio State University. Geoff has already gained extensive field experience working with prairie-chickens in Kansas and New Mexico. He also has a desire to combine understanding of both basic grouse behavior and applied conservation to further the welfare of prairie grouse. The scholarship defrayed the cost of his attendance at the Prairie Grouse Technical Council meeting, where he gave an informative presentation titled, "An experimental test of the relationship between color ornaments and parasite loads in the lesser prairie-chicken (*Tympanuchus pallidicinctus*)."

Your giving makes a difference! If you want to honor John's life and help support future wildlife biologists, please make a tax-deductible contribution to the *John Toepfer Prairie Grouse Research Scholarship*. Define with the donation that it goes towards the scholarship. Credit card donations can be made on our website —suttoncenter.org — and checks can be mailed to: G. M. Sutton Avian Research Center | P.O. Box 2007 | Bartlesville, OK 74005

Welcome to STCP/Hamerstrom Prairie Grouse Research Chair, Dr. Aaron Pratt



 $f \Gamma$ he Sutton Center is honored to announce our new Society of Tympanuchus Cupido Pinnatus (STCP)/Hamerstrom Prairie Grouse Research Chair, Dr. Aaron Pratt. Filling the position opened by Dr. John Toepfer's passing, Dr. Pratt brings valuable experience and passion for working with prairie grouse and other wildlife to our staff. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Wildlife Ecology and Management from University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, a Master of Science in Range and Wildlife Management from Texas A&M University-Kingsville, and a Ph.D. in Ecology from University of Wyoming.

As a native of Wisconsin interested in conservation, Dr. Pratt's early wildlife studies involved working with Dr. Ray Anderson (a mentor and graduate advisor to Dr. Toepfer) on black bear research and elk reintroduction projects in Wisconsin. Through this connection, Dr. Pratt met and began working for Dr. Toepfer and the STCP on multiple prairie-chicken research projects over the years.

Dr. Pratt has almost 20 years of experience studying prairie grouse including greater prairie-chickens, Attwater's prairie-chickens, greater sage-grouse, and Columbian and plains sharp-tailed grouse. He has worked with several agencies and universities on multiple projects in several states, making him an apt choice to continue the legacy of prairie grouse research at Sutton Center.

Dr. Pratt is as delighted as we are to be with us, continuing our efforts to protect and study birdlife, educate people on the value of our natural world, and encourage conservation. With his help, the Sutton Center will be taking on the monumental task of analyzing and furthering Dr. Toepfer's many years of research and data on prairie chickens, such as juvenile dispersal, brood survival, seasonal movements, nesting habitat, and more.

We look forward to seeing Dr. Pratt continue the legacy of the STCP, noted conservationists such as the Hamerstroms and Dr. Toepfer, as he adds his own unique and valuable contributions to furthering the mission of the Sutton Center.

Staff Update: Meet Ariel



Hi, everyone! I'm Ariel Wapnick, the newest member of the Attwater's prairie-chicken team—and I'm so excited to be here!

I got my start in animal care when I was in middle school in my hometown of Pine Plains, New York. During the summers, I volunteered at the Trevor Zoo in Millbrook, New York, where I worked with red pandas, black and white ruffed lemurs, white-naped cranes and many other animals.

As a high school freshman, I was selected to be a counselor/animal care assistant in the zoo volunteer program. I was only 15, and I was already a zookeeper! I brought the volunteers to each exhibit for morning and afternoon cleanings, prepared diets, helped with medications, and learned a lot about daily husbandry.

Loving this work, I went on to attend Delaware Valley University, graduating with a major in zoo science and a minor in education. Among my other animal-related experiences, I held an internship at the Academy of Natural Sciences, working mostly with reptiles and amphibians. I also educated children of all ages from innercity Philadelphia, and interned at Elmwood Park Zoo in Pennsylvania, working with most of their species from giraffes to itty-bitty milk frogs. Most recently, I was a Guest Experience Keeper at the Turtle Back Zoo, where I worked with everything from petting zoo animals, Australian barn animals, and animals from South America as well as the Great Plains.

I decided to leave traditional zookeeping because I wanted to do more to benefit conservation on our earth. I wanted to turn my passion into action. And I hope to be able to do that here at the Sutton Center.

33rd Biennial Prairie Grouse Technical Council

4-7 November 2019 in Bartlesville, Oklahoma

by Don Wolfe



A special session was held to memorialize Dr. John Toepfer, including a toast with diet Mountain Dew.

Photo by Dan Reinking.



Dr. Dwayne Elmore discussing greater prairie-chicken habitat needs during Wednesday field trip to the Joseph H. Williams Tallgrass Prairie Preserve and the Chapman Ranch. Photo by Lena Larsson.



The first ever recipient of the John Toepfer Prairie Grouse Research Scholarship was Geoffrey Gould, from The Ohio State University, presented here by Aaron Pratt, Chairman of the scholarship selection committee. Photo by Noppadol Paothong.

What a week! Over 100 grouse biologists and stake holders from across North America met in Bartlesville, OK from 4 through 7 November for the 33rd Biennial Prairie Grouse Technical Council. There were 37 presentations on prairie grouse or related subjects. In addition to the technical presentations, we held field trips in two afternoons. The first field trip included visiting Sutton Center's Attwater's prairie-chicken and masked bobwhite breeding facilities; then we wrapped up the day with a visit to the Woolaroc Museum and Lodge.

The second field trip went to the Joseph H. Williams Tallgrass Prairie Preserve and the Chapman Ranch in Osage County. Sutton Center board member Harvey Payne gave a history of the preserve and overview of the natural history of the Flint Hills. Dr. Dwayne Elmore and David Londe spoke about ongoing greater prairie-chicken research and their nesting and brood habitat needs. R. D. Farr and Jimmy Rutledge discussed the management of the Chapman Ranch, and how they have been able to improve conditions for prairie-chickens without affecting their bottom line. This was especially meaningful, both to the presenters and the audience, as the ultimate fate of prairie-chickens and other grassland avifauna is dependent of the wise and responsible management of private livestock producers, and the Chapman Ranch should serve as a model for other operations in the entire Flint Hills region.

The final day of the conference also included a special memorial to Dr. John Toepfer, when various friends and colleagues of John exchanged memories and sometimes humorous stories, and a toast to John (with diet Mountain Dew, John's favorite beverage). We are sure that the younger conference attendees who had not had the privilege of knowing John personally have a better understanding of the great contributions John has made to this field and the influence he had on others. In John's honor, the first ever *John Toepfer Prairie Grouse Research Scholarship* was presented to Geoffrey Gould, in recognition for his prairie grouse studies and presentation at this conference on color ornamentation and parasite loads in lesser prairie-chickens.

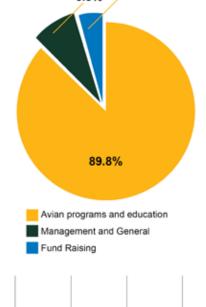
During Thursday evening's banquet, Sutton Center board member Noppadol Paothong gave an amazing and thought-provoking talk and slide show on grouse, highlighting some of his spectacular photographs. Also during the banquet, the prestigious Hamerstrom Award was presented to Dr. Christian Hagen, certainly a very deserving recipient!

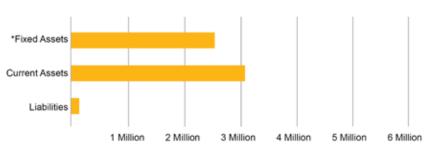
Thanks to all the Sutton staff and volunteers, as well as Brett Cooper (Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation) and Patricia Echo-Hawk (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), who helped to make this conference a success.

Annual Report

Financially Sound, Fiscally Responsible 6.3% 3.9%

Since our beginnings 35 years ago, the Sutton Avian Research Center has continued to serve as one of the most influential and effective bird conservation organizations across the nation. It is exciting to see the impact our conservation and education efforts have on our local and national bird life—and we could not do it without the support and commitment of faithful donors and champions like you. Your generous support makes it all possible!





*Fixed Assets (buildings, properties, etc.) The Sutton Center has no debt.

Accomplishments at a Glance

- 2,000 Attendees supporting Oklahoma and regional birds at Wild Brew
- 1,023 Masked bobwhites transferred to Arizona for release back into the wild
- 583 Breeding bird blocks to be surveyed for the 2nd edition of the *Breeding Bird Atlas* in 2020
- 199 Active bald eagle nests in Oklahoma monitored by our Bald Eagle Survey Team
- 151 High school artists participated in the Sutton Award
- 35 Years of protecting and encouraging the health of bird populations
- 12 Breeding pairs of Attwater's prairie-chickens for our 2020 work
- 2 New buildings put into use; one for bobwhites, one for Attwater's prairie-chickens
- 1 International Prairie Grouse Technical Council meeting hosted by the Sutton Center

Sutton Center's Recent Publications/ Presentations

Sutton Center's Recent Publications:

Grzybowski JA, Carver C, Cox JA, Husak MS, Loyd MJ, **Reinking DL.** 2019. Oklahoma Bird Records Committee (2019) Date Guide to the Occurrence of Birds in Oklahoma, 7th edition. Oklahoma Ornithological Society. 44pp.

Larsson LC, Sherrod SK, and Toepfer JE. 2018. Experimenting with methodologies for releasing captive raised greater prairiechickens into the wild. Grouse News 56:41-42.

Morrow ME, Koutsos EA, and **Toepfer JE.** 2019. Nutrient profiles of wild and captive Attwater's and greater prairiechicken eggs. Journal of Fish and Wildlife Management 10(1):38–50.

Sherrod SK, Larsson LC, and Toepfer JE. 2018. Captive breeding and raising of prairie-chicken for release into the wild, with experimental methodologies potentially applicable for breeding other galliformes. Grouse News 56:20.

Toepfer, JE. 2018. Greater prairie chicken (*Tympanuchus cupido pinnatus*) production in Nebraska and northwestern Minnesota, 2012-2016. Grouse News 56:42

Toepfer JE, Sherrod SK, Larsson LC, Gibson BL, and Gibson BD. 2018. Evaluating survival and release protocol of young of the year captive-raised Nebraska greater prairie-chickens in native sandhill habitat. Progress report to Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. Sutton Avian Research Center. 12 pp.

Sutton Center's Recent Presentations:

Dierenfeld ES, Sherrod SK, Larsson LC, Toepfer JE. 2019. Hepatic fatty acid, mineral, and fat-soluble vitamin concentrations in captive-reared compared with free-living greater prairie-chickens (*Tympanuchus cupido*). Oral Presentation. ZWNF/NAG Conference on Zoo and Wildlife Nutrition, St. Louis, MO, 30 Sept.

Masked Bobwhite Update

by Brittney Tayrien, Sarah Harren, and Don Wolfe







A masked bobwhite chick about to be released on the Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge. Photo by Molly Condit.

In early summer 2019, there were several sightings of wild masked bobwhites roaming the Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge (BANWR), as well as a nest located. Some birds were spotted hanging out near the visitor's center, much to the pleasure of refuge visitors, and others were seen throughout the refuge via game cams. This was exciting news to know some of our birds survived the winter and made it into the breeding season! Considering the vastness of BANWR and how many nests we likely simply did not discover, these observations are truly meaningful.

We made 67 pairings of birds at the Sutton Center in the beginning of May — which included 30 additional breeding pairs compared to last year, since we had access to a freshly renovated second building. The birds produced 2010 eggs during the 2019 breeding season, with 1,471 being fertile. Of those fertile eggs, 1,246 hatched, giving us an 84% hatch success rate. We used 18 adult masked bobwhite dads for fostering some of our two-day-old chicks. Each foster parent received 15 chicks. About 200 chicks from each hatch had to wait until we transported them to BANWR to meet their wild-caught, sterile northern bobwhite foster dads.

Incubating, hatching, and care of young chicks is only the first step, however, and arguably the easiest part. The chicks then need to endure a 1,200-mile drive, with heat-lamps to keep them warm, ice packs to keep them cool, and water/ food stops every two hours. (As you might guess, these transfer trips are hard on personnel as well, but worth it!)

Once we arrived at BANWR, we paired up our remaining chicks with previously captured wild northern bobwhite males that were sterilized to prevent cross-breeding, or with additional pen-reared masked bobwhite males from the BANWR facility. Once the dads accepted the chicks, these family groups were relocated to outdoor pens to acclimate to the outdoors and recover from the trip.

About two weeks later, the broods were released. Field technicians are continuing to monitor the family groups on the refuge. We made six trips this summer, as our staff transported 1,023 chicks in all to BANWR. During one trip, we brought back masked bobwhite eggs from BANWR's breeding flock to add those missing genetics to our flock. Of those eggs, 51 hatched. We also held back 40 of our masked bobwhite chicks for future breeders and foster parents. Some severe weather (often alternating days of extreme heat and heavy monsoonal rains) and other factors beyond our control caused mortalities among the chicks while they were waiting for release at BANWR, but 63 foster parents with broods were released.

Early September, there was a photo documentation of a wild-hatched masked bobwhite brood on the refuge (a probable second brood was also spotted, but unconfirmed). Lacrecia Johnson, Masked Bobwhite Recovery Team Leader, reported, "Great news! We have documented wildhatched masked bobwhite on BANWR. The birds were in a high-scoring habitat area and feeding site at least 2.5 miles over rough terrain from the closest 2019 releases and where a winter covey hung out from October 2018 through at least April 2019. We know food was on the ground, [but] we do not know if the parents traveled there to take advantage of the supplemental food or because it is a preferred site for other reasons." This is exciting news for us, since wildhatched broods have not been documented in a long time.

With breeding season at an end, all our birds at the Sutton Center have been separated by gender and moved into separate pens. We have done extra cleaning and replaced all the sand, so all the birds have a fresh substrate. Those who hatched this year sport adult bands and are waiting to be moved to new enclosures. The ones brought over as eggs from BANWR will have to wait and be tested for any diseases before being introduced to our main breeding flock.

 ${f W}$ e would be remiss to not mention the wonderful assistance we had over the summer by Zach Woods, a Bartlesville native now studying at the University of Chicago, and Regan Gorman, a high school volunteer who we could count on for fantastic daily help. We would also like to welcome Madison Harvey, our high school intern for the 2019-2020 school year. Long-time Sutton staffer Fumiko Sakoda filled in whenever necessary, and also utilized her vast telemetry experience and knowledge to help technicians track broods at BANWR for two weeks.

Thank you to These Loyal Sutton Supporters! October 1, 2018 to September 30, 2019

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Memorials and Honoraria

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In honor of Rebecca Crocker: June Bolton, Leona Limon. In memory of Sam Daniel: Robert Ackerman, Adam & Amy Greenway. In honor of Lee Holcombe's birthday: Frederick & Janet Drummond. In honor of Kirby & Genny Lehman: H. Robson. In honor of Dan Reinking: Carl & Nan Reinking, Mary Vande Steeg & Jack Wagner. In memory of John Toepfer: Jackie Augustine, Alan & Venice Beske, Brett Cooper, Steven J. Furcich, Jonathan Haufler, Jeffrey and Beverly Kenkel, Jerry & Beverly Kobriger, Stephanie Manes, Microsoft, Minnesota Prairie Chicken Society, Minnesota Sharp Tailed Grouse Society, Michael Morrow, Charles J. Newling, Randy Rodgers, Michael Schroeder, Greg Septon, Steve Sherrod, Nova Silvy, Dan & Vicki Svedarsky, Jen Syrowitz Ruch, Donald & Linda Thiel, Jim & Marjorie Thiel, Paul & Leslie Toepfer, Bill Vodehnal, Marilyn Waters, Donald H. & Miri Wolfe. In memory of Barbara & Wendell Zachary: their loving daughter.